



# Port of Deposit State Historical Park Report to the Legislature

Port of Deposit State Historical Park  
Report to the Legislature per Natural Resources § 5-1012(g)(4) from SB 517, Ch. 602,  
2023

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By the Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
580 Taylor Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**For further information concerning this document contact:**

Department of Natural Resources  
580 Taylor Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
1-877-620-8367  
TTY: 410-260-8835  
TTY Toll Free: 800-681-8978  
Email: [CustomerService.DNR@Maryland.gov](mailto:CustomerService.DNR@Maryland.gov)  
Website: <http://dnr.maryland.gov>

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# Port of Deposit State Historical Park Report to the Legislature

## Background

The Great Maryland Outdoors Act of 2022 (Senate Bill 541/Chapter 39) mandates that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shall “establish the Port of Deposit State Historical Park as a partnership park that seeks to educate the public about and preserve and interpret the lives and experiences of Black Americans both before and after the abolition of slavery.” The Act goes on to require that the “Port of Deposit State Historical Park shall consist of a portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center Site, measuring not less than 120 acres and not more than 150 acres...including: the historic Tome School, Snow Hill Archaeological Site, and the Adjacent Wooded Conservation Area.” Each of these sections is highlighted in this report.

The Act, as originally enacted, required Bainbridge Development Corporation (BDC) to transfer the park property to DNR by June 1, 2023, and required DNR to submit a report to the General Assembly by January 1, 2023. In 2022 DNR submitted its report on the Port of Deposit State Historical Park to the General Assembly. Thereafter, SB517 of 2023 modified the date of the property transfer to provide that BDC transfer the property to DNR by June 1, 2025, and to provide that DNR submit a report to the General Assembly by September 1, 2024.

This report is a progress update and will address efforts by DNR, its partners, and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, to create the Port of Deposit State Historical Park, as well as remaining challenges and items that must be addressed.

The Great Maryland Outdoors Act directed DNR to establish a Stakeholder Advisory Committee to advise the Department on the scope and management of the “Port of Deposit State Historical Park.” For a complete list of members see Appendix 1. Port of Deposit State Historical Park - Advisory Committee. DNR greatly appreciated the input of all of our project partners, advisory committee members, and non-voting members and looks forward to continuing the efforts to create Port of Deposit State Historical Park after the report is submitted.



**Figure 1. Historic buildings from the Tome School**



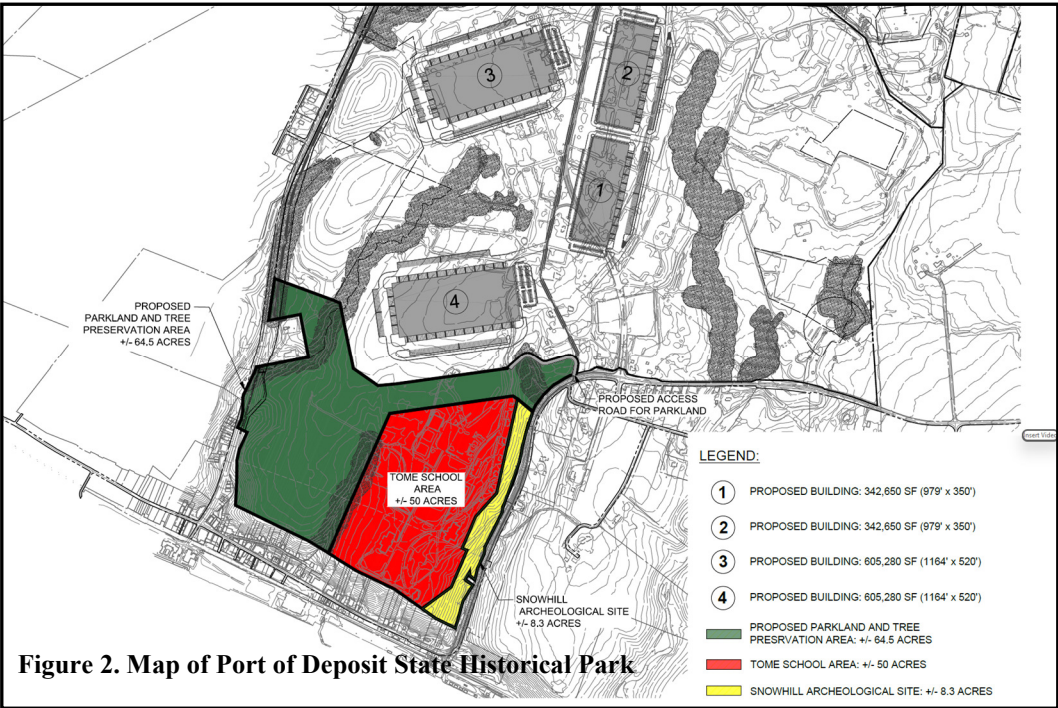
The Advisory Committee reconvened on November 20, 2023. New members were introduced and members received an overview of changes made in the most recent legislation. Notably, the modified deadlines and the authorization of funding for an archaeological survey and soil study of the Snow Hill Archaeological Site. BDC provided a presentation of site history and recent activities. Staff from DNR’s Land Acquisitions and Planning (LAP) unit questioned whether certain structures that had been damaged and faced deconstruction could be demolished, stabilized, or repurposed before being transferred to DNR.

The Advisory Committee met on site at the Tome School on January 24, 2024 and conducted a tour of the Tome School site. Additional insights were gained and questions were raised following the tour of the property.

The Advisory Committee met at the Town of Port Deposit’s Town Hall on May 14, 2024. Committee members received updates on the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway’s Projects and discussed the importance of National Trails for expanded access and funding opportunities. Representatives from the Town of Port Deposit updated members on the strategic objectives of the Town with an emphasis on cultural and recreational development. Representatives from DNR and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) addressed a partnership agreement to conduct a new shovel test pit survey at the Snow Hill Archaeological Site. Lastly, members discussed the obstacles to a recreational usage of the property as a Park, with respect to the United States Navy’s (USN) property transfer to BDC for commercial development. BDC shared that USN would likely want to be released from all environmental responsibility, but that USN would also likely request additional data and want a risk assessment to be completed before revisiting the issue of liability.

The Advisory Committee met again on August 21, 2024 and was joined for the first time by a representative from the Cecil County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who expressed concern about moving forward without the involvement of the local African-American community. DNR welcomed the chapter and is working closely with them and the community to arrange a tour of the site. DNR updated members on partnership agreements which had been drafted for the archaeological survey and soil study at the Snow Hill Archaeological Site to be conducted by MDOT, and for a property boundary line survey to be conducted by Bohler engineering, through BDC, on DNR’s behalf, to address boundary line issues.

Figure 2., below shows the acreages and the associated properties in a color-coded map.



## Historic Tome School

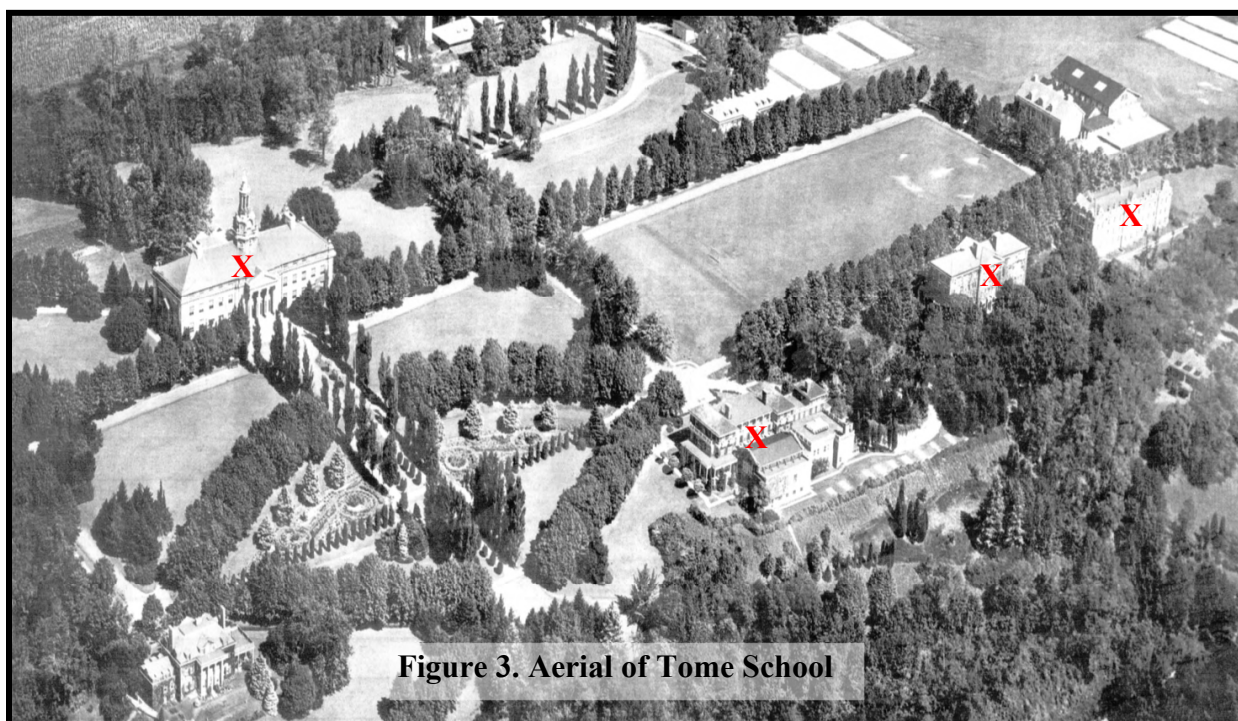
### *Background*

The historic Tome School for Boys was founded by Jacob Tome in 1894 as a nonsectarian college preparatory school for affluent boys. Between 1898 and 1902 a series of granite buildings were constructed on the bluffs above the Town of Port Deposit, overlooking the Susquehanna River, to serve as the school campus. Architects William Boring and Edward Lippincott Tilton designed the structures in the Beaux-Arts style. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., served as consulting landscape architect for siting of the buildings on the property while Charles W. Leavitt, a prominent New York landscape architect, was chosen as landscape architect for the campus. Leavitt worked with architects Boring and Tilton to design the grounds. Later, the property served as the site of the Naval Academy Preparatory School from 1943-1974. The Tome School for Boys Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 for its significance in national architectural, educational, and military history covering the period 1900-1974.

Memorial Hall (shown on the cover of this report) is known as the school's centerpiece and the façade is meant to show the gravitas of the educational facility that was the Jacob Tome Institute. This building held administrative offices, an assembly hall, the library, classrooms, and physics, chemistry and biology laboratories. Also part of the campus were the Headmaster's House, Tome Inn, Harrison Hall, a gymnasium and dormitories. Figure 1., shows the current state of buildings on the property.

Many of the buildings are in various states of disrepair and some have been damaged by arson, as seen in Figure 3. Aerial of Tome School, all of the buildings with red "X" have suffered fire damage, BDC provided the image. Structures include:

- Memorial Hall: Fire in September 2014, used for classrooms, offices, library and auditorium, 53,900 square feet
- Madison Hall: Used as a dormitory with 37 bedrooms, storage, laundry and utility rooms, 11,522 square feet
- Monroe Hall: Used as a gymnasium with a large entrance hall, swimming pool, lockers, bedrooms, 20,900 square feet
- Tome Inn: Fire in May 2020, used for dormitory and guest suites, 36,060 square feet
- Jackson House (condemned): Used as a dormitory, 63 bedrooms, lobby or lounge, storage or trunk rooms, 16,485 square feet
- Headmaster's House: Originally used as a faculty residence, 10,018 square feet



**Figure 3. Aerial of Tome School**

- Harrison Hall: Fire in June 2020, originally used as a dormitory, 77 bedrooms, 20,298 square feet

Positive preservation work on the Headmaster's House was recently conducted by BDC which expended fund on repairing the roof, removing graffiti, mothballing buildings, and sealing the building.

### *Update*

Throughout 2023 and 2024, DNR has continued to conduct site visits and assessment to determine the best path forward. Unfortunately, given the dilapidated and unsafe state of the majority of the buildings and their continued deterioration, it appears that many of them will need to be demolished. Since some of the structures were built using Port Deposit granite, deconstruction was suggested as a means to preserve the history and resources of Tome School. Certain structures are salvageable and can be used to interpret the history of the Tome School and Bainbridge Naval Academy. At the January 24, 2024 meeting the following demolition and deconstruction costs were shared by BDC from IMARK Builders:

- Demolition of cottages: \$271,000
- Deconstruction of 4 structures: \$1,315,000
- Stabilization and reuse of 3 structures: \$21,220,000
- Total: \$22,806,000

DNR requested that BDC get an updated quote for demolition, deconstruction, and stabilization. The updated quote came in well below the previous quote and did not include stormwater management and architectural engineering costs. The April 23, 2024 quote from Paul Risk Construction was \$1,194,198.00.

Given that these structures within the Tome School are all on the National Register of Historic Places, a decision could yet be made to restore all historic structures, but the associated costs would be significantly greater than what is proposed. Alternatively, financial costs could be reduced by deconstructing additional structures and stabilizing and reusing fewer structures, but at the "cost" of diminished historic value.

It is recommended that a full assessment of the remaining buildings be conducted in coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), and updated estimates be obtained thereafter for demolition, deconstruction and/or stabilization, once DNR takes the property on June 1, 2025. Priority would be placed on the Headmaster's House, the façade of Memorial Hall, and maintaining the historic landscaping and viewshed of the Tome School.

### Snow Hill Archaeological Site

#### *Background*

The Snow Hill Archeological Site was the location of a free Black community which was established in the Port Deposit area by the mid-1800s and it is widely recognized as the first Free Black community in the area. The remains of several structures and other items were identified at the site by MHT archaeologists during a 1982 cultural resource survey. At one point it had a number of residential lots and an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. Free Black merchants and laborers established this community on leased land and worked in and around the Town of Port Deposit. Snow Hill site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.



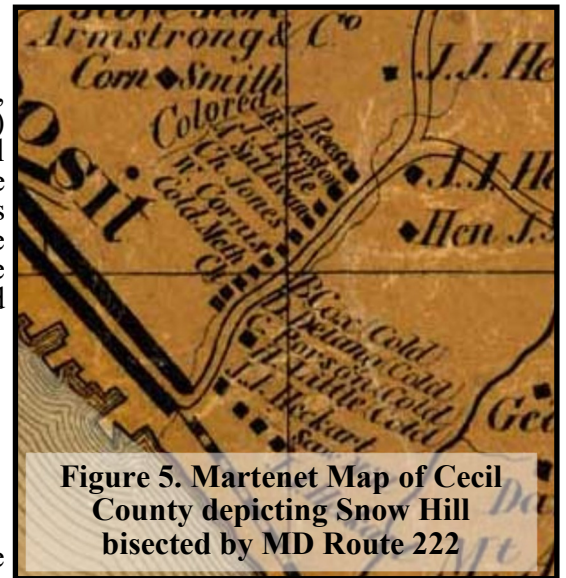
**Figure 4. Items found at Snow Hill Archaeological Site**

## Update

On June 18, 2024, Dr. Julie Schablitsky (Head Archaeologist, MDOT), Aaron Levinthal (consultant archaeologist with MDOT) and DNR staff did a site visit. Dr. Schablitsky and Mr. Levinthal located the site of Snow Hill based upon the approximate location from the 1982 survey. They found a stone foundation as well as a horseshoe and glass bottles at this remarkable site, see Figure 4. This preliminary survey suggests, however, that the outer limits of the Snow Hill community may actually extend beyond the boundary as identified in the 1982 survey.

Next steps for this important archaeological site include DNR working with SHA and the Town of Port Deposit to conduct archaeology so this site can be properly interpreted.

It should be noted that the legislation only requires half of the site to be part of the State Historical Park, because the other half is on the opposite side of Maryland Route 222 (Bainbridge Road), see Figure 5., showing the Martenet Map of Cecil County, zoomed into Snow Hill.



The site will be interpreted as a whole and the complete history of this important location will be shared. The map shows the surnames of the inhabitants including Reese, Preston, Little, Sullivan, Jones, Cornish, Cox, Delaney, Parson, Little and Heckert. It also shows the location of the Methodist Church and the Saw Mill. It should be noted that the abbreviation “cold” stand for “colored”. The term “colored” is both archaic and offensive. However, it was used in these historic documents to refer to individuals who are African-American or Black. We do not condone its use and it does not align with our values and practices. A significant portion of this effort will include engaging with the descendant community of Snow Hill.

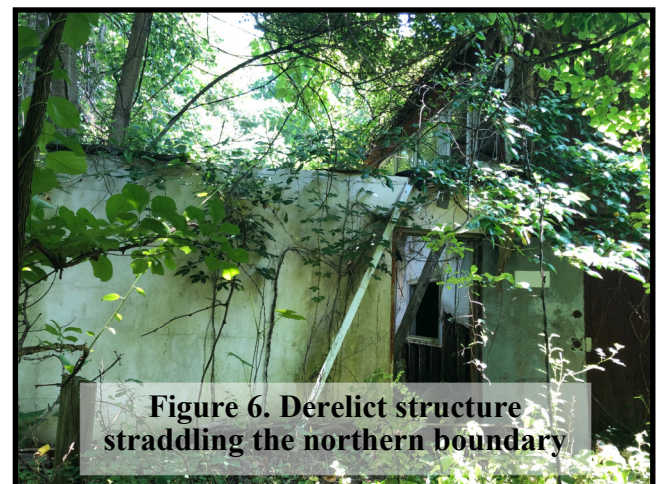
## Wooded Conservation Area

### *Background*

At approximately 64.5 acres, the wooded conservation area is the largest parcel of land and is located between the Tome School parcel and Maryland Route 276 (Jacob Tome Memorial Highway). The parcel has significant elevation, is rocky, has debris piles and includes the northern border of the park.

### *Update*

The Department’s LAP Real Property Asset Management team walked and flagged the proposed northern boundary of Port of Deposit State Historical Park, which includes a substantial portion of the wooded conservation area. A few days later, on June 17, 2024, staff from MPS and LAP completed a physical inspection of the site, which included a walk along a portion of the proposed northern boundary and portions of the wooded conservation area. Of note, the proposed northern boundary goes through a building (perhaps an old maintenance complex), a raised access road, a significant debris pile, an athletic field, and a wetland. Figure 7. Map of the Northern Boundary of Port of Deposit State Historical Park, the actual attachment shows comments from the surveyor. The Department is working with BDC to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will provide for a complete ALTA Survey of the property, which will identify all structures, utilities, tunnel locations and other potential matters that will need to be addressed. The proposed northern boundary line will need to be defined before the survey can be finalized. The completed ALTA survey (which will include a metes and bounds description of the property) is required in order to



accurately depict and describe the property to be conveyed to the Department, and must be completed prior to the transfer as it is included in and is a part of the Deed from BDC to the Department.

LAP will procure title to examine conditions and other matters that might be placed on the property, limiting potential uses. It is estimated that due diligence, including title work and survey will cost up to \$100,000 in Program Open Space Stateside funds.

Next steps in this process include working with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on remediation efforts with a Voluntary Cleanup Plan. According to Bainbridge Development Corporation remediation of this area will cost \$106,000 per acre for a total of \$6,890,000. The Department may need to develop a MOU with MDE, or perhaps BDC to obtain various environmental studies and/or reports, as well as to take action to remediate any unacceptable matters. Any remediation should occur while BDC retains ownership of the property, and before the transfer to the Department.

### Staffing

MPS would like Port of Deposit State Historical Park to be a fully staffed park with both permanent and seasonal (10-month contract) staff to supplement the workforce during busy seasons. The recommended staffing level is below:

- Park Manager (State Park Ranger Manager I)
- Assistant Manager (Park Service Supervisor)
- Ranger Lead (State Park Ranger Lead)
- Maintenance Supervisor (Park Maintenance Program Supervisor)
- Park Technician Lead (Park Technician Lead)
- Park Technician (Park Technician II)
- Administrative Assistant (Administrative Specialist III)
- Historian (Natural Resources Planner III)



### Patrolling the Property

The Law Enforcement unit of the Department is the Maryland Natural Resources Police. Once the property is taken by the Department, they will be charged with patrolling and securing the area. BDC currently has a security system in place that uses motion sensors and a public address system.

### Securing the Property

The Tome School and adjacent wooded area contain a multitude of structures and environs that are both physically and environmentally hazardous. The structure located straddling the northern boundary line in the wooded area appears it may contain asbestos or lead, see Figure 6. The Tome School campus contains a system of underground tunnels that were used for a central heating system, which has a number of uncovered hazardous above ground openings. Many buildings which are in a deteriorated condition and at risk of collapse, are open and unsecured. There is presently a chain link fence of varying heights around at least some of the property. In places the fence is compromised completely, or partially, allowing uncontrolled access to the site.

DNR recommends securing the entire perimeter of the property by repairing or replacing the existing fence, as well as installation of new signage. Furthermore, all buildings on site must be reassessed and secured, with signage.



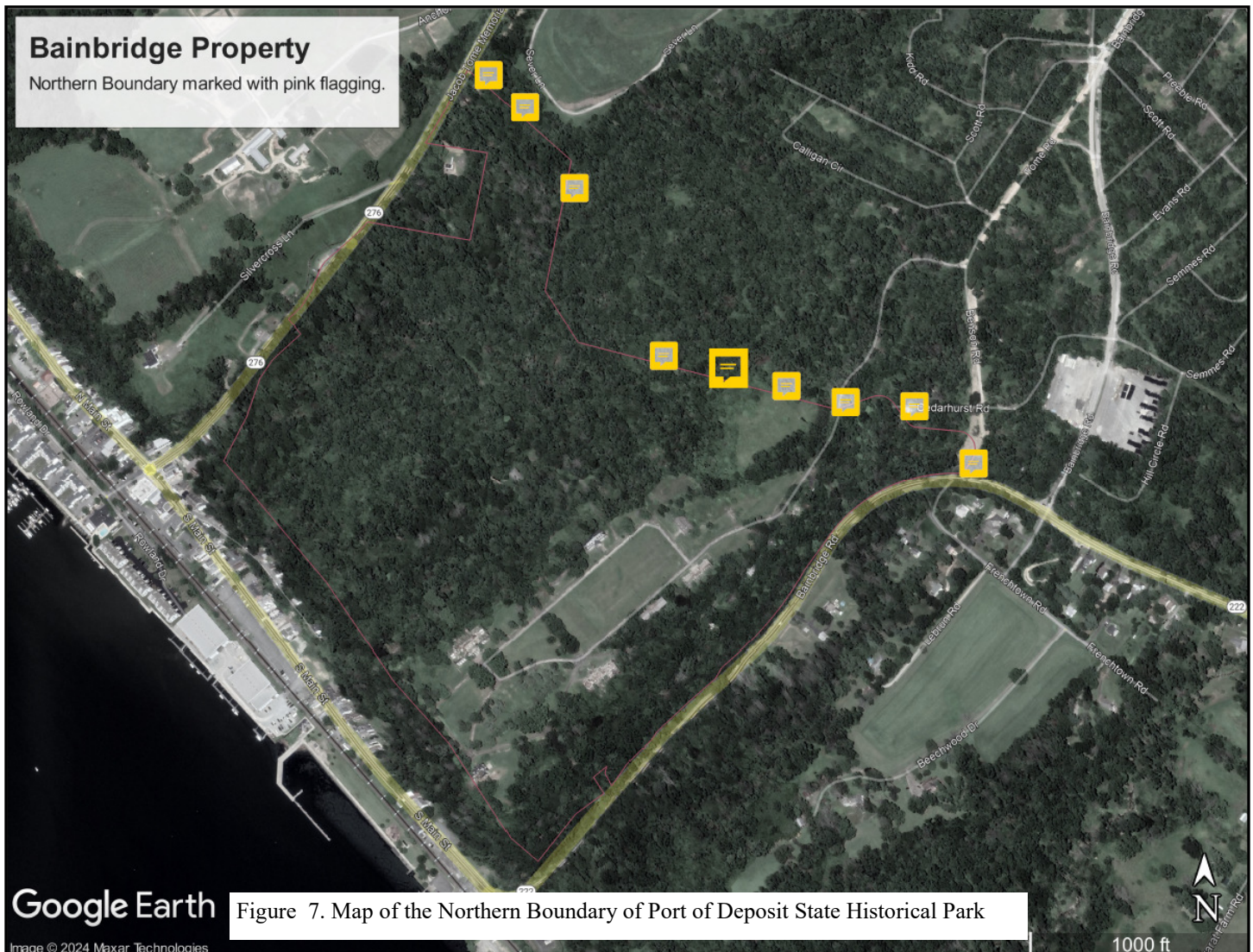


Figure 7. Map of the Northern Boundary of Port of Deposit State Historical Park

### Property Access and Boundary

On the June 17, 2024 site visit it was apparent that the northern boundary cuts off DNR's access to the future State Historical Park property by not providing an entrance road. The northern boundary goes along an old fire/access road (Benson Road) off of Maryland Route 222 that is steep, narrow and unfinished. This is clear in Figure 7. Map of the Northern Boundary of Port of Deposit State Historical Park.

For Port of Deposit State Historical Park to be viable there must be an entrance road for visitors, staff, services and emergency personnel. The DNR proposes that the northern boundary be changed to include Bainbridge Road, the associated paved parking lots, Kidd Road, Tome Road and down to the Tome School Property. Since we would need access to Bainbridge Road and the associated paved parking lots, we would need at least a 20-foot buffer around those areas. The paved parking lots on Bainbridge Road would make an ideal location for an administrative building, visitor center, parking lot, interpretive signage and a trailhead. BDC estimates that an access road (which does not include a new entrance off of Maryland Route 222) would cost \$2,768,000. If required to use the road presently proposed by BDC, the engineering and construction costs would be significantly higher.

Furthermore, the northwestern proposed property boundary contains a small in-holding around a piece of infrastructure along Maryland Route 276. As a result, the property line is jutting out and irregular, which would create greater difficulty for property management.

Since the current access does not allow for adequate build out of the future park, DNR will work with BDC and SHA to create a more effective road system to allow ingress and egress to the park.

## Utilities

Currently, the site does not have potable water, reliable electricity, sewer or internet. Artesian Water provides water to the Town of Port Deposit. According to Bainbridge Development Corporation water, sewer and electricity would cost approximately \$8,000,000.

## Legal Concerns

As previously identified in the 2022 DNR Report and as discussed during Advisory Committee meetings, the initial transfer of property from USN to BDC for commercial development did not contemplate or authorize the creation of a park. Because there is no requirement that the USN agree to further remediation to a recreational standard, it is likely that USN will wish to be released from any liability associated with a recreational land use that may require additional cleanup. DNR's Assistant Attorney General are unable to advise granting any such release until additional environmental assessments and information have been obtained from MDE.

As BDC continues to develop the property, this could present legal issues. Further development would present challenges to managing a historical and recreational area in the same space as industrial areas. Current publicly announced tenants may require permits and right of ways with DNR. DNR Leadership will work with BDC to plan for and overcome these challenges.

## Preliminary Budget

A complete and detailed budget for establishing and promoting Port of Deposit State Historical Park will not be possible until a park master plan is developed. The cost of roads, utilities, and related infrastructure are difficult to project until a conceptual design is completed. However, a preliminary estimated budget associated with the development and operation of this park is provided in Appendix 2., for a total of 56,053,200.00

## Stakeholder Advisory Committee Survey

DNR sent the Stakeholder Advisory Committee a survey on September 17, 2024. The goal of the survey was to gauge the Committee's interest in different features being considered for inclusion in the State Historical Park and their overall opinion of the report. The survey was open for over a month and received seven total responses. The responses are included in Appendix 3. Survey of the Advisory Committee. A summary of the response follow:

- Question #1, Snow Hill is the most important feature.
- Question #2, hiking trails are most important.
- Question #3, historical interpretation is most important.
- Question #4, picnic areas are somewhat important.
- Question #5, sharing African-American history is most important.
- Question #6, special event spaces are somewhat important.
- Question #7, most people were satisfied with the Report to the Legislature.
- Question #8, we received some very interesting and detailed feedback in this write-in portion, which is available upon request.



**Inside Memorial Hall**

## Conclusion

Port of Deposit State Historical Park is full of potential and in time will be home to historical resources that interpret Tome School, Snow Hill Archaeological Site, and the former Naval Training Center, hiking trails, picnic areas and a scenic vistas. Eventually, the Port of Deposit State Historical Park will be a beautiful new addition to Maryland's State parks and a boon to the local community. DNR proposes a phased approach to this endeavor, beginning with the legally necessary, followed by the operationally obtainable.

The first hurdle to be cleared is negotiating a property boundary line with BDC which will provide a suitable road access to support a park. The second hurdle will be obtaining the environmental and legal assurances necessary to support future investments. The first opportunity will be the interpretation of the Snow Hill area, followed by infrastructure improvements, and restoration of buildings at the Tome School.

The goal of DNR and MPS is for all of its properties to be clean, safe, operable and user-friendly. By working with our project partners DNR can fulfill that goal, but more due diligence is needed to adequately determine the type and level of public access that will be possible during these different phases. DNR is scheduled to take ownership of the property by June 1, 2025 but the ultimate success of the Park relies upon a secure funding source to support the restoration, stabilization, staffing, remediation, signage, construction, and everything else that is necessary before the park can safely open. DNR would like to acknowledge current budget constraints and state that there are limited State resources for the capital and operational costs outlined in this report. Funding these efforts would require the State to divert funds from other priorities and needs.



**Department of Natural Resources Staff at Memorial Hall on June 17, 2024**