



FISHING

SLIPPERY ROCK CREEK

in McConnells Mill State Park



photo-Ralph Scherder

by Don Feigert

Slippery Rock Creek inside McConnells Mill State Park, Lawrence County, is a Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) stocked trout water that supports a popular seasonal trout fishery. The creek is a warmwater stream where the occasional Muskellunge appears, and Smallmouth Bass naturally reproduce and thrive. Yet, stocked trout are the main attraction. Stocked trout are present in good numbers in almost the entire length of the stream inside the park. Slippery Rock Creek is recovering well from earlier pollution due to acid mine drainage, and the waters inside the park have steadily improved over the years.

The PFBC stocks over 21 miles of Slippery Rock Creek, including the 5.8-mile stretch of the park's waters, with

mostly Rainbow Trout, according to PFBC Fisheries Biologist Tim Wilson, but some Brown Trout and golden rainbow trout are also stocked. This section is stocked once pre-season and twice in-season, and the numbers of fish placed here are substantial. There is also a ½-mile Catch and Release Fly-Fishing Only section downstream near the Armstrong Bridge that is open year-round and is stocked before the opening day of trout.

“We stock several miles of stream here, and a lot of water,” said Wilson. “This is a popular trout fishing destination, especially on opening day, and it normally features very good fishing results, unless the weather has been rainy, and the waters tend to get swollen and muddy.”

Anglers use a wide variety of live baits and lures within this reach, and, of course, flies in the fly fishing section. You never know what the fish will be hitting during any given day, so bring a variety of lures or flies. “These stocked trout are willing biters,” said Wilson, “and for the

health benefit of the fish, we do not feed the trout the last few days before the fish are released, so often trout are hungry and aggressive from the start.”

To get to McConnells Mill State Park, start on Interstate 79 in western Pennsylvania. About 40 miles north of Pittsburgh, take U.S. 422 west, travel just past the intersection with Route 19, and turn left into the park entrance. Drive about 1 mile down McConnells Mill Road to the open picnic area, and park in the lot. Climb down the steep rock trail into the gorge and see the historic mill, the roaring waterfall and the wooden covered bridge. Fishing is permitted anywhere except near the dam structures where PFBC rules and regulations apply.

Walk past the covered bridge onto Kildoo Trail, and continue downstream until the water and the scenery suit you. I like the 1-mile hike down to Eckert Bridge for the exercise, the scenic beauty and the fishing opportunities. Then, I cross the bridge and hike 1-mile back on the opposite side of the stream to the wooden bridge again. This fishing trek can take all day, depending on your fishing stops along the way. There are plenty of boulders and fast water rapids in the creek. Trout may lie in pools and eddies. Find a good-looking spot, and toss in your line.

The Kildoo Trail is amazing because of the scenery. You start on a flat, blacktop trail for the first 400 yards. Then, it changes to drastic uphill and downhill and rough footing with frequent access points to the stream. You will see the

photo-Donna Rae



The renovated McConnell's Mill, Lawrence County.

currents rushing below and hundreds of boulders in and along the stream, creating drop-offs rapids and alternating slower stretches. There are thick hemlocks overhead and sheer rock walls looming above, plus glimpses of wildlife. All this was created by glacial action thousands of years ago. The mill was built in 1852 and was renovated and preserved for the wild and natural acreage. The area later came under the stewardship of the Western PA Conservancy and still later became a state park.

The park features historical sightseeing including the old mill and covered bridge. There is also whitewater kayaking and canoeing. The waters are wild and dangerous, though, so exercise care, and stay near the shoreline while fishing. ☐

photo-Donna Rae



The fast waters of Slippery Rock Creek in McConnell's Mill State Park.



photo-Ralph Schender

Slippery Rock Creek runs through the park and provides excellent stocked trout fishing.