



OCEAN COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

BARNEGAT BRANCH TRAIL

DEPARTMENTS OF PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND PARKS & RECREATION

GATEWAY TO WELLS MILLS PARK (1985)



Collection of Ocean County

James Wells is credited with damming Oyster Creek and building the first sawmill on the property in the late 1700s. Large stands of Atlantic White Cedar were harvested for lumber, used for shipbuilding, house construction and fences because of its light weight and resistance to rotting. The Estlow family acquired Wells Mills during the late 1800s. They were responsible for building two sawmills next to one another, thus the plural nature of the park's name.

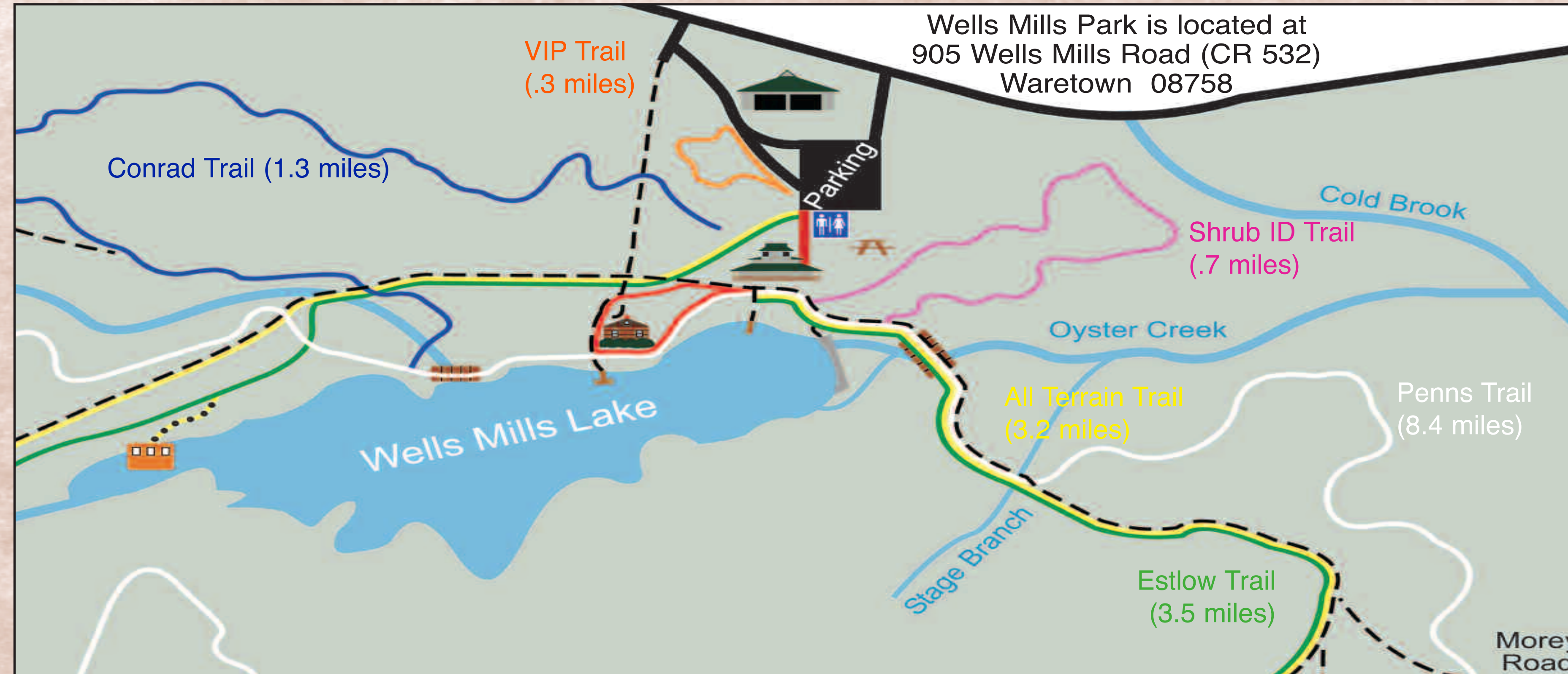


The Nature Center at Wells Mills County Park hosts exhibits of the flora, fauna, and local history of Ocean County, specifically the Pine Barrens. The center also has the Elizabeth Meirs Morgan Observation Deck, providing a fine view of the Wells Mills Lake and forest of the park.



Cedar View Lodge (Conrad-Oakley Cabin) :

Charles M. and Grove Conrad, Jr. constructed this family retreat and hunting cabin between 1935 and the winter of 1937 on land purchased from Tilton and Lydia Estlow in 1934. Special china was made in Trenton by a company named Tatler, friends of George Oakley. The china design included two cedar trees on each side of the words "Cedar View Lodge." The cabin has been the site of many good times and pleasant memories.



Opening to the public in 1991, Wells Mills County Park is the county's premier park in highlighting the diversity and beauty of New Jersey's Pine Barrens. The park includes a freshwater lake, streams, bogs, Atlantic White Cedar and Maple/Gum swamps and Pine Oak uplands. Many unique and rare plant species also grow at the park: majestic cedars tower over Curly Grass Ferns, Pitcher Plants, Sundews, Cranberries, Sphagnum Moss, and Turkey Beard. The habitat diversity provides food and shelter for a variety of animals that are an integral part of the Pine Barrens ecosystem. In 1934 the land was sold as a recreational retreat to the Conrad family who were prominent local businessmen.

The land was sold to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation in the late 1970s. This precluded any development plans for the tract. The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders purchased approximately 200 acres from the Foundation in 1985. Additional land was acquired increasing the park's size to over 900 acres. Significant additional land acquired through the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust Program has created an area of nearly 3,000 acres of contiguous Pinelands forest that will be managed by the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation.

For More information: www.oceancountyparks.org



Courtesy of Wells Mills County Park brochure

Wells Mills County Park boasts both passive and active recreation. Activities include: 16 miles of marked trails for hiking and biking, fishing and boating on Wells Mills Lake. Visitors to the park may bring their own boat (no gas motors) and launch at the Conrad-Oakley Cabin, or rent a canoe from the Nature Center when in season.

The Barnegat Branch Trail logo was explicitly designed with history in mind: Lady Liberty's silhouette is reminiscent of the Central Railroad of NJ (CNJ) logo, adopted by the railroad in 1944 to reflect the close proximity of the CNJ terminal in Jersey City to the Statue of Liberty. The BBT logo also includes a ghost locomotive, as well as Ocean County's most recognizable environmental features.

