

Baltimore City Recreation & Parks

AGENCY OVERVIEW



Presented by:

Reginald Moore, Executive Director

Adam Boarman, PLA, Chief of Capital Development



BCRP'S WAY

- **Mission:** To improve the health & wellness of Baltimore through maintaining quality recreational programs, preserving our parks & natural resources, and promoting fun, active lifestyles for all ages.
- **Vision:** To build a stronger Baltimore one community at a time through Conservation, Health & Wellness, and Social Equity.



AGENCY OVERVIEW

 Baltimore City Recreation and Parks is comprised of 17 different Divisions and employs 694 people.

- Therapeutic
- Senior Citizens
- Programs
- Marketing & Communications
- Safety & Risk Management
- Special Events & Permits
- Recreation Center Operations (52 recreation centers)
- Community Engagement & Strategic Partnerships
- Forestry
- Horticulture
- Information Technology
- Parks Maintenance
- Facilities Maintenance
- Administration
- Capital Development & Planning
- Fiscal
- Human Resources



AGENCY BUDGET - FY22

FY22 Operating Budget: \$59,8851,883

- Full-time Staff: 380
 - Administration: 62
 - Recreation: 179
 - Parks: 139

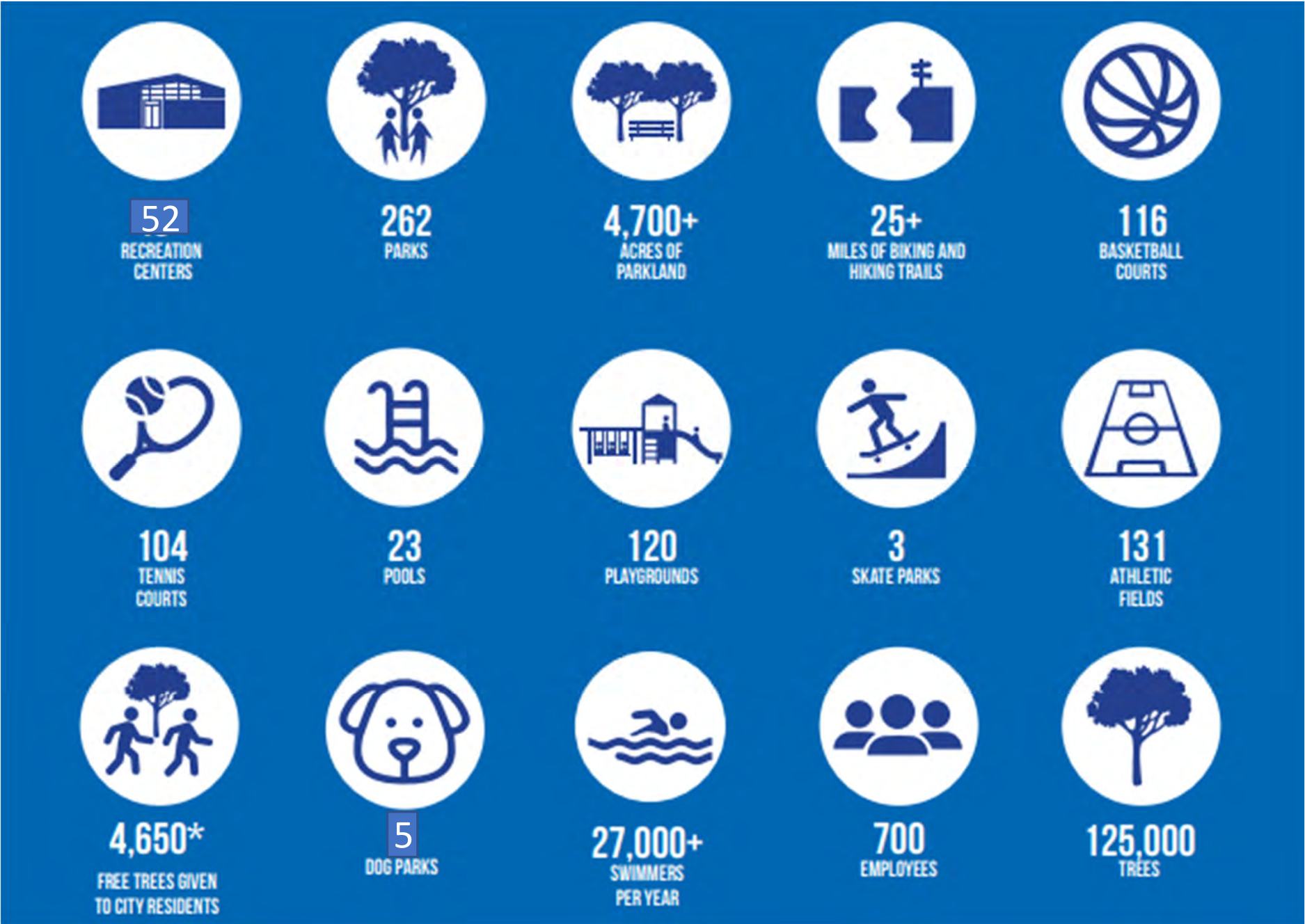
FY22 Capital Budget: \$31,942,000

- City Bond: \$11,392,000
- Casino Local Impact Funds: \$400,000
- Highway User Revenue: \$0
- State Grants:
 - Program Open Space Direct: \$3,000,000
 - Program Open Space Match: \$4,250,000
 - BPW PAYGO “Baltimore City Pool Improvements”: \$3,000,000
 - Local Parks & Playgrounds Infrastructure: \$10,000,000

Previous 5-yr Average
Capital Budget:
\$20,865,000



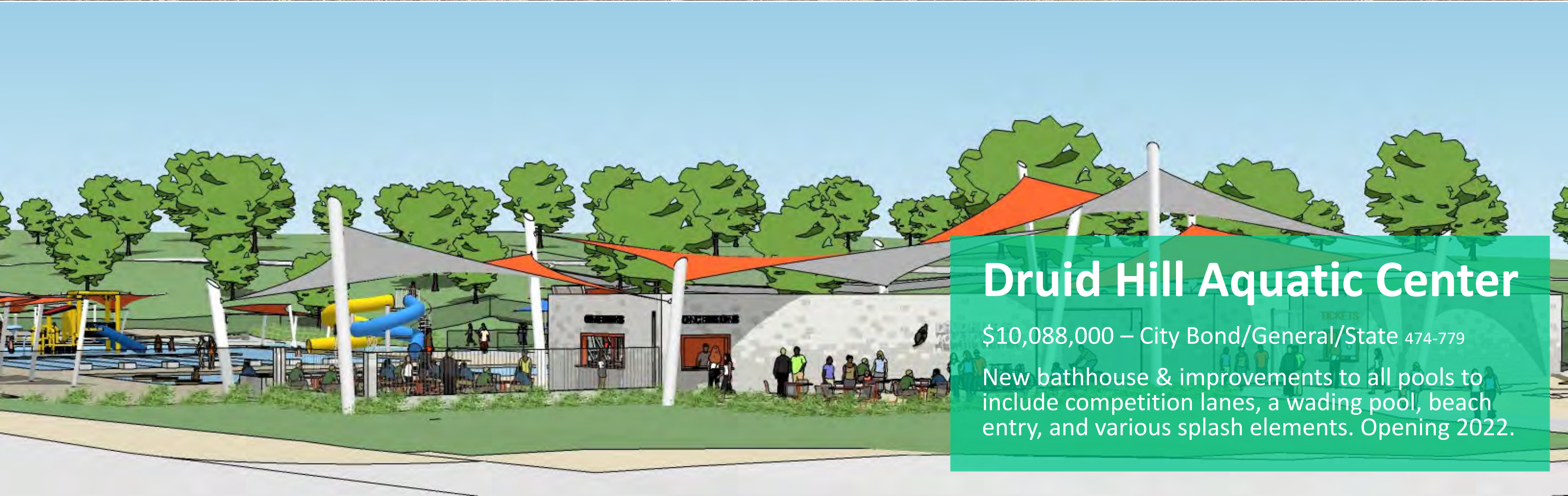
PARK ASSETS



UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN 2021

- ▶ Jones Falls Trail - Phase V
- ▶ Druid Hill Aquatic Center
- ▶ Gwynns Falls Maintenance Yard Improvements
- ▶ Middle Branch Fitness & Wellness Center
- ▶ Patterson Park Athletic Field Lighting (Completed in Sept.)
- ▶ Racheal Wilson Memorial Playground
- ▶ Towanda Recreation Center Renovations (Opened in October)
- ▶ Garrett Park Site Improvements
- ▶ Patterson Park Entrance Improvements
- ▶ Burdick Dog Park
- ▶ Dypski Park Improvements
- ▶ **TOTAL OF \$50M in CAPITAL PROJECTS**





Druid Hill Aquatic Center

\$10,088,000 – City Bond/General/State 474-779

New bathhouse & improvements to all pools to include competition lanes, a wading pool, beach entry, and various splash elements. Opening 2022.



Middle Branch Fitness & Wellness Center

\$23,134,000 – 8 Sources 474-047 & 474-784

35,000 square foot rec center w/ natatorium, gymnasium, fitness studios, walking track, maker space, and community room.

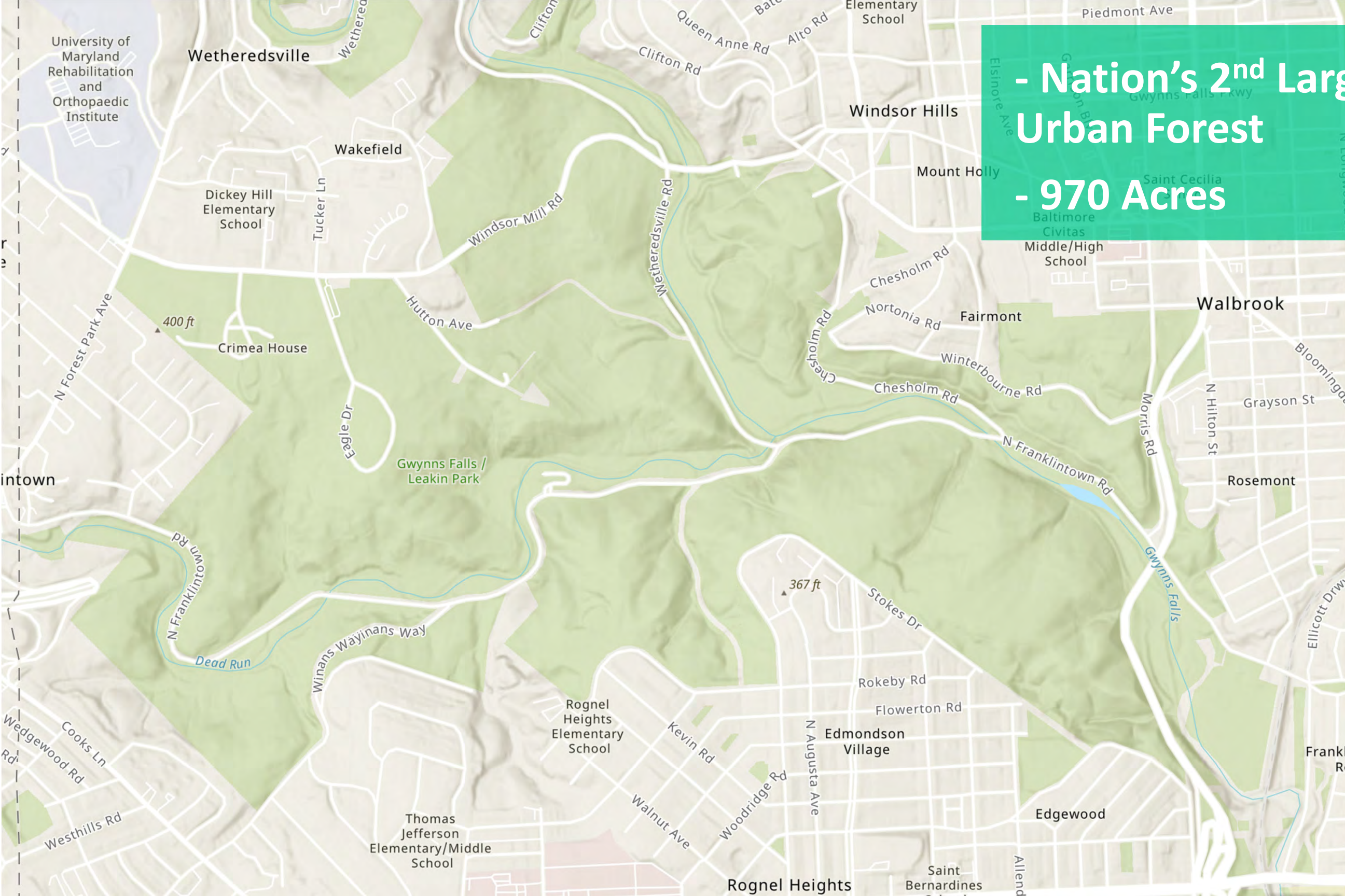


OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION

Gwynns Falls/ Leakin Park



- Nation's 2nd Largest Urban Forest
- 970 Acres





Water Wheel



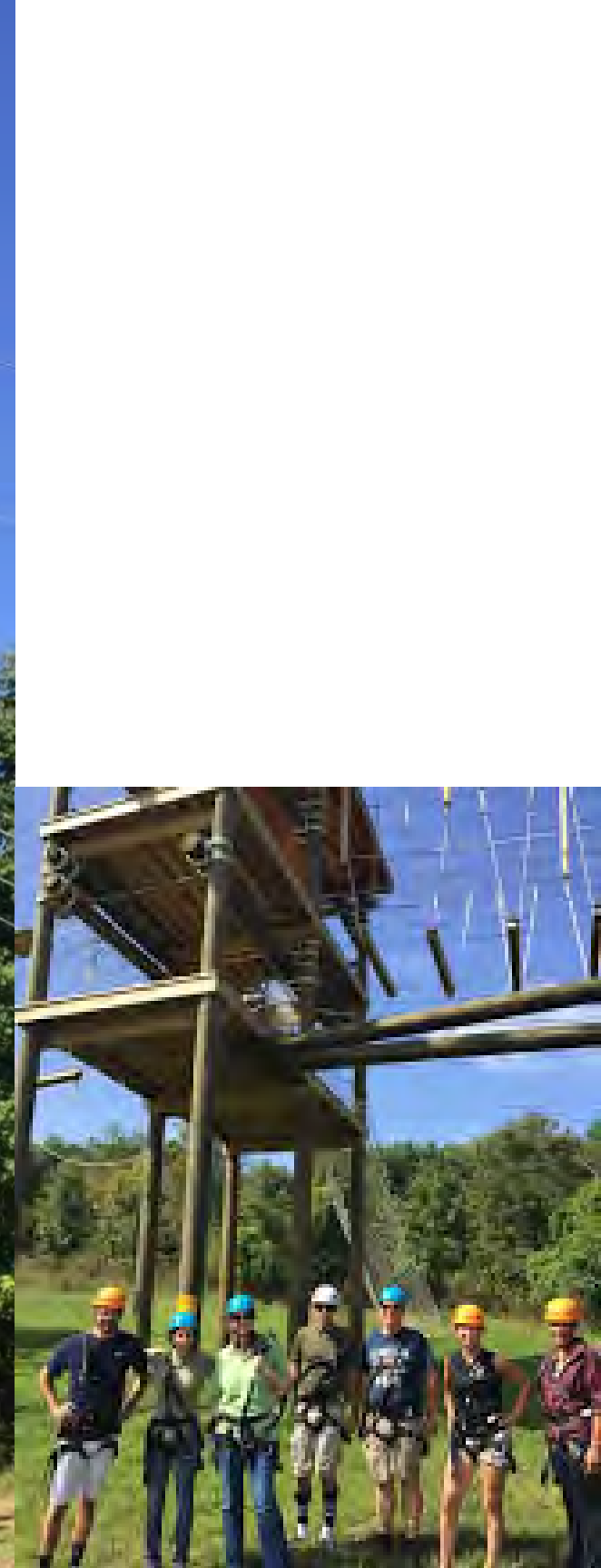
Winans Chapel



Orianda House

Historic Structures

Challenge Course



Ben Cardin Pavilion & Winans Meadow

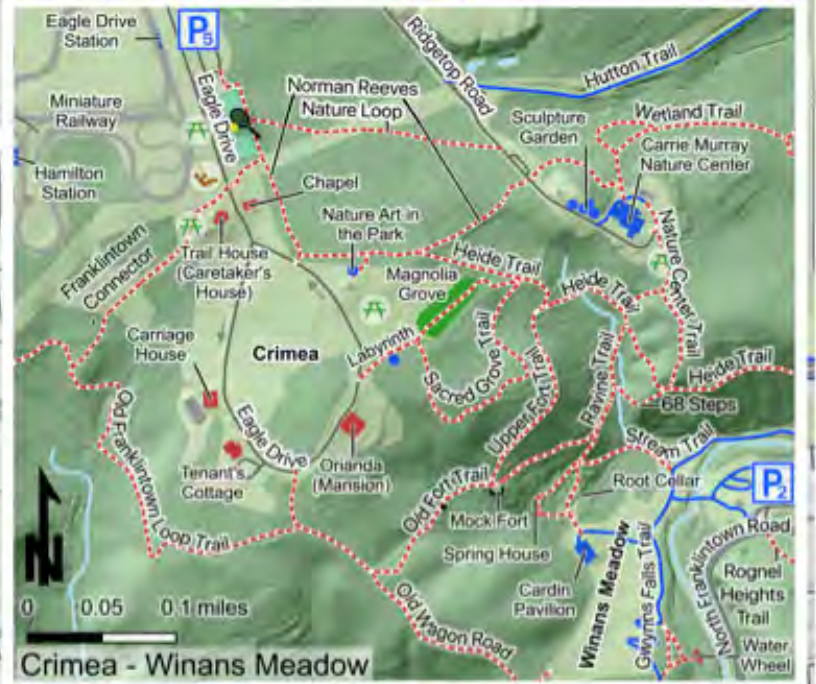
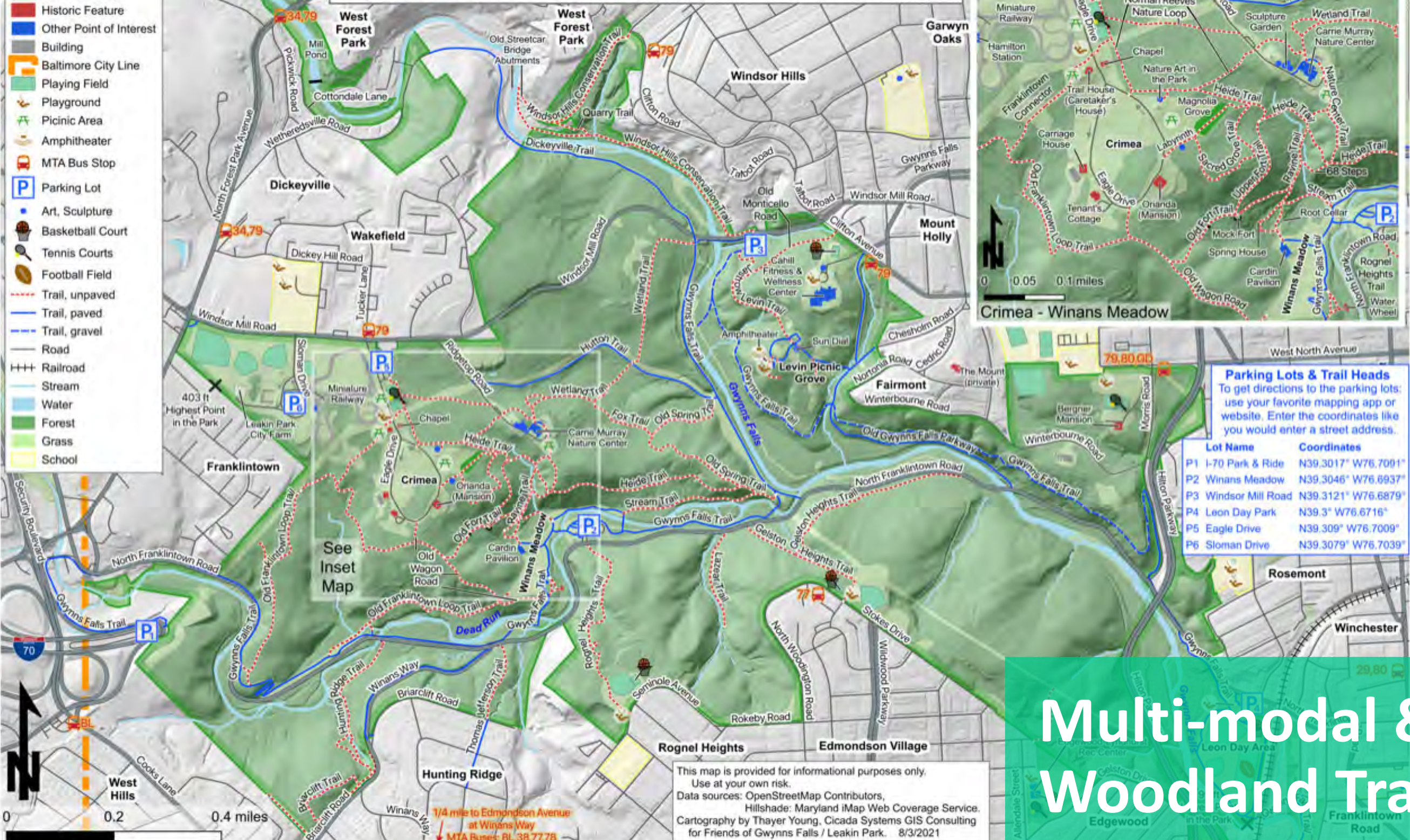


Carrie Murray Nature Center



- Legend**
- █ Park Boundary
 - █ Historic Feature
 - █ Other Point of Interest
 - █ Building
 - █ Baltimore City Line
 - █ Playing Field
 - █ Playground
 - █ Picnic Area
 - █ Amphitheater
 - █ MTA Bus Stop
 - P Parking Lot
 - Art, Sculpture
 - Basketball Court
 - Tennis Courts
 - Football Field
 - Trail, unpaved
 - Trail, paved
 - Trail, gravel
 - Road
 - +++ Railroad
 - Stream
 - █ Water
 - █ Forest
 - █ Grass
 - █ School

Gwynns Falls / Leakin Park Trail Map



Parking Lots & Trail Heads
 To get directions to the parking lots: use your favorite mapping app or website. Enter the coordinates like you would enter a street address.

Lot Name	Coordinates
P1 I-70 Park & Ride	N39.3017° W76.7091°
P2 Winans Meadow	N39.3046° W76.6937°
P3 Windsor Mill Road	N39.3121° W76.6879°
P4 Leon Day Park	N39.3° W76.6716°
P5 Eagle Drive	N39.309° W76.7009°
P6 Sloman Drive	N39.3079° W76.7039°

This map is provided for informational purposes only. Use at your own risk.
 Data sources: OpenStreetMap Contributors, Hillshade: Maryland iMap Web Coverage Service.
 Cartography by Thayer Young, Cicada Systems GIS Consulting for Friends of Gwynns Falls / Leakin Park. 8/3/2021

Multi-modal & Woodland Trails



**Recently Completed:
Cahill Fitness &
Wellness Center**

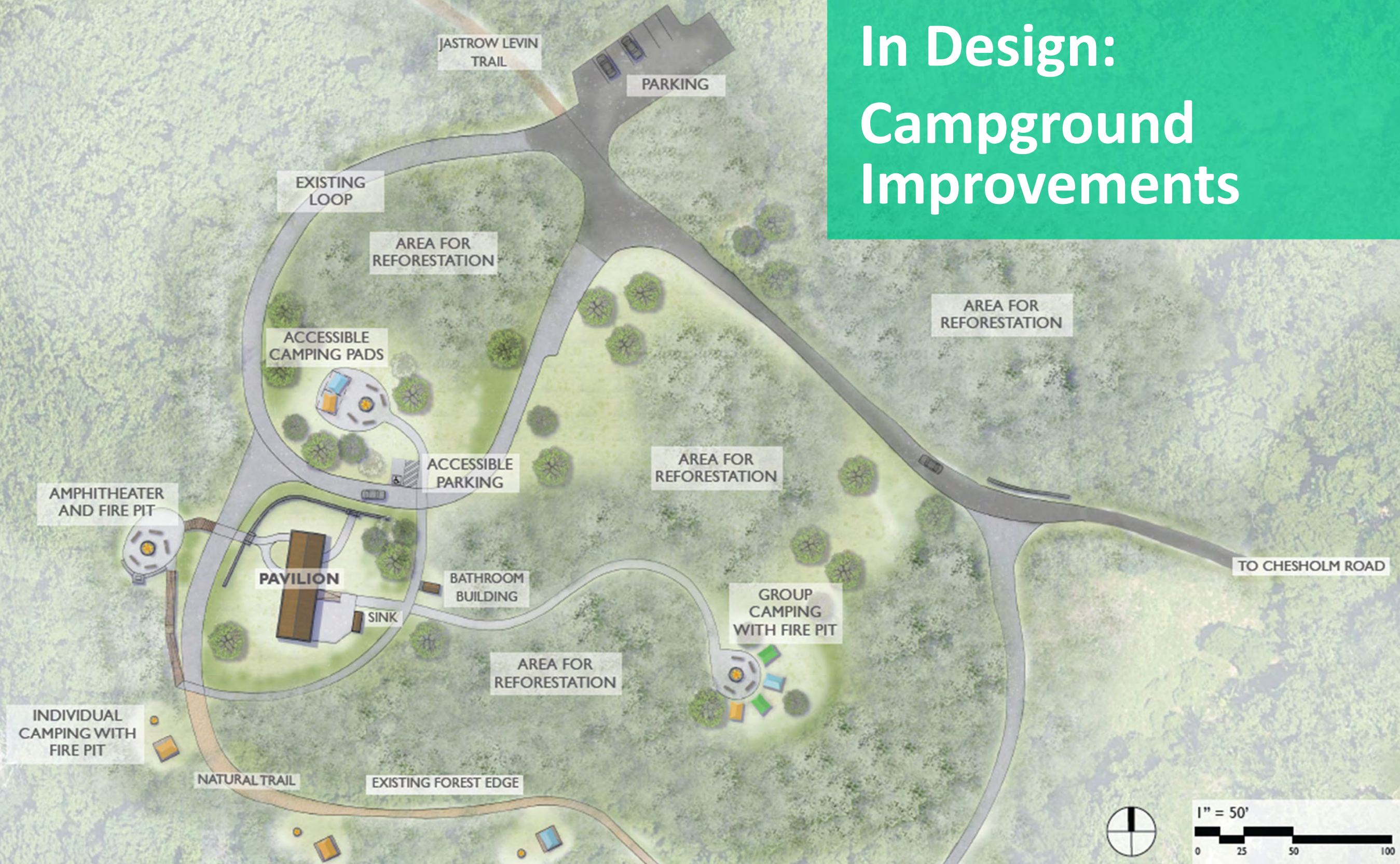
Under Construction: Pavilion at Sloman Drive Athletic Fields



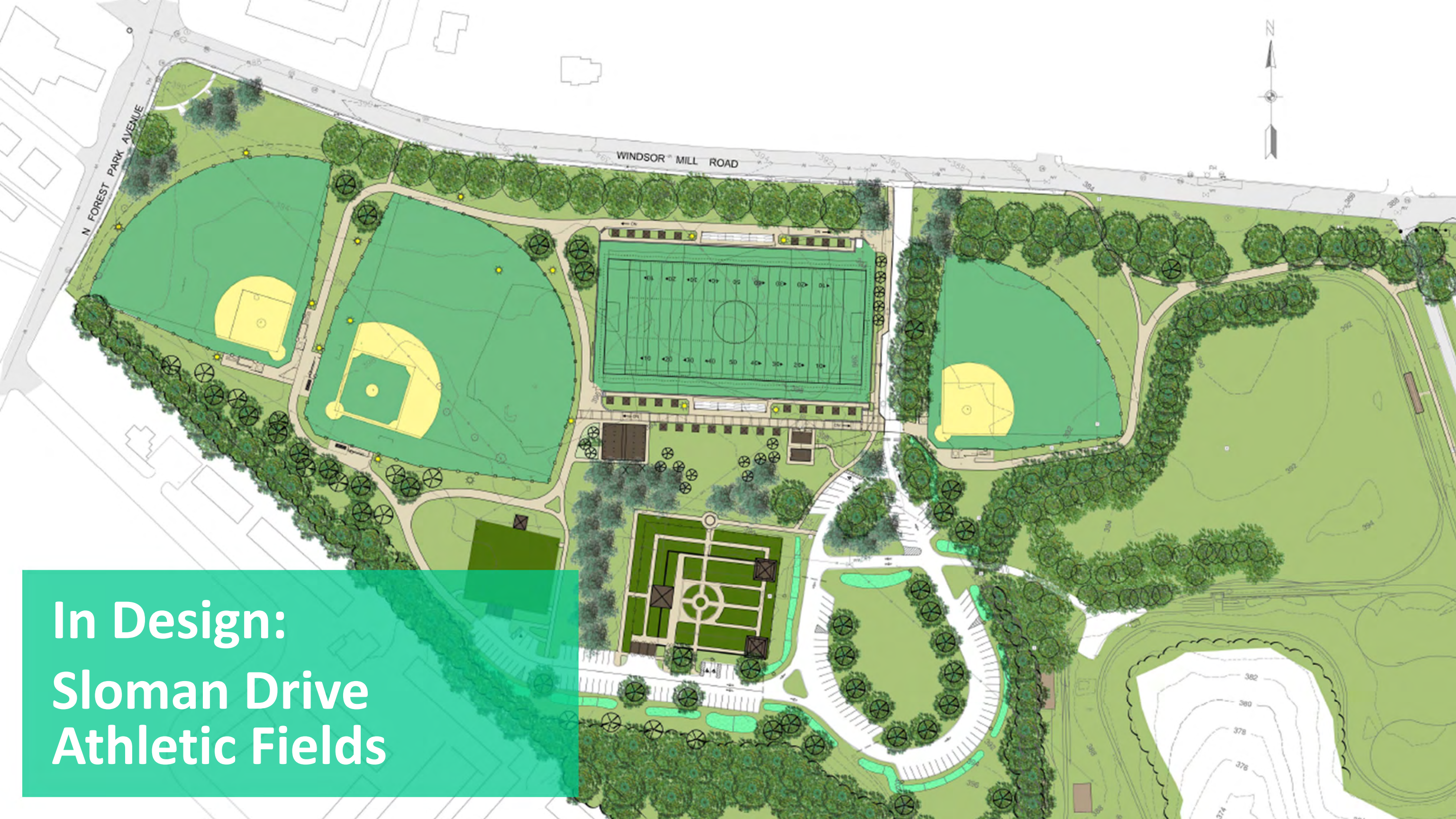
In Design: Winans Meadow Visitors Center



In Design: Campground Improvements



**In Design:
Sloman Drive
Athletic Fields**





Thank you for your
consideration.

Questions?



Status and Challenges Updated Briefing

Presentation to the State Park Investment Commission

**Department of Legislative Services
Office of Policy Analysis
Annapolis, Maryland**

November 9, 2021

Commission Charge

- The Commission will investigate and make recommendations regarding overcrowding in Maryland State parks, including:
 - The adequacy of existing State park facilities to meet demand for recreational opportunities in the State;
 - Levels of operating funding and staff for existing State parks, as well as the need for capital funding to provide a high-quality experience to park visitors;
 - The need for new State park offerings and identification of any recreational deserts across Maryland; and
 - The extent to which State parks and associated recreational opportunities are adequately accessible to all populations of Marylanders, including low-income Marylanders, those who lack access to a car, and Marylanders with disabilities.

Presentations

- **September 10th**
 - **Department of Legislative Services**
- **September 21st**
 - **Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**
 - **Local/Federal Government Panel**
 - Maryland Municipal League
 - Maryland Association of County Park and Recreation Administrators
 - Maryland Association of Counties
 - National Park Service, Chesapeake Bay Office

Presentations (cont.)

- **October 5th**
 - **Equity Stakeholders Panel**
 - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities
 - Hispanic Access Foundation
 - Maryland Recreation and Parks Association
 - University of Maryland School of Public Health
 - AARP
 - Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
 - Parks and People Foundation
 - National Federation of the Blind
 - **Environment and Allied Stakeholders Panel**
 - Chesapeake Conservancy
 - Maryland Rangers Association
 - Friends of Maryland State Parks
 - Preservation Maryland
 - Maryland Professional Employees Council Local 6197

Presentations (cont.)

- **October 19th**
 - **National Panel**
 - National Association of State Park Directors
 - Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
 - Frostburg State University
 - Texas A&M University
 - Utah State University
 - Pros Consulting
 - National Park Service – Chesapeake Office
 - Chesapeake Conservancy

Presentations (cont.)

- **November 9th**
 - Baltimore City Parks and Recreation
 - Department of Legislative Services

Challenges to Address

- Capacity: increasing recreational opportunities
- Maintenance
- Staffing
- Funding
- Equity: barriers to access
- Climate change

Capacity: Increasing Recreational Opportunities

Recommendation 1: The General Assembly should require DNR to investigate the possibility of establishing new State parks or developing new amenities in current State parks, including increasing the capacity to offer water-based recreational opportunities. The proposal for new or expanded State parks with associated amenities should be coordinated with the creation of a Maryland Park Service (MPS) Comprehensive Long Range Strategic Plan. Decisions regarding the establishment of new State parks or amenities should target areas identified by the park equity tool as in need of recreational opportunities and/or locations which would relieve overcrowding in existing State parks that have consistently had to be closed to the public due to capacity restrictions.

Recommendation 2: The General Assembly should require DNR to establish new State Historical Parks or other units in the Central Maryland region that preserve and interpret the story of Black Marylanders and other underrepresented communities.

Recommendation 3: The General Assembly should require DNR to establish, publish, and provide opportunities for public input on a five-year Capital Improvement Plan for the State park system.

Capacity: Increasing Recreational Opportunities (Cont.)

Recommendation 4: The General Assembly should require DNR to work on increasing the availability of recreational opportunities in other State-owned areas such as Wildlife Management Areas and State Forest lands.

Recommendation 5: The General Assembly should require DNR to investigate the possibility of redesignating State park system areas, such as Natural Resources Management Areas and Natural Environment Areas, and other State-owned areas, such as Wildlife Management Areas and State Forest Lands, as State parks.

Recommendation 6: The General Assembly should require DNR and the Baltimore City Administration to jointly investigate the possibility of establishing a new State park in Baltimore City. Such an establishment should provide new recreational opportunities for the residents of Baltimore, rather than simply redesignating existing local recreational facilities as State parks.

Recommendation 7: The General Assembly should require DNR to investigate the possibility of providing improved public access to privately-owned land.

Capacity: Increasing Recreational Opportunities (Cont.)

Recommendation 8: The General Assembly should require DNR to coordinate with county, municipal, and federal park systems to increase trail connectivity between park systems.

Recommendation 9: The General Assembly should require DNR to coordinate a whole systems approach to park and recreation planning, including coordination with local, municipal, county, and federal park systems. One avenue to explore is the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association planned meeting in late January 2022. Another avenue is the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

Recommendation 10: The General Assembly should require DNR to consider integrating infrastructure messaging with the National Park Service and local governments, including a one-stop shopping website and app that provides information on where parks and open spaces are located, the amenities available, and real-time information about park status (e.g. open, closed, etc.). A component of this integration should be expanding the day-use reservation system beyond the Fall Branch area of Rocks State Park to all parks experiencing capacity shutdowns.

Recommendation 11: The General Assembly should require DNR to connect the Office of Outdoor Recreation with MPS's business manager, county tourism, and economic development offices, Maryland Municipal League, Maryland Association of Counties, and the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable.

Maintenance

Recommendation 12: The General Assembly and appropriate executive agencies should collaborate to utilize current and anticipated federal funding and current State budget surpluses to make an immediate investment in critical maintenance to eliminate the existing critical maintenance backlog over the next several years, and to develop a formula for ongoing maintenance funding to prevent another backlog from occurring.

Recommendation 13: The General Assembly should require DNR to prioritize increasing staffing in its engineering and construction unit to allow DNR to better oversee and implement projects, including resolution of the critical maintenance backlog.

Recommendation 14: The General Assembly should require DNR to modify the critical maintenance program to include a robust funding allocation dedicated to the preservation and restoration of historical/cultural resources maintained by DNR. As a first step in this process, require DNR to undertake a systemwide survey of historical and cultural resources, including estimates of costs to restore and maintain those resources, with the understanding that the preservation and restoration of historical/cultural resources will not be delayed while the statewide survey is being conducted.

Recommendation 15: The General Assembly should require DNR to establish and publish on its website a list of maintenance projects in every unit of the State park system that are expected to cost more than \$25,000, to prioritize these projects using a system of objective criteria, and to publish information regarding the scores individual projects receive in the prioritization system.

Maintenance (Cont.)

Recommendation 16: The General Assembly should require DNR to coordinate with the Department of General Services (DGS) on the development of an asset management system for its infrastructure. The asset management system should be based on a facility condition index that is updated for MPS's infrastructure on a continuous basis by a dedicated asset evaluation team.

Recommendation 17: The General Assembly should consider making a significant one-time investment in pay-as-you-go capital capacity projects that will reduce the park capacity closures the system has been experiencing. These projects should focus on forms of recreation that are most driving demand, including trails, water-based recreation and picnicking, and parking facilities that support both.

Recommendation 18: The General Assembly should require DNR to work with DGS to increase the size of projects which can be handled in-house by DNR from \$50,000 to \$100,000. DNR should also consider tying the increase in the size of projects to the building and construction cost indexes to account for inflation.

Recommendation 19: The General Assembly should require DNR to consider the need to out-source capital development projects, particularly new infrastructure funded by the Natural Resources Development Fund, to the Maryland Stadium Authority to the degree that additional positions are provided for this purpose.

Staffing

Recommendation 20: The General Assembly should require DNR to increase the number of full-time employees in MPS by 100 permanent, classified positions over the next two fiscal years to better meet the needs of the park-going public. Further, every additional staff position should be accompanied by a supplemental budget allocation that will adequately support the work of that specific employee (vehicles, equipment, offices, shops, and other necessary supports). Require DNR to double the size of the MPS workforce in the next 10 years and set a long-term goal of one authorized position for every 30,000 park visitors. In addition, require DNR to conduct a staffing adequacy review every 10 years to determine if there is adequate staffing in the parks.

Recommendation 21: The General Assembly should require DNR to implement a volunteer management program modeled on the National Park Service's Volunteers-In-Parks program in order to strategically manage volunteer service provided by individuals and State parks friends groups. The program should be managed by a dedicated volunteer program manager who conducts annual training for staff and volunteers; develops and promotes volunteer opportunities; performs program audit, monitoring, and evaluation functions to determine volunteer management program efficacy; and reports on annual volunteer impacts and statistics. The General Assembly should consider adding supporting authority to the State code modeled after the Volunteers in the Parks Act of 1969. In addition, DNR should expand its work with the Friends of Maryland State Parks and other similar organizations, modeled on the National Park Service's relationship with the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service policy on Donations and Philanthropic Partnerships, in order to leverage additional private charitable funding for park enhancements.

Staffing (Cont.)

Recommendation 22: The General Assembly should require DNR to work with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to make improvements to the hiring process by requiring DNR to seek to streamline human resources processes to ensure faster hiring for all positions within MPS, especially seasonal positions; providing MPS with an administrative waiver to the Maryland State Online Employment Center hiring process that is used to hire temporary employees; and eliminating the MPS requirement to request hiring freeze exemptions for all critical operations positions.

Recommendation 23: MPS should increase efforts to recruit and retain bilingual rangers and park staff and increase funding for the Es Mi Parque Program.

Recommendation 24: MPS should increase efforts to diversify its workforce through strong, targeted efforts to recruit people of color into positions within the park service.

Recommendation 25: MPS should develop programs focused on creating a pipeline of new rangers and other full-time staff from among volunteers, the State's foster youth system, and the State's historically underserved communities. These programs should be modeled on the cadet programs implemented by the National Park Service and should include collaboration with the State's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Staffing (Cont.)

Recommendation 26: The General Assembly should require DBM to resolve the employee classification issues that have resulted in differential pay levels between some employees and their direct supervisors.

by promoting upward mobility within a job series.

Recommendation 27: The General Assembly should require DNR and DBM to conduct an annual salary review including the consideration of maintaining a salary level sufficient to ensure diversity in order to (1) improve hiring by compensating MPS employees at a level commensurate with employees of local park systems and the National Park Service and (2) improve retention

Recommendation 28: The General Assembly should require DNR to allow park managers to be involved in the management and allocation of law enforcement resources.

Recommendation 29: The General Assembly should adopt legislation to provide statutory recognition of the status of Maryland rangers as first responders and amend existing statutes to codify the inclusion of Maryland rangers in the unique benefits afforded to all other first responders, including emergency response pay, preferential income tax deductions, and legal presumptions for occupational diseases.

Funding

Recommendation 30: The General Assembly should: (1) maintain the current transfer tax repayment schedule and consider a formula modification in the future to allocate a greater portion of funding for State park operations, the critical maintenance program, and Program Open Space (POS); or (2) modify the repayment plan for the POS funds diverted but not yet repaid from fiscal 2006 and between fiscal 2016 and 2018 in order to allocate a greater portion of the funding to State park operations and the Critical Maintenance Program and consider future formula changes to allocate a greater portion of funding for those same purposes.

Recommendation 31: The General Assembly and appropriate executive agencies should collaborate to identify a permanent, sustainable, dedicated funding source that can adequately fund the additional resources identified and recommended by the Commission. This funding source should not redirect/reallocate existing funding sources. To the degree there is coordination between the State and local governments about overall park needs in the State, additional funding could be allocated to support local park needs.

Recommendation 32: The General Assembly should take action to create targeted funding sources for cultural resource areas, including archeological sites, historic sites, and battlefields. Funds could be used for inventory, designation, and enhancing visitor interpretation.

Recommendation 33: The General Assembly should set a statutory funding goal for the State park system with the intent of supporting Maryland as a National Park System model and to ensure that even with increasing visitation levels there are fewer State park capacity closures, improved access equity, and a green infrastructure in place to mitigate climate change.

Equity: Barriers to Access

Recommendation 34: The General Assembly should require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to conduct a pilot program extending existing Maryland Transit Administration bus routes in the Baltimore metro area, one of the most densely populated areas of the State, during the summer, thereby providing transit access to State parks in the region. Pilot routes could be advertised to park users, and MDOT could report back to the General Assembly on the usage of these extended routes.

Recommendation 35: The General Assembly should require DNR to partner with MDOT on a pilot program for weekend shuttle service to State parks. The decentralized program could be based in existing park and ride facilities, parks with lower visitation, or other large parking areas as negotiated with public or private entities. In addition, the program could partner with existing shuttle, bus, or other mass transit carriers or pursue an electric automated shuttle.

Recommendation 36: The General Assembly should require DNR to improve bicycle, sidewalk, and trail access to State parks.

Recommendation 37: The Maryland Park Service should adopt universal design principles in its programming and amenities to ensure maximum access by all people, including people with disabilities and seniors. In addition, the MPS website and all other digital outreach should adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 and Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act in order to ensure accessibility for individuals who are deaf, blind, or both.

Climate Change

Recommendation 38: The Maryland General Assembly should consider committing to a 30x30 goal for Maryland.

Recommendation 39: The Maryland General Assembly should ensure that the capital and critical maintenance programs include funding sufficient to allow DNR to modernize and integrate green technology and sustainable practices into all State park facilities, whether through rehabilitation or replacement. DNR should recognize as a formal policy that Maryland's forests and trees are a major tool to battle climate change, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation/resiliency.

Recommendation 40: The General Assembly should create a new Urban Legacy Reforestation Program to reforest urban areas in order to support human health and mitigate climate change. This program could support reforestation on the following properties: (1) existing local government land and (2) land purchased for this purpose and then either maintained by the State or turned over to local governments for passive recreation purposes as a natural landscape.

Questions?

- Contact information for questions or to submit written comments:
 - Jeremy D. Baker
(jeremy.d.baker@mlis.state.md.us)
 - Andrew Gray
(andrew.gray@mlis.state.md.us)

Andrew,

Here is a list of questions and answers pertaining to the State Park Investment Commission.

Warm regards,

Bunky Luffman

1. *The commission would like information on the existing and planned connectivity between parks and other open spaces.*

DNR is working with several jurisdictions and partners on connectivity projects. For example, The Baltimore Metropolitan Council is working on trail connection plans between Patapsco Valley State Park and parks within Baltimore City and the Town of Sykesville. A consultant is currently developing a feasibility study with public involvement.

Seneca Creek State Park is supporting efforts by Montgomery County and Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission to connect the state park trail system with county and regional parks.

The Maryland Park Service is also working with Anne Arundel County on trail connections to Sandy Point State Park. The Broadneck Peninsula Trail is a hiker-biker trail that will ultimately connect the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail to Sandy Point State Park with a spur to Bay Head Park

2. *What is the impact of climate change on the Maryland park system and what is being done in terms of mitigation of emissions and adaptation/resiliency to climate change impacts?*

The primary impact of climate change on state parks is increased damage from flooding and severe weather. Infrastructure resiliency is routinely addressed in all capital projects, including moving and raising the foundations of buildings in flood zones. DNR is continually investing in energy efficiency upgrades on our public lands, including solar energy system installations, tree planting, and wetland restoration projects to mitigate and reduce our carbon footprint. Certain DNR projects are also subject to Coast Smart review.

DNR is also working on the installation of EV charging stations at our headquarters in Annapolis. In partnership with the Department of General Services, two dual-port level II EV chargers have been recently installed that will be available to our staff and the public. The dual-ports provide capabilities for charging four vehicles. Six dual port chargers, one of which will be ADA compliant, are being installed in Lot K (Naval Academy

Stadium) and will have the capability of charging 12 vehicles simultaneously. This lot is also used by DNR employees and the public.

3. *Where are the three or four parks that currently are undergoing acquisition and construction and where future parks are planned?*

While we cannot disclose the exact location of properties we are currently negotiating to purchase, we can disclose that we are actively pursuing acquisitions on the Eastern Shore, in Western Maryland, and in Central Maryland. For properties we have already acquired, one of the newest parks to be added to the roster will be Bohemia in Cecil County, Cypress Branch in Kent County, and the former Camp Baker National Guard site in Allegany County.

4. *How much of the \$65.8 million approved by the Board of Public Works in fiscal 2021 for 175 Program Open Space Local grants was requested vs. the amount actually appropriated?*

The Department of Budget and Management allocates Program Open Space (POS) Local funds annually to every county and Baltimore City based on a formula. Projects funded through POS Local are determined by the local jurisdictions that submit applications for funding to DNR for review and approval. Once the application has been approved and the project eligibility is determined, DNR presents the individual project to the Board of Public Works (BPW) for approval. Local governments submit project applications up to the amount of POS Local funds allocated to their jurisdiction so the requested amount doesn't exceed total appropriation.

The FY21 budget appropriation for POS Local totaled \$44.2 million. The total POS Local funding approved by the Board of Public Works (\$65.8 million for 175 projects) exceeded the FY21 appropriation because local jurisdictions were also spending down POS Local funds appropriated in previous fiscal years.

The FY22 budget appropriation for POS Local totals \$53.4 million.

5. *What is the status of the repayment of the transfer tax funding diverted to the State General Fund and when the funding will be budgeted?*

The Governor's budget has consistently included funding for the repayment. In FY22, DNR received \$1 million, which has been budgeted.

6. *How is the Department of Natural Resources improving visitor experience through digital services?*

DNR uses social media extensively, including DNR's Facebook page (99.1K followers), Maryland Park Service's Facebook page (49,597 followers), DNR's Twitter (26.7K followers) account, Maryland Park Service's Twitter account (32,600 followers) and Instagram (28.3K followers) to communicate with the public about State Parks. E-newsletters for individual state parks provide followers with updates about activities and special events. Twitter is used to alert followers in a timely manner regarding the opening and closing status of state parks or threats from severe weather events.

We also have 14 active park newsletters. There are 105,000 subscriptions for these newsletters from more than 29,000 subscribers (many people subscribe to several park newsletters).

Our monthly DNR newsletter that generally includes park news goes out to 510,000 people and our Fall Foliage Report is up to 16,000 subscribers.

7. What is the Department of Natural Resources doing to pursue non-fossil fueled alternatives for facilities?

DNR is working in partnership with the Maryland Energy Administration to install solar arrays on state park buildings. Solar projects have been completed at Sandy Point State Park and Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. Additional buildings have been surveyed at five state parks that could be eligible for solar installations in the coming months.

DNR is also working on the installation of EV charging stations at our headquarters in Annapolis. In partnership with the Department of General Services, two dual-port level II EV chargers have been recently installed that will be available to our staff and the public. The dual-ports provide capabilities for charging four vehicles. Six dual port chargers, one of which will be ADA compliant, are being installed in Lot K (Naval Academy Stadium) and will have the capability of charging 12 vehicles simultaneously. This lot is also used by DNR employees and the public.

8. How much of the Program Open Space Local funding for each county is actually allocated to municipalities in that county?

According to statute, POS Local funds are allocated to each county and Baltimore City annually. It is up to each county to determine how and if funds are used for projects located in municipalities. Based on recent activity:

- 17 counties allocate funds to municipalities for projects. Of those counties, six allocate funding based on a county set formula and 11 counties allocate funding based on specific projects.

- Four counties have not allocated funds to municipalities for projects.
- Two counties do not have municipalities.
- In FY21, of the \$65.8 million approved by BPW for 175 projects:
 - \$49.3 million was approved for 105 county projects
 - \$16.5 million was approved for 70 municipal projects, including Baltimore City (POS Local and Baltimore City Direct Grant)

9. *What amenities does each State park provide, including camping (in particular, what type of camping), cabins, and beaches (including whether lifeguards are provided at each park)?*

The Maryland Park Service website* provides information on amenities at each state park such as:

- Campground amenities (water, sewer, electric hookups, restrooms, showers, etc.)
- Campsite types (RV sites, cabins, primitive camping, etc.)
- Park features (picnic shelters/tables, boating infrastructure, museums or interpretive centers, wheelchair accessible, etc.)
- Trail types (walking, mountain biking, equestrian, ORV, etc.)
- Recreation activities (hunting/fishing, swimming, paddling, etc.)

Most swimming beaches are supported by lifeguards according to waterfront management plans. There are two parks with swimming pools staffed by certified lifeguards, Dans Mountain State Park and Pocomoke River State Park.

[*dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Documents/MD_StateParksMap-Amenities.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Documents/MD_StateParksMap-Amenities.pdf)

10. *What is the overall plan for maintenance in State parks? Is there a data-driven planning process with community input informing investment in new amenities in current State parks or is it an ad hoc process?*

The Maryland Park Service and other DNR units submit critical maintenance projects annually to the DNR Engineering & Construction Unit. It is a deliberate process by which projects are scored, prioritized, and scheduled based on need.

The mission of the Maryland Park Service guides its planned improvements to enhance the enjoyment of outdoor recreation and resource appreciation in State Parks, including trails, picnic areas, campgrounds, cabins, water access, interpretive centers and historic sites, with an emphasis on minimizing the development of natural areas. DNR also refers to its 5-year Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan

(LPPRP) survey data as well as other surveys, which provide feedback from the public and general guidance on trends in outdoor recreation use levels and interests in Maryland. The Maryland Park Service also reviews direct input from visitors through thousands of customer satisfaction surveys collected annually. Participation in professional state park conferences are another valuable opportunity to inform Maryland Park Service leadership about outdoor recreation amenities, services and trends in the profession.

11. Why is there an apparent lack of inclusion in the Department of Natural Resources' "State Park Workforce" presentation slide and how the Department of Natural Resources solicits interest in the ranger leadership program?

The Maryland Park Service places a priority on attracting and supporting a diverse workforce, and many Ranger School classes reflect that effort. DNR attends job fairs yearly and recruits from Historically Black Colleges and nonprofit organizations that support diverse job applicant pools. In addition, the Maryland Park Service continuously recruits and mentors a diverse workforce of 700 seasonal employees and annually hires over 300 young people through its youth conservation corps programs to introduce underrepresented communities to natural resource careers at a young age.



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Questions from the State Park Investment Commission:

1. *Does the Department of Natural Resources' Conservation Corps programs engage with Maryland's foster youth population?*

Yes, the Maryland Park Service works with social service agencies to employ youth in the foster care system.

2. *Does the Department of Natural Resources expect to make any accessibility changes given that it assumes that visitorship is going to decrease?*

The Department anticipates that visitor numbers will continue to follow a longstanding and steady trend of increasing visitation, and is prioritizing the acquisition of new State Park lands to increase accessibility.

3. *What has the Department of Natural Resources been doing to ameliorate access concerns given the increase in the use of parks for at least the last 10 years?*

The Department is working to increase the number of State Parks and increase the size of existing State Park lands through land acquisition supported by Program Open Space. We also continue to work with local jurisdictions through Program Open Space Local and the Community Parks and Playgrounds program to increase and improve parks in local communities across Maryland.

4. *Are there any references to Native American lands within State parks in Maryland, such as historical plaques or teachings?*

The Maryland Park Service has robust partnerships with Maryland's American Indian tribes, including the Piscataway, Pocomoke, and Assateague, who use state parks and perform interpretive programs for park visitors. The Piscataway tribe has a Use Agreement to use the Merkle Natural Resource Management Area Visitor Center for ongoing programs and activities, and partners with the Department to provide interpretation at special events. The Pocomoke Indian tribe uses Pocomoke River State Park and also provides monthly interpretive programs.

5. *What additional investment would be needed to make Maryland a national model state park system?*



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Maryland is already a national model state park system. In 2019, Maryland Park Service was selected as a finalist for the National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. This national award is overseen by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Founded in 1965, the Gold Medal Awards program honors excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development, and agency recognition.

6. *What is status of the digitalization of information about access to State parks?*

The Department uses social media extensively, including its Facebook page (100K followers), the Maryland Park Service's Facebook page (50K followers), the Department's Twitter (27K followers) account, Maryland Park Service's Twitter account (33K followers) and Instagram (28K followers) to communicate with the public about State Parks.

E-newsletters for individual state parks provide followers with updates about activities and special events. Twitter is used to alert followers in a timely manner regarding the opening and closing status of state parks or threats from severe weather events.

We also have 14 active park newsletters. There are 105,000 subscriptions for these newsletters from more than 29,000 subscribers (many people subscribe to several park newsletters).

Our monthly DNR newsletter that generally includes park news goes out to 510,000 people and our Fall Foliage Report is up to 16,000 subscribers.

7. *Please address the need for new or expanded parks, including the underlying reason for the need (e.g. increased demand, staffing constraints, infrastructure constraints, equity considerations, climate change prevention and mitigation, etc...*

Increased visitation in our parks, even before COVID, demonstrates that there is demand for green space and outdoor recreation in Maryland. As Maryland and local jurisdictions plan for development of future parks and park improvements, we encourage them to utilize our Park Equity Tool*. The Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP) and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) process assist with planning for staff and infrastructure resources as well as meeting the wants and needs of our customers.

*<https://dnr.maryland.gov/pages/parkequity.aspx>



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8. *What is the status of park recreation and conservation partnerships between nonprofits, municipalities, counties, the State, and the federal government?*

Partnerships with local and federal governments as well as nonprofit organizations are absolutely key to increasing outdoor recreation and parks opportunities in our state as well as land conservation efforts. DNR works closely with these partners to leverage funding, attract private landowners to participate, and provide greater connectivity.



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Please respond to the Commission's following questions concerning the new Office of Outdoor Recreation by noon on Friday, October 29th.

1. What is the vision for what the Office can accomplish?

The Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic (MORE) Commission recommended that a designated Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR) be created to "provide a central point of contact, advocacy and resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses and communities that rely on the outdoor recreation industry." They further recommended that the OOR work with the outdoor recreation industry and small businesses to maximize their investment in Maryland, grow jobs, and improve the outdoor recreation economy.

2. How will it accomplish this vision in terms of particular measurable activities?

Implementation of the final MORE Commission recommendations will be central to accomplishing the OOR vision. The office will work with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Commerce, MORE Commission members, and other partners to establish metrics to track activities and progress.

3. How will the new Office work with the other entities in this policy area, including the Maryland Park Service's business manager; county tourism and economic development offices; the Maryland Municipal League; the Maryland Association of Counties; and the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable?

Implementation of the MORE Commission recommendations will require close coordination with all of the partners listed above and likely more. Agency liaisons will be identified to work directly with OOR to coordinate and facilitate efforts. Other partners will also be engaged, including our Outdoor Recreation Ambassadors.

4. What is the start-up budget and staffing level for the Office and how large is the Office expected to be in the next two or three years?

DNR is currently working with the Maryland Department of Budget and Management on the FY23 budget. Details will be released once the budget is finalized.

Comments From Richard Barton

Maryland State Park Investment Commission

2021

The author:

Richard Barton served as the Superintendent of the Maryland Park Service under four governors. He led the agency from 1990-2007 until his retirement with thirty years of service. During his tenure he became a national leader in the management of state parks, recognized for innovation and programs that enhanced visitor safety, improved resource protection, and implementing businesslike practices to improve management. Since his retirement he served as a County Administrator and today manages a global non-profit educational foundation. He remains in close contact with the field of park management as a consultant and advisor.

General Comments:

The Maryland Park Service is under great pressure resulting from years of excessive visitation, limited staffing, personnel benefits, recognition of their value, and a large backlog of critical maintenance projects. A basic but comprehensive statement describing the mission of state park service to visitors is *to provide neat, clean, and safe parks*. This guide is a long-standing directive that works throughout the world. Unfortunately, the Maryland Park Service is suffering in each of those categories. The general comments below are followed by a list of issues and recommendations.

- The information submitted to the Commission by the Maryland Rangers Association and Friends of State Parks is absolutely on target. The Rangers are closest to the work and see the issues daily. The Friends have a broader view, examining a bigger picture that enables them to offer an objective professional analysis. The comments of both groups should be closely considered by the Commission as being among the most meaningful information provided.
- Severely Increased Attendance is a legitimate issue. Park attendance is sometimes an estimate and not entirely accurate in some instances. However, Maryland State Park camping attendance and single access entry (such as found at Sandy Point State Park) is extremely accurate. The attendance numbers being reported today are so high that there is no question about the serious implications on the infrastructure, the carrying capacity of the resource, visitor safety, and the health of the employees. The statements and information about attendance provided to the Commission by credible sources is accurate. The parks and the staff are under tremendous pressure.
- The maintenance projects backlog presented to the Commission is accurate. The pressure upon the infrastructure and fragile natural resources due to high numbers of visitors is compounded by a large backlog of critical maintenance projects. This matter is well documented by credible information provided to the Commission and should be given a high degree of consideration.

- The economic benefit of state parks is well documented both in Maryland and nationally. The parks are important economic resources, especially to a local economy. This helps explain why local government agencies and officials are interested in the activities of the state parks in their area and why it is so important to include them as stakeholders and partners.

Accessibility, inclusion, and new park opportunities:

The Issues:

Many of the state parks have successfully served minority populations in very great numbers for many years. The beach and waterfront areas of Sandy Point State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Point Lookout State Park, Greenbrier State Park, Cunningham Falls State Park and Rocky Gap State Park, for example, are used very heavily by minority populations, especially in the warm weather months.

Equity and diversity of visitation in those areas is not an issue.

The problem is that people travel to those parks but find them already filled-to-capacity levels and they have nowhere else to go. People who do not have direct access to a motor vehicle cannot visit these destination parks because public transportation does not reach those locations. Providing increased access by offering off-site parking is not the answer to this challenge. That will create more pressure upon natural resources that are already stressed and staff that is already facing very high attendance numbers. There are better options.

Creating a new multi-use waterfront park is a long costly process. However, there are existing park areas that can be adapted to waterfront use (see the recommendation section).

The creation of new and expanded trails in Maryland State Parks has been very infrequent during the past two decades. There are opportunities to create new trails and improve existing trails.

Recommendations regarding accessibility, inclusion, and new park opportunities:

- **The Department of Natural Resources should be tasked** with creating effective and practical plans to provide **access to park areas that can support increased attendance** and to identify the potential for new park areas in each region of Maryland. The department should create a plan to improve this situation.
- **The Department of Natural Resources should be tasked** with identifying one or more existing park **areas that can provide waterfront use** for populations that are currently being denied access due to maximum park capacity. Specifically, Seneca Creek State Park has a lake that could be rather easily redesigned (especially when compared to the cost of creating a new lake facility) to offer a swimming beach and support amenities within the same service area as Cunningham Falls State Park and Greenbrier State Park. North Point State Park has waterfront beach access on the Chesapeake Bay that could provide swimming beach service within a short distance of the Baltimore population. These are two examples and others exist around the state.

- The **Unionville** community in Talbot County should be effectively pursued as a significant historical and cultural resource that honors the legacy of African American citizens including many who served bravely in the U.S. Civil War. Currently this historic resource lays largely unrecognized and arguably overlooked because of racial indifference. This should be a high priority as a new state park site.
- **New trail development** has been limited during the past twenty years, thus placing the full force of increasing use upon the existing trail infrastructure. The Department of Natural Resources should be directed to create realistic plans to increase and improve trails throughout Maryland.
A specific example is to develop and implement and plan to connect the trail systems managed by Gunpowder Falls State Park and Patapsco Valley State Park. The northern end of trails managed as part of Gunpowder Falls State Park should be connected to the northern end of trails managed by Patapsco Valley State Park. The southern end of the Patapsco system could be connected to the BWI trail and then to the B&A Trail. This would achieve a continuous trail from the Chesapeake Bay shoreline in Harford County, northward around Baltimore and finally south to the Chesapeake Bay in Annapolis. This would be a nationally significant trail that encircles primary metropolitan areas and features a partnership of state and local government.
- The Maryland Park Service outdoor tent camping youth program known as **Outdoor Discovery** should be brought back to life. This program served underprivileged youth, who often resided in urban areas. As participants in Outdoor Discovery, they would experience a week-long residential camp that uses outdoor activities in natural areas to build confidence in a mentoring culture. The cost is minimal, and the outcome is strong. This is one example of a menu of programs that can be developed to serve youth throughout the state and thus improve inclusion of underserved populations.
- **Waterfront access projects** and other park projects to serve diverse populations should be the **priority for local Program Open Space funding**.

Stakeholders, Partners, and Advocates:

The issues:

The Maryland Park Service has many active and potential stakeholders, partners, and interest groups. Some of these have missions that compete and at times counter the Maryland Park Service mission. Maintaining and managing these relationships is a challenge and one that invariably results in both positive and negative outcomes.

Over the decades, the Maryland Park Service has periodically enjoyed a very close relationship with many stakeholder groups and advocates. “Friends” groups for individual parks and a statewide “friends” group were at one time included as citizen partners who provided advice, on-site labor, and financial support for specific programs. Other stakeholders include state and local tourism officials, local and statewide economic development officials, state and local elected officials, local recreation agencies, federal park management, and recreation and resource non-profits and interest groups. Maintaining those relationships is a challenge but one that merits renewed energy.

Recommendations regarding Stakeholders, Partners, and Advocates:

- These recommendations require very **little actual financial cost** and can do a great deal to improve and increase access to parks and support for park management.
- State-level leadership must embrace a **close working partnership** with the Friends of Maryland State Parks, tourism leaders, outdoor recreation groups and other key stakeholders. This requires a culture that embraces partnership. The Friends of Maryland State Parks should be consulted about this recommendation.
- Each state park manager must have a **positive working relationship** with local officials specifically regarding tourism, commerce, and recreation. **State elected officials should be kept informed** about activities in the parks in their district and invited to events that feature those areas.
- **Relationships with local law enforcement** requires communication that is much more than incident-based and is proactive. Improving these relationships should become a high priority to ensure public safety and resource protection.
- **Relationships with activity organizations** such as fishing advocates, hiking groups, conservation groups and others should be a high priority.

Public Safety and Resource Protection:

The issues:

The state parks no longer receive dedicated specific attention from any public safety entity. In the early 2000s the law enforcement Rangers of the park service were moved to the Natural Resources Police (NRP). This became a large new enforcement task for the NRP, and they were required to address that mandate with a declining number of officers. Today, the NRP have significantly fewer officers than they had in 1990; and at that time their mission did not include areas managed by the Maryland Park Service. The outcome is a situation where visitor safety is compromised, and the civilian rangers of the Maryland Park Service are placed in unsafe situations.

The safety of park visitors, consideration for park visitor behavior that spills over into neighboring communities, and the protection of the significant resources managed by the Maryland Park Service is failing. The model of using the Natural Resources Police to provide public safety services is part of that failure. The NRP is a fine department, but their mission is too broad and demanding to expect them to properly serve parks that merit dedicated attention.

Recommendations regarding public safety and protection:

- **Officially identify the Park Rangers as First Responders.** These civilian employees are first on the scene of a wide variety of emergency incidents, including law enforcement incidents, that occur on and near park lands. They provide life-saving aid and are the first professional resource to help people in trouble. That is truly the definition of a first responder. This recommendation only requires an administrative action and gives credit where it is long overdue.

- **Create and activate a public safety force of law enforcement Rangers.** The visitors, park neighbors and the resources deserve this attention. An effective force of 50 to 75 officers, law enforcement Rangers, would become a unit specifically trained to keep peace in the parks, partner with full-service police agencies including the NRP and the Maryland State Police, and serve as the public safety leaders for the visitors and resources. This unit should not be under the direction of the NRP. Without this action, the parks will remain poorly protected and increasingly unsafe. This recommendation must be carried out with precision and careful strategic planning and specific expertise is essential in planning and establishing this team.

State Park Operational Funding

The Issues:

Over a period of decades, the Maryland Park Service was funded by General Funds and park revenue. The advent of Program Open Space funding for park operations in 2008 brought a new day to park service funding. The funding issue today in state parks is a matter of the finances not keeping up with the demand for service. This is a complicated topic with much background, some options, and no easy solutions.

General Fund support of the state parks was reduced and shifted every year prior to 2008. The State had made the commitment to create the parks using Program Open Space (POS) but failed to properly fund *“neat, clean and safe parks”*.

During my entire tenure I sought to achieve a dedicated fund to support state park management and operation. Since dedicated funds created the parks, a dedicated fund arguably should help operate those places. As my service time ended, in 2007, we finally achieved the objective.

In 2008, the state park operation was being funded by POS and park revenue. Unfortunately, that financial commitment has eroded over the years.

Recommendation regarding funding:

- **The Program Open Space priority to support Maryland Park Service operations should be restored.** Otherwise, proper care and service at state parks will remain in jeopardy and will continue to decline. If an increase in General Funds is used to support any of the actions to improve the Maryland Park Service that funding will erode over time. A dedicated fund is the only assurance that these properties that were created with dedicated funds will continue to best serve Maryland’s citizens.
- Note: There is an argument that POS should not be used to fund park operations because it fluctuates with the economy. The same can be said of General Fund support for state parks. During my entire seventeen-year tenure directing the Maryland Park Service, we suffered General Fund reductions or shifts every year. Parks simply could not compete with the other demands for General Funds. While POS funding does fluctuate with the economy, if state parks were given a clear priority the fluctuation would not severely injure the operations of parks, and certainly not the same injury caused by General Fund reductions. This statement results from my thirty-year career operating state parks and seventeen years managing the agency budget.

Concluding Comments:

The Commission will receive many comments and reports that have great value and validity. I urge you to consider most greatly those from the people closest to the situation and those with the most objective point of view who also have expertise. In my case, I have expertise, and nothing to gain from any of the recommendations. I have moved on in my career and offer my suggestions as professional advice free of charge and without a hidden agenda.

October 27, 2021

**PARTNERS for
OPEN SPACE**

Chesapeake Conservancy
Joel Dunn

Rural Maryland Council
Charlotte Davis

**Baltimore County Land
Trust Alliance**
Ann Jones

The Conservation Fund
Bill Crouch

**Maryland Recreation and
Parks Association**
Chuck Montrie

The Nature Conservancy
Deborah Barber

Lower Shore Land Trust
Kate Patton

Grow and Fortify
Kelly Dudeck

Trust for Public Land
Kent Whitehead

**Maryland League of
Conservation Voters**
Kristen Harbeson

**Southern Maryland
Heritage Area Consortium**
Lucille Walker

**Chesapeake Bay
Commission**
Mark Hoffman

**Eastern Shore Land
Conservancy**
Sara Ramotnik

Scenic Rivers Land Trust
Sarah Knebel

**Maryland Association of
County Parks and
Recreation Administrators**
Sue Simmons

Forever Maryland
Wendy Stringfellow

Maryland General Assembly
State Park Investment Commission
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Glendening and members of the State Park Investment Commission:

On behalf of Partners for Open Space, a statewide coalition of agricultural, recreation, environmental, and historic preservation organizations, we would like to offer our perspective regarding the commission's efforts to improve Maryland's state parks.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for your service on this commission and for your outstanding support for Maryland state parks. Our organizations work closely with state parks and we believe state parks are among Maryland's greatest natural and recreational assets. We also agree that now is the time to make a significant and long-term investment in improving state parks, including upgrading facilities and infrastructure, increasing staffing, investing in ongoing maintenance, expanding access, and expanding the state park system.

As the commission considers how to address these important needs for state parks, the Partners for Open Space would like to respectfully express our opposition to any funding plan that would use special funding accrued through the real estate transfer tax and directed to Program Open Space and the related conservation programs. The Partners for Open Space are united in our firm belief that diverting this special funding away from Program Open Space, the Rural Legacy Program, the Maryland Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation, and other vital conservation programs would represent a betrayal of Maryland's longtime commitment to provide adequate open space for its residents.

Since 1969, Program Open Space has sought to achieve a simple but compelling goal: for every acre of land converted to development, conserve an acre of open space. A 0.5% tax on real property transfers allows Maryland to achieve this goal, balancing growth and development with the protection of natural resources. Unfortunately, this goal has not been met. Well over \$1 billion in transfer tax funding has been diverted away from Program Open Space since its establishment. When funding is diverted, Maryland loses its best tool to protect natural areas, create parks, and secure greenspace for people and wildlife.

Special funds accrued through the real estate transfer tax are distributed to Program Open Space, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Rural Legacy Program, and the Heritage Conservation Program according to a formula. A portion of funding also goes to the Department of Natural Resources for administration. We believe that this formula should be maintained at this time in order to best meet the current and future conservation needs in Maryland.

In the coming decades, Maryland is only projected to grow in population, and this will inevitably result in further development and increased pressure on our state's remaining natural areas and its farmland. Trends toward a more remote work environment for many employers may add to this pressure. In addition, the impacts of global climate change on public health, our coastal areas, and natural lands provide further justification for fully funding Program Open Space now and each year forward.

We believe that Maryland state parks deserve a dedicated revenue source separate from the real estate transfer tax program to pay for staffing and ongoing maintenance and infrastructure. We are greatly encouraged by the recently approved projections for state revenue provided by the Board of Revenue Estimates and the level of Maryland's budget surplus, which puts Maryland in a very strong financial position now and in the coming fiscal years. This surplus could provide policymakers with the resources needed to address immediate infrastructure and maintenance needs at Maryland state parks, in tandem with efforts to identify a revenue source for ongoing costs like staffing, maintenance, and long-term infrastructure.

Thank you again for your service on this commission and for considering our letter, and please do not hesitate to rely on the Partners for Open Space as you advance the work of this commission.

Sincerely,



Joel Dunn, Co-chair
Partners for Open Space



Charlotte Davis, Co-chair
Partners for Open Space



November 2, 2021

Dear Governor Glendening and members of the State Park Investment Commission:

The Maryland Recreation and Park Association represents the 43 park and recreations departments on the state, county and municipal levels. With 3,500 members we provide continuing education and networking opportunities for our members and advocacy for our industry in Maryland.

As part of the Partners for Open Space coalition, we have provided information to the Commission on the issues surrounding Program Open Space and its nexus with the transfer tax and land preservation.

We are heartened by the increased use of all of the parks in Maryland, be they local or state parks, and the growing awareness of the benefits of being in nature and the health benefits of outdoor exercise. It is certainly one of the few upsides of this pandemic.

Looking at our state parks it has been clear to us long before the pandemic that the state park system has been woefully underfunded in both its operations and critical maintenance budgets. The likelihood of park closures due to failing infrastructure is real.

Maryland State Parks serve a broad array of visitors often providing inexpensive outdoor recreation opportunities for those residents unable to venture further afield for their recreation. Perhaps these voices are not heard in Annapolis during budget deliberations.

It is our firm believe that our State Parks System needs increased funding from the state's operating budget to meet the needs of our residents. We also recommend that the current budget surplus presents an opportunity to make a sizable dent in the backlog of critical maintenance projects.

Thank you for considering these comments and all your hard work on this Commission.

Sincerely

Chuck Montrie

Executive Director

Maryland Recreation and Parks Association

RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESOLVE STATE PARK INVESTMENT ISSUES

On August 6, 2021, President of Senate Ferguson and Speaker of the House Jones established a State Park Investment Commission. This legislative commission is to study the needs and make recommendations for the future of the State park system across Maryland. The establishment of this Commission was stimulated by State parks reaching capacity and turning away thousands of Maryland residents from enjoying these valuable outdoor assets during the 4th of July weekend.

The Commission is tasked with investigating and making recommendations regarding overcrowding in Maryland State parks, including:

1. The adequacy of existing State park facilities to meet demand for recreational opportunities in the State;
2. Levels of operating funding and staff for existing State parks, as well as the need for capital funding to provide a high-quality experience to park visitors;
3. The need for new State park offerings and any recreational deserts across Maryland; and
4. The extent to which State parks and associated recreational opportunities are adequately accessible to all populations of Marylanders, including low-income Marylanders, those who lack access to a car, and Marylanders with disabilities.

Having served for 16 years in the Legislature, the final 12 in the Senate, and having chaired the Senate Subcommittee on the Environment, I have extensive experience with Program Open Space and our system of State parks and their funding and proper functioning. Here are some observations on the state park problems raised by the presiding officers followed by recommendations to resolve the problem noted by the Presiding Officers:

First, the problems can be most simplified as ones of demand and supply. More demand for outdoor recreational opportunities by a growing population means the need for more supply to meet that demand. All measures recommended in items 1. through 7. below deal with meeting citizen demand through supply enhancements.

Second, the phenomenon of closing state parks because of overcrowding is nothing new. These closures and the turning away of thousands of Marylanders did not begin with folks seeking respite in natural outdoor settings in our state parks from COVID 19. Such shutdowns have been occurring for decades without adequate responses from Governors and General Assemblies. The time for studies and navel-gazing has ended; the time for action to resolve this problem is now.

The Maryland Park Service 2016 Strategic Park Investment Plan of November 2016 at page 4 found that: “Over the past seven years [2010-2016], 16 different state parks and areas of parks have filled to capacity during the spring and summer seasons. In 2010, these parks filled to capacity a cumulative total of 54 times. By 2015, those full-to-capacity closures had increased 126%, turning visitors away 122 times (and 112 more times in 2016), underscoring the need to expand the system to meet growing public demand during the summer season.”

The numbers, impact, and consequences of closures have grown significantly—in 2020, a record-setting 21.5 million people visited Maryland State Parks, a 45% increase from the 14.9 million in 2019. This resulted in 292 closures in 2020 due to capacity limits in 11 parks across the State. These closures were nearly triple the number in 2019 (101) at 15 State parks. The 21.5 million visitors in 2020 compares to

12 million only 5 years ago in 2015. In 2021, with the COVID-19 pandemic raging, Marylanders again flocked to the outdoors and State parks saw 170 closures, the 2nd highest on record next to 2020 closures.

Sandy Point State Park with its direct Chesapeake Bay beach access has been undergoing frequent closures for more than a decade. In 2021 it closed 20 times due to high visitation levels, filling 2,104 parking spaces, and sometimes backing up traffic for several miles on Route 50 at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. In 2020, Sandy Point had closed 23 times. Patapsco Valley State Park closed 50 times in 2020. Greenbrier State Park filled to capacity 115 times over the past seven years and turned away over 340 vehicles in one day in 2020.

Senator Ferguson is absolutely right-on in declaring when establishing the Commission that “Public outdoor spaces are essential to Marylanders’ emotional, mental, and physical health and bring people of all walks together. Geographic location, race, or income should not limit a person’s ability to enjoy these benefits, and it is critical that we expand these public spaces that protect Maryland’s rich natural resources.”

The problems have been exacerbated under Governor Hogan and his administration of DNR. Budget cuts and unfilled positions, the lack of additional staffing at the key positions for acquiring land under POS, and the lack of full POS funding and repayments have impeded the provision of more park opportunities for the public and the operation of existing parks. Maryland sets aside a tenth of 1% of the state’s budget to the management of the state park system—35 states spend more than this.

Under this Governor, the lack of cooperation by his executive agencies—in this case the Department of Natural Resources—is appalling and counterproductive. Secretary Riccio was not forthcoming before the Commission and her testimony was akin to a Hogan press release. She and her staff were not helpful in advising the Commission of any shortcomings at DNR and her staffers in the State Parks and Land Acquisition have been forbidden to speak to the Commissioners or me without her consent.

The root of the parks’ problems is the Hogan Administration starving DNR to proudly hail his budgetary restraints and importantly this includes not adequately staffing the Park Service. The Hogan Administration also has not budgeted all dedicated property transfer tax revenues to POS diverting funding to other budgetary needs and has failed to keep up with pledged paybacks which the Legislature has acceded to. This also has helped undermine the Park Service’s mission. The diversion of POS funds is not new and has occurred since 1984.

Last month after the establishment of the State Park Investment Commission, Governor Hogan announced a new Office of Outdoor Recreation within DNR to enhance recreation opportunities and stimulate economic benefits. A new hire was installed to staff the office with funds taken from the operations budget of the Park Service with no assigned budget pin number. Instead, the Governor should have reached out to the Presiding Officers and worked with them through the Commission to resolve the problems in the state parks, particularly the capacity issues.

If Governor Hogan truly wanted to act to assure state parks are accessible to all Marylanders and visitors are not turned away while the parks provide excellent experiences for Marylanders, then he should stop taking POS funds from DNR, repay what was taken, and either use part of the \$2.5 billion budget surplus or allocate federal stimulus money for state parks. Governors in Wyoming, Michigan, Maine and New Hampshire are doing the latter.

A staggering sum of \$1.371 billion from fiscal 2002 to 2016 was diverted from POS from “dedicated” real estate transfer tax revenue. See page 15 of the fiscal note for Chapter 10 for details at:

http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2016RS/fnotes/bil_0002/hb0462.pdf. From 1984 to 2002 at least another \$1 billion was diverted. Most recently, when these funds are siphoned off from POS and our park system with pledges of replacement spread over years, repayments are either delayed or not entirely honored. Despite pledges to repay the \$1.371 billion diverted from 2002 to 2016, much remains unpaid.

In the fiscal 2016-2018 time period under Governor Hogan, \$152.2 million more in POS funds were diverted but not repaid. The current budgetary plan is to repay \$242.2 million, attributable to \$90.0 million transferred in fiscal 2006 and the \$152.2 million that was transferred but not repaid during the fiscal 2016-2018 time period. Of this \$242.2 million, \$174.1 million remains to be repaid and is still planned to be repaid through fiscal 2031. The repayment schedule has been delayed by the Governor with the acquiescence of the General Assembly.

This lack of proper funding has greatly hindered the acquisition of additions to state parks as well as the purchase of new parklands even when the money is available and there are willing sellers. Staffing is totally inadequate to handle the laborious process of negotiating and conducting the legal work for additional land purchases. The same for staffing, operation, maintenance, and capital improvements in state parks—also woefully underfunded.

Again, to suggest the solutions in the most basic, simple terms: **This is a question of supply and demand.** The Senate President mentioned the critical necessity for expanding our parks. To meet the demands on our parks there must be more supply. Yes, it is that simple. And there are simple solutions on how to accomplish more supply. Here is a road map:

1. STOP STEALING DEDICATED POS FUNDS FOR OTHER PURPOSES AND PAY BACK FUNDS TAKEN.

The Governor and Legislature must stop “stealing” dedicated POS funding raised through the 0.5% transfer tax on all real estate sales and pay back funds taken. Since 1984, Governors have “stolen” more than \$2 billion in POS funds for other budgetary purposes with legislative approval. This has diversion of dedicated funding has starved DNR park funding, eliminating more land acquisitions and easements and hindering staffing improvements and maintenance and capital improvements of state parks.

Governors and lawmakers of both parties have allowed this backlog to occur. Too many policymakers consider open space funding a luxury, especially for land acquisition. The \$220 million raised last year from the transfer tax was an easy target for diversion to other uses and promises of full pay-backs spread over budget years were deferred again.

Maryland’s population has exploded five-fold since 1900 from 1.2 million to 6.2 million people today, with 783,000 people added in the last 20 years. This makes Maryland the 5th most densely populated state. The USGS Bay Office in July estimated an increase in Maryland of another one million people by 2050. Our growing, sprawling population demands more open space and more recreational opportunities at the same time that more land has been developed and land values have substantially increased. This has made parkland acquisition even more important but more expensive.

The last thing we should be doing if we do not want to close parks and run them down by overcrowding while dampening or excluding visitor experiences is for the Governor and Legislature to abscond with POS monies which were dedicated to purchase and operate parkland and use them for other purposes.

Of all state parks, the ones most sought after by visitors are ones with water access. Sandy Point State Park is a case study of this popularity. Wherever possible, new parklands should have water access.

Every state park with water access is at capacity during good weather summer weekends and holidays. If Sandy Point is closed to visitors, other water access parks could be accessed.

POS funds also have been diverted from their original purposes through amendments to the POS funding formula. One major example is diverting more than \$1 billion to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and to pay farmers to preserve farmland for 25-years. This program gets an automatic 17% of all POS funds off the top every year and provides zero access to the public while preserving lands that may be a major source of Bay pollution.

These funds would be better used to purchase sensitive forested and wetland areas as parks to provide water access to the public while enhancing the land to better protect water quality. Also lands near park deserts or in under-resourced communities of color could be targeted with these funds providing access to recreationally and outdoor experience deprived populations. MALPF already has other sources of state and local funding. minority dominated areas

Another \$1 billion has been diverted for easements to protect County-designated Rural Legacy Areas (107,000 acres) with very little of this land providing public access. POS Funds also are siphoned away annually for water and sewer operations on state land under MES (\$5 million) and Ocean City beach maintenance (\$1 million).

Local governments now receive nearly one-half of POS funds but choose to use most of these funds for operation, maintenance, and development of parks rather than purchasing land for expansion of existing parks or new parks. As of June 30, 2020, local governments have acquired 48,821 acres of land with their POS funding while the State share has been used to acquire about 300,000 acres with conservation easements on another 4,330 acres. This includes state parkland, Wildlife Management Areas, and State Forest land.

Policymakers should not siphon off more POS funds to poor-mouthing local governments to supplant their budgets. Rather, **the POS funding formula should be changed to require at least one-half of county funds to be used for acquisitions except for Baltimore City, Garrett, and Alleghany Counties** regardless of how many acres are listed by the counties as “open space”. The counties now count the land around all schools as “open space” including ball fields. Local governments should be resolving the supply problem to meet demand, too, and acquiring land should be paramount in the face of a growing population seeking open space retreats.

The prescient founders of POS back in 1969 would be appalled at the current situation. The absconding of POS funds documents why no one should be surprised that our parks have not kept pace with population growth and increasing demand for open space and recreational opportunities. These visionaries were worried about a growing and sprawling population 52 years ago but since then, the state has grown by another 2.3 million people (60%). The intent of the sponsors of the original 1969 POS statute was that "As one acre of undeveloped land is converted to a developed use, replace it with an acre of dedicated open space." This intent should be honored

2. HIRE MORE STAFF TO PURSUE ACQUISITIONS.

The Maryland Park Service is dependent on the Department’s Engineering and Construction and Land Acquisition and Planning units in acquiring more parkland. The three real estate attorneys they have are severely backlogged with processing fee simple and easement acquisitions and other real estate work like right of ways for utility crossings and rights of entry.

These highly skilled specialists must conduct the laborious efforts of first working with the State Park Service and the Division of Planning to ascertain where parkland acquisitions are best pursued to meet public demand and ecological needs. Then, they must find suitable lands with willing sellers, physically examining and assessing the lands for sale, securing appraisals, negotiating with sellers or their realtors and attorneys, seeing to surveys and title searches, making bids, taking the prospective sales to the AG's office for review, and then taking them before the Board of Public Works for approval.

There are many important acquisitions with willing sellers that are languishing because of the lack of land acquisition staff and assistant attorneys general, sometimes for years. Examples include the expansion of Wills's Mountain State Park in Allegany County. There is a willing seller for more than a 100 acre addition and the transfer has languished for more than a year. The same applies to an addition to Patapsco State Park. Other land opportunities are completely missed and the land may be developed.

Some of the most experienced staff have left and not been replaced and the Governor's budget has woefully underfunded such staff positions. The unit has not been using land trusts enough as in the past. This can greatly expedite purchases. When land trust personnel bring good deals for parkland purchases from willing sellers, DNR does not move them through their internal review with reasonable speed and they languish.

Even though recent POS funding has allowed for about \$150 million in acquisition funds, there is a major backlog in acquisitions attributable to the lack of these land acquisition specialists.

DNR is in urgent need of another four full-time land acquisition staffers in its Land Acquisition and Planning unit to break the logjam and expand our state park system. The lack of such specialists is greatly impeding the purchase of thousands of acres of parkland that could help resolve park overcrowding and closure. I suggest a sufficient budget enhancement to allow DNR to retain outside real estate professionals contractually to move more acquisitions through the pipeline. This would expedite acquisitions.

Adding to this personnel problem is the shortage of staffers in the DNR Assistant Attorney Generals' office. These real estate attorneys must review all state purchases including under POS by DNR. They are in urgent need of at least one other full-time real estate attorneys to break the huge backlog with processing POS fee simple and easement acquisitions and other real estate work like rights-of-way for utility crossings and rights of entry.

3. HIRE SUFFICIENT STAFF AND ALLOCATE SUFFICIENT OPERATING FUNDS TO PROPERLY MANAGE THE PARKS.

The existing parks and newly established parks are grossly underfunded both for operating and staffing state parks properly to serve the public and allow for fulfilling outdoor recreational opportunities for visitors. Many parks remain unattractive to visitors because of this lack of staffing and capital improvements. There is a critical need for park facilities to have adequate staff and operational budgets to meet the demand for recreational opportunities, maximize visitor experiences, handle crowds, and prevent closures.

Many years of budget cuts at DNR and the consolidation of park rangers with police authority with the DNR's Natural Resources Police forced remaining staff into responsibility for far too many tasks. The staff are stretched way too thin. They simply cannot adequately handle daily maintenance, some deferred maintenance, ensure safety, and provide reasonable visitor services.

The Friends of Maryland State Forests & Parks NGO estimates that 100 new positions are needed to staff parks now without any additions to parkland and this is just to serve visitors to meet the mission of the park service: to enhance visitor experiences and enjoyment, provide recreational experiences, interpret natural setting and any water connections, provide for the safety and welfare of visitors, maintain or establish trails, picnic areas, bathrooms, parking lots, visitor's centers, historic sites, and provide ecological services including land and water restoration, tree and flower plantings, buffers on water bodies and from heavy use areas like parking lots, and provide for endangered, threatened, and even common wildlife for visitor enjoyment and their conservation.

Examples include the inability of the Park Service to open and offer visitor experiences at some State parks. Wills Mountain State Park near Cumberland consists of 470 acres with the first purchase of 350 acres in 1998. There still is no public access and DNR leaves this State Park off a list of 23 other Western Maryland parks on its website. See the June 2021 article in the Cumberland Times-News *Wills Mountain State Park Expands Without Public Access* at:

https://www.times-news.com/news/local_news/wills-mountain-state-park-expands-without-public-access/article_3278b2ec-a78a-11eb-8b90-0b661eb0bd80.html

Another example is Franklin Point State Park a 477 acre peninsula park on the Chesapeake Bay, Deep Creek, and Flag Pond in Shady Side in Anne Arundel County. The Park remains unimproved since it was established and is unstaffed and managed by community member volunteers represented by the West/Rhode Riverkeeper. There is very limited parking with water access along unimproved shoreline which is often inaccessible during low tides. DNR's web site cautions visitors to "Check a tide chart prior to going because the mud can be extreme." The Park is a gated park with a combination lock for which you must submit an application to gain access.

An important element of park visitation is nature education and the interpretation of natural settings and any water connections. These services are fulfilled by some Park Service naturalists or volunteers who still need staff oversight. Unlike National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges, this hugely important element of enhancing visitor experiences is lacking in most of our state parks. I would urge any funding initiatives to include naturalists for most of our state parks.

This shortage of staffing personnel and operating budgets is severe and prevents not only access to visitors but prevents a fulfilling visitor experience and full recreational opportunities at many state parks. Without such staffing and operating funding, the problems of lack of access, closures, and limited outdoor recreational opportunities will increase.

Another indication of this lack of proper funding is in the 13,200 acres of production agriculture on the 141,000 acres of state park land. Contract growers mainly produce corn and soybeans on these park lands. These crops are highly dependent on nitrogen fertilizer and nitrogen is a major Bay and groundwater pollutant. The Park Service wants to employ agricultural technicians to work with growers to assure that regenerative agricultural practices are adhered to including crop rotation to minimize pesticide and fertilizer use and assure fully sustainable farm practices with BMPs on State lands. This cannot be done without more staff.

This shortage of staffers for the enhancement of ecological services applies for most all state parklands.

4. ALLOCATE SUFFICIENT MAINTENANCE FUNDS TO END THE BACKLOG OF CRITICAL MAINTENANCE AND PROVIDE FUNDS FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS. .

Most of state parks' infrastructure is over 40 years old and some dates back to the 1930s. Despite years of alerts calling for increased funding to the increasing backlog of critical maintenance needs that are

crippling the proper functioning of state parks, the problem is increasing. In FY2018 there was a backlog of \$40 million in critical maintenance in FY 2022 that deficit increased to \$63.8 million. This backlog does not include pricing-in design and construction inflation. In reality, the deficit may be more than \$100 million. Over the last 4 years \$28.7 million was cut from the Park Service budget for this critical maintenance. This data is from DLS. The increasing aging of state park infrastructure without necessary maintenance is exacerbated by greater traffic and usage in the parks.

This is from the Maryland Rangers Association:

\$68 Million Critical Maintenance Backlog – Many State Parks were developed in the 1930s through the 1960s, and, in many cases, critical infrastructure is original and far beyond its life expectancy.

Recurring delays and deferrals of capital project and critical maintenance funding, at a time when park attendance is at historically record high levels, results in straining and overwhelming infrastructure, leading to facility breakdowns, compromised visitor experiences, loss of services, and impacts to public safety.

*This backlog also represents the Department's inability to meet its responsibilities with regard to **preserving and restoring the significant number of historical / cultural resources** in its care, as well as the inability to move forward with **integrating green technology** into the State Park infrastructure and **modeling sustainable practices** for both the public and private entities.*

DNR's Engineering and Construction Unit is impeded by critical staffing shortages and unable to manage additional projects / funds with existing personnel.

The backlog is for 551 defined projects that are critical and range from bathroom renovations to road repairs. An example of this is the historic Mt. Airy Mansion where George Washington visited at Rosaryville State Park. This mansion was previously opened for visitors but has deteriorated so badly it has been closed for years while the deterioration worsens without a working heating system. Deprived of critical maintenance funds this major project awaits funding along with 550 others which you can ascertain from DNR.

Also note above the critical staffing shortage in DNR's Engineering and Construction Unit which renders it unable to manage additional projects and funding without more staff, a problem noted elsewhere in these recommendations.

Reports by DNR, DLS, and the General Assembly have repeatedly pointed out the necessity of resolving these maintenance backlogs. For example, passage of HB 462 (Chapter 10 of 2016), was to provide an additional \$40 million in funding for projects at \$7 million a year to address the critical maintenance and capital development project backlog needs of state parks. But the funding was not always in the budget and is woefully inadequate to meet the \$63 million backlog in critical maintenance.

DNR never knows its critical maintenance or capital projects funding from year to year until the state budget is approved. This creates planning problems. Further, DBM holds the upper hand in such allocations even with use of some POS funds.

The current system is complicated but here is a simplification, all subject to the Governor's budget and the whims of the General Assembly for final approval:

Under the transfer tax formula, there is an allocation of funding to capital development. This allocation is determined as 1/8th of the sum of the POS allocation, Rural Legacy allocation, and additional State

land acquisition allocation minus the \$3.0 million that goes to the Heritage Areas Authority and the funding that goes to the Maryland Environmental Service for water and wastewater projects on DNR lands.

This capital development funding includes the following:

- **Critical Maintenance Program** – an amount determined by DNR and DBM within the capital development allocation that is used for maintenance/replacement projects in DNR facilities;
- **Natural Resources Development Fund** – an amount determined by DNR and DBM within the capital development allocation for new capital projects in DNR facilities
- ; and
- **Ocean City Beach Maintenance** -- \$1,000,000 per year as the State contribution to the Ocean City Beach Maintenance Fund.

This formula and budgeting methodology needs to be changes to full fund the critical maintenance and capital improvements needed for state parks. See the proposed solution in item 5. below.

5. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BACKLOG NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.

The existing parks and new parks lack both operational funding and staffing to serve the public as well as capital funding to provide a high-quality experience to park visitors. Many parks remain unattractive to visitors because of this lack of staffing and capital improvements.

Besides the \$63 million needed for critical maintenance, increased funding for other capital improvements, including for new parks, is needed. This in addition to the additional staffing in DNR's Engineering and Construction unit and in the DGS capital development unit is urgently needed to expedite the procurement of contractors to do these projects. Both units are struggling with reduced staff resources.

Recent state park additions and improvements have preoccupied the limited DNR staff and used much of the capital improvement funding. These projects included:

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park; establishment of the new North Point State Battlefield and War of 1812 Exhibit Hall; renovation of the 1,000-foot Crystal Pier at North Point State Park; interior renovations of 21 cabins at New Germany and Herrington Manor state parks; complete renovation of nine bathhouses at Assateague State Park; and; construction of nine nature-themed playgrounds.

At the same time as completing this capital projects, the Park Service must struggle to maintain and operate existing parks. Many facilities are well beyond their useful lives and need to be replaced through a long-term capital budget plan. The condition of these facilities has been exacerbated by the increased park visitation that led to the establishment of this Commission.

Folks with more than 40 years of experience in state parks have recommended that a long-term capital budget plan be developed that shifts major State Park capital projects out of the DNR share of POS and funds them in the annual capital budget bond bill. This can be accommodated by prioritizing these many backlogged park capita projects in the capital budget. Major facilities would include projects of at least \$1 million.

The Maryland Stadium Authority would be authorized as the contractor to implement these major capital projects. A recent example of the authority's expedited work to bring these facilities online can be seen at Fair Hill Park Natural Resources Management Area managed by DNR State Parks in Cecil County.

The MSA successfully used funds from the POS stateside share to fund this project. Substituting funds from annual capital budget would allow state parks to use POS funds previously allocated for these major capital projects to be redirected to deferred critical maintenance with DGS contracting for these maintenance projects. More POS funds also would be available for land acquisition.

As mentioned, both Fair Hill and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park were funded through DNR's share of POS. The consequence of funding major projects from POS is that these major projects displaced all other capital projects in DNR's POS funded capital budget (including some critical maintenance capital projects) during the years these facilities were funded.

Additional funding for deferred capital maintenance is critical but the delivery system also needs to be reformed. Otherwise, additional funding will create growing surpluses that then will result in budget reductions in subsequent fiscal years on the basis that DNR cannot spend down the annual budget allocations for maintenance. This cycle has existed for some time and is obviously counter-productive to the goal of well-maintained parks.

Also, the legislature should fund a second In-House Construction Crew (a project manager and 4 crew members for a total of 5) in DNR's Engineering and Construction Unit. This unit has had an in-house crew since the 1980s but its capacity has been reduced by budget cuts and not being able to fill vacancies.

These employees are skilled craftsmen and the crew leader was a project manager from a construction company. The crew provides great flexibility to be deployed around the state to do capital maintenance, renovation of facilities including historic structures, and new facility construction. There has been a plan to fund the establishment of a crew in each of the park service's four regions. But funding at least a second one would be a much needed step in the right direction.

6. TRIPLE THE ALLOCATION OF POS FUNDS FOR THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION FUND. We are undergoing the 6th great species extinction, the first in 60 million years and the only one caused by human activity. The Heritage Conservation Fund was established under Governor Hughes and uses POS funds for acquisition of the most sensitive lands and water in Maryland that are critical to preserving biodiversity. The DNR Natural Heritage Program tracks over 1,250 rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants and animals, including pollinators.

DNR receives dedicated funding through only 1.8% of the POS real estate transfer tax which brought \$3.6 million this year for The Heritage Conservation Fund. Since 1986, 10,000 acres of critical habitat have been protected. But Maryland's targeted overall ecological areas for protection total 2,578,651 acres. To date, only about 930,000 acres have been protected, leaving 1,650,903 acres still to be protected. See page 4 of the DLS analyses of the DNR 2021 capital budget at: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2021fy-budget-docs-capital-KA05-Department-of-Natural-Resources.pdf>

Boosting this Fund will provide significant ecological experiences for Marylanders and visitors where wildlife and flora can flourish amid the crush of population growth and spiral development. I suggest tripling this allocation off the top of POS funds to 5.4%.

7. THE DIVERSION OF POS FUNDS AND LACK OF STAFF IS IMPEDING EFFORTS FOR NEW STATE PARK OFFERINGS, RESOLVING RECREATIONAL DESERTS, AND ASSURING PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL POPULATIONS OF MARYLANDERS, INCLUDING LOW-INCOME MARYLANDERS.

These funding problems must be resolved to make progress on these equity issues by expansion of existing parks and establishment of new ones. DNR has been trying to work with Baltimore City Recreation and Parks and some neighborhood groups to establish pocket parks and gardens. The lack of personnel to carry out such a program is inhibiting progress.

The Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park is a model established many years ago and comprises the second largest woodland park in the United States consisting of over 1000 acres. Although surrounded by an urban environment some of its trails are so heavily wooded that they give the impression of wilderness.

Maryland enacted The Community Parks and Playgrounds Program providing \$2.5 million annually in POS funding to focus on restoring existing and creating new park and green space systems in Maryland's cities and towns. Flexible grants are provided to local governments which help them rehabilitate, expand or improve existing parks. Funding can help develop environmentally oriented parks and recreation projects, create new parks, or purchase and install playground equipment in older neighborhoods and intensely developed areas throughout the state. Again, lack of sufficient DNR staff inhibits great progress.

Sandy Point State Park is an example of the broad appeal of parks to all income groups and races. It provides a broad, sandy Chesapeake Bay beach that is used in the summer by mostly minorities. With access to changing spaces, boat rentals, and fishing gear rentals. DNR has a capital plan for a visitor's center and other major amenities to enhance the visitor's experience including trying to find funds for naturalists. Unfortunately, this park is frequently closed in the summer due to overcrowding. More staffing is needed as well as the planned capital improvements.

The Chesapeake Conservancy has recommended a new allocation of stateside POS funds, the Urban Equity Fund, to start a new grant program to make funds available to local governments or nonprofit community organizations to provide a variety of green spaces in under-resourced communities of color in both urban and rural settings.

6. WHAT NOT TO DO.

- a. Do not believe the answer to overcrowding and park closures is to add to or build more parking spaces. Park Service professionals are convinced this is not a viable solution and would negate fulfilling visitor experiences at even more overcrowded parks, overwhelm facilities, and strain park personnel further.
- b. Do not take more funds from POS for maintenance. This would be robbing Peter to Pay Paul diverting even more funds from POS. This will lead to more overcrowding and park closures as land acquisitions decline as do operating funds.
- c. Do not increase park fees as this would inhibit equitable access to state parks.
- d. Do not divert attention at this time from the core purpose behind the appointment of the Commission to deal with park overcrowding and access to underserved communities by including measures for park resiliency due to climate change or the interconnectivity of federal, state, and local parks.
- e. Do not be misled by increasing visitors to state park meaning adequate revenues to resolve overcrowding problems as the reverse is true
- f. Do not put off resolving the issues we now know need to be addressed especially by appointment of yet another group or DNR or DLS study to come up with solutions to what is at its most basic a supply and demand problem.

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your work in Maryland's General Assembly and especially for your membership on the Joint State Park Investment Commission.

As a resident of Frederick County, I write to express my appreciation and support for the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain and enhance Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks. As you are aware, the advent of the COVID 19 pandemic has meant an overwhelming increase in usage and visitation of all our state parks. Although park visitation was already on the rise, the pandemic put unprecedented stress on the system. When faced with limited safe options for recreation, relaxation, and stress relief, Marylanders turned to our state parks in record numbers.

The staff and volunteers at Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks rose to the challenge with grit and grace. Despite being understaffed and underfunded these individuals worked hard to keep the parks safe, clean, and open. The amount of work they have had to do to make this possible, however, is not sustainable. I am hopeful that additional funding and resources from the state of Maryland will be forthcoming.

As a resident of Frederick County, I am an admirer of the work done by The Catoctin Furnace Historical Society (CFHS). CFHS works closely with the staff and volunteers at Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks and they are essential to the work done to preserve and interpret the historic village of Catoctin Furnace, much of which is on Maryland Park Service land. They assist in staffing events and work with CFHS volunteers to ensure that the furnace, historic houses, African American Cemetery Trail, and surrounding landscape are well maintained. Simply put, CFHS could not do its important historic preservation work without the state park staff's support and assistance. However, while this partnership is critical to our work, the park is unable to help with funding for the work. For example, CFHS supplied, via grant monies, nearly \$250,000 to restore the DNR managed/state owned stone worker's cottage at 12610 Catoctin Furnace Road that houses the Museum of the Ironworker. CFHS also independently raised significant funds to create and restore (and provide interpretive signage) on trails within the park. Thus, CFHS has a unique perspective on the need for increased funding and support for the Maryland parks and, in particular, those that oversee historic sites.

Catoctin Furnace (www.catoctinfurnace.org) has a unique and important story to tell about industrial slavery and the iron industry. However, it is critical to note that the park system's essential mission differs from that of CFHS. Whereas CFHS is concerned with the preservation and maintenance of the furnace and village, including protecting the structures from vegetative and weather-related threats, the park staff have a wider mission in the realm of active recreation. Thus, with limited resources, essential work necessary to preserve the historic furnace and state-owned site is often delayed, putting the historic village and its history at great risk.

Catoctin Furnace played a crucial role in American history. For more than 125 years it manufactured iron used to produce household tools and Franklin stoves for the growing country. It also produced historically important arms and ammunition, including the bombshells fired by George Washington's army in defeating the British at the Battle of Yorktown.

The role of Catoctin Furnace in the industrial development of Maryland is well known. What is much less well known is the story of the workers, both black and white, who powered this industrial activity. Detailed historical research has revealed that the majority of the workers during the late 18th/early 19th centuries were enslaved Africans and African Americans, including skilled artisans such as iron workers, masons, and carpenters. While many of these individuals are buried in an unmarked cemetery at Catoctin Furnace, their visibility in the historical interpretation of the furnace and early industrial America to date has been minimal. The economic benefit of heritage tourism at Catoctin Furnace is significant and increasing. The installation of two forensic facial reconstructions in the museum and the release of the

Smithsonian Channel's "America's Hidden History" program about Catoctin Furnace will dramatically increase visitorship which has already increased 647.89%.

The partnership between CFHS and Cunningham Falls State Park has been fruitful for each party, telling the story of the land and the people of Catoctin. However, I urge the Commission to consider the needs of Catoctin Furnace as a separate entity within the park system, one that focuses on the nationally significant historic industrial site where enslaved and freed Africans lived and labored, transferring ironmaking skills from Africa to America during the colonial period and where later arriving European immigrants fueled the industrial might of nineteenth century America. Catoctin Furnace highlights the contributions of both groups of workers and provides an opportunity to understand and appreciate their significant contributions to the industrial history of the United States. This critically important story deserves focused and funded site management and interpretation unit within the state park system.

Thank you for your assistance in this important effort.

Sincerely,
Judy I. Thompson

Dear Members of the State Park Investment Commission,

I write to express my appreciation and support for the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain and enhance Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks. As you are aware, the advent of the COVID 19 pandemic has meant an overwhelming increase in usage and visitation of all our state parks. Although park visitation was already on the rise, the pandemic put unprecedented stress on the system. When faced with limited safe options for recreation, relaxation, and stress relief, Marylanders turned to our state parks in record numbers. As a member of the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society (CFHS), I can attest to the fact that the staff and volunteers at Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks rose to the challenge with grit and grace. Despite being understaffed and underfunded these individuals worked hard to keep the parks safe, clean, and open. The amount of work they have had to do to make this possible, however, is not sustainable. I am hopeful that additional funding and resources from the state of Maryland will be forthcoming.

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Elizabeth A. Comer,
President
Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.
12610 Catoctin Furnace Road
Thurmont, Maryland 21788-3007
www.catoctinfurnace.org

Delegate Luedtke,

As a follow up to the Commission's previous discussions about National and State Park staffing differences, we thought that you and the other Commission members may be interested in seeing the Assateague Island National / State Park organizational charts side-by-side. Please see the attached documents.

The Assateague State Park organizational chart is currently up to date and shows the actual number of seasonal positions filled during the 2021 summer season. State Park permanent employees are shaded in blue.

On the Assateague Island National Seashore organizational chart, the acronyms stand for the following:

PFT - Permanent Full Time

PPT - Permanent Part Time

PSF - Permanent Subject to Furlough

Term - Term positions are for jobs that may last one to four years. Term appointments may be used for project work, extraordinary workload, scheduled cancellation of a position, reorganization, uncertainty of future funding, or contracting out of the function.

Andrew / Jeremy - We would like to submit these documents as written testimony.

On behalf of all Maryland State Park Rangers and employees, we sincerely appreciate the Commission's thorough study of Maryland's state park system. We are eagerly looking forward to next week's meeting, and as always, we remain available to you to answer any questions or assist in any way that we can. Have a great weekend.

Sincerely,

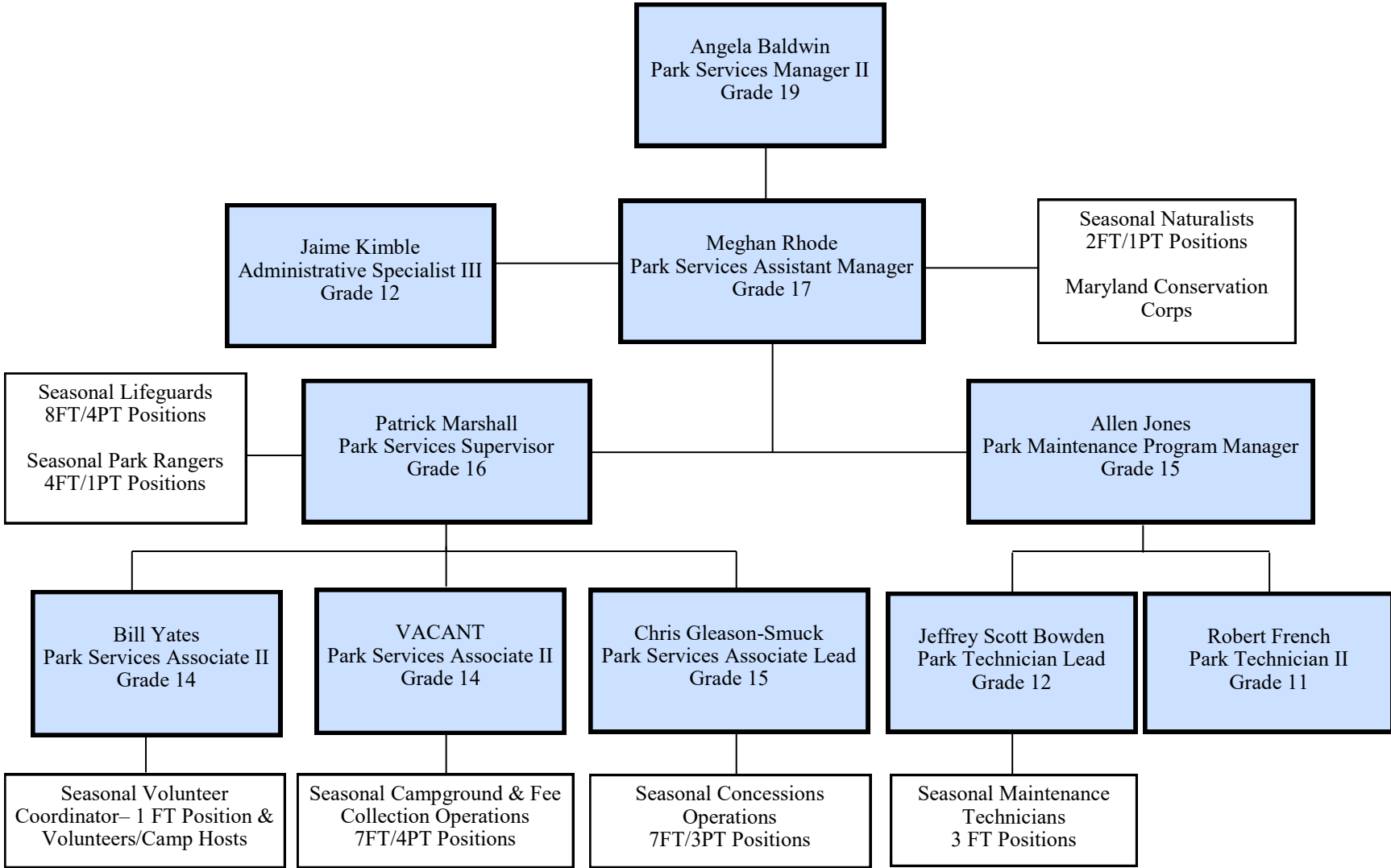
Ranger Dean Hughes

President

Maryland Rangers Association

Assateague State Park

Organizational Chart – 2021 Season

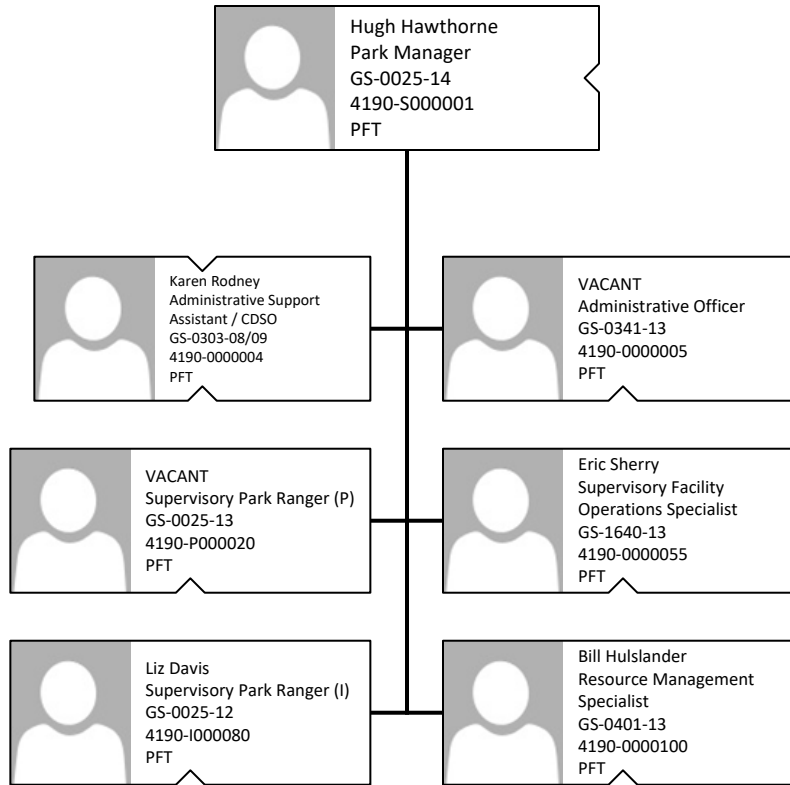





Assateague Island National Seashore
Organizational Chart
October 2021


Hugh Hawthorne, Superintendent


Deborah Conway, Deputy Regional Director



 VACANT
Administrative Officer
GS-0341-13
4190-0000005
PFT

 Ryan McKelvey
Budget Analyst
GS-0560-09/11
4190-0000006
PFT

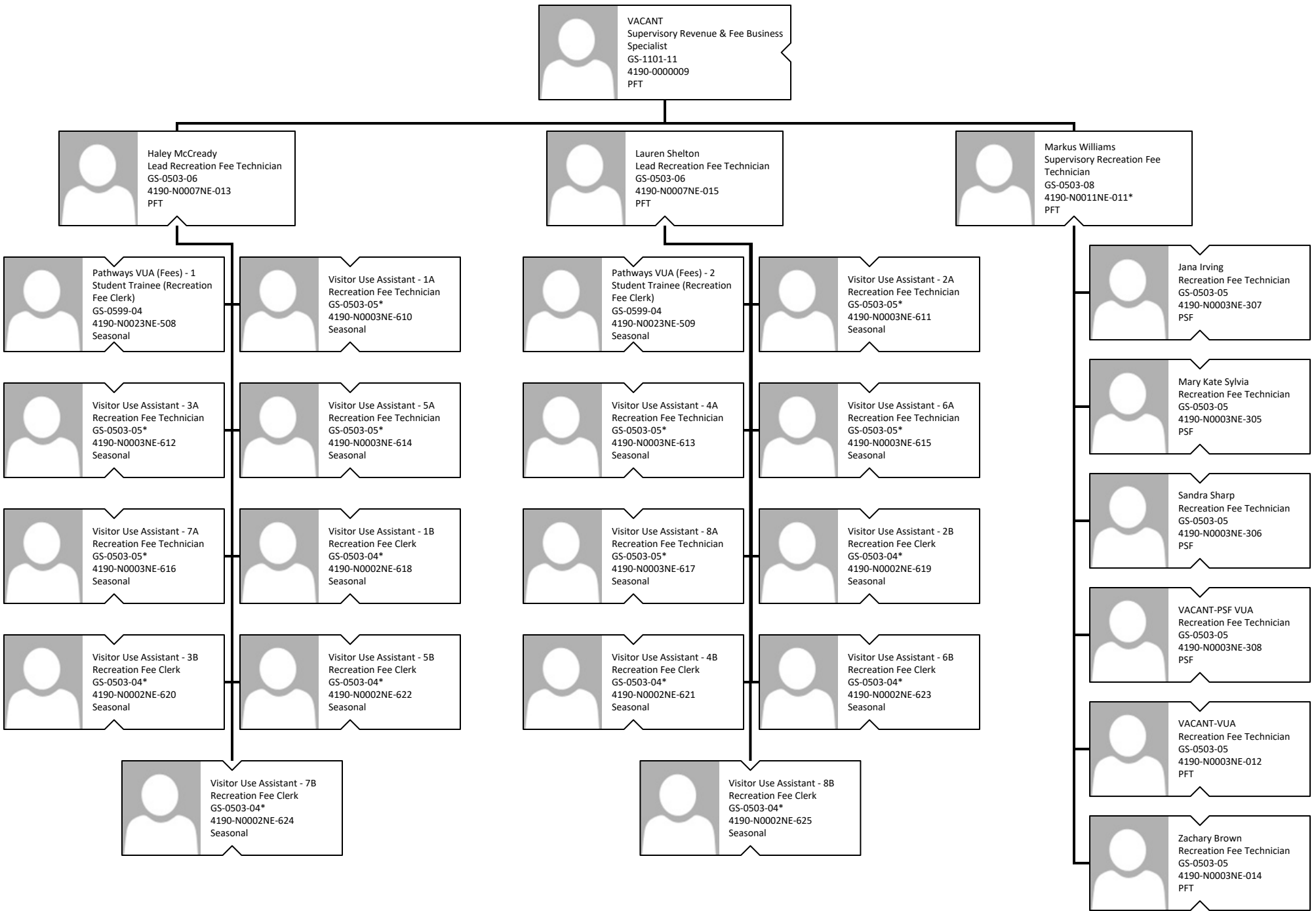
 Joel Gordon
Information Technology
Specialist
GS-2210-11
4190-0000007
PFT

 Jeanne Feltes
Budget Technician
GS-0561-07
4190-0000008
PFT


 VACANT
Supervisory Revenue & Fee
Business Specialist
GS-1101-11
4190-0000009
PFT

 Gregory Yarbro
Concessions Management
Specialist
GS-1101-09
4190-0000010
PFT

 VACANT
Administrative Support
Assistant
GS-0303-06
4190-0000330
PSF



*Due to mandatory use of different PD#s, GS-4 & GS-5 positions are separated. A total of eight seasonal positions will be filled.



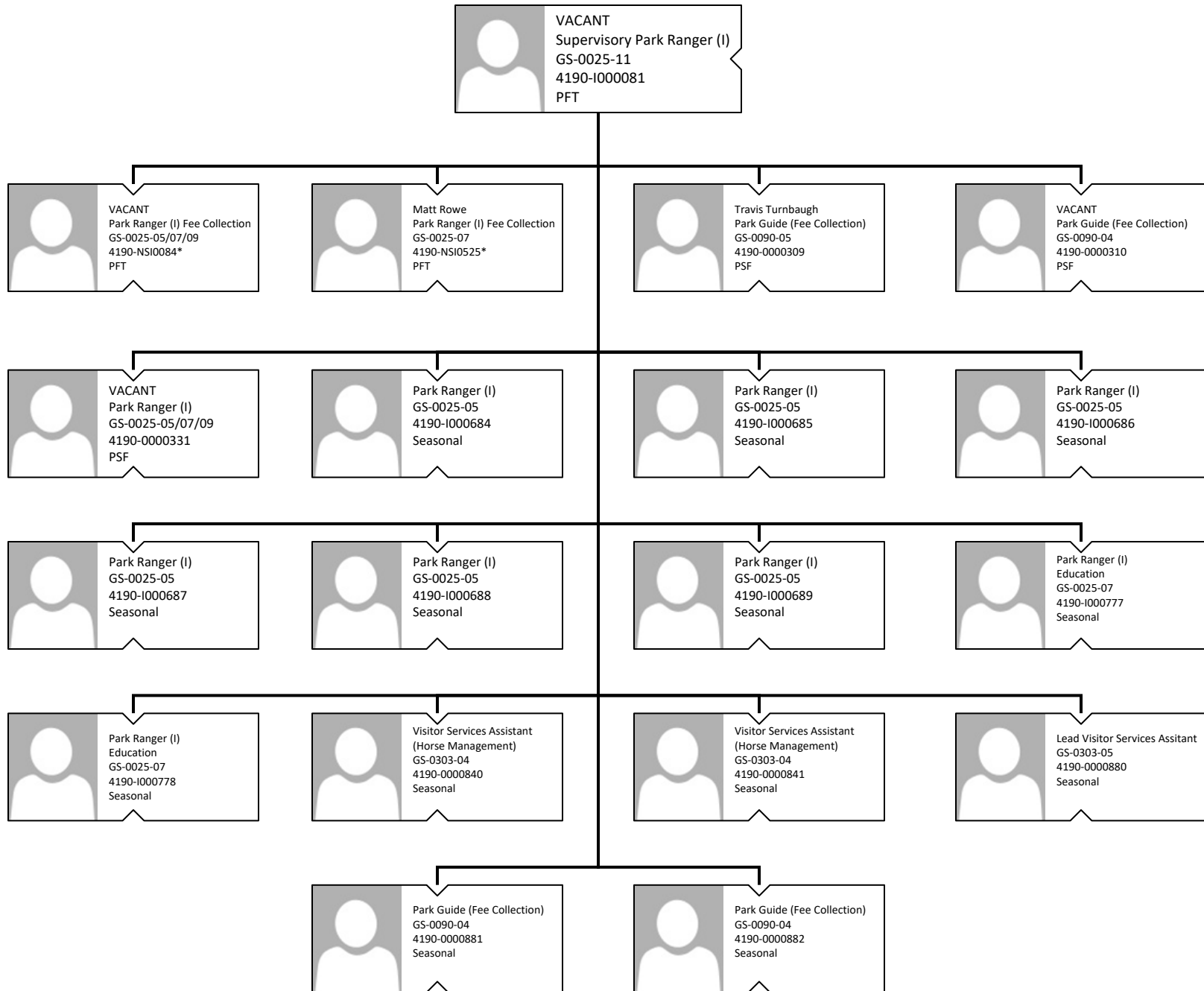
Liz Davis
Supervisory Park Ranger (I)
GS-0025-12
4190-1000080
PFT



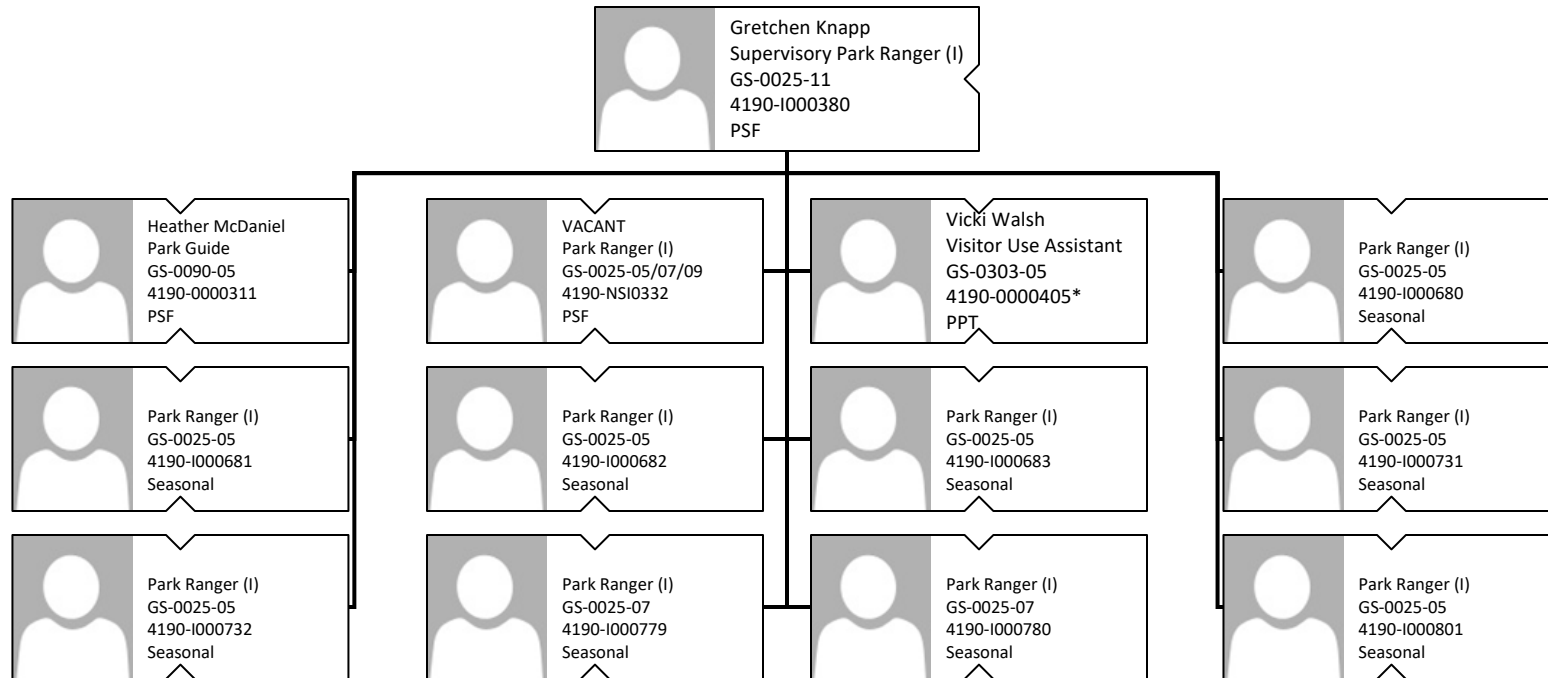
Gretchen Knapp
Supervisory Park Ranger (I)
GS-0025-11
4190-1000380
PSF




VACANT
Supervisory Park Ranger (I)
GS-0025-11
4190-1000081
PFT




*VRA appointment. Once successfully completed 2 yrs., employee will be converted to PD# 84.




*Position will not be filled when vacated.



Eric Sherry
Supervisory Facility Operations
Specialist
GS-1640-13
4190-0000055
PFT



VACANT
Budget Technician
GS-0561-06/07
4190-0000056
PFT



Kevin Means
Maintenance Mechanic
Supervisor
WS-4749-10
4190-0000057
PFT



Christopher Fitzgerald
Maintenance Mechanic
Supervisor
WS-4749-09
4190-0000064
PFT



Bruce D'Aloisio
Facility Management Systems
Specialist
GS-1601-07/09
4190-0000500
PFT




Kevin Means
Maintenance Mechanic Supervisor
WS-4749-10
4190-000057
PFT




Christopher Amoroso
Maintenance Mechanic
WG-4749-09
4190-0000315
PSF




Christopher Hayes
Automotive Mechanic
WG-5823-10
4190-000059
PFT




James Bell
Water Treatment Plant
Operator (MVO)
WG-5409-10
4190-000061
PFT




Joshua Lockwood
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000316
PSF




Laborer (MD) - 1
Laborer (Motor Vehicle
Operating)
WG-3502-04
4190-0000810
Seasonal



Laborer (MD) - 2
Laborer (Motor Vehicle
Operating)
WG-3502-04
4190-0000811
Seasonal



Laborer (MD) - 3
Laborer (Motor Vehicle
Operating)
WG-3502-04
4190-0000812
Seasonal



Laborer (MD) - 4
Laborer (Motor Vehicle
Operating)
WG-3502-04
4190-0000813
Seasonal



Maintenance Worker (MD) - 1
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000655
Seasonal



Maintenance Worker (MD) - 10
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000664
Seasonal



Maintenance Worker (MD) - 2
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000656
Seasonal




Maintenance Worker (MD) - 3
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000657
Seasonal



Maintenance Worker (MD) - 4
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000658
Seasonal




Maintenance Worker (MD) - 5
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000659
Seasonal



Maintenance Worker (MD) - 6
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000660
Seasonal




Maintenance Worker (MD) - 7
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000661
Seasonal




Maintenance Worker (MD) - 8
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000662
Seasonal




Maintenance Worker (MD) - 9
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000663
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 1
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000757
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 2
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000758
Seasonal



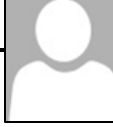
MVO (MD) - 3
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000759
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 4
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000760
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 5
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000761
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 6
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000762
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 7
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000763
Seasonal




MVO (MD) - 8
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000764
Seasonal




Nicholas Jones
Engineering Equipment
Operator
WG-5716-08
4190-0000314
PSF



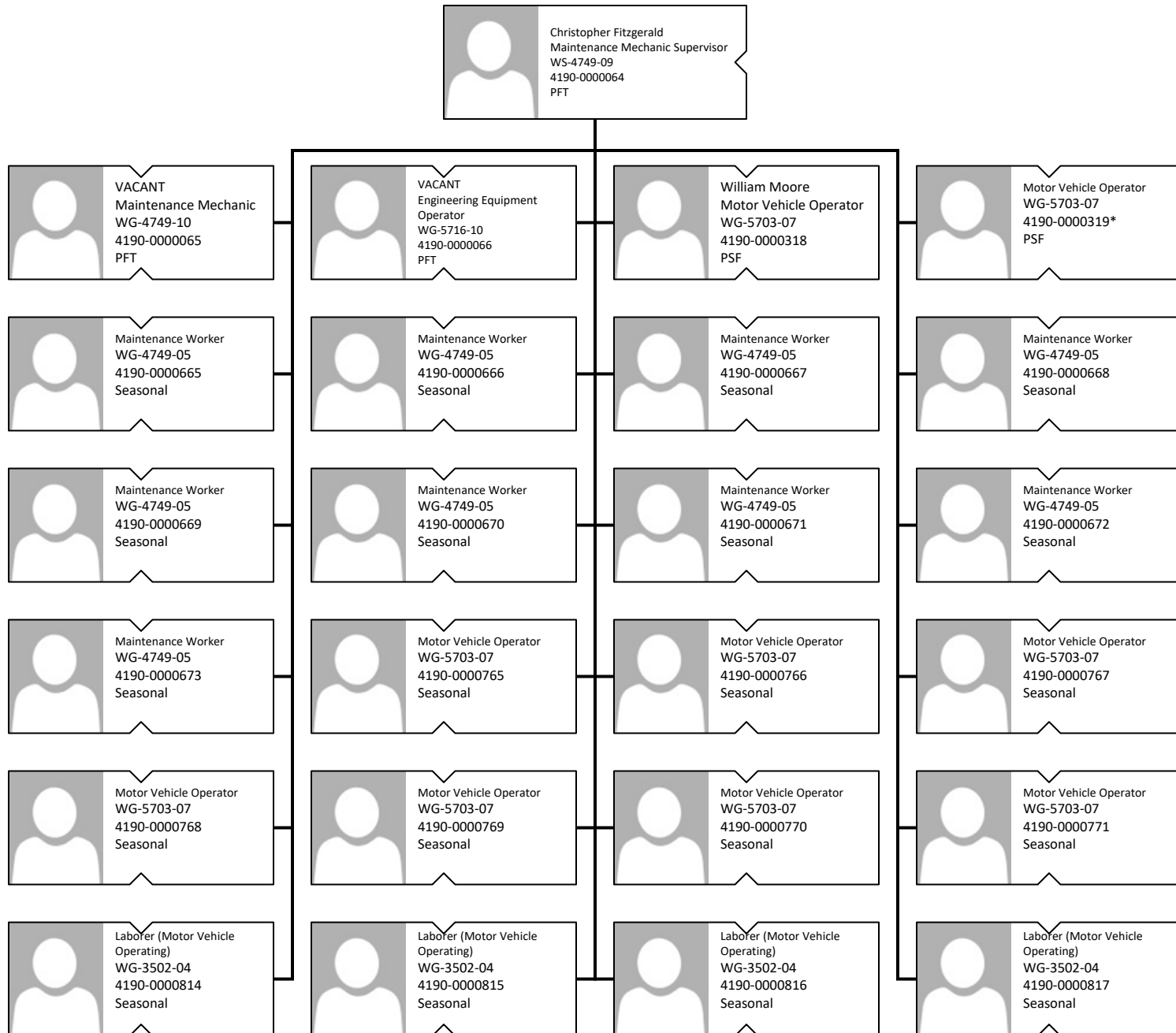
Reed Carter
Maintenance Mechanic
WG-4749-10
4190-DFM0063
PFT



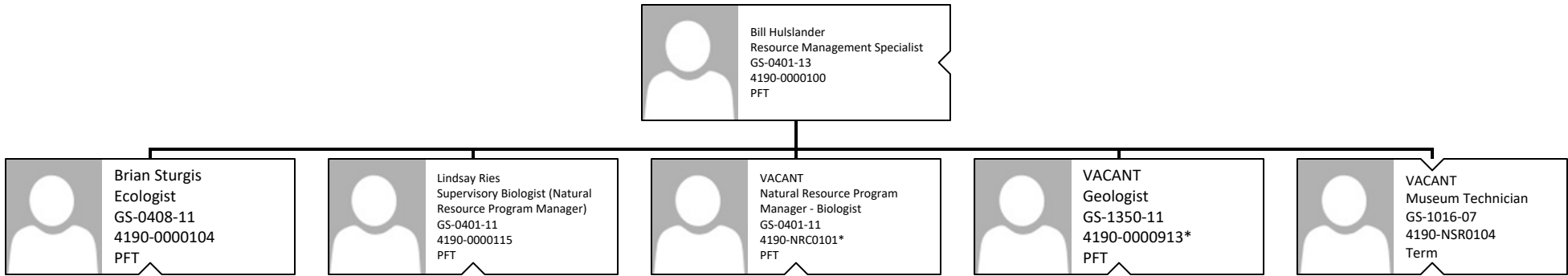
VACANT- MD MVO - 2
Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000317
PSF




VACANT-Maintenance Worker
Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-000062
PFT





*Position will be filled if RecFee waiver is approved.



*Position not currently funded


 Brian Sturgis
Ecologist
GS-0408-11
4190-0000104
PFT


 Casey Nolan
Biological Science Technician
(Aquatic)
GS-0404-08/09
4190-0000108
PFT

 VACANT
Engineering Equipment
Operator
WG-5716-08
4190-0000902
TERM


 Hydrologic Technician
GS-1316-05
4190-0000600
Seasonal


 Maintenance Worker
WG-4749-05
4190-0000730
Seasonal

 VACANT
Biological Science Technician
(Fisheries)
GS-0404-07
4190-NSR0103
PFT


 VACANT
Biological Science Technician
GS-0404-06/07
4190-0000916
TERM


 Bio Science Tech - (Fisheries)
GS-0404-05
4190-0000710
Seasonal


 Motor Vehicle Operator
WG-5703-07
4190-0000775
Seasonal

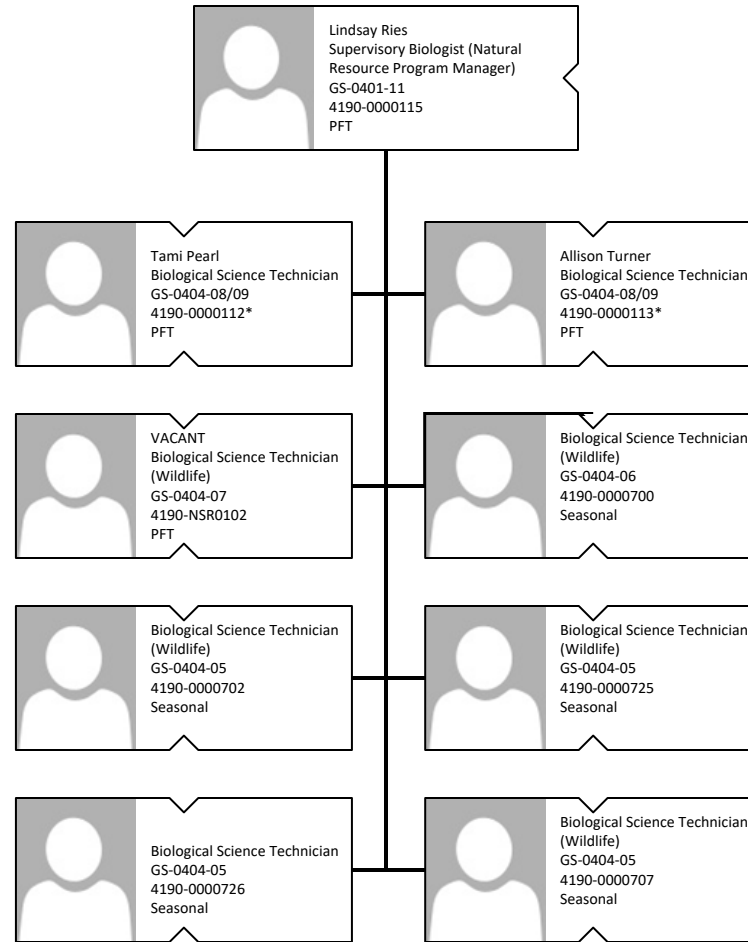
	VACANT Natural Resource Program Manager - Biologist GS-0401-11 4190-NRC0101* PFT
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	Jonathan Chase Biological Science Technician GS-0404-08/09 4190-0000107 PFT
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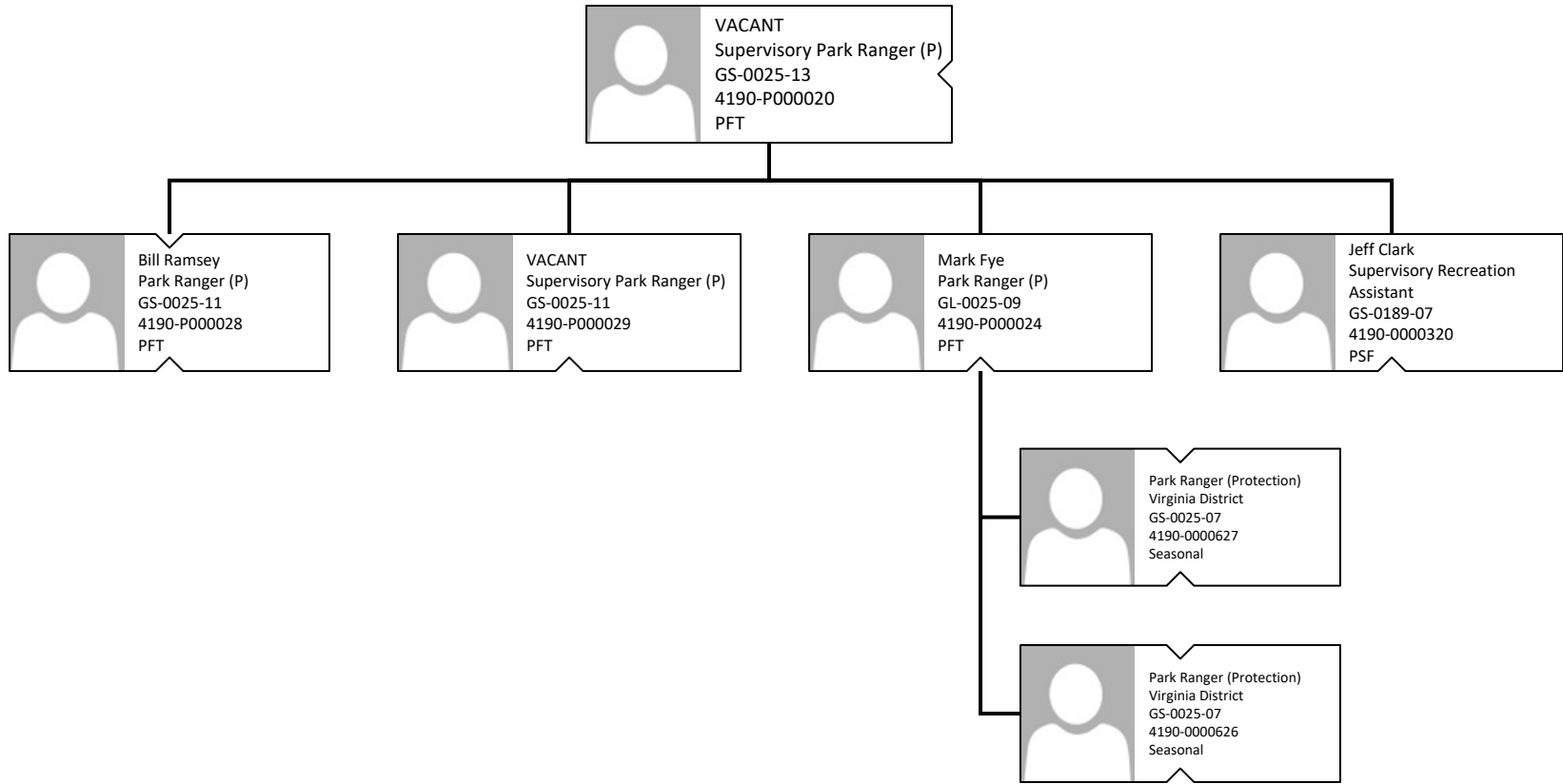
 VACANT
Geologist
GS-1350-11
4190-0000913*
PFT

 Cartographic Technician
GS-1371-07
4190-0000714
Seasonal


 VACANT
Cartographic Technician
GS-1371-05/06/07
4190-0000905
TERM





*Position will not be filled when vacated.




 VACANT
Supervisory Park Ranger (P)
GS-0025-11
4190-P000029
PFT

 Jacob Zanette
Park Ranger (P)
GL-0025-05/07/09
4190-P000023
PFT

 Matthew Lippy
Park Ranger (P)
GL-0025-09
4190-P000025
PFT

 Nathan Puskar
Park Ranger (P)
GL-0025-09
4190-P000026
PFT

 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000620
Seasonal


 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000621
Seasonal


 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000623
Seasonal

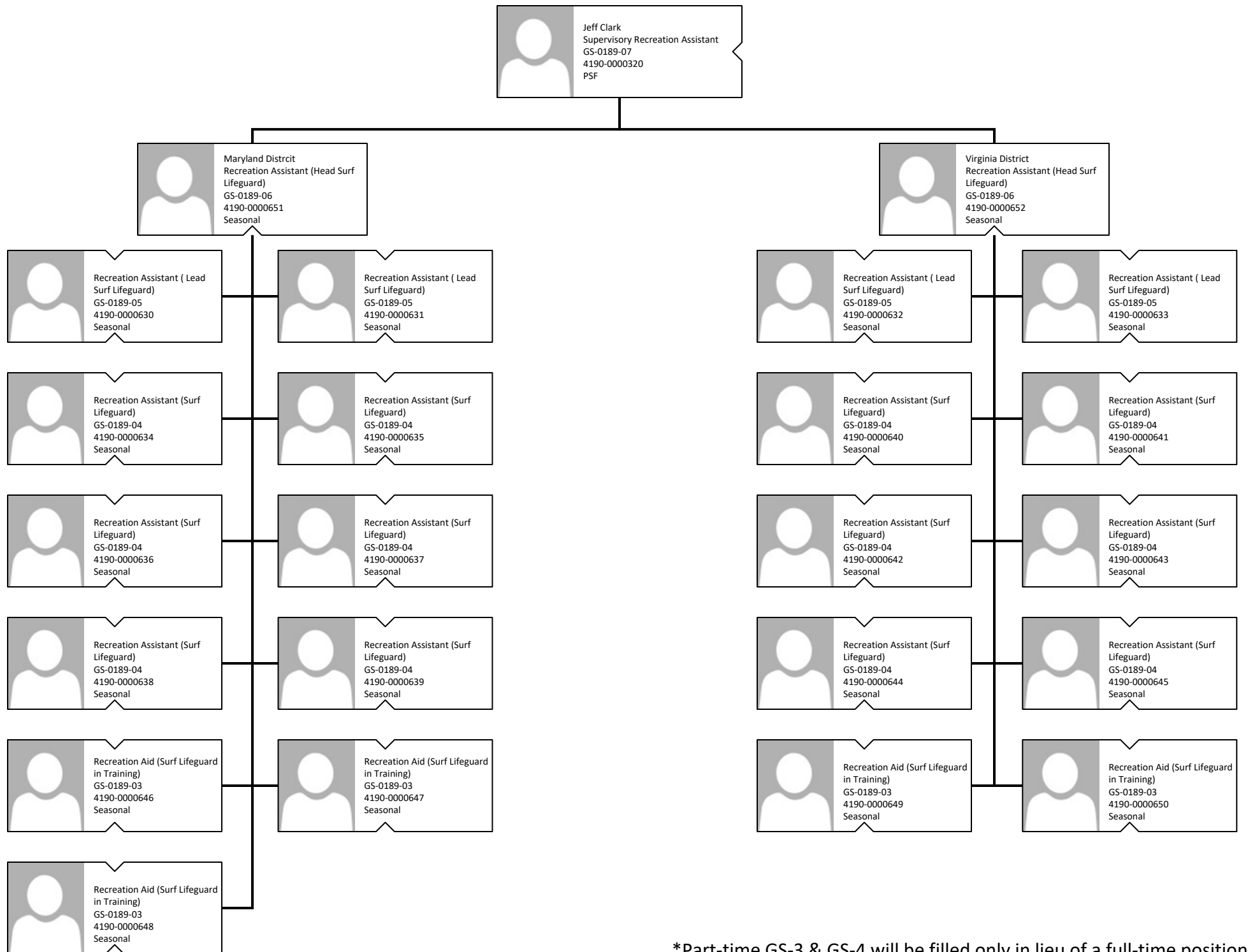
 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000624
Seasonal

 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000625
Seasonal

 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-07
4190-0000626
Seasonal

 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-05
4190-0000629
Seasonal

 Park Ranger (Protection)
GS-0025-07
4190-0000622
Seasonal



*Part-time GS-3 & GS-4 will be filled only in lieu of a full-time position.