

R.B. Winter State Park

by Kelly Houghton



photo-courtesy of DCNR

In the ridge and valley region of central Pennsylvania, surrounded by the mystic beauty of Bald Eagle State Forest, is the small, quiet and friendly R.B. Winter State Park. This 695-acre, cold-water fishery has many opportunities for recreation and is certainly one of the state's best kept secrets. "We have a great deal to offer, from lots of activities to beautiful facilities that are very modern," said State Park Manager, Bob Deffner.

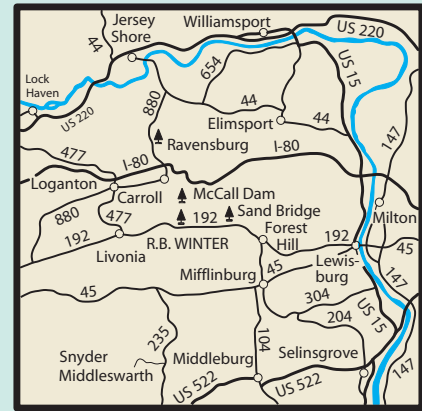
The state park's focal attraction is Halfway Lake, a six-acre reservoir fed by cold, mountain streams and

numerous springs contained by a sandstone dam. The park's most unique history lies in the foundation of this stone structure, which was the first stone masonry dam ever built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the United States. The small size of the lake leaves little ground for both anglers and boaters to intermingle. Consequently, boating isn't permitted on the lake, but visitors can hardly complain since this only allows them more time to enjoy activities like camping, picnicking, hiking, trail mountain biking, swimming and hunting.

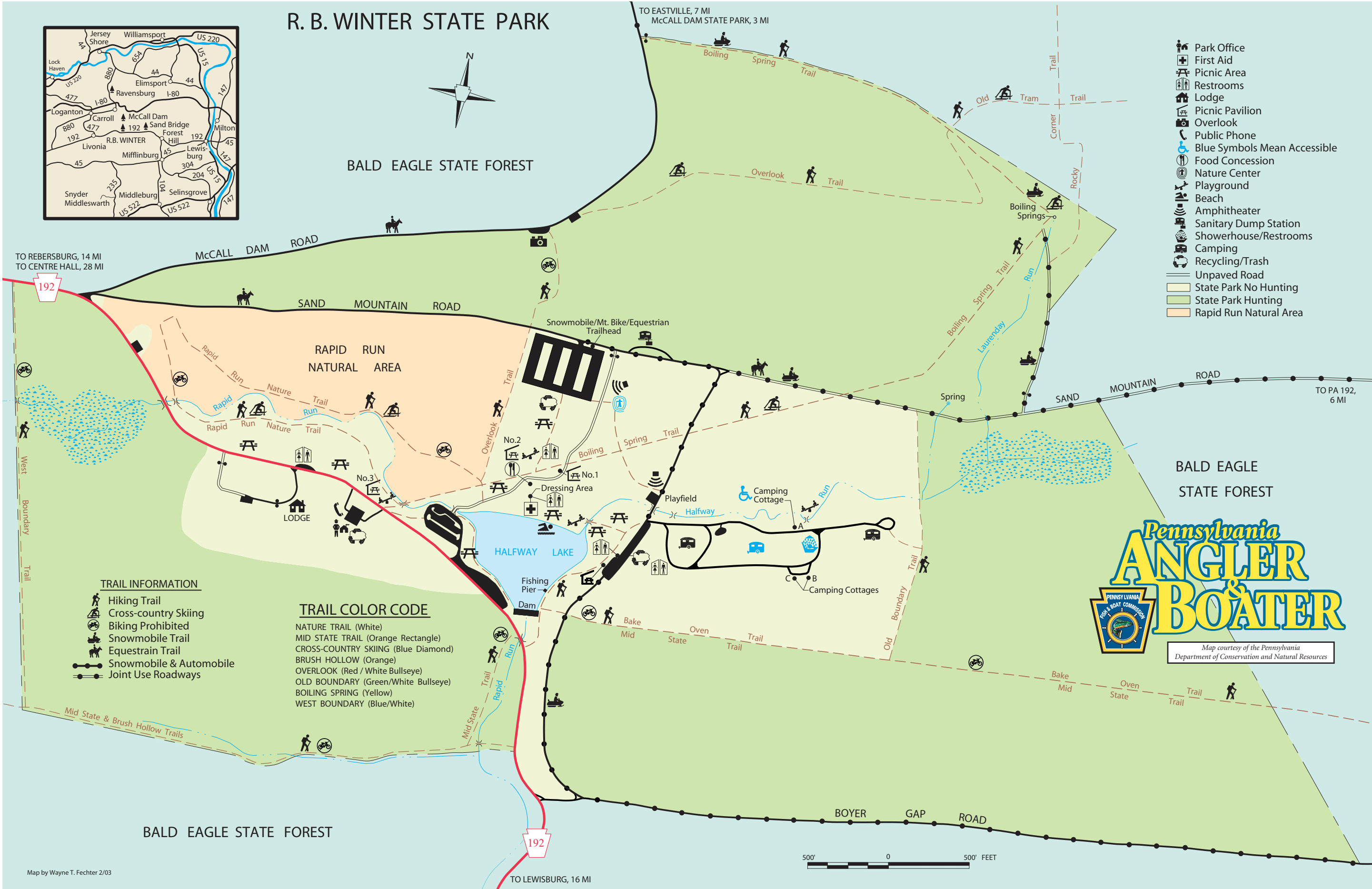
Families enjoy the park's swimming beach, featuring 300-feet of white sand, while 250 picnic tables and 3 picnic pavilions are arranged in the perfect setting for groups to kick back, relax and enjoy the park's beautiful scenery. Hikers have 6.3 miles of trails to explore that pass through a variety of terrains around R.B. Winter's lakeshore, hunters have 487-acres to utilize and mountain bikers have access to 48-miles of terrain on 25 off-road trails in the state forest. R.B. Winter is also the ideal starting point for long day hikes, backpacking and

(article continued on page 30)

R. B. WINTER STATE PARK



- Park Office
- First Aid
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Lodge
- Picnic Pavilion
- Overlook
- Public Phone
- Blue Symbols Mean Accessible
- Food Concession
- Nature Center
- Playground
- Beach
- Amphitheater
- Sanitary Dump Station
- Showerhouse/Restrooms
- Camping
- Recycling/Trash
- Unpaved Road
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- Rapid Run Natural Area




TRAIL INFORMATION

- Hiking Trail
- Cross-country Skiing
- Biking Prohibited
- Snowmobile Trail
- Equestrian Trail
- Snowmobile & Automobile
- Joint Use Roadways

TRAIL COLOR CODE

- NATURE TRAIL (White)
- MID STATE TRAIL (Orange Rectangle)
- CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING (Blue Diamond)
- BRUSH HOLLOW (Orange)
- OVERLOOK (Red / White Bullseye)
- OLD BOUNDARY (Green/White Bullseye)
- BOILING SPRING (Yellow)
- WEST BOUNDARY (Blue/White)

Pennsylvania
ANGLER
BOATER



Map courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

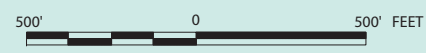




photo courtesy of DCNR

R.B. Winter State Park

mountain biking excursions, since many trails connect with paths in the neighboring 196,213 acre Bald Eagle State Forest.

After an active day at the park, you may want to rest your legs while taking in one of R.B. Winter's fantastic environmental education activities, like a guided walk, or a stream and watershed study. The park's Sheary-Linn Amphitheater and the Halfway Run Environmental Learning Center are the two centerpiece facilities for environmental education, which is available year round. A calendar of events can be accessed at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>.

R.B. Winter is also more than just a day-use park, offering three lodging options amid picturesque scenery. From April through December, a 58-site campground with a historic and rustic feel offers newly renovated sites and modern facilities. It's situated east of the lake and accommodates tents and trailers. Other overnight alternatives include three cottages, which each sleep five people, and a modern, two-story, furnished cabin with four bedrooms and front and back porches. The cottages are open during the camping season while the cabin is available year round. To make reservations, visit <http://www.pa.reserveworld.com>.

With the summer months drawing

the largest crowds, the winter season attracting snowmobile enthusiasts, skiers and dedicated ice anglers, the spring months are left with the undeniable reputation as being a trout angler's season of play. The mountain streams and springs emptying into Halfway Lake always keep the lake's temperature perfect for trout. Both the lake and its tributary stream, Rapid Run, are excellent areas to cast a line and provide two different environments.

The most popular location to trout fish is Halfway Lake, where the shores with exception of the swimming area, are crowded with anglers throughout April and May. Some anglers choose to wade into the lake's waters while others enjoy the shoreline and its open lawn areas. Many anglers also choose to gather near the sandstone dam or the fishing pier. Families especially appreciate the Fishing Loan Program, a project of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission to promote fishing. This program supplies basic fishing equipment that can be borrowed without a fee. Equipment can be picked up at the state park office.

For the experienced angler, Rapid Run, provides a challenging trek through boulders, plentiful hemlock pines and bountiful rhododendron bushes. Although the sandstone stream is beautiful, it's also less than

10-feet wide, leaving very little room to cast and giving anglers only a few opportunities before the fish get spooked. "You have to know what you're doing to fish the creek, but if you do, you can catch some dandy trout," said R.B. Winter State Park Environmental Education Specialist, Mary Ann Haladay-Bierly.

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission stocks the lake and Rapid Run regularly with rainbow and brook trout. Trout stockings in the lake occur four times during the year, one pre-season in early March, two in-season and a final stocking in late September. This spring, trout season opens on Saturday, April 18 at 8:00 a.m.

The variety of fishing opportunities and recreational activities are even more expansive since R.B. Winter State Park oversees and maintains the facilities at three nearby state parks. Ravensburg State Park, which lies in a steep gorge and is covered by a northern hardwood forest, is a 78-acre park that has hunting, fishing, picnicking, hiking, cold-water fishing and a 21-site, tent-only campground. McCall's Dam State Park, although only eight acres, is a nice place for a quiet picnic next to White Deer Creek, which is also enjoyed by fly anglers. Sand Bridge State Park, located east of R.B. Winter, attracts picnickers and anglers who enjoy the murmur of Rapid Run and its trout stocked waters.

The exceptional trout fishing, array of activities, picturesque scenery and convenience of utilizing neighboring state parks and a state forest all validate why R.B. Winter State Park is one of Pennsylvania's best kept secrets. "You feel as if you're out in the boonies, but you're not, and you get to escape your daily stresses, yet you're not traveling far from home," said Deffner.

See for yourself why people have been coming for generations to R.B. Winter State Park. The park is in Union County, 18 miles west of Lewisburg on Pennsylvania Route 192. ☐