



Belle Isle State Park
1632 Belle Isle Road
Lancaster, VA 22503

BELLE ISLE STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
203 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219



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Reviewed by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on March 18, 2011

Approved:

 /S/
David A. Johnson, Director
Department of Conservation
and Recreation

March 22, 2011
Date



BELLE ISLE STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE

This Belle Isle State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted in 1998 and renewed in 2004 by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). It is the most recent five-year review as described in §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. This master plan update is intended to set forth a clear vision for the future (based on phased development), while fulfilling the narrative text requirements of Chapter IV of the Virginia Capital Outlay Manual and §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. It outlines the desired future condition for Belle Isle State Park when it is fully developed.

Comprising 708 +/- acres, two separate agricultural parcels with frontage on the Rappahannock River and Deep and Mulberry Creeks were purchased in April 1993. The acquisition was funded with appropriations from the 1992 Virginia Park and Recreation Facilities Bond Act. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) retained EDAW, Inc. to create the original park plan, and Belle Isle development was started in 1993. In 1998, while construction was ongoing, the master plan was revisited and modified to adjust for changing conditions, new acquisitions and new development. All park amenities funded through proceeds of the 1992 Virginia Park and Recreation Facilities Bond Act were completed by the fall of 1999, and at that time, the park opened to visitors.

The largest piece of the initial purchase was called “Belle Isle,” which consisted of 674.9 acres. The “Pollard” property made up the remainder of the original acquisition. Privately held property separates the two parcels. Combined water frontage on the Rappahannock River and Deep and Mulberry Creeks totals 5.5 miles. Open fields, many still in cultivation, make up approximately half the park acreage; the remaining half is forested. In 2009, DCR purchased the .88 acre Ruble property across Mulberry Creek from the park for staff housing. Current size of the park is 739.88 acres. Since the acquisition of the additional land was in keeping with the existing plan to add staff housing, a public review process was not required.

Belle Isle State Park lies within Lancaster County, which is in the Northern Neck Planning District (Region 17) of eastern Virginia. Located in the Coastal Plain physiographic region, the park is accessed via Route 683 off Route 354. It is about 70 miles northeast of Richmond, 80 miles southeast of Fredericksburg and 70 miles from the Hampton Roads area.

This 2011 update places value on connecting Belle Isle to other resources in the community. Water resources are abundant. In addition to the Rappahannock River, Mulberry Creek and Deep Creek which serve as park boundaries, there are many smaller tributaries in close proximity to the park, and of course the Potomac River and the unrivaled Chesapeake Bay. Conservation areas nearby include Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Chilton Woods State Forest, Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve, Bush Mill Stream Natural Area Preserve, Hughlett Point Natural Area Preserve, and Dameron Marsh Natural Area Preserve. Westmoreland State Park, Stratford Hall and George Washington’s Birthplace

National Park are all nearby in Westmoreland County. Scenic Rivers in the area include the Rappahannock River. Scenic Roads in the area include portions of State Highways 354 and 604. Additional connectivity opportunities exist with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Northern Neck Heritage Trail. The park is already recognized on the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Birding and Wildlife Trail). The Belle Isle State Park Regional Connectivity Map is an attachment to the full Master Plan document.

Belle Isle State Park received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 2005 for park facility development. In compliance with the LWCF Act of 1965 and amendments thereto, the Commonwealth of Virginia is required to maintain the park for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

As a part of the 2011 master plan process, the 1998 park master plan for Belle Isle State Park, as well as the 2004 Renewal were reviewed. It was determined that no significant changes occurred to warrant a full revision of the master plan. The goals and objectives and the desired future condition of the park have not changed since adoption of the 2004 renewal. The phased development plan and costs have been revised to reflect projects that have been completed since 2004. The park staffing and operations costs data have also been updated to reflect current conditions. The adopted park purpose statement is stated below:

“The purpose of Belle Isle State Park is to serve as a Gateway to the Rappahannock River and the transition from river to the Chesapeake Bay by providing a range of family oriented outdoor recreation and educational experiences, which identify and interpret the historical connections of various ages with visual and physical connections to the land and water, and provide for estuarine research opportunities.”

Annual visitation to the park has generally increased over the last ten (10) years as depicted in the following table:

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
28,648	31,952	29,426	29,666	31,041	31,818	43,051	38,032	37,389	39,947

In 2010 Belle Isle had 39,947 visitors: 6,945 were overnight guests, while 33,002 were day use visitors. With this level of visitation, it is estimated that the park had an economic impact on the local economy of approximately \$1,048,907. Master plan recommendations designed to increase visitation and improve the visitor experience, once implemented, should have a further positive impact on the community’s economic vitality.

Existing facilities at Belle Isle State Park include a contact station, camp store, restroom with concession, boat ramp and car top launch area, picnic areas with shelters and restrooms, playground, boat and bike rental facilities, trails, parking for horse trailers, historic rental houses, residences, roads, water system, and waste water system.

Park facilities developed since the 2004 update include: a 30-site campground with standard amenities, including bathhouse and utilities at each site; a maintenance shop; a Visitor Center and park office; and canoe/kayak campsites. Additionally, a staff residence was purchased across Mulberry Creek, in lieu of building a staff residence on-site.

This master plan update represents both new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. To the greatest extent possible, Virginia State Parks strives to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. Building and site design will implement green energy standards using energy-efficient and sustainable materials and process to the greatest extent possible. These facilities will be carefully sited to minimize impacts to the views of the park from the adjacent lands and water bodies. Development activities will comply with the requirements set forth by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Best Management Practices (BMP) Handbook for Erosion and Sediment Control in order to protect water quality.

Shoreline stabilization and the dredging of Deep Creek will be an ongoing issue, and long term planning and funding will be needed to protect the recreational resources of Belle Isle State Park.

Though Belle Isle State Park has more than the minimum recommended acreage for a state park, the fact that it is not a contiguous site is of great concern. Additional land acquisition is recommended in this park to enhance park offerings, buffer the park from inappropriate development, or protect valued viewsheds. Future land acquisitions will only be negotiated with willing property owners. The placement of conservation easements on adjacent property to preserve the natural resources, cultural landscapes, and scenic resources in close proximity to the park will be encouraged. In working cooperatively with neighboring landowners, the park will be enhanced and protected over time.

The proposed projects are presented in priority order. Completion of the projects in this list will represent total build-out (completion of the master plan) and covers a 20-year timeframe.

Phase I

Provide shore stabilization at: the Visitor's Center site, Day use area and the Watch House site
Dredge Deep Creek to Boat Ramp

Develop interpretive exhibits for the visitor's center and reconfigure visitor center parking

Improve ADA accessibility to park resources, facilities and programs

Construct a 30-site campground with bathhouses, laundry and other standard amenities

Construct a temporary Tie-up adjacent to the large boat ramp

Provide Additional Parking for Picnic Area

Construct YCC Shelter near Campground/YCC Bunkhouse

Construct and develop a trail with a bridge across the Mulberry Creek inlet

The estimated cost for implementation of Phase I projects is \$9,013,680

Phase II

Add fuel station to Maintenance Area
Construct a fishing platform in the day-use area
Build 12 cabins
Construct staff residence.

The estimated cost for implementation of Phase II projects is \$7,202,520

Phase III

Construct a restroom/canoe storage at the Boat Ramp
Construct Discovery Center with group campground and parking for 20 vehicles
Construct a swimming pool/spray ground in the day-use area
Construct a staff residence

The estimated cost for implementation of Phase III projects is \$14,435,928

The total cost to bring Belle Isle State Park to its desired future condition is \$30,652,128

Staffing and Operations

Staffing and operational costs at Belle Isle State Park are presently budgeted at \$594,000 annually, including salaries for 8 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has a need for \$5,000 additional funds but does not have an identified need for additional positions. At complete build out of the proposed 3 phases of development, 3 additional staff will be needed and an additional \$331,000 in operating funds. In order for the park to operate effectively and efficiently at full build out, the park must be provided with the projected staffing and operating cost identified as “existing additional needs” and the costs for the 3 development phases. The total budget for Belle Isle at full build out is projected to be \$930,000 with 11 staff positions.

Belle Isle State Park – Operating and Staffing

EXISTING (FY 11)	EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	FULL BUILD OUT
STAFFING					STAFFING
Park Manager					Park Manager
Asst. Park Manager					Asst. Park Manager
Chief Ranger					Chief Ranger
Education Specialist				Educ. Spec.	Educ. Spec. (2)
Park Ranger (3)				Park Ranger	Park Ranger (4)
Program Support Tech					Program Support Tech.
			Housekeeper		Housekeeper
SALARY TOTAL					SALARY TOTAL
\$409,000			\$40,000	\$80,000	\$529,000
WAGE TOTAL					WAGE TOTAL
\$49,000	\$5,000	\$16,000	\$63,000	\$30,000	\$163,000
OTPS TOTAL					OTPS TOTAL
\$136,000		\$11,000	\$77,000	\$14,000	\$238,000
TOTAL BUDGET (FY11 dollars)					TOTAL BUDGET (FY11 dollars)
\$594,000	\$5,000	\$27,000	\$180,000	\$124,000	\$930,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY11 budget projections.

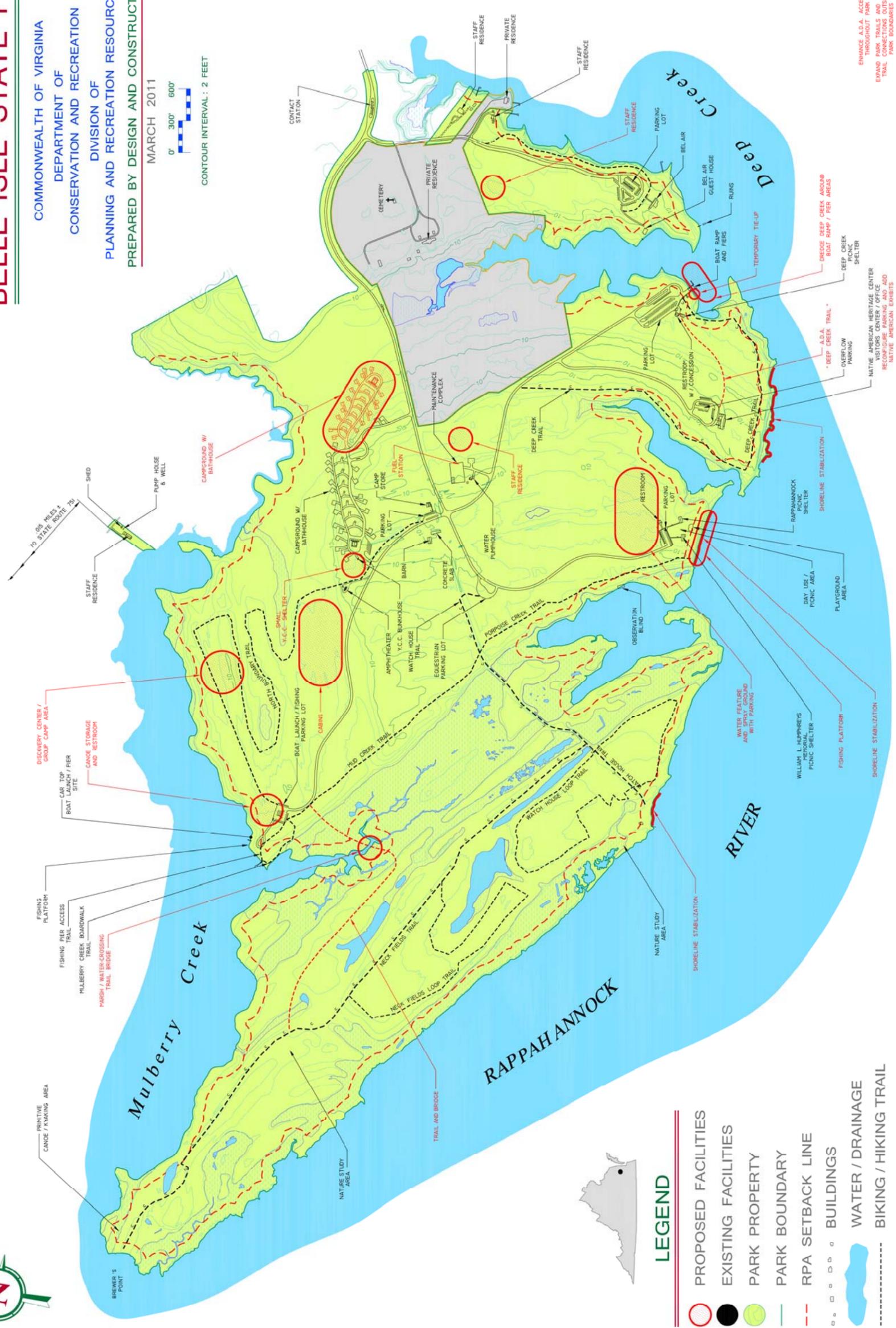
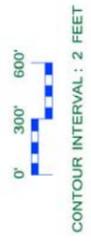
* Existing additional needs represents staff shortages that were identified as part of the 2002 re-benchmarking effort, and/or staff positions and operating costs reduced due to multiple years of state wide budget reductions.



MASTER PLAN FOR BELLE ISLE STATE PARK

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
DIVISION OF
PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES
PREPARED BY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

MARCH 2011



LEGEND

- PROPOSED FACILITIES
- EXISTING FACILITIES
- PARK PROPERTY
- PARK BOUNDARY
- RPA SETBACK LINE
- BUILDINGS
- WATER / DRAINAGE
- BIKING / HIKING TRAIL
- BIKING / HIKING / HORSE TRAIL

ENHANCE A.D.A. ACCESS THROUGHOUT PARK
EXPAND PARK TRAILS AND EXPLORE TRAIL CONNECTIONS OUTSIDE OF PARK BOUNDARIES

A.D.A. ACCESS
OBSERVATION BLIND
NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER VISITORS CENTER / OFFICE
RECONFIGURE PARKING AND ADD NATIVE AMERICAN EXHIBITS

WATER FEATURE AND SPRAY GROUND WITH PARKING
WILLIAM L. HAMPHREYS PICNIC SHELTER
FISHING PLATFORM
SHORELINE STABILIZATION

DAY USE / PICNIC AREA
PLAYGROUND AREA
SHORELINE STABILIZATION

RAFFAHANNOCK PICNIC SHELTER
RESTROOM W/ CONCESSION

DEEP CREEK TRAIL
DEEP CREEK BOAT RAMP / PIER AREAS
DEEP CREEK PICNIC SHELTER

BOAT RAMP AND TIERS
BEL AIR GUEST HOUSE
RUINS
PARKING LOT
STAFF RESIDENCE
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
STAFF RESIDENCE

CONTACT STATION
GERIATRY
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
STAFF RESIDENCE

MAINTENANCE COMPLEX
PARKING LOT
RESTROOM

WATER PUMP HOUSE
PARKING LOT
RESTROOM

CONCRETE SLAB
BARK
AMPHITHEATER
WATCH HOUSE TRAIL

Y.C.C. BUNKHOUSE
WATCH HOUSE TRAIL
EQUESTRIAN PARKING LOT

BOAT LAUNCH / FISHING PARKING LOT
CABINS

Y.C.C. SHELTER
TRAIL
TRAIL AND BRIDGE

STAFF RESIDENCE
PUMP HOUSE & WELL
SHED
TO OR WHEELS / STATE ROUTE 751

CAMPGROUND W/ BATHHOUSE
CAMP STORE
FUEL STATION
PARKING LOT

CAMPGROUND W/ BATHHOUSE
PARKING LOT
CAMP STORE

DISCOVERY CENTER / GROUP CAMP AREA
BOAT LAUNCH / PIER
CAMP STORAGE AND RESTROOM

FISHING PLATFORM ACCESS
FISHING TRAIL
MULBERRY CREEK BOARDWALK TRAIL
MARSH / WATER-CROSSING TRAIL BRIDGE

PRIMITIVE CANOE / KAYAKING AREA
NATURE STUDY AREA

NATURE STUDY AREA
SHORELINE STABILIZATION