



What's Happening at Blue Marsh Lake?

USACE

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Summer Safety

As I am writing this article we are almost through the month of July. The three-day July 4 weekend was relatively peaceful. Our biggest day for visitation was actually Saturday July 5. The fourth started out with some morning rains, which helped keep the crowds down. We only had 80 plus cars lined up at the Day Use Area gate at 8:00 am!

The staff at Blue Marsh Lake do not want you to leave your guard down now that we are past the July fourth holiday. We still have plenty of summer and warm, humid weather ahead of us. Remember to practice safety whether you are recreating on the water or land. Here are a few tips on how to have an enjoyable experience:

- When hiking or biking on area trails, carry water and stay hydrated
- Take steps to prevent ticks from attaching (use insect repellent, check yourself after each outing)
- Wear a helmet when riding bikes or horses on the trails
- When on the water your best friend is a Coast Guard approved life jacket
- Never ever exceed your abilities
- Enter the water feet first, do not dive into water when you are unfamiliar with what lies under the surface & do not jump off of the bridges
- Flotation items such as “water wings,” and tubes are not allowed at the lake because they are not meant as a life saving device. Purchase a Coast Guard life jacket—the type two near-shore life jacket and type three flotation aids are inexpensive
- Leave all alcoholic beverages at home, they do not mix well with water-based recreation
- Always swim with a buddy



Did You Know?

Many people that visit Blue Marsh Lake do not even realize that it is a federal park, and not a state park. The lake is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and is a unique agency, especially when compared with other federal agencies involved in recreation (National Park Service, Forest Service, etc.). Here are a few quick statistics about the Corps of Engineers:

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| 1. #1 federal provider of outdoor recreation | 5. Miles of trails: 9,506 |
| 2. 370,000,000 visits per year | 6. Number of boat ramps: 3,671 |
| 3. Land/water used for recreation: 12 million acres | 7. Annual fishing tournaments: 20,000 |
| 4. Share of all US freshwater fishing: %33 | 8. Miles of shoreline: 55,390 miles |

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Upcoming Programs

- August 13: Wee Ones Trail Walk, 10 am, Swiftwater Access
- August 14: Control Tower Tour, 10 am, Visitor Center
- August 16: Family Fun Day Tulpehocken Creek Critters, 10 am, Stilling Basin
- August 23: Paddle Blue Marsh Lake, 8 am, Church Road Access

Bald Eagles Nest at Blue Marsh Lake!



Eagle Nest



Mature Bald Eagle



Mature Eagle Near the Nest

Blue Marsh Lake has welcomed its' first successful nesting Bald Eagles. The eagles built a large nest high up in a white pine tree along the Tulpehocken Creek arm of the lake. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an eagle nest is about five feet wide and two feet high, with an inside depression of four to five inches deep and 20 inches in diameter. Two eaglets successfully hatched from the eggs, and the adults stayed busy feeding them. This first-time eagle nest resulted a portion of the surrounding area being closed to the public. This was done so as not to disturb the first time nesting eagles causing them to leave the area. It took 12 - 14 weeks from the time the eggs were laid until the two young eagles have fledged, and left the nest. If you are lucky, you may see them soaring overhead.

Bald eagles build the largest nest of any bird, and they typically mate for life. Their wingspan is five-and-a-half to eight feet, and they weigh 8 - 12 pounds. Females are 25% larger than the males. Both the male and female will sit on the nest and protect the eggs and the young, exchanging places while the other forages for food. Bald Eagles will use the same nest for many years. Young eagles will leave the area to mature, but they return to the area where they hatched to mate. They feed mainly on fish, either living or as carrion.

Swimming at Blue Marsh

One of the most popular activities at Blue Marsh Lake is swimming. As with other Corps of Engineer swim areas, it is swim at your own risk. It is legal to swim in all areas of the lake except for the boat beaches at the Day Use Area, Dry Brooks and State Hill Boat Launches. You cannot swim around the dock areas at the boat launch, or within 150 feet of the Old Church Road and Mount Pleasant Bridges.

Safety is always our main concern at Blue Marsh. Individuals should never swim beyond their skill level. Distance is hard to judge on the water; what may appear to be a shorter distance when on land, may turn out to be a lot further once you try swimming it. Never dive into the water without knowing the conditions first. This means you have to make sure it is deep enough, and that there is not any submerged objects like rocks, tree branches or other debris on which you could hit your head. Remember your best friend—the Coast Guard Approved life jacket!



Enjoying the swim area

Summer Seasonal Staff

Ranger Staff



Maintenance Staff



Boating Etiquette

Practicing boating etiquette on the water results in a safe and enjoyable day of fun in the sun. Both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission patrol Blue Marsh Lake. Both the State and Federal regulations are enforced during these patrols. Here are some tips to having a safe experience on the water:

1. Before launching, check to make sure you have all of the required equipment on board.
2. Do not travel at greater than slow, no-wake speed when within 100 feet of the shoreline, docks, launch ramps, swimmers, downed water-skiers, moored or drifting boats, or in areas marked with "slow, no wake" buoys.
3. Never operate faster than, slow, no wake when within 100 feet to the rear or 50 feet to the side of another boat that is underway, unless in a narrow channel
4. Do not operate within 100 feet of any person towed behind another boat
5. Do not tow more than one person behind your boat at any time, and never tow persons behind your boat between sunset and sunrise
6. Always operate you boat in a responsible manner
7. Make sure to keep a proper lookout and maintain a safe speed, so that you as the boat operator can take the proper and effective action to avoid a collision
8. All water skiers and anyone towed behind a boat, personal watercraft operators and passengers and sailboarders must wear a life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable for these activities. Children 12 years of age or younger must wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket when underway on a boat 20 feet in length or less and in all canoes and kayaks
9. Persons operating a personal watercraft must have in their possession a Boating Safety Education Certificate

National Public Lands Day, September 27

National Public Lands Day was created by the National Environmental Education Foundation in 1994. There were 700 volunteers participating in the 1994 event. Since then, hundreds-of-thousands of volunteers have helped improve public lands at thousands of sites across the country. Last year more than 175,000 people volunteered in all 50 states. Public Lands Day events were hosted by 2,237 public land sites in 2013 (including Blue Marsh Lake). Volunteers contributed over \$18 million in improvements to public lands, including litter pick-up, tree planting, invasive species removal and site restoration.



NPLD activities will start at Blue Marsh Lake at the Visitor Center at 8:30 am with all types of volunteer work projects. These projects will include trail work, litter pick-up, a geo cache activity, sensory garden maintenance, wildlife management projects and nature trail display rehabilitation. But the day will not be all work, as we will also be offering a tour of the control tower (10 am), trail hike with a ranger (10:30 am), and a paddling cruise on the lake at 1:30 p.m. This is your chance to get involved and be stewards of your public lands. Volunteer at Blue Marsh Lake on September 27 and be part of National Public Lands Day!

Meet Volunteers Karen and Ken Speicher

Ken and Karen Speicher have been volunteering at the lake since 2007, and their help is much appreciated. Ken and Karen have adopted the section of trail between mile markers 12-13. Their reason for selecting this section of trail was that Ken's father farmed land near School Lane and Peacock Road. They also live nearby. Karen and Ken enjoy daily walks, and check their section of trail approximately once a week. Karen has kept a record of the trash they collected since 2007. Since then they have collected an ASTONISHING 1,336 grocery bags of trail trash. They have walked 4,182 miles (most of them at Blue Marsh) since 2007! Ken is a retired dentist, and attended dental school on a Navy ROTC scholarship. He practiced dentistry in Okinawa, Japan for three years! They both enjoy traveling, collecting sea shells, gardening and birding. Thank you Karen and Ken! You both do a great job!



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

Summer 2014 Programs

Wee Ones Trail Walk: Wednesday, August 13, 10:00 am, Swiftwater Access. Mom and Dad, are you looking for something to do with your young children? Here is a great family activity for you! We will walk along the Union Canal Connector Trail for a short distance, and see what neat things we can discover. This trail runs parallel to the old Union Canal and the Tulpehocken Creek, and accommodates strollers.

Control Tower Tour: Thursday, August 14, 10:00 am, Visitor Center: Join Volunteer Alfred Schoenebeck for a behind-the-scenes look at the dam and control tower. You will learn how the dam/tower function, while getting a first-hand look at the interior of the tower. Be prepared to go down and up numerous steps.

Family Fun Day Tulpehocken Creek Critters: Saturday, August 16, 10:00 am, Stilling Basin. Did you ever wonder what kinds of animals live in creeks? Join us for a fun and educational program on the critters that live in the Tulpehocken Creek downstream of the dam. We will take a look at some of the birds, fish, frogs and other critters that love the water. Bring along a pair of shoes that you can get wet, because we will be wading in the Tulpehocken in search of creek critters. Nets and viewing jars will be available to help you experience Tulpehocken Creek critters up-close and personal!

Paddle Blue Marsh Lake: Saturday, August 23, 8:00 A.M., Church Road Access. Join volunteer Tony "Doc" Schoch on a Blue Marsh Lake cruise. Doc is an expert kayaker and naturalist, and will lead you on an excellent on-water adventure. Participants must provide their own equipment, and are required to wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket.

Hike with a Ranger: Saturday, August 23, 8:30 AM, Church Road Access: Join us for a five-mile hike along the multi-use trail and Skinner's Loops. Our route will take us through field and forest areas, so dress for the conditions.