

# The River's Ways

The Susquehanna River's islands, wetlands, flood plain, and woodlands are unique habitats that serve as a haven to rare plant and bird species. Over the centuries, however, human impacts have harmed these sensitive areas.

This pristine area, for example, was once one of the most active centers of trade in southern York County. In 1830, a charcoal iron furnace, called York Furnace, was built just north of here along Otter Creek. It produced pig iron, which was carried to markets down river on canal barges. Within a few decades, a village with a large store, hotel, warehouse, and several wharves, evolved. Businesses closed when the furnace ceased operations in 1875 and with the abandonment of the canal in 1894. Nature is now slowly erasing the human imprint at York Furnace.

In recent years, efforts to improve the quality of the river's environment have increased. Public agencies like the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, along with environmental groups and private interests, are working together to improve water quality, restore natural areas, and preserve open spaces throughout the watershed. These efforts have enhanced the health of both the river and the Chesapeake Bay.

York Furnace at Otter Creek circa 1938.  
Courtesy York County Heritage Trust



A photo of the ice gorge on the Susquehanna River and the ruins of the York Furnace, January 4, 1911.

Courtesy York County Heritage Trust



[www.baygateways.net](http://www.baygateways.net)

Lancaster - York Heritage Region  
Susquehanna River Water Trail

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