



**For More Information Contact:**  
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c/o Lackawanna State Park  
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An Equal Opportunity Employer  
[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com)

Friends of Salt Springs Park  
P.O. Box 541  
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570-967-7275  
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To make a reservation, contact the Friends  
at 570-967-7275 or email:  
[info@friendsofsaltspringspark.org](mailto:info@friendsofsaltspringspark.org).



### Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Please camp only in designated areas and try to minimize your impact on the campsites.
- Firewood Advisory: Firewood may contain non-native insects and plant diseases. Bringing firewood into the park from other areas may accidentally spread pest insects and diseases that threaten park resources and the health of our forests. Campers should use local firewood. Do not take wood home and do not leave firewood - Burn It!
- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.

### Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau.  
[www.endlessmountains.org](http://www.endlessmountains.org)

### History

In the 1790s, when the first American settlers arrived at what would become Salt Springs State Park, the area was an unbroken forest of old growth trees, dominated by eastern hemlock. The immediate concern was to clear the land. For decades the trees were cut, piled up, and burned. The better logs were used to build the first homes. Sawmills were soon built along Silver Creek and other nearby streams, and local tanneries began consuming hemlock bark at increasing rates. The hemlocks lining Fall Brook Gorge were probably spared because even by the early 1800s this area was a popular recreational destination.

In 1858, a mill and woolen manufactory were built below the first waterfall on Fall Brook, the remains of which can still be seen behind the Wheaton House. A flume channeled water from the first waterfall down the west side of the gorge and over a 16-foot overshot wheel. The building also had a lath machine, likely producing much of the lath used in the area's first farmhouses.

The salt spring on the south side of Fall Brook is one of the salt springs for which the park is named. The first people to extract salt from the spring water were American Indians who traveled through the area during hunting expeditions. They attempted to keep the location of the spring secret from the settlers, but eventually and with a large enough sum of money, it was revealed.

Numerous attempts were made by different entrepreneurs to develop the spring for commercial gain between 1795 and 1870. The brine obtained produced a high quality salt, but not enough could be coaxed out of the ground to yield a profit. The water was noted to be more sulfurous than salty. Bubbles would rise to the surface and when touched with fire would flash like black powder. Efforts to strike oil at or near Salt Springs were also pursued, but with no success. In 1902, the North Penn Oil and Gas Company sunk a new test well just behind the Wheaton House, but plugged it after several months and left without explanation. When methane gas continued to seep up through the plug, a simple container was built at the top of the well to gather the escaping gas, which was then piped into the Wheaton home where it was used for cooking and lighting. These pipes still run through the house.

### HISTORIC WHEATON FARM

On November 9, 1813, a circuit rider wrote in his diary that he had "dined with four gentlemen from Philadelphia on a visit. . . . They had stayed the night before at the Salt Springs where they had been for amusement, they dealt in extraordinaries about it, as though they had been on a voyage around the world." This is the earliest recorded documentation

### Geology

The park lies in a glacially altered, hilly terrain referred to since the 1750s as "the Endless Mountains." The varying layers of Devonian age sandstone and shale of the Catskill Formation are exposed in the 80-foot-deep gorge of Fall Brook.

The crystal waters of Fall Brook tumble over three picturesque waterfalls, each about ten feet in height, before joining the waters of Silver Creek near the eastern border of the park. Thriving in the cool, moist conditions of the gorge are mosses, liverworts, and ferns.

### Fall Brook Natural Area

Encompassing the gorge and the old growth hemlock forest on both the east and west rims, the Fall Brook Natural Area was established "to provide locations for scientific observation of natural systems, to protect examples of typical and unique plant and animal communities, and to protect outstanding examples of natural interest and beauty."

Visitors can experience what Pennsylvania's forests were like 300 years ago. Towering 100 feet and more above the



of the impact of the area's natural beauty on human visitors. From this time to the present, the 400-plus acres locally known as "Salt Springs" have been continuously visited by people searching for, and finding, not just amusement but also "extraordinaries."

The Salt Springs area was a dairy farm privately owned and operated by succeeding generations of one family, the Wheatons, from their settlement around 1840 until 1973, when it was acquired by the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks. During their stewardship, the Wheatons welcomed hundreds of visitors and travelers on visits to the legendary land of waterfalls and other natural wonders.



At the northeast entrance of the park is the historic homestead of the Wheaton family. Four buildings of the original homestead remain, as well as the foundation of the mill and woolen manufactory. The original home, built in the early 1840s by Nathan Philip Wheaton, is now the Wheaton House. This post and beam structure is timber framed with eastern hemlock. The hand-hewn beams are 40 feet long and the posts are two stories high. These timbers originated from trees similar to the impressive stand of old growth hemlock that line both sides of Fall Brook Gorge.

The sister home, built around 1870 by Nathan's eldest son James, is of balloon frame construction and features a Georgian style roof. This home is a private residence, generating rental income for park maintenance.

Adjacent to the Wheaton House, the carriage barn, circa 1865, is also made entirely of hemlock. The building is timber framed with hand-hewn beams and sawed posts. The foundation is of native stone laid without mortar.

Inside the dairy barn is an old 30-by-40-foot timber framed structure that may have originally been a threshing barn. Moved and altered over the years, this barn reflects the changes in agriculture and building from the past 165 years. When renovated, the barn will provide space for classrooms, meeting areas, and programs.

About 300 feet from the mouth of the gorge on the south side of Fall Brook, and easily reached from the picnic area, is the bubbling salt spring which is the park's namesake. The water from the spring is very high in chloride, sodium, and dissolved solids, revealing the marine origin of the sediments. The spring bubbles due to methane gas created by the breakdown of organic matter in the ancient sedimentary rock. The commercial extraction of both salt and oil was attempted in the late 18th century, throughout the 19th, and into the early 20th centuries but did not prove profitable and so was discontinued.

gorge is one of the last old growth hemlock forest tracts remaining in the commonwealth. Old growth forests exhibit complex ecosystems not found in younger forests, and involve a delicate balance between nutrients, plants, and animals. At one time, Pennsylvania was largely covered by this type of forest, but most have fallen prey to the pressures of commercial and industrial activities. The trees in the park now face the threat of infestation from hemlock woolly adelgid, a non-native insect infecting many of Pennsylvania's hemlock trees.

This unique habitat and the rich diversity of natural habitats found elsewhere in the park, including mixed hardwood forests, grasslands, overgrown meadows, streams, and wetlands, attract a wide variety of birds and wildlife.

Over 150 species of birds have been recorded at the park. The combination of Susquehanna County's cool climate and the park's deep gorge and coniferous habitat provide ideal conditions for some species of birds that are more commonly associated with the north, such as; common raven, hermit thrush, magnolia warbler, Blackburnian warbler, winter wren, and white-throated sparrow. A "Birds of Salt Springs State Park" checklist is available at the office. Wildlife at the park includes white-tailed deer, black bear, bobcat, eastern coyote, red fox, porcupine, beaver, striped skunk, raccoon, red squirrel, and flying squirrel. A wide diversity of plants can also be found, with spring providing the best time for wildflower viewing.



Photo by Marty Straub

### Recreational Opportunities



**PICNICKING:** A small picnic grove with tables and grills is between Fall Brook and Silver Creek, the two streams that traverse the park. A restroom is centrally located in the parking area. At the southeast end of the picnic area is the salt spring, the park's namesake. A large timber frame pavilion, with electric outlets, is across Silver Creek from the picnic area at the entrance to the campground. A second pavilion is located just west of the back parking lot. Both may be reserved in advance for a fee from the Friends or be used on a first-come, first-served basis.

**CAMPING:** Rustic tenting sites are privately situated along the banks of Silver Creek. All sites include a fire ring and picnic table. The campground has a restroom with composting toilets. Water is available from an outdoor faucet at the Wheaton House and from a faucet in front of the restrooms in the parking lot. Group camping is available in a large mowed field in the main campground. The maximum camping period is 14 consecutive days. Reservations may be made in advance by calling the Friends and are confirmed when full payment is received.

**CAMPING COTTAGES:** The cottages have wooden walls and floors, electric lights and outlets, and a porch. A cottage sleeps five or seven people in a single bunk and a single/double bunk. Rustic restrooms are nearby.

**FISHING:** Sections of Silver Creek and Fall Brook traverse the park for almost two miles and provide ample fishing opportunities for both novice and experienced anglers. A favorite area is where Fall Brook flows into Silver Creek near the east end of the picnic area. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocks both streams with trout in early spring. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

### Environmental Interpretation

The Friends of Salt Springs Park offer a variety of environmental, historical, and interpretive programs year round. Through hands-on activities, guided walks, interactive workshops, and programs, participants gain an appreciation and understanding of park natural and historic resources. Programs are listed on the Friends' website, and a printed brochure is available from the Friends.

Environmental education programs and historical programs can, upon request, be designed to fit individual group needs. Programs can be arranged in advance by calling the Friends' office.

**HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** About 800 acres, including adjoining lands owned by the Friends of Salt Springs Park, are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are deer, turkey, squirrel, and grouse. Hunting is prohibited in the Fall Brook Natural Area.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the Friends for ADA accessible hunting information.

Use **extreme caution** with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's vehicle or enclosed trailer. Exceptions include: law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* are authorized to carry a firearm concealed on their person while they are within a state park.



**ENJOY THE WINTER:** Most of the trails in the park are well suited for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and pastures and hay fields provide wide open areas for sledding and tobogganing. In winter, Fall Brook Gorge is transformed into a wonderland of massive ice columns and cascades. Use extreme caution when hiking in the gorge as stream ice and nearby rocks can be unstable and dangerous.

**WHEATON HOUSE:** The renovated Wheaton family homestead houses the Friends' offices, gift shop, and historical and environmental interpretive information. Displays feature nineteenth-century rural life and regional wildlife. The Wheaton House is open on weekends from May through September.

## Salt Springs State Park

The 405-acre Salt Springs State Park is in northeastern Pennsylvania, seven miles north of Montrose in Susquehanna County. Focal points of the park are the towering old growth hemlock trees, many estimated to be over 300 years old, and the rocky gorge cut by Fall Brook with its three waterfalls. The Friends of Salt Springs Park, a non-profit volunteer support group who operates the park, owns 437 acres adjacent to the park's southern border, which is also open for public access.

### Directions

Salt Springs State Park is easily reached from Montrose by following PA 29 north for six miles to the town of Franklin Forks. Turn left onto Silver Creek Road and follow for one mile to the park entrance.

From New York, take NY 7 to PA 29. At Franklin Forks, turn right onto Silver Creek Road and follow for one mile to the park entrance.

### Friends of Salt Springs Park

The Friends of Salt Springs Park, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, formed in 1994 and managed by local volunteers. Operating at the park through a cooperative agreement with the DCNR, Bureau of State Parks, the Friends' mission is to preserve and improve the facilities of Salt Springs State Park and to develop its potential for recreational, environmental, and historical education purposes.



Photo by Marty Straub

Support from numerous grants, the Bureau of State Parks, and the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps program allowed the Friends to renovate the historic structures and upgrade the facilities and recreation areas at the park. In 2000, the Friends purchased 300 acres of land adjacent to the park's southern border. Easily reached by way of Buckley Road or on several connecting trails, this property offers a variety of natural habitats not found in the park and expands the recreational opportunities available to visitors. In 2004, a conservation easement was placed on this land, ensuring its permanent protection as open and natural habitat. In 2006, the Friends purchased another adjoining tract of 137 acres, bringing the total size of the public space to 842 acres.

The Friends publish a seasonal newsletter, *The Salt Springs Messenger*, a monthly electronic newsletter, and an annual listing of events. All programs are open to the public and free of charge, unless otherwise indicated. On Labor Day weekend, the Friends host the annual "Salt Springs Celebration," a one-day festival featuring exhibits, programs, activities, entertainment, and family fun.

Support for the Friends' work is through memberships, camping revenue, public and private agency grants, business donations, in-kind donations of materials and services, special fundraising events, and program fees for educational services.

Friends of Salt Springs Park  
P.O. Box 541  
Montrose, PA 18801  
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[www.friendsofsaltspringspark.org](http://www.friendsofsaltspringspark.org)

### Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

### In an Emergency Dial 911

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted at the office and the information kiosks.

**NEAREST HOSPITAL**  
Endless Mountains Health System  
100 Hospital Drive  
Montrose, PA 18801  
570-278-3801

## Hiking 14.85 miles of trails

### **BORDER TRAIL: 2 miles, more difficult hiking, blue blazes**

Because of its elevation changes, this is the second hardest trail to hike. From the north it is accessed from the West Meadow. Together with Silver Creek Trail it runs parallel to a ridge while overlooking Silver Creek. It splits from Silver Creek Trail, proceeds up a steep climb through the most western part of the park, and crosses Buckley Road before ending at Wetlands Trail.

### **BUNNY TRAIL: 1.5 miles, more difficult hiking, orange blazes**

This loop is best accessed from a small parking lot on Buckley Road, east of where Fall Brook crosses the road. The trail ascends gently along Fall Brook to a small clearing which was once a log landing. It then climbs steeply for a short distance through hardwood forest before intersecting and paralleling Cliff Trail through forest and old fields with some excellent views. It leaves Cliff Trail, passes a delightful spring and then descends through a forest back to the parking lot.

### **CLIFF TRAIL: 1.6 miles, more difficult hiking, blue blazes**

This trail can be reached from either Bunny Trail or the Friends Parking Lot. After a short climb, Cliff Trail follows the contours of the land, gently climbing to the southwest corner of the property where there is an interesting spring area and Frog Pond. All along this section are boulders and cliffs worth exploring for ferns and wildflowers. From the pond, the trail follows an old logging road and then descends to where it intersects Bunny Trail and then back to the main parking lot.

### **FALL BROOK TRAIL: 1 mile, most difficult hiking, red blazes**

Access this trail across the bridge from the Wheaton House. It follows Fall Brook and climbs steeply along the three waterfalls. Use extreme caution on slippery rocks and near the edge of the falls. After the third waterfall, the trail flattens out and follows the brook past Buckley Road until it ends at the intersection with Bunny Trail.

### **FRIENDS TRAIL: 1.9 miles, more difficult hiking, white blazes**

The trail starts at Hardwood Trail and heads south out of the forest and through a meadow to Buckley Road. From there it meanders through another meadow before reentering the

forest. It eventually heads west to join Summit Trail near the highest point in the park. It can also be accessed from the Friends Parking Lot on Buckley Road.

### **GORGE TRAIL: 0.4 mile, more difficult hiking, blue blazes**

The trail runs south from the Wheaton House. After a sharp but short ascent, it levels out and follows the gorge rim. It goes through remnants of an old flagstone quarry and along a meadow's edge before returning to the woods and connecting with Buckley Road.

### **HARDWOOD TRAIL: 0.5 mile, more difficult hiking, yellow blazes**

Access this trail at the northeast end of the picnic area, past the salt spring. After ascending the moderate slope along the edge of the hill, the trail swings south and climbs gently through mixed hardwoods before leveling out and turning west to where it intersects Woodland Trail.

### **HEMLOCK TRAIL: 0.4 mile, more difficult hiking, white blazes**

Access this trail at the northeast end of the picnic area, past the salt spring. Follow right and climb steeply up the hill into the old growth hemlock forest. Just past the intersection with

Woodland Trail, Hemlock Trail becomes a raised boardwalk. It follows the east rim of the gorge past Penny Rock to where a right spur leads to an observation platform overlooking the falls. Use extreme caution near cliffs and steep drop-offs. The trail continues to eventually intersect Fall Brook and Overlook trails.

### **MEADOW TRAIL: 0.8 mile, easiest hiking, yellow blazes**

Accessed from either Buckley Road or Silver Creek Trail, this largely flat trail loops through meadows and by old foundations, stone walls, and an interesting shale outcropping.

### **NORTH CREEK TRAIL: 0.5 mile, easiest hiking, red blazes**

The trail begins behind the Williams Pavilion, crosses Silver Creek (no bridge), and runs west through meadows and wild apple trees along the meandering creek, which creates scenic views. After re-crossing Silver Creek (no bridge), it joins Silver Creek Trail.

### **OVERLOOK TRAIL: 0.2 mile, easiest hiking, blue blazes**

Designed specifically for accessibility, this short, wide trail begins at the parking lot on the north side of Buckley Road.

The trail winds through light and dense forest on level land and connects to Hemlock Trail near the overlook to the falls.

### **SILVER CREEK TRAIL: 1.2 miles, more difficult hiking, red blazes**

This trail is accessed from behind the dairy barn and parallels Silver Creek through hemlocks and carpets of ferns. It follows the creek, climbing gradually through mixed hardwoods, and then up a steep climb to where it connects with Meadow Trail. An old stone wall can be an interesting rest stop.

### **SPRUCE TRAIL: 0.5 mile, easiest hiking, white blazes**

This trail begins at the far western edge of the park, where Border Trail crosses Buckley Road. The trail follows an easy grade through a magnificent grove of towering spruce trees planted during a reforestation project. It ends near the beginning of Wetlands Trail at Salt Springs Road.

### **SUMMIT TRAIL: 1 mile, more difficult hiking, red blazes**

This loop consists of a short climb of about 0.3 mile from Frog Pond to the highest point on the Friends' property, returning to Frog Pond via an old logging road. The summit is a relatively flat area with large, widely spaced trees.

### **UPLAND TRAIL: 0.5 mile, more difficult hiking, red blazes**

This trail extends the loop of Hardwood Trail, climbing steadily up the mountain through mixed hardwoods, before circling back to rejoin it.

### **WETLAND TRAIL: 0.6 mile, easiest hiking, blue blazes**

This trail starts at the Buckley Road bridge and traverses the wetlands north of Fall Brook. Signs of beaver activity and wetland plants and shrubs can be seen along this trail. It ends just after crossing Fall Brook (no bridge).

### **WOODLAND TRAIL: 0.25 mile, easiest hiking, blue blazes**

Reached from Hemlock Trail, this trail circles around the east side of the old growth stand. Explore a hemlock almost 300 years old that has fallen across the path. The trail ends at Hardwood Trail.



Mountain laurel