

# Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS or “Drones”) in Fairfax County Parks

PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING – OAK VIEW ELEMENTARY

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2017



# Tonight's Agenda

- ▶ Welcome and Introductions
- ▶ Project Background
- ▶ Proposed Sites: Lake Fairfax and Popes Head Parks
- ▶ Moderated Comment Period
- ▶ Informal Q&A

# Park Authority at a Glance

TRAILS

324  
miles

PARKS

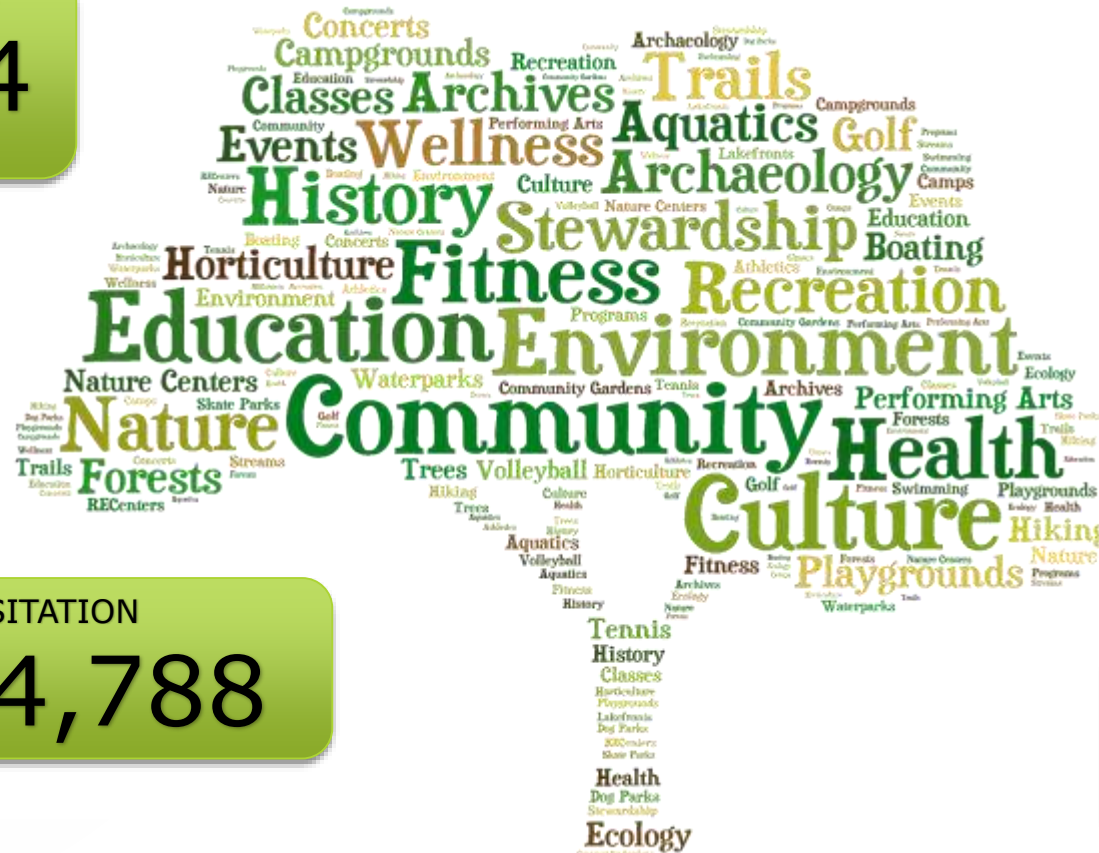
427

TOTAL VISITATION

17,754,788

LAND

23,300+  
acres



# Park Authority Board



- ▶ 12-member Board appointed by the Board of Supervisors
- ▶ One representative per Magisterial District and three At-Large members

# Park Authority Mission

- ▶ Enhance citizens' quality of life through:
  - ▶ Natural and Cultural Resource Stewardship
  - ▶ Recreational Opportunities
  - ▶ Quality Facilities and Services



# Project Scope

Provide FCPA Board members and leadership with guidance on:

- Responding to market trends
- Providing opportunities for UAS within the park system
- Protecting public safety and minimizing risk
- Balancing the needs of other park resources, users and activities



# Project Team & Subject Matter Experts

- ▶ Park Operations
- ▶ Natural & Cultural Resource Management
- ▶ Park Services/Programs
- ▶ Park Planning & Development
- ▶ Site Staff
- ▶ Federal Aviation Administration
- ▶ sUAS Community
- ▶ Environmental Advocates
- ▶ County Attorney
- ▶ Office of Emergency Management
- ▶ Public Comments

# The Issue: Emerging UAS Technology

- ▶ sUAS “drones” have increased in usage, availability, and application
- ▶ This increase is projected to continue as drones become commonplace in recreation, education, and commerce.
- ▶ sUAS are already in the parks
  - ▶ Successful, safe partnership at Poplar Ford Park
  - ▶ And elsewhere, although currently unauthorized



# On Airspace

- ▶ The FAA is the regulatory authority for the nation's airspace
- ▶ Park Authority does not control airspace
- ▶ sUAS users are expected to follow FAA rules and all federal, state, and local laws
- ▶ Special Flight Rules Area in greater DC area - Rules continually changing
- ▶ Ultimately, pilots are liable for the safe operation of their aircraft



Federal Aviation Administration

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Aircraft Airports Air Traffic Data & Research Licenses & Certificates Regulations & Policies Training & Testing

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Getting Started

Beyond the Basics

Where to Fly

Frequently Asked Questions

Programs, Partnerships and Opportunities

Research & Development

Resources

Contact Us

Report an Accident

Request a Part 107 Waiver for Operation in Controlled Airspace

### Unmanned Aircraft Systems

#### UAS Integration Pilot Program

On October 25, 2017, the President announced a new initiative that pairs unmanned aircraft operators with state, local, and tribal governments to safely expand cutting-edge unmanned aircraft operations. This program will shape a regulatory framework that balances the benefits of UAS technology while lessening the risks to public safety and security.

#### Top Tasks

- UAS Integration Pilot Program
- Register your UAS
- Become a UAS pilot
- Request a Part 107 Waiver or Operation in Controlled Airspace
- Report an Accident

#### UAS INTEGRATION PILOT PROGRAM

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration

#### Part 107 Knowledge Test Prep

#### Getting Started: How to Fly

#### UAS Programs, Initiatives, and Opportunities

FAA B4UFLY B4UFLY Mobile App

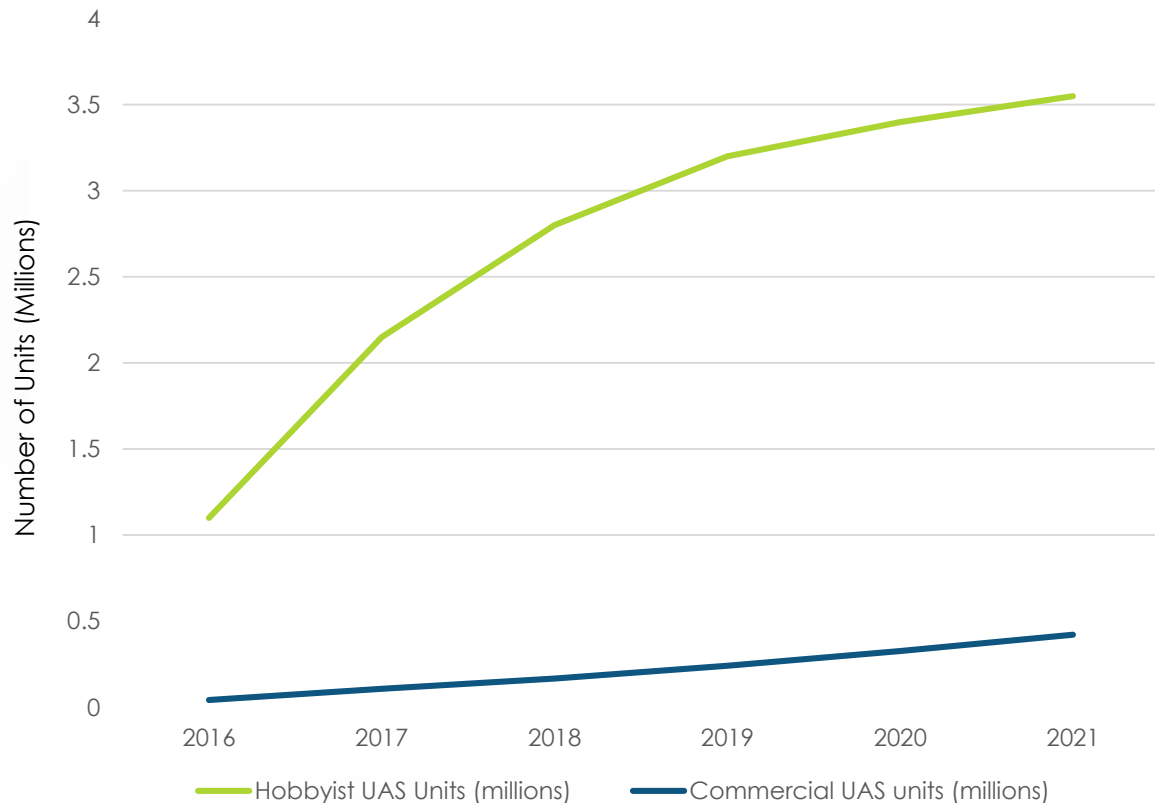
An unmanned aircraft system (UAS), sometimes called a drone, is an aircraft without a human pilot onboard – instead, the UAS is controlled from an operator on the ground.

When you fly a drone in the United States, it is your responsibility to understand and abide by the rules.

For more information:  
[www.faa.gov/uas](http://www.faa.gov/uas)

# National Trends

Projected UAS Fleet (National), 2015-2021

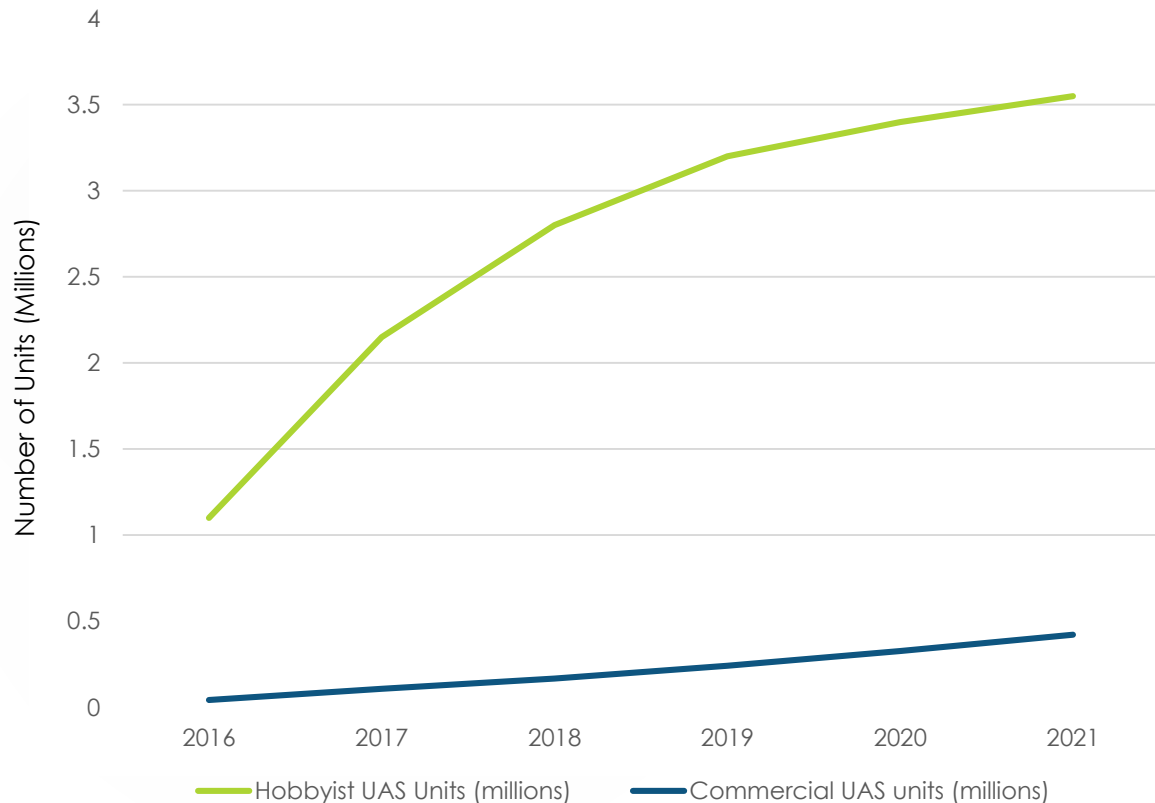


- ▶ Recreational use continues to grow:
  - ▶ Falling prices
  - ▶ New technologies
  - ▶ Market availability
- ▶ Rate of adoption and prices eventually settle

Source: Federal Aviation Administration

# National Trends

Projected UAS Fleet (National), 2015-2021



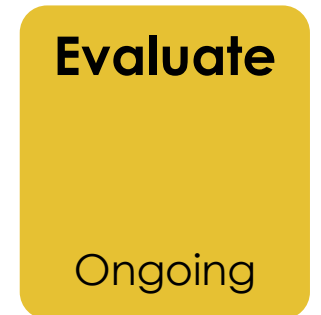
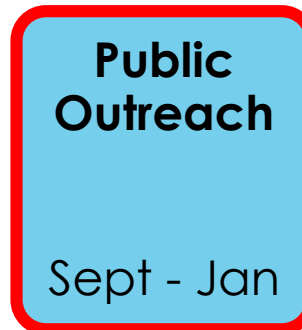
▶ Commercial fleet expected to be 10 x greater in 2021 than 2016.

- ▶ Photography (34%)
- ▶ Inspections (26%)
- ▶ Real Estate (26%)
- ▶ Agriculture (21%)

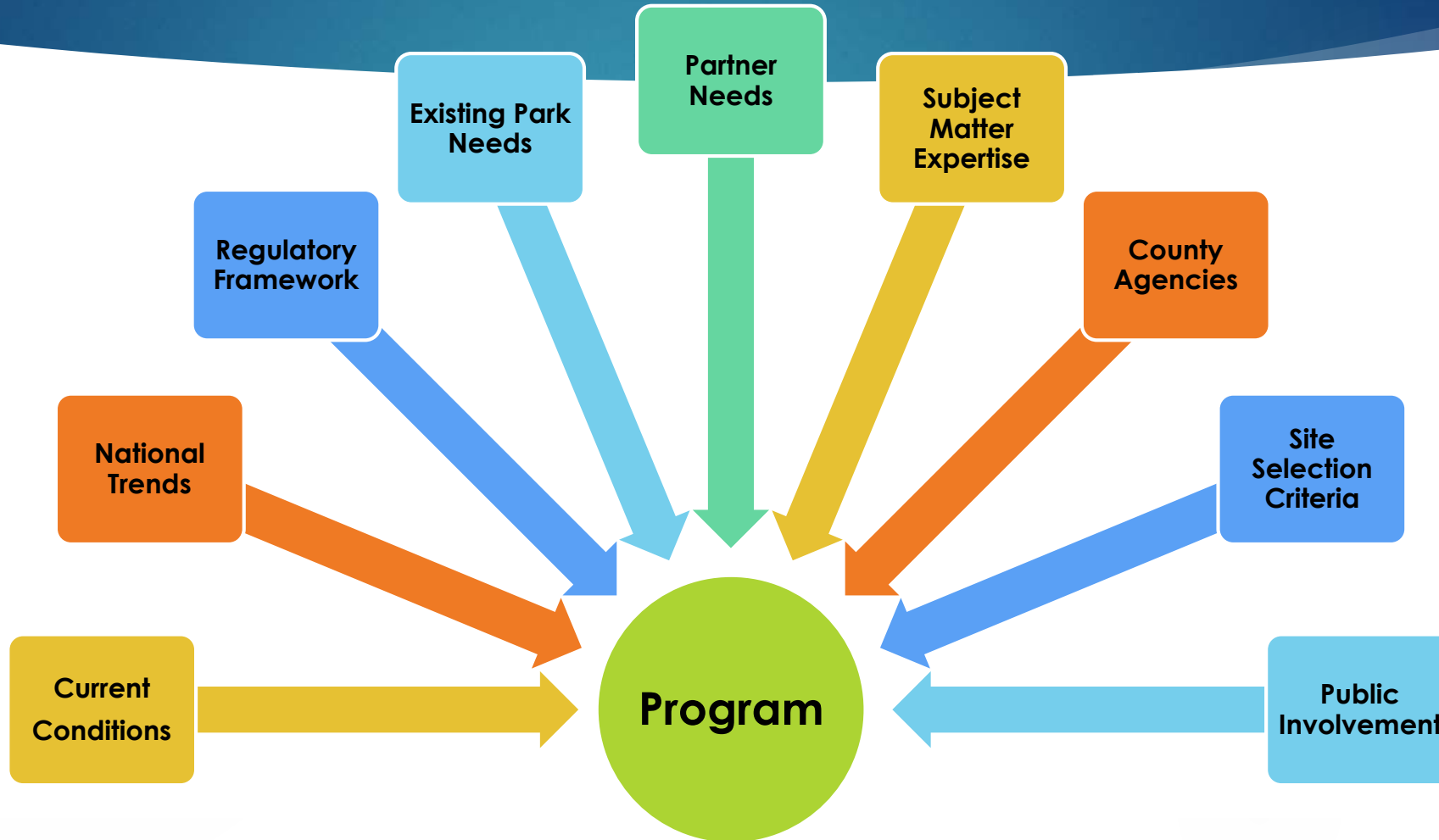
A single sUAS may be used for many applications

# Timeline

## Phase I: Internal Study



# Methodology



# Study Findings & Identified Issues

## Opportunities and Partnerships

- Recreational & Educational Programming
- Commercial & Park Authority Uses

## Limit Conflicts

- Natural Resources
- Other Park Users and Activities

## Community Safety is Paramount

- For all park visitors & community
- Limit unsafe conditions though adopted rules

## Partnerships = Success

- Provide expertise/supervision
- Education & training

## Public Outreach

- Safety
- Regulatory/Liability
- Limit Park Conflicts

## Site Selection Criteria

- Natural Resources
- Safety & Nuisance
- Park Use/Visitors

# Key Recommendations

- ▶ Consider a sUAS “pilot program” at 1-2 outdoor park locations, at sites evaluated and approved by the Park Authority
  - ▶ Sites chosen after careful consideration of safety and impacts to habitat, facilities, existing activities and the surrounding community
  - ▶ Pilot program would be conducted in partnership with suitable organizations
  - ▶ Indoor locations provide additional opportunities
- ▶ Develop sUAS programming, classes, and camps
- ▶ Incorporate sUAS to advance the Park Authority mission
- ▶ Ongoing public outreach and engagement

# Recreational Site Selection Criteria

- Consider all park types, RECenters, and field houses
- Minimize natural resource conflicts
- Exclude golf courses
- Adequate parking, bicycle, and pedestrian access
- Open space for safe flights, separation of spectators
- Nearby park and public uses
- Scheduling capacity
- Preference for partnerships
- Consistent with approved Park Master Plans





# Outdoor Site Evaluation

- Evaluation of outdoor locations suitable for safe recreational drone takeoff/landing – a land use exercise
- Application of site selection criteria
- Public input and comment needed
- Eventual selection of 1-2 sites for a pilot program if sites are suitable
- Considered sites are in active recreation areas

## Study Recommendations:

- Baron Cameron
- Frying Pan Farm Park Field House
- **Lake Fairfax**
- Laurel Hill
- Mason Neck West
- **Popes Head**
- Rock Hill District
- **South Run District Field House**

# Lake Fairfax Park – Large Field Area

Hunter Mill District

- Large open area
- Ample parking
- Single access road for safe access
- Defined boundary, generally isolated
- Near staffed facilities
- Scheduling opportunities
- No identified natural resource conflicts
- Proximity to restricted airspace?
- Currently active Park Master Planning process



# Popes Head Park – Fields & Open Play Area

Springfield District

## Athletic Fields

- Coordination required with adopting partner
- Adjacent to police range
- Ample parking
- Generally scheduled March-Oct., nights and weekends

## Open Play Area

- Smaller area adjacent to playground, courts
- Parking lot requires walk-in
- Well-defined border



# Next Steps

## Phase I: Internal Study

**Research  
&  
Interviews**  
Jan – June



**Analysis  
and  
Findings**  
July



**Refine  
Results**  
July – Nov



**Public  
Outreach**  
Sept - Jan



**Pilot  
Program**  
2018



**Evaluate**  
Ongoing

**Public Comment Period Ends January 11  
Staff to Finalize Recommendations in January – February  
Pilot Program in Spring 2018**

# Public Comments

**Open Through January 11, 2018**

**[parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov)**

**(703) 324-8662**

**Fairfax County Park Authority  
Planning & Development Division  
12055 Government Center Parkway, #406  
Attention: Ryan Stewart, Project Manager**

**<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/poplarford.htm>**