



WIDEWATER STATE PARK

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MASTER PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2013 UPDATE

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MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY October 2013

Widewater State Park is located in Stafford County on the peninsula created by the confluence of Aquia Creek and the Potomac River. The park consists of approximately 1,100 acres with water frontage on both the river and the creek. The Commonwealth acquired the land from Dominion Resources in 2006. Dominion originally planned on using the site for an electrical generation facility.

In 2008, the master plan for Widewater State Park was developed in accordance with the master planning process set forth in §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. An advisory committee comprised of Stafford County residents, adjacent landowners, government officials, user groups, and local businesses crafted the plan with the guidance of the public. As part of the development of the park master plan, goals and objectives and a park purpose statement were developed.

The purpose of Widewater State Park is to provide premiere water and land based educational and outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of the peninsula of land cradled between Aquia Creek and the Potomac River in Stafford County.

Goals reflected the desire to provide a wide range of day-use recreational activities, educational and interpretive programs, as well as facilities including camping and cabins. Management and maintenance by a well-equipped and trained staff is also included as a priority park goal.

Widewater State Park is accessed via State Routes 611, 633, and 658, Brent's Point Road. Brent's Point Road runs down the center of the peninsula dividing the park. The lands that comprise the park are divided into five separate parcels. These parcels have a considerable amount of private property lying between them. Much of the private land is subdivided for residential purposes, although many of the lots are vacant at this time. A grid system of residential streets provides access to the residential areas. One private corridor passes through management area V and provides access to private lands on the southwestern edge of the park.

A system of unpaved forest management roads provides access to most of the park. With improvements and connectors, portions of this road system can become an extensive multi-use trail system. Some other portions of these roads will be upgraded to function as the interior park road system. These roads will also provide access to the day-use areas, overnight facilities, and environmental education center.

The soils on the Widewater peninsula are marginal for most construction activities as they include areas with a high water table. Public water and sewer facilities are not available.

The river's bank along the Potomac River is fairly high and steep making bank erosion an issue wherever facility development is proposed. However, there are suitable places for bank fishing and wade fishing. A fishing pier is proposed where deeper water can be accessed. Hand-carry boat launches for canoes, kayaks, and small boats are planned on the Potomac River and on Aquia Creek. A dual ramp for boat launching is planned on Aquia Creek just before it flows into the Potomac. The park property also includes two small ponds.

The Potomac River is the only place in the nation where three national trails overlap. These are the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The park should seek out a partnership with the National Park Service to interpret the significance of the area, improve water access, and enhance the visitor experience.

The park land is suitable for day-use and overnight facilities. A visitor center would interpret the natural and historic resources of the park. One major interpretive theme will explore the glory days of fishing on the Potomac at an historically reconstructed fish camp. A second historic theme will explore Langley's early experiments with aircraft launched from boats. The diverse habitats, marshes, forest types, and waterfront allow great opportunities for environmental education and nature study. A residential environmental education center is proposed to serve as an environmental educational programming focal point for regional school systems, conservation organizations, and adult and youth outdoor education programs. Other day-use opportunities offered will include non-motorized trails, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and open field play areas.

Overnight use areas will include a campground, group camps, cabin area, and canoe-in camping areas. The residential component of the environmental education center will also provide overnight facilities.

Landowners who live on Widewater peninsula are very concerned about the impact that park traffic will have on the capacity of the access roads to safely carry both local and park traffic. They have recommended that development of the park be tied to upgrades of state routes 633 and 658.

As the Washington, DC, metropolitan area has expanded southward, the population of Stafford County has grown. Currently Stafford County is one of the fastest growing counties in Virginia. Development of Widewater State Park will help meet the need for open space areas for this growing population to enjoy traditional family-oriented outdoor recreation activities. The long frontage on the Potomac River and Aquia Creek and the many miles of trails planned for the park will help meet the demand for activities that have the highest participation rates in the state. Overnight facilities will attract visitors from throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

The three-phase development plan for Widewater State Park begins with a focus on water access to the Potomac River and Aquia Creek, including a boat launch, fishing pier, bank fishing, canoe launches/landings, and related support facilities. Day-use facilities such as trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas with beautiful water views are also planned in Phase I. Phase II includes the addition of a Visitor Center, office space, trail enhancements, and additional day-use facilities. Phase III focuses on overnight facilities and includes cabins, a campground, group camping facilities, additional canoe-in camping sites and an environmental education center. A full list of proposed facilities for the three phases follows.

2013 WIDEWATER PHASED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(See August 2013 Master Plan Map)

Management Areas

Area I = Northeast parcel

Area II = Middle Eastern parcel

Area III = Brent Point parcel

Area IV = Long Pond to Potomac River parcel

Area V = Large western parcel

The phased development plan is keyed to five management areas and it identifies each facility to be developed in each area for that particular phase.

Phase 1

Road improvements based on VDOT recommendations

Area IV

- Road improvements and utilities
- Staff residences (2)
- Contact station with office space
- Boat launch with two (2) lanes, restroom and parking(60 trailer/40 car)
- Picnic area (tables)
- Fishing pier
- Canoe launch/landing
- Bank fishing
- Picnic shelters(2), restroom, playground, parking (50 spaces)
- Canoe landing
- Canoe-in campsites with vault toilet shared with Group Camp (permit only)
- Group Camp with vault toilet shared with Canoe-in campsite (permit only)
- Trails – 1 mile loop
- Vegetative screening on western boundary and fencing along cliffs.

Area I

- Utilities and infrastructure
- Single two-way entrance road to Area I (direct route to Potomac).
- Park Office
- Hand carry boat launch
- Picnic shelters (2)
- Playground
- Restroom
- Parking (50 spaces)

Area V

- Gravel service road
- Maintenance area

Total Phase 1 Cost \$11,505,137

Phase 2

- Road improvements.
- Main trunk line trail for movement within park without a car. Expanded trail system in all areas.

Area I

- Contact station/Welcome Center
- Visitor Center with interpretive displays (fish camp, Langley story, national trails along the Potomac)
- Parking
- Complete loop road.
- Trails, trailhead parking and kiosk.

Area II

- Upgrade road
- Trails, trailhead parking and kiosk.
- Picnic shelters, parking, SST, playground, fencing along cliffs

Area III

- Extend the road
- Picnic area with (2)shelters
- Restroom
- Parking 30 spaces
- Fencing along cliffs

Area V

- Equestrian trailhead and kiosk.

Total Phase 2 Cost \$9,786,992

Phase 3

Area I

- New park entrance and road up to Area I turnoff – possible conservation easement along north side of Brent Point Road from railroad crossing to sharp right turn.

Area II

- Entrance Road
- Trails
- Environmental Education Center

Area V

- Roads/utilities/dump station
- Campground/associated docks
- Cabins/associated docks
- Group Camp (permit only) with vault toilet
- Canoe landing/canoe-in campsite (permit only) with vault toilet
- Staff Residence
- Trails and trailhead parking
- Wildlife viewing areas and facilities

Total Phase 3 Cost \$21,759,953

Total Master Plan Cost \$43,052,081

Staffing and Operations

Staffing and operational costs for the new Widewater State Park are based on fiscal year 2014 budget projections. Each development phase has specific staffing needs and operational costs. In addition, each phase will have one-time expenses for vehicles, tractors, mowers, weed eaters, communications equipment, and other equipment associated with new staff and facility operations.

The total costs for Phase 1 development including salaries for five permanent staff, wage, OTPS expenses, and one-time costs is \$703,000. At complete build-out of all three proposed phases, an estimated \$1,161,000 in operating costs will be needed which includes salaries for ten permanent staff. The total one-time cost for all three phases is \$518,000. Without the projected staffing, operating and one-time costs for the three development phases, there will be insufficient funds or staff to adequately operate the park at full build out. The total cost to operate Widewater State Park at full build-out is projected to be \$1,679,000.

WIDEWATER OPERATING AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	FULL BUILD OUT
STAFFING	STAFFING	STAFFING	STAFFING
Park Manager			Park Manager
		Asst. Park Manager	Asst. Park Manager
Chief Ranger			Chief Ranger
	Education Specialist		Education Specialist
Park Ranger (2)	Park Ranger	Park Ranger	Park Ranger (4)
		Housekeeper	Housekeeper
Office Manager			Office Manager
SALARY TOTAL	SALARY TOTAL	SALARY TOTAL	SALARY TOTAL
\$276,000	\$104,000	\$156,000	\$536,000
WAGE TOTAL	WAGE TOTAL	WAGE TOTAL	WAGE TOTAL
\$68,000	\$58,000	\$199,000	\$325,000
OTPS TOTAL	OTPS TOTAL	OTPS TOTAL	OTPS TOTAL
\$64,000	\$43,000	\$193,000	\$300,000
ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS	ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS	ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS	ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS
\$408,000	\$205,000	\$548,000	\$1,161,000
ONE TIME COSTS*	ONE TIME COSTS*	ONE TIME COSTS*	ONE TIME COSTS*
\$295,000	\$91,000	\$132,000	\$518,000
TOTAL COSTS	TOTAL COSTS	TOTAL COSTS	TOTAL COSTS
\$703,000	\$296,000	\$680,000	\$1,679,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services), one time) are based on FY14 budget projections.

* One-time operational expenses for vehicles, tractors, mowers, weed eaters, communications equipment, and other equipment associated with new staff and facility operations.