

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Donald Cochran, Director of Parks  
Mike Riley, Acting Chief, Park Planning & Development  
Doug Alexander, Design and Project Management Supervisor

**FROM:** Kathleen Dearstine, Landscape Architect

**SUBJECT:** Black Hill Regional Park Master Plan and the Black Hill Access Road Feasibility Study

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**I. RECOMMENDATION**

Staff requests that the Board set April 25, 2002 as a date for the continuation of the public hearing on the Black Hill Master Plan and for response on the Access Road Feasibility Study. Following the public hearing and two week period for written comments, the Master Plan, with any resulting changes will be presented to the Planning Board for approval during a work session.

Staff recommends approval of the Master Plan without any additional public vehicular access from Crystal Rock Drive or other location. In the alternative, should the Board approve the access road, staff recommends Alignment 3 as having the least environmental or cultural resource impact.

**II. INTRODUCTION**

Accompanying this memorandum is a copy of the Public Hearing draft of the Black Hill Regional Park Master Plan and a copy of the report on the Access Road Feasibility Study. Black Hill Regional Park has been in existence for over 12 years. This Master Plan was created to provide policy direction for future development and renovation of recreational facilities within the Park. The Plan was created with input from surrounding communities, park visitors, and staff, and is designed to delineate a long-range vision for the Park.

As described in the Master Plan, the vision for the Park, in brief, is to maintain the natural character of the Park while preserving and enhancing the visitor's experience by optimizing use and access to the lake, improving passive recreational opportunities;

improving park operational facilities; renovating existing facilities; and adding a few new strategically sited recreational facilities.

On November 4, 1999, the Planning Board approved the Final Staff Draft Master Plan with changes, to be released as a Public Hearing Draft. The primary change directed by the Board was to separate the Master Plan and the Management Plan into two documents. This change was incorporated into the Public Hearing Draft Plan, which was made available to the public on December 3, 1999.

On January 6, 2000, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the Black Hill Master Plan. Testimony was taken from the public on all aspects of the plan. The Master Plan Draft accompanying this memo incorporates changes made by staff based on that testimony. The transcript from that public hearing and staff responses to the testimony also accompany this memo.

At the Public Hearing, testimony was received from the Germantown Alliance in favor of implementing the second point of access to the park from Crystal Rock Drive as shown in the Germantown Master Plan. Based on this testimony, the Board directed staff to study the access road and return with a recommendation. In preparing the Black Hill Master Plan, staff had previously evaluated the access road and had rejected it based on environmental impacts.

To respond to the Board's request, staff hired a consultant, Frederick Ward Associates, Inc., to conduct the Access Road Study. Their analysis considered three areas: Community planning, environmental/cultural resources, engineering feasibility and cost. The study resulted in four alternatives: three possible alignments and a "no-build" option. The first alignment is least favorable. It is the longest alignment and would have the greatest impact on the natural and cultural environment of the park. The second alignment is an extension of the WSSC Pumping Station access road. The most favorable of all the alignments is the third, which would require an easement through the Far North Village development that adjoins the park on the east side, but has the least impact on resources and is least costly. The fourth option is to maintain the trail access planned from this side of the park and not to provide for vehicular access. This is referred to as the "no-build" option.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK MASTER PLAN

Black Hill Regional Park is a unique resource within the park system as well as the Washington metropolitan area. The Park provides significant passive recreational opportunities and access to the Little Seneca Lake, one of a limited number of large public-access lakes in the mid-Atlantic region. At the same time, the Park encompasses a substantial acreage of unbroken forest cover and a diverse mix of open landscapes. The combination of limited recreational activities within a predominantly natural setting makes the Park both useful and attractive for a wide range of constituents.

The Master Plan will provide a policy document, intended for M-NCPPC staff and the general public, which delineates the vision and use of the Park for the next 20 years. It will also give staff clear direction in order to prepare and prioritize CIP development recommendations for future budget cycles.

The Master Plan seeks to improve the Park through a series of focused recommendations, which address specific problems that have been identified during the Park's fourteen-year history. More importantly, the Plan is intended to realize the optimum potential of the Park to provide a natural respite, but also to help meet regional recreational needs.

The core vision for the future of Black Hill Regional Park promoted by this Master/Management Plan study is comprised of the following four provisions:

- Preserve and enhance the visitor's ability to experience the essential qualities of the Park, by optimizing use and access to Little Seneca Lake, improving passive recreational opportunities such as trails, and preserving the natural character of the Park.
- Develop new, "strategically sited" recreational facilities, such as new picnic shelters and playground sited on existing developed land, a new boat ramp on an old farm field, and new trails sited on existing utility corridors, old roads and trails.
- Renovate, expand, and replace older facilities in the Park to eliminate inefficiencies or crowding and provide safer, more accessible facilities; and
- Provide a means to better operate the Park, primarily through improved park maintenance facilities and infrastructure improvements.

#### IV. AREA MASTER PLANS

The *Germantown Master Plan*, adopted and approved in 1989, directs the growth of vacant and uncommitted land within the Germantown planning area. The planning area is divided into eight villages, each with a community identity, locally-serving retail center, and a mix of housing types at varying prices and rental levels. Connection by means of pedestrian, bikeway, sidewalk, and roadway systems within each village and between the other villages is an important characteristic.

Churchill Village, where the proposed Park Access Road would be located, is the oldest and most densely populated village with an average density of 8.8 dwelling units per acre. At the time of the Master Plan, Churchill Village was nearly completely developed with only 132 of 741 acres remaining to be built out.

The 1989 Master Plan recommended policy changes to assure a broader mix of housing choices in Germantown to offset the existing predominance of single-family attached units. The Plan set targets for the proportion of single-family detached, single-family attached and multi-family units for the entire planning area and for each village.

This objective shifted the number and proportion of new housing units toward single-family detached and multi-family units.

The proposed Park Access Road appears in two graphic illustrations in the Master Plan:

- Churchill Village Analysis Area (Figure 18 – Attachment A)
- Roadway System (Figure 34 – Attachment B).

There is no accompanying text or guidance presented regarding this access road.

In the development of the *Germantown Master Plan*, the park access road was not included in the Preliminary Draft (March 1988) that was presented to the Planning Board, or in the Final Draft (September 1988) forwarded to the Montgomery County Council. The Preliminary Draft contained a suggestion for an extension of Crystal Rock Drive using a 100-foot right-of-way that would bisect a significant portion of Black Hill Regional Park. This suggestion was eliminated from further consideration in the Final Draft Plan forwarded to the County Council.

Research of committee minutes (Planning, Housing and Economic Development) and the adopted minutes of the County Council failed to uncover at what point the Park access road was carried forward in the *Germantown Master Plan* maps.

The *Clarksburg Master Plan*, adopted in June 1994, strongly supports the opportunity for public open space linkages to the park. The plan does not support widening West Old Baltimore Road, but supports retaining its rural character. The plan proposes the extension of Newcut Road across I-270 north of West Old Baltimore Road to improve the access from the north into Black Hill Regional Park and to avoid any negative impacts on the Park:

- Generalized Highway and Transit Plan (Figure 40 – Attachment C)
- Proposed Interchange Design Concepts (Figure 41 – Attachment D).

The plan also emphasizes bikeway access to the Park.

## V. BENEFITS OF AN ADDITIONAL PARK ACCESS ROAD

Germantown residents presently have two potential routes to enter Black Hill Regional Park by vehicle: one route on the west side of I-270 uses Clopper Road (MD 117) north to Clarksburg Road (MD 121) to West Old Baltimore Road to reach the Lake Ridge Drive entry into the park. This route is approximately 12.5 miles from the Germantown Town Center at MD 118 and Middlebrook Road. A second route uses MD 118 east to Frederick Road (MD 355) to West Old Baltimore Road to park entrance. This route is approximately 8.5 miles from the Germantown Town Center.

The number of people to benefit from improved access to Black Hill Regional Park via a new park access road from Crystal Rock Drive as compared to the No Build alternative in 2000 is 18570. In 2025, it is 21486. (For a fuller discussion of the need and purpose for the access road, see Enhanced Vehicular Access Feasibility Study).

An alternative entrance has been voiced in the past suggesting that the same users to the south could be serviced by using the Black Hill Road entrance from Clarksburg Road. Should the suggested entrance from Clarksburg Road be utilized, the number of households within the two planning areas would change. Those areas west of the park would most likely use the Clarksburg entrance and all areas east of I-270 would use the existing entrance.

Staff had previously assessed the Black Hill Road access option and rejected it based on a number of factors. Black Hill Road exists only as a service entrance and cannot be converted to public use without realignment, engineering, and environmental analysis. Staff continues to recommend against this road access option as more fully discussed in Attachment E.

## VI. SUMMARY OF ACCESS ROAD FEASIBILITY STUDY

After reviewing the study submitted from Frederick Ward Associates, it is staff's opinion that the proposed access road from Crystal Rock Drive into the southeast corner of Black Hill Regional Park should not be included in the Master Plan. Although it is likely that the road would be used by a large number of Germantown residents, all three of the road alignments being proposed would have a significant impact on the environment. The clearing for the road would affect large numbers of trees and subsequently affect the bird habitat of the park. From past projects, it has been discovered that additional trees are lost at the edge of the new clearing for 5 to 7 years after construction. The area with the greatest impact is the first 10 feet of forested area along a newly cut edge.

All three alignments will cross Little Seneca Creek. In order to avoid permanent impacts to the floodplain and non-tidal wetlands, a bridge spanning the creek would require concrete abutments higher up on each bank and above the floodplain. As part of the construction of the road, storm water management ponds would have to be constructed to control storm run-offs of 10-year return storms and to reduce pollution from pavement surfaces. These are required to protect waterways farther downstream. Black Hill Regional Park is located within a "Special Protection Area" (SPA) of Montgomery County. Development and construction within an SPA must comply with a higher level of storm water treatment, which means an enhanced level of treatment for storm water quality. As a whole, M-NCPPC fully complies with SPA requirements.

If the Board should elect to include the access road into the Master Plan, staff would recommend Alternative #3. This alternative has the least impact on the environment and is the least costly.

In addition to other impacts, all three alignments will affect existing and planned trails in the Park. These include several CIP projects underway in various stages of planning and design: hard surface trail projects – Spinning Wheel Trail, Crystal Rock Connector, and Waters Landing Trail Reconstruction; a natural surface trail project – Ten Mile Creek Bridge; and the new Maintenance Yard (see Attachment F).

## VII. COMMUNITY MEETING

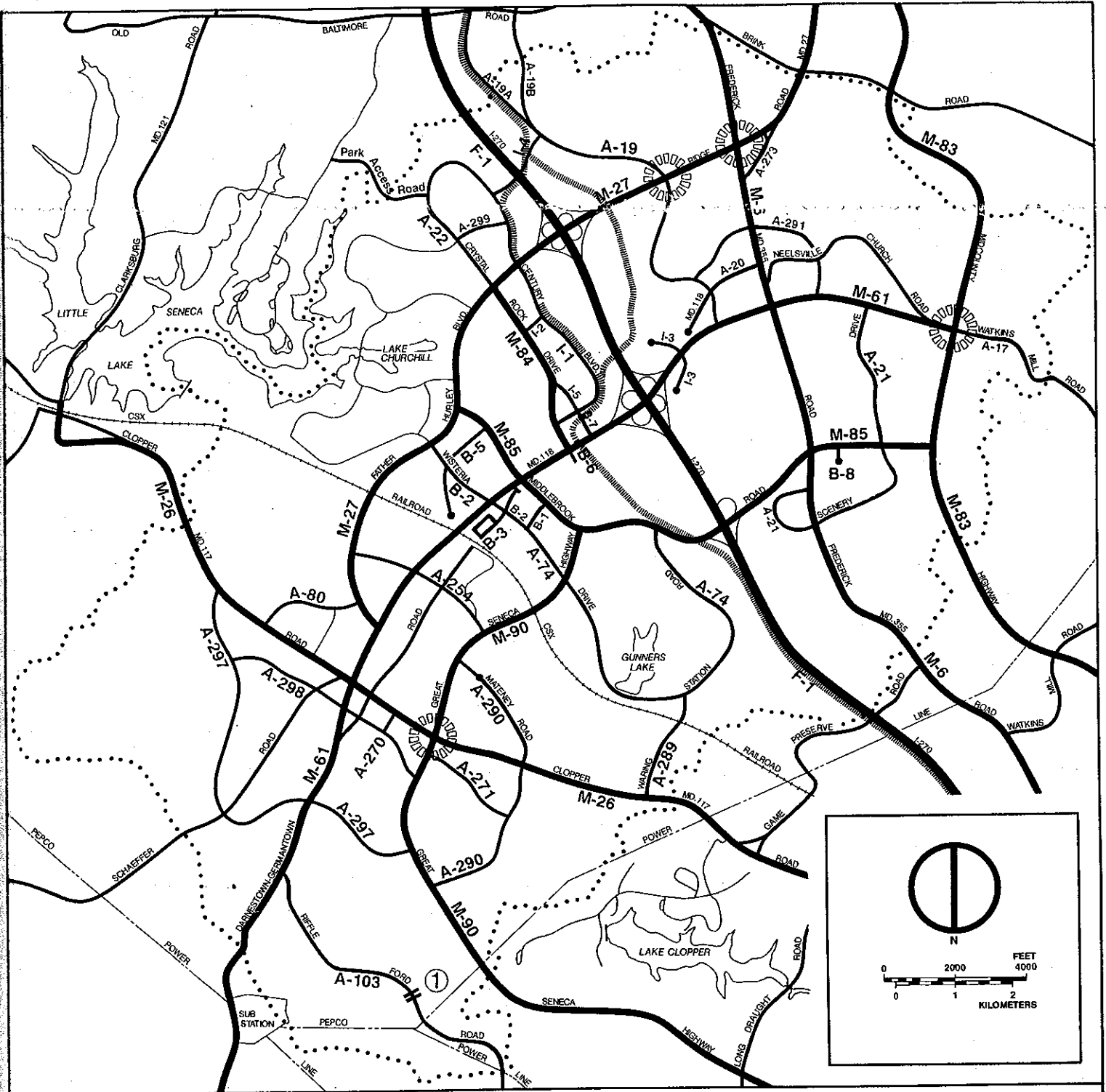
Frederick Ward Associates and staff presented the four alternatives for the access road to the citizens at a community meeting on Wednesday, January 16, 2000 at Seneca Lodge. All comments, oral and written, are included in the consultant's report. The majority of the questions and comments from the community were related to the Crystal Rock Drive proposal, but there was some interest in access off Black Hill Road. The majority of the participants that evening were in favor of the "no-build" option. Interest was expressed by the group for better trailhead parking to access the pedestrian trails into the park at this location. Although not a vehicular access, the existing Crystal Rock Trail project would provide enhanced pedestrian and bike access to the same community. This project will evaluate options to include trailhead parking.

### ACCOMPANYING REPORTS:





- The Black Hill Regional Park Master Plan
- The Black Hill Access Road Feasibility Study Report prepared by Frederick Ward Associates, Inc.
- Testimony from the Public Hearing, January 6, 2000
- Staff responses to the Testimony

### ATTACHMENTS:


- A Germantown Master Plan – Figure 18
- B Germantown Master Plan – Figure 34
- C Clarksburg Master Plan – Figure 40
- D Clarksburg Master Plan – Figure 41
- E Black Hill Road Access Option
- F CIP Projects in Black Hill Regional Park



## Roadway System

-  Grade-Separated Interchange
-  Freeway
-  Major Highway
-  Arterial(A), Industrial(I), and Business District Roads(B)

 **Comprehensive Amendment to the Master Plan for Germantown**  
 Montgomery County, Maryland  
 The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

May be closed when Great Seneca Highway is opened to traffic through Great Seneca Park 

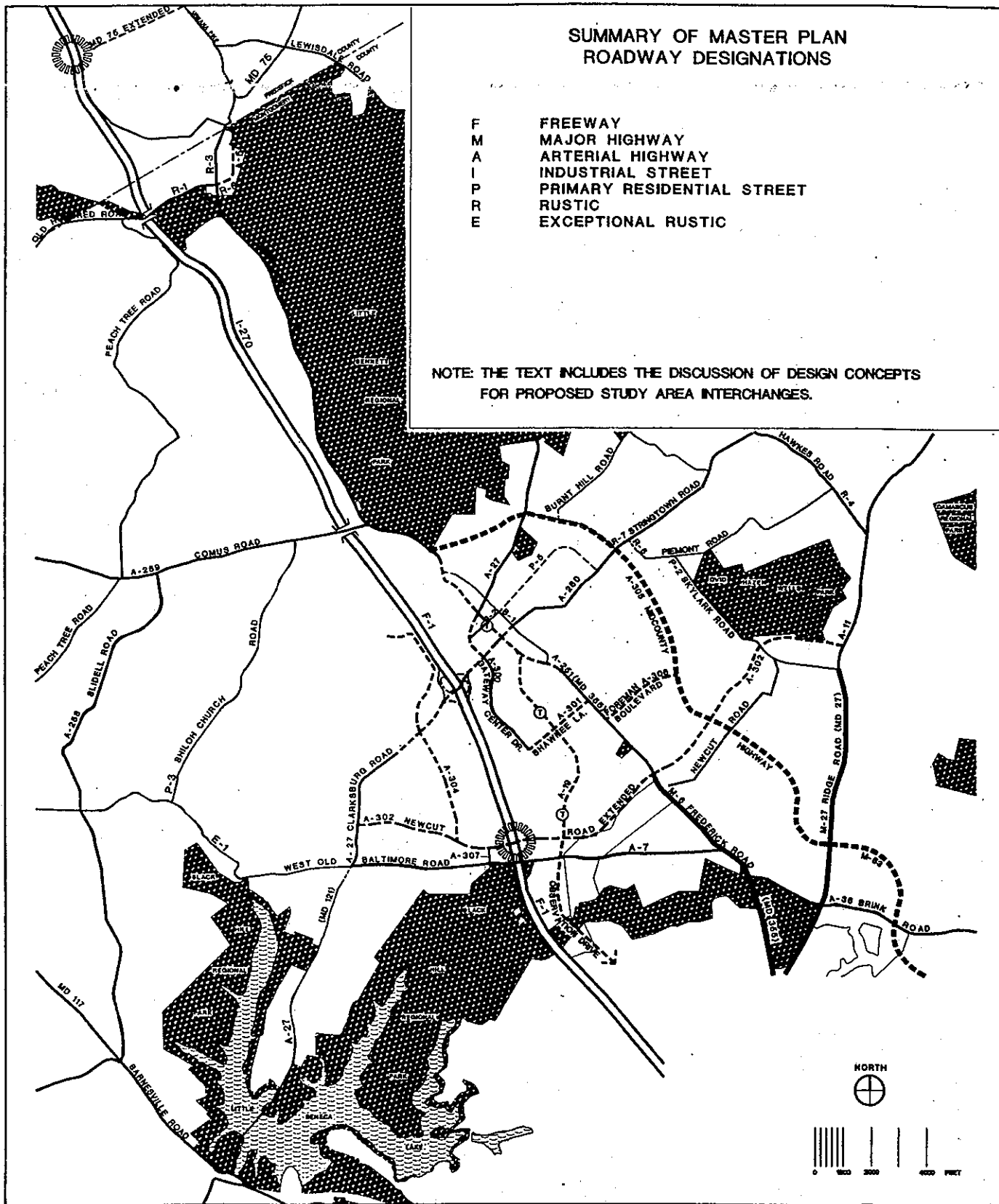


## Churchill Village: Analysis Areas



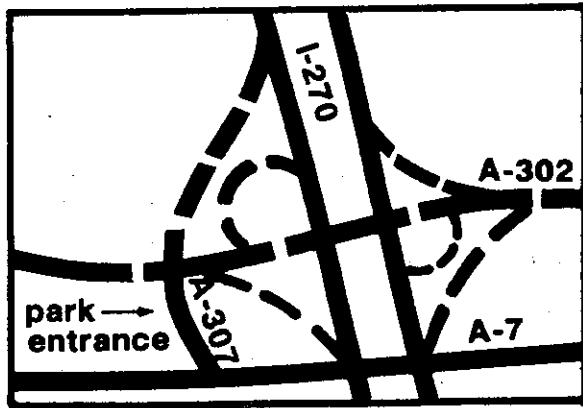
# Generalized Highway and Transit Plan

Figure 40

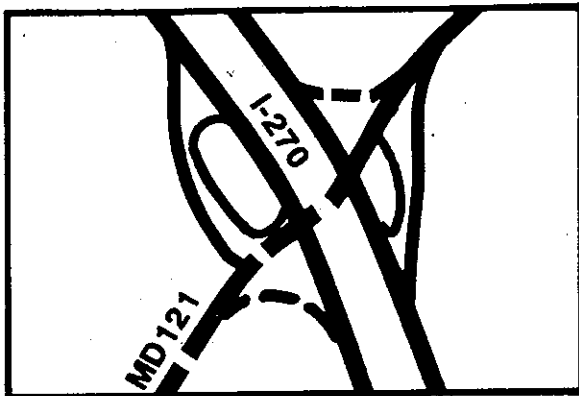


# Proposed Interchange Design Concepts

Figure 41



Proposed Interchange -  
I-270 at Newcut Road



Existing Interchange -  
(with currently designed  
modifications) - I-270 at MD 121

**BLACK HILL ROAD ACCESS OPTION**

At the January 16, 2002 community meeting, the Black Hill Road access proposal was mentioned again as a possible point of vehicular access to the Park. The access would connect Clarksburg Road with Lake Ridge Drive within the Park. Black Hill Road exists only as a service entrance and cannot be converted to public use without realignment, engineering, and environmental analysis. Staff recommends against this option for the following reasons:

1. Park Police, Maintenance, and emergency vehicles now use the Black Hill Road point of access to the Park. These users value this entrance as a means for reaching westerly areas of the Park. Use of this access by the public would impair these functions. In addition, public access at this location would require another point of control for after hours or special events.
2. The present roadway has poor sight distances at the entrance onto Clarksburg Road, which make it unsafe for traffic to exit the park from this location.
3. The existing Black Hill Road passes by three houses fronting the road to the south and additional houses backing onto the right-of-way to the north. Residents have made it clear that they oppose use of this road for an entrance to the park.
4. Black Hill Road is substandard and would need to be widened and upgraded, which would further impact the fronting home sites.
5. An access road at this location would have to be realigned to the south thereby providing a safer entrance and avoiding the existing houses. The alignment would require a substantial bridge and significant engineering and environmental analysis.
6. Constructing both this entrance and the one from Crystal Rock Drive would be inappropriate. It would create a road connection through the heart of the Park. As the consultant's analysis of users shows, significant overlap exists for the two proposals. Therefore, the decision is to build either one or none of these points of access, but not both. The consultant supplied an analysis for the number of households most likely to use a Clarksburg Road entrance. Those areas west of the Park would use a Clarksburg Road entrance and all areas east of I-270 would use the existing entrance as shown in the following:

**Number of Households (Germantown and Clarksburg Planning Areas)**

<b>Preferred Park Access</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
Clarksburg Road	47185	57232	58922	69597	65903	66114
Existing Entrance	22021	31836	24386	50699	56388	56309

**BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK – ON-GOING CIP PROJECTS**

The Black Hill Maintenance Yard and several trail projects planned for the Park are currently in various stages of planning and design. CIP projects located in Black Hill Regional Park include the following:

- Maintenance Facility – located at the northeast corner of the Park, adjacent to the entrance. The design for the facility is complete and construction is targeted to begin in July of this year. The facility is expected to be completed by early fall of next year.
- Spinning Wheel Hard Surface Trail – located east of Ridge Drive, is two miles in length and will connect parking lot #6 with the Crystal Rock Trail Connector to Crystal Rock Drive. Facility planning is in progress and will be presented to the Board in July of this year. The project is funded through design, but construction will require funding in a future CIP.
- Crystal Rock Hard Surface Trail Connector – located in the northeast portion of the Park and planned to connect and both the Spinning Wheel and Waters Landing trails to access from Crystal Rock Drive. A portion of the trail is being provided by WSSC as part of their pumping station project. Planning and design began in February this year and will continue through design with completion in July of this year. As trail connector, the Crystal Rock Connector will be prioritized for construction using level-of-effort funding in the Trails: Hard Surface Design and Construction PDF. Staff will present the trail as part of the Trail Connector Analysis in the summer of this year. This trail connection will include consideration for trailhead parking as recommended in the Master Plan.
- Ten Mile Creek Natural Surface Bridge – locate at the northwest portion of the Park and to cross the Ten Mile Creek south of West Old Baltimore Road. Planning and design began in February of this year and will be completed in July. The bridge will be constructed beginning July 2004 using Trails: Natural Surface Design and Construction funds.
- Waters Landing Hard Surface Trail Reconstruction – located on the east side of the lake and connecting Wisteria Drive to the south with Spinning Wheel Drive to the north, the project will reconstruct a two-mile length of existing trail. Facility planning will begin in June of this year and be completed in the fall, at which time the project will be presented to the Board. The reconstruction of the trail will be programmed for construction in a future CIP.

In addition, the WSSC pumping station located adjacent to Park property and with access from Crystal Rock is under construction and anticipated to be in service in 2005. As part of the project, a section of boardwalk will be constructed by WSSC to complete the Crystal Rock Connector.

ITEM 12

STAFF RESPONSES AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN  
PUBLIC HEARING  
JANUARY 6, 2000

**TRANSCRIPT FROM JANUARY 6, 2000 PUBLIC HEARING  
ON THE BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Number	Name/Affiliation	Issue	Staff Response	Recommendation
1	John Corless, WSSC Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Suggests use of boat ramp extensions to accommodate water fluctuations on lake. WSSC would be glad to offer assistance.	Concur - Need to find out more about this.	Need to work with WSSC on extensions.
2	Michael Bowen, MD Ornithological Society Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Natural character of park must be preserved. Opposes further development in 10-Mile Creek area.	Minimal development is proposed for 10 Mile Creek (bridge, parking lot, and additional trail).	
3	Lynne Rosenbusch, Clarksburg, Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Supports additional hard surface trails and hopes to see Clarksburg greenway become reality.	No response.	
4	Royal Buyer, Rockville Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Sees MP as another example of taxpayer money funding project that will be available only to select few.	Park is open to all, not a select few.	
5	John Fauerby, Clarksburg, Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Supports MP, but has suggestions about trails. Trail 3.b.3 changed from Class I To Class II and routed along Clarksburg Road to park. Supports Clarksburg Special Park and suggests it be located In SE corner of Clarksburg Road - Old Baltimore Road intersection.		
6	Terry Fitzsimmons, Boyds Civic Association, Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Supports new maintenance facility and vehicular access from Black Hills Road, supports need for additional parking at Cool Spring Run trail, supports Clarksburg Special Park. Opposes hard surface trail connecting gravel lot on Clarksburg Road and Black Hills Road for security reasons, opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance on environmental grounds.	Not sure if the statement about supporting vehicular traffic is accurate.	When is Clarksburg Special Park slated for development?
7	Patricia Fuhrer, Damascus, Public hearing, 1/6/00 Letter, 1/10/00.	Suggests a dog park be added to the park.	Department is looking at park locations for a dog park. Black Hill needs to be evaluated.	Proceed with Department Dog Park Feasibility Study.
8	Dawn Harrison, Germantown, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Suggests a dog park be added to the park.	Same as above.	
9	Marjorie James, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Has concerns regarding drawing down of water level in lake. Should be minimal impact to protect fish.	WSSC has sole authority to draw down lake. Refer to interagency agreement between WSSC and M-NCPPC	Does interagency agreement need to be revised? Need to review and make recommendation.
10	Jim Reynolds, Boyds, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Concerned about availability of equestrian trails. Explains that a sudden change from natural to hard surface might restrict equestrian access. Supports Clarksburg Special Park.	A portion of the Black Hill trail is the only portion proposed to be changed.	

11	Harry St. Ours, Boyds, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance. Fears that Black Hill is getting too developed.	Need to see Dewberry and Davis Proposal for this study- Does it include both Crystal Rock Drive Access Road (as per Germantown Master Plan) and access road from Route 121.	Conduct feasibility study of access road.
12	Jean Stone, Water Watch Public hearing and letter 1/6/00.	States desire to leave Black Hill as undeveloped as possible. Urges county not to relinquish control of lake to outside investors. Opposes paving of paths, building of amphitheater and building large picnic shelters.	Second sentence refers to proposed "privatization" of WSSC. Amphitheater is low priority.	
13	Amy Wang, Potomac Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance.	MCPB directed study to be done on feasibility of this proposed road.	
14	Brian Long, Germantown Alliance, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Supports Crystal Rock Drive entrance, citing need for Germantown residents to have easy access to park.		Must get feasibility study done ASAP.
15	Dick Pelroy, Dave Magill, Dave Scull, M.O.R.E., Public hearing and letter, 1/6/00.	Support Clarksburg Special Park and see it as way to enhance biker access to Black Hill. Would like to see more natural surface trails and volunteerism to encourage mountain biking.	Adding natural surface trail from Mauglin House to Osprey Heights Loop.	
16	Fred Bagley, Germantown, Public hearing, 1/6/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance, fearing increase in cut-through traffic.		
17	Ellen Gilson, Germantown, Letter, 1/17/00.	Suggests a dog park be added to the park.	See comments on #7 and #8.	See comments on #7 and #8.
18	Timothy Gier, Montgomery Village, Letter, 1/19/00.	Disagrees with further development in Ten-Mile Creek area. Cites that development will threaten waterfowl and the "rustic" designation of Old Baltimore Road.	Minimal development is proposed for the 10-Mile Creek area.	
19	Theodore Lewis, Germantown Letter, 1/17/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance and wishes development will be kept to a minimum in the park.	Staff feels development is being kept to a minimum.	
20	John Miller, Northern Area Recreation Advisory Board Letter, 1/19/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance citing environmental and budget concerns. Instead supports improvement and addition of trails in the Crystal Rock Drive area. Supports new maintenance facility on basis that upper Montgomery County is severely understaffed in this area.	Need to do a feasibility study of Crystal Rock Drive access. Maintenance facility is slated for construction in FY02.	
21	Davis Richardson Letter, 1/6/00	Supports maintenance facility and recommends keeping concert amphitheater in plan. Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance. Recommends painting exterior of Mauglin House.	See above comments. The curator of the Mauglin House is responsible for painting exterior.	
22	Lori Goldner, Boyds, Letter, 1/6/00.	Supports expansion of connector trails and bikeways because of added convenience and increased home values these trails bring. States that crime will not increase as new trails are added. Opposes new boat ramp.	Boat ramp may be needed in the future.	

23.	Anita Kimberling, Germantown, Letter, 1/18/00.	Opposes paving of trail between Churchill Town Sector and Lake Ridge Drive. If trail does get paved, suggests leaving switchback connector in natural state. In favor of continuing paved path from Churchill Town Sector to Crystal Rock Drive.	Study being conducted in near future. WSSC is constructing a portion of this path with M-NCPPC in conjunction with the new pumping station.	Ali Khan assigned to getting the RFP out. In FY03(?)
24	Thomas O'Connor, Germantown, Letter, 1/7/00.	Suggests replacing existing playground equipment and opening up bathrooms for winter use at playgrounds. Supports hard surface trail to Crystal Rock Drive. Suggests paving trail between Parking Lot #6 and Spinning Wheel to reduce hazard of steep slope. Signs warning bikers and hikers could be installed. Thinks that grading and resurfacing of Black Hill Trail is not needed.	Playground is being renovated now. Winterizing the bathrooms is also being done. Not sure what is being referred to concerning the Black Hill Trail.	
25	Cheryl Babik, Jessup Letter, 1/11/00.	Suggests adding dog park to the park.	See comments on #7 and #8.	
26	Steven Smith, Germantown Letter, 1/5/00.	Recommends hard-surface trail to connect Spinning Wheel Drive to the park. Opposes Crystal Rock Drive entrance.		
27	Bruce Hill, Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board, Letter, 1/3/00.	Requests holding a second public meeting closer to park to allow for more citizens to attend.	Another public hearing may be needed. Especially concerning the results of the access road study.	
28	John Kerekes, Germantown Citizens Association Letter, 1/6/00.	Supports Crystal Rock Drive entrance as way to make park more convenient for Germantown residents to access.	See previous comments on access road.	Must get study done!
29	Bonnie and John Collier, Boyds, Letter, 1/17/00.	Support small pedestrian bridge across Ten Mile Creek, but oppose any larger structure. If parking lot is built in this area, hope it is well-maintained. Oppose Crystal Rock Drive entrance.	Bridge and parking lot is slated for FY?.	
30	Stacy Miller, Boyds Letter, 1/6/00.	Opposes Crystal Rock Drive and extensive paving of trails. Wishes more people used park as a link to other communities rather than seeing it as a barrier.		
31	Brian Long, Germantown Alliance, Letter, 1/19/00.	Supports Crystal Rock Drive entrance. Opposes capping park occupancy.	Not sure what the second statement means.	
32	Neal Fitzpatrick, Audobon Naturalist Society Letter, 1/20/00.	Supports decision in Draft Plan to eliminate proposed Crystal Rock Drive entrance. Recommends that pesticides not be used in park.	We use Roundup Pro and few others.	
33	Peggy Stone, Damascus Letter, 1/20/00	Hopes to see natural and paved trail balanced in park with expansion of hiker-biker trails. Suggests building additional boat rental facilities and an ADA accessible fishing pier. Supports new maintenance facility. Opposes Rock Drive entrance.	Staff feels trails are balanced. Have one accessible fishing pier; another is proposed in conjunction with new boat ramp.	



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TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a dynamic relationship between regional parklands and the communities they serve that must be re-evaluated from time to time to assure the long term direction for development and management of the parks is on track. Park use varies, the character and condition of parkland resources may change, and the nature and density of land use surrounding these regional parks changes over time.

At regular intervals, it is necessary to determine if renovating, changing, expanding or deleting existing facilities is needed or if additional facilities must be constructed to meet the needs of the county's residents and fulfill the mission of the Montgomery County Department of Park & Planning. The plans and recommendations described in this report provide a comprehensive guide for future actions to realize desired long term development and management goals for Black Hill Regional Park. This project provides a working document for M-NCPPC staff to utilize for future decision making. Essentially, two core documents have been created:

The *Master Plan* depicts what M-NCPPC envisions as a reasonable balance between the need for recreation facilities and preservation of valuable open space and natural resources. The Master Plan is based on and supported by an inventory of existing park conditions, identification of opportunities and constraints inherent in these resources and facilities and input from concerned members of the community. The strategy for implementing the Master Plan includes a prioritized capital program for recommended improvement and development projects.

The *Natural Resources Management Plan* details a wide range of recommendations and guidelines for restoration, enhancement, development and conservation of each park's natural resources and serves as the companion document to the *Master Plan*.

As an integral part of the Master/Management Plan, a *Utility Feasibility Study* was produced which includes a compilation of existing utility information about this park and recommendations for improving this infrastructure while accommodating recommended facilities from the development components of the Master Plan.

## PROCESS

The goal of the Master/Management Plan study is to help the Montgomery County Department of Park & Planning continue to provide its citizens with a system of park facilities responsive to both the changing needs of the community and stewardship of natural resources. To realize this goal, the following objectives were pursued in a methodical, orderly fashion:

- Become familiar with all facets of the park's particular programmatic requirements; physical and cultural opportunities and constraints; and human resources.
- Organize the information gained by incorporating computer technology compatible with Montgomery County (CADD, GIS, GPS, etc.) and the way M-NCPPC staff will need to access this information in the future so the resulting deliverable - an integrated information system - has lasting usefulness to M-NCPPC.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- Incorporate the needs of the community, along with recommendations from M-NCPPC staff and officials, into the process of determining concerns to which the park must respond. Public involvement was actively sought via public workshops, surveys and reviews of work in progress. Staff from a broad cross section of the Department of Park and Planning were part of the team creating and reviewing the plans as they were developed. Past and current work on parallel issues such as the countywide trail planning effort and area master plans was referenced as well.
- Summarize key issues that must be addressed and in each case ensure that the end results are properly focused.
- Develop plausible plans and implementation/management strategies for revamping and enhancing existing park resources and facilities that address project needs as defined by: M-NCPPC; the community; the results of several surveys; the opportunities and constraints of the site; and the capabilities of M-NCPPC's human and financial resources.
- Evaluate all recommendations in terms of physical limits and potentials, environmental impacts and regulations, cost and budget factors, functional criteria and aesthetic experiences; and work with all concerned parties to develop preferred park development and management strategies. The end result is an optimal balance of these factors, providing park facilities the community can most enjoy within a budget and operational program M-NCPPC can afford.
- Thoroughly document and coherently present the recommended park master/management plans and clear the way for effective implementation.
- Proceed through the review and approval process for approval by the Planning Board of the Master Plan, and approval for staff use of the Natural Resources Management Plan.

## FUTURE VISION FOR BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

Black Hill Regional Park is a unique resource within the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning system as well as the Washington metropolitan area. The park provides significant passive recreational opportunities and access to Little Seneca Lake, one of a limited number of large public-access lakes in the mid-Atlantic region. At the same time, the park encompasses a substantial acreage of unbroken forest cover and a diverse mix of open landscapes. The combination of limited recreational activities within a predominantly natural setting makes the park both useful and attractive for a wide range of constituents.

The Master/Management Plan seeks to improve the park through a series of focused recommendations which address specific problems that have been identified during the park's twelve year history. But more importantly, the plan is intended to realize the optimum potential of the park to provide a natural respite and also to help meet regional recreational needs.

Accordingly, the core vision for Black Hill Regional Park in the future promoted by this Master/Management Plan study is comprised of the following four provisions:

- **Preserve and enhance the visitor's ability to experience the essential qualities of Black Hill Regional Park.** The plan optimizes the use and access to Little Seneca Lake, the only major lake in the Upcounty area. The intent is to allow visitors to enjoy the wooded hillsides, stream valleys and natural character of the park as a backdrop for primarily passive recreational and environmental educational activities. Implicit in this provision is an emphasis on preservation of the natural character and resources of Black Hill Regional Park. Therefore, the park will not be opened to concentrated active recreational activities.
- **Develop new "strategically sited" recreational facilities** focused on: limited expansion of picnic and play facilities, provision of a new boat ramp and an additional ADA accessible fishing pier, and better trail connections including improved connections from the park trail system to proposed regional trail and greenway systems in accordance with the Countywide Park Trails Plan and the Clarksburg Master Plan. The result will be improved access from the park to the surrounding communities of Germantown and Clarksburg and the historic community of Boyds, and the provision of new opportunities for family and children-centered recreational use facilities such as playgrounds and expanded interpretive facilities.
- **Renovate, expand, or replace older facilities in the park** to help eliminate inefficiencies or crowding in existing programs and operations; provide safer, more accessible facilities; and minimize disruption of the undeveloped areas of the park. To the extent possible, facility renovation, expansion and replacements of existing recreational development is proposed within existing developed areas or within limits of open, developable land unless a specific and compelling need justifies otherwise. Construction activities have been sited to avoid environmental buffers and priority forest areas where possible and should employ good conservation principles.
- **Provide the means to better operate the park** primarily through improving park maintenance facilities and utility infrastructure.

## MASTER PLAN - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is an abbreviated listing of specific recommendations from the *Master Plan* that when implemented will realize the vision for Black Hill Regional Park.

Unless otherwise stipulated, the Master/Management Plan recommends all existing facilities shall be retained along with implementation of the following renovations, replacements and additional facilities:

### PICNIC AREAS

- Picnic Lane – Construction of two traditional picnic areas; one large (100 person capacity) and one small (30 to 40 person capacity) shelter.
- Replace existing playground equipment with a large Adventure Playground.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**LITTLE SENECA LAKE FACILITIES**

- Upgrade boat rental facilities.
- Add a boat access point and ADA accessible fishing pier.
- Add wildlife observation areas.
- Enhance the ability to stage musical events by formalizing a Concert Amphitheater.
- Add additional boat dry mooring sites.
- Upgrade the existing portable toilets at the boat ramp

**TRAILS AND GREENWAYS**

- Provide connections to other regional park facilities and planning communities in the vicinity including:
  - Little Bennett Regional Park
  - Ovid Hazen Wells Park
- Provide new trail connections, trailhead amenities and improvements to existing trails.
- Build a trail bridge over Ten Mile Creek
- Create a paved trail along Lake Ridge Drive from West Old Baltimore Road to Black Hill Road.
- Pave the existing natural surface trail between Spinning Wheel Drive and Parking Lot #6.
- Realign the Field Crest Spur Trail.
- Improve signage along routes.
- Enhance views of Seneca Lake
- Improve safety of the trail crossings of Lake Ridge Drive.
- Regrading and resurface the paved portion of Black Hill Trail
- Improve trail related amenities.
- Expand hard surface and natural surface trails system.



**VISITOR CENTER**

- Expand the auditorium.
- Provide increased storage.
- Install an HVAC system.

**Park Support Facilities**

- Improve safety conditions for vehicles turning from West Old Baltimore.
- Reduce speeding on Lake Ridge Drive.
- Replace the existing maintenance facility.
- Implement adaptive reuse of existing maintenance facility.
- Expand the pasture at the Park Police facility.

**RELATED FACILITIES**

- Establish guidelines for the future use and development of the Maughlin House property.
- Provide improvements to the following historic sites:

- Waters Tenant Cabin
- Waters Mill
- Gold Mine site at the Park headquarters
- Bolton House
- Maughlin House
- Historic Boundary Stones (two locations)

**ACQUISITIONS**

Recommended acquisitions include all or portions of the following properties intended to provide or facilitate improvements to the park:

- Ecker Property 9± acres for trailhead parking area for trails in the Ten Mile Creek area.
- Lewis Property 100± acres for increased buffer lands for the proposed Ten Mile Creek Greenway and Black Hill Regional Park.
- Ortman/Farquhar Property 18.54 acres for potential trail connection to the proposed Ten Mile Creek Greenway.

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- Pickrell Property 10± acres for inclusion of the historic structure in the interpretative program and to provide additional buffer lands for Little Seneca Lake.
- Casey and Breeden Properties for the proposed trail connection between Boyds and the Osprey Heights Loop Trails.
- Bechem Property for a key trail connection to the Cabin Branch Trail.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES**

The following is a summary of recommendations from the *Natural Resources Management Plan* that when implemented will contribute to the realization of the vision of Black Hill Regional Park and will complement the *Master Plan*.

1. **NATURAL RESOURCES RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENTS** – Specific recommendations for the monitoring, restoration and enhancement of natural resources at Black Hill Regional Park are described for specific target areas in the park. These recommendations include the following:
  - a. Selective control of aquatic vegetation in high use areas within Little Seneca Lake
  - b. Establish warm season grassland habitat within Osprey Heights Loop
  - c. Thistle management near the Western Peninsula
  - d. Reforestation south of the Clarksburg Road Bridge
  - e. Streambank erosion monitoring on Cabin Branch
  - f. Volunteer Lake Monitoring at three locations on Little Seneca Lake
  - g. Edge treatments in the existing meadows along Osprey Heights Loop to protect valuable forest resources from invasion of invasive/exotic species
2. **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION** – The Natural Resource Management Plan also indicates techniques to preserve existing natural resource features. Techniques for preservation include:
  - a. Developing a Wildlife Management Plan
  - b. Providing special protection status for the Ten-Mile Creek arm of the Park
  - c. Providing special protection status for the Cabin Branch Watershed within the Park
  - d. Avoidance and minimization of impacts to steep slopes, soils and other sensitive features
  - e. Delineation of buffer zones for rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats
  - f. Development of interpretive programming for shoreline property owners around Little Seneca Lake
  - g. Providing guidance to minimize environmental impacts from future trail development projects
3. **ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** – The Natural Resource Management Plan also contains a summary of potential environmental impacts, associated with development proposals presented in the *Master Plan for Recreational Development*, and makes recommendations for minimizing or mitigating these impacts. These include:
  - a. Construction of a new Maintenance Facility
  - b. Construction of picnic facilities at Picnic Lane

- c. Parking and access to the Ten Mile Creek arm of the park
- d. Trail crossing of Ten Mile Creek
- e. Greenway connections
- f. Trail access from Crystal Rock Drive
- g. Paved trail along Lake Ridge Drive
- h. Trail connection towards Little Seneca Day Camp (Camp Seneca Park)
- i. Trail connection from Osprey Heights Loop to Boyds

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The majority of the recommendations contained in the *Master Plan* will be implemented through direct funding in the Capital Improvements Program [CIP].

The recommendations contained in the *Natural Resources Management Plan* will be funded primarily from the operating budget and also through the CIP.

Priorities and preliminary cost estimates are included in the Master/Management Plan for use in developing future CIP documents. Public and private grants are also possible funding sources.

Implementation of remaining recommendations requires on-going and regular park management procedures either by regional and departmental park staff or through the efforts of concerned groups and volunteers. Therefore, to the extent possible, the Master/Management Plan attempts to forecast increased staffing that will be required to maintain and operate the facilities recommended herein at the level of quality the residents of Montgomery County have come to expect from the Department of Park and Planning.





## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Parks bring people together with each other and with the landscape in a variety of ways that few other public facilities can accomplish. Parks serve as green islands and oases to provide a setting for community gatherings while at the same time, opportunities to enjoy relative solitude. They provide enjoyment for the young and old, from downtown or suburbia, and for those who pursue active or passive recreation. We often take these community treasures for granted, but they would be sorely missed if they were to disappear. The effort to plan, develop and maintain parks as common assets is formidable. However, the cost of losing this connection with our natural and open landscapes and the recreational opportunities contained within would be immeasurable.

The Maryland - National Capital Park & Planning Commission [M-NCPPC] is committed to the ongoing improvement and stewardship of this valuable heritage by acquiring, developing and maintaining a range of parkland facilities including: urban, local, neighborhood, special, recreational, conservation, stream valley and regional parks. The regional parks are large, contiguous land holdings that provide a wide array of recreational facilities capable of serving large numbers of people. These parks also preserve significant acreage for the protection of open space and natural resources and generally contain a stream valley or other natural area. M-NCPPC has developed five such regional parks in Montgomery County; Black Hill, Cabin John, Little Bennett, Rock Creek and Wheaton.

Black Hill Regional Park is located primarily in the southern portion of the Clarksburg & Vicinity Planning Area in the northwest part of Montgomery County (see Figure I.1). The eastern periphery of the park is located within the Germantown Planning Area and the extreme southwest portion of the park is located within the Lower Seneca Planning Area. On an annual basis, an estimated 425,000 park visitors travel from these surrounding areas and the entire metropolitan region to find

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relaxation and enjoy the recreational opportunities of the park, which features boating; fishing; hiking, biking and equestrian trails; picnicking and playgrounds; volleyball; bird watching; and visitor center programming. All year long, patrons find respite from the hectic pace of urban life in the inherent scenic beauty of this park set amidst a backdrop of wooded hills. However, expanding development in the vicinity of Black Hill Regional Park and steadily increasing development throughout the county is creating impacts and demands on the park's recreational resources and conservation goals.

Balancing the demand for developed facilities and protection of natural resources in a park such as Black Hill is guided by a fundamental policy wherein the Montgomery County Planning Board has set a limit on the amount of development that can occur in these regional parks at one-third (33%) of the total acreage of each park.

While this guideline provides a strong basis for protection of natural resources, Black Hill Regional Park is faced with the challenge of serving present and future recreational needs and withstanding heavy use on a year-round basis; managing public access; maintaining and upgrading outdated or deteriorated facilities and infrastructure; and conforming with current conservation and management practices to preserve sensitive natural resources. To meet this challenge, the park must be evaluated periodically to determine if facilities and resources are sound and sustainable, utilized to their true potential and managed effectively.

## **B. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE MASTER/MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The task of the Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan was to collectively obtain an inventory of the park as it is today; analyze and assess the issues and problems affecting the park's condition; and provide a working document and general guide for future management, development, and conservation of the park by M-NCPPC staff.

The Master/Management Plan provides an updated inventory and status of the park's natural resources, conservation areas and existing recreational development as well as the park's context within the surrounding communities. It also assesses present use and future needs and provides a framework which gives direction to implementation decisions concerning site specific projects within the park, along with natural resource management initiatives. The Plan also prioritizes these projects and initiatives. These actions will ensure the future survival and success of the park as a positive setting for recreational activities and natural resource preservation.

The Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan recommendations address park access, infrastructure and circulation issues for the adjacent as well as larger community; locations of major uses and facilities, location of major trails and rest areas, and the type and extent of natural resource management practices to be employed. It determines which developed facilities need to be maintained as is, upgraded, renovated, or provided, and what natural resources need to be protected, conserved, restored, or enhanced.

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All recommendations related to the developed resources of the park are presented in Section III of this report, the *Black Hill Regional Park Master Plan* which includes a strategy for implementing recommended improvements and additions. As part of this work, a *Utility Feasibility Study* (Appendix E.1) is included for upgrading and extending sewer and water service within the park as needed.

The accompanying *Black Hill Regional Park Natural Resource Management Plan* included in Section IV, identifies the necessary management practices and procedures to accomplish desired natural resource program elements.

**C. PLANNING BACKGROUND**

The development or redevelopment of a park is the outcome of a sequential process involving system planning, acquisition, master planning and programming, project planning and design, and implementing project construction. The park Master/Management planning process is one step of this planning and design sequence. The project team follows the Master/Management planning process to collect all information about the park, analyze the specific inventory aspects of the park which influence development and conservation, evaluate key issues, and then use this information to make recommendations for the Master/Management Plan.

The park Master/Management Plan represents the collective end product resulting from all the departments and disciplines, within the M-NCPPC, collaborating together and with the public for the common good of the park. The Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan and Report includes inventory and analysis studies of resources and land use, a Master Plan and a Natural Resource Management Plan. It also includes more detailed studies of key project areas within the park which will undergo renovation, expansion, restoration, new development, or deletion of facilities.

The original impetus for the Master/Management Plan of Black Hill Regional Park resulted from the need to create a comprehensive foundation for future recreational development and natural resource management decisions within the park.

**D. THE PROJECT TEAM**

The Black Hill Master/Management Plan process was initiated in December 1996. In the intervening years, the Master/Management Plan Committee has served as the synthesizing group which has pulled together site inventory and analysis information along with input from all other departments as well as agencies, user interest groups, and citizens into a consolidated and cohesive plan and report. The team primarily consists of staff from the M-NCPPC Department of Park and Planning. Park Planning and Development staff team members include landscape architects, trail planners, engineers and architects. Park management, planners, natural resource specialists, region managers, facility managers and Park Police complete the team.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

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The M-NCPPC Department of Planning: Transportation Planning, County-wide Planning, Community Based Planning, Environmental Planning, and Development Review staff have also contributed information to the project process such as trail planning, community context, adjacent zoning and land use, greenway planning, current development plans, highway and road plans and utility plans. Site surveys, use surveys, planning studies, meetings with citizen user groups, the communities, and the recreation advisory board, have all served to incorporate public input and park usage factors into development of the Master/Management Plan.

## **E. THE PLANNING PROCESS**

The planning process for the Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan is similar to the process that has been followed on other completed Master Plans for development of parks such as the Agricultural History Farm Park, Fairland Recreational Park, Ovid Hazen Wells, Rock Creek Regional Park, and South Germantown Recreational Park. This project differs in that we are preparing a plan for an already existing and developed park. Developed parks must also be evaluated and re-assessed periodically to determine if facilities and resources are utilized and managed efficiently and to determine if upgrading, expanding, or deleting of facilities is needed. Changes in surrounding land use must also be evaluated.

Park use changes over time, and the character of parkland resources can also change. It is our responsibility, as stewards of this land, to maintain current Master/Management Plans for recreation facility development and management and also natural resource management. The first two phases of the Master/Management Plan process for existing parks, such as this one, are extensive and lay the groundwork for the remaining project.

The basic project process is defined in the following outline (see Appendix D.1 for more detail):

### **Task 1 - Inventory and Analysis of the Existing Park**

- Natural Resource Inventory
- Developed Resource Inventory
- Community Context

### **Task 2 - Evaluate Needs Affecting the Park**

- Recreational Needs
- Community Needs
- Maintenance Needs
- Accessibility Network Needs
- Resource Management Needs

### **Task 3 - Programming**

- Determine Key Issues Affecting the Park
- Develop Goals and Objectives - the Project Program
- Determine the Vision for the Park



**Task 4 - The Design Process**

- Develop the Master Plan
- Develop the Natural Resource Management Plan
- Develop Site Studies for Key Project Areas

**Task 5 - Complete Master/Management Plan Report and Approvals****F. INFORMATION GUIDING THE MASTER PLAN**

Regional park master planning must encompass many areas of expertise and incorporate or consider all existing guidelines, policies, and plans which influence decisions about the park. To determine the optimum plan for active-use areas, natural areas, and conservation areas of parkland, the successful planning process addresses:

- Aesthetic and recreational values
- Design and engineering constraints
- Relevant ecological issues
- Knowledge of natural communities
- Public health and safety issues
- Adjacent land use
- Maintenance and funding issues

Existing plans, policies, and guidelines evaluated for use in Master/Management Plan decisions were grouped into categories of information. These categories are described briefly in the following and detailed in Appendix D.2:

**DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES** provide planning guidance in order to:

- Define the optimum extent of development .
- Determine the type of development needed.
- Determine impacts of development on community and natural resources.
- Define and enhance the character of park development and amenities.
- Implement energy conservation strategies in the planning of maintenance and development programs.
- Assure that facility and site development is maintenance-efficient and as sustainable as possible.
- Incorporate accessibility and challenge levels according to M-NCPPC accessibility policies.
- Relate development proposals with adjacent land use.

**CONSERVATION GUIDELINES** are applied to ensure that development plans include adequate consideration of the natural resource management objectives itemized in Section I.2 (on page 11). These guidelines have their foundation in established Montgomery County natural resource protection documentation and commonly accepted principles of watershed management.

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**TRAIL AND GREENWAY SYSTEMS** rely on county-wide park trail guides and plans, as well as a number of comprehensive reference materials available to guide the planning, design and implementation of trail and greenway systems.

**INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS** similarly are based on design standards for roads, utilities and any other park support facilities.

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT** utilize resource materials for determining use and needs of the regional park.

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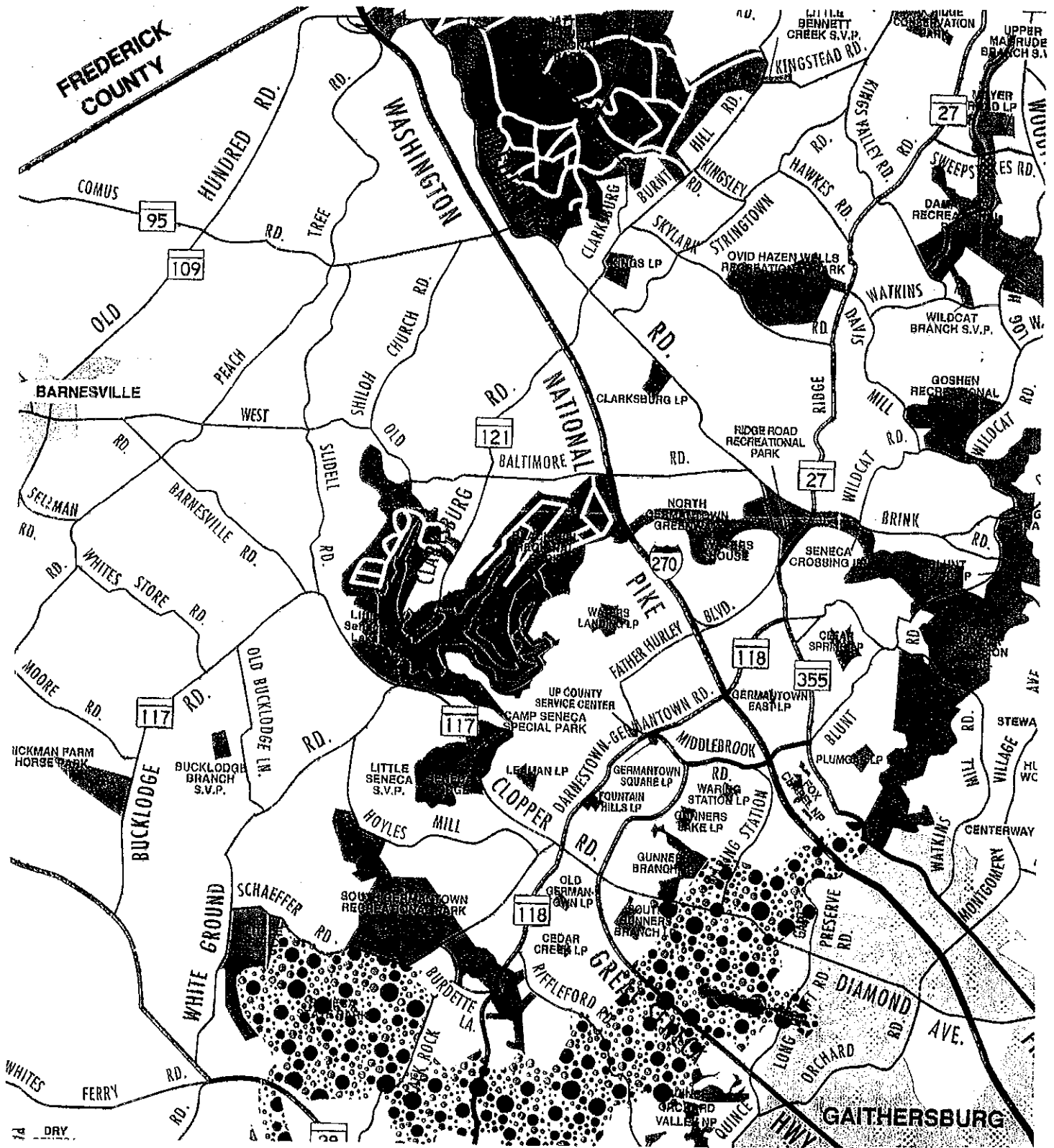


Figure I-1: Site Vicinity Map - Black Hill Regional Park

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### **G. PARK BACKGROUND**

Today, Black Hill Regional Park consists of 1,338 acres of picturesque and diverse landscapes featuring forests, meadows and streams in the northwestern part of Montgomery County, Maryland; northwest of Washington, D.C. The park encircles the 505 acre Little Seneca Lake, which is owned and operated as an emergency water reservoir by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. This attractive regional parkland was acquired and developed by M-NCPPC in the 1980's for passive and active recreation and conservation and has been operating successfully for twelve years.

Park development is focused on a peninsula of land between the arms of Little Seneca Lake fed by Cabin Branch and Little Seneca Creeks, and offers a range of predominately passive recreational activities. The following briefly summarizes the park's existing developed features:

- ♦ Picnic areas including picnic shelters, playground areas, restrooms, horseshoe pits, and volleyball courts are available year round.
- ♦ Canoe and rowboat rentals are available on a seasonal basis and launching facilities for private boats are provided on a seasonal or daily permit basis. These facilities provide access to the lake for largemouth bass, tiger musky, catfish, crappie and sunfish fishing with appropriate permits. Fishing opportunities are available for the general public and the physically disabled at a specially designed pier near the boat rental facility.
- ♦ Interpretive tours of the lake are available by reservation during the summer months aboard an accessible, motorized, pontoon-type, group excursion boat.
- ♦ Trails and greenways throughout the park include a total of approximately 15 miles of natural surface and hard surface trails that traverse the full range of landscape types in the park and help connect the developed resources of the park with the Visitor Center facilities.
- ♦ The Black Hill Visitor Center offers environmental and cultural education programs, trail walks, boat tours, nature films, conservation projects, workshops and interpretive exhibits for casual visitors and school groups.
- ♦ Special Events are held in the park on a frequent basis including Twilight Concerts, the Persian American Festival, and canoe and kayak classes.
- ♦ Park Headquarters and maintenance facilities are located in the park; they serve this facility and 21 other parks in the sub-area.

The Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan recommendations are made in direct response to the positive opportunities that exist in the park. The plan proposes to keep and enhance existing facilities and recreational opportunities, to preserve basic use patterns which exist within the park today, and to maintain and improve the scenic qualities and conservation areas of the parkland.

### **H. PARK ISSUES AND REGIONAL TRENDS**

Evaluating the existing condition of the park, as well as identifying issues and problems affecting the park was essential to the process of forming sound Master/Management Plan recommendations. Establishing the important issues was key to the direction of the Master/Management Plan. In

addition, forecasting long range issues and needs was needed in order to provide guidance for future planning.

## 1. ISSUES

The park is a well designed facility that can accommodate large numbers of people. The main issues for the park are: determining what, if anything, is appropriate for future development and/or expansion of recreational facilities in the park; finding a balance between these recreational needs and natural resource conservation and environmental education goals for the park; and expanding the role of Black Hill Regional Park as part of a proposed regional network of greenways, open space and recreational use corridors in this developing area of the county. Following are a brief summary of issues the Master / Management Plan Committee concluded should be addressed:

- a. **The developed areas of Black Hill Regional Park currently account for only 7.5% of the total park area; clearly fulfilling the M-NCPPC PROS Plan goal of a "1/3:2/3" conservation versus development ratio for regional parks.** Maintaining the 1/3:2/3 ratio will be relatively easy given the fact the total acreage that could be developed before the policy is compromised is almost 350 acres. However, the Master/Management Plan Committee recommended that the percentage of land devoted to development within Black Hill Regional Park should be held at or near current levels to help preserve the unique natural character of the park. It is important to note that Little Seneca Lake is not included in these calculations as it is technically owned by WSSC.
- b. **Access to and utilization of Little Seneca Lake should be expanded and enhanced.** Existing facilities for boat launching and rental need renovation and repair. New boat access points and storage sites would increase and better distribute utilization of the lake. In addition, trails at the periphery of the lake would allow increased enjoyment of the lake's resources.
- c. **Trail connections to the surrounding communities and future regional trail and greenways systems need to be improved.** Circulation within the park needs to accommodate anticipated increases in use due to on-going development in the region.
- d. **Certain existing facilities are inadequate.** Examples include the Maintenance Facility; which is inadequate to handle increasing demands for equipment and material storage necessary to service an increasing inventory of parks in the subarea; the Black Hill Visitor Center, which is inadequately sized to carry out programming and to meet the current visitor traffic; and the Boat Rental building which has no plumbing, inadequate electrical service and extremely tight storage space. In addition, the floating docks will need repair or replacement in the near future.

## 2. REGIONAL TRENDS

There are broad trends that were identified in the 1998 PROS-Master Plan Update which are affecting Black Hill Regional Park and parks throughout the county:

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- a. **Increased park use.**
- b. **Greater than expected increases in population and significant increases in the diversity of population.**
- c. **Continuing interest in developing trail systems and greenways.**
- d. **Passage of new legislation for increased storm water management and water quality protection; forest conservation/reforestation; environmental buffers for forests, wetlands, and streams impacts the cost and feasibility of new development in the park.**
- e. **Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 requires increased provision of park and recreation facilities which are accessible.**
- f. **Decreased CIP expenditures for new development and acquisition is resulting in an increased need to rehabilitate deteriorated facilities and utilize park user fees to maintain the system.**
- g. **Decreased maintenance funding requires more effective use of existing resources. However, increased efficiencies alone cannot entirely accommodate the increases in park acreage to be maintained.**
- h. **New requirements for private recreation development, based on a 1991 Planning Board decision to encourage residential developers to include close-to-home recreational facilities within developments.**
- i. **New school facility construction with recreational facilities which may offset park needs in some areas.**

## **I. PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The mission of the M-NCPPC - Department of Park and Planning:

*To provide a parks system which, in harmony with our natural and cultural resources, conserves and enhances the environment, offers a variety of leisure opportunities, and is accessible, safe and enjoyable for all.*

The Master/Management Plan Committee charged with development of the plan felt this was in essence the broad goal of the Black Hill Regional Park Master/Management Plan. The Master/Management Plan Committee established a number of major objectives for the project, which further support this mission and which give more definition to what was desired to achieve for this project. To derive objectives, it was important to first identify current issues and trends affecting the park which the Master/Management Plan needed to address.

## 1. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The following are general objectives that address the mission statement and the current and anticipated issues for the park.

- a. Forecast recreation and conservation needs of the future, based on surrounding and regional influences, which will impact Master/Management Plan recommendations.
- b. Create a plan which maintains a harmonious relationship with surrounding land uses, nearby parks, trails, recreational facilities, and adjacent landowners and which is supported by present and proposed infrastructure.
- c. Create a plan which will maximize use of the parks' regional location and help implement local planning area master plans and plans for countywide trails and greenways by providing valuable regional greenway and trail connections including :
  - Supporting proposals of the Countywide Park Trails Plan.
  - Connecting with proposed bikeway improvements wherever possible.
  - Promoting goals of the State of Maryland Master Plan of Greenways by maintaining "protected corridors of open space...in a largely natural state for a variety of purposes including water quality protection, wildlife enhancement, aesthetic relief, recreation, non-motorized transportation and environmental education..."
- d. Provide for innovative design and management recommendations which will:
  - Develop the potential of the park's resources and facilities while also adhering to land constraints.
  - Fulfill diverse recreational needs of users today and adapt to anticipated needs of the future.
  - Complement conservation and resource management recommendations.
  - Help to unify the parkland into a more cohesive regional facility.
- e. Promote visitor health, safety, and comfort, and enhance aesthetic qualities, site details, and amenities of the park by:
  - Updating overused facilities, creating new attractions and revising operation of the park to address current and future anticipated levels of use.
  - Incorporating current accessibility standards throughout the park facilities and providing varying challenge levels wherever possible.
  - Renovating existing facilities such as the Visitor Center.
  - Following an architectural theme.
  - Improving the landscape of entrance areas, vistas, and rest areas.
  - Providing uniformity in signage, use of construction materials, and site furnishings.
  - Planning more rest areas, overlooks, historic interpretation sites, environmental education sites, and informational kiosks.

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### 2. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- a. The following general objectives have been prepared as part of the Environmental Guidelines for Management of Development in Montgomery County which ensure that all development in the county includes adequate consideration of regional environmental management issues.

These objectives also apply to park development and were considered as part of this Plan.

- Maintain biologically viable and diverse streams and wetlands.
  - Protect stream water quality.
  - Reduce flood potential.
  - Protect water supply reservoirs against sedimentation and eutrophication.
  - Conservation of forests and trees.
  - Protect steep slopes.
  - Preserve/protect wildlife habitat and exemplary communities, including rare, threatened and endangered species.
  - Protect against development hazards on areas prone to flooding, soil instability, etc.
  - Provide visual amenities and areas for recreation and outdoor education activities.
- b. In addition, the following specific natural resource management objectives were developed:
- Inventory all natural and historic/archaeological resources and delineate environmental buffer areas and lands sensitive or unsuitable for development.
  - Create and implement a Natural Resource Management Plan [NRMP] which enhances the natural ecosystem of the park by restoring degraded areas and maintaining the 2/3 conservation to 1/3 development ratio goal of the PROS plan for regional parks. The NRMP consolidates all resource recommendations including reforestation, meadow management, streambank restoration and protection, buffer areas, shoreline stabilization, invasive/exotic species and noxious weed control, habitat enhancement, trail management, management of historical and archaeological features and acquisitions.
  - Avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts of existing and planned facilities or activities within the park such as any natural resource management implications and recommendations for the visitors center, maintenance facility, boating and fishing facilities, existing and proposed trails, picnic areas and other improvements.

### 3. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OBJECTIVES

- a. Provide for effective and efficient management and maintenance of park facilities and resources including:
- Erosion control



I. INTRODUCTION

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- Trail maintenance
  - Stream protection and maintenance
  - Building maintenance
  - Playground maintenance
  - Trash and litter collection
  - Security controls
  - Park access and circulation controls addressing traffic congestion at peak periods.
  - Encroachment controls
- b. Manage use so that overcrowding and overuse does not occur.
- c. Incorporate volunteer programs for maintenance, small scale construction, or resource upgrading.
- d. Consider public/private cooperative programs for developing and/or maintaining facilities using private funds on public land.



## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

The continued development and use of Black Hill Regional Park is inextricably linked to its physical conditions and setting. The following text summarizes the park and its context, including facilities, access and usage, as background for the recommendations contained in this report. This summary is based on a more in-depth discussion of developed and natural resources in the park contained in Sections III.B. and IV.B. of this report and indicated on the *Developed Resource* and *Natural Resource Inventories* respectively.

### A. EXISTING REGIONAL PARK FACILITIES, RESOURCES AND UTILIZATION

Black Hill Regional Park offers extensive lake-oriented passive recreational opportunities. Black Hill Regional Park is far below the 1/3:2/3 development relationship established for regional parks. The majority of the undeveloped parkland is forested with moderate to steep slopes. It also includes large tracts of open meadow, and floodplains along creeks and tributaries. Several of the existing open areas and meadows are located along park roads, but removed from the existing developed resources of the park.



Black Hill Regional Park officially opened in June of 1987 and is one of five regional parks in the Montgomery County park system today. The park is located in northwest Montgomery County, north and west of Germantown, within an area bounded to the south by Clopper Road, to the north by West Old Baltimore Road, and to the east by the Churchill Town Sector development and I-270. The park is bisected by Clarksburg Road and the large lot, single family residential development located along both sides of the road corridor. The park boundaries encompass significant acres of forest cover as well as numerous streams, springs and wetland features.

The central feature of the park - Little Seneca Lake - is not owned by M-NCPPC. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission [WSSC] owns and operates the lake as a reservoir but the park benefits substantially from its presence. Many of the recreational activities offered by the park are oriented toward the lake, and the layout of the roads and Visitor Center were clearly intended to take advantage of the compelling views of the lake from these upland facilities.

This park serves the region's recreation needs through activities such as boating; fishing; hiking, biking and jogging trails; picnicking and playgrounds; volleyball; bird watching; and visitor center

## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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programming. Most of the facilities in the park are no more than ten years old and are in good condition. However, a few notable facilities, the Visitor Center and the Maintenance Facility for example, are now unable to meet the increasing operational and programmatic demands placed upon them.

**DEVELOPED RECREATIONAL RESOURCES** in Black Hill Regional Park include:

- Substantial picnic areas with traditional picnic shelters, charcoal grills, restrooms and playground areas are located on the central peninsula between the arms of Little Seneca Lake fed by Cabin Branch and Little Seneca Creeks.
- Within the developed area near the picnic grounds, a Visitor Center is located overlooking Little Seneca Lake. The Visitor Center is also used as the staging area for many of the interpretive programs conducted within the park.
- At the lake shore, near the Visitor Center, a boat rental facility and an accessible fishing pier are located. North of the Visitor Center, up the Cabin Branch arm of the lake, a boat launching ramp and shoreline mooring sites are located.
- Existing hard surface and natural surface trails provide access to substantial areas of the park and limited connections to community trails systems and walkways.

The park is relatively young and the facilities are generally still in good repair.

**NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES** in Black Hill Regional Park include extensive deciduous forest cover over a majority of the park. This extensive cover, coupled with moderate to steep topography, and lowlands associated with Ten Mile, Cabin Branch, and Little Seneca Creeks, presents formidable environmental and practical constraints for development of additional recreational facilities. A number of historic and archeological sites exist within the park boundaries that present significant opportunities for existing and future interpretive efforts.

**PARKLAND UTILIZATION** in Black Hill Regional Park for recreational development is presently developed at 7.5% of the total 1,338 acres and conserved or undeveloped at 92.4%, easily fulfilling the PROS plan "1/3:2/3" goal for regional parks. Black Hill's undeveloped areas are largely in deciduous upland with a significant amount of open meadow. Virtually all open land in the park has either been cleared in the past specifically for parkland development, utilized for passive recreation facilities and activities, or are the remnants of the old agricultural fields from when this property was actively farmed approximately twenty years ago.

The "1/3:2/3" developed to conservation policy is interpreted in Black Hill Regional Park according to the following specific criteria:

**Active-use areas** are defined as the sum total of acres of land developed for public use. Development in turn is defined as changes in land forms or biota caused or managed by man which alter their function and/or appearance. In the case of regional parks, the changes have been instituted to serve a public purpose; provision of recreational opportunities for a broad spectrum of the population.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

**Conservation areas** are defined as land managed to maintain select, viable, native populations of plant and animal species. **Natural areas** are defined as land not developed for public use and limit management activity to those actions necessary to mitigate the influence of humans as well as non-native and undesirable species.

The limits of active use areas were determined through a combination of interpreting aerial photographs of the site and field visits. **It is important to note that Little Seneca Lake is not included in the calculations for the total area of the park or the developed / active-use areas as this WSSC reservoir facility is not owned or operated by M-NCPPC.**

In Black Hill Regional Park, the determination of the extent of developed versus conservation land required a delineation of the extent of the development associated with the trail system and unique development features. For this purpose, the following relationships were used:

Table II-1: Developed areas associated with development features.

Type of trail	Width of corridor considered as "developed"
Hiking only and nature trails	5 feet
Hard surface trails	20 feet
Multiple or joint use natural surface trails	6 to 8 feet

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

**B. AREA MASTER PLAN AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

**1. ADJACENT LAND USE AND ZONING**

Black Hill Regional Park is affected most directly by the planning and existing land use within the Clarksburg and Germantown Planning Areas.

The Clarksburg Master Plan is intended to “establish ...Clarksburg as a transit-and-pedestrian oriented community surrounded by open space.” One of the underlying goals in that plan is to pursue development of the Clarksburg area on the scale of a town as opposed to a city. Conversely, since the 1960’s, the Germantown area has been seen as one of the “corridor cities” with a single center of employment and commerce surrounded by residential development and defined at its edges by a greenbelt of open space and public lands.

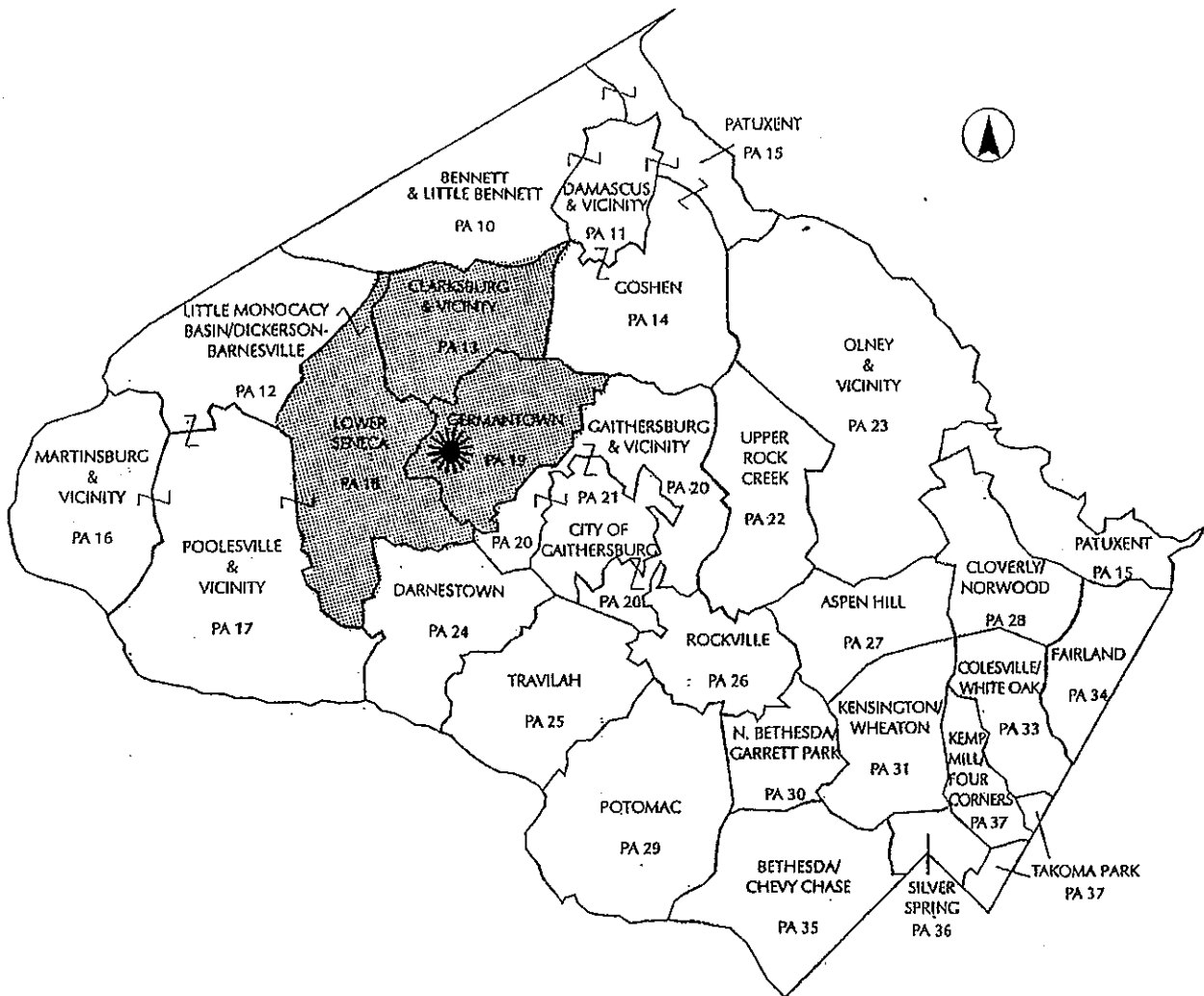


Figure II-1: Planning Area Map  
Montgomery County, Maryland

From: 1994 Planning Area Profiles by M-NCPPC

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Land use adjacent to and surrounding Black Hill Regional Park is comprised of a wide range of low to high density residential housing as well as some commercial areas. The park is part of a greenway system that provides much needed open space and recreational opportunities but also serves as both buffer and transition between these disparate development areas. To the east, the high density development within the Churchill Town Sector and the Germantown areas as a whole are in sharp contrast to the low density rural and large lot single family residential development to the west, south and north of the site.

In the future, the low density of development is likely to prevail in the western areas due to restrictive zoning and the ability to transfer development rights from the area to other regions of the county designated for clustered, denser development. The net percentage increase in population will still be significant, though, as development pressures continue throughout the north and central portion of the County. Development in this area has been affected by slower than anticipated development within the Clarksburg area which has been limited by inadequate sewer service and unfavorable soil conditions for septic field development.

The high density development planned for the Churchill Town Sector is nearly complete, but other sectors in the Germantown area are in varying states of development. There is ample land for significant growth in the Germantown area in the near future.

The zoning surrounding Black Hill Regional Park is as follows:

- To the southwest and west of Black Hill Regional Park, density is constrained by Rural and Rural Density Transfer zoning.
- North of West Old Baltimore Road there are two zones in which the transfer of development rights into the zones from Agricultural Reserve lands are allowed: RE-1 (Residential Estate, 1 acre lots) and RMX-1 (Residential, Mixed Use Development).
- Between the Ten Mile and Cabin Branch fed arms of Little Seneca Lake, zoning is RE-1 (Residential, One-family, 1 acre individual building lots).
- East of the park, the zoning is TS (Planned Development / Town Sector), corresponding to the Churchill Town Sector Planned Development.
- To the southeast, zoning is R-200 (Residential, One family, 20,000 square foot lots)

## **2. POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Black Hill Regional Park lies within the Clarksburg, Lower Seneca and Germantown Planning Areas number 13, 18 and 19 respectively.

The current and forecasted population of each of the planning areas discussed above, which make up the Black Hill Regional Park service area, are shown below (Note: the Lower Seneca Planning Area is part of the Poolesville Forecast Area, shown below, which extends to the extreme western edge of the county):

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Table II-2 Population Forecasts for Planning Areas in the Black Hill Regional Park Service Area

Planning Area	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Clarksburg - PA 13	1,373	1,612	3,604	9,578	18,810	28,177
Germantown - PA 19	44,351	56,271	68,211	79,192	82,763	85,486
Poolesville Forecast Area	7,472	7,337	7,450	7,672	7,777	7,882
Totals	53,196	65,220	79,265	96,442	109,350	121,545

Source: Montgomery County Park and Planning Department, Research and Technology Center, 1999

The population in the area surrounding Black Hill Regional Park, including Clarksburg, Germantown and Poolesville, is projected to increase by approximately 26,000 residents, about a 43% increase, in the ten years between 1990 and 2000. By 2015, the population of these areas is projected to increase by approximately an additional 42,000 people, representing a 53% increase between the years 2000 and 2015. The majority of this population resides in the Germantown Planning Area, and Germantown is expected to continue to have the largest population of these three areas in 2015. Poolesville's population is projected to remain relatively stable through 2015. However, Clarksburg is projected to triple its population between 1990 and 2000, and to more than triple in the coming 15 years, from 3600 in 2000 to over 28,000 in 2015. The population in the Black Hill Regional Park Service Area is therefore forecasted to increase substantially by 2015, mainly to the northeast, east and southeast of the park.

Table II-3: Selected Population Characteristics

Planning Area	Percent of Total Households Living in Single Family Detached Houses	Average Household Size (# of people)	Median Household Income (1996) (dollars)	Average Age (# of years)
Clarksburg & Vicinity	100%	3.14	\$70,000	34.2
Poolesville & Vicinity	87.8%	3.08	\$68,985	33.2
Germantown	21.3%	2.75	\$60,080	29.3
Montgomery County	52.0%	2.64	\$66,085	36.0

Source: 1997 Census Update Survey; Montgomery County Park & Planning Dept., Research & Technology Center, October 1999.

Selected population characteristics for the three planning areas adjacent to the park are listed in Table II-3 above. In general, Germantown, south and southeast of the park, is estimated to have a lower percentage of households living in single family, detached houses; and lower average household size, median income, and average age than the Clarksburg and Poolesville areas to the northeast, north and west. Germantown is also lower in all of these categories except average age compared to the overall Montgomery County figures, while Clarksburg and Poolesville have higher figures than the overall Montgomery County estimates in all four categories. Poolesville exhibits



**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

slightly lower figures for all these categories than Clarksburg. The most striking difference in these data is the variation in the percentage of households living in single family, detached housing. Less than one quarter of Germantown households are estimated to live in this type of housing, while over 85% of Poolesville residents, and all Clarksburg households live in single family, detached homes. Germantown is much lower, and Poolesville and Clarksburg much higher than the overall Montgomery County estimate of 52% in this category. Almost half of Germantown residents are estimated to live in townhouses, and the remainder live in garden apartments.

These data indicate that the population in the immediate vicinity of Black Hill Regional Park is diverse in structure type, household size, median income, and age. Other population data also indicate diversity between and within the subject planning areas. This suggests that the park's closest neighbors represent a heterogeneous population, from the younger, apartment and townhouse dwellers in the more densely populated areas to the south, to the larger, slightly older and higher income households to the north and west.

**3. AREA MASTER PLANS: RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Black Hill Regional Park is an important park resource not only for the County but for the three communities adjacent to it: Germantown, Clarksburg and Boyds. This is evidenced by the degree to which the area master plans for these communities have integrated Black Hill Regional Park and its related facilities into the planning efforts.

**Germantown**

Germantown is a Corridor City which is planned as a series of neighborhoods. The Churchill Village Center adjoins Black Hill Regional Park as does the Germantown Employment Center proposed along I-270. As recommended in the Germantown Master Plan, Churchill Village will be one of the most densely populated areas of Germantown (8.8 du/acre). Over 5,000 units are located in Churchill Village.

In terms of parks and recreation, the 1989 Germantown Master Plan states:

“The provision of adequate parkland and recreation facilities is an important goal for all areas of the County, and is especially important in Germantown because of its recent rapid rate of development and the large number of people living in townhouses and apartments. The parks provide open areas for recreation, nature observation, conservation, wildlife habitat preservation, and open space...” (p. 135)

The Germantown Master Plan identifies Black Hill Regional Park as an important element in the emerging city's open space and recreation pattern. Black Hill Regional Park provides two functions. First, it is part of the greenbelt system proposed to encircle Germantown and to provide an effective visual and physical border establishing the edge of the Germantown Community (p. 133). Second, the Master Plan notes that Black Hill Regional Park provides for some of the region's recreational needs with the lake and boating facilities, picnic areas, visitor center, trails and play equipment.

## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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### Clarksburg

Clarksburg is planned as a pedestrian and transit-oriented new town along the I-270 Corridor, surrounded by open space, and featuring an 11-mile greenway connecting the following regional and recreational parks: Black Hill, Little Bennett and Ovid Hazen Wells.

Although the current (2000 estimated) population of Clarksburg is about 3,600, at full-build out the town could be home to as many as 40,000 people. Black Hill Regional Park lies to the south of one of Clarksburg's three proposed neighborhoods: Cabin Branch Neighborhood. This neighborhood is proposed to have 1,950 dwelling units, between 2.0-2.3 million square feet of employment, retail uses, a school and civic facilities. A key planning objective for the neighborhood is to maximize access to the proposed open space system. The Plan states:

"The largest stream valley in the neighborhood extends southward into Black Hill Regional Park, providing an opportunity for public open space linkages to the park as well as to the proposed hiker-biker trail along Newcut Road..."

#### 4. CONNECTIONS TO FACILITIES AND ADJOINING NEIGHBORHOODS

Nearby parks and school recreation areas provide active and passive-use facilities which, in part, meet the present and future needs of the service area.

- a. **Existing developed parks in the immediate vicinity include:**
  - i. Camp Seneca Special Park with a day camp, lodge, swimming pool, and picnic shelter.
  - ii. Damascus Recreational Park.
  - iii. South Germantown Recreational Park.
  - iv. Little Bennett Regional Park with picnic area, camping and golf.
  - v. Clarksburg Local Park
  - vi. Leaman Local Park
  - vii. Germantown Square Urban Park
  - viii. Gunners Branch Local Park
  - ix. Gunners Lake Local Park
  - x. Kings Local Park
  - xi. Waters' Landing Local Park.
  
- b. **Special park facilities and/or stream valley parks in the area include:**
  - i. Little Seneca Stream Valley Park
  - ii. North Germantown Greenbelt.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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c. **Undeveloped parks in the region** which, when developed, will add significant active recreational opportunities include:

- i. Clarkmont
- ii. Clarksburg Road Special Park
- iii. Goshen Recreational Park
- iv. Ovid Hazen Wells Special Park.
- v. Ridge Road Recreational Park.
- vi. Ten Mile Creek Greenway

d. **Schools and other public facilities in the vicinity of Black Hill Regional Park**

According to the PROS Plan, the school facilities in the vicinity of Black Hill Regional Park have a number of recreational facilities that are available to the public on a limited basis (i.e., generally after school hours). Schools and other public recreational facilities in the area include the following:

- i. Lake Seneca Elementary School
- ii. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School
- iii. Seneca Valley High School
- iv. Waters' Landing Elementary School
- v. Seneca Creek State Park

II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

PARKS IN THE VICINITY OF BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

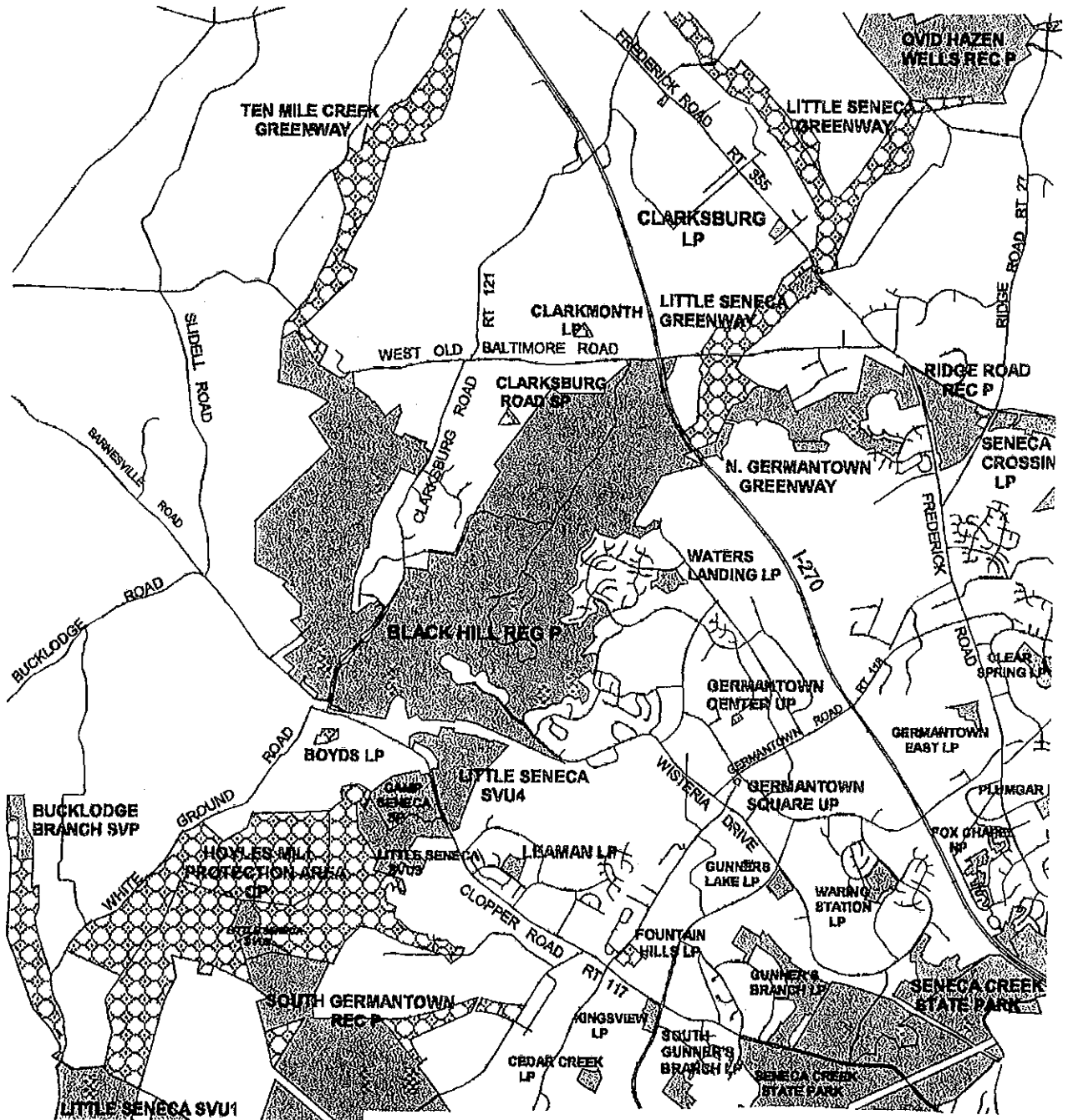


Figure II-2: Parks in the Vicinity of Black Hill Regional Park

Casual User Application

**Notes:**  
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 MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, ALSO PLANNING  
 1101 BENTLEY AND WASHINGTON STS. (BENTLEY AND WASHINGTON COLLESSION)  
 20700 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910



Legend

- Street Centerlines
- County Boundary
- Parklands**
- Existing
- Proposed

Scale 1" = 5000'

### C. NEEDS ANALYSIS

There is a long list of recreational needs that can be associated with a growing and diverse population such as there is surrounding Black Hill Regional Park. It is important to keep in mind that most of the development proposed in the original Park Master Plan has been completed. The original plan intentionally did not include development of large scale, predominantly active facilities. In addition, major changes to the development pattern of the park are simply not practical given the site's natural resource constraints.

However, the Master/Management Plan was pursued in part to accommodate the concerns and desires of the county's residents and park users for improved and enhanced facilities. This section includes the results of a number of surveys, staff investigations and public interactions that have helped shape the plan's recommendations.

For example, the ability to provide strong community connections may be the most significant "new" role the park can play. With potential greenway and trail connections between many of the diverse communities within the region and existing facilities, Black Hill Regional Park could become a pivotal element in providing recreational trails for a wide range of the population of north central Montgomery County.

#### 1. VISITOR USE – Survey Results:

Visitation to and use of regional parks can be evaluated by means of park user surveys. A number of surveys have been conducted by M-NCPPC and others in recent years that are of interest for this study:

- a. In 1987 and 1988, M-NCPPC conducted **The Black Hill Regional Park User Survey**. The park was not fully completed at that time as the Visitor's Center was not yet constructed.

Although the park now receives nearly ten times the level of use than in the first season, it is worth noting that in the second year of operation, the total number of visitors had already doubled to more than 130,000 visitors annually; and the fifty mooring sites were fully rented out with a waiting list established, attesting to the interest and need among the population at the time for a lake-oriented, passive-use facility.

- b. The **1989 M-NCPPC Hiker-Biker Trails Study** included a **Survey of Hiker-Biker Trail Use in Montgomery County Stream Valley Parks**. Although not specifically addressing Black Hill Regional Park, it makes a number of relevant observations. Trail activities were surveyed and the results indicated that hiking and biking were activities cited by more than half of the existing trail users.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Table II.4: Trail Activities.

Activity	Percentages of respondents who reported participation in the activity
Walking	60%
Bicycling	56%
Jogging	24%
Hiking	28%
Commuting	7%

Source: 1989 Survey of Hiker-Biker Trail Use in Montgomery County Stream Valley Parks

The study identified a number of recommendations related to specific issues to be addressed in planning and management of trails within these areas as follows:

- User Conflicts - Hiker-biker trail users frequently cited potential and actual conflicts among various user groups on the trails.
- Trail Access - Access to hiker-biker trails should be improved.
- Trail Maintenance and Safety - Regular trail maintenance increases the quality of the trail experience.
- Trail Signage and Directions - Effective trail signage is important to guide trail users.
- Trail Promotion - Trail locations, rules and regulations should be publicized.

c. The **1995 Park User Study**, published as a staff draft in May of 1997, surveyed use at twelve different areas of Black Hill Regional Park between the end of May and the end of October 1995. Twenty visits were completed, six on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., seven on weekday evenings before dusk and seven on weekends. The survey concluded the following:

- The number of average users observed per visit decreased 15.0% from 1990.
- Observed peak use was on weekends and the least use was in the evenings; this was consistent with previous surveys.
- The most popular use areas were the picnic grounds, with fishing at the lake the second most popular activity. In previous surveys, fishing use was declining, but improvements in managing the lake have yielded positive results and a turnaround in this trend.

d. A more recent survey, the **Park, Recreation and Open Space Survey** was conducted in 1997 as a joint effort with the University of Maryland Survey Research Center. The survey was conducted through 1170 telephone interviews across the entire county. The major highlights of the study included:

- Stated funding priorities included protecting natural and historic areas and upgrading existing park facilities. A great deal of interest was expressed in natural areas, visiting historic areas and attending historic programs.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

- The top reported recreational activity by far was walking and bicycling often to enjoy nature in the parks.
  - Other recreation activities participated in by large percentages of survey respondents were playing or watching ballgames, playground use and picnicking.
  - The greatest recreational facility shortages indicated included hiker-biker paths.
- e. In 1997, a **Recreational Needs Survey** for Black Hill Regional Park was undertaken by M-NCPPC staff. Survey forms were made available at the Black Hill Visitor Center and the Poolesville, Germantown and Damascus Public Libraries over the Summer and Fall of 1997. The results of the survey revealed the following:
- 45% of the respondents visit the park at least once a month; most used the park from 2 to 11 times per year.
  - Nearly three-quarters of the respondents live within five miles of the park and a total of 90 % come from Montgomery County.
  - Trails were used either “often” or “sometimes” by the most respondents.
  - Boating related activities and facilities received the second most “often use” or “sometimes use” responses.
  - Large numbers of respondents reported they used the visitor center, restrooms, picnic shelters, bulletin boards/information kiosks and “sunning/resting/relaxing”.
  - Boating and fishing from private boats received the most “never use” responses.
  - The park received high marks for the amount and quality of facilities and services including parking, maintenance of restrooms, vehicular access and circulation and maintenance of the shelters..
  - The items that received the lowest satisfaction rankings included the amount of: paved and dirt trails, nature programs, overlooks/benches/rest areas, information signage and safety in park / police presence.

**2. POTENTIAL PROJECT LIST**

As an early step in the process of developing the Master/Management Plan for Black Hill Regional Park, the Master/Management Plan Committee [MPC] developed a preliminary list of potential projects and actions that should be assessed and considered in a series of “brainstorming” sessions. The following table contains a brief description of the issues discussed. Where appropriate, this discussion includes indications for why any particular item was discarded prior to the final recommendations.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Table II-5: Potential Project List from M-NCPPC Staff

Note: The right hand column of this table indicates if the item was included in the Master Plan recommendations.

Item #	Description and Disposition	In the Master Plan?
1.	<p><b>New Maintenance Facility</b> – The existing facility cannot accommodate the needs of Black Hill Regional Park and all of the other parks that the facility services – equipment is rusting, materials are being inadequately stored, the number of parks served by the facility has increased, etc.</p>	Yes
2.	<p><b>Small Group Picnic Area</b> – Proposed to be located at the Picnic Lane area, the small group picnic area would hold approximately 250 people for corporate parties, group outings, etc. Contrary to the rest of the park, alcohol could be served and access controlled to this portion of the park. The road and parking infrastructure is already in place, but the pavilions and immediate picnic facilities are not. This picnic area would impact forest resources in the immediate vicinity. Since this is an area of better quality forest, impacts should be minimized. This impact could be minimized by utilizing areas already disturbed for parking that may not be needed to serve the picnic area adequately.</p> <p>This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations due to the fact that:</p> <p><b>This use was considered inconsistent with the rest of the park development. An alternate recommendation was made to incorporate expansion of traditional picnic facilities in this area.</b></p>	No
3.	<p><b>Vehicular access to the park from Clarksburg Road</b> - There is a vehicular access to the park currently from Clarksburg Road, however use is only allowed by staff for official purposes. The park has acquired some parcels, including the recently acquired Bennett Property, fronting MD 121 which could make an access to the park from Clarksburg Road more feasible. New property acquisitions could make the sight lines for a new road more desirable.</p> <p>This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations due to:</p> <p><b>Stiff opposition to this access from nearby residents who were very vocal during the planning of the park, the MPC desire to maintain a better control of vehicular access by maintaining only one entrance, and the MPC concern that the road could become a commuter cut-through in the future resulted in the MPC recommendation that only a trail access be pursued in this area and the idea of a road connection abandoned.</b></p>	No
4.	<p><b>Circumnavigational Trail</b> – Proposed trail system would include routing to encircle the entire lake.</p> <p>This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations due to the fact that:</p> <p><b>The full development of such a trail would have a high number of environmental impacts including potentially 20 or more stream and or wetland crossings and other private property infringement issues, depending on the final alignment. The permitting cost and potential environmental impacts are prohibitive for this project. However, the basic intent of connecting the two arms of the proposed regional greenway system and a provision for a hard surface trail around the main body of Little Seneca Lake has been included in the plan.</b></p>	No
5.	<p><b>Connection to Little Bennett Park via a proposed greenway connection.</b></p>	Yes
6.	<p><b>Connection to Ovid Hazen Wells Park via a proposed greenway connection.</b></p>	Yes



## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

Item #	Description and Disposition	Master Plan?
7.	Expansion/Renovation of the Visitor Center - Problems at the visitor center include lack of storage space and auditorium space. An increase in the seating at the visitor center auditorium to a total of 150 seats is needed to meet anticipated needs. Also, additional storage space could be added in the unfinished basement.	Yes
8.	Cool Spring Run Trailhead Parking along MD 121 - There is no parking in this area. The trailhead at Cool Spring Run is in a flat area which is not constrained by environmental buffers. Parking in this area does not need to be extensive; a lot big enough to accommodate about 10 vehicles and with room enough to turn a horse trailer around is adequate.	Yes
9.	Ten-Mile Creek Trailhead Parking - Creating a parking area here is not feasible for parking and turnarounds for horse trailers on existing park lands due to wetlands and the stream valley buffer. Therefore, the recommendations do include pursuing land acquisition adjacent to Ten Mile Creek Road that would provide adequate land for the purpose	Yes
10.	Ten-Mile Creek Trail Bridge - Several miles of trails are located on this side of the park but are not readily accessible to the public due to problems crossing the stream and inadequate parking. The floodplain is broad and it doesn't make for a real easy task but it is still considered feasible.	Yes
11.	<p><b>Boat Access</b> - The existing boat ramp is at capacity in peak periods, and increased demand is expected in future years. In addition, boaters have limited access to the southern portion of the lake without an extra battery or a lot of hard work. There is an easy potential access near the MD 121 bridge which is well suited for a boat access. The area is located on a peninsula on the south side of Little Seneca Lake. The area already has an unpaved access to the northern portion of the peninsula, but has no direct water access. The proposed access would only allow for "car-top" boats which can be hand launched and no trailers would be accommodated. This is a popular fishing and recreation area. There is room for parking and other amenities in the area. The M-NCPPC buffer shows this area to be inside the SV buffer.</p> <p>This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations in this location due to the fact:</p> <p>This particular spot is a significant area for migratory waterfowl and other species of note. Therefore, a compromise location was developed for inclusion in the recommendations.</p>	No
12.	<b>Viewshed Enhancement</b> - Several areas have been targeted for viewshed enhancement which would require removing brush, installing interpretive signs, installing benches, etc. These areas are indicated on the Natural Resources Management Plan.	Yes
13.	<b>Paved Trail along Lake Ridge Drive</b> - This was mentioned in the Clarksburg Master Plan [CMP] to facilitate a paved trail connection through to the north end of the park for future connectivity with bikeways and greenways in the Clarksburg area.	Yes
14.	<b>Up-grade Boat Rental Facility</b> - The boat rental building is too small to serve its function. The existing pre-fabricated wooden sheds have no plumbing, inadequate electrical and HVAC service and extremely tight storage capacity. The floating docks which currently service the facility are deteriorating and will need to be repaired and/or replaced in the near future.	Yes

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Item #	Description and Disposition	Master Plan?
15.	<b>Lake Management</b> - Lake management at Little Seneca Lake is conducted by a variety of agencies (WSSC, M-NCPPC, DNR, ICPRB). WSSC recently completed a sounding of the lake, but hasn't compiled the data to determine the rate and extent of sedimentation in the lake. Similar to Rock Creek, Little Seneca Lake sediment forebays are filling in at a moderately high rate. Direction on proactive measures for addressing this issue are posed in the Natural Resources Management Plan.	Yes
16.	<b>Class I Bikeway</b> - A Class I Bikeway (two-way, separate path in the road right-of-way) is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan along Clarksburg Road and could potentially be accessed from the park at the Cool Spring Trailhead. A Class I Bikeway is also proposed in the Clarksburg Plan along West Old Baltimore Road from Lake Ridge Drive east to Observation Drive. Connections into the park will be along the proposed Lake Ridge Drive Trail.	Yes
17.	<b>Class III Bikeway</b> - A Class III Bikeway (signed, on-road route) is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan along West Old Baltimore Road from west of Slidell Road east to the Clarksburg Road Bikeway (Class I). Connections to this bikeway within the park include the potential greenway connection along Ten Mile Creek.	Yes
18.	<b>Existing Maintenance Facility Reuse</b> - Ideas for reuse of the existing maintenance facility, when the new one is built, include tennis and/or basketball courts, roller hockey court, reclamation of the site to a natural cover or serving as an annex for interpretive programs. This plan recommends reuse as classrooms for interpretive programs.	Yes
19.	<b>Park Police Facility - Pasture Expansion</b> - There are currently 4-5 officers working out of Black Hill, they include normal patrol for Black Hill Regional Park, Little Bennett Regional Park, Upper and Lower Magruder Branch Park and others. The horse barn has capacity for 10 horses, but the pasture can only support 4 horses. Expansion of the pasture would be to the south and east of the existing pasture. A third pasture was added in the summer of 1999.	Yes
20.	<b>Large Group Picnic Area</b> - One highly controversial issue at the park involves building a large group picnic area which could serve over 1,000 people as an enterprise facility. There is no area within Montgomery County that offers this type of picnic or event area except privately owned areas such as Smokey Glen Farms which are quite profitable.  This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations in this location due to the fact:  <b>This idea faces significant opposition from local residents and is not recommended in this plan due to noise, vehicular access and management considerations.</b>	No
21.	<b>I-270 Newcut Road Interchange</b> - This interchange will provide improved access to the park in the future through revisions to the current dangerous intersection with West Old Baltimore Road and the park entrance road (Lake Ridge Drive).	Yes
22.	<b>Class I Bikeway</b> - Class I Bikeway (Black Hill Regional Bikeway) is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan from the park south along I-270.  This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations in this location due to the fact:  <b>The feasibility of this bikeway is questionable. It would require a paved surface trail across Little Seneca Creek into several private landholdings.</b>	No

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Item #	Description and Disposition	Master Plan?
23.	<p><b>Access from Crystal Rock Drive – New vehicular access is recommended in the Germantown Master Plan.</b></p> <p>This project was not included in the Master Plan recommendations in this location due to the fact:</p> <p><b>Vehicular access at this location would have significant environmental impacts, including the crossing of Little Seneca Creek and the impact to significant forest resources and fragmentation of existing forest communities. Topography is not conducive to this type of connection. This plan does not recommend vehicular access at this location.</b></p>	No
24.	<p><b>Clarksburg Road Special Park - Future development of this parcel is recommended in the Clarksburg Master Plan, and will yield significant acreage for active recreation facilities and potential trail connections between the two arms of the lake.</b></p>	Yes
25.	<p><b>Bird Observation Areas / Platforms - A number of spots are conducive to observing water fowl and migratory birds due to the natural protection from the elements offered. A few simple interpretive information stations and minor earth work are recommended to make some of the existing observation points more useful and educational for the general public but not obtrusive.</b></p>	Yes

**3. PUBLIC MEETINGS AND INPUT**

Two general public meetings were held in the course of this study as well as numerous smaller presentations to interested groups. The first public meeting, on June 11, 1997, was a public workshop to acquaint interested parties with the intent of the study and to discuss the basic issues and concerns of attendees. An itemized listing of the comments made by attendees at this workshop is included in Appendix A.1.

The second was a Public Presentation held on May 19, 1998 to present a draft version of the recommendations to be included in the Master/Management Plan. Appendix A.2 includes the minutes of this meeting.

In addition, presentations were given to the Clarksburg Civic Association, Boyds Civic Association, Upcounty Citizens Advisory Council and the Northern Area Recreation Advisory Board to obtain their input on the plan. The following represents a summary of the topics discussed and comments made by meeting attendees and written comments received on the plan. **The following is presented primarily as a record of the statements made by the participants, no representations are made about the accuracy of any particular statement.**

**Overview**

The initial public workshop held in 1997 included a review of the preliminary list of site issues, opportunities and constraints included in Table II-5. Due to a general misunderstanding about the nature of the preliminary listing of potential projects and the master/management planning process, a majority of the attendees were concerned about a perceived emphasis on continued and extensive development of

## **II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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Black Hill Regional Park. While the intent of developing the list was to fully explore all options as a means to determine the optimum direction for future development and conservation, the attendees stated at the meeting and in subsequent correspondence their strong objections to additional extensive development in the park. In particular, the participants took issue with the concept of a large group picnic area on the west part of the main body of the lake, new vehicular access to the park, the new maintenance facility and a boat ramp on the southern end of the Clarksburg Road bridge.

The second public presentation made in 1998 elicited a more positive response. Due primarily to the fact that many of the recommendations presented at the second meeting had directly responded to concerns voiced by participants at the first, qualified support for the Master/Management Plan was expressed by a significant number of the attendees. Concerns persisted regarding three definable categories and a few miscellaneous issues. The categories include the need and prioritization for new development, Little Seneca Lake, and trails and greenways. Related to all of these were issues concerning the management of the park's natural resources.

### **RE: Priorities and Needs**

#### Issues

- A large proportion of the people who expressed an interest in the park during the planning period feel the level of recreational development that exists now is appropriate. Criticism was made that the plan is "overshooting the potential of the park"; that this is a "nature park" and the park is already over-developed and over-managed. Further, there is no need for an expanded maintenance facility as the park already has more equipment than it needs. A related question was posed about the need for sewer and water extensions to a new Maintenance Facility when the surrounding area is all on well and septic. One participant at the second meeting even proposed a limit on development be imposed at a much lower level than the 1/3:2/3 policy prescribes. One reason consistently cited is the unique natural aspects of the park and how that quality of experience is not possible in many other public or private places in this rapidly developing region. Others raised specific environmental issues such as the impacts of continued and expanded development on the water quality in Little Seneca Lake and wildlife found within the park.
- A number of participants expressed a desire for improving existing programs and facilities prior to expanding park development. For example, enhancing educational programs and interpretation of the park's natural and cultural resources was viewed favorably by a majority of the participants.

#### Response in the Master/Management Plan

- The Master/Management Plan incorporates the unique natural character of the site as one of the most important aspects for preservation, enhancement and interpretation. No extensive development facilities outside of areas already developed are proposed with the exception of the expansion of the trail system. However, much of the proposed expansion of the trails are

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within areas of limited sensitivity or involve upgrading already disturbed trail and use corridors.

- The relocation and expansion of the maintenance facility has long been a priority due to the increasing demands of managing the regional park as well as 21 other park facilities in the region. With this redevelopment, the facility will fall under current environmental regulations that class the facility as an industrial use. Therefore, all waste water must be disposed of through a sewage treatment system or regional sewage collection and treatment facilities.

**RE: Little Seneca Lake**Issues

- A number of participants and correspondents are concerned about the long term management of the lake and the high quality fisheries that have developed there over the last decade. For example, specific concerns were raised regarding:
  - How many boats can the lake support?
  - How many fishermen can the lake support?
  - What if the numbers of boats and fishermen doubled?
  - Is hydrilla being managed to increase/decrease distribution in the lake?
  - What is the current condition of the water in the lake?
- The provision of additional access points to the lake, including an additional boat ramp, fishing piers and mooring sites, brought a wide range of comment. Those who regularly use the lake for fishing and boating endorsed the idea of increasing access to the Ten Mile Creek Area. People concerned about impacts on natural resources of the area voiced strong reservations about the long term effects of increasing numbers of people on this part of the lake, as well as the impacts of specific placement of proposed boat launches and ramps.
- Requests were made to improve access to existing mooring sites prior to opening additional sites, and to address restroom conditions at the boat launch which are currently handled by portable toilets.

Response in the Master/Management Plan

- Long term monitoring and sound integrated management of the surrounding landscapes are required steps in assuring that the lake will continue to provide a high quality aquatic resource. WSSC is the responsible agency for the direct management of the lake. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources [MDDNR] participates by managing the fisheries aspects of the lake. M-NCPPC manages the landscape in the immediate vicinity and access to the lake via park property and facilities. The majority of the watershed is in private ownership. The Master/Management Plan can only directly influence the actions and

## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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programs of M-NCPPC. However, WSSC has responded that they will likely be undertaking a regular monitoring program at Little Seneca Lake in the near future that can help supply answers to some of the public's questions over time. MDDNR has provided information about the fisheries management of the lake, and fully intends to keep an active role in monitoring and actively managing this part of the resource. M-NCPPC will play a role through continued incorporation of appropriate measures during development of new facilities to prevent unnecessary soil erosion into the lake as well as improving lake shore vegetative buffer areas.

- As part of the monitoring effort, the implications of increasing boat traffic on the lake will be examined and if deleterious effects are observed, M-NCPPC is committed to reducing or limiting the numbers of boats on the lake to the extent practical.
- Specific locations proposed for new boat launch facilities were changed based on citizen and M-NCPPC staff concerns about the effects on particular bird, waterfowl and insect species that frequent the originally proposed location.
- Improvements to the existing boat launch area were considered by the Master Plan Committee and the Utility Feasibility Study recommends options for providing sewer and water service to both the existing and proposed boat launch sites.

### RE: Trails and Greenways

- Generally, the attendees and correspondents are supportive of enhancing the trail system within the park and improving connections to the local and regional communities. However, concerns were expressed about a number of site specific instances. For example, it was suggested that the addition of a hard surface trail behind existing residences near the intersection of Black Hill Road and MD 121 (represented on the Master Plan as "3.b.3") will introduce increased crime and trash into the area behind the houses on Black Hill Road. A request was made by a resident in the neighborhood to extend the trail north along Route 121 to the intersection of Black Hill Road and then designate the roadway for trail use to the east as an alternative. Additional suggestions were made regarding a proposed trail head for Cool Spring Run off of Route 121 including:
  - Provide for tree buffer areas in the layout of the parking.
  - Keep the maximum number of cars to a small number.
  - Do not provide water fountains.
  - Close at dusk.
- One attendee made several criticisms including a strong opinion against increasing any black-top paving in the park as it is inconsistent with the character of the facility.

### Response in the Master/Management Plan

- The general trail alignments shown in the Master Plan are intended mostly to use already existing cleared areas such as utility corridors and old roads to minimize negative

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environmental impacts. They are all subject to change and adjustment during detailed design development and construction documentation. At that time, a number of site specific measures can be investigated to determine how to eliminate or mitigate environmental impacts and address concerns of adjacent residences. However, in the case of the alignment near Black Hill Road, it is appropriate to carry both alternatives forward to the next level of planning and design as the cost differences may be such that the original proposal will not be the most cost effective.

- The addition of hard surface trails in the park will not all necessarily be asphalt.

**RE: Miscellaneous Issues**

Issues and Responses: Issues identified by participants are shown in underline with the response immediately following:

- A request was made for a fenced area for exercising dogs "off-leash". At the same time, a complaint was made that previous requests in this regard have been ignored. In fact, the Master Plan Committee had considered this request and felt it was inconsistent with the park character and its purpose although it may be appropriate elsewhere in the park system. This was not communicated directly with the correspondent until the second public meeting.
- Questions were raised about the size (concern about the type of events that would be staged) and the need (when a natural bowl already exists) and location ("inappropriate" for this park) for the proposed concert amphitheater. The intent of this proposal is merely to improve the site to better accommodate the type and size of concerts that have always been offered at Black Hill Regional Park: small, community concerts or performances.
- A concern was voiced about the location of the proposed Maintenance Facility as the area is used extensively by birders. Regarding the location of the Maintenance Facility, a number of sites were investigated by a team of M-NCPPC staff members. The recommended site was selected because of the ability to screen the facility from park users, access to sewer utilities, minimization of disturbance to forested areas, and proximity to the park entrance. Care should be taken during facility planning and design to minimize disruption of the open meadow area through which the access road will pass.

**4. TRENDS**

The challenge during the planning and design process is understanding the trends in our society that will have a major effect on the way we recreate. Only by understanding these trends and addressing them can we be sure that the park will meet needs of future communities. According to the latest recreational research, the following are trends that generally need to be responded to when planning public parks:

- a. **An older population that remains very active**  
Recreational planners and designers will need to address the needs of this population by providing activities such as tennis, golf, easy walking trails, comfortable and attractive

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seating areas, and other leisure activities geared to this older age group. It is well documented that as people age, those who remain active choose less physically demanding pursuits. In many ways the changes may be subtle as in a change from bicycling and jogging to walking. Trail use may be at the same levels as before in terms of quantitative measures but the intensity of the use will be changed. Accessibility will be even more important. Larger print signage, more lighting, smooth grades and shallow slopes should be incorporated wherever possible.

**b. Affordable recreation close to home**

Unfortunately, future trends suggest that Americans will be working longer hours but making less money. This is apparently already being borne out in Montgomery County as the median household income has decreased since the 1990 census. This will mean that families will have less time and money to spend on extended vacations and will look to their parks departments to provide a variety of weekend and weekday recreational activities close to home and at an affordable cost.

**c. Lack of funding for recreational facilities**

Funding problems are going to have to be addressed by using innovative thinking. Instituting user fees for park facilities, lower maintenance designs and volunteer programs to help maintain parks are just some examples of what can be done. Privatization is another option that can bring much needed recreational facilities to a park system that does not have the money to develop them.

**d. A diverse community interested in a wide range of facilities**

In addition to the range of economic and family size characteristics mentioned in Section II.A.2. above, Montgomery County and the region adjacent to Black Hill Regional Park are becoming more diverse, and with this diversity comes a need to understand how different cultures use our park system.

For example, the Forest Service's Wildland Recreation and Urban Culture Project in California discovered that Hispanic and Asian park user groups are much larger than the Anglo groups for whom the parks are traditionally planned. This will affect the sizing and capacity of many areas within the park such as group picnic areas and the parking needed to accommodate the larger groups.

Also, a better understanding is needed of the types of recreation that attract the different cultural groups and what is popular with the younger generation. An example of the types of new recreation that are very popular now and should be planned for somewhere within the park system are skateboarding, street hockey, in-line skating and BMX biking.

**e. An increased interest in educational and environmental opportunities**

With the public's increased interest in environmental issues as well as cultural heritage and historic background comes the responsibility of providing environmental and historical/archeological education and interpretation in our park system. The need for



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Nature Centers and interpretive programs will increase as more families with school age children move to the northern parts of Montgomery County. One important aspect of public education is the positive benefits that a less manicured and maintained park setting has on the ecosystem and also a greater respect for the natural and cultural/historic resources which exist.

**5. PROS AND COUNTYWIDE PARK TRAILS PLAN GUIDANCE**

Two documents assess countywide park needs and offer policy guidance to meet those needs. The Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the most recent version of which was adopted in July 1998, is the primary policy document which guides agency decisions on many aspects of park lands. It projects recreational facility needs by Planning Area and countywide for several types of facilities, including: ballfields, playgrounds, pools, and tennis courts. It also addresses Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources protection, parkland acquisition needs, and trails and greenways. The Clarksburg & Vicinity and Germantown areas to the east of Black Hill Regional Park are projected to have high needs for playgrounds and ballfields by the year 2010. The Germantown area falls into the high needs category for tennis courts, while the Clarksburg area is projected to have low needs for tennis courts by 2010. The projected year 2010 needs for playgrounds, ballfields and tennis courts are estimated to be met for the Lower Seneca Planning Area to the west of the Park. Land acquisition needs are specified in the PROS Plan, including proposed acquisitions to expand Black Hill Regional Park. Passive recreation, such as fishing, boating, nature observation, hiking and horseback riding, are recognized in the PROS Plan as important components of the M-NCPPC park system, but the needs for passive recreational facilities are not quantitatively measured. Likewise, the PROS Plan includes goals and policies guiding natural resources protection, but, due to the difficulties of quantitative assessment, needs for these are not enumerated.

The Countywide Park Trails Plan, adopted in July 1998, is the major policy document for the development of a countywide trails system. The Trails Plan did not quantitatively assess unmet trail needs in the county, but relied upon existing surveys and public comments to judge needs and formulate recommendations. The Trails Plan recognizes Black Hill Regional Park as a major recreational destination in the county, and recommends improved trail connections between Black Hill park trails and surrounding communities for greater non-motorized accessibility.

For more information on the PROS and Countywide Park Trails Plan, see Appendix D-2.

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**D. TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS TO THE PARK**

**1. VEHICULAR ACCESS**

There is one primary public vehicular entrance to Black Hill Regional Park. West Old Baltimore Road provides direct access to Lake Ridge Drive which leads directly to the majority of the park's developed facilities, including the existing Visitor Center, park headquarters and maintenance facility. Lake Ridge Drive also intersects with the eastern terminus of Black Hill Road, which provides access to the boat launching area for Little Seneca Lake. Park Police regional offices and horse stables are located on Black Hill Road to the west beyond the boat launch area in an area otherwise closed to public vehicular access.

West Old Baltimore Road continues east of the park entrance to its intersection with MD 355 after crossing under I-270. To the west of the park entrance, West Old Baltimore Road intersects with Clarksburg Road and proceeds beyond that point as a designated rural /rustic roadway. Clarksburg Road connects with Clopper Road to the south and to I-270 and MD 355 to the north of the park providing regional vehicular access.

There is limited vehicular access to the Ten Mile Creek area via West Old Baltimore Road and Ten Mile Creek Road.

There is no direct vehicular access to the park from the Churchill Sector, which is the most densely populated area surrounding Black Hill Regional Park.

**2. TRAFFIC ANALYSES**

This Master/Management Plan does not propose any major facility additions or revisions that would generate significant traffic increases. The only possible exceptions are the potential expansion of picnic facilities in the Picnic Lane Area, including two picnic shelters which could accommodate 140 people, and the addition of a boat access point at the southern end of Little Seneca Lake. Development of either facility should be accompanied by an assessment of the impact on future traffic conditions according to the Montgomery County Local Area Traffic Review procedures. The latter development should also be looked at in terms of preserving safe travel conditions for through traffic on Clarksburg Road at the point where traffic from the boat launch will enter the roadway.

Otherwise, existing land use and carrying capacity are to remain basically unchanged and recommended modifications to present land use areas and facilities have been made with the objective of better serving existing park users, not significantly increasing their numbers. Therefore, for all other components of the Master/Management Plan, a traffic analysis is not considered necessary.

3. PROPOSED ROAD AND TRANSIT RELATED IMPROVEMENTS

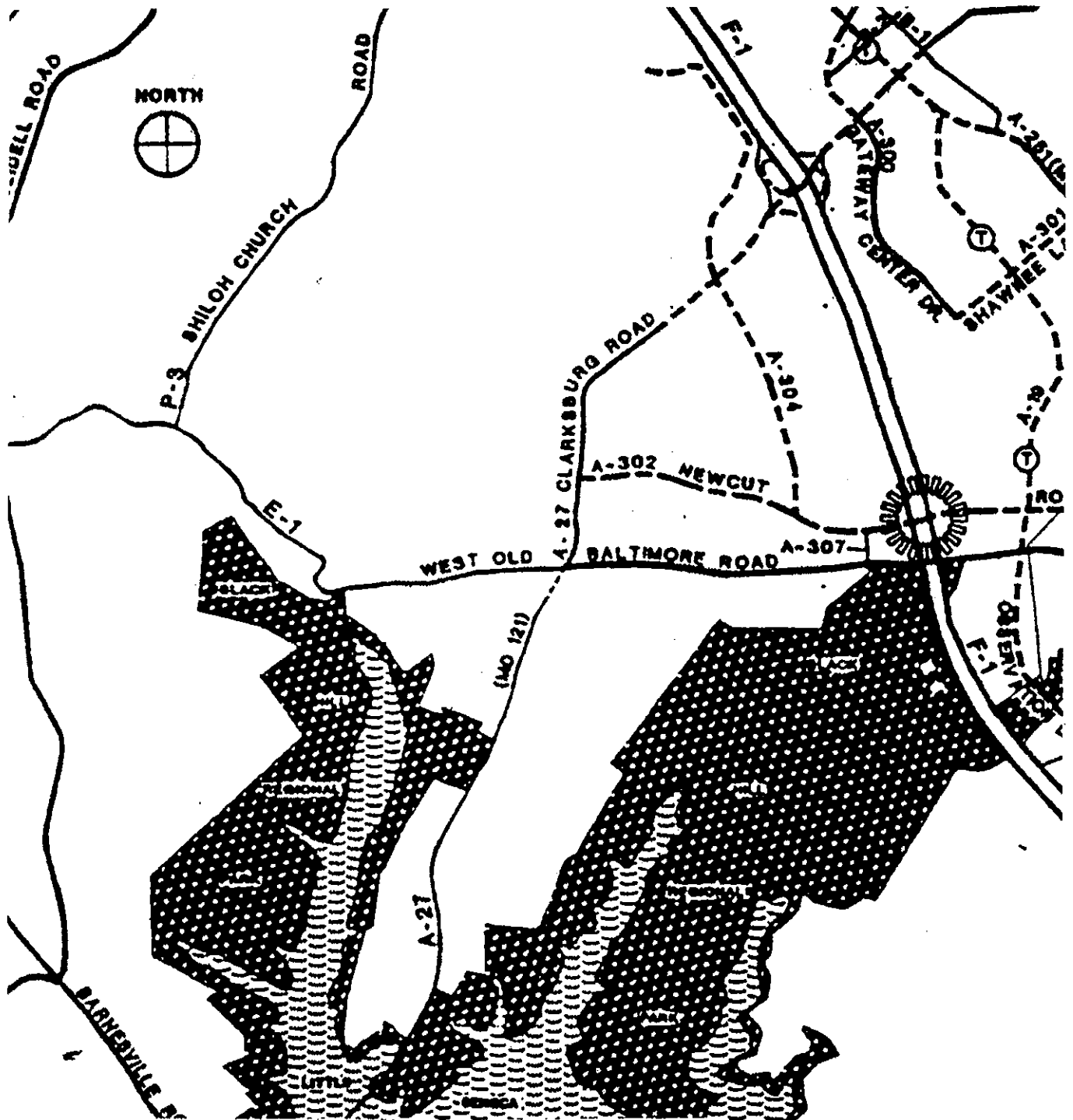


Figure II-3: Clarksburg Master Plan Roadway Designations

Source: Figure 40, Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area - Approved and Adopted June 1994.

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Many of the major roads in the vicinity of the park are subject to road improvement projects under the Montgomery County Capital Improvements Program (CIP), or the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA).

The major roads that affect access to Black Hill Regional Park are listed below, and any improvements which are programmed for them are described as well as improvements which are planned for beyond the six year CIP, or in the Master Plan of Highways or the Zoning/Highway Plans for relevant planning area:

- a. **A-307 - Proposed Road** - from Newcut Road Extended (A-302) to West Old Baltimore Road. As shown on Figure II-2, this new road extension is recommended for 2 lanes within an 80 foot wide right-of-way. This road will connect directly with the park entrance and the proposed new interchange at I-270.
- b. **West Old Baltimore Road** - In the northwest corner of the park, West Old Baltimore Road intersects Ten Mile Creek Road west of the park entrance. The section of West Old Baltimore Road between Barnesville Road east to Route 121 (Clarksburg Road) is classified as an exceptional rustic road, and as such should generally not be subject to any roadway realignment or widening. However, because of the sharp curve just to the west of the intersection, some realignment is a possibility. Eighty feet of right-of-way is designated in the Clarksburg Master Plan, although it appears from tax maps of the area that only a prescriptive, not a dedicated, right-of-way now exists. If the road is realigned in the future, it appears that it would be relocated to the north away from the park property.
- c. **I-270 (Dwight D. Eisenhower Freeway)** - In the Clarksburg Master Plan, a 350 foot right-of-way is called for adjacent to the park. From the tax map, it appears that only 200 feet now exists. The Clarksburg Master Plan calls for widening to eight lanes in this area.
- d. **Barnesville Road** - The Clarksburg Master Plan designates the road to remain two lanes. An 80 foot right-of-way is called for.
- e. **Clopper Road (M-26)** - The Clarksburg Master Plan designates realignment of Clopper Road to intersect with White Ground Road further south of the current intersection. This realignment would not directly affect park property, but will affect proposed hiker-biker trail connection to the park trails near this intersection. Plans will need to be coordinated.

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- f. **Clarksburg Road (A-57)** - The Clarksburg Master Plan designates the extension of Clarksburg Road to intersect with the realigned section of Clopper Road. This extension would not directly affect park property, but will affect the proposed trail mentioned in Item e above.
  
- g. **CSX Rail Line** - There is a possibility that the CSX rail line that runs between the southern boundary of the park and Little Seneca Stream Valley Park will be expanded to include a third track. The existing line carries freight, Amtrak and MARC traffic and is somewhat overloaded. No plans have been developed and there has not been a definite decision to go forward with this idea. This proposal may affect the proposed trail connection from the existing end of the Black Hill Trail to Clarksburg Road.

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**4. TRAIL ACCESS**

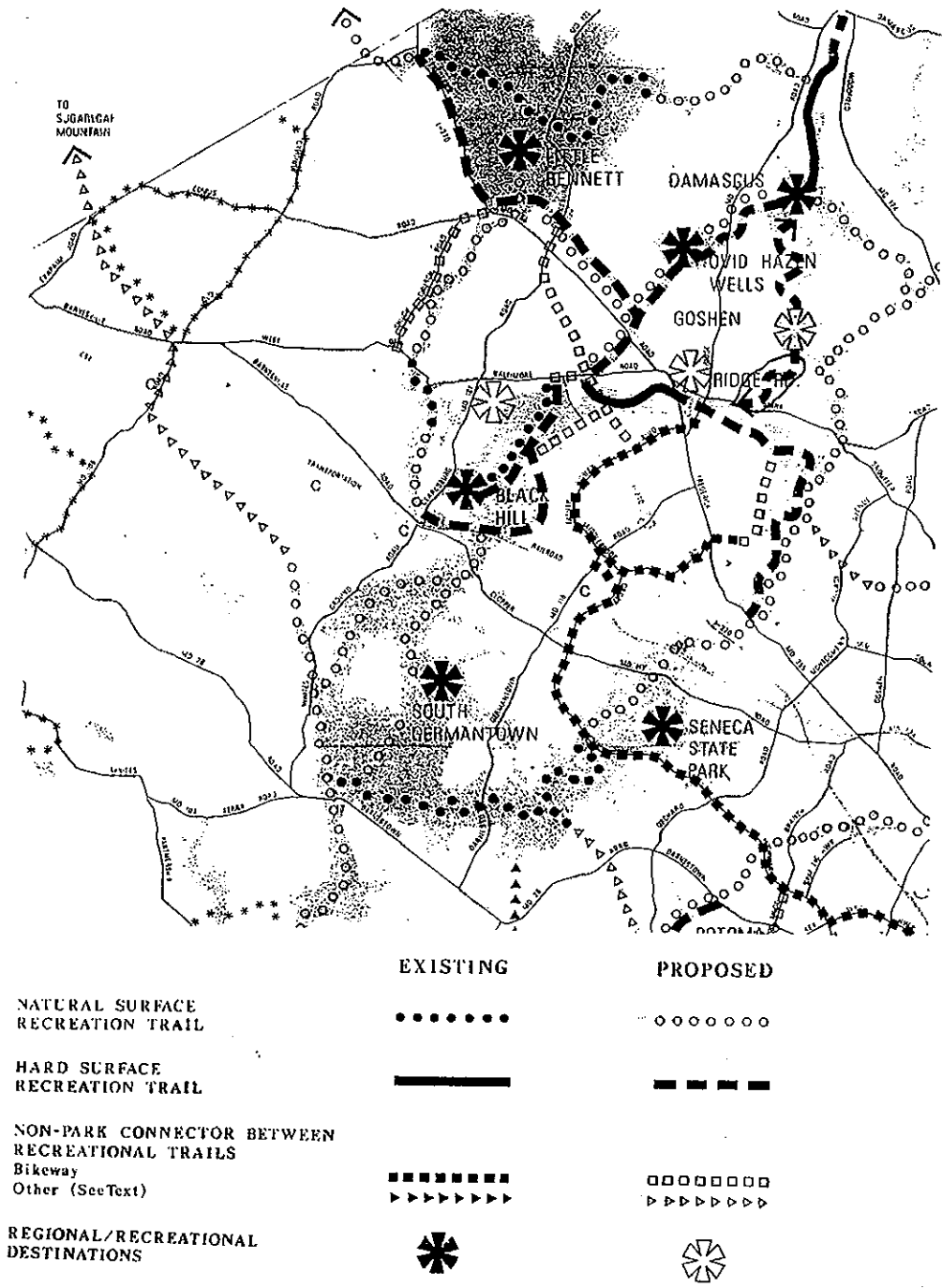


Figure II-4: Countywide Park Trails Plan Excerpt

Source: Countywide Park Trails Plan, July 1998.

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There are already a significant number of trails within Black Hill Regional Park providing access to much of the park's unique landscape for equestrians, mountain bikers and hikers. However, there is great potential to improve the internal trail system to take better advantage of the resources of Little Seneca Lake and to increase access to the park from surrounding communities and future recreational and public lands.

- a. **Existing Regional Trail Access.** Black Hill Regional Park is currently not directly accessible via any of the major trails in the county. However, Figure II-3 illustrates the planned system of regionally significant trails as depicted in the recently adopted Countywide Park Trails Plan for Montgomery County which plans to connect Black Hill Regional Park to other parts of the Upcounty.

In addition, Appendix E.3 includes a detailed description of the greenways and trails included from the Clarksburg Master Plan. The following briefly describes additional specific improvements that are discussed in the Clarksburg Master Plan and may be possible within the immediate vicinity of the park as part of future roadway improvements and alterations.

- b. **Potential Regional Trail Access.** The following is summarized from the Countywide Park Trails Plan; the Clarksburg and Germantown Master Plans and the Maryland Greenway Atlas:
  - A Class I Bikeway (see Figure II-4) along Clarksburg Road is proposed in the Clarksburg and Boyds Master Plans extending south of Boyds along White Ground Road.
  - A Class III Bike Route (see Figure II-4) along West Old Baltimore Road west of Clarksburg Road to the intersection with Clarksburg Road is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan.
  - A Class I Bikeway along West Old Baltimore Road between Lake Ridge Drive and Observation Drive is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan.
  - A Class I Bikeway heading south from the park parallel to I-270 is proposed in the Clarksburg Master Plan although no definitive route is identified. The intent is to eventually make a connection across I 270 toward the Milestone Development area.
  - A bikeway is proposed along Clopper Road in the 1989 Germantown Master Plan, extending north to that Master Plan area boundary at Little Seneca Creek with an arrow showing the bikeway extending north toward Boyds beyond the planning area boundary. However, neither the 1985 Boyds Plan, nor the 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways indicates a bikeway along Clopper Road. The Master Plan of Bikeways is currently being revised, and may address this issue.

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- a. Bike Paths are proposed in the Boyds Master Plan along Barnesville Road west of Clarksburg Road, and along the railroad tracks east of Clarksburg Road.
- c. A potential greenway connection is identified along Seneca Creek and Little Seneca Creek originating from Seneca State Park, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park and the Potomac River, north through South Germantown Recreational Park, to Black Hill Regional Park. From there, the corridor continues on to the north accompanying Little Seneca Creek toward Ovid Hazen Wells Park and branching to the east via North Germantown Special Park to Ridge Road Recreational Park and continuing on to again join with Seneca State Park.
- d. A potential greenway connection is identified along Ten Mile Creek extending from Black Hill Regional Park north toward Little Bennett Regional Park.

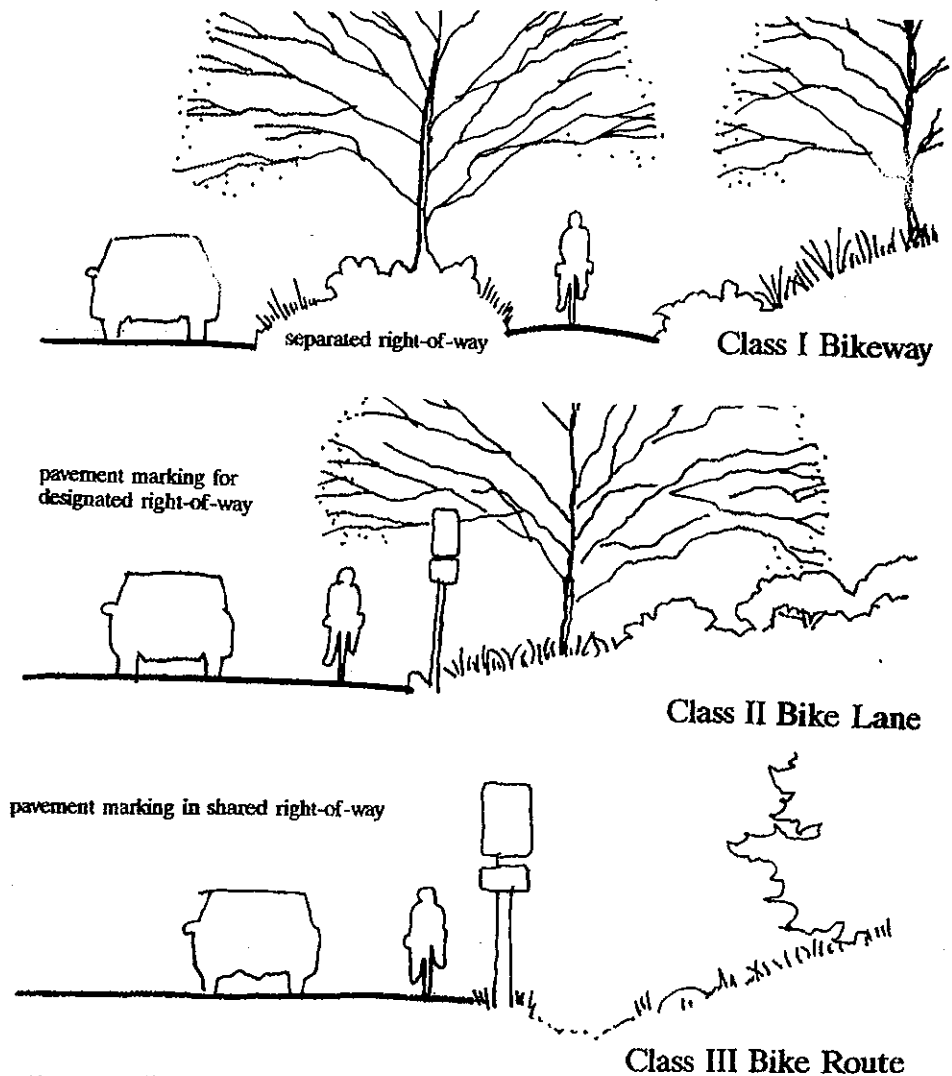


Figure II-5: Bikeway Classifications

Adapted from Bicycle Circulation by Edward Macleod & Associates.



## 6. LOCAL ACCESS

The asphalt Black Hill Trail along the park's eastern periphery is readily accessible from the popular pedestrian walkways and paved trails within the Churchill Town Sector development. From the west, local residents can access the developed areas of the park by foot or by bicycle via Black Hill Road or the intersection of the Cool Spring Run Trail at MD 121.

### E. THE PARK IN THE PAST

An understanding of how the park was acquired as well as a thorough understanding of the pre-historic, historic and archeological resources of the park can yield important perspectives for how current conditions arose as well as identify requirements for preservation and opportunities for interpretation.

#### 1. ACQUISITION

Montgomery County covers 316,160 acres of land within the east coast Piedmont region and consists primarily of uplands with some floodplain areas and Potomac river terraces.

As of the 1994 Montgomery County Planning Department census update, there were approximately 795,600 people living in this county, with a median household income of \$59,085. Our park system not only serves these county residents but is also utilized by hundreds of thousands of citizens from the greater Washington metropolitan area for various recreation activities and, to a lesser degree, for commuting to and from work.

The M-NCPPC park system includes nearly 28,000 acres of long narrow stream valleys and gently rolling uplands in Montgomery County. Regional parks and stream valley parks form the core of the park system. The five regional parks today cover a total of over 7,700 acres.

Black Hill Regional Park is one of the department's youngest regional parks. The majority of the park acquisition was accomplished between 1965 through 1985, although small parcels have been added to the park over the last decade.

At this time, there are three critical land acquisitions specifically programmed for Black Hill Regional Park although a number of sites are proposed for consideration as part of the Master/Management Plan.



## II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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### 2. HISTORY

**Boys:** The community on the southern edge of Little Seneca Lake, formerly marked with a sign: *Boys, Home in the Country*.

Boys is named for Col. James A. Boyd, a Scottish immigrant, who obtained a contract to build the railroad in western Montgomery County shortly after the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad was chartered in 1865. The railroad, completed in 1873, included the longest wooden trestle bridge in the world at the time, across Little Seneca Creek, later replaced by one made of steel and stone. So strategic was this bridge to Washington transportation that during World War I, it was guarded night and day. Only a massive stone abutment and several stone supports remain.

This new mode of transportation provided a means to carry perishable items to Washington such as milk, butter, poultry, hay, fruit and vegetables, etc. and bring to the community much needed fertilizer for the then impoverished soil. Col. Boyd owned a dairy farm and benefited greatly from the quick transport of milk.

Boyd built a large, rather elegant house for himself named Bonnie Brae and several smaller houses. These he leased to African-American tenant farmers, together with a small amount of land for their use. He had purchased approximately 1100 acres of land on both sides of the track, thus increasing the size of the village from the original 72 acre tract as surveyed by Thomas Howard in 1753. The present-day historic district encompasses approximately 70 acres and consists of buildings constructed primarily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Located at the entrance to the historic district is the Mauglin House, the last standing home in the community attributed to Col. Boyd. The house was probably built around the time of the railroad's charter in 1865 according to a photograph of the house with the caption, "Our House - 1866." The farm also boasted a wooden silo, the first in the area. A childless couple, the Boyds left this house and other property to her sister's children, whose last name was Mauglin. The house is currently being restored in a public/private partnership with M-NCPPC.

The railroad's establishment encouraged the building of homes along the line where abundant water, land and large trees prevailed. So healthy and picturesque was the area within and surrounding the park area, being 500 feet above sea level, that large, Victorian houses with extra rooms to rent in the Ten-Mile Creek area flourished during the summer months, giving a respite from heat and disease to the unfortunate citizens of the city, 30 miles to the south who now had available transportation. The area was considered so healthy that departing visitors took containers of spring water back to Washington.

One such inn, Staley's Boarding House, an imposing Victorian mansion with windowed mansard roof and airy porches, is now submerged under Little Seneca Lake, along with a

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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school, four dairy farms and two mills. The flooding occurred out of necessity to create the lake as an emergency water supply.

In 1879, the population of Boyds was 100 and boasted the existence of both white and colored public schools. The one-room Boyds Negro School built in 1895 is now restored. The black population lived in one end of town; the white population at the other. The white area sprang up around the railroad station and the black population settled in White Grounds, named for its soil containing chalky diabase stone.

The name "Black Hill" has no factual association. Two possibilities are black cinders from the railroad covering the ground or scorched earth from a fire(s). A stretch of the imagination could associate the name Black Hill with the Black Hills of South Dakota where gold mining also occurred.

**Gold Mining**

The sporadic mining for gold in Montgomery County roughly spanned the 100 years between 1850 and 1950. The Appalachian gold belt passed through Maryland in a northeasterly direction and touches the tip of the county at Great Falls on the Potomac. The discovery of gold on farms in this vicinity was an anomaly since this location is west of the gold-bearing belt.

Unlike the larger mines along Great Falls that utilized modern extraction techniques, miners in what is now Black Hill Regional Park, employed simple picks and shovels to extract ore from an open pit. The value of gold remained around 20 dollars per ounce between 1834 and 1933 with a ton of ore yielding on the average one ounce of gold.

**Gold Mine Farm**

Seven hundred acres of Black Hill Regional Park was formerly a farm owned by George A. Chadwick, Jr. A lawyer by profession, Mr. Chadwick initially purchased 400 acres of the original William and Mary land patent in the mid 1940s and developed the farm as a weekend hobby. He had heard of the gold mines on the hill and built a custom home from stone found on the property next to the largest pit. Chadwick later turned the pit temporarily into a bomb shelter by installing a cement floor.

The initial land purchase contained no structure of consequence until he built his home. In the early 1950s however, he purchased an adjoining 300 acre dairy farm very much improved at the time with dairy barns, a house, silos, etc. Mr. Chadwick always preferred agriculture to dairying.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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**Waters' Mill**

The first Waters family members came from England in the early 1600s surviving both a ship wreck and Indian massacre during his journey to and subsequent establishment in the New World. A hundred years later, the Waters family were landowners in Montgomery County. Within the confines of the park are the ruins of Waters' Mill, a saw, grist and oil mill, built by Zachariah Waters around 1810 on land acquired by his family in the 1780s. He imported the finest burrstones from France for his millstones and owned 22 slaves, some of whom worked at the mill.

This mill was unusual in that along with milling grain and sawing lumber, flax seed was crushed to make linseed oil, a paint ingredient. Around 1895, the advent of steam power silenced the waterwheel and the mill closed.

**Bolton Cabin**

Near the entrance to the park a cabin once stood, the scene of a heinous crime that resulted in the last hanging of a man in Montgomery County on April 15, 1921. It was prior to an election and Julian Waters, store owner, was encouraging his customers to vote. One of his customers, James Bolton, refused to vote. Bolton lived in a cabin owned by the Waters family near the old mill with Hattie Shipley and her two children. Guy Vernon Thompson overheard Julian Waters tell of the refusal. He offered to visit Bolton and encouraged him to vote. A scuffle occurred and Bolton wounded Thompson in the shoulder with his shotgun. The gauntlet was now thrown down. Thompson stole dynamite from Mr. Waters' store and returned under cloak of darkness to destroy the cabin, severely wounding Bolton and Hattie Shipley and killing her children. Bolton died 17 hours later, Thompson was subsequently hanged for the crime.

Remnants of another less famous Waters' Cabin are found near the Visitor's Center. Two stabilized stone chimneys are all that remain of the former cabin, nestled in this peaceful, scenic, historic gem of nature that is Black Hill Regional Park.

**3. ARCHAEOLOGY**

Black Hill Regional Park is important to archaeology for several reasons. Not only has little research been conducted in the area, but the Park's stream valley system makes it amenable to both prehistoric populations and, later, water-powered technology.

Archaeological site prediction and location testing were employed using a local geomorphology model developed by William Gardner, Ph. D. of Catholic University. The survey was variously conducted first through a Montgomery College Field School, which helped excavate the Water's Cabin (early 19th century). Secondly, a Field School conducted in partnership with American University, which dug on the Water's Mill miller's house (late 18. century), and, lastly, the

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

ongoing contributions of the Senior Naturalist at Black Hill Regional Park and our high school "Volunteers in Archaeology". Such sampling strategy yielded eight prehistoric and twelve historical sites.

**a. Prehistoric Sites:**

Three of the prehistoric sites were quartz flake scatters. The Cabin Branch site consisted of a small quartz scatter on the east side of Cabin Branch. The Black Hill No. 1 site was just outside the maintenance yard, while Black Hill No. 2 was situated on a knoll overlooking what would have been Little Seneca Creek.

None of these sites yielded diagnostic artifacts. Such areas would have been typical locations for small, hunting and nut-gathering camps used at various times down through the centuries during yearly, seasonal foraging rounds.

The fourth (Site No. 16/18MO136) and fifth (Site A) prehistoric sites were located in the same area on knolls overlooking what would have been the confluence of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Creek. Considering the artifact tool inventory of scrapers, choppers, hammerstones and bifaces, these camps were used for a variety of hunting, food and hide processing activities. A quartz Brewerton-like projectile point and another side-notched quartz variety place the sites in the Late Archaic, or Hunting and Gathering Period (3,000 B.C. to 1,000 B.C.). This was a time when Montgomery County received its most intensive use, just before the introduction of agriculture in the Woodland Period (1,000 B.C. to Contact).

The sixth prehistoric find was a single, quartzite, Savannah River-like projectile point discovered on the main access road into the Park. Savannah River points date from 2,200 B.C. to 900 B.C.

The seventh prehistoric feature was actually a north-south corridor following present Route 121, Clarksburg Road. Used by Iroquoian speaking northerners to raid southern Algonquians, it is mentioned by Col. Richard Brightwell of the Potomac rangers as, "the old Indian trail through the White Grounds".

**b. Historical Sites:**

There were twelve historical sites identified within the Park: two were mills; two were hotels; one was a railroad trestle; four were dwelling locations; one was a boundary stone; another was a cemetery and the last a gold mine.

- Of Selman's or Pyles' Mill (Locational Atlas 13/26), there is only the remnant of a mill race on Ten Mile Creek just below Old Baltimore Road. Just off parkland, the adjacent house was probably the miller's. The records indicate that the mill operated from the early nineteenth century until after the Civil War.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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- Mrs. Water's Mill (Locational Atlas 19/2) is a complex of ruins on Little Seneca Creek adjacent to Water's Landing subdivision. The complex contains the remains of the mill pond, dam, headrace, grist mill, saw mill, tailrace and the miller's house and outbuildings. Basically a family mill, it was up and running by 1819 and had ceased to function by 1895. The miller's house was the focus of the American University's Field School for the 1997 summer session. The mill ruins are scheduled to be stabilized and used as an interpretive site.
- The two hotels were Staley's Boarding House (Locational Atlas 13/32) on the west side of Ten Mile Creek and the Burdette Hotel (Locational Atlas 13/30) on Route 1231. These sites are reminders of the summer communities that flourished in Boyds with the coming of the railroad in 1873.
- Speaking of the railroad, The Baltimore and Ohio Metropolitan Branch Railroad bridged Little Seneca Creek just below the present dam in the early 1870s. Made of wood, it was later replaced with iron in 1896. Guarded round the clock during World War I, it was abandoned and dismantled when the B & O realigned the section from Germantown to Barnsville in 1928. Today, only the stone abutments and the railroad bed contours remain.
- The four dwelling sites are mostly concentrated in the eastern portion of the Park. One house foundation and barn straddle the old road bed up from Little Seneca Creek and Mrs. Water's Mill. Another series of cellar holes are on the hill off to the right of those.
- The third stone foundation is more interesting. Situated at the corner of the old road and the present main access, the James Bolton house was the scene of a triple murder, when Guy Vernon Thompson dynamited the house in 1920, blowing up and killing Bolton and his common-law wife's two children, Evelyn and Harold Shipley. Hattie Shiply survived to testify against Thompson, who has the distinction of being the last man to be hanged in Montgomery County.
- The fourth dwelling site, Water's Log Cabin (18MO366), stands on a knoll between the park office and the Visitor Center. A rectangular stone foundation with two standing fieldstone chimneys, it was a tenant house belonging to Mrs. Ellen Waters of the mill site. The subject of the Montgomery College's Field School for 1996, its artifacts reveal a construction date sometime in the early nineteenth century.
- The boundary stone is on a hillside across from the park office. This is one of the original meets and bounds belonging to the original land patent, "William and Mary, 56 acres, patented by William Shofford in 1752. In 1787, William Waters deeded the tract to his son, Zachariah.

**II. BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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- Owned by the Ball family, the cemetery is reported to lie in the stand of trees in the field just to the left of Park entrance. No reconnaissance has been completed for it.
- Situated within the circular driveway by the park office is the remains of a hand dug, nineteenth century gold mine that was later used as a fall-out shelter in the late fifties. There are also remains of tailings in the woods adjacent to the circle.

**c. Significance**

Through the efforts of our volunteers and the Montgomery College and American University Field Schools, this archaeological survey added to the scant knowledge of prehistoric populations and historic life in the Park. Surveys such as this one are all the more important since, "With the current and past intensive level of development in Montgomery County, a large portion of its archaeological record has been lost, and this loss increases yearly" (Maryland Historical Trust White Paper No. 1, 1987:32). In fact, according to the Chief Archaeologist for the Maryland Historical Trust, "More archaeological sites have been lost in Montgomery County than any other county in the State" (Personal Communication).

It is becoming a truism that the valuable record of Montgomery County's prehistoric and historical populations remains only in those undisturbed portions of our county which, increasingly, are solely preserved in our county park system.

Because archaeological sites are subject to vandalism, Federal and State guidelines do not allow locational information to be made available to the public (Section 304, National Historic Preservation Act; Section 9 (a), Annotated Code of Maryland). Therefore, any archaeological site maps may only be used in-house.







### III. MASTER PLAN FOR RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

#### A. OVERVIEW

Master planning for regional parks is part of an initiative originated with the 1988 PROS plan to "determine the most appropriate location for all new facilities and to assure that sensitive environmental areas receive adequate protection." In the case of Black Hill Regional Park, while there are a few new facilities recommended, the *Master Plan* recommendations are focused on anticipating future needs for enhancing existing facilities and operations rather than on creating substantial new recreational facilities.

The plan proposes to keep and enhance facilities, recreational opportunities and basic land use patterns which exist within the park today, to maintain and improve the scenic qualities and conservation areas of the parkland, and to improve access from within the park to surrounding areas and facilities.

#### B. INVENTORY OF DEVELOPED RESOURCES

Developed resources include all man-made features in the park providing recreational opportunities or supporting park operations. A detailed listing of developed resources is included in Appendix E.2 and depicted on the Developed Resource Inventory mapping included with this report. The following is a summary description of these facilities grouped according to the coherent and distinct areas in the park.

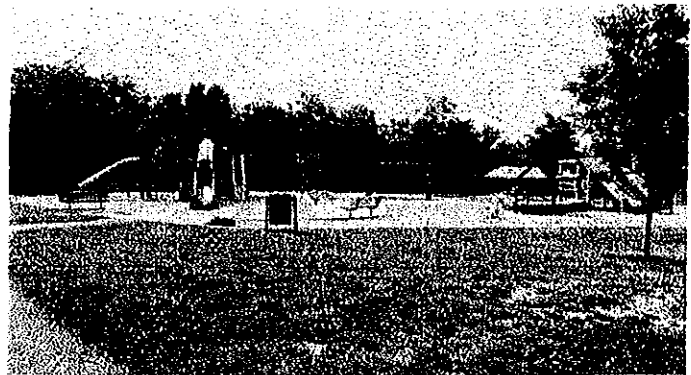
### III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

#### THE PICNIC AREAS

The Picnic Areas are located on uplands within the peninsula of land between the Cabin Branch and Little Seneca Creek fed arms of Little Seneca Lake. These areas provide ten shelters which can be reserved for a fee, picnic tables and grills, restrooms, playground areas and volleyball courts.



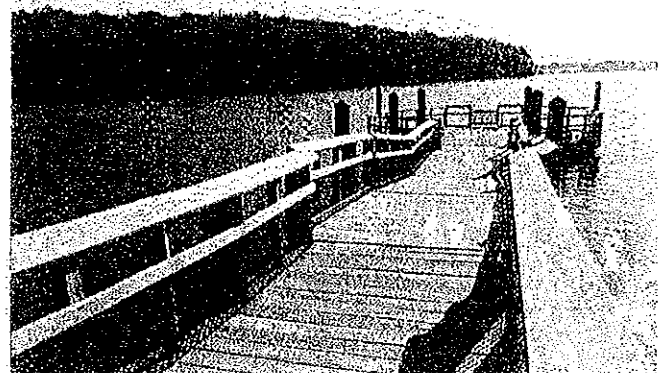
They are opened to the public during the day, year-round. The restrooms and drinking fountains are operational April through mid-November. The areas are inter-connected with hard and natural surface trails which connect to the internal park trail system and lead to the Visitor Center and Little Lake Seneca related facilities.



This area receives substantial use. Overcrowding sometimes occurs, especially on major holidays and during weekends in mid-summer. The result is a reduction in the potential enjoyment of the park by visitors, extensive wear and tear on facilities and strain on the park maintenance resources.

#### LITTLE SENECA LAKE FACILITIES

Canoe and rowboat rentals are available in season on an hourly basis, and private boat launching is available between March 1 and December 15 with a valid daily or seasonal permit. The park interpretive staff conducts canoe and kayak classes. Only battery powered electric motors are permitted. Sailboats without



### III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

a fixed keel and with a maximum mast height of 18 feet are permitted. Dry mooring sites are permitted for the season on a first come basis at the Visitor Center for private boats. Typically, these mooring sites are filled for the season before March 1st and boaters requesting sites thereafter must be turned away.

These facilities provide access to the lake for recreational boating as well as fishing for largemouth bass, tiger musky, catfish, crappie and sunfish with appropriate permits. Fishing opportunities are available for the physically disabled and the general public at a specially designed pier located near the boat rental facilities. The facilities are subject to peak demands with overcrowding the result at the boat launch at the most desirable times.

Interpretive tours of the lake are available by reservation during the summer months aboard an accessible, motorized, pontoon-type, group excursion boat.

#### TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

Trails provide access throughout the park via a total of approximately 15 miles of natural surface and hard surface trails. These trails and pathways traverse the full range of landscape types in the park and help connect the developed resources of the park with the Visitor Center facilities.



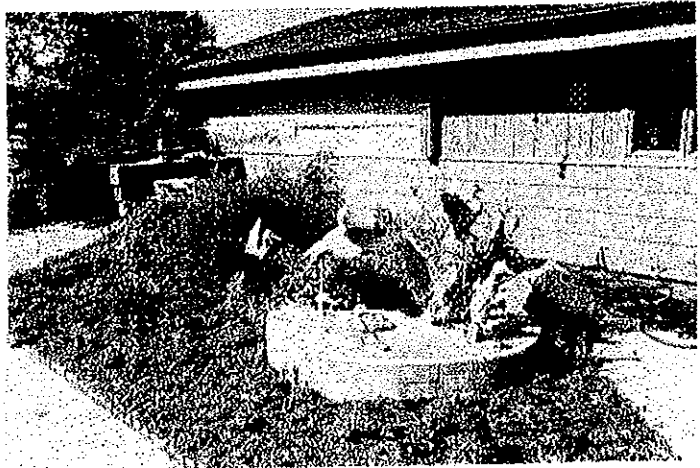
The major issues identified for the trails include connecting to surrounding communities, enhancing trail access to and viewsheds of the lake, increasing natural and historical interpretive opportunities, improving hard surface access to the Visitor's Center area, connecting to the proposed regional trail system, connecting the trail systems in the east and west sections of the park, and improving trail heads and access to parking.

**III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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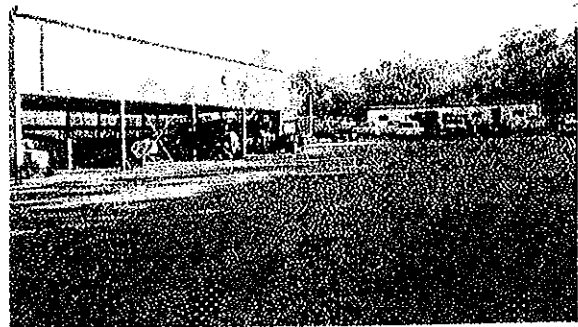
**VISITOR CENTER**

The Black Hill Visitor Center offers Park Naturalist-led environmental and cultural education programs, trail walks, boat tours, nature films, conservation projects, workshops and interpretive exhibits for casual visitors and school groups within the park and the surrounding areas of Montgomery County. Interpretive programs for schools and other organized groups are possible through special arrangements with the Park Naturalist.



Special Events are held in the park on a frequent basis including Twilight Concerts, Summer Stage; fishing lessons and tournaments and canoe and kayak classes.

**Park Headquarters and Maintenance Facilities** are located in the park and serve this facility and many other smaller parks in the region. The Maintenance facilities were constructed in the 1980's to service the regional park and are no longer adequate to accommodate the increasing responsibilities for maintaining other parks in the region from this facility.



**C. SUMMARY OF SITE ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

The following are significant issues and related opportunities and constraints in Black Hill Regional Park that influenced recommendations included in this Master Plan.

**I. PARKLAND UTILIZATION/CARRYING CAPACITIES**

**a. Issues:**

- i. Black Hill Regional Park land utilization is presently developed at 7.5% of the total park acreage and conserved or undeveloped at 92.5%; clearly meeting the PROS plan goal of limiting development to one-third of the total

### III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

acreage for regional parks. However, in order to address the concerns of the community and to take full advantage of the unique character of the site, development will need to be limited more stringently than existing policy allows.

- ii. The park is extensively used throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons and existing recreational areas and facilities are sometimes filled beyond capacity on holidays and weekends.

**b. Opportunities/Constraints:**

- i. The existing 1/3:2/3 status indicates potential availability of nearly 350 acres of development area. Proposed additions to the trail system and expansion of other facilities in the park will marginally increase the developed area. Admittedly, much of the park acreage is constrained by environmental features and buffer areas, but even so, significant contiguous areas are theoretically suitable for development of new substantial passive or active recreational use areas.

Examination of the *Inventory of Natural Resources* shows a significant area of land parallel with Lake Ridge Drive that is outside the stream valley buffers. To ensure preservation of parks' landscape resources, this plan is explicitly recommending a lower level of development than that to which the 1/3:2/3 policy might otherwise lead.

## 2. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER/NATURAL, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**a. Issues:**

- i. Little Seneca Lake and the varied landscapes of Black Hill Regional Park provide a unique physical and visual setting for recreation on a scale that few facilities in this steadily developing region offer.
- ii. A number of natural, cultural and historic resources exist in and around the park that are not fully recognized or enjoyed by current visitors to the park.

**b. Opportunities/Constraints:**

- i. The preservation of the natural character and habitat values of this significant acreage of woodland will preclude the development of large scale recreational facilities. Due to proposed development of large scale recreational facilities in nearby South Germantown and Ridge Road Recreational Parks, and Clarksburg and Ovid Hazen Wells Special Parks, open up large areas of Black Hill Regional Park for active recreation.
- ii. The steep slopes near the lake edge in many areas of the park offer the opportunity for providing striking overlooks of the lake. With initial clearing and long term maintenance focused in these key areas, the visual aspects of

### III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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the lake resource can be maximized while the maintenance requirements can be held to the effective minimum.

- iii. The park has a rich natural and cultural heritage that is already being interpreted and should be enhanced through historical interpretation and increased environmentally oriented programs and facilities. Key among these features is the lake, which could be more broadly interpreted for lake ecology, which is rare in Maryland. The role this lake plays in providing emergency water flow to the Potomac River during dry periods is another interesting point to interpret. The stream valleys could provide a wide range of interpretive subjects from urban hydrology to wildlife biology.

### 3. LOCATION AND ACCESS

#### a. Issues:

- i. The park is located between densely populated areas, farmland, large lot residential developments and small historic villages with a diversity of socio-economic characteristics.

#### b. Opportunities / Constraints:

- i. Vehicular access to the park includes a dangerous turning condition from West Old Baltimore Road and the layout of Lake Ridge Road does not discourage speeding by park visitors.
- ii. The one northern vehicular entrance to the park is not convenient to the higher density residential and commercial areas on the south and east sides of the park. However, due to land use configurations, additional vehicular access is not feasible.
- iii. Trail access into the park exists in several locations, but many are informal connections. Additional public access and connections to residential, commercial and recreational areas are needed, but environmental conditions and land use configurations will make access in some areas difficult and costly.
- iv. The park is situated at the "intersection" of significant existing and proposed greenway corridors that can connect to local communities, other parks and greenways in public ownership with relative ease. On the preceding page is an excerpt from the Maryland Greenways Atlas showing the major corridors in Montgomery County. The pivotal position of the park in a proposed county wide system of greenways and trails translates to significant potential for improved non-vehicular access to the park for regional and area residents. Connections to regional trail systems should be provided through Black Hill Regional Park to assure the completion of this unique community asset.
- v. Some areas of the park do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act due to steep slopes and trail surfacing materials.

III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

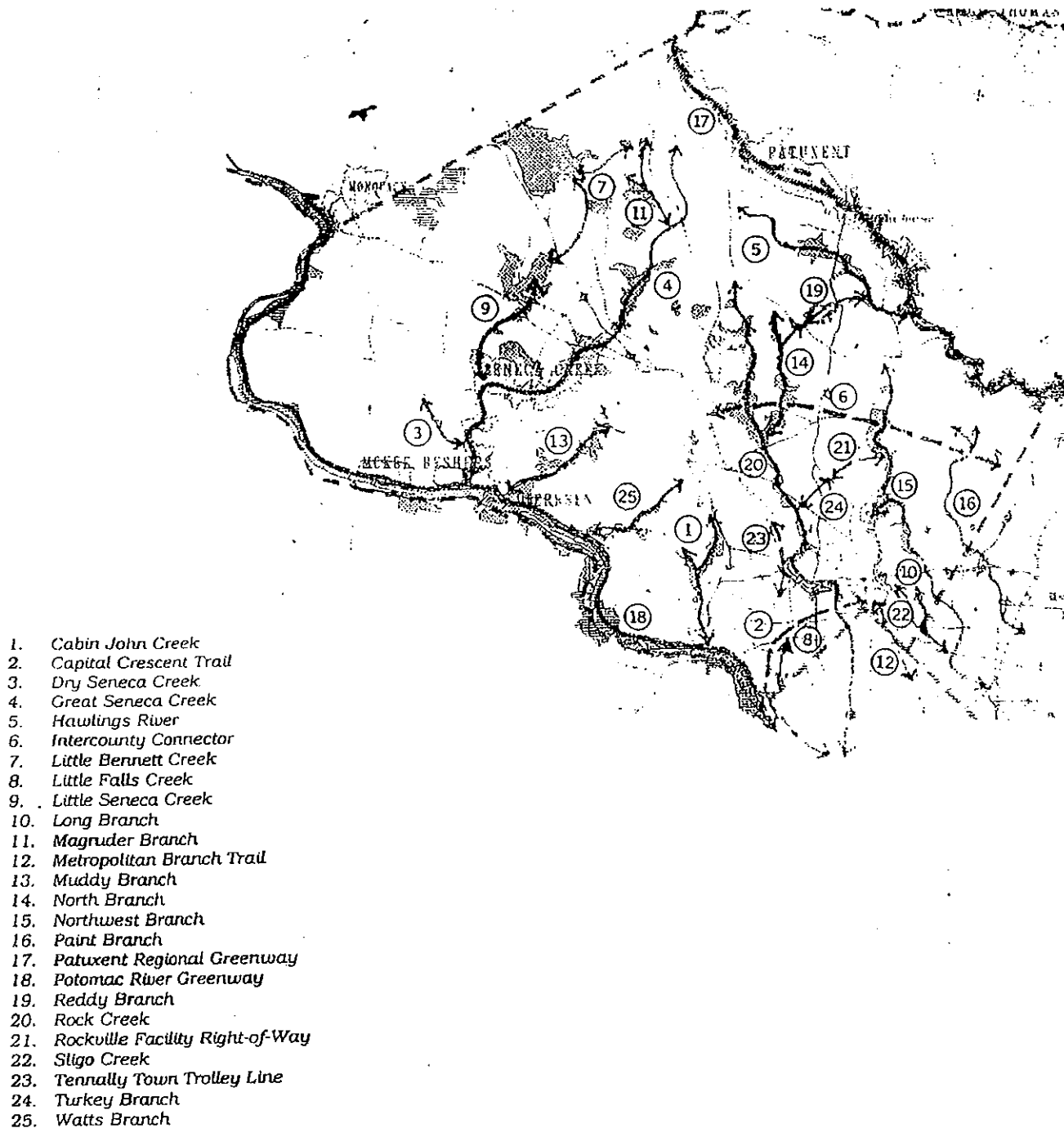


Figure III-1: Montgomery County Greenway Corridors

Source: MarylandGreenways Atlas, The MarylandGreenways Commission/Maryland Department of Natural Resources

### III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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#### 4. PARK RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

a. **Issue:**

- i. Existing facilities in most cases, besides being heavily used, are in good repair. The exception is the existing playgrounds, which do not comply with current CPSC standards.
- ii. The Maintenance Facility is inadequate to service the park and other facilities in its charge.
- iii. The infrastructure of the park will need to be extended to service the location for the new maintenance facility.
- iv. The Clarksburg Master Plan identifies that Black Hill Regional Park should be considered for routing of regional sewer connections to service future development north of West Old Baltimore Road and/or for alignments parallel to I-270.

b. **Opportunities / Constraints:**

- i. A study has been completed as part of this project for utility upgrades.

#### D. FUTURE VISION FOR BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

The core vision for Black Hill Regional Park in the future is comprised of the following four provisions:

- **Preserve and enhance the visitor's ability to experience the essential qualities of Black Hill Regional Park.** The plan optimizes the use and access to Little Seneca Lake, the only major lake in the Upcounty area. The intent is to allow visitors to enjoy the wooded hillsides, stream valleys and natural character of the park as a backdrop for primarily passive recreational and environmental educational activities. Implicit in this provision is an



emphasis on preservation of the natural character and resources of Black Hill Regional Park. Therefore, the park will not be opened to concentrated active recreational activities.

- **Develop new "strategically sited" recreational facilities** focused on: expansion of picnic and play facilities, provision of an additional ADA accessible fishing pier, a new boat ramp, and better trail connections including improved connections from the park trail system to proposed regional trail and greenway systems in accordance with the Countywide Park Trails Plan Clarksburg Master Plan. The result will be improved access from the park to the surrounding communities of Germantown, Clarksburg and the historic community of Boyds



**III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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and the provision of new opportunities for family and children-centered recreational use facilities such as playgrounds and interpretive facilities.

- **Renovate, expand, or replace older facilities in the park** to help eliminate inefficiencies or crowding in existing programs and operations; provide safer, more accessible facilities; and minimize disruption of the undeveloped areas of the park. To the extent possible, facility renovation, expansion and replacements of existing recreational development is proposed within existing developed areas or within limits of open, developable land unless a specific and compelling need justifies otherwise. Construction activities have been sited to avoid environmental buffers and priority forest areas where possible and should employ good conservation principles.
  
- **Provide the means to better operate the park** primarily through improving park maintenance facilities and utility infrastructure.

### **III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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#### **E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Black Hill Regional Park Master Plan recommendations for renovation and development are organized relative to the following major land use areas of the park or major systems of the park:

- Picnic Areas
- Little Seneca Lake Facilities
- Trails and Greenways
- Visitor Center
- Park Support Facilities
- Special Facilities
- Acquisitions

See Figure III-2 on the following page for the location of the recommendations for the main developed areas of the park.

##### **1. PICNIC AREAS**

###### ***Recommendations***

The Master/Management Plan recommends almost all existing facilities shall be retained in this area including over 800 parking spaces, along with implementation of the following renovations, replacements and additional facilities:

- a. **Picnic Lane** - Construction of two traditional picnic areas is recommended in this area through removal of some of the existing parking and construction of facilities identical to other picnic areas in the park. The area can accommodate one large (100 person capacity) and one small (30 to 40 person capacity) shelter, common restroom facilities and small play areas. Approximately 90 parking spaces would remain. Assuming no more than 2.5 people per car, this amount of parking is more than ample for the potential facilities. The "excess" parking capacity may be useful for additional trail parking as the hard surface trail is to be extended to and from this facility as part of this plan. Figure III-3 on page 59 includes a plan and sketch of the proposed picnic grounds.
- b. **Replace existing playground equipment** – replacement with a large Adventure Playground installation similar to those found at Wheaton and Cabin John Regional Parks or a similar design is recommended. This will require expansion of the existing playground boundaries and the addition of at least 50 parking spaces to accommodate the increased usage this area will receive. Approximately \$100,000 will be spent in FY00 to replace the existing wooden playground structure near Shelters A and B.

III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

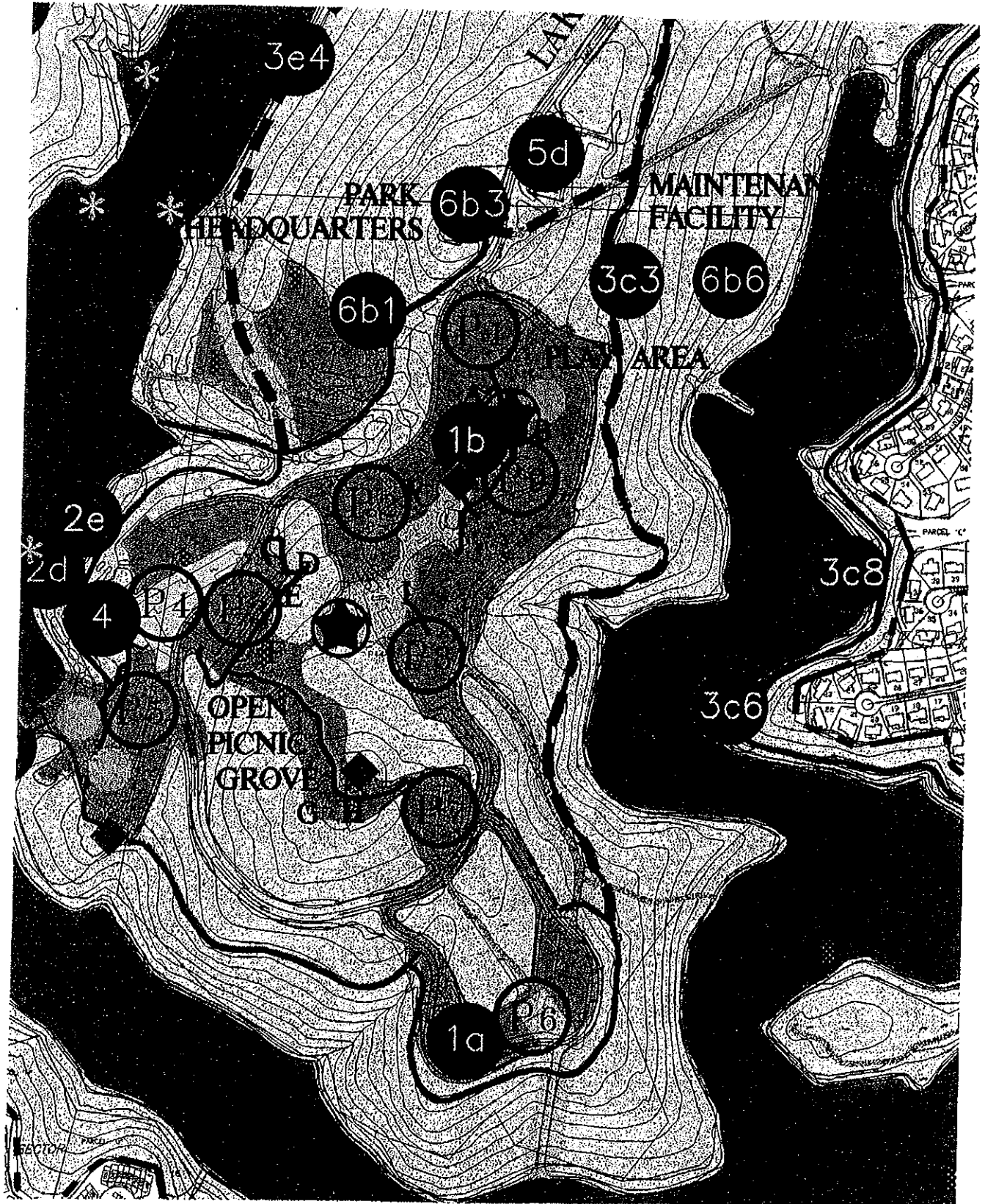


Figure III-2: Master Plan – Picnic Areas

III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

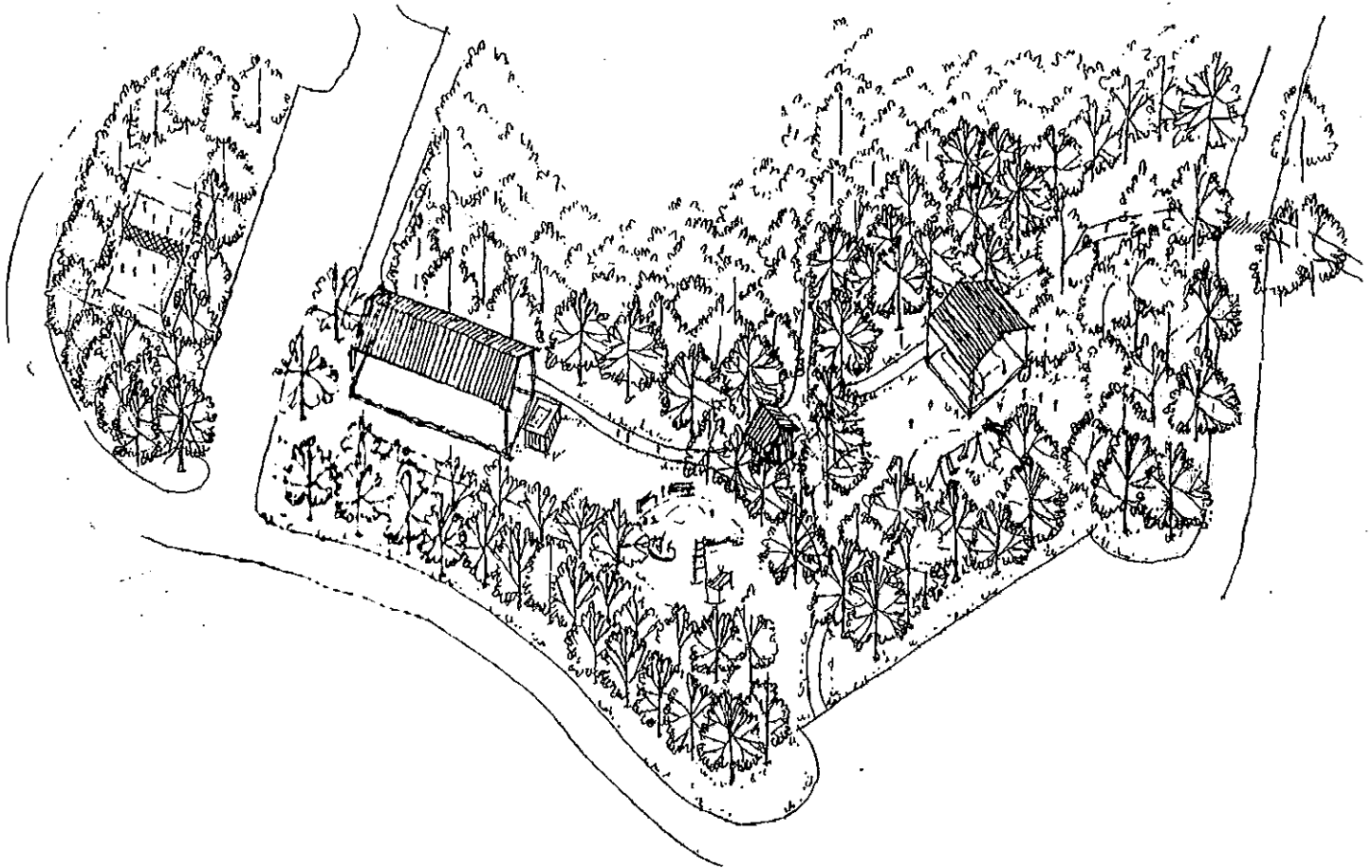


Figure III-3: Picnic Lane

2. LITTLE SENECA LAKE FACILITIES

*Recommendations*

- a. **Upgrade boat rental facilities** - including replacements of the existing wooden sheds and floating docks. No specific program exists for this renovation but during facility planning, the expansion, location and orientation of the building and docks should be examined to determine if there are economical ways to improve storage, and convenience for the users.



- b. **Add a boat access point and ADA accessible fishing pier** - to meet anticipated future demand and to improve boat access to the southern part of Little Seneca Lake. Based on the examination of a number of alternatives, the location indicated on the

### III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

Master Plan, on a peninsula on the northern end of the Route 121 bridge, on the east side of the highway is considered the optimum choice. This location also allows for the simultaneous or separate construction of an additional ADA compliant fishing pier with parking. Restrooms or waterless toilets should be considered as well.

- c. **Add wildlife observation areas** within view of protected areas where migratory birds and waterfowl tend to congregate. These should be minimal developments – minor re-grading to establish a level area, interpretive signage, a solitary bench, etc. – and should be sited so as not to disturb the wildlife of interest.
- d. **Enhance the ability to stage musical events by formalizing a Concert Amphitheater** – at the water's edge by building a stage at the lake shore with grass slopes as the seating area. The intent is to provide an improved setting for the same type and small scale of concerts held in the past, and to provide the lake as the backdrop for the stage.
- e. **Add additional boat dry mooring sites** – to better satisfy existing demand.
- f. **Consider upgrading the existing portable toilets** at the boat ramp parking lot. Replacement with permanent facilities such as clivus or chemical toilets which do not require a water line should be considered, as well as the possibility of adding a water line and restrooms.

#### *Issues*

Recommendations for these two areas of the park – the Picnic Areas and Little Seneca Lake - directly relate to the following identified areas of concern:

- Parkland Utilization/Carrying Capacities** – through the addition of facilities within already developed areas.
- Park Resource Management** – through the replacement of outdated and worn equipment.

### 3. TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

#### *Recommendations*

The Master/Management Plan recommends the retention of all authorized existing trail facilities and a few strategically sited additions to the existing trail network as well as the provision of connections to the surrounding community, the addition of a number of trail related facilities, and the



**III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

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elimination of some unauthorized trails in the park.

Trail design guidelines are provided in M-NCPPC's approved Planning Guide to Trails, and are scheduled to be updated as part of a new Trail Implementation Guide in 2000. However, trail design issues, such as width, surfacing material and clear zones may vary from the guidelines, based on the site conditions of each trail. Design details, as well as alignment decisions, will be finalized in the facility planning and design stages of each project.

a. **Provide connections to other regional park facilities and planned communities in the vicinity including:**

1. Little Bennett Regional Park via proposed natural surface connection to the northwest in the planned Ten Mile Creek Greenway.
2. Ovid Hazen Wells Park via proposed bikeway connection to the northeast across I-270 utilizing the underpass of West Old Baltimore Road. The trail connection is planned as a Class I facility along West Old Baltimore Road from Lake Ridge Drive east under 270. In the park, this facility is proposed to connect both to a new hard surface trail along Lake Ridge Drive and the existing natural surface trail connection to Cabin Branch Trail.

Per the Countywide Park Trails Plan, these connections would in turn provide access to the Milestone development area, Ridge Road Recreational Park, Damascus Recreational Park and Magruder Branch Trail heading north to the Damascus Town Center.

b. **Provide new trail connections, trailhead amenities, and improvements to existing trails** in order to increase trail access to the park, and to improve the condition of and access to existing trails. Make the following improvements to the trail system:

1. Add a trailhead at the entrance to the Cool Spring Run Trail on the west side of Clarksburg Road, including a small gravel parking lot large enough for a horse trailer to turn around in, and other amenities as discussed in Section d below.
2. Add a trailhead at the southern terminus of Ten Mile Creek Road, near the Cool Spring Run and Turkey Hill Loop Trails. Due to the wetlands and steep terrain within existing park lands in this area, this trailhead is proposed if and when a portion of the Ecker Property could be acquired. A small gravel parking area is recommended, and other trailhead amenities should be considered. See Section III.E.7 regarding acquisition recommendations, and Section d below for possible amenities.

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3. Construct a Class I bicycle (and pedestrian) path along Clarksburg Road from Clopper Road to Black Hill Road. This path is recommended in the Clarksburg Area Master Plan, and would continue north beyond West Old Baltimore Road. The Clarksburg Plan does not specify on which side of the road the bikeway would be built. However, for trail connections, the east side of the road is preferred. Between Barnesville Road and Black Hill Road, the Class I bikeway along Clarksburg Road should be designed to accommodate natural and hard surface trail users through either a natural surface shoulder adjacent to the hard surface, or a separate, parallel natural surface trail. When this trail is implemented, improvements should be made to provide a safe crossing of Clarksburg Road in the vicinity of Barnesville Road for trail users.

In addition, construct a hard surface trail connection from Clarksburg Road to Black Hill Road. Two alignment options should be examined during facility planning to determine the cost effectiveness, feasibility and desirability. They are: (1) a hard surface trail within park property from the existing gravel parking lot adjacent to Clarksburg Road and across recently acquired fields to join Black Hill Road within the park; and (2) a Class I bicycle (and pedestrian) path within the right of way of Clarksburg Road (MD Rt. 121) from the parking lot to Black Hill Road, then a signed Class III bike route along Black Hill Road. One of these options should be selected during the facility planning process. The design of the selected option should accommodate all allowed natural surface as well as hard surface trail users.

Within the park, the trail would follow the existing Black Hill Road as a signed Class III bike route to Lake Ridge Drive. Since the road west of the boat ramp receives only park maintenance, staff, and emergency traffic, a bike route is considered sufficient in this section. Due to the higher vehicular traffic volume, from the boat ramp to Lake Ridge Drive improvements, such as a Class I or II bikeway for hard surface trail users and a natural surface shoulder for equestrians, should be considered when the road is resurfaced and/or the bridge is replaced.

4. Construct a hard surface trail connector from Crystal Rock Drive to join the Black Hill Trail in the vicinity of Waters Mill. The proposed alignment follows an existing "people's choice" trail along an existing cleared sewer easement for at least of its length. This trail was conceptually approved the M-NCPPC Planning Board as part of the WSSC pumping station project. The trail is in facility planning and design as a joint WSSC/M-NCPPC project. Also described in Section e.5 below.
5. Provide a hard and natural surface connection from the Cabin Branch Trailhead on Black Hill Drive near the boat ramp to the proposed future Clarksburg Special Park, through the park to Clarksburg Road, and south

### III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

along Clarksburg Road to the Cool Spring Run Trailhead. This trail will serve to connect the trails in the eastern and western sections of the park. The Clarksburg Master Plan directs the dedication of significant open space and public areas for Clarksburg Special Park. The Plan does not specify an exact location for the park, but locates it generally between Clarksburg Road and Black Hill Regional Park north of the Countryside Moorings subdivision. The recommended trail alignment follows the existing natural surface Cabin Branch Trail from the parking lot north along an existing utility easement within the Regional Park. In order to accommodate equestrian use, an alternative hard surface is recommended for this trail instead of asphalt or concrete. The trail alignment from the Regional Park boundary to Clarksburg Road must be determined when the location for the Special Park is selected and during the facility planning stage. The hard surface connection from the future Special Park to the Cool Spring Run trailhead forms part of the Clarksburg Road Class I bikeway. Like #3 above, the Class I bikeway along Clarksburg Road should be designed to accommodate natural and hard surface trail users through either a natural surface shoulder adjacent to the hard surface, or a separate, parallel natural surface trail. When this trail is implemented, improvements should be made to provide a safe crossing of Clarksburg Road in the vicinity of the Cool Spring Run Trailhead for trail users.

6. Renovate existing trails as needed to improve surface drainage and safety conditions. In particular need of attention are several unimproved crossings of tributaries along natural surface trails.

#### c. Enhance existing trails within the park

1. **Build a trailbridge over Ten-Mile Creek.** This bridge must be able to support equestrian, and pedestrian traffic as well as be rated for normal park operations and patrol vehicles. This project has been in the approved Capital Improvement Program for several years.



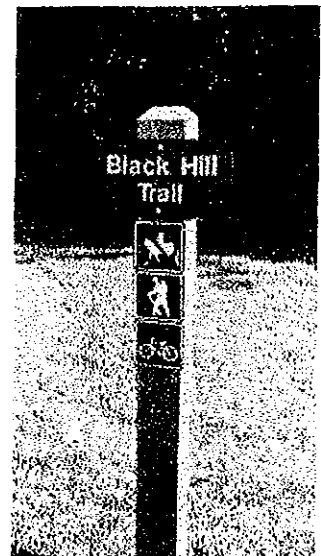
2. **Create a paved trail along Lake Ridge Drive from West Old Baltimore Road to Black Hill Road.** The recommendation for implementing this trail involves limited clearing of the wooded edge on the east side of the cleared area to install a Class I multi-use, hard surface trail. In a few areas, the trail may veer into the wood to avoid specific trees. However, care must be taken



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to avoid creating too many openings in the existing canopy that may lead to invasive species gaining a foothold in the woods.

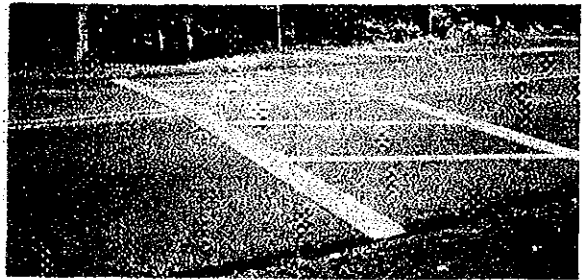
3. **Pave the existing natural surface trail between Spinning Wheel Drive and Parking Lot #6.** This trail connects the existing paved trails in the picnic area to the paved portion of the Black Hill Trail, which runs along the eastern shore of the lake. Improving this trail to a hard surface trail will allow for easier access to the Black Hill trail from the visitors center area, and will improve bicycle and pedestrian access to the park for Waters Landing area residents. This project was part of the original plan for the park, and has been in the approved Capital Improvements Program for several years. It is in design in fiscal year FY00 and is proposed for construction in FY01.
4. **Realign the Field Crest Spur Trail** as needed to accommodate the New Maintenance Facility.
5. **Improve Signage** along routes. Work in this area has already begun to increase visitor awareness of the overall trail system and the facilities in the park. In addition to general signage improvements, the segments of the Black Hill trail system that are part of the Clarksburg greenway system should be appropriately signed and mapped. Any signing for the greenway system should be a cohesive element of the internal park signage system, allowing for easy identification of the system while blending in aesthetically with the natural environment, not detracting from the ease of navigation of the internal park signage system, and should be low maintenance. A photo of the existing signage standard is on this page. A logo which can be affixed to the trail name sign, or a small separate sign is recommended. Also see section 6.b below regarding display maps and brochures.
6. **Enhance views of Little Seneca Lake** and the park landscape from the trails at various points. Trail view enhancements would normally include trimming of vegetation to allow for better views, especially of Little Seneca Lake, but would not include major clearing of trees. Enhancements may also include benches and interpretive signage offering information on topics such as wildlife, waterfowl, water quality, native plants, ecology, or local history.



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7. **Improve safety of the trail crossings of Lake Ridge Drive** through crosswalks, signage and/or traffic calming measures.



8. **Regrade and resurface the paved portion of the Black Hill Trail** along the lakeshore east of Little Seneca Creek.
- d. **Improve trail related amenities** including trail head/rest areas at a number of locations with gravel parking lots, water fountains, signage kiosks, shade, benches, etc. Locations include:
- Cool Spring Run terminus on Route 121
  - On the existing park property north of and adjacent to the Maughlin House.
  - On the portion of the Ecker Property (proposed in this plan for acquisition) along Ten Mile Creek Road.
- e. **Expand hard surface and natural surface trails system** within Black Hill Regional Park including the following specific routes:
1. Hard surface trail at the edge of the current clearing for Lake Ridge Drive from West Old Baltimore Road to the vicinity of Black Hill Road. This new trail will connect to the Black Hill Trail extension described in 3.c.3. above.
  2. Hard surface trail along the south perimeter of the park completing a hard surface loop trail around the east arm of the lake and connecting to regional bikeways to the south. This trail is proposed to cross Wisteria Drive near the existing end of the Black Hill Trail and traverse east-west along the north side of the railroad tracks to Clarksburg Road. Upon initial review, the most feasible alignment appears to mainly follow existing utility corridors, maintenance roads and cleared areas on WSSC-managed public property, and on railroad right-of-ways. Coordination with the railroad and WSSC will be necessary to further explore the feasibility of this route. In addition, the trail would likely follow the existing gravel road to Route 121 across the Pickrell Property, proposed for acquisition. This trail will likely not be feasible until the property is acquired.
  3. Natural surface trails along the southwest perimeter of the park including a separate hiking only routing near the lake shore. These trails would connect to Boyds at the proposed trailhead adjacent to the Maughlin House and the Osprey Heights Loop Trail to the north.

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4. Natural surface trail at lake shore from Black Hill Road to the Visitor Center connecting the existing Cabin Branch natural surface trail with the visitors center.
5. Hard surface trail from the existing bridge over Little Seneca Creek on the Black Hill Trail to Crystal Rock Drive. This project is being coordinated with WSSC and their pump station plans. See also Section b.4 above.

A tabulation of the existing and proposed length of trails within the boundaries of the regional park under each of the relevant categories is as follows:

Table III-1: Existing and Proposed Trail Lengths

Description	Existing Total	Deleted/ Replaced	Additions (1)	Proposed Total
Hard Surface Recreation Trail	23,375 LF (2)	0 LF	29,450 LF (3)	52,875 LF (10.0 miles)
Natural Surface Recreation Trail	43,900 LF (4)	8,950 LF (5)	25,050 LF (6)	60,000 LF (11.4 miles)
People's Choice Trail (7)	23,050 LF (7)	3,050 LF (9)		20,000 (3.8 miles)
Totals	90,325 LF	12,000 LF	54,500 LF	132,875 LF (25.2 miles)

Notes:

1. Additions include only the linear footage of trails proposed within or immediately in proximity to Black Hill Regional Park.
2. Includes 5,250 LF of existing Black Hill Road pavement.
3. The proposed trail along Lake Ridge Drive stops at the Park Headquarters.
4. Includes 1,750 LF along utility rights-of-way.
5. Includes 7,750 LF replaced by hard surface trails and 750 LF realigned in the vicinity of the New Maintenance Facility.
6. Includes 6,875 LF proposed within utility rights-of-way.
7. "People's Choice Trails" are informal trails that are not part of the official maintained trail system in the park.
8. Includes 10,250 LF within utility rights-of-way. Does not include all utility rights-of-way.
9. Includes 875 LF replaced by hard surface trails, 2,625 LF replaced by natural surface trails and 1,750 designated to be deleted.

The Master Plan recommends the retention of virtually all authorized existing trail facilities, the conversion of some of these facilities from one surface treatment to another, the addition of a number of new trail alignments and connections, the addition of a number of trail related facilities, and the elimination of some of the unauthorized trails throughout the park. The impact of the development of this quantity of trails on the existing developed to conservation ratio is as follows:

**III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK**

Table III-2: Implications of Proposed Trails

Description	Proposed Net Change	Developed Area Width (1)	Developed Area Increase KSF = 1,000 SF
Hard Surface Recreation Trail	+26,000 LF	20 FT	+520.0 KSF +11.9 acres
Natural Surface Recreation Trail	+1,750 LF	10 FT	+17.5 KSF +0.4 acres
People's Choice Trail	-5,250 LF	6 FT	-31.5 KSF -0.7 acres
Totals	N/A	N/A	+506.0 KSF +11.6 acres

Notes:

1. These widths represent the impacted area width for various types of trails. These figures are for planning purposes only and do not indicate either proposed trail widths or cleared area widths. These will most likely be narrower than the widths indicated here.

As discussed in earlier in this section, there is an existing "freeboard" of approximately 350 acres when applying the 1/3:2/3 ratio to the existing park. This additional developed area resulting from the trail recommendations will decrease that surplus by less than 2%. Trail use designations are discussed in the Facility Management Plan and depicted on the Trail Use Plan.

However, designations for specific approved uses for trails inside the park and connecting to the park will be determined by staff and are subject to change based on seasonal conditions and future management needs.

**4. VISITOR CENTER**

*Recommendations*

The Master/Management Plan recommends that all existing facilities shall be retained along with implementation of the following renovations, replacements and additions:

- a. **Expand the auditorium** to increase total capacity to 150 seats.
- b. **Provide increased storage** by finishing the basement area.
- c. **Install an HVAC system** to control humidity in summer months.

**5. PARK SUPPORT FACILITIES**

*Recommendations*

The Master/Management Plan recommends the following renovations, replacements and additions to the park infrastructure:

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**Improve Circulation, Access and Signage.**

- a. **Improve safety conditions for vehicles turning from West Old Baltimore.** Reconstruction of the intersection to alleviate sight line problems would be prohibitive in the absence of the new road that is to connect Newcut Road extended to West Old Baltimore Road (Roadway #A-307 in the Clarksburg Master Plan). However, the timeline for that project is not defined and is unlikely within the next several years. The only viable and cost effective measures in the meantime would be to improve pavement markings and associated signage in the vicinity of the entrance for all directions. Unfortunately, this would have a limited effect on regular users of the roadway.
- b. **Reduce speeding on Lake Ridge Drive.** Options include speed islands and bumps, which would pose difficulties for snow removal. Other options include the type of traffic calming measures that work in more urban situations, such as narrowing the road. In addition, provide more prominent crossing indications for vehicles, trail users, and pedestrians between the picnic areas and the Visitors Center, and at all trail crossings.

**Improve Maintenance and Management Facilities**

- c. **Replacement of existing maintenance facility** to accommodate operational needs. Currently a parks staff approved site plan has been developed in order to provide a complete set of construction documents for construction at this particular facility. A preliminary cost estimate has been submitted and will be adjusted according to development of the construction documents. This facility planning project is expected to be submitted during the FY 01-06 CIP cycle. If all goes well, it is expected that construction could begin at this site as early as the summer of 2002.
- d. **Implement adaptive reuse of existing maintenance facility.** Options discussed included provision of hard surface courts for tennis and basketball, an in-line skating rink, a storage site for the Osprey and reforestation and restoration as part of the natural landscape. However, the preferred alternative is to use the facility as additional classroom space for interpretive programs. At this point, no detailed program has been assembled for this alternative.

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- e. **Expand the pasture at the Park Police Facility.** The expansion would allow more adequate space for the care of horses used by the Park Police for patrolling. In addition, when the Park Police boat house is renovated or replaced, consideration should be given to providing a more aesthetically pleasing facility that blends in with the surrounding environment better than the existing facility. However, the facility must also be functional and cost effective. This was recently completed in August 1999 with a 2 ½ acre expansion.



**Upgrade Park Utilities**

- f. Extend sewer to the Proposed Maintenance Facility - and alleviate any other problems in the existing system. Well water is currently proposed due to the prohibitive cost of running a public water line to the site.

**Summary of Recommendations**

**Black Hill Regional Park Utility Feasibility Study**

The purpose of the utility feasibility study is to identify the existing and proposed public (water and sewer) utilities and their condition throughout Black Hill Regional Park. The identification of these existing and proposed utilities shall be used to investigate and report on improvements required for the effective and economical operation of the Park at the present level of development. Further assessment of the water and sewer needs is also herein presented for the suggested improvements proposed with the Park's Master/Management Plan. The Master/Management Plan recommends improvements to the 'Picnic Lane' Picnic Area, the Visitor Center, the Boat Rental Facility, Trails and Greenways, the Boat Launch Facility, the Park Office, the Play Equipment Areas, the Park Police Facility, and the Proposed Maintenance Facility. Locations of these facilities are shown on the Master Plan for Recreational Development, Utility Feasibility Study and other related drawings that accompany this report.

**6. RELATED FACILITIES**

**Recommendations**

- a. **Establish guidelines for the future use and development of the Maughlin House property,** located off Barnesville Road, across from the Boyds Post Office.

### III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

- Continue the restoration of the historic Maughlin House and the adaptive reuse of the site as a bed & breakfast and/or arts center. In addition, improve the interpretation of the site. The house is currently under a twenty year public/private partnership whereby a private party is restoring the house and managing its use under an agreement for resident curatorship. The following policies pertain to the future use of the House:
  - This Plan supports the use of the house as stated in the Agreement for Resident Curatorship of the Maughlin House, December 1, 1994. In particular, the use of the House as a bed and breakfast is encouraged as an activity that will complement the character of Black Hill Regional Park and enhance the Boyds Historic District.
  - Add outdoor interpretive signage of the Maughlin House at the parking area and trailhead proposed for the park property adjacent to and west of the Maughlin House. Design of the parking lot and amenities should complement the historic character of the House where possible, and, at a minimum, not detract from its historic character.
  - Include the House in the trail/historic site brochure and maps described below.
  - Consideration should be given to converting the barn in the rear of the house to an information station for historic interpretation and for park and trail information, if and when the volume of use at the House and park trails in the vicinity warrant it.
  - Due to the proximity of the House to residences in the town of Boyds, any large outdoor events related to the use of the House as an arts/cultural center are encouraged to take place in the main activity area of the park, on Lake Ridge Drive.
- b. Provide improvements at the following historic sites in addition to interpretive areas associated with the natural or historic resources of the park. Increase public exposure to historic sites by linking them to the trail system. Provide trail connections where necessary from the main park trail system to the historic sites specified above. Include historic sites on trail display maps to be installed at various trailheads in the park. Produce a new brochure of park trails and historic sites that identifies and describes the historic sites in the park. Interpretation should also relate the park historic sites to the Boyds historic district, and highlight the historic role of Boyds as a respite from urban life as it was originally when Boyds was founded in 1873. Recommended interpretive locations include:

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1. Waters Tenant Cabin -- One idea is to construct a frame outline of the Waters Tenant House made of posts connecting the chimneys at the site, to depict the dimension and location of the building.
2. Waters Mill -- The site needs stabilization prior to increasing use. The trail that connects the Black Hill Trail to the Picnic Areas will need to be realigned to avoid disturbance of the Mill Site. This trail is currently a natural surface trail but is designated to be upgraded and paved (see recommendation 3.c.3.).
3. Gold Mine site at the Park Headquarters. The reconstruction of an open pit mine at the site to be used for interpretation and demonstrations should be considered.
4. Bolton House
5. Maughlin House. (see Item 6.a.above).
6. Historic boundary stones exist at two locations in the park that offer interesting interpretive points regarding the settlement and use of the site in the past.

**7. ACQUISITIONS**

Over 800,000 people live in Montgomery County. The park system not only serves these county residents but is utilized by other citizens from the greater Washington metropolitan area for various recreation activities.

The spread of urbanization is not only affecting recreational demands on parkland but also on surrounding developable land for residential and commercial uses. Park acquisition must keep pace with this spread both to provide protection to existing parkland resources and conservation areas and also to provide parklands for recreation and potential alternative transportation purposes.

***Recommendations***

The Master/Management Plan recommends the following acquisitions be pursued on a willing-seller basis.

- a. **Ecker Property** - 9± acres, partly wooded and part open lawn -- The acquisition of a portion of this property adjacent to Ten Mile Creek is a high priority due to potential use as a trailhead parking area for the trails in the Ten Mile Creek.
- b. **Lewis Property** - 100± acres, heavily wooded floodplains and deep ravines - A moderate priority for acquisition due to potential use as increased buffer lands for the



### III. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

proposed Ten Mile Creek Greenway and Black Hill Regional Park. Further research is needed to determine whether acquisition of all or only part of this property is desirable.

- c. **Ortman/Farquhar** - 18.54 acres, mostly stream valley; part wooded and part pasture - A moderate priority for acquisition due to the existence of wetlands within the property, potential use as increased buffer lands for Ten Mile Creek Stream Valley and potential trail connection from the Ten Mile Creek area trails to the proposed Ten Mile Creek Greenway.
- d. **Pickrell Property** - 10± acres, wooded area adjacent to Little Seneca Lake - A high priority for acquisition; this in-holding contains an historic house that could be added to interpretive programs, and the property would provide additional buffer lands for Little Seneca Lake. In addition, the roadway along the south extent of the property is part of the new trail connector proposed in 3.e.3 above.
- e. **Casey and Breeden Properties** - Acquisition of a small portion of these properties along their western boundaries is recommended in order to avoid a wetland area for the trail connection between Boyds and the Osprey Heights Loop Trail proposed in 3.e.3 above, but is considered a low priority.
- f. **Beachem Property** - Acquisition of the small portion of this property south of and including the existing utility easement is recommended. The utility easement is cleared and is currently used informally as a trail connecting to the Cabin Branch Trail. This trail is proposed for improvement to a formal natural surface trail, and will form a key connection in the trail system. Acquisition would allow for easier trail management and maintenance.

## F. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### 1. BASIS FOR PRIORITIES

Priorities have been assigned to the capital improvement projects included in the Master Plan according to a number of objective and subjective criteria including:

- Cost effectiveness. To what extent does the expenditure of public monies yield the greatest impact or improvement in park conditions.
- Maintenance efficiencies. To what extent does the proposed activity make the operation and maintenance of the park more efficient.

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- Compliance with county, state or federal laws in such areas as accessibility per the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] or environmental compliance with Montgomery County regulations.
- Safety of park visitors.
- Construction sequencing.
- Public needs and desires for facilities.
- Ease of permitting the proposed activity.

**2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM**

Table III-3 on the following page lists all recommendations, assigns a priority ranking from high to low and gives a lump sum cost estimate. Details and assumptions regarding costs indicated in the following table are contained in Appendix *[to be determined]*.

*[Note: Cost values need to be determined (TBD) prior to final versions in a manner consistent with all three park plans.]*

Table III-3: Master Plan Recommendations / Priorities

Priority	Location – Description	Number	Cost
1 – High	New maintenance facility	5.c & 5.f.	
2 – High	Little Seneca Lake – Upgrade boat rental facilities.	2.a.	
3 – High	Visitor Center Expansion and Upgrades	4.a.-d.	
4 – High	Black Hill Trail Hard surface Trail Extension Parking Lot 6 to Spinning Wheel Drive and Stabilization of Waters Mill Ruins	3.e.2	
5 – High	Renovate hard surface trail on Water's landing side of Black Hill Trail		
6 – High	Replace existing playground equipment with Adventure Playground plus parking.	1.b.	
7 – High	Ecker Property Acquisition	7.a.	
8 – High	Construct new trail head parking lot and trail bridge at Ten Mile Creek		
9 – High	Safety improvements at entry from West Old Baltimore Road	5.a.	
10 – High	Little Seneca Lake – Add additional boat mooring sites.	2.e.	
11 – High	Add two (2) new picnic shelters and associated facilities at Picnic Lane area	1.a.	
12 – High	Realign Field Crest Spur to accommodate new Maintenance Facility		
13 – Moderate	Hard surface trail from Crystal Rock Drive to Spinning Wheel Drive		
14 – Moderate	Obtain trail easements along AT&T line to "close the loop" on the Cabin Branch Trail		
15 – Moderate	Construct small gravel parking lot at Cool Spring Run trailhead adjacent to Route 121		
16 – Moderate	Adaptive reuse of maintenance facility.	5.d.	
17 – Moderate	Expansion of Park Police pasture area.	5.e.	

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Priority	Location - Description	Number	Cost
18 - Moderate	Ortman/Farquhar Acquisition	7.c.	
19 - Moderate	Renovate natural surface trails system.		
20 - Moderate	Hard surface trail from existing parking lot on Route 121 to Black Hill Road.		
21 - Moderate	Hard surface trail adjacent to Lake Ridge Drive		
22 - Low	Pickrell Property Acquisition	7.d.	
23 - Low	Little Seneca Lake - Add an additional boat ramp and accessible fishing pier.	2.b.	
24 - Low	Lewis Property Acquisition	7.b.	
25 - Low	Natural surface trail from Black Hill Road to Visitor Center		
26 - Low	XXXXX Property Acquisition	7.e.	
27 - Low	Natural surface trail and trail head parking from Maughlin House to Osprey Heights Loop	3.e.3.	
28 - Low	Little Seneca Lake - Create a Concert Amphitheater.	2.d.	
29 - Low	Little Seneca Lake - Add wildlife interpretative stations.	2.c.	
30 - Low	Improve interpretive areas.	3.f.	
31 - Low	Hard surface trail along railroad tracks on south perimeter of park		

**3. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Funding of Capital Improvement Program development projects is accomplished through several different means including the following:

1. Bond Funding - whereby M-NCPPC issues General Obligation Bonds and the Montgomery County Park real property surtax is applied toward retirement of the bonds.
2. Current Receipts wherein funding for CIP projects is dependent on revenues generated by park facilities.
3. Enterprise facility revenues periodically are used to improve the designated enterprise facilities and from time to time are also used to underwrite capital projects.
4. State and Federal Grants are available for capital projects and acquisitions from two major sources in recent years:
  - Program Open Space, funded from State property transfer tax revenues has been a significant source of funding in the past for Montgomery County.
  - In addition, the county has been successful in obtaining federal grants under the enhancement program of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act (ISTEA) of 1991. Past grants were used primarily for construction of the Capital Crescent Trail. The act has recently been renewed as the Transportation Enhancements Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) by the US Congress and is administered by the State of Maryland Department of

### III. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

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Transportation. Nationwide, over 30% of ISTEA funds have been spent on bicycle and trail related projects. Since much of the CIP program for Black Hill recommends expanding the trail system including regional connections that are looked upon favorably by the ISTEA grant criteria, it would seem to be a prime candidate for pursuing funding.

- Simms Recreational Trails Act Grants. This federal program is administered by the State Highway Administration and provides funding for trail development on a 50% matching basis. However, the amount of funding available in Maryland is relatively small.
- d. Other: M-NCPPC currently uses Volunteers for a wide variety of projects. The Montgomery County Parks Foundation accepts donations for use in specific areas, and M-NCPPC has entered into agreements with a variety of local organizations for facility construction and maintenance. A volunteer trail construction and maintenance program is now being established. M-NCPPC should continue to explore options for and expand its use of volunteers and public/private partnerships to supplement its operating and capital improvements budgets and staffing levels.

# MASTER PLAN BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITOL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



Prepared by:  
The Planning Board



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