



What's Happening at Blue Marsh Lake?

USACE

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Ice and Cold Water Safety

The water temperature of the lake is currently in the thirties. Exposure to water at this temperature is very dangerous. Water cools our body down thirty times faster than air at the same temperature. If you plan on being around the water keep safety in mind at all times. The most important safety equipment is a Coast Guard approved life jacket. Dressing for the weather is also important. Wear a hat, as we lose much of our body heat through our heads. Dress in layers, wearing a fabric next to your skin that wicks moisture away from your body, thereby conserving body heat. Also, wear fabrics that insulate, event when wet. Your outer layer should be a fabric that repels wind and moisture.

As the water temperature continues to drop, ice begins to form on Blue Marsh Lake. It takes the lake quite a long time to freeze over, and there have been several winters where there was never a solid cover of ice on the lake. Ice thickness varies on a body of water like Blue Marsh. There are many factors that can affect ice thickness, including underwater springs, current, weather (fog, wind and precipitation), rotting vegetation and the fish. Avoid areas where objects are sticking through the ice, as rocks, etc. absorb the sun's heat causing the ice to be thinner in those areas. If you are planning on being on the ice, carry ice awls or a sharp object in your pocket such as a knife, keys or nails. If you were to go through the ice you would use these to dig into the ice while kicking your legs/feet and pulling yourself out of the water and up onto the ice. And do not stand up next to the

hole you just got out of, but roll away from it. When walking on the ice, drag your feet across the ice surface as this has less impact on the ice than stepping. The safest ice is that which you stay off of!



Recreation Spotlight—Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is a great way to remain active during a snowy winter. It is great exercise, and an enjoyable way to get outdoors. One nice thing about snowshoeing is that if you can walk you can snowshoe! A pair of snowshoes are not that expensive to purchase. They are sized according to our weight. The majority of people also use poles when snowshoeing. When walking through the snow when wearing snowshoes you need to get use to walking with much wider and longer feet so to speak because they add width and length to your feet. It takes a little getting use to, but you will be a pro in no time. The deeper the snow the more fun it is to snowshoe. They help keep you on top of the snow, instead of sinking way down like you do when wearing just your normal boots or shoes. When you head out make sure you dress in layers, because it is a good workout, and you will probably be removing a layer or two. Also carry water with you to stay hydrated. Instead of complaining about the snow this winter, don the snowshoes and hit the trails. It is a blast!

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Volunteer Project Days

January 18th
February 15th
March 15th

Projects will include trail work, bridge work and possibly olfactory garden rehab work.

Contact Volunteer Coordinator Nate Freiwald for more information, 610-376-6337

2013/2014 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits

SQUIRRELS: (Combined Species) Oct. 19-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 & Dec. 26-Feb. 22, 2014 (6 daily, 12 possession).

RABBIT: Oct. 26-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 & Dec. 26-Feb. 22, 2014 (4 daily, 8 possession).

PHEASANT: Cocks only in WMUs 2A, 2C, 4C, 4E, 5A & 5B - Oct. 26-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 & Dec. 26-Feb. 22, 2014. Cocks or hens in WMUs 1A, 1B, 2B, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 2H, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4A, 4B, 4D, 5C & 5D - Oct. 26-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 & Dec. 26-Feb. 22, 2014 (2 daily, 4 possession).

DEER, ARCHERY (Antlered & Antlerless) Statewide: Oct. 5-Nov. 16 & Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2014. One antlered deer per license year, and an antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

DEER, ANTLERED or ANTLERLESS FLINTLOCK (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2014. One antlered or antlerless deer with general license and muzzleloader license, plus an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

RACCOONS & FOXES: Oct. 26-Feb. 22, 2014. Unlimited. **COYOTES, OPOSSUMS, SKUNKS & WEASELS:** No closed season, with certain exceptions during big game seasons. No limits.

TRAPPING: MINK & MUSKRATS - Nov. 23-Jan. 5, 2014. Unlimited. **COYOTES, FOXES, OPOSSUMS, RACCOONS, SKUNKS, WEASELS** - Oct. 27-Feb. 23, 2014. Unlimited. Cable restraint devices may be used by those with certification cards for coyotes and foxes from Dec. 26-Feb. 23, 2014.

Ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers, Oct. 19-26, and Nov. 15-Jan. 15. (for bag limits and combination possession limits, please refer to the Pa Game Commission Migratory Game Bird Brochure.)

Goose: Oct. 26-Nov. 30, Dec. 18-Jan. 15, and Feb. 1-28, with a 5-goose daily bag limit; 15-goose possession limit.

Snow Goose: Oct. 1-Jan. 25, 25 daily, no possession limit. Conservation Hunt: Jan. 27 – April 25; 25 daily, no possession limit.

****For additional hunting opportunities, hunting hours, orange requirements, and regulations please refer to the Pennsylvania Game Commission: www.pgc.state.pa.us/ ****

Share The Land

It is that time of year again, when sportsmen and trail users flock to Blue Marsh Lake to enjoy all it has to offer. Can you hunt close to the hiking trail? That is a common question posed to the rangers every year. The answer is yes. But there is no need to worry, Blue Marsh can be enjoyed by all with minimal effort. Hunters wear blaze orange to identify each other. Hikers and bikers should do the same. If you do not have any blaze orange, just wear bright colors. It is also not a bad idea to put blaze orange, bright colors, or a bell on your dog if you are recreating with them. Trail users and hunters need to respect each other. If you are a hunter, you might want to hunt away from the trail. There is a better chance to find the game you are after when you aren't as close to an area where there is human traffic. If you are a hiker, you might want to stick to the trail, as to not spook the game the hunters are pursuing. As always, there is no hunting on Sundays.



The Benefits of Winter Recreation at Blue Marsh

When most people think of Blue Marsh Lake they think of the summer time, when visitors come out to swim, boat, fish and picnic. But the lake is open year-round, and it is a great place to visit during the off-season. Why? We can give you numerous reasons. There are no crowds! You practically have the place to yourself. The winter season is a great time to do some wildlife watching. Stop by the beach area and keep an eye out for the Merlin (falcon), as well as ring-billed and herring gulls. There have also been a pair of mature bald eagles frequenting the area. You can also visit the Great Oak Nature Trail wildlife feeding station where you might see white-throated or white-crowned sparrows, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and juncos. A huge advantage to winter recreation is there are no bugs! No mosquitoes biting you, or gnats flying around your face and getting in your eyes. Unfortunately, you might still encounter those pesky little black-legged ticks (deer ticks). The temperatures are more comfortable for physical activity, including hiking, mountain bike and horseback riding. Winter is a great time to take to the trails, however no motorized vehicles are allowed on any of the trails. And if you do not want to go out alone, join us on one of our hikes. See you soon!

Winter Word search

COLD

GLOVES

HUNTING

ICESKATING

PLOWING

SCARF

SHOVELING

SKIING

SLEDDING

SNOW

SNOWMAN

WINTER

F Q O W N Z Q H P A B P
 D R H G A U L W W Y G G
 H U A C N S V I S I L G
 E U M C W I W N Z O W N
 O O N O S F L T V H F I
 G N I T A K S E C I N D
 D G N I I K S R V A W D
 L K S W J N N W M O E E
 O N G E X K G W N I H L
 C D A N Z K O S U Z R S
 P L O W I N G G P Q S J
 V J I Q S C P V N J H J

Blue Marsh Lake—A Lake for all Seasons

Winter is one season where many people tend to spend a lot less time outdoors. But there are plenty of outdoor recreation activities available during the winter season.

Move outdoors and visit Blue Marsh Lake. If there is snow on the ground you and your children can go sledding. There are numerous hills in the Day Use Area that are good for sledding, and visitors also go sledding on the dike at Dry Brooks Boat Launch. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are also quite popular. No matter what your skill level, there are plenty of places to go, including the Multi-use Hiking Trail, Foxtrot Hiking Loop and Skinner’s Loops. For cross-country skiing you need a minimum of four inches of snow for grass skiing, and for trail skiing you should have at least six inches so you are not hitting rocks, etc. The more snow the more fun it is to snowshoe. Both skiing and snowshoeing are great workouts!



It is also fun to take a walk after a fresh snowfall, and look for animal tracks. You can even discover where a bird landed and took off on the snow by the wing-patterns they leave behind in the snow. Mountain biking is always fun, but with some snow on the ground it adds a little bit of a challenge. Horseback riding is also a great winter activity. The nice thing is you do not need snow for riding horses or mountain bikes.

When recreating at Blue Marsh this winter, the Corps of Engineers recommends that you stay off of the ice. Stick to the land, and enjoy an exhilarating day outdoors at Blue Marsh.

Meet Volunteer “Doc” Schoch

Anthony “Doc” Schoch was a school teacher for 35 years, before retiring from Schuylkill Valley School District. But he was not ready to totally walk away from teaching. Lucky for us he volunteers at Blue Marsh Lake! His knowledge of anything outdoors is incredible. He especially enjoys studying and photographing dragonflies and damsel flies, and is currently involved in a complete survey of the two species in Berks County. Another one of his interests is studying mosses, ferns and fungi.

Volunteer Schoch loves the outdoors. He enjoys bike riding, hiking and kayaking. He has done whitewater kayaking in Canada, New York and West Virginia. One of Doc’s favorite volunteer duties is leading the Paddling Cruises on Blue Marsh Lake. These cruises offer him the opportunity to teach others about what is so great about being outdoors. He also leads local school students on nature trail hikes. However, his greatest passion is his family, including wife Sandy, and his five grandchildren. Thank you Doc for everything you do at Blue Marsh Lake. We really appreciate it!



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

Winter 2014 Programs

Hike with a Ranger: Saturday, January 11, & February 22, 10:00 a.m., Visitor Center. Join us for a 3 mile hike that will start at the Visitor Center, and follow the hiking trail to the Day Use Area. We will then walk along two of the nature trails in the Day Use Area, and eventually head back toward the Visitor Center by walking along the lake's edge. Dress warmly, and wear comfortable shoes.

Bird Walks: Thursday January 16, Wednesday February 12 and March 12, 1:00 p.m., Visitor Center. Join local naturalist and bird expert, Joan Silagy, as she guides you along trails and roadways in search of a variety of birds. Walking should be easy with few hills. Don't forget your binoculars.

Control Tower Tour: Thursday, January 23, February 20 and March 20, 10:00 a.m., Visitor Center, Participants get a "behind-the-scenes" look at how the dam functions. Not only will you be out on the dam, but you will also be going inside the control tower. Be prepared to go down and up numerous steps. For those of you who cannot handle the steps you can go as far as the control room.

Family Fun Day Snowshoeing for Beginners: Saturday, January 25, 1:00 p.m., Day Use Area. Winter-time fun! If you've ever wanted to learn how to snowshoe, join us for this program for beginners. No snow needed. Learn shoe sizes, fit and of course 'how to move in them.' The program is good for all ages. Snowshoes can be rented at Buckmans, or you can bring your own. Call 610-374-2944 to register by January 21st. This program is being presented by Blue Marsh Lake and Berks County Parks & Recreation.

Home School Field Day Snow Me Some Fun: Wednesday, February 5, 10:00 a.m., Conference Center. Just because it is winter doesn't mean we have to stay indoors. Join us as we spend time indoors and outdoors taking a look at snow. We will be doing some hands-on activities and spending time outdoors exploring and hopefully playing in the snow!

Cross-Country Ski/Hike: Saturday, February 8, 1:00 p.m., Day Use Area. • Join the Berks County Parks and Blue Marsh Lake staff for a cross-country ski outing on area trails. This is for all levels of skiers, as we will be skiing areas with few hills. If there is not enough snow (on no snow) we will go for a hike. Either way this will be a fun-filled adventure.