

Monocacy Scenic River

Water Trail Map & Guide



“The Monocacy’s size makes it one of the more reliably floatable streams... in this state of small creeks...a good retreat for a quiet day in the outdoors....”

—Edward Gertler



The Monocacy River begins near the Pennsylvania border and flows 58 miles through central Maryland before emptying in the Potomac River and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay.

A 41.4-mile water trail on this Maryland Scenic River takes paddlers through an historic Civil War landscape and areas once inhabited by American Indians and early European settlers who were attracted to this fertile, relatively flat valley between the Catoctin Mountains on the west and Parr’s Ridge on the east.

Sycamores, maples, and oaks line the riverbanks and seasonally shade the waterway along much of its route. In some areas, high bluffs rise abruptly on one side of the Monocacy while marsh grasses or shrubs cloak a low bank on the opposite side. Here and there the bluffs and trees give way, opening up a variety of vistas ranging from extensive farmlands and distant wooded ridges to sub-divisions and city buildings.

Native Americans camped, hunted, and fished here 10,000 years ago after the glaciers receded. About 2,000 years ago, the Seneca, Shawnee, and other

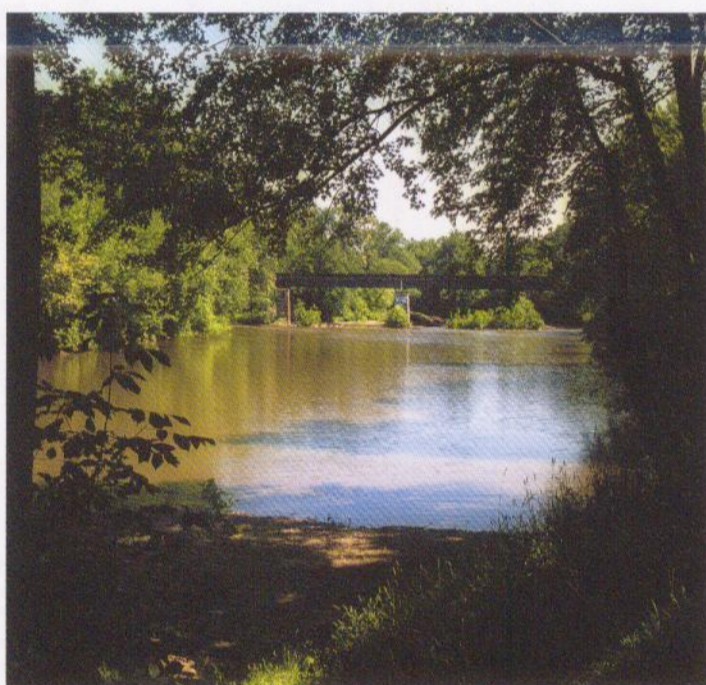
Indians lived here in intermittent or permanent villages. Besides fishing and hunting, they tilled the soil and raised corn. The Shawnee called the river the Monnockkesy, the “river with many bends,” while

other Indians referred to the river as “the garden creek” because of the lush vegetation bordering its banks.

“The place is without question, the most healthful and pleasant place,” Henry Fleet wrote when he explored the upper Monocacy Valley in the 1600s. “And for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkey the woods do swarm with them and the soil is exceedingly fertile....”

Franz Louis Michel, a Swiss explorer, visited

and mapped the valley in 1702 and 1707 as he looked for sources of silver and gold. German and English families in Pennsylvania began moving down the river in the 1700s and settling in the valley. They cleared woodlands, established sawmills and farms, formed villages, and set up gristmills powered by the river and its larger streams. By the century’s end the valley had more than 870 gristmills along the Monocacy and its tributaries. Paddlers can still see one of them, Michael’s Mill, which stands above the riverway east of Buckeystown.



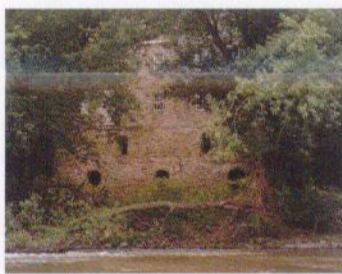
LeGore Bridge



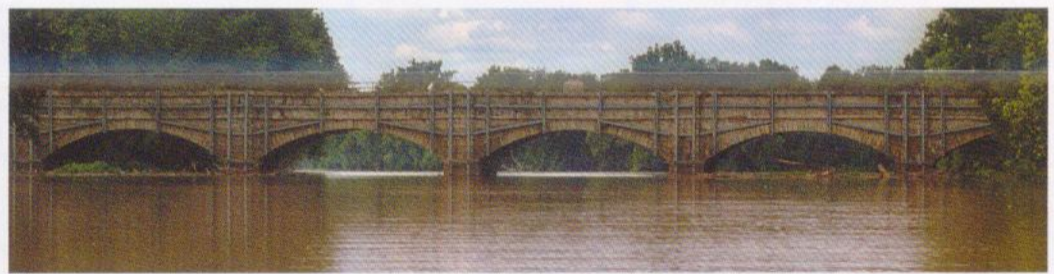
Great Blue Heron



Fishing for Bass on the Monocacy



Michael’s Mill



Monocacy Aqueduct

The Monocacy River affects the Chesapeake Bay

The Monocacy River flows 58 miles on its journey to the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. With headwaters near the Mason-Dixon Line, the river winds along the Carroll and Frederick County border in central Maryland, draining more than 970 square miles of agricultural and developed lands. Land use practices and drinking water demands throughout the river’s watershed affect the quality and quantity of water flowing down stream.

In 1974, Maryland designated the Monocacy a state scenic river in the Scenic and Wild Rivers Program. A management plan was developed to guide future restoration

and protection efforts. A heightened awareness of the river led to the initiation of conservation projects. Today, native trees and shrubs are planted along the Monocacy and its tributaries to create wildlife habitat and reduce soil erosion. Local students lead the way in an on-going stream monitoring program coordinated by Hood College. Canoe and kayak tours and other hands-on educational programs are held to celebrate the river as a recreational and environmental resource. Paddlers can observe a diversity of wildlife along the river from turtles, bank swallows, green herons, Baltimore orioles, bald eagles, and indigo buntings attributed to local conservation efforts.

Partners in sustainability — Gateways and Community Commons

The Monocacy Water Trail is part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network—a system of water trails, parks, refuges, historic sites and museums for experiencing the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Gateways are places to enjoy Chesapeake life and culture first-hand.

To explore other gateways within the Chesapeake watershed or to receive a free Gateways Network Map & Guide, go to: www.baygateways.net

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Since the early 1970s, Community Commons has supported community-based conservation projects in the Monocacy River region. Established as a nonprofit organization in late 1977, we are dedicated to building a sustainable future for the region’s social and natural resources through education, outreach and partnership building. For more information call (301) 662-3000 or browse our web site at: www.communitycommons.org



