

Lake James State Park General Management Plan



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Division of Parks and Recreation

Mountain Region

February 2017

I. MISSION & PURPOSE

MISSION STATEMENT:

Conservation: To protect North Carolina’s natural diversity 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 1987 State Parks Act defines the purposes of the state parks system. It establishes that: 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:

Lake James was developed for hydroelectric purposes by Duke Power Company in 1923. Lake James State Park was established in 1987, becoming the first North Carolina State Park created under the provisions of the State Parks Act of 1987. It is also the first park in the history of the state to receive funds for acquisition, development, and operation upon its creation.

The park serves residents and visitors of North Carolina by providing opportunities for appropriate outdoor recreational use; providing the ability and facilities for viewing and enjoying the major scenic values of the area; protecting wildlife and natural communities within its boundaries; and providing interpretive and environmental programs that allow visitors to learn about the significant resources of the area.

Lake James is a significant statewide recreational resource. A man-made lake fed primarily by the headwaters of the Catawba and Linville rivers. Lake James State Park is a primary provider of public water-based



Paddy’s Creek Bathhouse

recreational facilities and access to the lake. It is the only public park on the lake. Facilities provide for a range of activities, including boating, picnicking, swimming, fishing, hiking, camping, photography, and natural resource interpretation.

II. HISTORY

Located at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, between the towns of Marion and Morganton, Lake James is 1,200 feet above sea level. The lake was created between 1916 and 1923 with the construction of dams across the Catawba River and two tributaries, Paddy's Creek and Linville River. These impoundments were connected by a broad canal to form a 6,812-acre body of water. Named for James B. Duke, founder of Duke Power Company, Lake James has been a hydroelectric unit for the power company since the early 1900s.

Lake James is one of the more recent additions to the North Carolina State Parks system. Resulting from strong local support and the efforts of area legislative delegations, the park was established in 1987 by the North Carolina General Assembly. Funds were appropriated for the purchase of 565 acres of land and for the initial phase of facility development.

Located along Lake James, a reservoir of the Catawba River, the park property consists of open uplands, gently sloping to very steep, located in the western Piedmont province. The site is vegetated by forests that have experienced periodic timber removal and associated soil erosion. Original community types of this area consist of Chestnut Oak Forest on ridges and upper slopes mixed with Dry Oak, Hickory Forest on uplands, transitioning to stream valleys vegetated by Acidic Cove Forest and Piedmont/Low Mountain Alluvial Forest with occasional Floodplain Pools. Some large successional areas dominated by White Pines (*Pinus strobus*) cover hundreds of acres and Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*) often co-dominates in areas of regenerating hardwoods at recently harvested sites. Adjacent land uses in this rural region include forestry, agriculture, and increasing residential/recreational developments plus nearby villages/ communities such as Nebo and Longtown. The Linville River runs along the north end of the park, but the Linville River Significant Aquatic Natural Heritage Area is located further upstream and not adjacent to the park.



View of Lake James

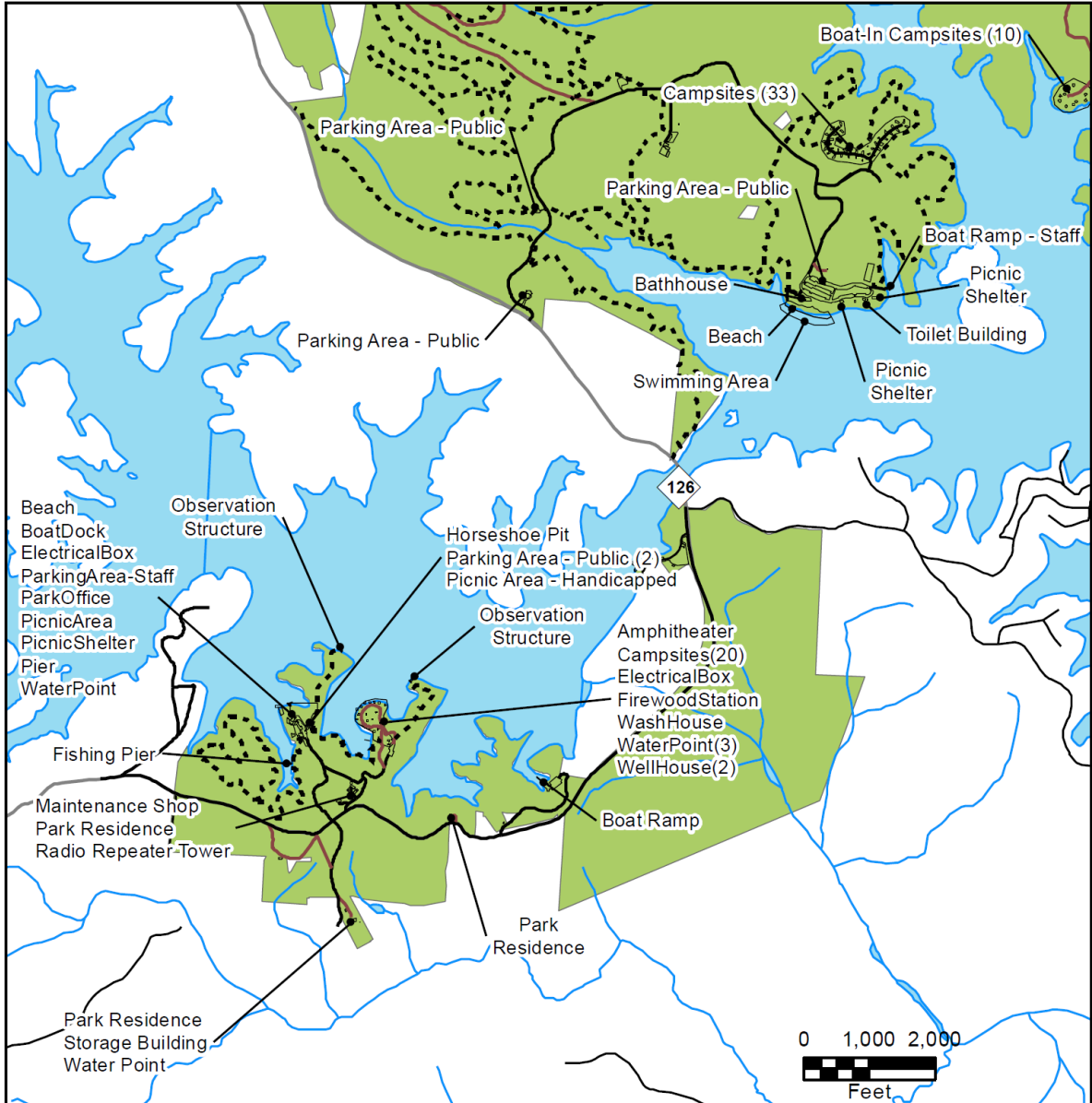
II. THEMES AND INVENTORY

THEME TABLE FOR LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

Theme Type	Theme	Significance	State Parks System Representation
Archeological/Historic	Cemetery	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Recreation	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Campsite/Activity Area	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Underwater	High	Moderate
Archeological/Standing Structure	Public Works	High	Moderate
Archeological/Standing Structure	Recreation	High	Adequate
Geological	Metamorphic Features	High	Adequate
Scenic	Forests	High	Moderate
Scenic	Meadows/Grasslands	High	Little
Scenic	Reservoirs/Lakes	High	Moderate
Scenic	Scenic Vistas	High	Moderate

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

FACILITY INVENTORY - CATAWBA AREA
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

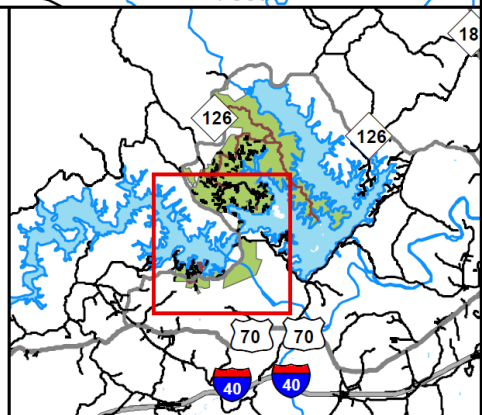


Lake James
State Park
Facility Inventory

September 2016



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



TRAIL INVENTORY
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

Trail Inventory	Hiking	Bike
East Wimba Loop	4.40	4.40
Tindo Loop	4.00	4.00
West Wimba Loop	6.00	6.00
Fishing Pier	0.30	
Fox Den Loop Trail	2.25	
Holly Discovery Trail	0.75	
Homestead Trail	0.70	
Lake Channel Overlook	1.50	
Loop Trail	0.78	
Lower Tindo Loop	1.40	1.40
Mill's Creek Trail	3.60	
Overmountain National Historical Victory Trail (OVNHT)	2.00	
Paddy's Creek Spur Trail	0.12	
Paddy's Creek Trail	1.00	
Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail	0.50	
Upper Tindo Loop	1.40	1.40
Lake James SP Totals (miles)	30.76	17.20

Mountain Bike Trails:

East Wimba Loop: This trail is a 4.40 mile located in the Paddy's Creek Area. The trail is appropriate for mountain bikers of intermediate or advanced skill levels.

Tindo loop: 4 miles of easy beginner's trail.

West Wimba Loop: An 11-mile trail for intermediate riders.

Hiking:

Fishing Pier: This is a 0.30-mile trail in the Catawba River area that leads to the fishing pier.

Fox Den Loop: This 2.25-mile trail is located in the Catawba River area. This trail loops through mature forest with a thick canopy. It is an undulating tract with a steep staircase up to the highest pitch.

Holly Discovery Trail: This is a 0.75-mile trail found at both Catawba River and Paddy's Creek areas for all ages and for adventure groups. The trail is a flat, easy trek through riparian forest

adjacent to Paddy's Creek area. It is a national award winning interpretive trail with 18 interactive information stations.

Homestead Trail: This 0.70-mile trail is located in the Paddy's Creek area. The trail is an excellent connector to the Paddy's Creek Trail for hikers who park in the mountain bike trail system parking lot.

Lake Channel Overlook: This 1.50-mile trail is located in the Catawba River area with views of Lake James. The trail is an easy hike to a scenic overlook of Lake James and Linville Gorge.

Loop Trail: A short, 0.78-mile intermediate trail.

Lower Tindo Loop: is a 1.40-mile loop trail in the Paddy's Creek Area. The trail is appropriate for mountain bikers of beginner or intermediate skill levels.

Mill's Creek Trail: is a 3.60-mile moderate trail in the Paddy's Creek Area. The trail offers a track through forested habitat along and adjacent to Lake James with lake views overlooks along the way.

Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail: A historically significant to the Revolutionary War, 2.0-mile section to the scenic vista at the end of the Lake Channel Overlook Trail. The Overmountain men patriots were from East Tennessee. They crossing the Great Smokey Mountains and fought in the Battle of Kings Mountain in South Carolina. The trail is located in the Paddy's Creek area and follows the route taken by American patriots who shadowed a force of marauding British loyalists across three states until they finally engaged in battle at King's Mountain, where the colonials were victorious. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a cooperative effort of the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Overmountain Victory Trail Association, local citizen associations, local historical societies and the States of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Paddy's Creek Spur: A 0.12-mile trail that connects Homestead to Mill's Creek Trail

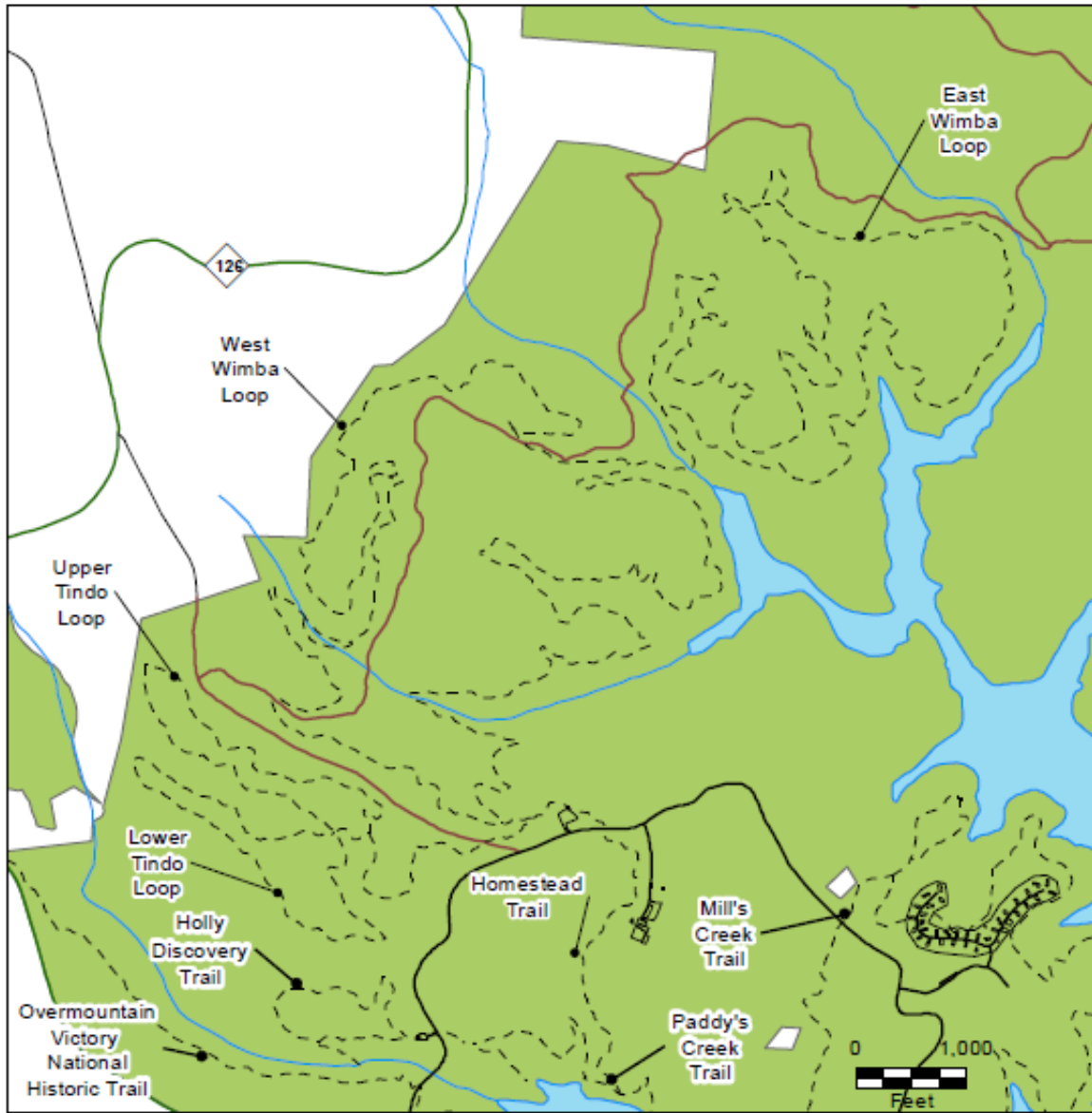
Paddy's Creek Trail: This 1.0-mile moderate trail is located in the Paddy's Creek area. The trail runs along the shoreline of Lake James to the mouth of Paddy's Creek. It is mostly flat with a few rolling sections through mature forest. There is evidence of a historic homestead signified by rock piles and a few remaining foundation stones about midway along the trail.

Sandy Cliff Overlook: is a 0.50-mile trail through the Catawba River Area. The trail is an easy hike to a scenic overlook of Lake James and Linville Gorge.

Upper Tindo Loop: This 1.40-mile trail in the Paddy's Creek area is appropriate for mountain bikers of beginner or intermediate skill levels.

West Wimba Loop: This 6.00-mile trail is located in the Paddy's Creek area. The trail is appropriate for mountain bikers of intermediate or advanced skill levels.

**MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL SYSTEM
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK**



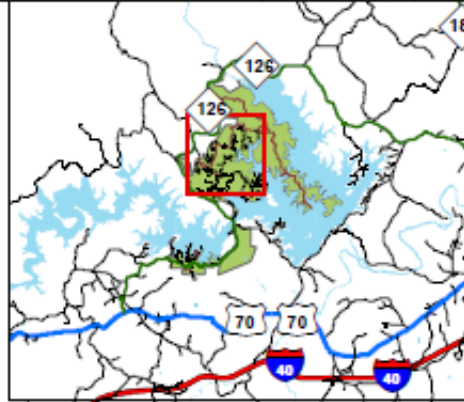
**Lake James
State Park
Trail Inventory**

Mountain Bike Area

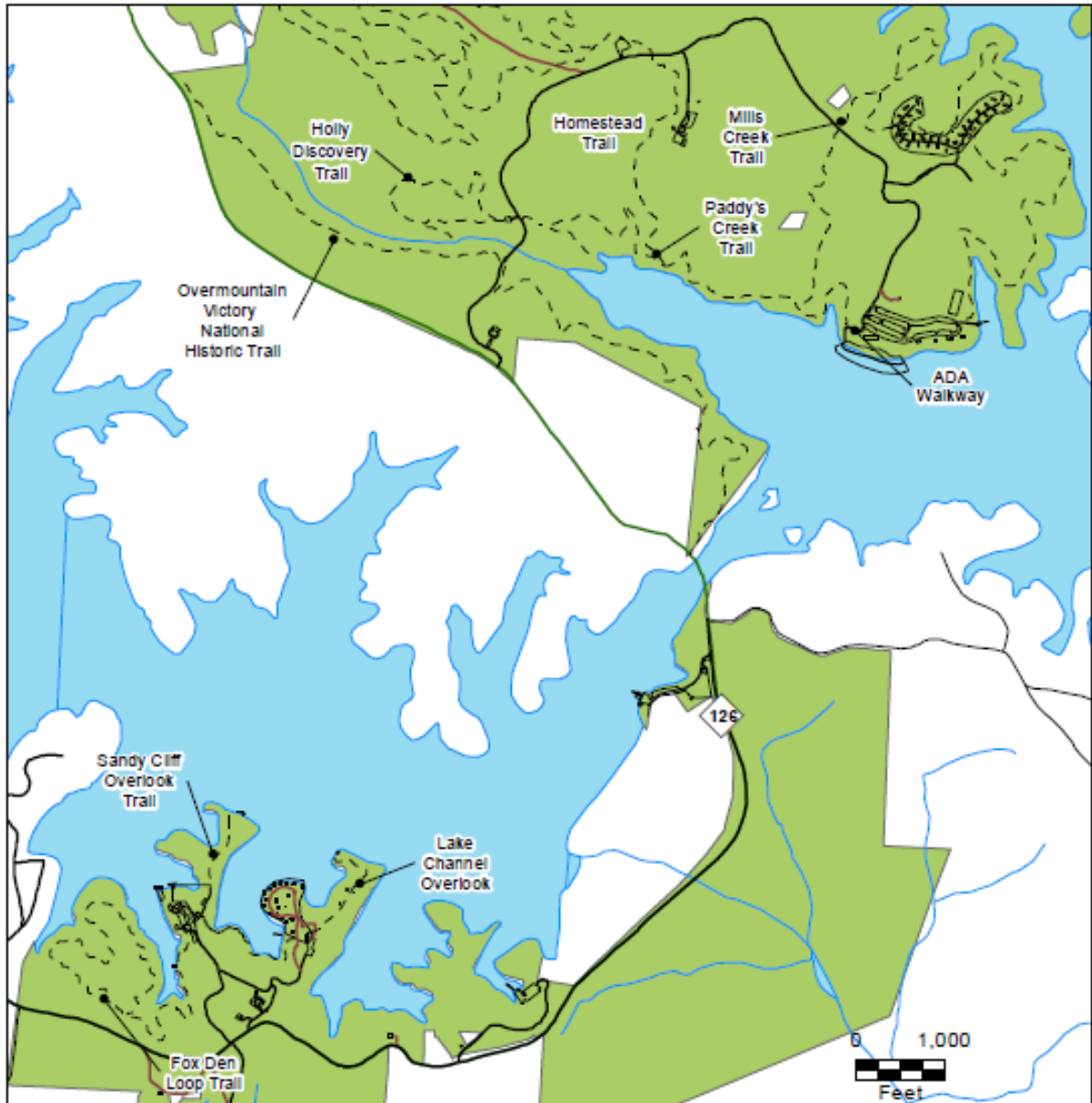
December 2016



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



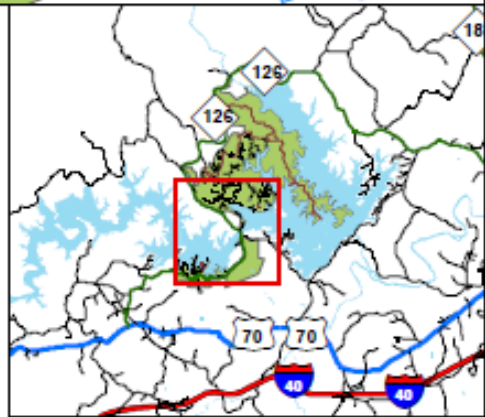
TRAIL INVENTORY- CATAWBA RIVER AREA
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



Lake James
State Park
Trail Inventory
Catawba Area
December 2016



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**EXISTING FACILITIES
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK**



Swim Beach



Swim Beach



Fishing Pier at Paddy's Creek Area

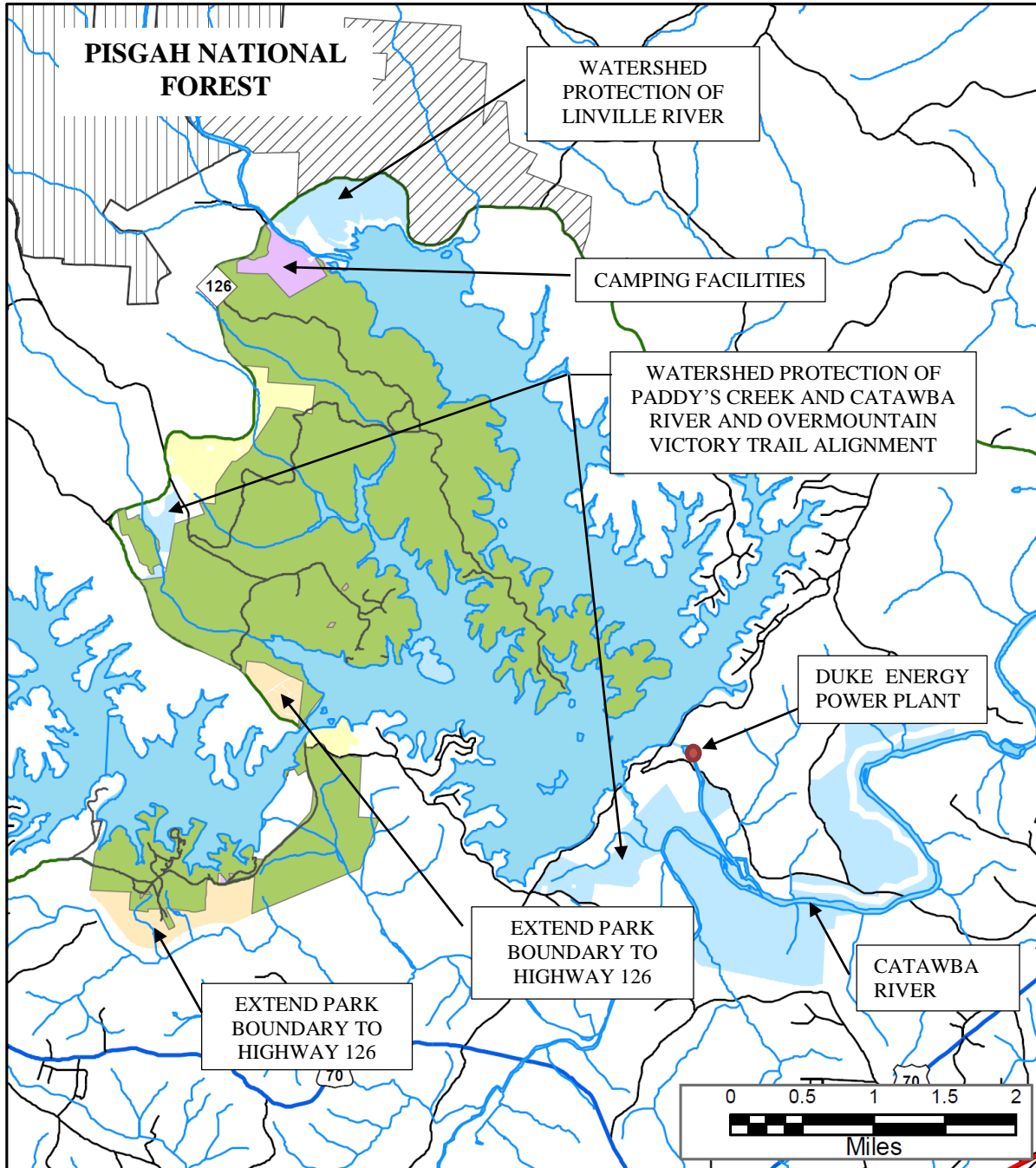


Picnic area

IV. PLANNING

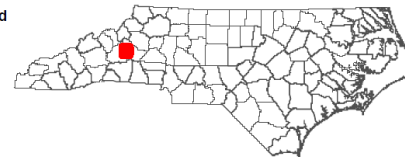
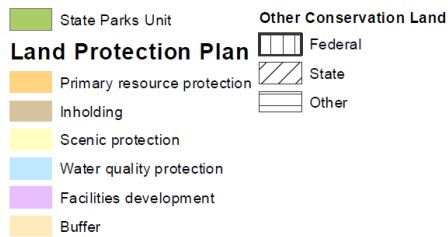


LAND PROTECTION PLAN
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

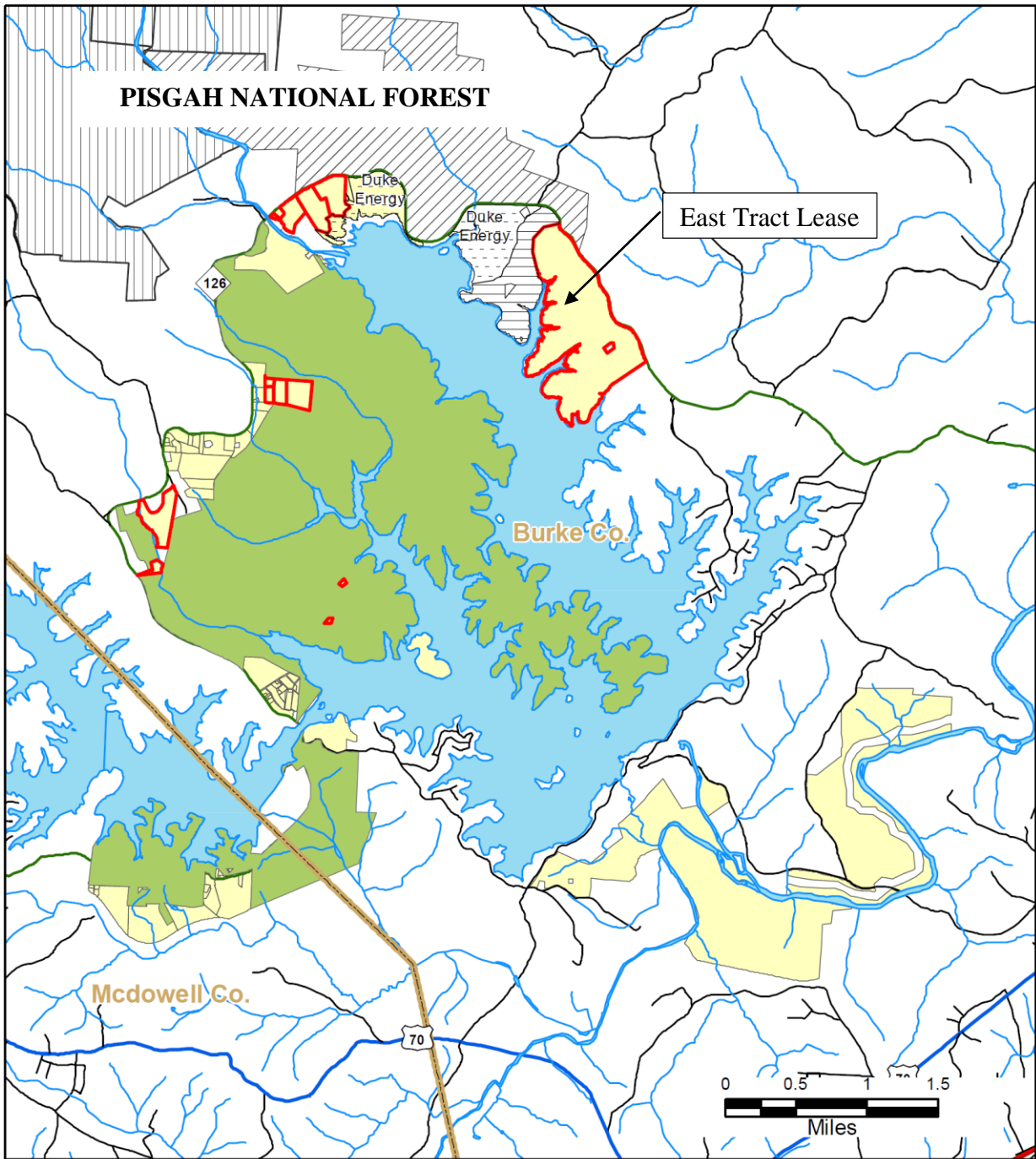


Lake James SP

N
October 2016



LAND PROTECTION PLAN- CRITICAL
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



Lake James SP



Sept 2016

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Critical need | Other Conservation Land |
| State Parks Unit | Federal |
| Land Protection Plan | State |
| Future need | Other |



PROJECT EVALUATION PROGRAM LIST
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

Project	Project Title	Cost
1	Paddy's Creek Visitor Center	\$3,376,859
2	Paddy's Creek RV Camping	\$3,363,681
3	Group Camp Development	\$684,859
4	Shoreline Stabilization at Overlook & Campground	\$249,689
5	Paddy's Creek Development	\$1,810,000
6	Primitive Camping at Long Arm Peninsula	\$768,250
7	Canoe Launch and Restroom at Long Arm Peninsula	\$260,000
8	Park Museum/Interpretive Exhibits	\$182,787
9	Fonta Flora State Trail	\$400,000
10	Cove Bridge	\$1,300,000
TOTAL		\$12,396,125

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

1. Paddy's Creek Visitor Center

Project consists of a 5,000-6,500 SF square foot Visitor Center with staff offices, auditorium space, museum quality exhibit space, classrooms and retail space. Infrastructure includes septic system, water, electric and adequate parking spaces for the visitor experience.

The Visitor Center could provide a central location for information about the Lake James Loop trail and a 'base camp' for visitor to explore the Fonta Flora Loop State Trail and other attractions in the region.

2. Paddy's Creek RV Camping

This project includes: 1,800 linear foot RV camping loop with minimum 22 sites, dump station, universal shower house with septic field, and water and electric at each campsite; and (2) two standard 1,700 square foot ranger residences.

3. Group Camp Development

Project consists of five group campsites near Fox Den Loop at Catawba River Area accommodating 20 to 30 campers at each site. Twenty (20) paved parking spaces and a 900 sq. ft. universal shower house will serve the campsites. Utilities include a well, 1,000-gallon tank, waterline, underground electric, septic field system, and 750 linear feet of paved road.



Shoreline

4. Shoreline Stabilization at Overlook & Campground

Project consists of 2,500 linear feet of rip-rap stabilization along the shoreline located at the Catawba River Area Lake Channel Overlook, Sandy Cliff Overlook and campground area. Boat activity has caused erosion issues along the shoreline.

5. Paddy's Creek Development

Project consists of the development of: 15 cabins with water and electric along 1,800 linear foot loop road served by a universal shower house; canoe/kayak launch with canoe rack and storage bin, restroom building and septic, kiosk, 12 table picnic shelter and 15 scattered picnic sites, underground electric and potable water with two hose bibs. Project also includes the development of 25 primitive camp sites on the Long Arm Peninsula. A courtesy dock is needed near the existing covered Cove bridge to launch boats.



Paddy's Creek Bridge

6. Primitive Camping at Long Arm Peninsula

Project includes the development of 25 primitive camp sites on the Long Arm Peninsula and access drive. Site amenities will include fire pit and grills. The camping area will connect to the extensive loop trail system.

7. Canoe Launch and Restrooms at Long Arm Peninsula

A proposed canoe/kayak launch located in the interior Cove on the north side. This will allow for adequate and easy access to the water for both beginner and advanced user levels. Storage facilities for campers to store equipment includes: canoe rack and storage bin, restroom building with universal design standards will be provided along with utilities hook ups of water, septic system and electrical. Wayfinding signs and a kiosk will provide adequate maps. Day Use facilities will include a shelter with adequate picnic tables.

8. Park Museum/Interpretive Exhibits

Project renovates 400 sq. ft. park office into a rental space for events. This project includes five (5) trailhead displays with a kiosk. The office, located in the Catawba River Area, was built in 1989. After the visitor center is completed, the public can rent the swim beach area and shelter to create an opportunity for revenue generation.

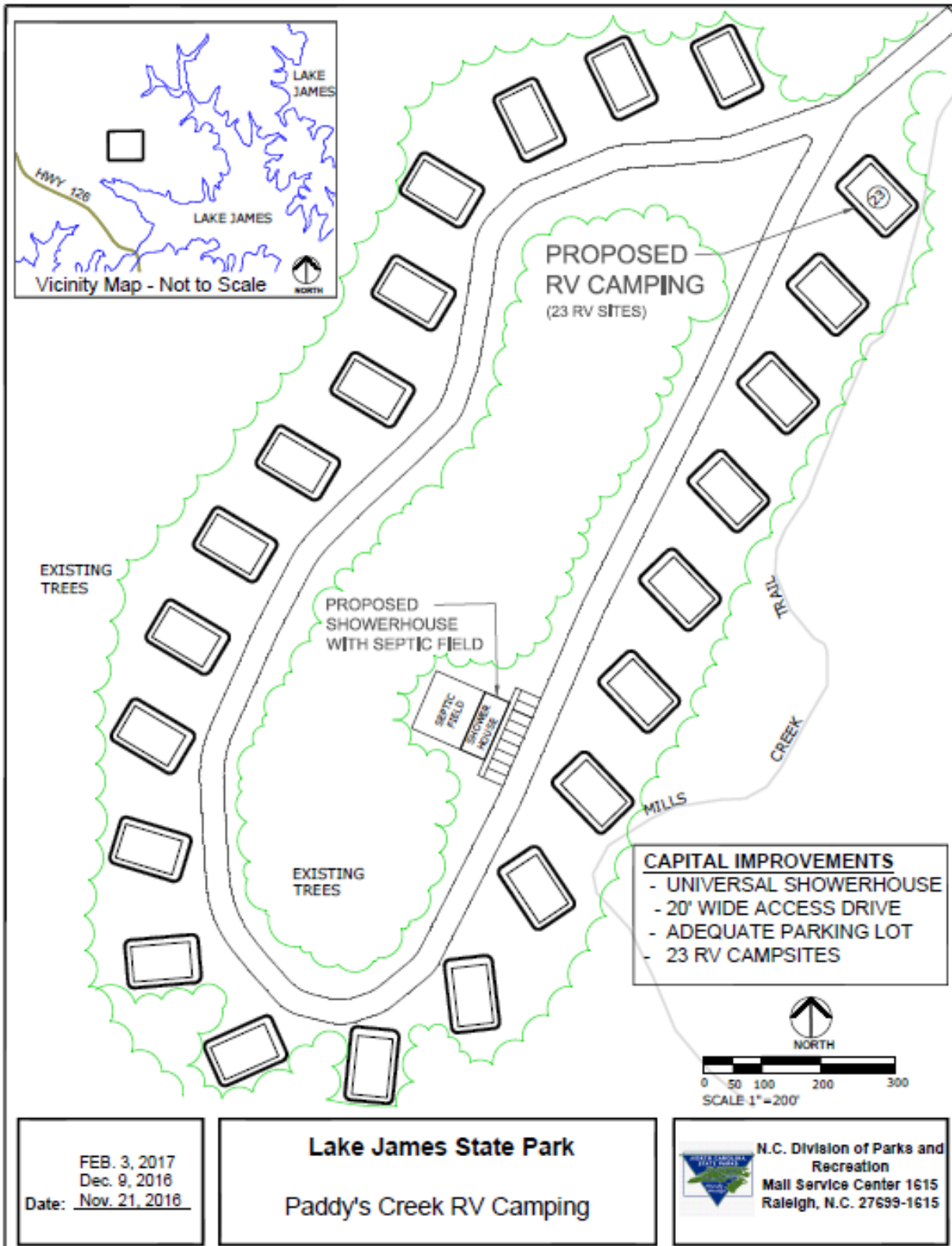
9. Fonta Flora State Trail

Fonta Flora Trail will be a regional trail corridor that extends from Morganton to Asheville that will provide direct connections to the Mountains to Sea State Trail and Overmountain Victory National Historic trail. A section of this trail will be a loop that is planned to extend around Lake James. The loop will be an average of 5 feet in width, and it will be approximately 30 miles long. Approximately 10 miles of the Fonta Flora State Trail will be located within Lake James State Park.

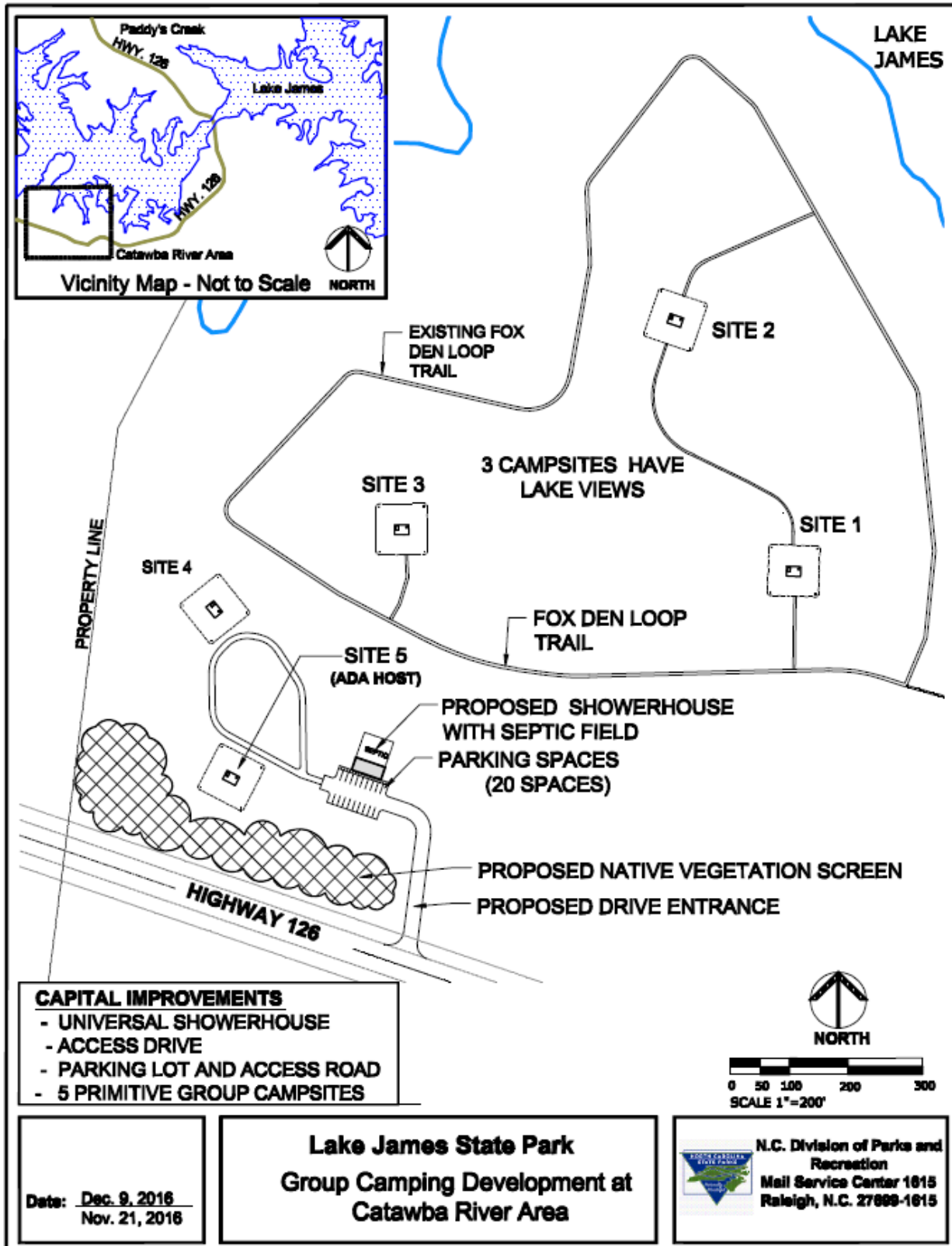
10. Cove Bridge

Development for the Cove Bridge project will follow the master plan dated 2006. This particular project will include a proposed paved road, leading to a trailhead parking area for approximately 185 vehicles; an approximate 1500 LF gravel trail connection leading from the parking area to the bridge; and a 200-foot long bridge across Lake James will serve as a focal point for the Fonta Flora State Trail and provide emergency vehicle access.

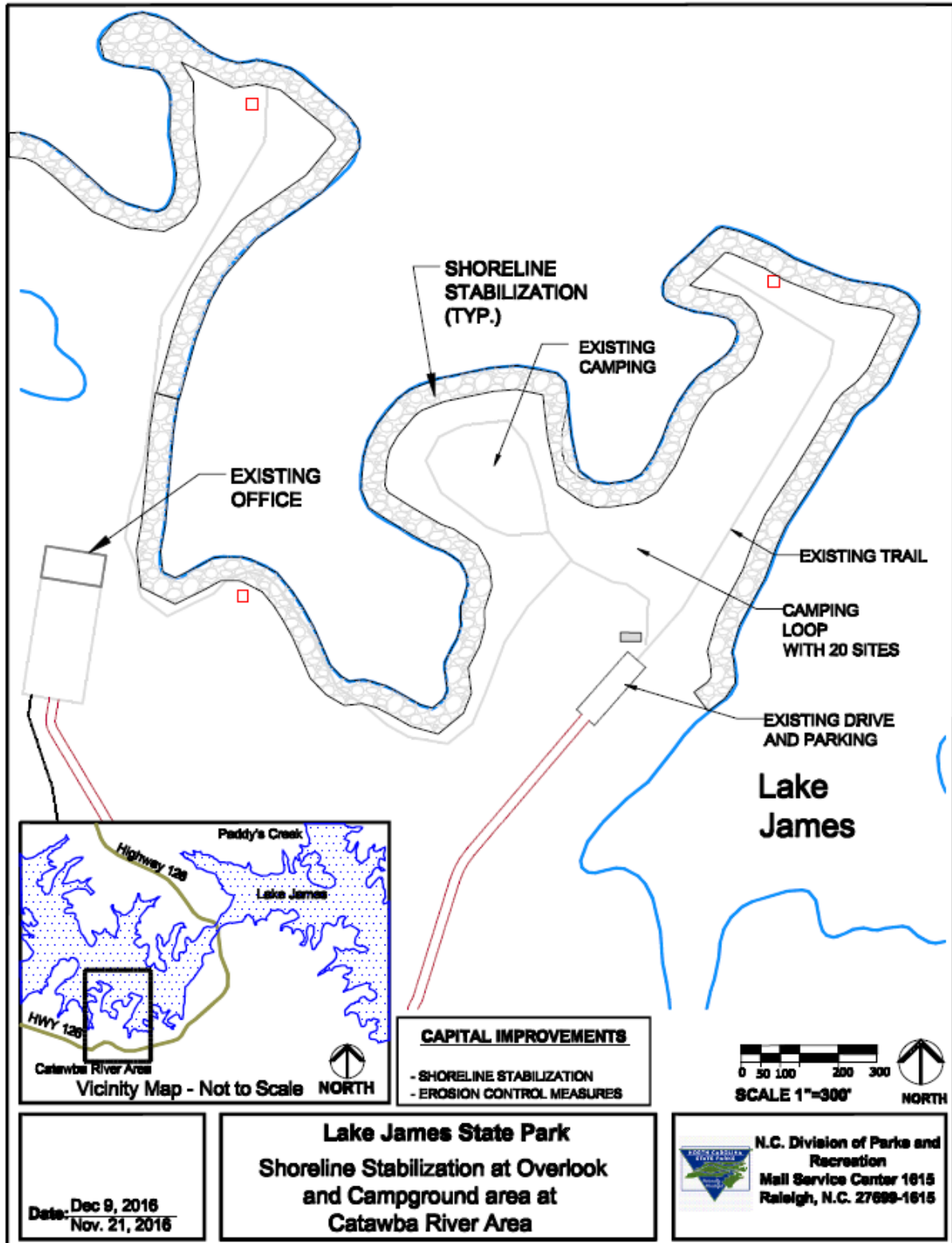
PROJECT # 2: PADDY'S CREEK INFRASTRUCTURE (RV CAMPING)
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



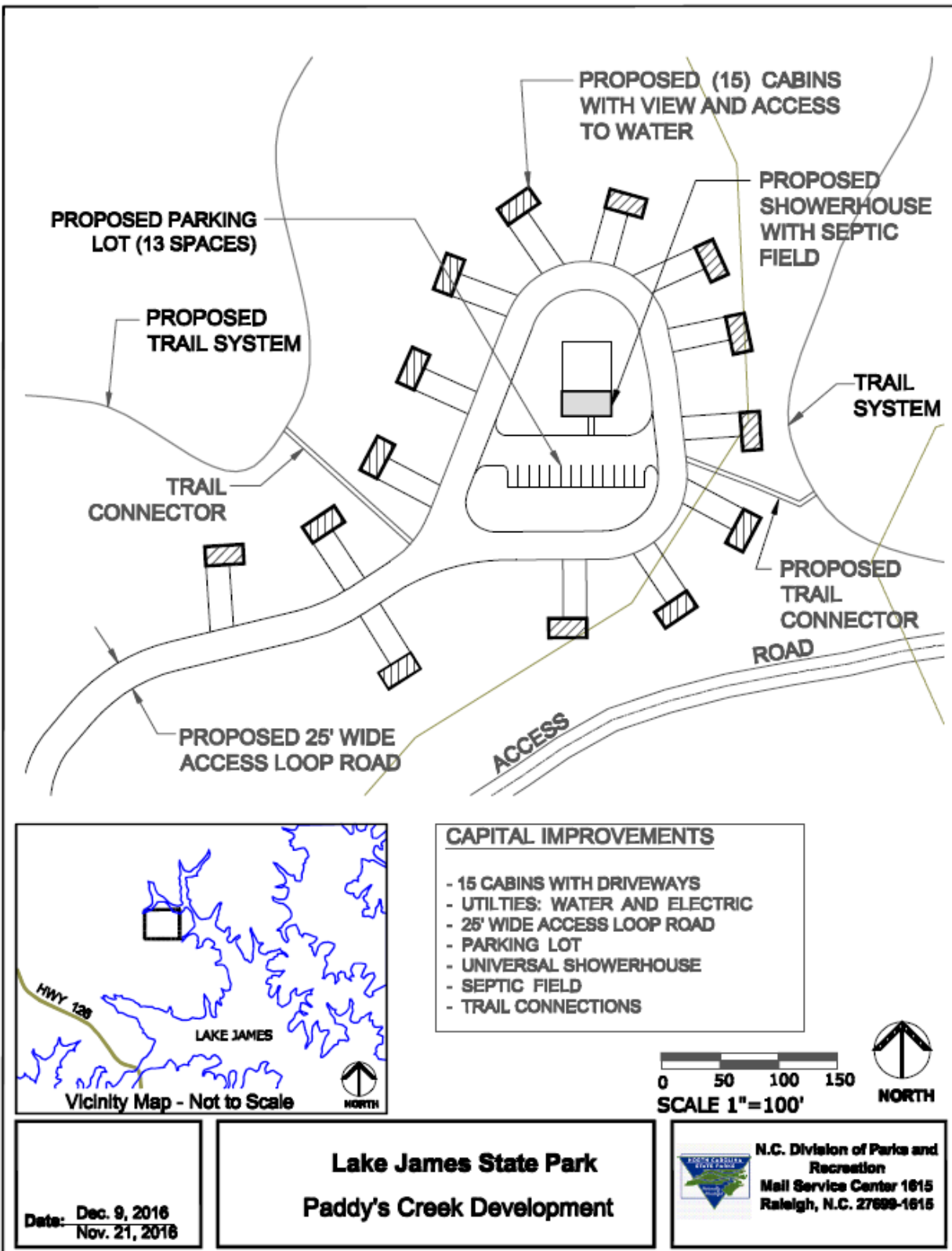
PROJECT #3: GROUP CAMP DEVELOPMENT
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



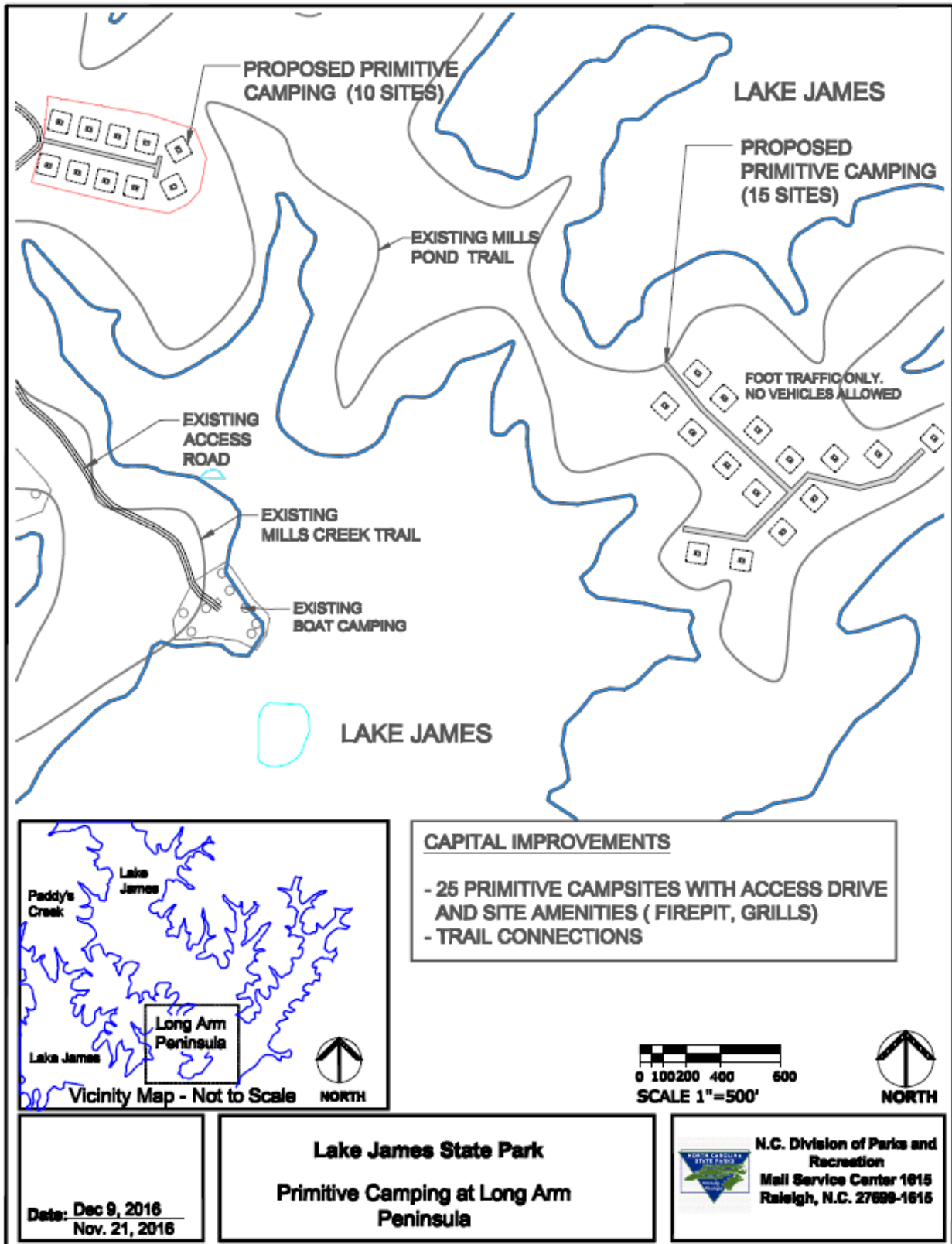
PROJECT# 4: SHORELINE STABILIZATION AT OVERLOOK & CAMPGROUND
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



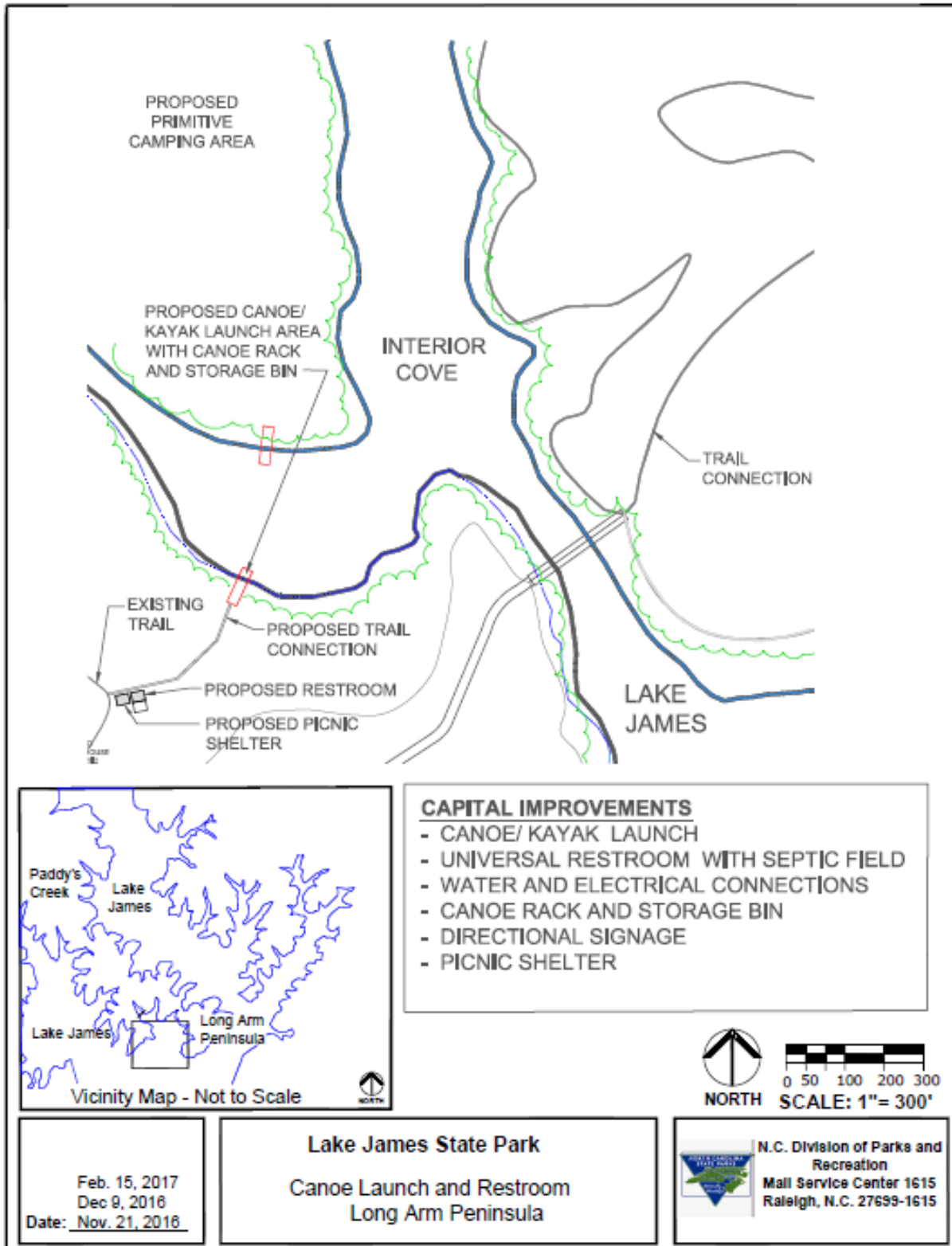
PROJECT# 5: PADDY'S CREEK DEVELOPMENT
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



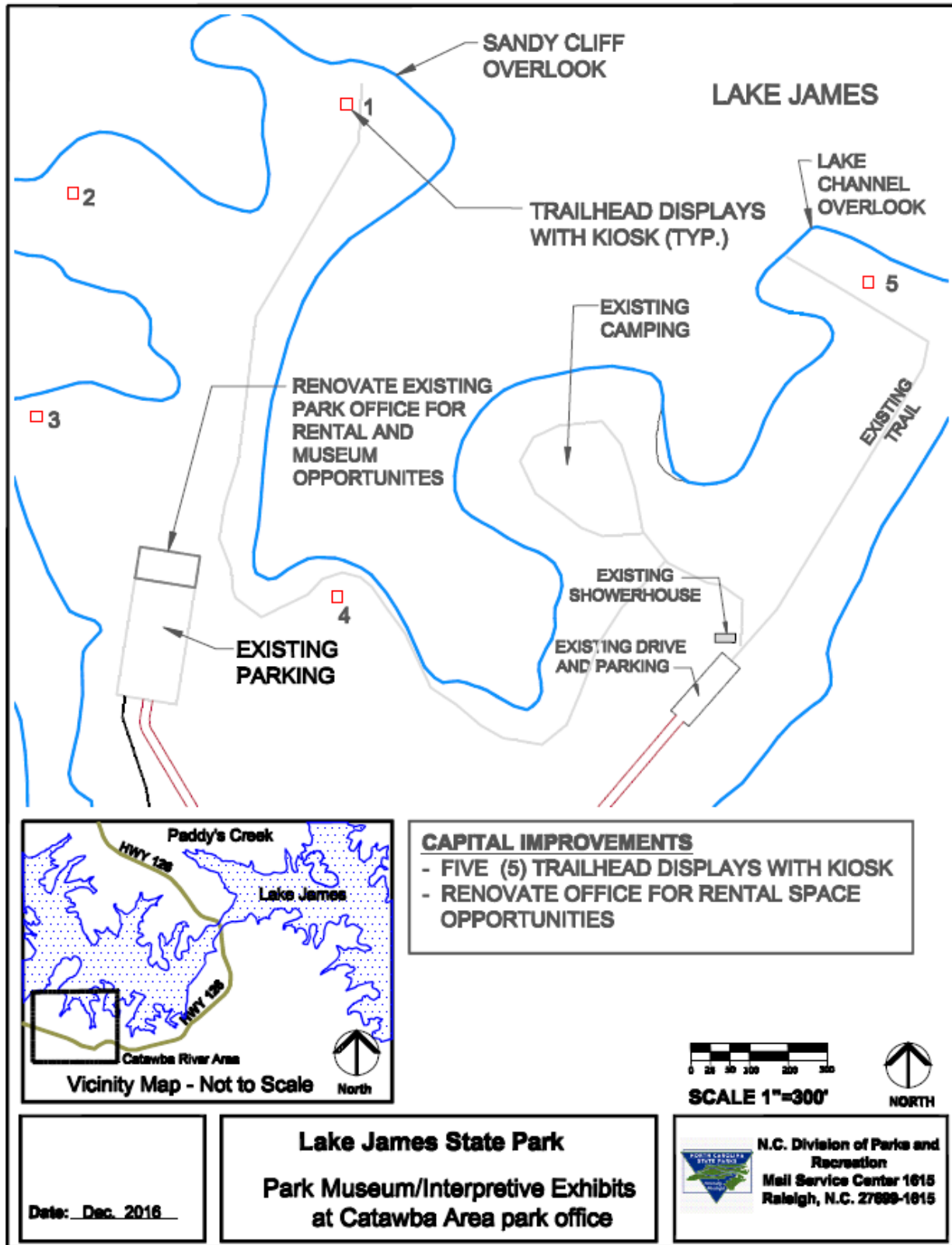
PROJECT #6: PRIMITIVE CAMPING AT LONG ARM PENINSULA
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



**PROJECT #7: CANOE LAUNCH & RESTROOM AT LONG ARM PENINSULA
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK**



PROJECT # 8: PARK MUSEUM/INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



PROJECT # 9. FONTA FLORA STATE TRAIL LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

Fonta Flora State Trail
Concept Plan

NC Division of
Parks and Recreation
Jan 2016


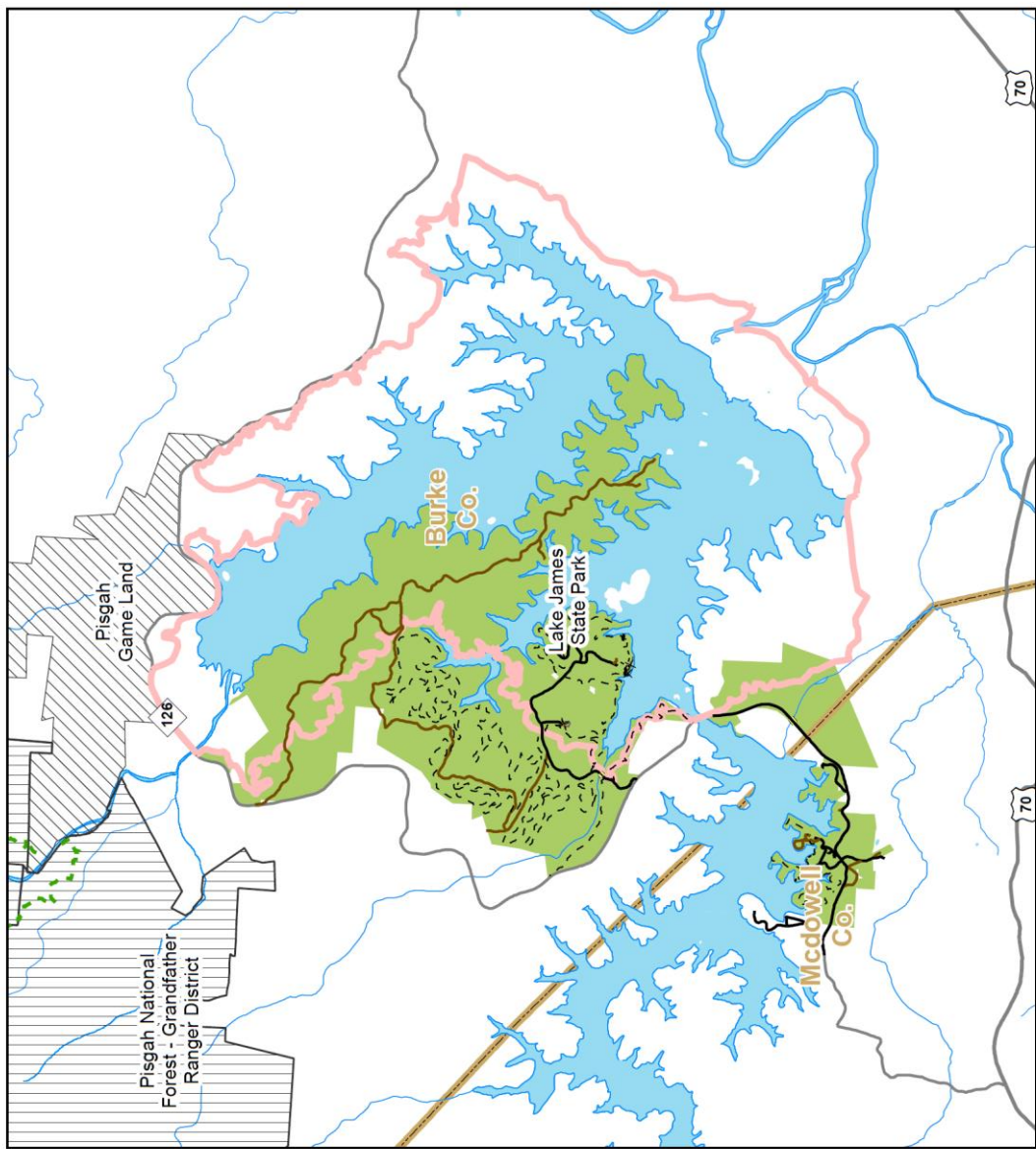
Legend

Fonta Flora State Trail
Planned

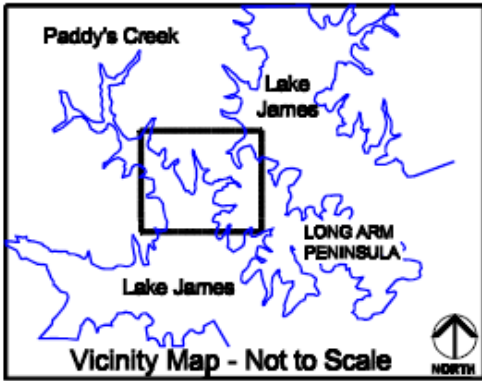
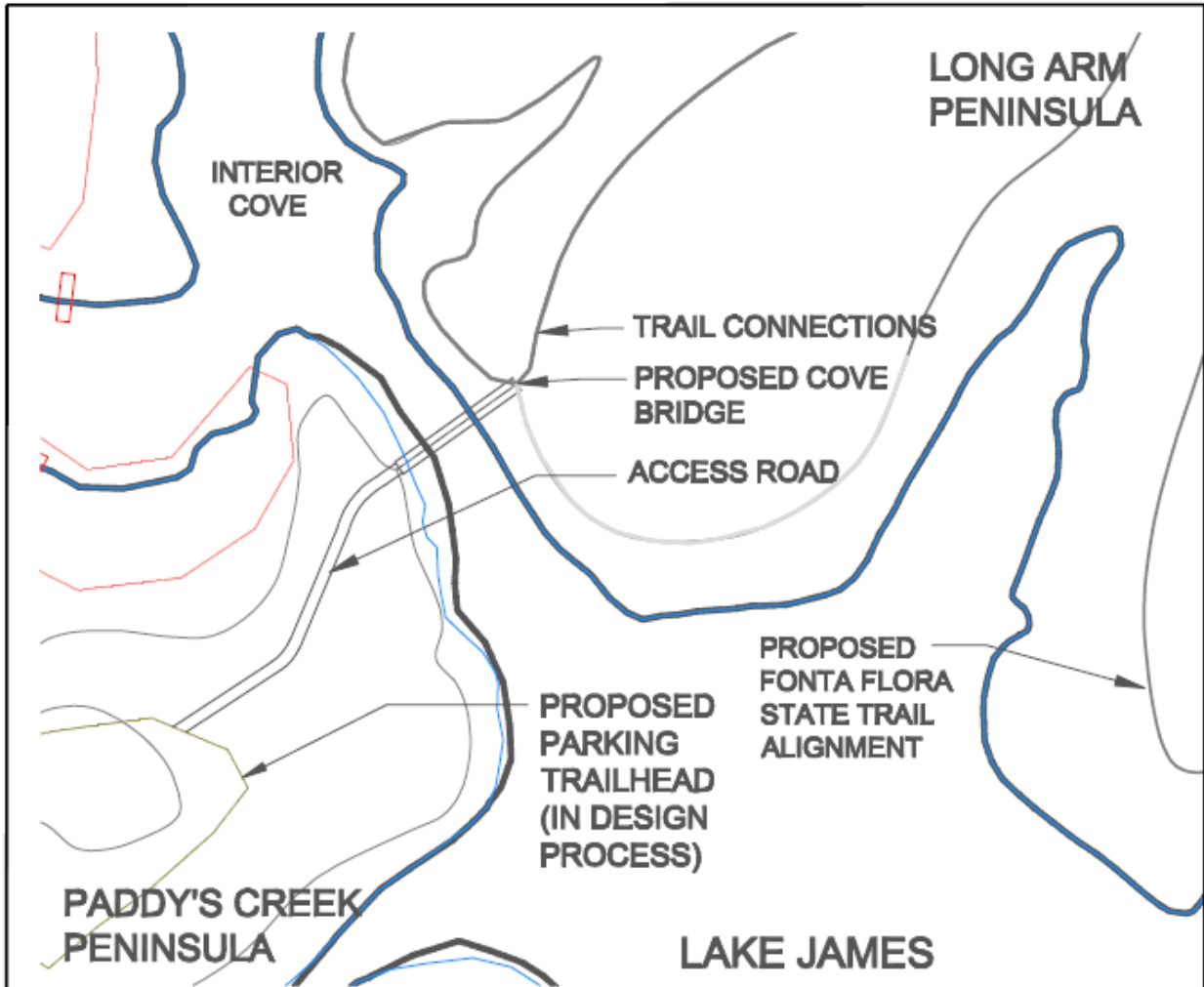
Mountains-to-Sea Trail
Designated

Other Conservation Land
Federal
State
Other

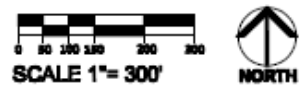
County Line

PROJECT #9: COVE BRIDGE
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



- CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**
- COVE BRIDGE
 - PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD
 - PROPOSED PARKING LOT
 - TRAIL CONNECTIONS



Date: Dec. 9, 2016
Nov. 21, 2016

**Lake James State Park
Cove Bridge**

 **N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation**
Mail Service Center 1615
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1615

PARK MAP
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

