

MCDUFFIE COUNTY TRAILS CHARRETTE



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Archway Partnership
Center for Community Design and Preservation
College of Environment and Design

SPRING 2021

MCDUFFIE COUNTY TRAILS CHARRETTE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REPORT PRODUCTION, UGA CED CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DESIGN AND PRESERVATION

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Photographs in this report are courtesy of the charrette team except where noted.

It has been our pleasure to work on this project. Thank you to our CED students for volunteering their time and talent to put their studies into practice and give back to Georgia communities. We are grateful to the McDuffie County Archway Partnership for this experiential learning opportunity, especially to Sam Perren, Elizabeth Vance, Don Powers, David Crawley, Chase Beggs, Susan Boyd, Kenneth Boyd, and I. B. Parnell for their guidance and expertise throughout this process.

We also appreciate the opportunity to build on the good work of our UGA colleagues with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government's RSVP program, the College of Engineering, and the Terry College Institute for Leadership Advancement.

Most importantly, thank you to the citizens of McDuffie County and the over 100 respondents to our community surveys. Your feedback was invaluable to the charrette team's work, and will assist local, state, and federal partners in prioritizing recreational opportunities in the Clarks Hill Lake area. Thank you for your commitment to our students' experiential learning, and to the great outdoors!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

McDuffie County stakeholders want to increase recreational opportunities around Clarks Hill Lake, one of the largest man-made lakes east of the Mississippi River. The lake and adjacent land are controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), which leases the majority of McDuffie County shoreline to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a Wildlife Management Area (WMA). McDuffie County holds lakefront leases on two former Corps campgrounds – Big Hart and Raysville – and has successfully increased visitation numbers over the last five years.

Also, in collaboration with the Georgia River Network, Wilkes and McDuffie Counties have established Georgia’s Little River Water Trail, a 20-mile paddling route along the McDuffie and Wilkes County borders. Students with the UGA College of Engineering have recently designed plans for a motor boat launch on the Little River at Highway 80, which would complete a group of four public access points on the water trail. Additionally, students with the Terry College of Business’s Institute for Leadership Advancement have researched the economic benefits of a trail system and explored marketing opportunities.

The McDuffie County Archway Partnership asked the Center for Community Design and Preservation (CCDP) at the College of Environment and Design (CED) to augment these efforts by developing concepts and an illustrative master plan for additional boat launches along the water trail and a land-based trail system to support their application for a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) grant. Given that the GOSP grant funds large-scale projects, this presents an opportunity to

consider outdoor recreation improvements more broadly – including adding amenities to current boat launches and considering improvements to county-managed campgrounds as well as exploring concepts for hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

CCDP used a design charrette – a multi-day brainstorming session between design experts and local stakeholders – to bring together a team of CED students in landscape architecture and planning to explore potential improvements. The goal of the charrette was to envision how to satisfy the county’s desire for recreational economic development with DNR’s priority to serve hunters and fishermen, and to incorporate best practices between different types of trail users. The charrette concentrated on the Little River Water Trail between Highway 80 and Highway 78 within the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area, as well as the McDuffie County campgrounds at Big Hart and Raysville. Due to Covid-19, this charrette was conducted with virtual meetings, two on-campus workdays, and extended periods of public input solicited through YouTube presentations and online surveys.

Using case studies, recreational industry best practices and public feedback, the proposed design concepts enhance the already attractive opportunities around the lake with new ideas meant to increase accessibility for a wider segment of the public. These concepts accommodate self-shuttling for paddlers on the Little River Water Trail, create a trail system for hikers and bike riders within the Big Hart and Raysville campgrounds, and suggest how equestrian trails may be included within the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area.



INTRODUCTION



Clarks Hill Lake is one of the largest man-made lakes east of the Mississippi River and is known as a premiere fishing destination.

Bordering South Carolina, to whom it is known as Lake Thurmond, it is the southernmost in a chain of three lakes on the Savannah River. The 70,000-acre lake and its 1000+ miles of shoreline are controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), which leases portions of the land to state agencies and local governments to manage. The majority of land around the lake within McDuffie County is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This 12,700-acre property offers hunting opportunities for deer, turkey, small game, dove and waterfowl. There is little to no private development on the lake.

McDuffie County has made a concerted effort to capitalize on its rich natural resources and increase recreational tourism to the region beyond what is prioritized by the WMA. McDuffie County's only lake access consists of two former Corps-managed campgrounds. The County has managed Raysville Campground for five years, and Big Hart Campground for two years. This venture has proved profitable – the county has successfully increased visitation to both campgrounds year after year. Raysville Campground has 55 spacious waterfront campsites, a concrete boat ramp and dock, and a few kayaks for rent to campers. Big Hart Campground is at the tip of a peninsula shared with the WMA between Hart Creek and Big Creek. The campground has 31 waterfront campsites and a separate group campsite, as well as a day-use area with picnic tables, a playground and a swimming beach, plus a motor boat launch and dock. Neither campground has a campground office or general store, and there are little to no retail or eating establishments in the vicinity for food and supplies.

Georgia's Little River Water Trail is a 20-mile paddling route along the McDuffie and Wilkes County borders of the Little River, which feeds into Clarks Hill Lake. There are four access points on the water trail, and all but one are in McDuffie County. The full route begins where the Little River crosses under Highway 80 (Access Point 1) and extends northeast to Highway 78 (Access Point 2). Access Point 3 is on the Wilkes County side at the Holiday Park campground after the river transitions to open water. The route continues across the lake to the

Raysville Campground boat ramp (Access Point 4).

The water trail is well-defined through brochures and a website that showcases the trail's natural beauty and abundant wildlife. However, Access Point 1 is as yet undeveloped and inaccessible, limiting paddlers' ability to self-shuttle the first, and most scenic, section of the trail. Access Points 2 and 4 have parking areas and concrete boat ramps, but neither the ramps or the existing docks are designed for launching kayaks or canoes. None of the locations have restrooms, and there is not an Outfitters on the lake to rent boats or provide a shuttle service.

Completing the water trail by adding parking and river access at Access Point 1 is a local priority. Students with the UGA College of Engineering have recently designed plans for a concrete boat ramp, parking lot, and restrooms on the McDuffie County side of the Highway 80 bridge. The ramp design will accommodate trailered motor boats, but the county is also interested in a separate launch for hand-carried boats that naturally blends in with the riverbank.

McDuffie County also enlisted students with the UGA Terry College of Business's Institute for Leadership Advancement, who conducted focus group research on the prevailing attitudes towards trails in the area. According to their research, locals of all ages are interested in hiking and biking trails for exercise, walking pets, and socializing with friends and family. Respondents were interested in using trails 1-2 times a week and prefer long trails with multiple entry points to allow for a variety of trail lengths and location options.

The Terry College's research showed that other regional trail systems have derived positive results in economic development (increased foot traffic for local businesses, increased real estate values, decreased healthcare costs), social interactions (mixing of age groups, community event programming, casual connections), and environmental outcomes (clean-up events, educational programming, minimal land impact).

The County's pursuit of a GOSP grant presents an opportunity to consider outdoor recreation improvements more broadly – not only completing access to the water trail, but also adding amenities to existing boat launches, adding amenities to county-managed campgrounds, and establishing a multi-user trail system. However, while McDuffie County has jurisdiction within the boundaries of the campgrounds, DNR has jurisdiction in the WMA, and hunting/fishing is the WMA's primary mission. McDuffie County and City of Thomson officials are interested in augmenting the water trail with a hiking-biking trail between Access Points 1 and 2, and suggest that while this shoreline is within the WMA, it is a relatively narrow segment, and it is unknown/questionable how much hunting activity actually exists. The DNR is supportive of adding a boat ramp at Highway 80, but has concerns about potential conflict with hunters, who are the WMA's primary clientele. Because the county is the leaseholder for all the acreage within Raysville and Big Hart Campgrounds, developing trail systems within those areas would not conflict with hunting seasons.

METHODOLOGY

CCDP used a design charrette – a multi-day brainstorming session between design experts and local stakeholders – to bring together a team of students in landscape architecture and planning to envision design concepts for enhanced recreational offerings around the Clarks Hill Lake area. Often described as “a tornado in reverse”, a facilitated charrette can take scattered issues, ideas and concerns and refine them into a comprehensive, illustrated vision. Participation by local stakeholders and feedback from the general public creates community buy-in and makes civic projects more fundable and more successful.

The goal of the charrette was to envision ways to satisfy the county’s desire for recreational economic development while recognizing DNR’s priority to serve hunters and fishermen, and to incorporate best practices between different types of trail users. The charrette concentrated on the Little River Water Trail between Highway 80 and Highway 78 within the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area, as well as the McDuffie County campgrounds at Big Hart and Raysville.

Due to Covid-19, we conducted this charrette with virtual meetings, two on-campus workdays, and extended periods of public input solicited through YouTube presentations and online surveys from March – July 2021. The charrette team met virtually with local stakeholders; analyzed related studies by UGA students in the College of Engineering and the Terry College of Business; researched multi-use trail standards and best practices; and virtually explored the area via photographs, video, and social media.



OUR CHARRETTE OCCURRED IN THREE PHASES:

PHASE I: COMMUNITY INPUT & RESEARCH

Our charrette team began by meeting with local stakeholders, including elected officials, Tourism Board members, and trail enthusiasts, as well as representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources over Zoom, to understand local needs and the function of the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area. This input session set up most of the framework for the rest of project. Our students were able to ask questions to determine the needs of the community as well as potential site locations where people would like to see new ideas or improvements. Following this input session, our team began conducting a site analysis, collecting GIS data, and researching case studies of other parks and Wildlife Management Areas. These maps and references were important for creating a baseline of knowledge for the later design phases.

PHASE II: INITIAL CONCEPTS & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

While most team members were acquainted with hiking trails, research on trail system best practices for paddlers, cyclists, and equestrian enthusiasts was needed. Through these lenses, and with the goals for the site in mind, our team spent the first workday creating design suggestions for various trails and other land improvement throughout the Clarks Hill Lake area. CCDP staff developed initial concepts into a video presentation which was shared with the community over social media channels. Community members were invited to complete a survey and provide responses on preferred elements, known limitations, and potential improvements to each concept.

PHASE III: FINAL CONCEPTS & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

After analyzing the community responses to the survey, the charrette team determined enhancements, modifications and additional research needed to adjust and improve upon initial ideas. A second workday was held with students from the first workday as well as new participants. Following the second workday, CCDP staff refined illustrations and plans and vetted final concepts with local stakeholders. The final concepts were presented to the general public via a second video presentation and a survey. All feedback received is incorporated and included in this final report.

PHASE I

COMMUNITY INPUT & RESEARCH

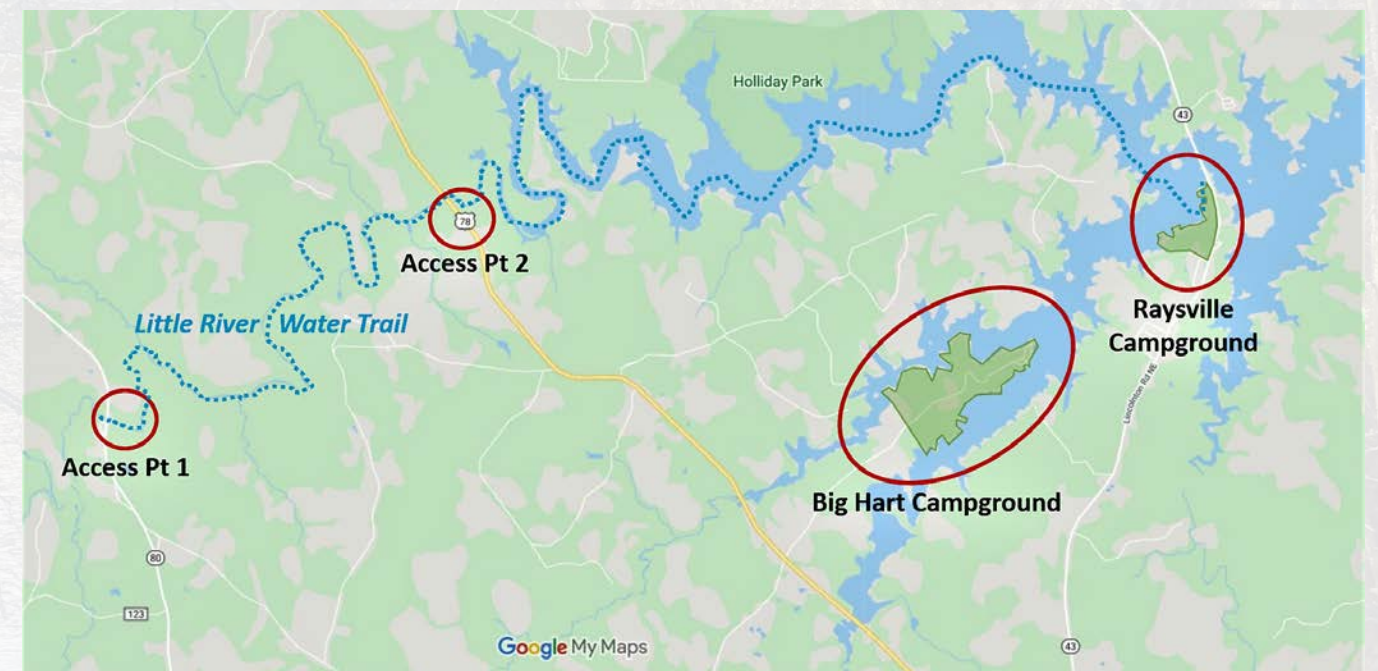


Our charrette team began by meeting with local stakeholders, including elected officials, Tourism Board members, and trail enthusiasts, as well as representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources, to understand local needs and the function of the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area.

SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

The typical site analysis includes the site location and size, neighborhood context, zoning, legal aspects, geology, physiography (natural and man-made features), hydrology, soils, vegetation, wildlife, climate, culture, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, access, utilities, historic factors, density, sensory stimuli, and any other factor deemed appropriate for the particular site. All this information is important to determine how a design will be incorporated into a new design.

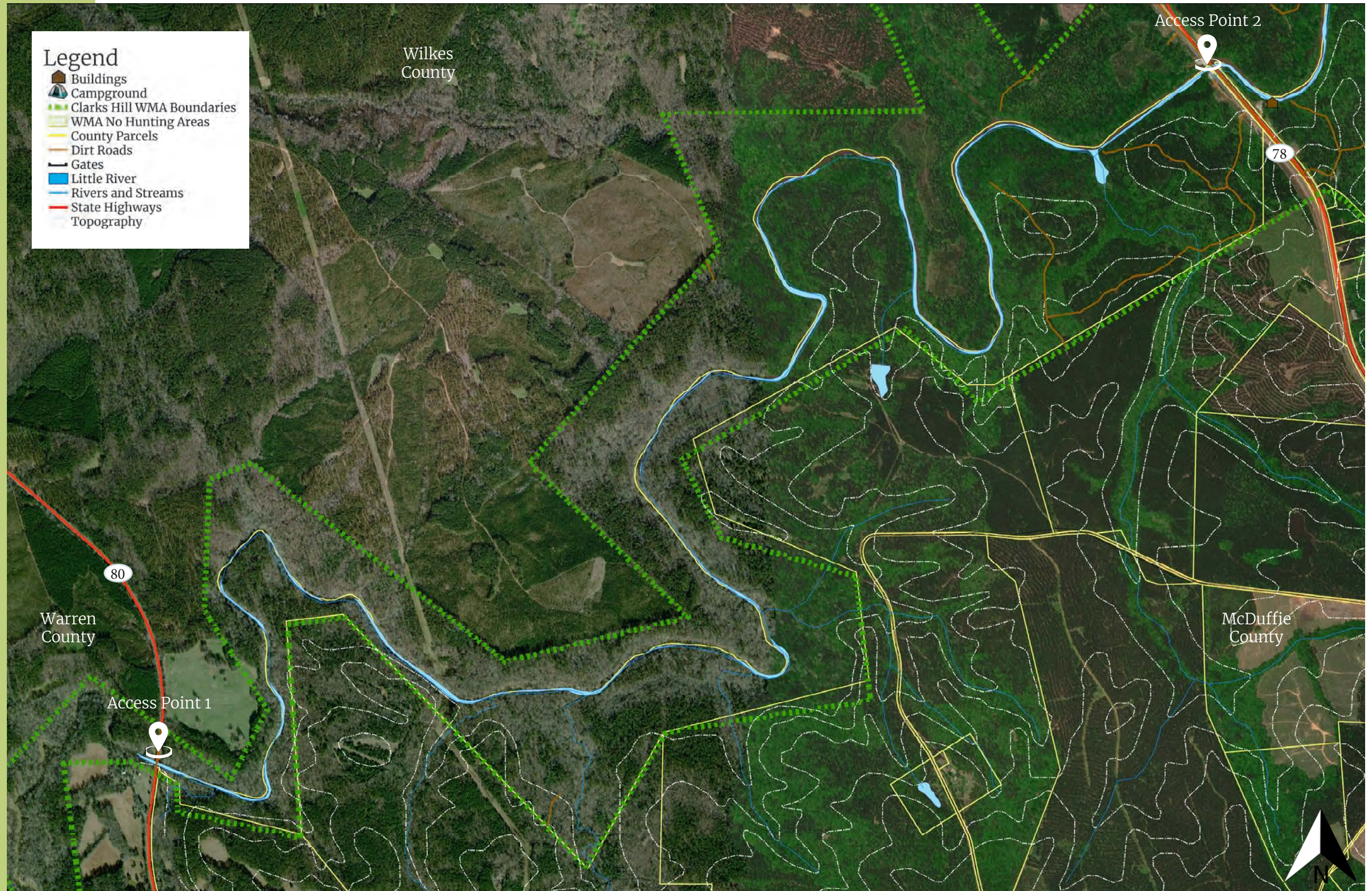
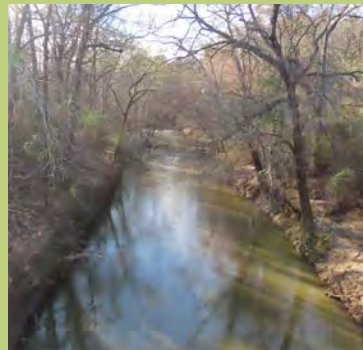
Specifically, our site analysis included the narrow strip of the WMA that includes water trail Access Points 1 and 2, the Big Hart Peninsula that includes WMA access and the Big Hart Campground, and the Hart Creek area south of the Big Hart peninsula that includes WMA land and the Raysville Campground.



The Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area is located where McDuffie County, Wilkes County, and Warren County all meet. Overall, the site is relatively flat with some steep slopes along the shoreline. All areas south of the river and lake are in the McDuffie County jurisdiction and will be the limitation of our site. Major vehicular circulation is limited to Highway 80, Highway 78, and Highway 43 with some more minor roads and dirt roads throughout the area. Pedestrian circulation is unique in that the Wildlife Management Area is completely open to the public for hunting and fishing with the purchase of a WMA-approved hunting or fishing license or Georgia Lands Pass. The entire area is fairly accessible with limitations on hunters within the designated campground areas. Overall, the site is a beautiful area surrounding the river and lake.

LITTLE RIVER WATER TRAIL

The Little River Water Trail is located on the western edge of the Wildlife Management Area. The charrette team's primary focus was between Access Points 1 and 2. Between these first two access points, the water trail spans about 7 1/2 miles with a calm flow and no major elevation changes, which allows for a relatively easy paddling experience. According to paddlers familiar with the area, it is ideal for kayaks and canoes. Motor boat traffic is minimal, due to shallow conditions and deadfall from downed trees.



ACCESS POINT 1



Currently, Access Point 1 at Highway 80 does not yet have any amenities, other than a quiet view of the river, but a boat launch is desired. The area is lacking a designated area for people to park and interact with the river. The shoreline appears to be steep by the river but there is a relatively flat clearing with low grass and a tall tree canopy next to the river that would be well suited for a parking area. The surrounding area is calm and serene, and beneficial to maintain in developing access. The vehicular circulation is from Highway 80, which has minimal traffic on it. The pedestrian circulation of the area is minimal, as there are no sidewalks or pathways in the area and falls in the Wildlife Management Area and on private property. There is no paved pull-off from Highway 80, but just enough grass median to hold a few vehicles.



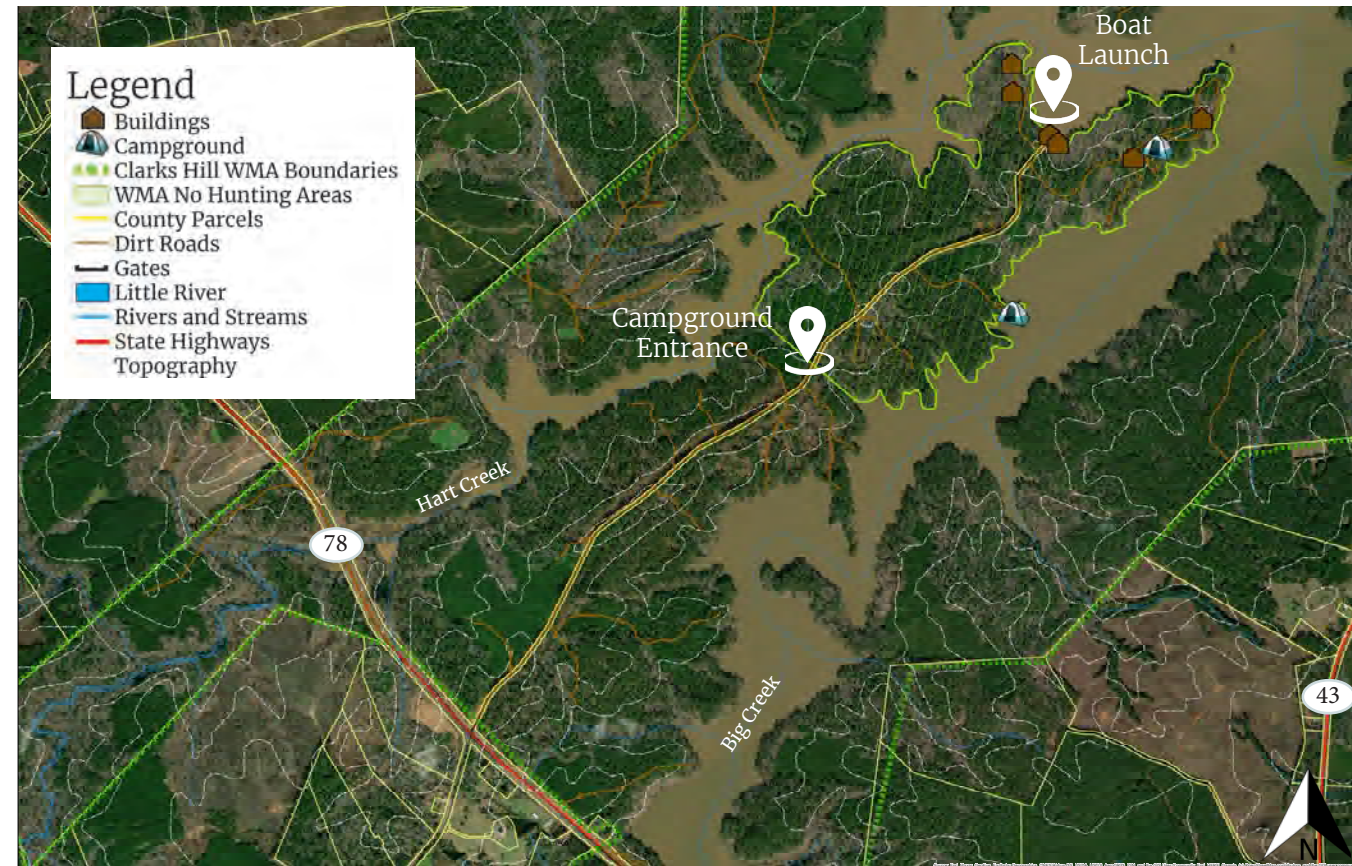
ACCESS POINT 2



Access Point 2 at Highway 78 includes a gravel parking lot, a motor boat launch, and a water trail kiosk with maps and information. It is a relatively flat area with direct river access via a concrete boat ramp. The area is lacking a restroom and other amenities that may improve the environment. The area is covered in a lot of low grasses and pine trees. Vehicular circulation is dominated by Highway 78, a divided four-lane state highway. There is only one way in and one way out of the area and trucks with trailers dominate this section of highway. Pedestrian circulation is non-existent on the highway, and there are no designated trails in the area.



BIG HART PENINSULA



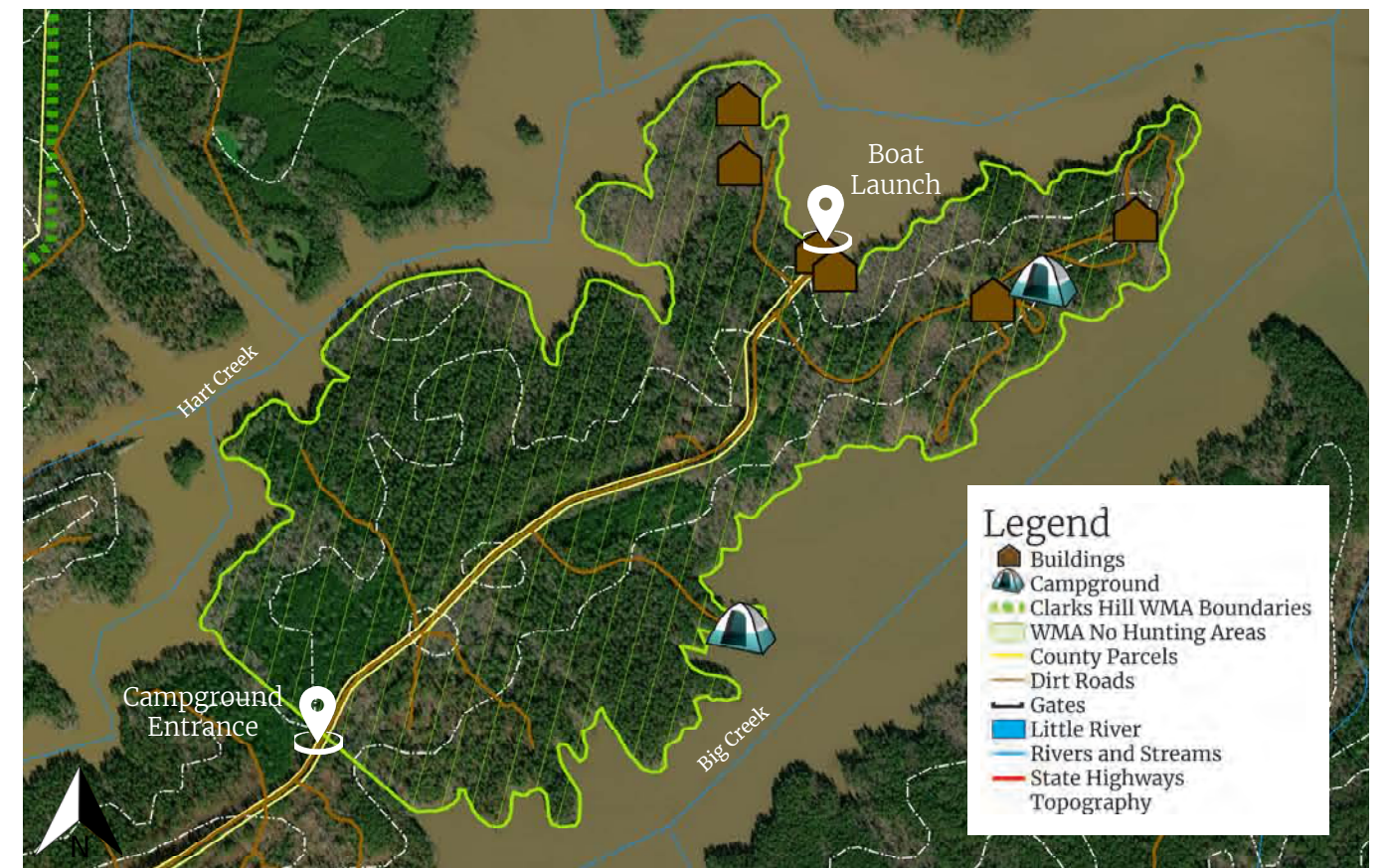
The Big Hart Peninsula is located in the center of the Clarks Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area. The area has about 50 ft. of grade change throughout the entire peninsula, but there are no harsh grade changes. The peninsula's access is divided, with the southern half of the peninsula at Highway 78 as an active part of the Wildlife Management Area, while the northern half is the Big Hart Campground, now managed by McDuffie County. The major vehicular circulation is where the peninsula connects to Highway 78. There is a single roadway that leads from Highway 78 to the campground's Day Use area and boat dock, and separate branches for the individual and group camping areas. Dirt roads branch off of the main paved road system and are used by hunters. Pedestrian circulation is limited, as there is no designated trail system.



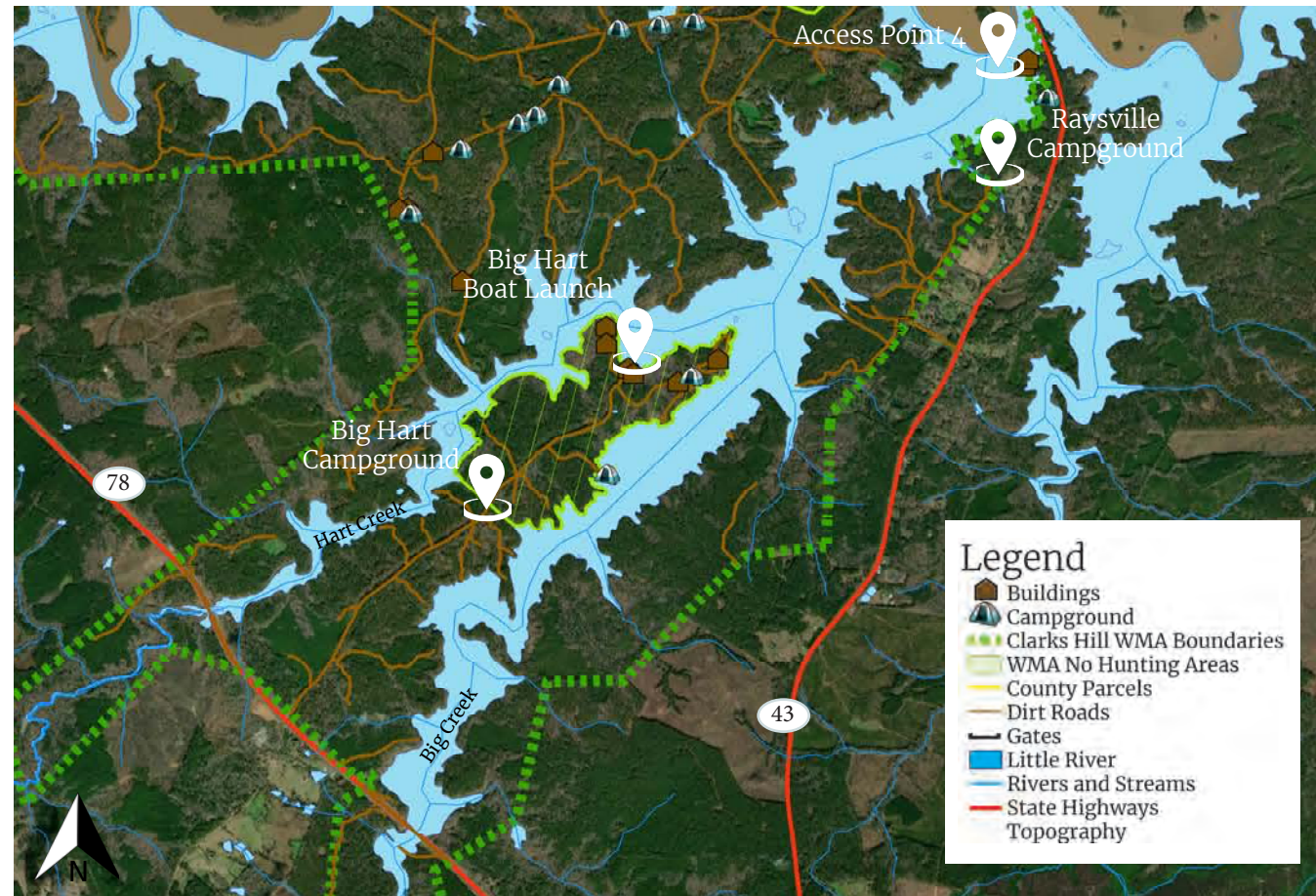
BIG HART CAMPGROUND



The Big Hart Campground dominates the northern portion of the Big Hart Peninsula. The area includes a boat launch and dock area; a day use area with playground, beach and picnic tables; and both 31 individual campsites and a 7-site group camping area with pavilions and restroom buildings. There is minimal signage and no campground office or general store, just a volunteer campground host site. The vehicular circulation of the campground is a single roadway that leads from Highway 78 to the boat launch and dock area, with spurs to the two camping areas and additional dirt roads throughout, which have limited use now that hunting is prohibited in this section. The campground has no designated trail system.



RAYSVILLE SHORELINE



The Raysville Shoreline refers to the area west of Raysville Campground along Clarks Hill Lake at Big Creek. The area is fully within the WMA and is maintained for hunting and fishing. This section appears relatively flat, with almost 75 ft. of grade change throughout the entire shoreline, but with minimal harsh grade changes. The major vehicular circulation of this area is where Raysville Campground connects to Highway 43 and funnels through the campground area; with dirt roads throughout. Pedestrian circulation is similar to the rest of the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area, as it is used for hunting and has no designated walking trail system.



RAYSVILLE CAMPGROUND



Raysville Campground contains Access Point 4 on the open water of the lake. It includes a parking lot, motor boat launch, a fishing dock/pier, and over 55 waterfront campsites. The vehicular circulation of the campground is contained into a single roadway with various dirt roads and other pathways leading from Highway 43 to the boat launch and dock area and the campsites. Pedestrian circulation is similar to the rest of the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area being used for hunting and the campground having no designated walking trail system.



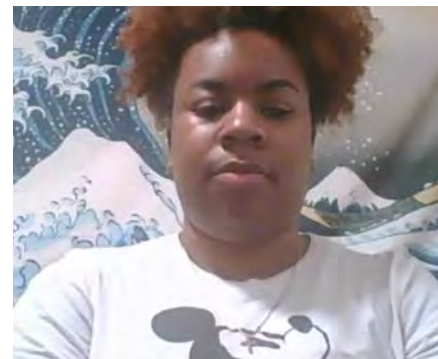
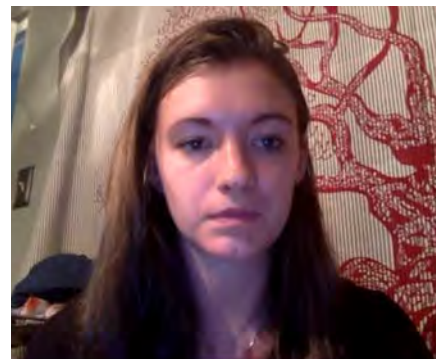


INPUT SESSION



On March 18, 2021, the CED team met virtually with invited McDuffie County stakeholders to kick off the charrette process.

CCDP staff led introductions of CED students and stakeholders, gave an overview of the goals for the charrette, and shared photographs and contextual information from a recent visit to the project sites. Next, the floor was opened to community stakeholders to provide any additional information about the project that may be helpful, as well as any specific amenities they hope to see in the new site plan. Some of the major takeaways from this meeting were:



1. The river and the surrounding areas are a beautiful asset and have a lot of potential for improvement.
2. It would be nice for paddlers to have a place to stretch their legs along the river between Access Points 1 and 2.
3. There is a desire to promote outdoor recreation in the Wildlife Management Area, but want to avoid conflict between different users.
4. It is important to work with DNR and understand the safety regulations of the Wildlife Management Area while looking for design solutions.
5. There is a desire for students to explore the idea of incorporating horse trails into the Wildlife Management Area separate from biking or walking trails.
6. There is interest in creating biking and mountain bike trails throughout the area to diversify the trail users within the area.
7. Prioritize trail systems at Big Hart Campground and Raysville Campground due to existing McDuffie County ownership and little to no conflict with hunters, fisherman, or DNR interests.

PHASE II

INITIAL CONCEPTS & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



Two on-campus workdays were held to generate initial recreational ideas and design concepts, followed by feedback loops of community input via online videos and surveys. CCDP staff then refined these designs based on feedback and additional research. This chapter outlines the charrette process, preliminary concepts, and survey results.

DESIGN CHARRETTE DAY 1



After meeting with our community stakeholders and conducting site inventory and analysis, the charrette team held the first workday of the design charrette on March 28, 2021.

The goals were to explore outdoor recreation opportunities in McDuffie County around Clarks Hill Lake, including:

- concepts for hiking, biking and equestrian trails,
- enhanced boat launches along the Little River Water Trail, and
- improvements to Big Hart and Raysville campgrounds.

First, the student charrette team engaged in a brainstorming exercise to begin thinking about the most important aspects of being outdoors – whether that was a feeling we wanted to convey through the project or a physical event that made them think of the outdoors. From this exercise, the students generated over 85 responses which they grouped into 7 categories including: Natural Ambiance, Experiences, Activities, Wellness, Tranquility, Safety, and Community. These themes served as guiding principles as various conceptual ideas were explored throughout the day.

Next, the charrette team worked in pairs to explore how different user groups use trails, and what they might seek out as amenities. Since hiking was familiar to all, the team focused their research through three different, distinct lenses: as paddlers, cyclists, and equestrian riders. By empathizing with these users, research was framed by these questions: “Imagine you are planning a trip to the Clarks Hill Lake area, and you are a kayaker, mountain biker, or horseback rider. What would you look for in a good trip? What are the pros and cons of this area?”

Using imagination, research, and case studies, we explored what each group would need and want in an adventure, and the advantages and disadvantages of the Clark’s Hill Lake area for such a trip.

We also explored the safest ways to incorporate trail systems in Wildlife Management Areas. As Wildlife Management Areas generally prioritize hunting and fishing and are open to hunting most of the year, it will be imperative to establish regulations and safety precautions in order to implement certain design suggestions.

PADDLING TRAILS

Canoeing, kayaking, and rafting are some of the most profitable activities for State Parks and rivers in the state of Georgia.

According to our initial research, we found that Georgia residents are more likely to participate in fishing and other water sports than the average American. Accommodating these services has a great chance to be extremely beneficial to McDuffie County. This research led us to examine what paddlers such as canoers and kayakers need and want when determining where to take a trip. We researched the area as well as the water trail maps to determine the pros and cons of the paddling experience along the Little River Water Trail.

WANTS AND NEEDS

MOST PADDLERS NEED:

- Knowledge of launch and take-out locations, type of access
- Parking spaces with and without trailers
- Travel times to and from start and end points
- Wayfinding on trail
- Bathrooms

THEY ALSO MAY WANT:

- Additional education material about the route
- Stops along trail to stretch legs or take in scenery
- ADA accessibility to accommodate wider user group
- Outfitter to rent equipment and/or shuttle boats

PROS AND CONS

SOME OF THE PROS INCLUDED:

- Extremely Profitable
- Water trail already in place
- Interest from community

SOME OF THE CONS INCLUDED:

- Requires some initial upfront cost from McDuffie County
- Part of it is through hunting area
- More infrastructure needed to make it an attraction



Sources: galittlriver.com; Mill Pond Kayak Tours





CASE STUDY: THE TUGALOO CORRIDOR

1 LAKE YONAH & YONAH DAM

2 YONAH PARK & PANTHER CREEK

3 THE ISLAND

4 5 TIMBER SLUICE LOG JAM

6 TUGALOO BEND HERITAGE PARK

7 ROCKY BRANCH

8 PRATHER BRIDGE

9 BARTON CREEK & RIVER ROAD

10 BREVARD FAULT ZONE

11 LONGNOSE CREEK FALLS & GRIST MILL

12 TUGALOO MOUND

13 SOUTHERN RAILWAY VIADUCT

14 JARRETT BRIDGE

15 BROKEN BRIDGES & STEPHENS CO. PARK

APPROXIMATE DISTANCES

- Yonah Dam > Walker Creek Ramp **1.8 mile**
- Walker Creek Ramp > Prather Bridge **2.9 mile**
- Prather Bridge > Broken Bridges **5.2 miles**
- TOTAL DISTANCE 9.9 miles**

CANOE/KAYAK RENTAL RATES

\$40 per day
or
\$30 per day
(2 or more vessels)

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www.tugaloobend.org/canoe-kayak-rental

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706-282-7636

PADDLING THE TUGALOO CORRIDOR

KAYAK TOUR

A PROJECT OF:
THE STEPHENS COUNTY FOUNDATION
A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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As part of their research on water trails, our students discovered the Tugaloo Corridor, which extends ten miles from Panther Creek to the Yonah Dam area.

In addition to having a number of canoes and kayaks available for rent, the Stephens County Foundation also sponsors Memorial and Labor Day weekend canoe/kayak river history tours. This case study is a good example for McDuffie County to consider in terms of additional amenities such as parking, wayfinding, an outfitter, picnic spots, and various other things paddlers look for in a water trail.



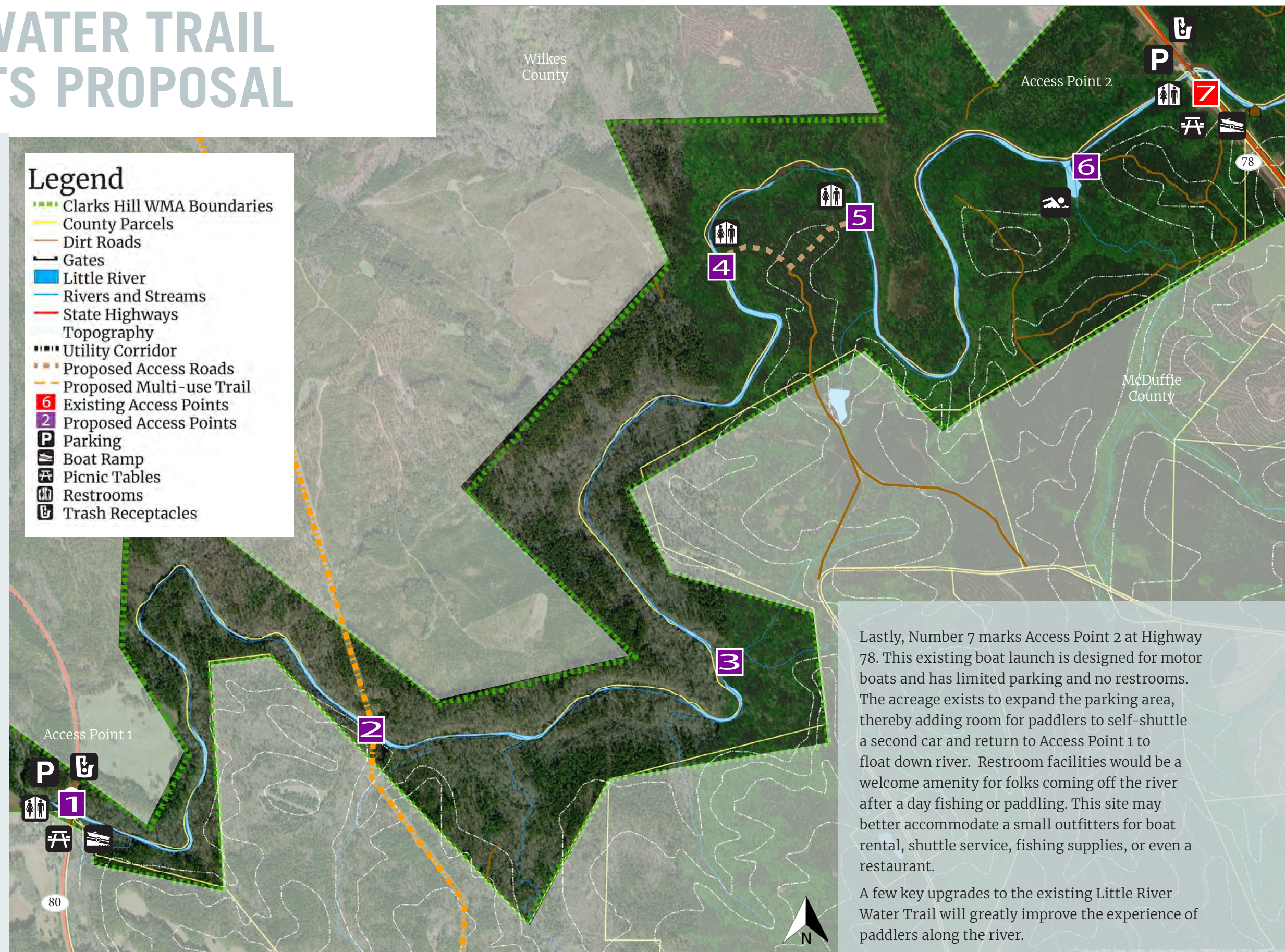
LITTLE RIVER WATER TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS PROPOSAL

Our students took the wants and needs of canoers and kayakers and incorporated them into Little River Water Trail between Access Point 1 (at Highway 80) and Access Point 2 (Highway 78). The purpose of this design is to improve the experience for paddlers on an already established water trail.

Beginning at Access Point 1 at Highway 80, we propose a new parking lot, motor boat launch, a separate kayak/canoe launch, and restrooms. This lot should accommodate trailer parking and be located away from the road in a clearing. Providing a separate launch that is specifically designed for canoes and kayaks is preferable, as getting into and out of a low boat can be tricky on a concrete ramp or dock designed for motor boats.

There is also potential for a small outfitters at this location to rent boats and provide a shuttle service. On the map, Number 2 indicates a utility corridor with the potential for vehicular access in emergency situations. There is also potential for handicap access, which would lend itself well toward emergency accessibility. Number 3 on the map would be a great location for travelers to get out and stretch their legs as well as take in the sights along the curve of the river.

Next, Numbers 4 and 5 indicate two options for restroom locations, as they occur midway on this first leg and are on flat areas where paddlers can access the shoreline easily. Plus, an existing dirt road serves as a place for potential emergency access. Number 6 marks a place in the river suggested as a swimming location.



Lastly, Number 7 marks Access Point 2 at Highway 78. This existing boat launch is designed for motor boats and has limited parking and no restrooms. The acreage exists to expand the parking area, thereby adding room for paddlers to self-shuttle a second car and return to Access Point 1 to float down river. Restroom facilities would be a welcome amenity for folks coming off the river after a day fishing or paddling. This site may better accommodate a small outfitters for boat rental, shuttle service, fishing supplies, or even a restaurant.

A few key upgrades to the existing Little River Water Trail will greatly improve the experience of paddlers along the river.

CYCLING TRAILS

Biking is a great form of exercise – it gets your heart rate up, is easy to do as a solo or communal activity, and is an accessible way to enjoy the outdoors.

According to our initial research, cycling is not only an affordable hobby, but there is also strong correlation between cycling and camping, which could benefit McDuffie County two-fold: with day-users and overnight campers.

Off-road cyclists generally fall into two camps: mountain bikers and casual cyclists. The Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) is the leading trail riding organization in the Southeast. Its members advocate for biking on public lands and are known for donating their time towards building and maintaining trails. While they are predominately mountain biking enthusiasts, members are known for hosting educational and fundraising events to promote trail use for all types of users.

Casual recreational cyclists are generally more comfortable riding on flatter, paved surfaces that aren't shared by vehicles. An infrequent bike rider may feel comfortable riding on unpaved dirt paths if the terrain is fairly hard packed. Campgrounds offer a great opportunity to ride bikes because they are self-contained areas without a lot of vehicular traffic. Kids are often seen riding bikes in campgrounds for this reason.

The Big Hart and Raysville Campgrounds provide excellent opportunities to incorporate trails as a recreational amenity. There is additional acreage in both campgrounds on property already managed by McDuffie County and outside of hunting ranges.

Source: www.TravelWisconsin.com



MOUNTAIN BIKING WANTS AND NEEDS

MOST MOUNTAIN BIKERS NEED:

- Hilly trails with steep inclines
- Narrow Dirt Trails
- Parking

THEY ALSO WANT:

- Trails no wider than 2' wide
- Single-use Trails
- Community
- Volunteer trail maintenance

CASUAL CYCLING WANTS AND NEEDS

CASUAL CYCLISTS NEED:

- Flat or Gently Sloped Trails
- Firm surfaces
- Minimal vehicular traffic
- To feel safe

THEY ALSO WANT:

- Directional Signage
- Options for short or long rides
- Destinations
- Scenery

PROS AND CONS

SOME OF THE PROS INCLUDED:

- Existing road network
- Established parking areas
- Gentle slopes
- County-managed land
- Free admission
- Developed for amenities
- Picnic areas
- Restrooms

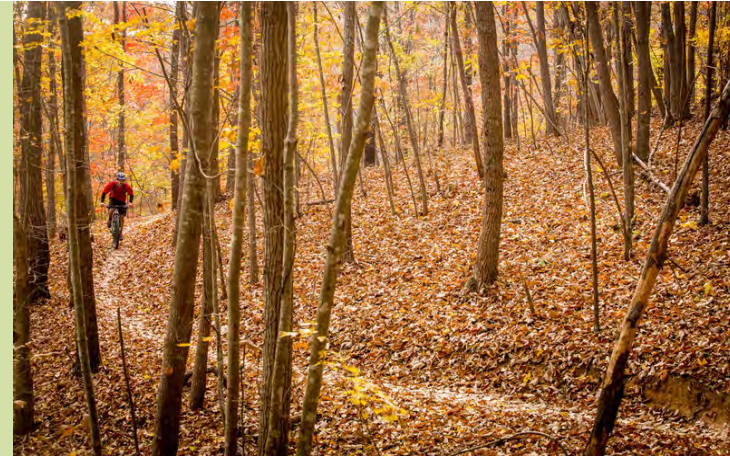
SOME OF THE CONS INCLUDED:

- Additional parking needed
- Potential conflict if near hunting zones
- May not attract challenge-seeking mountain bikers

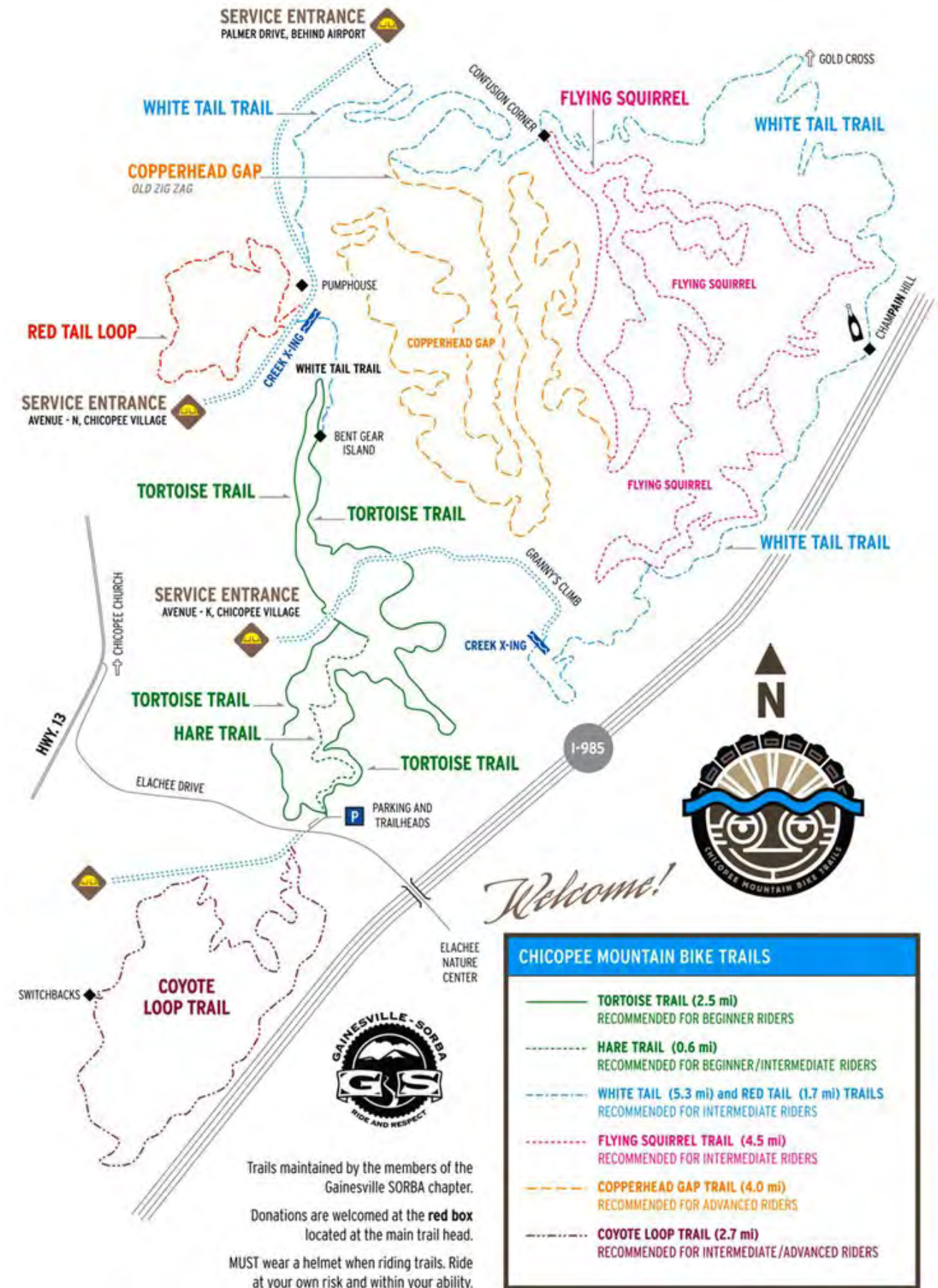
CASE STUDY: CHICOPEE WOODS TRAILS

Located in Hall County near Gainesville, Georgia, Chicopee Woods offers 21.3 miles of mountain bike trails ranging from beginner to expert.

The trails offer a variety of options from a fast, flowy trail to steep ups and downs. Reviews of this trail system indicate it is loved by mountain bikers due to its variety of terrain and encouragement of riders to forge and create their own paths. Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) is an advocacy organization for mountain biking in the Southeastern U.S. that is known for its dedicated volunteer base. Trail maintenance makes a big difference in rider experience, so if volunteers will be needed to maintain trails, SORBA members could be strong advocates.



Source: <https://www.mtbproject.com/trail/7000014/chicopee-woods-intermediate-loop>





CASE STUDY: PANOLA MOUNTAIN STATE PARK



Panola Mountain State Park has both paved and hard surface trails for your average cyclist, in addition to its mountain bike trails. Frequenters of the park love the recreational trails for its family-friendly experience and as a hidden gem of the community. By possessing all three types of biking options, the park markets itself as a place for all to come and enjoy the outdoors. McDuffie County could use this location as an example of how to include traditional paved trails that may connect the campgrounds, but also include the hard surface paths throughout the wooded areas for a more intimate experience.



Source: Panola Mountain State Park

BIG HART BIKE TRAIL DESIGN PROPOSAL

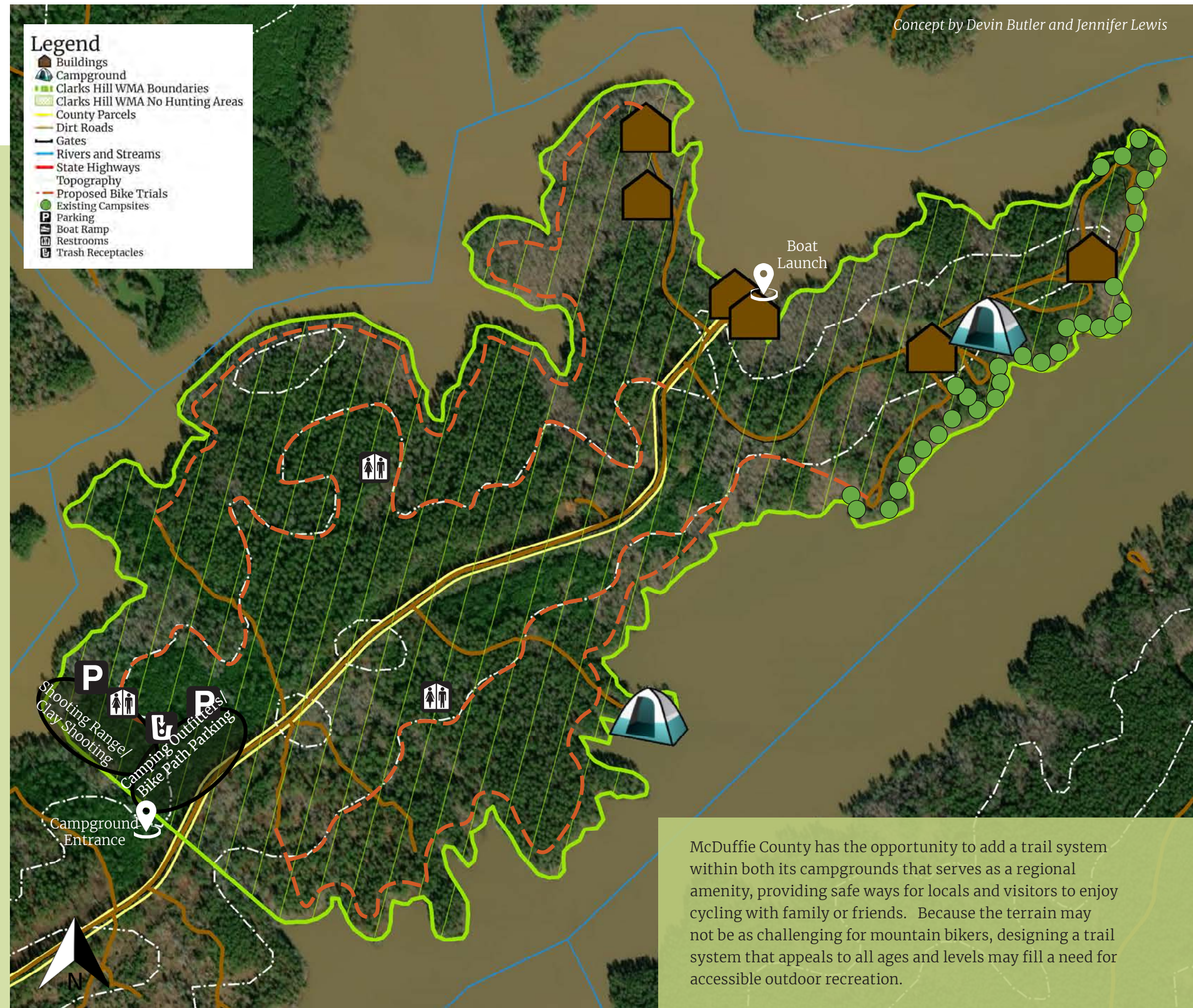
Because the area is not particularly steep and because there are mountain bike trails established nearby at Keg Creek WMA and Mistletoe State Park, Big Hart Campground presents a good opportunity to create bike paths for more casual riders.

A network of bike trails could be established that uses existing roads as well as new paths, connects campgrounds and day use areas, and takes advantage of shoreline and woodland scenery. Since the existing boat ramp, picnic area, and campsites are concentrated at the end of the peninsula along the shoreline, this leaves the rest of the campground acreage available as a cohesive unit for trails, including a good amount of shoreline.

A new network of bike trails could be accessed from the entrance end of the campground and weave through the peninsula, creating multiple loops and route options, both on-road and off-road. Bike trails that follow the topography would result in fairly flat pathways, thus appealing to casual riders. Having a series of loops near camping areas and away from vehicles provides a safe space for kids to ride independently, whereas longer rides would provide an adventurous challenge for all ages. Having more of the shoreline accessible by bike creates more access for bank fishing, as well.

Establishing a Campground Office and General Store at the entrance to Big Hart Campground would serve multiple purposes. It would help establish a clear entrance and delineation between the hunting areas of the WMA and the campground, thus better indicating which areas are now off-limits to shooting sports. A staffed welcome center could offer visitor assistance, camping supplies, and gift shop. Plus, it could incorporate an additional parking area for visitors who were interested in biking the trails, thereby leaving existing parking areas for boaters, fishermen and day-use picnickers.

An Educational Center could offer nature classes and safety courses. A shooting range could promote shooting sports and provide a safety buffer between the campground and the rest of the Wildlife Management Area.



McDuffie County has the opportunity to add a trail system within both its campgrounds that serves as a regional amenity, providing safe ways for locals and visitors to enjoy cycling with family or friends. Because the terrain may not be as challenging for mountain bikers, designing a trail system that appeals to all ages and levels may fill a need for accessible outdoor recreation.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Equestrian riding and the horse industry overall have a \$215 billion economic impact on the United States.

The terrain, beauty, and campground accommodations in the Clarks Hill Lake area could appeal to equestrian riders interested in using a trail system for day trips or extended overnight trips. Most horseback riding trails are laid out in loops and linked to other trails, allowing for a variety of excursion lengths. However, horseback riding requires a significantly longer trail system than hiking or biking, therefore portions of the Clarke Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area would likely be needed to accommodate equestrian trails.



Source: CSRA Equestrians Facebook page

WANTS AND NEEDS

MOST RIDERS NEED:

- Trails 5 to 25 miles in length
- Moderately flat/consistent terrain
- Other trail users to yield to horses
- 2-3 ft. wide minimum with 10 ft. high vertical clearance
- Access to water every 5-10 miles
- Horse Hitching Posts

THEY ALSO WANT:

- Horse Stables
- Equestrian Campsites

PROS AND CONS

SOME PROS INCLUDED:

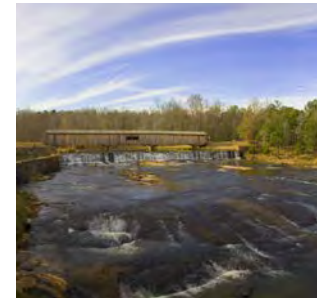
- Unique amenity that could attract a new user group to the area
- Increased connectivity between county campgrounds
- Potential revenue opportunity

SOME OF THE CONS INCLUDED:

- Minimum trail miles needed would require WMA acreage be used
- Expensive infrastructure (i.e., stable construction)
- Horses could be easily spooked depending on distance to hunters

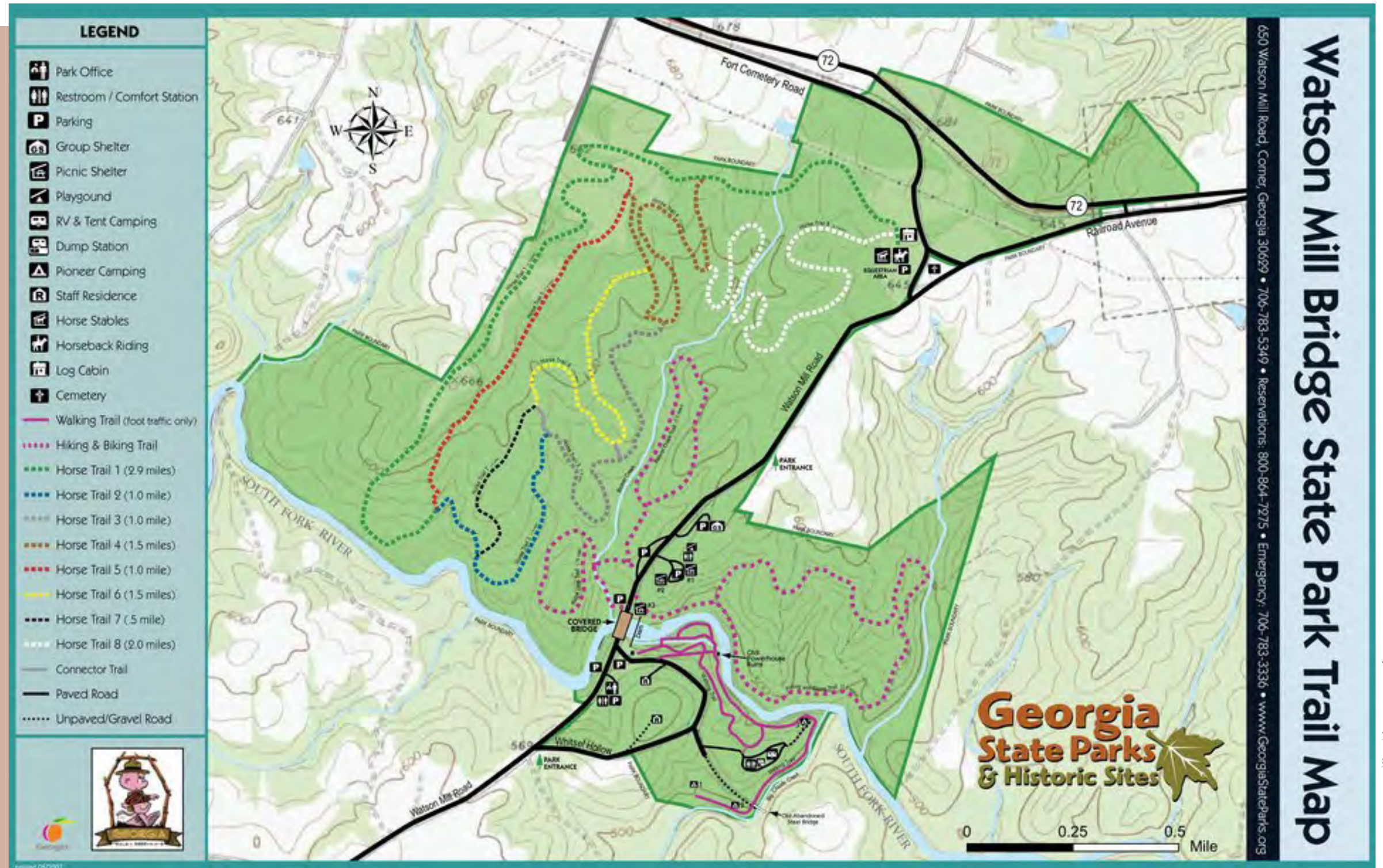


CASE STUDY: WATSON MILL BRIDGE STATE PARK

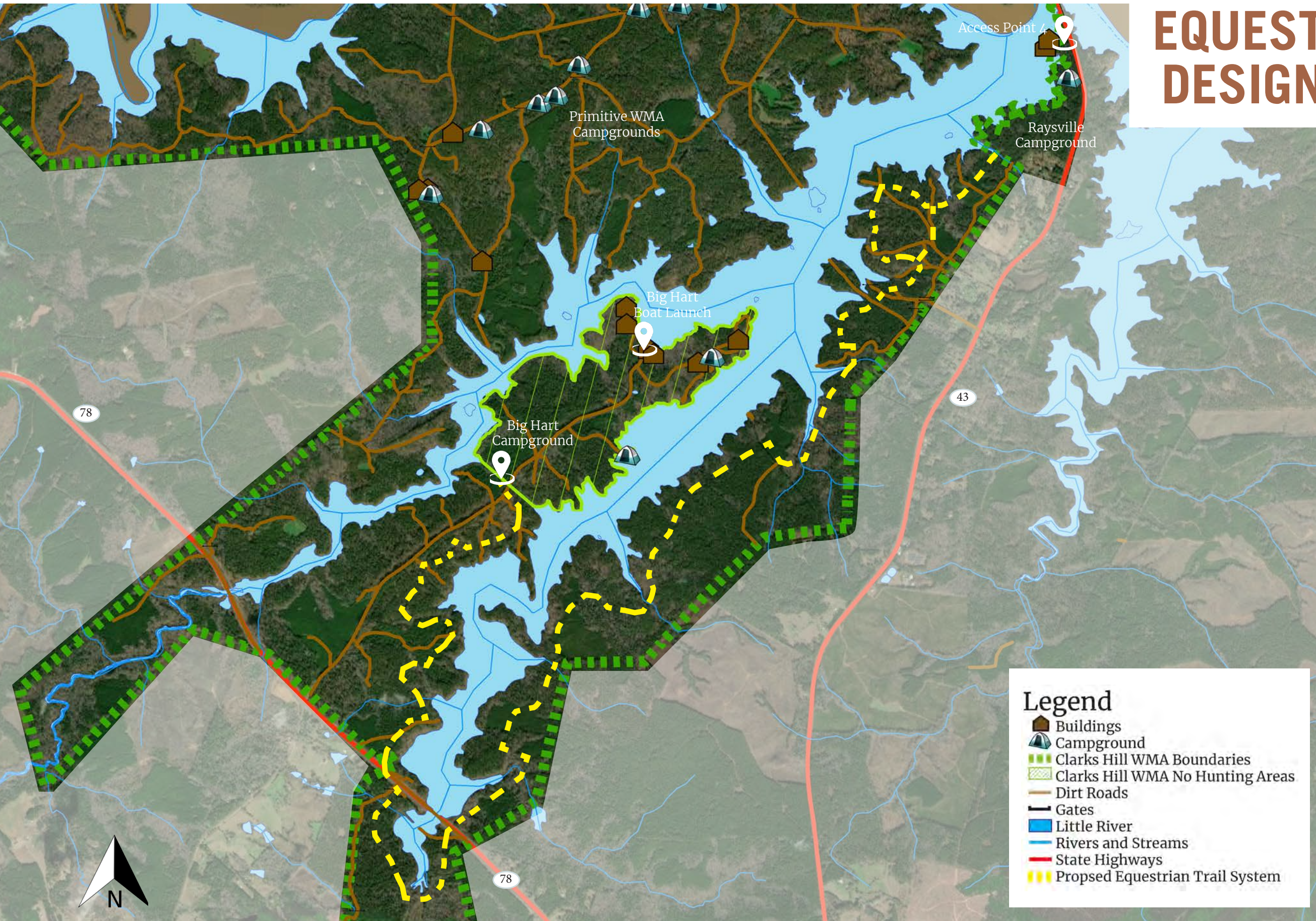


Watson Mill Bridge State Park in Comer, Georgia, is a popular destination for trail riding on horseback.

Presently, the park has 12 miles of horse trails designed for equestrian riders only – bicycles and dogs are not allowed on these trails, though hikers are welcome. There are a series of looping trails, allowing for a variety of lengths, including long-distance rides. While there are some grades, most trail riders consider Watson Mill Bridge trails' terrain not as steep as mountain trails further north, nor as flat as trails further south. This is one of the reasons equestrian trails are so popular at this site. Additionally, at the head of the horse trail system, there is an equestrian camping area for visitors wishing to stay longer than just a day.



EQUESTRIAN TRAIL DESIGN PROPOSAL



To accommodate the suggested minimum distance needed for equestrian trails as well as trailer parking and stable infrastructure for overnights, the charrette team proposed an 8.5-mile multi-use trail connecting Big Hart Campground and Raysville Campground. The main stable and equestrian accommodations could be located in Big Hart Campground to be the starting point for excursions.

The trail could consist of a series of loopbacks to offer riders multiple length trails depending on how long they would like to ride and camp.

There is also the possibility of incorporating equestrian campgrounds specific to housing horses overnight, perhaps concentrating the equestrian trails to the eastern part of the site and increasing the separation between hunting and horses.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK - DAY 1

CCDP staff introduced the initial design concepts generated during the first charrette workday by creating a video presentation that was shared with the community via YouTube. Additionally, community members were asked to complete a survey to collect feedback on the initial concepts presented.

The survey was designed to collect information on the types of recreational users, the frequency of visitation to the area, and what respondents liked and disliked about some initial concepts for the existing water trail as well as ideas for new biking and equestrian trails. The survey also offered an opportunity to share additional information and insights with the student team. The public input opportunities were advertised as follows:

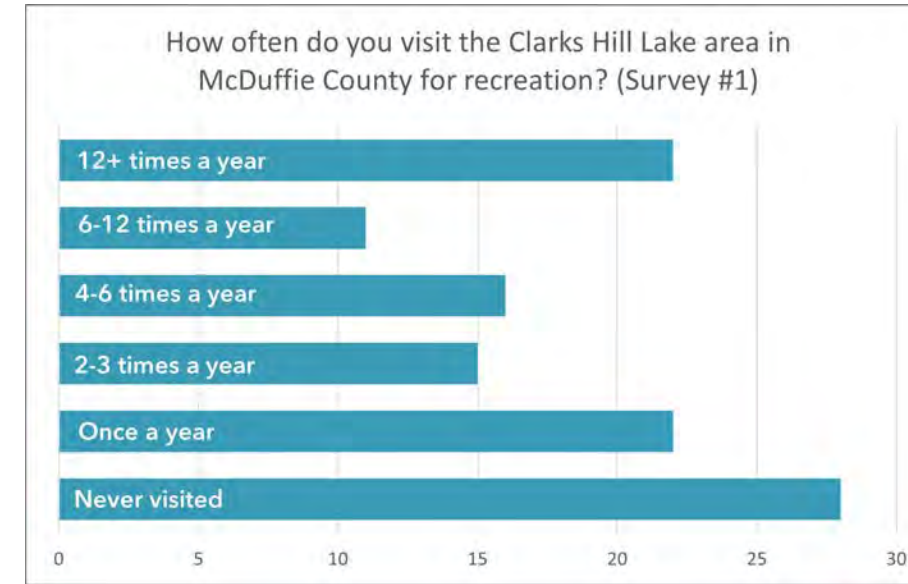
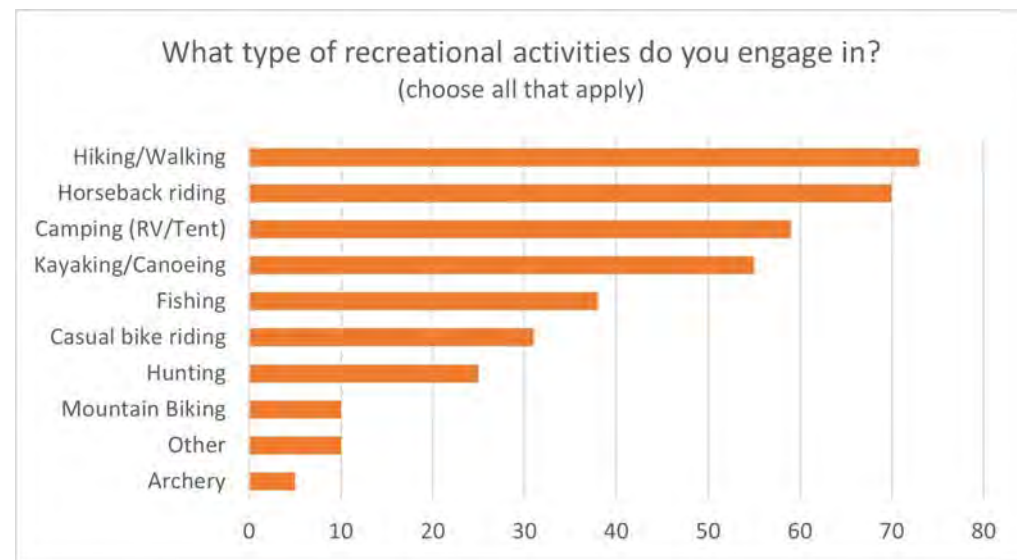
- Emailed to the full Thomson-McDuffie Archway Partnership email list (300+)
- Emailed to local stakeholder list (those invited to the initial stakeholder meeting) who were asked to share with their friends, family, and social networks
- Posted on Facebook pages for the Archway Partnership, Thomson-McDuffie Chamber, and Visit Thomson
- Video shared by Kiwanis Club at monthly meeting; asked members to fill out the survey
- Mentioned at Rotary Club monthly meeting.

The survey was open for nine days from Friday, April 2 to Saturday, April 10, 2021.

Community feedback proved beneficial in providing support for most concepts and offering insightful reasons why certain design ideas were untenable. Approximately 124 responses were received.

The chart below is a compilation of the various ways people like to utilize the Clarks Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area.

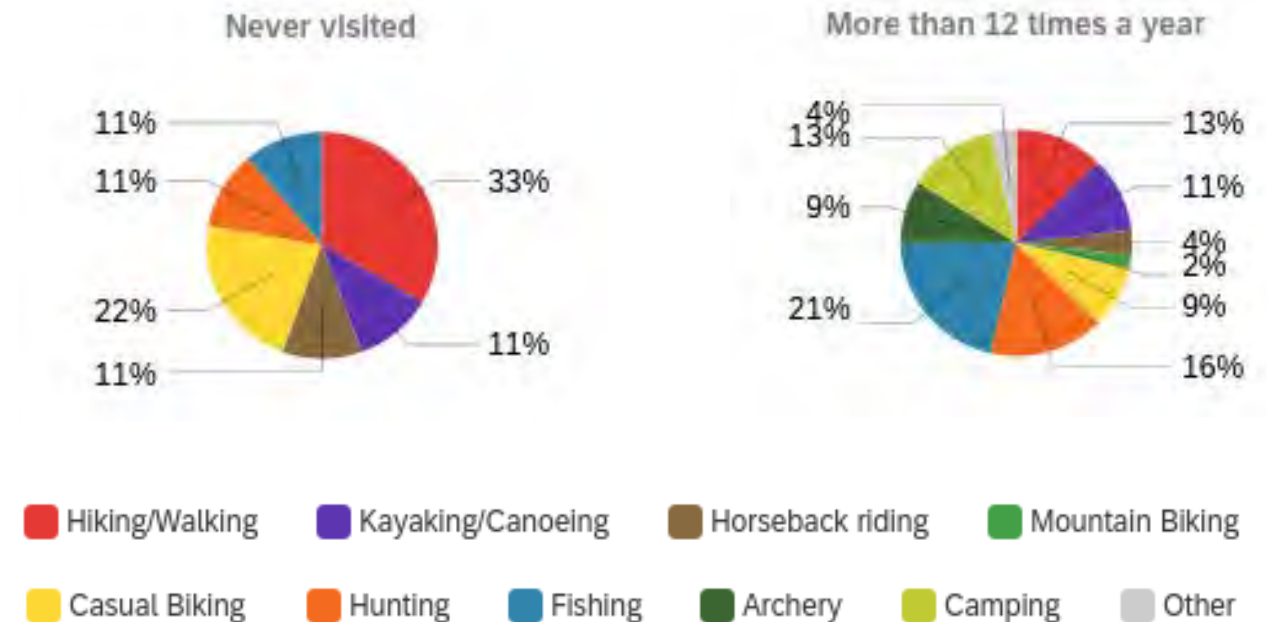
Of the total respondents, the recreational uses that most people identified with were Hiking/Walking (19%), Horseback riding (19%), Camping (16%), Kayaking/canoeing (15%), Fishing (10%) and Casual biking (8%). Hunting, Mountain Biking, and Archery ranked lowest of the user groups.



We also collected data about how often people visit the Clarks Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area currently to get a better idea of community interest in the area and see if there is any potential for growth. The majority of respondents said they had never visited the area (25%), followed closely by those that visit once per year (19%) or more than 12 times a year (19%).

Analyzing this Frequency question by user group, the majority of folks who had never visited also identified as Horseback riders (32%), perhaps owing to the fact that local saddle clubs advertised the survey to club members outside of the Clarks Hill Lake area. Other respondents who have never visited the area identified as Campers (20%), Hikers/Walkers (19%) and/or Kayaker/Canoers (15%). This shows an opportunity for regional impact by users with indirect connections to McDuffie County. Of those who visit more than 12 times a year, the majority identified as Hikers/Walkers (17%), Fishers (19%), Kayakers/Canoers (15%) and/or Campers (13%).

Visitation Rates by User Groups



SOME OF THE FEEDBACK WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT OUR INITIAL CONCEPTS INCLUDED:

KAYAK TRAIL BOAT LAUNCHES

- Hwy 80 needs a launch – Positive support for a launch at Hwy 80 to complete the water trail and accommodate self-shuttling.
- Restrooms are a necessity – Restrooms are needed for both launch locations. The simple restroom building example is good.
- Outfitters – An outfitters would help promote the water trail and make it more usable.
- Keep it natural – The Hwy 80 launch location and the first section of the Little River is peaceful and scenic, and there is some concern that locating an outfitters here would over-commercialize the natural beauty of the area.
- Picnic & Emergency access – Have pull-off areas to stretch your legs, have a picnic, and provide emergency access.

BIKE TRAILS AT BIG HART

- All-User Trails – Need family-friendly trails for casual cyclists and kids rather than hard core mountain bikers, as there are no regional options.
- Bike rentals – Provide bikes for those that don't have their own.
- Campground Office/Store – Campers at both campgrounds would benefit from having a staffed office for supplies.
- Shooting Range Noise – Great idea, but the noise from a shooting range is problematic for campers, bikers, and horses. Archery range would be more quiet, but there are 1-2 archery ranges in the WMA that may be underutilized.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

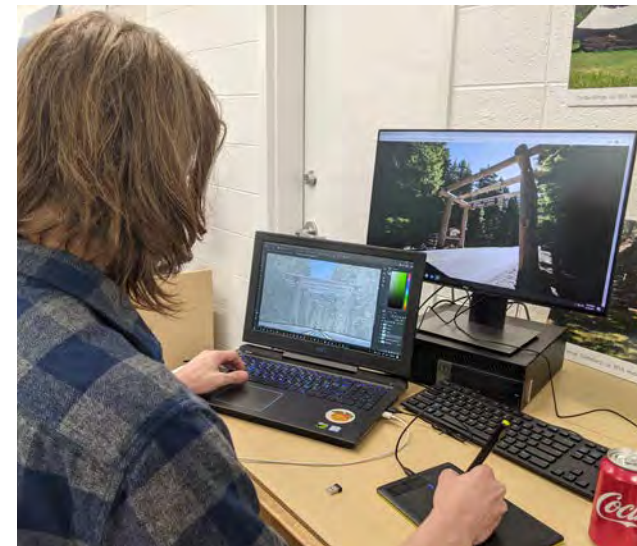
- Active local saddle club – Enthusiastic responses from local/regional riders for having trails in the county.
- Horses easily spooked – Equestrians prefer to not share trails with cyclists, and the noise from hunting or a shooting range would be a problem.
- Loops of 10-15 miles minimum – The 8.5-mile path initially proposed is too short for equestrians, as 15-20 miles are preferred. Horseback riding trails should be a series of loops for variety and length, not out-and-back trails where horses would have to pass each other.
- Safe crossings – Trails should not cross highways or waterways, both for safety reasons and cost of infrastructure upgrades.
- Trailering and camping – Parking should accommodate horse trailers, but buddy-camping areas do not need to have full stables.

This feedback directly influenced the next design phase. The full text of all surveys and submitted responses are summarized in this report and were submitted in full to the McDuffie County Archway Partnership Program. Available upon request.

DESIGN CHARRETTE DAY 2

A second workday was held on April 10, 2021, with students from the first workday as well as new participants.

After analyzing the community responses to the survey, the charrette team determined enhancements, modifications and additional research needed to adjust and improve upon initial ideas. The survey results supported many of the initial ideas and requested an expansion of several concepts, such as additional locations for hiking and biking trails, and more amenities at all boat launches.

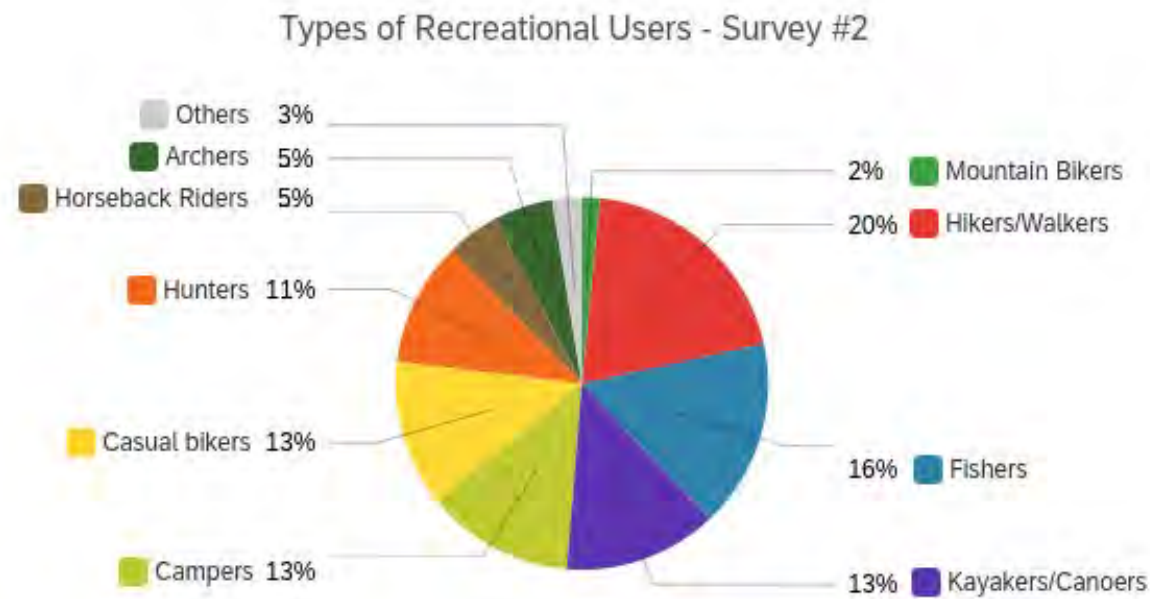


In the weeks following the second workday, CCDP staff refined these illustrations and plans and vetted final concepts with local stakeholders. The final concepts were presented to the general public via a second video presentation and a survey. All feedback received has been incorporated and included in the final plan, which is detailed in the Final Concepts chapter of this report.



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK - DAY 2

As with the first round of public input, the second feedback opportunity was also presented in a video and online survey and distributed in the same manner as the first. Both the video and survey included a brief summary as a reminder of the work done up to that point and explained how the results from the previous input period influenced the latest concepts.

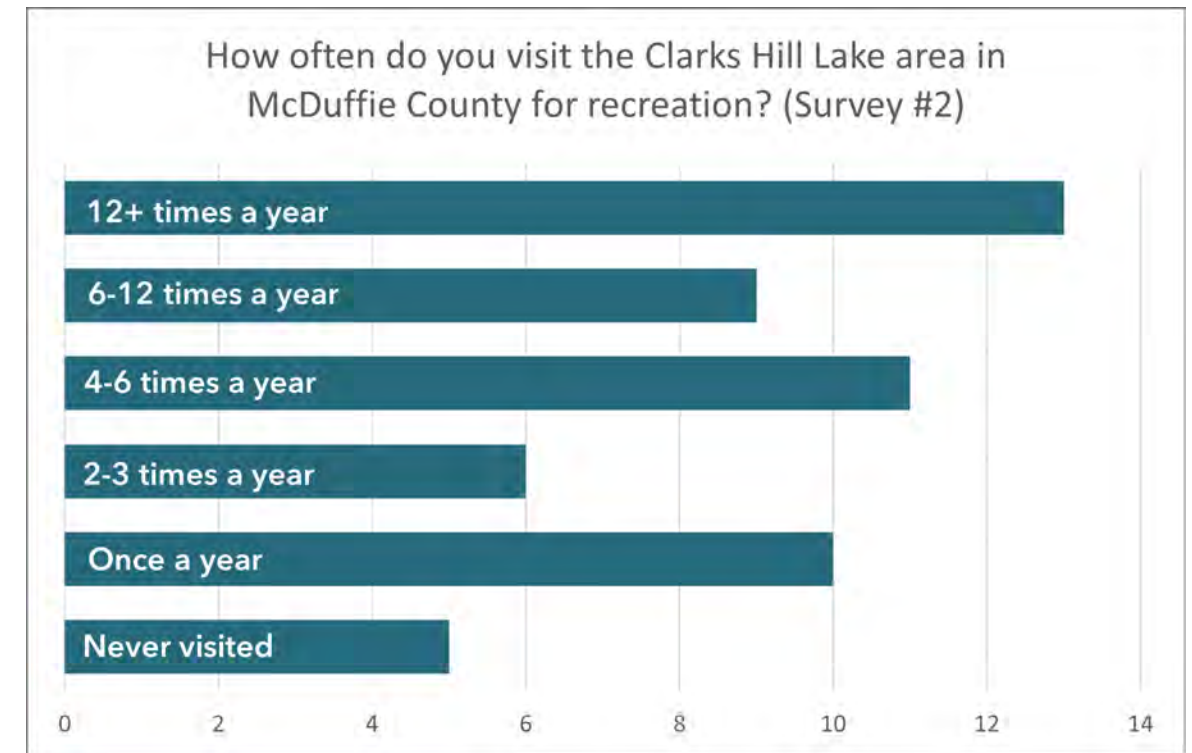


The survey collected the same user information and presented a summary of design ideas for: new and improved boat launches, new hiking/biking trails, and equestrian trails/equine camping. Respondents were then asked to:

- Provide their top three amenity choices for Access Points 1, 2 and 4
- Rank the proposed amenities for Big Hart Campground
- Select which equestrian trail system has the most appeal, and explain why, and
- List the concept they were most interested in becoming a reality.

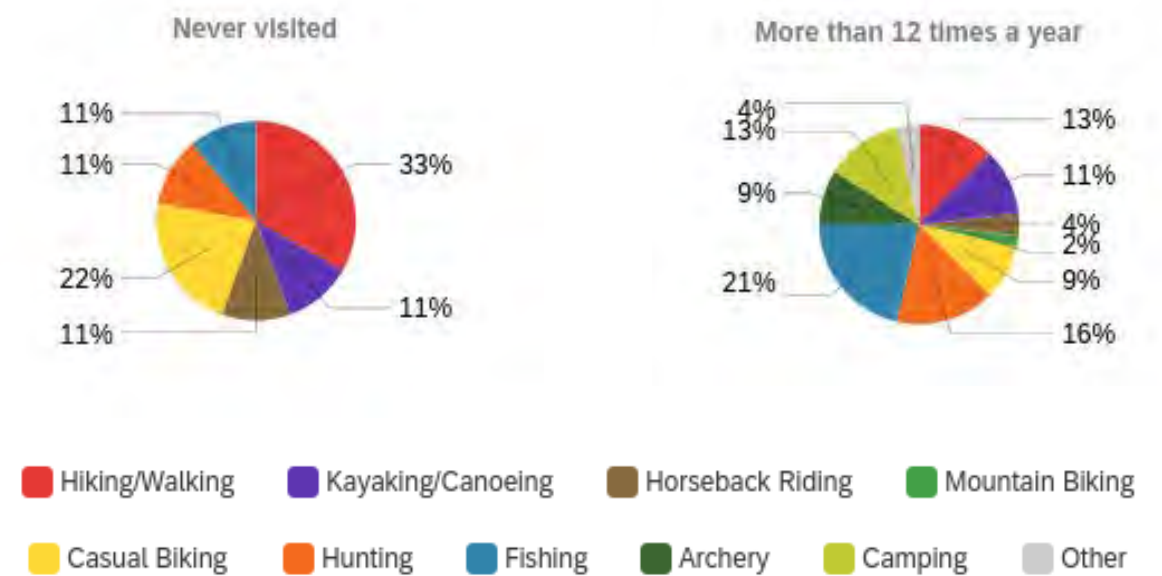
The survey was open for ten days from Wednesday, June 23 to Friday, July 2, 2021.

Approximately 67 surveys were received. Of those respondents, the recreational uses that most people identified with were Hiking/Walking (20%), Fishing (16%), Kayaking/canoeing (13%), Camping (13%) and Casual biking (13%). Unlike the first survey, only 5% identified as horseback riders. The respondents to the second survey were more likely to be frequent visitors to the area, with 24% visiting more than 12 times a year, and 20% visiting 4-6 times a year. Only 9% of respondents had never visited the Clarks Hill Lake area before.



Analyzing the frequency of visits by user group, respondents that visit the area more than 12 times a year tend to be Fishers (12%), Hunters (16%), Campers (13%) and/or Hikers/Walkers (13%). The majority of those that have never visited identified as Hikers/Walkers (33%) and/or Casual Bikers (22%).

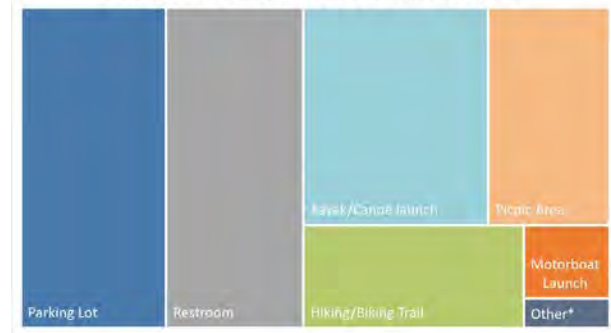
Visitation Rates by User Groups - Survey #2



WATER TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

The charrette team recommended adding restrooms and kayak launches to each access point, with handicap-accessible launches suggested for the larger locations (Pts. 2 and 4). Other amenities proposed included a 10-mile hiking trail between Access Pts 1 and 2, an Outfitters at either Access Pt. 2 or 4 to facilitate rental boats and shuttle service, and a swimming beach at Access Pt. 4 that could also serve as a beach launch.

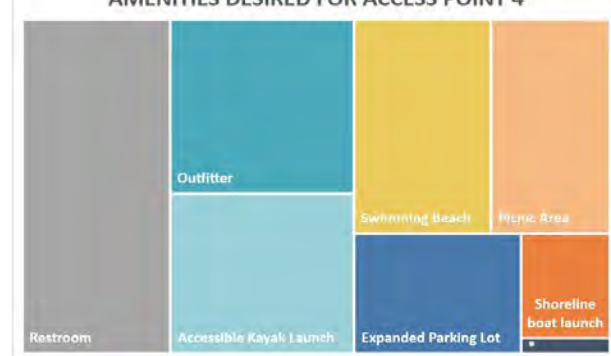
AMENITIES DESIRED FOR ACCESS POINT 1



AMENITIES DESIRED FOR ACCESS POINT 2



AMENITIES DESIRED FOR ACCESS POINT 4



Respondents were asked to choose their top three amenities from the list of features proposed for each of the water trail access points in McDuffie County. The results are shown (left) in “treemap charts”, which provide a hierarchical view of data and make it easy to spot patterns, such as which items are most popular. The larger the rectangle, the more popular the item.

The top amenities requested along the Little River Water Trail for Access Points 1, 2 and 4 were Parking and Restrooms. Adding this basic functionality throughout will greatly increase the usability of the water trail and create a more inviting and family-friendly atmosphere. An Outfitters is also a popular idea, either at Access Point 2 or 4, with there being a slight preference for Access Point 2. An Accessible Kayak Launch is also preferred, ranking highest at Access Point 4. Consistent with feedback from the first survey, a hiking-biking trail was considered highly desirable for both (and between) Access Points 1 and 2.

The feedback included the following key insights and suggestions:

“All amenities should be handicap accessible from the outset. There is no reason to exclude the handicap from the beginning.”

“For any improvements at HWY 80 access pt. 1, team will need to also focus on security in that area. Current location is remote and would require monitoring to provide a safe environment and reduce vandalism.”

“The beauty of this area is that it is so natural. Hiking/Biking trails may take away from this. I love the idea of kayak/canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area, and even the outfitters/shuttle possibility. A swimming beach would be nice at the Raysville area.”

CAMPGROUND TRAILS & AMENITIES

The charrette team proposed that the undeveloped acreage at both the Raysville and Big Hart Campgrounds be developed into trails, which could be used for casual bike riding as well as hiking.

When asked to rank the various amenities proposed for Big Hart Campground, “Campground Office and General Store” received the greatest percentage of the highest rankings, followed closely by “Entrance Gate” and “Hiking/Biking Trails”. “Indoor Shooting Range”, “Bike Rentals” and “Educational Center” were prioritized lower.

Respondents were asked which campground they would prioritize for a trail system, and why. The majority of respondents (66%) favored a trail system at Big Hart Campground. Reasons included: a larger area for trails, its central location, and the lack of conflict with hunting activities in the WMA.

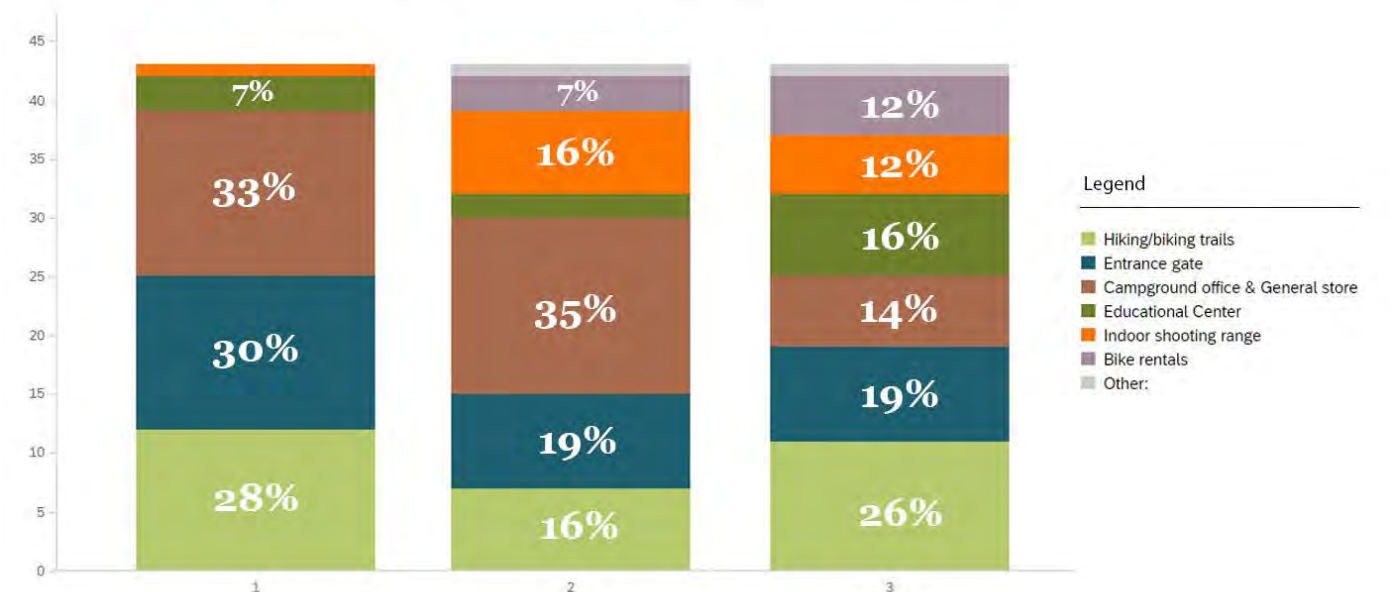
Comments on the design proposals for both campgrounds were very favorable. Some key insights included:

“I would encourage a focused use of the shoreline between 78 and the Raysville camp group since this area is already an established commercial area.”

“Indoor gun range is great idea, but I would think expensive on insurance and liabilities and government environmental requirements - the indoor range in Harlem was not able to stay open. Staff gun range indoors or outdoors with a range officer. Give law enforcement and other public safety that is properly trained opportunity to work as range officers for additional income.”

“Maybe add some benches for people to sit and take in nature.”

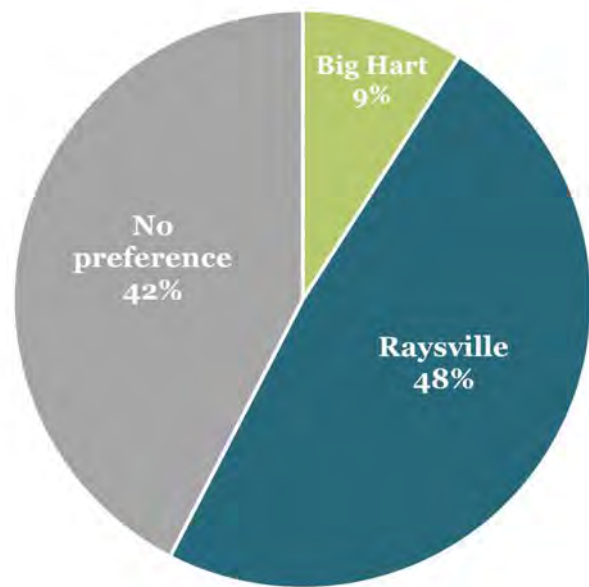
Top 3 amenities proposed for Big Hart Campground



EQUESTRIAN TRAILS & EQUINE CAMPSITES

The Clarks Hill Lake area is appealing to equestrian riders interested in using a trail system for day trips or extended overnight trips. Because horseback riding requires longer trail lengths (preferably 10-20 miles), portions of the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area would be needed to accommodate equestrian trails. The charrette team proposed that the WMA-managed portion of Big Hart peninsula could accommodate a 6-mile trail system, while the Hart Creek shoreline of the WMA adjacent to the Raysville Campground could accommodate a 16-mile trail system. Because a 60-acre parcel adjacent to Raysville Campground has been offered to the county to manage, an equine camping area could be considered if equestrian trails are pursued.

Which equestrian trail system has the most appeal?



When asked which trail system has the most appeal, respondents overwhelmingly voiced a preference for the Raysville shoreline option, as it offers a longer, exclusive ride and is adjacent to an area that could be developed for equine camping.

The feedback included the following key insights and suggestions:

“Will there be possible consideration for stalls in the future if this idea develops further? One corral may not be as appealing to some. I personally like to use a tie line between trees so would not need either option but just thinking of others.”

“No need to duplicate same purposes of the two sites: Big Hart & Raysville; delineate each of the two sites in unique, distinctive recreational choices;

spreads out the activities, broadening the areas for exploration for tourists as well as local citizens to enjoy McDuffie County in new ways.”

“I do not think equestrian trails are a good fit for this project. There are 3 existing equestrian trails (2 are public and one private) within 30 miles of this project site. Equestrian trails are usually exclusive use and will also negatively impact hunting and other opportunities already available on the WMA.”

“As an equine enthusiast/camper your planning has considered what would be in our best interest and I thank you for including us in this project as well. There are a number of saddle clubs here in the SC Upstate who are very interested in adding this location to our schedules for 2022!!”

FAVORITE IDEAS

Lastly, respondents were asked an open-ended question: “Of all the ideas presented in this recreational trails plan, which concept are you most interested in becoming a reality?” Not being forced by survey design to choose only one concept, people’s enthusiasm for multiple favorite ideas was reflected in the answers provided.

A casual tally of the 30+ answers weighs in favor of the Access Point 1 launch, improvements to Big Hart Campground (especially the Campground Store), and hiking and biking trails in general. Some of the key insights included:

“My family and I live near Raysville and we camp frequently at both campgrounds. I would love to see an outfitters/general store at both... I would also like to propose some kind of signage that can be seen from the water. Twice this summer already I have been leaving my cove in Raysville and stopped by a boater to ask what campground it was. They were from North Carolina staying at Winfield but they liked the area of the lake but had no way of knowing what campground it was and how to find it for reservations.”

“I am most interested in seeing the water trails become a reality, especially with the option to rent kayaks. It seems like something that the community would use the most, and it seems like it has the easiest upkeep. McDuffie is a lower income community, so having kayaks available to rent would be a cheap and easy way to get out and have fun in the summer.”

“We think the upgrades to Big Hart would make it a regional camping destination which would bring more visitors to the area. We are multigenerational family living minutes from Big Hart and Little River and we really like the ideas presented for access points one and especially access point two. The suggested



upgrades would increase our use of these areas.”

“Paddle trail and multi-use trail along the bank. Currently there is no signage about kayak rentals at Raysville. If you see if when you book you know about rentals, but if you do not see it there then you find nothing in the campground to indicate rentals are available.”

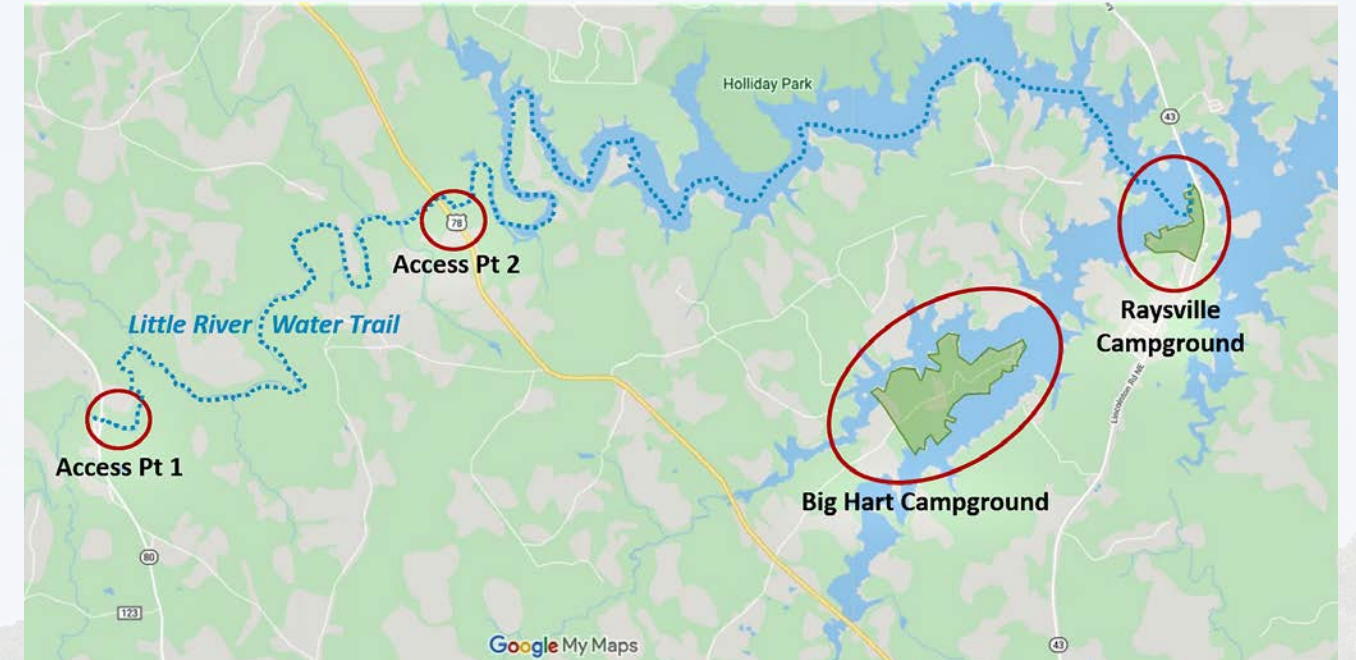
The public input received in the second survey was extremely helpful to the design process, and influenced the Final Concepts presented in the next chapter.

PHASE III

FINAL CONCEPTS



The final concepts in this section include potential recreational enhancements for hikers, paddlers, cyclists, and equestrians within the Clarks Hill Lake area of McDuffie County. Design ideas are presented by location, beginning with the Little River Water Trail, then Big Hart Campground and Raysville Campground, and includes areas in between that fall within the Clarks Hill WMA. This section concludes with suggestions for prioritizing and phasing improvements based on ease of development and public support.



Improvements to the user experience on the Little River Water Trail received an abundance of support from survey respondents. Based on this feedback, the final designs for all Access Points suggest new amenities such as car and boat trailer parking with a drop-off lane, kayak/canoe launch, and restrooms are included. We removed a suggestion for a swimming hole due to a community member explaining that the area is unsuitable for this type of recreation, but a location for emergency access remains. Many respondents to the survey expressed interest in a hiking trail along the Little

River between Access Points 1 and 2, so this was explored.

Given the affirmation from the survey, the team incorporated hiking and biking trails at both campgrounds. The site with the biggest potential for biking and hiking trails is the Big Hart Campground. By following the natural contour lines of the site and ridge lines, various trails of low intensity were created that are suitable for hiking and casual cycling.

Since most equestrian trail riders are looking for trails between 10–20 miles long, separate from bikes, and with an overnight option, the team

suggests locating equestrian trails along the shorelines of the WMA at Big Hart Peninsula and along Big Creek between Highway 78 and the Raysville Campground, shown via a yellow dashed line.

While it has less acreage than Big Hart Campground, Raysville Campground also has the potential to add many desired amenities, such as a waterfront day-use area and hiking-biking trails. Future development could include an equestrian camping area if horseback riding trails are incorporated within the WMA.

WATER TRAIL PLAN

Original Concept by David Evans and Freja Carlson
Refined by Devin Butler and Jennifer Lewis

A few key upgrades to the existing Little River Water Trail between Access Points 1 and 2 will greatly improve the experience of paddlers along the river. This plan suggests expanded parking areas, separate kayak/canoe launches, restrooms, and a hiking-biking trail along the Little River between Access Points 1 and 2.

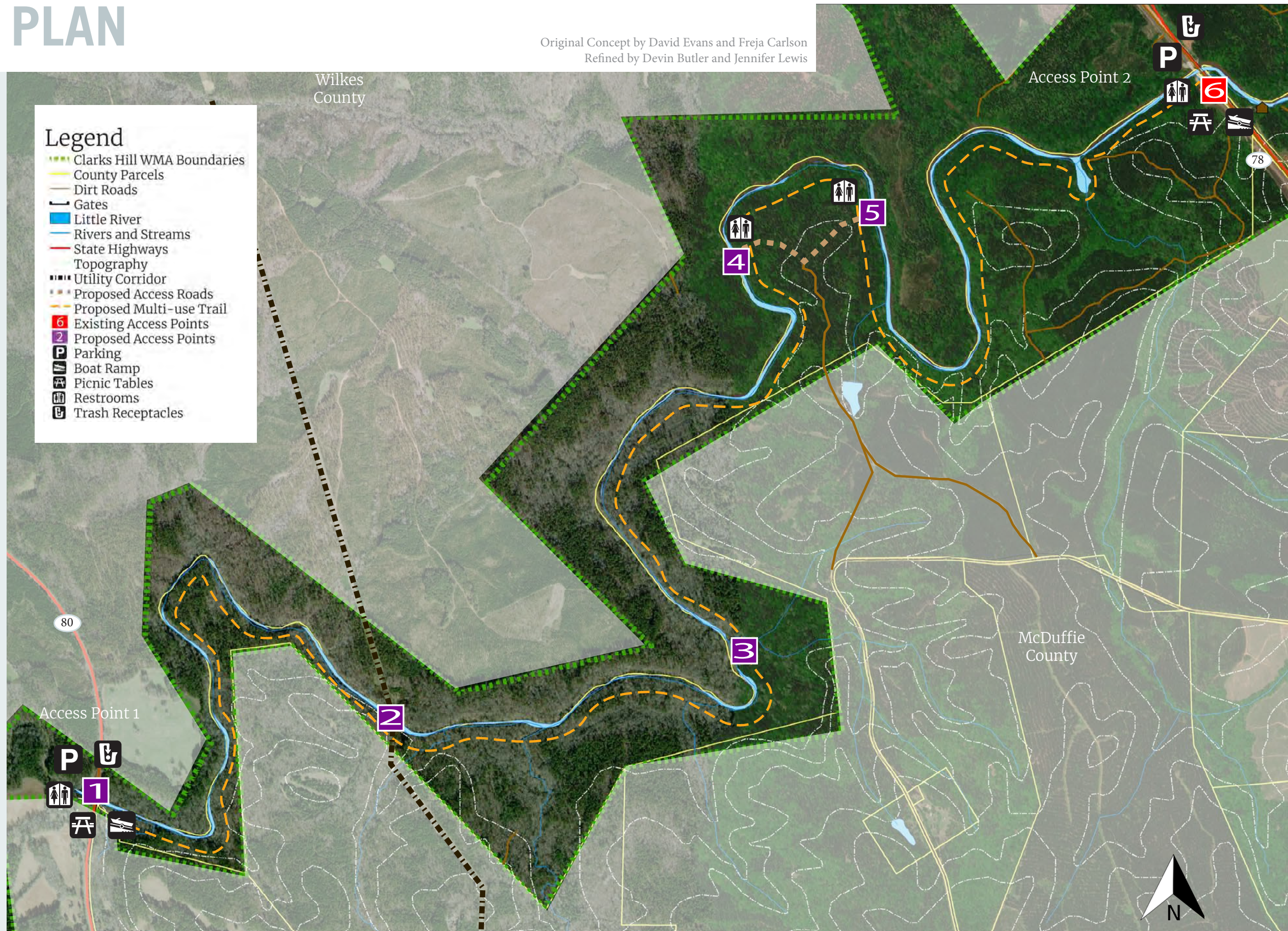
On the map, Number 1 marks the proposed location for Access Pt 1 at Hwy 80. Proposed amenities include parking for cars and boat trailers, a traditional motorboat ramp, a kayak/canoe launch, restrooms, a pavilion, and picnic tables.

Number 2 indicates a utility corridor with the potential for vehicular access in emergency situations. There is also potential for handicap access, which would lend itself well toward emergency accessibility.

Number 3 would be a great location for travelers to get out and stretch their legs as well as take in the sights along the curve of the river.

Numbers 4 and 5 indicate two options for restroom locations, as they occur midway on this first leg and are on flat areas where paddlers can access the shoreline easily. An existing dirt road serves as a place for potential emergency access.

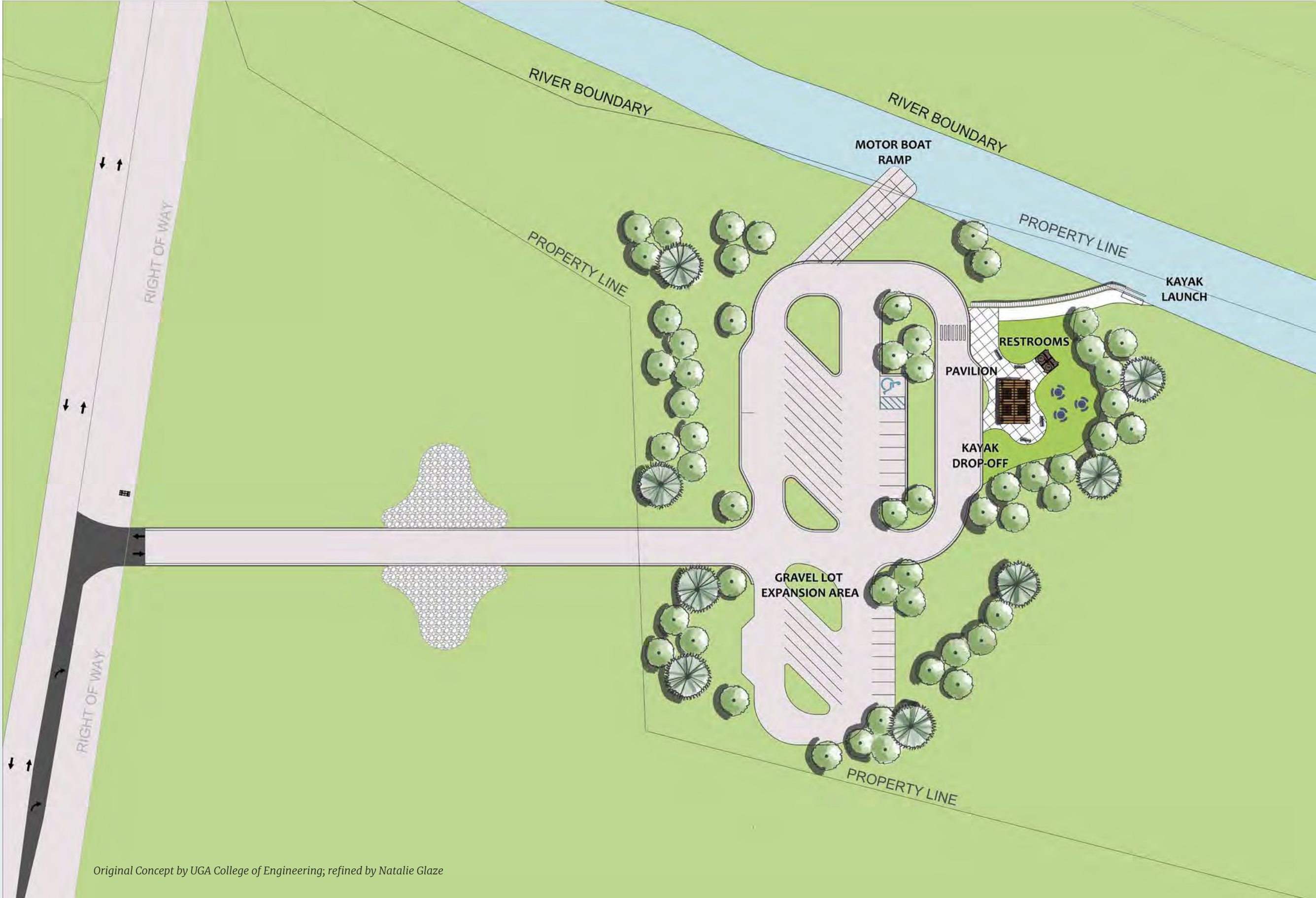
Number 6 marks Access Point 2 at Highway 78. Amenities suggested for this existing boat launch include an expanded parking area, an Outfitters, a handicap accessible kayak launch, picnic tables and restrooms.



ACCESS POINT 1

Building off an initial plan produced for Access Point 1 by UGA Engineering students, the charrette team created an alternate parking lot design that retains existing trees and accommodates paddlers.

The new parking lot plan features 19 boat trailer parking spaces, 11 parking spaces, and 1 handicap space. There is a separate drive to drop off your kayak as close to the launch as possible. There is also a traditional motorboat ramp, restrooms, a pavilion, and picnic tables.



Original Concept by UGA College of Engineering; refined by Natalie Glaze

WATER TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

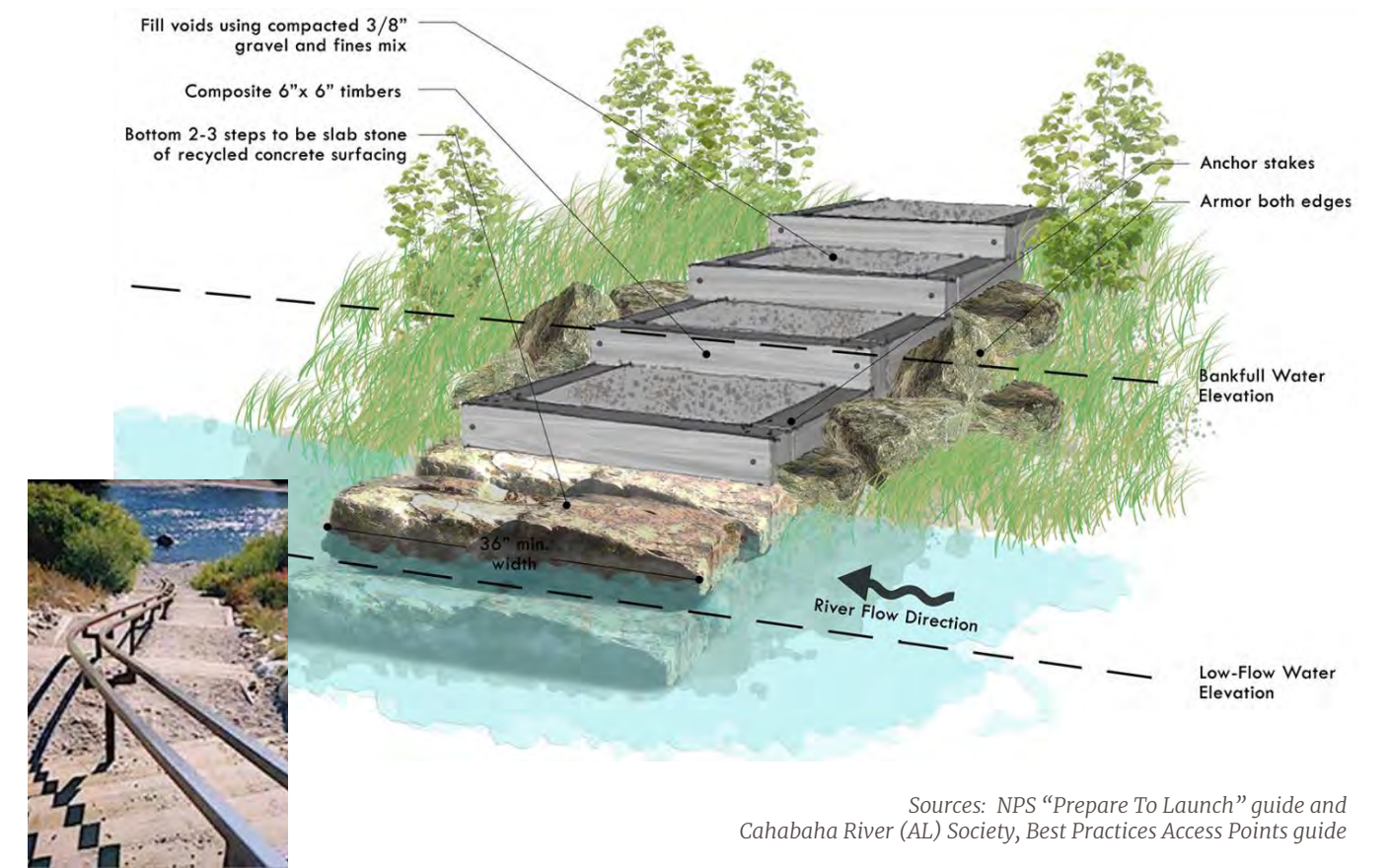


Based on design standards recommended in the National Park Service's guide, "Prepare to Launch", for moving water bodies with steeply banked sides, the kayak launch at Access Point 1 is designed as a natural dirt path with wide, deep steps down to the water. If the distance from the drop-off zone to the water's edge seems extremely long for hand-carrying boats, a double handrail can serve as a boat slide to assist users with getting their kayak to the water.

Based on local feedback, Access Point 1 is kept minimalistic and as natural as possible. Therefore, the restrooms shown are a simple wood structure, and an outfitters is not included at this location. This pit toilet design can be used elsewhere along the water trail as well.



Concept and Rendering by Devin Butler



Sources: NPS "Prepare To Launch" guide and Cahabaha River (AL) Society, Best Practices Access Points guide



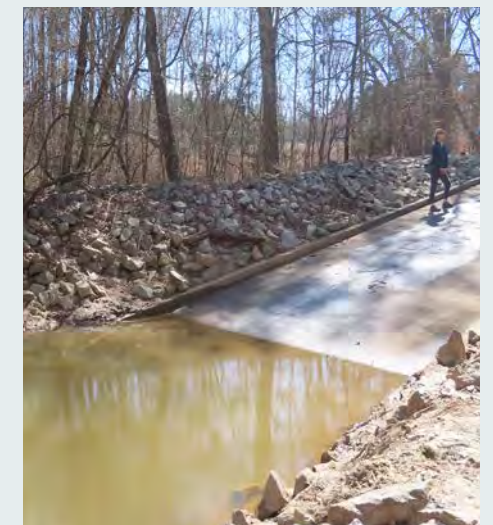
Rendering by Hannah Lewis



ACCESS POINT 2

Acreage exists to expand the existing parking area and include a kayak launch, thereby adding room for paddlers to self-shuttle a second car and return to Access Point 1 to float down river. The parking area should remain a naturalized gravel lot and be expanded in a way that preserves as many trees large as possible. A launch for kayaks and canoes extends from a drop-off area and should be handicap-accessible, as the bank may lend itself to a dock installation.

This site could accommodate a small outfitters for boat rentals, shuttle service, restrooms, fishing supplies, and even a restaurant. Having the outfitters at Access Point 2 allows the outfitters to be in a central and easily accessible location, providing a variety of paddle trip options.



Original Concept by Natalie Glaze;
Refined by Devin Butler

WATER TRAIL OUTFITTERS

The outfitters includes approximately 5,000 square feet of retail space and a storage shed for additional kayaks. In addition to providing boat rentals and a shuttle service, this multi-purpose building could provide restrooms, a pavilion, and picnic tables as well as food and drinks.



Many respondents suggested a need for kayak launches that were handicap accessible. Accessible kayak launches allow an adult in a wheelchair to self-launch a kayak. Accessible launches are enjoyed by able-bodied paddlers as well, as the stabilizers and assistive supports make it easier to get in and out of a low boat, no matter one's physical abilities.



Sources: Nantahala Outdoor Center and www.thedockdoctors.com



Rendering by Freja Carlson

LITTLE RIVER HIKING-BIKING TRAIL

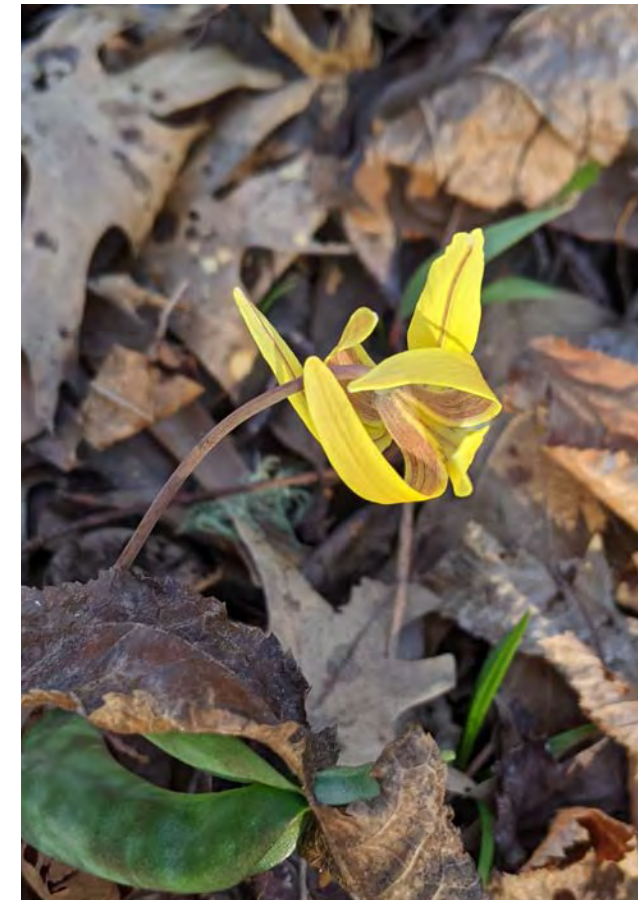
If both Access Points 1 and 2 are developed with parking and restrooms, a supplemental land trail could easily accommodate hikers originating from either location. The distance between locations measures approximately 10 miles, providing a maximum 20 mile out-and-back trail, which could be reduced at the user's discretion. A connecting trail on land would also provide easy access for picnic spots that could be used by hikers and paddlers.

Challenges to creating this trail include the topography, which is steep closest to the river. Given the narrowness of the WMA acreage in this location, there is not a lot of variety as to where the trail could be located, potentially resulting in steep grades. Also, having a hiking trail alongside the water trail could disturb a serene area of the river, which is a concern brought by paddlers familiar with the quiet beauty of this section.

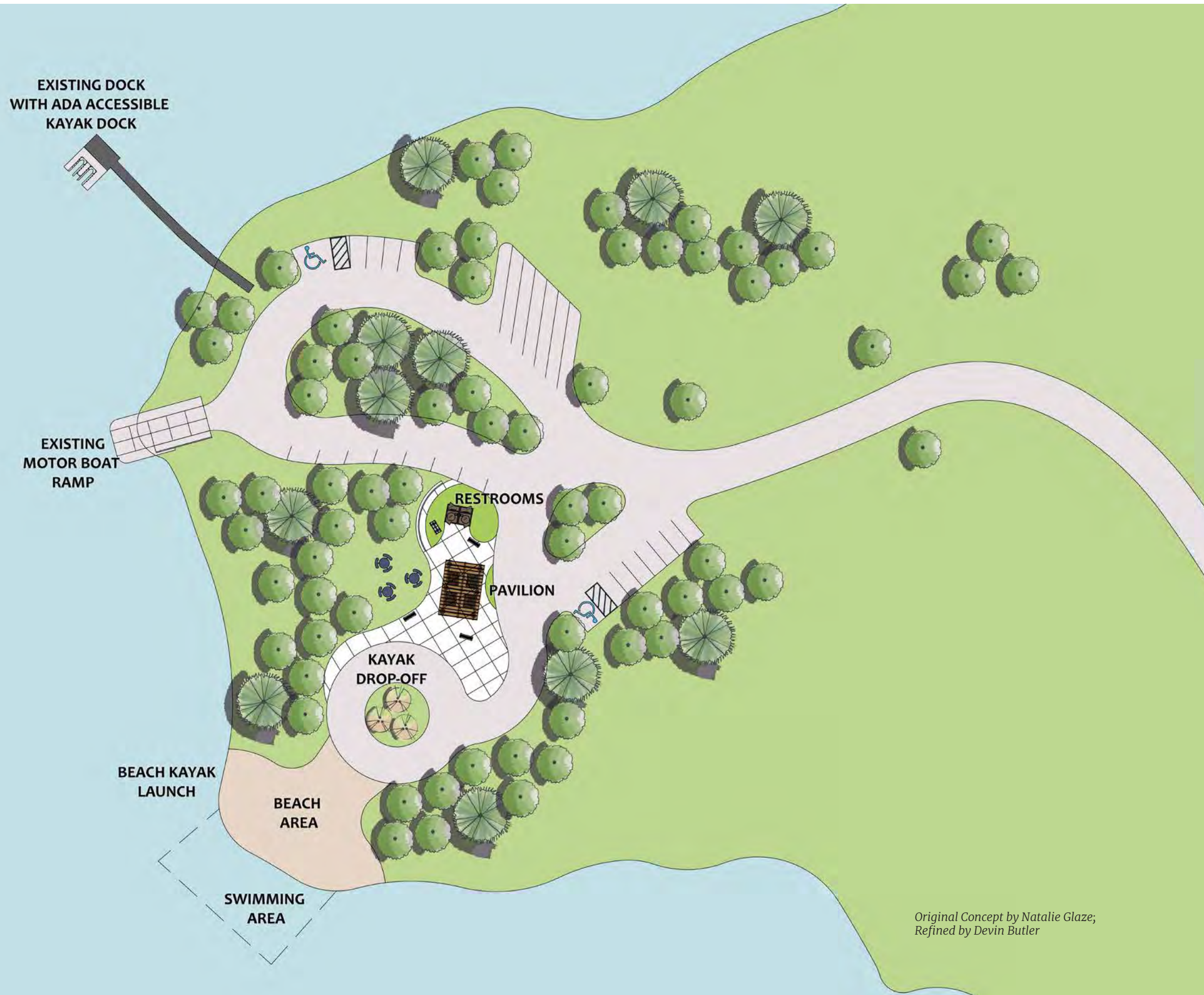
Another concern is introducing non-hunters into an area prioritized for hunting and fishing. The narrow area of the Clarks Hill WMA west of Highway 78 in which this trail is proposed is approximately 845 acres. This represents 7.5% of the WMA acreage within McDuffie County, and 4.8% of the total WMA acreage. It is a narrow portion relative to the total WMA, and local officials suggest that there is likely not a lot of hunting activity in this section. State officials do not have data on the number of hunters who use the WMA, but do know that private property surrounding this area has private lease hunting activity as well.



Concept and Rendering by Freja Carson



ACCESS POINT 4



Access Point 4 on the Little River Water Trail is at the Raysville Campground. The same amenities suggested for Access Point 2 have been applied here to enhance usability for launching kayaks and canoes. A redesigned parking area features 12 boat trailer spaces, 10 parking spaces, and 1 handicap space. Restrooms, a pavilion and tables are added. The existing dock could be modified to include an accessible kayak launch.



According to the National Park Service’s guide on boat launches, the lake’s gradually sloping shoreline would also lend itself to a beach launch. Natural surface launches have minimal impact and provide a stable boat launch for kayaks and canoes. Expanding this concept to also include a swimming beach would enhance this site as a full Day Use area, like Big Hart Campground has. In turn, the Day Use beach at Big Hart could accommodate paddlers by creating a launch at its swimming beach.

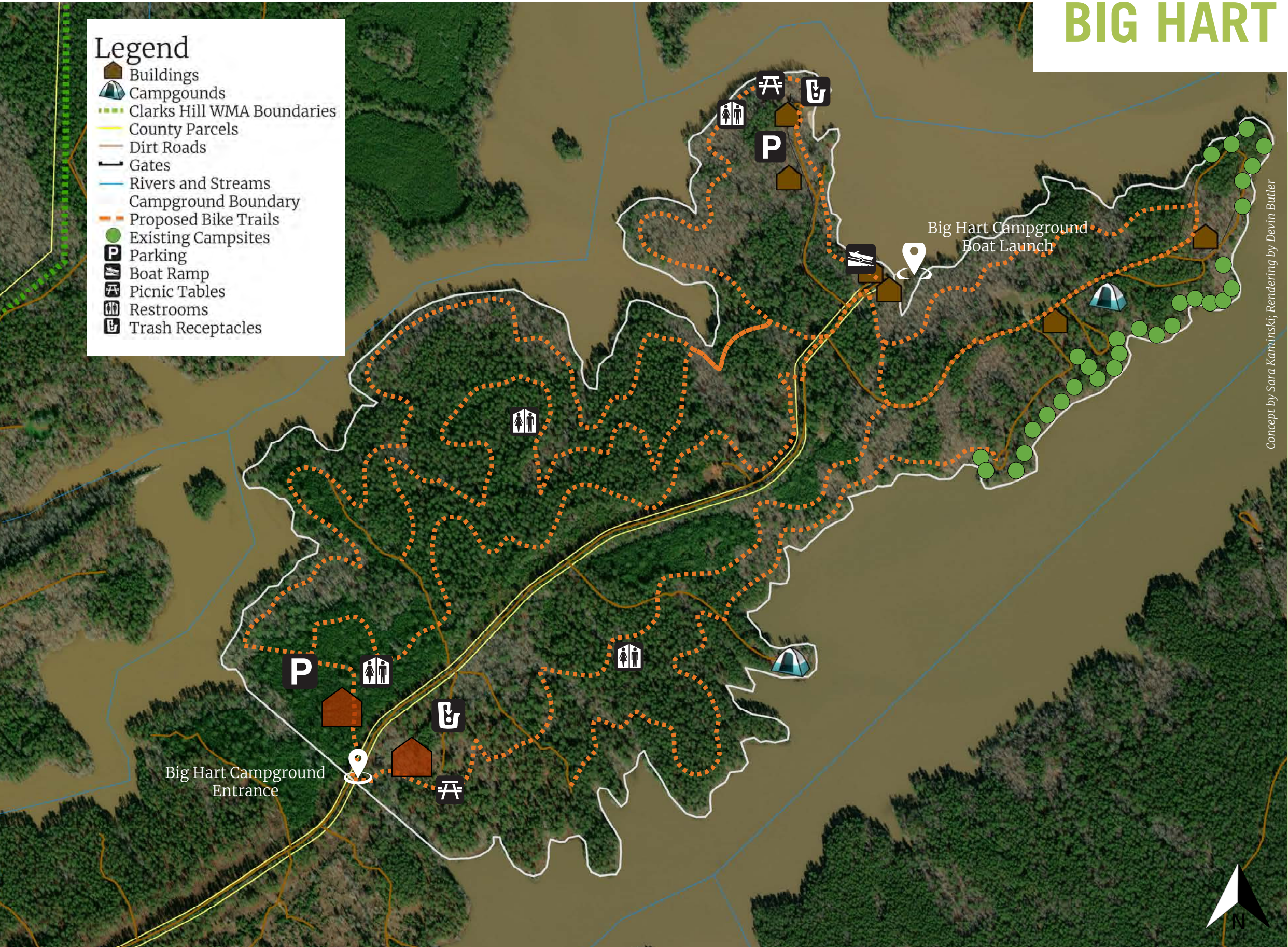


Sources: dockdoctors.com (top) and NPS “Prepare to Launch” guide

BIG HART CAMPGROUND TRAILS

Legend

-  Buildings
-  Campgrounds
-  Clarks Hill WMA Boundaries
-  County Parcels
-  Dirt Roads
-  Gates
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Campground Boundary
-  Proposed Bike Trails
-  Existing Campsites
-  Parking
-  Boat Ramp
-  Picnic Tables
-  Restrooms
-  Trash Receptacles



Concept by Sara Kaminski, Rendering by Devin Butler

Big Hart Campground presents a good opportunity to create bike paths for more casual riders as well as hikers. This plan includes a new network of trails that takes advantage of the existing road system to create multiple options and loops. Most trails shown follow the topography, resulting in fairly flat pathways that would appeal to riders of all abilities. Having a series of loops near camping areas and away from vehicles provides a safe space for kids to ride independently, whereas longer rides would provide an adventurous challenge for all ages. A trail connecting the day-use playground and swimming area to the campsites is intended to be the easiest and safest, with children biking in mind. Having more of the shoreline accessible by bike creates more access for bank fishing, as well. All totaled, this plan provides for 10 miles of multi-use trails.

Additionally, establishing a formal campground entrance helps delineate the end of the hunting zone and provide campground amenities, including bike rentals.

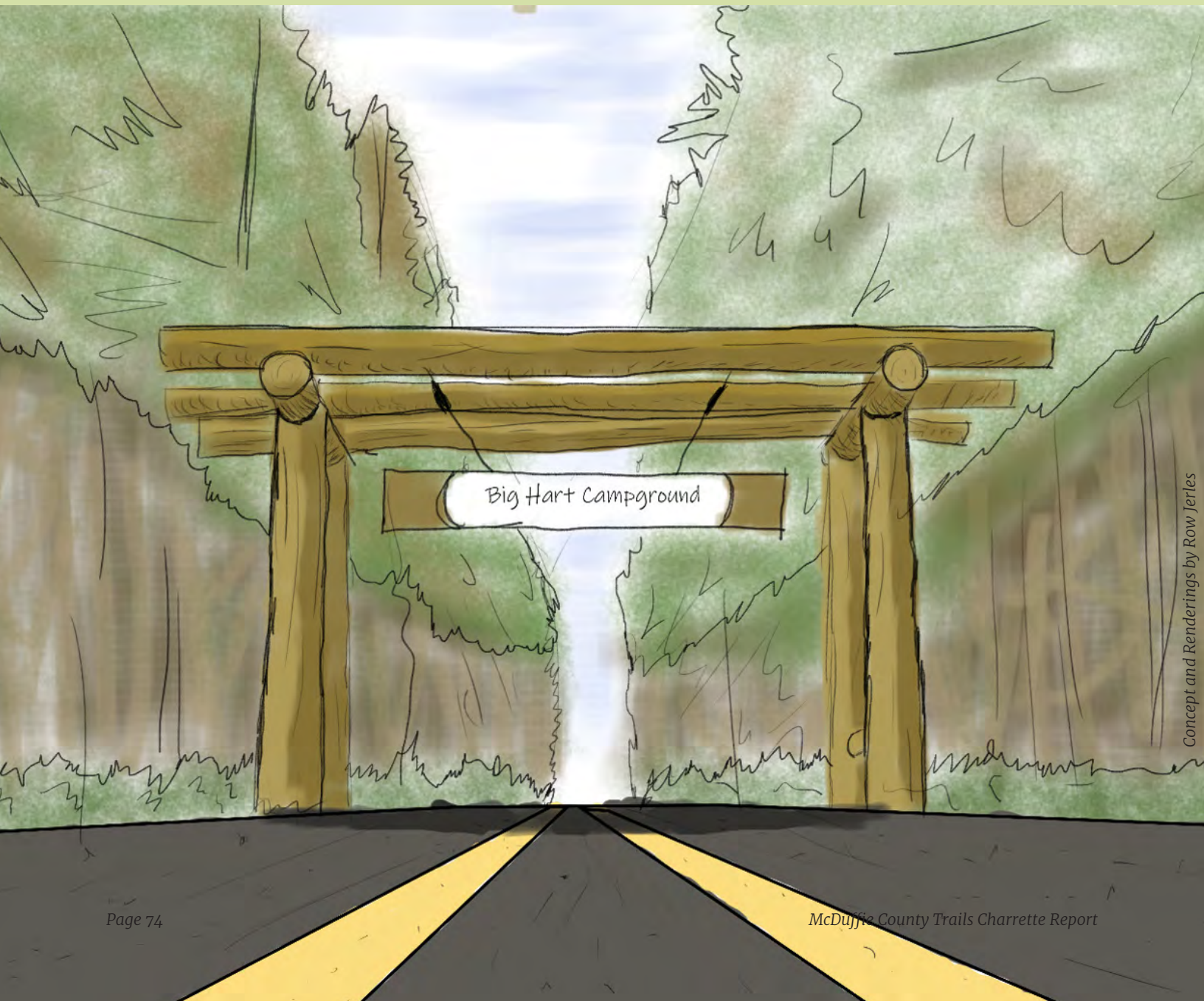


BIG HART CAMPGROUND ENTRANCE

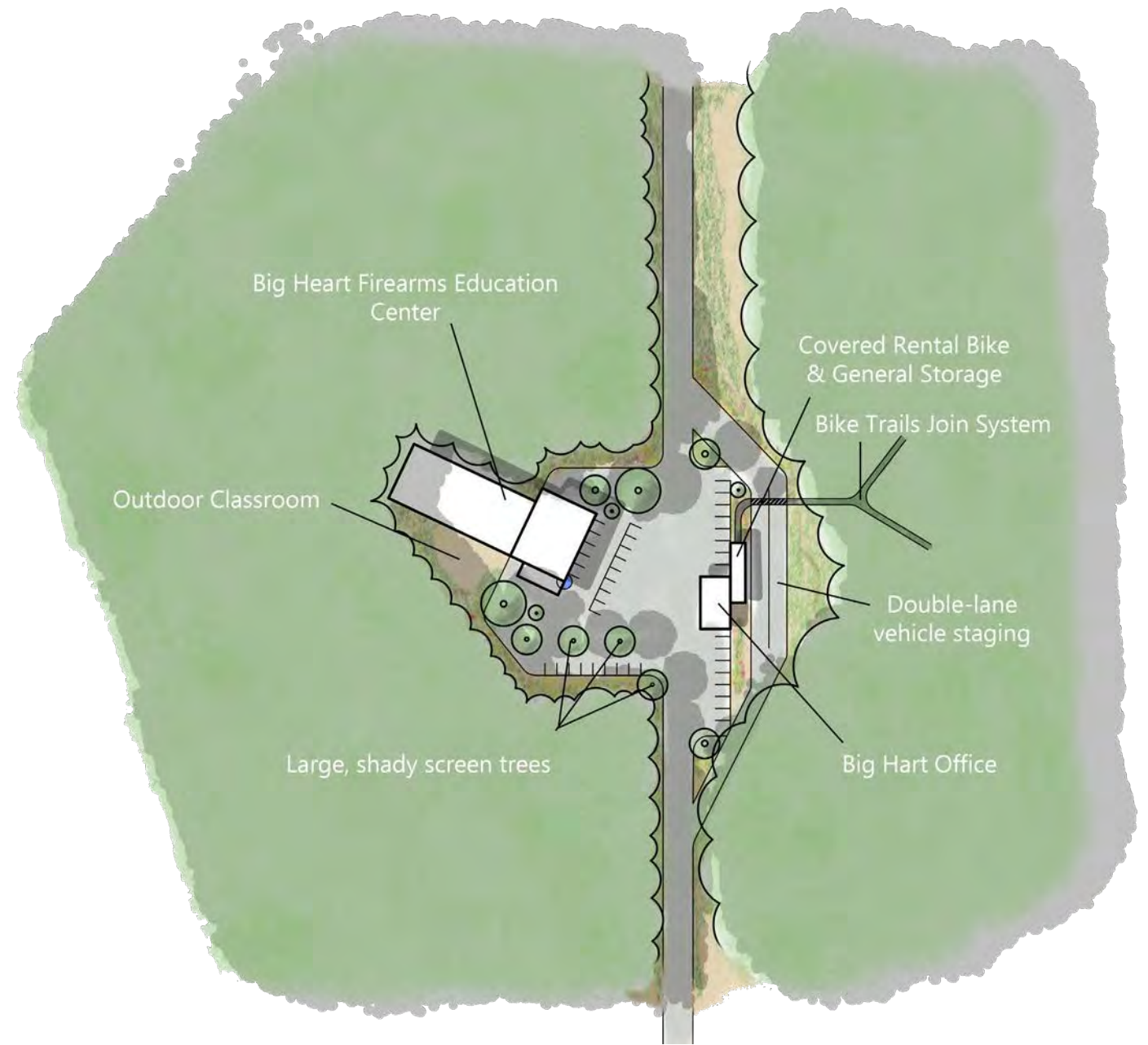
A formal entrance to Big Hart Campground would not only mark the arrival to the campground, but also serve as an indicator for where hunting is no longer allowed throughout the open forest.

Just past the entrance gate, this plan suggests a Campground Office and General Store located on the right-hand side, and an Education Center on the left. The Campground office includes parking in front as well as a double lane behind the building to accommodate guests checking in that are towing campers.

Given the noise disruption that an outdoor shooting range would cause, the students suggest an indoor range instead, if desired, perhaps in combination with an educational center. This center could provide



Concept and Renderings by Row Jerles



classes on myriad outdoor subjects. The shooting range should be as insulated as possible from excessive noise permeating the campgrounds. Stalls should be limited to a small number to keep the impact minimized for courtesy's sake.

While firearm safety and the promotion of shooting sports could be conducted downstairs, the upstairs could be used as an educational center for certification in subjects such as: CPR, Bushcraft, tying fly-fishing lures, and many more. The shooting range may be closed or restricted to certain hours on days with classes unrelated to firearm training so that courses may proceed without interruptions.

A Campground Office and General Store is a nice amenity for campground guests, as it provides a place to get local recommendations, replenish forgotten supplies, and purchase souvenirs. This area could incorporate an additional parking area for visitors who were interested in biking the trails, thereby leaving existing parking areas for boaters, fishermen and day-use picnickers. Plus, the office could also provide bike rentals for campers and day users, with the trails easily accessible from this location.

BIG HART CAMPGROUND OFFICE AND GENERAL STORE



Concept and Rendering by Jennifer Lewis

RAYSVILLE CAMPGROUND TRAILS

Since the existing campsites of Raysville Campground are adjacent to the west side of the road along the water, there is additional acreage that could be developed into hiking-biking trails. Shown in this plan in orange and located on the opposite side of the road from the campsites, these trails follow the current road and topography to create four miles of easily accessible paths for walkers or riders.

Also, an adjacent section of the WMA, indicated with the dashed green line, may be available in the future to expand the Raysville campground. If this 60-acre parcel could be used for trails, it could add an additional 3 miles to the proposed trail network.



Concept by Sara Kaminski
Rendering by Devin Butler

CLARKS HILL WMA EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Since most equestrian trail riders are looking for trails between 10-20 miles long, separate from bikes, and with an overnight option, this plan proposes equestrian trails along the shorelines of the WMA at Big Hart Peninsula and along Big Creek between Highway 78 and the Raysville Campground, shown here as a yellow dashed line. Incorporating feedback from local riders, this trail system is looped rather than out-and-back and is exclusively for horseback riding.

The proposed shoreline trail system on the Big Hart Peninsula will provide a 6-mile equestrian-only trail system that is separate from the proposed biking and hiking trails within the campground.

To put this amount of impacted property in context, the Big Hart peninsula is approximately 1156.8 acres in total. The WMA's half of the peninsula proposed for shoreline equestrian trails is approximately 726 acres, or 6.4% of the WMA acreage in McDuffie County, and 4% of the overall WMA.

On the Raysville side, the proposed equestrian-only trail system could provide a 16-mile trail connecting the Raysville Campground and the Wildlife Management area.

This proposed area of the WMA is 1208 acres representing 11% of the WMA in McDuffie County, and 7% of the overall WMA acreage.

If more trails are needed, then consider alternating the days that horseback riding and biking are allowed on the same trail system.



RAYSVILLE CAMPGROUND EQUESTRIAN CAMPSITE

Respondents to the survey expressed a desire to come from out of town to ride a large trail system if they could camp overnight with their horses. If the 60-acre parcel adjacent to the Raysville Campground is annexed in, rather than it being used for hiking and biking trails, it could be designed as an equestrian camping facility.

Our plan suggests a central area for grazing and trailer parking as well as 3 connections to the new equestrian trails.

We have also suggested 18 new campsites which would include the standard camp amenities in addition to a horse corral, which could accommodate up to 3 horses. A corral may be an intermediate solution, with a tie line being a first phase amenity and stables coming in a later phase. Local saddle clubs have been instrumental in developing equine campgrounds in the area, such as at Bussey Point Recreation Area, and should be tapped for their expertise.



Concept and Renderings by Devin Butler



<https://wkdq.com/horse-owners-urging-deer-hunters-to-double-check-their-prey/>



Source: iceagetrail.org

BEST PRACTICES FOR WMA TRAIL SYSTEMS



Because the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area prioritizes hunting and fishing and is open to hunting most of the year, it is important to remember that additional regulations and safety precautions will be needed to implement many of the design ideas that have been suggested.

Our charrette team researched other Wildlife Management Areas, such as Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Cary Wildlife Management Area, and Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area in order to determine some of the practices they utilize to ensure the safety of hikers, cyclists, riders, and hunters. These Wildlife Management Areas do not have any special buffers or physical regulations hunters in the area but have a series of aids and regulations meant for hikers and riders to follow for their safety. This includes but is not limited to:

- All riders and hikers in the Wildlife Management Areas must wear a minimum of 500 sq. in. of hunting orange on both the human and the horse.
- Limiting the time pedestrians, cyclists, and horseback riders are able to use the trails within the Wildlife Management Area, such as not before 10am or after dusk.
- Providing alternating schedules for cyclist and horseback riders such as Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for cyclists and hikers only, and Tuesday and Thursdays for horseback riders and hikers only.
- Keeping all pedestrian and equestrian trails within the 200 ft. safety buffer from roads and buildings, where hunters are not allowed to fire.

Comparing these safety regulation examples with what may already exist for the Clarks Hill WMA will be key, as will conveying this information to the general public. Websites for the Big Hart and Raysville Campgrounds as well as for the WMA should make aware the relation between the areas. Using various communication techniques is a best practice, including maps, posted on-site regulations, camper check-in information packets, and videos.



Concept and Rendering by Devin Butler and Freja Carson

CONCLUSION



Most of the design proposals presented in this report occur within county-managed parcels (i.e., campgrounds) or are not in conflict with Wildlife Management Area activities (i.e., boat launches). However, some of our design suggestions fall within the existing WMA, which prioritizes hunting and fishing and is open to some type of hunting most of the year. Therefore, it is important to remember that new regulations and additional safety precautions will be needed to implement some of the design suggestions.

Expanding user groups for WMAs is beneficial for enhancing an appreciation for shooting sports and angling. A shared arrangement and scheduling protocol that includes an educational campaign, prevalent signage, and seasonal priority groups would allow for a wider group of users in the safest manner possible. As stated in Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2017-21), "Public parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities can help every Georgia community thrive and become more sustainable. The greater the visitation to our parks and outdoor resources, the greater economic benefits to the surrounding communities."

It was the experience of the charrette team, all but one of whom are not hunters, that understanding the regulations and periods of "hunting season" are complex and not user-friendly to non-hunters who may want to recreate in WMAs. Perhaps this is by design to prioritize an insider clientele. Clarity would surely increase public safety and eliminate conflicts that arise due to misunderstandings. If the state intends to fulfill its potential as a regional recreation destination, a more balanced approach will be needed in regard to WMAs.

By ensuring that each access point along the Little River Water Trail has adequate parking, restrooms, and launches that

are designed for those carrying their boats by hand, the usability of the water trail is greatly increased. By adding additional amenities such as picnic spots, emergency access, and an outfitters to rent boats and provide a shuttle service, the trail becomes a recreation destination for an even wider audience who may be getting on the water for the first time. A hiking trail between these two access points enhances the destination further, providing a scenic retreat for increasing personal health and appreciation of the natural world. If the WMA shoreline is available to fishermen without conflicting with hunting, then perhaps considerations could be made for hikers as well.

McDuffie County has the opportunity to improve on its already attractive campgrounds by adding amenities that recreational tourists have come to expect, like a general store and a trail system. With these improvements, both campgrounds can serve as a regional attraction, providing safe ways for locals and visitors to enjoy cycling and hiking with family or friends while generating minimal impact on the environment.

Equestrian trails within Wildlife Management Areas are a relatively common practice throughout various states. If equestrian trails are pursued within the Clarks Hill Lake area, incorporating best

practices and safety measures from other trails, state parks and WMAs that attract saddle clubs would accommodate a wider user group and further add to the recreational opportunities in the region.

A phased approach to the development of these recreational enhancements would allow for immediate gains. Concentrate on areas of mutual agreement between federal, state, and local partners. Based on jurisdiction and public interest, the following phased implementation is proposed:

Phase 1: Access Point 1 launch, restrooms, parking; Access Point 2 restroom, kayak launch

Phase 2: Access Point 2 Outfitters; Raysville Campground hiking-biking trails

Phase 3: Big Hart Campground hiking-biking trails, office/general store, entrance gate

Phase 4: WMA Equestrian Trails; Raysville Campground equestrian campsite

In conclusion, enhancing the natural resource-based outdoor experiences in McDuffie County with a wide variety of users in mind will provide value far beyond the local market, extending opportunities to a regional audience. An investment in recreational tourism provides generous returns in the form of natural resource protection, economic development, and health promotion.

REFERENCES

The Georgia Outdoor Recreation Plan is a statewide blueprint for maintaining and sustaining public outdoor recreation resources to meet the demands of Georgia's diverse and growing population. The Plan also provides a snapshot of the current supply and demand for outdoor recreation resources. By offering information on important issues and considerations facing our public parks, this Plan provides guidance to Georgia's policy makers, practitioners, and citizens to protect key resources and address the outdoor recreational needs of Georgians. <https://gastateparks.org/scorp>

Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program provides a dedicated funding mechanism to support parks and trails and protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation across the state of Georgia. As part of the 2018 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, this grant and loan program funds competitive proposals that support state parks and trails; support local parks and trails of state and regional significance; provide stewardship of conservation land; or acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering, or for natural resource-based outdoor recreation. <https://gadnr.org/gosp>

Prepare to Launch! is an update to *Logical Lasting Launches*, a National Park Service publication that has been a reliable resource for river managers at the federal, agency, state, local, and community level across the country since 2004. Prepare to Launch! utilizes decision-based links to guide users through the development process from conception to detailed design creation and making final construction choices for a launch. *Prepare to Launch!* is a joint project with the River Management Society and is available as an online resource at: www.River-Management.org

Trail Planning Workshop – Toolkit was developed by Russell Clark, a project manager for the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. This step-by-step guide for communities, partners and local jurisdictions was designed to use in developing and implementing a trail planning workshop. Included are tools to help workshop participants identify community assets, establish trail priorities and brainstorm ideas for future linkages. <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/upload/Trail-Planning-Workshop-Toolkit.pdf>

The Best Practices Guide for Cahaba River Access Points is intended to provide [Alabama] communities along the Cahaba River and its tributaries with the tools and resources necessary to evaluate, plan, and develop recreational access points along the river that provide safety and ease-of-use for visitors, optimize durability of improvements, and enable cost-effective maintenance while protecting the outstanding natural values of this nationally significant waterway. The guide pulls together the latest water access standards from a variety of sources as a reference for creating recreational access points that are low-impact, safe, and durable. https://cahabablueway.org/resource_documents/best_practices.pdf

Pine Log Wildlife Management Area is located in White, GA. This 14,134-acre property offers opportunities for deer, bear, turkey, small game and dove hunting. There are over 23 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails as well as access to trout streams. Trails are closed all day during deer firearms season and before 10:00 a.m. during deer archery and turkey season. <https://georgiawildlife.com/pine-log-wma>

Cohutta Wildlife Management Area is located in Murray, Fannin and Gilmer counties. This 96,503-acre property has hunting opportunities for deer, turkey and small game. Over 158 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails are open to the public. <https://georgiawildlife.com/cohutta-wma>

Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area is located in Gilmer and Fannin counties (GA). This 19,955-acre property offers hunting opportunities as well as biking, hiking, horseback riding and wildlife viewing. <https://georgiawildlife.com/rich-mountain-wma>

Cary Wildlife Management Area is located west of Jacksonville in Nassau and Duval counties (FL) and consists of 11,319 acres of forested uplands and swamps. This area is managed for many uses including hunting, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, camping, hiking, biking, environmental education and picnicking. Horseback riding, hiking and biking are allowed on most forest roads. <https://myfwc.com/recreation/cooperative/cary>

Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area in Cornelia (N. GA) is known for its stellar hiking and primitive camping. The wildlife management area extends over 17,300 acres. Activities to partake in here include camping, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and hunting, and includes bike and equestrian trails. <https://georgiawildlife.com/lake-russell-wma>

APPENDIX

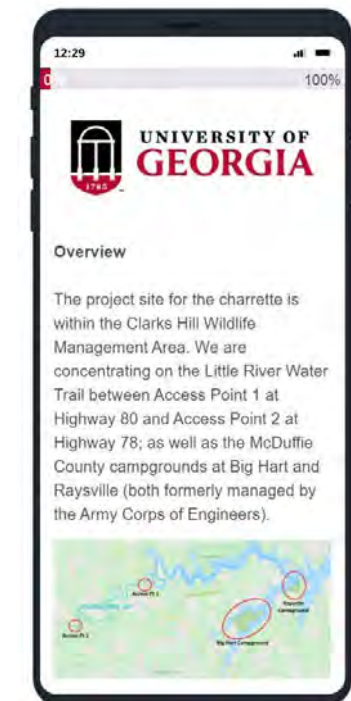
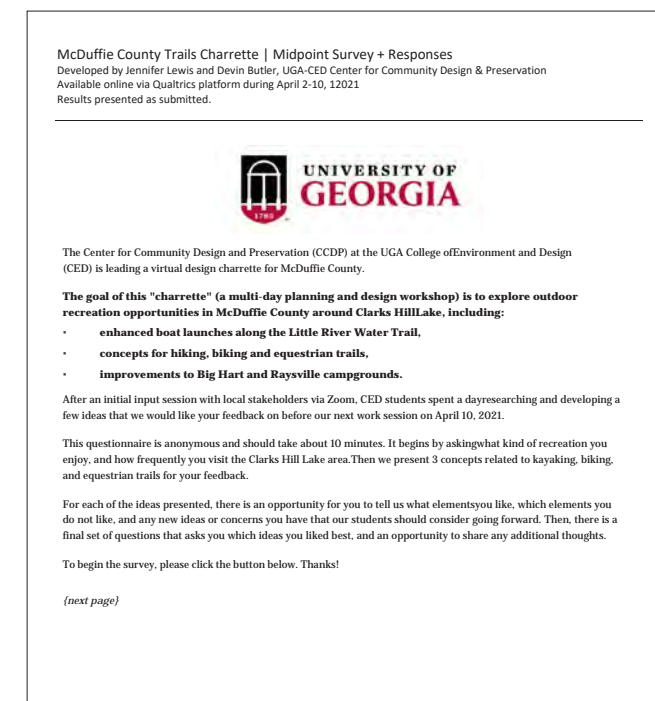
Throughout this virtual charrette, Center for Community Design and Preservation staff presented concepts for public input by creating video presentations shared with the community via YouTube. Additionally, community members were asked to complete online Quatrics surveys to collect feedback.

The public input opportunities were advertised as follows:

- Emailed to the full Thomson-McDuffie Archway Partnership email list (300+)
- Emailed to local stakeholder list (those invited to the initial stakeholder meeting) who were asked to share with their friends, family, and social networks
- Posted on Facebook pages for the Archway Partnership, Thomson-McDuffie Chamber, and Visit Thomson
- Video shared by Kiwanis Club at monthly meeting; asked members to fill out the survey
- Mentioned at Rotary Club monthly meeting.

The first feedback survey was open for nine days from Friday, April 2 to Saturday, April 10, 2021 and received 124 responses. The second feedback opportunity was also presented in a video and online survey and distributed in the same manner as the first. Both the video and survey included a brief summary as a reminder of the work done up to that point and explained how the results from the previous input period influenced the latest concepts. This survey was open for ten days from Wednesday, June 23 to Friday, July 2, 2021 and received 67 responses.

The surveys and submitted responses are summarized in the McDuffie County Trails Charrette Report and were submitted in full to the McDuffie County Archway Partnership. They are available upon request by contacting the Thomson-McDuffie Convention and Visitors Bureau or the UGA-CED Center for Community Design and Preservation.



MCDUFFIE COUNTY TRAILS CHARRETTE

APPENDIX:

Community Engagement Methodology and Survey
Results Collected During the Virtual Design Charrette



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Archway Partnership
Center for Community Design and Preservation
College of Environment and Design

SPRING 2021

REPORT PRODUCTION, UGA CED CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DESIGN AND PRESERVATION
<http://ced.uga.edu/pso>

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Art Direction and Revision: Eleonora Machado, CED Graphics Coordinator
Report Editor: Jennifer Lewis
Cover illustration: Hannah Lewis

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The McDuffie County Archway Partnership asked the UGA Center for Community Design and Preservation (CCDP) at the College of Environment and Design (CED) to develop concepts and an illustrative master plan to support their application for a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) grant for: (1) additional boat launches along the Little River Water Trail, and (2) a land-based trail system for a variety of users.

CCDP used a design charrette – a multi-day brainstorming session between design experts and local stakeholders – to bring together a team of CED students in landscape architecture and planning to explore potential recreational amenities for the area. The goal of the charrette was to envision how to satisfy the county's desire for recreational economic development with the Georgia Department of Natural Resource's priority to serve hunters and fishermen in the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area, and to incorporate best practices between different types of trail users.

Due to Covid-19, this charrette was conducted with virtual meetings, two on-campus workdays, and extended periods of public input solicited through social media and online surveys. At the midpoint and conclusion of the virtual charrette, Center for Community Design and Preservation staff presented concepts by creating video presentations shared with the community via YouTube and invited responses via online Qualtrics surveys in order to collect feedback.

The public input opportunities were advertised as follows:

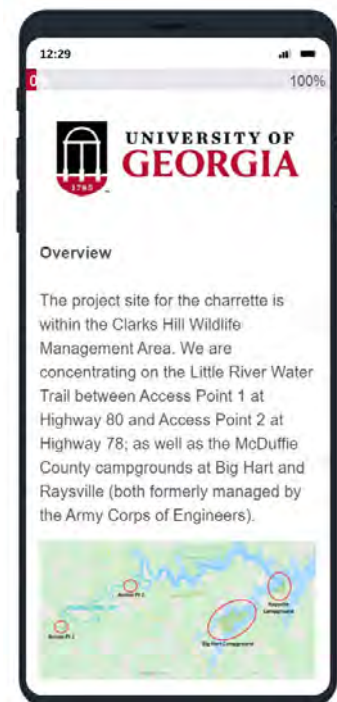
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The surveys and submitted responses are summarized in the McDuffie County Trails Charrette Report and were submitted in full to the McDuffie County Archway Partnership. This Appendix includes a compilation of the two survey questionnaires and the complete responses.

For additional information related to the charrette concepts, please see the following:

- Final Charrette Presentation Video: <https://youtu.be/Ag4bfsZdyOc>
- Final Charrette Report: <https://ced.uga.edu/ps0/charrettes>



McDuffie County Trails Charrette | Midpoint Survey + Responses

Developed by Jennifer Lewis and Devin Butler, UGA-CED Center for Community Design & Preservation

Available online via Qualtrics platform during April 2-10, 2021

Results presented as submitted.



The Center for Community Design and Preservation (CCDP) at the UGA College of Environment and Design (CED) is leading a virtual design charrette for McDuffie County.

The goal of this "charrette" (a multi-day planning and design workshop) is to explore outdoor recreation opportunities in McDuffie County around Clarks Hill Lake, including:

- **enhanced boat launches along the Little River Water Trail,**
- **concepts for hiking, biking and equestrian trails,**
- **improvements to Big Hart and Raysville campgrounds.**

After an initial input session with local stakeholders via Zoom, CED students spent a day researching and developing a few ideas that we would like your feedback on before our next work session on April 10, 2021.

This questionnaire is anonymous and should take about 10 minutes. It begins by asking what kind of recreation you enjoy, and how frequently you visit the Clarks Hill Lake area. Then we present 3 concepts related to kayaking, biking, and equestrian trails for your feedback.

For each of the ideas presented, there is an opportunity for you to tell us what elements you like, which elements you do not like, and any new ideas or concerns you have that our students should consider going forward. Then, there is a final set of questions that asks you which ideas you liked best, and an opportunity to share any additional thoughts.

To begin the survey, please click the button below. Thanks!

{next page}

Overview

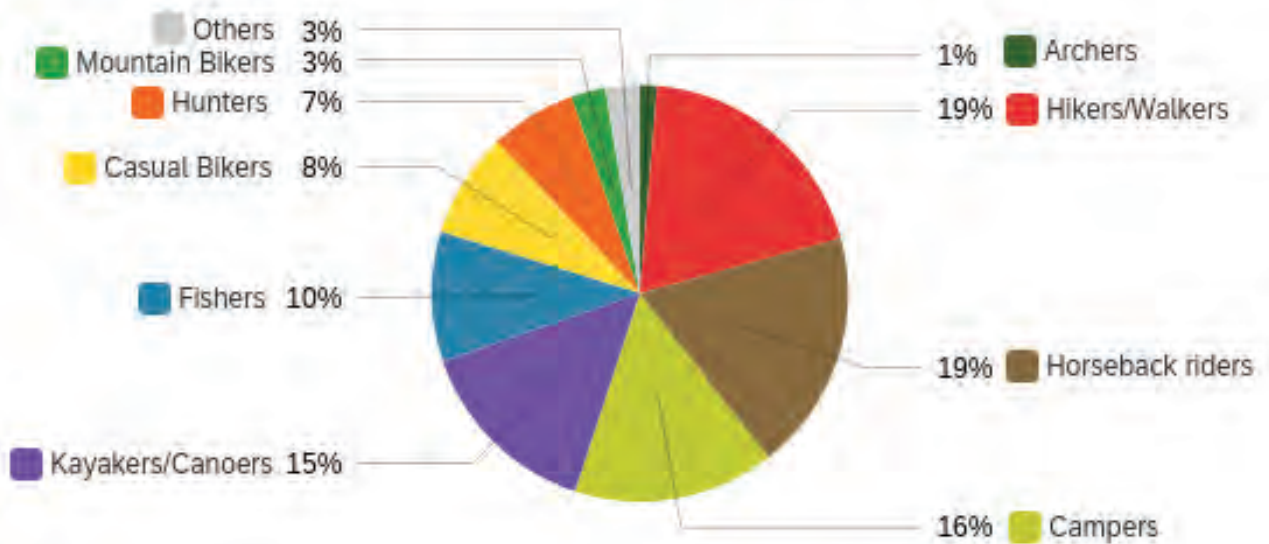
The project site for the charrette is within the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area. We are concentrating on the Little River Water Trail between Access Point 1 at Highway 80 and Access Point 2 at Highway 78; as well as the McDuffie County campgrounds at BigHart and Raysville (both formerly managed by the Army Corps of Engineers).



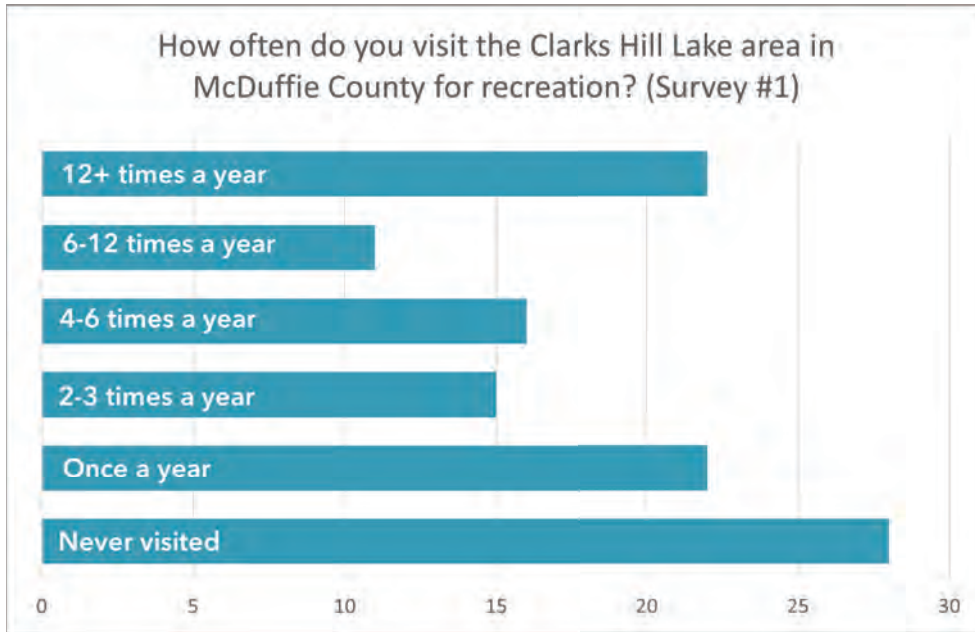
User Profile

Q. 1a. What type of recreational activities do you engage in? (choose all that apply)

Types of Recreational Users - Survey #1



Q. 1b. How often do you visit the Clarks Hill Lake area in McDuffie County for recreation?



Water Trail



The Little River Water Trail is a great asset for McDuffie County and the entire region. The trail is 20+ miles and winds through the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area and into Clarks Hill Lake. The water trail has four water access points in total. We are focusing on the 6-mile section between Access Points 1 and 2.



Access Pt 1 – Hwy 80

Access Point 1 (Woodruff Bridge at Highway 80) is the only launch point that does not have paved access off the highway, a boat ramp, or parking. We propose a new parkinglot, motor boat launch, a separate kayak/canoe launch, and restrooms. This lot should accommodate some trailer parking and be located away from the road in a clearing. Providing a separate launch that is specially designed for canoes and kayaks is preferable, as getting into and out of a low boat can be tricky. There is also potential for a small outfitters at this location to rent boats and provide a shuttle service.

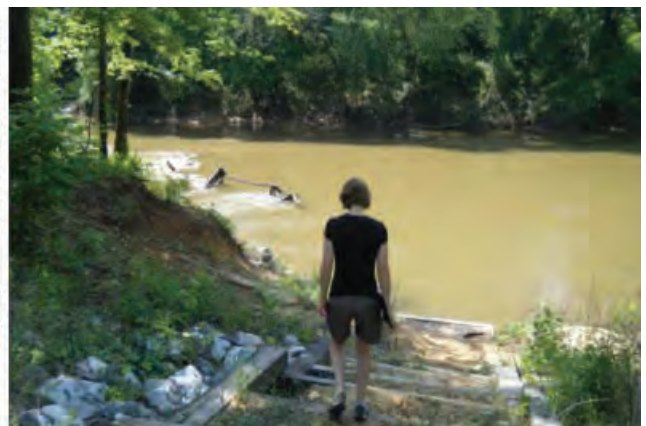


Access Pt 2 – Hwy 78

The existing boat launch at Access Point 2 (Highway 78) has a small gravel parking lot and a trail kiosk, but the launch is designed for motor boats and has no restrooms. There appears to be enough state-owned acreage to expand the parking area, thereby adding room for paddlers to self-shuttle a second car and return to Access Point 1 to float down river.



Prefabricated Pit Toilet



Naturalized Riverbank Kayak Launch

Restroom facilities would be a welcome amenity for folks coming off the river after a dayfishing or paddling. Including specially-designed kayak/canoe launches would make it easier and safer for folks walking boats up and down the riverbank. This could be an alternative location for a small outfitters to rent boats and provide a shuttle service.

Additional ideas to enhance the water trail include adding emergency access along a utility corridor and providing picnic spots midway along this section.



Q. 2a. What do you like about this concept?

Everything

I like the water trail, and the fact that you could rent kayaks, etc.

Great ideas

All great ideas for kayak/canoe launching. Restroom facilities would be great !

Emergency access, the restrooms, parking areas.

Separate access for kayak and canoe. Restroom availability

Restrooms are important to bring in the whole family. If we make the launch experience easier, we can attract more families instead of just hard core enthusiasts.

Nice parking area. Nice boat ramp.

Restrooms and a shuttle service for kayaks and a kayak launch that is safe

Restrooms are ALWAYS appreciated, and I love the idea of waterway picnic spots.

Great to have this available for outdoor activities

This addition is a great idea.

Everything

I like everything about this concept! I also like the idea of a stopping point/picnic area along the way.

Definitely having a better access off access 1. I have kayaked from this location twice before and it was very difficult getting the kayaks safely in and getting in them. One of those times our truck got stuck in the mud which made it a stressful start to our kayaking adventure. We would certainly utilize this access point if improved as has been suggested. Bathrooms at access 2 would be much appreciated!!

I think this is a great idea. Perhaps consider a handicap accessible kayak launching dock.

This proposal can greatly enhance the water attractiveness for this area. Some of the basic amenities are already in place. There is a good amount of interest from the community. No adjacent community has such a feature within their community.

Love the idea of picnic area and restroom stop after a day on the river.

If one enjoys outdoor activities, perhaps it would attract visitors.

ease of access for a variety of craft, bathrooms, and emergency support access.

I love this and really like the idea of picnic spots midway. This to me makes it very family friendly and that much more enticing.

The restrooms and emergency access (I'm getting older :)

Many things are appealing. Shuttle and outfitters is great for tourism but I think making it more accessible and friendly will appeal to year-round users.

Restroom facilities and the naturalized riverbank launch

paved parking and restrooms

Adding paved area. I love to go on walks with my children but still need a stroller.

Since I am up in age, I would like easy out and in access for kayak or canoe to allow for more persons to enjoy. Restrooms are a plus.

The trail already exists, so this concept focuses in improvements. That makes this an easier concept to complete.

I like all of it

Canoe/kayak launch, second parking location to self-shuttle

Access to river

Restrooms! Dedicated canoe/kayak launches are much safer than having to share with motor boats.

Any accommodations indicator have. Especially room for parking trailers and bathrooms

I like it but our camping friends do this type activity, and we do horse activities so if we had access to both, that would be great!

Restrooms, picnic areas, boat access

No opinion

Love to have kayak access..restrooms..park... Would love to have more horse trails with camping restrooms and electric

It sounds well thought out

I think this would be great as other parks are doing wonderful to have the equestrians the people riding bikes camping fishing

I like this concept but would love to have equestrian trails along the lake.

Shuttle points, bigger lots

Looks nice

I have kayaked this area many times. It could surely use restrooms and maore parking areas. I have considered putting together a small outfitter that would have stationary and portable rentals I have a place close to the Little River Area. The lake and its tributaries are beautiful.

More adventures

I think it's a great idea

Length of water trail system, new accessibility

I like the idea of having bathrooms and of having an access points

Sounds fantastic

It is 20 minutes from my house. As far as I know of, there is no other experience like this in McDuffie County. Good use of our lake and water trails.

I like restrooms, launch safety, picnic areas, emergency access, expanded parking.

Love all the ideas

I'm interested mainly in equestrian trails

I like the launch for kayaks and canoes separate from the boats - it is much safer.

I like the idea of making use of existing access points and improving them for multi-purpose use. Parking, restrooms, different types of boat launches are great for drawing users to our waterways. Picnic areas are always a positive for boaters as well as families.

I think it sounds great, we launch kayaks and motor boats but would love for the facilities to be "beefed up".

Restroom facilities.

I like the planned improvements.

The idea of extending the parking area is a necessity. The addition of washrooms is also a needed amenity.

I have floated this section of the river on a hunting trip. It is truly beautiful with abundant wildlife and will be great for paddling.

This sounds great

Love to see the idea of more outdoor fun coming into our community.

I love the idea of having an outfitter at Access 1. The video presentation showed a small pool as well. The idea of having the restrooms half way and the swimming area is fantastic!

More convenient access to kayaking and water trails.

I would like not having to drive to Augusta or North Augusta to do bike and hiking trails.

FYI--I am the kayaker in the picture above. A launch ramp and safe parking at Hwy 80 is a must! This section of river has nowhere to safely get out of your kayak and stretch your legs. A greenway trail along river with access to water fairly often would increase paddler comfort and use significantly. The outfitter idea is also a good idea to increase usage.

Added amenities would be nice in both places. An established, marked, and maintained waterway nearby would be great.

I have not kayaked the trail but cycle and hike the area frequently. It is a beautiful stretch of land that has the potential to be a travel destination if constructed and marketed correctly.

This is a great idea. Local Boy Scout Troop 125 has paddled both sections of the river from HWY 80 all the way to Raysville. The section from HWY 80 to 78 is the most challenging for parking, and launching boats. The river also need to be cleared of debris in some sections. Really like the idea for rest areas and emergency access. I hope this is something that can be established.

I like the bathrooms and the style of them. I also like the naturalize boat launch and could see this working well on our river bank.

I love everything about it!

Love it!

Increased access for fishing, boating and potentially hunting.

Q. 2b. What do you not like about this concept?

Being an equestrian, I would hope to have some nice trails to ride, separate from bikers and hunters.. I'd love to see more camping areas, along with stalls.

That it has taken so long for improvement

N/A

Nothing comes to mind.

Didn't see any horse trail heads.

Picnic spots are nice but would there be a way to properly dispose of garbage?

Expanding parking for boat trailers is needed at most spots.

Not interested in kayak

Nothing. Great ideas!

nothing

Close proximity to the wildlife management hunting area. Several critical infrastructure items need to be added.

Only concern would be that is could possibly become a "gathering ground" for " unruly" teens/adults during the evening hours if not monitored regularly.

The highway 80 access point doesn't appear inviting as pictured in these photos. How much money would it take to make this vision a reality? How many visitors would be needed for the project to be economically viable and sustainable for potential outfitters and the county, which would have to maintain the restrooms and other facilities?

None I can think of.

Would prefer equestrian trails for riding and buggy driving .

None. I like it all.

Expansion of the parking area at access point 2 will be challenging.

I wish trails could be developed along the river between point 1 and point 2. If not now, then sometime in the future

Nothing

Have seen rental concessions elsewhere turn lovely natural areas into overcrowded overused destroyed areas.

Nothing

No opinion

no mention of horses

I don't see horses mentioned. Would like to see parking for horse trailers and horse trails.

I don't like the idea of over commercialization (outfitters, restaurants, The beauty and peacefulness of the river is why I go there in the first place.

Nothing

Nothing

Cost of maintaining long term could be an issue in the future.

I would like to see hiking trails along the river included.

There are no dislikes at this time...but make sure to include in this project dog friendly options and dump stations to the community

I worry about boats in the open water. I think we would have to build out our fire/rescue program as well.

There is not much to not like about this concept.

On video the #6 location on the LRWT is a creek offshoot mentioned for swimming .. It is very shallow and banks overgrown. It is a beautiful spot to fish but is to shallow during drier years to access. Lots of trees and willows growing in the water and probably a good location for snake infestation.

Security- These are very isolated locations. Who will patrol them, keep them clean and safe?

The potential conflict with the WMA hunters is a concern (and I am a hunter as well as a cyclist). It has been done successfully in other locations (Bartram Trail) so it's not a dealbreaker.

I like all aspects of this proposal

Motorboating this section of the Little River will be difficult at best. There is a substantial amount of woody debris that is carried down this waterway and gets hung up where motorized boats cannot easily navigate the river. Also, who will maintain the facilities being proposed? Neither the Army Corps of Engineers nor Georgia DNR have the manpower to maintain these facilities on a regular basis. Will McDuffie County be responsible for cleaning bathrooms and removing trash?

Q. 2c. Is there anything the students should consider or be aware of as they continue to develop ideas for kayak trail improvements at this site?

Restrooms and picnic areas.. plenty of trash 🗑️..

No

I am not experienced with this activity; thus, I have no basis to evaluate it.

Mark the trails very well. Make sure the horse trails are marked.

Consider security cameras, especially in parking as more and more rec facilities are having vehicle break ins.

To make sure it doesn't flood every time it rains

only consider handicap accessible area/launch site

Consider linking the swim training offered at the local YMCA and water safety when kayaking/canoeing/boating.

Equestrian accessibility

I have only been a few times so an experienced person could provide info better than I can.

Wondering who controls the rights to the waters; is it the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; or is McDuffie County leasing the rights from the Corps? Who funds these proposed amenities?

Make it accessible to those with disabilities and children. We miss out on a lot of trails because they aren't accessible

Ea6r of getting kayaks on and put of water

No

People are going to relieve themselves whether or not restrooms are provided. Even an outhouse is better than providing nothing and having people 'go' in the water or shoreline woods.

Unsure

No opinion

Sadly, it is difficult to get people in this area to get very excited about new things and ideas.

Consider trail extension and signage going out to Holiday Park

Just allowing access points to the river but to not over commercialize it. That will only bring more trash, noise ... take away from the natural beauty of the river

Not aware of any.

A sandy area for kayaks to launch out of the way of motorized boats. Many people that have motorized boats do not have the patience and get angry when kayakers are launching at the main boat ramps.

Does the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers control access to these waters? Does McDuffie County lease the rights from the Corps of Engineers? Who builds/funds the amenities, Corps or McDuffie County?

I think in addition to bathrooms being added at Hwy 78, it would be a good idea to incorporate Bath Houses. Folks on the River all day may want to "wash off the River" before heading home or out to dinner.

Add in canoe/kayak storage buildings at access point locations... maybe at campgrounds, too

Picnic tables and lockable garbage bins should be added to these areas. Solar lighting around boat ramps and parking are welcoming when you are traveling at dusk.

Be sure there are plenty of take out points along the way. Kayaks are fun, but you need to get out and stretch regularly.

The whole area needs better signage, and the infrastructure might need more work than you think.

May want to consider dog friendly stations such as waste baskets for dog families...

WMA hunting is not very well regulated or patrolled. It's a lot of acreage to patrol. There would need to be an information campaign for hunters, especially deer hunters that come in out of area. Shine Russell's performed that service years ago.

Numerous access points along river: medical emergencies, weather exits, rescues, exit for folks just too tired to go on!. Distance markers and maps/map boards posted along the way. How is the cell tower availability? Emergency communication service?

Mile markers along river would give paddlers an idea where they are at all times. Mile Markers are great if you have to call for a rescue and give 1st responders an idea where you are. There are some high banks on south side of river starting at the Big Bend. Elevation climbs will challenge bikers a bit more there and it makes for great scenery both from the bank looking down and river looking up.

Public Hunting for most of the year. June, July, August would be best months to use this waterway.

Keeping that stretch of River open from falling trees could be a challenge.

Promote clean waterways by having trash receptacles, also consider life jacket loaner stations. Consult DNR or WMA about how to clear river between 78 & 80

What if the water level gets low? In some seasons of drought, the "backwater" areas can get low.

Staffing/manpower for maintenance of bathroom, parking areas, and other public use facilities.

Bike Trails



Biking is a great form of exercise. It gets your heart rate up, is easy to do as a solo or communal activity, and is an accessible way to enjoy the outdoors. Also, there is a strong correlation between cycling and camping, which could benefit McDuffie County two-fold.

There is undeveloped acreage at both the Raysville and Big Hart Campgrounds (below) that could be developed into trails, which could be used for bike riding as well as hiking.

Off-road cyclists generally fall into 2 categories: mountain bikers and casual cyclists. Research shows that mountain bikers look for narrow dirt trails with curves and steep inclines, and are well-known for being great trail advocates, including doing volunteer maintenance.



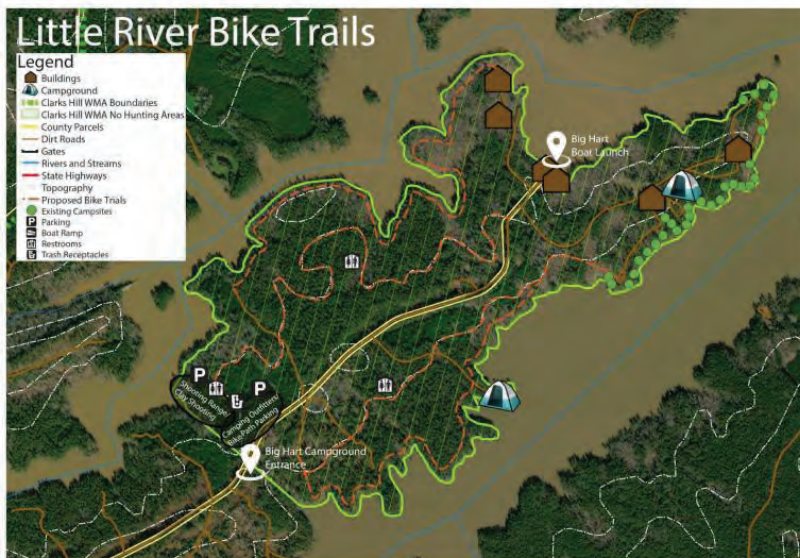
Mountain Biker



Casual Cyclists

Casual recreational cyclists are generally more comfortable riding on flatter, paved surfaces that aren't shared by vehicles, and may feel comfortable riding on unpaved dirtpaths if the terrain is fairly hard packed. Campgrounds offer a great opportunity to ride bikes because they are self-contained areas without a lot of vehicular traffic. Kids are often seen riding bikes in campgrounds for this reason.

Because the area is not particularly steep, and because there are mountain bike trails established nearby, Big Hart Campground may be a good opportunity to create bike paths for more casual riders. A network of bike trails could use existing roads as well as new paths, connect campgrounds and day use areas, and take advantage of shoreline and woodland scenery.



Proposed Bike Trails at Big Hart Campground

Since the existing boat ramp, picnic area and campsites are concentrated at the end of the peninsula along the shoreline, this leaves the rest of the campground acreage available as a cohesive unit for trails. Having more of the

shoreline accessible by bike creates more access for bank fishing, as well.

Establishing a Campground Office and General Store at the entrance to Big Hart Campground (midway down the peninsula) would serve multiple purposes. It would help establish a clear delineation between the hunting areas of the WMA and the campground; and could offer visitor assistance, camping supplies, and gift shop. Plus, it could incorporate an additional parking area for visitors who were interested in biking the trails, thereby leaving existing parking areas for boaters, fishermen and day-use picnickers.



Campground Office – Devil's Fork State Park, SC

A target shooting or archery range could be incorporated to provide an inclusive space to promote shooting sports and also provide a safety buffer between the campground and the rest of the Wildlife Management Area.

Q. 3a. What do you like about this concept?

Please do not combine the bike and equestrian trails...at most places it is a very bad idea.

Plenty of room for everyone

Adding the bike trails and the store would be great for this area.

Casual bike trails for families camping

I like the bike trail designed for family friendly and joy riding use. Many of us enjoy riding for scenery and fun without the hard core exercise and risk of long or difficult rides. I am 59 with an artificial knee but enjoy riding about 5 miles a day through the downtown Thomson area. I also bring my bike on beach vacations and ride a few hours a day to see the scenery and visit local businesses. I would enjoy bike trails that are safe and conducive to easy riding.

Need to make horse trails.

Casual cycling, campground office

Better use of land by adding trails

This is a good concept.

Target shooting

Love the idea of creating an office/gift shop/edu center/range! I like creating the space for bikers to park (freeing up space for the boaters).

Great! Having bike trails in McDuffie county would be a huge plus. My husband and I love to ride and though we have some nice, rural roads to ride on in McDuffie county, it still doesn't quite compare to getting to ride out in nature on trails.

I think expanded biking is a good idea, although horses and bikes on the same trails can be problematic so it would be optimal to separate these if possible. Horses and hikers go well together and hikers can also have conflicts with bikers due to mountain bike speeds.

Road network, parking, and picnic areas already exists.

It has greater likelihood of being feasible than a kayaking trail because of the number of campground visitors.

Easy bike paths for families, making good use of the unused land in the campground, connecting existing roads with bike paths, a campground store/HQ to buffer with the WMA.

I like the offering of causal riding options. A family may have both types of riders and there will be an inclusiveness afforded by accommodating both on neighboring areas.

Several things I like about this. First, my family of 4 frequents both McDuffie campgrounds and the only place for my kids to really ride their bikes is in the road. I would love to give them a safer space. Also, most other campgrounds we frequent (River Falls at the Gorge and Elijah Clark State Park) have a front store. It is very nice to have a place to purchase some possible left behind items. Having a gift shop too makes it fun and some of the merchandise could be used to promote our area. Just as a side thought, we LOVE the little putt putt place at Elijah Clark. I would love to see this at one of our campgrounds

Target shooting and archery range.

There is a need for trails of this sort in the area

Creating jobs and better terrain

The campground office & general store very good idea; the safety buffer aspect between the campground and the wildlife management area also a very good idea.

awesome

All of it.

Casual bike trails would encourage those with limited bike shops to exercise. There are no trails for the casual rider in the area but many more challenging trails are available not too far away for your mt bikes

The idea for bike trails is nice. I really like the idea of adding a shooting range. There is currently no safe area for a shooting range in McDuffie County. The proposal of having a welcome center/office at the entrance to the campground property is also a huge improvement.

Big Hart has great potential to be almost like a min-state park. I like all of it

Trails for casual cyclists, connecting campgrounds to day use areas

Buffer between hunting area and recreational area could reduce conflicts. Shooting and archery ranges are great IF they're staffed with range officers.

Target range

Everything!

No opinion

I don't bike so no comment. It would be nice to keep bike trails separate from hiking n horse trails

That sounds wonderful

There are many bike trail systems and not as many equestrian trails. Would be nice to have separate horse and bike trails.

Don't want to hear a shooting range if I am there to relax.

Trying to work with multi purpose trails

I would love to see biking promoted in this area. If the DNR would cooperate, there are a number of areas that could be used for biking trails.

Increase trails

Great idea

I'm not a cyclist, but seems like a good plan. If I do ride, I would be more of a casual rider. I like the idea of the welcome center/store. We camped for 30 years at Big Hart until it closed.

All ideas are very good, especially office/general store

Love the thought of a shooting range!

I like the possibility of casual biking trails which can be used for individuals as well as families. Mountain biking isn't an activity I participate in but know others who would love a local trail. The idea of an outpost/office area would be wonderful. The possibility to provide educational activities for all ages in multiple areas is a definite positive.

Love it.

Great concept; establishing the proposed campground office and general store.

I like the Casual Biking concepts. There are so many families in the area that would enjoy these types of paths. I like the idea of a Campground office/General Store.

I like it all

I like the idea of a visitor center. We travel a lot and always bring back a little something from our trip. Its a great place to educate visitors of all the area offers and what wildlife they can possibly see while using the different trails.

Sounds like a great use of the campground for very casual riders.

We really need safe bike trails around here; most people I know travel a good distance to ride their bikes. I would love to see some paved trails for casual riders like me.

Offers more to the community than sports..offers family related activities

I love the idea of a general store.

Something for the casual biker that's not so intimidating as some of the more aggressive trails. Convenient access and a store for drinks/water/refreshments is great.

Having access so close to home

Flat wide bike trails for casual bikers with trails connecting to boat launches, exits along river, fishing and camping spots, restrooms, parking lots, points of interest, etc. Trails should be able to loop back and forth for short and long riders and to avoid backtracking.

Biking and hiking add to the camping experience and will attract more users to the campground

I like the general office and multi use facility (check out charlie Elliott wildlife center). Archery yes, firearms I'm not sure.

There is a great opportunity to put in a quality mountain bike trail system and as another option you could extend the trail to the WMA on Smith Mill Rd and incorporate some very technical/challenging trails, as it gets very hilly in that area.

Great idea, like all aspects of it. Target and Archery range would be welcome addition in this area. The archery range at Clarks Hill WMA is nice but is difficult to get to.

I particularly like the campground office and store. The idea of a building such as this creates limitless opportunities. A portion of this building could even be used as a campground lodge for the campground manager/host.

I think it is a really good idea for many different hobbies and interest.

Potential increased access to shooting sports

Q. 3b. What do you not like about this concept?

Not liking commercialism

It would be nice to have a trail between campgrounds to attract riders that like more of a challenge.

Loud gun shots will frighten the horses.

Shooting range - need more details. Is this self serve or would there be someone to manage it?

Gun ranges are loud and may be disruptive to others trying to get away to nature.

There is no mention of bike rental/blke parking areas. This should be included in the plan.

I don't like the idea of creating trails that would need to rely on volunteer efforts to be maintained.

It does not seem safe to me to use shooting/archery as a "safety" buffer. Also shooting is very noisy. I think this idea will lead to user conflict.

More parking would be needed if attraction grows significantly. Close proximity to the wildlife management hunting area. Thrill seeking cyclists may not be interested due to the lack of hilly terrain.

None, I like it all.

Not sure that the goft store etc would be profitable venture at this time. Favor casual for our paved bike trails over more challenging.

Good concept.

Well designed multiuse trails should also accommodate horses

Unstaffed shooting range would risk attracting an undesirable crowd and creating safety issues.

Shooting range would keep equestrians away. Spooks horses. Archery would be fine

I just wish there could be more campsites.

I prefer to hike so would like use of trails for that also

I have the same concern for this option as the water trail infrastructure. I'm concerned with the maintenance and upkeep in the future. How many years will it be before the funds are gone and everything is allowed to fall in disrepair?

I am not sure you have enough space for those wanting more of a workout but not really into mountain biking. You need to have 10-15 miles of trails and it doesn't look like you have that. Maybe include this along the kayaking trail.

I am concerned about the cost to McDuffie County. T would need to eventually be self sustaining.

Do people who are out to enjoy the outdoors want to listen to a shooting range? I do like the idea of a place to teach gun safety and hunter safety classes. What about cost of liability with archery /gun range?

The interaction with WMA hunters could be an issue

Some concern with having enough visitors to support the full concept. Bike path is a no-brainer. If there is a facility should look at having water equipment (kayak, canoe, stand-up paddleboards) available for rent to draw more people

Bike and horse trails should not come into contact with each other.

I am a horse lover. Will any of these trails include equine?

It is not necessary to have an additional buffer between the campground and WMA. There have been no safety issues at this location for 15-plus years. Firearms shooting ranges are noisy, so be prepared for complaints from other users. Proximity to water may be an issue for lead contamination from the shooting range. Staffing for the range would need to be addressed. There are already 2 state-maintained archery ranges in McDuffie County that receive limited use.

Q. 3c. Is there anything the students should consider or be aware of as they continue to develop ideas for bike trails at this site?

No

Please restrict trails to horse riders and others for bicyclists.

I know a few regular road bikers and very, very few joy riders in Mcduffie. This would have to be advertised in and out of the county.

Consider horse trails also. I have a saddle club that would use this facility a lot.

Stated above.

Mountain bikers like speed and speed is an enemy of horses and hikers. Also, trails for child bikers should be separated from horses and adult mountain bikers. ebikes and other motorized vehicles should be prohibited.

Consider the construction of a bike/skateboard park as well.

Wide, flat trails would be nice

Many places have shared trails between horses and bikes but in my experience creates problems as mt bikers ride fast and easily so horses. Motorized bikes should not be allowed on trails definitely

Bike parking, restroom access, potable water are all appreciated by families

Electric bikes are NOT equivalent to pedal power. Keep them with other motorized vehicles and off 'bike' trails for safety sake.

Unsure

Gravel cycle paths are preferable to dirt or pavement. Pavement reflects too much heat, dirt paths are affected by rain too frequently

Keep it simple and not over commercialize everything

The image of the campground office/general store is very appealing; I'd personally enjoy going there to dine such as a restaurant open to the general public, dining room overlooking the water? Big Hart or Raysville either location -- the view of water would be the sizzle!!!

Creating nice picnic area's along the paths would be great, as well as Restrooms and plenty of trash cans to cut down on littering

We stayed in a campground that was close to a shooting range. We will not visit again as the noise took away from the relaxing trip we had planned. We are a family that actively hunts so we're not against the range. It was just to close. My suggestion would be to have it a good distance from the campground.

The proximity to hunters and shooting sports will be a negative. The noise from the shooting really takes away from the quiet that hikers/cyclists crave.

You'll need to do a lot of advertising.

I would look at traffic patterns on home game days at UGA. That highway is a major conduit. That brings DOT issues for turn off lanes, etc. but it would also bring possible revenue to make a structure/gift shop more self sustaining. I would love to understand what the build out of the plan would do for the intersection of the highway and Big Hart Campground.

Try to keep bikes and horses on different trails. They usually dont work well together. Bikers do not like to ride through horse manure.. some horses are scared of bikes.

Safety and security- who will patrol it for safety and cleanliness?

Look at other trail systems in the area with FATS being the best system in this area by far.

How much to build the campground office and store? How would it be paid for?

There is hunting around this area. This will likely need to be addressed.

Making sure the trails stay clean :)

Trail maintenance needs

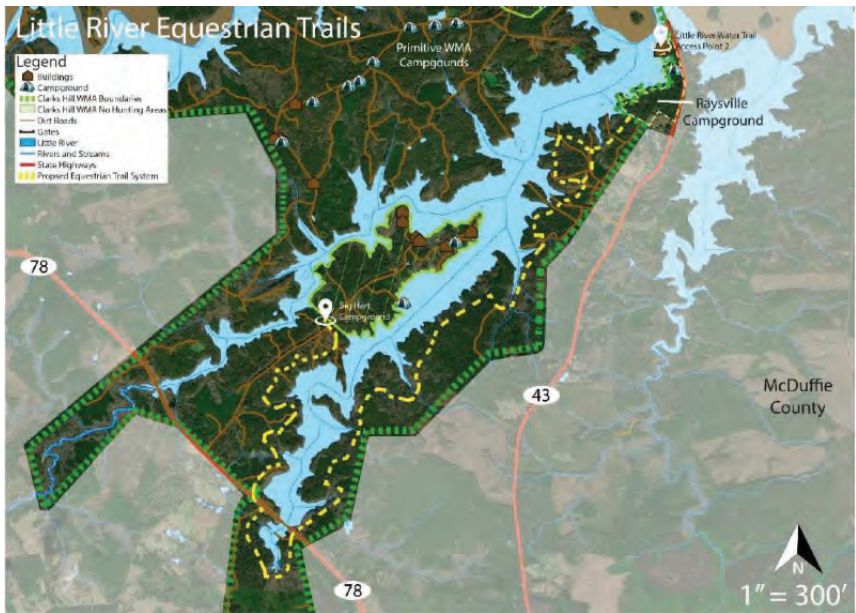
Equestrian Trails



According to our initial research, we found that equestrian riding and the overall horse industry has a \$215 billion economic impact on the United States. The terrain, beauty and campground accommodations in the Clarks Hill Lake area could appeal to equestrian riders interested in using a trail system for day trips or extended overnight trips. Most horseback riding trails are laid out in loops and linked to other trails, allowing for a variety of excursion lengths.



However, horseback riding requires a significantly longer trail system than hiking or biking, generally 5-25 miles. Most equestrians can ride a 5-mile trail in about 1-2 hours, and riders prefer a trail system with a variety of routes that allow rides of 2 to 3 hours, a half-day, and a full day or more. Therefore portions of the Clarke Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area would likely be needed to accommodate equestrian trails.



To accommodate the suggested minimum distance needed for equestrian trails as well as trailer parking and stable infrastructure for overnights, the charrette team proposes a 8.5 mile multi-use trail (shown as yellow dashed line) connecting Big Hart Campground and Raysville Campground. The main stable and equestrian accommodations would be located in Big Hart Campground. The trail would consist of a series of loopbacks to offer riders multiple length trails depending on how long they would like to ride and camp. Because this trail system would need to utilize a portion of WMA land that is currently prioritized for hunting, accommodations would need to be negotiated if this type of trail system is pursued.

Q. 4a. What do you like about this concept?

- Having beautiful horse trails to ride on and a place to overnite...stalls and hookups for living quarter trailers.

- It's a great idea to have more trails and it draws money to the county area

- It provides more opportunities for the local horse riding population to enjoy the public lands. Hunting, while an important sport, is on decline, and horse back riding is on the rise.

- Equestrian trails would be a great asset to the campgrounds for campers and locals as well.

- New riding and camping opportunity for equestrians

- I like the fact that equestrian trails are being considered

- I know nothing about this.

- Love it! we need more horse trails. our local saddle club would ride there often and would camp also if camp sites were developed.

- Horse trail with stalls available would be an amazing addition!!

- I like the fact that opportunity is being considered for horseback riding.

- Riding trails

- I like that the trail connects the two campgrounds.

- Great mileage and route for horse riding.

As a horse rider primarily, I appreciate this approach to a longer trail system. Many riders would be OK with a 5-6 mile trail for day rides, but horse campers would prefer the longer trails. They should be multiuse for horses and hikers, but preferably not allow bikers. If bikers are allowed, signage will be needed to show that bikers yield to horses and hikers due to safety issues. Most horse riders are fine with restricted access to trails during hunting seasons as this is common in national forests and even in some state parks.

Horse presence already exists outside the city. Connects horse owners with other activities like the Fox Hunt. Potential revenue opportunity, like the others.

I'm not a horse person, but I like giving those who are the option to enjoy their sport in McDuffie County. I like that it connects our two campgrounds.

Sounds good

Great effort to include equestrian recreation in this plan. Riders and horses alike may enjoy the increased shade and water access in all seasons. This will Gets folks out of the hot fields and walking circles of the horse farm that they may be accustomed to and encourage exploring WMA areas both here and state/country wide

The loopbacks.

It sounds like a great opportunity to create beautiful trails with all types of horse back riders taken into consideration.

Bringing more opportunities for tourism

Connecting Big Hart & Raysville Campground with the 8.5 mile multi-use trail another great idea.

I don't know about horse trails

Great to have an equestrian trail

Adding more to do.

Horse back riding areas are shrinking for to land development. Additional trails and camping much needed. Our club volunteers to maintain trails on the lake and would help. Definitely longer trails a plus too encourage those that come from other areas and there at camping opportunities.

The route is nice. I like the proposal to connect two county-maintained campgrounds.

I like the layout, but I don't have a strong opinion one way or another.

Equestrian trails! If there were enough loops to give us ~3 hours of riding a day we would gladly make a weekend trip there from the Raleigh NC area. Of course, the distance means that camping for me and my horse must be available. I can dry camp but appreciate at least water and power. I also appreciate a bath house at the equestrian campground.

All

Would love to bring the horses, camp and ride. Variety of trail routes and options is good.

I love having connected loops to ride, making a trail longer or shorter. If your horse is suddenly not doing well it's invaluable to be able to dismount and take a shortcut back to camp and your trailer.

Love it. Equestrians are lacking in places to ride and camp

The simple fact of having another choice to go ride. Most trail riders are always looking for more places to ride!

It would offer horse back riding opportunity for locals and visitors. A great new place to go!

Horse camping would be great but 8.5 miles is not enough to camp. Local day riders is all you would have.

Horse stalls

Enjoy riding along the lake. The more miles available the better. We generally ride 8-15 miles in a day. Would like options to be able to ride multiple days to make the trip worth it.

Horses trails would be awesome in this area. Camping site with electric hook ups water and restroom would be ideal... Bussey really needs restrooms and electric hookups..

Sounds good and trails can be ridden in opposite direction and it looks different. Again , nice to keep horse trails separate from hiking n biking for safety.

I think that that would be great the people who ride bikes the equestrians and the people who like there are a lot of people who hiked 10 miles at a time the guys that ride bikes do 30 miles this would be great if you can get into the WMA

Love this concept. There could be additional cut throughs that could lengthen the amount of trails. AH Stephen's, Watson Mill and Hard Labor creek all have fabulous setups.

I love the idea of new horse trails and campground. Stalls are nice but not a necessity. Water access for horses on trails is a must. For us to travel to camp there I would want at least 20 miles to make it worth the drive.

Willingness to consider horse trails

Our area has many riders. The Belle Meade trails are well used. Again, if the DNR would cooperate, other trails could be developed. I have been told that I could not ride on the dirt roads on the Management Area. I reminded the ranger that the sign said only foot traffic was allowed and that the horse was certainly using only his feet/hooves. He threatened to arrest me if I did not leave or if he caught me there again.

Increase trails and Maintenance

Love it. We need more equestrian trails in this area

I would love a horse trail system but do agree it needs to be 5-15 miles.

Would love more trails, preferably easy to follow trails. Like steep rises and low dips too.

I like the fact that it is even being considered. I've ridden at Hard Labor, AH Stephens and Watkins Mill. We also equestrian camped at Hard Labor and plan to at both the others in the near future. 20 mins from my house!!! Would use frequently.

I like everything about this concept. There are many equestrians interested in these trails locally. And overnight camping as well.

The tranquility of riding along a river and enjoying the wildlife and nature. Clarks Hill is beautiful! I love the concept of stables to safely secure my horse and the campground close by.

I love camping with my horse and would love to see many more trails for riding and areas to camp.

New trails are very very welcome to riders

Love it! As an equestrian with such limited trails in the area this is a wonderful idea. It would be supported not only by use but with workers - we live to pitch in the support trail systems.

The length of trails seem adequate. Love that it will have horse stable for overnight camping.

I don't ride horses more because I don't own horses. I know equestrian lovers would love a local trail. It provides trail riders an option for enjoying nature as they ride the trails.

I think its great, if the students are not familiar with, they should check out Bussey Pointe, they have a great area that many equestrians in the area use.

Another great concept connecting the two points Big Hart to Raysville, 8.5 miles trip.

No opinion

I like it all

Love to see more options like this. There is a park in Columbia county just like this..

An 8 mile trail would be a game changer for Clarks Hill in McDuffie County. Connecting Big Hart to Raysville would redefine the use of the lake for our area.

Not much into horseback riding. Again, the notion of improved convenience and access is encouraging.

An additional trail system close to home

8.5 mile trail with numerous loopbacks.

Uses a lot of underused Corp land and scenery will be fantastic.. Equine campsights are a must to increase revenue and usage.

A horse trail to connect the two campgrounds would be really neat.

Hooking up the two campgrounds sounds like a fantastic idea.

Interesting concept, not sure how many people would utilize it.

I like the length of the trail and the long amount of terrain that one would get to ride.

I like that there would be stables for overnight, out of town guest. I like that it is 8.5 miles. As you have stated before, it could stand to be a little longer. I think you will get a lot of day riders, like me. But as far as overnight guest, they will want a longer trail to ride.

n/a - not a rider :)

Potential increased tourism to McDuffie County

Q. 4b. What do you not like about this concept?

Multi-use trails can be dangerous for riders...especially if bikers are allowed to use the same trails. They come at us fast and if they come from behind, the horses spook. The bikers often wear ear buds so they can't hear us, either. Hikers love the let their dogs run loose...who wouldn't? Even when there are signs posted that say all dogs must be kept on leashes. People ignore this. And not all dogs respect horses....and not all horses have a lot of exposure to dogs. This can be a disaster. PLEASE keep all trails separated.. Everyone will be happier and most likely more people will want to use these trails. Thank you.

Shared trails some times causes conflict between people that use the trails bike people don't like horses or horse people don't like bikes

I would love more miles of trails :)

hunting area, multi use trails

While I understand multi-use is preferred, horses and bikes on the same trail is not a good situation. Depending on the terrain more than 8.5 miles of trail would be needed to encourage horse campers for a weekend versus a day ride only. 8.5 miles is less than a 3 hr ride Not worth a long drive Not worth camping for several days Would be great if somehow could be linked to bussey point trail Trails would have to be closed while managed hunt is being held. Not a problem but has to be posted well

Nothing to add

Would like longer trails and camp sites for weekend camping.

More/longer trail options. We usually ride 10+ miles.

I do not think that this Studidea should be incorporated in this park design trail.

I worry that using hunting grounds will not work for horse trail riders.

I question the multiuse concept.

More trail miles would be needed. The infrastructure needs would be more expensive.

Still need buggy trails as well as riding trails

It goes through hunting areas

A combo of 3 to 5, 5-10 and 10-20 mile trails would be better.

Horses can be seen as an upper class activity, leaving little for those with lower incomes to do.

Just need as many miles as possible. Primitive camping okay but more would use of water (esp for horses) and electric for campers.

This would be the most expensive concept. I wonder if an 8 mile equestrian trail would be enough to entice riders to visit.

It seems that there will be some additional costs in parking and upkeep that will only target a small group of users. But again the students work is good

We don't really need a stable we are happy to set up a high line or portable corral. Not all equestrians are comfortable doing this but at least 75% of my riding buddies are. It's not that I am against a barn, but they are expensive and I can't imagine that revenue from stall rental is going to cover the infrastructure expense. I would hate to see the bridle trail idea scrapped because it's too expensive to build the barn.

Nothing

25 miles is bare minimum for us to be interested in bringing horses to camp and ride. Less than that may work nicely for locals to day-ride.

Wish it was already in place

To make it a destination for equestrians to camp and ride you need at least 15 miles of trail and campsites with hookups.

Additional trails by there lake and thru the WMA would be wonderful.

Multi use doesn't work well for everyone. I like an alternating system where certain trails are for horses on even days and others on odd days.

Horses and bikes do not mix. All the extra stalls are not necessarily, especially for day use people, High lines can be used until you see how many people camp with there horses. I have ridden for 20+ years and try to avoid multi use trails as much as possible- people don't follow the rules " of beware of the riders"

Being close to hunting areas. My horse spooks at gun fire.

Wish trails were longer. I love camping at Big Hart and, like everywhere, it is very hard to get sites. I really hope the equestrian center doesn't take up any of those sites but would be an addition of sites. I would be a frequent camper at both as well as day rider.

Nothing

Sharing trails with WMA is a major concern of mine. Perhaps locked in time frames can be established to ensure both riding and hunting are not being performed at the same time?

Love it, when will it be ready?!!!

Ideally, it would be longer than 8.5 miles, but that's better than nothing

Same concern as with the previous two options. How long before the money to pay for maintenance and upkeep runs out? Who will be responsible for making sure this doesn't happen?

No opinion

Not sure it is worth all the money that will go into this part of the project. We spent 75% of the summer last year in a Columbia county park..only saw horses twice on their horse trails

I would like to see hiking be an integral part, not just secondary. I would also like to know more about how we protect the trail from hunters. The hunters coming out of Atlanta are not the best stewards of the WMA.

If start at Big hart and finish at Raysville, how do you get back to your trailer?

1. You need to loop the equine trail !!!!! the loop trails do not need to be far apart usually just out of sight gives the feel that you are not on the same trail you rode out on. Unlike kayakers, most equine riders will not shuttle the large rigs and it requires extra persons to watch horses on both ends of a one way trail. 2. You cannot ride a horse from Big Hart to Raysville Campground. Big Creek is in the way. Equine riding across the highway bridge on Hwy 17 would be a terrible idea.. I doubt any one will pay for an equine only bridge to cross Big Creek that flows into Clarks Hill Lake. That highway bridge is long and the water can be 100 yards or more wide.

Horses would have to cross 4-lane highway twice, unless you could go under the hey 78 bridge.

I'm not a horse person so can't offer anything here.

I do not know how well it would work for the trail to not loop back around. Equestrian riders will need to return to camp. Would this trail length over to Raysville be short enough so that riders can make it there and back in one day?

There is no mention of trailer (horse) parking and overnight camping for them. Many will like to have the campsite nearby to the stable, along with a bathhouse. Many horse campers will also be fine with tie lines for the horses at the campsite.

There are already many horseback riding options within a 45 minute drive from McDuffie County. This trail would not be very long by horseback riding standards and may not be used because of the length. The trail would negatively impact hunter opportunity in the area. Also, crossing Hwy 17/78 two times on horseback could be problematic for both the riders and vehicles. Construction and maintenance for creek crossings will need to be addressed.

Q. 4c. Is there anything the students should consider or be aware of as they continue to develop ideas for equestrian trails at this site?

Please keep all trails separate. If you are a rider, biker or hiker you understand this. If you don't do any of these, please listen to us. I know it looks good on paper to combine us, but it is a very dangerous idea to do so. Thank you.

limit the amount of gravel on the trails

Please consider: Minimum of 25 miles to attract riders outside the local area (even from out of state) Planning, design and build by a professional trail builder - not a general contractor Consider applying for a Recreational Trails Program RTP grant for this project Crucial to plan map design and build a sustainable trail system that will last for decades Large day parking area designed for large rigs Campground with water and electric USFS had a book published that has great info I would very much like to discuss this with someone I've been involved with building and maintaining equine trails for a couple of decades with state parks and USFS Please discuss with experienced people as there are a lot more ideas — too many to include here

Nothing to add

Camp sites with water and electricity if possible.

Would love some picnic areas with corrals along the route, and possibly a horse swim area. Thanks!

Students should be aware of the care and space needed to accommodate the horses.

There are several groups, the most prominent of which is Backcountry Horsemen of America that provide many volunteer hours on equestrian trails. This group is also very good at designing sustainable trails. Establishing sustainable trails is very, very important.

Fewer people own, or have access to, a horse than own a bike or boat

Would other modes of transportation be allowed on trails, such as atvs, golf carts, etc.?? If not, how will this be monitored as to keep these vehicles off of the trails so they do not destroy them?

Law enforcement will need to be engaged to patrol the area for the safety of the riders and the maintenance of the area's natural beauty.

I would think that portion of the WMA would need to become off-limits to hunters.

As above ,trails for horse drawn carts and buggys

Water and place to park Riggs

Parking for big rigs. Pull through camp sites... At least a few

I know equestrians prefer single-use trails, but this route would be an outstanding addition to the bike trail system. As a multipurpose trail, it would also be a great potential option for trail running.

Many if not most equestrians are comfortable sharing the trails with bikers and hikers. Most would rather not share with motorized vehicles. I've been to equestrian campgrounds with poles set in the ground to high tie off of and I've also been to campgrounds that have small corrals set up for horses. Both options are more cost-effective than a barn. We go up to Fairystone Park in VA to camp and ride. There are only about 10 miles of trails open to equestrians. But, the trail from the equestrian campground to anything else is 1.5 miles long so, for most horses, that's about a 30-minute ride each way to access the other trails. Then you often ride on park roads to go from one trail to the next so we can go there for a weekend and ride basically different trails each day.

No

I would rather have camp sites with horse corrals or room for us to set up our own at or adjacent to our trailer, over a common stable area for all visitors' horses. Need a plan and a place to dispose of manure and used bedding. Most horse trailers with campers in them are 20-30' on the floor, so large enough spaces and room to maneuver are important.

Trails next to a steep drop off can be extremely dangerous with horses.

Barns are nice and spacious parking as rigs can be rather large. Lighting is also very nice to have. Well marked trails are very nice as well

Surely they already know trails have to be alot wider, and higher tree limbs than hiking trails. Just throwing that out there.

Over night horse accommodations

Unsure

Consider shared trails with bikers and hikers. It's being done successfully in many places. Education of users is key.

Shallow water crossing so horses can drink

Would enjoy access to the lake for watering horses during the ride. And in the summer swimming the Horses is fun.

Mounting blocks along trails

Stalls should be 12x12 to accommodate larger horses and have high enough dividers that horses don't have other horses being able to reach them. Some camps have nothing but 4 ft 3 board fence separating horses in 10x10 stalls and there is an aggressive neighboring horse the submissive horse gets hurt or cannot rest. It's ideal to have camping close enough to barns that owners can keep eye on horses. High line tie out poles by trailer camping is ideal if that can be done. Much of the enjoyment from horse camping is having horse with you.

And equestrian campground would be great. Stables could be planned for later with tether lines or areas for small portable pens located behind each campsite. Stables could be built once income is established from the equestrian campground. Water and electric hookups are preferred but could be added at a later time. Pull through sites are nice, but nice large back in sites will work fine. Please research the other equestrian state park setups.

water access please

Trail should include multiple access points for people to pick up injured/lame horses and riders. Access to fresh water should be available for every hour of riding, communal water troughs should be discouraged due to possibility of disease/virus transmission.

It would be safer for the horses if it was a trail just for them. While an occasional person walking a dog or an occasional person on a bike is not bad. You will find that if it becomes an obstacle course of avoiding bikers and walkers - EQUESTRIANS will go somewhere else to ride.

Students should consider having areas along the trail for picnics. Also installing hitching posts for highlines in the camping areas.

Definitely want cut backs and loop. I would recommend more miles of trails to make it more worth the time for someone to camp and ride. AH Stephens State Park has great facilities and length of trails.

Restrooms and adequate trailer parking

Make sure there are restrooms at the beginning of trails. Also, a bathroom and shower for overnight camping. Thanks.

No opinion

Lots of parking space is needed for trailers.

There are nesting areas along this trail for Canadian Geese that would need to take their habitat into consideration.

Separate trails for hikers, bikers and equestrian, as much as possible. Ok for trails to cross at intx as long as well marked. Primitive campsites? Or water, bath electricity? We are ready to ride, let's git er done!

You can inexpensively put up Highlines (2 tall 6X post with a high rope between) to tie horses while camping instead of stables to reduce initial expense of the project at the equine campground. Parking for day riders needs a large area to accommodate large trailers and trucks. Local equine clubs are great at designing the equine trails and are willing to assist.

I would think this would be a large undertaking, to cut an equestrian trail that long, in that terrain.

Tie lines for horses would help with the initial cost. If you didn't have to build a stable right away, most horse people would be ok with this. Especially if you have a bath house.

manpower for trail maintenance, impact to other user-groups, public safety crossing highways

Final questions

Q. 5a. Now that you have seen a variety of trail ideas presented, which type of trail system stands out as the best option to pursue, and why?

For me it's horse trails and the money they bring in

Equestrian trails.

I would use the bike or walking trails.

Equestrian.

Equine

The concept for building a bike trail at Big Hart would differentiate the campground from others and may substantially increase use. If there is kayak use on the Little River, we should build on it. I haven't heard too much about it. My adult kids have used it but not sure if it is popular. It seems to be the lowest investment required for improvement but may not bring in many more people by itself. However, if we could market a boating, biking, kayaking, fishing multi-campground complex, it could be a big draw to the area for families looking for the full outdoor experience.

Our local horse clubs would like to have more trails to ride for day rides and weekend camping

Kayaks and cycling like the Augusta Canal have already been done so it could be modeled in a similar fashion

All 3 options cater to different types of recreation, and I would likely use all of them. Most likely horse trails the most, river second, and bike trails third.

I think that the bike and walking/hiking trails are best to pursue at this time.

None of these. Walking only

Riding trails, most of all

Kayaking for sure (it's already there and just needs to be upgraded). And the recreational biking trail, as it can be used for hikers, too. Also, it may be more doable without the need to negotiate with the Wildlife management folks.

Would utilize the kayaking and biking ones very frequently. But of everything presented I suggest improving access 1 for kayakers would be the very best thing to first pursue. I'm sure I along with many others would utilize this much more if made safer/more accessible.

Of course, I am a horse rider and hiker so I would love to see the equestrian trails and campgrounds included. I think the water trail is also very important and would allow campers to pursue several different activities, riding, hiking, canoeing, kayaking.

The water trail (1st) and cycling (2) options have more appeal to me than the horse trail. The infrastructure requirements for the water or cycle trail would be less expensive than the infrastructure needs for the horse trail. Secondly, I believe more people, from outside the county/community, would be willing to experience the great outdoor amenities via a bike or boat.

As of right now, the horse trail stands out as the best option along with updates to river trail.

Bike trails are the best option for physical health; they are the most economically accessible to McDuffie residents at this time. Many families have multiple bikes but they don't have access to horses or kayaks.

River trail and bike trails would make best use of current resources and appeal to the broadest community.

Equestrian

I think all three are best to pursue because there are delineated areas that can easily accommodate all three separately but with interrelated access and amenities

I love the first 2. I know a lot of people who would benefit from either of those

I would like see all this done! Great ideas!

All of them because multi trail use is our future

Whichever will bring more use and money to McDuffie

Pursue all 3 types of trail system simultaneously because: recreation is different to different people; horseback riders will appreciate the equestrian trail; the canoe/water path connecting Area 1 & 2 will be appreciated by the water sports enthusiasts; the walking/hiking trail will require less equipment for the participant; I would choose walking/hiking trail personally.

So many equestrians are looking for places to ride or camp. This would be a great addition!

Paving for hiking, walking and bikes.

Of course I favor equestrian trails and camping. Then water like kayaks and canoes

The improvements to the existing kayak trail seems to be the most feasible and easy to complete quickly. After that, biking or multi-use trails are most appealing to me.

Walking and biking. Ties in to Archway Health and Wellness IWG and seems like the logical next step. This continues the idea that Clarks Hill can be used for more than hunting and fishing

The option that would make me drive from the Raleigh NC area is equestrian camping and trail access. I think equestrians have more limited trail access and I wouldn't mind driving to ride somewhere new.

Equestrian

Equestrian, because riding is my preferred way to enjoy the outdoors.

Multi use trails are ok. But can be hazardous to riders on horse back. Not all people are courteous and can spook horses.

Equestrian, because we need more trails!

I would love the horse back riding trail

Equestrian trails and camp because that's what I love (smile)

So only one can be pursued? Another multi use trail?

It all sounds really wonderful

Equestrian trails and campground would be my choice. They are limited at state parks so a ew option is needed and would be used.

equestrian - there are fewer equestrian trails than anything else.

Always interested in additional horse trails and camping options with horses.

I think that all of them have great potential. The water trail is in frequent use.

Horse back riding and kayaking

Equestrian trails and camping

The water trail systems are most appealing as there are no comparable options in the area. Cycling trails would be appealing to some campers, but most serious cyclists are going to travel to more purpose built trails. There is a strong equestrian presence in the area, mostly associated with the Belle Meade Hunt, and existing horse trail systems on private farms that can be ridden for a small fee.

Would love to see the equestrian trails because we are very limited in this area of places to ride our horses.

I am an equestrian first , also enjoy kayaking and have been hiking some. I do enjoy camping and have a nice horse trailer with a small living area but I need sewer hook ups water hook up and electric.

The water trails for kayaking and canoeing would probably (in my opinion) would be the easiest. My favorite and one I personally would use the most is the equestrian.

Horse trail system could be a multiuse trail that allows hikes, bikes and horses to share the trails. Local equestrians & bicycle groups volunteer to provide help on trail cleanups after storms and expansion of trails.

I am an avid equestrian. But I think all the ideas are great!

Trails for horses

I would love the equestrian option but reality is that there are many more mountain bikers than pretty much anything else around here.

All of them.

Biking and walking trails would be the first ones I chose to visit.

I personally would love them to pursue the equestrian trails because there is a very limited number of trails in the area and equestrian trails can be used by bikers and hikers alike.

All 3 type trail systems should be considered simultaneously; recreation is different to different people; the water streams will appeal to some; walking/hiking will appeal to a group who prefer land as opposed to being in the water; the horseback riding and bicycle trails to other groups; the concept should include all 3 types of trails; keeping it simple: walking/hiking doesn't require a lot of equipment for the participant, therefore walking/hiking is my personal choice.

I prefer the Casual Bike Trails

Bike trails seem like the best option. More people own a bike then own a horse and a bike is easier to transport.

The water and bike trails. There already there and the cost to perfect them would be far less then creating new ones.

No reason not to do the water trails - we have the water. I think bike trails will be the best investment. While there are lots of horses around here, I just don't know anything about that community.

I think the walking...biking..and paddling options are the best for our community

The best option is the Kayak trail because it is already established and therefore the easiest to implement. The most exciting and a fundamental game changer is the equestrian trail. Connecting Bug Hart to Raysville on the shoreline would redefine the use of the lake on the McDuffie County side in a way nothing else could.

Both the water trail and bicycle trail are very encouraging. Both have a significant local following; providing more convenient access and parking is also a fantastic idea.

Hiking and biking because the demand is so great and the expense relatively low.

Multiple loop backs. The more variety, the more people will come. Need points of interest along the way or a destination. Mix it up, not just ride out and back.

all of them . I bike, Hike, ride horses and kayak. Long term this will greatly increase usage of this area of Corp land. It will increase land values in the area.

Family friendly bike trails seem the easiest way to go, but the water trail sounds like a lot of fun.

The kayak trail is the easiest to do and would be a great asset to the area. The bike trails have the potential to be big and could bring in campers if done correctly.

Water trail system would offer biggest impact for least amount of investment. Improving access at HWY 78 parking and launch area would be a big step forward to enabling a vendor or shuttle service between both points.

Equine Trail---This is my heart. But a close second would be the kayaks. We don't really have a place to rent now without driving to Augusta.

Kayak/canoe water trail along Little River (Hwy 80-Hwy 78); moderate difficulty bicycle trail at Big Hart Campground area. These trails have the most positive impacts with the least negative impacts to existing user groups. Also, they will require the least maintenance and establishment cost.

Q. 5b. Do you have an idea for a potential trail system that was not presented, or a final comment?

I don't think the equestrian trail fits into the overall concept. I suggest that we look into connecting the campgrounds with a bike trail even if it is packed dirt or somewhat primitive. The equestrian trail is a niche that takes interest, planning and a substantial investment by the user and the park.

Just consider camping areas for the equestrian trails.

Thanks for working to create more opportunities for recreation!

Please do be sure that the trails, whatever type, are designed to be sustainable. A well designed trail will last for years if used properly, but a poorly designed trail will degrade quickly and require many hours of volunteer effort to maintain it. It cost more upfront to do a sustainable trail, but it pays off in the long run.

Right now there seems to be more folks interested in ATV and golf cart trails, IF folks would utilize them correctly and not destroy them

Possibly parallel the Benton McCay Trail in Fannin county Ga

Maybe add a zip line system.

Accessibility for disabilities and any restrooms need changing tables in BOTH sexes restrooms. Dads change diapers too.

Partnerships with representatives each group of enthusiasts to design the areas decided upon would be beneficial. Try to keep bikers and horses separate.

There is potential to extend the kayak trail to include end points at both Raysville campground and/or Big Hart. With the proposed welcome center at Big Hart, that may be a great additional access point that could provide an easy and short shuttle service to current access point 2.

Good work!

I suggest you consider some multi-use trails that allow hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Of course, I like equestrian only trails but I feel like they are a harder sell.

Thank you for considering equestrian trails!

4 wheelers

Thank you. I hope you are successful.

Trails could have connectors and include part of the WMA.

We need a place to camp and ride horses. Currently, I have to travel to other counties to trail ride. I live in McDuffie County and there isn't any place to camp and ride. Many others in my horse club have expressed interest in trails at Big Hart.

Consider multi use trails for hikers and horseback riders. That way you can get longer length trails for both interest.

It would be pretty cool if McDuffie County could do something like North Augusta did with the Greenway Bridge.... Have a Trail Bridge that would connect the trails, ultimately allowing bikers to go from Big Hart to Raysville

Great presentation!

The kayaking trail along the river with hiking/cycling trails added seems to me to be a better option.

Pet options

Don't forget the access through the water treatment intake road. I don't know if that would be another emergency access point since it is directly across from the Raysville Fire Department. I would also love to see the Raysville Marina incorporated somehow to help its sustainability.

1.Possibly expand the group camp area at Big Hart for Equine only camping. 2.Loop the equine trail. 3. Bike /Hike trail along Section 1 of the LRWT will provide a safer experience paddling with access to a trail from the water in case of capsizing, snakebite, heart attack, etc. Water trail mile markers will assist rescue if needed.

See previous comment about lengthening the trail to the WMA on Smith Mill Rd.

Has the team considered a hiking or equestrian trail that parallels the Little River water trail?

Any of these options will likely enhance the county's use of this land.

A hiking trail parallel to the water trail was not addressed. A hiking trail could be closed to hiking during high-use hunting periods and would improve hunter access along the Little River portion of the WMA.

Almost done! You can click the left arrow to go back and review previous pages, or click the right arrow button to submit and finish.

McDuffie County Trails Charrette | Final Survey + Responses

Developed by Jennifer Lewis and Devin Butler, UGA-CED Center for Community Design & Preservation

Available online via Qualtrics platform during June 23 – July 2 2021.

Results presented as submitted.



The Center for Community Design and Preservation at the UGA College of Environment and Design (CED) is leading a virtual design charrette (aka design workshop) for McDuffie County.

The goal of this charrette is to explore outdoor recreation opportunities in McDuffie County around Clarks Hill Lake, including:

- **enhanced boat launches along the Little River Water Trail,**
- **concepts for hiking, biking and equestrian trails, and**
- **improvements to Big Hart and Raysville campgrounds.**

After an initial input session with local stakeholders via Zoom, CED students spent a day researching and developing concepts related to kayaking, biking, and equestrian trails within the Clarks Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area. The students presented their initial concepts via a YouTube video shared on social media and collected public feedback via an online survey.

The results of that first survey informed our final round of designs, which are presented in full here:

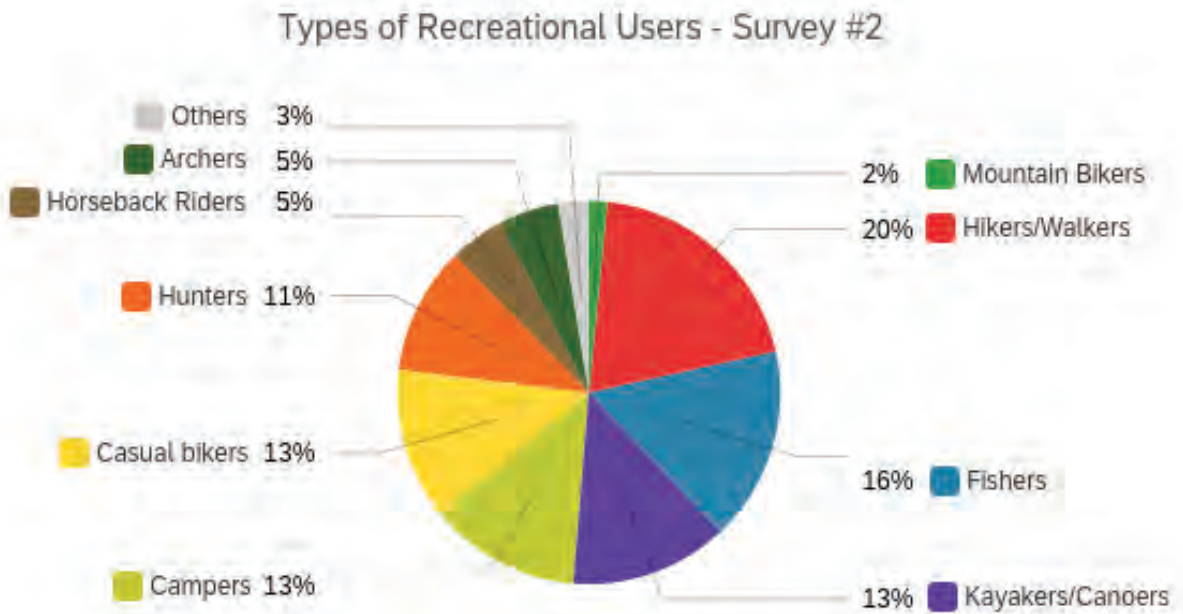
<https://youtu.be/Ag4bfSZdyOc>

To share your feedback on the final concepts, please click the button below. This survey is anonymous and should take about 10 minutes. Thanks!

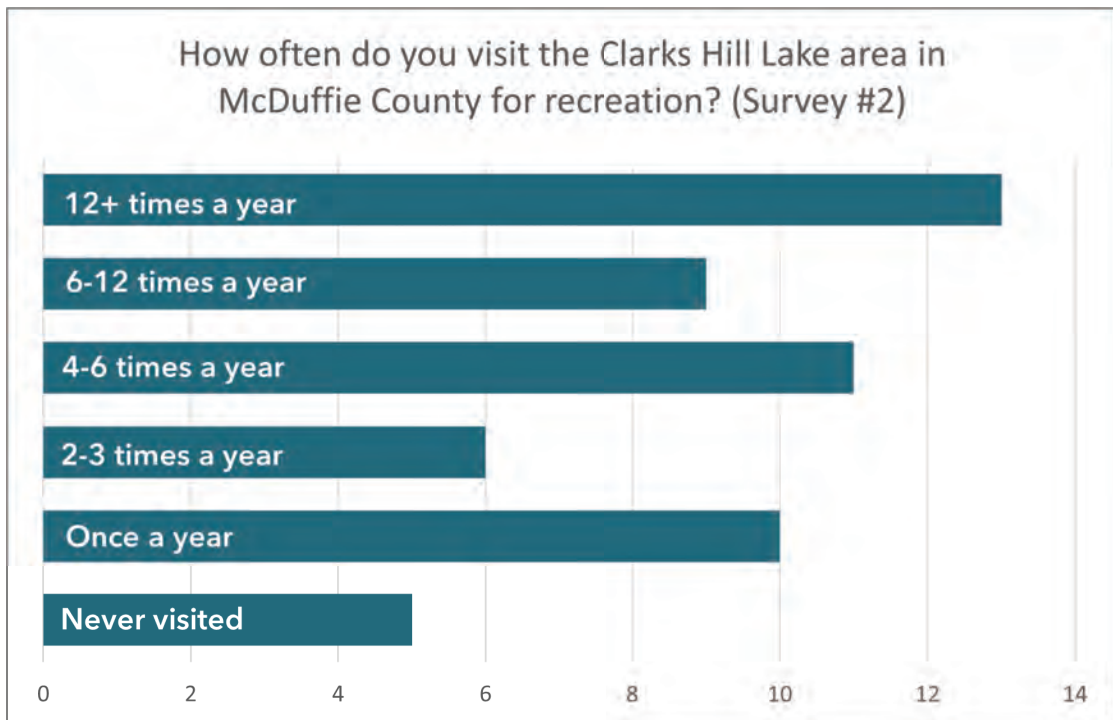
{next page}

User Profile

What type of recreational activities do you engage in? (choose all that apply)



How often do you visit the Clarks Hill Lake area in McDuffie County for recreation?



Overview

Our charrette concentrated on the Little River Water Trail between Access Point 1 at Highway 80 and Access Point 2 at Highway 78 as well as the McDuffie County campgrounds at Big Hart and Raysville. This survey presents a summary of design ideas for:

1. new and improved boat launches
2. new hiking/biking trails, and
3. equestrian trails/equine camping

There are opportunities for feedback after an overview of each section.



{next page}

1. Water Trail improvements

The Little River Water Trail is over 20 miles long and winds through the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area and into Clarks Hill Lake. The water trail has four water access points in total, and all but Access Point #3 are in McDuffie County. Access Point 1 (Highway 80) does not yet have any amenities. Access Point 2 (Highway 78) includes a gravel parking lot, a motorboat launch, and a water trail kiosk. Access Point 4 is in the Raysville Campground and includes a parking lot, motorboat launch, a fishing dock/pier, and a few kayaks for rent.



Based on initial feedback, there is positive support for a launch at Hwy 80 to accommodate self-shuttling, and interest in an outfitter to facilitate boats and shuttle service. Restrooms, kayak launches, and a hiking trail are also desired.

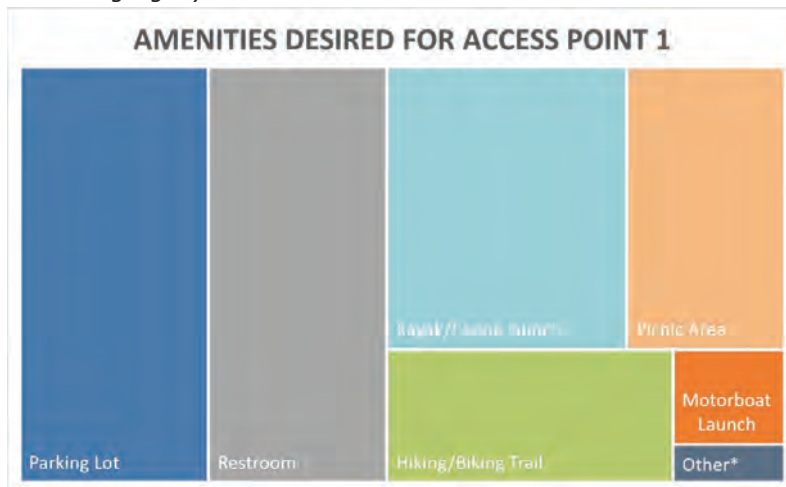
The following additions to the Water Trail are recommended:

- Access Pt 1: Parking lot, motorboat ramp, separate kayak/canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area
- Access Pt 2: Expanded parking lot, handicap accessible kayak/canoe launch, outfitters for boat rental/shuttle service, restrooms, picnic area
- Between Access Pts 1 and 2: A 10-mile hiking/biking trail
- Access Pt 4: Expanded parking lot, handicap accessible kayak/canoe launch, swimming beach, shoreline boat launch, restrooms, picnic area

(These concepts are described in full beginning at the 4:58 mark in our video: <https://youtu.be/Ag4bfsZdyOc>)

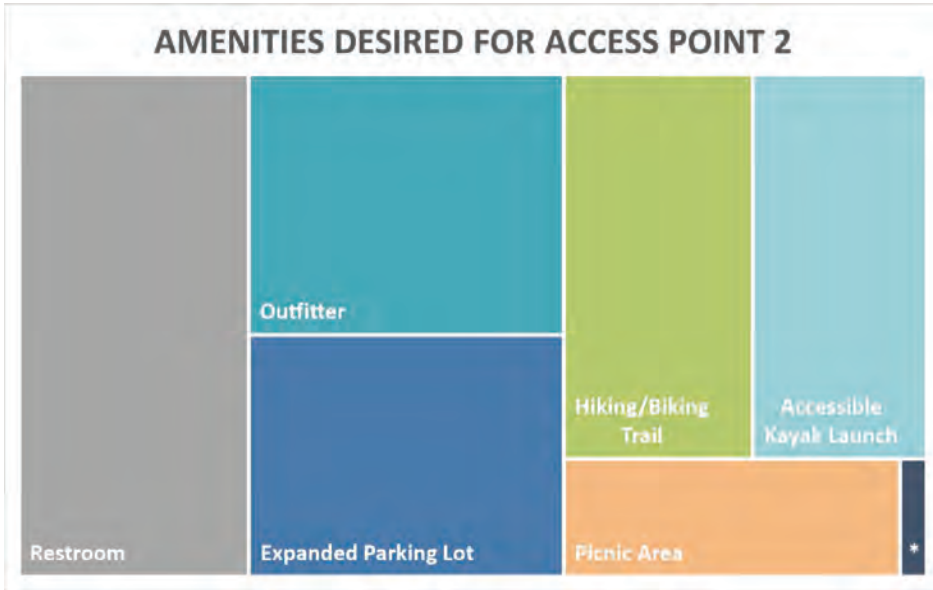
Q. 1a. What are the top 3 amenities you would like added to the Water Trail at Access Point 1 (Highway 80 bridge)?

Click to highlight your choices.



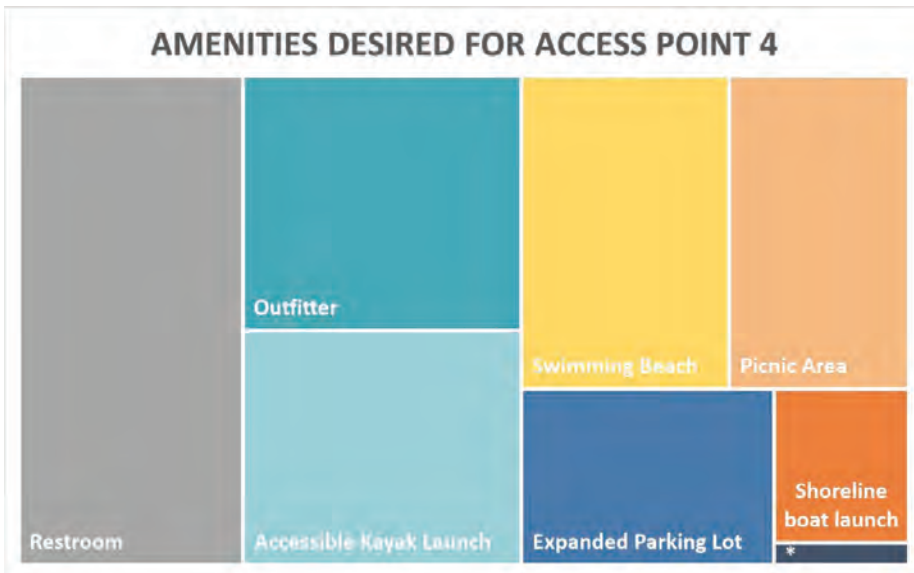
**"Other" answers = hiking only trail; Handicap Accessibility*

Q. 1b. What are the top 3 amenities you would like added to the Water Trail at Access Point 2 (Highway 78 boat ramp)?



*"Other" answer = hiking only trail

Q. 1c. What are the top 3 amenities you would like added to the Water Trail at Access Point 4 (Raysville Campground boat ramp)?



*"Other" answer = Trails

{next page}

Q. 1d. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or modifications to these Water Trail ideas?

great plan/ years to implement/thanks for your work

This is a wonderful idea

All the ideas I have seen in the video are great. We need more hiking trails that we close to camping ground areas and I love the ideas for equestrian trails closer to our area.

All amenities should be handicap accessible from the outset. There is no reason to exclude the handicap from the beginning.

Great work!

Need to put in our long term plan & budget for it

Thanks to the UGA students for doing such an indepth study of this project.

Concerns that the water trail between Access point 1 and 2 is often blocked by downed trees. Who will keep the water trail passable?

For any improvements at HWY 80 access pt 1, team will need to also focus on security in that area. Current location is remote and would require monitoring to provide a safe environment and reduce vandalism.

I like the idea of having a walking/hiking/biking trail throughout along the river.

The beauty of this area is that it is so natural. Hiking/Biking trails may take away from this. I love the idea of kayak/canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area, and even the outfitters/shuttle possibility. A swimming beach would be nice at the Raysville area.

Picnic areas and parking at all

2. Campground trails and amenities

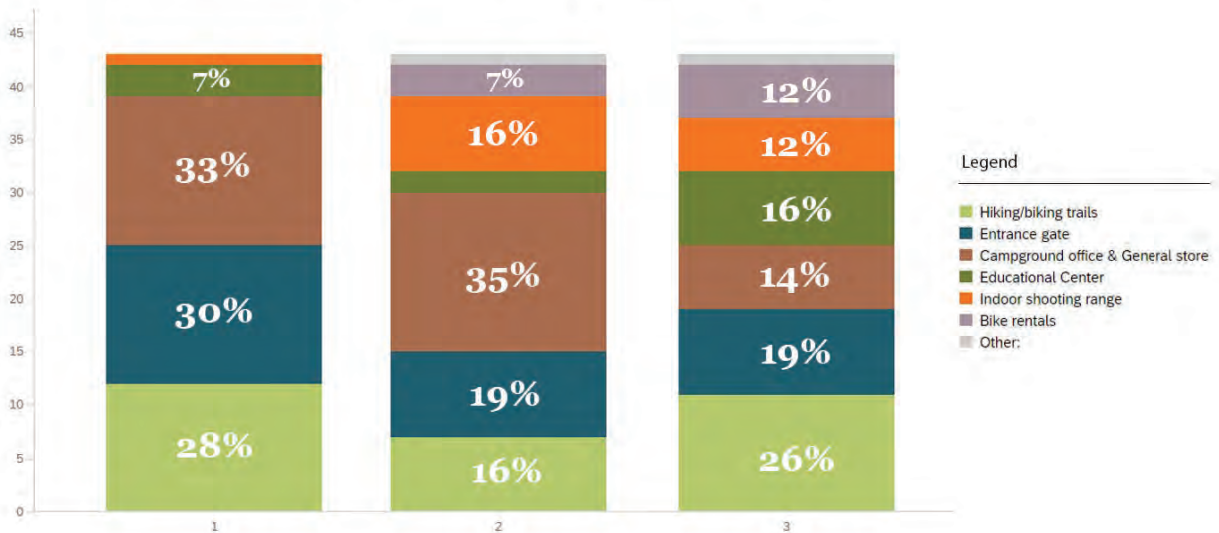


There is undeveloped acreage at both the Raysville and Big Hart Campgrounds that could be developed into trails for bike riding as well as hiking. Campgrounds offer a great opportunity to ride bikes because they are self-contained areas without a lot of vehicular traffic – especially good for kids!

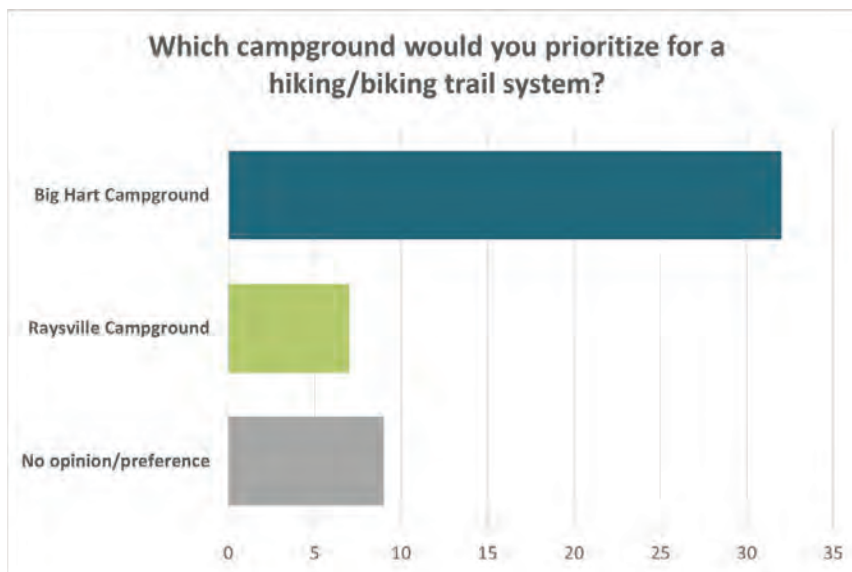
At Big Hart Campground, approximately 10 miles of fairly flat, looping trails could be created. Erecting a formal campground entrance gate would delineate the campground from WMA hunting areas. An office and general store could provide camping essentials and bike rentals, and an educational center could promote shooting sports and wildlife education. At Raysville Campground, there is less available acreage for additional amenities (beyond what has been suggested at the Access Pt 4 boat ramp), but 4-7 miles of hiking/biking trails could be added. (These concepts are described in full beginning at the 12:56 mark in our video: <https://youtu.be/Ag4bfSZdyOc>)

Q. 2a. Rank the proposed amenities for Big Hart Campground by clicking and dragging the options below from top (most desirable) to bottom (least desirable):

Top 3 amenities proposed for Big Hart Campground



Q. 2b. Which campground would you prioritize for a hiking/biking trail system?



Q. 2c1. Why would you prioritize trails at this campground (Big Hart)?

Bigger area. And more wildlife

Nicer campground

larger area for trails and to accommodate more campers that will not negatively impact hunting activities on the WMA

The size; more interesting and challenging trails

Easily accomplished

Another added feature of a great campground

Raysville appears to be in a better position for accommodating horse trailers and equine camping.

more land

It seems to be the most in use

This is a large area with undeveloped spaces that need improvements.

Seems to be more room to explore.

More usable space outside what we think of as the campground area

There is more land to create more trail systems.

It has the most usable land area for hiking and biking.

Lots of room and away from a busy road. Interesting topography that borders the lake. This would be a very scenic area.

More use and would compliment the campground

It's more accessible to town and I think it has greater potential.

There is a greater length of trails available and Raysville already has many amenities. I am mostly interested in equestrian trails which would be more desirable at Big Hart.

There is more room and you do not have the residential aspect surrounding

Big Hart seems like a bigger area than Raysville and would more easily lend itself to these amenities for more people to use.

It is a larger area which allows more distance on the trails.

Plan indicates more acreage for the trail development at Big Hart.

Seems to be a central location.

I DON'T HAVE TO TRAVEL AS FAR TO GET TO THE CAMPGROUND

Q. 2c2. Why would you prioritize trails at this campground (Raysville)?

I believe this would enhance this campground

Current accessibility and use in an already developed Raysville Area. It's low hanging fruit. It would also encourage a build out of infrastructure in that area which is desperately needed.

To spend time with family and have an area to hangout besides boat ramp launches.

More convenient

Closer to where I live.

Q. 2d. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or modifications to these ideas for campground trails and improvements?

"All great ideas for our community."

From what I have seen on the video they are great ideas

I would encourage a focused use of the shoreline between 78 and the Raysville camp group since this area is already an established commercial area.

"The proposals have obviously required a great deal of research input from quite a variety of recreational opinions. As an equine enthusiast/camper your planning has considered what would be in our best interest and I thank you for including us in this project as well.

There are a number of saddle clubs here in the SC Upstate who are very interested in adding this location to our schedules for 2022!!

Thank you!!

Debra G. Menting"

Make it easy to maintain

This team has done an excellent job!

Indoor gun range is great idea, but I would think expensive on insurance and liabilities and government environmental requirements - the indoor range in Harlem was not able to stay open. Staff gun range indoors or outdoors with a range officer. Give law enforcement and other public safety that is properly trained opportunity to work as range officers for additional income.

No.

We really like the improvements suggested for Raysville and Big Hart.

Bike trail at Raysville would be good idea.

I do not like the idea of adding the horseback trails. There are plenty of other equestrian opportunities in the area all the way up to Aiken, SC. Horses/horse trailers/pens, etc require so much more space than hiking/biking/boating/kayak/swimming, etc. It seems like it would be a competing choice rather than another recreation enhancement.

Keep the trash picked up

"Looks and sounds very good.

Now interested in the costs of construction and maintenance."

MAYBE ADD SOME BENCHES FOR PEOPLE TO SIT AND TAKE IN NATURE

{next page}

3. Equestrian Trails and Equine Campsites



The Clarks Hill Lake area is appealing to equestrian riders interested in using a trail system for day trips or extended overnight trips. Most horseback riding trails are laid out in loops and linked to other trails, allowing for a variety of excursion lengths. However, horseback riding requires a significantly longer trail system than hiking or biking, generally 10-20 miles. Therefore, portions of the Clarks Hill Lake Wildlife Management Area beyond the county-managed campgrounds would be needed to accommodate equestrian trails, and safety precautions should be implemented.

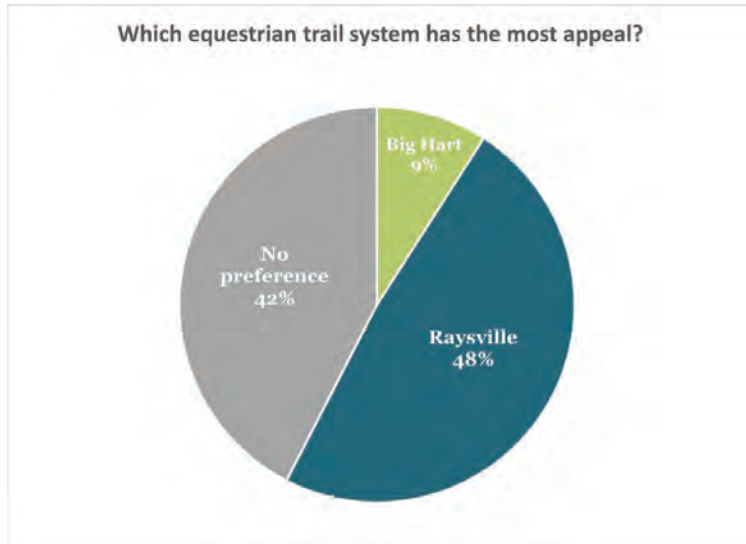
Respondents to the survey expressed a desire to come from out of town to ride the trails if they could camp overnight with their horses. If the 60-acre parcel adjacent to the Raysville Campground is annexed in, rather than it being used for 3 miles of hiking and biking trails, it could be designed as an equestrian camping facility. Our plan suggests a central area for grazing and trailer parking and 18 new campsites with a horse corral.

Proposed designs include:

- A 6-mile equestrian-only trail system on the Big Hart Peninsula (outside of campground)
- A 16-mile trail connecting the Raysville Campground to the Wildlife Management Area
- An Equine campsite on available acreage adjacent to Raysville Campground

Q. 3a. Which equestrian trail system has the most appeal?

Note: This question malfunctioned during the majority of the survey period, forcing respondents to choose all 3 answers rather than just one. The table below is recreated from the comments submitted as part of the follow-up question in which discernable opinions were given.



Q.3b. Why is this your preferred option?

- no opinion
- I believe that the longer trail would be used the most
- 16 miles on Raysville's campground
- No answer.
- none
- The previous question is messed up on the survey. It requires one to click all three answers instead of choosing one answer. My answer would have been "No Opinion."
- I don't think people would be interested in bringing a horse and trailer to an overnight destination for 6 miles of trails.
- no opinion or preference, system would not let me select just this option
- The longer trail.
- The survey made me choose at least 3 options so I had to pick all options.
- Bring more people into the community and hopefully be a more active spot.
- Big heart would be more practical for this.
- No preference
- 16 miles around raysville shoreline for equestrian
- It made me answer all three choices. I really don't have a preference. I am not one who normally rides a horse.
- Raysville offers a longer trail
- Convenient
- Big Hart does not offer necessary trail length, as I understand it?
- This question is broken. I have no preference, but it forced me to select 3 options.
- I like the idea of shoreline trails. I also like the idea of a lengthy trail.
- IT SOUNDS LIKE IT IS A GOOD OPTION

Q. 3c. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or modifications to these ideas for equestrian trails or equine campsites?

Again great ideas

I do not think equestrian trails are a good fit for this project. There are 3 existing equestrian trails (2 are public and one private) within 30 miles of this project site. Equestrian trails are usually exclusive use and will also negatively impact hunting and other opportunities already available on the WMA.

The Raysville Campground needs to make sure it has availability for very large motor homes.

I would prioritize in such a way that it was considered for future phases, not this one

I'm not an equestrian

no

No.

no opinion or preference, system would not let me select just this option

Will there be possible consideration for stalls in the future if this idea develops further? One corral may not be as appealing to some. I personally like to use a tie line between trees so would not need either option but just thinking of others.

Stables for horses, watering

Have individual spaces for guest to keep the horses

No need to duplicate same purposes of the two sites: Big Hart & Raysville; delineate each of the two sites in unique, distinctive recreational choices; spreads out the activities, broadening the areas for exploration for tourists as well as local citizens to enjoy McDuffie County in new ways.

None

NO

Final Comments

Q.4. Of all the ideas presented in this recreational trails plan, which concept are you most interested in becoming a reality?

Access point 2 being developed

Entrance to Big Hart and Camp ground store would be great.

Hiking trails near the camp ground and the equestrian trails.

Kayak/canoe launch at Access point 1

My family and I live near Raysville and we camp frequently at both campgrounds. I would love to see an outfitters/general store at both. I think they would stay busy. and Big Hart definitely needs a big entrance. I would also like to propose some kind of signage that can be seen from the water. Twice this summer already I have been leaving my cove in Raysville and stopped by a boater to ask what campground it was. They were from North Carolina staying at Winfield but they liked the area of the lake but had no way of knowing what campground it was and how to find it for reservations.

The trails on the Raysville peninsula.

Walking trails

hiking trails

Access point 1, access point 2 improvements, and trails system on either Big Hart or Raysville

Big Hart then Hiway 80

I am most interested in seeing the water trails become a reality, especially with the option to rent kayaks. It seems like something that the community would use the most, and it seems like it has the easiest upkeep. McDuffie is a lower income community, so having kayaks available to rent would be a cheap and easy way to get out and have fun in the summer.

All of these ideas are good, however, development of the Big Hart area is the one that I am most interested in becoming a reality.

Accessible kayak launch for disabled.

Paddle trail and multi-use trail along the bank. Currently there is no signage about kayak rentals at Raysville. If you see it when you book you know about rentals, but if you do not see it there then you find nothing in the campground to indicate rentals are available.

I would be most interested in the trail system at Big Hart Campground. Then, the kayak/canoe launches at the various river access points.

We think the upgrades to Big Hart would make it a regional camping destination which would bring more visitors to the area. We are multigenerational family living minutes from Big Hart and Little River and we really like the ideas presented for access points one and especially access point two. The suggested upgrades would increase our use of these areas.

Little River trail improvements including access point development (especially access point 1) and hiking trail.

Equestrian facilities/trails

I love the idea of hiking trails along the river along with some picnic areas and restroom options at one or two spots.

Big Hart Campground improvements

Walking/biking trails and the outposts with restrooms.

Hiking and biking

Equestrian campsites

Hiking trails

Any

Walking trails, swimming area, general store, and bike rentals.

I am interested in the entire concept becoming a reality. Recreation is different for different people; these concepts becoming a reality offer entertainment in the out of doors in ways that should appeal to almost everyone.

Better access at Hwy 80 for kayak launch.

The water amenities and activities

All of the above. The conceptual drawings are amazing and I think we should put them into a masterplan and fund the entire project in stages. I think that a general store at Big Hart is a necessity due to the campground being so far from other businesses.

THE WALKING/HIKING TRAILS, BIKE RIDING TRAILS AND THE GENERAL STORE

Q.5. Do you have any final comments?

Would love to see these improvements.

Looking forward what the future will bring.

I really love the idea of indoor shooting and archery as well as educational center. I would like to even see part of the facility to be able to be rented out for events, parties etc...

Please make sure every new a minute is handicap accessible!

Thanks for the great work. Now let's get moving to make the plan a reality.

I'm excited for this project.

This was a tremendous undertaking, so I highly commend the UGA students for their efforts!!

I will volunteer to help cut and work to develop the multi-use trail along the water trail.

I hope these plans can become a reality in the near future so my family and children can enjoy them!

The presentation was terrific, and we appreciate all of the hard work, research, and listening that UGA has done.

I thought you did a good job with the presentation and any and all enhancements will compliment the area.

Thank you for this opportunity to bring new ideas to McDuffie.

I am concerned about 1. Seasonal high use times - keeping the areas safe, well maintained, clean, closely monitored.
2. Off Season - the areas should still be regularly maintained and closely monitored for safety reasons.

No

Thank You for the excellent work being done for McDuffie County; these are exciting plans for our county!

You may look into A. H. Stephens Park in Crawfordville and consider adding stalls rather than a corral for keeping of horses if equestrian trails are included.

NONE

Almost done! You can click the left arrow to go back and edit previous answers, or click the right arrow button to submit and finish.

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Center for Community Design and Preservation
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