

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park General Management Plan



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Division of Parks and Recreation

COASTAL REGION

May 2017

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

MISSION STATEMENT:

Conservation: To protect the natural diversity of North Carolina through careful selection and stewardship of state parks system lands;

Recreation: To provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities in the state parks system and throughout the state; and

Education: To encourage appreciation of North Carolina's natural and cultural heritage through diverse educational opportunities; for all citizens of and visitors to the State of North Carolina.

Our purpose: The State of North Carolina offers unique archaeological, geologic, biologic, scenic and recreational resources. These resources are part of the heritage of the people of this State. The heritage of a people should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.

PARK PURPOSE:

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park is located on one of a series of high cliffs that run northwest to southeast along the Neuse River. Geologic studies show that most of the sediment layers visible in the cliffs belong to the Black Creek formation, which was deposited during the late Cretaceous period over 65 million years ago. The cliffs were formed by the Neuse River, which gradually cut into the Black Creek formation by erosion. The cliffs are composed predominantly of layers of multicolored sands, sandy clays, small gravels, shale and seashells. Colors vary widely with white, tan, yellow and brown being the most common.

The scenic resources provided by the park focus on the cliffs along the Neuse River. During the mid-twentieth century, the scenic view of the multicolored cliff face towering ninety feet over the river below was a major attraction for tourists to the area who ventured up the river. Visitors can also approach the cliffs from above and look out over the river and riparian lands. A trail lined with oaks, dogwoods and other trees follows the edge of the cliffs and offers views of the river far below. Pine and hardwood forests and bottomlands provide



Visitor Center built in 2011



Bath house/Pavilion

varied scenic views and offer visitors opportunities to enjoy and appreciate natural settings.

The diverse environments of the park support a registered natural heritage area and seven natural communities that contribute to its biological resources, ranging from dry upland pinelands to wet bottomland hardwoods. The most unusual natural community is the Piedmont/Coastal Plain Acidic Cliff, which is the largest and best-developed example in the Coastal Plain. The divided terrain found in the park provided protection from the natural fires that once swept the Coastal Plain, therefore allowing hardwood forest communities, more commonly found in the Piedmont, to remain. In addition, plant associations including Galax, Red Oak and Virginia Pine, more typical of mountain habitats farther west, are also found here. Animal life in the park includes the significantly rare Eastern Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) and the rare Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Piscoides borealis*).



View of Cliffs from Neuse River



Cliffs

Recreational opportunities include canoeing, swimming, diving, and beach activities centered on an 11-acre manmade lake within a natural setting. The banks of the Neuse River offer many opportunities to fish. Picnicking, hiking and camping day use offer an opportunity to learn about nature and the natural features unique to this park.

The Cliffs of the Neuse State Park exists to preserve the beauty of the cliffs along the river and to protect its unique collection of natural communities. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving its

geological, scenic, biological, recreational, and archaeological resources and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of this natural heritage.

II. HISTORY

Witness the effects of the forces of erosion that have carved and chiseled cliffs in the south banks of the Neuse River. Extending for 600 yards, this spectacular series of cliffs rises 90 feet above the water. Layers of sand, clay, seashells, shale and gravel form the multicolored cliff face, white, tan, yellow and brown.

The cliffs were formed when a fault in the crust of the earth shifted millions of years ago. The Neuse River followed this fault line cut its course through layers of sediment overtime, deposited by shallow seas that had earlier covered the coastal plain. A portion of the river took a bend against its bank and the erosive action of water slowly carved Cliffs of the Neuse.



Fishing along Neuse River

Much of the human history of the area centers on the river. The Tuscarora and Saponi Indian tribes once occupied much of the land between the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. The center of the park used to be a ceremonial ground and a gathering place for hunting expeditions. The Neuse River was used for travel into the surrounding wilderness.

Much of the archaeological history of the area centers on the river. The Tuscarora and Saponi tribes once occupied much of the land between the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. This area was chosen due to its proximity to a permanent watercourse and the existence of high ground which provided protection from floods, and a view of potential enemies. Early European settlers set up a trading center at Whitehall, now Seven Springs, the earliest English settlement in the area. After the Revolutionary War, a stagecoach line and river traffic promoted growth of the agricultural town. A gateway to the Pamlico Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, the Neuse River also played a role in Civil War history because the Confederate ironclad, the CSS Neuse, were built at Whitehall. As part of an effort by the Confederate navy to challenge Union control of coastal waters of North Carolina, an ironclad ramming vessel, the CSS Neuse, was built at Whitehall. The ill-fated ship ran aground in the river and was destroyed to prevent its capture. The town itself was bombarded by Union cannons and much of it was demolished.

In the years following the Civil War, Wayne County residents attempting to capitalize on the resort potential of the nearby natural mineral springs built hotels in the Whitehall/Seven Springs area. These resort hotels also operated excursion boats that carried guests and tourists up the Neuse River to view the tall cliffs that overlooked the river at the site of the current park. In 1944, local resident Lionel Weil contacted the Superintendent of North Carolina State Parks to inquire about establishing a park on this land, locally known as the Cliffs of the Neuse. The following year, Cliffs of the Neuse State Park was established and the Board of Conservation and Development approved an Advisory Committee. Land on the south side of the river was donated by Weil and other individuals through the Wayne Foundation and the park was established in 1945. By 1957, the park had grown to 365 acres through donations by local conservation-minded groups, including Weil and the Wayne Foundation.

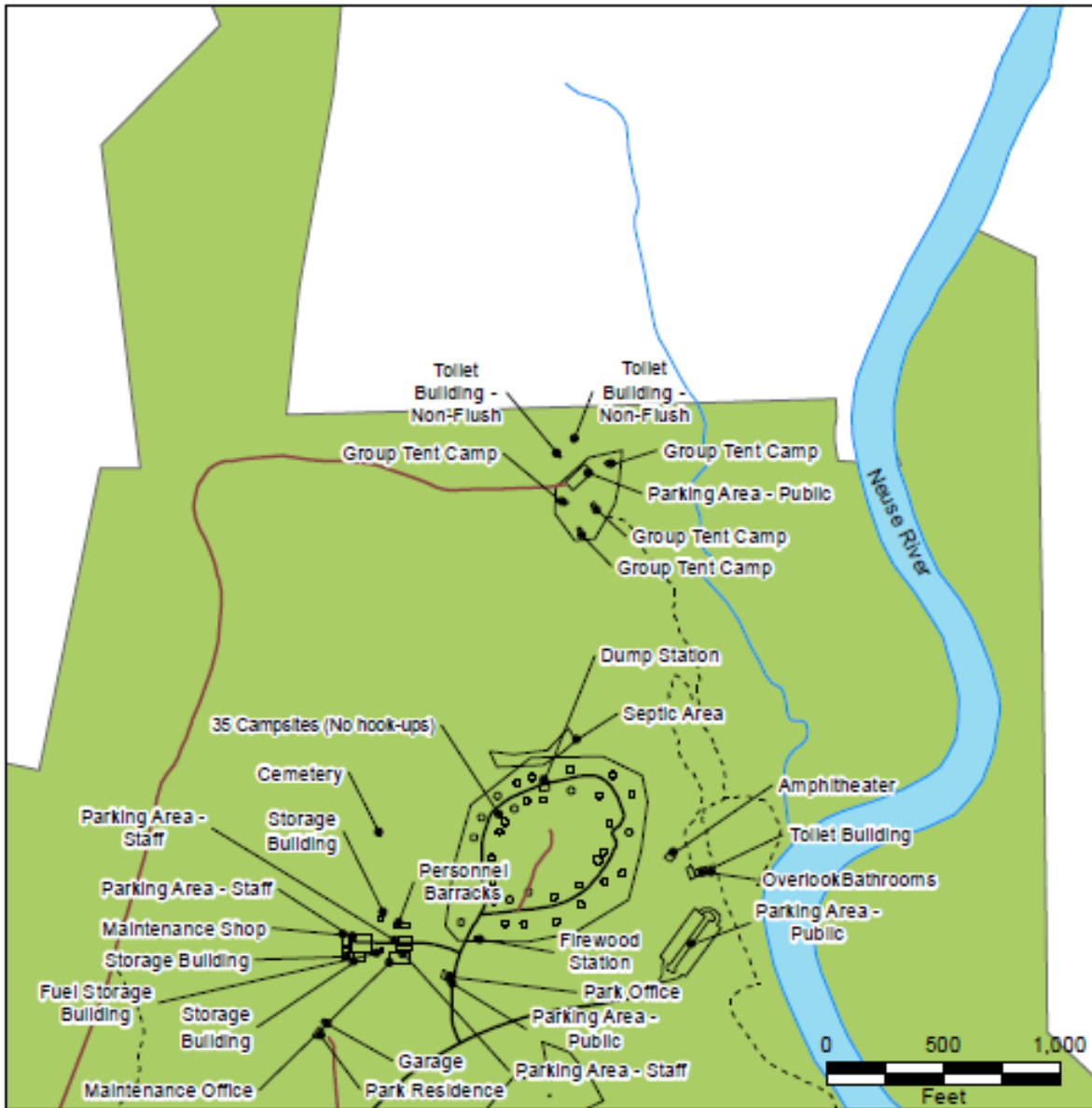
III. THEMES AND INVENTORY

CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK THEME TABLE

Theme Type	Theme	Significance	State Parks System Representation
Archeological/Historic	Rural-Domestic	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Campsite/Activity Area	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Village	High	Moderate
Biological	Brown water Coastal Plain Floodplains	High	Moderate
Biological	Low Elevation Cliffs and Rock Outcrops	Moderate	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Coastal Plain Mesic Forests	High	Adequate
Biological	Piedmont and Coastal Plain Oak Forests	High	Adequate
Geological	Cliffs	High	Adequate
Geological	Dissected Uplands	High	Adequate
Geological	Fluvial Depositional Features	High	Adequate
Geological	Fossils	High	Little
Geological	Sedimentary Features	High	Adequate
Scenic	Caves/Cliffs	High	Little
Scenic	Forests	High	Moderate
Scenic	Reservoirs/Lakes	High	Adequate
Scenic	Rivers	High	Moderate
Scenic	Rock Outcrops	High	Little
Scenic	Scenic Vistas	High	Moderate

*See the System Wide Plan for references to Theme and Inventory terms. Themes have both actual and “potential” future needs to be at a park.

FACILITIES INVENTORY - CAMPGROUND AREA
 CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



Cliffs of the Neuse
 State Park
 Facilities Inventory

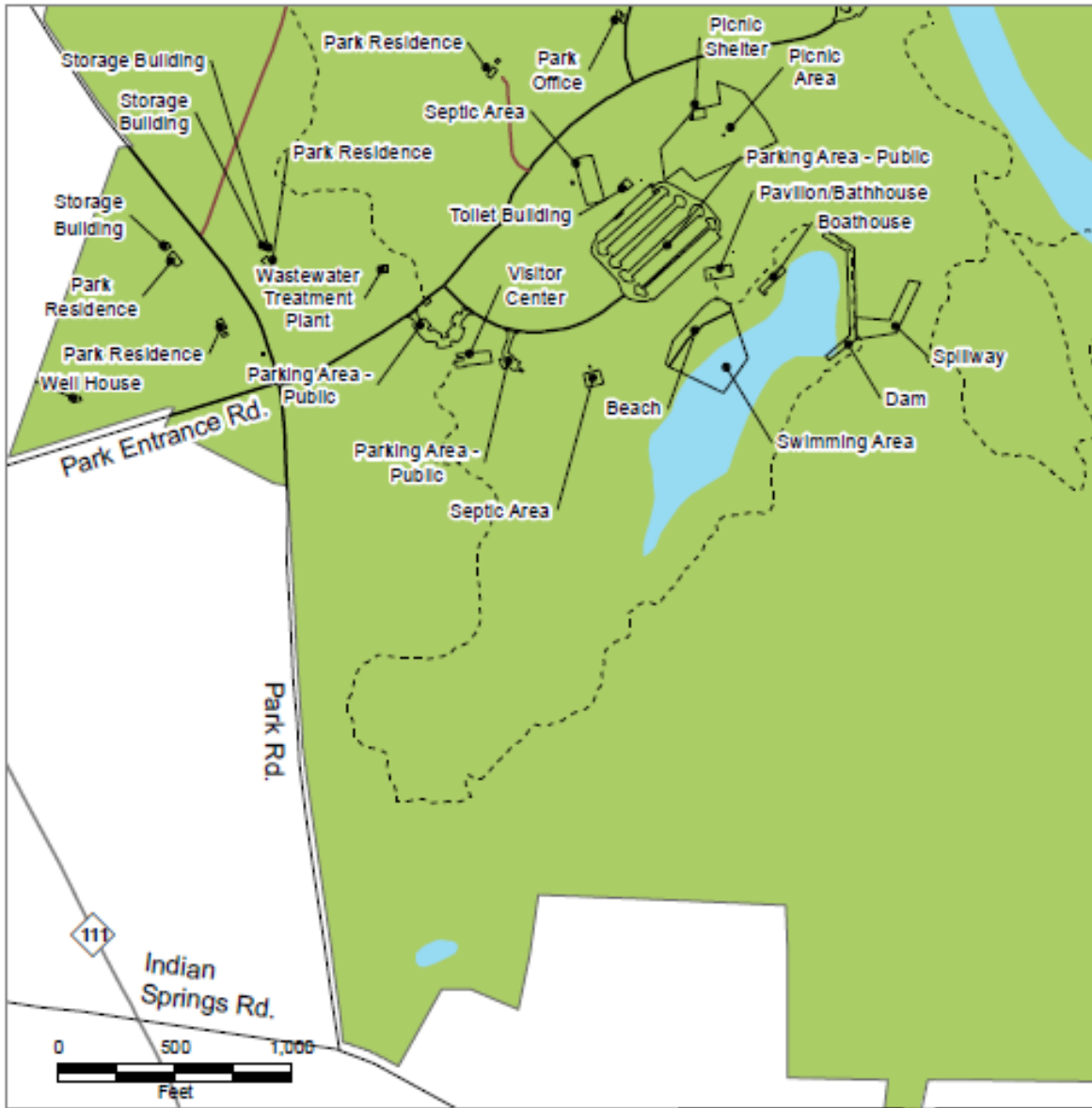
Campground Area
 January 2017



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



FACILITIES INVENTORY-SWIMMING AND PICNIC AREA
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK

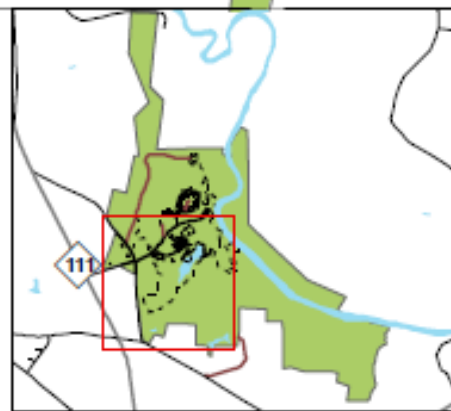


Cliffs of the Neuse
State Park
Facilities Inventory

Swimming & Picnic Area
April 2017



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



TRAILS INVENTORY
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK

Trail Inventory	Hiking	Paddle
350 Yard Trail	0.20	
Bird Trail	0.59	
Galax Trail	0.63	
Lake Trail	2.00	
Longleaf Trail	0.40	
Sand Path	1.80	
Spanish Moss Trail	0.60	
Cliffs of the Neuse SP Totals (miles)	6.22	
Neuse River		0.50

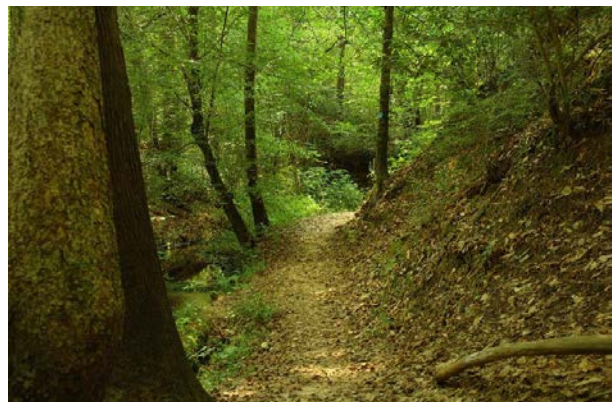
TRAILS:

350 Yard Trail: The trailhead is located at end of Park Entrance Road. The 350 Yard Trail is the shortest trail but remains the access to the signature natural feature; the 90-foot overlook that stands above a 90-degree turn in the Neuse River. For many years this overlook was a major attraction of the Seven Springs community prior to the end of World War II when the park was formed. The 350-yard trail, accessible 0.20-mile-long, however, terminus will have a difficult uphill hike back. The section of the path adjacent to the cliff features a well-packed, gravel base and is ideal for those with limited mobility. Park visitors who want to fish in the Neuse River should follow the 350 Yard Trail to its southern terminus along the river bank.

Bird Trail: is 0.59-mile trail that is located adjacent to the Galax Trail. The Trail is accessed by crossing the Mill Creek boardwalk at the base of the 350-yard Trail and then crossing the Mill Creek boardwalk. The Bird Trail joins the Galax Trail along another section of the cliffs on the Neuse River. Bald Eagles are found along the river that can be seen occasionally as they hunt for fish and waterfowl. Just below this section of trail the woods were occupied by both Union and Confederate soldiers in 1862 following the Battle of Whitehall (Seven Springs) and a number of pickets have been found on the park in more recent years. In the event of high water, hikers will need to follow the alternate trail sign to access the Lake Trail and then cross the lake spillway to access the Galax and Bird Trails.

Galax Trail: is 0.63-mile easy trail that links the Bird Trail and 350 Yard Trail.

Lake Trail: is a 2.00-mile loop sand-based trail and the trailhead is located at the Visitor Center.



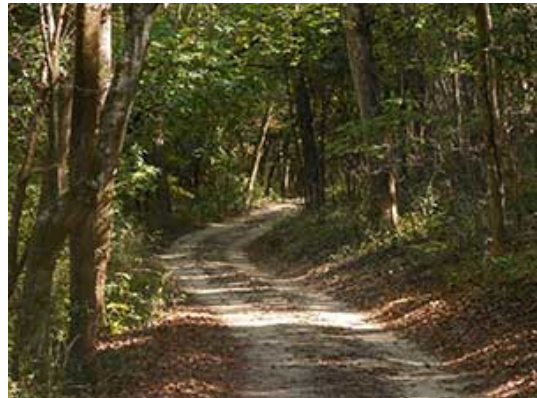
Galax Trail

This trail winds through a native forested section of the park and provides visitors to see mature White Oaks and other hardwoods. With a number of Loblolly and Longleaf Pine featured, hikers who look closely may glimpse historic remnants of dead longleaf stumps that were used in the Naval Stores industry between 1750 and 1875. This trail leaves from the Visitor Center parking lot, travels around the 11-acre swim lake and crosses the lake spillway on a series of stepping stones.

Longleaf Trail: The 0.40-mile trail connects the Visitor Center Parking lot to the Sand Path and then on to the Spanish Moss trail. Following the trails allows for a two-mile loop back to the Visitor Center. The Longleaf Trail is named after the longleaf pine restoration area, a 75-acre section of mixed pine and hardwood that is an active with prescribed burn operation on regular intervals to foster the dominance of the longleaf forest. Two of the three oldest longleaf pine trees, used in the Naval Stores industry between 1750 and 1875, are along this trail and feature the distinctive scarred bases that are indicative of past pitch collection efforts. This section of forest displays historic red-cockaded woodpecker dens inside several mature longleaf pines.

Sand Path: This 1.80-mile trail is one section of a larger loop formed by hiking multiple trails.

The Sand Path is an old farm path that leads to the four (4) semi-primitive group sites. The Sand Path features forms a large section of the loop formed by hiking the Longleaf and Spanish Moss trails together. This path travels through a mixed pine and hardwood forest, and borders an intensively managed section of the park being worked on by division staff to restore longleaf pine habitat. This trail may be traveled by vehicles at low speeds by campers so hikers must be aware of the dual use. This trail begins adjacent to the multi-use field off Park Road and offers a great round-trip hike opportunity for groups. This trail offers opportunities to view birds due to the variety of habitats encountered and the secluded environment. Probably the best trail on which to view eastern wild turkeys or eastern fox squirrels.



Sand Path

Spanish Moss Trail: is a 0.60-mile trail that is moderately difficult. It links the group camp trail and 350-yard trail along the Neuse River.

PADDLE TRAIL:

Neuse Paddle Trail is a 0.50-mile blue way along the park boundary.

A canoe/kayak/paddle launch is located two highway miles north of the visitor center. The launch is located adjacent to the intersection of River Road and Mince Hill Road just below Broadhurst Bridge.



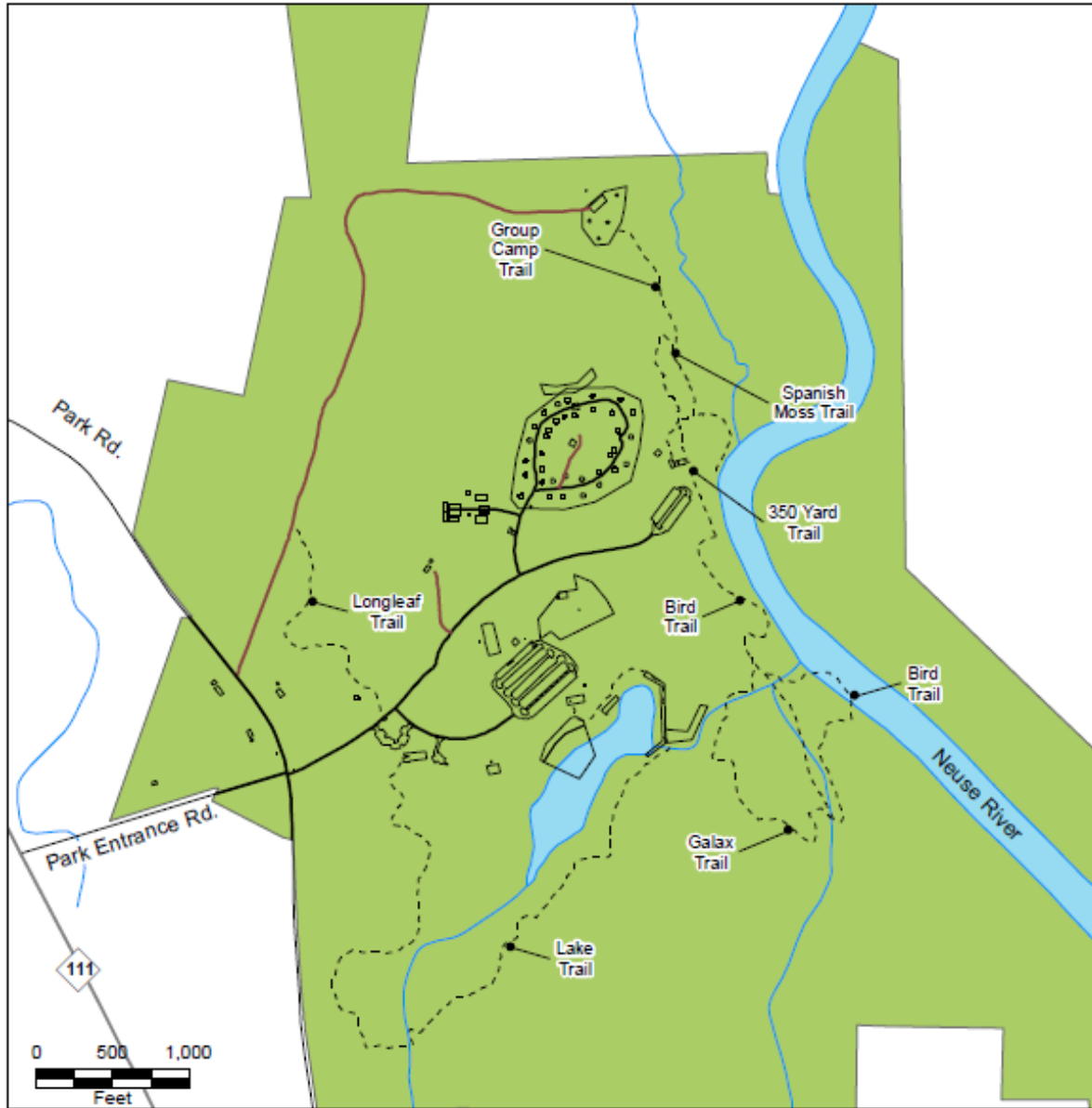
View from the Neuse Paddle Trail

The launch offers an opportunity to paddle an 8-mile section of the Neuse that leads through the park boundary and onto the

Seven Springs public boat ramp managed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission which serves as a take-out.

Common sights along the river include: bald eagles, river otter, various waterfowl, and abundant fishing opportunities. On standard flow conditions, the trip typically takes about 3 hours. The Neuse Paddle Trail is a section of the Mountains-To-Sea paddle trail.

TRAIL INVENTORY
 CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



Cliffs of the Neuse
 State Park
 Trail Inventory

January 2017



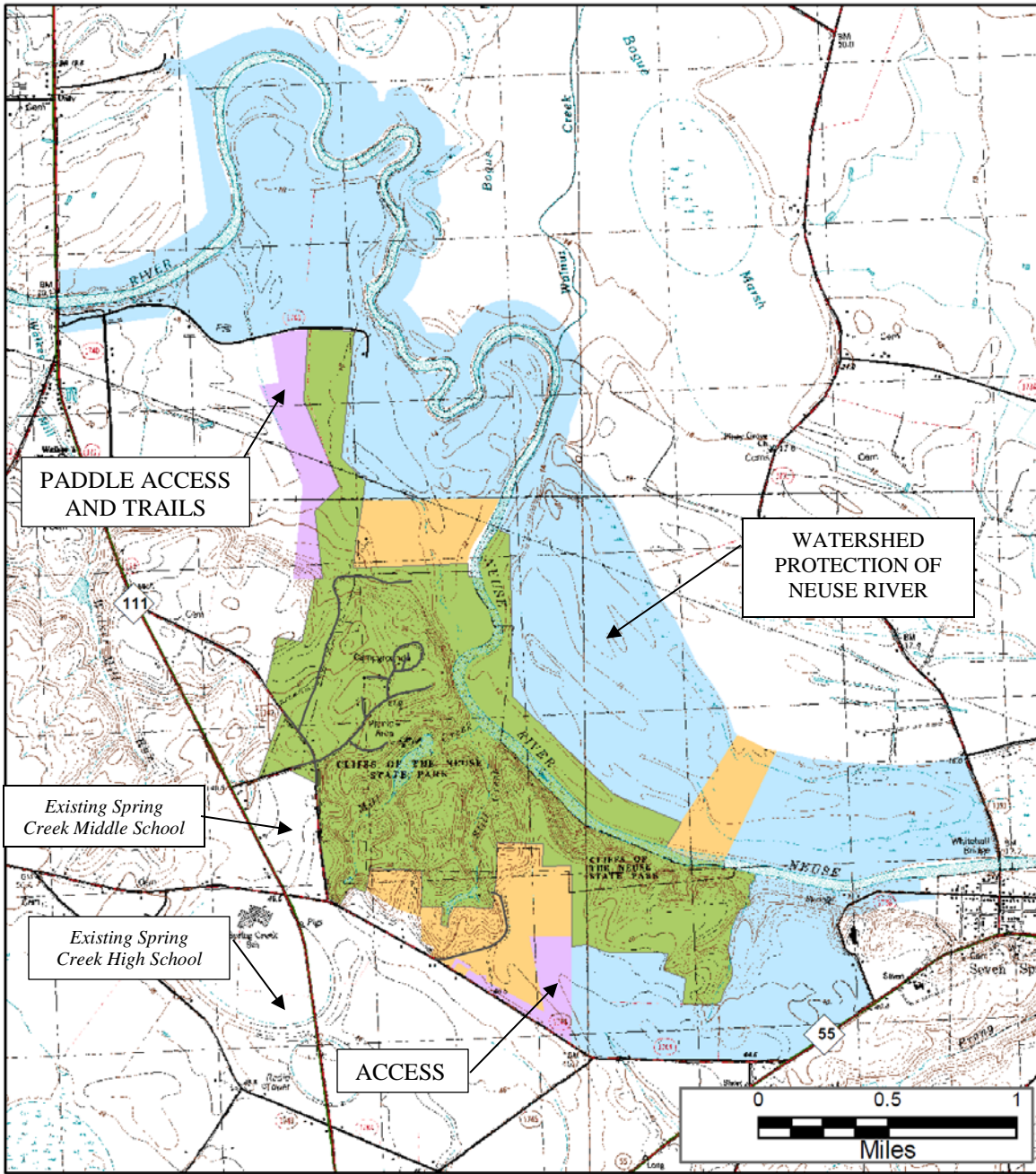
- Existing Trail
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- State Parks Unit



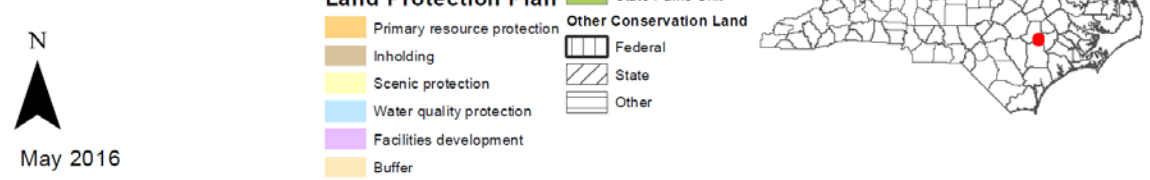
IV. PLANNING



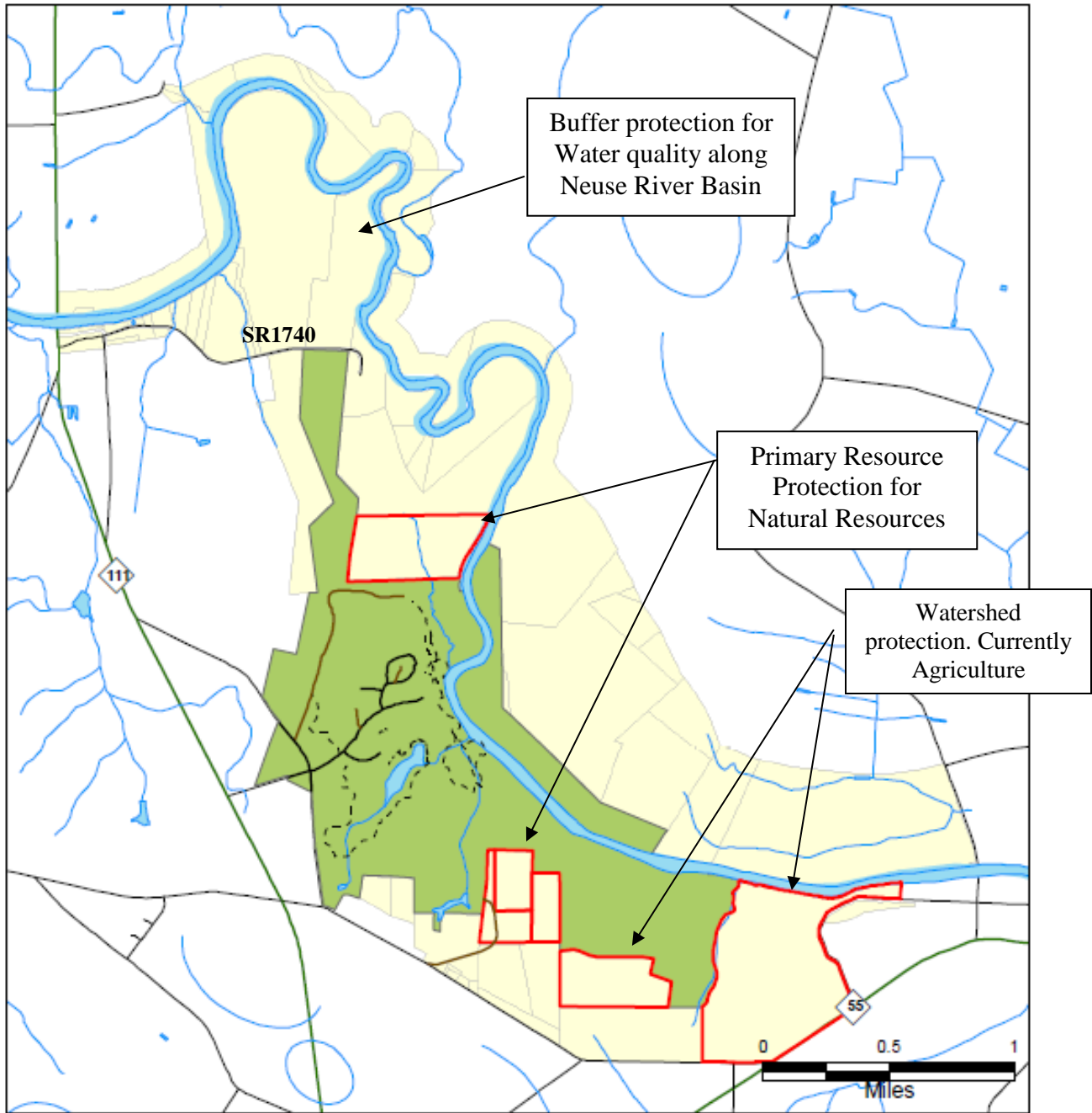
LAND PROTECTION PLAN
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



Cliffs of the Neuse SP



LAND PROTECTION PLAN- CRITICAL ACRES
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



Cliffs of the Neuse SP

- Critical need
- State Parks Unit
- Land Protection Plan**
- Future Need

Other Conservation Land

- Federal
- State
- Other



April 2017



PROJECT EVALUATION PROGRAM LIST
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK

Project	Project Title	Cost
1	Renovation of Three Ranger Residences	\$232,000
2	Trail Improvement & Picnic Area Renovations	1,180,000
3	Tent & Trailer Campground Improvement	692,400
4	Overlook Bathroom Renovations	103,000
5	Maintenance Area Improvements	767,300
TOTAL		\$2,974,700

** Estimated project cost does not include contingencies, design fee, nor escalation.

1. Renovation of Three Ranger Residences



Ranger Residence



Ranger Residence

The project will expand and renovate three residences to meet state building codes. Utilities include: electrical, plumbing, and water upgrades.

2. Trail Improvement and Picnic Area Renovations

This proposed project scope of work includes: repair the existing trails, design and construct a universal pedestrian bridge, reroute the parking lot drainage currently piped directly into the swim lake, create a sediment pond to collect excess drainage water. Trail system will extend to the east section of the park along the along the Neuse River corridor.

Renovate the existing shelter to universal design standards and replace the 14 tables and 6 grills with universal metal picnic tables and upgraded grills. Electricity will also be run to the shelter.



PICNIC SHELTER

3. Tent & Trailer Campground Improvements

The scope of work includes: Complete renovation of the shower house and upgrades to 12 RV campsites and 3 camper cabins with utility connections. Improve the existing campsites by adding impact pads, timber borders, tables and grills, for campground hosts. The structure will be demolished and a proposed universal shower house will be constructed.



CAMPGROUND

4. Overlook Bathroom Renovations

Renovate the building restrooms to meet current accessible and building standards. Scope of work includes: convert museum to 400 square feet of dry storage, restroom renovation & install a new roof. Dry storage is needed for large event & lake supplies.



OVERLOOK BATHROOMS

5. Maintenance Area Improvements

A shed is needed to store trucks, building materials, and equipment which are currently exposed to the elements. Scope of work includes: sewer and water utility extension, a parking area for staff and an equipment storage area. The project will include a roof on the pump house, a combustible storage building, and repairs to the shop building and the renovation of the barracks restrooms. Also, included will be a 7-bay burn crew vehicle storage shed, proposed 7-bay vehicle storage with a lift station for the District's use, proposed flammables storage, re-grade & renovate existing office.

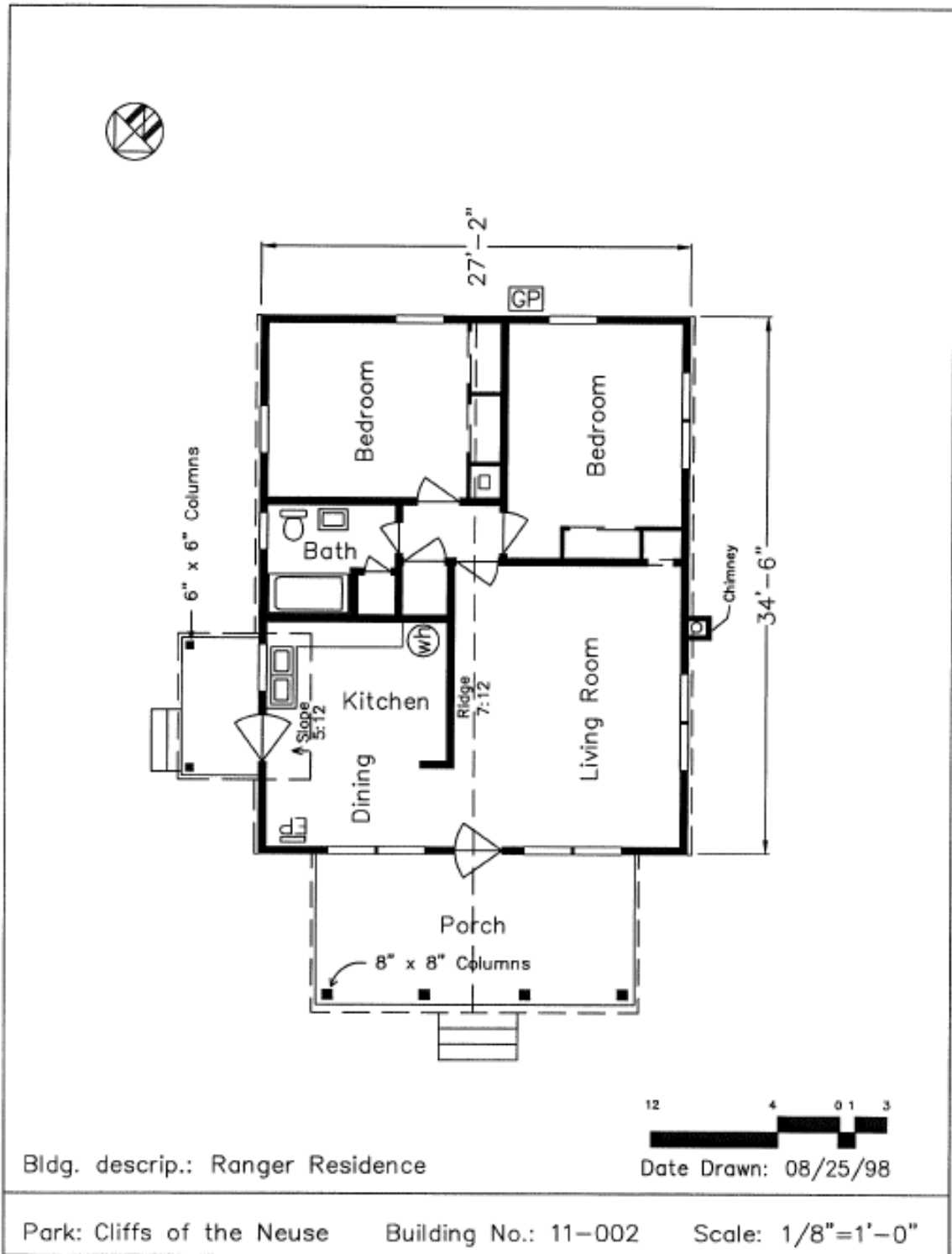


VISITOR CENTER



BATHHOUSE/PAVILLION

PROJECT #1 RENOVATION OF THREE RANGER RESIDENCES
 CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



PROJECT #2 TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS & PICNIC AREA RENOVATIONS
 CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



PROJECT #3: TENT AND TRAILER CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



PROJECT #4: OVERLOOK BATHROOM RENOVATIONS
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



PROJECT #5 MAINTENANCE AREA IMPROVEMENTS
 CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK



PARK MAP
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK

