Paddler's Guide to Connoquenessing Creek

Compiled from information provided by members of the Connoquenessing Watershed Alliance and the Western Pennsylvania PaddleSport Association. Text contributions from Bruce Kemp, Bob Barr, and Paul Eisner. Photos courtesy of Bruce Kemp and Bob Barr.

The "Angler's Guide", which appears as an appendix, was compiled by Dave Andrews.

~ Introduction ~

This is a description of Connoquenessing Creek from the Oneida Reservoir just north of Butler to its mouth at the Beaver River. It is intended to provide information for recreational paddlers of canoes and/or kayaks. It was originally prepared in the summer of 2008 and describes conditions, obstacles, hazards, and access points known at that time. Some CWA/WPPSA members have paddled most of the length of the creek, but not 100% of it, so there may well be additional hazards, access points, etc. which are not mentioned here. And, as with any element of nature, creeks change over time, sometimes quickly (remember Hurricane Ivan in '04). They are not static features. You may find that conditions have altered, and paddlers should remain alert while on the water.

The description is divided into sections. These divisions are arbitrary, but do roughly correspond to sections of the creek which differ from each other, at least a bit, in terms of character of the stream, or the type of surroundings through which it flows.

ACCESS: Through 2007, the Connoquenessing had just one designated, developed public boat launch along its entire length, that being at the Butler School District Athletic field right in Butler just downstream of Monroe St. In 2008, through the efforts of the Wild Waterways Conservancy, and others, several more public access points have been developed. Each of these sites is mentioned in the text and may be found on the accompanying maps. In addition, access to the creek is possible for canoe and kayak launching at a number of other locations, many of which are described below. Some are public areas, such as parks; some are spots, such as bridge crossings, that are not in the strictest sense "public", and where ownership of the land is unknown, but which have been used by local residents as access points for many years. Most of the land along the Connie is privately owned, and people seeking access to the creek should always respect the rights of property owners. Always obtain permission to access over private land, and don't leave a mess. Park vehicles well off the road, taking care not to block any portion of the road, someone's driveway, or mailbox.

CLASSIFICATION: In general, the Connoquenessing has the pool and riffle configuration common to most rivers and streams in Western Pa. Some years ago, the International Scale of River Difficulty was developed to try to serve as a more or less objective rating system to compare the relative difficulty of sections of moving water, and thereby provide a prospective paddler with some idea of what he or she may expect to find, and of the level of skill and/or experience necessary to successfully negotiate those sections. This scale runs from Class I (short, easy rapids suitable for novice paddlers) to Class VI (extreme difficulty and danger, with significant risk of loss of life). In addition, some regional guides have extended this scale on the lower end with additional ratings of A, B, and C. On this scale, the Connie goes from B-C to Class III. The general definitions of these classifications appear below, and are applied to the descriptions of particular sections of the Connie in the text following:

B - flat flowing streams with no obstructions and modest current

C - flat flowing streams with current slightly more than an easy back paddle, which may have sharp bends or mild obstructions, and some easy riffles.

Class I - occasional fast moving water with riffles and/or small waves of a foot or less. Obstructions are few and are easily avoided.

Class II - rapids generally longer, and/or larger than Class I, with waves 1 to 2 ft; channels generally evident without scouting, but some maneuvering required to avoid rocks or ledges.

Class III - waves 2 to 3 ft; channels not easily discernable without scouting; precise and sometimes complex maneuvering required to avoid obstacles. Open boats easily swamped. Good boat-handling skills in strong and turbulent current are necessary.

Note: Increased water level (indicating a higher volume of flow) can affect these classifications. A stretch which in normal water conditions may be Class I or II, can increase in difficulty significantly with more water, moving more quickly, in the stream with a corresponding increase in risk to the paddler.

WATER LEVEL: The Connie from about Zelienople to the mouth is classified in size as a "medium" stream (based on its drainage area and mean volume of water) and as such it is generally paddleable from November through June. Above Zelie, the stream is classified as small, and the paddling season in the upper reaches is correspondingly shorter. By summer in most years, the water level has dropped significantly enough that paddling excursions just aren't much fun. In wetter years however, levels can remain paddleable further into the summer, and of course levels rise for short periods after significant periods of rain at any time of year.

There is one USGS gauge on the Connie, located at the bridge crossing near the small village of Hazen, between Zelienople and Ellwood City. This gauge is monitored for stage ("Height") and flow ("Discharge") several times a day all year long, and current readings are available on the USGS website. This gauge is referred to there as being "near Zelienople" **(http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/rt).** For the reaches of the Connie below Zelie, the gauge reading should read between about 1.7 and 3.5. 1.7 is generally considered by most paddlers to be the minimum "runnable" level, since readings below that will probably mean that the creek may just be too shallow (though to be sure it's already mighty shallow indeed by the time you've gotten to 1.7, and what one considers a "minimum level" is a subjective assessment); and above 3.5 the water may be too pushy, and therefore dangerous, for inexperienced paddlers. For reaches above Zelienople, minimum runnable levels should be a bit higher, probably in the area of at least 2.1 or 2.2 A gauge reading a couple of tenths above minimum is always better.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: The most important safety consideration for all paddlers, of any skill level, is to have a **realistic assessment of your own and your fellow paddlers' abilities, and to always exercise good judgment and common sense.** Contrary to popular misconception, no one is born knowing how to paddle a canoe. There are skills and techniques to learn and practice. Nature isn't Disneyland, and it can quickly demonstrate that to those with too high an opinion of their own abilities, and too low a respect for the power of moving water. Don't fool with it; it's stronger than you are by a long shot, and it doesn't care about you. If you are unsure about a set of rapids ahead, pull over and scout them from the shore to see what's there. If you don't like the look of it, carry the boat around and continue on from the downstream end. Always err on the side of caution.

The second most important thing is **always, always, wear an approved PFD (personal flotation device) at all times on the water.** Wearing a PFD has absolutely nothing to do with how good a swimmer you are. It is there to keep you afloat when you are unable to swim, or swim effectively - not because you don't know how, but because circumstances make swimming either difficult or impossible. If you are unconscious, say; or if the water is cold and you begin to become hypothermic, which in just minutes can render your arms and legs useless for trying to swim; or when the stream is stronger than you are - and **every stream is stronger than you are**. A PFD is cheap insurance. Wear it.

Strainers - these are trees which have fallen into the stream, or which are simply very low-hanging, such that the water flows through and around the branches. Always give them a wide berth, since you can too easily become entangled in the branches, where the force of the water may pin you and hold you underwater, PFD or no.

Dams - there are at least 3 on the Connie. All are low-head "run of the river" dams which should be portaged. Water flowing over the lip of the dam creates a recirculating hydraulic at the downstream base, its strength varying with the height of the dam and the volume of water coming over it. This hydraulic can trap and hold a boat and a paddler. From the upstream side dams are recognized by the sight of a sharp and smooth horizon line extending entirely across the stream ahead. Exit the water well upstream of the dam to avoid getting caught in the current and being swept over. Portage around the dam to a point far enough downstream to avoid being caught in the backwash when getting back in.

~ STREAM DESCRIPTION ~

Incorporated into the Stream Description text following there are a series of sketch maps of the Connie. These sketch maps are referenced at various points within the text as a guide to finding the locations of various features which are discussed. While these maps are adequate for purposes of reading this Guide, we suggest that for actually finding these places in the field these descriptions be read in the company of a good map, so that the roads and access points may be more easily found. USGS Topo maps, either the 7.5 minute or County maps, are best; but the *Pennsylvania Atlas and Gazetteer* published by DeLorme is an excellent resource, and is highly recommended.

Following the Stream Description text there is a River Mile Index for a large number of selected points along the Connoquenessing. The River Mile Index for a given location is the distance of that point, in miles, from the mouth of the creek. Using the indices, it is possible to find the distance between any two points on the list, and thus fashion a trip of the length you fancy.

~ SECTION 1 ~

Oneida Dam to Butler, ~ 6 miles Class B - C, with 1 dam

Reference Map 1 – page 6

The Connoquenessing has its headwaters near Hooker, and unwinds its first 4 or 5 miles flowing south as a tiny brook into the Oneida Reservoir, where its waters are impounded by the Penn American Water Co. to serve the needs of the City of Butler. While it is possible to access the stream just below the reservoir ***(point A, Map 1),*** the creek here is still very small and narrow, being between 10 and 15 feet wide, with densely vegetated banks.

The first reasonable access point is a small public park (which is unnamed and unsigned, as far as can be determined) along Glenwood Way, just off rt. 38, about a mile or so below the Oneida Reservoir dam ***(point B, Map 1)***. This park is small, being just an acre in size, with a picnic pavilion and several tables, and parking for just a few cars, but access to the stream is easy along a short length of grassy bank. The creek here is still quite small, varying between 15 to 25 feet in width, and in most places still thickly vegetated with alder and assorted other dense bushes along the banks. As with any small stream, the possibility of trees being down across the creek, blocking progress, is always present. The dense vegetation on the banks would make a portage difficult.

The Connie near Glenwood Way

From Glenwood Way the creek flows south, generally paralleling rt. 38 but gently meandering through a fairly broad flood plain, usually hugging the hillside on the west side of the valley. There is some small industrial activity here and there, as well as several large auto salvage yards in close proximity to the creek. From the creek itself however, these are not overly visible owing to the thick riparian buffer.

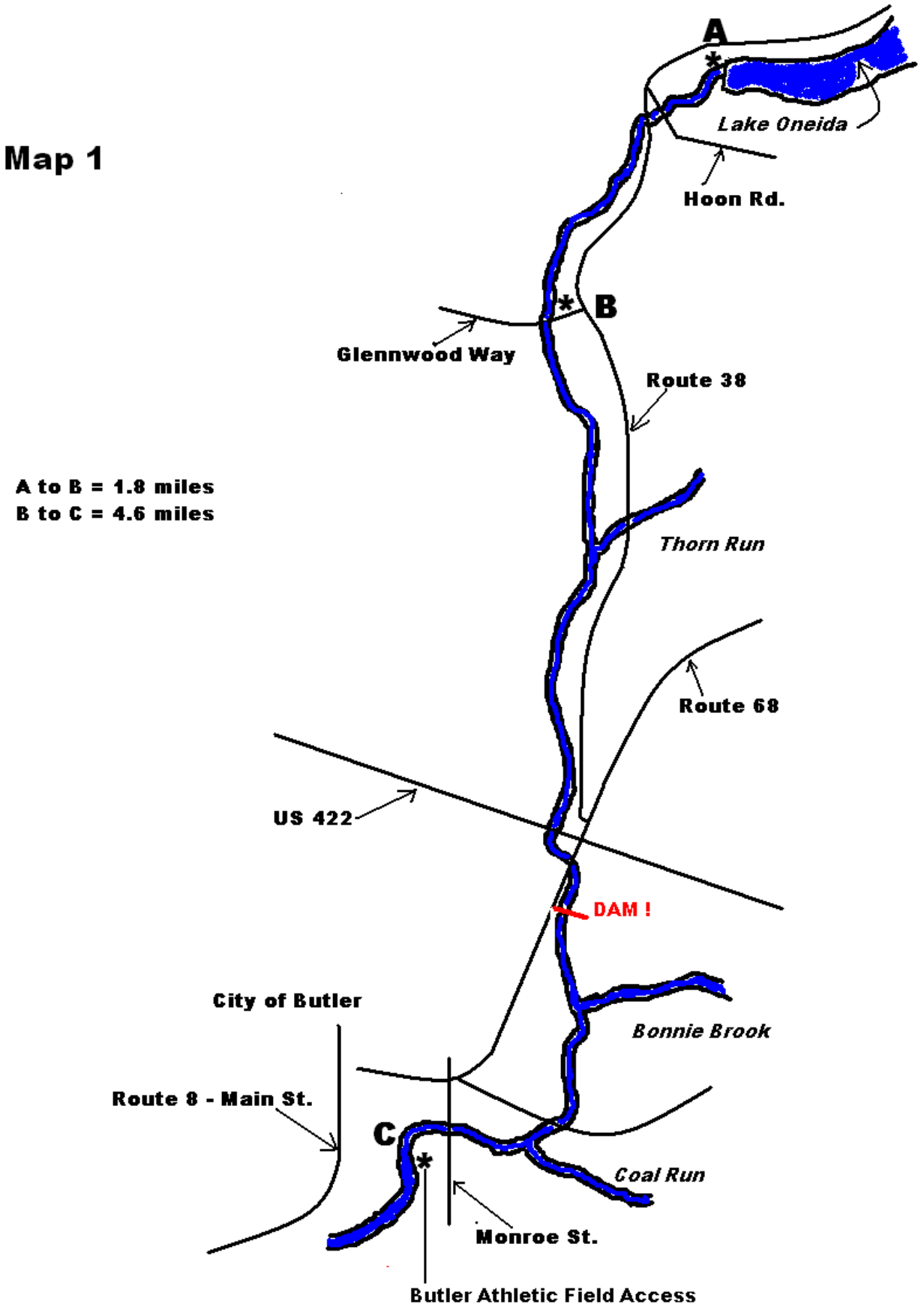
After about 2 ½ miles the creek begins its approach into Butler, passing through a large train yard north of the city. It flows under Rt. 422, and after turning sharply left, almost immediately passes under Rt. 68. A couple of hundred yards after the Rt. 68 bridge, there is a three-foot concrete dam (see map) which is easily portaged on the right. For the next mile it winds through a forested bottomland, rather a "wilderness", before passing under the Kittanning St. bridge and entering the City of Butler proper.

← In the Wilderness just upstream from Butler; at the mouth of Bonnie Brook, which is not visible in the picture.

The next road bridge after Kittanning St. is Monroe St., immediately beyond which, on the left, is the area known as the "soccer field", which is what it is. This is public land (owned by the Butler School District) and one can take out here at what was the first Officially Designated canoe launch on the Connie, established in June of 2006 ***(point C, Map 1).*** It is located on river left, just beyond the foot-bridge over the creek. Vehicular access onto the soccer field is not possible, so one must park in the gravel lot behind the Marmon-Keystone building on Cliff St. and use the footbridge. The distance from the park at Glenwood Way to the soccer field is a total of about 4 ½ miles.

Looking downstream from the footbridge; the soccer field is on the left. The canoe launch is at the gravel bar on river left in the middle distance.

Map 1



A to B = 1.8 miles
B to C = 4.6 miles

~ Section 2 ~

Butler to Renfrew ~ 6 miles - Class C, with 2 dams
Reference Map 2 – page 10

The section of the creek beyond the soccer field consists of a bit of industry, and a long, channelized section down to The A/K Steel plant along Rt. 8 south of Butler. It is described here FYI, but is not recommended as a paddling destination. The creek did not always flow through here in its present channel. There was once a broad loop which flowed to the north, right through a portion of Butler. That loop was cut off, and the stream straitened in 1907. About half of the former loop was filled in, and the present Sullivan Run now flows into the Connie through what was once the main channel of the stream.

A little more than ¼ mile below the soccer field foot-bridge, the creek bends right and approaches a passage underneath the General Butler Bridge, high overhead. Just around this bend, abreast of the Barnsteel Abrasives building, there was for many years a three foot dam. That dam was removed with little or no fanfare in December of 2009.

Looking upstream at the former Barnsteel dam from under the General Butler bridge, as it appeared before its late 2009 removal. Note the long stretch of concrete and steel siding. A busy railroad line is on the left of the picture 25 feet above the creek.

The dam now removed. The character of the creek really hasn't changed at all, since the concrete siding still remains to channel the flow.

Just beyond this former dam site the channelized section begins. The creek here has been straitened, and widened to about 30 feet or so. It hugs the southeast side of the valley, up against the hillside holding Rt. 8, with the city of Butler (presenting its least appetizing aspect to the creek) in the broad flood plain on the north and west side. After almost 2 miles, yet another dam appears, this one a concrete eight-footer. Just upstream of the dam, on river right, there is a small sheet steel building, pale blue in color. Use this building as your warning that you are approaching the dam. Portage on the left, using (and taking great care with) the very active railroad line. At this point one will already be abreast of the A/K Steel facility, whose buildings, yards, rail lines, and roads line the right side of the creek for about 2 ¼ miles. There is some talk about building a true portage trail here, but as of late 2009 it does not yet exist.

The dam at A/K Steel. Notice the small blue metal building along the creek –circled in red, just about dead center in the picture, on the left bank as you look at the picture but actually on river right. Its presence tells you to begin to get left in preparation for portaging.

Leaving A/K Steel, the creek enters a wooded valley (Class C), flowing about ½ mile to the McCalmont Rd. bridge. A bit more than a mile beyond that, the creek passes the mouth of Thorn Creek on the left, with the deteriorated remains of the old Franklin Glass plant, long abandoned, on the right side across from the mouth. On this site, on river left, there has been constructed a new sewage treatment plant to serve Saxonburg and several of the townships along Rt. 8 south of here. It was put on line in the Spring of 2007.

Of more pressing interest at this point is the presence of yet another concrete dam immediately below the Thorn Creek mouth. Portage is possible only on the left, across the property now occupied by the Sewer Authority. There is talk of establishing a portage trail here, but as of late 2009 such a trail does not yet exist. Until such time as that may be in place, it is anyone's guess as to how those folks will feel about paddlers traversing across the property to skirt the dam. Note from the pictures below just how close this dam is to the mouth of Thorn Creek. To safely exit the Connie for portage, one must take out essentially <u>in</u> Thorn Creek - it's that close. And that breach in the dam - it may look runnable with enough water, but it is <u>not</u>. Don't be tempted. Nasty rock piles below, and a broken boat and broken paddler are the likely outcome.

↑ ***5-foot concrete dam at Thorn Creek, partially broken out. The breach is not runnable. May 2007, with the Hazen gauge reading 1.86***

Looking upstream from river right. Note the lone dark-trunked tree in the center of the picture on the far bank, and the short bluff just across the water to the right of it. Thorn Creek empties between them. The Connie is flowing from the left of the picture. This illustrates the immediacy of exiting the creek for portage at the mouth of Thorn Creek.

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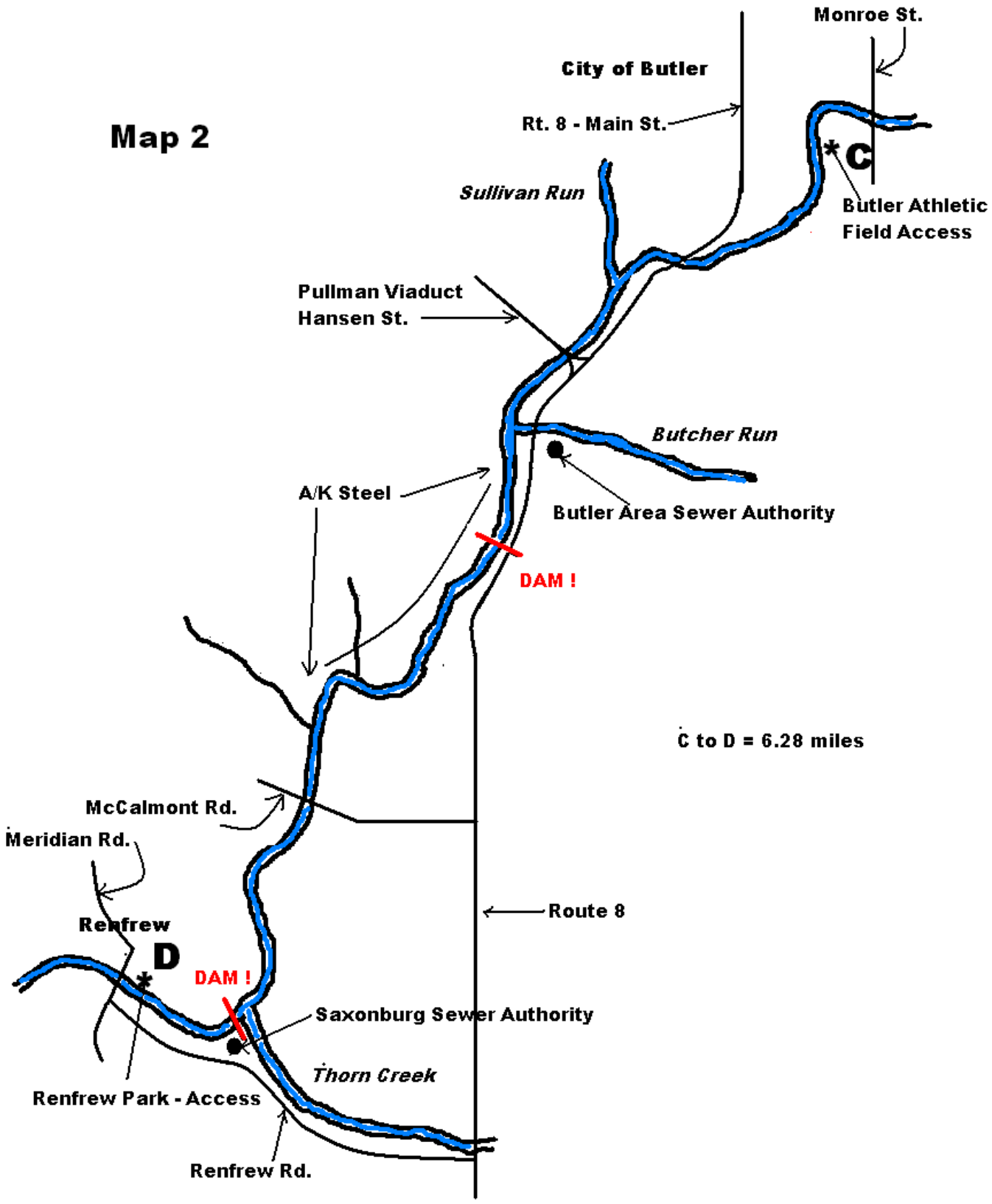
Renfrew is about ½ mile further on. At the bridge in Renfrew, upstream side, river right, is a small community park. The banks are steep there, but this is a place where access is available, albeit a bit difficult. ***(point D, Map 2)***


Map 2
Monroe St.
City of Butler
Rt. 8 - Main St.
C
Butler Athletic
Field Access
Sullivan Run
Pullman Viaduct
Hansen St.
Butcher Run
A/K Steel
Butler Area Sewer Authority
DAM !
C to D = 6.28 miles
McCalmont Rd.
Meridian Rd.
Route 8
Renfrew
D
DAM !
Saxonburg Sewer Authority
Thorn Creek
Renfrew Park - Access
Renfrew Rd.

~ SECTION 3 ~

Renfrew to Zelienople ~ 18 miles, Class C - I; rocks
Reference Map 3 (page 13) and Map 4 (page 18)

The uninspiring prospect the Connie has presented as a paddling destination through Butler is about to change though, as a better looking section of the creek awaits from this point.

From Renfrew, the creek winds through mostly wooded valley, with an occasional house here and there. It is quite pretty in most places, and has a remote feel for long stretches. About 1 ½ miles from the Renfrew bridge is an undeveloped access area just near the road entrance to Camp Redwing, at a point where a bridge long ago used to cross the creek ***(Map 3 "former bridge crossing").*** Local folks use this access commonly.

Camp Redwing is a Girl Scout Camp active, for the most part, only during the summer months. There is a canoe launch area associated with the Camp which is on the Camp property, and is therefore not public ***(Map 3 "Camp Redwing launch area")*** However, the Camp has historically been generous with permission for "civilians" to use that area, provided that permission is secured beforehand. The access point is on the left side, with its own separate entrance road, with the bulk of the Camp on the right - the point being, that not much activity occurs at the launch area, and public use of that space would not involve having to drive through the Camp with tons of kids wandering around.

There is a small rock dam that the scouts have built to impound a little water, located just above the Camp's launch area, right in a sharp right bend in the creek. It's only a foot high, and presents no real danger at all, and at any rate is quite easy to portage around on either side, or to simply get out and lift over. At times of higher water, this little dam would be covered over and paddlers would probably not even be aware of it.

In the area of Camp Redwing, looking downstream. The creek on this day was at a very low stage, the Hazen gauge reading about 1.8

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The creek continues to flow through mostly wooded valley now, for 4.75 miles (from the Redwing launch) to Ash Stop Rd. At this bridge, on the upstream side, is a significant hazard (see picture, next page). There are large rocks in the stream, extending from the left almost all the way across. There is often a channel on the far right. This obstruction is easy to portage, on the left, or can be run on the right if water level allows. Scouting is recommended. In higher water this could be a dangerous spot for the inexperienced. On the downstream side of the bridge, on river left, is a ball field, with a good access ***(Point E, Map 3).*** Forward Twp anticipates constructing a Public Canoe Access here in 2010

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The rocks at the Ash Stop Rd. bridge, photo taken from the bridge. Note the opening in the rocks on the left of the picture (on the far right when on the creek). With enough water it is possible to pass through here, though there will still be some turbulence. Not so on the day this picture was taken.

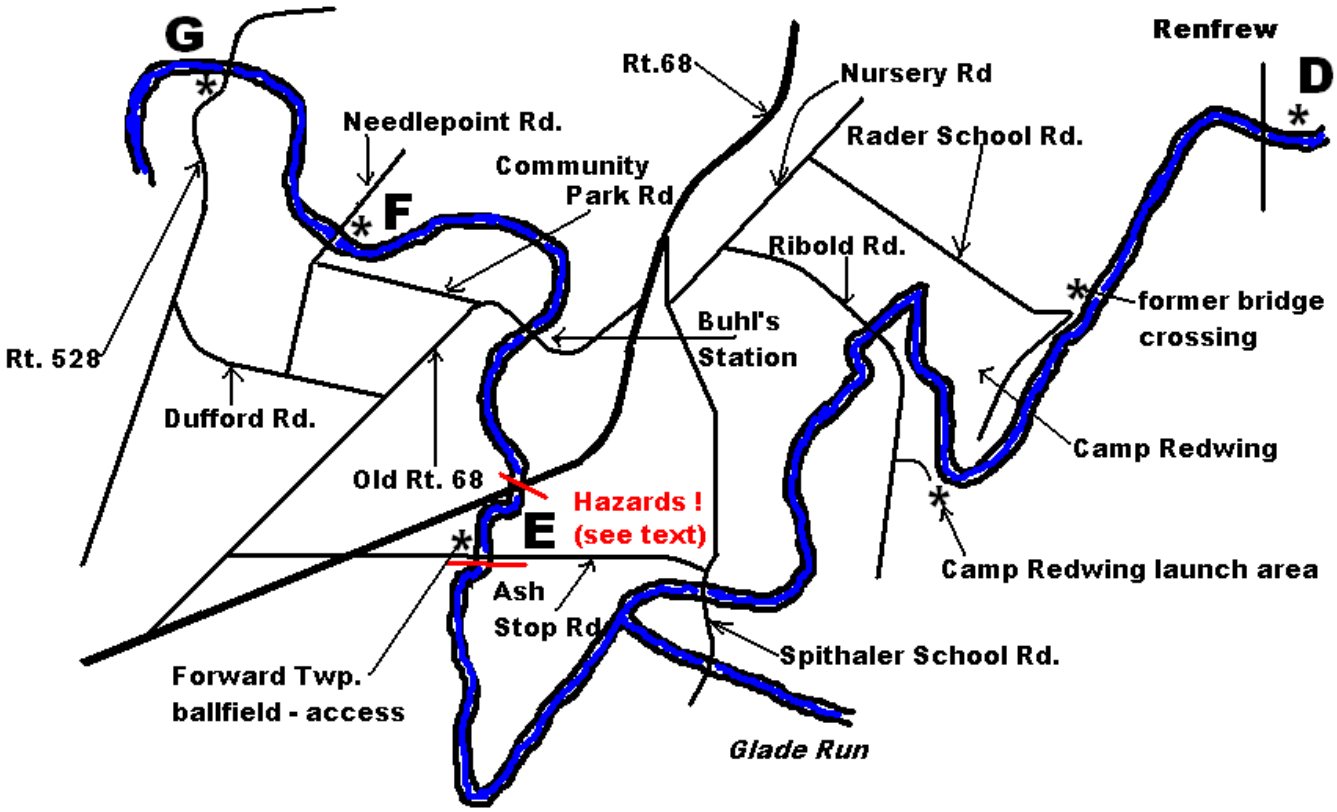
½ mile downstream from here is another potential hazard. The creek bends left sharply at 90°. In this spot the old stream was cut off by the railroad and rerouted. There is exposed bedrock in the stream, and some ledges and riffles. The water is not deep here. At lower water levels, some walking through here may be required, though you could do that right through down the stream alongside your boat. At higher water levels, there could be some significant turbulence. Portage would be on the left side, being careful of slippery rocks. At most times of year, there would not be danger here so much as simply a rough-bottomed shallow area, of about 100 yds. in length (extending to a point just beneath the Rt. 68 bridge) which paddlers should be alert for. Note though that in this short stretch, the banks on either side are quite steep and sheer, and in times of higher water, portage may not be possible.

The railroad cut at a low stage of water. Note the exposed bedrock in the foreground. The flow is coming in on the left of this picture, through what is on this day a narrow chute. The rt. 68 overpass may be seen in the distance.

Just downstream from the railroad cut rapid just described, there is a bridge at Buhl's Station. Just before that bridge there is a two foot rock weir, this being a dam whose wings jut out from both sides of the creek but which do not meet in the middle, leaving an open channel through which the water passes. The opening is three to four feet wide, and presents no hazard under normal water conditions.

The next bridge beyond Buhl's Station is Needlepoint Rd. This is another locally used access spot, which is entirely undeveloped, but which is quite easy to use ***(Point F, Map 3).*** Access is river right, essentially under the bridge. Needlepoint Rd. is 2.4 miles downstream from Ash Stop Rd. (ball field).

Another 1.4 miles brings you to the Rt. 528 bridge ***(Point G, Map 3).*** Again, access here is locally used, and undeveloped. Best access is river left, immediately below the bridge. By this point the creek has grown in width to 50 feet or better, but remains quite shallow in most reaches.



Map 3

D to E = 7 miles
E to G = 3.8 miles

From the area of Needlepoint Rd. mentioned just above, the stream valley is still mostly wooded, but there begin to be increasing numbers of "camps" located along the creek in clusters. These are for the most part small, ramshackle cottages. Some are used year-round, but many are seasonal. They are something of an eyesore, and the efficacy of their on-lot sewage treatment systems (where they exist) is questionable. As it happens, the severe flooding from Hurricane Ivan in September of 2004 destroyed many of these places, and debris is still scattered everywhere in some areas. In most cases it is likely that the townships will not allow rebuilding on any of these lots without an up-to-date sewage plan, so it may be that Nature has gone a long way towards solving a pollution problem of long standing. We'll see.

↑ ***Looking downstream, about ½ mile below Rt. 528***

About 4 miles below the 528 bridge there used to be another dam at Harmony Junction, where Hartmann Rd. crosses the creek. This is/was an area known as Porter's Cove. Before Hurricane Ivan, there were about a dozen homes here in the flood plain on the inside of the bend on river right. Ivan did a Huge Number on them, to the extent that ultimately all of these homes were purchased by FEMA, and then demolished. With the aid of grant money, the Wild Waterways Conservancy purchased the dam and funded its removal. This occurred during June and July of 2009, and the creek is in the process of reverting to its original state. This will take some time. There are plans now to develop some portion of this land as a park, with a canoe/kayak access point, but one expects also that this will take a little time. The proposed location of this access is marked on Map 4 as "proposed access, Jackson Twp"

The 8 foot dam at Harmony Jct. as it existed from ca. 1915 to 2009. This photo in May of 2007.

…and the dam now gone, just its small scar visible on the far wall. The creek has sought and formed its new channel. This photo from December 2009.

December 2009, looking from just upstream towards the former dam site. The pool has dropped between four and five feet.

Looking back upstream. The original pool behind the dam extended only about as far as that first cabin on the left.

Beyond the Harmony Junction dam site, the creek passes under I-79, and after 1 ¼ miles from the dam reaches the Mercer St. bridge in Harmony. This is an undeveloped access, on the left immediately downstream of the bridge ***(Point H, Map 4).*** A near-by Moose Lodge provides tons of parking. However, it is recommended that paddlers continue just another ½ mile or so downstream to a far easier access point in Harmony. This is the Harmony Canoe Launch at the west end of Jackson Street ***(Point I, Map 4).*** It was constructed with the assistance of the PFBC, and so presumably requires a registration sticker or launch permit (the only such access on the Connie presently). Opened for use in the Spring of 2009. Lots of parking.

Just below the old dam

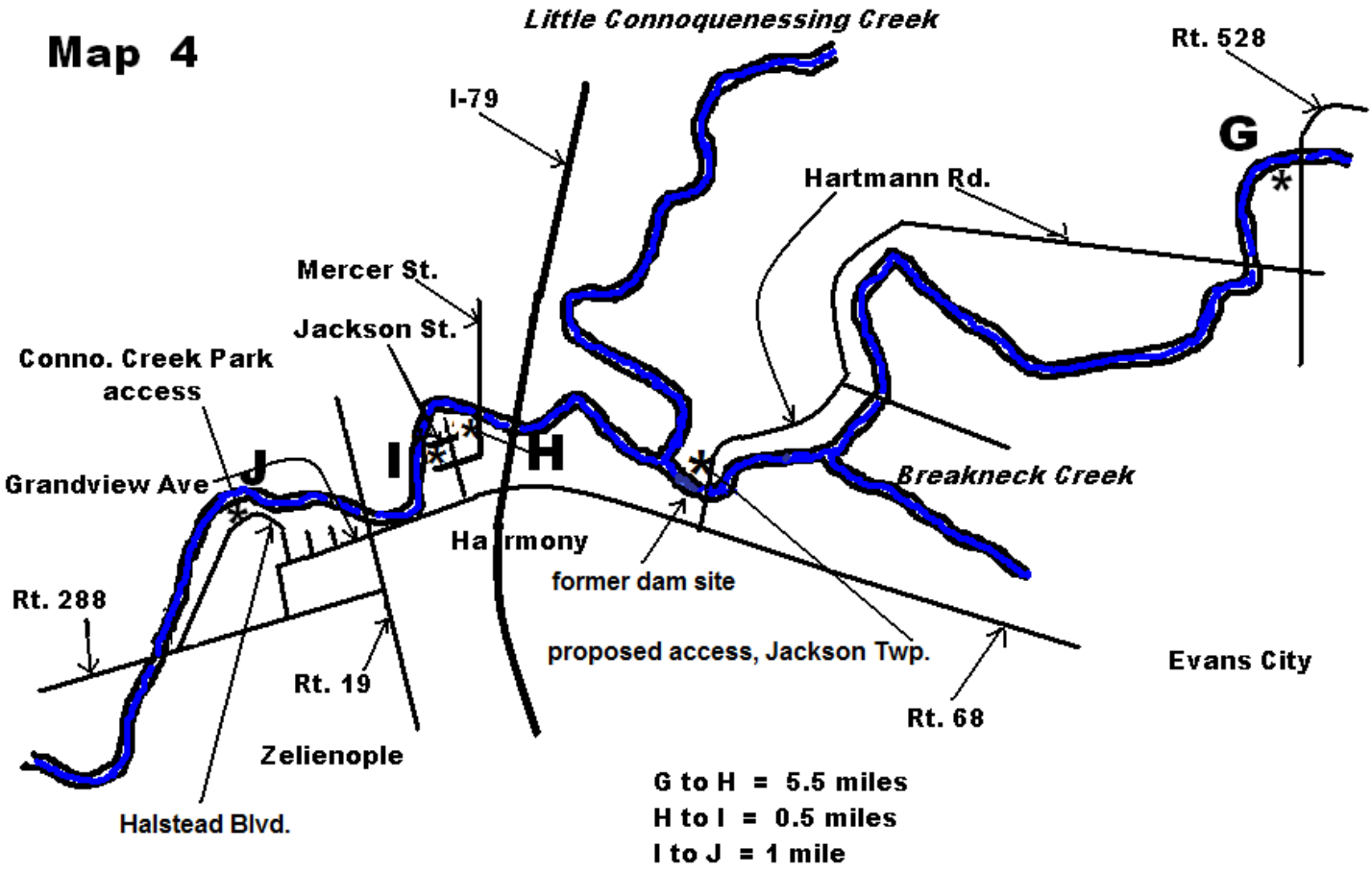
Harmony Canoe Launch

A mile downstream from Harmony the Connie passes under Rt. 19 at Zelienople, and ½ mile further on is the last access point in this section. This was formerly known as ECOZ park, but the place was purchased by the Wild Waterways Conservancy in 2008, and is now known as Connoquenessing Creek Park ***(Point J, Maps 4 and 5).*** As a description "park" may be a bit overblown, as there is just one small pavilion there, and that in a rather sorry state of repair. But public it is. It is located along Halstead Blvd., about ¼ mile east of that street's intersection with rt. 288 in Zelie.

Looking upstream from very near Connoquenessing Creek Park, with the Route 19 bridge in Zelienople visible in the distance.

Connoquenessing Creek Park access.


Connoquenessing Creek
Park
Wild Waterways Conservancy


Map 4
Little Connoquenessing Creek
Rt. 528
I-79
G
Hartmann Rd.
Mercer St.
Jackson St.
Conno. Creek Park
access
J
I
H
Grandview Ave
Breakneck Creek
Harmony
former dam site
Rt. 288
proposed access, Jackson Twp.
Evans City
Rt. 19
Rt. 68
Zelienople
Halstead Blvd.
G to H = 5.5 miles
H to I = 0.5 miles
I to J = 1 mile

~ SECTION 4 ~

Zelienople to rt. 65 bridge ~ 11 miles, Class C/ I
Reference Map 5 (page 20)

Just outside of Zelienople, at the bridge crossing of Rt. 588, is yet another undeveloped, locally used access point ***(Point K, Map 5).*** A longish dirt road on the south side of the roadway on the Zelie side of the bridge leads down to the creek. Parking on this dirt road is not advised, and parking along 588 may be problematic, but access is possible here.

If you are looking at a map it appears that the creek flows around a large island just beyond this point. This "island" is actually an old strip mine area, and in fact the channel flowing north around this area is pretty much silted up and is not passable all the way around.

Beyond Fombell, the creek passes between YMCA Camp Kon-o-kwee and Camp Spencer. These camps are of course privately owned, and permission for access here is an absolute must.

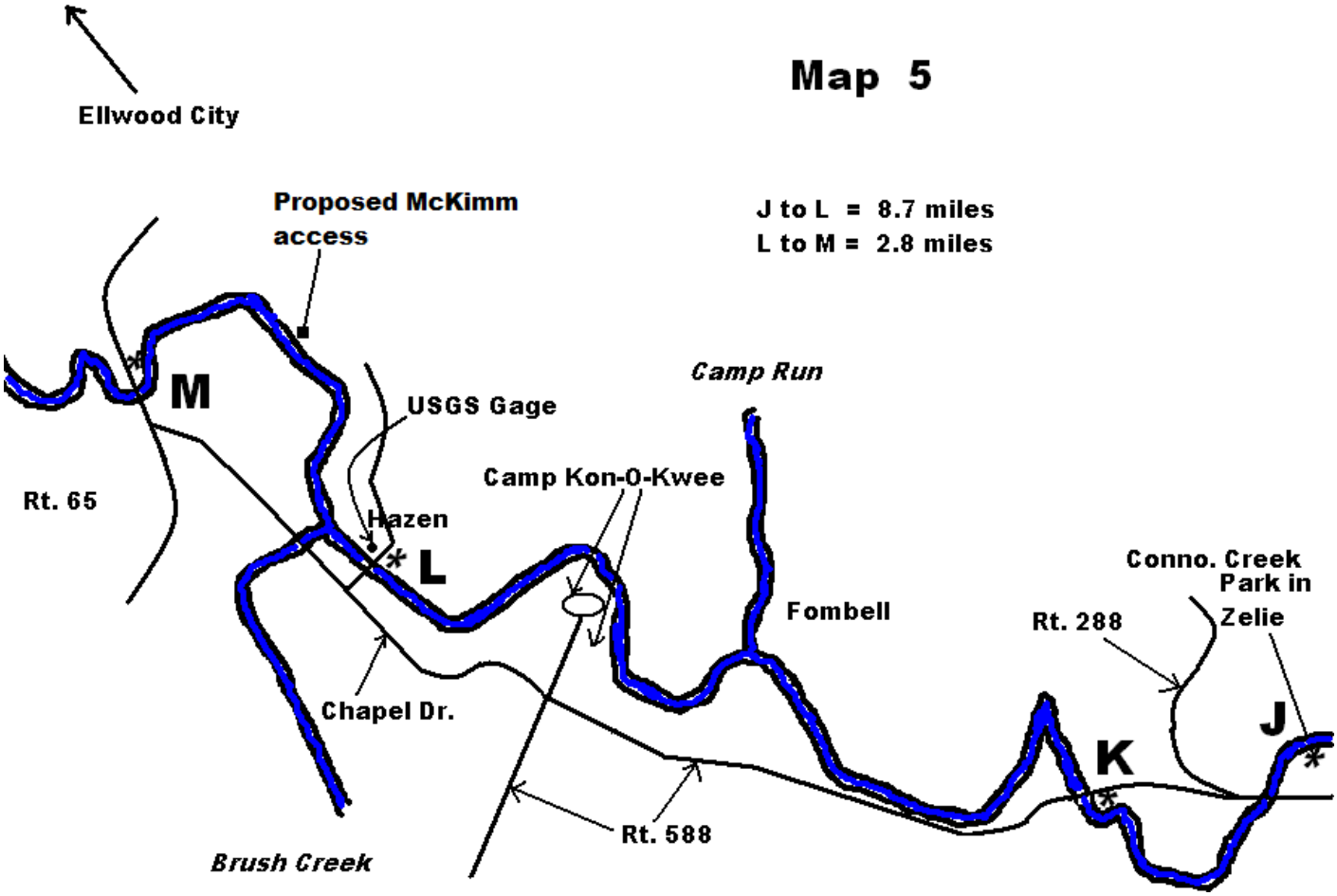
In the vicinity of Camps Kon-o-Kwee and Spencer

A bit downstream of the camps is the bridge crossing at Hazen, notable here only because it is the site of the only USGS gauging station on the Connie, as mentioned in the section above on water levels. The little concrete "outhouse" up on the right bank is the station. There is access here at the bridge crossing ***(Point L, Map 5),*** but parking is limited and the banks are a bit steep.

About ½ mile beyond the Hazen bridge, Brush Creek enters from the left, and about 2 ½ miles beyond that point, after a strong bend to the left, the Rt. 65 bridge comes into view. Access here ***(Point M, Map 5)*** is on the right side, just upstream of the bridge. Be careful of traffic along the road.

The Wild Waterways Conservancy anticipates establishing a public access point in the community of McKimm a short distance above the rt. 65 bridge on the site of some homes which were, again, destroyed by Hurricane Ivan. This is scheduled for 2010, and information on this proposed site will be included in future editions of this guide.

The distance between the rt. 19 bridge at Zelie and the rt. 65 bridge is 11.5 miles. The stream keeps its placid and shallow character throughout, gradually broadening to 80 to 100 feet in width. Mostly wooded, but with significant stretches of camps and year-round housing here and there. Generally pretty, if not breathtaking.


Ellwood City
Map 5
J to L = 8.7 miles
L to M = 2.8 miles
Proposed McKimm access
M
USGS Gage
Camp Run
Rt. 65
Camp Kon-O-Kwee
Hazen
L
Conno. Creek Park in Zelie
Fombell
Rt. 288
Chapel Dr.
J
K
Rt. 588
Brush Creek

~ SECTION 5 ~

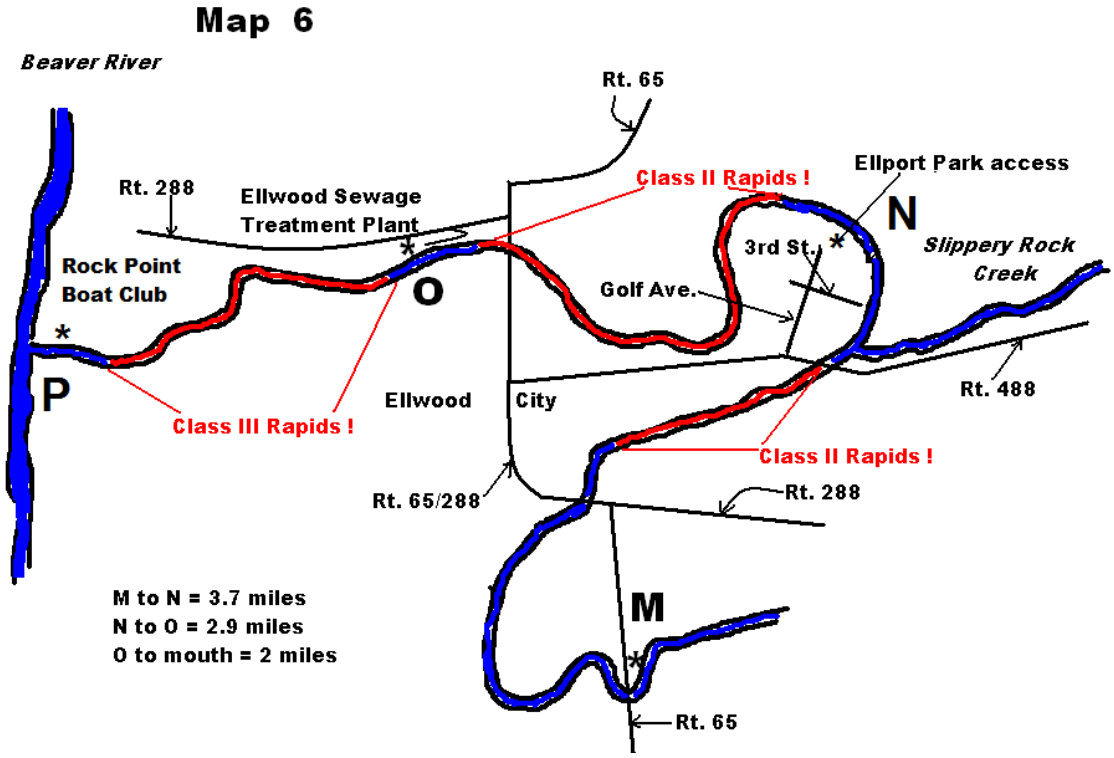
Rt. 65 to Ellport Park - ~ 3 miles, Class I-II - the "Upper Rapids"
Reference Maps 6 (below) and 6(A) (page 29)

NOTE: The character of the Connie changes drastically just downstream from the Rt. 65 bridge. Up to this point, it has been a mild, meandering stream; shallow for the most part, and with the exception of the few hazards already discussed, gently flowing with just small riffles. From here to the mouth (~8 miles in total) the gradient increases, the creek constricts a bit and becomes much rockier, and develops Class II and Class III whitewater. This sort of water is for experienced boaters only, properly equipped, and with boat-handling and paddling skills to handle bigger water with rocks to avoid and ledges to negotiate. As these final miles represent the biggest challenge the Connie has to offer, more detail and description is presented here.

There are three major "sets" of rapids between here and the mouth. Each of these sets will be discussed as separate Sections. Map 6 below represents an overview of the whole of the last eight miles, including all three sets, and the subsidiary maps - 6(A), 6(B), and 6(C) - are more detailed section maps of the sets themselves.

There are photographs of many of the individual rapids, some at different water levels to illustrate the sort of change an individual rapid may undergo with more or less water passing through it. When looking at these photos, bear this in mind - if it is true that when the subject of a photograph is a person, "the camera adds 10 lbs." , it is certainly true that when the subject is a rapid, "the camera removes one Class". What may look entirely doable in a photo may well be quite another story in life.

Many of the photo captions will contain a "…cfs." designation. This refers to "cubic feet per second" (of water, of course, passing a given point) and is another measure ("Discharge"), which along with the Gauge Height (1.7, 4.0, etc.) mentioned in the discussion of water levels at the beginning of this Guide, can help you assess the level of the creek and the degree of difficulty you may expect to find if paddling. If the camera removes one Class, more water can often add one Class. Both Height and Discharge values may be found on the USGS website. Be cautious.



DESCRIPTION: As the creek bends sharply north towards Ellwood City after the rt. 65 bridge, it enters a gradually deepening canyon. It begins to constrict, and the riffles become rapids. For about the first mile, these are Class I rapids, or a bit above that. After about 2 miles of this, just below an old disused railroad bridge along River Rd. (also used as an access point by whitewater boaters), the rapids jump to a solid Class II. The canyon walls are steep and high, and while one can portage the worst of the rapids, you can't really hike out easily in most places.

The beginnings of the Class II section, just above the old railroad bridge along River Road. Note the increase in the number of rocks in the streambed. The gradient is increasing quickly.

The distance from the old rail bridge to the new Rt. 488 bridge at Ellport is only about 1.1 miles, but this stretch contains seven rapids. The drop in elevation is about 30 feet from one end to the other. This Section is best run at levels of 2.5 (~350 cfs) to 5.0 (~2200 cfs). Below 2.5 the creek gets increasingly "boney" and above 5.0 the rapids begin to wash out.

The first of the rapids is about 150 yards downstream from the rail bridge and is known as Calgon Ledge. At most water levels large rocks in the middle of the stream generally split the flow such that most times one will choose either the left or right side to run. Usually the left channel is the dicier of the two, the right being more or less just a straitforward drop. Below are several photos of this drop at different water levels:

At 1.8 (~100 cfs) on the Hazen gauge, barely runnable…

←

At 2.2 (~250 cfs)

Calgon Ledge at 2.9, (~600 cfs)

…and at 3.4 (~ 950 cfs.) Whitewater for sure.

After Calgon Ledge, the creek bends a bit left, and after a short stretch back again to the right before a half-mile long straight reach. More or less at the right bend begin a series of four rapids in fairly quick succession, though there are pools below each one. Under most water conditions, the runnable passages through each of these are evident enough from the water that they present no great difficulty for a Class II paddler.

Upper #2 - 2.9, 600 cfs ↓

Upper #3 - 2.9, 600 cfs ↓

Upper #4 - 2.9, 600 cfs ↓

Upper #5 - 2.9, 600 cfs. ↓

After #5, there is a relatively calm ¼ mile or so of straight running. It becomes apparent that the creek will bend to the left ahead, and a couple of hundred yards before that bend is the 6th set of rapids.

Upper #6 – 2.5, 350 cfs. A very low stage of water.

→

Just at the head of the bend to the left is the 7th and final drop in this Section, and the one that is probably the most challenging. The most dependable chute is on the far river left, but at different water levels other options come and go. The 3 photos below show this same drop at three water levels. They are taken from the Rt. 488 bridge.

#7 - 2.9, 600 cfs – difficult to run. ↑

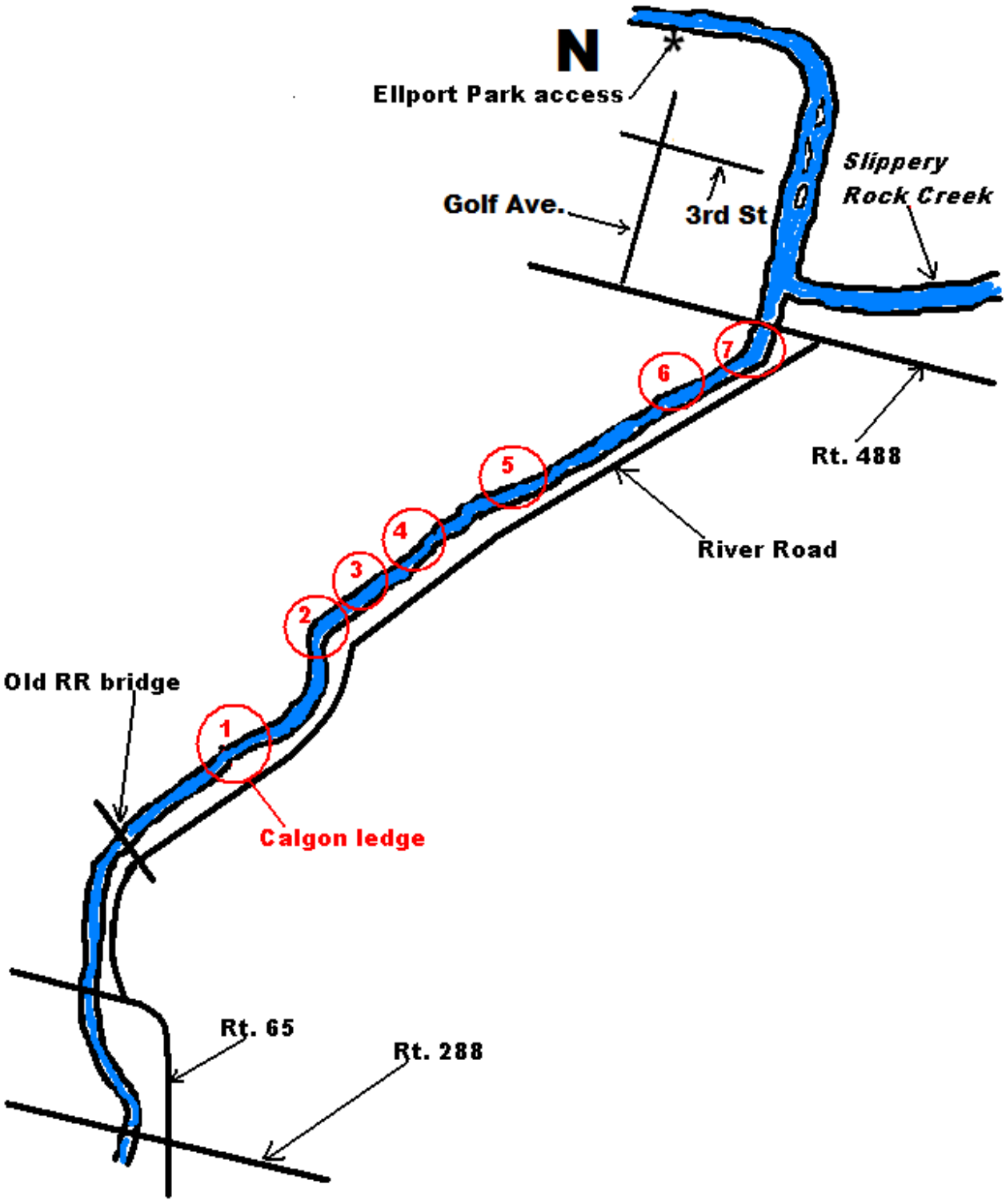
↑ ***#7 – 3.4, 950 cfs. - the left chute (on the right as you look at the picture) now begins to be visible about ¼ of the way across.***

↑ ***#7 – 3.7, 1200 cfs.***

Having negotiated #7, you will find yourself sitting under the Rt. 488 bridge. Just beyond the bridge is the mouth of Slippery Rock creek, which adds its considerable flow to the Connie's volume. There is some respite from the action from this point for about ½ mile, as the creek flows past several small islands and comes abreast of Ellport Park, also known as Rodgers Park, (about 3 miles from the Rt. 65 bridge) which occupies the small floodplain in the bend of the creek to the left. This is a community park, and of course public. There is no developed access point here, but access in or out of the water at the downstream end of the park (100 yds. or so after the left bend) is not difficult ***(Point N, Map 6 and 6(A)).*** Park entrance is from the end of 3rd street (see map 6(A), page 29) Note that the park gates are closed and locked at nightfall.

Looking downstream at Ellport Park just after the left bend, and looking downstream. The access is on the left of the picture. The grassy gravel bar is more generally under at least a bit of water.

Map 6(A) - Upper Rapids - Class II



~ Section 6 ~

Ellport Park to Ellwood City Sewage Plant - ~ 3 miles, Class II
Reference Maps 6 (page 21) and 6(B) (page 41)

NOTE: As noted in the previous Section, Slippery Rock Creek has entered the Connoquenessing just upstream of Ellport Park. The Slip is a sizeable stream in its own right, draining an area only a little bit smaller than the drainage area of the Connie. Thus from this point on, the Connie is quite suddenly carrying much more water.

In previous Sections, all references to Gauge Height and/or Discharge have been based on the USGS gauge at Hazen which records only the level of the Connie. Now that Slippery Rock Creek has contributed its flow, the Hazen gauge is an inadequate tool to accurately assess the level of the stream from here on out.

The Slip has a USGS gauge located at Wurtemburg (which gauge may also be found on the USGS website), 2 miles or so from its mouth at Ellport. All references to water levels in this Section, and in Section 7 following, will be rendered in *cfs* only and will represent the combined Discharge of both the Connie at Hazen and the Slip at Wurtemburg. Most of the photos of this section reproduced here were taken at a level of 750 cfs. By the time cfs reaches about 3000, almost every feature described here is essentially washed out.

DESCRIPTION: For much of its length through this Section, the creek flows through Ellwood City - I say "through" Ellwood City, but in fact from the water you mostly don't have much sense of that. The gorge continues to deepen (to a hundred feet and better in many places) such that you generally have little idea what may be up on top. From the creek it's mostly just high, steep, wooded walls. Beyond Ellport, there are many places where large boulders have intermittently slumped down the sides of the gorge, as well as into the stream. These not only dominate the dramatic scenery through this section, but have formed several areas of constriction which create the Class II action through here. For the most part, there are clear channels through each of these constrictions (generally, but not always, on river left) but one needs to be alert always for rocks. The challenge here is not so much avoiding rocks and ledges, but rather negotiating the wave trains that appear in the chutes in the constrictions.

For about ½ mile downstream from the park ***(Point N, Map 6 and 6(B)*** the creek flows placidly enough until Duck Run comes in on the right. The Class II action picks up again just beyond this point, with what is sometimes called "Billy Goat" rapid.

"Billy Goat" at 2000 cfs. looking downstream. The most challenging route is through the wave train on river left. There is a hole about ½ way down on the left, which most Class II paddlers should be able to punch. At higher water levels a larger hole develops at the bottom left. Most of the heaviest action may be avoided by staying river right.

After Billy Goat the creek begins a turn to the left, and enters into a ¾ mile long S-bend. The first half of this bend is for the most part a pool, though with some riffles at the top, and a few widely spaced rocks here and there in the creek which are easily discerned and avoided.

Looking upstream in the first part of the S-bend. Billy Goat is just beyond the turn to the right. 750 cfs.

..and looking downstream, from the same spot, towards the sharp bend to the right which signals the second half of the S. 750 cfs.

The second half of the S, as the creek begins a sharp bend to the right, contains a couple of closely spaced areas of constriction which produce some bouncy wave trains at some water levels. There are some rocks in the water in these constrictions, but in general there is a reasonably clear and obvious route through each one. These constrictions are marked on the map as separate features, but they are close enough together, with not much distance between them, that one might consider them to be one long feature.

The first constriction appears just at the top of the bend to the right, marked as "2" on map 6(B), and is shown in the pictures below. The flat table rock on river right will announce its presence to you from a distance. Before reaching the Table, one must negotiate a passage between three large boulders in the stream, arranged in a line across the current.

"2" from just upstream. Note the Table Rock, and the clear chute on river left.

Boulders in the stream just above the Table, which appears in the picture at the right.

After the Table Rock, the passage through the second bend itself is fairly clear, but one quickly encounters a series of three constrictions placed close together which are combined on Map 6(B) as "3".

↑

Looking upstream back into the second bend of The S, showing the clean river left channel.

↑

The first constriction at "3"

↑

…the 2nd constriction at "3"…

↑

…and the 3rd. All at 750 cfs.

Essentially immediately, one enters the next series of constrictions, marked as "4" on Map 6(B). As mentioned before, it is just as reasonable to consider both "3" and "4" to be one long feature with a number of component parts, rather than as separate entities.

Looking downstream from "3" into "4".

750 cfs

The head of "4"…

…and about 100 yards farther downstream

The end of "4", and of the ½ mile combination of constrictions coming out of the S-bend.

Looking back upstream from "4" into "3", at another time of year and a lower water level

Following "4" there is a pool of about a 500 yard straightaway, pictured immediately below, which leads to another slight bend to the right in the creek. Just before that bend, there is another constriction, "5" on Map 6(B)

Straightaway, looking towards "5"

The picture on the left, above, is a view of "5" from the top, and on the right a view from the bottom. The constriction is about 100 yards long. Channel is just left of center.

After making the bend to the right after "5", one comes into view of the Sims St. Bridge in Ellwood City. There is a mild riffle and some little turbulence just before the bridge, then a spot of constriction just below, marked as "6" on Map 6(A).

Looking down into the canyon of the Connie from the Sims Street Bridge. The constriction/rapids just visible at the bottom of this photo are seen in the picture below at more nearly water level.

The rapids just below Sims Street, with the channel again on river left. 750 cfs. Taken from directly under the bridge.

Just after the bridge, the creek bends left. At the very large sloping rock on river right just beyond the bend is another bouncy passage, probably the largest on this section of the creek, though it is short. It is marked as "7" on the map. It consists of two elements, which are separated by about 50 yards. The first of these elements, just abreast of the sloping rock, is a turbulent wave train, pictured below. At most water levels there are no obstructions in the river through here, but the waves can be strong and fairly large. They'll bounce you around pretty good.

Two views of the wave train at the sloping rock at "7". 750 cfs

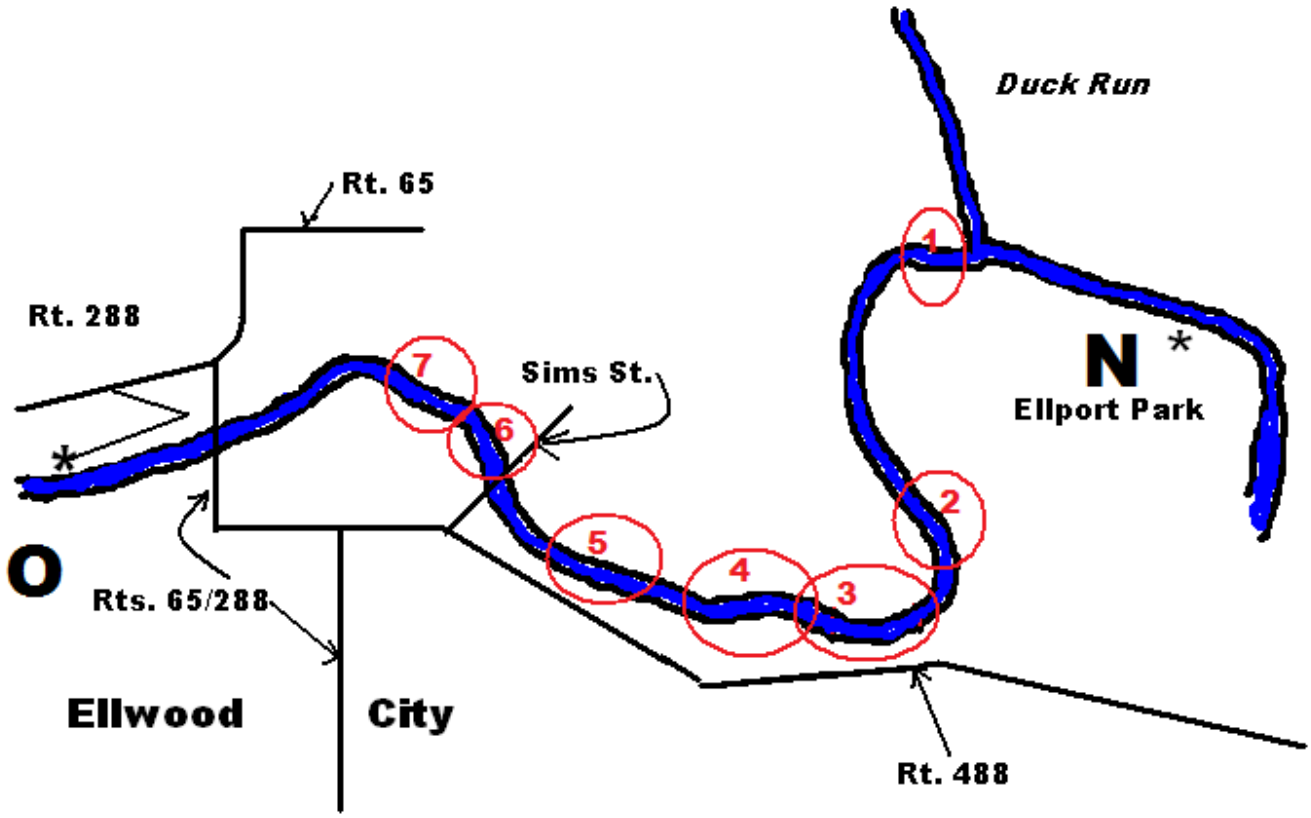
The second element of "7" is a very large but low-lying boulder in the creek, at a constriction, which very nearly covers the entire width of the creek. At most paddleable levels there is some pour over which creates a hydraulic behind this boulder. There is a boat-wide passage on each side of the boulder, with the one on the left being the smoothest of the two.

Two views of the river-wide boulder at "7", this at 750 cfs. In the lower picture the two channels are visible on each side of the boulder near the shores. Note the loosely scattered boulders in the foreground of the lower picture, and which are on river left as you paddle through here. At higher water levels, these rocks in effect "enter" the stream, which has also then the effect of "pushing" the left chute around the boulder more towards the center of the stream, as it would appear upon approach.

This is the last feature of any consequence on this Section. The remaining ½ mile is plain sailing. After the sloping Rock and boulder at "7", the creek bends left and the rt.65/288 bridge comes into view. Just a couple of hundred yards below the bridge, on river right, is the site of the former Ellwood City Sewage Treatment plant. A new facility was put on line in 2008 at another location, and this is now a Pumping Station. The spot just in front of the gated entrance to this facility has long been used as an informal access point by paddlers of the Connie ***(Point O, Maps 6 and 6(B)).*** In 2008, The Wild Waterways Conservancy created a small parking area at this location, and eased the slope for actually accessing the creek. It is now a formal public access area, but can be difficult to spot from the river.

The public access at the former Ellwood City Sewage plant, on river right a bit below the 65/288 bridge. From the river, look for the post and rail fence which defines the small parking area, on the shelf above the creek.

Map 6 (B) - Middle Rapids - Class II



N to O = 2.9 miles

~ SECTION 7 ~

Ellwood City Sewage Plant to Rock Point - ~ 1 ¼ miles, Class II and III
Reference Maps 6 (page 21), and 6(C) (page 53)

NOTE: Through the area of Sections 6(A) and 6(B) the creek has been cutting through primarily Homewood Sandstone, and then gradually into the softer Mercer shale layer which underlies that. Here in this last Section it is working entirely on that shale layer. Because that rock is relatively softer it is more easily eroded, and that along with the greater volume of water working on this softer stone has resulted in a more dramatic drop and a narrower channel, constricting to 50 feet in several places.

This is the Connie's most challenging Section, and while short it contains 6 rapids of note. Three Class II and three Class III rapids are packed into the middle half-mile in which distance the elevation drops 30 feet. This sort of water is for experienced boaters only, properly equipped, and with boat-handling and paddling skills to handle bigger water with rocks and ledges to avoid. All the cautions mentioned before apply here in spades.

DESCRIPTION: The start of this Section is the old Elwood City Sewage Treatment plant, just below the rts. 65/288 bridge ***(Point O, Maps 6 and 6(C))***. For about the first ¾ mile or so the running is straight, through fairly unremarkable water. The creek then takes a sharp bend to the left and a high railroad bridge comes into view. Just after this bend, and just before the bridge, is the first major drop of this Section, the 200 foot long Railroad Rapid. The pictures below show this rapid at three different water levels.

Lower #1 - "Railroad Rapid" at 550 cfs… ↑

…at 1060 cfs…. ↑

…and at 1700 cfs. ↑ ***Note the shadow of the bridge above in all three pictures.***

Immediately below the bridge is the second rapid. Actually this is not so much a rapid, but rather a constriction with a large stone which sits in the center of the creek. It is possible to go on either side of it, but most commonly the swift chute on the right, sometimes called the "Squirt Gun", is used. In higher water, a small recirculating wave forms just behind the stone.

Lower #2 at 550 cfs. The railroad bridge is visible in the background. Despite its blue appearance in the photos, it is actually black.

Lower #2 at 1060 cfs.

About 700 feet downstream of the railroad bridge comes the 3rd and easily the most challenging rapid on the entire creek, the famous "Rooster Tail". At lower water levels (400-1500 cfs.) a large sloping rock on river right tends to channel all or most of the water to a chute on the left. Just follow the current. At higher water levels (2000 cfs. and up), the sloping rock becomes a pour over. A hole forms behind the rock, and a diagonal wave (the Rooster Tail) begins to form along the chute. This wave likes to flip people who are not ready for it. A swim here can be longer and rougher than most people enjoy. The pictures on the next page show Rooster Tail at three different levels.

Lower #3 - Rooster Tail, at 660 cfs. Note the extreme constriction of the creek here.

Rooster Tail at 1060 cfs. ↑ The diagonal wave is beginning to form.

Rooster Tail at 1700 cfs. ↑
Water is beginning to pour over the sloping rock, and the diagonal wave is becoming more pronounced.

Below are two views of the 4th rapid/constriction, sometimes called "Boulder Garden", both at 1060 cfs. The upper photo shows the garden of rocks on river left - an interesting playground when the water is running high - but there is a relatively clear pathway on the right side.

The 5th rapid in this closely-spaced series is "Rainbow Rapid", aka "Park Gate". An iron footbridge dating from 1887 spanned the creek over this spot for better than 100 years. It was associated with Rock Point Park, an amusement park once active on river right stretching from here to the mouth of the creek, and carried pedestrian Park visitors from Ellwood City over the creek. The supporting arch of the bridge suggested a rainbow. The bridge finally collapsed into the creek in the very early 2000s, and the broken debris for a time created a potential boating hazard in low water. The flooding from Hurricane Ivan in 2004 (when the Connie topped out here at 32,000 cfs.) shredded the remains and cleared the creek. Below is a picture of the bridge as it appeared in 1994.

Two shots of Lower #5, Rainbow/Park Gate, as it appears today, both at 1060 cfs. This, looking downstream as you approach…. ↓

…and looking back upstream. ↓

Rapid #6 of this Section at a low 450 cfs. and the last rapid on the Connie, sometimes called "Captain Crunch". The end of #5 Rainbow/Park Gate is just visible at the bend in the distance.

NOTE: It is worth reminding again that this Section in particular should **only be attempted by experienced paddlers.** Remember that photographs can be misleading as to the actual speed, size, and difficulty of a rapid. And remember too that higher water levels can make dramatic changes in any rapid. At 3000 cfs. and above for instance, Rooster Tail becomes a Class IV. At the relatively low and/or moderate levels pictured here, each of these rapids is distinct and there is a calm pool at the bottom of each one for recovery. At higher levels the rapids start to merge, and a spill can mean a long, fast, and uncomfortable swim. Assess your own abilities and equipment wisely, and leave your ego at the put-in.

THE LAST ¼ MILE: Just after Rapid #6, the Connoquenessing bends right and enters the last calm, straight reach to the mouth. The Rock Point Boat Club lies along the creek on the right side. The property here was once Rock Point Park, an amusement/picnic Park dating from the latter part of the 19th century (a website detailing the fascinating history of the Park and this piece of ground may be found at **rockpointpark.com**). The Park folded long ago, and for many years the property has been leased to the Rock Point Boat Club. This is a private Club, still in existence and still present here, whose facilities to this day represent the only access point at the mouth of the Connie. To use those facilities, one needed to be a member of the club.

The 80 acre piece of ground which includes the old Park (and the Boat Club) was recently purchased by the Wild Waterways Conservancy (**www.wildwaterways.org**). The Conservancy has renewed the lease of the boat club, so it will remain on site. But, limited public access will now also be available. The dirt and gravel road (about ¾ mile long, which leads to creekside from rt. 288, is chained with keyed access for boat club members. At the time of this writing, the schedule for public access is that it is open daily during daylight hours during late Spring, Summer, and early Fall, but is only open weekend daylight hours in late Fall and early Spring. It is closed during the Winter months. On days the gate is closed, it is permissible to park outside the gate and walk in. Please remember to park in a manner that will allow other vehicles to pass (in case of an emergency).

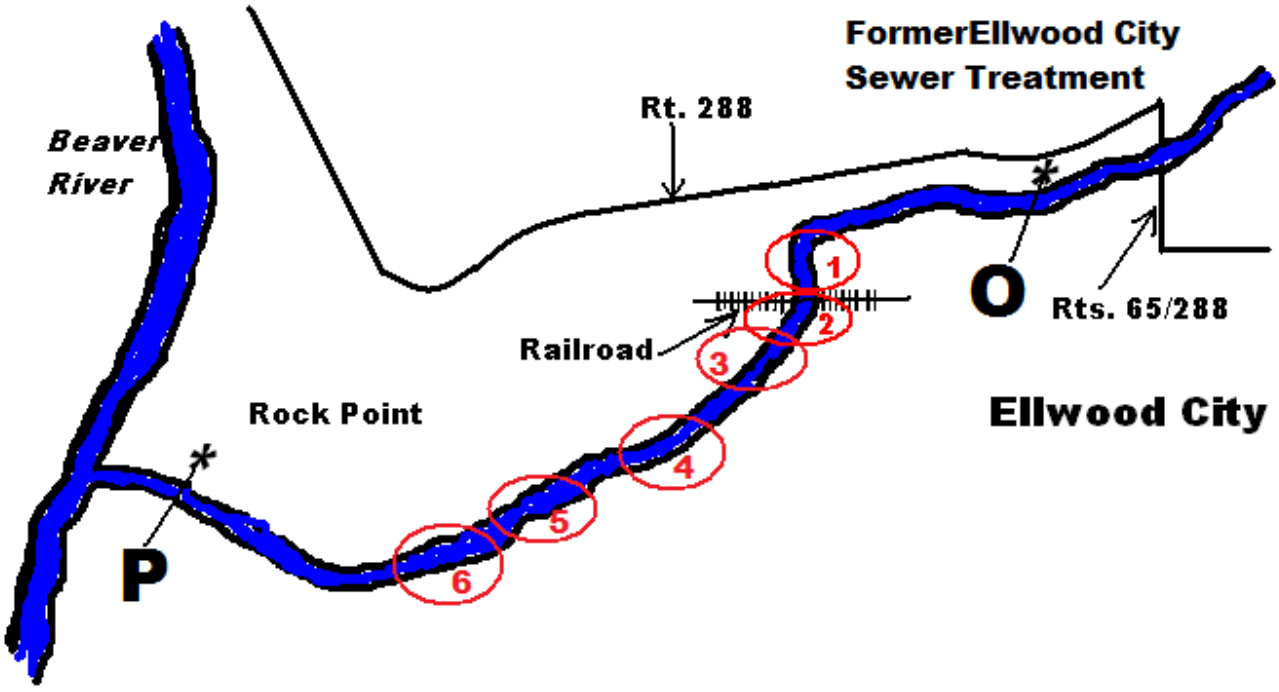
Public Access issues are still in flux a bit due to some abuses such as dumping and vandalism, and thus may be adjusted periodically in the future. Check for the current access arrangements and schedules beforehand, using either the Rock Point web site mentioned above, or the phone number on the sign.

This area is not a public park, and the Boat Club still operates here. Haul out all of your trash, be thoughtful and courteous in parking your vehicles and using the ramp, and be polite to Boat Club members. You are their guests, and they are maintaining the road and facilities for your access now as well. They are and for many, many years have been the caretakers for this unique and beautiful property, and they have treated that responsibility with an uncommon devotion and sensitivity. They have been excellent stewards and they deserve your respect and your thanks.

The last ¼ mile of the Connoquenessing, now reverted to its quiet character after leaving the whitewater behind at the bend in the distance. Rock Point Boat Club's dock/ramp is on the left of the picture.

The Mouth, with the Beaver River just on the other side of the railroad bridge. Just ain't no mo' Connie.

Map 6 (C) - Lower Rapids - Class III



Appendix 1 - Connoquenessing Creek - River Mile Index

This listing gives the distance, in miles, from the mouth of Creek at the Beaver River to selected points, in downstream-to-upstream order. One can use these to determine the length of a proposed paddling trip on the Connie, as well as using them as general "milepost markers" along the way.

Beaver River - 0.00

Rock Point Boat Club (point P, Map 6) - 0.15

Rt. 65 hi-level bridge in Ellwood; old Ellwood Sewer Treatment plant access (point O, Map 6) - 2.12

Sims St. Bridge in Ellwood - 2.77

Ellport Park Access (point N, Map 6) - 4.63

Mouth of Slippery Rock Creek - 5.28

Rt. 288 bridge in Frisco - 6.72

Rt. 65 bridge at Stone Wall Country Club (point M, Map 6)- 8.56

Mouth of Brush Creek - 11.07

Hazen bridge (point L, Map 5) - 11.38

Fombell Bridge - 14.79

RR bridge above Fombell - 16.70

Rt. 588 bridge by Zelie airport (point K, Map 5)- 18.50

Rt. 288 bridge in Zelie - 19.52

Connequenessing Creek Park (point J, Maps 4 and 5) - 20.13

Rt. 19 bridge in Zelie - 20.41

Jackson St. park access in Harmony (point I, Map 4) - 20.94

Mercer Rd. bridge in Harmony (point H, Map 4) - 21.51

I-79 bridge - 21.84

Mouth of Little Connie - 22.53

Hartmann Rd. bridge at Harmony Jct. (former dam site, site of proposed access) - 22.83

Mouth of Breakneck Creek - 23.09

Textor Hill Rd. - 23.56

Hartmann Rd. bridge at Wahlville - 26.31

Rt. 528 bridge (point G, Maps 4 and 3) - 27.10

Needlepoint Rd. bridge (point F, Map 3)- 28.48

Buhl Station bridge - 29.88

Ash Stop Rd. Bridge and ball field access (point E, Map 3) - 30.95

Mouth of Glade Run - 32.58
Riebold Rd. bridge - 34.99

Camp Redwing Canoe launch point (in bend) - 35.92

Former site of Rader School Rd. bridge (Redwing entrance) - 36.51

Renfrew bridge - 37.96

Mouth of Thorn Creek (dam) - 38.56

McCalmont Rd. bridge - 39.75

A/K Steel entrance bridge - 40.93

A/K Steel dam - ~41.9

Mouth of Butcher Run (Butler Area Sewer Authority) - 42.21

Pullman viaduct - 42.90

Mouth of Sullivan Run - 43.33

General Butler Bridge - 43.90

Wayne St. viaduct (Barnsteel dam)- 44.14

Monroe St. bridge - 44.48

Mouth of Coal Run - 44.76

Kittanning St. bridge - 44.89

Mouth of Bonnie Brook - 45.71

Rt. 68 bridge - 46.10

Rt. 422 bridges - 46.24

Mouth of Thorn Run - 46.97

Glennwood Way bridge - 48.77

Rt. 38 bridge - 50

Oneida dam - 50.61

Appendix 2 - ~ Angler's Guide to the Connoquenessing ~

This compendium of the Connie from the perspective of fisher folk was compiled by Dave Andrews. It is divided into sections, and these sections correspond to those which appear in the preceding Stream Description.

Section 1
Oneida to Butler

This stretch of stream is noted for its stocked trout angling opportunities. Almost the entire stretch, from Oneida Dam down to the Route 356 bridge in downtown Butler, is stocked heavily with rainbow and brown trout. In addition, several of the tributaries to the Connie in this area have been identified as having the potential to harbor wild brown trout. This area is hard to fish, as it is so closely guarded by brush along the banks. The hardy angler who likes to fish in brush and doesn't mind walking away from the bridge stocking points will often times be rewarded with nice catches of trout long into the season. All of the bridge crossings are popular stocking points, but fish tend to move around a lot on this stream to find their comfort level.

Angling pressure is high early in the season, but wanes quickly as temperatures rise, water levels drop, and stocking ends. The mouth of Bonnie Brook is sometimes productive, but is a long walk from any access point and is difficult to fish with high, muddy banks and deep water.

Once the creek enters Butler, four stocking points were located in close proximately to each other prior to 2009. However, arsenic was discovered in soils near the confluence of Coal Run and the Connie in and around Father Marinaro Park. As of late 2009, the area near the park downstream to the Monroe Street bridge will no longer be stocked with trout. The creek here is larger with some very deep holes, and tends to hold fish long into the season. Besides the stocked trout fishing, this section of creek holds several different warmwater species, including rock bass, smallmouth bass, suckers, and carp. Closer to Oneida Dam, the creek holds other warmwater escapees from the dam, including largemouth bass, perch, crappies, and bluegill.

Section 2
Butler to Renfrew

As far as angling goes, this is a forgotten stretch of waterway, primarily due to the lack of access. The upper stretches flowing along AK Steel offer boat-only access, and downstream the creek is crossed only by the McCalmont Road bridge before arriving at Renfrew. Angling in the stretch is primarily for warm-water species, but occasionally trout do make their way downstream. The dam at AK Steel is one of the highlights of this section, and anglers are often found here catching a mixed bag of species. This stretch is rather shallow and muddy, and fishing opportunities are limited. The new sewage treatment plant in Renfrew might increase water quality in this lower section, but only time will tell what effect it will have on fish species.

Section 3
Renfrew to Zelienople

This part of the Connie is a native warm-water fish area. Not many people test the angling opportunities here, even though the area is popular with canoeists when the water levels allow. Species that anglers can expect to target here include rock bass, smallmouth bass, suckers, and carp. Several of the slow water areas just downstream from Renfrew are known to produce large carp and suckers, with the occasional bass thrown in as well. Several bow fisherman I know also seem to think this is one of the best flowing water areas around to try to hunt carp, as many areas have a thick mud bottom to protect equipment and harbor a large carp population.

Sections 4 through 7
Zelienople to mouth

As the Connie flows through these bottom sections, it grows in size with the addition of numerous tributaries. As the volume increases, the creek becomes a suitable habitat for some very large warm and coolwater fish. The PFBC begins to stock the creek with walleye and muskellunge from the former Harmony Junction dam downstream to the mouth. In addition, smallmouth bass, rock bass, northern pike, carp, and suckers proliferate in this area. Some very large muskellunge are caught every year in this area, and this section of creek is fished hard by knowledgeable anglers looking to catch a trophy.

One of the best sections in recent years for muskie angling has been at the confluence pool of the Connie and the Slippery Rock. Fishing jigs and minnow imitations will often bring strikes from several different species out of the same hole. In future years, with the removal of Harmony dam, it is hoped that fish migration will begin to occur and that some species found in these lower sections will start to proliferate in upstream areas. There is also the possibility of the start of fingerling stockings of some cool and warm water fishes in the middle stretches of the creek to enhance angling opportunities in those areas. Overall, the Connie is a largely underfished stream, other than immediately following the trout stockings in the upper reaches of the stream.