

Public Hunting & Fishing  
8,002 Acres

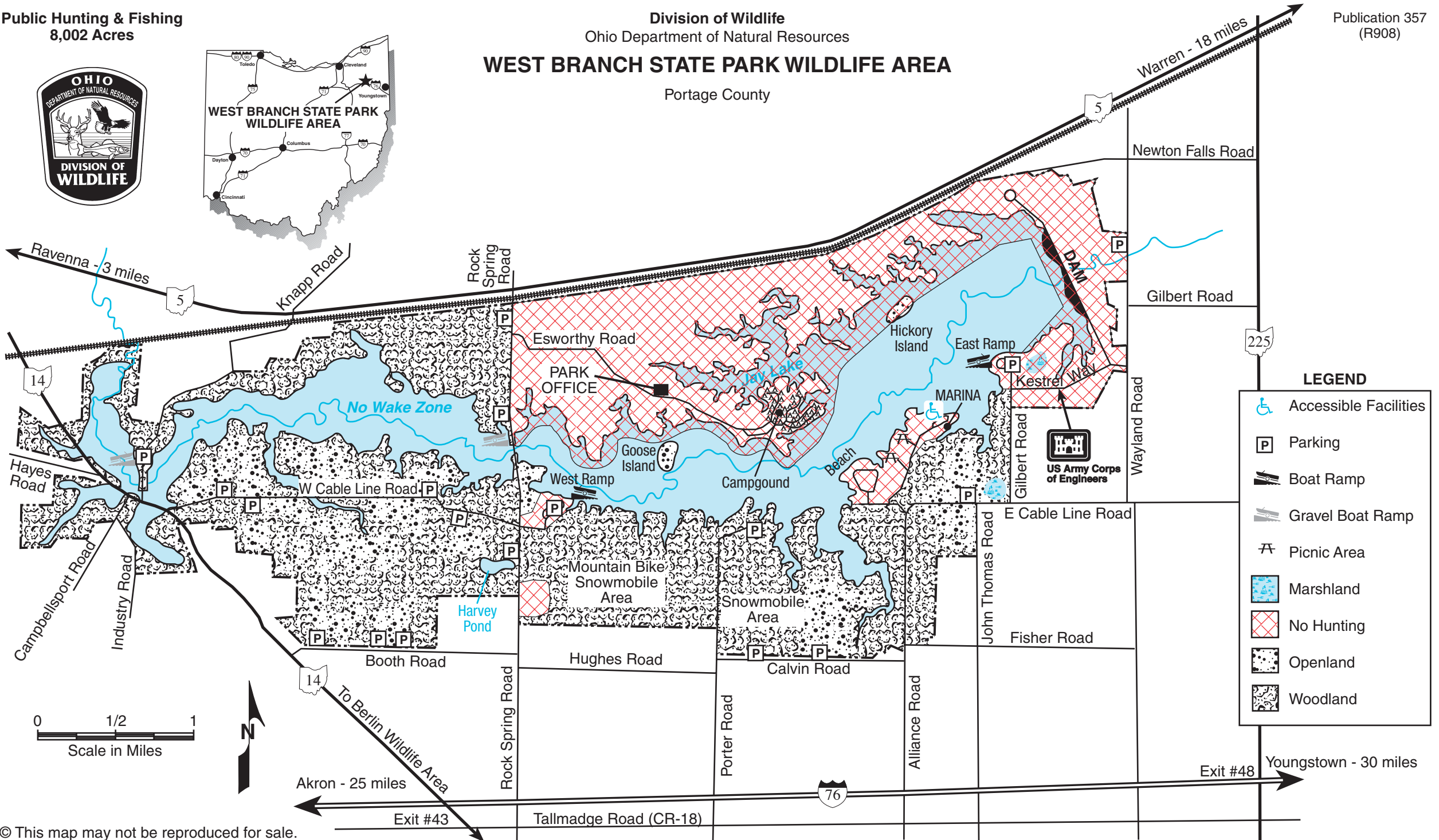


Division of Wildlife  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

# WEST BRANCH STATE PARK WILDLIFE AREA

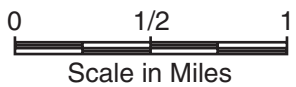
Portage County

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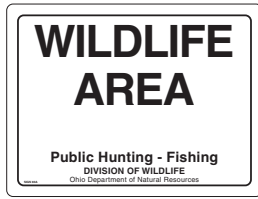


**LEGEND**

- Accessible Facilities
- Parking
- Boat Ramp
- Gravel Boat Ramp
- Picnic Area
- Marshland
- No Hunting
- Openland
- Woodland



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# WEST BRANCH STATE PARK WILDLIFE AREA

Portage County

## DISTANCE FROM MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

3 miles from Ravenna  
15 miles from Alliance  
18 miles from Warren  
25 miles from Akron  
30 miles from Youngstown  
35 miles from Cleveland

## LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

This 8,002-acre state park wildlife area is situated in northeast Ohio in Portage County on lands adjacent to West Branch Reservoir (Michael J. Kirwan Dam and Reservoir). The area is situated along the south side of State Route 5 about 5 miles east of Ravenna, and within the quadrangle formed by State Route 5 to the north, State Route 225 to the east, I-76 to the south, and State Route 14 to the west.

At full summer pool (elevation 985.0 feet) the surface water area of the reservoir totals 2,650 acres. Approximately 4,000 land acres are available for public hunting. The topography of the land ranges from flat to gently rolling, to strongly sloping. The soils are poorly drained and low in productivity.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

In 1965, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction of the Michael J. Kirwan Reservoir. This reservoir was developed for flood control, water supply, recreation, and fish and wildlife management. West Branch State Park was formally opened to the public in 1966 for boating, fishing, and hunting recreation. A wildlife management plan provides for maintenance and protection of existing woodlands, establishment of crop rotations, improvement of open fields for upland nesting, and establishment of food plots for general wildlife use. Permanent wildlife cover has been provided by letting trees and shrubs revert through succession along field borders and in odd areas, and by establishing brushy field dividers. The primary purpose of the wildlife area is to provide general public hunting and fishing on West Branch State Park.

## FISH AND WILDLIFE

West Branch Reservoir (M. J. Kirwan Reservoir) has a diverse population of sport fish, which includes large and small mouth bass, muskellunge, Northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, white and black crappie, bluegill, channel catfish, and bullhead.

Squirrels, rabbits, pheasant, raccoon, woodchuck, muskrat, mink, and opossum are the principal upland game and furbearer species; white-tailed deer can be found throughout the wildlife area and waterfowl occur on the lake and on the ponds and beaver marshes. Small impoundments on the area provide excellent habitat for beaver and other furbearers and shorebirds.

## HUNTING AND FISHING

Upland game species are well distributed throughout the wildlife area, in crop fields, shrubby coverts, grasslands, and woods. The best rabbit hunting occurs in the brushy upland along field edges and woods borders. There are several good squirrel woods on the area. Deer populations are good offering good archery and shotgun hunting opportunities. **West Branch State Park is open for hunting, but the northeastern section of the park, which is bound on the west by Rock Spring Road and on the south 100 yards beyond the lake shore, is closed to hunting.** This no hunting

area includes the park office, camp area, horse camp, dam, and east boat ramp. A 400-foot no hunting/safety zone extends around all other developed facilities. Hunting is limited to shotguns and primitive weapons for most game. **Rifles are not permitted for squirrel hunting.** Rifles are permitted for furbearer hunting only, between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. during the furbearer hunting season. Trapping is permitted in all hunting zone areas. **Target shooting is prohibited.** Contact the park office for more details.

There is year round fishing opportunity at the West Branch Wildlife Area.

Large and smallmouth bass, muskellunge, and Northern pike can be taken in the spring by working the shorelines. Walleye, yellow perch, bass, and muskellunge can be found on submerged hummocks during the summer months. Catfish can be caught at night using live bait on the bottom.

## PUBLIC USE FACILITIES

There are road pull offs and parking lots situated throughout the area. Fishing access is available at two paved and two gravel launching sites and at numerous shoreline fishing access points including a wheelchair accessible fishing pier at the marina. A marina with gas, bait, tackle, marine supplies, food, and boat rental is located off E. Cable Line Road. Docks and duck blinds are available on a lottery basis, contact the park office for more information. A modern campground is available.

## WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

A variety of nesting and migrant birds can be found throughout the varied habitats of the area. Species include waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, red-tailed hawks, an occasional bald eagle, upland game, and forest game species. Active beaver dams do occur on the area.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information may be obtained from the area manager, Berlin Lake Wildlife Area, 1806 Bonner Road, Deerfield, Ohio 44411, telephone (330) 654-2392 or at the Wildlife District Three Office, 912 Portage Lakes Drive, Akron, Ohio 44319, telephone (330) 644-2293.

For park and camping information contact the park manager at West Branch State Park, 5708 Esworthy Road, Route 5, Ravenna, Ohio 44266, telephone (330) 296-3239.

## TURN IN A POACHER

Ohio's TIP, "Turn In a Poacher," program is helping to curtail poaching throughout the state. TIP is designed to involve the public in reporting wildlife violations. Citizens who observe wildlife violations should call the TIP toll-free hotline at 1-800-POACHER.