

# LOWER POTOMAC PLANNING DISTRICT

## Planning District Overview and Character

The Lower Potomac Planning District is the southernmost district in Fairfax County and it is in the Mount Vernon Supervisory District. The district is bounded on the south and southwest by the Potomac River and the Occoquan River, respectively. Two major highways bisect the district: I-95 and Richmond Highway and serve as the southern gateway to the County.



The District is located in seven watersheds: Dogue Creek, High Point, Giles Run, Kane Creek, Mill Branch, Occoquan and Pohick Creek. Though stream conditions vary widely throughout the watershed, many streams entering the district are already in a degraded condition. The most impacted of these is Accotink Creek which drains heavily developed suburban areas before entering the district. Two watersheds that stand out as having the highest quality streams are Mill Branch and Kane Creek. These two watersheds are located near the confluence of the Occoquan and Potomac Rivers in areas with low development.

The Laurel Hill and Lorton-South Route 1 Community Planning Sectors (LP1 and LP2) have the highest population growth rate in the County because of the Laurel Hill mixed use residential and commercial development project. The land for this development was formerly the District of Columbia Department of Corrections Lorton Prison. There are heavy industrial uses developed just south of Laurel Hill, including the I-95 Landfill, the Fairfax Water Facility, the Fairfax County Energy Resource Recovery facility and the privately owned Vulcan Rock Quarry.

The Mason Neck Community Planning Sector (LP3), which is the southernmost part of the District, is still rural with low density residential development and a preponderance of public parkland. Two historic roads, Old Colchester Road and Gunston Road, are the main roads serving Mason Neck, which has archaeological resources related to both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Fort Belvoir is an 8,300-acre United



States Army base located in the Fort Belvoir Community Planning Sector (LP4), which is in the northeastern section of the District adjacent to the Mount Vernon Planning District. There are 5,000 military personnel and families and 12,000 people are employed at Fort Belvoir.

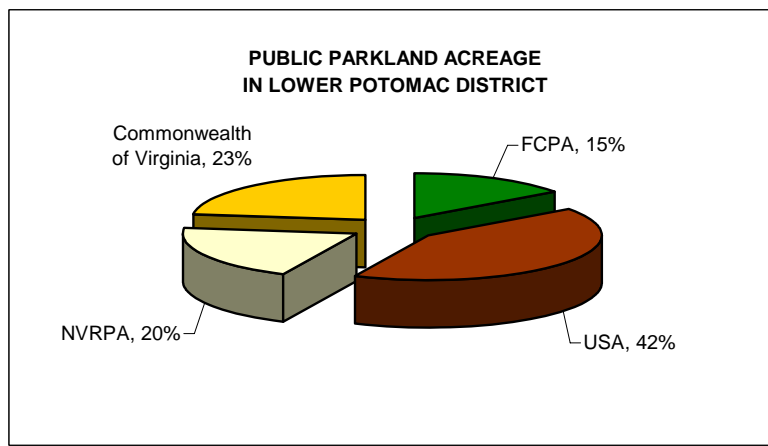
The Lower Potomac Planning District had the lowest population density of all the County planning districts in 2004, as shown on Table 1. The high amount of public parkland and the planned low density development in the Mason Neck Community Planning Sector account for its low amount of population. Lower Potomac has the highest number of households with children under 18 and the lowest number of households without children.

*Table 1: Demographic Indicators for Lower Potomac*

Lower Potomac Demographic Data			
	Lower Potomac	Fairfax County	District Rank
<b>Total Population</b>			
1980 Population	16,305	596,901	13 of 14
2005 Population	28,004	1,041,242	13 of 14
<b>2004 Population Density</b>	1.0 per acre	4.5 per acre	14 of 14
<b>Median Market Housing Value</b>	\$248,340	\$349,000	14 of 14
<b>Housing Units 2005</b>	8,557	384,683	13 of 14
<b>Nonresidential Structure Gross Floor Area 2004</b>	3,600,649	229,527,736	14 of 14
<b>2000 Households (HH)</b>	7,361	348,714	13 of 14
w/o Children	52%	63%	1 of 14
w Children under 18	48%	37%	14 of 14
<b>Total Population in 2000</b>	23,770	969,749	13 of 14
White	50.1%	69.9%	13 of 14
Black	10.9%	8.6%	1 of 14
Asian & Pacific Islander	5.5%	13.1%	14 of 14
Other or Two or More	9.1%	8.5%	6 of 14
Hispanic (can be of any race)	10.0%	11.0%	7 of 14

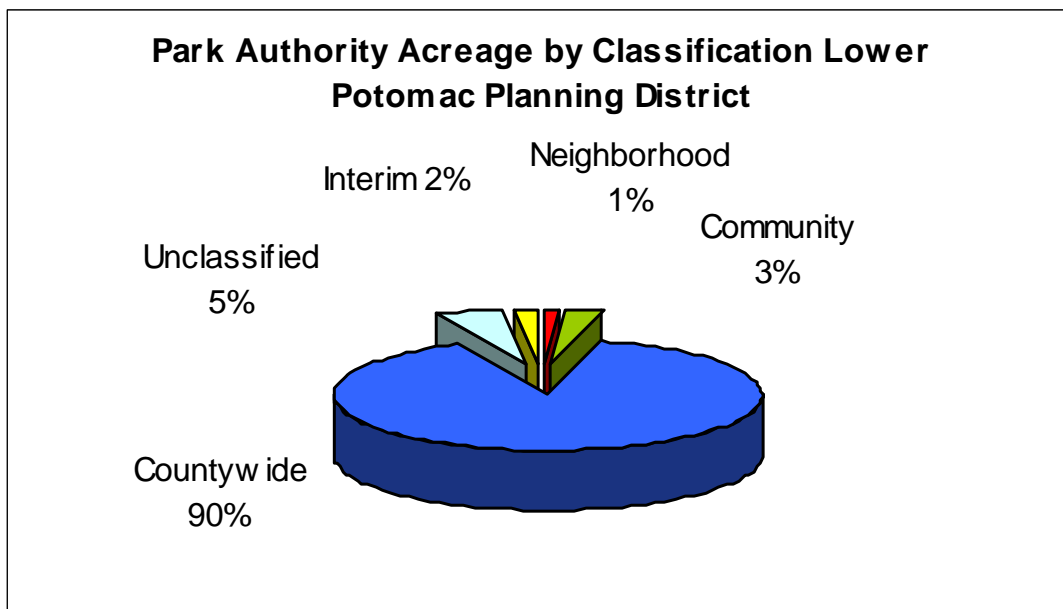
### Park System Overview

Thirty-four percent of the land in the Lower Potomac Planning District is public parkland. The majority of the parkland, 8,036 acres, is in the Mason Neck Community Planning Sector and consists of large federal, state and regional land holdings.



The Fairfax County Park Authority owns and manages 11 parks in Lower Potomac with a total of 1,483 acres, which is five percent of the land in the District. The majority of the County parkland is in the Laurel Hill and Lorton-South Route 1 Community Planning Sectors. Map 1 shows all the Lower Potomac parks and Table 2 lists the park acreage by community planning sector.

The following chart illustrates the predominance of parkland classified as countywide in the Lower Potomac Planning District. The large acreage in Laurel Hill Park plus two stream valley parks, and a cultural resource park account for the district's large amount of countywide parkland. Unlike many other areas of the County, large tracts of land were available for public parkland acquisition in this district. Map 2 illustrates the distribution of parks by classification in the district.



Map 1: Public Parkland in Lower Potomac

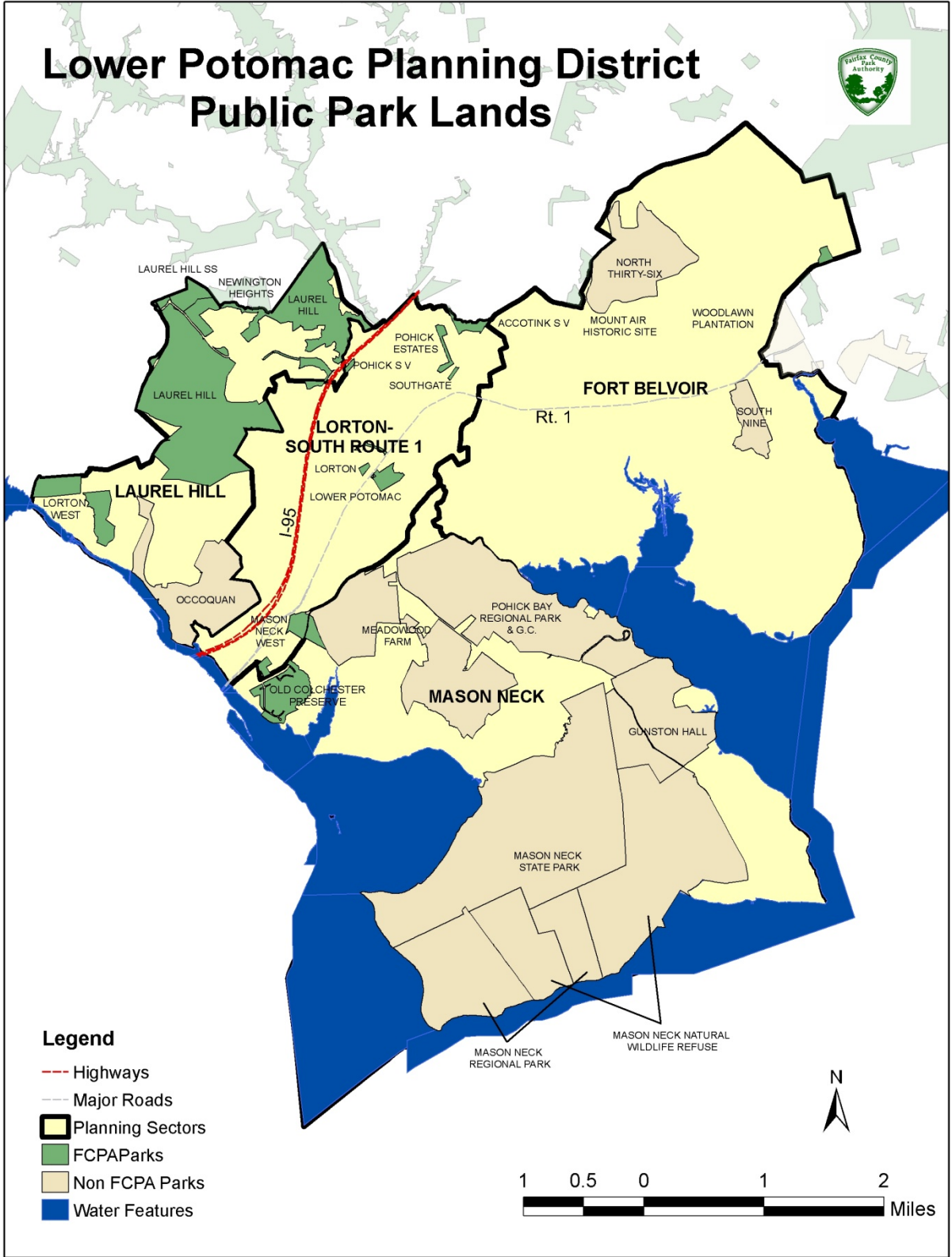
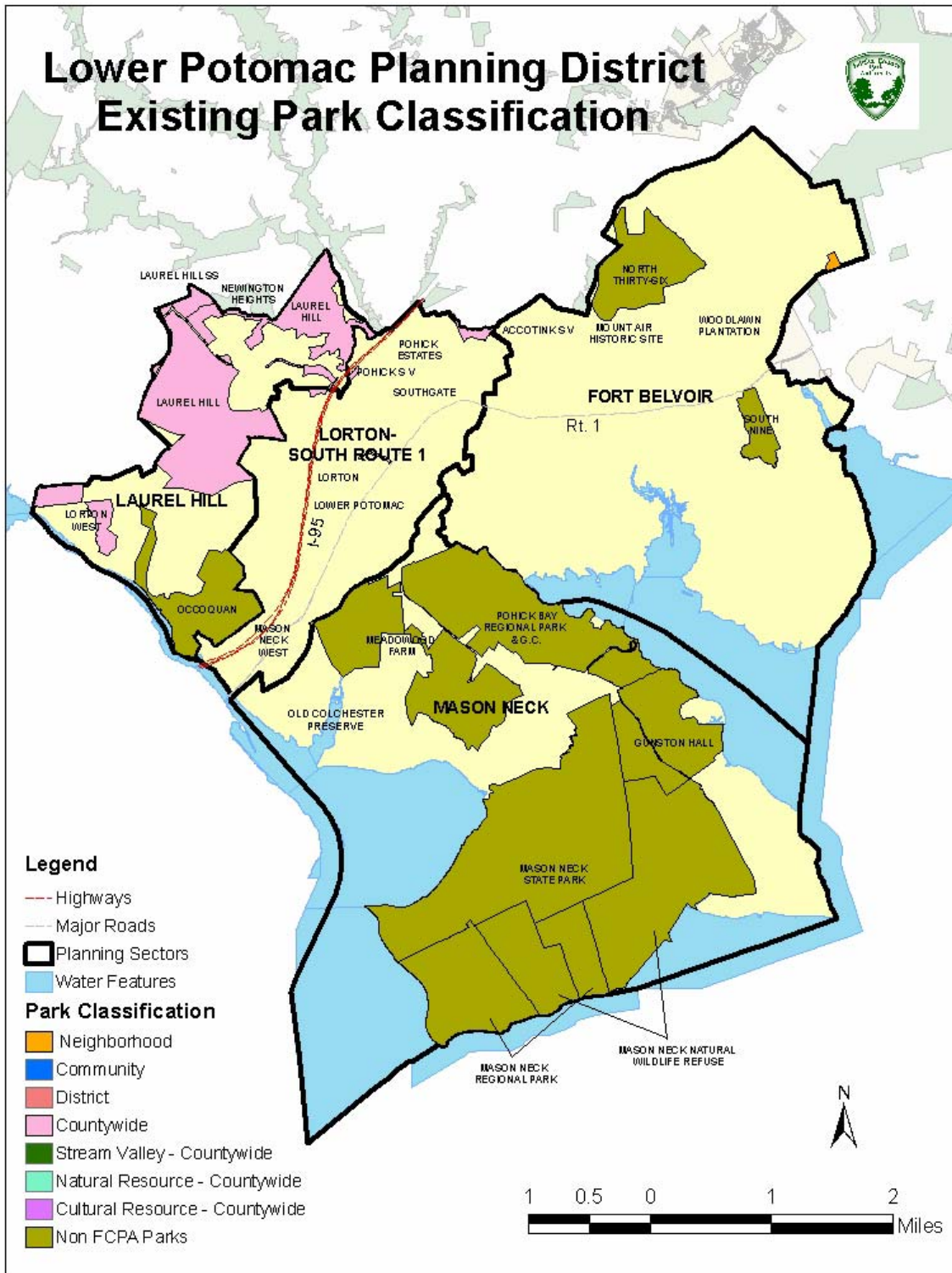


Table 2: Parks by Planning Sector in the Lower Potomac Planning District

SECTOR	PARK NAME	PARK CLASSIFICATION	ACRES	MASTER PLAN APPROVAL DATE
<b>LP1 LAUREL HILL</b>	LAUREL HILL	MULTIPLE RESOURCE	1,171.37	2005
	LAUREL HILL SCHOOL SITE	INTERIM USE	39.40	
	OCCOQUAN REGIONAL PARK	NVRPA	420.60	
<b>LP2 LORTON-SOUTH ROUTE 1</b>	ACCOTINK STREAM VALLEY	STREAM VALLEY	19.30	
	LORTON	NEIGHBORHOOD	4.39	1985
	LOWER POTOMAC	UNCLASSIFIED	27.90	
	MASON NECK WEST	COMMUNITY	25.73	1984
	POHICK ESTATES	COMMUNITY	15.81	1977
	SOUTHGATE	NEIGHBORHOOD	2.78	
	POHICK STREAM VALLEY	STREAM VALLEY PARK	8.14	
<b>LP3 MASON NECK</b>	ELIZABETH HARTWELL MASON NECK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE	FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE	1,486.00	
	GUNSTON HALL PLANTATION	VIRGINIA	557.00	
	ELIZABETH HARTWELL MASON NECK NATIONAL WILDLIFE	REGIONAL	568.90	
	MASON NECK REGIONAL PARK	REGIONAL	220.00	
	MASON NECK STATE PARK	COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA	1,813.00	
	MASON NECK WEST	COMMUNITY	18.16	1984
	MEADOWOOD SPECIAL RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREA	BUREAU OF LAND MANGEMENT	805.70	
	OLD COLCHESTER PARK AND PRESERVE	HERITAGE & NATURAL RESOURCE	128.12	
	POHICK BAY REGIONAL PARK AND GOLF COURSE	REGIONAL	1,000.70	
<b>LP4 FORT BELVOIR</b>	ACCOTINK BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE	FEDERAL	1,300.00	
	FORT BELVOIR GOLF CLUB SOUTH COURSE	FEDERAL	116.60	
	FORT BELVOIR GOLF CLUB	FEDERAL	419.80	
	HUNTLEY MEADOWS	NATURAL RESOURCE	1.13	1978
	JACKSON MILES ABBOTT WETLANDS REFUGE	FEDERAL	150.00	
	MCNAUGHTON FIELDS	COMMUNITY	10.11	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>10,330.64</b>	

Map 2: Parkland by Park Classification



Laurel Hill Park, which is 1,180 acres, is the largest County park in the District. Initial phases of development are underway and the park is envisioned to draw users countywide with a unique offering of recreational opportunities and natural and cultural resources. Its large acreage allows the Park Authority to plan community parks within it for the local residents to enjoy. Lower Potomac is served by a number of RECenters outside the District: [South Run](#), [George Washington](#), [Mount Vernon](#) and [Lee District](#).

There are five neighborhood and community parks in the Lorton-South Route 1 (LP2) Community Planning Sector. These parks provide athletic fields, tennis courts, picnic areas, and playgrounds in various residential areas. The District is located in Maintenance Areas 3 and 4. Table 3 shows the various facilities provided by the Park Authority in each park in the Lower Potomac District.

*Table 3: Park Facilities provided by Park Authority in Lower Potomac*

PARK NAME	Restrooms	GOLF	Mini Golf	TRAILS	PICNIC SHELTERS	Picnic Tables	PLAYGROUNDS	RECTANGLE FIELDS	DIAMOND FIELDS	Sand Volleyball Courts	TENNIS	MULTI-USE COURTS	RECenter	Garden Plots	HISTORIC FEATURE	WATER ACTIVITIES	Nature Center	Dog Park	SPECIALTY FEATURES
ACCOTINK STREAM VALLEY				●											●				
LAUREL HILL		●		●		●		●	●						●				●
LAUREL HILL SS																			
LORTON				●	P	●	●								●				
LORTON WEST																			
LOWER POTOMAC				●				●	●		●								
MASON NECK WEST				●		P	P		●		●	●							
MCNAUGHTON FIELDS									●										
OLD COLCHESTER PARK AND PRESERVE																			
POHICK ESTATES				●		●	●		●		●	●							
POHICK STREAM VALLEY				●		●									●				
SOUTHGATE																			
Facilities Exist ●																			
Facilities Planned P																			

### Summary of Major Parks and Facilities

The Park Authority’s most recent acquisitions, Laurel Hill Park, Old Colchester Park and Preserve and McNaughton Fields Park preserve substantial natural and cultural resources as well as provide recreational facilities, which reflects the dual mission of the Park Authority.

#### *Park Authority Parks and Facilities*

[Laurel Hill Park](#) is 1,180 acres primarily comprised of recently abandoned agricultural land and numerous wooded creeks, stream valleys and a heavily wooded natural resource area (the northern part). The facilities planned for the park are an equestrian facility, a Sportsplex for both indoor and outdoor recreation, a disc golf course, picnic areas, playgrounds, an extensive trail

system, and sites for historical resource interpretation. Construction of some facilities is underway.

The recently completed [Laurel Hill Golf Club](#) is located on a 280-acre tract in the Lorton area that provides an 18-hole golf course, clubhouse and pro shop. Staff is taking significant steps to retrofit the park to make it acceptable for Audubon accreditation.

The [Cross County Trail](#) (CCT) begins near the Occoquan River, connects to the Laurel Hill Park Greenway Trail and then continues north through the county up to the Potomac River where the CCT ends in [Great Falls National Park](#). The Cross County Trail passes through several extensive floodplain ecosystems.

### *Parks and Facilities Provided by Other Entities*



The majority of parks and recreational facilities in the Mason Neck (LP3) and Fort Belvoir (LP4) Community Planning Sectors are provided by other government agencies that have substantial land holdings in these sectors, including [Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge](#), and [Mason Neck State Park](#). These are adjoining parks located along the Potomac River on the Mason

Neck Peninsula that were established to protect the nesting, feeding, and roosting habitat for American Bald Eagles. The Mason Neck peninsula has the largest fresh water marsh in Northern Virginia and a large Great Blue Heron rookery. The peninsula also has over two hundred species of birds, which makes the refuge a popular destination for birders. The total non-County public parkland is over 6,000 acres in the Mason Neck peninsula. The [Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority](#) (NVRPA) and [Virginia State Parks](#) also provide numerous active recreation facilities, including golf courses, boating facilities, and campgrounds.

The Fort Belvoir Community Planning Sector (LP4) is comprised mainly of land owned by the Department of Defense. Fort Belvoir has multiple golf courses and recreation facilities as well as two wildlife refuges and significant cultural resources. Table 4 lists the non-County parks and their facilities in Lower Potomac.

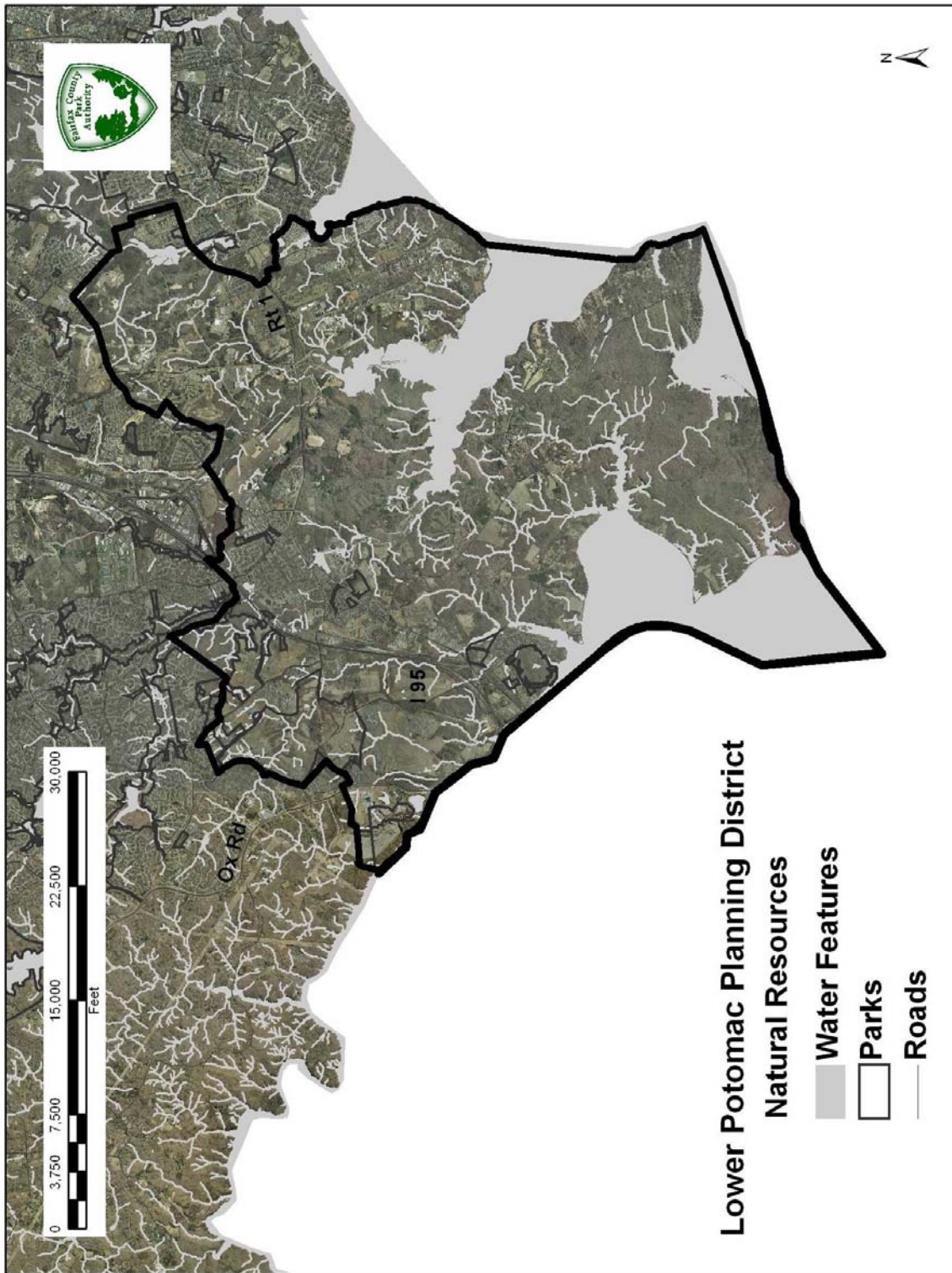
Table 4: Parks Provided by Other Entities in the Lower Potomac Planning District

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Facilities</b>
<b>NVRPA</b>	Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge	Hiking trails
<b>NVRPA</b>	Pohick Bay Park	Campground, 18-hole golf course, miniature golf course, outdoor pool, picnic shelter, disc golf course, trails, boat rental
<b>NVRPA</b>	Occoquan Regional Park	Batting cage, boat ramp, boat/RV storage, concession stand, gazebos for weddings, picnic shelters, soccer fields, softball/baseball fields, volleyball court, trails
<b>NVRPA</b>	Pohick Bay Park	Golf course, boat launch, boat/RV storage, campground, canoe/kayak rental, disk golf course, concession stand, horse trails, Jon boat rental, mini golf course, picnic shelter, cabins, sailboat/pedal boat rental, trails
<b>US Department of Defense</b>	Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge	Trails and Environmental Education Center
<b>US Department of Defense</b>	Fort Belvoir Woodlawn Golf Club	Private, non-equity 36-hole course with clubhouse
<b>US Department of Defense</b>	Fort Belvoir South Golf Course	Private, non-equity 9-hole course
<b>US Department of Defense</b>	Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge	Hiking trails with ADA section
<b>US Fish and Wildlife Service</b>	Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge	Trails, educational pavilion, photography blind
<b>US Bureau of Land Management</b>	Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area	Trails: hiking, biking and horseback riding
<b>Virginia Department of Education</b>	Gunston Hall Plantation	Historic home and outbuildings, visitor center, museum shop
<b>Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation</b>	Mason Neck State Park	Campground, cabins, trails, fishing, boating, hunting, visitor center, environmental education center, picnic shelter

Summary of Natural Resources

Unlike other sections of the County, the Park Authority does not own the low-lying stream valley corridors and therefore few connections exist between large swaths of uplands. The larger park parcels including Laurel Hill, portions of Accotink Stream Valley east of Pohick Estates in the Newington area and Old Colchester Park and Preserve are isolated and contain high-quality resources. These valuable resources remain under stress due to human activity, non-native invasive plant species and deer herbivory. The aerial photo in Map 3 illustrates parkland in a landscape context with streams.

Map 3: Aerial Photo of Lower Potomac Planning District with Streams



Coordinated assessment, research and documentation of natural resources on public and private properties are lacking. Laurel Hill is the only park in the planning district with a natural resource inventory, which was completed for only the forested areas.

### Cultural Resources

The Lower Potomac Planning District contains the Pohick Church Historic Overlay District and a portion of the Woodlawn Plantation Historic Overlay District and the Lorton National Register Historic District, and many important cultural resources. The most important of these are the town of Colchester, Late Woodland Period/Contact period archaeological sites, Revolutionary War and War of 1812 sites. Also found in this District are 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mills, World War I sites, as well as many Native American sites. These Native American sites exist in abundance in the undeveloped portions of our park lands. Sites types include Native American villages, campsites, hunting stations and stone quarries. The Native Americans used locally available stone for the manufacture of many types of tools, including spears, knives, arrow points, scrapers, axes and awls. The District contains Native American sites that date from the earliest known occupations in the county, some 12,000 years ago up and may contain a Contact period village site identified on Captain John Smith's 1608 map of the Potomac River. Contact period sites are among the most rare site types in the county and are of paramount importance to our understanding of county history.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the first permanent non-Indian settlements in the County were most likely established in the District, which are also largely undocumented. The relatively undeveloped nature of much of the District has helped preserve important evidence of all periods of the area's history. Undeveloped areas have the potential for the discovery of important cultural resources. The Town of Colchester represents one of the earliest towns in the county and provides evidence of the colonial period town development in the county. Archaeological remains associated with Colchester are largely intact. The area surrounding these sites has a low intensity of residential development due to the restriction of public sewers in this area and consequently has retained a scenic, country atmosphere worth preserving.

This Planning District contains archaeological resources related to both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. During the Revolutionary War, Rochambeau's troops passed through this Planning District and established an encampment near Colchester. During the War of 1812, the White House, a Fairfax family house (the archaeological remains of which are on Fort Belvoir), was bombarded by British ships during the Battle of the White House. Fort Belvoir also contains sites related to World War I Camp Humphries. The National Register Historic District at Lorton contains historic resources representing

prehistoric, colonial, Civil War, Progressive Era, Suffragettes, 19th-20<sup>th</sup>-century agriculture, Post-Progressive Era Prison, and the Cold War eras.

The Lorton area has over twenty properties listed in the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites and some of these are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Fort Belvoir has six sites listed with some of these sites included in the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. Among the listed sites is the Belvoir archaeological site, the Fairfax family residence.

### Park Accessibility and Connectivity

The Lorton and Laurel Hill portions of Lower Potomac are served by major roads, public transportation and trails. Two major roads are I-95 and Richmond Highway that bisect the District north to south. A network of secondary roads, such as Route 123 and Lorton/Furnace Road, connect with these highways and provide easy access to Laurel Hill Park. These roads are being improved to serve the Laurel Hill development.

The Lower Potomac Planning District has several existing trail systems and a planned trail system that is partially built. Some of them are designed to allow access to the scenic Mason Neck Peninsula. The trails include the Cross County Trail, Laurel Hill Greenway Trail, Occoquan Regional Park Trail, Interstate Route 1 Bikeway Trail, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Interstate Route 1 Bikeway Trail and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail overlap in sections and they provide east/west access across the District from Mason Neck to the Occoquan Reservoir.

The Countywide Trail system incorporates existing trails into its network and is planning new sections along Richmond Highway, Ox Road, Silverbrook Road, Furnace Road and Hooes Road. Links will be created to the network of non-motorized travel ways throughout the Laurel Hill area and around Fort Belvoir. A trail along Ox Road has been completed.

### Anticipated Land Use and Demographic Changes

The population of the Lower Potomac Planning District will increase significantly through 2015 and the District is projected to be the fastest growing planning district in the County, as shown in Table 5. In 2005 the population was 28,004 and it is projected to increase to 52,105 in 2015, an increase of about 186 percent.

Since the Lorton Prison was closed the site was renamed Laurel Hill and is planned for use as park property, school sites, re-use areas, and residential/commercial development. Development has been underway and when it is built out it will have about 2,900-3,400 dwelling units, 250,000-

500,000 square feet of office and retail uses, and 30-60 acres of light and high tech industrial uses. Laurel Hill development is the reason for the dramatic increase in population projected for the Lower Potomac Planning District. The Park Authority has acquired additional parkland in Lower Potomac and will develop park facilities in a phased manner at Laurel Hill Park. Without increases in stormwater management, control of human activities and encroachments, and population control of white-tailed deer and non-native invasive species, the quality of preserved parkland is threatened.

The proposed Department of Defense’s Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process will potentially move an additional 8,500 employees from other parts of the region to Fort Belvoir by 2011. The increased residential and commercial development in the region associated with the BRAC action will cause further demand for parkland and recreational facilities in the Lower Potomac Planning District.

*Table 5: Growth Rates for Lower Potomac Planning District*

<b>Lower Potomac Planning District</b>			
	Lower Potomac	Fairfax County	Rank
<b>Total Population</b>			
Forecast 2005	28,004	1,041,242	13 of 14
Forecast 2015	52,105	1,179,258	12 of 14
Growth Rate 1980-2005	72%	74%	7 of 14
Growth Rate 2005-2015	86%	13%	1 of 14
<b>Housing Units</b>			
Forecast 2005	8,557	384,683	13 of 14
Forecast 2015	17,742	436,436	13 of 14
Growth Rate 1980-2005	116%	78%	4 of 14
Growth Rate 2005-2015	107%	3%	1 of 14