

**Memo:** Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks: 2022 Homeport Farm Park Feasibility Draft Report Response

**Date:** December 12, 2024

In March of 2022, the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) received the following draft feasibility report for Homeport Farm Park from the Department of Public Works. The draft report aimed to develop a conceptual plan for installing a boat ramp. Upon thorough review of the report, DRP expressed significant concerns regarding several aspects, including the expansion of amenities beyond the original limits identified by the Department and the much greater potential for disturbances to natural habitats and environmentally critical areas.

The DRP concluded that the report's findings did not accurately represent the original request, the County's needs, or the practical implications of such a project. As a result, the **draft feasibility report was deemed unviable** and was not made available for public review. Due to this, the project was placed on hold shortly after that, and the County stopped all efforts on this report in 2022.

The DRP is releasing this report in response to a recent request. It should be noted that, as recently as July 2024, the County has indicated **no plans to develop a boathouse at Homeport Farm Park.**

This report does not, and has never represented, the Department's intentions for this property.

The Department of Recreation and Parks remains dedicated to engaging with the public, local communities, and stakeholders to explore solutions that enhance water access for all. For the latest updates on Homeport Farm Park, please visit our [official website](#) and refer to the "July 9th Water Access Discussion Update."

We appreciate your understanding and look forward to your continued feedback as we strive to enhance recreational offerings in Anne Arundel County.

This memo should be shared with any reproductions or publications of the report.

## Introduction

As part of a county-wide program to increase public access to local waterways and enhance water-related activities throughout the county, Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works (DPW) has contracted AECOM to conduct a feasibility study for the inclusion of a boat ramp, associated piers and docks, boat storage areas, boat house, and ancillary utilities for kayak and canoe type boats along the Church Creek shoreline of Homeport Farm Park. The park is located at 11 Homeport Drive in Edgewater, Maryland, with the park entrance at a traffic circle adjacent to the Homeport private community and extending to the shoreline (Figure 1). It is bound to the east and north by Church Creek, and by Route 2 and residential subdivision to the west and south.

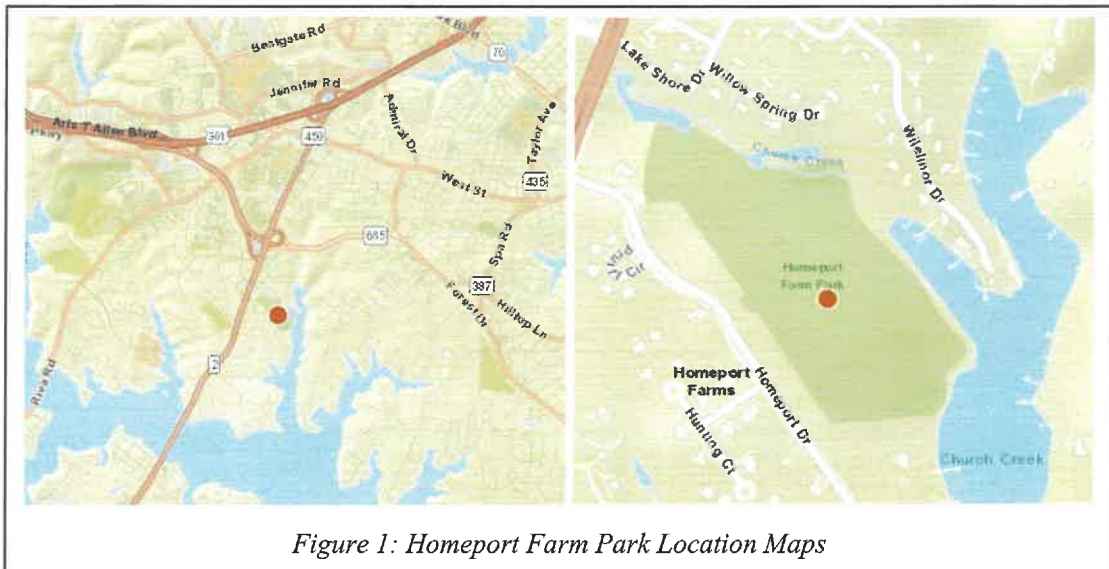


Figure 1: Homeport Farm Park Location Maps

Homeport Farm Park is approximately 25 acres. It has a gated entrance with a combination lock and is open to park users from dawn to dusk. Current access to the lock combination is requested from the county through an online gate access request form. The site has an existing drivable paved/gravel boat launch driveway (trail), direct access to the shoreline for fishing, limited natural trails, picnic areas, and seasonally provided portable restrooms. No swimming, camping, or overnight parking is allowed.



Photos 1 and 2: Views NW from existing kayak storage and SE at launch location



*Photos 3 and 4: View SE at entrance to existing launch area and view NW at existing parking*

The Anne Arundel County DPW and the Department of Recreation and Parks (DR&P) indicate that the park is currently utilized for “soft launch” for car top boats. Goals of the proposed project are:

- Accommodate manual powered long boats, such as “dragon” boats.
- Incorporate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access to the water.
- Parking to allow for vehicles and trailers with tows, but not trailer storage.
- Creation of an area for overflow parking.
- Construction of piers/docks to accommodate electric boat lifts to be used by the clubs for motorized coach/support boats.
- Construction of level mulched pads to accommodate storage racks to be built by the clubs.
- Construction of a boat house for scheduled meetings and a secure storage location.
- Electric utilities will be provided for site lighting, the boat house, boat lifts, and ancillary uses. No permanent water, sanitary sewer, natural gas, or other utilities will be provided.

The following report presents existing conditions of the project site and the proposed concept design. The current preliminary design has been evaluated for several criteria, including:

- Ease of access to County residents, including ADA design, and the projected population to be served by park upgrades;
- Parking requirements;
- Proposed design impact on the existing environment; and
- Stormwater management (SWM) requirements.

## Existing Conditions

Homeport Farm Park is located within central Anne Arundel County, south of busy shopping areas along Riva Road (MD 655). The park is tucked within a residential rural shoreline area. The entire site is located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (Critical Area) and designated as a Resource Conservation Area (RCA). RCAs receive additional protections from development in accordance with the Anne Arundel County Critical Area Program. The park is located within the Maryland 8-Digit (02131003) South River Watershed and the HUC 11 Federal Watershed (02060004010). The eastern portion of the property abuts Church Creek and the northern property boundary abuts an unnamed tributary to Church Creek. Tidal portions of Church Creek are estuarine tidal waters and classified by the Maryland

Department of the Environment (MDE) as Use II waterways. The upper portion of the unnamed tributary is classified as Use 1 nontidal waters. A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain is associated with all tidal portions surrounding the property. No mapped wetland systems are identified in published databases of the Maryland Department of Natural Resource (MDNR) or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI).

All forest within the park is designated by the MDNR as Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat, although, on September 1, 2021 a tornado touched down in Edgewater, causing destruction to much of the forested area along the shoreline.



*Photos 5 and 6: View of forest destruction from 2021 tornado*

According to the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, who tracks bald eagle population trends and monitors identified nests, there is an active bald eagle nest located approximately 0.75 to one mile northwest of the project.



*Photo 7: Tobacco Barn*

The entire park boundary is identified within the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) database as Site # AA-946 Homeport Farm. Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) records document the presence of multiple domestic and agricultural historic buildings (greater than 50 years of age), and consideration of the farm as a significant representation of changes in farming practices. The farm changed from tobacco use to a tenant farm from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Homeport Farm was not recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), however, in 2010 the tobacco barn, still located on the property, was considered potentially eligible for

individually listing to the NRHP under Criterion C for a “distinctive building type that holds great agricultural value for Maryland history; and it has retained its original character defining features.”

## Concept Plan

Attachment A illustrates the Concept Plan, representing the additional and revised and/or upgraded features desired by the County, as noted in the introduction. As a part of this concept, most of the existing paved/gravel trail access to the shoreline will be removed and replaced with a new trail to its south and west that will satisfy ADA criteria. The northernmost portion of the existing trail will remain in place and connect to the new trail, but will not conform to ADA requirements. These trails are intended to maintain the ability for cartop boat launch access to the shoreline. The existing parking area and portable restroom will remain in their current location. An additional parking area adding 40 new spaces, two new boat storage pads (35 feet by 60 feet), and a boat house (2,275 square feet) will be constructed just west of the existing parking lot. An area of overflow parking will be available in a mowed turf area to the north. A boat storage area is proposed along the shoreline. The existing soft launch boat area will be upgraded. A configuration of piers with two boat lifts and floating piers for kayak launching will be installed. The proposed Concept Plan provides rock sill erosion protection along the existing shoreline of Church Creek.

## Accessibility

### ADA Compliance

The most notable new feature at the site providing accessibility to residents is the proposed new trail, designed with a maximum of five percent (5%) grade from its connection at the added parking area and extending fully to the shoreline. This is an important part of the development, ensuring that the new trail is available to groups of all ages and people with disabilities. In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the trail is compliant per *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design* and considered acceptable and usable by individuals with disabilities. One inconvenience for those with disabilities is the only location of the portable restroom, to remain at its existing location, which is some distance from the new trail entrance.

In addition to the ADA compliant trail access to the waterfront, the concept plan provides an ADA accessible floating dock for kayak launching. A floating dock will rise and fall with the tide, allowing easier boat boarding and launching.

### Park Users & Parking

It is anticipated that with the newly added boat house, with meeting room and secure storage, and multiple boat storage areas, a significant increase in users can be accommodated at the site. Existing site conditions allow for approximately 30 cars to park within a designated parking space, with areas along the roadway wide enough to allow for cars to pull over and park; however, this is not a designated parking location. The proposed concept allows for an additional 40 parking places, as well as a designated overflow parking for an additional 30-35 vehicles. One benefit to this added parking is avoidance of vehicles along the access roads and corners of the existing lot, which pose a hazard to users.

Not only will the park be able to accommodate an increase in individual users, but it will allow larger groups and/or multiple groups to access the park at the same time. For example, Homeport Farm Park is currently one of ten locations advertised and used by the Canton Kayak Club, a non-profit program out of Baltimore offering training, equipment, and various group outings along waterfronts in Maryland. The club's addition of a "kayak exchange rack" currently located at the creek end of the existing trail, has initiated controversy with local residents, that an increase of non-Anne Arundel County users may occupy the park and not allow room for local users. The increase in parking and additional boat storage allows use by several groups. Persons most likely to visit the site are local residents interested specifically in

gaining access to the water. Trails within the park are limited, and not connected to other County park trails, so this is not expected to be a significant draw to the park per the proposed concept.

The addition of the boat house, with a meeting room and secure storage, will also invite more users. The Annapolis Rowing Club has been advocating for a boathouse for their use for several years. The boat house can be used for meetings and trainings, which will entice larger groups to seek this location for their events. The meeting room, combined with the existing picnic area may become a valued asset for the adjacent neighborhoods and community groups.

As use at the park is expected to increase, the County may find disapproval from the direct local property owners. With the ability for the park to now accommodate more than half of its previous capacity for parking, and the allure of this area for additional clubs and users, the adjacent residents could become agitated regarding the increase in traffic within their relatively quiet community. The County may also find that upgrades to their existing gated access may be necessary so that users may enter and exit more readily, without having to exit from their cars, and causing potential traffic backups within and leading to the existing traffic circle along Homeport Drive.

## Environmental Impacts

### Marine Environment

As proposed piers and platforms are proposed within tidal waters, authorization will be required by the Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW), the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Tidal Wetlands Division, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Coordination with MDE and MDNR will be required for consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA) and the Critical Area Act.

The total permanent impact from permanent piles placed in the river bottom as well as the square footage of pier/platform placed over tidal waters will need to be accounted for in permit packages, including details regarding the length and width of the piers, and the distance channelward from the mean high-water line (MHWL). Construction of piers will also result in temporary impacts within the river, due to noise, vibrations, and construction equipment. To construct the permanent piers, piles will need to be driven into the river bottom with a vibratory hammer. The length of pilings and the time it will take to drive the pile depends upon the river bottom substrate. This has the potential to impact fish within the area during construction as well as potential river bottom natural habitat. Permanent impact to the river bottom is minimized with the proposed design however with the proposed floating platforms.

Although the entirety of Church Creek was identified as a shellfish sanctuary prior to 2010, it is no longer. No submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is documented in this waterway and would not be impacted by this project. A rock sill protection design is proposed along the shoreline of Church Creek, with the goal of providing restoration to the existing shore and slowing erosive actions along the sandy shoreline.

It is not anticipated that there will be permanent impacts to shallow water habitat as a result of pier installations. The impacts will be temporal and focused more on the local fish populations. Further coordination with the MDNR should be sought to evaluate potential essential fish habitat in the near vicinity of proposed structures, and appropriate time of year restrictions for in-river construction.

### Terrestrial Environment

The Concept design will require compliance with Anne Arundel County Code Articles 17 and 18 and COMAR Title 27, for proposed actions within the Critical Area designated RCA and the Critical Area

Buffer, which comprises the first 100-feet inland from the MHWL. Site design and stormwater management will be required to adhere to Critical Area requirements to provide the necessary phosphorus reductions. The current site design addresses these needs through proposed permeable pavers within the new parking area. Treatment for new impervious for the new trail, boat house, and parking lot aisle has been considered in the preliminary stormwater design discussed in greater detail below.

The proposed new parking, storage pads and boathouse are all located in an area of mixed scrub-shrub vegetation. All existing forest within Homeport Farm Park has been designated FIDS habitat. The only area of forest impacted by the Concept is forest that has already been ravaged by a tornado in 2021, in the location of the new proposed trail. This project area poses an anomaly, in that existing conditions are not captured in current Critical Area regulations. Coordination with the Anne Arundel County Critical Area Program and the Critical Area Commission will be required to determine how to address the area of destroyed forest, and mitigation that will be required due to significant grading/fill for the proposed trail in order to maintain ADA compliance. A Buffer Management Plan is also required due to proposed disturbance within the Critical Area buffer.

Potential habitat for the federally threatened northern long-eared bat (NLEB) is identified within existing forest at the site by the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) unofficial species list. No direct impact to the bats or its habitat would occur from the project, as the only trees to be removed on the site is the area discussed above and already damaged/destroyed forest. Bald eagles are also known to nest and roost along the eastern and western shorelines, and with the identification of one bald eagle nest identified less than one mile away from the project area, the County will continue to monitor the status of this nest, as well as continue to observe the area before and during construction. Should additional nests be found within 0.5 miles of the site, the County should follow any relevant conditions set forth in the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. Additionally, prior to clearing of vegetation, the area should be investigated to confirm no active nesting raptors (eagles, peregrine falcons, and osprey) will be disturbed by clearing activities.

### Cultural Resources

The Concept design does not propose any direct impact to known architectural cultural resources, namely the existing tobacco barn located northeast of the identified overflow parking area. Mowed grass trails provide access to the barn, which will not be altered by this plan. The barn is in a current state of disrepair and has received heavy vandalism. This area will not be highlighted by the project. Cultural Resources coordination with the County's Office of Planning and potential surveys will be required prior to final planning and construction.

### Stormwater Management Considerations

The stormwater management strategy proposed will follow Environmental Site Design (ESD) criteria in accordance with the Stormwater Management Act of 2007 and latest revision of the Anne Arundel County's SWM Manual. The ESD criteria in the MDE Manual and the County's SWM Manual promotes use of small scale, nonstructural ESD solutions to mimic natural pre-development patterns, to the maximum extent practicable (MEP).

The use of impervious surfaces is minimized in the Concept plan, to decrease stormwater treatment requirements for the proposed work. Using pervious pavement in feasible locations of the design, this delivers added benefits to the project. Pervious pavements provide water quality, reduce impervious area, enhance groundwater recharge, and have runoff characteristics more closely resembling vegetated areas. Since the capacity of pervious pavements to capture and detain runoff is controlled by the storage capacity, compaction of soil subgrade, and in-situ soil properties, the feasibility and location of potential

pervious pavement depends on specific site characteristics that will need to be further investigated in future phases of the project.

The remaining stormwater treatment for the project will be provided using other micro-scale practices for ESD. Micro-bioretenion facilities are practices that capture and treat runoff from discrete impervious areas by passing runoff through a filter bed mixture of sand, soil, and organic matter. Stormwater runoff is stored temporarily and returned to the conveyance system and partially infiltrated into the soil. The landscaping of this practice provides plants, which enhance nutrient and pollutant uptake, create habitats, and add aesthetic value. The site layout provides advantageous locations to create low points for micro-bioretenion to maximize treatment of impervious surfaces from the proposed work. Drainage areas to micro-bioretenion may be limited and require diversion of offsite runoff through a perimeter swale or berm. Micro-bioretenion facilities are adaptable for all soil types, making them versatile during design.

Stormwater management requirements for the proposed Concept have been considered on a conservative basis, utilizing ESD such as permeable pavers to reduce impervious surfaces, and micro-bioretenion facilities. An overtreatment of volume is proposed through the three illustrated stormwater management systems, in the case a facility is infeasible due to soil conditions or other site restraints. Providing the required ESD volume satisfies both the water quality and channel protection volume requirements. The project goal for ESD<sub>v</sub> (volume) is to provide treatment of the total project requirements for ESD<sub>v</sub> to the MEP.

## Conclusion

A preliminary cost estimate has been developed for the Concept plan and included as Attachment B. The estimate includes necessary vegetation clearing and grubbing, grading, and new construction of building, parking area, and trail. It includes an estimate of supplies and materials needed to construct new piers and platforms as well as site amenities and landscaping. A cost for dredging has been included should results of bathymetry studies reveal that dredging is required.

Homeport Farm Park has extensive open area, in which the Concept plan utilizes open space on land to construct new parking, storage, and facilities, while largely avoiding impacts to natural resources. This feasibility study provides a foundation for further assessment and more comprehensive design of site features. With final determination of marine structures sizing, and regulatory requirements for tidal water permitting as well as input regarding Critical Area considerations of the destroyed forest on site, a more detailed consideration of mitigation can be evaluated.

The proposed improvements to Homeport Farm Park will be an enhancement to a valued community asset. Better access to the waters of Church Creek will improve the recreational opportunities for Anne Arundel County residents and visitors.



## References

Maryland Department of the Environment. *Designated Use Classes for Maryland's Surface Waters*. Accessed through <https://mdewin64.mde.state.md.us/WSA/DesigUse/index.html> February 2022.

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Schwab, Darian. Anne Arundel County. *Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form: Homeport Farm (AA-946)*. Maryland Historical Trust. 2010. Accessed through <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/Medusa/PDF/AnneArundel/AA-946.pdf> February 2022.