

# *Carolina Beach State Park General Management Plan*



**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

**Division of Parks and Recreation**

**Coastal Region**

**January 2017**

# I. MISSION AND 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 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

Carolina Beach State Park was established in 1969 to preserve unique environment and diverse natural communities. It also provides recreational activities in a coastal environment. Snow's Cut, which forms the northern boundary of the park, was dredged in 1929 to connect Masonboro Sound with the Cape Fear River as part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. A significant portion of the park land is leased from the U.S. Army. The first 291 acres were acquired and funded by the first General Assembly appropriation for state park land acquisition since the purchase of Mount Mitchell in 1916.

Thirteen natural communities, including the only protected Coastal Fringe Evergreen Forest community in the state, makes this one of the most diverse sites in the State Parks System and contributes to its statewide significance. Several species of carnivorous plants are found at Carolina Beach State Park, including the Venus' Flytrap, found only within 75 miles of the park. The beaches, ponds and woods are home to many animal species: birds - such as brown pelicans, ospreys and painted buntings; larger mammals - such as river otter, white-tailed deer and raccoons; and reptiles and amphibians - such as skinks, anoles and the rare eastern coral snake.

Opportunities to view many natural communities in one location and enjoy water-based recreation are significant resources at Carolina Beach State Park. Recreational uses should be compatible with the protection of the outstanding natural resources. Fishing, hiking, picnicking and boating are popular activities for visitors, and family and group campsites accommodate overnight visitors. Boat ramps and amenities for boaters are provided at the marina. From the park, boaters can access the estuarine waters of the Cape Fear River and Masonboro Sound, and the salt waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

The underlying geology at Carolina Beach State Park contributes to the presence of the large number of natural communities. The dry, coarse soil of a series of stabilized east-west trending relic sand dunes of Pleistocene age hosts forests of Turkey Oak, Live Oak and Longleaf Pine. Dense shrub swamps called pocosins occur between the dunes. A series of small shallow ponds are sinkholes in the Pleistocene coquina or shell limestone that underlies the park, formed when

groundwater dissolves and weakens the limestone. These lime sink ponds are each vegetated by a unique plant community, and the acidic, mineral-poor boggy soils provide the ideal environment for several interesting carnivorous plants to thrive.

Over seven miles of trails and boardwalks provide the visitor with excellent places for watching birds, exploring tidal marshes and creeks, and experiencing the many natural communities and unique carnivorous plants found at Carolina Beach State Park. Locations along Sugarloaf Trail and Sugarloaf Dune provide scenic views of the natural landscape of the Cape Fear River, several river islands, watercraft, and the mainland beyond.

Prior to European settlement, Cape Fear Indians lived in and around the area that is now Carolina Beach State Park, and artifacts of their culture that have been found here include pottery fragments, arrowheads and shell middens. In 1726, permanent colonial settlement was established and the Cape Fear River became an official port of entry for commerce, supporting the local economy of agricultural and timber products, naval stores, shipping, and trade. Sugarloaf, a 50-foot high sand dune near the bank of the Cape Fear River, was of strategic significance during the siege of Fort Fisher near the end of the Civil War.

Carolina Beach State Park exists primarily for its outstanding biological, recreational and geologic resources, and also for its scenic and archaeological significance. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of the natural heritage.

## II. HISTORY

The Cape Fear Indians lived in and around the area that is now Carolina Beach State Park, prior to European settlement. Mainly occupying the land along the Cape Fear River and its tributaries, the small tribe grew hostile to early settlers and, in 1715, participated in an uprising against Europeans in the area. The Cape Fear Indians were defeated and left the area by 1725. Artifacts of the native culture, including pottery fragments, arrowheads, and mounds of oyster shells have been found in the area.



**Visitor Center**

Early attempts at colonization in the area were unsuccessful, mainly due to conflicts with the Cape Fear Indians. Pirating, common in the area during colonial times, also contributed to the struggles of early settlers. In 1726, a permanent settlement was established along the Lower Cape Fear. The newly settled land became an important arena for commerce when the English Crown designated the Cape Fear River as one of five official ports of entry. Agricultural, timber products, naval stores, shipping, and trade formed the basis of the economy.

Sugarloaf, a 50-foot sand dune near the bank of the Cape Fear River, has been an important navigational marker for river pilots since 1663. The dune was also of strategic significance during the Civil War when, as part of the Confederacy's defense of the Port of Wilmington, about 5,000 troops camped on or near Sugarloaf during the siege of Fort Fisher.

Carolina Beach State Park was established in 1969 to preserve the unique environment along the intracoastal waterway.



**Marsh**

The park is located on a triangle of land known as Pleasure Island, which lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River. The land became an island when Snow's Cut was dredged in 1929 and 1930, connecting Masonboro Sound to the Cape Fear River. Snow's Cut, a part of the Intracoastal Waterway, provides inland passage for boat traffic along the Atlantic coast.

As of June 30, 2016, Carolina Beach State Park manages 627.61 acres.

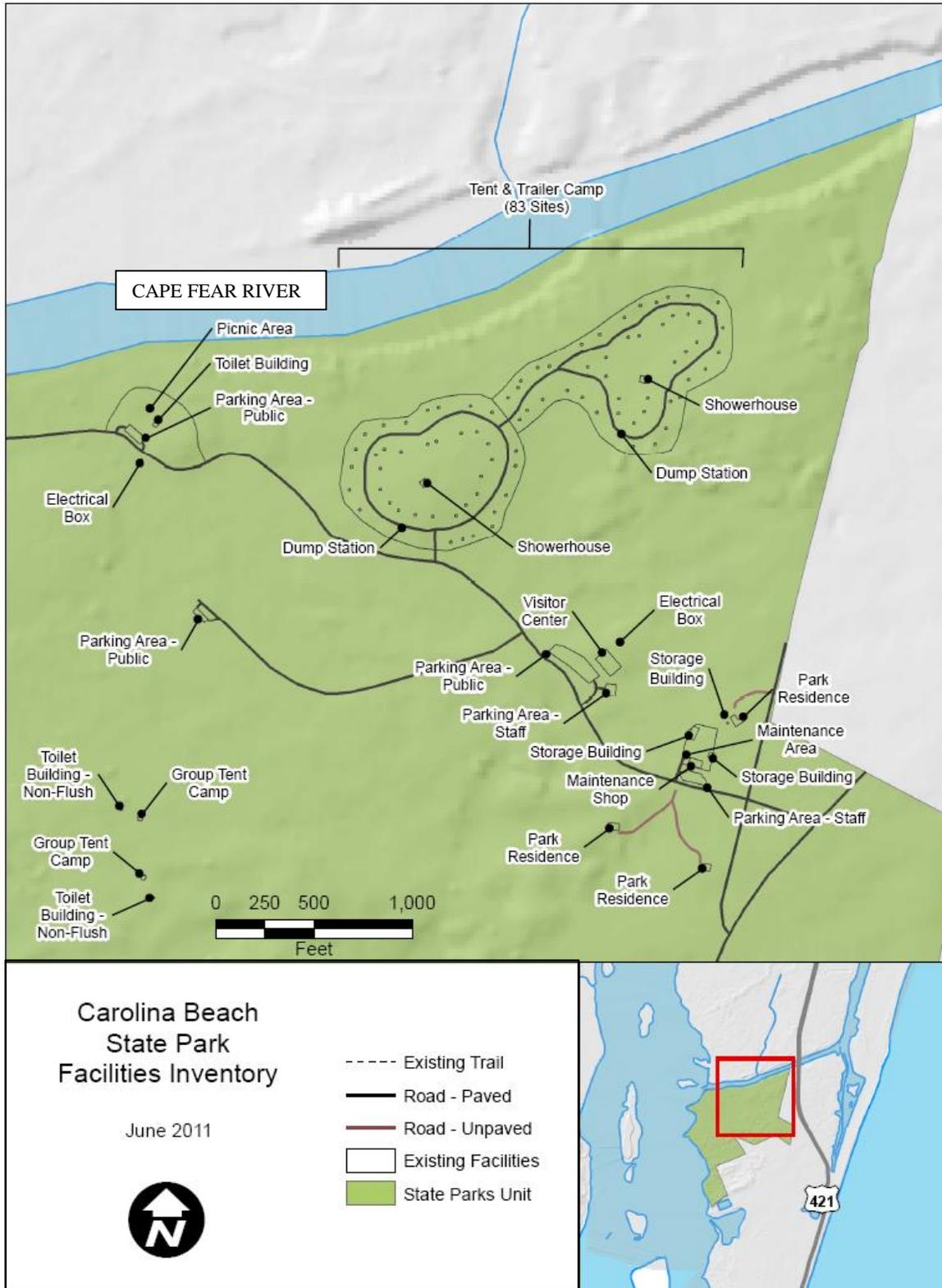
### III. THEMES AND INVENTORY

Carolina Beach State Park Theme Table

Theme Type	Theme	Carolina Beach Significance	State Parks System Representation
Archeological/Historic	Military	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Rural-Domestic	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Campsite/Activity Area	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Underwater	High	Adequate
Biological	Coastal Plain Depression Communities	High	Moderate
Biological	Dry Longleaf Pine Communities	High	Moderate
Biological	Estuarine Communities	High	Adequate
Biological	Maritime Forests	High	Moderate
Biological	Peat Dome Pocosins	High	Moderate
Biological	Streamhead Pocosins	Little	Little
Biological	Wet Pine Savannas	High	Moderate
Geological	Caves, Sinks, and Springs	High	Adequate
Geological	Natural Lakes and Ponds	High	Adequate
Geological	Relic Coastal Features	High	Little
Scenic	Bays/Estuaries	High	Little
Scenic	Forests	High	Moderate
Scenic	Islands	High	Little
Scenic	Marshes	High	Moderate
Scenic	Meadows/Grasslands	High	Little
Scenic	Reservoirs/Lakes	High	Moderate
Scenic	Rivers	High	Little
Scenic	Scenic Vistas	High	Moderate
Scenic	Seashores	High	Moderate
Scenic	Swamps	High	Adequate

\*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.

# FACILITY INVENTORY CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



TRAIL INVENTORY  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK

<b>Trail Inventory</b>	<b>Hiking</b>
Campground Trail	1.00
Flytrap Trail	0.50
Oak Toe Trail	0.25
Track Trail	0.45
Snow's Cut Extension	0.75
Sugarloaf Trail	3.00
Fitness Trail	1.00
Swamp Trail	0.75
<b>Carolina Beach SP Totals (miles)</b>	<b>7.70</b>

**Hiking:**

**Campground Trail** is 1.00 mile in length and is marked with blue circles. It begins and ends at the family campground and briefly joins Sugarloaf Trail. Much of the trail leads through a coastal fringe sand hill forest. This plant community, dominated by Longleaf Pines and Live Oaks, is threatened and becoming very rare.

**Flytrap Trail** is a wheelchair accessible, 0.5-mile loop through pocosin wetlands, drier longleaf pine, and wiregrass savanna communities. Venus Flytraps can be seen along the edges of the pocosins, and native wildflowers bloom along the trail. Parts of the trail travel along wooden boardwalks.

**Oak Toe Trail** is a 0.25-mile spur trail off of the Sugarloaf Trail, marked with blue diamonds. Journey to the Marsh Overlook, viewing dwarf palmetto and oak toe lichen along the way. Views of the Cape Fear River await and the brackish marsh is a great place to see fiddler crabs navigating its mudflats.

**Track Trail**, is a 0.45 mile section of the Snow's Cut Trail designated as a self-guided trail for kids. Activity brochures may be found at the picnic area trail head and ends in the family campground trail access by campsite #20.

**Snow's Cut Extension Trail** is marked with red diamonds and follows along man-made Snow's cut for 0.75-mile past towering pines and hardwoods. Views of the Intracoastal Waterway may be experienced along this trail that begins in the picnic area terminating at the town's bike path along Bridge Barrier Road.

**Sugarloaf Trail** marked with orange circles, is a 3.0-mile excursion that begins at the marina parking area. This trail offers great birding opportunities as you wind your way through numerous distinct habitats. Journey through a coastal evergreen forest, a coastal fringe sandhill forest, a tidal cypress-gum swamp and a longleaf pine savannah on your way to the Sugarloaf Dune, a prominent pre-Colonial and Civil War geological feature.

**Fitness Trail** marked with yellow circles, is a wheelchair-accessible one-mile loop through diverse habitats. There are several exercise and activity stations set up along the way. This trail is located off of 7<sup>th</sup> Street with parking at the Carolina Beach Recreation Center.

**Swamp Trail** is a three-quarter-mile trail marked with red circles, begins and ends along Sugarloaf Trail. It provides access to the group camping areas as well as views of a tidal cypress-gum swamp and brackish marsh that are seen along either side of the trail.

TRAIL INVENTORY  
 CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



Carolina Beach  
 State Park  
 Trail Inventory

June 2011

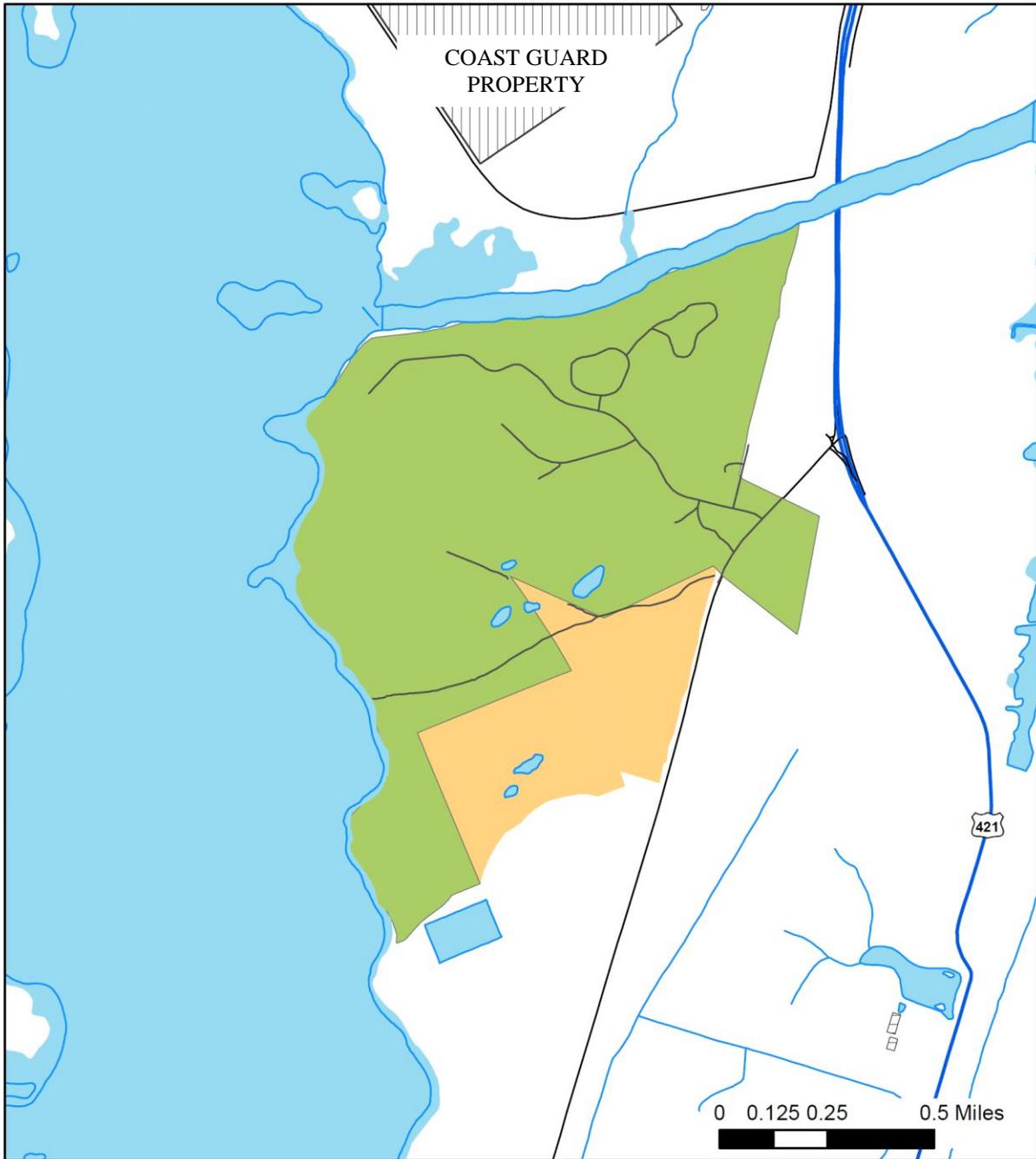


- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit

## IV. PLANNING



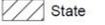
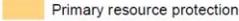
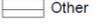
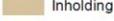
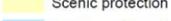
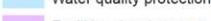
LAND PROTECTION PLAN  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



Carolina Beach SP

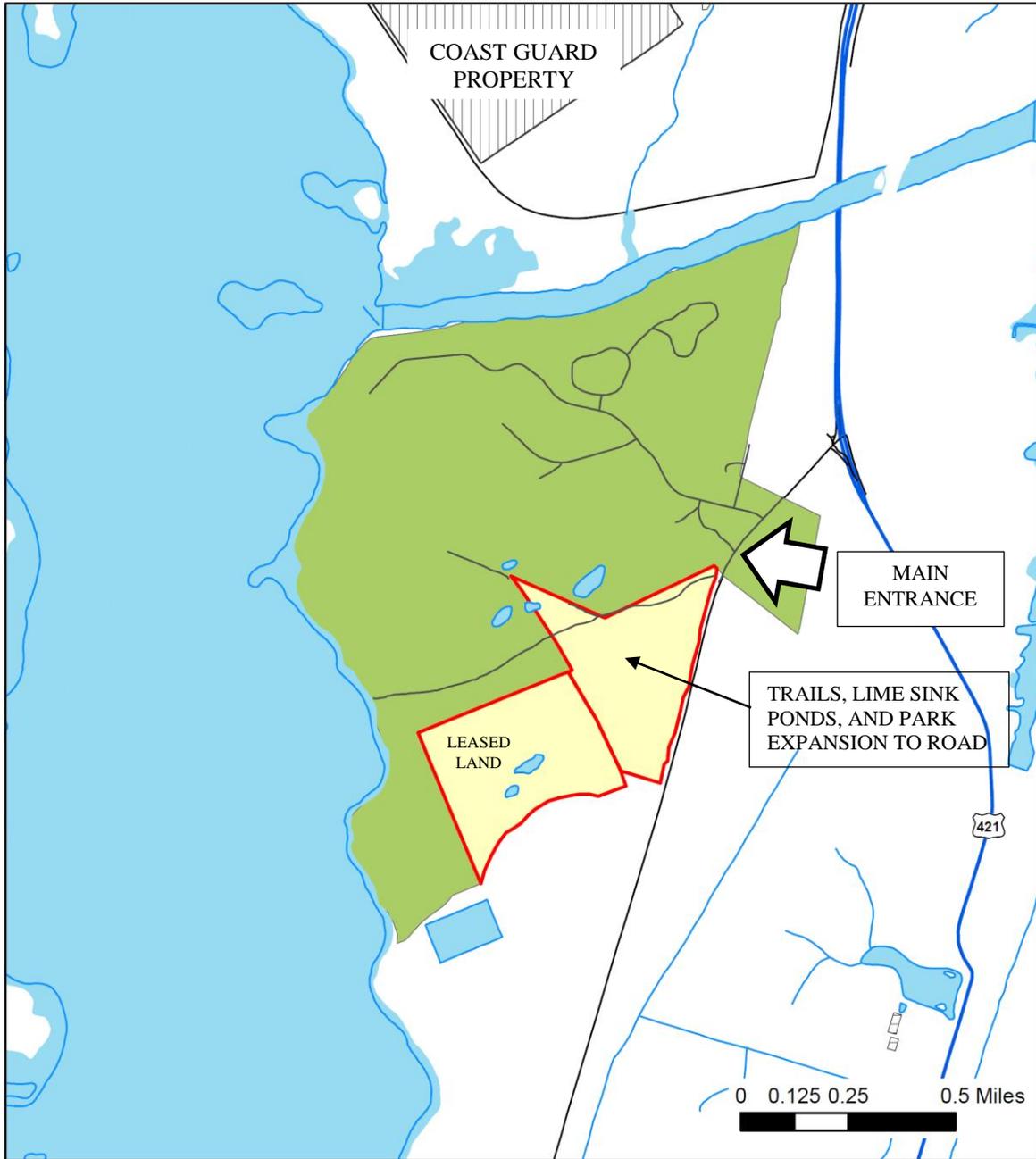


June 2015

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  State Parks Unit            |  Federal |
| <b>Land Protection Plan</b>   |  State   |
|  Primary resource protection |  Other   |
|  Inholding                   |   |
|  Scenic protection           |   |
|  Water quality protection    |   |
|  Facilities development      |   |
|  Buffer                      |   |



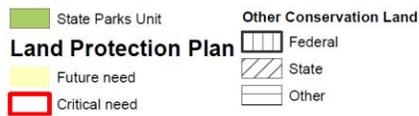
LAND PROTECTION PLAN  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



Carolina Beach SP



June 2015



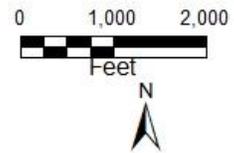
FEDERAL LEASE AREA  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



Carolina Beach  
State Park

**Legend**

- State Park
- Federal Lease Area



PROJECT EVALUATION PROGRAM LIST  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK

Project #	Project Title	Cost
1	Two Picnic Shelters and Parking Improvements	\$305,200
2	Tent/Trailer Campground Improvements	\$904,179
3	Maintenance Area Improvements	\$953,037
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,162,416</b>

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

**1. Two Picnic Shelters and Parking Improvements**

Included are construction of two eight-table picnic shelters, one located in the picnic area and one at the marina area. The picnic area parking lot scope of work includes additional 20 parking spaces. The contractor will repave entire parking lot after the proposed spaces are installed. Construction of the marina area picnic shelter is needed, but a nautical flagpole was installed at the high point of the site.

**2. Tent/Trailer Campground Improvements**

Nine (9) existing campsites in Loop 1 will be converted to full “3 point” hook up capability (water, sewer, electricity) for sites # 2, 4,5,7,8,10,12,14,15.

Funding is needed to complete entire Loop 1 amenities. Loop 2 will remain primitive camping without hookups.

Loop 2 campsites need tent pad borders and renovation of each shower house is necessary. The Loop 2 dump station needs repair. The demand for more RV sites and recent project to tie the parks sewer into the local municipal system may make re-establishing of Loop 2 dump station easier to accomplish. An automated gate is needed for camper and boater convenience.



**Primitive campground**

The two shower houses will be renovated to meet current building and universal codes or replaced with new construction. A decision on renovation versus replacement feasibility will be made at the time of project funding. Additional funds may be required to demolish the old structures and build proposed structures.

**3. Maintenance Area Improvements**

The project includes industrial equipment, a flammable storage building, vehicle shed, vehicle lift and vehicle wash station.

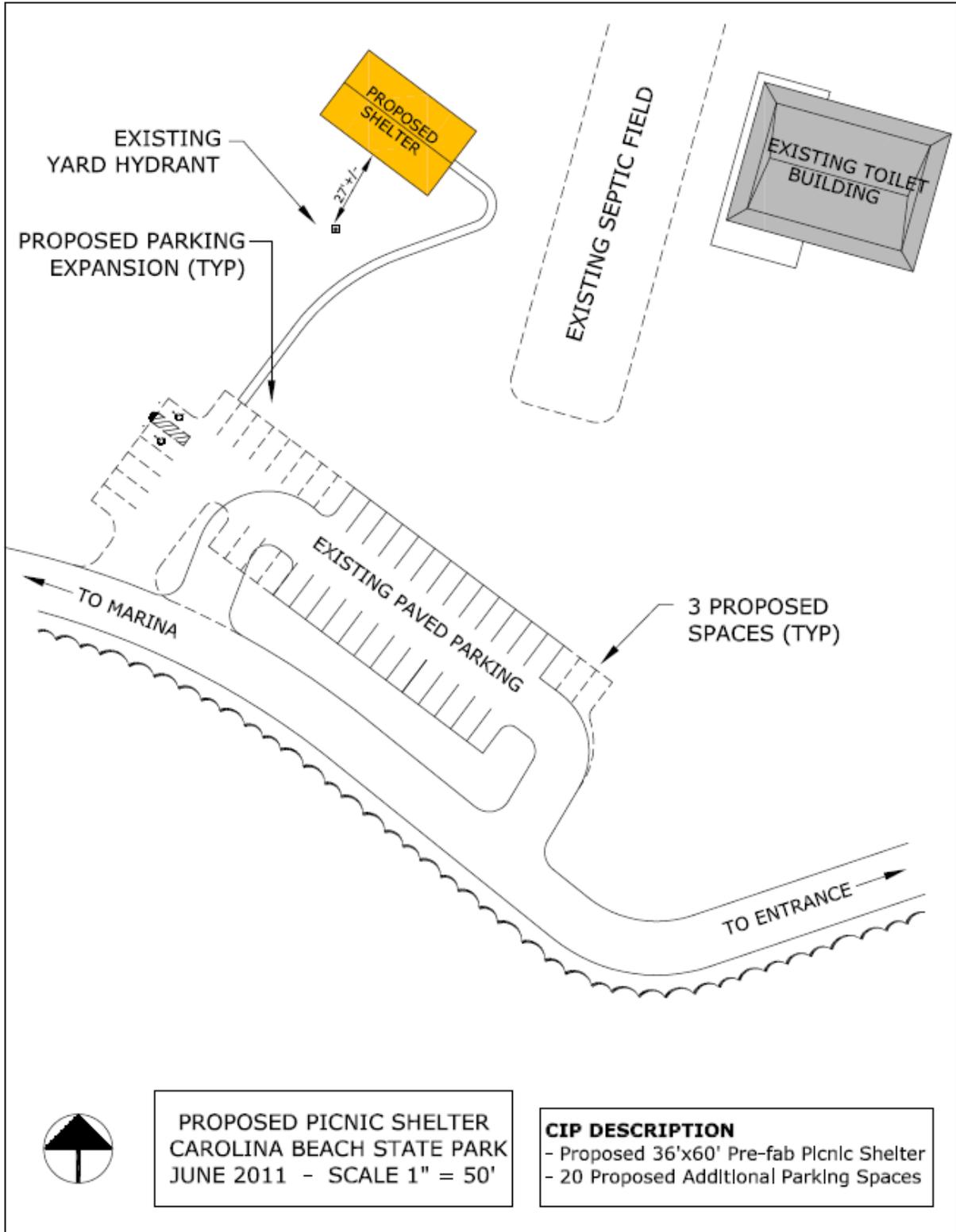
The removal of the existing underground fuel tank and installation an above ground 1,000-

gallon fuel tank and fuel point has been approved for major maintenance

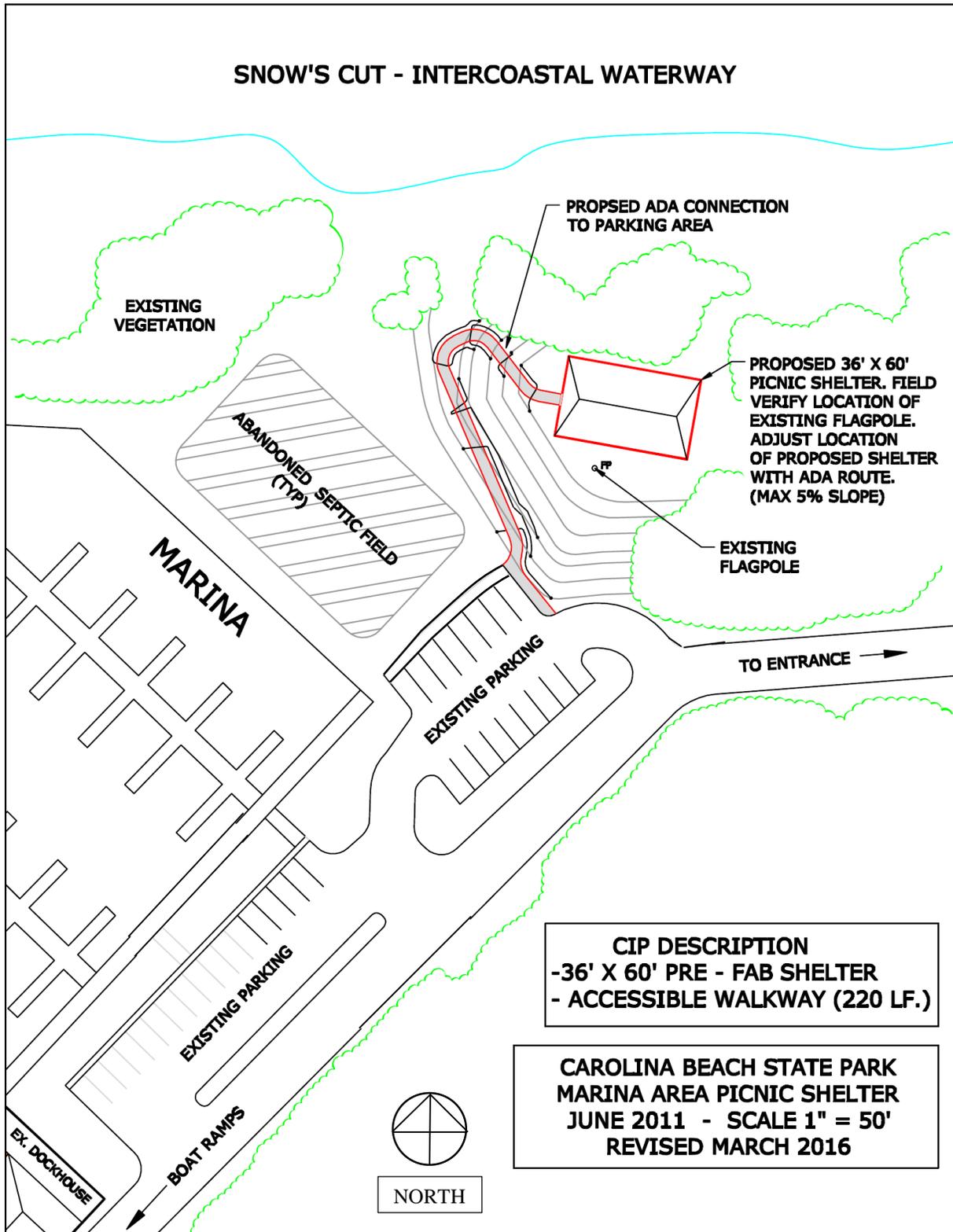


**Pole Barn at Maintenance area**

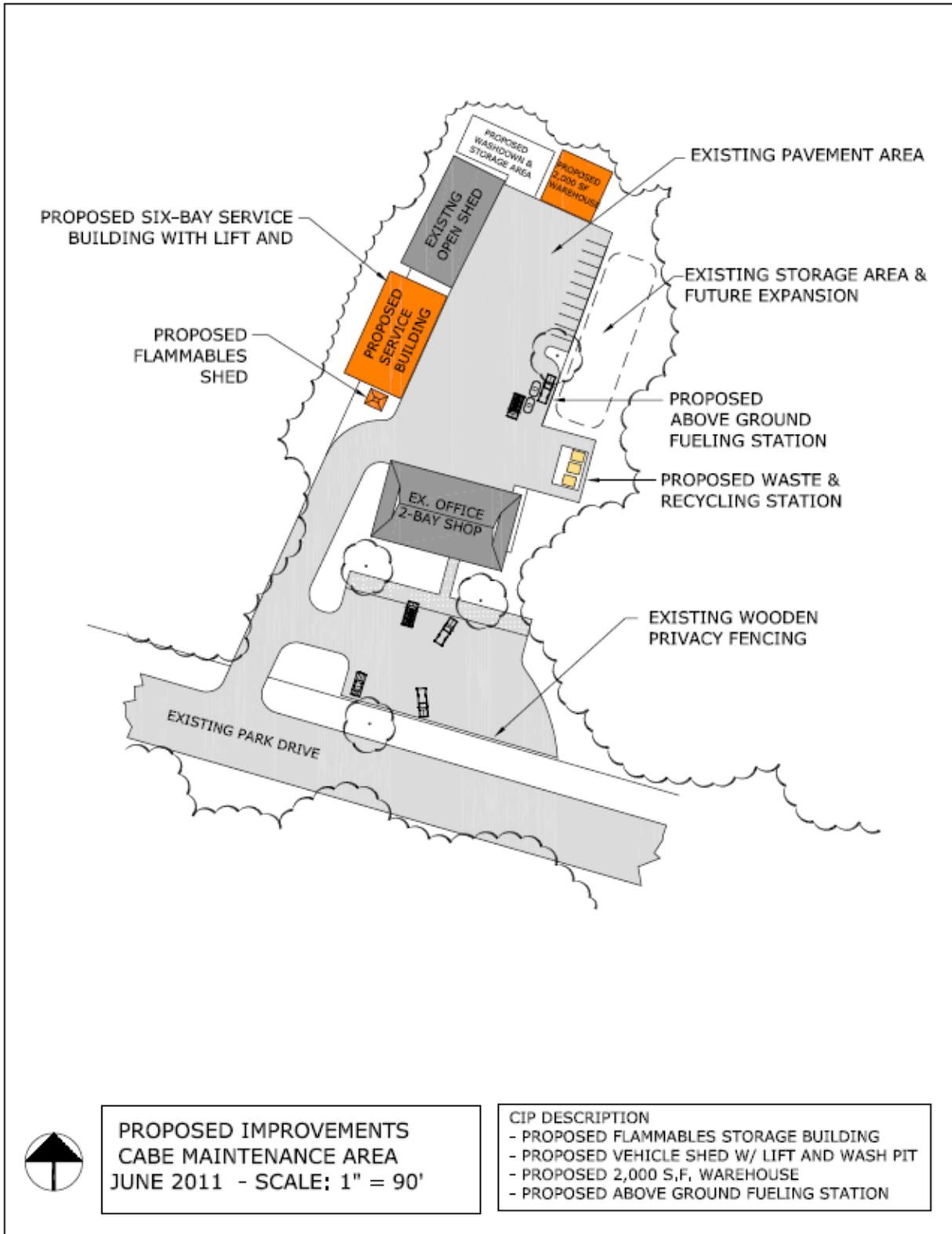
PROJECT #1: PICNIC SHELTER  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



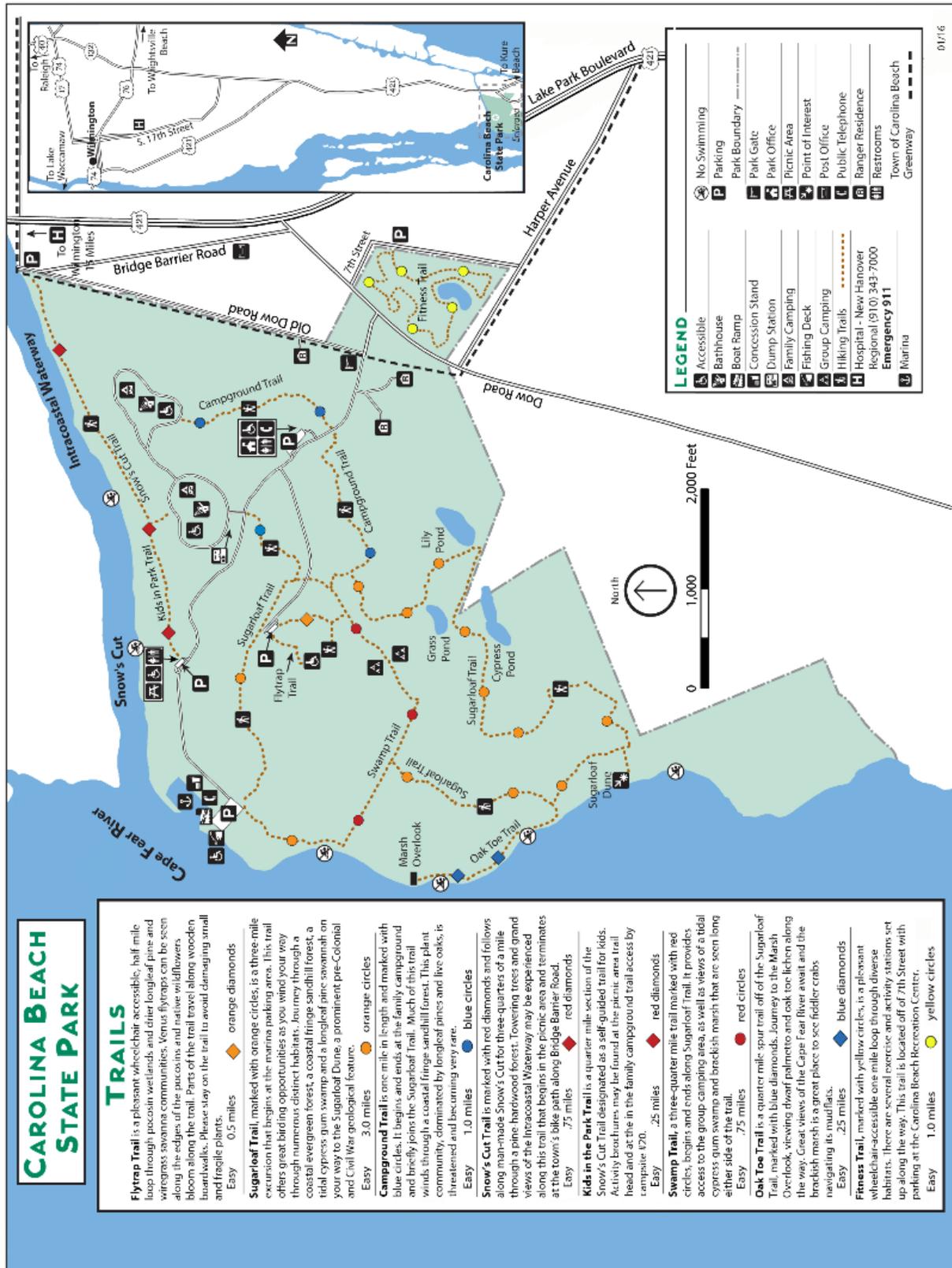
PROJECT #1: PARK SHELTERS  
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



PROJECT #3: MAINTENANCE AREA  
 CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



# PARK MAP CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK



## CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK

### TRAILS

**Flytrap Trail** is a pleasant wheelchair accessible, half mile loop through pocosin wetlands and drier longleaf pine and wiregrass savanna communities. Venus flytraps can be seen along the edges of the pocosins and native wildflowers bloom along the trail. Parts of the trail travel along wooden boardwalks. Please stay on the trail to avoid damaging small and fragile plants.

Easy 0.5 miles ◆ orange diamonds

**Sugarloaf Trail**, marked with orange circles, is a three-mile excursion that begins at the marina parking area. This trail offers great birding opportunities as you wind your way through numerous distinct habitats. Journey through a coastal evergreen forest, a coastal fringe sandhill forest, a tidal cypress gum swamp and a longleaf pine savannah on your way to the Sugarloaf Dune, a prominent pre-Colonial and Civil War geological feature.

Easy 3.0 miles ● orange circles

**Campground Trail** is one mile in length and marked with blue circles. It begins and ends at the family campground and briefly joins the Sugarloaf Trail. Much of this trail winds through a coastal fringe sandhill forest. This plant community, dominated by longleaf pines and live oaks, is threatened and becoming very rare.

Easy 1.0 miles ● blue circles

**Snow's Cut Trail** is marked with red diamonds and follows along man-made Snow's Cut for three-quarters of a mile through a pine-hardwood forest. Towering trees and grand views of the Intracoastal Waterway may be experienced along this trail that begins in the picnic area and terminates at the town's bike path along Bridge Barrier Road.

Easy .75 miles ◆ red diamonds

**Kids in the Park Trail** is a quarter mile section of the Snow's Cut Trail designated as a self-guided trail for kids. Activity brochures may be found at the picnic area trail head and at the in the family campground trail access by telephone 120.

Easy .25 miles ◆ red diamonds

**Swamp Trail**, a three-quarter mile trail marked with red circles, begins and ends along Sugarloaf Trail. It provides access to the group camping area, as well as views of a tidal cypress gum swamp and brackish marsh that are seen long either side of the trail.

Easy .75 miles ● red circles

**Oak Toe Trail** is a quarter mile spur trail off of the Sugarloaf Trail, marked with blue diamonds. Journey to the Marsh Overlook, viewing dwarf palmetto and oak toe lichen along the way. Great views of the Cape Fear River await and the brackish marsh is a great place to see fiddler crabs negotiating its mudflats.

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