

# Nature and Commerce

The large boulders dispersed throughout the riverbed of the lower Susquehanna have long fascinated geologists.

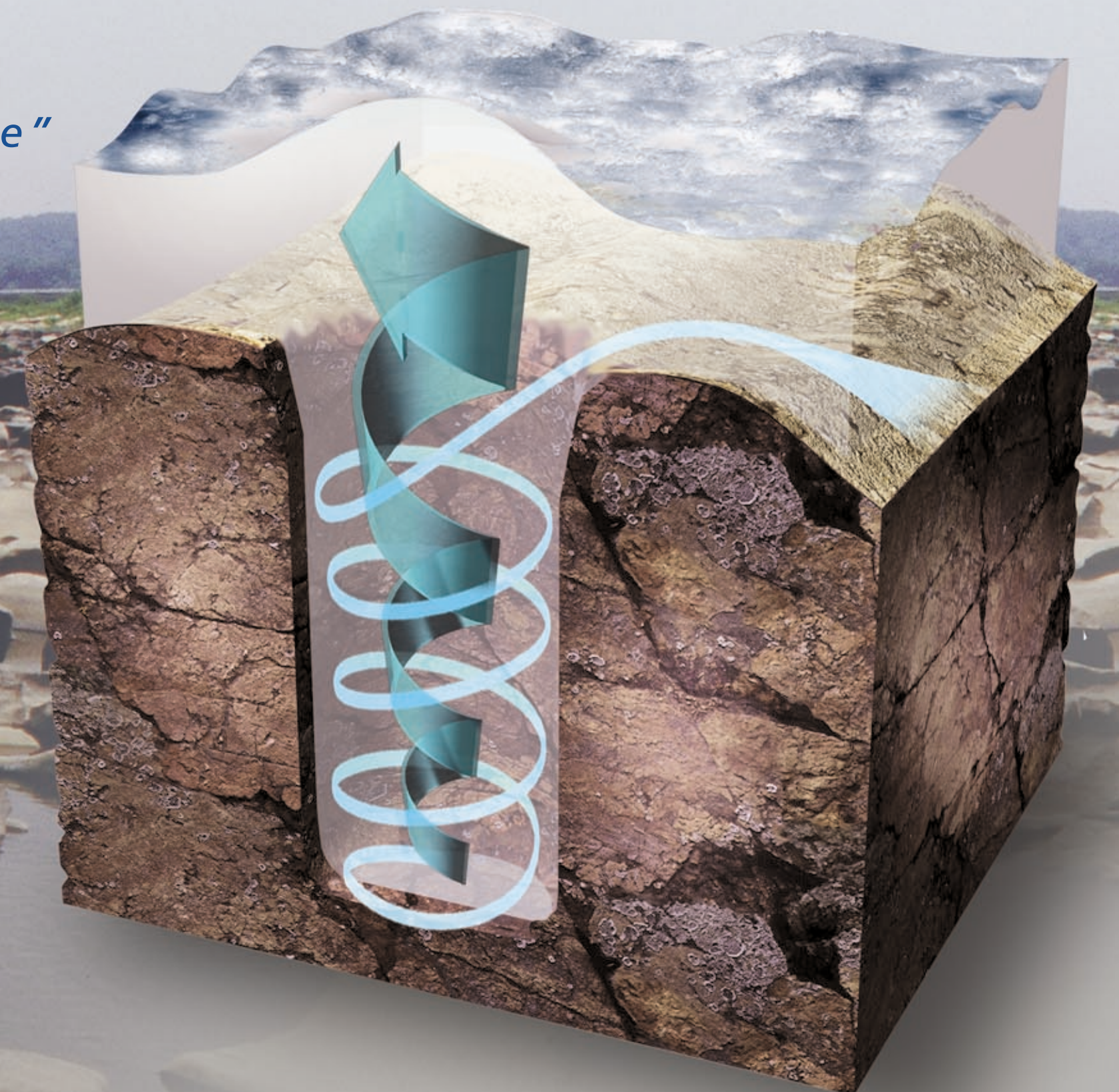
Geologists theorize that during the Ice Age, a glacial lake in the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River suddenly drained causing a tumultuous flood. The rampaging floodwaters transported giant boulders many miles down river to their present location.

Below the surface, mystery abounds. For thousands of years, fast-moving abrasives and gravel from glacial melt and floodwaters have drilled potholes into the hard bedrock on the river bottom. Some potholes measure five feet in diameter.

In the late 1700s, a group of Philadelphia businessmen, intent on opening commercial traffic on the Susquehanna, constructed a canal on the west bank around the rocks at Conewago Falls. Completed in 1797, it was the first canal built in Pennsylvania, and it opened the way for commercial goods and raw materials to reach Marietta, Columbia, and points down river.

Never a commercial success, the canal disappeared from view when a hydroelectric plant was constructed at York Haven in 1904. Today, the waters of Lake Frederic cover the remnants of the Conewago Canal.

*Formation of a river "pothole"*



River "potholes" at Falmouth, PA.

Courtesy Keith Baum/Pennsylvania Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau



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Lancaster - York Heritage Region  
Susquehanna River Water Trail

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