

Gifford Pinchot State Park

by Alice Stitt

Pinchot is a perfect place for introducing people to fishing. Its plentiful panfish population makes success practically a certainty.

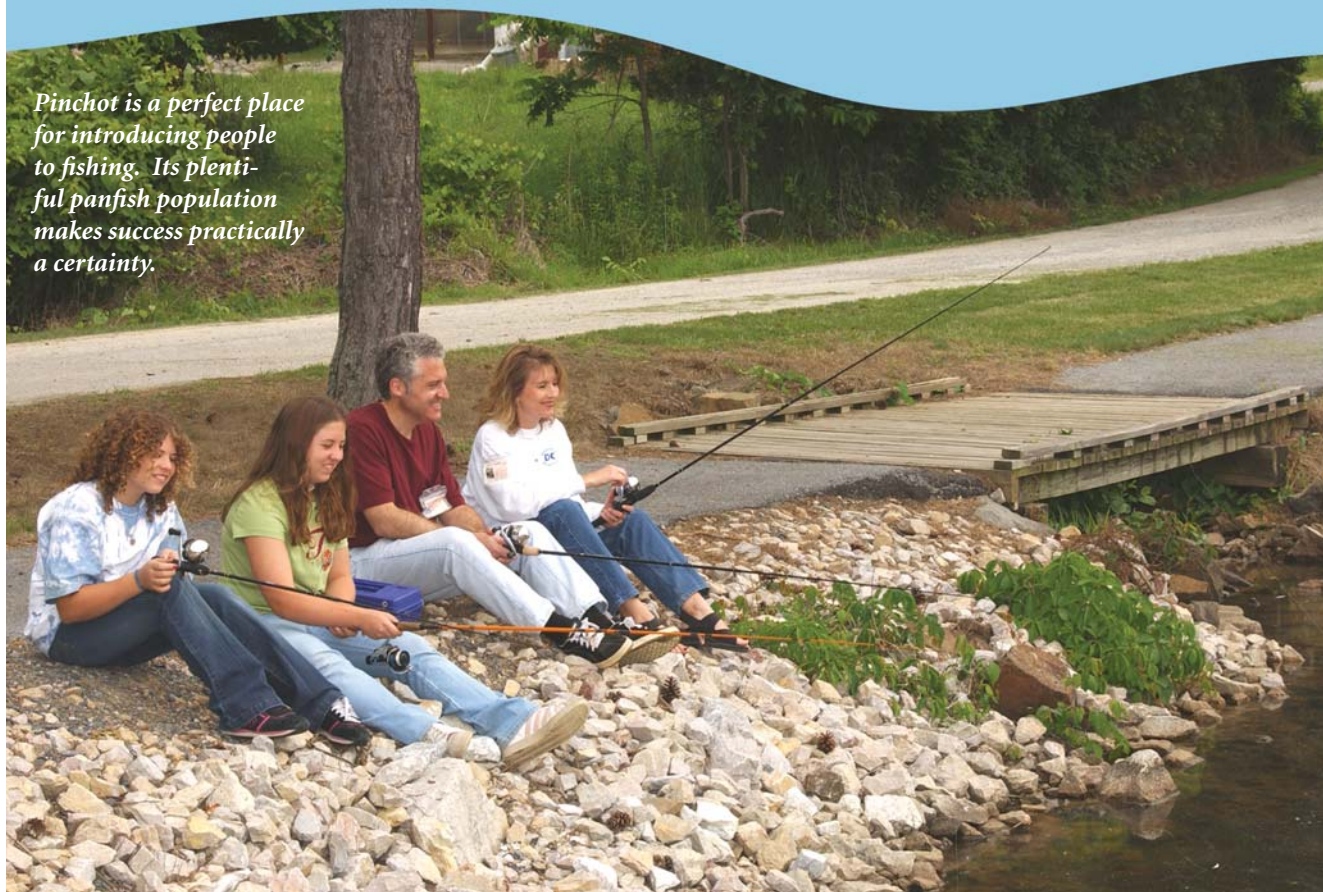


Photo: Art Richards

Nestled between the ridges of northern York County, Gifford Pinchot State Park is an “all seasons” park with varied activities for every visitor. The park, with more than 2,000 acres, averages 600,000 visitors annually. The 340-acre Pinchot Lake is an angling and boating delight.

Through a land purchase by the Commonwealth in 1959, this park—named after the Pennsylvania governor, forester and conservationist Gifford Pinchot—was formally dedicated in 1961 by Governor David L. Lawrence. Surrounded by ridges on all sides, it is a quiet and secluded

area that takes one closer to nature. It offers many recreational options from fishing, boating and camping to swimming, hiking and disc golf.

Pinchot Lake is a warmwater fishery with an average depth of only 6 to 8 feet. The lake features gravel bars and porcupine cribs, as well as other manmade structures that have been added to enhance the habitat.

The lake has a good population of panfish, including bluegills, pumpkinseeds, sunfish and crappies, which can be caught from shore or from a boat. Anglers know that the area around the dam and in some of the deeper

pools gives them the best chance of landing some good-sized crappies. Largemouth and smallmouth bass are found throughout the lake. Some 5-pound largemouths have been taken, and even larger hybrid striped bass in the 7- to 12-pound range have been caught there. Walleyes, catfish and carp are also popular quarries.

Overall, bass and panfish are the big draw for anglers. These fish are caught throughout the year and provide steady action. Shore fishing is good—there is access to almost the entire shoreline for bass and other fish. Stripers can be caught most

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To Dillsburg, 9 Mi.

GIFFORD PINCHOT STATE PARK



- TRAIL INFORMATION**
- Hiking Trail
 - Cross-country Skiing
 - Equestrian Trail
 - Multipurpose Trail

To Wellsville, & Historical Warrington Meeting House & Cemetery

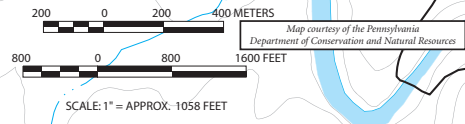
To I-83, 7 Mi. Historical Pinchot Road Marker, 1.4 Mi.



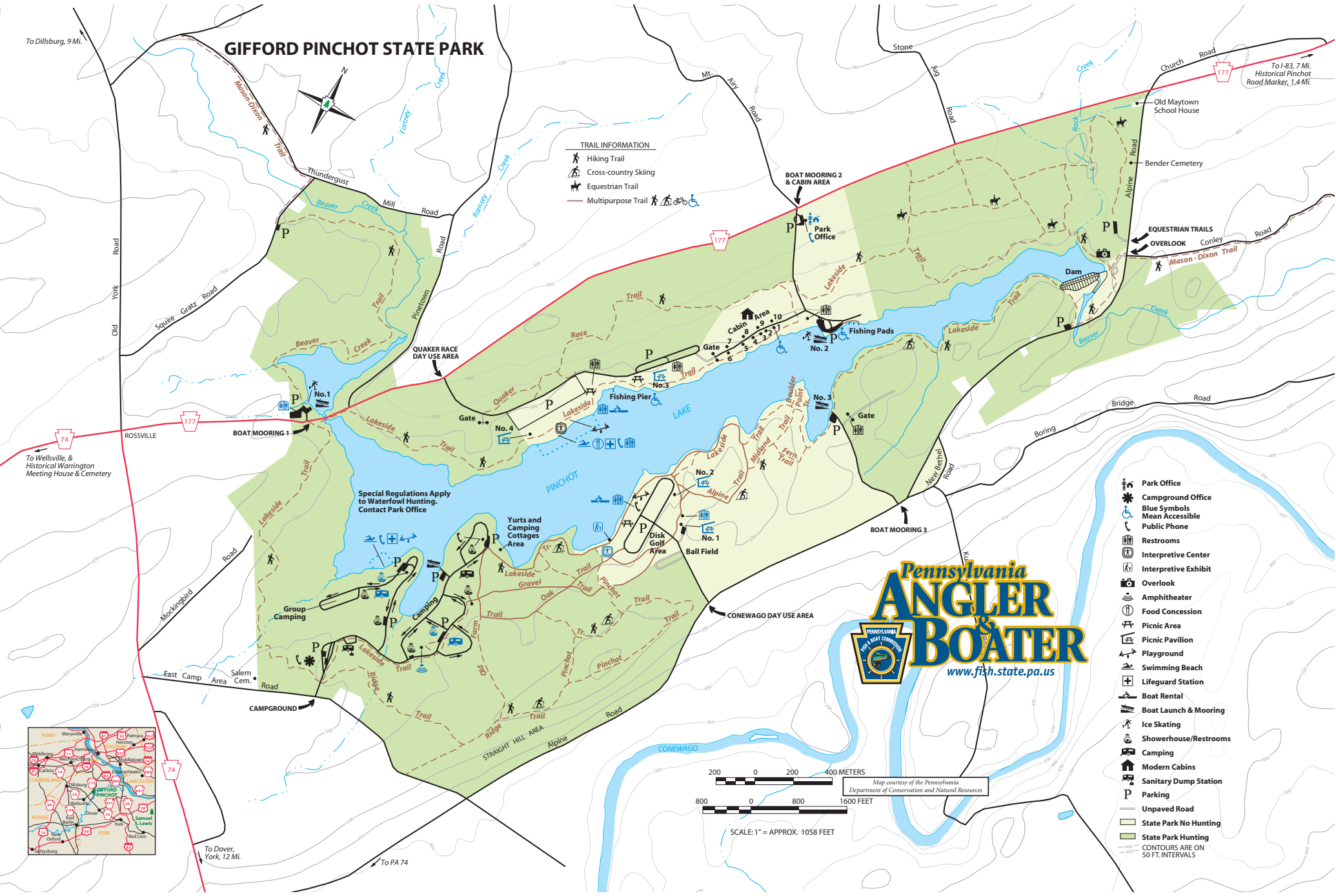
To Dover, York, 12 Mi.

To PA 74

Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER
www.fish.state.pa.us



- Park Office
- Campground Office
- Blue Symbols Mean Accessible
- Public Phone
- Restrooms
- Interpretive Center
- Interpretive Exhibit
- Overlook
- Amphitheater
- Food Concession
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Pavilion
- Playground
- Swimming Beach
- Lifeguard Station
- Boat Rental
- Boat Launch & Mooring
- Ice Skating
- Showerhouse/Restrooms
- Camping
- Modern Cabins
- Sanitary Dump Station
- Parking
- Unpaved Road
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- CONTOURS ARE ON 50 FT. INTERVALS



often around boat mooring area #2. Live bait as well as artificials are typical offerings.

Park manager Bill Rosevear revealed that there are some “really big fish” in Pinchot Lake. He knows of one veteran angler who has repeatedly caught some very nice muskellunge. Big bass are also taken at the yearly bass tournaments, some in the 20- to 25-inch range. “It’s all in how you fish for them,” says Bill.

One bass angler, who said he had been coming to the lake since he was 12 years old, discovered that the gizzard shad that inhabit the lake are a help to him when fishing for hybrid stripers. “They come to the surface in a school, and you can tell they are being chased. That’s when I drop down a silver spoon and land a big one,” the angler said. Pinchot Lake is part of the Big Bass Program.

Fishing from a boat is your best approach when traveling between the lake’s hotspots. The lake is governed by electric-motors-only regulations. Anglers can be seen fishing from a variety of craft, from bass boats to kayaks to rowboats and canoes. There are also handicap-accessible fishing pads located near boat mooring #2.

The three boat accesses on Pinchot Lake provide 24-hour access. The most popular launch is #2, midway on the lake. It is located off of PA Route 177 and has a large parking area and a restroom. Launch #3 is located on the opposite side of the lake from launch #2, off of Alpine Road. It has a small parking area and restrooms. Boat launch #1 is more isolated at the southwestern and most shallow end of the lake. This shallow section is connected to the main part of the Lake by a narrow channel. Many paddlers choose to use this launch for a more quiet area to view wildlife. In addition to the launches, there are more than 286 shoreline mooring and canoe rack spaces that may be rented from April 1 to November 1. The mooring areas include many larger spaces designed to accommodate sailboats and pontoon boats.

If you don’t own a boat, the park has several types of boats for rent, including paddleboats, canoes, kayaks, rowboats and boats with electric trolling motors. The two boat rental areas are located at the Quaker Day-Use Area and the Conewago Day-Use Area.

PA Fish & Boat Commission and Department of Conservation & Natural Resources rules and regulations apply for all the park’s fishing and boating and other activities.

With more than 300 campsites, Gifford Pinchot State Park provides one of the Commonwealth’s largest state park campgrounds. The campsites are open the second Friday in April and close by the end of October. They can accommodate tents or recreational vehicles. There are also camping cottages and yurts available for rent, and a large area for organized group tent camping. The campground has a swimming beach, boat launch and mooring area as well as modern bathhouses, toilets and showers. In addition, 10 modern cabins, located near the park office and boat launch #2, are open for rental year-round. Reservations are required for all sites.

During the summer, the park hosts many events and activities including rowing regattas, competitive sailboat races, bass tournaments and triathlons. The environmental education staff also has a schedule of programs including pontoon boat tours, natural history and interpretive events, nature hikes, and guest speakers. Check the park’s calendar of events to see what is happening on the weekends as well as during the week.

Note that sometimes crowds can be a challenge to both anglers, boaters or other park visitors. Mornings and evenings and mid-week may be your best bet to visit the park if you don’t want the hustle and bustle of the weekend traffic.

Wintertime doesn’t slow the visitors to Gifford Pinchot State Park. Ice fishing, ice skating, ice boating, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing all take place during winter at Pinchot.



Photo: Alice Stitt

When ice conditions permit, ice fishing for largemouth bass and crappies is a popular pastime. The park reports that the ice can sometimes reach thicknesses of a foot when the temperature drops below freezing for days at a time. And with over 18 miles of marked trails, wintertime visitors with snowshoes, skis or hiking boots have much to explore.

Gifford Pinchot would be proud of this state park named in his honor. With over 2,000 acres for visitors to explore, a beautiful and sheltered lake for fishing and boating, many picnic areas, miles of trails, and ample and modern camp sites, it is obvious why visitors return year after year to enjoy the whole host of activities at Gifford Pinchot State Park. ☐

More Information

Visit the park online and check state park regulations at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/giffordpinchot.aspx, or contact Gifford Pinchot State Park, 2200 Rosstown Road, Lewisberry, PA 17339-9787; campground office: 717-292-4112; park office: 717-432-5011; email: giffordpinchotsp@state.pa.us.

For general state park information or to make reservations, call toll-free: 1-888-PA-PARKS, Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.