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Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program

STAFFORD COUNTY PARK

MASTER PLAN

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1987

HURON COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

COASTAL ZONE
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STAFFORD COUNTY PARK
MASTER PLAN
HURON COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

July 1987

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Huron County Road Commission

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I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Stafford Park is one of eight parks located within the Huron County park system. It incorporates approximately 38 acres of land and is located on Lake Huron in the Village of Port Hope. Because of this location, the park draws over 2,000 visitors per year and provides important recreation opportunities for residents within Huron County as well as residents throughout the Central Michigan region. Heavy visitor use and expanding recreation demand has prompted the Huron County Road Commission to formulate a gradual improvement program for this park facility. It is recognized that any extensive improvements will require detailed long range plans for the future improvements of the park. It is felt that these long range plans must be included within an overall master plan. Development of a park master plan is identified as a primary objective prior to any future park development.

In 1986 the Huron County Road Commission received funds from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program to conduct a study of Stafford County Park. Over the past few years, gradual improvements have been made to the property. A new bath house and boat launch were constructed along with horseshoe courts and lighting for the ballfield and horseshoe courts. Funding for the lighting and horseshoe courts was obtained through the generous contributions from local merchants and residents of Port Hope.

The purpose of this study is to develop a Master Park Development Plan which will analyze the coastal area, explore design schemes, develop final site designs, and propose implementation programs.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

Considering the above stated purpose of this study, a detailed set of work objectives can be developed. The objectives are as follows:

- Solicit input from Huron County officials and Port Hope residents regarding the long range development schemes of the park.

- Analyze coastal features and recommend opportunities for new development.

- Develop new designs for the coastal area which will be beneficial to tourists and residents alike.

- Develop an implementation strategy which will include cost and funding sources for the development of Stafford County Park.

II

STUDY AREA ANALYSIS

STUDY AREA ANALYSIS

NATURAL RESOURCES

An examination of natural features and systems is an important aspect of the planning process. In many ways the natural systems will dictate which future uses can or cannot be accommodated in the park.

Water Quality

Water quality for Stafford County Park area is generally rated good. It has been determined that lake conditions have improved since lake communities and industries have begun efforts to comply with water quality discharge standards. The water quality in the area is considered acceptable for beach use and direct lake swimming. There are occasions where sawdust and wood fibre is observed near the beach. This occurrence varies according to wind and wave conditions and is more of a nuisance than serious impediment to swimming use.

Research on ground water on the site indicated that high ground water problems do exist. This problem will be further exacerbated if Lake Huron continues to rise.

Soils and Wetlands

Most of the study area consists of primarily clay and rock, over a layer of shale. The shale will present problems regarding excavation, tree planting and grading. Additional construction costs will have to be allocated to excavate in these shale soils.

Most land areas of Stafford County Park are flat to gently sloping. Land areas to the north and west of the site contain ridges, steep slopes, and low wetlands which

are all characteristic of this area. The physiographic feature of this area does provide quite outstanding views of the park and lake.

The park does contain some designated coastal wetland areas primarily in the northern portion. According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), development within these areas could be limited due to occasional flooding and unstable soils. If development is to occur within these areas, Huron County must obtain all the necessary permits from the DNR Wetland Protection Unit. A wetland inventory map, illustrating wetland locations has been included in the appendix.

Shoreline

The shoreline of the park is approximately 1200 feet in length. The shoreline varies considerably with the season. Northeast winter winds from the lake have eroded the shoreline and pushed gravel and rock onto the shore. Due to the gravel lake bottom, swimming is not attractive to many park users.

Vegetation

Vegetative communities in the park and proposed expansion area will change in response to the wetness or semi-dryness at the sites. Typical species found within these areas range from hybrid cattails and arrowheads to red-osier Dogwood, cottonwood, aspen, willows, and tag alder. There are no known rare or endangered plant species within the Stafford County Park area.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Utility Services

Currently the park has very limited utilities. The existing campground is one of the only areas with any type of utility. Water, sewage, and electricity are available to some of the camp sites and the newly constructed bathhouse with

flush toilets and showers. In the near future, sanitary sewer lines are to be installed through this area. Once the sewer lines are in, Huron and State Streets are to be paved. The park is also served by overhead electrical wires.

Site Access

Vehicular access is via the local roads of Portland and State Street. Both are two-lane gravel roads. These roads connect with M-25 which parallels Lake Huron and connects Port Huron to Bay City.

Improvements to Huron and State Streets are priority projects. Motorists with boat trailers have complained that their vehicles have bottomed out on the road and motorists must often drive at speeds of less than 10 mph.

Existing Park Improvements

Some improvements have begun on the park itself. A boat launch with paved parking area for cars and trailers has been completed. Also a new bathhouse was constructed along with ballfield lighting and horseshoe courts.

Adjacent Land Uses

The downtown area of the Village of Port Hope is located to the west of the park. A village-owned marina and public park is located to the south. This 22-boat slip facility provides direct access to Lake Huron. A privately-owned campground and residential area is located to the north. The County should contact the owner of the campground to discuss shoreline erosion control devices to benefit the park and property owners.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Huron County has already established a good foundation for outdoor recreation facilities. However, this park is for the most part undeveloped, and the facilities

are fragmented. There lacks a clear design concept and design continuity for the park elements.

It is projected that the recreational needs and demands of the County and Village will continue to increase. Tourism will remain a major source of income to the County and Village. It is important to provide quality outdoor recreation opportunities to encourage their return. The development of parks to accommodate these tourists is essential.

Tourism is not the only reason for development of park land in the County. The residents of the area must be considered with equal importance. Providing recreational facilities close to the residential population are important in maintaining Village identity.

The importance of public access to coastal lands is a major reason for the development of Stafford County Park. The park with the combined improvements could provide the area with an essential access site fulfilling many recreational needs.

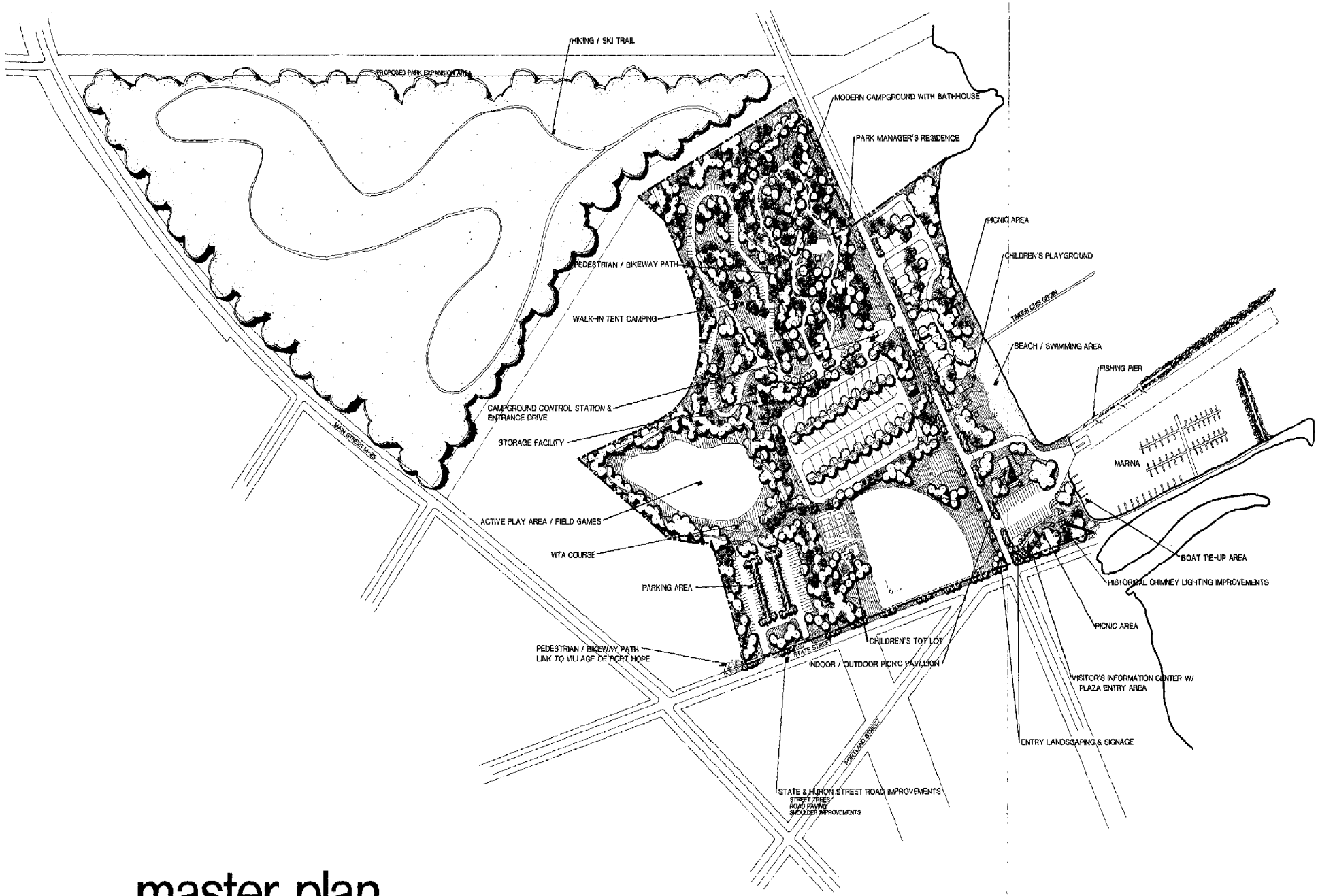
III

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Analysis of existing physical conditions and the perception of Huron County officials and local community representatives revealed a number of characteristics from which to structure the Master Park Plan. The proposed improvements to follow are focused on addressing the existing problems while also capitalizing on opportunities for expansion and diversity of recreational facilities in the park. Specifically the Master Park Plan illustrated on the following page responds to the following goals:

- Improve overall quality and aesthetics of recreational facilities in the park
- Consider maintenance and programming costs with regard to new facilities
- Emphasize multi-use, multi-season facilities
- Redesign park to function more efficiently
- Expand tourism industry, particularly as related to the boating industry
- Provide for pedestrian/bikeway and hiking/ski trail systems that link all of the park facilities together and provide pedestrian access to the Village of Port Hope.
- Improve vehicular circulation within the park
- Expand campground facilities to provide a variety of camping sites
- Link park elements with a continuous design theme or design detailing.



master plan

Stafford County Park • Huron County Road Commission

Ayres, Lewis, Norris and May, Inc.
engineers planners

To achieve these objectives, a variety of improvement projects involving active participation by various public and private agencies and individuals must be undertaken. The Master Park Plan serves as the overall framework around which park improvement projects are addressed and involved citizenry are organized and guided. The following will describe the park design concept and identify projects necessary to achieve the Master Park Plan.

The single-most important aspect of the Master Park Plan is that it establishes a sense of "place" or positive image to the park. In other words, the character of this county-owned park should be distinguished apart from the other public and privately-owned recreational facilities which border the park and contribute to the composition of the Village. To achieve this distinction, several physical improvements are proposed for the park, including street trees located along State and Huron Streets which border the park, road paving improvements, entry and directional signage, and a visitor's information center located at the entry to the park.

The Master Park Plan identifies various improvement projects within Stafford County Park. The projects are based upon the review of recreational needs and the environmental capability of the site. The following is a brief description of each project.

Park Entrance Area

The park entrance area is located on the northeast corner of State and Huron Streets. A visitor's information center has been proposed in the relocated and rehabilitated railroad depot station. The center will include mapping and other information which will inform the visitors about the park and other County attractions. This focal feature along with lighting improvements to the historical chimney will serve as a point of orientation to the park visitors. New park entry signage, landscaping, additional flagpoles and decorative banners, and an entry plaza will bring attention to Stafford County Park and draw people to the area.

Marina

The marina is proposed along the existing pier near the boat launch and fishing pier. With the use of the existing pier for shoreline protection, this area becomes an excellent location for a marina. The marina could accommodate up to 132 boat slips for seasonal and overnight boat users. The construction of the marina could be broken down into phases. Phase I would include the construction of the stone breakwater and approximately 76 boat slips. Phase II would include the construction of approximately 56 additional boat slips. An alternative to the construction of all 132 boat slips would include the negotiation and possible incorporation of the 22 boat slip Village-owned marina with the proposed County marina.

Campground Expansion

Various camping options have been proposed directly north and west of the existing campground. Of the camp sites and roadways, the development should be based on the preservation of existing vegetation and other natural features. The proposed layout should also reflect the topography and drainage problems in the area. The site contains sloped areas with some areas of poorly drained depressions. Standing water has been observed along Huron Street especially during periods of heavy rainfall and when winds prevail out of the northeast. If development does occur within this area, it is recommended that earth fill be brought in to raise the ground levels and mitigate standing water problems.

The proposed campgrounds provide sites for modern camping with utility hook-ups, bathhouse facilities, and paved or gravel drives and picnic areas. Adjacent to the modern campground is an area for walk-in tent camping. This type of camping provides concentrated parking areas along the roadways with bathroom facilities. Controlled access to the proposed and existing camp sites has been provided with a campground control station for information and permit acquisition. Two exit drives have been proposed to eliminate congestion at the main entrance.

Waterfront Facilities

An important goal of the plan is to provide improved swimming and beach areas. This could be accommodated with the construction of groins and the placement of various types of sands to control erosion and provide access into the water. The groin can be placed to the north of the beach site and will protect the beach and sand from severe northeast erosion.

Picnic use is one of the more popular activities at the park. It could conceivably become more popular at the site with the construction of a new combined indoor/outdoor picnic pavillion. This pavillion would accommodate picnic tables for group picnics, as well as provide protection from the sun and the rain. Additional picnic areas located along the lake would provide single tables and grill pits for single parties.

A children's play area would also be built to provide activities for the younger age group. This would include swings, slides, and climbing structures. Near the play area, additional landscaping along the waterfront is also proposed. This includes massing of deciduous shade trees within the picnic and play areas.

The installation of benches, lighting, and safety rails located along the existing fishing piers would provide added comfort and safety to the users. With the possible construction of the marina, the proposed stone breakwater could be used as an additional fishing pier, providing access to deeper waters.

Parking Area Improvements

One of the main entry roadways (State Street) will provide access to a parking area for approximately 120 cars. This parking area will provide convenient access to the recreational and waterfront facilities. The lot will also provide parking for vehicles towing boat trailers. One major parking area versus several smaller lots has been favored for ease of access. The parking area has been located away from the lake frontage to encourage more pedestrian oriented activities.

Pedestrian/Bikeway System

Extensive pedestrian and bicycle path corridors have been included throughout the park, linking the parking areas to the park facilities. The corridors are also intended to connect with the commercial and residential areas of Port Hope.

Directional Signage

Improved signage will help direct park users, inform users of available facilities and provide a continuous design theme. New signs could be placed along State Street and Huron Street pointing out parking areas, ball fields, picnicking, beach, marina, etc. The signs are relatively low cost and are a highly visible improvement.

Proposed Park Expansion

With the possible acquistion of approximately 34 acres northwest of the existing park, the area could provide for added recreational facilities to compliment existing facilities at the park. These facilities should preserve and capitalize on existing natural resources, such as wetlands, sloped lands, hardwood and evergreen forests.

The proposed facilities would also address the recreational needs and objectives set up by the County and local communities. The following is a partial list of facilities that could be considered for this expansion area.

- A hiking/ski trail system illustrating natural history and offering interpretive opportunites. Signs could be located along the trail detailing the importance of wetland areas in the Great Lakes ecology.

- Sled/toboggan runs located along the sloped areas.

- Nature information center with warming facilities for winter recreation.

Some other improvement projects of the Master Park Plan include such items as landscaping and entry signage. Landscaping is important to guide viewing and movements, define boundaries, and to screen unsightly areas. Landscaping at Stafford County Park would be used in these ways. Plantings along the pedestrian/bikeways would define bikeway limits and guide visitors to the lake. Additional naturalistic plantings in the campground and picnic areas would enhance the currently growing species. Presently the industrial area to the south dominates the views of the park. The introduction of street tree plantings along State and Huron Streets would define and screen this area. Street trees would also visually and functionally tie the park together. A plant material list, representing various plant species indigenous to the area has been included in the appendix.

A coordinated signage system should receive special attention. Directional signs which would guide park users to specific facilities and entry signage should be considered. New signage along M-25, as well as the Huron Street entrance, would bring notice to Stafford County Park and draw people into the area.

The development of Stafford County Park can tie together many recreation opportunites and create a favorable area for tourist and residents. The combination of the existing boat launch and fishing pier, proposed marina, and campground all promote public access to Lake Huron. Facility improvement will also encourage tourism and day use activities in the area and meet a need for improved facilities close to the residential population.

IV

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest an implementation strategy for Stafford County Park. Of course, it is not possible to define a detailed implementation strategy without detailed designs. Such specifics must necessarily be developed at the time the project is ready to be built.

The Stafford County Park Master Plan graphically illustrates conceptual improvements and management programs for the park. This concept plan is incomplete without an implementation strategy to provide the County with a direction toward development and management of Stafford County Park. The implementation strategy consists of project cost and priorities, and funding sources and mechanisms. The Plan presents a long-range program which will require public and private resources and cooperation to fully implement.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT COSTS AND PHASING

The full implementation of the Master Park Plan is projected over a period of fifteen years. The chart on the following page provides a summary of improvement projects, as well as priorities, phasing, funding, and projected costs. Project phasing is broken down by 0 to five years, five to ten years, and ten to fifteen years. Assignment of priorities is an indication of project importance, as well as the potential for implementation within a given time frame.

According to County and local community officials and residents, high priority projects for Stafford County Park include:

- fishing pier improvements
- beach and swimming area
- State and Huron Street road improvements
- campground expansion

Stafford County Park Master Plan
Implementation Program

Park Improvement	County & Local Community's Priority	Phasing	Funding	Projected Cost
Fishing Pier Improvements benches, lighting & safety rails	high	0-5 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$13,000
Beach & Swimming Area groin construction, erosion control, sand relocation & grading	high	0-5 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF, ACOE	$58,000
State & Huron Street Road Improvements street trees, lighting, paving & shoulder improvements	high	0-5 yrs	village	$149,000
Campground Expansion walk-in tent & modern campsites, bathhouse facility, lighting roadways, landscaping, signage, control station, seeding and grading	high	0-5 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$310,000
Marina Facility 132 boat slips, wood docks, & stone breakwater	moderate	5-10 yrs	LWA	$882,500
Off-Street Parking Area paved parking area, landscaping, seeding and grading	moderate	5-10 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF, LWA	$42,500
Pedestrian and Bikeway Corridors 8' paved pathway, landscaping, signage, seeding & grading	moderate	5-10 yrs	LAWCON	$47,200
New Indoor/Outdoor Picnic Pavillion and Picnic Areas picnic tables, grill pits, landscaping, seeding & grading	moderate	5-10 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$35,000
Park Entrance Area visitor's information center housed in relocated railroad depot station including paved outdoor standing area, benches, landscaping, kiosk, flagpoles, floodlight for historical chimney, seeding & grading	moderate	5-10 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$40,000
Park Signage 2 entry signs, landscaping & directional signs	moderate	5-10 yrs	LAWCON, CZM	$11,000

Funding Sources: LAWCON - MDNR Land & Water Conservation Fund; NRTF - MDNR Natural Resources Trust Fund; LWA - MDNR Local Waterways Assistance; ACOE - US Army Corps of Engineers; CZM - MDNR Coastal Zone Management

Stafford County Park Master Plan
Implementation Program
(continued)

Park Improvement	County & Local Community's Priority	Phasing	Funding	Projected Cost
Park Storage Facility 30x40 refabricated structure, landscaping, grading, paved roadway, and seeding	low	10-15 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$30,000
Park Manager's Residences rustic double-wide manufactured housing, landscaping, paved roadway & seeding	low	10-15 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$30,000
Playground Area children's play equipment, landscaping, seeding & grading	low	10-15 yrs	LAWCON, CZM	$12,000
Recreational Facilities vita course, seeding, grading & landscaping	low	10-15 yrs	LAWCON	$11,000
Proposed Park Expansion land acquisition, hiking/ski trails, interpretive signage, grading, landscaping and seeding	low	10-15 yrs	LAWCON, NRTF	$57,000

Funding Sources:
LAWCON - MDNR Land & Water Conservation Fund
LWA - MDNR Local Waterways Assistance
CZM - MDNR Coastal Zone Management
NRTF - MDNR Natural Resources Trust Fund
ACOE - US Army Corps of Engineers

- marina facility
- off-street parking area
- pedestrian and bikeway corridors

Most of the above items will be grant eligible and it is recommended that the County monitor various grant programs for possible funding. It is also possible for the County to begin low cost improvement measures immediately. Landscaping, clean-up, and sign construction can be an early effort conducted by County staff and local residents.

FUNDING SOURCES AND MECHANISMS

The cost of implementation will place added importance upon outside grants and assistance programs. A variety of Federal, State and private grant resources are available for Stafford County Park. However, it is likely that local funds will be necessary for a portion of the project cost.

While the status of many Federal and State funding programs is unclear, the County, with the help of consultants and staff, should monitor the funding situation and be prepared to act when funds become available. The grant programs listed on the following page will be important resources for the future development and management of Stafford County Park.

The potential availability of grant funds does not eliminate the necessity to finance all or portions of projects with local funds. It is the rule rather than the exception that State and Federal grants require the local unit of government to fund a portion of the project. Local funding can be raised through General Fund Revenue Sharing, General Obligation Bonds, Revenue Bonds, special millage, and private contributions.

Volunteer efforts should not be overlooked. Concerned citizens can do a number of worthwhile, low-cost improvements within the park area. Possible projects include:

Stafford County Park Master Plan
Potential Funding Sources

Program	Agency	Type of Assistance	Applicable Projects
Land & Water Conservation Fund	National Park Service, MDNR	project grants	Recreation facilities, bike paths, landscaping, campgrounds, fish pier
Local Waterways Assistance	MDNR Waterways Division	project grants	Marina, parking and restrooms
Coastal Zone Management Program	NOAA/MDNR	project grants	Planning (possible low-cost construction)
Natural Resources Trust Fund	MDNR	project grants	Recreation development and/or acquisition
Coastal Assistance Projects	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	project grants/ technical assistance	Miscellaneous waterfront improvements

- signs
- clean-up programs
- volunteer street tree donations and planting programs
- general landscaping

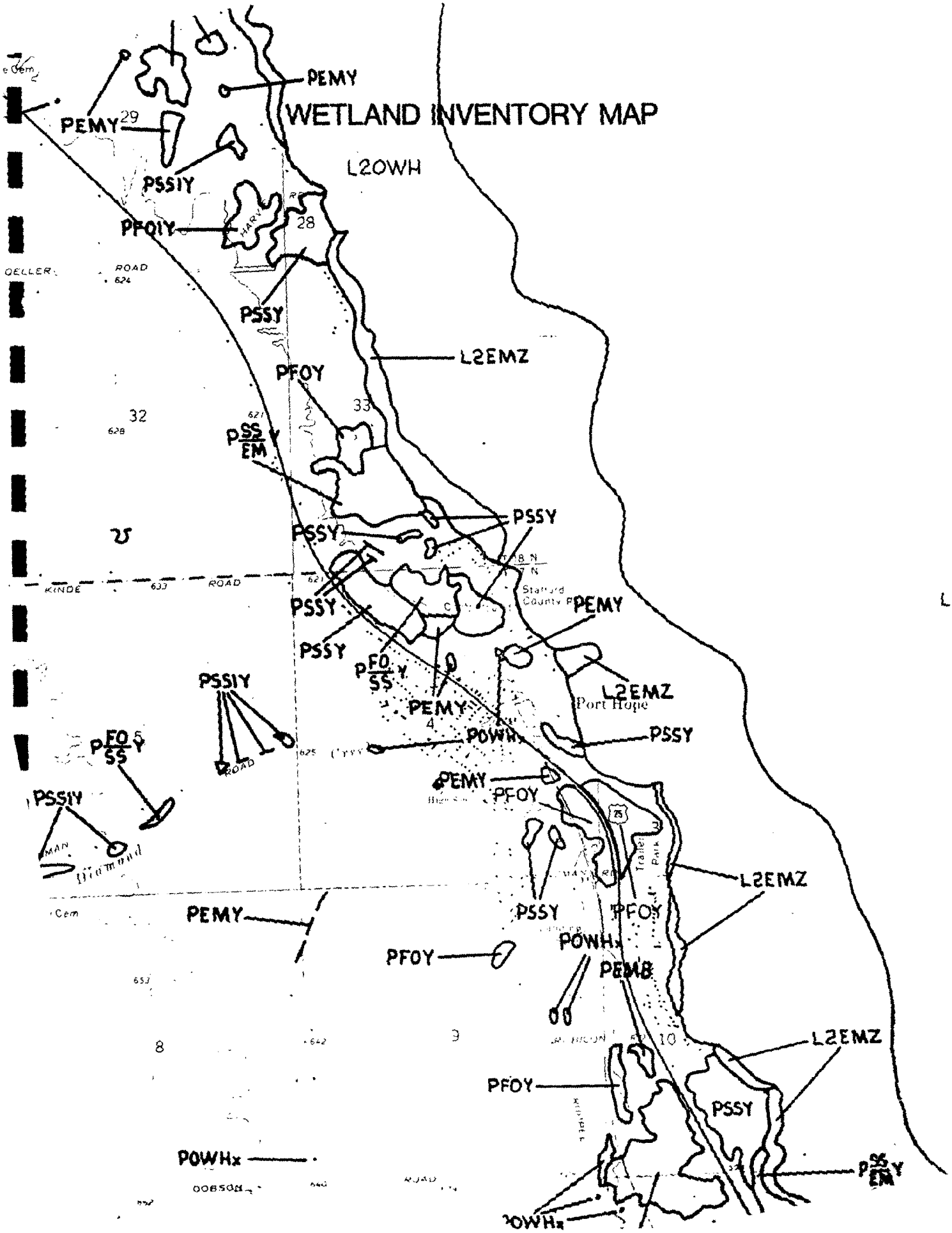
SUMMARY

The Stafford County Park Master Plan emphasizes the importance of the County's coastal resources. It attempts to determine the best use and maximum opportunity for Stafford County Park. It also expands the County's recreational facilities while continuing a program of revenue generating opportunities. It should be noted that this plan does not represent the final planning effort for Stafford County Park. The County must continue to evaluate the detailed proposals for other possible facilities of the park and make sound judgments regarding the future management of this important resource.

APPENDIX

Stafford County Park
Plant Material List

Plant Species	Minimum Size	Spacing
Deciduous Trees		
Acer Rubrum Red Sunset Maple	1-3/4" to 2" caliper	30 ft o.c.
Betula Nigra River Birch	1" to 1-1/2" caliper clump	15 ft o.c.
Malus 'Dorothea' Flowering Crab Apple	1" to 1-1/2" caliper	20 ft o.c.
Tilia Cordata Little Leaf Linden	1-3/4" to 2" caliper	30 ft o.c.
Evergreen Trees		
Picea Pungens Glauca Colorado Blue Spruce	6 ft high	20 ft o.c.
Pinus Nigra Austrian Pine	5 ft high	20 ft o.c.
Pinus Sylvestris Scotch Pine	6 ft high	20 ft o.c.
Deciduous Shrubs		
Cornus Baileyi Red Twigged Dogwood	3 ft high	6 ft to 8 ft o.c.
Sambucus Canadensis American Elder	4 ft high	15 ft o.c.
Symphoricarpos Albus White Snow Berry	3 ft high	4 ft o.c.
Viburnum Dentatum Arrowwood	4 ft high	6 ft o.c.
Evergreen Shrubs		
Juniperus C. 'Armstrongii' Armstrong Juniper	24 inches high	4 ft o.c.
Juniperus C. 'Gold Coast' Gold Tip Juniper	24 inches high	5 ft o.c.
Juniperus C. 'Seagreen' Sea Green Juniper	24 inches high	5 ft o.c.


WETLAND INVENTORY MAP
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PSSIY
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PFOIY
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ROAD
PSSY
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PSS/EM Y
PSSY
PSSY
KINDE
ROAD
PSSY
PEMY
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