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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Mid-April 2026 Newsletter

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exploring undeveloped trail route on American Battlefield Trust property (Second Sunday Hike in March)

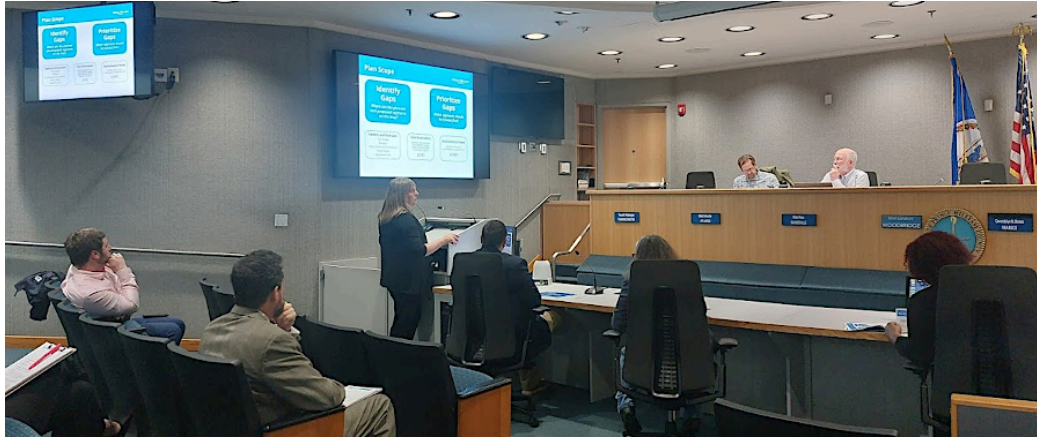
Come to the Quarterly Meeting on April 23, 10:00-11:30am

Get the latest news on [Pathways 2035 - Trails Master Plan](#), funding opportunities/challenges, the status of trail projects now underway or already planned, upcoming events - there is a lot going on these days.

Member organizations will provide updates on what's happening with trails south of the Occoquan

River. Meetings are designed for networking, schmoozing, and co-aling. Next Quarterly Meetings are June 5 and October 22, 2026; mark your calendar.

Please register so you can join us via Zoom or in person at the **Potomac Science Center** of George Mason University. If you Zoom, you're on your own for getting coffee, tea, and tasty donuts.



Update on Pathways 2035 - Trails Master Plan

Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation **briefed** the Planning Commission on April 8 regarding the draft of **Pathways 2035**, the latest countywide trails plan. Previous **trails planning** includes the 2022 Mobility Chapter and Countywide Trails Map, 2008 Comprehensive Plan, and 1993 Trails and Greenways Master Plan.

Highest-priority needs to close gaps in the county's 2,000 miles of sidewalks were identified previously in the **Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan**. Also, a later plan will address trails maintenance needs. The county's 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan also has a 10-year timeframe, so it will be updated in 5 years.

Pathways 2035 separates Recreational trails (to be constructed primarily by Department of Parks and Recreation) from Active Mobility trails (to be built by Department of Transportation). Active Mobility trails include shared use paths, paved shoulders, bike lanes, and sharrows (shared streets).

Both Gap 2 and Gap 3 of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail are identified in Tier 1, the priority for construction over the next 10 years. Gap 2 is listed as a Recreational trail, Gap 3 as an Active Mobility trail.

About 90% of the Recreational trails would be natural surface. Active Mobility trails would have a paved surface. Segments where right-of-way is already available are identified as "planned." New trails requiring land acquisition are "proposed."

118 miles of Recreational trails, organized in 140 logical segments, were prioritized and 55 miles were recommended in Tier 1. Costs were estimated at \$425,000-\$6 million per mile, though some "low hanging fruit" projects built with volunteers could be far less expensive.

Active Mobility trails are planned within the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) right-of-way, so they must be built to **VDOT standards**. A 10' wide shared use path would cost \$4.5 million per mile. Design/permitting could add an additional 40%, plus right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation costs could add 20-60% more. Simply painting markings on roads to create sharrows would cost only \$6.300/mile.

When prioritizing Active Mobility segments, improving bike/pedestrian safety regarding road traffic and connecting to transit facilities (as an alternative to driving) were emphasized. 290 miles were broken into 200 segments with logical start/stop points ("termini"). 40 segments totaling 95 miles were proposed as Tier 1 projects. Funding requests will be for portions of segments, with an "eat the elephant one bite at a time" approach.

There are 3 miles proposed to close gaps in the Woodbridge magisterial district. 31 miles are in Brentsville, where less infrastructure has already been completed.

Total cost to build 55 miles of Recreational trails in Tier 1 would be \$68-\$335 million. Total costs for constructing 95 miles of Active Mobility trails would be around \$350-\$450 million. In addition to funding constraints, actually building 95 miles of Active Mobility trails within 10 years would be a construction management challenge.

State and Federal agencies are expected to provide the additional funding for the planned trails network on their public lands. That includes the section of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail within Prince William Forest Park.

New boat ramps on Broad Run, using land already owned by the county, are proposed as the top priority for accessing blueways. Most users are looking for launch sites that would allow 2-3 mile round trips.

Prioritization Tiers:

Tier I

- Health/safety/welfare

Tier II

- Current projects that are shovel ready (at time of referendum) and underfunded
- Recent or pending BOCS property acquisitions that require improvements to allow public access
- Planned trails with substantial right of way, but no funding

Tier III

- Projects with recent investment of planning funds
- Active BOCS directives

Tier IV

- Projects that increase level of service for an existing park or facility
- Other unmet project needs, including open space acquisition

November 3, 2026 Bond Issue to Fund Trails

The Finance Committee of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) was **briefed** on April 7 regarding projects that could be funded via a bond issue, plus the communication and engagement plan to inform voters.

Possible projects include parks and recreation, libraries, and an indoor sports complex. Within parks and recreation, the top 5 needs identified by the Department of Parks and Recreation 2024 **Needs Assessment** are trails, bathrooms, botanical gardens, wildlife habitat, and museums. Trails were also the #1 need in the **2019 Needs Assessment**.

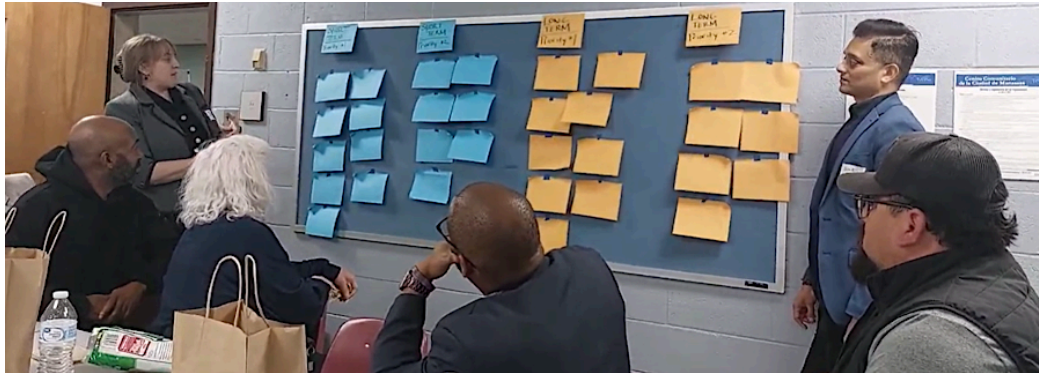
Costs to build every proposal on the new construction list of Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) would be around \$600 million. Seth Hendler-Voss offered four tiers of priorities for the BOCS to choose what projects to include in a bond issue. All would be new construction; maintenance has been funded sufficiently.

Impact on the county's debt capacity was a concern, but at the end of the discussion all but one of the seven supervisors at the meeting were comfortable with moving forward on a bond issue.

Official county outreach efforts may not advocate for or against the proposed bonds. Encouraging voters to support funding for trails is the "opportunity" for advocates of implementing the Pathways

2035 Master Plan.

NOTE: BOCS can also provide funding directly through the General Fund appropriations which do not affect the bond capacity. Grants are another source of funding. **Transportation Alternative** grants could be used for “active mobility” trail projects and not just for sidewalks.



Manassas/Manassas Park Community Surveys: Want Trails?

The City of Manassas Park is gathering public comment for its Comprehensive Plan. Many survey questions focus on walkability and trails. Residents and non-residents (visitors) are invited to **complete the survey**.

City of Manassas is preparing a **Parks, Culture & Recreation Master Plan (2026–2036)**. Public meetings are underway to get in-person input (see above), with one specifically on parks and open space May 13 at **Dean Park**. Public **comments** can be submitted online now.



Featherstone Segment - Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

When the Featherstone segment **groundbreaking** was held on August 23, 2024, the expectation was that the **project** would be completed in October 2025.

Then contractors discovered the unexpected depth of the legacy sediments. New, longer helical piles to support the boardwalk and bridges had to be ordered and the route slightly revised. That

required extra time for grant review and permitting. Construction has been paused now to avoid disturbing nesting eagles.

Completion is now estimated in Fall 2026.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROJECT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS 2026

Funding Allocated to Date



- \$44.4 million for capital projects
 - 78 new projects
- \$4.8 million for active transportation infrastructure maintenance
- Other allocations to:
 - Fairfax County Police Department
 - Fairfax County Park Authority
 - Local cash match for project grants
 - Additional funding for existing projects
 - Consultant support
 - Contingency



Potomac Heritage Trail Association Notes (April 2 Meeting)

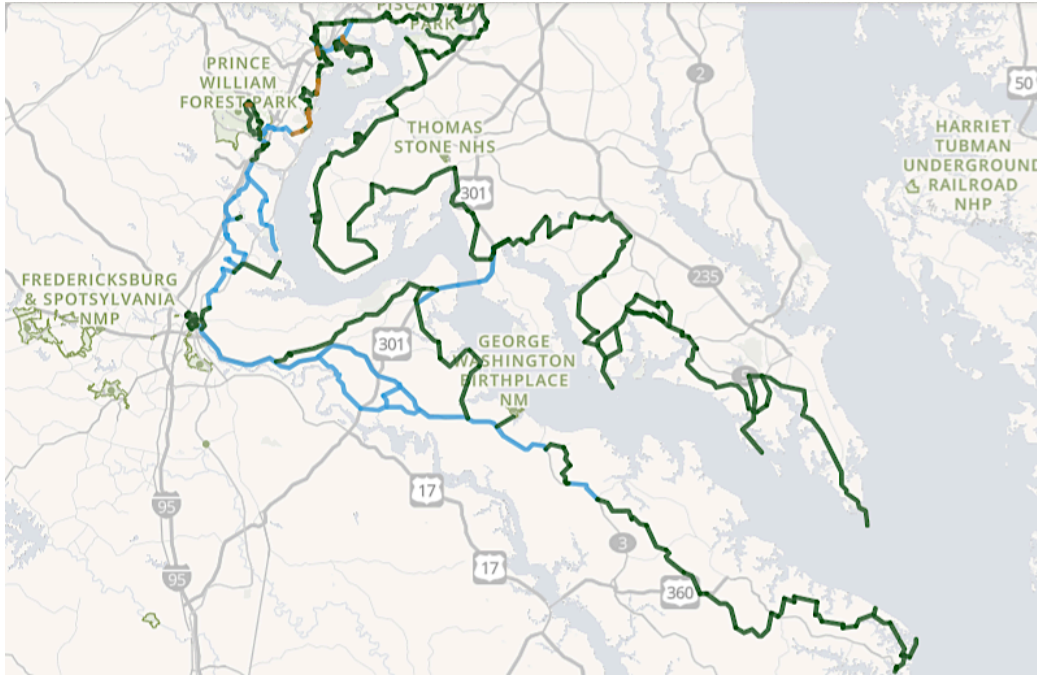
The **Potomac Heritage Trail Association** (PHTA) meets every other month. Highlights from the April 2 meeting:

- PHNST Comprehensive Plan is being developed by the Denver Service Center; the management team of the park does not have primary responsibility. First general public involvement opportunity for the plan is likely to be in June. Plan could identify criteria for downs such as Occoquan and Dumfries to be designated officially as “trail towns.”
- Prince William County’s Pathways 2025 Trails Master Plan will identify primary PHNST route, but National Park Service plan could decide to which braids be designated as official components of PHNST and where primary PHNST route will cross the Occoquan River.
- PHTA leaders are meeting quarterly with Fairfax County Transportation Department to coordinate trails-related projects and discuss policies. Fairfax County supervisors have committed **\$100 million** for bike/pedestrian projects in the Active Transportation plan (see *above*). Many involve safety upgrades such as Installing pedestrian refuge islands, crosswalks and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, plus accessible curb ramps. Priorities are defined with a Need Analysis Tool (to identify areas with the highest need for safe active transportation facilities) and a Demand Analysis Tool (to identify locations with the highest density of pedestrian destinations).
- **Earth Day festival** at Lake Fairfax Park (April 25 10:00-4:00pm) could draw as many as 7,000 people this year. (There will be “land kayaking.”)
- Fairfax County Park Authority declined to participate in **Active Fairfax** planning and appears unwilling to route new trails through county parks. Alternative is to build new trail segments as shared use paths along highways.
- **Loudoun’s Trails and Waterways** was formed out of the Linear Parks and Trails (LPAT) Plan approved by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in 2021. Program Manager will

propose an official PHNST route within Loudoun County to the supervisors' Loudoun Transportation and Land Use Committee.

- PHNST was authorized by US Congress in 1983. Approval of Pathways 2035 - Trails Master Plan by Prince William Board of County Supervisors will make the county the first Virginia jurisdiction to adopt an official route.

Next PHTA meeting will be on June 4 at the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club office in Vienna. Contact **Bill Niedringhouse** for details.



Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Maryland

The National Park Service has scheduled a Southern Maryland Gateway Community Meeting on Friday, May 1 from 9 :00am-3:00pm at the **Lexington Park Library**. Please **register**.

It is a prelude to the public kickoff for developing a Comprehensive Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST). As in Stafford County, choosing a route for the PHNST in Maryland will be challenging. There is little green space between parks, so the trail could resemble "beads on a string."

The May 1 in-person meeting, part of a series of free Roundtable meetings this year, explores common ground between heritage tourism and outdoor adventure enthusiasts to build support for desired improvements to the route in southern Maryland. Make it a weekend and attend **MarylandFest** on Saturday and/or join in a group bicycle ride to Point Lookout State Park.



Long Bridge project across Potomac River includes a separate bike/pedestrian bridge

Can Bikers/Pedestrians Get Across Bull Run/Occoquan River?

There is no safe crossing for walkers/bikers between Stone Bridge at Manassas Battlefield downstream to the Town of Occoquan. There are currently only three bike/pedestrian crossings:

- Stone Bridge (Manassas National Battlefield Park)
- Town of Occoquan pedestrian bridge
- sidewalk on Route 123 bridge

In addition, a sidewalk was built on the Route 28 bridge across Bull Run decades ago - but there is no connection to it on either the Fairfax or Prince William County side. The draft **Pathways 2035 plan** includes connections to the Fairfax County trails network, but did not prioritize bridges in the recommended Tier 1 segments.

The Prince William Board of County Supervisors is **considering** how to improve mobility on Route 28, after cancelling the planned bypass. Bonds approved in 2019 could be used to widen segments or perhaps all of Route 28 north of Manassas Drive, but the \$17-18 million/year required to repay those bonds is not in the FY27 budget's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

The Prince William Transportation Department anticipates that widening the entire stretch could be a 15-20 year project similar to widening Route 1. A Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) corridor study to explore options will be guided by a steering committee, with representatives from Prince William and Fairfax counties plus the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park.

Active Prince William has recommended improving just the northern end near Fairfax County, replacing the bridge and opening the bike/pedestrian connection across Bull Run. Traffic congestion on the rest of Route 28 would be addressed by innovative intersections based on a VDOT **STARS study**.



Virginia's Plan for Well-Being 2025-2029: Trails Are a Solution

Access to bike/pedestrian paths and other forms of transportation are one of the social determinants of health. The Virginia Department of Health just released **Virginia's Plan for Well-Being 2025-2029**. It recognizes that getting outdoors can help deal with obesity, mental health, and other challenges.

Two of the action steps under the goal that includes *"increase the proportion of adults who walk or bike to get places from the baseline of 22.5% to above the HP2030 target of 26.8%"* are (pp.47-48):

- *Develop training programs to increase capacity of communities to achieve bicycle and pedestrian-friendly designations or policies.*
- *Assist communities in creating **Active Transportation Plans**, **Complete Street Policies**, and **Vision Zero Plans**.*

More than dogs need regular exercise. The state Health Commissioner said:

"Our health isn't just shaped in hospitals and clinics. It is also forged in the places where we're born, grow, live, learn, eat, play and pray,"

The Northern Virginia Transportation Agency (NVTA) **comment period** has opened for the FY2026 - 2031 Six Year Plan. Prince William County's official requests include \$45 million for the "Route 234 at Innovation Park Trail" along Prince William Parkway from Route 28 to Sudley Manor Drive.

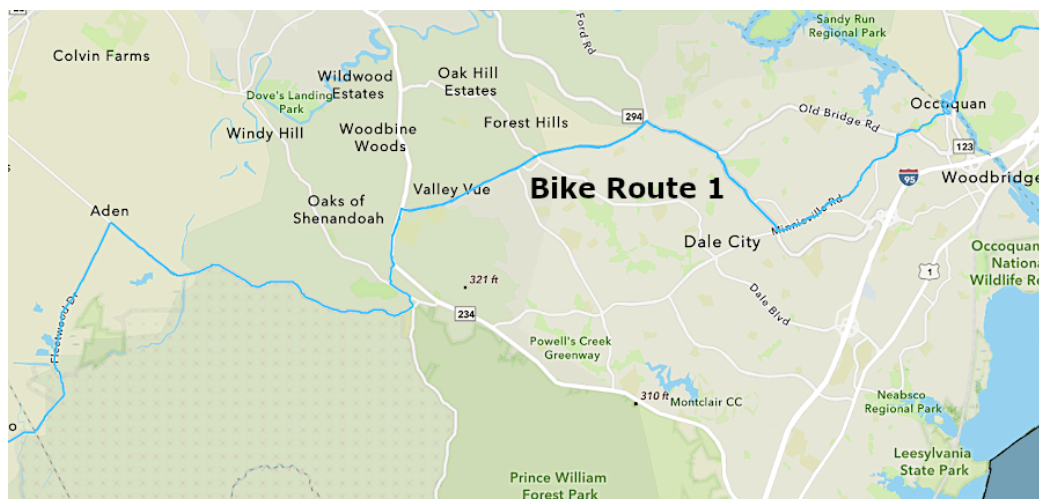
The Prince William Transportation Department's list of **Current Mobility Projects** offers no information about the project, It is not a Department of Parks and Recreation project, so it is not listed in that agency's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) **dashboard**.

The **NVTA description** notes that a 10' wide asphalt path would be constructed on the north (George Mason University) side. In addition, a pedestrian bridge would cross 234 to the south side, as shown on p.155 in the **Innovation Park Small Area Plan** (see above).

The parkway was constructed without a shared use path. The **Mobility Chapter** of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes completing a shared use path along Route 234 all the way from Route 1 north to Balls Ford Road. None of those segments are in the list of Tier 1 projects in the draft **Pathways 2035 plan**.

The shared use path already is complete from the bike/pedestrian bridge at Brentsville Road south to Talon Drive near I-95. The requested \$45 million would not address the remaining gaps on the parkway between Sudley Manor Drive-Balls Ford Road and between Route 28-Brentsville Road.

Detailed proposals are due April 21 for the \$115 million design-build **Sudley Manor Interchange** contract. Technical requirements include a shared use path on new Wellington Road Bridge over Prince William Parkway (eliminating the existing interchange) and a requirement to leave space at Sudley Manor Road interchange bridges for the planned shared use path.



Notes from April 12 Active Prince William Meeting

Prince William Transportation Department will hold a **Spring Open House** on April 23, 6:00-8:00pm. Questions can be asked regarding:

- which projects in Pathways 2035 plan would be constructed by new Department of Transportation and Capital Construction
- as Virginia Department of Transportation prepares annual road resurfacing plan, where the county will propose adding bike lanes
- funding, such as planned use of FY26 \$1 million for trail construction and completing the Route 234 Trail
- status of construction, such as Featherstone segment of Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
- plans to enhance transparency, such as revealing priorities for grant applications for projects before Board of County Supervisors makes decisions via Consent Agenda

Northern Virginia Transportation Agency (NVTA) has a survey open until May 17, and a public meeting on May 14 to **get input** on the regional Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP) for bus transit, rail, roadway enhancements, technology, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and intersection/interchange improvements. **Rail With Trail** project is in the package.

Commonwealth Transportation Board also is gathering feedback on the **state's FY27-32 SYIP**. Northern Virginia meeting will be in Alexandria on May 19.

Active Prince William members also discussed:

- Route 28 widening and option for focusing on northern segment with Bull Run bridge replacement, finally providing a bike/pedestrian crossing to Fairfax County's shared use path extending to Centreville and the Bull Run-Occoquan Trail. Construction of **innovative intersections** between Manassas Drive-Spruce Street is not planned until Fall 2028. A total of **\$65 million** has been allocated to improve Route 28 intersections.
- General Assembly passed bill (**HB1120**) for Department of Motor Vehicles to convene a work group for improving the safety of electric power-assisted bicycles and similar devices, and **HB812** to facilitate adding bicycle-specific signals at traffic lights.
- **State Trails Office** could be authorized to release State Trails Plan to the public soon.
- The existing Countywide Trails Plan includes a proposed trail from the planned **homeless navigation center** on the western end of Prince William County to Route 234. The shared use path along Route 234 underneath I-66 should be completed before the new homeless facility.
- George Phillips is retiring from Prince William Transportation Department and Chloe Delhomme in Manassas is on maternity leave.
- Manassas Healthy Community Action Team (MHCAT) has offered to partner with Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, using a grant for obesity reduction. It could be focused on increasing community use of the "traffic garden" planned at Dean Park, for the Manassas, for Walk, Bike and Roll to School Day, to support a Walk/Bike to School initiative, or for other events in the Manassas area.
- Board of County Supervisors has been receiving public feedback on what projects to include in a potential November 2026 bond issue (if one is if approved). Public release of Tier 1 projects in Pathways 2035 simplifies which trail projects to suggest.



In Other News...

- On April 17, the Prince William Transportation Department will give a presentation to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) **Operations Board** on the Route 1 **pedestrian bridge** project at the Woodbridge VRE station. Last proposal to cross Route 1 was at Occoquan Road intersection and did not connect to existing bridge across the tracks.
- **Celebrate Trails Day** is April 25. **Walk, Bike and Roll to School Day** is May 6. **Bike to Work Day** is May 15.
- Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation is still developing a master plan for Davis Ford Park. **Public survey** on what facilities are desired/not desired is still available.
- **Our Virginia Outdoors** is compiling a statewide Outdoor Recreation Business Directory. Please submit outdoor recreation businesses through a **2-question survey** that just requires the business name and location. In particular, searching for small businesses that provide guide, tour, or specialized training services, outdoor gear manufactured in VA, businesses that serve hunters and anglers, and businesses that support marine/coastal recreation.
- **Fairfax County considers adding Capital Bikeshare stations along I-66 corridor** (WTTG, April 8) *"The proposal would add up to 17 new stations stretching from Fairfax and Fair Lakes to the Dunn Loring Metro Station."*
- **Are eBikes Actually Good for the Earth?** (Lectric e-Bikes, April 10) *"Around Earth Day, a lot of products start wearing green labels. Some deserve it. Some... stretch it. eBikes are one of the few that actually hold up under a closer look."*
- The Spooky Beaver Chapter of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) helps to maintain the 37 miles of trail within Prince William Forest Park. Over **20 trees** that fell across trails since the start of 2026 have been cleared, along with boardwalk and bridge repairs (see below).



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