

Washington Grove Meadow Conservation Park – Developing a Vision



PARK PLANNING & STEWARDSHIP

M-NCPPC, Department of Parks, Montgomery County

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Town Council Briefing
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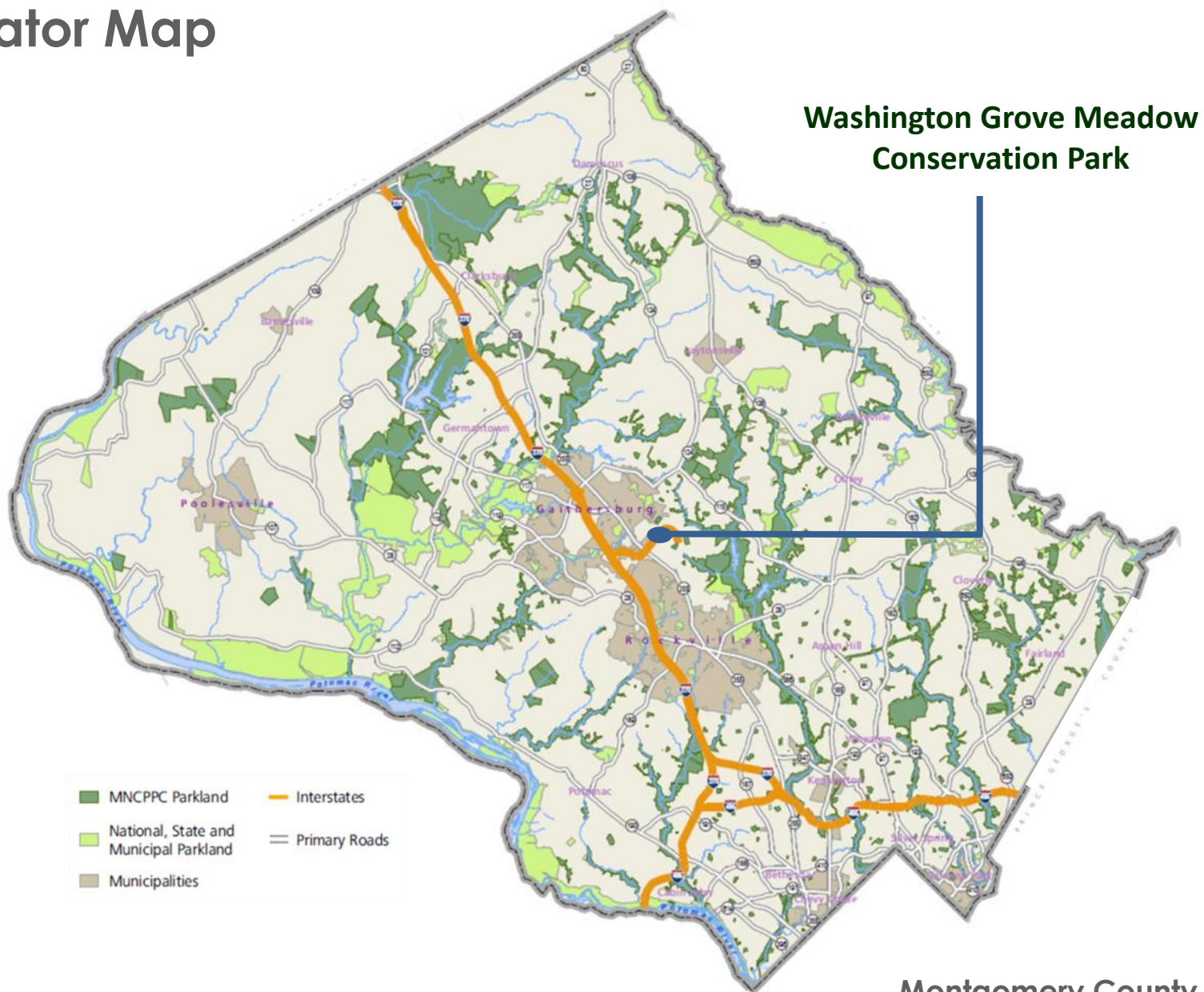


Agenda

- Background
- Operation and Use Planning Process
 - Collaborating to Create Vision for Park
 - Draft Operation and Use Plan Recommendations
 - Natural Areas
 - Cultural Resources
 - Natural Surface Trails
 - Interpretation
- Moving Forward
 - Next Steps
 - Partnership Ideas



Locator Map



Montgomery County, MD



Site Background

- **2002**

Meadow area added to the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* as a Heritage Resource action of the Planning Board

- **2007-2009**

Most of Meadow and additional hedgerow area dedicated to M-NCPPC after lengthy development process due to significant community input

- **2007**

Site designated as a Conservation Park within the park classification system

- **2009**

Initial Non-Native Invasive control undertaken along meadow edges; Operation and Use Planning initiated in collaboration with Town of Washington Grove

- **2010**

Property ownership lawsuit settled: Parks Department responsible for operation and maintenance as a Legacy Open Space park, Town owns underlying in-fee interest

- **2011-2012**

Significant NNI control efforts undertaken; O&U Planning process continued



Operation and Use (O&U) Plan Process

- Initial Site Cleanup, Resource Analysis and Initial Community Outreach – 2007
- Creation of Parks PDCO Team (Planning, Design, Construction, Operation) – 2008
- Creation of Liaison Committee by Town of Washington Grove – Spring 2011
- Park Plan Developed and Reviewed – 2009 thru 2012:
 - Multiple site visits with Town Liaison Committee and neighboring property owners
 - Multiple PDCO team meetings and site visits
 - Review of draft recommendations with Liaison Committee Chair
- Review of Draft O&U Plan Recommendations with Town Council and Committee – TODAY
- PDCO reviews and finalizes O&U Plan – November 2012
- Second Review with Town Council/Committee – Nov/Dec 2012
- Parks Senior Management Briefing and Approval – December 2012
- Move forward with Implementation

NEXT STEPS



Vision and Policy Framework

The O&U Plan envisions a park that:

- Preserves the rural, open vistas of the agricultural fields that formed the setting the historically-significant Town of Washington Grove
- Creates a native meadow habitat to support native meadow species
- Provides natural resource-based recreational opportunities
- Provides interpretive information about the natural and cultural significance of t Park

Policy Framework

- Plan recommendations will be consistent with the purpose of the Legacy Open Space designation of the property as a cultural resource
- Park classified as a Conservation Park (PROS Plan, 2012) that sets broad parameters for development and facilities appropriate for the park:
 - Natural areas acquired to preserve specific natural, archaeological, or historic featu
 - Provide opportunities for compatible recreation activities, such as trails, nature stu informal picnic areas, etc.
- Split ownership: Parks Department retains day-to-day decision-making and operational control as a park; Town retains right to enforce overall use of park
- Collaboration and Cooperation with Town key to creating a quality Conservation Park!



Operation & Use Plan Content

- Provides specific guidance to park operations personnel for management of:
 - Natural Areas
 - Cultural Resources
 - Natural Surface Trails
- Management Maps provide short- and long-term guidance

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Natural Areas Objectives

- Continue significant NNI control for next 5 years (minimum)
- Create native meadow habitat over time
- Reforest selected areas with mix of native deciduous and evergreen trees
- Preserve some woody vegetation within meadow for wildlife

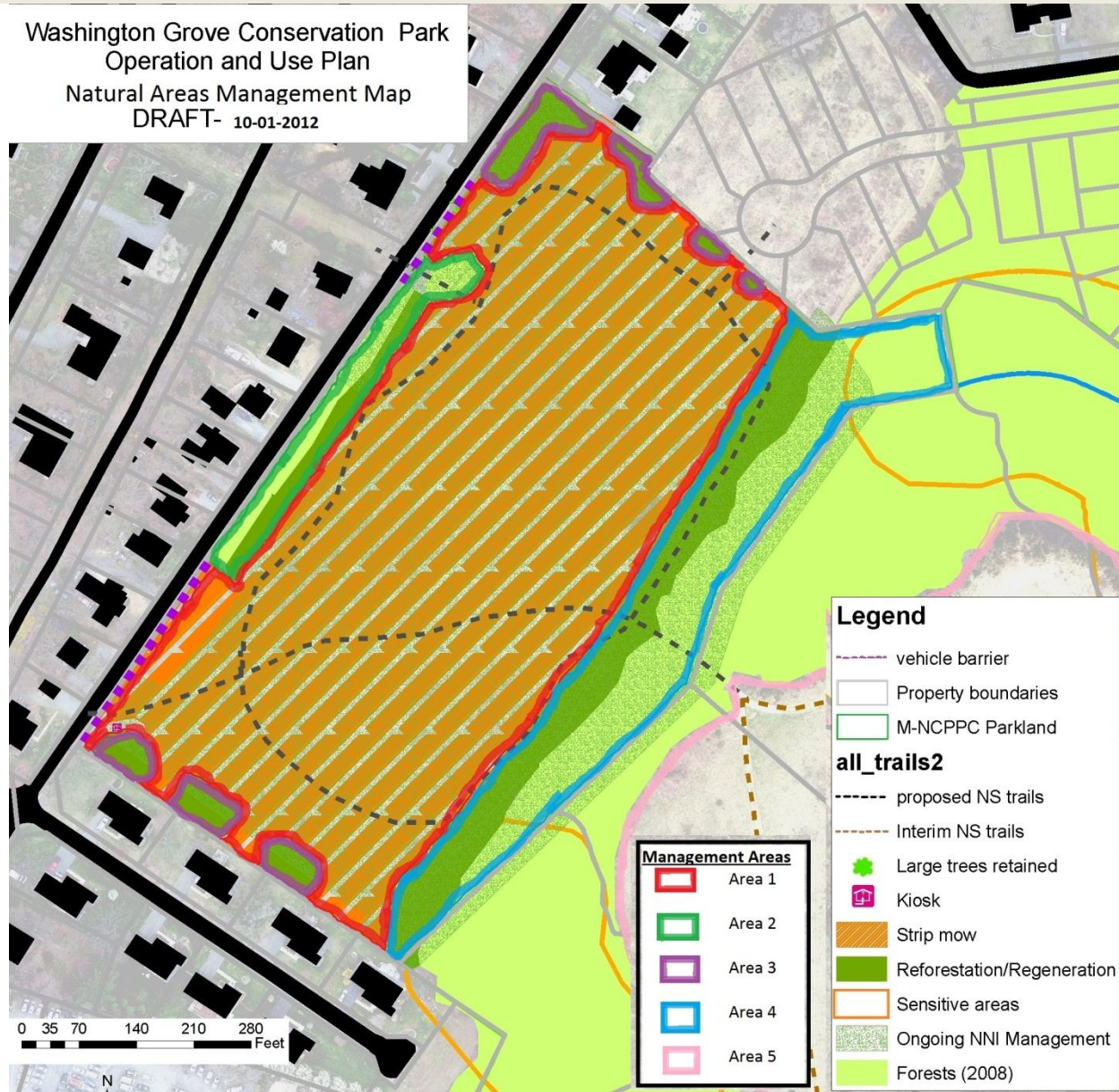


Natural Areas Recommendations

Entire Park

- Continue removal of NNI vines, shrubs and trees
- Follow protocols in Non-Native Invasive Plant Management Plan
- For tree plantings, suggested species list includes:
 - Red, White & Black Oak
 - Tulip Tree
 - Red Maple
 - Black Gum
 - Serviceberry, Persimmon, Sassafras, Redbud
 - American Sycamore
 - Eastern Red Cedar
 - American Holly
 - Virginia Pine

Washington Grove Conservation Park
Operation and Use Plan
Natural Areas Management Map
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Natural Areas Recommendations

Area 1: Meadow Habitat

- Mow entire meadow annually in late winter
- After NNIs under control, strip mow 1/3 to 1/2 of meadow annually
- Spot mow and/or spray for Canadian Thistle as necessary
- Control Tall Fescue with herbicides and replace with native meadow herbaceous species during annual mowing
- Keep all native shrubs and trees over deer browse limit to provide habitat variety within meadow

Natural Areas Management Map
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Natural Areas Recommendations

Areas 2 & 4: Forest Buffers

- Remove all remaining fence poles, barbed wire, trash and debris
- Remove dead, dying and hazardous trees as necessary
- Evaluate Ridge Road trees for long-term viability, remove those too close to road or utilities over time
- Restore and thicken forest buffers by planting staggered rows of trees to desired width, leaving paths for mowing to control NNIs for several years
- Plant understory trees and shrubs after NNIs under control
- Maintain open “windows” into the park at southwest and northeast ends of Ridge Road

Natural Areas Management Map
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Natural Areas Recommendations

Area 3: Boundaries Adjacent to Houses

- Place additional boundary markers if necessary
- Identify areas of encroachment and work with property owners to remove
- Plant pockets of native trees and shrubs to create broken buffer along developed park edges
- Coordinate with developers of Piedmont Crossing subdivision on required buffer plantings for consistency with rest of Park
- Check park boundaries annually for encroachment and maintain open “windows” into the Park from homes

Natural Areas Management Map
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Natural Areas Recommendations

Area 5: Piedmont Crossing Local Park

- In the interim until construction of Local Park on this site, provide minimal maintenance to protect native meadow and forest on Meadow Park
- Continue to remove Bradford Pears and other invasive trees in open area over time
- Mow entire open area annually while retaining native trees



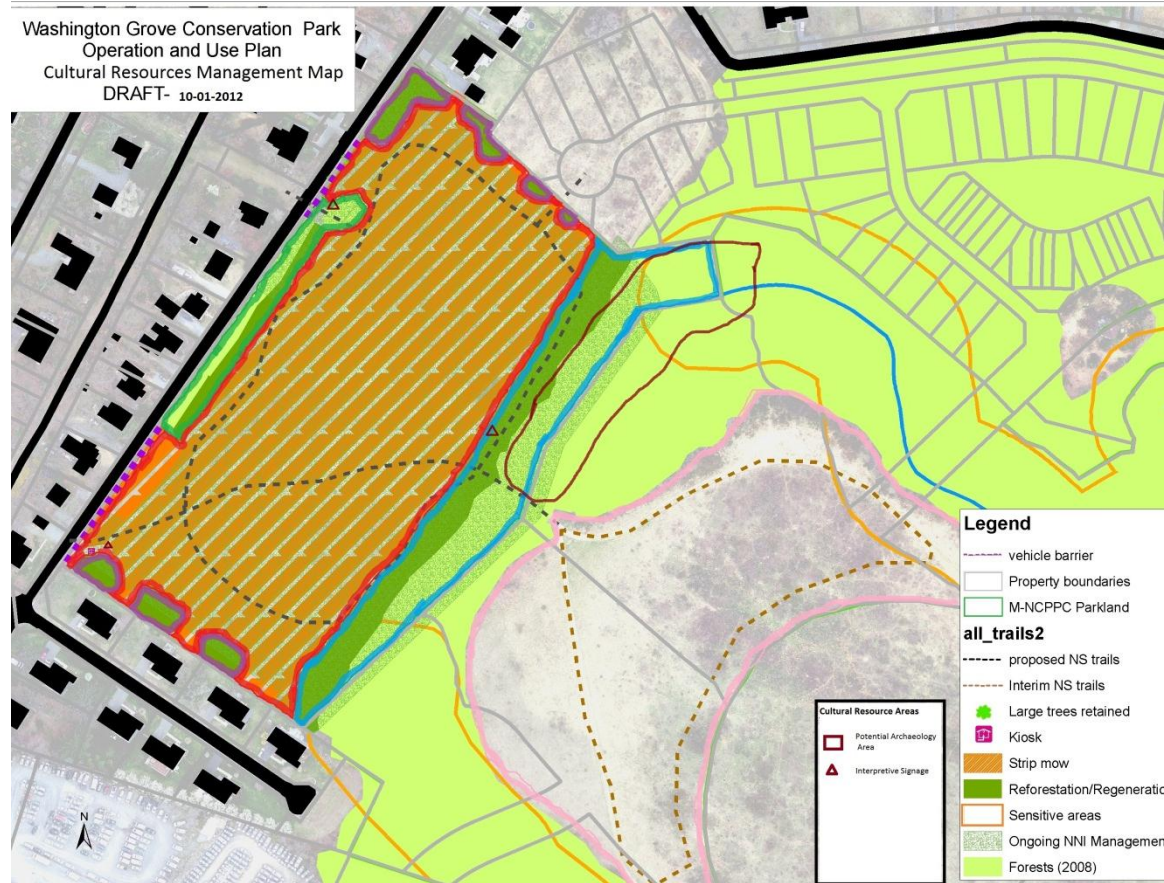
Cultural Resources Objectives

- Maintain mix of open meadow and wooded areas to preserve rural look and feel to this edge of the historic town
- Monitor and preserve area of potential prehistoric and historic steatite mining



Cultural Resources Recommendations

- Conduct a walking survey of steatite mining area to identify and remove surface archaeological artifacts
- Place site in queue for future archaeological research
- Provide interpretive signage for variety of historic themes relevant to this site:
 - Importance of rural and agricultural setting to Town
 - History of use of this property as active agriculture, hayfields, and now a native meadow
 - History of local, small-scale quarrying for local use



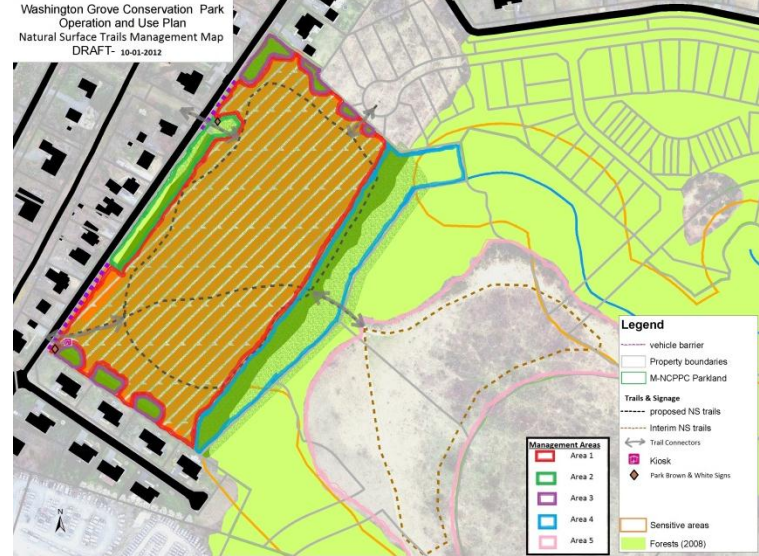
Natural Surface Trails Objectives

- Provide opportunities for nature appreciation, exercise, and cultural and natural interpretive experiences
- Create variety of walking opportunities through loop trails and connectivity to existing and future trails in area
- Provide information kiosk and trail signage at park entry point(s)
- Limit unauthorized motor vehicle use while providing for maintenance vehicle access
- Do not provide visitor parking on site
- Provide interpretive signage for natural resources and historic significance



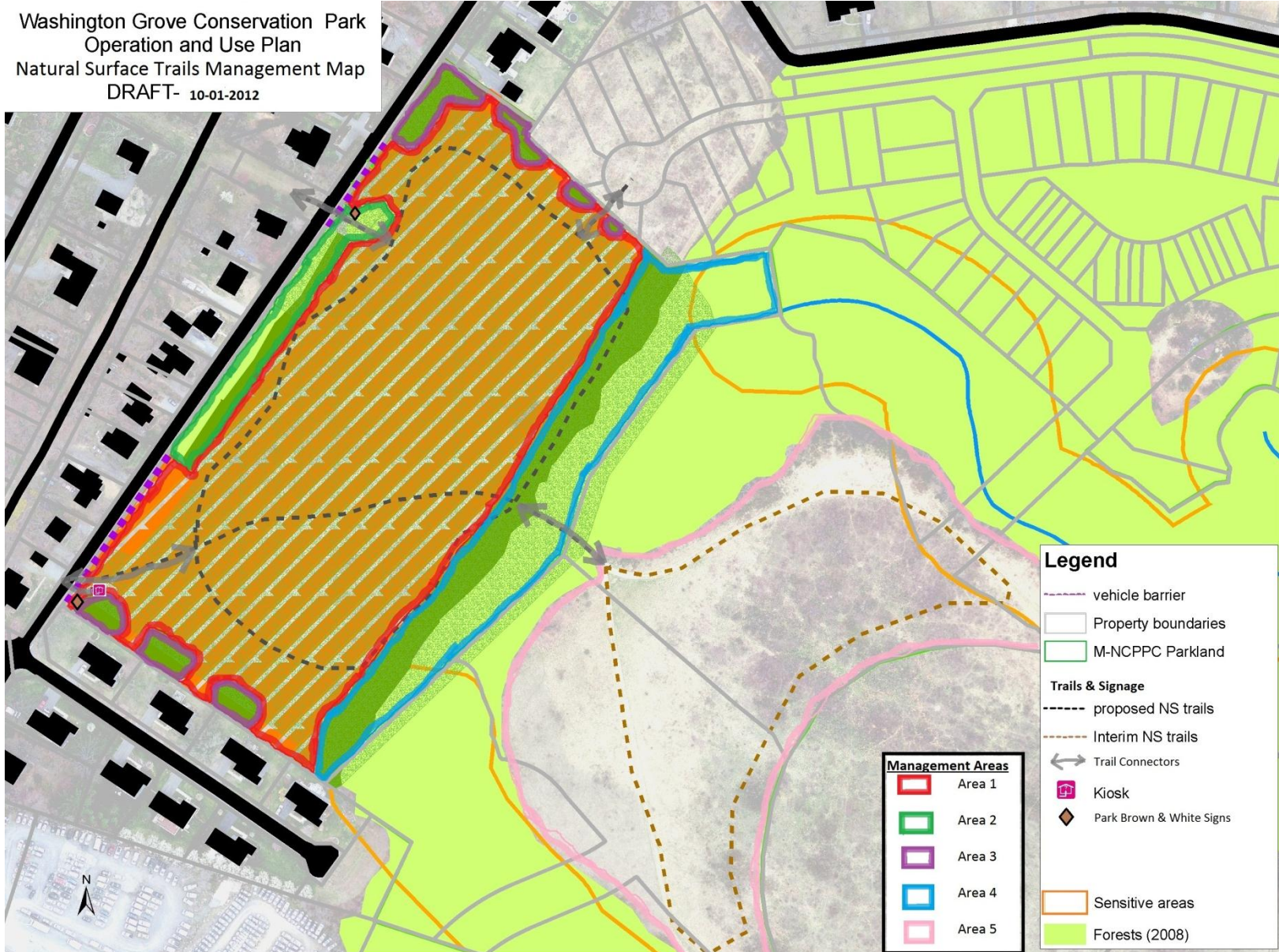
Natural Surface Trails Recommendations

- Install park signage at two main entry points on Ridge Road and possibly at entry from Piedmont Crossing subdivision
- Install and maintain information kiosk at one or two entry points
- Create and maintain natural surface trails by mowing paths in the meadow and installing trail signage
- Mow at monthly intervals during growing season to maintain trails
- Connect park trail loop to other parks and trails in the vicinity
- Install vehicle barriers along Ridge Road at the open “windows” into the park to prevent unauthorized vehicle access
- Create removable barrier at southwest corner to all park maintenance vehicle access
- Create and update park trail map on the Parks’ website



Natural Surface Trails Recommendations

Washington Grove Conservation Park
Operation and Use Plan
Natural Surface Trails Management Map
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Supporting Features Examples

Park Entrances Need Signage and Information

- Located at main pedestrian walkway entrances to park
- Install one or more information kiosks at main trail entryways to Park from Town
- Use standard “brown & white” park signs at one or more of these entry points
- Install interpretive signage about cultural and natural history of site as appropriate



Moving Forward: Next Steps

Operation and Use Plan Completion

- Get comments today on Draft O&U Plan Recommendations
- PDCO Team reviews and finalizes O&U Plan – November 2012
- Second Review with Town Council/Committee – Nov/Dec 2012
- Parks Senior Management Briefing and Approval – December/January 2012

Park Implementation

- Non-Native Invasive plant removals efforts continue (\$37K spent to date on contract NNI removals)
- Tree planting request already submitted for this planting season
- Seasonal mowing of meadow will occur this winter
- After O&U Plan approved, other management recommendations will be implemented as resources allow



Moving Forward: Potential Partnership Options

Town or individuals can provide tangible support to the Park

- Establish a “Friends” group for the park through the Montgomery Parks Foundation to support the park financially
- Donate tangibles, such as trees, benches, etc., directly to the Parks Department for installation in the Park
- Develop a financial partnership with Town of Washington Grove to implement certain elements of O&U Plan or provide maintenance support (through MOU)
- Identify and train volunteers to help maintain the park through Weed Warriors events – key to maintaining NNI control once initial contract funds end

