



What's Happening at Blue Marsh Lake?

USACE

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Winter Recreation

Winter is an excellent time to get outdoors. Whether there is snow or no snow Blue Marsh Lake offers numerous recreational opportunities during the winter season. If it is a relaxing stroll you are looking for, there are several nature trails available, including two in the Day Use Area. These trails are self-guiding and are relatively easy to walk. If you are into something a bit more challenging there is the 29 mile long multi-use trail that makes its way around the entire lake. This trail winds its way through fields and forests, and offers some nice lake views. The multi-use trail is open to hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, biking and horseback riding. Carry water with you, as there is no drinking water available along any of the trails.

If you are a novice cross-country skier we recommend that you first try skiing in areas that are not hilly. The Union Canal Connector Trail is a great beginner trail. Both snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are great exercise and a lot of fun. If it is a sunny day, wear sunglasses, as the sun's glare off of the snow is rough on the eyes! Dress in layers, as you may be cold when you start out, but I guarantee you will warm up quickly! As you warm up you can remove layers, and when you stop to take a break you can add a layer to prevent getting too cold.

Hunting season is still underway, so wear bright colors when in undeveloped/hunting areas. Archery and flintlock season for deer is open through January 10. Fishing from a boat or shoreline is popular year-round. If you like to fish the Tulpehocken Creek at the Stilling Basin, remember from the first stone deflector south is artificial lure fishing only. No bait or archery fishing is permitted. If you are on a boat (including ice boats), you must have a life jacket on board, and you must wear it if your boat is 16 feet or less in length.



Have a great day outdoors, but do so safely!

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Upcoming Programs

Winter GO Day: January 10, Saturday, 1:00 pm, Berks County Heritage Center
Bird Walk: January 14, Wednesday, 1:00 pm, Visitor Center
Hike with a Ranger: January 16, Friday, 10:00 am, Visitor Center
Hands On Nature Wonderful Winter: January 21, Wednesday, 10:00 am, Conference Center

Beware of the Ice

What do you do if you fall through the ice? First of all don't panic! If you have a pair of ice awls use them to pull yourself out of the water and up onto the ice. No ice awls? Try "swimming out," which helps your body rise up and allows you to get onto firm ice. Kick your legs behind you to prevent being pulled under the water. If unable to get out call for help. Slip your boots off to make treading water easier. Keep your clothes on because they will still insulate you even if wet. Once you get out of the water and onto the ice **do not** stand up, but roll away from the hole. When you are a safe distance away from the hole, stand up and keep yourself low distributing your weight over as much surface area as possible. Shuffle your feet as you make your way to shore. If someone else falls in, do not approach them on the ice. **Reach** something (fishing rod, tree branch, jacket, etc.) out to them, or **throw** them something that floats, **row/push** a boat out to them or **go** call for help. The only safe ice is that which you stay off of!

Winter Season Safety

Blue Marsh Lake is open every day of the year for many types of recreation. The winter season brings colder temperatures and dangerous driving conditions. If you are a fan of winter recreation, please make sure you adhere to winter driving conditions on the way to your destination of fun. Clear your vehicle of ice and snow, fuel your vehicle when it gets to half a tank, do not speed, carry cold weather gear in your vehicle, let someone know where you are going, and listen to the radio for local weather updates.

Before you plan your day, check the weather to make sure you are dressed properly. Three common problems caused by cold weather are hypothermia, frostbite, and trench foot. Hypothermia is a condition in which the body uses up its stored energy and can no longer produce heat. Frostbite is a bodily injury caused by freezing, which most often affects the hands, fingers, toes, ears, nose, and face. Trench foot is an injury of the feet resulting from prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions. A few tips to prevent cold weather bodily injuries are: wear warm, loose-fitting layers, a hat, gloves, waterproof insulated boots, change your clothes if they become wet, and seek shelter if you become fatigued or start to shiver.

REMINDER: Many of you may think that since white-tailed deer rifle season ended on December 13th that “hunting season” is over. However, that is not the case. The following hunting seasons are still active:

Small Game Season; December 15, 2014 through February 21, 2015

Deer Archery and Flintlock; December 26, 2014 through January 10, 2015

Waterfowl/Migratory Game Bird Season; extends through January 26, 2015

Fur-taking/Trapping Season extends through March 31, 2015

No hunting is allowed in our “developed areas” including the Dry Brooks Day Use Area, boat ramps, Visitor Center, and Stilling Basin areas. One other small area that hunting is not allowed is around Old Dry Road Farm. Hunting is allowed along the multi-use trail. Hunters are required to wear orange. You, as a trail user, should wear it for safety and visibility purposes. It is also a good idea to put an orange vest on your dog.

Please remember that Blue Marsh land is only open for non-motorized use; off-road vehicles and snowmobiles of any kind are not permitted anywhere on the property. Always be safe when recreating at Blue Marsh!

Ice Fishing

If you plan on heading out to Blue Marsh Lake or one of the other area lakes for a day of ice fishing, we have some tips that can make your ice fishing experience both safe and enjoyable.

Before heading out let others know where you are going and when you expect to return. Always fish with at least one other person. Dress for the cold weather by using the layering system. Layering makes it easier to remove or put clothes back on if you get too warm or cold. And do not forget to wear a warm wool, fleece or knit hat, as we lose body heat through our head. Make sure you keep your feet warm by wearing a pair of insulated waterproof boots. But keep the boots loosely tied, allowing you to easily kick them off if you end up in the water. Wear neoprene or waterproof nylon mittens to protect your hands from the cold icy water.

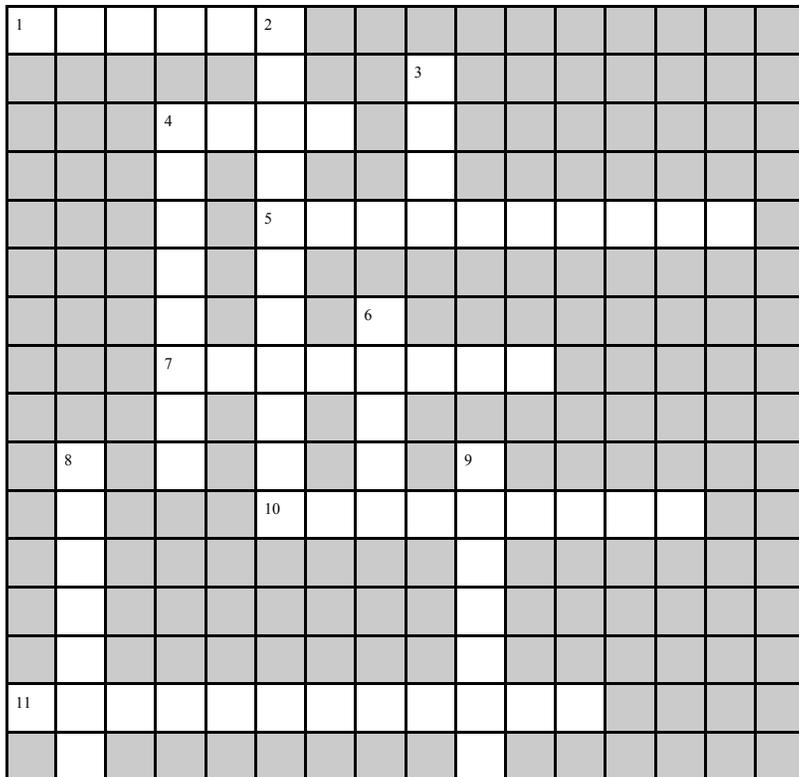
Take along a small bag of sand or cat litter to sprinkle around your ice hole for better traction. Some other items to take along with you include a dry set of clothes, energy-rich snacks and warm drinks, a coil of rope to use in case someone falls through the ice, a small first aid kit, matches in a waterproof container, ice awls and a life jacket seat cushion to use as an emergency flotation device. Most importantly, never fish on ice that’s less than 4 inches thick. The staff at Blue Marsh does not measure the ice thickness, so it is up to you to decide if it is “safe”. Ice thickness can greatly vary from one location to another and can also become suspended due to changes in the lake level.

Obey the Leash Law

Blue Marsh is a popular park for dog walkers and non-dog walkers. Some people are afraid of dogs and some dogs are more aggressive than others. If you are walking your dogs, keep them with you and under your control at all times. In our developed areas, they must be on a 6’ leash or shorter. In non-developed areas, they must remain under voice command and in control of the owner. If a dog is in the water, it does not need to be attached to a leash, but it is a good idea to put a life jacket on it. They can tire out from swimming just like people! Please clean up after your pet. If you forget your own bag for your pet’s waste, don’t worry, the park provides Mutt Mitts at several locations throughout the park. Mutt Mitts are located at State Hill Boat Ramp, the Stilling Basin, and parking lots C and D of the Dry Brooks Day Use Area for your convenience. Pets are not allowed below parking lot lower F of the Day Use Area, State Hill Boat Beach, in the Visitor Center, or in restrooms.



Winter Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. Animals leave them behind
4. Precipitation in the form of crystalline water ice
5. A tool used in snow removal
7. Ice fisherman use this to drill a hole in the ice
10. The largest member of the squirrel family in Pennsylvania
11. Super cooled droplets freezing on impact

DOWN

2. An easier way to trek through the snow
3. A way to remove snow
4. This activity originated in the Alps
6. Also known as the snowbird
8. This month's birthstone is garnet
9. Olaf is known as a _____

Winter Recreation Safety Highlights

1. Dress in layers - if you get too hot you can always take a layer off!
2. You still need to stay hydrated, so drink plenty of water.
3. Wear insulated, waterproof boots, as well as well as mittens and a hat.
4. When on the ice stay away from multiple pressure cracks, rocks, sticks and plants that can weaken ice.
5. Four inches of ice is considered thick enough for walking or ice skating.
6. The ice thickness can vary greatly from area to area on Blue Marsh Lake.
7. New/black ice is stronger than old milky ice; water covering ice weakens it.

Meet Volunteer Audrey Wells

Audrey Wells has been volunteering at Blue Marsh for 5 years. She works at Governor Dick Park in Cornwall, PA as a naturalist and office manager. Audrey says, "I love being outside hiking, birding, "blooming" and learning about anything that moves and grows in our great outdoors; particularly birds and wildflowers. The wildflowers seem to be "growing" into an obsession with us as we can pretty much count on them being in the same place year after year, barring any human progress (houses, roads). Reading and 'riting (not 'rithmetic) are home hobbies and keeping lists mainly of birds and flowers. We set a goal of seeing 500 wildflowers this year and got 528! As a grandma of two, I have a mission to get my granddarlings plenty dirty in creeks and out in the woods exploring." She holds home school field days, teddy bear walks and Jr. Ranger programs along with Kathy Grim at Blue Marsh and loves sharing her knowledge with all. Thank you Audrey, you do a wonderful job!



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**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Philadelphia District**

Winter 2015 Programs

Winter GO Day: Saturday, January 10, 1:00 pm, Berks Heritage Center: Get outdoors with the Berks County Parks, Township of Spring Parks and Recreation Dept., and Blue Marsh staff for a fabulous day of winter-time games. We'll have tons of fun activities throughout the day, including an introduction to cross country skiing, along with snowshoe relay races, winter wildlife tracking programs, and much more. Of course, if there is not enough snow for the skiing or snowshoeing we will have alternate activities for your enjoyment. Some snowshoes will be available for trial. Please call 610-374-2944 to register by January 7th.

Bird Walks: Wednesdays, January 14, February 18, and March 18, 2015, 1:00 pm, Visitor Center. Don't let some cool temperatures keep you indoors. Join birding expert and naturalist Joan Silagy as she guides you along trails and roadways in search of birds. Walking should be easy with few hills. Don't forget your binoculars!

Hike with a Ranger: Friday, January 16, 10:00 am, Visitor Center: No this is not a typo, we are meeting on a Friday for January's hike. The route will start at the Visitor Center and we will make our way to the Day Use Area. Our hike will include portions of the Great Oak and Sensory Trails. The return trip will take us along the lake shoreline to the Dry Brooks Boat Launch, where we will hit the multi-use trail to return to the Visitor Center. Length of hike is about three miles.

Hands On Nature Wonderful Winter: Join Audrey Wells for a fun and educational look at winter weather. Be prepared to be outdoors, because if there is snow we are going to build snow creatures that will double as bird feeders. That is just one of several activities we are planning on doing both indoors and outdoors. This programs in recommended for home school students/families.

Control Tower Tours: Thursdays, January 22, February 12, and March 26, 2015, 10:00 am, Visitor Center: Join volunteer Alfred Schoenebeck for a behind-the-scenes look at the dam and control tower. You will learn how the dam/tower function, while getting a first-hand look at the interior of the tower. Be prepared to go down and up numerous steps.