

FAIRFAX VILLA PARK

MASTER PLAN REVISION



Fairfax County Park Authority

Approved July 25, 2007

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY BOARD

Harold L. Strickland, Chairman, Sully District
Frank S. Vajda, Vice Chair, Mason District
William G. Bouie, Secretary-Treasurer, Hunter Mill District
Edward R. Batten, Sr., Lee District
Kevin J. Fay, Dranesville District
Kenneth G. Feng, Springfield District
Harrison A. Glasgow, At-Large Member
Georgette Kohler, At-Large Member
George E. Lovelace, At-Large Member
Gilbert S. McCutcheon, Mount Vernon District
Ken Quincy, Providence District
Winifred S. Shapiro, Braddock District

SENIOR STAFF

Timothy K. White, Acting Director
Cindy Messinger, Acting Deputy Director / Chief Operating Officer
David Bowden, Director, Planning & Development Division
Charles Bittenbring, Director, Park Services Division
Miriam C. Morrison, Director, Administration Division
Cindy Walsh, Acting Director, Resource Management Division
Todd Johnson, Director, Park Operations
Judith Pedersen, Public Information Officer

PROJECT TEAM

Sandy Stallman, Manager, Park Planning Branch
Scott Sizer, Senior Planner, Park Planning Branch
Andy Galusha, Park Planning Branch
Mark Rogers, Park Operations Division - Area 4 Manager
Jenny Pate, Trails Coordinator, Special Projects Branch
Meghan Fellows, Natural Resources Management and Protection Division
John Rutherford, Cultural Resources Management and Protection Division

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Master Plan 1

 I. Introduction 1

 A. Purpose and Plan Description 1

 B. Public Process 2

 C. Park Location and General Description 2

 D. Administrative History 2

 II. Park Classification 6

 A. Park Classification 6

 B. Park Purpose 8

 C. Importance 8

 D. Visitor Experience 8

 III. Existing Site Conditions 9

 A. Context - Adjacent Uses 9

 B. Surrounding Facilities 9

 C. Natural Resources 11

 D. Cultural Resources 17

 E. Existing Facilities 19

 F. Existing Use 22

 IV. General Management Plan 22

 A. Introduction 22

 B. Desired Visitor Experiences 22

 C. Resource Management 22

 D. Description of Planned Uses 23

 E. Site Management Issues 24

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Location 3

Figure 2: Parcel Acquisition History 4

Figure 3: 1977 Master Plan 5

Figure 4: Nearby Facilities 10

Figure 5: Topography 12

Figure 6: Hydrology and Slopes 13

Figure 7: Resource Protection Area (RPA) 14

Figure 8: Asbestos and Hydric Soils 15

Figure 9: Cultural Resources 18

Figure 10: Existing Trails 21

Figure 11: Proposed General Management Plan 25

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 projects or programming are initiated.

This master plan document consists of two sections: the Background/Existing Conditions, and the General Management 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.

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 Fairfax Villa Park. 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 20, 2007, 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. This draft will be presented at a public hearing in May 2007. The plan will be revised following the public hearing and is scheduled to be approved by the Park Authority Board in July 2007.

C. PARK LOCATION AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Fairfax Villa Park is a wooded 58.65-acre park in the Braddock Supervisory District and owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority. It is located at 4420 Belden Street, Fairfax Virginia, 22035 (Figure 1). Fairfax Villa Park is bounded by several neighborhoods including Waples Mobile Home Estates and residential lots on the north, Shirley Gate Park on the west, George Mason Woods to the south and Fairfax Villa to the east.

Though Fairfax Villa Park is currently classified as a Community Park, this needs to be updated since this park classification was eliminated in 2005 under the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. Due to the presence of significant cultural and natural resources in Fairfax Villa Park, it aligns most appropriately with the Resource-Based Parks classification.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

Fairfax Villa Park is comprised of eight parcels acquired at various times over the last 40 years (Figure 2). The original property (Parcel A1) was acquired by the Park Authority for park use in December 1962 as a result of open space dedication from the Fairfax Villa subdivision.

In 1977, the Park Authority approved a master plan for the original parcel (Figure 3). This master plan includes two bridges, one over Popes Head Creek near the Belden Street park entrance and the other over a perennial stream further south along the existing trail. This plan also includes steps leading down the hill from the Belden Street entrance to the bridge over Popes Head Creek and a bicycle rack placed near this entrance. A walkway and skateboard run is depicted on the hill near the southern end of the park. Benches were proposed to be placed along a woodchip surfaced trail.

Between 1990 and 1993 more parcels were acquired expanding the park to its current size. The aggregation of these eight parcels represents the current Fairfax Villa Park. (Figure 2 Table)

There is an existing right-of-way owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) which cuts across these later additions to the park from Park Drive towards Belden Street (Figure 2). This street was never constructed by VDOT and is not part of the Fairfax County's transportation plan as amended in 2006. The construction of this street would have bisected the park, negatively impacting its resources.

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007



Figure 1: Location

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007



Figure 2: Parcel Acquisition History

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007



Figure 3: 1977 Master Plan

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

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 Fairfax Villa Park, it aligns most appropriately with the Resource-Based Parks classification. This is a change from the current park designation as a Community Park, which was eliminated 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 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 Fairfax Villa Park is to:

“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, including trail use and enjoyment of nature.”

C. IMPORTANCE

Fairfax Villa Park is an important component of the Fairfax County park system, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the Braddock Supervisory District. This park contains significant Natural and Cultural resources that will be further described in this master plan. Trails throughout the park are heavily used by residents from the neighboring communities.

D. VISITOR EXPERIENCE

As described by park users who were present at the public information meeting or sent comments to the Park Authority regarding this Master Plan, the first thing that visitors to the park experience is the powerful natural setting. Once inside the park visitors feel like they are in a large natural area, far away from the urban reality that can be found in the rest of the county. This unique visitor experience should be maintained. In addition, occasional signs could be strategically placed to interpret important cultural

and natural features. Formal recreational use will be limited to trail use by pedestrians, joggers/runners, and other non-motorized transportation.

III. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

A. CONTEXT - ADJACENT USES

Existing and Planned Land use & Zoning

Fairfax Villa Park is surrounded by mostly residential uses on 0.3 to 1.0 acre lots. Waples Mobile Home Estates and The Cloisters of Fairfax communities are located to the northwest. Directly to the north of the park is Chandlers Grove subdivision and a few private residential lots, which are within the City of Fairfax. The Fairfax Villa subdivision is located to the east of the park. Directly along the park's southern border is the George Mason Woods subdivision. The Shirley Gate Park subdivision is on the western border, and includes several undeveloped lots along Park Drive. While Shirley Gate Road is a major arterial between Braddock Road and Lee Highway, Park Drive has a distinctly rural character. At the corner of Braddock and Shirley Gate Road is a large tract of undeveloped woodland, currently owned by George Mason University. (Figure 1)

B. SURROUNDING FACILITIES

Nearby Parks and Schools

Within the three miles of this site are 13 schools (ten elementary schools, two intermediate/high schools and one high school) plus an administrative office. Typically, schools have athletic fields and playgrounds (elementary schools). In addition there are a total of 27 parks within this three mile area, including several with trails, basketball courts, tennis courts, diamond fields, rectangular fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and garden plots (Figure 4).

Needs Assessment Statement

Need for park and recreation facilities is determined through long-range planning efforts. The Park Authority tracks inventory of facilities and land, looks at industry trends, surveys County citizen recreation demand, and compares itself with peer jurisdictions to determine reasonable need. 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. Fairfax Villa Park presents the opportunity to incorporate several existing informal trails into the park system, to help in meeting this need.

C. NATURAL RESOURCES

Topography

The park is characterized by ridges divided by several stream valleys, which drain into Popes Head Creek. This creates a stunning and unique landscape within Fairfax County. The highest point in the park is along the western edge where it is bordered by Park Drive, with an elevation of approximately 490'. The lowest point on the park is in the southern end of the park where Popes Head Creek leaves the park at the George Mason Woods Subdivision with an elevation of approximately 330' (Figure 5).

Hydrology

The park is the headwater of Popes Head Creek, which drains from north to south along the eastern portion of the property. Several small tributaries flow eastward through the park into Popes Head Creek with associated ridges in between (Figure 6).

Slopes

Gentle to moderate slopes are found between the relatively flat ridge top and stream valley areas. However, a few locations near the streams are quite steep. The steepest slopes (over 14%) are along the Popes Head Creek and the tributaries that feed the creek. The flattest slopes of the park are on the knolls along the western part of the park and along the Popes Head Creek streambed (Figure 6).

Resource Protection Area

The stream valleys along the Popes Head Creek are 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 six soil types present within the park. These include Mixed Alluvial, Glenelg, Orange, Enon, Rocky Land, and Elbert. Of these six, Mixed Alluvial and Elbert are hydric soils. Elbert as well as Orange and Rocky Land soils belong to the Orange Soils group, which contains naturally occurring fibrous asbestos (Figure 8).

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007

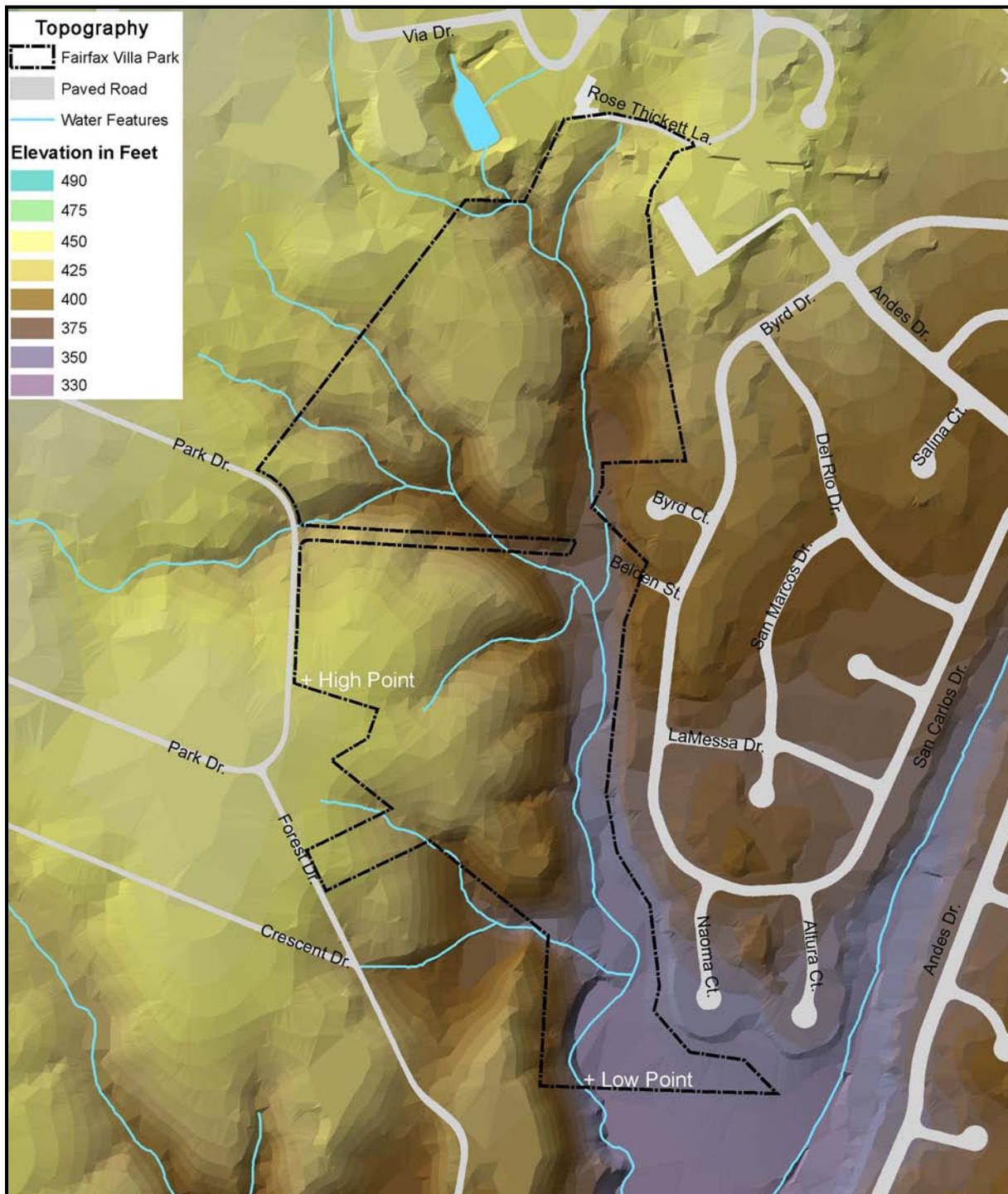


Figure 5: Topography

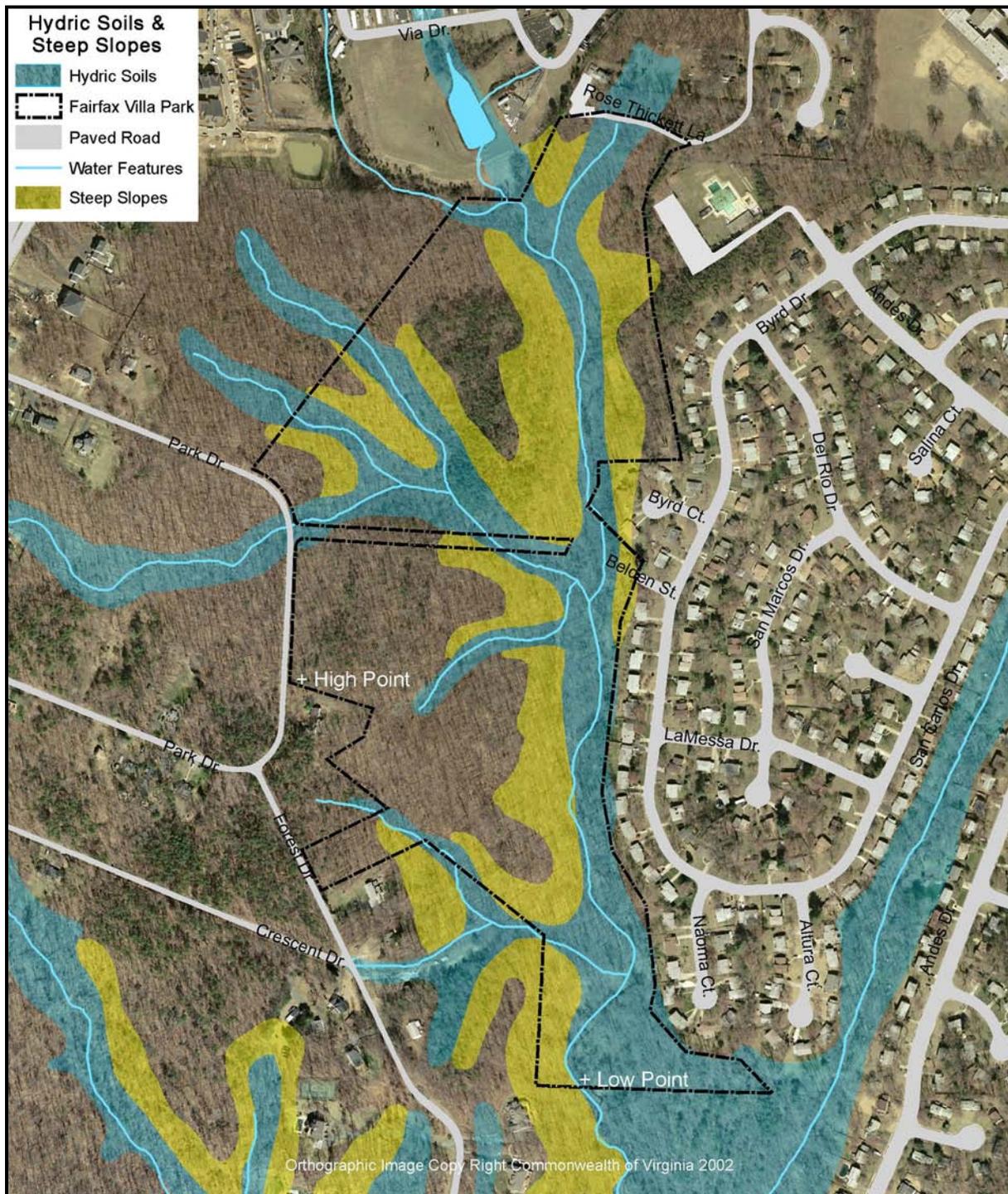


Figure 6: Hydrology and Slopes

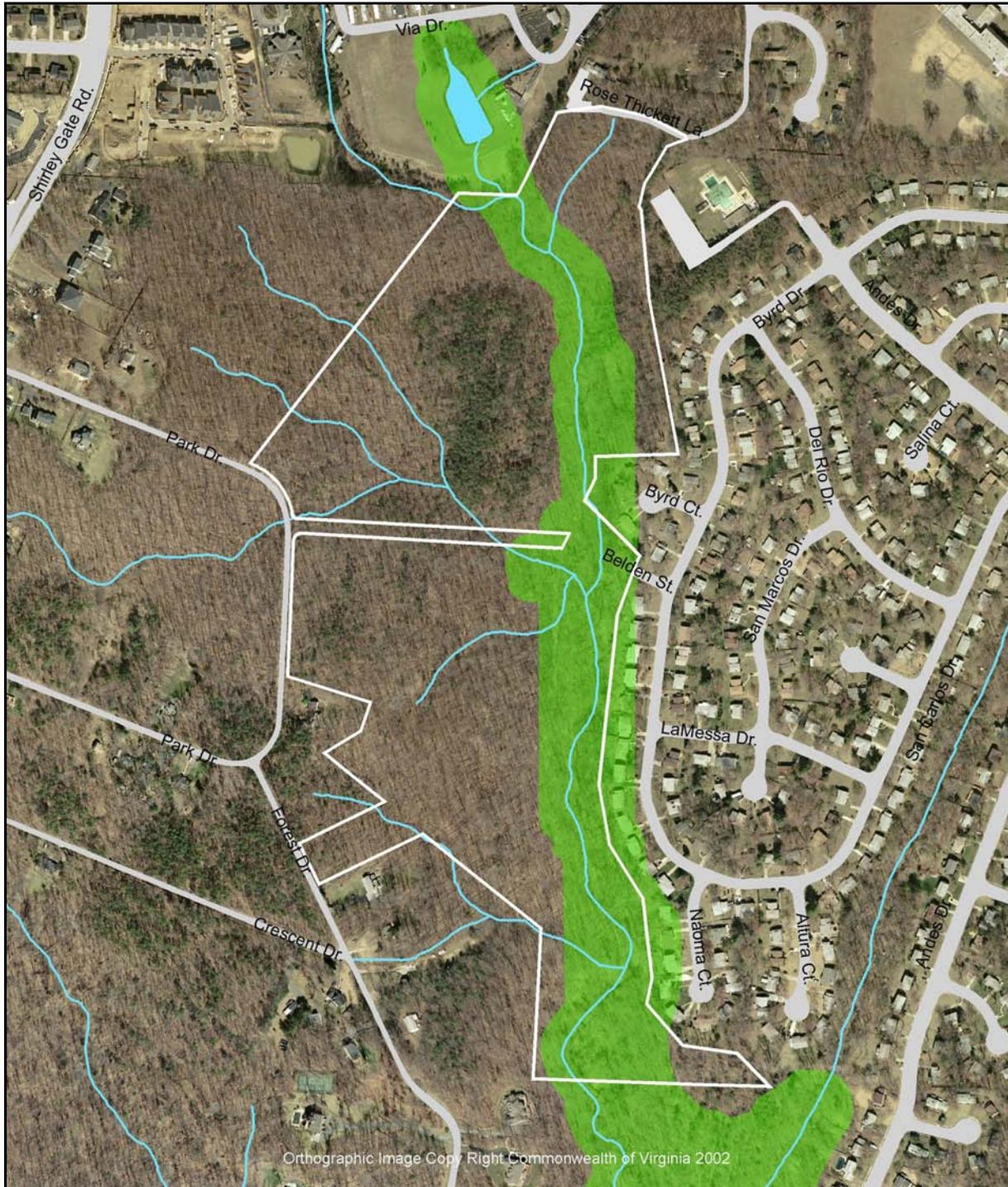


Figure 7: Resource Protection Area (RPA)

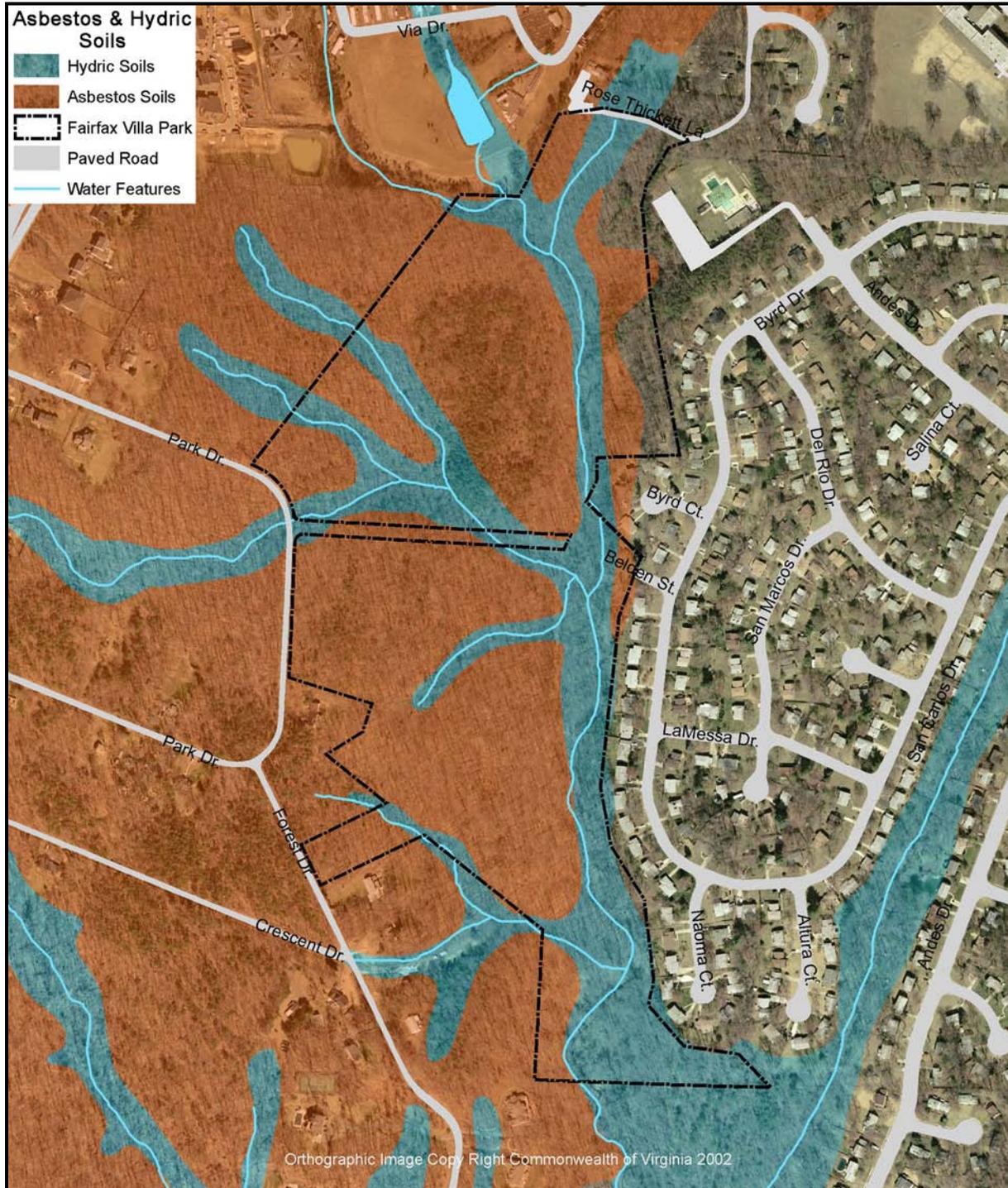


Figure 8: Asbestos and Hydric Soils

Asbestos Soils of the Orange Soils Group often occur on highland and side slopes. They consist of clay, which extends to greenstone bedrock, which is between one to 15 feet below the surface. Outcrops of boulders may occur on the surface. A perched seasonal water table often results from the slow permeability of the clay soil and underlying bedrock. Building support is low in the soft plastic clays, but good on bedrock. Suitability for septic drain fields and infiltration trenches is poor because of the plastic clays, perched water table, and shallow depth to bedrock. Fibrous asbestos minerals occur in this soil derived from the greenstone bedrock. These fibers may become airborne during excavation and blasting operations. Worker protection and dust control measures are required when working with these soils.

Hydric soils occur in floodplains as well as drainage ways, are susceptible to flooding, and may include nontidal 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

Fairfax Villa Park contains a rare example of original natural forest types in Fairfax County. Although not a virgin forest, the upland forest areas remain in a natural state. Except for the northern and eastern edges, it is remarkably free of invasive and non-native species to Northern Virginia's forests.

Most of the upland forest areas of Fairfax Villa Park consists of native, mature upland forest species. The trees include: American beech, white oak, hickory, red maple, black gum, white ash, scarlet oak, and black oak. The understory is composed of dense stands of young American beech, American holly, viburnums, heaths, and Christmas ferns. Groupings of crane-fly orchid and partridgeberry are also found throughout. The southern sections include more tulip poplars with beech occurring as an understory species. Northern red oak, black locust, pignut hickory, and flowering dogwoods are scattered throughout the park. This high-quality forest is in good condition and forest structure analysis rates this stand as a priority for forest stand preservation.

The north central ridge top area contains a stand of Virginia pine. This stand is gradually giving way to upland hardwoods. A few pitch pines are scattered in the stand. Greenbrier, crane-fly orchids, partridgeberry, and spotted wintergreen are scattered throughout.

In the lowlands along the stream valleys, the forest is dominated by a mixture of bottomland hardwoods. These include sycamore, white ash, red maple, elms, and tulip poplars, with some specimens along the creek exceeding 35” in diameter. The understory includes the same species with the addition of witch hazel, ironwood, viburnums, spicebush, redbud, and brambles.

Areas in the northern and eastern 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 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. The presence and abundance of these non-native, invasive species reduced the quality rating of these forest portions.

Wildlife

Staff have identified pilated woodpeckers, as well as other birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and signs of whitetail deer within this park.

D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Local Native American groups came to the area that would become Fairfax Villa Park for the stream as a water source as well as the quartz and quartzite cobbles that are found in the streambed. They used these stones to manufacture tools, such as stone knives and projectile points. In addition, high-quality quartz outcrops in the park, were used to create axes and other tools for quarrying the high quality soapstone (steatite) found within the park. Soapstone was then carved into large cooking bowls, as well as artistic and ceremonial pieces with the quartz tools manufactured while camping in the area. Later with the advent of ceramics, around 3,500 years ago, this same soapstone was used in the tempering process. These sites form a very unique Native American cultural landscape. Few other sites in Northern Virginia have been discovered that combine cobbles and outcrop quartz quarries with soapstone quarries accompanied by workstations.

Native American soapstone quarries were often quarried again in historic times disturbing or destroying the cultural landscape. The soapstone quarry in Fairfax Villa Park remained undisturbed and thus is largely intact. The fact that these sites are located on land which has not been plowed or severely disturbed in other ways is very significant. These Native American sites are potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, due to their extent, pristine condition of the sites and the rarity of the resources in Northern Virginia (Figure 9).

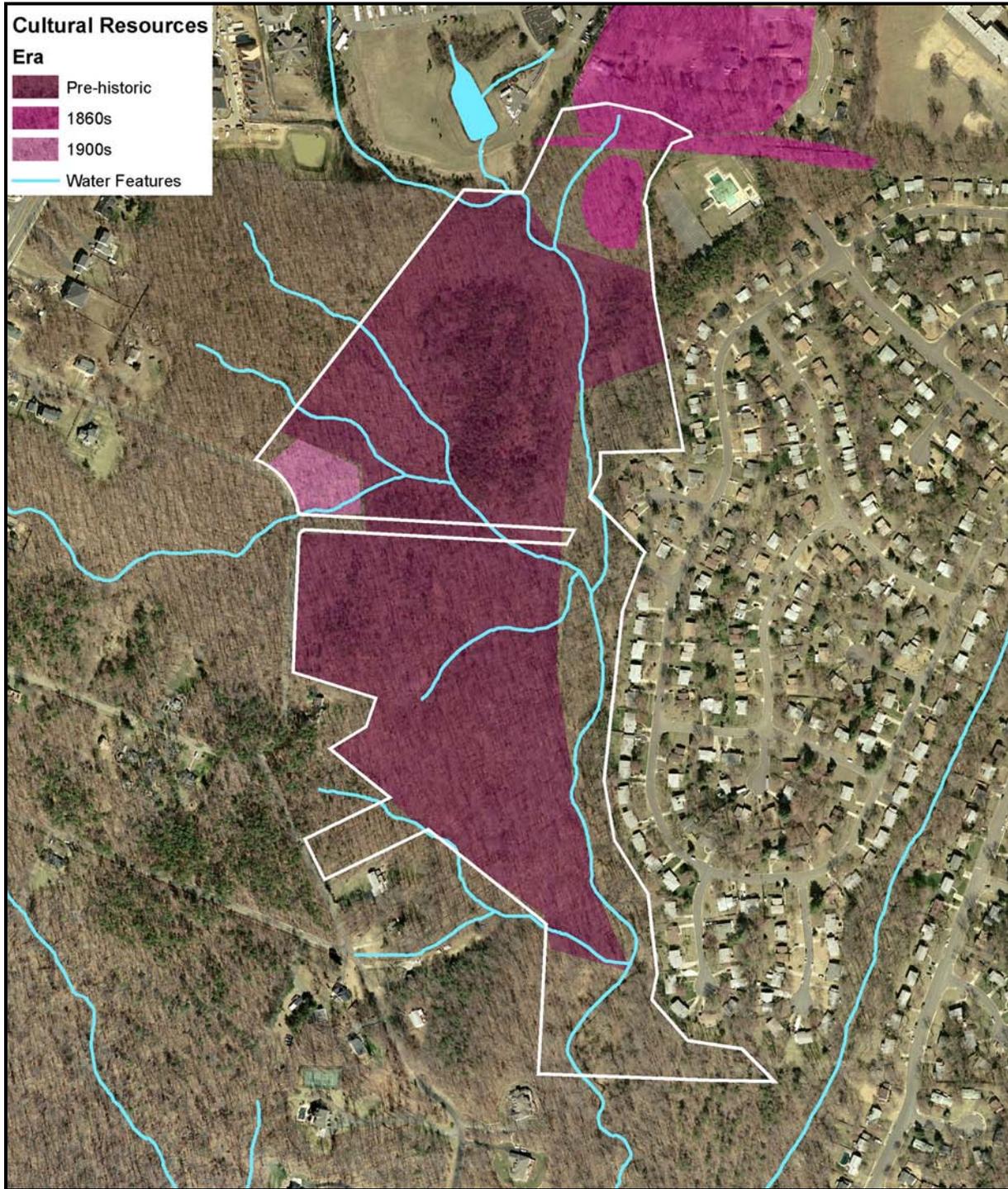


Figure 9: Cultural Resources

Historic

After the arrival of European settlers in the area, the original patent for lands including what would become Fairfax Villa Park was issued to Walter Griffin, Jr., and Benjamin Griffin in 1719 according to the Northern Neck Land Grant. The Griffins built one of the earliest roads in Fairfax County, which became known as “Griffin’s Rolling Road”, which is now called Braddock Road (Smith - “Centreville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture”). In April of 1810, Henry S. Halley obtained 100 acres including what became the park, calling it Pleasant Green Farm (Fairfax County Deed Book # L2). Since the soils, slopes, and geology of the park would not have suited farming, the land was likely used for timber or grazing. Newman Burke purchased the property from Halley in 1845 (Fairfax County Deed Book #Q3). The Burke Family Cemetery is located along Byrd Lane in the Fairfax Villa Community just to the east of the park on land owned by the homeowners association.

Around 1858 a portion of the ill-fated Manassas Gap Railroad (ca. 1858) was constructed across what is now the northern edge of the park. Only the grading and some stone abutments for the planned railroad were constructed before the American Civil War forced the company into default and the rail line was never completed. While not complete, other portions of the railroad are listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and under review for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. During the Civil War, the Union “Kamp Washington” was constructed immediately north of the park, occupying areas of what is now the Chandlers Grove subdivision. However, some of the activities of this construction are located within the park.

In the early 1900s, two structures were built on what would become the western section of Fairfax Villa Park. The remains of these structures, including foundations can still be seen there today.

All of these sites make Fairfax Villa Park an important cultural resource, particularly as a well preserved, prehistoric Native American landscape.

E. EXISTING FACILITIES

Original Master Plan

In 1977, the Park Authority approved a master plan for Fairfax Villa (Figure 3). This master plan primarily included a woodchip trail with two bridges, one over Popes Head Creek near the Belden Street park entrance, the other over a perennial stream further south along the existing trail. This plan also included steps leading down the hill from the Belden Street entrance to the bridge over Popes Head Creek and a bicycle rack placed near this entrance. A walkway and skateboard run is depicted on the hill near the southern end of the park. Benches were also proposed along the trail.

Existing Facilities

A paved trail currently exists in the park, from the Belden Street park entrance down the hill to a bridge over Popes Head Creek, which is in good condition. (Figure 10) From there, a natural surface trail continues southward along the western side of Popes Head Creek. The trail crosses a second wooden bridge, also in good shape, and climbs up the hill to the southern property line with the George Mason Woods subdivision. This trail, which is about 8 feet in width, appears to have been covered with woodchips and reinforced with stone dust in some places, but most of those surfaces have worn away. The trail is generally stable and is not eroded, except for a few minor dips through perennial drainage areas and a culvert where the stone dust has been washed from one end near the southern bridge. The planned “skateboard run”, benches, stairs, or bike rack near the entrance from Belden Street were never installed. The existing trails leading out of the northern end (now to the rest of the park) are still in use. The existing trails shown on the 1977 Master Plan leading out of the northern end of the park have been more clearly defined and widened over time. It should be noted that most of the trails throughout the park are relatively stable and well-drained despite having only natural surfaces and heavy use. Some erosion and wet spots exist, particularly in the lower areas.

Un-built Facilities to be Removed

The evolution of skateboard facilities in the last three decades indicates that skateboarders prefer urban places with concrete surfaces, curbs, benches, or bowls. The Park Authority now maintains a skateboard park for this purpose at Wakefield Park. This feature should be removed from the master plan.

There is also an existing right-of-way, owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), which cuts almost all the way across the park from Park Drive towards Belden Street (Figure 2). This street was never constructed by VDOT and is not part of Fairfax County’s transportation plan. The construction of this street would have severe detrimental affects on the park and its resources.

Access

The park can only be accessed by pedestrians or bicyclists. The original entrance to the park is at Belden Street in the Fairfax Villa Subdivision. Since the acquisition of the additional land, other public access points are located on Park Drive in the Shirley Gate Subdivision and at the northern end of the park adjacent to Rust Road in the Chandlers Grove subdivision. In addition, there is an informal trail running from The Cloisters of Fairfax subdivision. Parking is available on Belden Street as well as along the side of Rust Road near the north entrance.

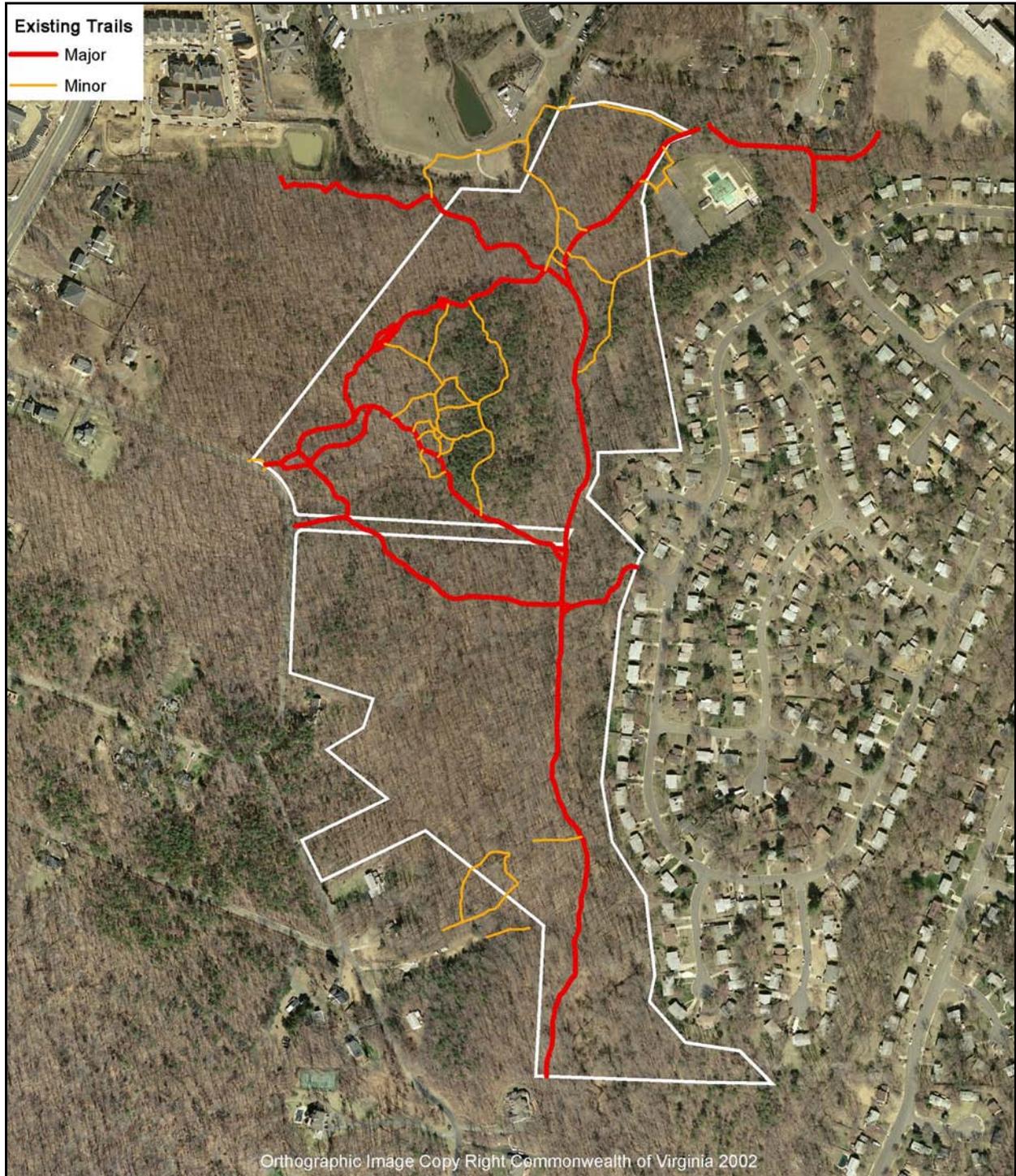


Figure 10: Existing Trails

Passive Recreation

The only Park Authority maintained trail within the park is along the east side running south from the Belden Street entrance to the George Mason Woods subdivision. This trail is paved from the Belden Street park entrance down the hill to just past the bridge over Popes Head Creek. From there, it is a natural surface trail, with some stone surfacing reinforcement continuing southward along the western side of Popes Head Creek to the southern property line (Figure 10).

Utilities

Electricity, water, telephone, and sewer are available in the subdivisions surrounding the park, as well as along most of the adjacent streets. An exception is that most of Park Street, and the western portion of the park, is outside the approved sewer service area.

F. EXISTING USE

The park is well used primarily by neighboring communities who enjoy walking the trails, riding bicycles, and enjoying the natural setting.

IV. GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION

The management framework integrates research, site analysis, and basic data presented in this document. Management zones are defined to provide a framework for decision-making. Existing uses, existing conditions, and recommendations from Park Authority staff were considered in the development of the management zones. This framework provides broad flexibility within a range of potential uses for each management zone. Figure 11 depicts the management zones. The "Potential Uses" stated for the zones describe acceptable uses for each zone. If a use is not listed for a zone it is considered an incompatible use for that zone. The potential uses are intentionally general to allow flexibility when making decisions following further studies of the site.

B. DESIRED VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Park users highly value the unique natural setting and trails provided in this park. Once inside the park, visitors feel they are in a natural area, far away from the urban areas outside the park boundary. This visitor experience should be maintained. Park users also expressed a desire to limit interpretive signage in an attempt to retain the natural setting. Amenities such as benches and trails should be naturally styled in keeping with the visitor experience.

C. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Due to the significant cultural and natural resources that exist in this park, the entire park, with the exception of the Entrance Zones, is designated as a Resource Protection

Zone (Figure 11). The park will be managed with the primary purpose of protecting the existing cultural and natural resources of the site. Human impact in this zone should be kept to a minimum. Management of the cultural and natural resources will be allowed as well as trails to provide access, but activities which degrade the resources of this zone shall be prohibited.

Management Zones

All of these zones are depicted in Figure 11.

A. Resource Protection Zone

The majority of this property is designated as a Resource Protection Zone. Human impact in this zone should be kept to a minimum. Management of the natural and cultural resources will be allowed, however, new structures or environmental degradation of this zone shall be prohibited.

B. Entrance Zones

Pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access will be from the various residential streets into the trail system within the park. These entrance areas are marked with an asterisk on Figure 11 and are accessed from Belden Street, Park Drive, and Rust Road. There will be no vehicular entrance for the park, parking is available on Belden Street as well as along Rust Road near the north entrance.

D. DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED USES

Potential Uses

The "Potential Uses" stated for the zone describe acceptable uses for each zone. If a use is not listed for a zone it is considered an incompatible use for that zone. The potential uses are intentionally general to allow flexibility when making decisions. These include the following:

- Passive Recreation, Enjoying Nature
- Trails and Trail Support Facilities
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Research, Interpretation, and Education

Planned Uses

In the resource protection zone, the emphasis is on interpretation, protection, and preservation, as well as protection of cultural and natural resources, including management of wildlife habitat and forest health. These resources are subject to ongoing research. Interpretative signs may be placed at specific locations within the park describing important resources. The number of signs will be kept to a minimum to preserve the natural setting and prevent impacts to important resources. A trail network will allow visitors to circulate through the park without impacting the resources. Many of the existing informal trails created by park users will be incorporated into the trails plan.

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007

Some trails will need to be relocated or closed to protect sensitive cultural and natural resources, including the prevention of erosion by removing trails from steep slopes.

The trails will provide a natural setting for passive recreational activities for county residents, including walking/jogging or bicycling, relaxation, and educational experiences. These trails are only suitable for individuals or small group use for hiking and running, as opposed to large, organized hikes or runs.

Signs will be placed at all Entrance Zones bearing the name of the park and other official Park Authority information. Trash cans at the entrance may also be provided. Amenities such as way finding signs and benches are appropriate enhancements. These should be naturally styled in keeping with the visitor experience.

E. SITE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Significant management issues at this park include steep slopes with associated runoff contributing to erosion of trails and important cultural elements. The location of important sensitive cultural and natural features is heavily considered in management decisions. Asbestos and hydric soils are also elements to consider when making site improvements. The parks boundaries are well marked due to the natural nature of the park and the character of the adjacent residential development. These factors may contribute to residential use encroachments within the park. There is an existing right-of-way owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) which cuts across the park from Park Drive towards Belden Street (Figure 2). This street was never constructed by VDOT and is not part of any transportation plan. Construction of this street would have severe detrimental affects on the park and its resources. The Park Authority recommends that this right-of-way be vacated and the land area incorporated into the park.

Several park users have expressed interest in helping maintain Fairfax Villa Park. The Park Authority has also expressed willingness and need for help from volunteers. The Park Authority does not believe that full-time staff is appropriate for this park. There exists opportunities for the Park Authority to enter into a partnership with the adjacent community to the benefit of both parties. Particular benefits may be the removal of accumulated trash, monitoring the dumping of debris in the park, and protecting the existing forest stands from spreading invasive species. Other benefits will include a better understanding of park policies leading to a reduction of encroachment activities, which is a recurring issue at Fairfax Villa Park. Increased use and volunteer activity will help Park Authority Staff monitor undesirable activity as well as more promptly intervene when it does.

Fairfax Villa Park Master Plan Revision – 2007

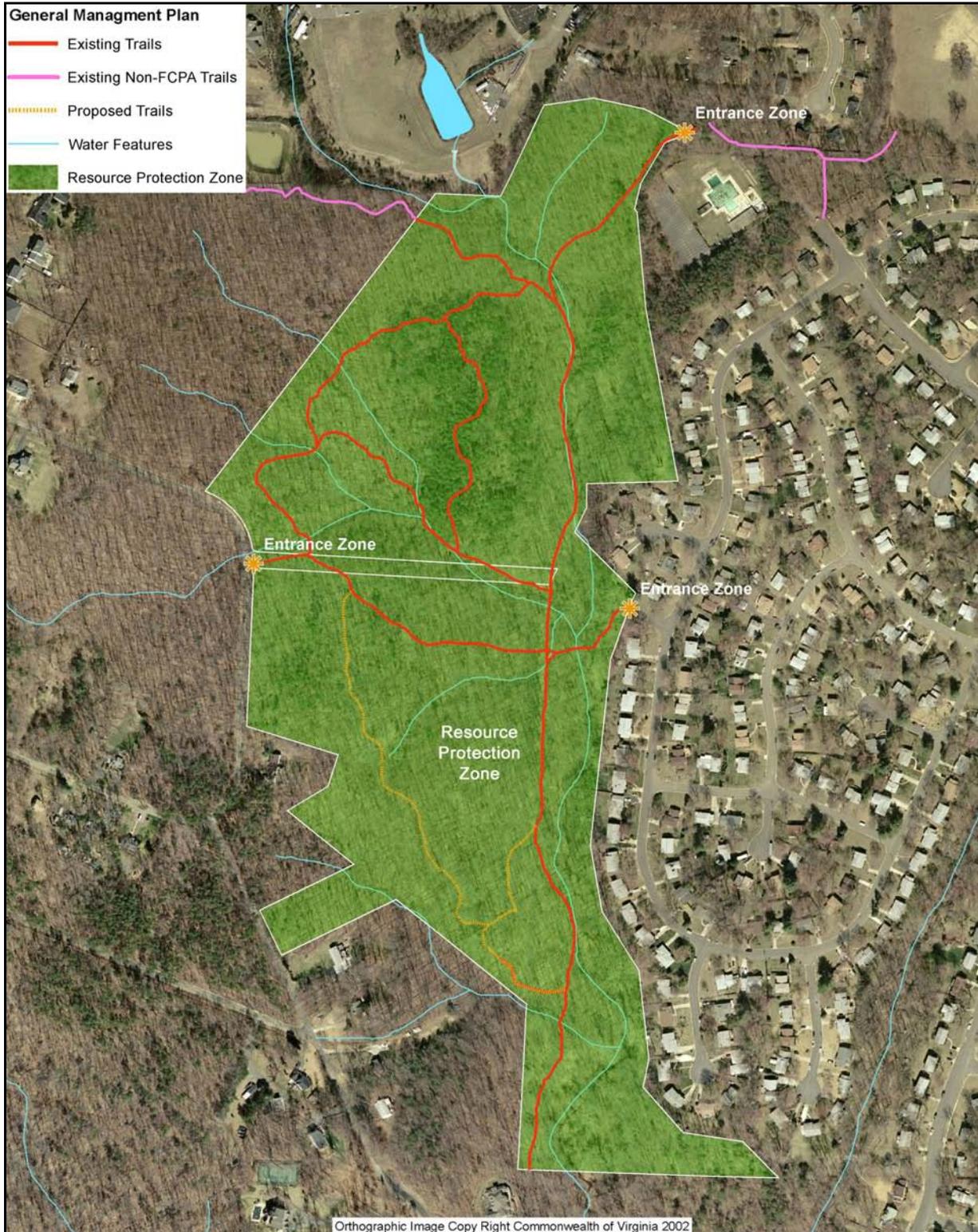


Figure 11: General Management Plan