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Point Lookout State Park



Strategic Management Plan

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Updates





OVERVIEW

This document is the result of a statewide initiative by the Maryland Park Service to develop strategic management plans for its properties in order to continue to pursue a path toward a sustainable future. The purpose of each Park's strategic management plan is to use a collaborative process to identify and evaluate the following essential elements of each park: 1) natural resources; 2) cultural and historic resources; 3) recreational resources; 4) human resources; and 5) infrastructure. Using this background data, a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)" analysis is performed. The SWOT analysis facilitates the identification of big-picture goals and targeted objectives that are used to develop a work plan for the park.

This plan documents the process and is divided into five parts:

1. BACKGROUND

This section defines the mission and goals of the Maryland Park Service and provides a summary of the features that make the park a significant component of Maryland's state park system.

2. PARK FEATURES AND RESOURCES

This section identifies and describes park-specific resources including natural resources, cultural and historical resources, recreational resources, human resources and infrastructure.

3. RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

This section documents a resource assessment using the SWOT analysis process and identifies park-specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

4. BIG PICTURE GOALS

Using the SWOT analysis in Part 3, this section identifies "big-picture" goals that are focused on promoting strengths, overcoming weaknesses, maximizing opportunities and eliminating threats. The goals are directly connected to reinforcing the significance of the state park and the core values of the Maryland Park Service.

5. WORK PLAN

This section serves as a road map that identifies specific actions and projects to effectively achieve the stated goals. It includes a timeline for completion, so that appropriate resources can be dedicated to accomplishment and employees are empowered to move forward with tasks that support the park's goals and mission.

Background

MARYLAND PARK SERVICE MISSION & GOALS

The mission of the Maryland Park Service is to manage the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.

The goals of the Maryland Park Service are as follows:

- To promote, cultivate and expand public knowledge, understanding, appreciation and support for the resources and services managed by the Maryland Park Service.
- To operate the Maryland Park Service in a manner that generates an atmosphere of teamwork, shared information, cooperation and trust at all levels of employment.
- To manage the Maryland Park Service in a manner that ensures the maximum benefit from each dollar and hour of labor expended.
- To promote the management of natural and cultural resources to ensure the continuing benefits for present and future generations.
- To provide diverse recreational services with an emphasis upon public safety and the provision of neat, clean and well-maintained resources.

MARYLAND PARK SERVICE BRAND PROMISE

The Maryland Park Service is dedicated to providing an outstanding experience to all park visitors and is committed to the following principles:

- Providing a place where visitors can bring their children that nourishes their well-being in ways that only nature can provide.
- Connecting visitors with each other and their surroundings, through the beauty and serenity of nature, in a safe and welcoming place that belongs to them.
- Preserving and providing opportunities for visitors to discover important historical sites and relics that tell inspiring stories of people and events that give context and meaning to their lives today.
- Creating an environment for relaxation with the reassuring presence of a friendly and dedicated Park Ranger who inspires and supports the desire to be a good steward of the Earth.
- Imparting visitors with a sense of well-being and happy memories, so when they leave they are feeling stress-free and revitalized.

Background



Photo Courtesy of MD Park Service

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The significance of Point Lookout State Park is ...

- Conserving and interpreting an important and unique ecosystem where the Potomac River meets the Chesapeake Bay, including open water, high marsh, low marsh and shrub-scrub tidal wetlands, as well as a sandy beach and upland forest that comprise critical habitat for a wide variety of wildlife and migratory birds on the Atlantic flyway.
- Providing visitors with opportunities to enjoy water-based recreation including boating, paddling, swimming, and fishing, and providing a family-friendly camping experience.
- Preserving and interpreting one of the largest Prisoner of War Camps constructed by the Union Army during the American Civil War.
- Preserving and interpreting the historic 1830 Point Lookout Lighthouse, representing unique Chesapeake Bay maritime navigation history.

Park Features and Resources

PARK STATS	FY20
TOTAL PARK ACREAGE	1,079
ANNUAL VISITATION	379,087
ANNUAL REVENUE (excluding concession revenue)	\$724,194
ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET* (excluding classified employee payroll)	\$473,528
TOTAL CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES** (including filled and vacant positions)	11

****EMPLOYEES ALSO OPERATE THE FOLLOWING STATE PARKS:**

Point lookout State Park, Greenwell State Park, Newtowne Neck State Park, St. Clements Island State Park, and St. Mary's River State Park

Park Features and Resources

SCHEDULED CAPITAL PROJECTS	YEAR	AMOUNT
Park Entrance & Contact Stations (COMPLETED)	2019	\$850,000
Lighthouse Renovation (COMPLETED)	2019	\$3,200,000
Lighthouse Exhibits (UNDER CONTRACT)	2021	\$150,000
Water and Wastewater System Improvements	2022	\$4,400,000

SCHEDULED CRITICAL MAINTENANCE	YEAR	AMOUNT
Greens Loop - Electrical Panel Repairs	2021	\$95,000
Culvert Replacement at Civil War Fort, Day Use Area and Campground	2021	\$270,000
Renovate Fishing Pier	2022	\$1,000,000
Replace ADA Lift - Headquarters	2022	\$40,000
Renovate Museum/Nature Center	2023	\$240,000
Nature Center Parking Lot Resurfacing	2023	\$70,000
Fort Lincoln - Reroof Buildings	2023	\$50,000
Renovate North, Point and Fishing Pier Comfort Stations (3 Total)	2023	\$250,000
Renovate Park Store - Exterior	2024	\$45,000
Replace Fuel Dispensers at Shop	2024	\$4,000
Replace Public Address System - First Aid Room	2026	\$35,000

Park Features and Resources

AREA MAP



Park Features and Resources

NATURAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

- Lake Conoy and Point Lookout Creek comprise a brackish 300-acre tributary of the Potomac River, surrounded by 240 acres of marshland and extensive areas of submerged aquatic vegetation and native marsh grasses.
- Over 3.5 miles of shoreline at the confluence of the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River including a mixture of constructed rip-rap, sandy beaches, tidal fringe marsh and low banks.
- A diverse ecosystem that is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including numerous nesting and migrating bird species.
- Habitat that supports rare and endangered species, including but not limited to, loggerhead sea turtles and Northern saw-whet owls.
- Young forests composed of mature loblolly pine and sweet gum, as well as younger stands of red oak and black cherry.
- Important stopover and feeding area for the monarch butterfly during migration.
- Lake Conoy is the site of one of the top 30 largest great blue heron nesting colonies in the state, with 56 breeding pairs.

DESCRIPTION

Point Lookout State Park is a unique peninsula located at the confluence of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. The peninsula is primarily a marshland ecosystem with extensive areas of tidal wetlands, shrub-scrub wetlands and young pine forests maturing inland. As the pine forest has matured, succession has led to younger stands of oaks, maples and cherries within the wooded areas. This mixed habitat supports many mammals, including white-tailed deer, red fox, gray fox, muskrat and river otter.

The park's location along the Atlantic flyway makes it an important stopover for migratory birds, and the forests and marshes provide nesting and breeding areas for many species. Approximately 300 different bird species have been identified at Point Lookout. There is a large great blue heron colony near Lake Conoy with 56 breeding pairs. This colony is located on the mainland, and the mature trees provide the height needed to keep the birds' nests out of the reach of ground predators. The birds' fidelity to the successful nesting area has some consequences for the habitat, as the accumulation of bird guano from the nest area eventually causes die-off of the mature trees where they prefer to nest. The birds will use live trees when they return each year; however, successful nesting is dependent on the availability of live trees.

Point Lookout features long stretches of shoreline adjacent to the Potomac River, the Chesapeake Bay, Lake Conoy and Point Lookout Creek. Shallow water areas are home to a variety of submerged aquatic plants, and are bordered by a mixture of native and invasive marshland grasses. Blue crabs, small fish, clams and mussels are abundant in the marshes and along the shoreline. Visitors can enjoy sport fishing on the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay by boat, along the shoreline, or on the park's fishing pier with striped bass, bluefish, and Atlantic croaker being common catches.

Park Features and Resources

CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

- Home to the Piscataway Indian tribe prior to the first voyages of Captain John Smith.
- Mapped and explored by Captain John Smith in 1608.
- During the War of 1812, the point was a lookout for American forces and a landing point for British forces prior to the attack and burning of Washington D.C.
- A lighthouse was constructed in 1830 on the point, and was in operation until 1966. The historic lighthouse stands on the same site today.
- During the American Civil War, Hammond General Hospital was erected and the Camp Hoffman Prisoner of War Camp was established. One of the three earthen forts constructed to defend the Prisoner of War camp still stands and all buildings within the fort have been re-created.
- A hotel was established in the 1920s in an attempt to rejuvenate the area as a seaside resort. The hotel was razed in 1989.

DESCRIPTION

Point Lookout State Park has a long and diverse history that includes Piscataway Indian use and occupation prior to the 1700s. In 1608, Captain John Smith explored and mapped the region, and with the founding of Maryland in 1634, the first settlement of the region was established at St. Mary's City. Point Lookout became part of St. Michael's Manor, one of the holdings of Leonard Calvert, the first Governor of colonial Maryland.

During the War of 1812, Point Lookout saw use by both sides of the conflict. American forces used the area as a lookout for the British Navy. After landing and defeating the small American militia, the British used Point Lookout to land troops for raids and for their march on Washington, D.C. Following the War of 1812, Point Lookout was used as a seaside vacation community. In 1830, with shipping increasing in the area, a lighthouse was commissioned and built. This lighthouse would see two major renovations and would remain an active navigational beacon until 1966.

The longest and most well-known historical era for Point Lookout occurred during the American Civil War. In 1862, with mounting casualties and many battles fought in the neighboring state of Virginia, the Union Army established the Hammond General Hospital. The hospital was constructed near the lighthouse, with many wings originating from a central water tower, similar to the shape of a wagon wheel with spokes emanating from a central hub. Following the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, Point Lookout would become one of the largest Prisoner of War (POW) camps of the Civil War. Camp Hoffman was designed to have a "prison pen" holding 10,000 Confederate prisoners, but the prison population swelled to more than 20,000 in August of 1864. The Prisoner Of War camp was defended by three earthen forts and had several Union Army units rotate through to guard it, including U.S. Colored Troops. While the camp was active, from July 1863 to June 1865, it saw more than 52,000 Confederate prisoners pass through its gates. After the Civil War, the Hammond General Hospital and Camp Hoffman were dismantled, and the peninsula later saw the creation of a segregated seaside resort in the 1920s. This small community adapted and survived into the second half of the 20th century, until the hotel closed in the late 1970s and was razed in 1989.

Park Features and Resources

RECREATIONAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

- 143 wooded campsites (33 electric hook-up and 26 full hook-up).
- Civil War Museum and Marshland Nature Center.
- 0.75 mile self-guided nature trail and 8.1 miles of water trails.
- 300-acre tidal lake available for paddling, boating, and fishing.
- Equipment rentals, including canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards.
- 710-foot fishing pier on the Chesapeake Bay.
- Boat launch with four ramps and a fish-cleaning station.
- Beach picnic area covering 0.25 miles of shore-line along the Potomac River.
- Pet beach area located along the Chesapeake Bay.
- Civil War fort available for self-guided tours year-round.
- One reservable picnic shelter with a large open grill, picnic tables, water, and electricity.
- Historic lighthouse and grounds open for tours.
- 200 acres of land available for deer hunting and two waterfowl stake-out sites.

DESCRIPTION

Point Lookout State Park offers a variety of recreational opportunities. There are 143 wooded campsites, along with the Marshland Nature Center and Civil War Museum. The center and museum are open seasonally and offer nature and history programs. The park's 0.75-mile nature trail also begins at this site.

Point Lookout has a rich and varied history. There is a Civil War museum, as well as several historic sites available for tours including a Civil War fort (open for self-guided tours year-round) and a lighthouse (open for tours the first Saturday of each month from April to November).

The park's 8.1-mile water trail system provides a unique perspective of key areas, including the marshes of Lake Conoy, the lighthouse and the Civil War fort. Many areas of the park provide views of Lake Conoy, a calm and protected body of water perfect for paddling, fishing and nature observation. Canoes, kayaks and paddleboards are available for rent at the park store from May to September.

The park is a very popular fishing location for shoreline and pier fishing and has a boat launch offering easy access to Lake Conoy, the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. The park's numerous water access points provide a variety of fishing options for several species, including bluefish, croaker, spot and striped bass.

The most popular recreational area during the summer months is the beach picnic area. Located along the Potomac River, this beautiful, shaded area offers opportunities for swimming (guarded and unguarded areas) and picnicking and has many grills and picnic tables. There is also a reservable picnic shelter within this area. On some weekends there may be over 10,000 visitors to the park.

Park Features and Resources

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 11 full-time/classified employees.
- One long term contractual employee.
- 20-35 seasonal/contractual employees (including lifeguards).
- Two affiliated foundation/volunteer organizations (Friends of Point Lookout and Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society).

DESCRIPTION

There are 11 full-time, classified employees assigned to Point Lookout State Park, including one Park Manager, one Park Services Supervisor, one Lead Ranger, four Park Rangers, one Park Maintenance Program Supervisor, two Park Technicians and one Administrative Specialist. In addition to Point Lookout State Park, these employees also manage: St. Clements Island State Park, St. Mary's River State Park, Greenwell State Park and Newtowne Neck State Park. There is also one long term contractual Park Ranger stationed at Newtowne Neck State Park.

Point Lookout's seasonal labor force typically includes up to four Park Rangers, two park naturalists, four to eight lifeguards, one to three housekeepers, three to six concession attendants, five to nine maintenance workers and up to five contact station attendants. Some of these employees also assist with maintenance and operations at St. Clements Island State Park, St. Mary's River State Park, Greenwell State Park, and Newtowne Neck State Park. Seasonal staff are flexible and cross-trained, so they can work on, and assist with, a variety of park operations and visitor services.

Park Features and Resources

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Park office building.
- Two contact stations.
- 143-site campground, including 5 camper cabins and a camp office.
- Five campground bathhouses, Three day-use comfort stations and one large beach bathhouse.
- Three operational houses.
- Nature center and Civil War museum with displays.
- Maintenance complex consisting of three buildings.
- Historic lighthouse, buoy shed, coal shed and smokehouse.
- Civil War-era fort, including four reconstructed buildings.
- Boat launch, boat storage, and fish-cleaning station.
- Park store.
- Concession stand at the beach.

DESCRIPTION

Most of the infrastructure at Point Lookout State Park was built during the early and mid-1900s, when the property was used as a private beach resort and vacation destination, which included a hotel and rental cottages. At one point, the property was slated for development, with plans for dozens of private home parcels. Because of these plans, roads, water and sewer lines were installed on the property. Starting in the 1960s, the State of Maryland began buying parcels to acquire the land area needed to establish Point Lookout State Park. The existing utility infrastructure is aging and upgrades have been initiated.

The Point Lookout Lighthouse was built in 1830 by John Donahoo, a famed builder of lighthouses around the Chesapeake Bay. The light was deactivated in 1966, and the property was transferred to the United States Navy. The Navy allowed civilians to live in the house until 1981. The U.S. Navy used the property for communications towers and office space until 2006 when it was transferred to the State of Maryland.

In the last several years, numerous repair and renovation projects have taken place in order to address aging infrastructure and improve visitor facilities and amenities. The beach bathhouse, as well as the five campground bathhouses, have been renovated. A new and expanded headquarters building was constructed on the footprint of the old one in 2010. The boat launch was resurfaced, new energy-efficient lights installed, and a boat / trailer storage area was constructed in 2014.

In 2019, the park entrance was renovated and new contact stations were constructed to improve traffic flow and reduce traffic congestion on busy weekends. Restoration of the Point Lookout Lighthouse, Buoy Shed and Coal Shed is nearing completion and it is anticipated that all of the buildings and the new exhibit will open for visitors in 2021.

Resource Assessment - SWOT Analysis

NATURAL RESOURCES

STRENGTHS

- Point Lookout's marshland ecosystem supports a diversity of native and migratory wildlife species.
- Marsh, shrub-scrub and forest areas provide habitat for a variety of upland mammals and birds.
- Surrounding saltwater provides visitors with opportunities to encounter many waterfowl and aquatic species.
- Annual arrival of migratory monarch butterflies facilitates programming on the importance of pollinator habitat.
- The park is mostly forested, which stabilizes the soils and provides important riparian buffer benefits, such as nutrient removal, habitat and carbon sequestration.
- The surrounding community is in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, which limits building and development around the park.

WEAKNESSES

- Marsh areas flood regularly during lunar tide and storm events due to sea level rise, stressing salt-intolerant plant life and low-lying forested areas.
- Loblolly pine forests are vulnerable to degradation from storm events, salt-water intrusion and the presence of the Southern pine beetle.
- Impervious parking areas allow untreated stormwater run-off to enter the Chesapeake Bay.
- Visitor crowding on summer weekends leads to compacted areas around the swimming beach, which stresses trees and other vegetation.
- Current species lists and documentation of potential rare, threatened or endangered species are needed.
- Sound forest stewardship is challenged by the lack of a comprehensive forest inventory/forest management plan.
- Drainage improvements are needed to address areas of standing water after storm events.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Grow Not Mow areas could be expanded to increase habitat for pollinators and migratory monarch butterflies.
- Alternative deciduous tree species could be planted to diversify the pine forests.
- Local environmental groups may be willing to partner on water quality projects, possibly using oyster reefs and submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Additional land acquisitions could expand park boundaries to protect the park's ecosystem.
- Local St. Mary's College of Maryland students may be willing to volunteer/intern and help develop species lists of the park.
- Collaboration with the Maryland Forest Service could facilitate the development of a forest stewardship plan(s) to diversify and better manage park forests.
- Grants can be explored to expand and diversify environmental education to include new trails, pollinator gardens and saltwater marsh programs.
- The large great blue heron colony could be used to educate visitors about this iconic species.

THREATS

- Invasive plants (Phragmites, kudzu, wisteria, etc.) harm native species, provide no benefit to wildlife, and are expensive, time consuming and labor intensive to remove.
- Erosion/sea level rise is degrading the shoreline, beaches, buildings and infrastructure.
- Southern pine beetles are ravaging the loblolly pine forests because of tree age and saltwater inundation.
- Due to the composition of the park's forests, losing loblolly pines to insects will leave very few trees as buffers.
- Significant high tides and storm events cause flooding that may damage park buildings and continue to stress non-saltwater-tolerant plants.
- Trash-Free Parks programming and education needs to be emphasized annually to fully realize the savings of time, money and effort spent on litter pick-up and trash collection/removal.
- The great blue heron colony's ongoing use of certain trees will eventually cause die-off of mature trees, and the herons will relocate to new trees and forest areas to sustain the colony.

Resource Assessment - SWOT Analysis

CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL RESOURCES

STRENGTHS

- The park has a very rich history from the Middle Woodland era through the 1970s to present day.
- An earthen fort remains on site from the Civil War, with re-created barracks and officers' quarters.
- The lighthouse, built in 1830, still stands on its original site and is open to tours.
- Volunteer groups have a strong knowledge of the park and history to share with the public through various events.
- A Civil War museum and nature center in the campground showcases various eras and historic events from the 1830s, 1860s and 1920s.
- An "auto tour" developed by the Friends of Point Lookout provides visitors with informative roadside interpretive panels at various historic sites.
- Staff and volunteers continue to perform research in order to provide the public with factual information.
- Events showcasing the park's historic sites bring in new visitors annually for the "Lighthouse Challenge" and "Blue and Gray Days."

WEAKNESSES

- Additional interpretive panels are needed to describe the hospital that was once located at the Point.
- More displays and programming related to American Indian occupation and life on the peninsula are needed.
- Existing signage and interpretive panels related to all historic sites need to be researched and updated.
- There is a need for a Ranger certified as a Historic Weapons Safety Officer to facilitate reenactments.
- There is a demand for the Civil War museum to be open year-round.
- Once the lighthouse exhibit installation is completed, there will be demand for the site to be open more frequently (daily during the summer months.)
- Parking for individuals with disabilities needs to be improved to provide access to all park amenities.
- The Civil War prisoner pen needs improved interpretation and restoration.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The development of a comprehensive historic site interpretive plan for the park is needed.
- Collaborating with Jefferson Patterson Park could aid park staff in improving exhibits and programming.
- Internships with local colleges could provide assistance with new displays, research and programming.
- The restored lighthouse and new exhibits may reinvigorate volunteers.
- Creating "themed trunks" for interpreters to use could enhance programs on the Civil War, lighthouse keepers and the War of 1812.
- Creation of living history programs and displays related to the War of 1812 could highlight a different period in the park's history.
- The expansion of historical records and photographs relative to all historical periods at Point Lookout would enhance exhibits, waysides and displays.
- Civil War exhibits could be relocated to the Civil War Fort area and the prisoner of war pen could be improved and interpreted

THREATS

- Additional attention needs to be focused on the management of artifacts and ensuring that illegal metal detecting does not take place.
- The park's volunteer numbers are shrinking and need new membership.
- Sea level rise, erosion and subsidence are a constant threat to the Civil War museum and nature center, and alternatives need to be explored now.
- Continued failure of the revetment near the Civil War fort and the parking area of the lighthouse could result in adverse impacts to infrastructure and resources.
- Overcrowding of the picnic/beach area leads to park patrons occupying and recreating within the Civil War fort area, which adversely affects the area and fort visitors' experience.
- The earthen walls of the Civil War fort require regular maintenance to protect them from wildlife and invasive plant species growth.

Resource Assessment - SWOT Analysis

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

STRENGTHS

- A wide variety of opportunities for recreation draw diverse user groups to the park.
- The campground is large and has both electric hook-up sites and full hook-up sites.
- The guarded beach and picnic area are very popular drawing thousands of visitors during summer weekends.
- The boat launch allows easy access to both the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Fishing opportunities are abundant in the Chesapeake Bay, Potomac River, and Lake Conoy.
- The 8.1- mile water trail system is picturesque, and provides an enjoyable experience for both experienced and inexperienced paddlers.
- The park store offers a good selection of rental canoes/kayaks and paddleboards.
- There are 200 acres of land open for hunting.

WEAKNESSES

- The location of the youth group site is not ideal for visitors and alternative locations should be explored.
- Electrical components in the campground are beginning to age and need to be upgraded to avoid outages.
- The fishing pier and accompanying restroom are heavily used, presenting maintenance challenges.
- Illegal crabbing and fishing is reported regularly, requiring additional enforcement attention.
- The park's only land trail needs additional maintenance and wayfinding signage.
- Large numbers of picnickers at the beach generate excessive trash.
- The lighthouse is open for visitors only one day a month.
- The park's mini cabins are aging and need to be replaced.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased outreach to Hispanic visitors through bilingual fishing days and Es Mi Parque events would enhance visitor experiences.
- Increase education of beach-goers about Trash-Free Parks and location of dumpsters to improve compliance.
- Conduct invasive species removal and install interpretive signs along the Periwinkle Point Trail.
- Engage camp hosts and other volunteers in the eradication of Phragmites and other invasive species from the campground roads and camp pads.
- Plant new trees to diversify the forest community and maintain shade in the campground.
- Partnerships with other state parks could be used to facilitate the recruitment of camp hosts.
- Develop a staffing plan to provide regular, daily hours of operation at the newly renovated historic lighthouse.
- Replace the park's aging mini cabins with cabins that reflect the Civil War fort architecture.

THREATS

- Invasive and noxious plant species are taking hold in the campground and other areas, and they continue to spread.
- Climate change is causing low-lying areas to flood more frequently and become unusable for longer periods of time.
- Renovation of the fishing pier is necessary to ensure that a high-quality fishing facility and visitor experience is maintained.
- Enforcement of illegal fishing, camping and violation of other park rules and regulations is needed.
- Phragmites is spreading in wetland areas and becoming more difficult to manage.
- Foot traffic on unsustainable social trails throughout the park may degrade sensitive resources and reduce the value of natural areas.

Resource Assessment - SWOT Analysis

HUMAN RESOURCES

STRENGTHS

- There has been a great deal of upward career mobility for most staff.
- The addition of a long-term-contractual Ranger at Newtowne Neck State Park has allowed other Rangers to be more focused on Point Lookout State Park.
- The influx of new staff has led to new ideas and positive changes at Point Lookout State Park.
- Point Lookout is supported by dedicated and talented volunteers, including the Friends of Point Lookout and the Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society.

WEAKNESSES

- Positions that remain vacant for extended periods create park operational and management challenges.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified candidates for seasonal staff has been difficult due to the remoteness of the park's location.
- Monitoring seasonal staff in satellite parks is time-consuming and makes training difficult.
- Aging park equipment requires frequent maintenance.
- Steady turnover of classified staff makes it difficult to plan projects effectively and to implement policies and procedures consistently.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Developing park-specific handbooks/manuals for various areas of operation (e.g. concession, beach) would ensure smooth transitions when turnover occurs.
- Continuing to emphasize employee satisfaction, well-being and recognition will strengthen and improve the park's workforce.
- Exit interviews should continue to be conducted upon staff departures to explore ways to improve job satisfaction.
- A staffing plan could be developed for the Point Lookout Complex to include amenities, acreage, operations and visitorship to ensure that increased staffing can be justified and defended during the budget process.

THREATS

- Maintaining adequate staffing levels needs to remain a priority to ensure positive employee morale, the safety of visitors and staff and adequate facility maintenance.
- It can be time consuming to hire and fill vacancies.

Resource Assessment - SWOT Analysis

INFRASTRUCTURE

STRENGTHS

- The Park headquarters building was built in 2010 and is a modern facility in great condition that meets current office needs.
- The campground bathhouses and the beach bathhouse have all been renovated within the past five years and include modern fixtures in good condition.
- Three vehicles have been replaced within the last two years.

WEAKNESSES

- Aging electrical service infrastructure in the campground requires frequent maintenance and repair.
- Water and sewer lines have exceeded their lifespan. The park's wastewater collection and treatment system should be upgraded to be cleaner and more efficient. These facilities are maintained by the Maryland Environmental Service (MES).
- High visitation combined with an increase in demand for convenient parking, presents a challenge in parking cars quickly and efficiently.
- Because of the high water table, low-lying landscape, and hydric soils, roadside ditches and culverts hold water contributing to poor drainage in the park.
- Older vehicles and heavy equipment are less reliable and are costly to maintain.
- Original park buildings are threatened by flood waters, Capital Improvement Projects are necessary to plan for building succession (Park Store, Nature Center, Civil War Museum)

OPPORTUNITIES

- The park needs a facility master plan to locate the camp store, natural and historic interpretation exhibits and concessions in conjunction with planned renovations in the FY23 Critical Maintenance budget
- The renovation of the lighthouse, buoy shed, and coal shed will be completed in 2021.
- The trail and signage leading from the parking areas to the main beach area needs to be improved to better accommodate visitors.
- Maryland Park Service branding and color standards should be more consistently applied to signs and buildings around the park.
- Bulletin boards should be updated and/or replaced to improve the park's appearance.
- Opportunities to use native shrubs and grasses to help direct visitor parking and access can conserve natural areas and improve aesthetics.
- The FY22 Capital budget includes \$4.4 million in WWTP upgrades by the Maryland Environmental Service.
- The fishing pier and comfort station are scheduled for renovations in FY22 and FY23.

THREATS

- Older structures may sustain interior damage due to extreme weather events. Critical maintenance assessments and project justifications must remain a priority.
- Salt water intrusion is adversely affecting the park's water system necessitating frequent repairs.
- Rising water levels and land subsidence threaten the long term use and sustainability of several campsites in the park.
- The Southern pine beetle is adversely affecting and, in some cases killing, existing pine trees in the campground, creating hazardous trees that must be removed.
- Failing revetments and high tides during storm events could lead to flooding and large scale erosion.
- Poorly graded stormwater ditches along roadsides and lack of necessary outflow lead to standing water and occasional sinkholes.

Big Picture Goals

NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS

1	Develop and implement a prioritized plan for eradication or control of non-native invasive species.
2	With assistance from the Maryland Forest Service, develop and implement a forest stewardship plan to diversify and maintain the forest resources at Point Lookout.
3	Develop and implement a plan to improve and increase pollinator habitat and increase efforts to educate visitors on the importance of pollinators.
4	Improve underwater habitat and water quality in Lake Conoy through restoration of oyster beds, re-establishing submerged aquatic vegetation and restoring native marsh vegetation.

CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL RESOURCE GOALS

5	Support the lighthouse restoration effort by coordinating with Engineering and Construction staff and Maryland Park Service planners on construction oversight, exhibit design, and site improvements.
6	Develop and implement a comprehensive historic sites interpretive plan, including the Civil War Fort area, and address unified, branded interpretive signage and appropriate historical markers.
7	Evaluate the feasibility of improving portions of the Civil War Fort area, assess buildings and surrounding areas, including the POW area, and investigate whether the Civil War museum collection could be moved and displayed at the site.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCE GOALS

8	Take actions necessary to provide visitors with a more enjoyable and informative trail experience in the park, while also limiting impact to sensitive areas.
9	Formulate and implement best practices to address challenges associated with night fishing in the park while providing a high-quality fishing opportunity.
10	Increase outreach to Hispanic and Latino visitors through bilingual fishing days, Es Mi Parque events, and Leave No Trace programs that would enhance the visitor experience and promote conservation practices.

HUMAN RESOURCE GOALS

11	Explore opportunities to reduce maintenance workload through streamlined procedures, equipment upgrades and service contracts.
12	Maintain focus on and look for additional opportunities to enhance employee satisfaction, well-being and recognition.
13	Develop resources to improve continuity of operations and prepare for employee turnover and transition.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

14	Improve aesthetics and consistency of message by applying Maryland Park Service branding standards to park infrastructure and landscaping.
15	Develop and implement a plan of action to improve the roadside trail to help visitors move safely to and from the main beach area and the more remote parking lots.
16	Place water/sewer improvements, campground electrical updates and roadside ditch repair on the capital projects or critical maintenance list.

Work Plan

GOAL #1

Develop and implement a prioritized plan of action for eradication or control of non-native invasive species within the park.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Identify expert resources, such as staff from the Wildlife and Heritage Service and members of the Native Plant Society, to provide training and assistance	Complete
Utilize available resources to perform a comprehensive inventory of non-native invasive species within the park.	Complete
Define priorities and develop a plan of action for eradication, control and prevention of invasive species, using the template developed by Maryland Park Service planners	2021
Submit the plan for internal project review.	2021
Once approved, utilize available resources (employees, volunteers, interns, etc.) to implement the plan.	2022-2023
Assess progress and update the plan of action at annual intervals.	2022-2023
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #2

With assistance from the Maryland Forest Service, develop and implement a forest stewardship plan to enhance and maintain the forest resources at Point Lookout.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Create a comprehensive list of native tree species found in Point Lookout State Park, noting those that are healthy and growing well.	2021
Request assistance from the Maryland Forest Service in the development of a forest stewardship plan that includes additional planting.	2021-22
Carefully evaluate campground areas that have lost pine trees and work to identify appropriate tree species that will tolerate the site conditions.	2021-22
Work with the Wildlife and Heritage Service on forest stewardship efforts that will support the conservation of the great blue heron colony.	2021-22
Identify grants/funding sources/labor force to facilitate tree planting efforts.	2021-22
As recommended, schedule regular controlled understory burns in healthy forests to help control invasive species, allowing native species to flourish.	2022-24
Implement new plantings and supplemental plantings as specified in the forest stewardship plan.	2022-24

COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT

Work Plan

GOAL #3

Develop and implement a plan of action to maintain, improve and increase pollinator habitat and increase efforts to educate visitors on the importance of pollinators.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Inventory park areas that are routinely mowed and assess the possibility of conversion to meadows/pollinator habitat.	2019-20
Assess presence/absence of important pollinators within the park and focus planting on host/nectar-producing plants.	2021
Plant specific areas of milkweed to support monarch butterflies and develop related educational programming.	2021
Develop, or utilize pre-developed, educational materials to highlight pollinator habitat and its importance.	2021-23
Establish a maintenance protocol for pollinator/meadow areas to ensure long term viability and improve aesthetics.	2021-23

COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT

Work Plan

GOAL #4

Improve underwater habitat and water quality in Lake Conoy through restoration of oyster beds, re-establishing submerged aquatic vegetation and restoring native marsh vegetation.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Identify resource personnel from the Department and other agencies that can provide guidance, training and assistance with restoration efforts.	2021
Utilize available resources to train park staff, volunteers, conservation corps members and interns in correct practices for plantings and propagation.	2021
Define areas for oyster and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) restoration.	2021
Submit the plan of action for internal project review.	2022
Once approved, utilize available resources, staff and volunteers to implement the plan, including one or more "special event" days to educate visitors.	2022
Assess progress and update the plan of action at annual intervals.	2022-24
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #5

Support the lighthouse restoration effort by coordinating with Engineering and Construction staff and Maryland Park Service planners on construction oversight, exhibit design, and site improvements.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Continue coordination with the Department of General Services, DNR Engineering and Construction, and the construction contractor on the lighthouse renovation project.	2021
Support exhibit design and development by providing artifacts, photographs, period furniture, and current exhibits and interpretive panels from the Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society.	2021-22
Promote continued and enhanced use of the lighthouse and grounds for tours, meetings, events, programs and field trips.	2022- 24
Develop an operations plan and budget to open the lighthouse up to seven days a week.	2022
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #6

Develop and implement a comprehensive historic sites interpretive plan, including the Civil War Fort area, and address unified, branded interpretive signage and appropriate historical markers.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Inventory current signs and display panels that portray and identify the Civil War Fort as "Fort Lincoln."	2021
Assess current displays in the Civil War Museum and in publications that show Fort Lincoln in the location of Fort Three.	2021
Develop and implement an interpretive plan for the Civil War Fort that is historically accurate, reflects new research, and uses unified and branded signage.	2021-22
Secure grant funds to implement the interpretive plan, including new signage that depicts the location of Fort Lincoln and Fort Three.	2022
Install signage to increase awareness and encourage park visitors from other day-use areas of the park to discover the historic fort.	2022-23
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #7

Evaluate the feasibility of improving portions of the Civil War Fort area, assess buildings and surrounding areas, including the POW pen, and investigate whether the Civil War museum collection could be moved and displayed at the site.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Assess the feasibility of improving portions of the structures in the Civil War Fort to accommodate the exhibits from the Civil War Museum.	2021-22
If relocation of the Civil War Museum to the Civil War Fort Ares is determined to be feasible, begin development of a Design Program/Scope of Work for the effort.	2022
Determine course of action and possible funding sources.	2023
Submit Capital Improvements Program Project Application.	2024
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #8

Take actions necessary to provide visitors with a more enjoyable and informative trail experience in the park, while also limiting impacts to sensitive areas.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Close trails that have evolved as unauthorized social trails near the boat launch and pet beach parking areas.	2021
Plant native species in and around the trail corridor to obscure trails and discourage use. Install "Restoration Area" signage.	2021
Close flooded access points to Periwinkle Point Trail and remove signage from these areas.	2021
Reroute Periwinkle Point Trail corridor to a sustainable location.	2021
Refurbish existing puncheons over wet areas on the trail.	2021
Construct and install an interpretive bulletin board and wildlife viewing blind to be located at the turnaround point on the trail.	2022
Promote use of the Periwinkle Point Trail in the Camp Office and Nature Center.	2022
Create an interpretive walking trail from the park store to Fort Lincoln to the hospital site to the lighthouse, and back. Include native plant gardens and meadow areas along the trail.	2023

COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT

Work Plan

GOAL #9

Formulate and implement best practices to address challenges associated with night fishing in the park while providing a high-quality fishing opportunity.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
In collaboration with the Natural Resources Police and Fisheries Service, identify effective strategies to better monitor night fishing and ensure compliance with State fishing laws and regulations and park rules and regulations.	2021
Propose potential changes to park operations associated with night fishing to Maryland Park Service leadership.	2021
Inform the Natural Resources Police of impending changes, collaborate with the DNR Office of Communications to communicate those changes to park visitors, and implement.	2021-22
Monitor the effectiveness of the changes.	Ongoing
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #10

Increase outreach to Hispanic and Latinx visitors through bilingual fishing days, Es Mi Parque events, and Leave No Trace programs that would enhance the visit experience and promote conservation practices.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Schedule one to three annual bilingual fishing days and develop related programming.	2021
Schedule at least one Es Mi Parque event and coordinate with other units to provide a variety of activities and learning opportunities.	2021
Coordinate Hispanic and Latinx outreach with bilingual rangers from the Chesapeake Conservancy and identify opportunities to educate visitors about conservation ethics and "Leave No Trace."	2021-22
Continue efforts to ensure signage and messaging is bilingual or uses symbols, so that all visitors can understand and comply with park rules and requirements.	2021-22
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #11

Explore opportunities to reduce maintenance workload through streamlined procedures, equipment upgrades and service contracts.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Identify significant maintenance issues.	2021
Explore ways to streamline procedures or upgrade equipment	2021-22
Determine if service contracts for some maintenance activities could reduce the maintenance workload and, if possible, can be funded within current appropriations.	2021-22
If feasible, affordable and practical, implement new service contracts.	2021-22
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #12

Maintain focus on, and look for additional opportunities to enhance employee satisfaction, well-being and recognition.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Continue to schedule at least two staff development activities per year, such as familiarization tours, team-building events, educational seminars or field trips.	Ongoing
Formally recognize important milestones for employees, such as years of service, letters of commendation, promotions to or from the park, etc.	Ongoing
Create a program that recognizes employees for healthy life choices and physical well-being, such as exercising regularly, eating healthy foods, etc.	Ongoing
Designate time for employees to maintain physical fitness and experience recreating outdoors in the park, including walking and paddling excursions.	Ongoing
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #13

Develop tools and resources to improve continuity of operations and prepare for employee turnover and transition.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Develop a winterization handbook to serve as a guide for winterizing park buildings.	2021
Develop a concession handbook to serve as a guide for overseeing the concession operation.	2021
Develop a beach handbook to serve as a guide for overseeing the beach operation.	2021
Develop an administrative handbook to serve as a guide for overseeing the office and administrative operations.	2021
Develop a Duty Ranger handbook to serve as a guide for daily operations and Duty Ranger responsibilities (to supplement the Maryland Park Service Ranger Pocket Guide.)	2021
Update handbooks annually.	2021 - 2026
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #14

Improve aesthetics and consistency of message by applying Maryland Park Service branding standards to park infrastructure and landscaping.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Create a park sign plan using the Maryland Park Service Wayfinding Guide and Routed Sign Specifications, prepare mockups of new signage needed and submit for internal project review.	2021-22
Upon approval of the plan and designs, purchase or make new signs and install them.	2022
Prepare a plan to plant native plants in areas that will help to manage visitor actions by guiding them away from sensitive areas	2022-23
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #15

Develop and implement a plan of action to improve the roadside trail to help visitors move safely to and from the main beach area and the more remote parking lots.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Work with the Maryland Park Service Trail Planner to develop a plan for roadside trail improvements, including bridges, punchions and drainage improvements.	2021
Implement trail improvements.	2021-22
Add wayfinding signage in accordance with the Maryland Park Service Wayfinding Guide.	2023
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Work Plan

GOAL #16

Place water/sewer improvements, campground electrical updates and roadside ditch repair on the capital projects or critical maintenance list.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Work with DNR Engineering and Construction and the Maryland Environmental Service to identify appropriate capital projects or critical maintenance projects to address water and sewer improvements and enhance reliability.	2021
Provide support for site analysis, field survey and design work for water and sewer improvements.	2021
Prepare a Project Justification Form for campground electrical updates, to be added to the DNR Critical Maintenance Program.	2021
Prepare a Project Justification Form for roadside ditch and culvert repair, to be added to the DNR Critical Maintenance Program.	2021-22
Provide support for construction of water and sewer improvements.	2021-23
Provide support for construction of campground electrical upgrades and roadside ditch and culvert repairs.	2023-24
COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT	

Appendix A: Lake Conoy

Key Wildlife Habitats:

Tidal forest

Important Features

Great blue heron colony

Size: 71 acres

Ecological Significance

Located on the edge of a pine forest in Point Lookout State Park, the Point Lookout-Lake Conoy site is a nesting area for a colony of great blue herons. The colony was among the top 30 largest great blue heron nesting colonies in Maryland in 2013, with 56 breeding pairs. Colony sites are usually in areas near the water, as this one is, and somewhat protected from predation when located on islands or otherwise inaccessible by land. This colony is situated on the mainland, and the mature trees provide the height needed to keep the birds' nests out of reach of ground predators. The birds' fidelity to the successful nesting area has some consequences for the habitat; however, as the accumulation of bird guano from the nest eventually causes die-off of the mature trees where they prefer to nest. When the birds return each year they use the live trees outside of the original center, thus creating a donut-shaped colony as viewed from above. This progression can only continue as long as there are suitable trees in which to nest.

Forest interior dwelling species are likely to utilize the riparian forest areas that remain as migration corridors. Some of Maryland's species of greatest conservation need may nest within these forested areas. The forest also provides corridors for the movement of other wildlife.

Site Management Considerations

The majority of this forested area is waterfront, which allows the herons a close food source to support their young, but makes the land attractive to human activities. Significant disturbance to nesting birds can result in mortality of young. Routine human disturbance may threaten this colony site. Human activities, including hiking and fishing, can be timed for outside of the breeding season for this species or located well away from the colony to avoid inadvertent harm to these birds and their young. Generally, the breeding season runs from February 15 through July 31 each year.

For additional management considerations, see the applicable key wildlife conservation actions in the State Wildlife Action Plan. Access the full Plan at

https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/SWAP_Submission.aspx

Acknowledgements

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