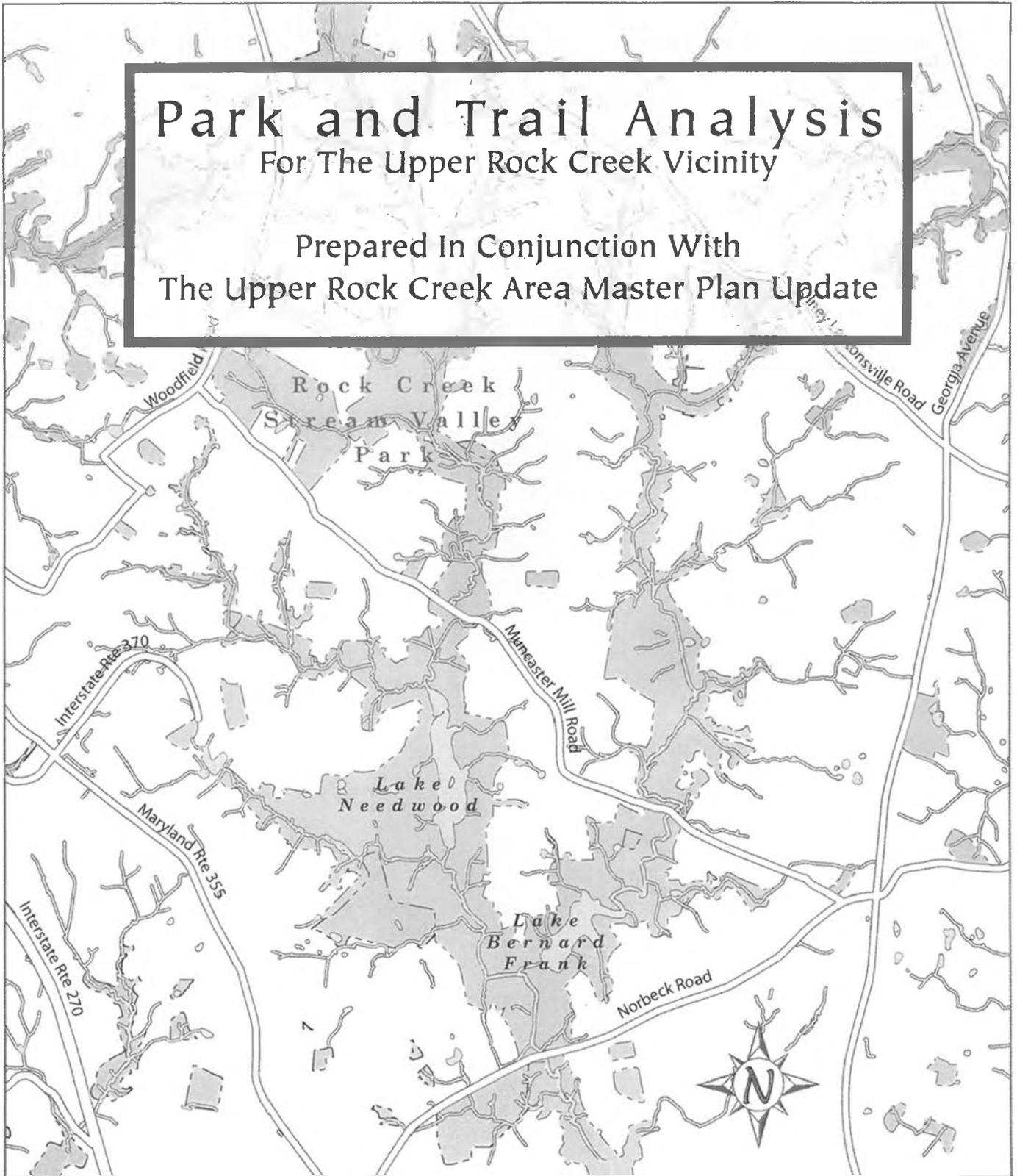


Park and Trail Analysis

For The Upper Rock Creek Vicinity

Prepared In Conjunction With
The Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan Update



AUGUST 2002



PREPARED BY:
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

Draft 9/19/02

PARK AND TRAIL ANALYSIS FOR THE UPPER ROCK CREEK VICINITY

**PREPARED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE UPPER ROCK CREEK AREA
MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

September 2002

PREPARED BY:

**THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING**

ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

COUNTY COUNCIL

Steven Silverman, *President*
Isiah Leggett, *Vice President*
Marilyn J. Praisner
Phil Andrews
Nancy Dacek
Blair Ewing
Howard A. Denis
Michael L. Subin
Donell Peterman

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Douglas M. Duncan

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Elizabeth M. Hewlett, *Chairman*
Derick P. Berlage, *Vice Chairman*

COMMISSIONERS

Montgomery County Planning Board

Derick P. Berlage, *Chairman*
Wendy Collins Perdue, *Vice Chair*
Allison Bryant
Meredith K. Wellington
John M. Robinson

Prince George's county Planning Board

Elizabeth M. Hewlett, *Chairman*
William H. Eley, Jr., *Vice Chairman*
James M. Brown
George H. Lowe, Jr.
Albert C. Scott



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	OVERVIEW.....	1
	Purpose of Report	1
	Park & Trail Planning Objectives	3
II.	RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES	7
	Future Park and Recreation Needs	11
	Park Development Proposals.....	12
III.	RESOURCE PROTECTION.....	15
	Watersheds and Stream Valleys.....	15
	Water Resources.....	16
	Additional Parkland Acquisition	16
IV.	TRAIL CORRIDORS	19
	The Countywide Park Trails Plan.....	19
	Trail Issues.....	20
	Trail Recommendations.....	21
V.	SETTINGS FOR HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL FEATURES....	23
	Recommendations.....	23

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Vicinity Map
- Figure 2. Montgomery County Park Classification System
- Figure 3. Table of Existing Recreation Facilities at Parks and Schools in Upper Rock Creek
- Figure 4. Map of Park Development, Existing Schools and Trail Corridors
- Figure 5. Upper Rock Creek Watershed
- Figure 6. County Wide Park Trail Concept: Rock Creek Corridor
- Figure 7. Historic Sites on Existing and Proposed Parkland
- Figure 8. Additional Parkland Recommendations Summary
- Figure 9. Map of Proposal Park Acquisition

PARK AND TRAIL ANALYSIS FOR THE UPPER ROCK CREEK VICINITY

PREPARED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE UPPER ROCK CREEK AREA MASTER PLAN UPDATE

I. OVERVIEW

The purpose of this analysis is to consider park and trail needs and their interrelationships in the Upper Rock Creek Area of Montgomery County in conjunction with the ongoing update to the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan. The analysis attempts to consider needs for recreation and trails while balancing the desire to protect sensitive environmental areas and provide stewardship of our park's natural resources. This Park and Trail Analysis differs from the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan in that it includes a broader geographic area than the Area Master Plan and more detail on proposals for parks and trails. The Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan will include parkland acquisition proposals, and general recommendations on local, regional and recreational parks.

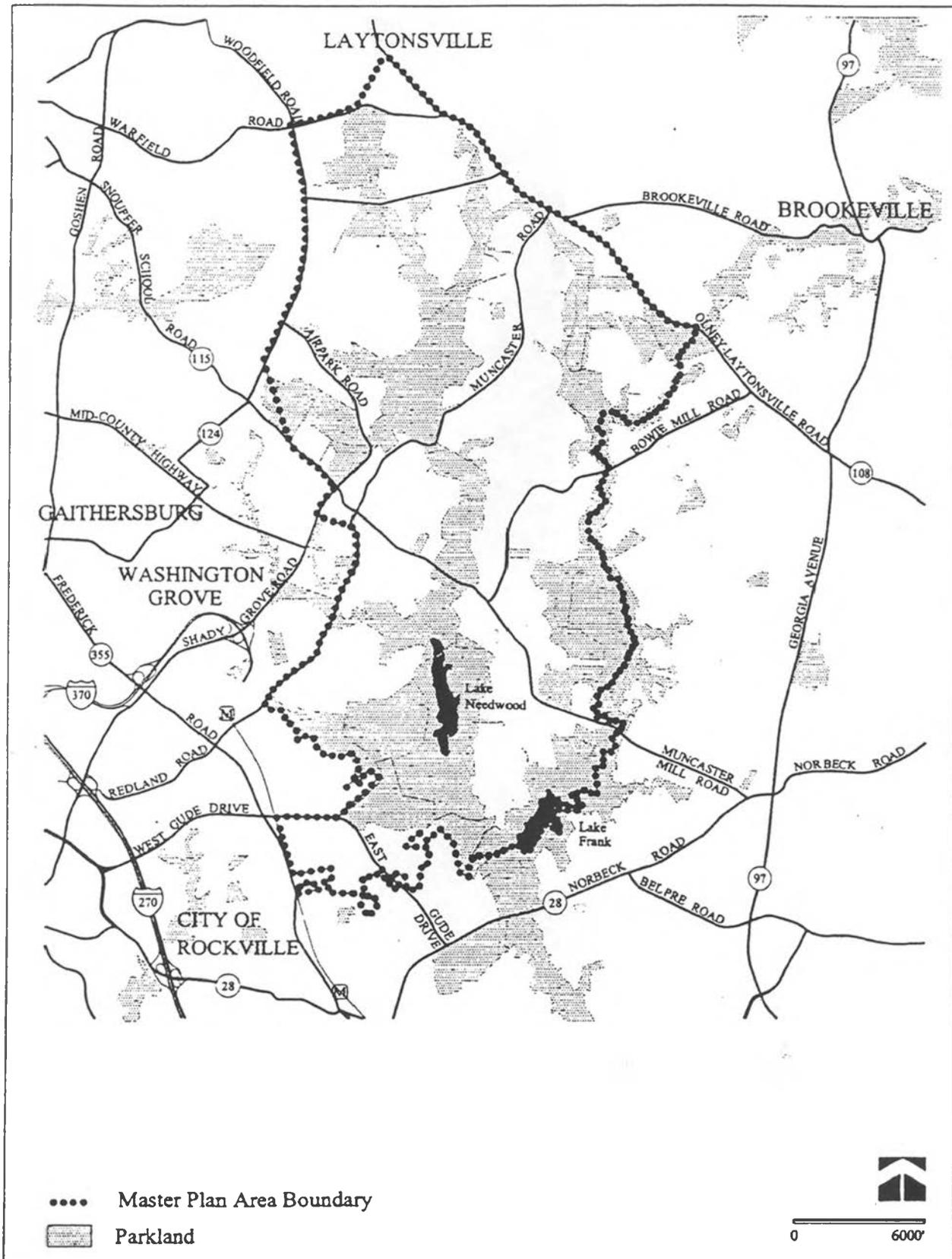
Purpose of Report

The park and Trail Analysis Report for the Upper Rock Creek Vicinity was developed to achieve the following purposes:

1. To provide a basis for parkland recommendations in Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan (see Figure for Master Plan boundary)
2. To recommend where additional parkland should be acquired to meet plan objectives related to:
 - a. Recreation Opportunities
 - b. Resource Protection
 - c. Trail Corridors
 - d. Settings for Historic, Archeological and Cultural Features
3. To convey general development proposals for local, regional and recreation parks in the planning area.
4. To recommend amendments to the Countywide Park Trails Plan.

Figure 1

LOCATION MAP



Park and Trail Planning Objectives

The following park and Trail objectives have guided the recommendations of this report:

- **Recreation Opportunities**

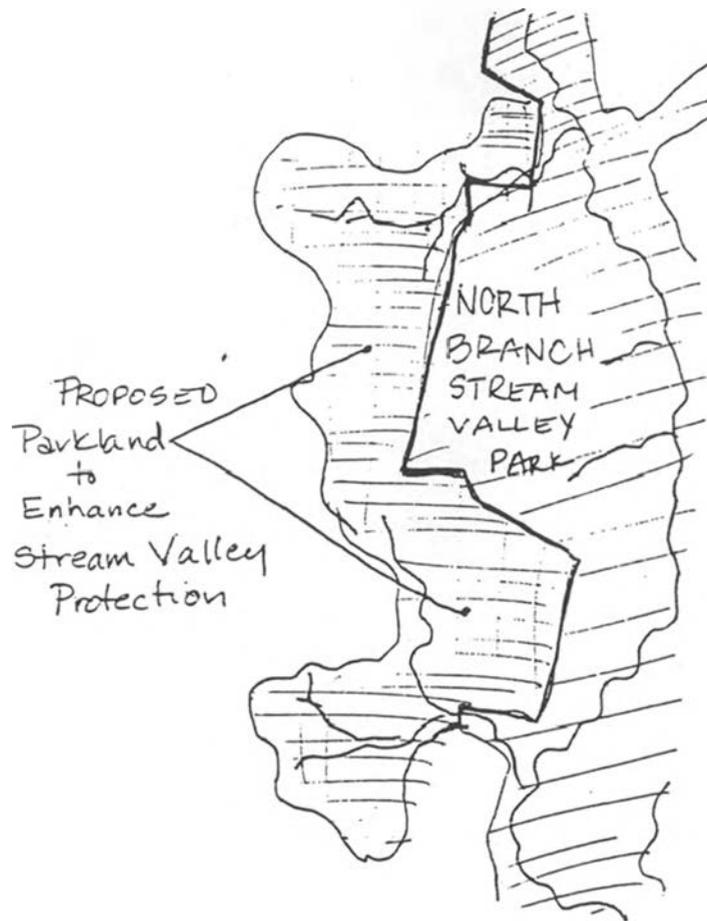
Provide a network of parks that meets the many different recreational needs of the community and is within easy walking or biking distance of their homes.

Existing recreation facilities are projected to be adequate through the year 2010. A survey conducted by local residents indicate general satisfaction with the park system. Most homes in Rock Creek Master Plan are within one mile of parkland. This does not always mean park access is available. Sometimes parkland is "landlocked" behind private backyards. Park trails, bikeways and sidewalks must be integrated to enhance non-vehicular access to parks. This report includes general development recommendations for different parks but recognizes these recommendations may have to be modified to adapt to changes in future recreation preferences and demands.



- **Resource Protection**

Integrate sensitive environmental features into the park system as needed to protect the overall health of the park system and to protect the county's natural resource base for generations to come. Protection of the environmentally sensitive Rock Creek and North Branch Steam Valley Parks is of paramount importance. A key planning principle is to expand these stream valley parks whenever practical to accomplish objectives related to resource protection and trail connectivity. The opportunity to do this is greatest along the North Branch where vacant, undeveloped parcels adjoin the stream valley park. New areas of park acquisition and dedication are proposed to provide additional natural buffers to the streams and to protect significant stands of trees. This concept is illustrated below.

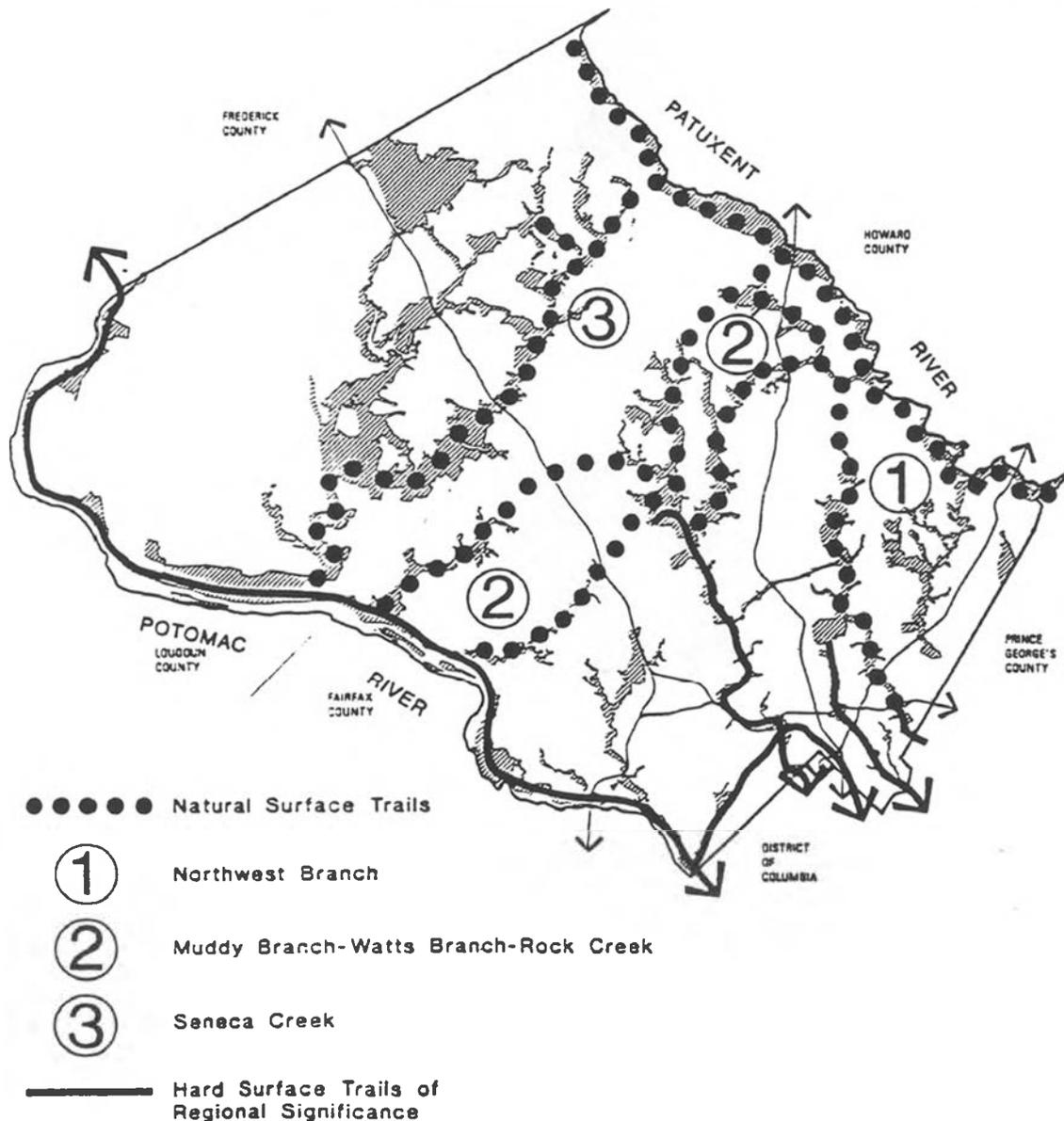


- **Trail Corridors**

Provide a pattern of parkland and open space that helps provide greenway trail connections between the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers.

The park pattern in the Upper Rock Creek vicinity consists of many north-south oriented stream valley parks that follow Rock Creek, North Branch, the Hawlings River, Northwest Branch and Seneca Creek. As shown in the 1998 Countywide Park Trails Plan, existing and proposed paths in these stream valley parks will one day form a network of natural surface greenway trails that connect the Potomac River to the Patuxent River. Figure represents this concept.

**NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL PLAN:
CONNECTIVITY TO POTOMAC AND PATUXENT RIVERS**

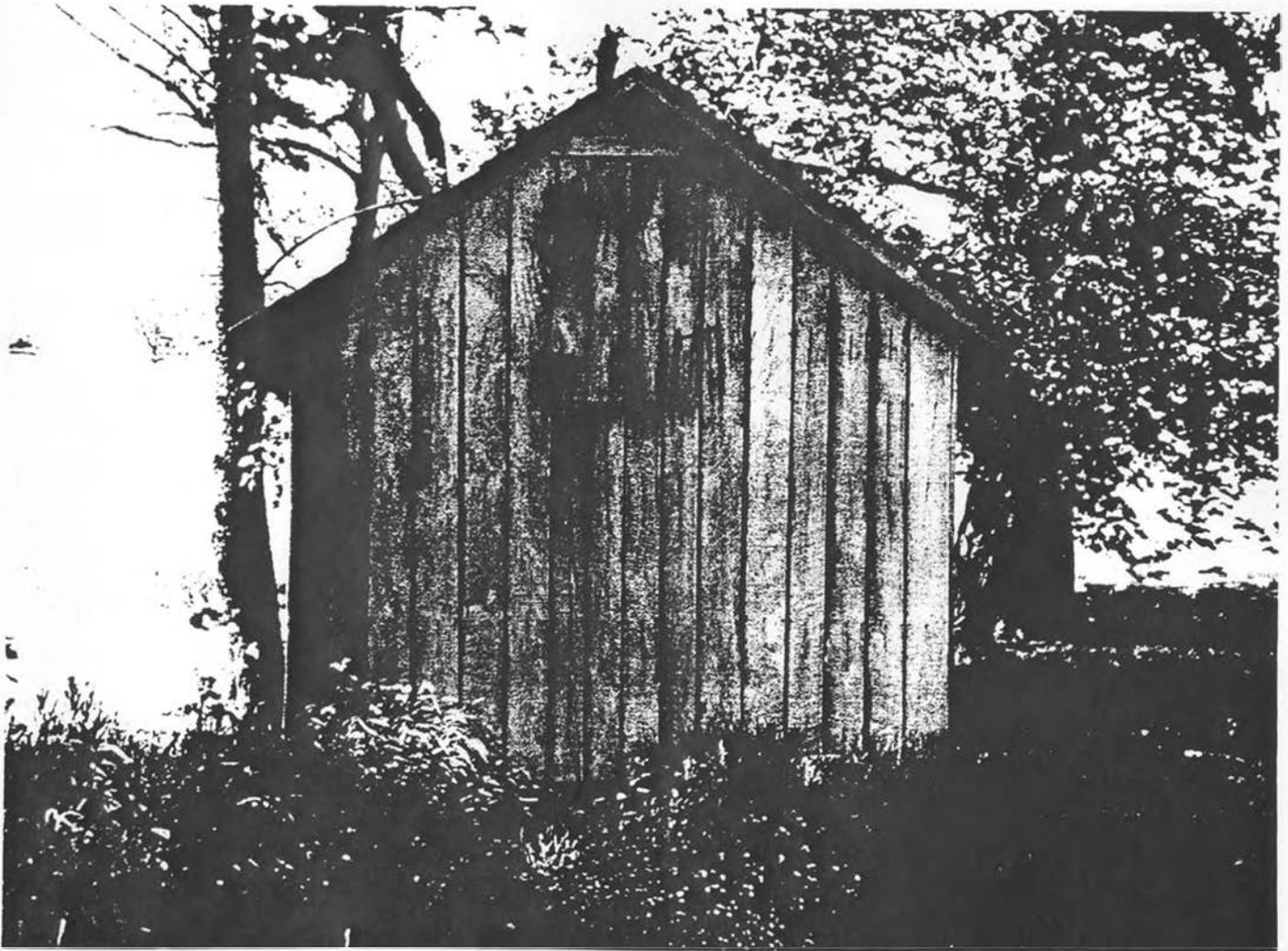


- **Settings for Historical, Archaeological and Cultural Features**

Identify sites from the County's past that should be preserved as park features and interpreted for public enjoyment.

The park system in the Rock Creek Planning Area offers the opportunity to interpret three historical themes. The County's Agricultural Heritage is already celebrated at the Agricultural History Farm Park. Protecting this park setting from modern visual intrusions is important. The many mill sites in the park system are a reminder of the County's economic and cultural heritage. Commemorating the involvement of Montgomery County residents in the Underground Railroad is particularly appropriate in the area because we know that Rock Creek was used as a route by escaping slaves.

The following sections of this report discuss each of the four primary planning concepts in greater detail.



II. RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Upper Rock Creek includes over 4100 acres of parkland, encompassing approximately 36% of its total land area. The majority of this parkland is undeveloped stream valley or recreational parkland. It serves to provide areas for recreation, trail corridors, protection of natural areas, and preservation of historic and cultural sites. Parks in the Upper Rock Creek Watershed serve both active and passive recreation needs.

The M-NCPPC park system is categorized into different park” types” for budgeting and planning purposes. The park types are based in part on the service area of each park, its physical size, natural features, and the kind of facilities it contains. Figure 2, ” M-NCPPC Montgomery County Park Classification System” from the 1998 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, contains a summarized description of each type of park, including approximate park size and typical recreation facilities. The Upper Rock Creek Watershed includes many types of parks including: regional, recreational, stream valley, special and local parks.

The variety of parks within the Upper Rock Creek watershed include those developed for active use, and undeveloped areas for passive recreation use and conservation. They provide thousands of acres of woodlands and many miles of trails, contain numerous athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, and playgrounds. They also offer other recreation opportunities for ice skating, boating, fishing, golfing, horseback riding, nature observation, etc. While they may vary dramatically in size, shape and focus, all of the parks provide essential open space and most provide some type of active or passive recreation.

-Active Recreation

Active recreation needs are currently served by one developed local park, four schools, and one developed Regional Park that currently serves the Upper Rock Creek Area. These parks and schools provide a total of 8 athletic fields available for community use, 10 tennis courts, 6 basketball courts and 5 playgrounds, as well as water- oriented recreation and picnic playground areas at the regional park. The Agricultural History Farm Park encompasses 439 acres of parkland and includes farm buildings, agricultural fields, and meeting rooms.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

PARK TYPE	PARK TYPE DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL FACILITIES*	APPROXIMATE SIZE
COUNTY-WIDE PARKS - Parks in this category serve all residents of Montgomery County			
- Recreation Oriented Parks			
Regional Parks	Large parks that provide a wide range of recreational opportunities but retain 2/3 of the acreage as conservation areas.	Picnic /playground areas, tennis courts, athletic fields, golf course, campgrounds, water-oriented recreation areas	200 acres or more
Recreational Parks	Parks larger than 50 acres in size that are more intensively developed than Regional Parks, but may also contain natural areas.	Athletic fields, tennis courts, multi-use courts, picnic/playground areas, golf course, trails, natural areas.	50 acres or more
Special Parks	These parks include areas that contain features of historic and cultural significance.	Vary, but may include agricultural centers, garden, small conference centers, historic structures, etc.	Varies
- Conservation Oriented Parks			
Stream Valley Parks	Interconnected linear parks along major stream valleys providing conservation and recreation areas.	Hiker-biker trails, fishing, picnicking, playground areas.	Varies
Conservation Area Parks	Large natural areas acquired to preserve specific natural archaeological or historic features. They also provide opportunities for compatible recreation activities.	Trails, fishing areas, nature study areas, informal picnic areas.	Varies
COMMUNITY USE PARKS - Parks in this category serve residents of surrounding communities			
Urban Parks	Very small parks, serving highly urban areas	Landscaping, sitting/picnic areas, play equipment courts, and shelters.	1 Acre
Neighborhood Parks	Small parks providing informal recreation in residential areas.	Play equipment, play field, sitting area, shelter, tennis and Multi-use courts. (Does not include regulation size ballfields)	2.5 Acres
Local Parks	Larger parks that provide ballfields and both programmed and unprogrammed recreation facilities	Ballfields, play equipment, tennis and multi-use courts, sitting/picnic area, shelters, buildings and other facilities	15 Acres
Neighborhood Conservation Areas	Small parcels of conservation oriented parkland in residential areas, generally dedicated at the time of subdivision.	Generally undeveloped, may include a storm water management pond and related facilities.	Varies

Figure 1

* This list is not all inclusive, but includes facilities typical of each park type.

Figure 3 Existing Recreation Facilities at Parks and Schools in Upper Rock Creek

NAME OF PARK OR SCHOOL	BALL FIELDS	TENNIS COURTS	BASKETBALL COURTS	PLAYGROUNDS
Bowie Mill Local Park	2 Soccer	2		1
Sequoyah Elem. S.	1 soccer, (softball overlay)		1	1
Candlewood Elem. S.	1 small softball field, soccer overlay		1	1
Redland Middle S.	2 softball, 1 soccer	4	2	
Magruder H.S.	2 community use fields	4	2	
Rock Creek Regional Park	2 lakes, boat rental, visitors pavilion, fishing, nature center, picnic areas with shelters, 2 playgrounds, trails			
Agricultural Farm Park	Meeting rooms/Office Building, Barn, farm buildings, fields			

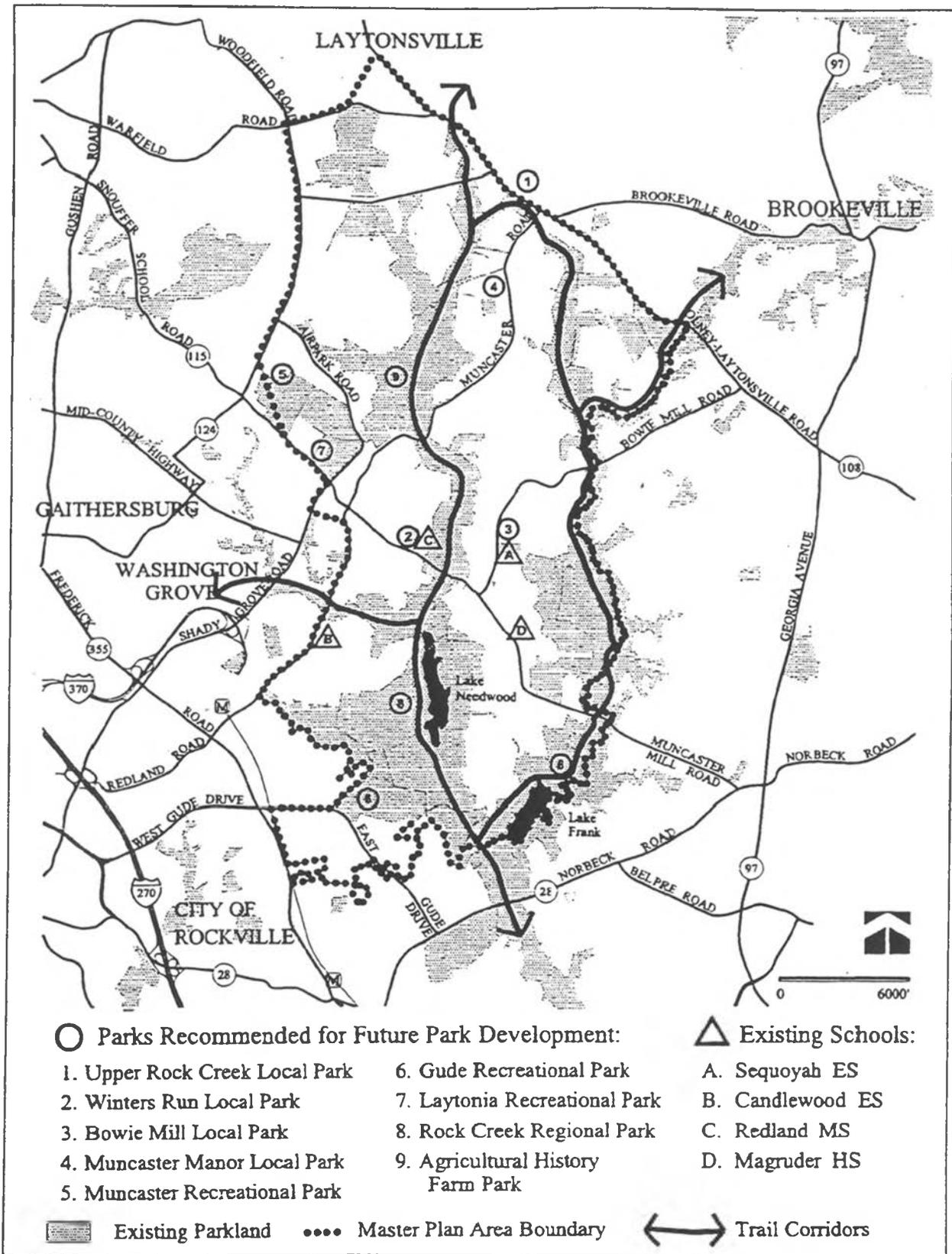
-Passive Recreation

Passive recreation needs in the Upper Rock Creek Watershed may be met by the Rock Creek and North Branch Stream Valley Parks and the conservation portions of Rock Creek Regional Park. Passive recreation experiences depend on the presence of natural areas and often require little modification of the environment. There are many types of passive recreation mentioned in the PROS Plan. They include: camping, boating, picnicking, bird watching, hiking, nature walking, wildlife viewing, nature photography, fishing canoeing and horse-back riding.

High quality passive recreational experiences require high quality natural areas. These areas contain a large diversity of native plants and animals, absence of invasive exotic plant species, minimal human impacts, high water quality, large acreage, and offer quiet opportunities to enjoy the out-of-doors.

Figure 14

PARK DEVELOPMENT, EXISTING SCHOOLS AND TRAIL CORRIDORS



Future Park and Recreation Needs

1. Recreation Survey of Upper Rock Creek Residents

A survey by the Granby Woods Civic Association on quality of life issues, included questions on future recreation needs, and future needs for currently undeveloped parkland. Results of the survey indicated that Upper Rock Creek residents are significant park users. The majority of respondents indicated that they used Montgomery County Parks 2 or 3 times a month or more. Most frequent reasons given for visiting parks were 1) to be outdoors and enjoy nature; 2) use playground or other children's recreation facilities; 3) walk on trails/nature walks, and 4) picnic. Residents said that we need more conservation areas, trails, nature centers, historic areas, playgrounds, and ball fields. A large majority of respondents felt that park facilities fulfilled the recreation needs of their household, are well maintained, and safe during the day. Some respondents felt that parks were overcrowded.

2. PROS Plan Recommendations

The 1998 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan indicated that existing recreation facilities would meet needs of the Upper Rock Creek Area through the year 2010. It is anticipated that a new local park may be needed after that time, particularly as residential areas adjacent to Upper Rock Creek are densely developed and use area facilities. Parkland needed for protection of sensitive environmental areas is discussed in other sections of the Plan.

3. Specific Issues

A number of Issues were considered with regard to future park and recreation needs. These included:

- Proposals for new park acquisition and additions/major renovations to existing parks.
- Potential future park acquisitions – additions to stream valleys, Agricultural History Farm Park and possible new regional park acquisition.
- Potential future park development at Gude , Muncaster , and Laytonia Recreational Parks, and Winter's Run and Muncaster Manor Local Parks.
- Proposal for additional development/renovation needs of existing parkland, including Agricultural History Farm Park

Park Development Proposals

1. Local Parks

The following parks are recommended for future park development.

- A New Upper Rock Creek Local Park is proposed at Muncaster Rd. and Rt.108,. Approximately + - 20 acres of existing open parkland could provide long term development of ball fields and other recreation facilities to serve future needs of the Upper R.C. and Olney Areas. In addition, trails, a picnic area, and a playground should be provided as requested by the R.C. Survey. However tennis courts also requested, are not recommended because of decreasing county needs for this type of facility.
- Winters Run Local Park is proposed for development of a soccer lacrosse field and playground to supplement the fields and recreation facilities at the adjacent Redland Middle School.
- The Bowie Mill Local Park/Sequoyah Elementary site is proposed to be enlarged with a small dedication of adjacent land from the Casey Property which would permit the expansion of the ballfield.for Community use.
- The Muncaster Manor Local Park Site should be kept in agricultural lease. It is unclear if it will be needed for future long-term park use.

2. Regional/Recreational Parks

The following recommendations are suggested for future development Regional and Recreational Parks in the Upper Rock Creek Area.

- Muncaster Recreational Park/Pope Farm - The majority of the 105-acre Muncaster Recreational Park which is located adjacent to the Pope Farm Nursery cannot be developed for active recreation because it falls within environmental buffer areas. An area adjacent to Rt.124 is suitable for active development and should be considered for lighted, high/impact facilities because it is in an industrial area and has access off a major Arterial road. An example of facilities that might be considered include indoor soccer or indoor tennis. It has also been suggested as a potential site for a skateboard park/and or roller hockey rink. A large picnic/playground area would also be desirable. The Rock Creek Survey indicated a desire for picnic areas, a playground, trails and nature areas at this park which could be partially located in the treed areas. An additional +/- six acres of developable land is adjacent to the Pope Farm and may be considered for future local recreation use to serve the adjacent subdivision. The Pope Farm serves a useful function by growing trees and plants needed to landscape County Parks.

- Gude Recreational Park - The future development of the Gude Recreational Park is questionable because it is a former landfill site that is still settling, producing methane gas, and was never properly sealed. A great deal of unsafe debris protrudes at the edges of the old landfill area. There is a contract for the removal of the gas that extends to approximately 2005. A schematic development plan completed for that park several years ago, included 5 ball fields, an amphitheater, picnic playground areas and gravel parking. No paved facilities or structures were recommended because of the potential for settlement damage. At the conclusion of the methane recovery lease, an engineering assessment should be done to determine if it is cost effective to develop the site as a park. The landfill would have to be properly sealed, which would be extremely expensive, and continuing problems with settling and debris rising to the surface may be too difficult to overcome. Minimally, a trail system with connections to the adjacent Upper Rock Creek Regional Park and Gude Drive, is desirable. The Community Survey indicated that facilities most desired by residents for this park include picnic areas, trails, a playground, soccer and baseball/soccer fields and nature areas. This is consistent with the previously developed plan. A proposal has recently been made by the Department of Health and Human Services to use a small portion of the park as a rescue dog training facility. This proposal appears to be a good interim use as it would make good use of the park now, and in its present state.
- Laytonia Recreational Park - A plan has been approved for the Laytonia Recreational Park that includes four athletic fields, a basketball court, roller hockey court, playground and natural areas. The Plan is consistent with the residents survey which requested trails, picnic and nature areas, playground and fields. Tennis courts which were also requested, are not proposed because of the large number existing at area schools.
- Rock Creek Regional Park - This developed regional park includes 1778 acres in the southern portion of the planning area. It includes two lakes and many recreation facilities. The western portion of the Park is developed with active recreation areas including Lake Needwood boating area, picnic/playground areas, trails, archery and a golf course. Conversely, the Lake Frank section of the park to the east, is a predominantly undeveloped natural area serving passive recreation needs with a nature center, nature trails and shoreline fishing. A master plan developed for the Park in 1999, proposed additional trails, and renovation of older park facilities.
- Agricultural History Farm Park - The Farm Park continues to provide an opportunity to interpret Montgomery County's rich agrarian heritage while demonstrating current trends in agricultural technology. The park's programs, facilities, displays, and demonstrations combine the expertise of the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service, the Soil Conservation Service/ Montgomery Soil Conservation District, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, as well as the Friends of the Agricultural History Farm Park. Important issues for future consideration include the need to prepare a limited amendment to the park master

plan reflecting additions of a tank house, corn crib, saw-mill, and a Friends funded antique equipment storage building to the site; the need to protect the park's boundaries and surrounding viewscape, especially north of the Activities Building on the site of the Hoover Farm; and the need to pursue funding for facility planning and construction of a maintenance yard. It has also been suggested that a small area east of and adjacent to Airpark Road might be suitable for propagating trees, thereby providing an opportunity for future expansion of operations associated with the Pope Farm Plant Nursery.

The pattern of recreational parks in the vicinity is generally satisfactory to meet existing and future needs through the year 2010. The Legacy Open Space Plan has identified the need for a new regional park in the county and a site selection process will be initiated in the near future. One site that has been nominated for evaluation is located west of the Rock Creek Planning Area. The site, identified as the Webb tract, adjoins the Louis Y. Green Conversation Park.

III RESOURCE PROTECTION

The stewardship of important natural and cultural resources in the Area is important. Stewardship of our County's best natural resources while providing our residents with high quality active and passive recreation opportunities and facilities, requires careful balancing between these important, but sometimes conflicting goals. Careful analysis of natural resources impacts when planning recreational facilities assures that residents can appreciate an area's diversity of natural resources, as well as enjoy a wide range of quality recreational opportunities.

An analysis of environmental factors within the Study Area is important to show significant natural areas that should be protected. This analysis identifies sensitive areas using existing mapped resource information to delineate stream buffer areas that include floodplains, adjacent steep slopes, mature forest areas, biodiversity areas and priority natural areas.

Controlling storm water, stabilizing eroding stream banks and enhancing aquatic habitat are other important ways of helping to preserve natural areas. Methods of protecting the streams include installation of storm water management facilities, reforestation, establishment of no mow zones next to the stream, and stream habitat improvement.

The overgrowth of non-native invasive plants in parks has become a region-wide problem in recent years, including portions of parks in the Upper Rock Creek Watershed. It has been noted by the public as a major concern.

Watersheds and Stream Valleys

Protection of the two major tributary watersheds in Upper Rock Creek ,Rock Creek and North Branch, is essential. Rock Creek, including its North Branch above Muncaster Mill Road is a Use III stream, and below Muncaster Mill Road is a Use IV stream. Use III streams, or "Natural Trout Waters" are waters that are capable of supporting natural trout populations, including propagation, and their associated food organisms. Streams of this quality are relatively rare in the county; the Use III area is one of six such areas. Use IV streams include cold or warm waters that have the potential for, or are capable of, holding or supporting adult trout for put and take fishing. These streams are managed as a special fishery by periodic stocking and seasonal catching.

North Branch of Rock Creek in the eastern part of the planning area (see Figure 5) flows southward from Route 108, crossing Bowie Mill Road and Muncaster Mill Road and flowing into Lake Frank. The North Branch is the more sensitive tributary of the two in the Upper Rock Creek watershed. While there are large forests and wetlands in the headwaters, the medium-density development that is present in Olney further east puts considerable pressure on the stream. Protecting the headwater resources in a natural, undeveloped state is critical to sustaining the cold water habitat of the stream.

A very important biodiversity area of forest and wetlands is located just north and south of Muncaster Mill Road. The streamside habitat of the North Branch forms a significant part of this habitat for a considerable length of the stream. Groundwater recharge feeds the wetlands and small tributary streams and springs that contribute to the high quality of this area. Protection of the undeveloped areas of the North Branch drainage on the Dungan and Casey (Bowie Mill) properties is essential to the health of the biodiversity area. Several areas on the Casey Property, while not delineated wetlands today, may have been wetlands prior to farming. These wetlands and adjacent forest areas could be restored to provide additional water quality and habitat benefits.

Recommendations regarding the North Branch and Rock Creek Stream Valleys include:

- a. Enhance protection through additional forest preservation, particularly adjacent to the North Branch biodiversity area.
- b. Enhance the quality of the forest and wetland resources through restoration, particularly the lower North Branch area above Muncaster Mill Road.
- c. Minimize impacts to these biodiversity areas due to disturbance, fragmentation, or damage to buffer areas.
- d. Avoid damage to groundwater resources for biodiversity areas due to excessive or unnecessary imperviousness.

Water Resources

Protecting the water resources of the Upper Rock Creek watershed is critical. The planning area contains exceptionally healthy aquatic ecosystems. In addition, most of the streams flow into Lakes Needwood and Frank in Rock Creek Regional Park. The water quality of these lakes is directly affected by the nutrients and sediments delivered by the streams. County and statewide efforts to improve water quality in tributaries have influenced the general approach to water resource protection in the Upper Rock Creek watershed. These efforts include the 1983 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and subsequent agreements, the 1992 State Planning Act, and the 1997 Smart Growth Act that gives financial incentives to local governments to promote concentrated growth and avoid sprawl.

Additional Parkland Acquisition to protect Natural Resources

Additional Parkland Acquisition is primarily needed to complete stream valley parks and protect sensitive natural Areas. Properties have been recommended for addition to the park system to assure long term protection and preservation of specific resources. Additional properties are recommended to be added to the park system to provide buffers for these resources and areas for forest or wetland restoration. These additions will enhance the stream valley park system and protect the stream valleys as development occurs in the planning area. These recommendations are listed in Figure 5.

There are several key areas proposed for parkland for environmental purposes which are summarized below and should be added to the park system at the time of development of several remaining large parcels of land in Rock Creek. These should be obtained through dedication whenever possible and include:

- Dungan property- acquire as parkland if the right of way for a new road crossing is removed from the master plan.
- Casey (Bowie Mill) property- seek dedication of portions that drain to the North Branch.
- Fraley Property - seek dedication along the east and south sides of the Fraley property to provide additional stream buffer.
- Freeman property. cluster development to protect existing forested areas, stream buffers and wetlands as dedicated parkland.
- Hendry Property-obtain dedications of two forested stream buffers on the Hendry property as part of any residential subdivision of the property.

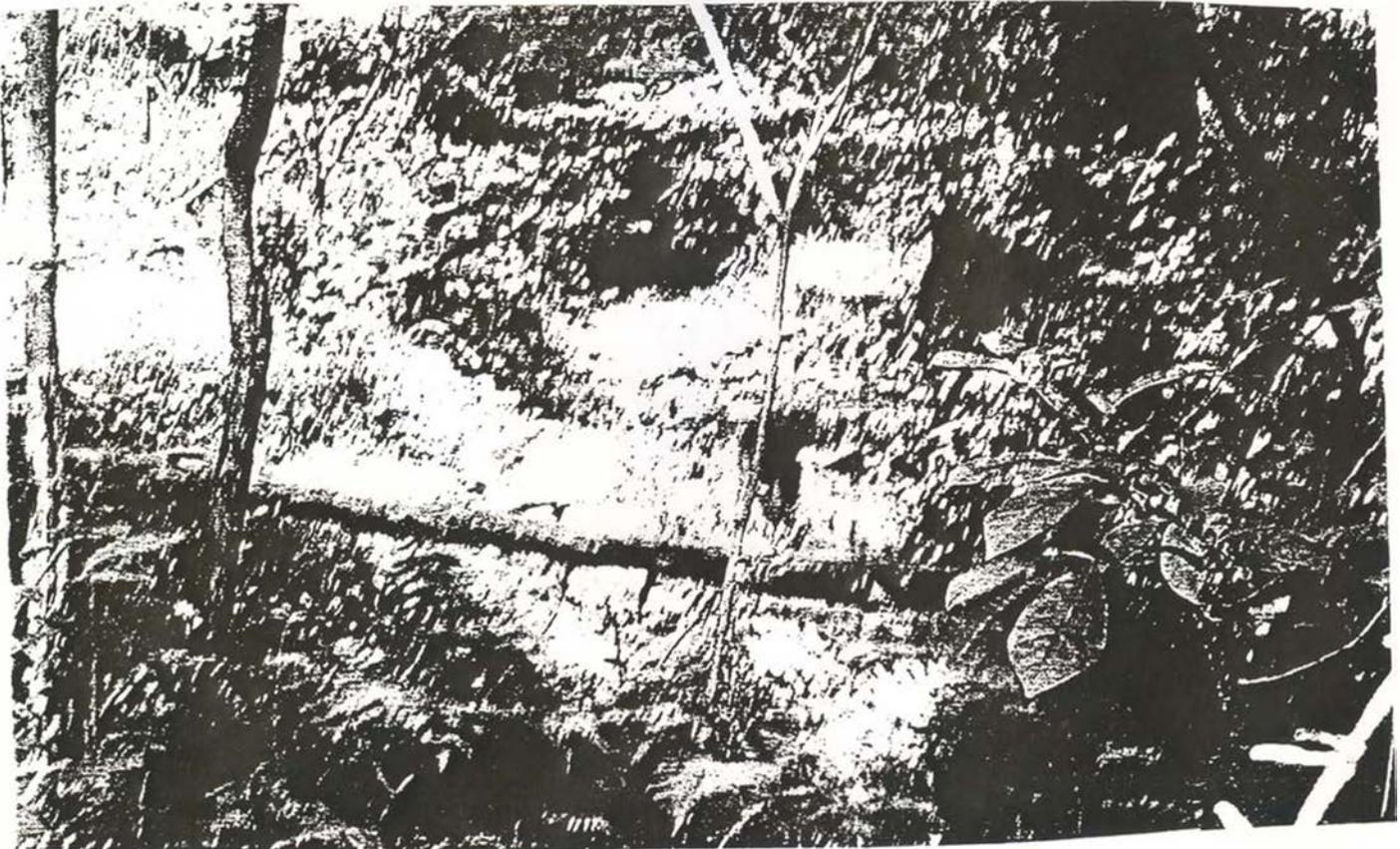
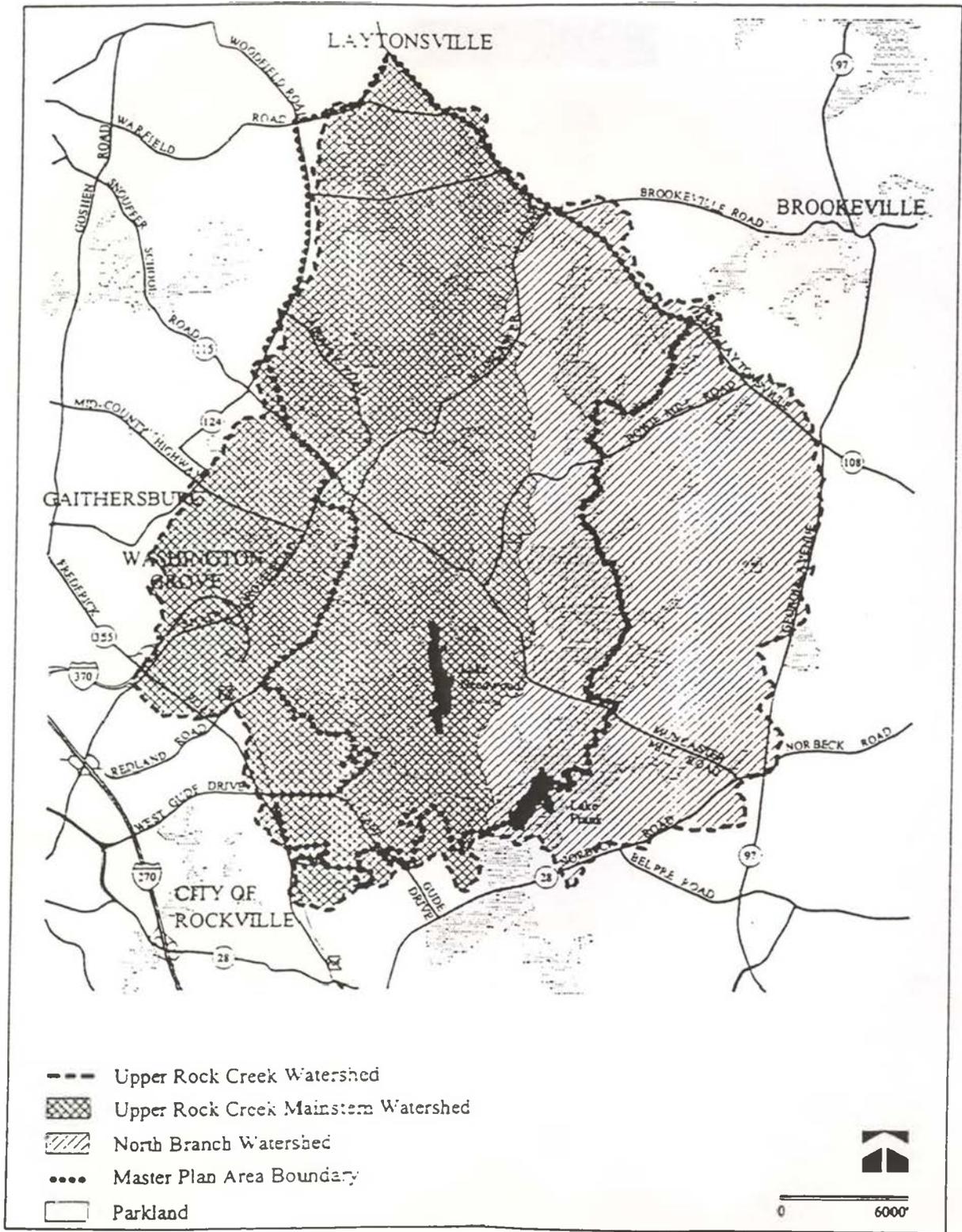


Figure 5
UPPER ROCK CREEK WATERSHED



IV. TRAIL CORRIDORS

Trails are the County's most popular recreation facility and can be used by people of all age groups including the elderly and the very young. It is important to develop an interrelated trail and bikeway system that provides trails within the park system linked by connections to the community and nearby bikeways.

The Countywide Park Trails Plan

The Countywide Park Trails Plan (July 1998) and the Master Plan for Rock Creek Regional Park propose trail systems in the planning area.

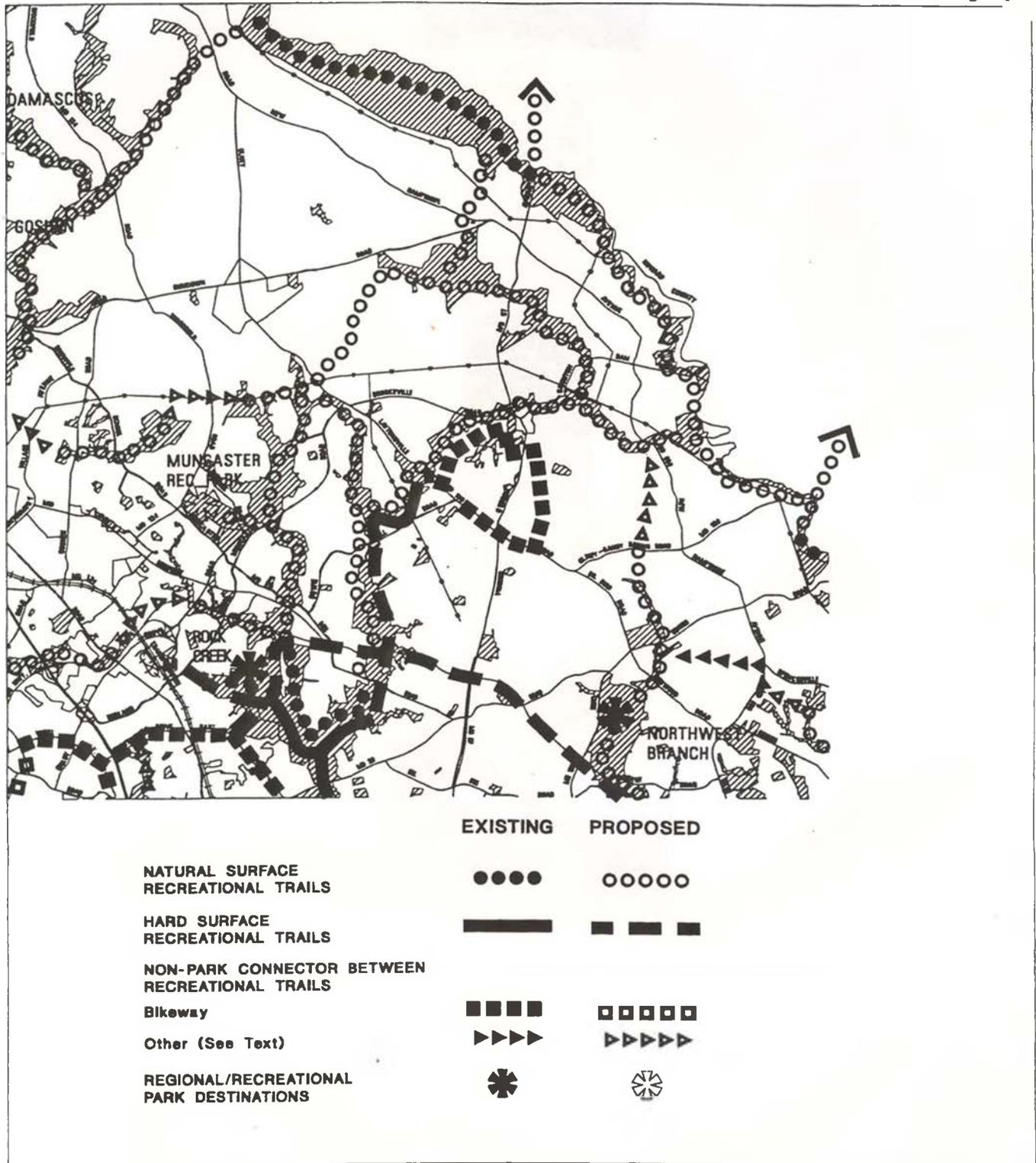
The future County-wide Trails Plan network of recreation-oriented trails are based on the following guiding principles:

- Maintain a county-wide perspective
- Emphasize connectivity
- Provide variety
- Seek balance among recreation, transportation and environmental concerns
- Establish the priority of key components of the County-wide network
- Designate a network which is responsive to population centers, both existing and planned
- Recommend implementation strategies, including trail planning and design guidelines

The Countywide Park Trails Plan shows a natural surface trail through the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, linking Rock Creek Regional Park to the Agricultural History Farm Park, Muncaster Recreational Park, and ultimately extending north to the Patuxent River. (See figure 4). The North Branch of Rock Creek is shown as a hard surface trail corridor in the Countywide Park Trails Plan. To provide more opportunities to avoid environmentally sensitive areas when these trail proposals are studied in more detail at some time in the future, acquisition of additional parkland is recommended outside of stream valley buffers whenever possible. This recommendation is reflected on the proposed parkland map along the North Branch of Rock Creek Park.

COUNTYWIDE PARK TRAIL CONCEPT: ROCK CREEK CORRIDOR

Figure 6



Trail Issues

The Upper Rock Creek Park and Trail Analysis considered the following trail corridor issues:

General Issues

- Provision of natural and hard surface trails and trail connectors to implement the County-wide Park Trail Plan
- Provision of bicycle paths along roadways in lieu of most hard surface trails in Stream Valley Parks.

North Branch Trail Related Issues

1. Trail crossings of Muncaster Mill Road
2. Additional park acquisitions needed in narrow stream valley areas
3. Provide trail connections between schools and parks
4. Eliminate park encroachments that interfere with trails
5. Trail crossing/trail head @ Bowie Mill Road
6. North Branch trail to Olney- determine final destination
7. Provide safe crossing of trail at MD 108

Rock Creek Main Stem Trail Issues

8. Explore hard surface trail to Rockville Bicycle Beltway (through Gude Park)
9. Explore hard surface trail access to Shady Grove Metro Station
10. Accommodate bike paths on Needwood Road
11. Acquire property to accommodate hard surface trail connection to ICC r/w
12. Identify environmentally sensitive portions of areas proposed for trail construction
13. Provide safe crossing of Muncaster Road
14. Develop natural surface trails and connections at Oaks Landfill.

The role of the ICC right-of-way in trail planning is also addressed in the Countywide Park Trails Plan., which recommends that a hard surface trail be provided in the vicinity of the right-of-way whether or not the highway is built. The Plan states:

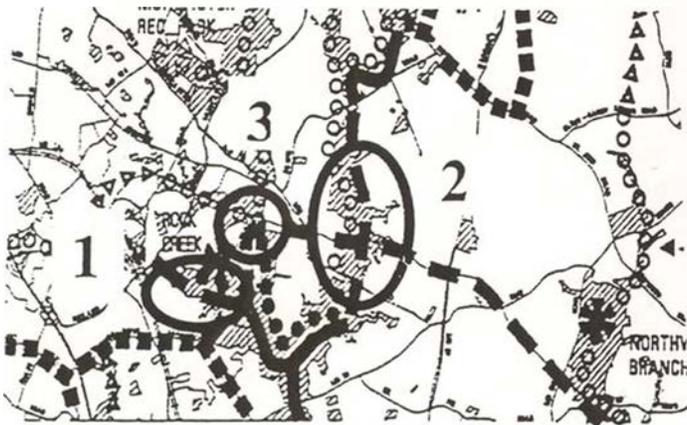
"If a highway is built on any portion of the ICC right-of-way, a bike/pedestrian path will also be provided. This path will provide east-west connectivity between the I-270 Corridor/Gaithersburg area and Rock Creek Regional Park, Martin Luther King Regional Park and Fairland Recreation Park. This Plan recommends a trail throughout the length of the ICC (with or without a highway). However, its exact location and design should remain flexible in order to minimize its environmental impact."

Trail Recommendations

1. Proposed Revisions To The Countywide Park Trails Plan

To reflect the environmental, bikeway and land use recommendations of the Rock Creek Master Plan, amendments to the Countywide Park Trails Plan are begin proposed.

The proposed changes to the Countywide Park Trail Concept map for the Rock Creek Corridor are shown below.



	EXISTING	PROPOSED
NATURAL SURFACE RECREATIONAL TRAILS	●●●●	○●●●○
HARD SURFACE RECREATIONAL TRAILS	————	■ — ■ — ■
NON-PARK CONNECTOR BETWEEN RECREATIONAL TRAILS		
Bikeway	■ ■ ■ ■	□ □ □ □
Other (See Text)	▶▶▶▶	▶▶▶▶▶
REGIONAL/RECREATIONAL PARK DESTINATIONS	✱	✱

1. Remove hard surface trail from Crabbs Branch; rely on bikeway along Needwood Road for access to Metro

2. Remove portion of hard surface trail from most sensitive portion of the North Branch biodiversity area; rely on bikeway along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road for connectivity. Realign portion of trail on Casey and Dungan properties to least sensitive areas

3. Rely on proposed class I bikeway to link Rock Creek Trail to the ICC Alignment Bikeway.

2. Specific Trail Recommendations

Needwood Road area between Rock Creek Park and the ICC Right of Way. The Countywide Park Trails Plan anticipates the bike path proposed to be built in conjunction with the ICC will provide much needed east-west connectivity between a number of parks in the eastern part of the county, including Rock Creek Regional Park. As previously mentioned, this connectivity is so important that the Countywide Park Trail Plan proposes that the ICC right-of-way be considered for a hard surface trail whether or not the ICC is built. For this reason, it is important to provide a safe trail connection

between Rock Creek Park and the ICC right of way. An area is designated for parkland south of Needwood Road to allow this connection.

Muncaster Road and Emory Lane. The Rock Creek Trail Corridor identified in the Countywide Park Trails Plan traverses both the Upper Rock Creek and the Olney Planning Areas. As part of planning for Upper Rock Creek, an area of potential future park acquisition related to the Rock Creek Trail Corridor has been identified in Olney. The property is located at the corner of Muncaster Mill Road and Emory Lane. In order to provide a safe connection from the bike path planned along Emory Lane to the Rock Creek Trail system south of Muncaster Mill Road, a park trail may be needed in this vicinity.

Trail Related Guidelines for Roadway Projects - At grade road crossings are one of the most dangerous features of trails. Many such crossings exist in the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area. This Plan recommends that opportunities for providing safe trail crossings be included in any planned improvements for the following roadways: 1. Bowie Mill Road; 2. Muncaster Mill Road 3) Muncaster Road, and 4) Maryland 108. Additionally, the blinking light now located at the entrance to the Oaks Landfill should be retained to help provide safe crossing of Maryland 108 for trail users. As usage of this trail increases, a pedestrian activated crossing light should be considered.

Trail Related Guidelines For Review of Development Proposals - When new development occurs in the planning area, a major concern should be how residents will access parkland without using their automobile. This can be accomplished by providing sidewalks, bike paths or trails from new subdivisions to parks. This is especially important in the Rock Creek Planning area because of the extensive amount of parkland in the area and the many opportunities to enjoy trails in both Rock Creek and the North Branch. Providing connections to these park systems will be a major concern in the review of private development.

V. SETTINGS FOR HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL FEATURES

Historic and archaeological sites provide important links to our County's heritage. Parkland acquisition is often desirable to preserve settings for historic, archaeological and cultural features. These settings are a major part of the historic feature's origin and sense of identity and should be retained wherever possible. Current historic sites on park property in the Upper Rock Creek include Needwood Mansion and outbuildings, built in 1856 by William Robertson and having some Civil War historical association; and the Bussard Farm on the Agricultural Farm Park, which is in the process of being made into a 1910 farm museum. Archeological sites on park property include the sites of Bowie Mill, Muncaster Mill and Horner's Mill.

Recommendations

Research is currently underway on the operations of the Underground Railroad and other aids to escaping slaves in Montgomery County. It is known that Rock Creek was used as a route by escaping slaves, and several sites in the D.C. section of Rock Creek Park have already been marked. For this reason, and also because of its inherent significance, Dorsey Spring (22/1), the headwaters of Rock Creek should be given top priority, and the condition of this resource should be assessed and the Laytonsville Golf Course, on whose property this site exists, should be made aware of its importance. If the owner is not willing to protect the site consideration should be made for the purchase of this site by the county. Also, the marsh called *Blue Mash* is known to have been a hiding place for escaping slaves. Because of this historical connection between Rock Creek and Blue Mash, priority should be given to a trail connecting them. Between the two, on Rt. 108, was an African American village called Claysville (22/3) which is no longer there, but which should be noted as a possible link. Blue Mash should then be connected with Rachel Carson Park and the Northwest Branch Trail, creating a continuous loop Underground Railroad experience hike, and a link to the Patuxent River which would have been a gateway to Pennsylvania and freedom for escaping slaves.

The Agricultural History Farm Park is an important planning concern in this category. Views from trails and main public areas of the park should be consistent with the agricultural character of the park. The Bussard Farm House and Barn (22/7) interpretive area is planned to be a Living History Museum of a 1910 farmstead (see AHFP Master Plan) (PROS Plan pg. 74). This is an especially sensitive forty acre area and the view-scapes from the house and barn should be assigned special importance in order to maintain the historical cultural landscape for educational purposes. One property (the Hoover property) near the park is proposed for development and could alter the rural, agricultural and historical view shed, replacing vistas of farm fields with houses. As part of this Master Plan process, the following options are being examined to help assure the view shed is protected:

1. Preserve open space as primary view from the festival area and demonstration gardens at the Agricultural History Farm Park.
2. Explore the use of plantings to create a visual buffer.
3. Shift trail away from park boundary to avoid views of development.

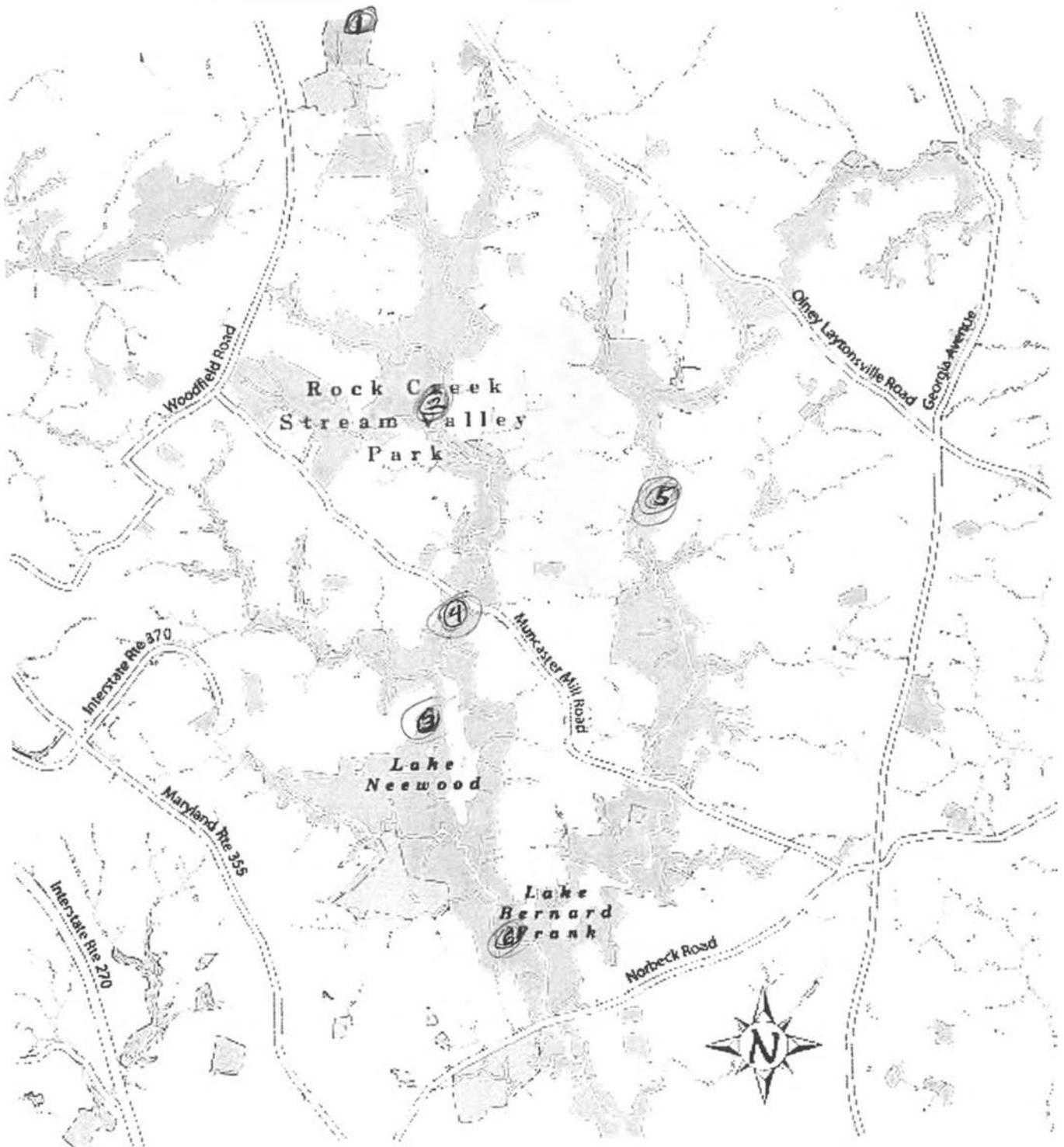
Another park planning concern in this category is to protect the historic location of the Bowie Mill, located adjacent to present-day Bowie Mill Road on the west side of the North Branch of Rock Creek. MNCPPC has already acquired both the headrace and tailrace leading to and from the actual mill site. Acquisition of the footprint of the mill foundation would complete the preservation of this historic cultural resource, which has given its name both to the road and local neighborhoods and would enhance interpretative opportunities.

The Muncaster Mill Site and the Horner's Mill Site, already in Parkland, should also be protected and interpreted.

Signage

Historical interpretive signage should be placed at all historic sites along trails. These include: Bussard Farmstead, Newmantown site, Dorsey Spring (headwaters of Rock Creek), Muncaster Mill site, Horner's Mill site, Bowie Mill site, and possibly others, especially as relates to the Underground Railroad.

Figure 7 - Historic Sites on Existing and Proposed Parkland



1. Lorsch Spring
2. Bussard Farm
3. Neewood
4. Muncaster Mill site
5. Bowie Mill site
6. Homers Mill site

Figure 8

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL PARKLAND RECOMMENDATIONS

Category	Name of Property	Recommendation
Recreation Opportunities		
	1. Upper Rock Creek Local Park	Re-designate portion of Rock Creek Unit 16 at MD 108 and Muncaster Road to serve local recreation needs.
	2. Casey	Obtain small dedication from Casey property to enlarge ballfields at Bowie Mill Local Park.
Resource Protection		
	3. Dungan	Acquire for resource protection
	4. Casey	Seek dedication of portion that drains to North Branch for watershed protection
	5. Fraley	Seek dedication during development process along east and south sides to protect stream buffer.
	6. Freeman	Seek dedication to protect forested areas, stream buffers and wetlands.
	7. Hendry	Seek dedication of portions of two forested stream buffers through development process.
	8. Woodlawn	Seek dedication to provide trail connection between Needwood Road and ICC.
Trail Corridors		
	9. Underground Railroad	Extend Rock Creek Trail to Dorsey Spring and connect it with the Blue Mash Trail.
	10. North Branch	Expand parkland where feasible to locate potential future hard surface trail outside of environmental buffers.
	11. ICC right-of-way	Locate bikeway in ICC right-of-way, whether or not the road is built, with flexible design to minimize environmental impacts.
	12. Emory Lane/ North Branch trail connection	Acquire parkland at Muncaster Mill Road and Emory Lane to provide safe trail connection outside of sensitive natural area.
	13. North Branch/Ag History Farm Park Connection	Acquire Property south of Muncaster Road to increase natural surface trail options and incorporate natural features into park.
	14. Rock Creek/ Oaks Landfill Connector	Acquire parkland to provide safe, attractive trail connection from Rock Creek trail to Oaks Landfill trail.
Settings for Historic, Archeological Cultural Areas		
	15. Bowie Mill	Protect and provide interpretive opportunities for historic Bowie Mill Site.
	16. Muncaster Mill	Protect and provide interpretive opportunities for historic Muncaster Mill Site.
	17. Horner's Mill	Protect and provide interpretive opportunities for historic Horner's Mill Site.
	18. Dorsey Spring	Work with Revenue Authority to assure protection of this historic site.

Figure 9

PARKLAND RECOMMENDATIONS

