Water trails are recreational waterways on a lake, river, or ocean between specific municipalities or for a specific purpose, including hiking trails for the boating public. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the resources. Explore this unique Pennsylvania water trail.

For your safety and enjoyment:
- Always wear a life jacket
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills
- Know fishing and boating regulations
- Be prepared for river hazards
- Carry proper equipment

**Historical Context**

French Creek is arguably one of the most ecologically significant waterways in Pennsylvania and has been called one of Pennsylvania’s top 10 best water trails. French Creek originates in Chautauqua County, New York, and flows 117 miles through Erie, Crawford, and Venango counties before joining the Allegheny River. The French Creek watershed covers approximately 1,270 square miles, making it one of the most significant water sources and habitats for a wide variety of wildlife and aquatic organisms. This area is home to over 140 species of fish and 27 species of freshwater mussels. The Creek flows through an area that has a rich history and has been shaped by the influence of early French settlers, who contributed to the area's ecological diversity and resource management. The ecosystem of French Creek is considered to be one of the most important ecosystems in the northeastern United States.

**Pennsylvania Boating Regulations**

- A U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) or life jacket is required on each person on board. In addition, one throwable device (an inflatable cushion or foam splashboard) is required on all inland watercraft that are 16 feet in length or longer. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a self-bailing device.的生命
- Life jackets must be the appropriate size for the person intending to use them. All life jackets must be worn when on or near the water, and all life jackets must be properly fastened according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- All boaters must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) at anchor. Anchor lights must be turned on before dropping an anchor and can be turned off when the anchor is secured.
- All boaters must display running lights during nighttime or low-visibility conditions. Running lights may be turned off when the anchor is secured.
- All boaters must display proper identification and registration when traveling on public recreational areas. Please check with your local state park office for more information.
- All boaters must display a sound-producing device. Motorboats less than 65 feet in length must carry a mechanical means of making a sound signal. This device may be hand-powered or powered by an electrical system. No mechanically powered device may be operated at a speed of more than 5 miles per hour, or at times when visibility is limited.
- All boaters must display proper registration and identification when traveling on public recreational areas. Please check with your local state park office for more information.
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**Stewardship**

Protecting French Creek from environmental degradation is a shared responsibility. To help protect the land, water, and cultural resources along the French Creek, it is important to know which threats are affecting your property and how you can help prevent them. The following guidelines are provided to help you identify and address potential threats:

- Keep your property clean and free of litter. Litter can be harmful to wildlife and water quality.
- Avoid using pesticides and fertilizers that wash into the water. These chemicals can harm aquatic life.
- Control erosion on your property to prevent soil from being washed into the water. Erosion can contribute to pollution and habitat degradation.
- Properly dispose of hazardous waste, such as batteries, electronics, and fluids. These materials can contaminate the soil and water.
- Keep pets under control to prevent them from roaming or entering the water. Pets can introduce upstream and downstream.
- Slow down and drive safely on roads near water bodies. This will reduce erosion and water runoff.