

US Army Corps of Engineers®
Norfolk District

The Corps Mission

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the Federal Government's largest water resources development and management agency. Congress assigned the Corps this civil works responsibility in an effort to preserve one of the nation's most vital natural resources. The variety and challenge of water projects also serve to maintain the Corps' range of engineering skills which are critical during national emergencies.

The Corps began its water resources program in 1824 when Congress for the first time appropriated money for improving river navigation. Since then, the Corps has been involved in improving river navigation, reducing flood damage and controlling beach erosion. Along with these missions, the Corps manages a recreational and resources program, generates hydropower, supplies water to cities and industry and regulates development of navigable waters and wetlands. Today the Corps manages nearly 2,000 water resources projects.



Revised: August 2005

Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw

Alleghany and Bath Counties, Virginia

For Further Information

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Norfolk District Project Office
Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw
P.O. Box 432
Covington, VA 24426
Phone: (540) 962-1138
Internet: <http://www.nao.usace.army.mil>

USDA Forest Service
James River Ranger District
George Washington & Jefferson National Forests
810-A Madison Avenue
Covington, VA 24426
Phone: (540) 962-2214
Internet: <http://www.fs.fed.us>

USDA Forest Service
Warm Springs Ranger District
Southern Region
George Washington & Jefferson National Forests
Route 2, Box 30
Hot Springs, VA 24445
Phone: (540) 839-2521
Internet: <http://www.fs.fed.us>

Alleghany County
First Aid: 911
Sheriff's Office: (540) 965-1770
Virginia State Police: 1-800-542-5959
Internet: <http://www.co.alleghany.va.us>

Bath County
First Aid: 911
Sheriff's Office: (540) 839-2375
Virginia State Police: 1-800-542-5959
Internet: <http://www.bathcountyva.org>

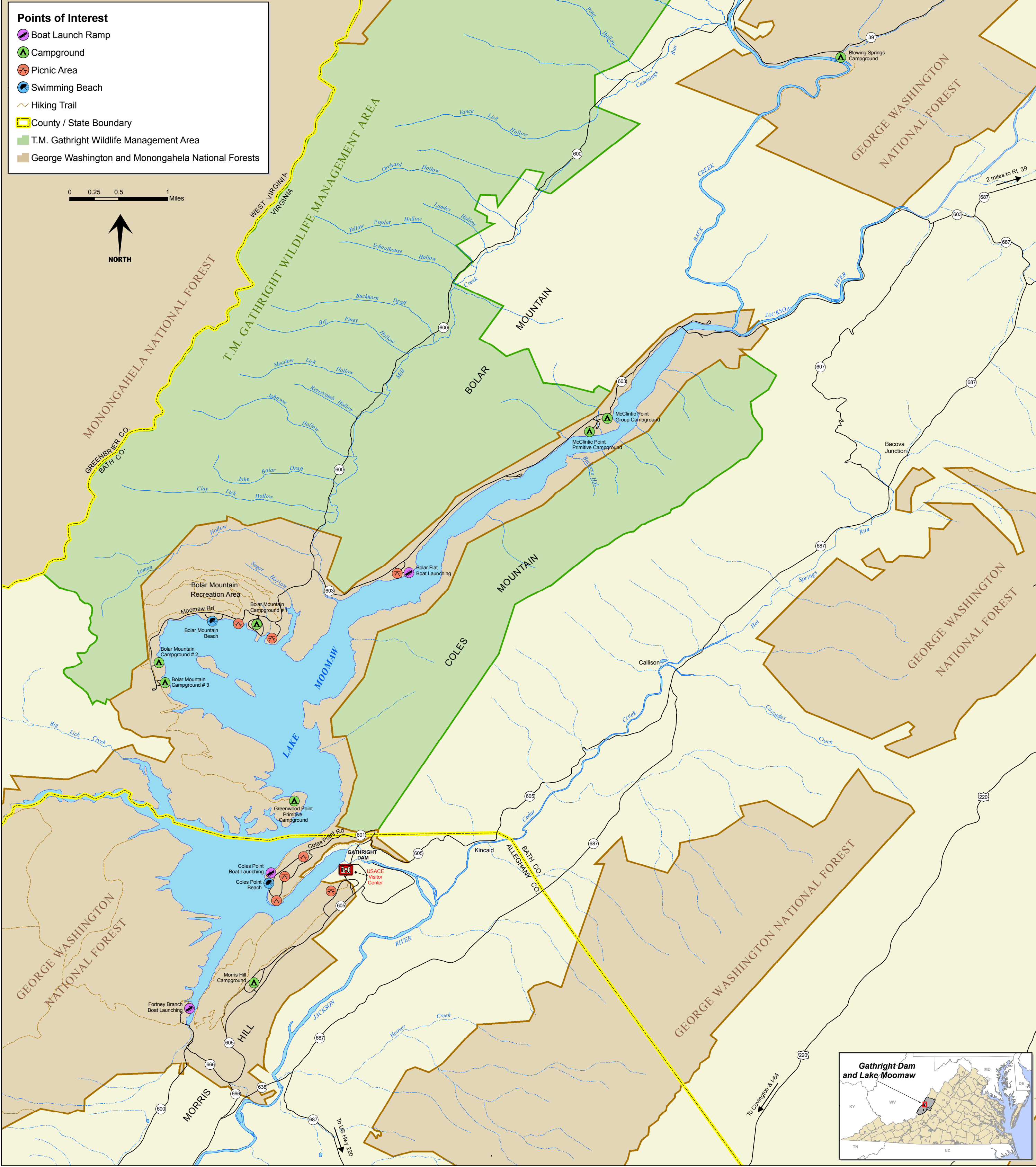
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
T.M. Gathright Wildlife Management Area
Bacova, VA 24412
Phone: (540) 839-2635
Internet: <http://www.dgif.state.va.us>





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Photographs by Jason A. O'Neal, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2005.
Exceptions include cover photograph and photographs captioned
Aerial View, Fly Fishing Downstream, Gathright Dam, Stilling Basin, and Fall Colors.





Introduction

Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw provide flood and water quality control along the Jackson and James Rivers in western Virginia. This area also offers opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities.

The recreational areas were developed and constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Operations and maintenance of these areas was transferred to the U.S. Forest Service in 1981.

Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw are located on the Jackson River, 43 miles upstream from its confluence with the Cowpasture River, which, at that point forms the upper James River. The City of Covington is 19 miles downstream from the dam. From the dam, the lake extends 12 miles along the Jackson River. At its normal recreational level of 1,582 feet above sea level, the lake covers a surface area of 2,530 acres and has a shoreline of more than 43 miles.

Much of the shoreline at Lake Moomaw is adjacent to the 13,428-acre T.M. Gathright Wildlife Management Area. Managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, this area is devoted to the enhancement and management of wildlife, especially wild turkey.



Spillway

An emergency spillway has been provided in the divide at Fortney Branch about 2 ½ miles south of the dam. The spillway is designed to discharge waters resulting from phenomenally heavy rains. There is only a very remote possibility that it will ever be needed.



Flood Control

The dam controls a 345-square-mile drainage area for the purpose of providing reduced flood stages at industrial, commercial and residential properties on the Jackson and James Rivers. Even before the lake began filling in December 1979, the dam had already been used for flood control – preventing some two million dollars in potential damages downstream.

Water Quality

The project assists in improving the quality of waters in the upper Jackson and James Rivers by allowing an increased flow of water in the rivers during periods of drought. The additional water flows improve conditions for the fish which live in the rivers by enhancing oxygen levels and alleviating stagnant water conditions at some locations. This also provides an aesthetically more pleasing appearance along the rivers.

Use of Gathright Dam’s multiple level intake tower will allow the Corps to augment the amount of water flow which tends to prevent deposits of solid materials into river pools. This helps enhance water quality and clarity as well as maintain maximum capacity of the lake during high water.



Intake Tower

Above the dam at the entrance to the outlet tunnel is the 260-foot intake tower. Portals are arranged in the tower at nine levels in two wet wells. This allows the withdrawal of water from any level depending on the desired water temperature.

Selective withdrawal of colder water from the lake, allows the Corps to maintain a prime trout habitat downstream from the dam.

Hydraulically-operated sluice gates, eight feet wide and 17 ½ feet high, used for flood control, are among the largest ever fabricated.

Through the south abutment of the dam there is a concrete-lined outlet tunnel, which is used for passing lake waters into a stilling or “quieting” basin before the water enters the Jackson River downstream.

Downstream Area of the Gathright Dam

A permit must be obtained from the Visitor Center before entering the downstream area. Please keep the permit with you while in this area.

The gate to the stilling basin road may be closed due to inclement weather or heightened security.

Do not block the roads or gates, if you walk down the road to downstream area. Parking is available across the main road (state route 605 or Coles Mountain Road) in the picnic area. All other gates (maintenance area and Visitor Center roads) are locked by 3:30 p.m.

Call the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers automated recording line at (540) 965-4117 for lake and stream information, and change to closure of the area.

If you see any person committing a crime or any act of vandalism or someone suspicious in appearance or action, please contact either U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Visitor Center at (540) 962-1138 or Alleghany County Sheriff’s Office at (540) 965-1770. Give a description of the individual or individuals, their actions, their vehicle, and license tag number and state.



Lake Moomaw has been stocked with largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, brown trout, rainbow trout, lake run trout, brook trout, channel catfish, black crappie, yellow perch, chain pickerel, northern pike, gizzard shad, alewife, bluegill and various sunfish.

Nestled in Virginia’s scenic Allegheny Mountains, this area provides nearly year-round opportunities for boating, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, mountain biking, picnicking, swimming, water sports, wildlife viewing and many other activities.

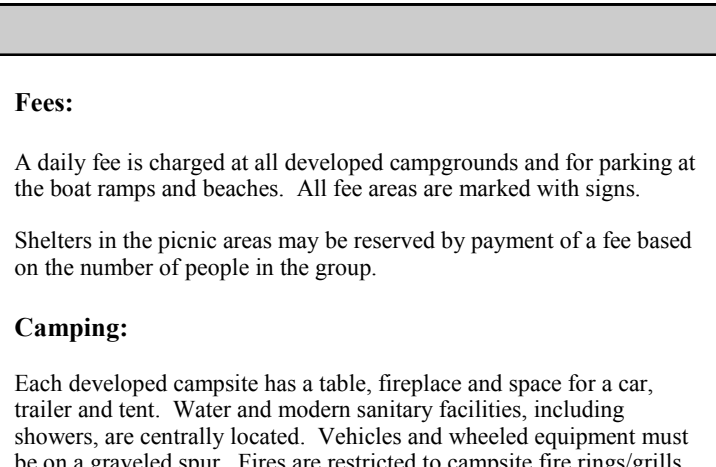
History

Gathright Reservoir, as it was originally called, was authorized by Congress in the Flood Control Act of 1946. However, two years later in a similar piece of legislation, Congress stated that the project should be reviewed to determine the desirability of its construction. Lawmakers also questioned whether some local funding should be sought based on benefits to be derived from water supply, pollution abatement and other conservation purposes.

In a review report to Congressional Public Works Committees, the Corps recommended that construction be undertaken without requiring local funding support.

The project was put in abeyance in 1954, when it appeared that economic justification for Gathright was marginal. In 1957, it was officially “Deferred for Restudy.”

The restudy, conducted in 1964, concluded that favorable economic benefits would prevail by constructing Gathright Dam. Gathright was soon thereafter placed back on



- Morris Hill campsites 1-39 are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Morris Hill Spur campsites 40-55 are available by reservation at www.reserveusa.com or 1-877-444-6777.
- Morris Hill campsites are open May 1 to October 31.
- Bolar Mountain Campground # 1 is open mid-April to early December.
- Bolar Mountain Campground # 2 and # 3 are open before Memorial Day and close after Labor Day.
- McClintic Point primitive campground is only open for overflow camping in the summer months and during the winter months when other campgrounds are closed.
- McClintic Point group campsites can be reserved through the Warm Springs Ranger District. Three group camping areas are available.
- Greenwood Point primitive campground is open year-round at no charge. Greenwood Point can be reached by boat or by trail from Moomaw Beach, a hike of four miles.
- Blowing Springs campground is open year-round.



Fishing:

- See current year state fishing regulations.
- State fishing license is required.
- No trout stamp or National Forest stamps are required on the lake.
- Camp fires/warming fires are permitted in developed area fire rings/grills only.
- There is a fishing access point at Coles Mountain for bank fishing and launching small boats.
- There are four fishing access sites along Virginia Route 603.
- Fishing is welcome downstream of the dam (note creel limit).



Boating (Lake Moomaw):

- Boat length is restricted to 25ft or less.
- No registered houseboats permitted.
- State boating regulations apply.
- Boating is permitted year round depending on water levels.
- No fishing or swimming from boat docks.
- No speed limit on lake but there are “No wake” and “No Boat” zones.
- There are bathrooms at each launch site.
- Launch Points:

North Side (Bath County)

- ♦ Bolar Flat- Two boat docks, four launching lanes at the ramp, and 120 parking spaces. Picnic area adjacent to launch site.
- ♦ Bolar Flat Marina- Boat rental, slip rental, camp store, live bait, and groceries.

South Side (Alleghany County)

- ♦ Fortney Branch- Four launching lanes at the ramp, and 120 parking spaces. Picnic area adjacent to launch site.
- ♦ Coles Point- Two launching lanes at the ramp. 38 parking spaces.

Recreational Use Rules and Regulations

Fees:

A daily fee is charged at all developed campgrounds and for parking at the boat ramps and beaches. All fee areas are marked with signs.

Shelters in the picnic areas may be reserved by payment of a fee based on the number of people in the group.

Camping:

Each developed campsite has a table, fireplace and space for a car, trailer and tent. Water and modern sanitary facilities, including showers, are centrally located. Vehicles and wheeled equipment must be on a graveled spur. Fires are restricted to campsite fire rings/grills only. Tents must be on tent pads.

Jackson River Canoeing & Kayaking:

The Jackson River has five canoe/kayak access points available below Gathright Dam.

- The first access point is just below the dam spillway, off SR 605, and is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- The second, Johnson Springs, is off SR 687.
- The third, Smith Bridge, is off SR 721.
- The fourth, Indian Draft, is off SR 687.
- The fifth, Petticoat Junction, is off SR 687.

You may fish and launch canoes/kayaks at the access points, but not in the surrounding areas, which are private land.

Hiking:

There are many trails associated with the Lake Moomaw area and the National Forest in general (see map on opposite side of brochure).

There are about 10 miles of maintained hiking trails in the Bolar Mountain Recreational Area. No horses, mountain bikes, or all-terrain vehicles are permitted.

Hiking trails are also associated with Morris Hill campground, Coles Mountain Recreation Area and Fortney Branch.

Hunting:

Hunting is permitted in the lake area with the following considerations. The discharging or uncasing of firearms is permitted only during an open game season and is not allowed around developed recreation areas. Hunting is not permitted between the road and the lake. A National Forest stamp is required for hunting at Lake Moomaw. Obtain a copy of the current Virginia hunting regulations for additional information.



Fire and Wood:

Fires are permitted, but only within designated camping and picnicking areas. All camp and picnic fires must be built in grills or rings provided.

Dead wood may be gathered in the area without a permit, but only for use within the designated picnic and camping grounds. No wood may be removed from the area.

During extremely dry conditions, additional rules may be necessary to protect the area.

Safety:

Rules and regulations designed to protect and enhance the environment at Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw are posted in all recreation areas.

Boaters are reminded of their responsibility to comply with all regulatory markers and special rules designed to help make their trip safe and enjoyable.

Because the lake is used for flood control, there are times when the shoreline campsites and other facilities along Lake Moomaw may become flooded by high water. Visitors are asked to cooperate with the Forest Service in evacuating these areas when necessary.

Seasonal hunting is allowed in the wildlife management area. Certain areas however are closed to all hunting. Check with the James River and Warm Springs Ranger Districts for rules and regulations.

Recreational opportunities continue on into winter. However, the Forest Service does not maintain roads during winter months, and the snow and ice buildup on roads and boat ramps can represent a hazard.

Ice fishing or skating on the frozen lake surface can be hazardous due to water level fluctuation.