

The River, the Dams and the Lakes

During the late 1800s, engineers started looking to the lower Susquehanna as a source of electric power.

From 1895 to 1931, as demand for electricity increased, four hydroelectric dams were constructed on the river: at York Haven, Safe Harbor, Holtwood, and Conowingo. Each one of these dams creates huge reservoirs behind it: Lake Frederic, Lake Clarke, Lake Aldred, and Conowingo Pond.

The dams have provided many benefits, but they also have created some problems. They furnish the area with electricity, drinking water, and recreational opportunities. At the same time, they have caused harm to natural habitats, disrupted the river's flow, and contributed to the virtual disappearance of certain species of fish from parts of the Susquehanna.

A summer day of recreation along the Susquehanna River at Indian Steps and falls on Porters Battery.

Courtesy York County Heritage Trust



A view of the Susquehanna River looking south, from Long Level in York County, before the construction of Safe Harbor Dam and the creation of Lake Clarke. Note the exposed bedrock of the riverbed.

Courtesy Barry C. Kent, from his book *Susquehanna's Indians*.

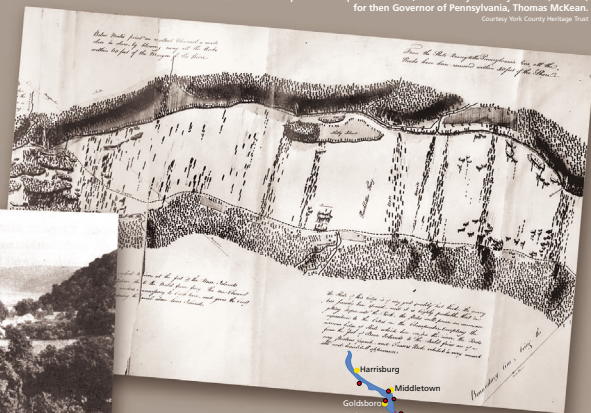


In recent years, the utility companies have worked with governmental agencies and citizen groups to improve the constancy of the Susquehanna's flow and to restore migratory fish to upstream locations.

Another environmental success story occurred on Mount Johnson Island, which can be seen across the river. In 1935, the National Audubon Society obtained a lease from the Philadelphia Electric Company and made the island the world's first Bald Eagle sanctuary.

A section of the map of the Susquehanna River, sketched by B. Henry Latrobe, in 1801, for then Governor of Pennsylvania, Thomas McKean.

Courtesy York County Heritage Trust



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Lancaster - York Heritage Region
Susquehanna River Water Trail

This project was completed with generous financial contributions from the following grant partners:
National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateway & Water Trails Network
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Gateway Center/Heritage Parks Program
PA, Maryland

East Deming Township
Mason-Dixon Heritage
PA, Maryland LLC
Susquehanna
York Haven Water Power Corporation
The John Deere Company

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