

## Parks, Open Space and Trails CPA Approved by the Planning Commission on 9/26/07

Key to Planning Commission changes to the draft plan prepared by Planning Staff as of September 26, 2007:

- Changes made by straw vote at Planning Commission work sessions are in red.
- Changes made as part of the Planning Commission resolution approving the draft proposal are underlined and highlighted in yellow.

### INTENT

The quality of life for residents of Prince William County is linked closely to the development and management of a well-maintained system of parks, trails, and open space. Prince William County contains a diversity of park, open space, and trail resources. These parklands, open spaces and recreational facilities play a key role in shaping both the landscape and the quality of life of Prince William County residents through the conservation of natural and cultural resources, protection of environmental quality, and provision of recreational facilities. Prince William County's parks and open spaces have evolved into a diversified mosaic of public parks, public open space and recreation facilities, ranging from smaller local parks to extensive, regionally and nationally significant land holdings. Privately managed parks, open space, and facilities provide additional components of the open space and recreation system serving County residents. The integrated park system serves as the primary public mechanism for accomplishing two equally important purposes: (1) to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive land, habitat connectivity, and water resources, and areas of archaeological, historical and/or cultural significance; and (2) to provide opportunities for residents, workers and visitors to pursue leisure activities in safe, accessible, and enjoyable parks and community recreational facilities.

### PARK PLAN

#### PARK PLAN CONTENTS

The components of the Park Plan are:

- Intent
- Definitions
- Goals, Policies, and Action Strategies
- Map 1: County Parks
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- **Table 2 – Existing and Projected County Park Facility Needs**

### INTENT

Prince William County's parks contain recreation facilities, natural and cultural areas and public open space that meet a variety of active and passive recreation and conservation needs for county residents of all ages. The way the county manages development and change, specifically with regard to protection and conservation of land, provision of active recreation facilities, and preservation of

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cultural and historic sites has an immense impact on future generations.

Prince William County is one of a few jurisdictions on the Atlantic Seaboard that cover three geologic provinces, extending from the Valley and Ridge province at Bull Run Mountain to the Atlantic Coastal Plain on the tidal Potomac River. This natural heritage results in a great diversity of plant and animal life found in mountain streams, forests, meadows, tidal marshes, and nearly 30 miles of Potomac River shoreline. as well as a rich cultural heritage.

It is the intent of the county to provide an appropriate balance of both active and passive recreation for the community. By using existing recreation facilities as a base for future development, the county recognizes that an ideal park system provides a wide variety of multi-use recreation facilities which accommodate the needs of the community.

As additional parks are developed, consideration for the balance between conservation issues and the provision of active recreation becomes an important ingredient in the park development process. The quality of life for residents of Prince William County is not only linked to the availability of a well-maintained system of parks and recreation facilities, but also to the quality of the natural and cultural resources they contain. The county's diverse natural environments as well as cultural landscapes such as farmland and historic sites influence the way we spend our leisure time, determine whether we have clean air and water, and provide habitat for plants and animals. They shape the character of the community, strengthen the county's economy, preserve links to the past, attract tourists, provide corridors for trails and a non-motorized transportation, and connect key resources.

Parks in Prince William County are to be provided countywide according to level of service (LOS) standards adopted by the Board of County Supervisors and contained within this Plan. These standards address the kinds and size of parks and recreational facilities needed to meet the park and recreational needs of county residents. In addition to county parks, public schools help provide a variety of active recreation facilities to meet recreational needs of residents.

The LOS standards in Appendix B are based upon existing conditions within the county and on recognized and accepted national, state, and county standards. They also reflect resident demand for these facilities. The LOS standards ultimately quantify monetary costs for providing a countywide park system and recreation facilities for new residential and non-residential development in the county. These LOS standards are the basis for the county's Capital Improvement Program and for county requests for monetary contributions for park and recreation facilities to serve new development.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Parks:** Lands set aside for recreation use and/or the preservation and management of natural and cultural resources. Parks consist of three main components: active recreation, passive recreation, and conservation areas.

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**Public Parks:** Those lands owned, leased or secured under easement or use agreement by a political body, including but not limited to the federal government, Commonwealth of Virginia, Prince William County, and other local jurisdictions, for the benefit of the citizens and managed for recreation and resource protection purposes.

**Private Parks:** Privately owned land and/or facilities providing recreational facilities.

**Active Recreation:** Uses involving development of parkland to provide facilities including the construction of buildings, fields, courses and other related infrastructure to support recreational activities. Examples include baseball, soccer, volleyball, tennis, basketball, and other sports requiring managed fields, courts, swimming pools, tracks, or indoor program or classroom space.

**Passive Recreation:** Uses that generally require or result in little or no alteration of the landscape and produce little or no light, noise or visual intrusion on their surroundings. Passive uses may require trails, small footprint buildings for rest rooms or visitor centers, parking, etc. Examples may include hiking, jogging, birding, photography, nature study, fishing, canoeing or kayaking (depending on the access needs), biking, and horseback riding.

**Conservation Areas:** Land areas set aside for natural and/or cultural resource protection that are protected by easements, code or ordinance restrictions, or federal, state or county designation. The primary purpose is to protect, research and manage significant natural and/or cultural resources. Passive recreation may be allowed within conservation areas. Decisions about the management of conservation areas and what activities are to be permitted within them will be based on site evaluations, research and empirical data to determine whether the proposed practices or uses are compatible with resource protection.

**Natural Resources:** Biotic (living organisms such as plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and abiotic components (non-living things such as soils, rock, water, air, light, chemical compounds, etc.) and the communities, landscapes and ecosystems that they make up.

**Cultural Resources:** Physical evidence of any past human activity identifiable through field survey, historical documentation or oral history. These include archaeological sites, man-made objects, historic buildings, structures, objects or districts, cemeteries and the landscapes in which they exist.

**Cultural Heritage:** Cultural resources, history and practices such as farming, medicinal arts, crafts, industry, social and religious traditions, arts and literature, military traditions and skills, woodcraft and other human activities that help the present generations know and understand the people, places and events that came before them.

## **GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

**PK-GOAL 1: PROVIDE PARK LANDS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES OF A QUANTITY, VARIETY, AND QUALITY APPROPRIATE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS OF PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY.**

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**PK-POLICY 1:** Preserve at least 25.0 acres per 1,000 population of Prince William County in county-owned or leased park land, with the goal of ultimately preserving 10 percent of the county, as ~~county-owned or leased park land.~~ the inventory of which shall consist of two categories: County owned, leased, or controlled park land and privately owned or leased park land. Privately owned or leased park land shall include privately held green space such as HOA common areas, privately held recreational facilities such as community pools, accessible for community use whether for a fee or not, acreage and facilities used for recreational purposes at public and private schools within the County, and privately held natural preserve areas.”

### Action Strategies:

1. Review and update total land area recommendation pursuant to an analysis of community needs using national park and recreation association standards and procedures.
2. Conduct and maintain an inventory of existing public and private park lands and facilities.
3. Collocate parks and schools to the maximum extent possible to optimize the shared use of facilities. Elementary and middle school parcels should contain at least five contiguous acres for recreational use.
4. Acquire lands in areas underserved by park lands and recreation facilities of high population density to serve current populations.
5. Land proffered to the county or acquired by the county that is classified as Resource Protection Area (RPA) should be considered for conveyance to the Park Authority if the land furthers the goals and objectives of the Park Authority.
6. Consider recommendations of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, the Virginia Wildlife Plan, and the Virginia Natural Heritage Resources Assessment, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Cultural Resources Inventory during park planning efforts.
7. Coordinate park planning efforts with the plans for Quantico, Prince William Forest Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Leesylvania State Park, Conway Robinson State Forest, Bull Run Mountain Conservancy, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges, Prince William County School Board and others, as appropriate.
8. Coordinate Park and open space planning with adjoining jurisdictions and with the towns of Occoquan, Quantico, Dumfries, and Haymarket.
9. Coordinate with the Prince William County Area Agency on Aging to ensure that there are adequate park facilities to serve the specialized needs of senior citizens.
10. Ensure the availability of adequate funding in order to take advantage of opportunities to acquire park land and develop appropriate facilities.

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11. Utilize creative funding solutions such as special taxing districts, foundations, grants, private donations, endowments, partnerships, and bond referendums for park land acquisition and recreational facility construction.
12. Consider conveying to the Park Authority any unused rights-of-way or other unused or abandoned land (including but not limited to the School Board and Service Authority) that meet land, facility, or corridor needs identified in this chapter or the Park Authority Comprehensive Plan.

### **REC-GOAL 1: PROVIDE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION FACILITIES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF COUNTY RESIDENTS.**

**REC-POLICY 1:** Ensure the consistency and coordination of interagency planning techniques to provide for an appropriate quantity, variety, and quality of recreational facilities.

#### Action Strategies:

1. During rezoning and special use permit applications, accept land dedications and/or monetary contributions adequate to offset the impacts of the proposed development on the park system.
2. Update the Policy Guide for Monetary Contributions periodically to reflect accurate costs for land acquisition and facility construction.
3. Assist and support state efforts to locate and develop public fishing access sites in Prince William County.
4. Encourage developers incorporating pools in new developments to construct 25-meter, six-lane community pools designed to meet the needs of community and competitive swimming.

**REC-POLICY 2:** Ensure that active and passive recreation facilities meet the established level of service (LOS) standards and are adequate to carry out an effective park and recreation program.

#### Action Strategies:

1. Implement and periodically update LOS standards and criteria for park sites and facilities (see Appendix B) based on industry standards and comparison with those of neighboring and comparable jurisdictions. Such standards shall be applied countywide throughout the development review process.
2. Develop strategies to determine the participation rates and demand for services at county owned and publicly accessible private park facilities for use in future facilities analysis.

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3. Develop and periodically maintain an inventory of existing recreational facilities for use in future facilities analysis and to determine current LOS attainment.
4. Increase access for boating, fishing, and beach activities along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers and along other public waters in the county.
5. Develop new facilities that serve special interests such as dog parks, skate parks, sportsman facilities, equestrian facilities, and water-based recreational facilities.

**REC-POLICY 3:** Utilize innovative means to construct, renovate and maintain parks and park facilities.

### Action Strategies:

1. Encourage the use of public-private partnerships for the purposes of acquiring, constructing and/or operating parks and park facilities.
2. As part of the rezoning and special use permit process, encourage monetary contributions to provide needed facilities for existing park sites.
3. Continue to coordinate with the school board to design, construct, and program facilities on elementary and middle school property that can be utilized by the community for recreational purposes.

**REC-POLICY 4:** Balance passive and active park provisions based on community input, actual and projected use, and need.

### Action Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a county-wide recreation demand survey every five years. Analyze results to determine adjustments and prioritization of maintenance and improvement strategies, new park development and appropriate land acquisition.
2. Identify demographic changes in the community and develop communication strategies with emerging populations. Incorporate adjustments in recreation provision planning accordingly.
3. Annually survey organized leagues and primary users of active recreation facilities to determine adjustments to active land use programming.
4. Utilize national and regional park planning data trends to proactively adjust programmed park

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facilities based on community need.

5. Work with leagues, nonprofit organizations, homeowner associations and individual community representatives to identify local needs.

### **NCR-GOAL 1: IDENTIFY, PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND MANAGE THE SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ON COUNTY PARK LAND.**

**NCR-POLICY 1:** Consider natural and cultural resource stewardship needs at all levels of land use-related decision-making.

#### Action Strategies:

1. The county shall inventory current park land holdings to identify rare, sensitive and high quality natural and cultural resources.
2. Rare, sensitive and high quality resources and connectivity corridors will be preserved, protected and managed on park land.
3. As part of the rezoning and special use permit process, developers are encouraged to dedicate and/or preserve lands that contain rare, sensitive and high quality natural and cultural resources and connectivity corridors.
4. At least 50% of county park lands shall be left undeveloped for resource protection, open space or passive recreation.
5. Prioritize identified sensitive ecological resources and corridors for acquisition and encourage the dedication of land or easements for such sites by private property owners.
6. Identify opportunities to use open space preservation or acquisition as a means of protecting cultural resources.

**NCR-POLICY 2:** Enhance the awareness of Prince William County's natural and cultural resources and cultural heritage and the importance of the county in the historical development of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States.

#### Action Strategies:

1. ~~Develop and implement programs and outreach materials to create and foster a sense of ownership and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and cultural heritage among county staff and residents.~~  
Work with nonprofit organizations, homeowner associations and others to develop and implement programs and outreach materials to create and foster a sense of ownership and

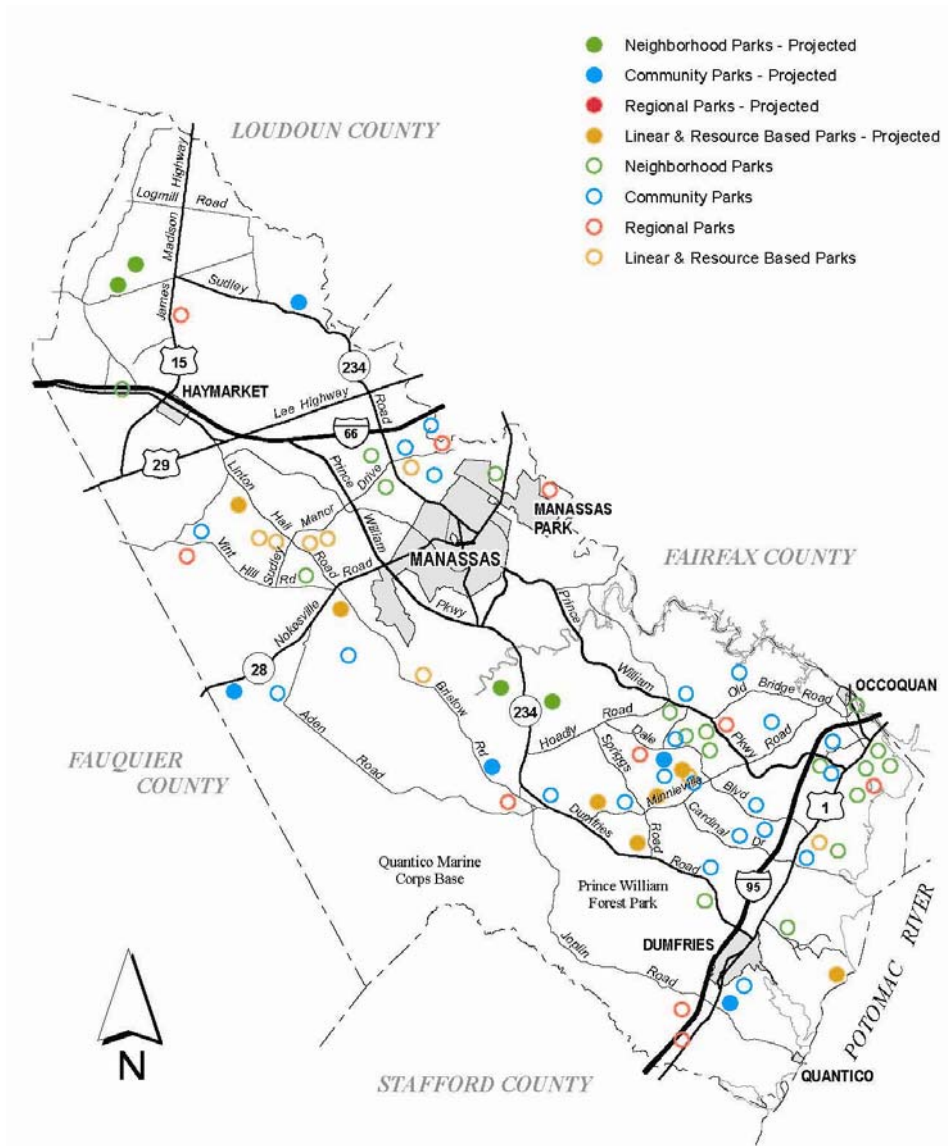
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stewardship of natural and cultural resources and cultural heritage among county staff and residents.

2. ~~Develop and implement interpretive programs, independently and through partnerships with nonprofit and other organizations, to educate citizens on natural and cultural resources and to promote a sense of resource ownership and stewardship among residents.~~  
Work with nonprofit organizations, homeowner associations and others to develop and implement interpretive programs, independently and through partnerships with nonprofit and other organizations, to educate citizens on natural and cultural resources and to promote a sense of resource ownership and stewardship among residents.
3. Network and partner with other groups and organizations such as the future Virginia science museum at Occoquan, the Marine Corps Museum, the National Park Service, the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy and others to provide resource education and foster stewardship.



## MAP 1: COUNTY PARKS



## APPENDIX A – PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

### INTRODUCTION

The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning, and also to assist in the development of public and private land management plans, by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. Prince William County parks fall into the following park classifications:

- A. Neighborhood Parks
- B. Community Parks
- C. Regional Parks
- D. Linear and Resource/ Based Parks

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This Park Classification System is augmented by state and federal park areas within Prince William County boundaries. Park Classifications provide guidance: a) to the Planning Commission for determining whether a proposed park site is in substantial conformance with the County Comprehensive Plan; b) for determining the appropriate geographic location and equitable distribution of varying types of parks; c) to the park planning staff during the park planning and development process; and d) to set public expectations for future park uses. Park master planning, determination of substantial conformance with the County Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Code of Virginia section 15.2-2232 (known as the 2232 process), and capital funding allocations are all public processes that precede development on parkland.

Criteria for each park class are provided in the individual descriptions below. The general areas of consideration are:

1. **Purpose** - indicates the general park use.
2. **Location and Access** - indicates the appropriate location and means of access.
3. **Character and Extent of Development** - indicates the general park size range, typical facility types, the extent of development, the general experience a user may expect and any special considerations. Site-specific facilities and uses are determined through the park master planning process for individual parks. The park master planning process is a public process that provides opportunities for public input and requires approval by the appointed officials of the respective park agency or elected officials of local municipalities.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

#### **Purpose**

This general classification of parks includes parks that serve neighborhoods and mixed use centers in suburban and urban areas of the county. Neighborhood parks primarily offer a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities, or a combination of both, in close proximity to residences and employment centers. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection may also be included within these parks.

#### **Location and Access**

Neighborhood parks should be located to serve local residential neighborhoods, broader residential communities and/or urban employment or mixed-use centers. Pedestrian, bicycle and/or car access is appropriate depending on the setting and access features. Whenever feasible, locate these parks adjacent to elementary or intermediate schools to maximize co-location of recreation facilities; in mixed-use developments, proximity to retail/office areas is desirable for collocation of parking and minimum impact on residences. Areas designated for natural and cultural resource protection and management may be included within these parks.

Neighborhood parks serve a wide range of recreational needs within the community and are sized between five and twenty acres. The service area for a Neighborhood Park is up to a two mile radius. These parks serve as the recreational and social links within residential communities. Neighborhood Parks should accommodate a wide variety of recreational needs and ages. These parks can supply both

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passive and active needs within the community. Neighborhood Parks should provide both pedestrian access as well as vehicular access and the site is sized so that both passive and active recreation can coexist within the park. These parks should be located outside of floodways and drainage easements, but may be located adjacent to them. Where possible these sites should be located along a trail or open space corridor. Given site specific conditions, the Park Authority may accept parcels less than five acres.

### **Character and Extent of Development**

Neighborhood parks primarily provide facilities for active or passive recreation, or both; areas for scheduled and unscheduled recreation activities and social gathering places; and serve residential, employment and mixed-use centers. In suburban settings, park size will typically be at least 2.5 acres and less than 50 acres, but some neighborhood parks may range up to 75 acres. In urban areas, park size is typically less than 5 acres and often less than ½ acre. Visits to neighborhood parks will typically be less than two hours.

The character of neighborhood parks may vary depending on their location within the county. In residential settings, neighborhood parks will generally be larger than in urban parts of the county. Neighborhood parks offer open space to those with little or no yards. Typical facilities may include open play areas, playgrounds, courts, athletic fields, game areas, trails, trail connections, natural areas, picnic facilities and facility lighting. In a suburban setting and depending on the park size and facilities, the neighborhood park service area may be up to 3 miles.

The user experience at neighborhood parks may be casual and informal geared toward social interaction, play and outdoor enjoyment, or may be more structured to support organized sports and park programs. Collocation of a mix of park uses and facilities that support both informal and structured activities is increasingly necessary to meet the county's diverse and varied recreation and leisure needs where available land is diminishing. To the extent possible, facilities will be planned so that areas that address different needs are compatible.

In urban areas, urban-scale neighborhood parks are appropriate. These publicly accessible urban parks should include facilities that are pedestrian-oriented and provide active and passive recreational opportunities, visual enhancement, a sense of identity, opportunities for social interactions, enjoyment of outdoor open space and performing and visual arts. Urban parks are generally integrated into mixed use developments or major employment centers in areas of the county that are planned or developed at an urban scale. Areas in the county that are generally appropriate for urban parks include Woodbridge, Dale City, the Route 1 Corridor, Lake Ridge, Manassas, Transit Station Areas, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and identified "Town Centers" or mixed-use activity centers. Urban parks can be administered by private land owners, the Park Authority, or through joint public and private sector agreements for public benefit.

Primary elements of urban-scale neighborhood parks are ease of non-motorized access and a location that complements, or is integrated with, surrounding uses. Features may include urban style plazas, mini-parks, water features and trail connections, oriented to pedestrian and/or bicycle use by employees and residents. Park architectural characteristics reflect the built environment. Short-term,

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informal activities and programmed events during lunch hours and after-work hours are intended to foster social interactions among users, provide leisure opportunities, and create a visual identity to strengthen sense of place and orientation. Service area is generally within a 5-10 minute walking distance from nearby residences, offices and retail uses. Well-conceived and executed design is critical to the viability of this type of park. To be successful urban parks need high visibility, easy access, lots of pedestrian traffic, immediacy of casual food service, access to basic utilities, landscaped vegetated areas, ample seating, high quality materials, a focal point or identity, regular custodial maintenance, and an inviting and safe atmosphere. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Neighborhood Park site is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

### **COMMUNITY PARKS**

#### **Purpose**

This park classification includes larger parks that serve larger geographic areas of the county and provide a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and park experiences. Portions of these parks may be designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection.

#### **Location and Access**

These parks may be located in most areas of the county. Access should be available by the major arterials and the countywide trail system to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; public transit access is also desirable. The service area can range from two to ten miles. Size is typically 20 to 150 acres. Parking must be provided.

#### **Character and Extent of Development**

Community Parks provide diverse opportunities for passive and active recreation uses. Generally, facilities in these parks are larger in number and scale than at Neighborhood Parks and support a longer visit.

Community Parks may combine recreation-oriented complexes of developed facilities with areas of the park that are undeveloped. The extent of development will depend on actual site conditions, such as topography, amount of developable acreage, and access. Appropriate facilities include those that support active and passive recreation, often clustered together, areas for programmed activities and gathering places and areas designated for resource protection. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are the norm.

These parks offer diverse experiences and activities that typically involve an individual or group for a time period of up to a half day and may attract spectators or participants. Typical recreation activities at Community Parks include golf, skating, cultural and holiday events, performing arts, sports play and activities scheduled in recreation centers. Additionally, woodlands, open space, trails and open play areas are highly desirable features. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites

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within the parks will be managed as Natural or Cultural Resource Areas. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Community Park and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

### **REGIONAL PARKS**

#### **Purpose**

This park classification includes larger parks that serve the county and provides a variety of larger-scale indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or both, and facilities that are unique within the county. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection and management will be included within these parks.

#### **Location and Access**

These parks may be located in most areas of the county. Access should be available by the major arterials and the countywide trail system to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; public transit is also desirable. The service area is over ten miles, often including the entire county or larger, depending on the facilities and location. Park size is typically 100 acres or more. Parking must be provided.

#### **Character and Extent of Development**

Regional Parks provide diverse opportunities for passive and active recreation uses to a wide range of simultaneous users. Generally, these parks provide complexes of intensively developed activity areas. The complexes may include multiple facilities for the same activity, an assortment of different activity focuses in one or more areas of the park, and/or unique facilities found in only one or a few parks within the entire park system. Facilities in these parks are larger in scale than those found in Community Parks.

Regional Parks may combine larger complexes of developed areas with extensive natural areas. The extent of development will depend on actual site conditions, such as topography, amount of developable acreage, access and intensity of adjacent land uses. Appropriate facilities include those typically found in Community Parks as well as the facilities unique to Regional Parks and the support uses necessary for a full day activity such as concessions and restrooms. Formally scheduled community gathering places and areas for large programmed activities and events are also typical. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are the norm.

These parks offer diverse experiences and activities that typically involve an individual or group for a time period of up to a day and which may attract large numbers of spectators or participants. Typical activities include those found in Community Parks as well as facilities such as sports complexes, indoor gymnasiums, field houses and lakefront parks. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites within the parks will be managed as Natural or Cultural Resource Areas.

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The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Regional Park and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

### **LINEAR AND RESOURCE-BASED PARKS**

#### **Purpose**

This classification includes parks that primarily preserve, protect, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources.

#### **Location and Access**

The location for Resource-based Parks is determined by the location of the specific resources. Size and access can take many forms depending on the setting and type of resources. Access to stream valleys is primarily by trails however trailheads with parking should be strategically located along trail routes. Management plans should give consideration to the natural and cultural resource within the park; cultural resource protection could include entire landscapes or one small point feature such as a cemetery on a few hundred square feet.

#### **Character and Extent of Development**

Resource-based Parks are selected for inclusion in the park system because of their exemplary natural and/or cultural features and are acquired, identified and preserved for stewardship and protection. Protection and stewardship of unique natural and cultural resources provide a variety of public benefits. These parks provide educational and interpretative opportunities relative to environmental and cultural resources. These lands may offer opportunities to restore degraded areas and to protect, increase and restore biodiversity of species that may inhabit these areas. In addition, passive recreation opportunities and facilities are also appropriate at these parks. Development which does not adversely affect resources and which enhances awareness of the resource values is appropriate. Development of public sites should include opportunities for public education and enjoyment. Interpretive (educational) facilities and structures may include visitor centers, nature centers, orientation kiosks, nature watching stations, demonstration areas, preserved buildings and gardens, hiking, biking and equestrian trails as designated. To the extent that they do not adversely impact the resources themselves, support amenities may also be developed such as picnicking areas, restrooms, signs, benches and parking. Trails and trail connections are a significant feature at these parks, especially along stream valleys and often serve as countywide trail connections.

Stream valleys are a predominant physiographic feature of Prince William County and are protected under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act as Resource Protection Areas (RPAs). Parks located in and along the stream valleys encompass those segments of RPA planned for public parkland and comprise the core elements of a greenway network that links areas notable for significant natural and cultural resources with residential and employment areas throughout the county. They may vary in size and character from steeply sloped corridors with cascading streams to broad floodplains; all are treated as sensitive environmental areas. Trails within stream valleys may be prohibited if incompatible with the resource needs and where they are allowed they must be located to be sensitive

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to environmental conditions. In addition to trails, seating areas, small picnic and open play areas, landscaping and interpretive structures may also be developed, if they do not adversely impact the RPA or other sensitive natural or cultural resources.

The user experience at Resource-based Parks will be varied. These parks support nature, horticulture and history programs as well as more casual interests such as gardening, nature watching and appreciation of local, regional, state and national history. Settings for quiet contemplation are appropriate in these parks. Visitors may frequent these parks on a regular or occasional basis. Resource-based Parks will allow public use only as it is compatible with resource protection. These parks may be small to encompass a specific, finite resource or large, encompassing entire ecosystems (e.g., forest components are usually best protected in blocks of 100 acres or more to minimize fragmentation and protect functions within a landscape; vernal pools should be protected with the surrounding upland habitats that protect the pools and provide habitat for adult breeding populations of amphibians and salamanders.).

The specific types of facilities and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, to be developed at each Resource-Based Park is determined by the managing agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

Narrow parks may be appropriate in some locations and situations in order to establish linear corridors that connect recreational, natural, and/or cultural resources, and/or transportation corridors. The long-term role of such parks will be contribution to a county-wide trail network and connections to surrounding jurisdictions as well as providing protection for natural and cultural resources and movement corridors for wildlife.

### **APPENDIX B - LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR PARKS**

New development presents demands for parks and recreational facilities. It is important that Prince William County provide both current and future residents adequate recreational facilities that meet current and future demand according to established levels of service. The future demand for parks and recreational facilities must be measured and means must be identified for maintaining the established countywide level of service for these important services after new development occurs.

All applications for a rezoning or special use permit for residential dwelling units shall contain the following information:

- Number and types of dwelling units proposed.
- Number of new residents anticipated in the proposed residential development.
- Number and type of recreational facilities or number of acres of parkland to be provided on site (i.e., within the proposed development).

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The following represents LOS standards for parks, recreation, and open space:

- Parks/population served (sizes and types)
- Service area (i.e. travel time boundaries)

It shall be determined that LOS standards have been met if the applicant has provided a monetary contribution in an equitable amount to provide park and recreation facilities at the established LOS standards contained in the Parks, Open Space and Trails Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Alternately, the applicant can dedicate a park site or park sites to the county, construct park facilities and dedicate them to the county, or provide funding to the county for parks and park facilities, or a combination of one or more of these alternative mitigation measures, so long as that mitigation is acceptable to the Park Authority.

Rezoning and/or special use permit applications that are found by the Park Authority to generate a shortfall between the new demand and existing and projected and already funded parks and park facilities without committing to mitigation measures that are acceptable to the Park Authority shall be found inconsistent with the Parks Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

### LOS Standards for Park Facilities:

PWCPA Std.	(facility/pop. served)
<b>ACTIVE FACILITIES</b>	
<b>PLAYFIELDS</b>	
Baseball	1/6,000
Little League	1/4,000
Softball	1/4,000
Football	1/15,000
Soccer	1/2,000
<b>COURTS</b>	
Tennis	1/5,000
Basketball	1/5,000
Volleyball	1/10,000
<b>OTHER</b>	
Gymnasium	1/35,000
Fitness/Trail	1 mi./10,000
Playground/Tot Lots	1/5,000
<b>PASSIVE FACILITIES</b>	
Nature Centers	1/100,000
Trails	1 mi/1,500
Amphitheaters (stage and seating for approx. 300)	1/100,000



<b>TABLE 1</b>					
<b>EXISTING AND PROJECTED COUNTY PARK LAND NEEDS<sup>(3)</sup></b>					
Park Type	LOS Standards	Existing County Park Acreage <sup>(2)</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2007 Estimated Population 381,221 Total Acreage Needed <sup>(1)</sup>	2015 Forecast Population 463,343 Total Acreage Needed <sup>(1)</sup>	2030 Forecast Population 555,012 Total Acreage Needed <sup>(1)</sup>
Neighborhood (26 acre average)	3 acre/1,000 population	267	1,144 (44 parks)	1,390 (53 parks)	1,665 (64 parks)
Community (85 acre average)	5 acres/1,000 population	921	1,906 (22 parks)	2,317 (27 parks)	2,775 (33 parks)
Regional (200 acre average)	10 acres/1,000 population	2,131	3,812 (19 parks)	4,633 (23 parks)	5,550 (28 parks)
Linear/ Resource Based <sup>(4)</sup>	7 acres/1,000 population	682	2,669	3,243	3,885
County Totals by Category	25 acres/1,000 population	4,001	9,531	11,584	13,875

(1) 2007 Source: PWC Office of Information Technology  
2015 and 2030 Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
(MWCOG) Round 7.

(2) Existing acreage reflects only property owned or leased by PWC. Data is derived from the PWC Park Authority's June, 2007 publication of existing park acres, acres conveyed to the park Authority on September 4, 2007, and the PWC historic properties list.

- (3) Sums have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- (4) Size and number of Linear/ Resource Based Parks are dependent on the size and character of resources and corridors to be protected

**TABLE 2**

**EXISTING AND PROJECTED COUNTY PARK FACILITY NEEDS <sup>(2)</sup>**

Facility Type	LOS Standards	Existing County Facilities	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2007 Estimated Population 381,221 Total Facilities Needed <sup>(1)</sup>	2015 Forecast Population 463,343 Total Facilities Needed <sup>(1)</sup>	2030 Forecast Population 555,012 Total Facilities Needed <sup>(1)</sup>
Baseball	1 facility/ 6,000 population	26	64	77	92
Little League	1 facility/ 4,000 population	76	95	116	139
Softball	1 facility/ 4,000 population	80	95	116	139
Football	1 facility/ 15,000 population	22	25	31	37
Soccer	1 facility/ 2,000 population	131	191	232	278
Tennis	1 facility/ 5,000 population	42	76	93	111
Basketball	1 facility/ 5,000 population	39	76	93	111
Volleyball	facility/ 10,000 population	27	38	46	56
Gymnasium	1 facility/	77	11	13	16

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	35,000 population				
Fitness/ Trail	1 mi./ 10,000 population	3	38	46	56
Playground/ Tot Lots	1 facility/ 5,000 population	87	76	93	111
Nature Centers	1 facility/ 100,000 population	0	4	5	6
Trails	1 mi./ 1,500 population	174	254	309	370
Equestrian Facilities	1 facility/595,000 population				
Amphitheaters	1 facility/ 100,000 population	2	4	5	6

- (1) 2007 Source: PWC Office of Information Technology  
 2015 and 2030 Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
 (MWCOG) Round 7.
- (2) Sums have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

## OPEN SPACE PLAN

### CONTENTS

The components of the Open Space Plan are:

- Intent
- Definitions
- Goals, Policies, and Action Strategies
- Map 1 - Open Space and Corridors Map

### INTENT

A system of open space and corridors will protect water quality in streams and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay (including sources of public drinking water); enhance the ability of wildlife to find food, water, and shelter; minimize environmental damage from development on excessively steep slopes, floodplains, Resource Protection Areas (RPA's), or inappropriate soils; conserve cultural sites and scenic vistas; and enhance connections between neighborhoods.

These open spaces and corridors can be used for recreation; wetlands and forests supply storm-water drainage and wildlife habitat; and farms and forests provide aesthetic benefits to surrounding residents. In rapidly growing urban and suburban areas, any preserved land can offer relief from congestion and other negative effects of development.

Open space provides a range of economic, aesthetic, environmental, and recreation benefits to the citizens of a community. Open space enhances property values and attracts businesses, homebuyers, and workers.

This Open Space plan provides policy guidance for the future of Prince William's open space. The plan includes objectives, strategies, and recommended actions designed to ensure the provision of an adequate supply of beneficial open space to satisfy the needs of this and future generations in the county.

The Plan also includes minimum open space and recreation facility principles and identifies criteria to evaluate acquisition sites and implementation strategies.

### DEFINITIONS

**Environmental Corridors:** Continuous systems of open space. These corridors include environmentally sensitive lands and natural resources requiring protection from disturbances and development, and lands needed for open space and recreational uses. Environmental corridors include drainage-ways and stream channels, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and other resource features, and are part of a countywide system of continuous open space corridors.

**Heritage Corridors:** Linear swaths of land that connect or contain resources of cultural significance

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and may contain trails and/or roadways with interpretive signage linking cultural sites, are part of a countywide system of continuous open space corridors. The corridors may be historic routes themselves, or modern routes that connect sites of cultural interest.

**Recreational Corridors:** Linear swaths of land or waterways that contain trails or offer other opportunities for recreation, and are part of a countywide system of continuous open space corridors.

**Open Space:** Land that is not dominated by man-made structures. It preserves natural or cultural resources, provides for passive recreation, is used for cultivated fields or forests, or exists in a natural and undeveloped state. Open space may include nature preserves, historic sites, farms, parks, forests, floodplains, wetlands, etc., and may include some structures, parking areas, roads, trails and facilities that support the use of the land.

**Protected Open Space:** ~~Land that is protected through public ownership or by a binding legal instrument such as: (1) permanent conservation easement held by a land trust or similar conservation-oriented nonprofit organization with the legal authority to accept such easement; (2) a permanent restrictive covenant for conservation purposes (3) an equivalent legal tool that provides permanent protection.~~

Land that is protected from development with a perpetual conservation or open space easement or fee ownership, held by federal, state, or local government or nonprofit organization for natural resource, forestry, agriculture, wildlife, recreation, historic, cultural, or open space use, or to sustain water quality and living resource values.

In general, Protected Open Space is made up of these categories of properties:

- Portions of County owned property: the passive recreation portions of county parks; recreational, cultural, heritage and wildlife corridors; specified historic and environmental resource lands;
- State and Federal parks, forests, and wildlife preserves;
- Land designated as a Resource Protection Area (RPA) under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, excluding intensely developed areas (IDAs);
- Land protected by easements or covenants that limit residential or commercial development.

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Whether a specific property would be considered protected open space is clarified by the following examples:

- Existing state and federal park acreage in PWC is included (although it is recognized that some portions of these parks are dedicated to active recreation);
- The passive recreation areas of county park land are included; active recreation areas of county parks (recreation centers, water parks, swimming pools, golf courses, tennis courts, athletic fields, etc) are excluded;
- Military bases are excluded;
- Home Owner Association land and utility rights-of-way would be excluded, unless protected by RPAs, covenants for conservation purposes or appropriate easements;
- Highway rights-of-way would also be excluded, since they are intended for future development rather than long-term protection.

### GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTION STRATEGIES

#### **OS-GOAL 1: PRESERVE THE EXISTING PROTECTED OPEN SPACE, MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY OPEN SPACE, AND EXPAND THE AMOUNT OF PROTECTED OPEN SPACE WITHIN THE COUNTY.**

**OS-POLICY 1:** Complete and maintain an up-to-date inventory of protected open space in Prince William County.

#### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Periodically prepare and publish a comprehensive inventory of existing protected open space.
2. Define and publish guidelines for calculating changes to the inventory of protected open space.
3. Maintain an Open Space Inventory Map showing parcel-specific boundaries of protected open space and make this information available as a Geographic Information System (GIS) layer on the County Mapper.

**OS-POLICY 2:** Partner with other government agencies, businesses, and non-government organizations, including nonprofit organizations and Home Owner Associations, to permanently protect open space and increase public access to open space areas.

#### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. ~~Consider the recommendations of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, the Virginia Wildlife Plan, the Virginia Natural Heritage Resources Assessment, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Cultural Resources Inventory during open space planning efforts.~~  
Coordinate land use planning with the recommendations of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, the Virginia Wildlife Plan, the Virginia Natural Heritage Resources Assessment, and the Virginia

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### Department of Historic Resources' Cultural Resources Inventory

2. Coordinate county ~~open space~~ land use planning efforts with the plans for Quantico Marine Corps Base, Prince William Forest Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, the Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges, Leesylvania State Park, Conway Robinson State Forest, properties managed by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Bull Run Mountain Conservancy, Prince William County School Board and other public sites as appropriate.
3. Coordinate open space planning efforts with adjoining counties, the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, and the towns of Occoquan, Quantico, Dumfries, and Haymarket.  
Staff asked to find general substitute words for all the entities listed.  
Staff revised language:  
Network and partner with other groups and organizations to provide resource education and foster stewardship.

**OS-POLICY 3:** Identify county-owned land and designate such land for open space, where suitable.

#### ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. ~~Review county owned properties and identify those properties that are open space.~~  
Review County-owned properties and determine what County-owned lands should be protected as open space, and ensure such designation is made in official management plans of the Park Authority, Services Authority, Department of Public Works, Transportation Department, and other County agencies.
2. Consider using future "surplus" county rights-of-way or other county-owned lands for trails, parks, and open space, prior to determining if other disposition is more appropriate.

**OS-POLICY 4:** Retain existing open space in the county

#### ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Review and implement programs, including the Purchase of Development Rights, Transfer of Development Rights, and outreach highlighting opportunities available through private conservation easements, in order to protect existing open space.
2. Review and implement programs which provide incentives for landowners in the Rural Area to preserve agricultural land uses, protect prime soils, and prevent non-agricultural uses from negatively impacting the primary land use.

**OS-POLICY 5:** A minimum of 39 percent of the total land area in the County should be retained as protected open space.

#### ACTION STRATEGIES:

## **Parks, Open Space and Trails CPA Approved by the Planning Commission on 9/26/07**

1. When and where possible and appropriate, work with Home Owner Associations, utility companies, and other private property owners to obtain appropriate easements and **covenants** that ensure permanent protection of open space.
2. Review the open space development standards and definitions in the Zoning Ordinance, including the rural cluster component, and update them to reflect the goals and policies of this chapter.
3. In the comprehensive plan, identify and map existing open space and other areas where acquisition of additional protected open space should be prioritized.
4. Review opportunities, including the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), and Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) and implement appropriate programs in order to provide incentives for landowners to protect open space and to shift density to appropriate locations where infrastructure is planned or in place.
5. Actively seek to acquire easements or fee interest in property – through land purchases, grants, proffers, and donations – that is suitable for protected open space, including existing open spaces, or where an Environmental Constraints Analysis shows that by-right development would result in substantial community impacts.
6. Acquire easements as authorized by the Virginia Open Space Land Act.
7. Update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure increased requirements for protected open space.
8. Consider open space acquisition as a regular component of the capital improvement program.

### **OS-GOAL 2: IDENTIFY, PROTECT AND PRESERVE ENVIRONMENTAL, HERITAGE, AND RECREATIONAL CORRIDORS.**

**OS-POLICY 6:** Ensure connectivity, and encourage diverse forms of transportation, between neighborhoods/employment centers/transit nodes and open space that is accessible to the public.

#### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Link neighborhoods to existing and planned county parks and state and Federal natural/historic/recreational sites. Link employment centers and transit facilities to county, state and Federal natural/historic/recreational sites.
2. Provide convenient, well-marked, well-defined entrance points in and near public parks for access to trails within the park and to environmental, heritage, and recreational corridors. Where possible, locate these entrance points at activity centers such recreation centers, nature centers, field complexes, public transit, residential communities.



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3. As part of the rezoning and special use permit process, ensure adequate pedestrian, biking, and equestrian access to the nearest local parks through environmental, heritage, and recreational corridors. Access should incorporate, where practical, existing utility and conservation easements, abandoned railroad beds, and existing or planned trail segments.

**OS-POLICY 7:** Partner with others to plan and manage heritage, environmental, and recreational corridors.

### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Support the efforts of State and Federal agencies to establish corridors linking public parks, forests, and wildlife management areas.
2. Work with private and public organizations, utility companies, and other county, regional, state and federal agencies to develop heritage, environmental, and recreational corridors.
3. Ensure opportunities for public participation in developing partnerships for heritage, environmental, and recreational corridors, including planning and maintenance of the corridors that get established.
4. Ensure that all County agencies use best practices to develop and maintain corridors, including topographic standards, environmental concerns, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access requirements, where appropriate.

### **MAP 1: OPEN SPACE AND CORRIDORS MAP**

## **TRAILS PLAN**

### **CONTENTS**

The components of the Trails Plan are:

- Intent
- Definitions
- Goals, Policies, and Action Strategies
- Map 1 – Trails Map
- Appendix A – Trail Classification System
- Appendix B – Section 29.1-509 of the Code of Virginia

### **INTENT**

The quality of life for residents of Prince William County is linked closely to the development and management of a well-maintained system of parks, trails, and open space. This Comprehensive Plan chapter addresses trails on public land or water, or private land where the trail is open to public use.

A network of multi-use trails will connect residential areas with county, state, and national parks, forests, and wildlife management areas as well as with places of cultural and historical interest, schools, retail areas, and transportation nodes. Recreational trails will include appropriate designation of selected county streams and rivers as "blueways" for recreational use, and satisfy a need to provide public access to waterways that can support canoes and boats for recreation and fishing.

A network of trails provides a range of economic, aesthetic, environmental and recreation benefits to citizens of a community, beyond the benefits that accrue to private landowners. A trails network (including blueways) can increase residential and commercial property values, encourage the revitalization of declining areas, attract tourists, and provide an alternative to the use of automobiles that can help reduce traffic congestion.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Blueways:** Rivers, lakes, or streams with public access for recreation that includes fishing, nature observation, and opportunities for boating.

**Trails:** Designated routes on land or water with public access for recreation or transportation purposes such as walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, and backpacking. For safety or other management purposes, some Prince William public trails and blueways may be restricted to particular uses. Trails may be located on land or water bodies of any size including, but not limited to, urban, suburban, subdivided, and rural land.

### **GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

**TR-GOAL 1: Preserve the existing trails network (including blueways) within the County.**

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**TR-Policy 1:** Complete and maintain an accurate inventory of trails (including blueways) in Prince William County.

### ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. The County shall prepare a current comprehensive inventory of existing trails (using the classification system in Appendix A) The inventory will include, but is not limited to trails within public parks and open space, paved multi-use trails alongside roadways, natural surface trails, and other paths open to the public for non-motorized travel. The inventory will also include existing blueways and public access points to lakes and streams in the county.
2. Periodically update trails inventory to include newly constructed trails.
3. Develop and maintain a publicly available online inventory of all trails

### **TR-GOAL 2: Plan and implement a comprehensive countywide network of trails**

**TR-Policy 2:** Establish a Trails Advisory Committee to serve as the focal point for developing a comprehensive network of trails (including blueways) in Prince William County.

### ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. The Board of County Supervisors should consider the creation of a Trails and Blueways Advisory Committee to operate under the auspices of the Park Authority to advise and assist the Park Authority Board and the Board of County Supervisors in efforts to create, implement and protect a countywide trails network. The Trails Advisory Committee shall be responsible for developing baseline criteria for creating public trails as well as recommending priorities for inclusion in the Prince William County Capital Improvement Program, the Prince William Park Authority Capital Improvement Program, reviewing comprehensive plan amendments, rezoning and special use permit applications and recommending trail development opportunities, and actively seeking to establish a broad range of partnerships to ensure a high quality and comprehensive Countywide trail network.
2. The Trails Advisory Committee, with staff support from the Prince William County Park Authority, Planning Office, and other agencies as directed by the Board of County Supervisors, shall identify new trails that connect residential areas, county, state, and national parks, forests, and wildlife management areas, places of cultural and historical interest, schools, retail areas, and transportation nodes, and provide their recommendations to the Board of County Supervisors for inclusion in the County's Comprehensive Plan.
3. The Trails Advisory Committee shall identify opportunities to increase public access to blueways, and to create safe portage paths around obstacles (dams, low bridges, etc.)

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The Trails Advisory Committee shall create benchmarks to measure progress in completing Prince William's comprehensive trail network.

**TR-Policy 3:** Maximize partnerships and public participation in all phases of the County trail and blueways programs.

### ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Invite input from county/state/regional/Federal agencies, adjacent jurisdictions, landowners and developers, as well as community and regional organizations (including athletic leagues, civic groups, conservation and environmental groups, plus hiking, cycling and equestrian groups), to update the Trails Map, develop high-quality facilities, and attract alternative sources of land and funding.
2. Ensure that the County's plans for a comprehensive trail network are included in the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) "Northern Virginia Bikeway and Trail Network", the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOG) "Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the National Capital Region," plus other relevant state and regional planning documents.
3. Facilitate arrangements with Virginia Railroad Express (VRE) and Omnilink for transport of bicycles, to increase access to trails in other Northern Virginia jurisdictions.
4. Encourage willing Home Owner Associations whenever possible, to incorporate existing trails into the public trail system.
5. Work with the Prince William County Service Authority to co-locate trail easements in utility corridors and on Service Authority properties.
6. Work with utilities and other private property owners to incorporate existing trails, not open to the public now, into the county's comprehensive trail network.
7. Consideration regarding residential privacy will be included as a factor when siting trails. Provide adequate public parking at appropriate trail access points to ensure residential or commercial interests will not be inconvenienced inappropriately by trail users.
8. Establish an Adopt-a-Trail Program to stimulate community support and protection of individual trails, and to offset the need for county resources to build, monitor, and maintain trail facilities.
9. Corridors, trails, and blueways generally shown on the Trails Map may take place on public property, within the public right-of-way, or on private property through voluntary donations by citizens and through negotiating proffers from landowners and/or the development community, as development occurs. Private property owners are not obligated to participate in the trails program."

TR-POLICY 3: Add Action Strategy (9) to read Corridors, trails, and blueways generally shown on the Trails Map may take place on public property, within the public right-of-way, or on private

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property through voluntary donations by citizens and through negotiating proffers from landowners and/or the development community, as development occurs. Private property owners are not obligated to participate in the trails program.”

**TR-Policy 4:** Make land use decisions that stimulate both private sector developments and public transportation improvements that are consistent with the county's desired trails network.

### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Assure that approvals for new development (such as Comprehensive Plan Amendments, rezonings, and Special Use Permits) will include appropriate proffers for trails (see "Guidelines for Trail Proffers," Appendix D). Assure that approvals for new development will not negatively impact existing trails, and that new developments will preserve public access to trails.
2. Review all Federal, state, regional, and county transportation projects in Prince William to ensure funding includes appropriate lateral crossings in the design and construction of bridges and road projects, as well as bicycle and pedestrian signage, crossing signals, and crosswalks that facilitate easy pedestrian and bike access across highways, streams, and railroads. Consider the suitability of sidewalks and on-road bicycle lanes as interim measures for completing a comprehensive network of dedicated trails.
3. Consider using existing county rights-of-way or other county-owned lands for trails, parks, and open space, prior to determining if other disposition is more appropriate.
4. Acquire easements and other property rights using donations, grants, General Funds, and proceeds from bond issues as well as proffers, to implement the comprehensive trails network.

### **TR-Policy 5: Develop and maintain standards and guidelines for trail planning, development, and maintenance.**

1. Amend the DCSM to include construction standards for trail types identified in Appendix A.
2. Amend the Park Authority Comprehensive Plan to include trail guidelines, types, and standards consistent with this Plan.

### **MAP 1: TRAILS MAP**

## Appendix A

### Trail Standards and Classification

Trails serve a multiplicity of purposes including exercising, walking, jogging, hiking, cycling, mountain biking, bird-watching, boating, and equestrian use. They provide safe, alternative, non-motorized transportation routes to destinations such as private residences, work, schools, or shopping. For safety and other management purposes, some trails may be restricted to particular uses.

Trails are designed to provide a variety of experiences for users of different ages and abilities. Based on factors including the terrain, surrounding natural resources such as vegetation, surface material, trail width, stream crossings, and road crossings, users will be offered a range of experiences.

Furthermore, because of the range of user abilities and purposes, it is impossible for one trail type to be optimal for all purposes and users. For example, baby strollers need a smooth, paved surface while mountain bikers prefer a natural surface with some challenging features.

#### Trail Standards

- Whenever feasible, the trail should be separated from vehicular traffic, except for regulated uses such as maintenance and emergency access.
- A trail should either have definitive start and end points, which may include residential areas, businesses, schools, parks, other trails, or, as in the case of a loop trail, the trail itself, or a potential for future connectivity. In many cases it may take a number of years to assemble all the pieces needed to make a meaningful trail connection.
- A trail should be mapped in the appropriate trail database.
- A trail should be signed in such a way that it can be navigated with reasonable ease from one end to the other.
- A trail should be maintained so that it is generally passable. Many trails, especially natural surface trails, have some use limitations due to uncontrollable weather events.
- The existence of boardwalks and bridges does not affect the classification of a trail.

Depending upon factors such as user demographics, topography, and connective value, trails are classified into one of eight categories:

1. Major Regional Trail: A major trail that connects to trails outside the County, such as the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and the Virginia Bikeway. Surface and width vary depending upon the terrain and regional uses.

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2. On-road Bicycle Route: Designated bike lane or signed bike route on road surface.
3. Major paved trail: Concrete or asphalt trail, 8 feet or more in width.
4. Minor Paved Trail: Concrete or asphalt trail, 4 to less than 8 feet in width.
5. Multi-Use Trails: Minor paved trail with a parallel natural surface or stone dust trail.
6. Natural Surface or Stone Dust Trail: Stone dust, wood chip, or packed soil, usually 6 – 8 feet in width.
7. Stream Valley Trail: Trail in a stream valley, surface and width vary depending upon the terrain.
8. Trails Belonging to Other Jurisdictions: Trails that belong to the City of Manassas, Manassas Park, or the Towns of Occoquan, Dumfries, Haymarket, or Quantico.

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