FISHING BAY WATER TRAIL

A Wildlife Adventure

Water Trail Descriptions

The water trails have been designated within Fishing Bay for experienced paddlers who would like to explore wildlife. These trails are not marked or patrolled on a regular basis. This is a wilderness area and you can become lost. Remember, it is your responsibility to have the necessary skills, knowledge and equipment for a safe and environmentally sensitive visit. Make sure you have a map.

Remember as you visit and explore the lands and waters of Fishing Bay. Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a majority of the subject properties are privately owned. Please respect the rights of these landowners and do not enter their lands without prior permission.

Transquaking River Loop Trail

(Length: 5-mile loop; Total approximate paddle time: 3 hours)

Begin at the Bestpitch boat launch and head north on the Transquaking River (see from the wooden bridge). When you reach the end of the canal, proceed to the right. At the end of the canal, paddle to the left. Going right will take you to open waters on Fishing Bay. This long trail will bring you to two of the largest wooded islands within Fishing Bay WMA's Greens and Chance islands. Here is an opportunity to get out of your boat and visit. With time to rest, an average approximately 3 to 6 hours above the marsh, these islands provide a rare vista across the marsh.

Historically, Greens and Chance islands were sites of Native American settlement by the Nanticoke-Wampanoac tribes, whose populations still exist in their ancestral homes today. Exposed areas along the Transquaking River reveal the remains of oven middens, where these native peoples discarded shells over hundreds of years.

Experienced paddlers may also want to explore some of the loop trail sides. Get a local guide for a creek that intersects a salt marsh. During a high tide, it may even be possible to move through the marsh to meet the Transquaking River on the other side of the long canoe trip. Be sure to study your map and watch for conflicting intersections. Continue on the main waterway and it will carry you back to the boat launch where you began your adventure.

Directions to Transquaking River Loop Trail:

From the Bay Bridge, take U.S. Route 50 East to Cambridge. Continue east through Cambridge to the Bucktown Road (also airport exit), at the right. Follow Bucktown Road south, approximately 1 mile to Bestpitch Ferry Road. Turn left onto Bestpitch Ferry Road and continue for approximately four miles to Bestpitch. Just before crossing the bridge at the Transquaking River turn right onto the Fishing Bay WMA boat launch; continue until you follow it to the launch area.

Island Creek Trail

(Length: variable; Total approximate paddle time: variable)

This is an open back trail. Spend as much time as you like paddling. Enjoy the scenery but be sure that this trail is subject to high winds and strong currents at times. Check the tide charts when planning your paddle trip.

Island Creek is a pristine back channel. Exposed mudflats provide good viewing opportunities. To the left is Island Creek. As you paddle down the creek you will be parallel to Elliott's Island Road. Avoid paddling through the five horseshoe bends in the creek you will pass an abandoned yellow clubhouse on the left. After you pass the house, the creek turns to the right and leads out into Fishing Bay. Once you are in the channel of Island Creek, you can stop at Great Marsh Point to stretch and enjoy the view.

Minding north on Island Creek (to the right), the main creek has many side guts on the right leading to numerous secluded ponds, where waterfowl and other birds are often sighted. Drift quietly into these ponds and observe wildlife feeding in the shallow, warm pockets of water.

Directions to Island Creek boat launch:

From U.S. Route 50 take Route 503 east to Vienna, Maryland. At the stop sign, go straight across old Route 50 to the next stop sign. Turn left onto Market Street and go for one mile to Pinkney Road. Proceed to the stop sign, go straight across, and continue on Market Street which will become Elliott Island Road. Go approximately 1/2 miles and the boat launch will be on your right.

Fishing Bay Wildlife Management Area

Paddling and Boating Safety:

- Although tidal elevation change is only one to two feet in Fishing Bay, paddling against an incoming tide can be difficult and will slow your progress. Please check the tide schedules when planning your trip. Tide table charts are available at the Visitor Center at Sailwinds Park or on MD DNR's website on the Fisheries page.

- Fishing Bay is a wilderness area. Water trails are not marked. These trails are also not patrolled on a regular basis. It is easy to get confused and hide behind the maze of creeks that divide the tidal marsh. Be sure that you have the navigational skills necessary to use a map and compass. Bring extra clothing and gear in case of emergencies.

- Be sure to study your map and watch for conflicting intersections. Construction on the main waterway will carry you back to the boat launch where you began your adventure.

- Certain types of mud and marsh appear as though they may be safely crossed on foot, but they can be very deceptive. Use extreme caution in these areas as you may become entrapped. If you do, lay on your back, using your elbows and hands to work your way back to solid ground.

- Be sure to study your map and watch for conflicting intersections. Construction on the main waterway will carry you back to the boat launch where you began your adventure.