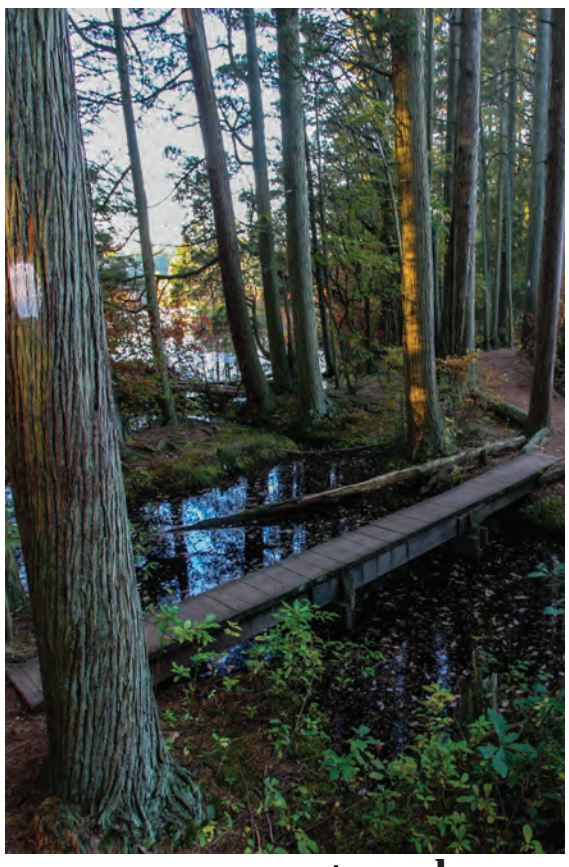
Ocean County Park System

Wells Mills County Park

905 Wells Mills Road
Waretown, NJ 08758
609-971-3085



www.oceancountyparks.org

Public Use

Admission to the park and nature center is **FREE.**

The park is open every day from **7:00 am to dusk.**

The nature center is open
Monday - Friday: 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Saturday - Sunday:
10:00 am to 4:00 pm
except certain holidays. Inquire at the front desk for our holiday schedule.

****Please be advised that ticks may be present****

Group Programs

All groups **MUST** register in advance of their visit to Wells Mills County Park.

We advise group leaders wishing to schedule a visit or education program at the park to reserve the date at least nine months in advance in order to prevent disappointment.

Groups must make reservations to use the picnic area, which can accommodate up to one hundred people. Reservations are handled by mail or in person at any Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation office. Please call (609) 971-3085 for additional information.

Ocean County Board of Commissioners

Robert S. Arace
Liaison to Ocean County Parks & Recreation
Jennifier Bacchione
Sam Ellenbogen
Ray Gormley
Frank Sadeghi

Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation

Mary Jane Bavais - Director
Scott Binkley - County Parks Superintendent
Tracey Lynch - Division Director of Recreation
Timothy G. Hart - Division Director
Cultural & Heritage Commission

Administrative Offices
1198 Bandon Road, Toms River, NJ 08753

(732) 506-9090
Fax: (732) 270-9464
www.oceancountyparks.org

Find Us On Our Social Media @OceanCountyParks

PARK OFFICES
Cattus Island County Park: (732} 270-6960
Wells Mills County Park: (609) 971-3085
Jakes Branch County Park: (732) 281-2750
Cloverdale County Park: (609) 607-1861

OCEAN COUNTY GOLF COURSES
Forge Pond Golf Course: (732) 920-8899
Atlantis Golf Course: (609) 296-2444

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Wells Mills County Park

At over 900 acres, Wells Mills County Park is Ocean County's largest park. Wells Mills County Park boasts a variety of unique habitats including a freshwater lake, streams, bogs, Atlantic White Cedar and Maple-Gum swamps, and Pine-Oak uplands.

Park Highlights

- Wells Mills Nature Center
- Over 16 miles of marked hiking/walking trails
- Boating and fishing access
- Picnic area
- Playground
- Canoe rentals
- 1,400 square foot exhibit room
- 50 seat lecture room for educational groups

The Wells Mills Nature Center

The Wells Mills Nature Center was designed to meet the ever-growing need for environmental education and recreation in Ocean County. Exhibits inside the Nature Center interpret the local history, flora and fauna of Ocean County. The Elizabeth Meirs Morgan observation deck provides a fine view of Wells Mills Lake and the surrounding Pine Barrens from atop the building.

Trail Rules

Below are some important rules to help make your visit safe and enjoyable.

- Please sign in and out at the trailhead near the outdoor restrooms. This is for your safety.
- Be sure to check closing times posted at the park entrance before using the trails.
- For your safety, please stay on the marked trails.
- Alcoholic beverages, smoking and campfires are not permitted.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times. Please pick up after your pet.
- Carry out your trash and a little extra if you can!
- Do not feed or approach wildlife, please enjoy it from a distance.
- A portion of our trails run through the Joseph A. Citta Scout Reservation. Please respect this property by observing all trail rules.
- All-terrain Bikes MUST stay on designated bike trail, and MUST give hikers the right-of-way.
- Cross country skiers are welcome when the ground is snow-covered. All trail rules apply.

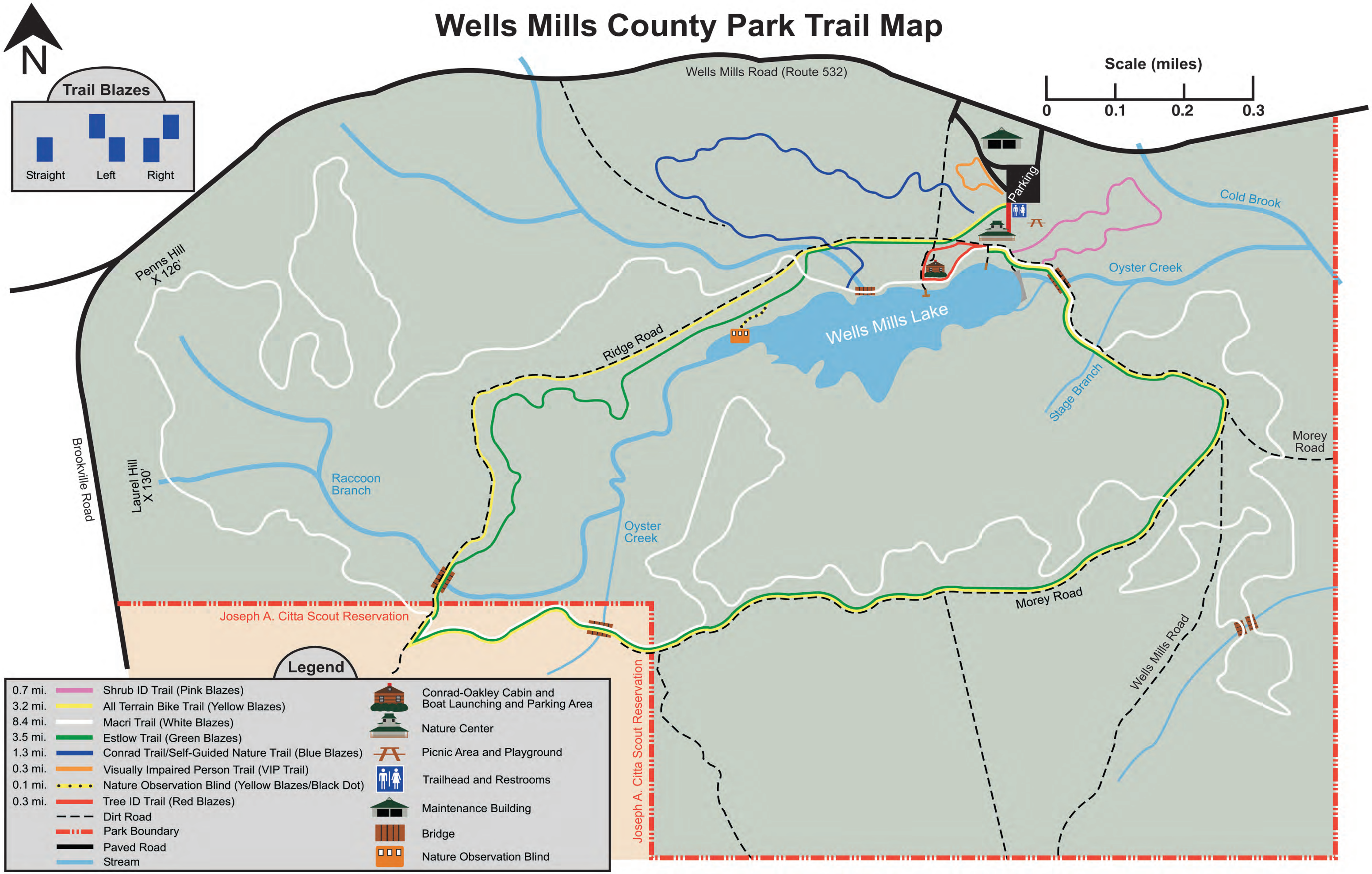
Wells Mills County Park History

The history of the park dates back to colonial times when Elisha Lawrence, a zealous Tory, lost ownership of this land after fighting on the side of the British during the Revolutionary War.

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. This wood was prized for use in shipbuilding, home construction and fences for its light weight and rot resistance.

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. Other activities that occurred on the property include shingle making, firewood cutting and sphagnum moss gathering. Clay mining was also undertaken by Tilden Estlow, who was one of the last Estlows to live at Wells Mills.

In 1936, the land was sold as a recreational retreat to the Conrad family who were prominent local businessmen. Charles M. and Grove Conrad, Jr. built the rustic cabin that overlooks Wells Mills lake during the winter of 1937. The Conrads gave life rights to the Estlows, who remained on the property to live and work. Tilden Estlow died in 1951, after which his wife Lydia moved to Waretown.

Due to increasing taxes, 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 from Ocean Township and other private landowners, increasing the park's size to over 900 acres.

Wells Mills County Park Trail Map