

# **COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE**

## **MASTER PLAN REVISION**



**Fairfax County Park Authority**

Draft – April 29, 2008

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## **GENERAL MASTER PLAN**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### ***A. PURPOSE AND PLAN DESCRIPTION***

The purpose of a master plan is to create a long-range vision for the park. During the planning process, the site is considered in the context of the surrounding neighborhood and as one park of many within the Fairfax County Park Authority system. When approved, this document will serve as a long-term decision making tool for all future planning of the park to be referred to before any planning, design / construction projects or programming are initiated.

This master plan document consists of three sections: the Background/Existing Conditions, General Management Plan, and the Conceptual Development Plan. The first section lays a foundation for the Master Plan, including establishing the park purpose and classification. This section describes existing conditions, details the desired visitor experience, and provides other background information. This information serves as the basis for decision-making and creating the General Management Plan (GMP).

GMPs serve as a guide for future park development, describing how to best protect park resources while providing quality visitor experiences. The GMP does this through detailing the desired visitor experience and identifying “management zones.” GMPs are meant to be flexible to accommodate the changing needs of park visitors. This document should be referred to before all future planning and design projects are started. Every GMP should be updated periodically to reflect changes that have occurred both in and around the park site.

The Conceptual Development Plan (CDP) describes the planned park elements, identifies design concerns, and illustrates the general location of the recommended facilities based on the guidance of the General Management Plan.

A Master Plan Revision develops a new master plan using the existing approved master plan as a starting point for reviewing the planned or built facilities, park purpose, goals, and community needs. Some existing master plans consist solely of a plan graphic, without accompanying text, which is the case for Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. In these instances, more extensive site analysis is required. Revisions to the GMP may or may not be required depending upon the changes proposed. Deletions, relocations, and/or additions to park facilities are also depicted. Public meetings are required to gain citizen input. Once approved by the Park Authority Board, the Master Plan Revision will replace the existing master plan.

The revision process is designed to make changes to a master planned use or facilities without reconsideration and revision of the entire plan. This revision focuses on incorporating additional properties that have been acquired and added to the park. By defining the park as one cohesive unit, its management and visitor experience will be improved as well as allowing for the sustained protection of significant resources.

## ***B. PUBLIC PROCESS***

On February 5, 2008, the Park Authority held a community meeting to initiate the park planning process and to solicit community input. A draft master plan was developed based on site analysis and public input provided. Public input on the draft will be solicited and received during spring 2008. The plan may be revised following the public input and is scheduled to be approved by the Park Authority Board in **September 2008**.

## ***C. PARK LOCATION AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION***

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is a 38-acre historic site owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority. It is located at 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls Virginia, 22066 (Figure 1). Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is bounded by several neighborhoods including Colvin Meadow Estates, Brick Mill Manor, Mill Run Acres, and residential lots on the north. Leesburg Pike (Route 7) cuts through the park separating the northern section with the mill from the southern part in the stream valley (Figure 2).

Though Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is currently classified as a Cultural Resource-Based Park, this should be updated to reflect the park classification changes in 2005 to the Park Policy Plan portion of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. Due to the presence of significant cultural and natural resources in Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, it aligns most appropriately with the Resource-Based Parks classification.

## ***D. ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY***

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is comprised of five parcels acquired between 1965 - 1980 (Figure 2). The original property, Tax Map Parcel 18-2 ((1)) 24 was acquired by the Park Authority to preserve the mill in 1965 and includes the majority of the site on both sides of Route 7. A small parcel of the site located across Colvin Run Road was sold after the General Store was moved from it to its present location. Adjacent parcels were added as they became available in 1973, 1978, and 1980 as shown. Colvin Run Stream Valley Park, borders three sides of the portion of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site on the south side of Route 7. The adjacent parcels of the stream valley park contain similar resources associated with Colvin Run Mill Historic Site that are more appropriate for inclusion in the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site.

In 1973, the Park Authority created a master plan for the original parcel (Figure 3). This master plan includes the mill, mill races, and two bridges over the mill races. This plan also includes the miller's house, carriage shed / barn, general store, walkways, and parking lot. All of these features are currently present within the park. The small portion of park across Colvin Run Road was sold after the General Store was moved to its present location.

## **II. PARK CLASSIFICATION**

### ***A. PARK CLASSIFICATION***

The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning, and to assist in the development of public as well as private land management plans, by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. The Park Classification System specifically supports Countywide Objective 1, Policy a, in the Policy Plan section of the County Comprehensive Plan, by

outlining the primary purpose, location and access, character and extent of development for the following park classifications:

- A. Local Parks
- B. District Parks
- C. Countywide Parks
- D. Resource-Based Parks
- E. Regional Parks



**Figure 1: Colvin Run Mill Historic Site**



Figure 2: Parcel Acquisition History

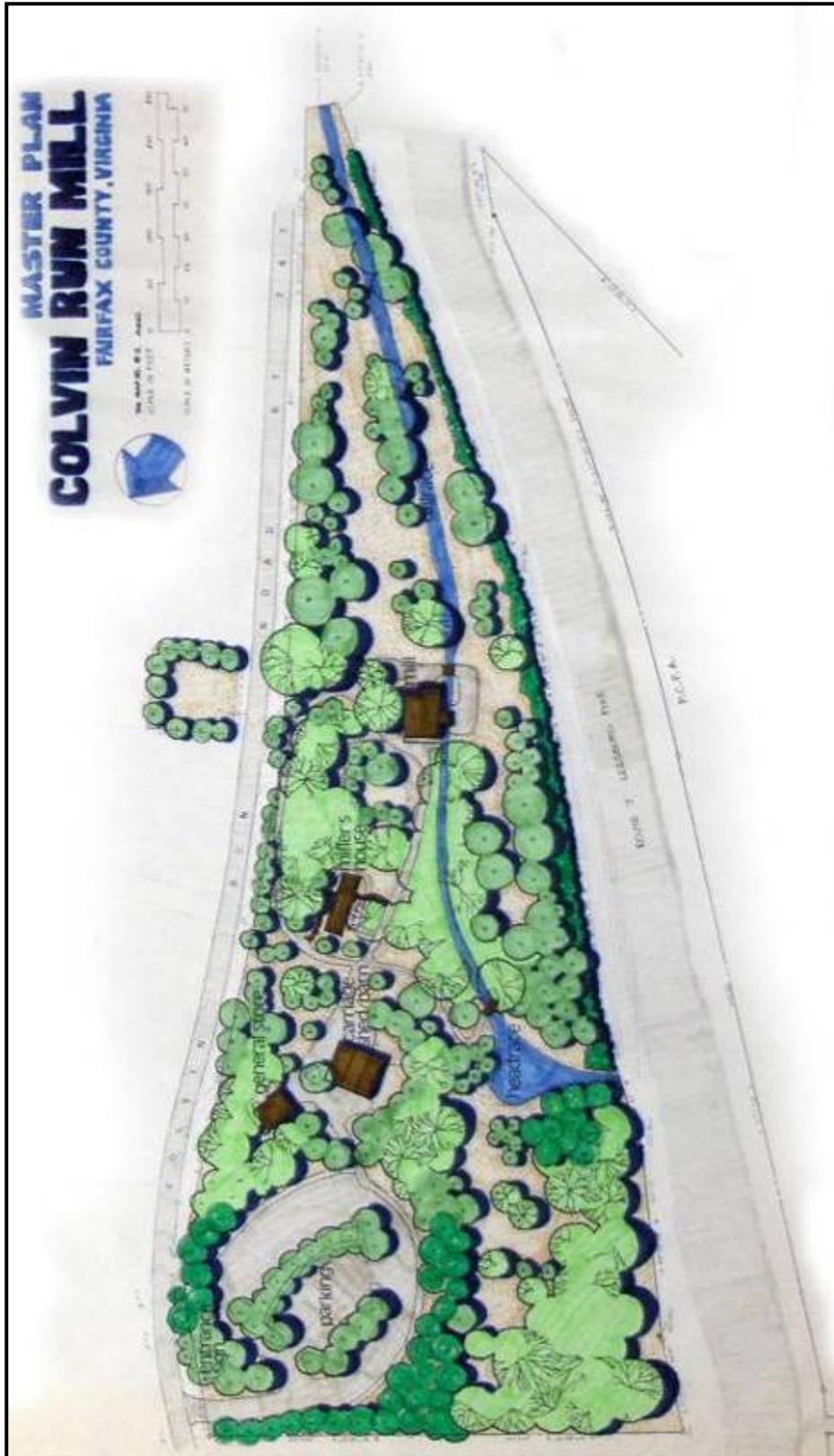


Figure 3: 1973 Master Plan

This Park Classification System is augmented by state and federal park areas within Fairfax County boundaries.

Park Classifications provide guidance:

- a) To the Planning Commission for determining whether a proposed park site is in substantial conformance with the County Comprehensive Plan;
- b) For determining the appropriate geographic location and equitable distribution of varying types of parks;
- c) To the park planning staff during the park planning and development process; and
- d) To set public expectations for future park uses.

Criteria for each park class are provided in the individual descriptions below. The general areas of consideration are:

1. Purpose - indicates the general park use.
2. Location and Access - indicates the appropriate location and means of access.
3. Character and Extent of Development - indicates the general park size range, typical facility types, the extent of development, the general experience a user may expect and any special considerations. Site-specific facilities and uses are determined through the park master planning process for individual parks. The park master planning process is a public process that provides opportunities for public input and requires approval by the appointed officials of the respective park agency or elected officials of local municipalities.

Due to the presence of significant cultural and natural resources in Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, it aligns most appropriately with the Resource-Based Parks classification. This is very similar to its current park designation as a Cultural Resource-Based Park, which was replaced by resource based parks as a park classification in 2005. The description of the Resource-Based Parks classification from the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan, Parks and Recreation section is as follows:

## **RESOURCE-BASED PARKS**

### **Purpose**

This classification includes parks that primarily function to preserve, protect, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources.

### **Location and Access**

Locations for Resource-Based Parks are determined by the location of specific resources. Size and access can take many forms depending on the setting and type of resources. Access to stream valleys is primarily by trails; however trailheads with parking should be strategically located along trail routes. Management plans should give consideration to the resource and allow public use only as it is compatible with resource protection.

### **Character and Extent of Development**

Resource-Based Parks are selected for inclusion in the park system because of their exemplary natural and/or cultural features and are acquired, identified and preserved for stewardship and protection. Protection and stewardship of unique natural and cultural resources provide a variety of public benefits. These parks provide educational and interpretative opportunities relative to environmental and cultural resources. These lands may offer opportunities to restore degraded areas and to protect increase and restore biodiversity of species that may inhabit these areas. In addition, passive recreation opportunities and facilities are also appropriate at these parks. Development which does not adversely affect resources and which enhances awareness of the resource values is appropriate. Development of public sites should include opportunities for public education and enjoyment. Interpretive (educational) facilities and structures may include visitor centers, nature centers, orientation kiosks, nature watching stations, demonstration areas, preserved buildings and gardens, hiking, biking and equestrian trails as designated. To the extent that they do not adversely impact the resources themselves, support amenities may also be developed such as picnicking areas, restrooms, signs, benches, and parking. Trails and trail connections are a significant feature at these parks, especially along stream valleys and often serve as Countywide Trail connections.

Stream valleys are a predominant physiographic feature of Fairfax County and comprise the core of the County's Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) system. Parks located in and along the stream valleys encompass those segments of EQCs planned for public parkland and comprise the core elements of a greenway network that links areas notable for significant natural and cultural resources with residential and employment areas throughout the County. They may vary in size and character from steeply sloped corridors with cascading streams to broad floodplains; all are treated as sensitive environmental areas. Trails within stream valleys should be located to be sensitive to environmental conditions. In addition to trails, seating areas, small picnic and open play areas, landscaping and interpretive structures may also be developed, if they do not adversely impact the EQC or ecological functions.

The user experience at Resource-Based Parks will be varied. These parks support nature, horticulture and history programs as well as more casual interests such as gardening, nature watching and appreciation of local, regional, state and national history. Settings for quiet contemplation are appropriate in these parks. Visitors may frequent these parks on a regular or occasional basis.

### ***B. PARK PURPOSE***

Park purpose statements provide an umbrella for planning and decision-making. If a proposed use conflicts with any one of the purposes listed, it is considered an incompatible use. By establishing park purposes, future plans remain flexible as legislative requirements and visitor preferences change. The purpose of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is to:

“Maintain and interpret the historic buildings and collections at the site for the enrichment of Fairfax County residents and visitors as they relate to the themes of technology and community in 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century rural Northern Virginia.

Preserve, protect, and interpret natural and cultural resources, to the extent that it does not conflict with management of either resource type onsite and to;

Provide a natural setting for passive recreational activities, which includes trail use, enjoyment of nature and history.”

### ***C. IMPORTANCE***

Colvin Run Mill is located within the Colvin Run Mill Historic District, one of thirteen historic districts within Fairfax County, established in accordance with state enabling legislation and administered by the County's Department of Planning and Zoning. It is listed on the Fairfax County Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places, making the site an important component of the Fairfax County park system, surrounding neighborhoods, and Dranesville Supervisory District. Facilities at the park are heavily used by residents from these communities. Designated as a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site contains significant Cultural and Natural resources. This site was also the first outdoor facility to be accredited by the American Association of Museums. Retention of this accreditation is very important, to which updating of facilities and interpretation is critical.

### ***D. VISITOR EXPERIENCE***

Park users experience 19<sup>th</sup> century milling technology and the community which grew up around it. Park visitors can view vignettes of different time periods between the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This unique visitor experience should be enhanced to provide better interpretation of these important cultural and natural features. Recreational use is limited to trail use by pedestrians, joggers/runners, horse riding, bicycling, and other non-motorized transportation.

## **III. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS**

### ***A. CONTEXT - ADJACENT USES***

#### **Existing and Planned Land Use & Zoning**

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is surrounded by mostly residential uses on 0.2 to 1.0 acre lots. Colvin Meadow Estates, Brick Mill Manor, and Mill Run Acres, subdivisions are located to the north. To the west is Colvin's Run subdivision, and the Carper's Farm community is to the south. Colvin Run Road runs along the north and eastern section of the park, separating it from the Mill Run Acres subdivision. The northern portion of the park, which contains all structures, is separated from the southern part of the park by the Leesburg Pike (Route 7) (Figure 1). The Virginia Department of Transportation currently has plans to widen Leesburg Pike (Route 7), from two to three lanes in both directions. As of 2008 this project was only in preliminary planning with no funding identified.

### **Nearby Parks and Schools**

Within the three miles of this site are 11 schools and a library. Typically, schools have athletic fields and playgrounds (elementary schools). In addition there are 27 parks, including 19 County parks within a three mile area. Collectively, these parks contain trails, courts, athletic fields, rectangular fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, garden plots, waterfront areas, natural and cultural resources. The 40-mile Cross County Trail that stretches from the Potomac River to the Occoquan River passes in close proximity to Colvin Run Mill Historic Site (Figure 4).

### **Needs Assessment Statement**

The need for park and recreation facilities are determined through long-range planning efforts. The Park Authority tracks public inventories of park facilities and land, looks at industry trends, surveys County citizen recreation demand, and compares itself with peer jurisdictions to determine reasonable park needs. The most recent needs assessment was completed in 2004. Trail use has the highest participation rate among County residents, and an increase in the number of trails is recommended. On the south side of Route 7, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site and Colvin Run Stream Valley form an important link to the interconnecting trails running through the park system. North of Route 7, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site presents an opportunity to connect the mill site to the Cross County Trail as well as making an important link to the interconnecting trails on the south side of Route 7, to help in meeting this need.

### ***B. NATURAL RESOURCES***

The features described in the following sections apply only to the existing site boundary. They do not include the area in proposed to be added to Colvin Run Mill Historic Site from the Stream Valley Park as described latter in the General Management Plan.

### **Topography**

The park is mostly in the Colvin Run Stream Valley. In the section on the north side of Leesburg Pike, the high point is on the side of a ridge in the northwest side along the property line with adjacent home owners. In the portion of the park on the south side of Leesburg Pike, the high point is on top of a knoll in the northern tip along Route 7 overlooking the stream valley. Both high points are at approximately 300'. The lowest point in both the northern and southern parts of the park occur at the eastern point where Route 7 intersects with Colvin Run Road with an elevation of approximately 170' (Figure 5).

### **Hydrology**

The park is along the Colvin Run, which drains from west to east through the southern portion of the property. Several small tributaries flow through the park into Colvin Run (Figure 6). Colvin Run is a degraded stream characterized by steep banks with exposed soil, tree roots, bank failure, down trees in the channel, and poor riffle-pool structure. Colvin Run is a very flashy stream with high energy during storm events and displays a poor overall stream habitat. Several of its feeder creeks exhibit the same characteristics.

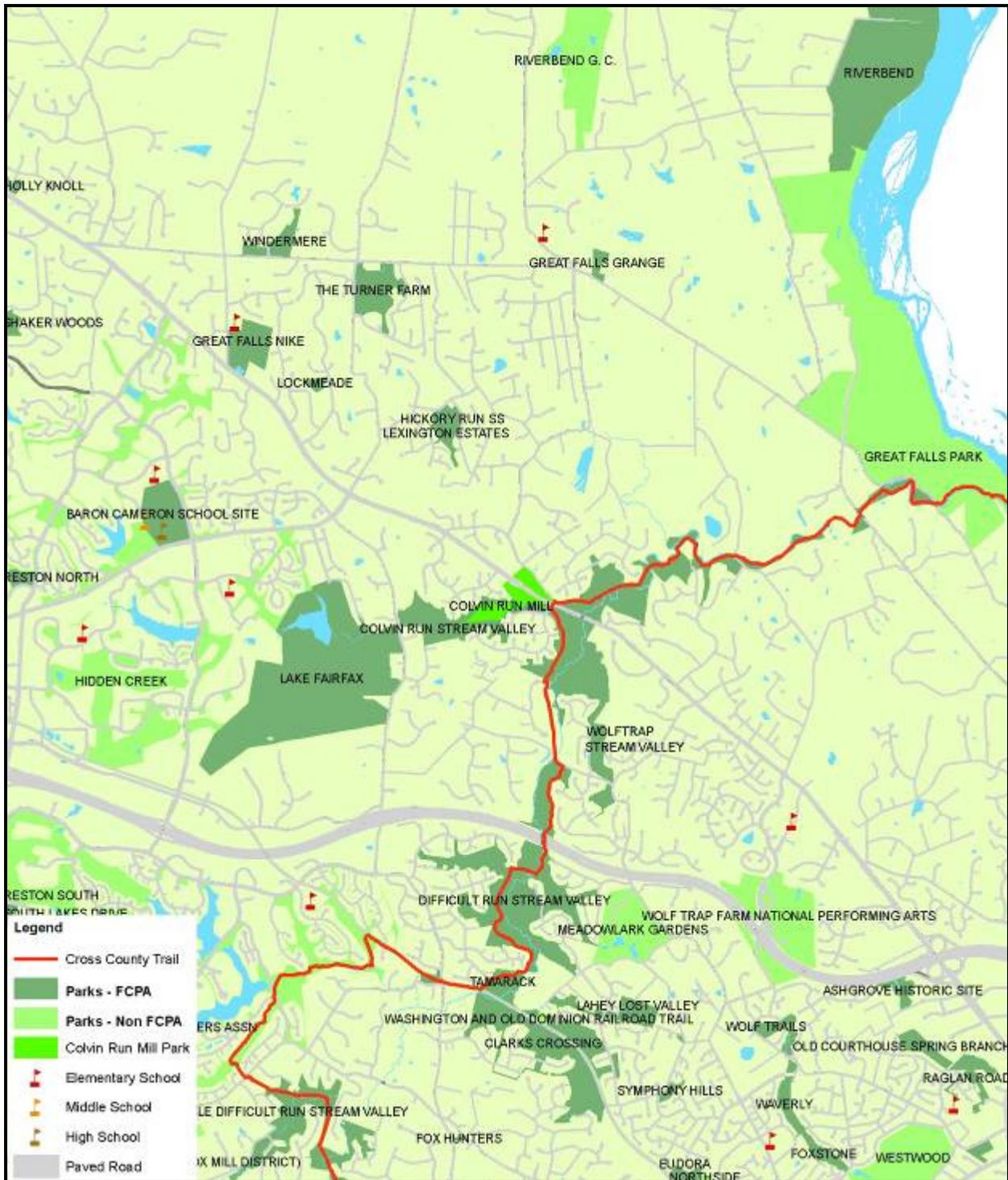


Figure 4: Nearby Public Parks and Schools

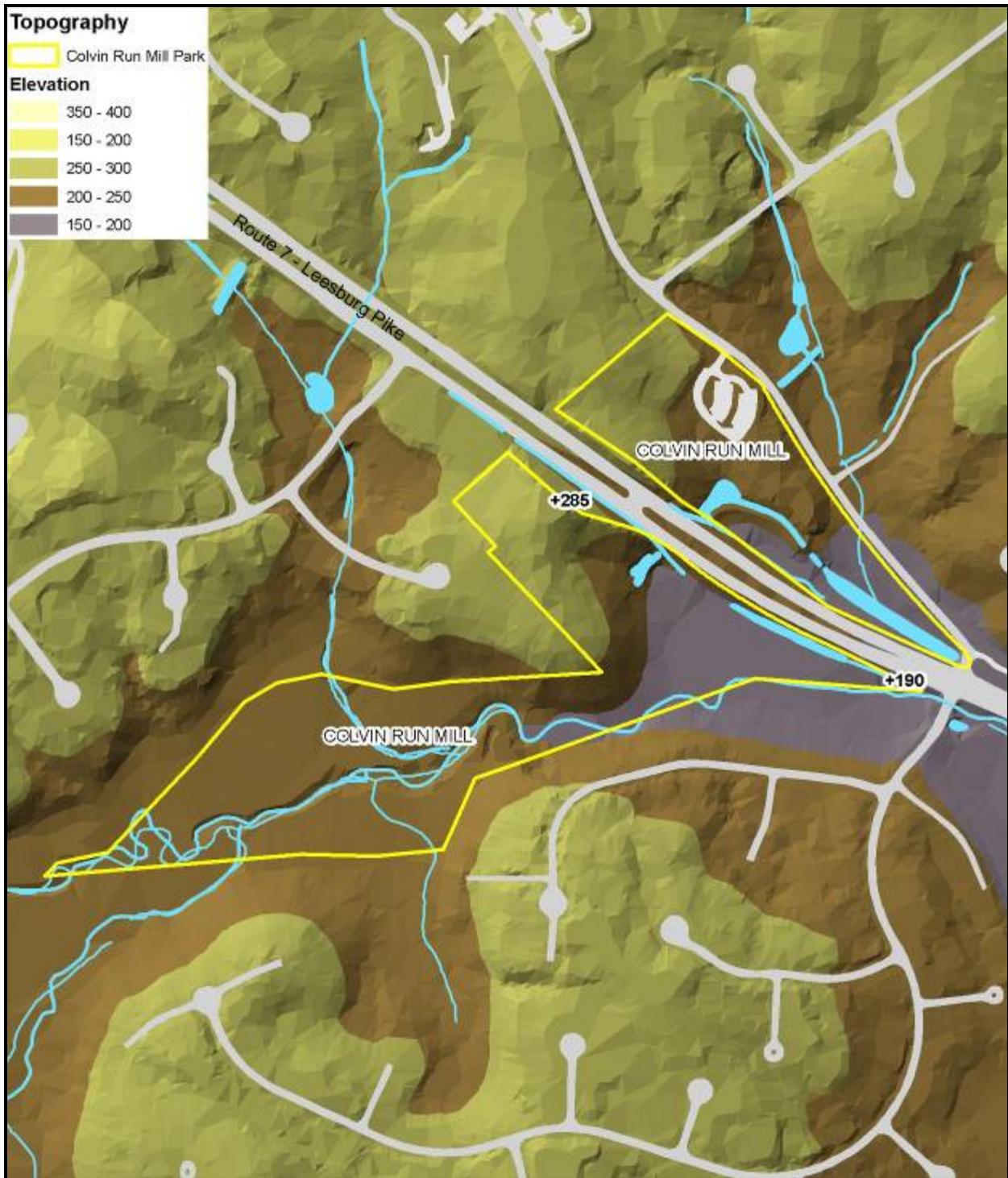
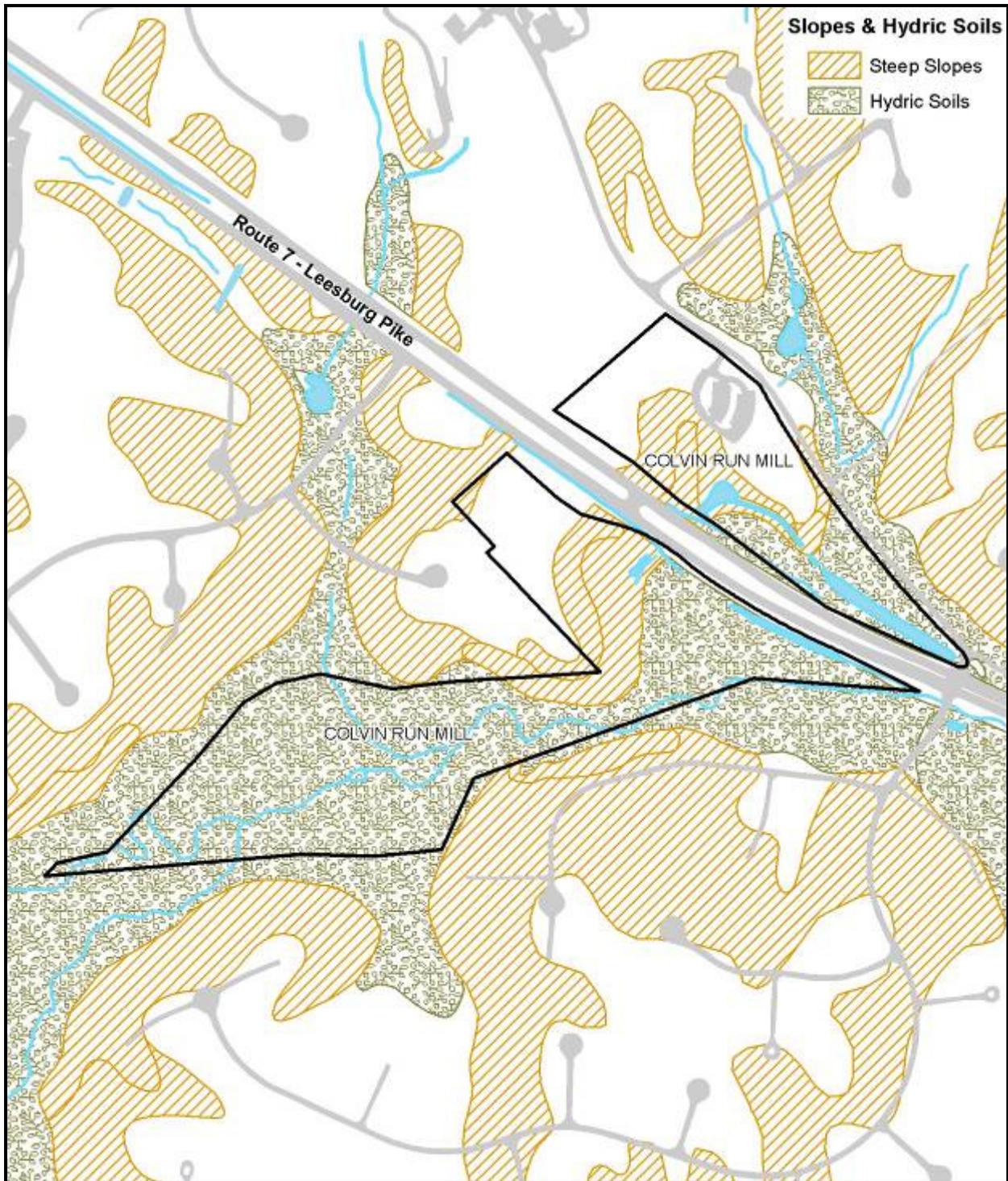


Figure 5: Topography



**Figure 6: Hydrology and Slopes**

**Slopes**

Gentle to moderate slopes are found between the relatively flat high points and stream valley areas. However, a few locations near the streams are quite steep. The steepest slopes (over 14%) are just above the flood plain of Colvin Run in the southern portion

adjacent to Route 7. The flattest slopes of the park are in the streambed adjacent to Colvin Run as well as the parking lot in the northern section (Figure 6).

### **Resource Protection Area**

The stream valley along the Colvin Run is within a Resource Protection Area (RPA). RPAs are the corridors of environmentally sensitive land that lie alongside or near the shorelines of streams, rivers or other waterways that drain into the Potomac River and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay. In their natural condition, RPAs protect water quality, filter pollutants out of stormwater runoff, reduce the volume of stormwater runoff, prevent erosion, and perform other important biological and ecological functions. In 1993, the Board of Supervisors enacted a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, which regulates the kinds of development that can occur in these important environmentally sensitive areas (Figure 7).

### **Soils**

There are four soil types present within the park. These include Mixed Alluvial, Glenelg Manor, and Rocky Land (Acidic). Glenelg Manor, and Rocky Land (Acidic), are predominantly upland soils, however Mixed Alluvial is a hydric soil (Figure 7). Hydric soils occur in floodplains as well as drainage ways, are susceptible to flooding, and may include non-tidal wetlands. They are often silts or clays with slow permeability and seasonally or permanently high water tables. Soil strength may be poor because of soft soil and seasonal saturation. Foundation footings must extend below the soft plastic clays, generally to bedrock, which could be as deep as 15 feet below the surface to ensure competent building support. These soils are poorly suited for septic drain fields and infiltration trenches due to wetness or flooding potential. Stream bank erosion within these soils may result in undercutting of embankments on adjacent properties.

### **Vegetation**

Most of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is developed in the section north of Route 7, with lawns, trees, and shrubs intermingled with the structures. Most of these consist of fruit and ornamental trees, including several oaks for shade, and a large native Virginia hazelnut. The area between the parking lot and general store has been landscaped with flowering plants, yew, and flowering trees. Northern red oak, black locust, pignut hickory, and flowering dogwoods are scattered throughout the park.

A stand of mid-succession forest exists on the high ground in the western part of the site adjacent to Route 7. This forest stand is dominated by black locust, black cherry, black walnut and red maple. The understory includes native tree and shrub species, but also a high degree of non-native, invasive plant cover. Much of the vegetation outside of this forested block is characterized by a mixture of native and non-native plants some of which are highly invasive. Vegetation throughout the northern portion of the park could be improved to enhance the native vegetation and the habitat benefits for wildlife.

Successional vegetation is growing along the Route 7 right of way. This vegetation consists mostly of tulip trees, Virginia red cedars, scrub, and vines. This growth is beneficial to the extent that it provides screening to the historic site from the highway.

However, it contains a high concentration of non-native invasive plant species that can harm healthy vegetation.

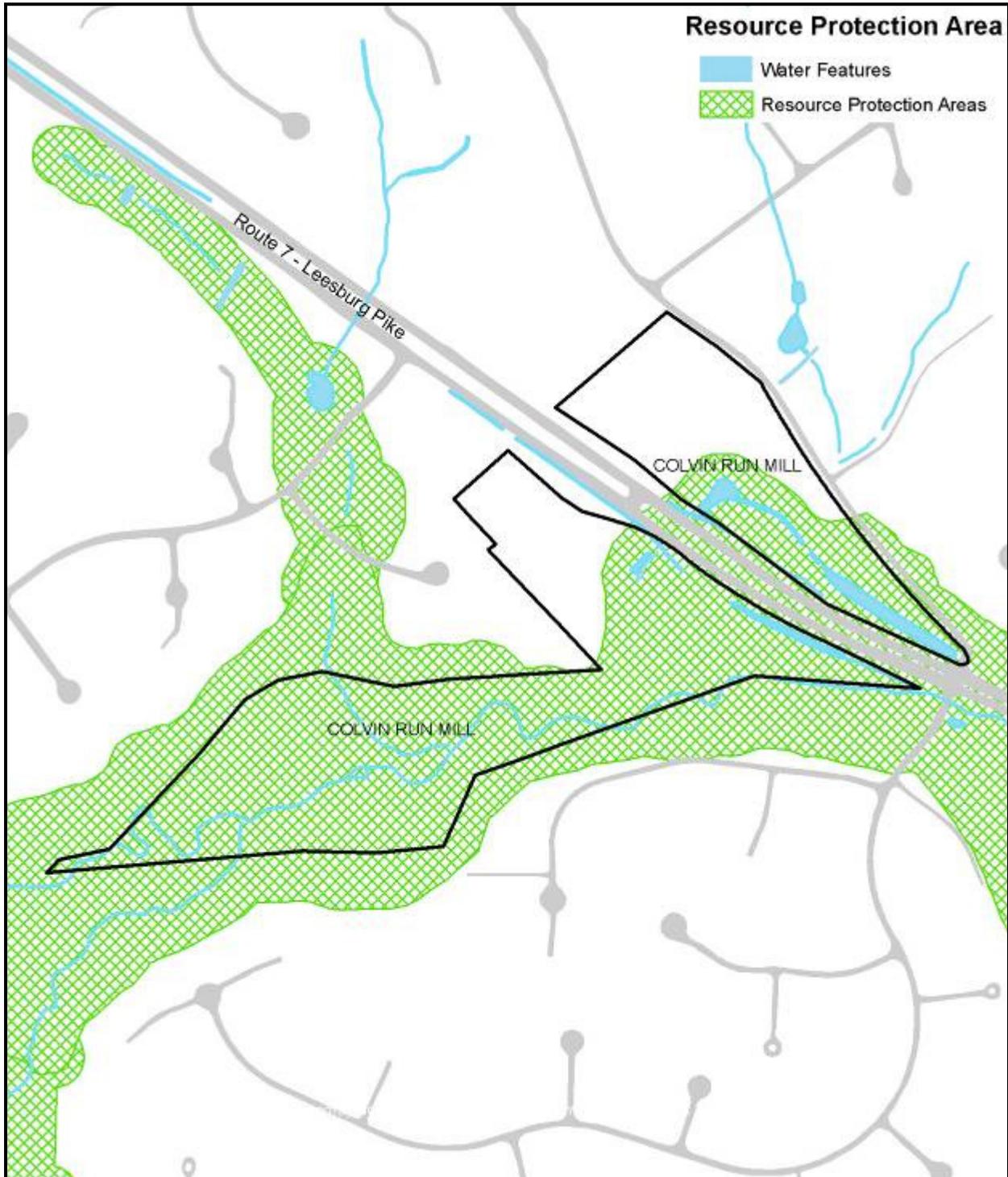


Figure 7: Resource Protection Area (RPA)

The majority of the site south of Route 7 is lowland stream valley, containing six habitat types: mature upland forest; early to mid succession upland forest; upland field; mature bottomland forest; early to mid-succession bottomland forest; and wetland or wet meadow. Dominant species include sycamore, red maples, oaks, and tulip trees. The under story includes the same species with the addition of witch hazel, viburnums, and brambles. A high quality community of mature upland forest is located along the southern edge of the parcel near Scenic View Terrace. Part of the stream valley trail runs through this community which is approximately five acres in size. The remainder of the southern portion of the property consists of moderately to highly impacted vegetative cover/habitat types that exhibit a fairly high degree of relatively recent human disturbance, non-native invasive plant cover and deer herbivory.

Areas around the borders of the park are dominated by invasive shrubs and vines. This includes burning bush, Japanese barberry, Japanese holly, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and English ivy which cover extensive areas. Japanese stilt grass and bamboo are also found in limited areas. The areas affected by invasive species are concentrated in close proximity to the adjacent residential neighborhood.

### **Wildlife**

There is a wide variety of wildlife resident in the park, with other species that move through during migratory periods and as part of larger home ranges. Mammal species include white-tailed deer, red and possibly grey foxes, raccoons, opossums, skunks, mice, beaver, bats, occasional coyotes, and probably flying squirrels amongst other species. A wide variety of birds can be found on the site, including bluebirds, chickadees, red-shouldered hawks, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers, mallards, herons, Canada geese, starlings, bluejays, robins, crows and song sparrows. Numerous other bird species can be found on the property. Reptiles include northern water snakes, copperheads, black rat snakes, eastern box turtles, and eastern painted turtles. Likely amphibian species include bullfrog, green frog, pickerel frog and red-backed salamander. The portion of the park north of Route 7 offers fewer wildlife opportunities due to less natural habitat and greater human presence. The area south of Route 7 offers greater habitat opportunities due to a greater variety of landscapes, lower levels of overall habitat disturbance and a lower level of human usage. All areas within the park offer opportunities to improve wildlife habitat and provide for wildlife viewing and interpretive opportunities. However, the presence of waterfowl at the tail race causes water quality problems which degrade water quality and wildlife habitat in the tail race area.

## ***C. CULTURAL RESOURCES***

### **Historic**

In the late 1700's mills were constructed to grind wheat and corn at strategic points along Northern Virginia streams. The location of these mills determined the routes on which the turnpikes were constructed. Wheat grown in the piedmont and valley to the west was hauled to the rivers in wagons, being converted into flour at mills along the way. The land along Colvin Run had a stream for water power and oak trees for building the mill. Located halfway between the grain-producing region of the

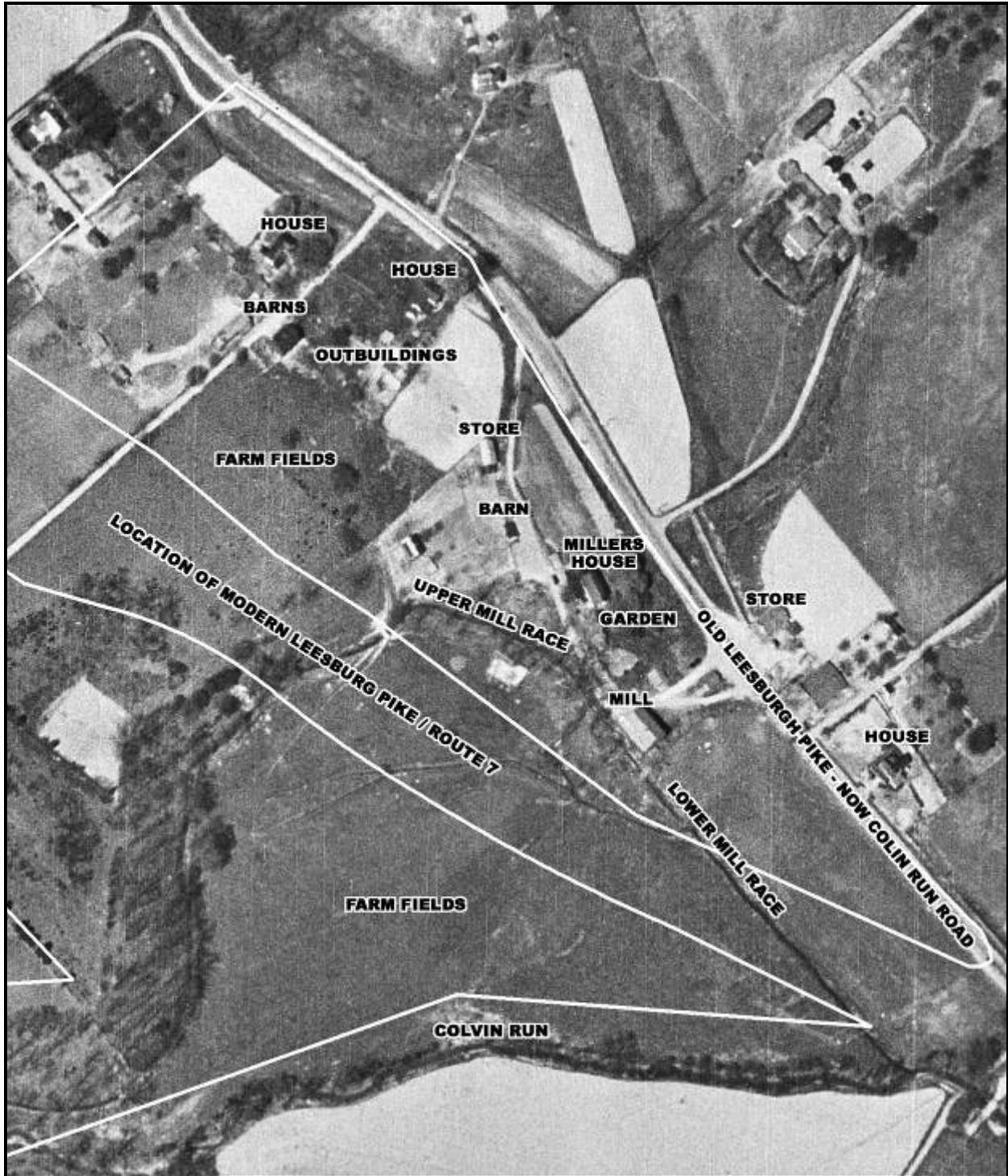
Shenandoah Valley and the port of Alexandria, along what became the Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike made it an ideal place for a mill.

In 1739 John Colville received land grants totaling 9,823 acres in Northern Virginia, including the land where Colvin Run Mill is located. Colville conveyed most of this land to William Fairfax in 1740. When William Fairfax died, his son Bryan sold 275 acres including the mill site to George Washington in 1763. Washington mentions his intent to build a mill on the parcel in a letter, but was prevented from doing so by the Revolutionary War.

William Sheppard purchased 300 acres from Washington's heirs in 1803. The first known mention of a mill building on this property occurs in 1809 when Sheppard advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* to rent "a valuable mill". In 1811 Sheppard advertised to rent or sell the mill with 70 acres. The ad also mentioned a house, kitchen, cooper's shop, other buildings, and a peach orchard on the property. In the same 1811 issue of the *Alexandria Gazette*, the Fairfax County Commissioners advertised the sale of Sheppard's property to settle a suit by Washington's heirs.

Sheppard sold the property in 1813, including the "mill, house, dam, race, and etc." to Philip Carper, a successful miller from Maryland. According to the Carper family, Philip built the mill and miller's house with indentured laborers. Although the 1811 deed included the mill and miller's house, Carper may have improved the mill, then rebuilt the house to suite his tastes. During Carper's ownership, more farms started growing wheat, while new markets for flour opened in Europe. By 1840 transportation was greatly improved when the Leesburg/Alexandria Turnpike was completed, passing the mill on what is now Colvin Run Road. This served as the main road running past the mill for 100 years as shown in Figure 8, from 1937.

In 1841, Carper sold the mill to John Powell, but retained 1/8 acre for a family burial site. Powell hired professional millers to operate the mill with slave labor. Between 1840-1860, other businesses including a sawmill, blacksmith shop, and general store were constructed around Colvin Run Mill. New farming techniques boosted grain production to the leading source of income for Virginia's farmers. Roads construction improved transportation, connecting farms, mills, and ports during the 1850s, followed by the railroad which became the preferred method for transporting grain and flour from the Shenandoah Valley to the market cities. When the Civil War erupted in Virginia, Colvin Run Mill was within reach of foraging parties from both Union and Confederate armies. As a result, local harvests were depleted, eventually milling ceased altogether. However, during the latter part of the war, the mill's stones turned to custom grind wheat or corn for neighboring farmers who brought their grain in sacks across their saddles. When the war ended, northern Virginia's economy and farms were in ruin, with crop production in 1870 only about half of what it had been in 1860. Powell filed for bankruptcy in 1872, with his property put up for sale.



**Figure 8: 1937 Aerial Image**

Addison Millard bought the property in 1883 and renovated the mill facilities. Once operational, the mill machinery was progressively modernized, with roller milling equipment added by 1895 and two steam turbines added in 1897. Millard successfully operated the mill, passing management to his wife in 1898 and their sons in 1919. The mill served the neighborhood as well as more than 20 stores in Washington, DC, and

Richmond. After buying two trucks, the Millards transported their products to Hunter Mill Station for shipment by rail to Ohio, New York, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky. Buhr stones were still used for cornmeal, whole wheat, and to crack wheat before using rollers to process it into finer flour. Using this process, the Millards produced about 35 barrels, or close to 7,000 pounds, of flour per day. The Millard's cultivated a large garden, kept dairy cows, and stored their produce in the mill's ice house. Besides the mill, they also kept a store specializing in poultry supplies, fence wire, roofing materials, as well as farm produce, and the mill's grain products. In the summertime, the mill pond was a favorite swimming and fishing spot. When it froze in winter ice skating parties were held on the millpond, with roaring bonfires on the banks and lanterns on the ice, skating continuing into the night. The mill and stores were the center of community life, where people gathered to exchange news while the miller, blacksmith, or storekeeper conducted business. These structures are visible in the 1937 Aerial shown in Figure 8.

In 1934, the Millards sold the mill to Bernard Bailey, along with 32 acres of land, millrace, and milldam. In 1941, the Virginia Department of Highways began the relocation of State Route 7 from the roadway of the old Alexandria / Leesburg Turnpike along the north side of the mill to a new location south of the mill. The realigned route ran between the mill and milldam in a deep cut excavated through the hill north and west of the mill site. The engineers proposed to carry the old mill race under the new highway in large concrete pipes, ignoring, Bailey's argument that the pipes would clog with dirt, and it would be very difficult to clean them. World War II rationing made it impossible for Bailey to obtain the machinery and materials to strengthen and restore the mill. The cast-iron roller milling machinery was removed and sold for scrap iron for wartime steel making. After the war, Bailey resumed his restoration, installing a wood-and-steel waterwheel, but as predicted, the pipes under the new Route 7 did not carry a sufficient flow of water to turn the waterwheel. Repairs could not be made fast enough to reverse the mill's gradual deterioration. By the end of the 1950s, Bailey considered other uses for the mill property, including refitting the mill as a restaurant, but with no success.

Fairfax County residents petitioned the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to preserve and restore the mill as a historic landmark before its complete ruin from neglect. In 1964, Fairfax County acquired the 36-acre property, bisected by Route 7, encompassing the mill, miller's house, barn, three sheds, and the remains of the mill dam. This parcel was then conveyed to the Fairfax County Park Authority in 1965. After considerable research, mill restoration began in 1968. The exterior of the miller's house was returned to an early 1800's appearance, with an addition added on the west end of the house. This addition now contains the lunch room, library / office space, with the upper story used as office and storage space. Next restoration began on the mill, returning it to early 1800s appearance and functionality, using pieces recovered from other mills, and newly handcrafted woodwork. The mill opened to the public in 1972 with the waterwheel turning the stones for grinding corn and wheat. In 1972, the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning established the Colvin Run Mill Historic District, in accordance with state enabling legislation to further protect the site (Figure 9). Meanwhile restoration work continued on the mill fixtures in the upper levels of the

mill. In 1974, the 1880s era general store was moved from across Colvin Run Road to near the barn. The barn has been serving as a visitor center, presentation space, and storage facility since remodeling in the early 1980s. At that time, the blacksmith shop was constructed on the side of the building as well.

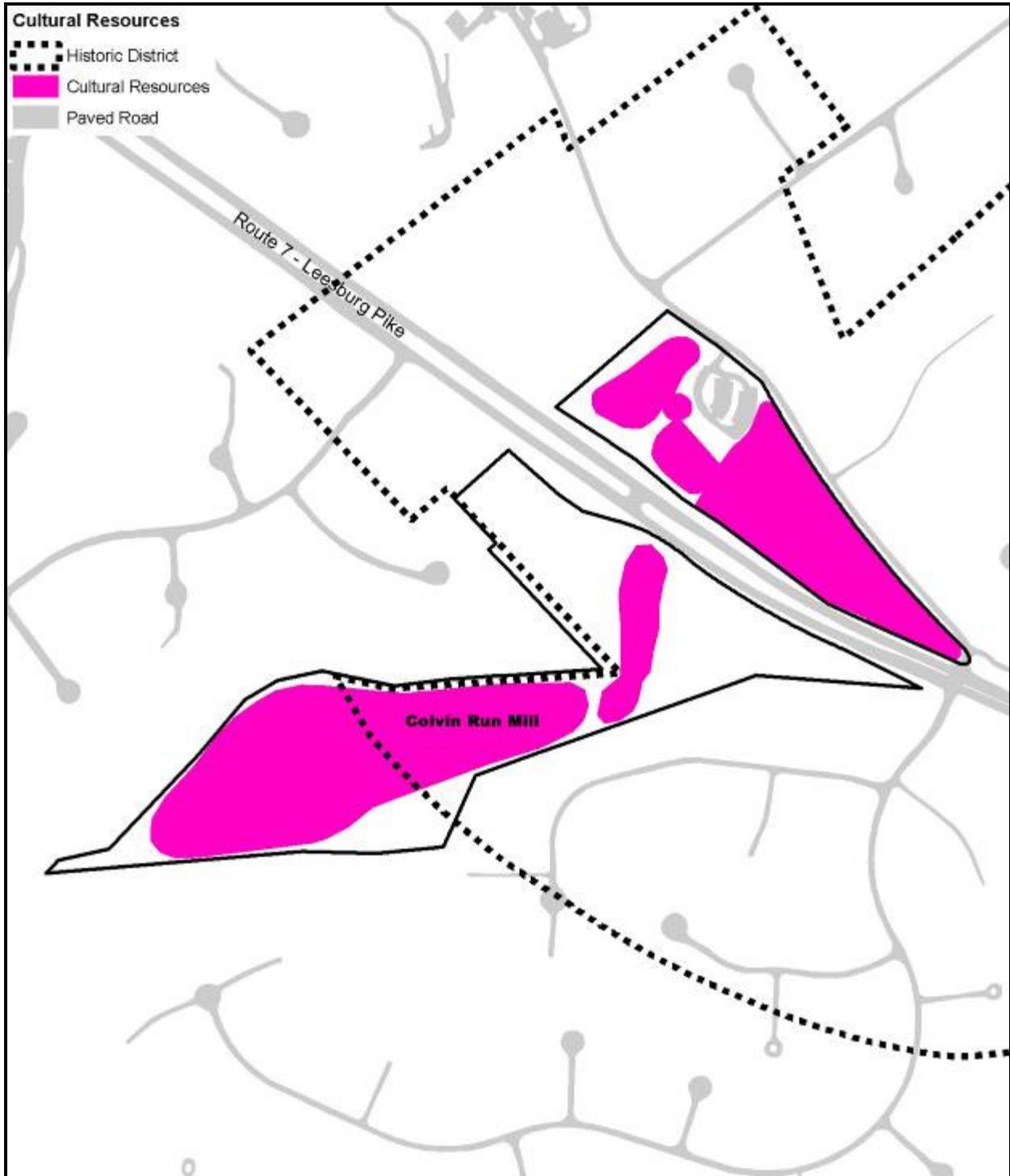


Figure 9: Cultural Resources

Colvin Run Mill is designated a Virginia landmark, as well as a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The site is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Heavily used by residents, school children, and visitors, this park is an important cultural resource, particularly as a functioning example of early American industrial technology and the community that supported it (Figure 8). As a component of the Fairfax County park system, Colvin Run Mill serves an important function within a larger regional community.

#### ***D. EXISTING FACILITIES***

##### **Existing Use**

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site is used to preserve and interpret the historic buildings and collections at the site for the enrichment of Fairfax County residents. Visitors view these structures and uses as they relate to the themes of technology and community development in 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rural Virginia. Milling demonstrations are given once a week using the functioning mill, the products of which are sold in the General Store. The park is well used by school groups and visitors from throughout the region who enjoy the mill, general store, and site programs. This preserved historic landscape in its prominent location along Route 7 further enhances the public's sense of local history.

##### **Original Master Plan**

In 1973, the Park Authority approved a master plan for Colvin Run Mill Historic Site (Figure 3), for the park section on the north side of Route 7. This master plan primarily included the existing mill, miller's house, general store, carriage shed / barn, mill races, and parking lot. Additional features on this plan include a park sign, walkways and two bridges over the mill races.

##### **Existing Facilities**

Existing facilities in the park north of Route 7 include all of the features depicted in the 1973 Colvin Run Mill Master Plan described above. Additions since the 1973 master plan include a picnic area, kiosk, wooden fence, composting area, restrooms at the general store, and ornamental gardens. An unused, wooden outdoor stage platform overlooks Colvin Run Road, which is to be removed. Other features include old stone foundation, honey bee hives, and overflow parking on the parcel acquired in 1980 (Figure 10). There is a trail through the stream valley, water pump for the mill facility, old stone quarry, and the ruins of the mill pond in the portion south of Route 7.

##### **Access**

The park is accessed via a driveway marked with a sign located along Colvin Run Road. This drive, leads directly to the parking lot, which features handicap and bus parking. The park is accessible along the paved pathways from the parking lot to the millers' house. The mill is also accessible from the service entrance to the first two levels.

##### **Trails**

There are walkways throughout the site north of Route 7, including a nature trail from the picnic area to the overflow parking lot. The only maintained trail within the portion of

the site south of Route 7 is the Rails to River Trail along Colvin Run which winds in and out of the park. This trail is part of the Difficult Run trail network, linking Lake Fairfax Park, Colvin Run Stream Valley Park, and Colvin Run Mill Historic Site to the Cross County Trail (Figure 11). An un-maintained trail is heavily used by the neighborhood on the opposite side of Colvin Run from the Rails to River Trail.



Figure 10: Existing Facilities



**Figure 11: Existing Trails**

**Utilities**

Electricity, telephone, internet, cable TV, water, and sewer are available to the General Store and the Miller’s House. Restrooms for visitors are in the rear of the General Store, while facilities and offices exist for staff in the Miller’s House. Electricity, internet,

and cable TV service is also present in the barn / visitors center. The mill has both electrical and telephone service.

#### **IV. GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

##### ***INTRODUCTION***

The General Management Plan integrates research, site analysis, and basic data presented in this document. Management zones are defined to provide a framework for decision-making. Existing uses, site conditions, as well as recommendations from residents and Park Authority staff were considered in the development of the management zones. This provides broad flexibility within a range of potential uses for each management zone, depicted in Figure 12. The potential acceptable uses are general to allow for flexibility when making decisions following further studies of the site. If a use is not listed for a zone it is considered an incompatible use within that zone.

The portion of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site on the south side of Route 7 is bordered on three sides by Colvin Run Stream Valley Park. These adjacent parcels of the stream valley park contain similar resources associated with Colvin Run Mill Historic Site that are more appropriate for inclusion in the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. To facilitate better management of contiguous natural and cultural resources in the southern section of the site, 29 acres from Colvin Run Stream Valley Park is to be incorporated into Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. This brings the total acreage of the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site to 67 acres.

##### ***A. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES***

In order to achieve the park mission, the following objectives have been developed to guide specific actions and strategies for dealing with management issues:

- Education and Interpretation — To provide a broad range of educational and interpretative programs and exhibits promoting an appreciation of Fairfax County history with a focus on industry in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- Cultural Resources — To identify, record, and preserve the park's cultural resources and foster attitudes and practices that support conservation of cultural resources.
- Natural Resources — To conserve and where appropriate, enhance designated natural areas. To foster attitudes and practices that support conservation of natural resources and responsible environmental stewardship.
- Historic Collections — To preserve, protect, document, and manage the Historic Collection items according to best practices for historic building museums. To foster attitudes and practices that support good stewardship of historic objects and material culture.

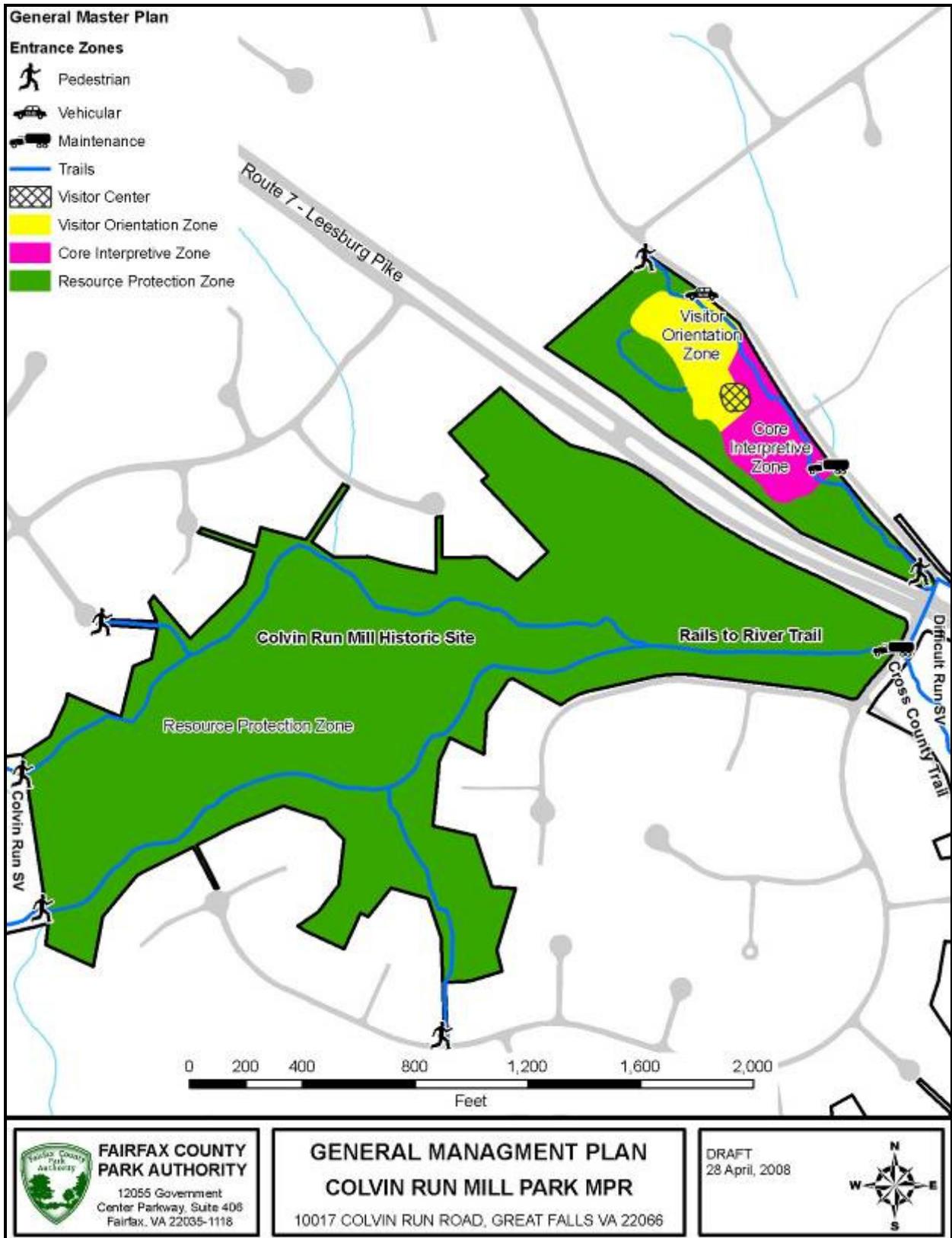


Figure 12: General Management Plan

## **B. VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

The unique visitor experience at Colvin Run Mill supports groups and individual visitors in self guided as well as staff guided tours. This interactive experience allows users to gain an understanding of the site history and function. Preservation and restoration efforts seek to create an authentic historic experience that supports interpretation of the 1810 – 1935 period of significance.

The five most important messages that visitors should take home from their visit to Colvin Run Mill are:

1. Colvin Run Mill is owned and operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority.
2. Flour and cornmeal are still ground at Colvin Run Mill.
3. 19<sup>th</sup> century milling technology was complex.
4. Colvin Run Mill was the center of the community.
5. History is the story of ordinary people.

Casual enjoyment of the park's open space and historic landscape is part of the visitor experience. Users value the interactive experience with the historical features provided in this park. Site visitors gain an understanding of the technology and processes involved in 19<sup>th</sup> century milling and how the mill and general store were the center of the community.

Recreational use of this site is primarily trail use in the portion of the park south of Route 7. This experience may be enhanced through interpretive features located along the nearby trail network.

## **C. SITE ISSUES**

In considering the future planning and management for Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, a number of issues require consideration. Some issues may be resolved through management actions, some through development solutions, and others may not be resolved within the life of the plan for various reasons.

### **Route 7 Widening**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has proposed widening Route 7 from two lanes to three lanes in both directions past Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. This project is in the preliminary planning stage, with no proposed funding or time line as of 2008. The current plans show little impact to

### **1973 Master Plan Elements**

Colvin Run Mill  
Miller's House  
General Store  
Carriage Shed / Barn  
Mill Races  
Parking Lot  
Walkways  
Two Bridges over Mill Races

### **Added Since 1973 Master Plan**

Picnic Area  
Kiosk  
Outdoor Stage  
Wooden Fence  
Restrooms at the General Store  
Ornamental Gardens  
Lot Acquired In 1980:

- Old Stone Foundation
- Honey Bee Hives
- Overflow Parking
- Composting Area

'Rails to River Trail' through Stream Valley  
Water Pump for Mill Facility

the portion of the site north of Route 7, however the area south of Route 7 will be impacted significantly. The plans also show the expansion and upgrades to the intersection with Colvin Run Road and Carper's Farm Way. Due to the impact to parkland, the opportunity exists for negotiation with VDOT for mitigation for these impacts.

### **Exhibit and Operations Space**

Staff offices are currently located on the second floor of the Miller's House, with their kitchen, break room, restroom, and library located in the addition on the first floor. The existing office space is inadequate and these facilities are negatively impacting the structure of the Miller's House, particularly on the second floor. Moving these operations out of the Miller's House would allow it to be preserved, restored, and opened to the public, furthering the sites mission of interpreting the mill community during the 1800 – 1900s period.

The main room of the barn structure currently serves many functions: visitor orientation, meeting, exhibit, demonstration and interpretive spaces. Another room serves as storage and preparation space while the blacksmith shop is located outside under the barn's northern roof extension. Due to increased uses and a need to modernize these facilities to better meet user needs, more space is required for these activities, particularly display and storage facilities. Increased demand for Colvin Run Mill's flour means more space is needed for grain and cold storage for ground flour.

### **Improved Interpretation Facilities**

Over the past 35 years, the use of the site has changed and grown. During this time the way in which historic sites function and the interpretive methods used have changed dramatically, as have public expectations. Visitors of all ages now expect a more interactive learning experience. Historic sites rely on repeat visitors, which requires dynamic, ever changing exhibits, which remain relevant to the mission of the site. Modern interpretation centers use hands-on displays as well as modern, interactive technology to tell their stories. A modern visitor interpretation center will improve these functions at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site.

## ***D. MANAGEMENT ZONES***

When developing a management framework, a range of opportunities are evaluated for the site to determine the most appropriate uses for each part of the park. The end results are zones which delineate general areas of the site, identify the primary purpose of each area, and suggest appropriate land use activities. The management zones provide the foundation for future decision making in the park (Figure 12 — General Management Plan)

### **Visitor Orientation Zone**

Adjacent to the entrance zone, the visitor orientation zone will serve as the primary visitor orientation point that provides the basic site interpretation and education. All visitor services and staff offices should be relocated to the visitor orientation zone to allow for a more accurate historic representation of the Miller's House and surrounding area. A visitor center in the location of the barn is envisioned to house a variety of uses

that includes space for site orientation, exhibits, class's, programs, kitchen, library, restrooms, staff offices, workspace, and event rental. Picnic facilities, trails, interpretive and directional signage, are other suitable outdoor uses for this zone.

Visitor amenities such as benches and trash cans should be provided in the visitor orientation zone. These should be of a styling consistent with the sites period of significance (1800 – early 1900's) in keeping with existing historic structures to preserve the visitor experience. All visitor services and routes will be developed to be fully accessible.

**Vehicles Entrances and Parking** Within the visitor orientation zone is the main vehicle entrance from Colvin Run Road and parking lots. The main parking lot provides 56 parking spaces as well as space for three buses. Overflow parking is provided to the west of the parking lot. Park identification, wayfinding and interpretive signage is appropriate in this zone.

### **Pedestrian Entrances**

Pedestrians enter the site from several trail connections including the Cross County Trail (CCT) across Colvin Run Road on the eastern tip of the northern section of the park, the Rails to River Trail through the Colvin Run/Difficult Run Stream Valley, and from adjoining neighborhoods. An opportunity exists when Route 7 is widened to add a few parking spaces along Carper's Farm Way for trail users at the maintenance access to the southern portion of the site. Beyond this parking lot, vehicular access will be restricted to only maintenance access on the southern portion of the park.

### **Core Interpretive Zone**

The central area of the site north of Route 7 is designated as a core interpretation zone. This area is managed with the primary purpose of preservation, protection, research, and interpretation of the sites main cultural resources for the enrichment of visitors. The interpretive focus primarily relates to the themes of technology and community in 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20th century. Management and enjoyment of these resources is allowed, but activities which degrade the resources of this zone are prohibited. With the exception of the visitor center and parking lots, development within this zone is restricted to interpretation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic elements. Walkways, water supply facilities for the mill, reconstruction, and archaeological research will be permitted in this zone.

Amenities, such as benches, way finding signs, and interpretative features describing important resources may be placed at specific locations throughout the zone. These should be of a styling consistent with the sites period of significance (1800 – early 1900's) in keeping with existing historic structures to preserve the visitor experience. The number of signs and walkways are to be kept to a minimum to preserve the setting while preventing impacts to important resources.

Management of the mill facilities, including water supply, natural and cultural resources, is also appropriate. Non historic structures and environmental degradation of this zone is prohibited. Long term goals for this zone include:

- Archaeological research of historic features
- Interpretation of Cultural Resources
- Control non-native invasive plant species.
- Improve native vegetation and wildlife habitat
- Improve water quality by seeking opportunities to stabilize the tail race
- Protect resources from future impacts of Route 7 road widening and other nearby development impacts

The creation of a detailed Cultural Landscape Report is recommended to provide a management summary including an existing conditions inventory, analysis and evaluation, and treatment recommendations. This report should be used to inform any modification to the landscape and to determine the appropriate extent and location of trails, signage, interpretation, and other visitor amenities.

### **Resource Protection Zone**

Due to the significant cultural and natural resources that exist on this site, the majority of the site is designated as a Resource Protection Zone. This area is managed with the primary purpose of interpreting, protecting, and preserving the cultural and natural resources of the site. These resources are subject to ongoing research. With the exception of interpretation and preservation activities, human impact in this zone should be kept to a minimum. Permissible activities include management of cultural features, wildlife habitat, and forest health. Management of the mill facilities, including water supply, and archaeological research are also appropriate. Trails, interpretive features, water supply facilities for the mill, will be permitted in this zone.

The trails in the southern section provide a natural setting for passive recreational activities, including walking/jogging or bicycling, horseback riding, relaxation, and educational experiences. Many of the existing informal trails created by park users will be incorporated into the trails plan. Some trails will need to be relocated to protect sensitive cultural and natural resources, including the prevention of erosion by removing trails from steep slopes. Amenities, such as benches, way finding signs, and interpretative features describing important resources may be placed at specific locations throughout the zone. These should be of a styling consistent with the sites period of significance (1800 – early 1900's) in keeping with existing historic structures to preserve the visitor experience. The number of signs and walkways are to be kept to a minimum to preserve the setting while preventing impacts to important resources.

All activities should support the site mission and long term goals while preventing cultural and environmental degradation of this zone. Activities for this zone include:

- Archaeological research of prehistoric and historic features
- Interpretation of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Control non-native invasive plant species.
- Control white-tailed deer.
- Improve native vegetation and wildlife habitat
- Improve water quality by seeking opportunities to stabilize Colvin Run's stream channel. This includes expanding the wetland south of Route 7, to create a natural storm water retention area where water could be collected and retained from Colvin Run then slowly released later.

- Protect resources from future impacts of Route 7 road widening and other nearby development impacts

## **V. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The Conceptual Development Plan (CDP) has two primary purposes. First, it describes the elimination of previously planned facilities no longer appropriate or needed in the park. Second, the CDP contains descriptions of concept plan elements, design concerns, and a plan graphic that illustrates the general location of the recommended facilities. For Colvin Run Mill Historic Site, this CDP applies only to the section of the park north of Route 7 as shown in Figure 13.

### ***A. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ELEMENTS***

#### **Existing Elements to be Removed**

A small, wooden, outdoor stage platform overlooks Colvin Run Road, near the General Store. This stage is unused due to its proximity to the busy road, and should be removed.

#### **Visitor Orientation Zone Elements**

##### **Entrance and Parking**

The existing park entrances and parking areas are to remain. After archaeological investigation, the overflow parking area is to be upgraded. The parking lot lighting is to be updated to comply with current standards and accommodate the new visitor center facilities.

##### **Visitor Center**

The existing barn shall be renovated to provide a visitor center with much needed modern interpretation and support facilities. This new facility should be independent of the core interpretative area. Due to an expected increase in visitorship over the next few years and fulfilling the criteria established by the AAM accreditation process, a 9,000 square foot facility is recommended to include the following:

- Welcome / Visitor Orientation Area
- Museum quality exhibit room for permanent and temporary exhibits
- Public and separate staff restrooms
- Store / sales facility to expand current sales
- Multi-purpose room for orientation videos, classroom, demonstration, meetings, conferences, and other uses
- Office space to relocate staff and office equipment from the Miller's House
- Storage space for historic collections, rotating exhibits, housekeeping supplies, and equipment
- Library, research space, and work room
- Kitchen
- Laundry facility
- Storage for supplies, products, grain, and visitors bags

This modern facility should be fit within the existing building element if at all possible.

If the entire structure is to be rebuilt, it should be a low-level building, of the same size, position, and architectural styling as the barn to be complimentary to the landscape, limit its visual impact on the core interpretive area.

### **Picnic Area**

It is recommended that the existing picnic area is to remain in its present location. This area consists of picnic tables and trash cans.

### **Core Interpretive Zone Elements**

#### **Colvin Run Mill**

As the site's most important feature, priority is to be given to the completion of the restoration of Colvin Run Mill. All mechanical components in the upper floors are to be restored to full functionality so that they can be utilized in the mill's operations and demonstrations.

#### **Miller's House & Surrounds**

Use for staff offices structurally stresses the Miller's House. Moving staff offices out of this building will reduce the weight on its second floor and provide staff with better functioning work space. This will allow for the Miller's House to be fully restored and opened to the public, furthering the sites mission of representing life and community during the 19th and early 20th Century.

Restoration of the Miller's House shall include extensive archaeological investigation of the garden and privy areas originally located on the east side of the house. The investigation will be continued throughout the site to determine the location, size, and nature of the other structures known to have existed on site. This investigation will guide the preservation, treatment, and reconstruction of these facilities.

#### **General Store**

The provision of visitor restrooms in the visitor center will allow the restroom in the rear of the General Store to be converted to much need storage space.

#### **2008 Master Plan Revision Elements**

Defined Entrance Zones  
Interpretive & Directional Signs  
Connection to the Cross County Trail  
Parking Lot Updated & Lighted  
Parking Area along Carper's Farm Way  
Trash Cans  
Benches  
Improving Visitor Accessibility  
Barn Renovated Into Visitor Center with:  
    ▪ Improved Exhibit  
    ▪ Demonstration  
    ▪ Office Space  
    ▪ Restrooms  
    ▪ Support Facilities  
Foot Bridge over Mill Race near Pond  
Site Designated As Resource Protection Zone  
Ongoing Archaeological Research  
Miller's House Restored  
Reconstruction of:  
    ▪ Garden  
    ▪ Privy  
    ▪ Mill Wright / Blacksmith Shop

#### **Removed By 2008 Master Plan Revision**

Unused Stage Platform along Colvin Run Road

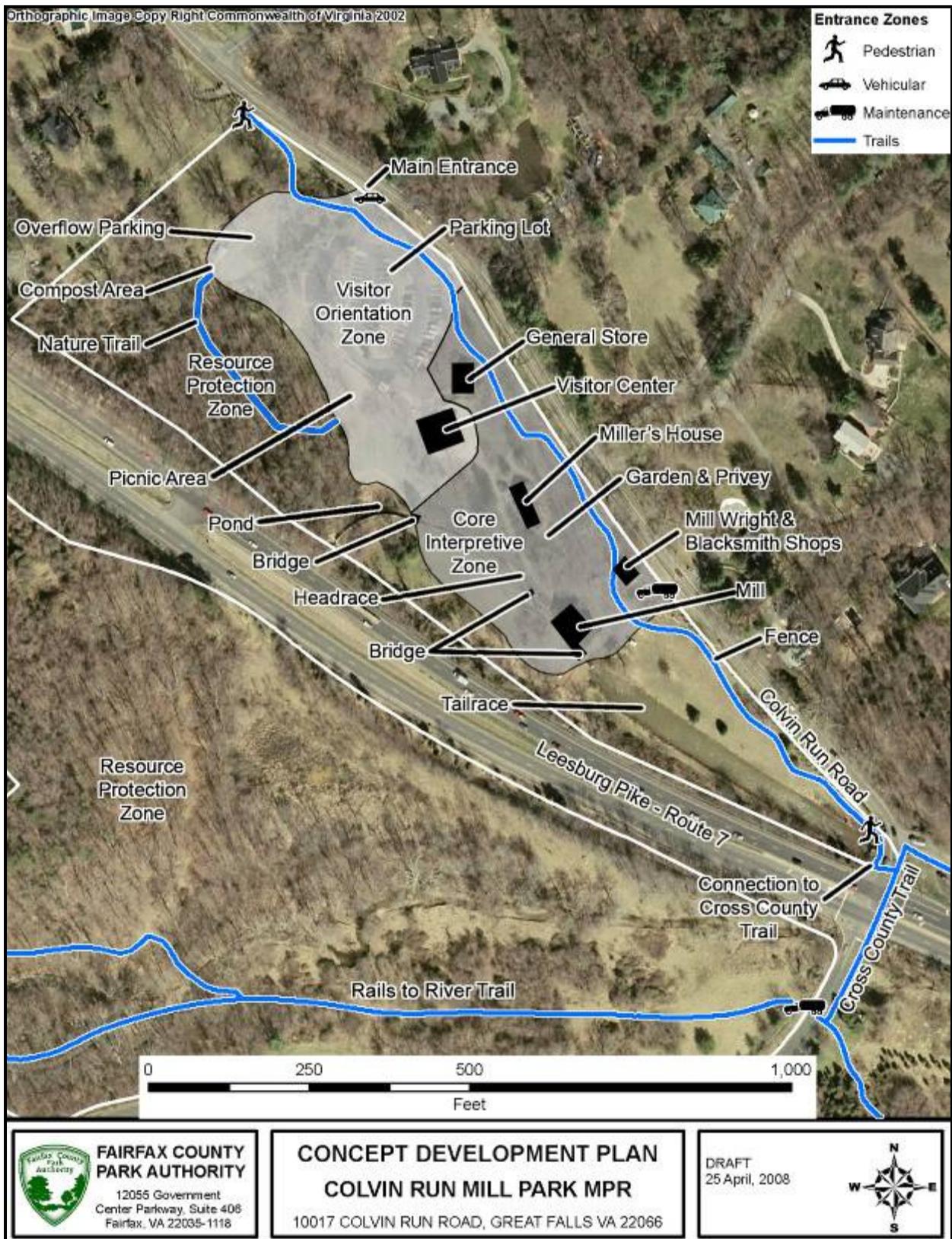


Figure 13: Concept Development Plan

### **Mill Wright & Blacksmith Shop**

The Mill Wright shop should be reconstructed on the north side of the mill along Colvin Run Road next to the service entrance. The blacksmith shop will be moved from its current location at the barn to this facility as well. These shops both serve the mill in regular maintenance, as well as part of the historic sites living museum and interpretation facilities.

### **Foot Bridge**

Further site improvements include the construction of a foot bridge over the western portion of the upper mill race near the pond. This will allow access across the mill race to improve visitor circulation with access to the picnic area and nature trail.

## ***C. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS***

### **Adaptive Reuse of the Barn**

A design process is underway to refine the spatial needs and functions of adaptive reuse of the barn as a visitor center. This process will further inform the design options, engineering and architecture of the visitor center.

### **Historic District**

Colvin Run Mill is located within the Colvin Run Mill Historic District, established in accordance with state enabling legislation and administered by the County's Department of Planning and Zoning. The County's Architectural Review Board (ARB) is responsible for project review in the Colvin Run Mill Historic Overlay District as stipulated in the County's Zoning Ordinance. The Park Authority will submit site development applications to the ARB for review as necessary.

### **Habitat Management**

Colvin Run Historic Site could provide very positive habitat benefits over time for a wide variety of animal species, particularly in the southern section. To achieve this, overall conditions of the plant communities should be preserved and improved. Methods of doing so include controlling the deer herd to reduce the impacts of deer browse, limiting encroachments, and controlling non-native invasive plant species. Doing so would not only benefit natural resource health, but also allow the site to offer an improved a natural experience for the public, with the potential for interpretation of these resources.

### **Stormwater**

Stormwater runoff from the adjacent roadways contributes to erosion and siltation in the mill races. Future site development should provide detention for increased stormwater runoff through use of Low Impact Development methods. The proposed widening of Route 7 by VDOT provides an opportunity to work with VDOT and DPWES to look for opportunities to improve water quality and stream condition in Colvin Run. This effort could include lowering the culvert under Colvin Run Road, stabilizing inflowing channels from the surrounding subdivisions, stabilizing the main stem of Colvin Run, and possibly creating a several acre wetland in the low area next to the south side of Route 7 (location of existing wetland) to increase the flood storage capacity and the habitat.