

Protecting Clean Water Together Series: Getting to Know Our Own Backyard
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CAPTION: Fall is a great time to get out on trails in Pocono creek lands. This trail at Pinebrook Park is one of many in the Stroud Township Greenway.

As you travel around our area, you've surely noticed that creeks and streams are everywhere. So maybe it's not surprising that Pennsylvania has more waterways than any other state but Alaska.

But did you know that in Monroe County alone we have almost 900 miles of waterways — some of the most beautiful, pristine waters in the country? In fact, nearly all of our creeks and streams are state-classified as “High Quality” or “Exceptional Value” streams, meaning they are so important they must be protected from any impacts, including stormwater run-off.

A sunny day in fall when the foliage is putting on a show is a great time to get to know some of these waters. Here are three places to try:

Easy — Smooth gravel walkways, mostly flat, form a chain of parks in Stroud Township. You’ll walk along the Brodhead Creek, one of the most famous trout streams in America. You may see red-tailed hawks, geese, osprey and eagles. It’s very easy walking, with no roots or rocks, through manicured, park-like settings. There are even occasional benches, making these trails a great choice for kids and people of all abilities. Try ForEvergreen Nature Preserve or Pinebrook Park North to get started.

Moderate — For more of a challenge, head to Paradise Township’s Nothstein Cranberry Creek Preserve. Deep in the fold of two ridges, you’ll see glimpses of the Cranberry Creek along the trail as you head uphill toward the railroad track. The trail has roots and rocks, and may be wet in some places. If you go far enough, you’ll enter an adjoining preserve protected by Pocono Heritage Land Trust (www.phlt.org) — complete with low waterfall and awesome rock formations. Double back and cross the creek to explore a former red-rock quarry.

Challenging — And for a more off-the-grid feeling, nothing beats Barrett Township’s Mount Wismer Nature Preserve. From the lower trailhead, a moderate trail leads to a large marsh, part of the headwaters of the Brodhead Creek. Backtrack from the marsh to take the challenging rocky climb that leads to the viewpoint. Or start at the upper trailhead — you’ll get a glimpse of the marsh and cross an intermittent rivulet on your way to the view. And what a view! From Delaware Water Gap all around the escarpment of the Pocono Plateau — most of the Brodhead Watershed will be spread at your feet.

Wherever you choose to go outdoors, there’s no ceiling hiding the sky, no walls confining your spirit, no digital hum filling your head. You might find that you walk taller among trees, that the air reaches deeper into your lungs, that you feel clearer, more fully alive.

Like conserved land everywhere, these preserves protect clean air and pure drinking water. You may just find they protect something else essential, in you, too.

Find information about dozens of hikes in the Brodhead Watershed at www.brodheadwatershed.org. Click on Programs, then Get Outdoors Poconos. The Hiker's Archive offers descriptions, trail maps, and directions for easy, moderate, and challenging hikes throughout our area. Most include creeklands.

Trails described here are on land owned and maintained by municipalities and protect their residents' quality of life. Thank you!

ForEvergreen Nature Preserve is located at 1539 Cherry Lane Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Ample parking. Open dawn to dusk.

Pinebrook Park North is located at 4070 N 5th St, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Ample parking. Open dawn to dusk.

Nothstein Cranberry Creek Preserve is located on Cranberry Creek Road off Route 191 in Paradise Township. Limited parking. Open dawn to dusk.

Mount Wismer Nature Preserve has two trailheads: a lower trailhead near the intersection of Gravel Road and Route 447 has ample parking and a dog park. The upper trailhead is on route 447, five miles north of the Canadensis light, with limited parking. Both open from dawn to dusk.

The Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member!
www.brodheadwatershed.org