

East Branch Trail, PA

Trail Location: Titusville to Spartansburg

Trail Length: 7.5 miles

Counties: Crawford

Activities:

Walking, Horseback Riding, Snowmobiles, Cross Country Skiing, Mountain Biking, Off-Road Vehicles, Amish horse-drawn wagons

Trail Surface(s):

Ballast

Trail Description:

The Pennsylvania Railroad originally built the Chautauqua Line as part of a network of rail lines that linked Corry, Titusville, Oil City, Franklin and Meadville during the boom days of the oil industry in Northwest Pennsylvania. Spartansburg, Glynden and Centerville were important depots in the network. Heading south out of Spartansburg, the rail corridor parallels the East Branch of Oil Creek, hence the trail's name.

In 1988 the Clear Lake Authority was established and purchased the 15.4 mile abandoned rail corridor from then owner Conrail in order to provide public access to Clear Lake in Spartansburg. This original right-of-way runs from Spartansburg to Hydetown, just north of Titusville. Clear Lake is a 280-acre man-made lake, impounded by the Clear Lake Dam. Today a 7.5-mile section of the old railbed is used between Spartansburg and Centerville by hikers, hunters, snowmobilers, four-wheelers and Amish horse-drawn wagons. Spartansburg is a small borough with a population of less than 500 and is a commerce center to a sizable Amish community. Horse-drawn buggies and wagons are a regular site in town and occasionally on the trail when it is used as an alternative transportation corridor, deemed safer than the main highways.

The trail skirts wooded hillsides, Amish homesteads, farms and fields of brush and wetlands. Preservation of this corridor provides linkages to Chautauqua County in New York State with Oil City, PA, both areas filled with 19th and 20th century history and charm. Over the past ten years Spartansburg has become a tourist destination for those in search of Amish furniture, antiques, country crafts and fresh maple syrup. Clear Lake provides recreational opportunities in the form of swimming, boating and fishing.

The East Branch Trail provides a key link in a system of trails that will eventually connect Lake Erie to the Chesapeake Bay via the Great Allegheny Passage and Erie to Harrisburg via the Mainline Canal Greenway.

Contact: Clear Lake Authority, 46107 Erie County Line Rd, Corry, PA 16407, 814-664-7303.

Parking & Trail Access:

The trail can be accessed in Spartansburg at the Clear Lake Parking Area off Route 77 or in the Village of Glynden on Glynden Road.

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