MCPB  
Item: 6

January 9, 2006

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Gwen Wright, Acting Chief, CWP *GW*  
John Hench, PPRASupervisor, CWP *JH*

FROM: Lyn Coleman, Trail Planning Supervisor 301-650-4391 *LC*  
Rachel Newhouse, Landscape Architect 301-650-4388 *RN*  
Countywide Planning

SUBJECT: **Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan Amendment: Plan Objectives, Community Outreach Strategy Recommendations and Plan Schedule - Approval**

### Recommended Board Actions

1. Approve Plan objectives to guide the planning process
2. Approve recommended Community Outreach Strategy
3. Approve schedule for Plan Amendment completion.

### Park Description

Little Bennett Regional Park is located northwest of Clarksburg (*see figure 1-Location Map*).

With over 3,600 acres, Little Bennett Regional Park is the largest park in the M-NCPPC park system and is one of our best natural areas. The park is bisected by Little Bennett Creek, a class III stream that supports one of the few brown trout fisheries in the County. There are 11 historic sites in the park including the Montgomery Chapel Cemetery, Zeigler Log House, Hyattstown Mill and Kingsley School House.

Existing park facilities (*figure 2 - Existing Facilities Map*) include a 91-site campground, 18 hole golf course and driving range, over 23 miles of natural trails and a maintenance yard with offices for park personnel. Approximately 67,500 visitors come to the park every year to enjoy hiking, cycling, birding, camping, fishing, horseback riding, plant walks, interpretive programs and golf.

The golf course and driving range were opened in 1994. Since then, there have not been any large capital improvement projects in the park. Instead, staff efforts have

concentrated on management of the existing facilities and protection of the natural and cultural resources.

### **Background Of The Current Master Plan**

The first master plan for Little Bennett Regional Park was adopted in 1979. In 1985, an updated Concept Plan was adopted.

The 1985 Concept Plan divides the park into four generalized zones or areas (see Figure 3). The Plan includes recommendations for a Future Family Campground, a Group Campground, a Swim Facility, a Day Use Facility, a Visitors Center, an Outdoor Education area, and a Golf Course Complex. The Plan proposes an ambitious implementation schedule which has not yet been realized. A summary of Plan recommendations and the status of each are included in Attachment A.

The guiding development philosophy in the 1985 Plan is to emphasize the park's natural features, beauty and tranquil environment while at the same time providing Montgomery County citizens with a variety of recreation experiences oriented to this unique outdoor setting.

This philosophy of the 1985 Plan is still valid. Little Bennett Regional Park remains one of the best natural areas in the Montgomery County park system and includes significant cultural resources. Stewardship of these resources should continue to be a central theme of the planning process.

Staff sponsored a community meeting on the future of Little Bennett Regional Park on Wednesday, November 9, 2005. Over 70 people attended. A summary of the comments at the meeting may be found in Attachment B. There was uniform agreement among those attending that the overall objectives of the 1985 Plan should continue to guide the planning process. As one of those attending said, "Little Bennett Regional Park is a diamond in the rough and it should stay that way."

### **Why an Update Is Needed**

While the guiding development philosophy from the 1985 Plan is still appropriate, there are many reasons why the plan should be revisited and refined:

1. The population in Clarksburg has increased substantially since 1985 and newer residents should have an opportunity to participate in planning for the park.
2. Many of those attending our community outreach meeting agreed it is time to reaffirm the vision for Little Bennett Regional Park in light of the increased development in Clarksburg. The 1985 Plan for Little Bennett predated adoption of the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan. Residents at the community meeting would like the benefit of an updated park master plan to reaffirm the 1985 planning principles and reassure residents that the park will remain in its natural setting.
3. The park trail system should be reevaluated in light of its growing popularity and the need to make the trails sustainable for a variety of users.
4. The 1985 Plan recommendations for the expansion of the campground need to be reevaluated in light of new environmental standards and guidelines.
5. Whether or not the golf course should be expanded needs to be considered, along with the suggestion that a lodge might be appropriate.

6. The 1985 Plan recommendation for a swimming pool needs to be revisited, especially in light of the Recreation Department's support for a pool at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park.
7. The facilities proposed in the 1985 Plan need to be "tested" against changing recreational trends.
8. The implementation recommendations in the 1985 Plan need to be updated and modified.
9. The 1985 Plan does not include any of the existing houses now located in the park along MD 355, Clarksburg Road and Prescott Road. The future of these homes needs to be reexamined.
10. Many new plans and policies have been adopted since 1985. The vision for Little Bennett Regional Park needs to be evaluated in relation to the following:
  - Environmental Guidelines (1991)
  - Rustic Roads Legislation (1993)
  - Master Plan for Clarksburg and Hyattstown Special Study Area (1994)
  - Comprehensive Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in Montgomery County (1995)
  - Brown Trout Management Plan (1997) that includes recommendations for Little Bennett Creek Watershed as a "catch and release" brown trout fishery
  - The Countywide Park Trails Plan (1998)
  - Legacy Open Space Plan (2001)
  - Damascus Master Plan (2005)
  - Countywide Bikeways Plan (2005)
  - Affordable Housing Policy for the county (2001) that affects park homes located in Little Bennett Regional Park
  - Updated information on biodiversity areas, best natural areas, archeological resources and historic sites.

### **Relationship to Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP)**

In December 2005, the Planning Board adopted the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) update. This is an important document in terms of park planning because it estimates the need for future recreation facilities throughout the county to the year 2020. The "service area" for Little Bennett Regional Park is shown in Figure 4. Future recreation needs have been identified in this area and the role of Little Bennett Regional Park in meeting these needs has been examined. This analysis will continue throughout the planning process but preliminary findings indicate the following:

- ballfield needs can likely be met at schools and other parks in the service area
- accommodating needed playgrounds and picnic areas should be considered as part of the Little Bennett Park planning process.

A more detailed summary of staff findings is included as Attachment C.

## **Recommended Planning Objectives**

Staff recommends the following planning objectives guide the update of the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan.

### **Assure Little Bennett Regional Park continues as a unique open space feature and nature based retreat in an area that is rapidly building out (Clarksburg and Germantown in Montgomery County, Urbana in Frederick County).**

As the largest regional park in Montgomery County (over 3600 acres) Little Bennett Regional Park still allows visitors to feel “lost” in the woods and to experience a sense of solitude in nature. Visitors to the park can wander for hours on over 20 miles of trails within this forest setting.

This does not mean that Little Bennett Regional Park should remain untouched and undeveloped. The park already features a golf course, 91 camping sites and a maintenance facility. The determination of what other uses should be accommodated at the park will be based on an analysis of PROS needs, surrounding land use patterns, comments from community meetings and future recreation trends. As discussed in the next objective, the overall guiding principle will be to incorporate uses that respect the park’s natural beauty and natural resource base and that allow people to enjoy activities that feature the park’s natural setting.

### **Update the key planning principles underlying the 1985 Concept Plan for Little Bennett Regional Park.**

The 1985 Concept Plan (*see Figure 2*) proposes day use recreational facilities (a swim facility, picnicking, parking, and picnic shelter) along MD Route 355. A golf course complex is proposed in the northern section of the park with access off Prescott Road. The interior of the park is proposed for natural surface trails and camping. An outdoor recreation area is shown in the northeast portion of the park, just west of Clarksburg Road.

The golf course, camping areas and trails have been implemented.

The 1985 Concept Plan directed that more active uses be directed along Md Rte 355 and this principle will continue to guide the Plan Amendment process. This area of the park still has the best access and features land best suited for development. However, the type of uses and how they interrelate requires more study.

Keeping the interior of the park natural and the forest area largely undisturbed is another principle from the 1985 Concept Plan that will be continued. The golf course complex is already built but the Concept Plan’s recommendation for an additional par 3 course to be used as a learning center will be reconsidered.

Finally, the 1985 Concept Plan proposed a visitor’s center and an interpretive center. The need, timing and location of these uses will be reviewed as part of the Plan amendment process.

**Provide more emphasis on interpretation of the park's natural, cultural, prehistoric and historic resources.**

Little Bennett Regional Park includes many resources that relate to the occupation of the area by native peoples prior to recorded history, and the County's development in the 19th Century. Hyattstown Mill, the David Ziegler House, the Kingsley School House, Price's Distillery all date from an era when the County's economic mainstay was milling and farming.

Interpreting these sites and linking them by trails would provide a "walk through history". Making some of these interpretive trails accessible to seniors and people with disabilities will be an important plan consideration.

In accord with the interpretation emphasis, the Plan process will examine the potential for providing an interpretive center and/or an educational center in the park and explore how programs might be integrated with the county's school system. The concept of providing an architectural theme compatible with 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and materials will be explored.

**Provide a comprehensive, sustainable trail network for the entire park.**

This was the single most important issue raised by the more than 70 people who attended the community meeting in November and was endorsed by all trail user groups: hikers, equestrians, and cyclists.

Little Bennett Regional Park currently offers 20 miles of natural surface trails. This Plan will examine how these trails can be integrated into a network that serves the entire park, connects to nearby communities, links to greenways proposed in Frederick County and Damascus and helps support interpretive programs.

The Countywide Park Trails Plan, the Clarksburg Master Plan and the Clarksburg Greenway Implementation Study all propose a hard surface trail be located in Little Bennett as part of the larger Clarksburg Greenway Trail System. This Plan will explore potential locations for that trail.

**Provide more definition of the proposed "day use facility" shown on the 1985 concept plan.**

The 1987 concept plan showed a generalized location for a day use facility with little discussion of the types of uses that should occur there. This Plan will look more carefully at the character and nature of the day use facility.

**Recognize the role of Little Bennett Regional Park as a "gateway" to Montgomery County and the importance of the Park's character along MD 355.**

Little Bennett Regional Park has frontage along I-270 and along MD 355. For people entering the county from the north along I-270 or MD 355, this frontage defines the entry experience into Montgomery County.

One of the key issues during the plan process will be the future of park-owned houses, most of which are located along MD 355. These houses are being considered

for work force housing for Commission employees maintaining the park system or serving as park caretakers. Many of these homes are in poor repair. One of the issues that will be addressed in the plan process is how continuation of these houses relates to the long-range park vision for this key portion of the park.

### **Identify future options for the golf course.**

The 18-hole Little Bennett Golf Course opened in 1994. More than xx golfers enjoy the course every year. The 1985 Concept Plan includes a proposal for the addition of another 9 holes.

The existing golf course, although popular, is not providing the level of revenue originally anticipated. One approach to attract more golf course use may be to provide family oriented facilities and group event areas near the golf course. This and other options, such as providing a golf learning center, will be explored during this master plan process and as part of a separate Strategic Plan for the golf course being prepared by the Enterprise Division.

### **Enhance park accessibility.**

The Clarksburg Master Plan, adopted after the Concept Plan for Little Bennett Park, features a transit way that could provide access to the park. Ride-On bus routes travel along MD 355. The opportunity to have a key portion of the park accessible by public transit makes the Little Bennett Park unique in the park system. Locating some park facilities within walking distance of future transit will be considered as part of this plan process.

### **Designate a unified architectural theme.**

Planning recommendations for Little Bennett Regional Park will take many years to implement and will occur one project at a time. Designating an architectural theme for the park will help assure that individual projects are compatible regardless of when they are built and will help establish a unique character and identify for Little Bennett.

### **Recommended Community Outreach Program**

The community outreach program began on November 9, 2005, with a very successful community "kick-off" meeting in Clarksburg. About 70 people attended. A summary of the comments from that meeting are included as **Attachment B**.

In general, the community outreach strategy will rely on the following techniques to encourage citizen input and involvement:

### **E-Communications**

Establish a web site related to the plan and maintain an e-mail list of interested residents. Information related to the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan process is located at <http://www.mc-mncppc.org/littlebennett/index.shtm>. The comments from the November 9 meeting may be found there as well as an outline of the general planning process. All community meetings and Planning Board meetings related to the plan will be posted there.

The Park Planning and Resource Analysis unit is maintaining an e-mail list of interested citizens. Over 50 names are already included on the list; all notices will be sent directly to this email list. Citizens who do not have e-mail will be notified by regular mail.

### **Public Meetings**

Sponsor community meetings on plan concepts and options. These meetings will focus on creating an updated layout for the park and include "hands on" work with base maps and planning concepts. At least two community-wide meetings are envisioned.

Community Relations/Media Outreach staff will publicize all public meetings and will encourage articles in the media on the plan's progress through adoption. News releases will be sent out to a number of media outlets that target non-traditional participant communities.

### **Small Group Meetings.**

Be available to attend meetings of local community groups, business groups and groups with particular trail interests whenever possible. Staff will make presentations to groups like the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board, Recreation Advisory Boards, civic groups in Damascus and Clarksburg and any other civic or interest group that expresses an interest in a staff presentation.

### **Outreach to New Constituencies**

Community Relations/Media staff will make informational phone calls to community organizations that work with or have constituencies that would be interested in the Little Bennett Park Master Plan but that might not have been involved in such processes in the past. The phone calls will inform the organization or group leaders of the e-communications, public meetings and small meeting opportunities to identify the preferred way of involvement of that particular group.

**Staff Recommended Plan Schedule**

The following plan schedule may be affected by staff reassignments to Clarksburg related regulatory review projects.

November 2005 .....	Issues Meeting with Community
January 2006 .....	Report on Issues, Outreach and Work Program to Planning Board
January-June 2006 .....	Prepare draft plan concepts with community input
July-August 2006 .....	Staff Draft recommendations finalized
September 2006 .....	Staff Draft presented to Board and Public Hearing scheduled
November 2006 .....	Planning Board holds Public Hearing
January-February 2007 .....	Planning Board work session(s) and Plan Adoption

**Figure 1 - Little Bennett Regional Park Locational Map**

*Little Bennett Regional Park*  
Vicinity Map

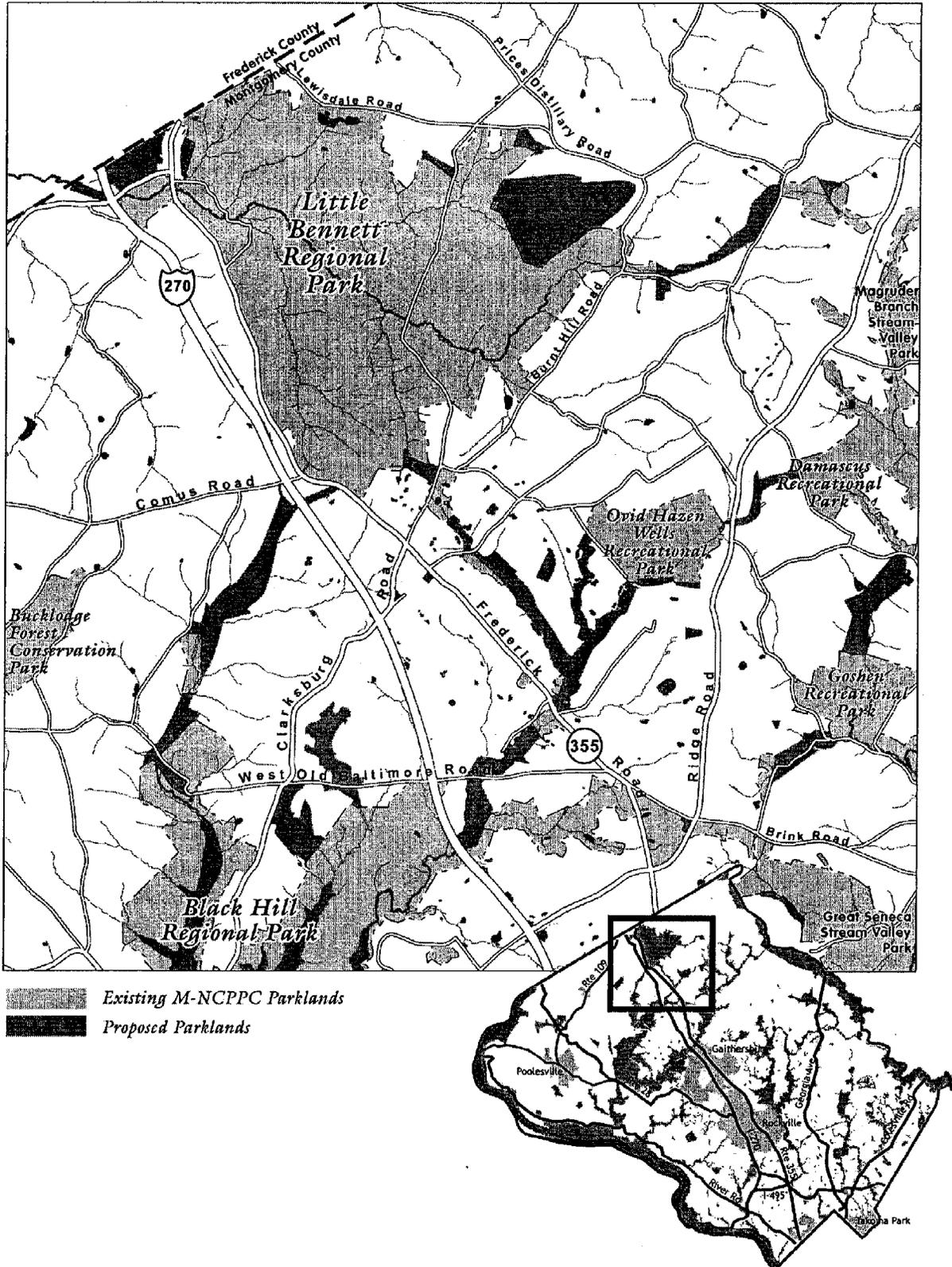


Figure 1 - Little Bennett Regional Park Locational Map

# Little Bennett Regional Park

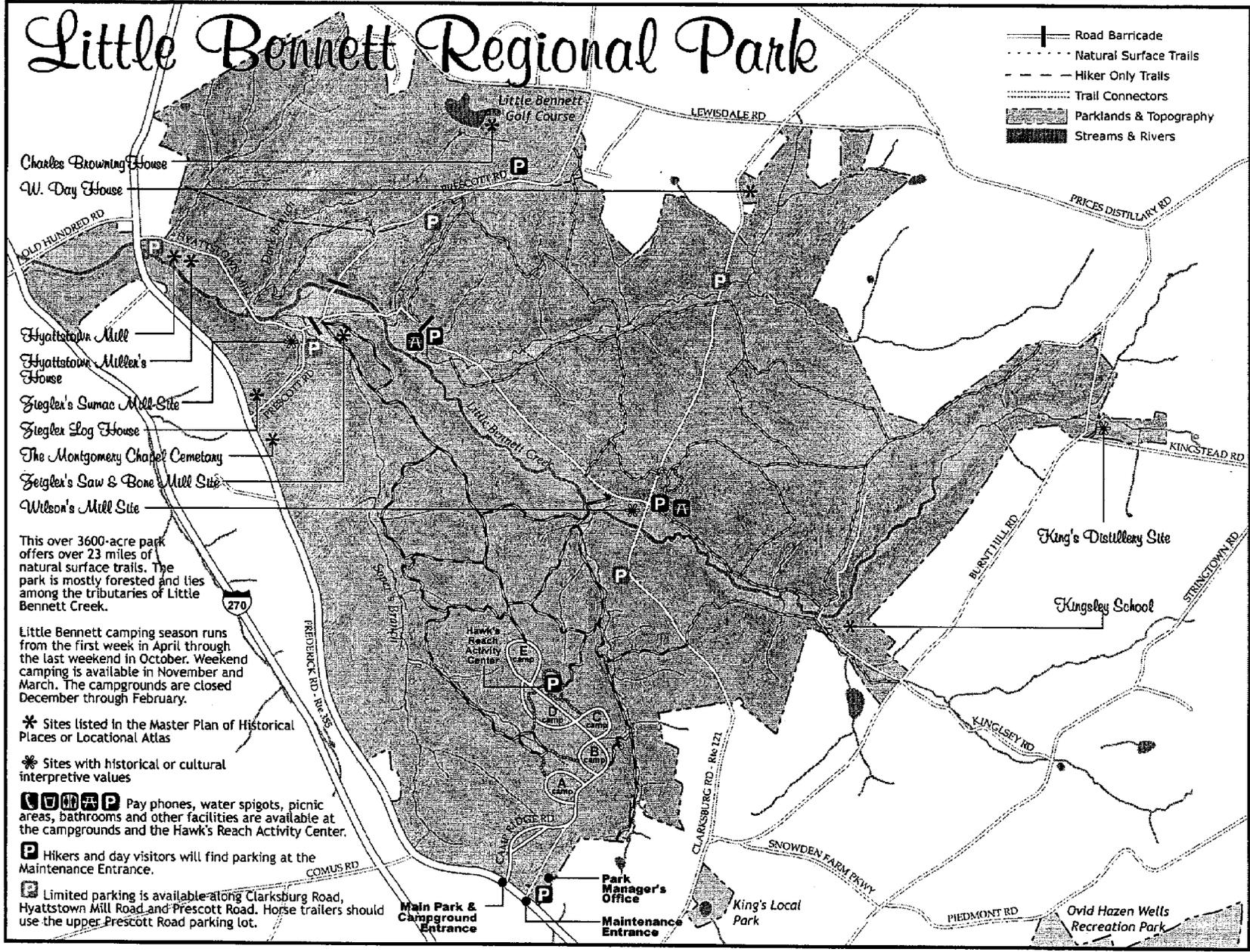


Figure 2 - Little Bennett Regional Park Existing Facilities Map

Figure 3 - Little Bennett Regional Park 1985 Plan Map

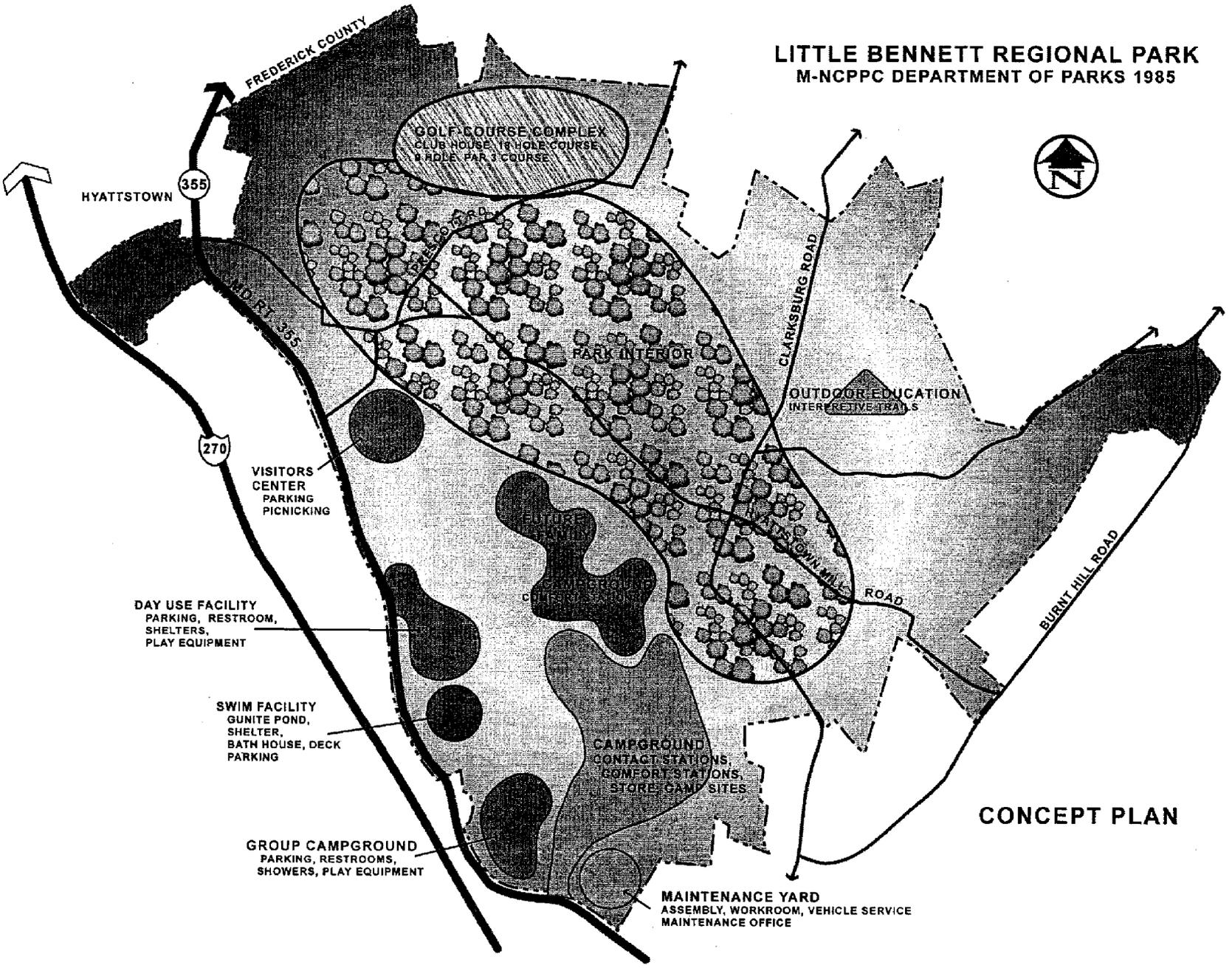


Figure 3 - Little Bennett Regional Park 1985 Plan Map  
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**Figure 4 - Little Bennett Regional Park Service Areas Map**

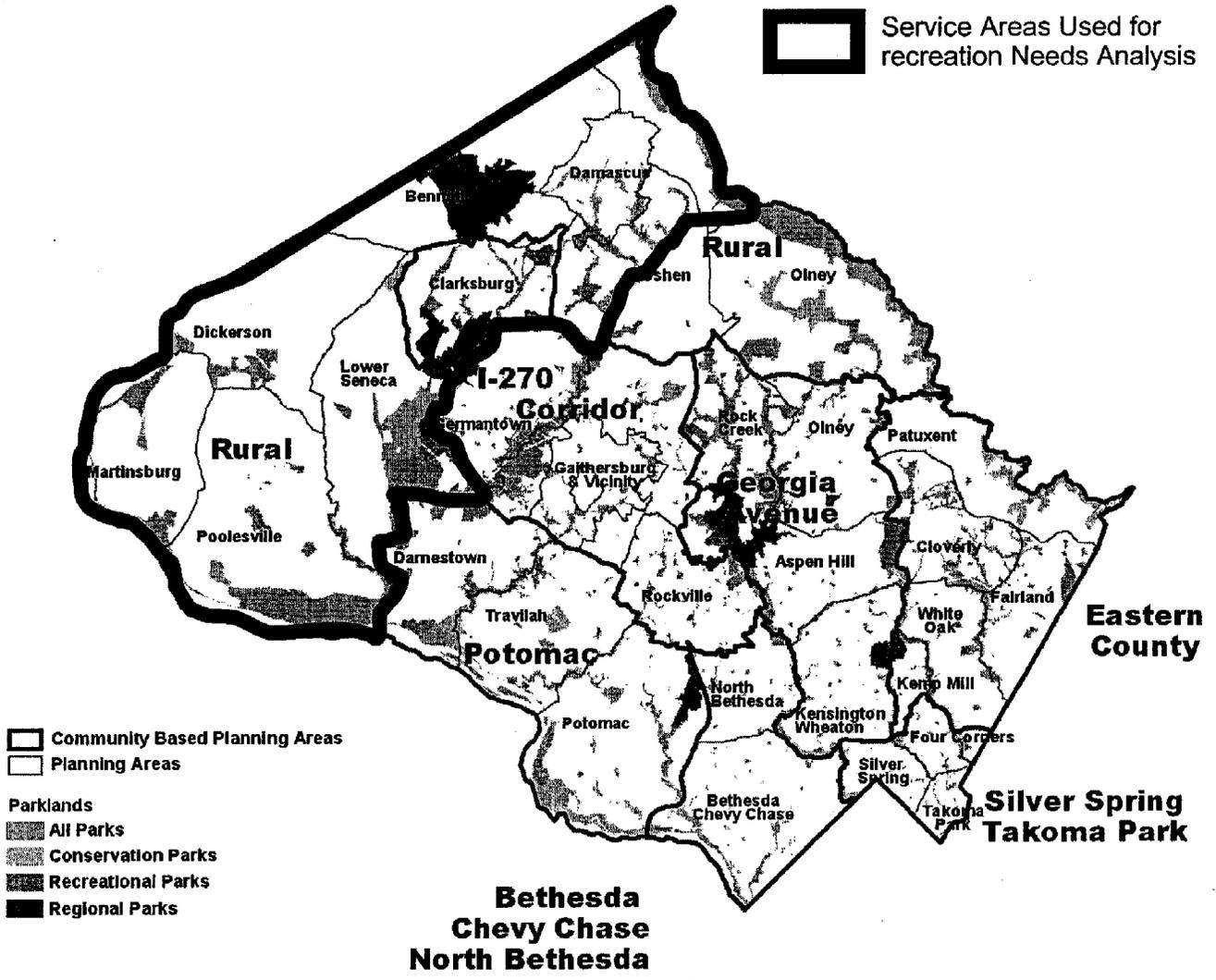


Figure 4 - Little Bennett Regional Park Service Areas Map

# Attachment 1

## Status of 1985 Little Bennett Regional Park Plan Recommendations

### Natural Resources

Recommendations from 1985 plan process:	Status of Recommendations - 2005
Terminate agricultural activity and implement reforestation program as appropriate	Farming is limited to areas of the park proposed for future site development.
Maintain 2/3:1/3 ratio of natural area / conservation area to active recreation area.	This policy is still guiding the planning and design of regional parks. The current percent of Little Bennett Regional Park that is in active recreation use is 21%.
Complete remaining acquisitions identified for Little Bennett Creek Stream Valley park	The boundaries proposed in the 1985 plan process have been accomplished. Since then additional areas of future park acquisition have been identified by the Legacy Open Space Functional Plan and the June 1995 update to the parkland acquisition map.
Consider acquiring stream valley parkland along a major Little Bennett Creek Tributary running east of the intersection of Old Kingsley Road and Burnt Hill Road.	Since this area is part of the Agriculture Reserve with strict limits on development and since Old Kingsley Road has been identified as a rustic road which will help protect its existing rural character, this area is no longer proposed for parkland acquisition.
Provide interpretive programs on a "satellite" basis at the Hawk Reach Nature Center, Hyattstown Mill and Kingsley School. Preserve these conservation / interpretative areas from all encroachments except for carefully located natural surface trails.	Interpretive programs at Little Bennett began in 1983 and included the Hawk Reach Nature center until its closure for budgetary reasons in the mid 1990's. The Hyattstown Mill Area is used by naturalist staff for vernal pool study in the old mill race. Little Bennett functions as an outdoor environmental study area for elementary, middle and high schools and Montgomery College.

### History/Archaeology

Recommendations from 1985 plan process:	Status of Recommendations - 2005
Historic sites valuable link to rich history of Little Bennett Valley. These sites will contribute to interpretive programs and will relate to Hyattstown Historic District next to park.	<p>Many sites in Little Bennett Regional Park have been included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, underscoring their importance to the history of the county: the Hyattstown Mill and Miller's House (part of the Hyattstown Historic District), the Ziegler Log House, the Charles Browning Farm and the Kingsley School. The Hyattstown Mill is currently leased to the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project and features an art trail of outdoor sculpture. Art classes and community events are held inside the mill. A study has been done to look into making this into a living history museum with a working water wheel and milling operation. This will be considered in the future with current cost estimates. Other historic sites in the Park under consideration for inclusion in the Master Plan are: W. Day House (Kovachik house), 25925 Clarksburg Road; Zeigler's Mill Ruins; and Montgomery Chapel Cemetery.</p> <p>Archeological sites include ruins of Wilson's Mill and King's Distillery.</p>
Rustic architectural theme should be followed in keeping with rural heritage.	An architectural style specific to the park has not yet been established.

## ***Park and Recreation Facilities***

<b>Recommendations from 1985 plan process:</b>	<b>Status of Recommendations - 2005</b>
Championship level 18-hole golf course, a 9-hole executive type course and a practice range to double as winter sports area for cross-country skiing, ice skating and sledding.	The park features an 18-hole golf course, a clubhouse with fully stocked pro shop and snack bar, a practice grass driving range and three practice greens. The golf course opened in 1994.
Group picnic area to accommodate up to 500 people that could be split into two smaller areas for picnic groups of 250 people each	Not yet implemented.
Swimming facilities: one to be associated with lodge/conference center complex and open to the community, the other exclusively for use of family and group campers. Major upcounty swim center not appropriate.	Not yet implemented.
Day Use Area to provide family picnicking (200 tables and grills) and limited recreational facilities such as tennis courts, multi-use courts, playground equipment, play meadows, horseshoe pits, etc.	Not yet implemented.
Wooden Observation Platform for interpretive purposes on one of Little Bennett's highest elevations.	Not yet implemented.
Lodge/Conference Center/Cabins with access from Lewisdale only. Number of cabins should be limited to 25.	Not yet implemented.
Visitors Center should be constructed to serve as information center and park focal point; should include space for a snack bar, restrooms, community meeting room, first aid station, administrative offices, etc. that are associated with the day use area.	Not yet implemented. A nature center open to the public is located in the camping section of the park

## ***Camping and Trails***

<b>Recommendations from 1985 plan process:</b>	<b>Status of Recommendations - 2005</b>
Two group camping areas each accommodating 100 campers. These should be rustic and separated from the family camping area.	The park offers 91 campsites. Efforts are underway to provide three cabins.
The family camping area should be expanded as demand warranted up to 220 sites.	
Hard surface trail should connect park facilities.	The Clarksburg Master Plan and Greenway Implementation Study propose a hard surface trail along the frontage of MD 355.
Natural surface trails should be in keeping with the natural setting.	The park offers over 18 miles of natural surface trails for the enjoyment of hikers, equestrians and cyclists. Trail map is available at <a href="http://www.montgomerytrails.org">www.montgomerytrails.org</a> .
Explore possibility of hiking trail connection between Oak Ridge Special Park in Damascus and Little Bennett Regional Park.	Renovation of the natural surface trails to make them sustainable from an environmental and maintenance viewpoint is programmed for FY08-10 and will help implement the recommendations of this plan process.  The Countywide Park Trails Plan was amended in 2005 to include this connection.

## Access and Transportation

Recommendations from 1985 plan process:	Status of Recommendations - 2005
To preserve the integrity of Little Bennett Regional Park, the plan recommends that vehicular traffic in the park should be severely limited.	Rustic Roads Legislation, adopted in 1993, recommends limited improvement to the roads through and around the park with the exception of MD Route 355. Clarksburg Road (MD121) is a country arterial road limited to two lanes of traffic and minor improvements. Burnt Mill Road is a rustic road with limited improvements. Kingsley Road is designated an exceptional rustic road.
Clarksburg Road within the park should be closed to public use to protect the park's natural area appeal and to reduce the impact of an unnatural fragmentation of the wildlife habitats presently caused by this road. This recommendation will require a further study of the roads serving the park and the community.	No study has yet been undertaken.
Primary access points to Little Bennett Regional Park should come from Route 355 on the east and Lewisdale Road on the north. These access roads should be designed to deliver park patrons directly to the various recreation developments with a minimum impact on the environment.	The Clarksburg Master Plan (1994) makes the following recommendations for MD 355 area near the park: - a transit way is proposed to parallel MD 355 and would allow a transit-oriented entrance to the park near Comus Road. - a new Hyattstown bypass is proposed between the park and Hyattstown Historic District.
There should be no provision for vehicular traffic across the park (connecting different recreation developments), except for service roadways to be used by park personnel. Trails should connect various recreation developments in the park.	Hyattstown Road and Prescott Road have been closed to thru traffic

## Implementation Priorities

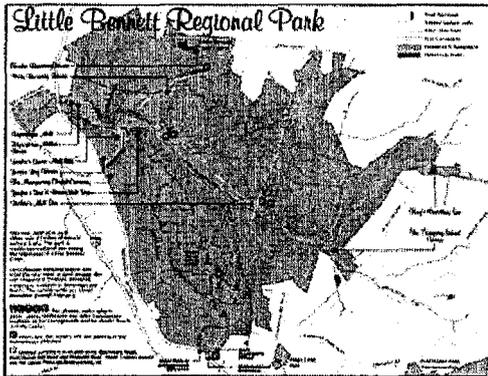
Recommendations from 1985 plan process:	Status of Recommendations - 2005
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct 18 hole and 9 hole golf course and clubhouse</li> <li>2. Construct day use facility/family picnic area</li> <li>3. Install water line</li> <li>4. Construct swim facility</li> <li>5. Complete construction of infrastructure (roads, electrical, hiker-biker trails, telephones, sewer)</li> <li>6. Complete construction of other day use facilities – visitor center, group campground</li> <li>7. Construct family campground</li> </ol>	<p>Maintenance facility opened in 1983. Campground opened in 1983. Golf Course with 18 holes opened in 1994. Natural surface trails opened in late 1980's.</p> <p>Water line/septic system serves campground. Maintenance facility to be served by pump station that will carry sewage to sewer lines being provided by nearby development.</p> <p>There have not been any large capital improvement projects since 1994. Instead, staff efforts have concentrated on management of the existing facilities and protection of the natural communities and native wildlife.</p>

## Attachment 2

Summary of Public Meeting Comments Little Bennett Regional Park - 9 Nov 2005

### PPRA Park Planning Projects

#### Summary of Public Input - November 9, 2005



The November 9, 2005, Public Meeting on the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan update was attended by over 60 people. Those attending circulated among six "stations":

- Natural Resources
- History/Archaeology
- Park and Recreation Facilities
- Trails and Camping
- Access and Transportation
- Implementation Priorities

Staff members at each station answered questions and recorded people's comments and thoughts on each topic. After an hour, the group reconvened and the comments were read aloud. The comments are summarized below by topic.

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Staff will review the comments from the community meeting with the Planning Board in January. We will also present a suggested schedule for completing the update to the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan and outline the citizen participation component of the plan process. Once a date has been selected, it will be posted at this web site. The staff report to the Planning Board will be available one week prior to the meeting.

[\\*Click here to view a detailed map of the existing facilities and trails in this park \(adobe .pdf\)](#)

### LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL PARK PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS - NOVEMBER 9, 2005

#### Natural Resources

- Keep natural trails, providing a place for wildlife.
- Provide a visitor center/gardens like at Brookside Gardens
- Provide an interpretive trail for native plants/trees
- Educate public about danger of non-native invasive plants
- Keep park as natural and undeveloped as possible
- Provide more trail heads with small parking lots and maps
- Soper Branch is eroding badly and needs restoration. Little Bennett was repaired, but not Soper Branch

#### History/Archeology

- Use/restore historic buildings as part of a new history trail
- Provide more descriptive interpretive signage on trails
- Use Kingsley School for programs, museum, and oral histories; sponsor a reunion of those who attended the school
- Consider sponsoring a winter festival
- Provide day rides on horseback, wagon rides with mules
- Provide benches, passive areas at historic sites
- Consider following at Montgomery Chapel: reunion, oral histories, and archeological survey of cemetery with ground penetrating radar.
- Attract more people to historic sites; use transit, winterize campground, provide sleigh rides
- Provide more interpretation of pre-history
- Include Wims Field, the old baseball field, as an historic interpretive area.

## Park and Recreation Facilities

- Support pool
- Oppose pool
- Consider Learning Center for golf
- Modify lighting at Golf parking lot; clubhouse okay
- Any plans for golf expansion should not affect trails
- Consider astronomy center at golf course
- Continue hatchery and stocking
- Maintain stream as a catch and release stream
- Improve stream from Clarksburg Road to MD 355
- Better water supply needed for Fire and Rescue
- Provide picnic areas that are equestrian friendly
- Maintain the passive atmosphere that exists now
- Provide pavilion at Prescott Road parking
- Provide senior softball fields; bocce courts
- Sponsor winter festival in campground area
- Do not pave existing equestrian trails
- More park police for law enforcement
- Provide open area for festival space
- The park needs a focal point and an identity to draw people, whether at a visitors' center or elsewhere

## Camping and Trails

- Provide more access for equestrians, especially south of Little Bennett Creek
- Provide equestrian campsites
- Link trails in a more systematic way-too many dead ends
- Mow around open fields to provide trail access
- Expand Froggy Hollow Trail
- Balance expansion of trails with maintaining natural setting
- Pipeline easement could be trail
- Existing trail system not built with recreation in mind, just follows old roads, need new environmentally sound trail system made for fun and enjoyment
- All trails should be shared use
- Consider opening trails near streams
- Consider camping with horses and connecting horse trails from the campground to the larger park network
- Keep and even expand horse trailer parking
- Keep portable toilet at horse trailer lot
- Realign Froggy Hollow trail to make it less steep
- Improve creek crossings
- Need circumferential trail around park
- Need uninterrupted trail along Little Bennett Creek
- Need bridge at Browning Run
- Horse access would be nice to archeological sites, with hitching post
- Provide pavilion at horse parking lot with water pump
- Need better signage with simple map
- Consider color-coding trails-shouldn't get lost on trails
- Realign trails so they don't get muddy
- Consider surface like C&O Canal towpath
- Cyclists like climbing/descent of trails offered at Little Bennett
- Timber Ridge trail needs to be redone
- Need to remember ALL users
- Oppose cabins-keep primitive camping for Scout troops
- Park should have access from public transportation-show bus stops
- Provide interpretive trails oriented to natural landscape (trees, flowers, shrubs)
- More trailhead access would increase trail use
- Need bridge across Little Bennett at Hyattstown
- Extend Clarksburg greenway trail all the way to Hyattstown
- Add bike path to Hyattstown Mill Road
- Provide bike trail connection from Prescott Road to Hyattstown along the north boundary of golf course.
- Provide trail along Prescott Road from trailer parking past golf course to Lewisdale Road.
- All traditional points of horse access should be continued
- Should be some access for horse owners in the community across park from MD 355
- Signs confusing about horses near golf course
- How do we make sure people stay on the trails?
- Campground expansion should be sensitive to trout population
- Wherever trail crosses stream, use stabilized crossing or bridge
- Connect the Damascus trails to the trails in Clarksburg.

## Access and Transportation

- Concerned about safety at proposed intersection of MD 355 and Snowden Farm Parkway.
- Major safety issues when crossing Clarksburg Road, weekdays in particular
- Expand existing parking lot on Clarksburg Road and formalize additional lots
- Provide stepping stone bridge (like the one at Seneca Greenway) to access Earls picnic area
- Need formal signage for parking and location maps in parking areas.
- Keep and maintain existing equestrian parking and provide additional horse trailer parking areas
- Consider following related to Clarksburg Road:
- Slower speed limits and other traffic calming
- Should consider closing Clarksburg Road because of safety concerns and for improved park experience
- Improve shoulders on Clarksburg Road, Stringtown Road and Burnt Mill Road for cyclists.
- Clarksburg Greenway should go north all the way to the Frederick county line.
- Bike access from Lewisdale Drive (Class 1): possible connect to the greenway to the north.
- Provide bike access to Hyattstown Mill Rd. from Clarksburg Rd. to proposed greenway to the north.
- No trolley or motorized vehicular service within the park
- Piedmont Road's extension to Rt. 355 should go on top of the hill, near the Maintenance Facility, instead of in the valley for improved sight distance.

measures should be used

distance.

- Provide better, safer bike/pedestrian/equestrian access to park from Clarksburg Road

### Implementation Priorities

- Better access. Where will all the people and cars go as development occurs? Small parking lots near activities is one approach.
- Bike trails/bike access
- A "swimming hole" for children
- Nature museum; trails that explore natural history
- Provide for older elementary/teens who now have nothing to do
- Improve trails
- Provide trails for everyone
- Group picnic areas with tables/grills.
- Visitors center, using Brookside Gardens as model
- Improve access to fire department; roadways too narrow, wooden bridges, need ponds for water, no water supply in some areas of park
- First Tee or similar golf learning facility with intermediate 9-hole golf course

### General Comments from Audience or by Correspondence

- How often do park police patrol park? Patrols should be increased.
- Need to address future of park houses.
- Volume of traffic on Clarksburg Road is a very big deal.
- Now is time for money to be prioritized for park maintenance by staff; should not rely solely on volunteers.
- Consider having meetings elsewhere in upcounty, too.
- Trails should be widened to allow equestrians and bikers to travel abreast.
- Implement a policy of selected, one-year closures of sections of the park that become stressed or heavily eroded due to overuse.
- Park needs a permanent, well-funded maintenance crew.
- A History Trail should be established linking all the historic sites in the park.
- Frisbee golf should be provided for campers or day visitors in the camping area.
- The 80 plus acres of open field have a lot of erosion, so some fill could be obtained from the housing developers. It percs at 20 g/m.
- Little Bennett is a diamond in the rough: leave it that way!

## **Attachment 3**

### **Preliminary Staff Analysis of Recreation Needs: Little Bennett Service Area**

(Prepared by PPRA staff, 1/06)

In December 2005, the Planning Board adopted the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) update. The LPPRP projects future recreation needs by first estimating participation rates based upon current park use and then factoring in information from County and state surveys of park users. These participation rates are then applied to County population forecasts to the year 2020. For the Little Bennett Regional Park plan, a "service area" of the park has been designated (*see Figure 4*) and future recreation needs identified in LPPRP have been analyzed for this service area.

This is an important analysis to help determine the role of Little Bennett Regional Park in meeting future recreation needs.

The results of the analysis are summarized below.

#### **Ballfields**

Staff concludes that the 2020 Ballfield needs for the service area can be "**potentially**" met at existing and future schools and parks other than Little Bennett Regional Park. The term "**potentially**" is used because:

- There is an assumption that all future schools will be built,
- The estimated number of fields at future parks will be the same as when they are actually designed and built, and
- Baseball needs will be met through a combination of public use of high school fields and lighting suitable park fields.

Schools have a very specific number and types of facilities (the standard program) that need to be built in order to meet the educational needs of students. Estimating the number of future school facilities is assigning the standard program for each future school site.

Future park facilities are more flexible and can meet the documented public demand driven needs. Estimating the number, type, and size of fields that a future park can provide is only a rough estimate without a Concept Plan. The future parks that need a Concept Plan are:

- Woodfield Road Local Park
- Linthicum West Recreational Park

Concept plans must take into consideration streams, stream buffers, steep slopes, highly erodible soils, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, wetland buffers, habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species, archeological resources and historic sites. These factors can greatly influence the number, type and size of fields that are ultimately built. Concept Plans help eliminate the vagaries of what facilities a future park may provide.

### ***Playgrounds***

The 2020 Playground needs for the service area indicate a need for 1.5 playgrounds. This need could be addressed at Little Bennett Regional Park and should be considered in planning of the park. One idea would be creation of a large Adventure Playground that is larger than a "regular" Local Park playground. Regional Parks drawing larger numbers of people would logically need a larger playground. A larger and unique Adventure Playground could be an additional draw complementing the other park amenities and unique sites.

### ***Picnicking***

#### Group Picnicking.

The 2020 Group Picnicking needs for Montgomery County is one. There are none planned for the CIP in the next 6 years. The Little Bennett Regional Park could supply one as there are no Group Picnic Areas in the upper part of Montgomery County. A Group Picnic Area would be an additional draw complementing the other park amenities and unique sites. The one Group Picnic Area needed could also be a Black Hills Regional Park if an appropriate site can be found.

#### Permit Picnic Shelters

The 2020 need for Permit Picnic Shelters is 21. There are 5 planned over the next 10 years leaving a balance of 16 to be sited. All Regional Parks have such facilities except Little Bennett. There needs to be an analysis of which Regional Parks have the development potential, proximity to existing shelters, and parking capacity to accept more Permit Picnic Shelters.

The Little Bennett Regional Park Plan process will explore how the projected needs for playgrounds, picnic areas and picnic shelters can be accommodated.