

# M.K. Goddard State Park

by Kelly Houghton



Photo-William Wasser

M.K. Goddard State Park, a boater, angler and naturalist's paradise, is the perfect day trip destination. Situated on 2,856 acres in northeastern Mercer County, Goddard State Park is recognized for its large lake, fantastic fishing, year-round outdoor activities and abundance of wildlife that is seen and heard in the park's picturesque woods, wetlands and fields. The state park's biggest lure is the 1,860-acre Lake Wilhelm, which offers opportunities for great boating and year-round fishing.

Named after Dr. Maurice K. Goddard, who was instrumental in the

founding of many of Pennsylvania's State Parks, Goddard opened to the public in 1972 and today attracts over 200,000 visitors each year. A majority of these visitors travel to the state park for its boating and fishing opportunities, which are some of the best in the area.

Stretching 9 miles in length, Lake Wilhelm attracts boaters who are both pleasure cruisers and serious fishermen. Kayakers and canoeists, who enjoy tranquility and opportunities to see wildlife, can explore the Pennsylvania Game

Commission's portion of the lake, where in some sections only non-powered vessels are allowed. Anglers trolling or casting a line from their vessel can utilize Lake Wilhelm's main waters, which permit up to 20 horsepower motors.

Boaters have access to fantastic marina facilities and great launching accessibility. Not only does Goddard offer forty-eight dry land mooring spaces, but the state park boasts an impressive 241-slip marina. Available at the marina are 250 car and 121 car and trailer parking spaces, a fueling

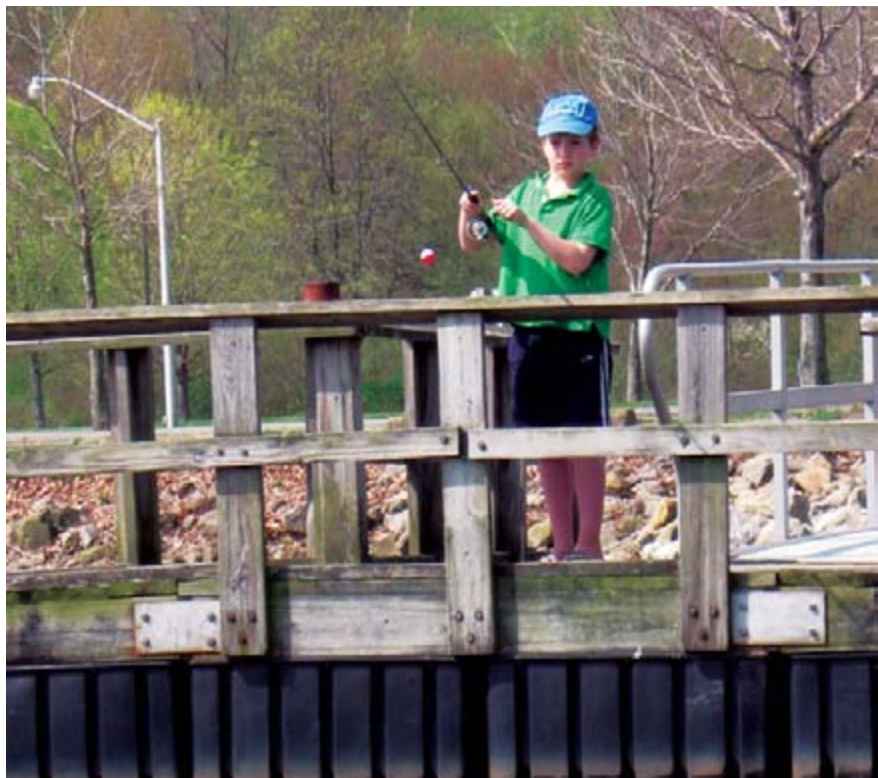
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station, a bait and fishing tackle concession and a boat concession, where kayaks, canoes, small motor boats and pontoon boats can be rented. Two courtesy docks and a four-lane boat launching ramp are also accessible at the marina. In addition to the marina's ramp, seven other boat launches are scattered along Lake Wilhelm's shoreline. Four are within the state park. Three launches are located within the state game lands.

The substantial amount of water at Goddard State Park appeals to more than just boaters. In fact, anglers typically never want to go anywhere else after fishing the warm water fishery, regardless of the season. In the spring, panfish are a popular catch. In fact, the fishing for panfish at Lake Wilhelm can be premier. This may pay tribute to having the right predator-prey balance, since the lake is also noted for its largemouth bass fishing and good numbers of walleye and musky. The summer months are arguably the best for largemouth, and also offer good water conditions for musky and walleye. During the fall, Wilhelm's waters are still abundant with panfish, while the winter months are prominent for nice size bass and panfish.

One of the park's most popular fishing spots is located in the 2,000-acre state game lands. A 420-acre lagoon, known as the stumps, attracts canoeists and belly boaters casting lines for largemouth bass, walleye and panfish. Anglers targeting musky and walleye, which have been stocked by the Fish & Boat Commission since 1971, typically fish the lake's deeper areas such as the 22-foot waters west of the dam. Other popular locations are areas where artificial structures have been placed. Maps indicating these locations throughout the state park portion of the lake are available from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and can be found at the state park office. For the best shoreline spots to cast a line, visit the causeway on Lake Wilhelm Road, the cove



*Handicapped Accessible Fishing Pier, Marina Point*

areas of boat launches three and four, Dugan's Run and along the dam. The handicapped accessible fishing pier at Marina Point, known as rounded point, is also very popular.

Although the state park is noted for its fishing and boating, many other activities attract visitors throughout the seasons. Biking, hiking, picnicking, hunting, wildlife viewing and attending park education programs are some of the park's most popular activities.

Hikers can utilize 14 miles of hiking trails, ranging from moderate to difficult, while bikers favor the paved, twelve mile Multi-Use Trail. Picnickers enjoy five large picnicking areas, located at the marina and at four of the boat launches, while hunters have access to over 1,155 acres, plus Lake Wilhelm, for hunting, trapping and the training of dogs during established seasons. A wide variety of interpretive and educational programs are also offered May through September at the Marina's Environmental Learning Center.

The winter months especially offer a variety of exciting activities. Ice

fishing is the most popular winter sport and accounts for many of the larger fish caught in Lake Wilhelm. Other popular winter activities are hunting, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, sled riding, ice skating and ice boating. The north shore section of the Multi-use Trail is open to snowmobiles in winter (approximately 6-miles), while the south shore section of the trail is open to cross-country skiing (also approximately 6-miles). For family fun, Launch 3 has been a popular area for ice skating and the dam is home to a one-acre sled riding hill.

For even more reasons to visit M.K. Goddard State park, as well as additional park information, visit <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/>. M.K. Goddard State Park is five minutes from I-79. Take Exit 130, the Sandy Lake-Greenville exit, and travel west on PA 358 toward Greenville for about 0.1 miles, then bear right onto Carpenter's Corners Road (S.R. 1011). At the first stop sign, turn right onto Lake Wilhelm Road (S.R. 1009) which goes directly into the park. ☐