

One-Day Kayak Trip Plan: West Branch Susquehanna (Montoursville to Montgomery)

River Overview – Mileage, Time & Landmarks

Route Length & Paddling Time: The trip covers approximately **14.5 river miles** from the Montoursville (PFBC Greevy) boat launch to the PFBC Montgomery boat launch ¹ ². Intermediate paddlers can expect about **5-6 hours** of paddling time, not including stops. This assumes a moderate pace on mostly gentle water. (For reference, 10 miles on this section takes ~3-4 hours under normal flow ³, and 12 miles takes ~5-6 hours at a leisurely pace ⁴.) Plan for a full day with breaks – launching by mid-morning and taking off in late afternoon is typical.

Notable Landmarks & Scenery: Right after launching at Montoursville's Greevy Access (river mile 37.3 ¹), you'll pass **Canfield Island** on river left. This man-made island (created by a 19th-century sawmill) has archaeological significance and a short walking trail, though you'll likely remain in your boat here ⁵. About a mile downriver, **Loyalsock Creek** enters on the left; this was the site of the Native American village Otstonwakin (home of Madame Montour, for whom Montoursville is named) ⁶. As you continue, the **West Branch Susquehanna** broadens with **multiple islands** splitting the flow. Two notable islands are **Racetrack Island** (around river mile 35) and **King Island** (near RM 32.6). Follow the local guidance here: stay river **left** at Racetrack Island (this island is private, no stopping allowed) ⁷, and later keep river **right** at King Island ⁸ to avoid shallow channels. These island areas have fun **riffles** – minor rapids that at normal levels are splashy but not technical. In fact, around the islands you may hit some swift ripples that *almost* feel like low-class whitewater, especially in higher water ⁹. Between these faster stretches, the river is often flat and lake-like, so you'll be paddling rather than just floating, particularly in summer low flow ⁹.

Further downstream, you'll paddle along the base of **Bald Eagle Ridge** on river right (a forested ridge that's an important raptor flyway) ¹⁰. Keep an eye out for wildlife: great blue herons fishing the shallows, bald eagles soaring overhead, and various ducks and songbirds along the brushy shoreline are commonly spotted ¹¹. Approaching **Muncy** (around river mile 27), you'll see the remnants of history: the **Lycoming Valley Railroad Bridge** comes into view, marking where the famous "Last Raft" lumber reenactment tragically crashed in 1938 ¹² ¹³. On river left near this bridge are old stone walls of the **Muncy Canal** and the site of **Fort Muncy/Samuel Wallis's estate**, though little is visible from the water. At **Muncy Heritage Park & River Access** (RM 26.7) ¹⁴ ¹⁵, there's a public landing with picnic tables – a great place to pause. In fact, this park is an ideal lunch stop or emergency bail-out with parking and facilities ¹² (more on that below).

Downstream of Muncy, the next 3-4 miles are peaceful and scenic ¹⁶. You'll soon spot the **Montgomery** area: an automobile bridge (Route 54) will appear ahead – **Montgomery's PFBC Access (river mile 22.8)** is **river right just before that bridge** ¹⁷. This is your take-out, located in the **borough of Montgomery**, a small river town that once was a logging and industrial hub. The Montgomery access has a concrete boat ramp and a parking area right by the bridge. It's also a convenient rest stop (with a portable toilet seasonally) if you needed a break before ending ¹⁸.

Map of the West Branch Susquehanna (Williamsport/Montoursville to Muncy segment). Montoursville's put-in (PFBC Greevy Access) is near the top-left, and the route heads southeast past islands and historic sites ⁵ ¹⁹ .

Map of the Muncy to Watsontown segment (which includes our route's second half). Montgomery is marked as a rest stop (orange icon) between Muncy (start of map) and Watsontown (far right). Our trip ends at Montgomery Access (river mile 22.8) ² , before the former Ordinance Dam area further downstream.

Water-Level Guidance – Flows, Gauge & Forecasts

Ideal Levels & Gauge: This stretch of the West Branch is generally forgiving in a wide range of water levels. It is usually **passable except when frozen in winter or during flood conditions** ²⁰ . The primary gauge to watch is the **USGS gauge at Williamsport** (upstream of Montoursville). At low summer flows, the Williamsport gauge can drop to about **1.2 feet** (~600–800 CFS in summer) and the river remains navigable (expect some scraping in shallow spots) ²¹ . **Optimal levels** for an easier ride are a bit higher – for example, around **2–3 feet stage** (roughly a few thousand CFS) which provides a steady current and fewer exposed rocks. High spring runoff can push flows much higher; for safety, avoid venturing out when the gauge is approaching **action stage or flood stage** (the **NWS flood stage** at Williamsport is ~21 ft, far above normal) – in practical terms, flows above ~10–12 feet on that gauge would mean very fast, pushy water not suitable for a casual day trip. A good **ideal range** is roughly **1.5 to 4 feet** on the Williamsport gauge (which is roughly **1,000 to 9,000 CFS** based on recent readings ²²), staying well below any flood advisories.

Seasonal Fluctuations: Water levels on the West Branch vary by season. **Spring** (March–May) brings snowmelt and rain, often yielding *high, fast flows*. In early spring the current will carry you faster, but water temperatures are cold and levels can occasionally become too high for safety (large debris and strong currents) if there's heavy rain. By **summer** (July–August), without recent rain the river settles into *lower flows* – the water will be **shallower and slower**, meaning you'll paddle more since the river's push is gentle ⁹ . Late summer levels can get low enough that some riffles become gravel shoals; you might have to pick channels carefully to avoid grounding. However, typical summer base flow is still enough to get through (this section is noted as essentially always runnable in normal summer conditions ²⁰). **Fall** brings variable flows: early fall can remain low until rainstorms or hurricanes bump the river up; late fall rains usually raise levels slightly (and leaf-fall in October can clog eddies). Generally, fall has comfortable medium levels and cooler water. **Winter** sees the lowest flows and the river may partially freeze – not applicable for our trip, but good to know.

How to Check Levels & Forecast: In the week leading up to your trip, monitor the **USGS real-time gauge at Williamsport** (Station #01551500) for the latest stage and CFS. You can easily find this data online; for example, USGS or NOAA websites show current gauge height and discharge. The night before, also check the **NWS River Forecast** (Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service) for the **West Branch at Montoursville/Williamsport or at West Milton** (just downstream of Montgomery). The **West Milton gauge** gives a 2–3 day forecast of river levels in the Montgomery/Watsontown area ²³ . This is helpful if heavy rain is in the forecast – the river can rise significantly within a day or two of big storms. If the forecast shows a sharp rise or approaching flood stage, consider postponing. On July 5 (your target date), levels are typically stable summer flows **unless** there's been recent downpours. Check the weather radar and any rainfall upstream (in central PA) for the few days prior. The night before, ensure the gauge is within the safe range (e.g. not spiking beyond the **ideal range**) and look at the **CFS**: ideally a moderate few thousand CFS for a nice current. You can use apps or websites (USGS Waterdata, NOAA AHPS) which often color-code conditions. One rule of thumb: if islands that are usually visible start to disappear under water, the river is on the high

side; if you see vast exposed gravel bars on satellite images but not in person, it might be lower side. In any case, err on side of caution – it's better to paddle with slightly low water (just occasional scrapes) than water that's too high and fast for comfort.

Best Time of Year – When to Go (Spring vs Summer/Fall)

Spring (Apr–early Jun): High water and cool weather. **Pros:** Spring runoff and rains swell the river, providing a faster current and deeper channels. You'll glide over riffles that might be scratchy in late summer. The riverbanks are coming alive – leafy green scenery and spring wildflowers. Also, *fewer insects* early on (April) compared to midsummer; black flies can be an issue in some PA waterways, but spring treatments on the Susquehanna often keep them manageable. Cooler air temps (50s–70s°F) are great for paddling exertion, and you'll likely have the river largely to yourself aside from maybe fishermen. **Cons:** The water is **cold** (often 50°F or below in early spring), so immersion without proper gear can be dangerous – wetsuits or drysuits are advisable in April. High flows can make eddies and currents stronger; while this section isn't whitewater, an intermediate paddler should still use caution if levels are unusually high. Also, spring weather is fickle – sudden rain, wind, or even a late cold snap can happen. If you go in spring, target late April or May when levels have moderated a bit from peak snowmelt and daytime temps are milder. And always check that there's no flood watch.

Summer (July–Aug): Low water, warm weather. **Pros: Warm water and air temperatures** make for a very comfortable trip. In early July, the air temps are typically mid-80s °F and water temps can be in the 70s °F – pleasant if you want to swim or if you accidentally tip (much less risk of hypothermia). Long daylight hours let you start early or paddle into the evening. *Stable weather:* summer tends to have more predictable patterns (morning calm, afternoon chance of thunderstorms – keep an eye out mid-late afternoon). **Cons:** **Lower river flows** in summer mean the current is slower (you'll do more paddling) and some shallow **riffles may require careful line choices** or even a quick scoot if you bottom out. You might encounter a few spots where the kayak scrapes gravel at very low water – not dangerous, just an occasional annoyance. Another con: **insects**. By July, mosquitoes can be active especially near dusk or in shaded, stagnant backwaters (carry repellent for use when stopped). Deer flies and horseflies are also notorious along rivers in mid-summer – they can harass paddlers on still days. Wearing light-colored clothing and using bug spray on your hat or PFD can deter them. If there are any untreated **black fly** populations, they'd also peak in late June/July; however, the state often controls black flies on the Susquehanna, so they may not be bad. Also, **sun exposure** is stronger in summer – you'll want a sun hat, sunscreen, and perhaps an umbrella or long sleeves for shade. Finally, summer weekends may bring out more people: anglers in small motorboats or families tubing near easy access points (though this stretch is not usually crowded).

Fall (Sept–Oct): Cooling temps and scenic foliage. **Pros: Beautiful scenery** – by late September, the river valley trees start turning gold and red, offering fantastic photo ops. The air is cool (60s–70s°F days, cooler nights) which is ideal paddling weather – no summer haze, often clear blue skies. Water levels can be very good if autumn rains come: early fall might still be low if summer was dry, but late fall often sees moderate rises (without the torrential floods of spring). Fewer thunderstorms compared to summer, and virtually **no bugs** by mid-autumn (after the first frost, mosquitoes and flies diminish greatly). You'll also find much less boat traffic or crowds – it's a tranquil time on the water. **Cons: Shorter daylight** – by October, sunset comes much earlier (~6:30–7:00 pm), so you have less wiggle room for a late start. The water starts getting **chilly** again (down to 60°F or below by late fall), so while not frigid like spring, you'll feel the cold if you get wet – dress in layers and avoid cotton. Some accesses or amenities (like portable toilets at launches or concession stands in towns) may close or be removed after October 1. Fall water levels can be hit-or-miss; a dry autumn

could make parts of the trip very shallow. And of course, one wildcard con: autumn is hurricane season – a stray tropical system could dump heavy rain and cause high water in September/October. Always check conditions.

Overall Best: For this Montoursville–Montgomery trip, **late spring through mid-summer** is popular. *Early summer* (June, early July) offers a nice balance: generally moderate flows, warm but not stifling weather, and all amenities open. Your planned date (July 5) falls into this prime window – expect warm water and manageable water levels (barring a recent storm). Do start early to beat afternoon heat and keep an eye out for pop-up thunderstorms on summer afternoons. **Late summer** (August) is still fine, just plan for lower water and a hotter sun. **Fall** is gorgeous if you don't mind cooler water and a bit more trip planning around daylight and weather windows. **Spring** can be wonderful if you're prepared for cold water and possibly fast flows – if you ever do a spring run, May is recommended over early April. Each season has its charm on the West Branch, so it depends on your comfort with conditions. Whenever you go, try to target a stretch of a few dry days for clear water and safe levels.

Hazards & “Gotchas” on this Section

While this is an **easy-rated water trail** section with no major rapids or mandatory portages ²⁴, every river has its hazards. Here's what to watch for:

- **Strainers (Downed Trees & Debris):** The West Branch's channels around islands and along the banks can collect fallen trees, especially after storms. A “strainer” is a tree or branch pile in the water that lets water through but not solid objects (like a person or boat) – hitting one can flip a kayak. **Stay alert near the banks and island splits**, especially in the narrower side channels around Racetrack and King Islands. Give any logjams a wide berth. In general, hug the *inside of bends* rather than the outside where undercut banks and treefalls accumulate. After high water, also watch for floating debris (logs) coming downstream.
- **Shallow Riffles & Hidden Rocks:** At lower water, you'll encounter shallow gravel riffles – most notably downstream of islands or at tributary mouths (like near Loyalsock Creek's mouth). These are usually easy to spot by the faster, rippled water. Pick the deeper line (often the outside of a bend or the more defined channel) to avoid running aground. Even so, expect an occasional “thunk” on a submerged rock – **hidden rocks** lurk especially where the water looks slightly dimpled or there's a sudden riffle. They're usually smooth river stones; just keep your feet inside the kayak (to avoid foot entrapment) and push off with your paddle if you bottom out. The **Williamsport gauge ~1.2 ft** is the threshold where it gets really scratchy ²¹; at typical summer levels (2-3 ft) you should float through most riffles, but still pay attention. If you do get stuck on a gravel bar, scoot your weight forward or backward to slide off – or briefly step out onto the shallow bar (with shoes on) to refloat the boat.
- **Former Dams:** There are *no active low-head dams* on this particular segment. Historically, the **Muncy Dam** existed here to supply a canal, but it was destroyed by floods in the 1800s ²⁵ ²⁶. Downstream of Montgomery (past our take-out) are **remnants of the Ordnance Dam**, an old structure from a former river obstruction or industrial site ²⁷. We won't encounter it since we're ending at Montgomery, but if one were to continue, at very low water those remnants form rocky ledges that you'd have to go around (left side). For us, just be aware that *below* Montgomery one should research that hazard; **for our trip, no dam portages are needed.**

- **Bridges & Rapid Currents:** We will go under a couple of bridges (railroad bridge at Muncy, and the highway bridge at Montgomery near take-out). Bridges can constrict flow, but in normal conditions you won't notice much current change. Still, **avoid bridge piers** – don't get too close to the supports in case of weird currents or debris stuck on them. The *Muncy railroad bridge* piers were notably involved in the "Last Raft" accident, but that was during a high flow event ¹³. At typical summer flow, just pass through the widest clear span and you'll be fine.
- **Private Property "Gotchas":** Plan your stops at public sites because some appealing spots are private. For instance, **Racetrack Island is private property** – it might tempt you as a break spot, but stopping there is **not allowed** ⁷. Also, much of the shoreline is privately owned or undeveloped wild land. Always ask permission if you need to use someone's riverbank. That said, **Muncy Heritage Park** (river left, ~mile 26.7) and **Montgomery PFBC Access** (mile 22.8) are public-friendly places to get out ¹² ¹⁷. Use those for stretching, picnicking, or bail-out if needed, rather than random yards. *Leave No Trace* ethics (discussed later) are especially important if you stop on any wild shoreline or islands – pack out all trash and minimize impact.
- **Power Boat Traffic:** This stretch sees **occasional motorboats**, mostly small fishing boats or shallow-draft johnboats with jet engines. It's not a heavily motorized area due to the shallow nature of the West Branch, but on nice weekends you might see a couple fishermen near access points. Always **assume they don't see you** – wear bright clothing and give a friendly paddle wave. Stay to one side of the channel when passing oncoming boats (like cars on a road – each stays right). Their wakes are usually minor; just point your bow into the wake waves if a larger boat does pass fast (reduces rocking). Also note, upstream around Williamsport, there might be more motor activity, but by Montoursville/Muncy it thins out. One special case: **airboats** (flat-bottom boats with a big fan) sometimes operate in shallow Susquehanna sections – they're loud and can appear suddenly. If you hear one, just stay visible and they'll avoid you.
- **Wildlife Hazards:** Generally, wildlife is a treat, not a danger. You might see **snapping turtles** pop up or basking on logs – give them space if you're wading (they can bite if provoked, but won't chase you). **Northern water snakes** inhabit the banks; they're non-venomous but may startle you by slithering in the water. Just leave them alone. If you stop on a bank, be cautious where you step – there could be **poisonous plants or insects** (more below). No alligators or anything in PA, thankfully!
- **Poison Ivy & Vegetation:** Pennsylvania riverbanks are infamous for **poison ivy**, and this region is no exception – *"the river bank is poison-ivy woodsy,"* as one account describes ²⁸. Vines of **poison ivy** climb trees and sprawl along shores. Learn the *"leaves of three"* look and avoid touching any vegetation you can't identify. If you pull ashore at an overgrown bank for a bathroom break or to scout, be very careful where you step or grab – carrying a small bottle of Tecnu or skin cleanser in your kit is wise in case of contact. Also watch for **thorny brambles** (wild rose, blackberry) that can scratch, and **stinging nettle** in floodplain areas in summer. Wearing long pants or using a ground cloth when sitting on shore can help prevent rashes.
- **Insects:** As noted, **mosquitoes and flies** can annoy you, especially if you tuck into a calm cove or near dusk. They're not life-threatening, but constant swatting can ruin the peace. Use repellent on exposed skin and maybe treat clothing with permethrin beforehand if bugs love you. If you're **allergic to wasp or bee stings**, remember that bees sometimes hang around water's edge for

moisture; carry your EpiPen if needed. Ticks are present in grassy areas – another reason to avoid trampling through brush (and do a tick check after the trip, just in case, if you were in tall grass).

- **Weather Hazards:** *Summer storms:* Thunderstorms can blow in on hot afternoons. Lightning on the open water is extremely dangerous. We cover weather protocols in safety below, but as a hazard: if you hear thunder, be prepared to get off the water *immediately* and find shelter. Sudden wind gusts ahead of storms can kick up surprisingly large waves on a wide river like the Susquehanna – if a dark cloud approaches, head to the nearest safe shore before winds hit. *Sun/heat:* Heat exhaustion or sunburn are quiet hazards – hydrate frequently (have water easily accessible, not buried in a dry bag) and consider bringing a cooling neck gaiter or a spray bottle to keep cool. Wear sunscreen and reapply at midday, since water reflection increases UV exposure. *Fog:* Occasionally on cool mornings, fog can reduce visibility – if it's very thick at launch time, wait for it to lift a bit so any motorboats can see you (and so you can navigate).
- **Isolation / No Easy Outs:** One unique “gotcha” here: **between Montoursville and Muncy, there are no road access points or bridges – it's a ~10-mile stretch of uninterrupted river** ²⁹. That means once you launch and leave Montoursville, you're committed to paddling roughly 10 miles to Muncy's access or all the way to Montgomery, as there's nowhere for a vehicle to reach the river in between. This isn't a hazard per se, but it means you must be self-sufficient. If something goes wrong in that middle stretch, you can't just pull out and hitch a ride – you'd have to make it to Muncy. Keep that in mind if weather is changing or if someone in the group is struggling; turning back upriver against the current isn't really feasible beyond a mile or so. So, check everyone's gear and condition before leaving the put-in – it's effectively wilderness for that central portion.

By staying aware of these hazards and exercising common sense, you should have a **safe and enjoyable paddle**. This section in normal conditions has *no notorious dangers* – no dams to portage, no whitewater drops – just the ordinary river precautions we've listed. Scout with your eyes as you go, communicate with your paddling partners about upcoming obstacles, and you'll navigate it with confidence. And always wear your **PFD** (lifejacket) on the water – it's the single best safety move, mitigating many of the above risks.

Shuttle Logistics – Vehicles, Parking & Driver Shuttle Plan

Your group has **two vehicles** – a truck (able to carry both kayaks) and a car for shuttling drivers. This is ideal for a point-to-point paddle. Here's a step-by-step shuttle plan and tips:

Parking Locations:

- **Put-In (Montoursville):** The launch is the **Montoursville Municipal Boat Ramp (PFBC Greevy Access)**, sometimes called the Jack W. Ellmaker Access, on the west branch in Montoursville. It has a paved ramp, a parking lot, and even flush restrooms and a picnic area ³⁰. There is **no launch fee** for use ³¹, but **each kayak needs either a PFBC launch permit or registration sticker** (Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission rules) – make sure you've obtained those inexpensive permits beforehand to avoid a fine. The parking area is generally safe and frequented by anglers; nonetheless, do not leave valuables in your vehicles and lock up. Overnight parking is allowed, but since you're just day-tripping, that's not a concern. The address is near

Greevy Road, Montoursville – accessible via Interstate 180 (Faxon/Montoursville exit) and North Loyalsock Avenue. It's easy to find with signage for the boat launch.

- **Take-Out (Montgomery):** The take-out is **PFBC Montgomery Access**, located off Route 405 just west of the river, by the Montgomery bridge (PA-54). It similarly has a concrete ramp and gravel parking lot. There is a seasonal porta-potty and a small pavilion or kiosk. No fees here either, just the same launch permit requirement for boats. Montgomery is a smaller town; the lot is somewhat open and visible from the road/bridge. It's typically safe for day parking – local paddlers and fishermen use it – but again lock your car. Montgomery Access is at river mile 22.8 ², essentially under the bridge. It's about 5 minutes drive from the town center of Montgomery.

Shuttle Route & Drive Time: Driving between Montoursville and Montgomery is straightforward and fairly quick – roughly **18 miles or ~25 minutes** each way, mostly highway. The common route is: from Montoursville boat launch, get on **I-180/US-220 East** toward Muncy; go about 10 miles and take the **PA-54 (Montgomery) exit**. PA-54 South will cross the river on the Montgomery bridge – right after crossing, turn left onto 1st Street or Montgomery Street to reach the boat ramp area (the ramp road is just under the bridge on river-right side). Alternatively, you can exit earlier at **Hall's/Route 405** and follow PA-405 South along the river through Muncy to Montgomery. That route is scenic and only slightly longer (~20 miles total). Either way, budget about a half hour one-way for shuttling. It's wise to print or save directions offline, but signage is pretty clear.

Shuttle Plan (Two Vehicles): On the morning of the trip, do the following:

1. **Meet at the Take-Out first (Option A):** This is often simplest. Have everyone meet at Montgomery Access (take-out) early in the morning. Consolidate the gear and kayaks onto the **truck** there. Then **leave the car parked at Montgomery** (your take-out) and **all drive in the truck** (with boats) to Montoursville. This way, at the end of the paddle, your car is waiting at Montgomery for the drivers to use in case they need to retrieve the other vehicle. However, one downside: the truck – which carries kayaks – would not be at take-out in this scenario. So, consider *Option B* instead.
2. **Meet at the Put-In first (Option B, recommended):** Everyone convenes at Montoursville Greevy boat launch in the morning. Unload the kayaks and gear from the truck. If you have two paddlers, one can stay with the gear and boats (to keep an eye on them) while two drivers shuttle vehicles. **Both vehicles** leave Montoursville and drive to Montgomery. At Montgomery, **park the truck** (with its kayak racks/trailer) securely in the lot – this vehicle will be ready at the end to haul the boats. Then both drivers hop in the car and **drive back to Montoursville**. This gets both people back to the put-in where the boats are. Now you have the car at the put-in and the truck at the take-out.
3. **Timing:** This shuttle loop (Montoursville → Montgomery → back to Montoursville) will take about **1 hour round-trip**. If you leave Montoursville at 8:00 AM, you'd be back by ~9:00 AM ready to launch. Use that time to finish gearing up the boats (the person who stayed can prep PFDs, etc.). Early start is key to avoid mid-day heat and to have cushion for potential delays.
4. **Security:** It's generally fine to leave boats unattended for a short time at Montoursville, especially if off to the side of the ramp out of others' way. But if you're uneasy, both drivers could do a **"drop, drop, shuttle"**: Driver A drops boats & PFDs at the launch with paddler B waiting, then A and B take

both vehicles to drop the truck at take-out, then B brings A back in the car. Since you have only two people (assuming), someone must watch gear or you risk it – better to have one stay.

5. **Upon finishing the paddle:** At Montgomery take-out, the **truck** is right there. Load the kayaks onto the truck. By this time everyone might be tired, but take a moment to secure all straps properly. Because you smartly parked the truck forward (nose out) earlier, it's easy to drive out. Now if you followed Option B, the only remaining step is to retrieve the car from Montoursville: one of you can later drive the truck (with boats) back to Montoursville to get the car. If it's just two of you, you both can go in the truck to get the car after loading up (Montoursville is on your way home if returning that direction). Alternatively, you could swing by Montoursville on the way to dinner (see celebratory options later) to pick it up. Montoursville's lot is fine for a few hours. If you did Option A and left the car at take-out and truck at put-in, you'd now have a small logistical issue: the kayaks are at take-out but the truck is not. You'd have to either ferry drivers back to Montoursville to fetch the truck or (less ideal) try to fit kayaks on the car. This is why Option B (truck at take-out) is recommended.

Quick-Turn Driver Swap (Weather Contingency): If a sudden storm or emergency requires you to **cut the trip short**, the best intermediate access is **Muncy Heritage Park (RM 26.7)** ¹². You could land there, which is about 10 miles into the trip (roughly 2/3 of the way). However, since neither of your vehicles is stationed at Muncy by default, you'd need a plan: one option is if a storm is anticipated, you might *pre-place* the car at Muncy as a backup. But with only two vehicles, that complicates the morning shuttle. Without pre-placing, your move would be: get off the water at Muncy Heritage Park (it's an official launch with parking), then have one person wait with the gear while the other **hitches a ride or calls a taxi/Uber** to Montgomery (to retrieve the truck). It's about a 5-mile drive via Route 405 from Muncy to Montgomery. In a pinch, this can be done – keep a rideshare app on your phone or have a local cab company number. Alternatively, if you have a friend on call, they could do a driver shuttle for you from Muncy. The phrase “quick-turn driver-swap” likely implies being ready to shuffle vehicles quickly if plans change: so *carry car keys with you in a dry bag!* That way whichever vehicle is nearer can be accessed. For example, if you had left the car at put-in, turning back isn't helpful; but since we left the car at put-in and truck at take-out, bailing at Muncy still requires someone to get the truck or car. In summary: monitor the sky and forecast (see Weather Protocols in Safety section). If a severe thunderstorm is forecast for late afternoon, you could decide at lunch (Muncy) whether to **end early at Montgomery** (skip breaks and paddle through) to beat the storm, or get off at Muncy if it's closer. Having the car at Montoursville and truck at Montgomery gives you flexibility: you can always paddle directly to Montgomery truck (the original plan) or if absolutely necessary paddle back upstream a short distance to Muncy if you overshot (not easy, but if the storm is visible downstream, you might retreat a half-mile upstream to Muncy). These scenarios are unlikely, but it's wise to have a *Plan B exit*. The good news is that cell service is generally available by the towns (Muncy, Montgomery), so you could communicate with a shuttle driver if needed.

Shuttle Safety Tips: Both the Montoursville and Montgomery parking areas are public and generally safe in daylight. Montoursville's lot is in a somewhat hidden riverside spot (though there may be fishermen in the morning/evening). Montgomery's is right by the road. When leaving a vehicle for the day, hide any valuables (or better, don't bring them). A cooler of drinks covered with a towel is fine, but put laptops, etc., in the trunk or leave at home. Neither launch has an on-site attendant; however, local law enforcement and Fish & Boat officers do patrol occasionally. Be sure to display your **launch permit** on the kayak; on the vehicles, no special permit is needed beyond normal registration.

Also, leave a **trip plan** with someone not going: tell a friend or family member “We’re paddling from Montoursville to Montgomery, launching around 9am and expecting to finish by around 4–5pm. We have a black Ford truck at the take-out and a blue Honda car at the put-in. If you don’t hear from us by dark (9pm), call for help.” It’s unlikely to be needed, but a smart safety net.

Finally, for efficiency, have **all paddlers help** with the shuttle if possible: for example, if you have more people than just the two drivers, you can have everyone go to put-in, unload, then one driver takes the truck and one takes the car to take-out, and a third person could follow in the truck then drive the truck driver back in the car... (various combos). But since you specified two vehicles, I assume maybe two paddlers. In that case, Option B above is your best bet. The payoff is at day’s end: you drive off from Montgomery with kayaks loaded, no extra trip needed (aside from retrieving the car, which is on the way home if you live near Montoursville).

Emergency & Safety Notes

Nearest Medical Facilities: It’s always good to know where help is if someone gets injured or falls ill. The nearest full-service hospital at the **start** is *UPMC Williamsport Hospital* (~6 miles west of Montoursville). For most on-water emergencies, though, you’d exit and call 911 for an ambulance to the nearest access point. **Mid-route**, the closest medical facility is *UPMC Muncy* (Muncy Valley Hospital) in Muncy, about 2 miles from the Heritage Park access (it’s a small hospital with ER). Near the **take-out**, you’re not far from *Evangelical Community Hospital* (in Lewisburg, ~15 miles south) and *Geisinger Medical Center Muncy* (a new facility near I-180). But in practice, if something happens on the river, *don’t wait* – get to shore and call 911. Rescue crews can access the river at Montoursville, Muncy, Montgomery, or even by boat. Note that Montoursville/Muncy/Montgomery are in Lycoming County which has a well-coordinated 911 system. Provide mile markers or landmarks (carry the water trail map which has river miles and access names for reference). For minor injuries, you likely can self-rescue to your take-out.

Cell Service Dead Zones: The West Branch valley here is mostly open and near populated areas, so **cell coverage is fairly good** (Verizon and AT&T have towers along I-180 and in towns). That said, in the **10-mile roadless stretch** between Montoursville and Muncy, you might hit a dead spot, especially in low areas behind Bald Eagle Ridge. Don’t count on streaming video out there, but basic phone signal should work in most spots on the water. It’s wise to assume you *might not* have service exactly when you need it, though. Each paddler should have a whistle and know basic hand signals to communicate in case phones die. If you find a cell dead zone and need help, sometimes climbing up a bank or moving to an open area can get a bar or two. Keep phones in waterproof cases or dry bags to ensure they’re operable when needed.

Bail-Out/Exit Points: The primary bail-out is **Muncy Heritage Park & Boat Access** (river mile ~26.7) ¹², which we’ve discussed. It has a ramp and a park; you can meet a vehicle there if necessary. Another potential bail-out (though unofficial) is the **PA-405 bridge at Muncy** – there’s no boat ramp, but if absolutely needed you could get ashore near the bridge abutment and scramble up to the road. Not ideal, but a last resort. Past Muncy, the next exit is *Montgomery (our take-out)* – so basically the plan covers it. If someone is too tired or an equipment failure happens early (say within first 2–3 miles), turning back to Montoursville could be possible if the current isn’t too strong; otherwise the group should press on to Muncy. Therefore, check everyone’s readiness at the start.

Also note: on the **left bank opposite Montgomery**, a couple miles before Watsonstown, is *Allenwood* (Union County) which has a PFBC access called West Milton Access (RM ~18) ²³, but that’s downstream of

Montgomery. Mentioning for completeness: if you ever extended the trip, West Milton (also called Watsontown Access on some maps) would be another take-out in the next section.

Weather Protocols: We touched on this, but to reiterate safety steps: - **Lightning/Thunderstorms:** At the first sound of thunder, get off the water **immediately**. Lightning can strike even 10 miles from a storm. Move to shore, ideally an open low-lying area away from tall isolated trees. Crouch on the balls of your feet if lightning is close (to minimize ground contact). If you have a group, spread out 50+ feet apart on land (to reduce multiple strikes). Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder to resume paddling. Summer storms pass quickly, so better to be delayed than in danger. Use a weather app with lightning alert if possible. - **High Winds:** If a sudden squall kicks up strong wind, it can create choppy waves on the wide river. In such cases, angle toward the nearest bank and land until it eases. If you must paddle in wind, sticking close to the shore (on the leeward side if possible) offers some break. Avoid the middle of the river in high winds, as waves can broadside your kayak. - **Heat/Dehydration:** Use the buddy system – remind each other to drink water. Signs of heat exhaustion include dizziness, excessive sweating or no sweat, headache, cramps. If someone feels unwell from heat, get to shade (even if that means creating shade with a tarp) and cool them down gradually (splash water on skin, fan them). Carry electrolyte tablets or sports drink to replenish salts on a hot day. - **Cold Water (if spring/fall):** Dress appropriately (wetsuit or layers of synthetics). The rule in spring is dress for the water temperature, not just air. If someone capsizes in cold water, get them dry and warm ASAP – pack an emergency dry clothes bag. Know the signs of hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech) and get off the water if they occur.

Leave No Trace Reminders: The Susquehanna is a treasured waterway – please help keep it that way. Key LNT principles for paddling: - **Pack Out Trash:** Bring along a small trash bag in a dry bag. All wrappers, bottles, apple cores, etc., go back with you. Microtrash (like bits of tape or food scraps) should be policed as well. There are often trash cans at Montoursville and Montgomery launches, or just take it home. - **Leave Natural Objects & History:** You might find cool driftwood, fossils, or even historical artifacts (old canal pieces) – it's best to leave them so others can discover and they remain in the ecosystem. Removing driftwood or rocks can disturb habitats. (It's okay to skip stones for fun, just don't haul stuff away.) - **Minimize Campfire Impact:** Since this is a day trip, campfires aren't planned. If you ever had to stop overnight unexpectedly, use extreme caution with fire (prefer a stove). In dry summer, a careless embers could cause a brush fire on the islands. - **Respect Wildlife:** Observe animals from a distance. Don't chase or harass waterfowl or turtles. If you see an eagle on a branch, enjoy it quietly – their nesting areas (not that we'll necessarily see nests) should be given wide berth. Also, fishing is common here; if you fish from your kayak, make sure you have a license and follow regulations, and do not discard fishing line or hooks. - **Courtesy to Others:** Be polite at launches (don't block ramps), yield to anglers (give their lines a wide berth to avoid tangling), and keep noise levels reasonable – the Susquehanna's tranquility is part of the experience for everyone. - **Bathroom practices:** Ideally, use the facilities at Montoursville before launching, and at Montgomery at take-out. If nature calls mid-trip, go on a **leave-no-trace "cat hole"** basis: pick a spot at least 200 feet from water (difficult on small islands, better to stop at Muncy Park which has porta-potties). For solid waste, dig a small hole 6-8 inches deep and cover it after, or even better, bring a wag-bag to pack it out. For urine, just go well away from the water or on rocks. Toilet paper should be packed out (a Ziploc bag works) or at least thoroughly buried if absolutely necessary. - **Private Land:** As mentioned, be mindful of private property. If an owner is present and you need to cross, ask permission. Close any gates you open. Basically, treat any riverbank home as you'd want strangers to treat your yard.

By following these protocols, you'll ensure a safe trip for yourselves and keep the river healthy and enjoyable for others. Safety is about foresight: check conditions, wear PFDs, and don't take unnecessary

risks. The West Branch in summer is usually quite gentle, so with basic precautions it should be a relaxing adventure.

Packing Checklist – Gear & Essentials

Here's a comprehensive **checklist** of gear and supplies to pack for your one-day kayak trip. Being well-prepared means a more enjoyable and safer day on the water:

- **Kayak & Paddles:** (Obvious, but let's list for completeness) Each paddler's **kayak**, with **paddle**. *Spare paddle* (at least a breakdown 2-piece paddle) – secure it under deck bungees or in the truck; it's a trip-saver if someone's paddle breaks or floats off.
- **PFD (Life Jacket):** One per person, **worn at all times while paddling**. Adjust for snug fit. (Even strong swimmers should wear them; the river is unpredictable.)
- **Helmet:** *Optional*, since this is not whitewater, but if anyone has a light **paddling helmet** and plans to surf riffles or is cautious, they can bring it. Generally not needed on this calm section.
- **Dry Bags:** Bring a couple of dry bags to keep your gear dry. At minimum: one with a **change of clothes** (e.g. dry shirt, shorts, socks) in case you get wet, and one for **valuables/electronics**. Make sure to double-seal. It's wise to line them with a garbage bag for extra waterproofing.
- **Water & Hydration:** Pack **plenty of drinking water** – a good rule is at least 2 liters per person for a day, more if it's very hot. Carry in easy-to-access bottles or a hydration bladder. (You can refill at Muncy stop if there's a working pump or fountain ³², but don't rely on that.) Sports drinks or electrolyte tablets can help on a hot day.
- **Food & Snacks:** High-energy, non-perishable snacks: granola bars, trail mix, fruit, beef jerky, etc. Bring a **lunch** (sandwiches, wraps – ideally something that won't spoil or get squished easily). Muncy Heritage Park is a perfect lunch stop with picnic tables. Also pack some treats like chocolate or electrolyte gummies for quick energy if anyone fades. Keep snacks accessible (like in a day hatch or a small dry box by your seat) so you can munch while floating.
- **Sun Protection:** Crucial in summer. **Sunscreen** (waterproof, SPF 30+), apply before launch and reapply midday. **Hat** (wide-brimmed or a baseball cap with a neck drape) to shield face and neck. **Sunglasses** (with a strap so you don't lose them in the water). Perhaps a lightweight **long-sleeve UPF shirt** or **sun sleeves** to protect arms. Also consider a bandana or Buff for your neck. The sun reflecting off water can burn under your chin/nose – don't forget those spots with sunscreen.
- **Bug Protection:** **Insect repellent** spray or wipes (especially for when you're on shore in the evening or near marshy spots). If flies are biting, a **head net** is overkill for on-water, but you could keep one in case you end up in a buggy spot. Also, have **anti-itch cream** (like hydrocortisone or AfterBite) in the first aid kit for any bites or brush with nettles/ivy.
- **First Aid Kit:** A basic waterproof first aid kit for paddlers. Include band-aids, sterile gauze, adhesive tape, antiseptic wipes, tweezers (for splinters or ticks), pain reliever (ibuprofen/acetaminophen),

Benadryl (for allergic reactions or bee stings), any personal medications (e.g. inhaler, EpiPen). Throw in blister bandages if someone's not used to paddling (for potential blisters on thumbs). Also a small roll of duct tape or gear tape can temporarily fix a cracked boat or secure a bandage.

- **Safety/Rescue Gear:** **Whistle** (attached to each PFD – required by law in PA for boats, and essential for signaling). **Throw rope** (60-foot throw bag) – at least one per group, to assist in case of a swimmer or to tow a boat. A **bilge pump** or sponge if using sit-inside kayaks (to remove any water that splashes in). **Knife** (river knife or multi-tool) – to cut rope if needed (in case of entanglement) or for general use in camp/lunch. Carry it accessible on your PFD or belt. **Flashlight or Headlamp** – in case you're out near or after dark unexpectedly (pack it even if you don't plan to paddle at night). Choose a waterproof headlamp and check batteries. **Fire-making:** a lighter or waterproof matches in a dry bag – for emergency warmth or signaling if you got stranded after a capsized. A **small mirror** or signal device could also help in emergencies.
- **Navigation & Info:** A **river map or guide** – either waterproof printed map (the Susquehanna Greenway Water Trail map is great ³³) or a downloaded offline map on your phone. Mark the access points, potential bailout spots, etc. A **compass** (basic) isn't usually needed on a river where you just go downstream, but it can't hurt if fog rolls in to help orient. Also have the **phone numbers** of local emergency services (Lycoming County 911) and perhaps a local outfitter or friend as backup. A list of mile markers with landmarks (you can jot down key ones from this plan) is useful to track progress.
- **Clothing:** Wear quick-dry, synthetic or merino wool clothing – avoid cotton. E.g., swimwear or athletic shorts, moisture-wicking shirt, with extra layers depending on weather (for July, maybe just a light rain jacket in case storms). **Footwear:** Sturdy **water shoes or sandals** with heel straps. There will be rocky and possibly muddy landings; you don't want to be barefoot. Old sneakers or dedicated paddle boots are fine too. Pack a pair of **dry socks** in case needed for comfort at lunch or after finishing. If it's cooler, have a fleece or windbreaker in a dry bag.
- **Rain Gear:** A lightweight **rain jacket** or poncho. Summer storms can surprise you; a jacket can also double as a windbreaker if it gets chilly after rain. If forecast looks clear, you might stash it anyway – Murphy's law says if you bring it, you won't need it!
- **Miscellaneous Gear:** **Cell Phone** (in waterproof case or bag, charged fully) – for camera, GPS, and emergency calls. Maybe a **battery bank** to recharge it if you use it for photos/GPS a lot. **Camera** (if not just using phone) – many paddlers carry a waterproof action cam or just a phone lanyard for easy pics. **Binoculars** (small pair) for bird watching – optional, but fun given the eagles and scenery. **Towel or Packable towel** – can be nice to dry off or sit on during lunch. **Camping stool or sit pad** – if you plan a relaxed lunch at Muncy or on a shoreline, a little foldable pad or stool can add comfort (picnic tables at Muncy might be available, though). **Carabiners and bungee cords** – useful for securing gear to your kayak (make sure anything you strap in is tethered or it will sink if you flip). A couple of spare **straps** or rope pieces for tying boats to the truck securely after the paddle – don't forget to bring the tie-down straps for transport! (It sounds trivial, but people have arrived at the take-out with boats and realized the straps were in the other vehicle – double-check you have what you need in the truck.)
- **Documents & Money:** Have your **boat launch permits** affixed to kayaks. Carry your **ID, health insurance card** (in case of hospital visit), a **credit card or cash** (for any unexpected expenses or a

post-paddle meal). Secure these in your dry pouch. A copy of your **fishing license** if anyone plans to fish en route. Possibly a **COVID mask** if you plan to stop in any stores or need one for shuttle rides (as of current conditions – may or may not be needed).

- **Optional Fun Items: Swim gear** – you might want to take a dip! (The water will be refreshing in July.) If so, maybe bring a small **throwable float** or just use PFDs as floats. **Snorkel mask** if you're curious to peek under the water (the Susquehanna is not super clear, but you never know – could be fun near shallow rocks to see fish). **Fishing rod** – if you enjoy fishing, bring a collapsible rod and a few lures (smallmouth bass are common here). Just ensure you can stow it out of the way while paddling (two-piece rods can lie along your deck). **Speaker for music** – some like tunes on the river, but out of respect for nature and others, consider keeping it low or skipping it. The sounds of the river are better than any playlist.
- **Group Gear Assignments:** If paddling with others, divvy up some gear. For example, one carries the heavy first aid kit, another the spare paddle, another the main throw rope, etc. That way not everyone needs to duplicate everything. But certain things each must have (PFD, whistle, water, sun protection, etc.).

Double-check this list the night before. It often helps to lay everything out and tick off items. Remember that **balance matters** – don't overload your kayak with unnecessary items, but do bring what's necessary for safety and comfort. With the above checklist, you should be covered for just about any situation a day trip could throw at you.

One more tip: **pack your kayak the same way you intend to paddle with it** (weight distribution) and maybe take a short spin near shore at the launch to ensure it's stable and nothing is rattling or likely to fall out. Secure loose items – if you flip, you don't want your lunch or phone to sink. *If it's not tied down or in a sealed float bag, assume it will be lost in a capsized.* So secure those car keys (floating keychain highly recommended).

Now that you're packed, let's outline the day's timeline so you know what to expect and can stay on schedule.

Day-of Itinerary – Schedule, Stops & Highlights

To make the most of your adventure next weekend (Saturday, July 5th), here's a suggested **itinerary** for the day. Adjust times as needed based on your pace, but this gives a framework:

7:30 AM – Meet Up & Final Prep: Aim to meet early at Montoursville Greevy Boat Launch (or at your chosen rendezvous to set shuttle). Morning is the coolest part of the day and generally calm on the water. Do a final gear check, apply sunscreen, and ensure boats are loaded with all essentials. If meeting at the take-out first (Option A), perhaps meet 7:30 at Montgomery, then shuttle, to be paddling by ~9:00. If meeting at put-in (Option B), 7:30 there, shuttle by 8 and back by 9. *Target "butts in boats" time: around 9:00 AM.*

9:00 AM – Launch from Montoursville: Push off into the West Branch Susquehanna! Take a quick group photo at the ramp (you'll want a before-and-after). As you start paddling, you'll likely have light mist or glassy water if it's a calm morning – enjoy it. You'll immediately see Canfield Island on left. This is a nice spot

for a quick warm-up detour *if* you want: there's a little channel around it. But since it's right at the start, you might just note it and continue.

In the first mile, look right to see where Loyalsock Creek's clear water merges with the Susquehanna's flow ¹⁹. This confluence might have a slight rapid or tongue of faster water. You might also catch sight of fish jumping or osprey diving here, as confluences attract wildlife. The **Madame Montour/Native American history** here is interesting – perhaps one paddler can share the trivia while floating past (the town name Montoursville comes from that heritage).

10:00 AM – Mid-morning on the River: By now you've settled into a rhythm. You should be approaching the **island section (Racetrack Island around river mile 35)** after ~1 hour or so. The river splits – ensure you go **left of Racetrack Island** ⁷. The left channel is typically deeper; the right may have more snags. This area has some riffles – enjoy the gentle splashes and maybe take turns leading and picking lines. It's nothing too risky, so it's a fun spot to get some "moving water" experience. After Racetrack, you'll have a stretch of mostly flat water along **Tiadaghton State Forest** lands on the right bank ⁷ – untouched forested shoreline. This is a great time to look for wildlife: scan the treetops for bald eagles (they often perch high in dead trees near water) and watch the skies for hawks or vultures riding thermals above the ridge. **Bald Eagle Ridge** is on your right side; you might see hawks circling (especially broad-winged hawks if it were migration season) ¹⁰. Even in July, you could see local red-tailed hawks or maybe an eagle family. Keep cameras accessible for these moments.

11:00 AM – Approaching Muncy Area: You'll notice signs of civilization increasing – maybe a distant hum of traffic from I-180 or some houses on the left bank as you near Muncy. The **railroad bridge** comes into view (steel trestle). This is a milestone: you're about 1 mile from Muncy's public access when you pass under it ¹². Under the bridge, you might feel a cool shade – a nice relief if it's a sunny day. Right after the bridge on river left is the **Muncy Heritage Park & Access**. You might see the dock or ramp tucked behind some trees. If you plan to stop for lunch here, start ferrying to the left bank after the bridge. The actual take-out is slightly upriver of the Route 405 highway bridge (which you'll see just downstream). According to one paddler's tip: *"When you can see the [405] bridge, move to your left...the boat launch is out of view behind a small island of trees on the left, right before the bridge."* ³⁴. So keep left and you'll find the opening to the Heritage Park landing.

11:30 AM – Lunch Stop at Muncy (optional but recommended): Pull out at **Muncy Heritage Park & Nature Trail**. There's a nice grassy picnic area, picnic tables, and usually a **port-a-potty and water** (the park often has a seasonal restroom and water pump) ³². Stretch your legs – there's a short walking trail if you want to stroll. This park also has historical signage (Muncy was a canal town; you might see remnants of the canal wall nearby ³⁵). It's a great spot to relax. Enjoy your packed lunch, rehydrate, and reapply sunscreen/bug spray here. You've paddled roughly 10 miles (~3/4 of the trip) by now, so a good break is deserved. Check everyone's energy and the weather. If all is well and there's no storm threat, plan to be back on water in 30-45 minutes. If someone is very tired, you're actually close to the take-out (only ~4.5 miles to go), so encourage them that the hardest part is done.

Before departing, ensure trash is secured (there may be bins – if not, carry out). Use the restroom if needed; next one is at Montgomery. Also, **observe the river level mark** if any on the bridge piers or ramp – could be interesting to see how low/high it is relative to normal.

12:15 PM – Back on Water from Muncy: Launch again, now energized. Right below the Muncy access, you'll pass under the **Route 405 bridge** (Water Street Bridge). After that, you enter a very pretty stretch with a series of **small islands** and rich bird habitat ³⁶ ¹⁶. This 3-mile section before Montgomery is tranquil – likely you'll hear songbirds, see dragonflies skimming the water, maybe a bald eagle if you haven't yet (this area is known for them). Paddling through these islands, stick to the main channel (generally follow the stronger current, usually river right side initially).

1:00 PM – Montgomery Access in Sight: As you round a bend, the **Montgomery bridge (PA-54)** will come into view ahead (a concrete span). According to the water trail guide: "After navigating through a channel of islands, you will see a bridge up ahead. Navigate to river right just before the bridge to take out at PFBC Montgomery Access." ¹⁷. Follow that advice – start moving towards the **right bank** as the bridge approaches. The take-out ramp is immediately upstream of the bridge on river right, partially tucked in a cove. You might not see it until you're nearly there because of trees. Look for the break in the tree line and maybe a small sign or the gravel lot. **Estimated arrival:** between 1:00–2:00 PM, depending on how long you lingered at lunch and your paddling speed. Intermediate paddlers often average ~2-3 mph, so if you launched by 9 and paddled steadily with a lunch stop, early afternoon is a reasonable finish.

As you land at **Montgomery Access (river mile 22.8)**, congratulations are in order! You've completed the journey. It's a gentle concrete ramp, so landing is easy. If it's busy (sometimes local fishermen launch small boats), land to the side to keep ramp clear.

1:30–2:00 PM – Take-Out & Wrap Up: Once all boats are ashore, take a moment to **celebrate** – maybe a group high-five or photo under the Montgomery bridge to mark the occasion. This is also a good time to have a quick **recovery snack or drink** from your cooler (you might have left a cooler in the truck with cold drinks – a pro tip for post-paddle happiness!). Load the kayaks onto the truck, using your straps and tie-downs. Double-check nothing is left behind at the launch (gloves, water bottles tend to roll under seats). Change into dry shoes/shirt if you want – the portable toilet or even just a car door as a shield can work for changing.

If anyone feels sunburnt or dehydrated, address that now (more water, aloe, etc.). Also, do a mental (or actual) checklist that you have all your gear back from the river – paddles, PFDs, dry bags, trash, etc. It's easy to leave something behind in the excitement of finishing.

2:00–3:00 PM – Shuttle Retrieval: Depending on your shuttle plan, you may now need to retrieve the other vehicle. Likely, the car is still up at Montoursville. One or two of you can drive the truck (with kayaks) back to Montoursville (25 min drive) to pick it up. The others can hang out in Montgomery or join that drive. If it's a hot day, perhaps send one vehicle to also pick up some cold treats en route (there's an ice cream place in Muncy or Montoursville's famous Eder's Ice Cream a short drive away, though that's a bit north of Montoursville).

However, if you aren't in a rush, you might skip immediate shuttle retrieval and first do your **post-paddle celebration** as a group – after all, both of your vehicles will have to end up together eventually, but you could all go to a nearby eatery in one vehicle first.

Post-Paddle Celebratory Options (3:00 PM onward): You've earned a good meal! There are a few routes you can take: - If you head back to **Montoursville/Williamsport** (since you need to get the car anyway), consider stopping at **Johnson's Café in Montoursville** – a local favorite for hearty American fare and cold

drinks, located right on Broad Street in Montoursville ³⁷. They have a relaxed atmosphere – perfect for paddlers still in quick-dry clothing. Another casual spot is **Dolly's Diner** or **Orlando's** in Montoursville for a quick bite. If ice cream is appealing, the legendary **Eder's Ice Cream** (just a few miles from Montoursville launch) is an old-school dairy with gigantic scoops – nothing like a double-scoop of hand-made ice cream after a day on the river (just watch out for brain freeze!). - If you want to explore **Williamsport** (15 min from Montoursville) for dinner, there are some great breweries and restaurants: **Bullfrog Brewery** is a craft brewery pub with good food, or **The Brickyard/Stonehouse** for wood-fired pizza and beer garden vibe. Williamsport also has **The Loyalstock** and others. Since it's July 5, check if any holiday weekend events are happening in town – sometimes they have outdoor music. But also expect places might be busy on a holiday weekend Saturday. - Staying near **Montgomery/Muncy**: Montgomery is a small town with limited options (a pizza place or two, maybe a pub). However, **Muncy** (10 min away) has a couple options like **Trail Inn** or **Cricket's Tavern** if you want to keep it low-key and close. Or drive a bit south to **Watsontown** or **Lewisburg** if you're up for it – Lewisburg (25 min away) has the Bull Run Tap House and Victorian downtown charm. - If you have the energy to drive 20–30 minutes, **Pier 87 Bar & Grill** up along Loyalsock Creek (north of Montoursville) is an outdoor tiki bar/restaurant right on the water, known for its giant Adirondack chair and live music ³⁸. It's a super fun atmosphere and fitting for an outdoor adventure celebration – but it's the opposite direction (about 30 min from Montoursville). Perhaps save that for another time unless really motivated.

Whatever you choose, raise a glass (or milkshake) to a successful paddling day! And don't forget to **re-hydrate** – even if celebrating with a beer, chase it with water.

Evening Wrap-up: By 5:00–6:00 PM, you'll likely be wrapping up dinner. If you haven't yet, pick up the remaining vehicle (if one is still at Montoursville). The gear can be sorted out – perhaps do a quick rinse of sandy items when you get home. But most importantly, revel in the day's highlights: *favorite wildlife sighting*, *funniest moment (maybe someone got soaked in a riffle?)*, *the best view*. You might have captured some great photos at the Loyalsock confluence or with the backdrop of Bald Eagle Ridge. Those will be great to share with friends/family.

Finally, pat yourselves on the back for planning and executing a safe, enjoyable one-day trip on the West Branch Susquehanna. July 5th on the river – not a bad way to spend a summer day! The experience combines history, nature, and adventure, and now you've got the know-how for future sections of the Susquehanna as well.

Enjoy your paddle, stay safe, and have fun making memories on this beautiful stretch of Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River!

¹ ³ ⁵ ⁶ ⁷ ⁸ ¹⁰ ¹⁴ ¹⁹ ²¹ ²⁹ ³⁰ ³² **Kayak Williamsport to Muncy - Susquehanna Greenway**
<https://susquehannagreenway.org/water-trails/williamsport-to-muncy/>

² ⁴ ¹² ¹³ ¹⁵ ¹⁶ ¹⁷ ¹⁸ ²⁰ ²³ ²⁴ ²⁷ ³³ ³⁶ **Kayak Muncy to Watsontown - Susquehanna Greenway**
<https://susquehannagreenway.org/water-trails/muncy-to-watsontown/>

⁹ ³⁴ ³⁵ **Valley Girl Views: Kayaking from Montoursville to Muncy**
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