

# *Monocacy Scenic River Access Plan*

*Monocacy Scenic River Citizens Advisory Board*

STATE OF MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# The Monocacy Scenic River Advisory Board

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### ***Acknowledgements***

The Monocacy Scenic River Citizens Advisory Board played a principal role in developing this plan, with technical assistance provided by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Frederick County Planning and Zoning, interested citizens and elected officials. Special thanks to Jim Gilford, Larry Marsh and Phil Yost, former members of the Board; Gil Kingsbury, former Director of the Frederick County Parks and Recreation Department; and Mark Lynn, member of the Monocacy River Canoe Club.

# Monocacy River Access Study

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## MONOCACY RIVER ACCESS STUDY

### I. INTRODUCTION

Background: The Monocacy River is a state scenic river utilized increasingly by canoeists, float gunners and fisherman. River enthusiasts originally relied on state and county highway property for river access, typically parking and 'putting-in' adjacent to several preferred Monocacy River bridges. These areas were used by non-boating anglers as well. In the intervening years, traditional put-ins have been closed as old bridges were replaced by higher bridges with steeper approach slopes. No-parking signs and fencing have accompanied bridge improvements. Adjacent landowners, moreover, have been increasingly unwilling to tolerate river use due to vandalism at these locations. Inappropriate use has resulted in closure of two public access areas.

The Monocacy River was added to the Maryland Wild and Scenic River system in part due to its importance as a rich recreational resource. The Monocacy Scenic River Study and Management Plan, developed by the Monocacy Scenic River Citizens Advisory Board, addresses the river's recreational potential, and has provided the necessary background material for the Board to develop this access plan with technical assistance from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The Citizens Advisory Board is a ten member body appointed by the Carroll and Frederick County Commissioners.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to inventory the existing river access locations, and evaluate and rank candidate river access locations according to strategic importance for recreational canoeing, fishing and float gunning. The feasibility for improvements will be explored at select access locations, and potential funding sources will be identified as well.

The access plan is also intended to provide river access recommendations and implementation strategies to the Frederick County Board of Commissioners, the Carroll County Board of Commissioners, other government officials and users. The accompanying map and diagram may also serve as the basis for a brochure for those interested in recreational opportunities along the Monocacy River.

### II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RIVER ACCESS LOCATIONS

#### A. Key Existing Access Points

The Monocacy River is spanned by 22 bridges along its 58 mile stretch (not including three railroad bridges). An additional 12 public roads are in close proximity to the river. While all of these may be considered possible sites for public river access, only a limited number are necessary, provided they are properly spaced.

Downstream from the Monocacy's headwaters, the river's confluence with Double Pipe Creek is the first point at which a non-motorized boater can reliably put-in without repeatedly running aground. Even at this point, boating is limited to the wettest six months of the year. Frederick County owns a small tract of land on the northwest corner of the Route 77 Bridge (Miller's Bridge). This may serve as the initial publicly owned and maintained access point. Access is important upstream as well; however, due to lack of public land ownership and local concerns, designated public access points are not being considered above Route 77 at this time.

The minimum desirable distance between river access points for non-motorized river use is six miles, which may be traveled in 3.0 - 5.0 hours of canoeing, kayaking or john-boating. The wide range in time of completion is due to many factors including the type of vessel, stream velocity, length of stops and skill levels of the user. Two miles per hour is considered a reasonable average for canoeing.

For planning purposes, river access points are classified into three types: primary, secondary and tertiary access. These terms describe the size and type of public land along the river. **Primary access** areas are relatively large public parks serving several functions, with river access being an important use. They include Pinecliff Park and the C&O Canal National Historical Park. **Secondary access** areas are smaller parks that serve the non-boating as well as the boating public. These include Creagerstown Park and Buckeystown Park. **Tertiary access** areas are small public access points which primarily serve the boating public, including access from respective bridges off Park Mills Road and Devilbiss Road. Primary access areas provide parking for the greatest numbers of boaters, with tertiary access areas providing the least. Because primary and secondary access areas provide more parking for boaters, funding for access related improvements at these locations may be considered a priority.

#### Descriptions of Existing Access Areas

1. **Creagerstown Park** is a small county park facility located just off Route 550, on the northwest quadrant of the bridge. Picnicking and playground facilities are available in addition to a railed concrete ramp and 12-18 car gravel parking lot (secondary access).

2. **Devilbiss Bridge** access is located off Devilbiss Road on county highway property on the northwest quadrant, underneath the bridge. An asphalt access road with a 30 car parking lot spurs off a private road. The put-in is not improved (tertiary access).

3. **Pinecliff Park** is a 95 acre county park facility located off Reich's Ford Road. Most of the park is devoted to ball fields and other county park amenities.

Parking is available for approximately 400 cars. A railed concrete ramp and turn-around is in place (primary access).

4. **Buckeystown Park** is a 5.5 acre county park facility located on Michaels Mill Road, just north of Fingerboard Road. Picnic facilities, a playground and other amenities are available in addition to unimproved river access and parking for 26 cars (secondary access).

5. **Park Mills Bridge** access is located on county highway property on the southwest quadrant of Park Mills Road bridge. A concrete ramp is available in addition to a concrete parking pad for nine cars with trailers (tertiary access).

6. **Monocacy Natural Resources Management Area** is a 2000 acre, state owned agricultural and forest reserve. Located on the northeast quadrant of the Route 28 bridge is a large gravel parking lot (>35 cars) located within carrying distance from the river's edge. Other uses on this large public holding include hunting, fishing, hiking and horseback riding (primary access).

7. **C&O Canal National Historical Park**, located wholly within National Park Service property off Mouth of the Monocacy Road, features historic interpretation and hiking in addition to boat access. Improvements include parking for approximately 35 cars and a small boat ramp. Parking capacity is often inadequate on weekends (primary access).

The following chart displays the distances between existing public access points as one moves downstream:

Access Point	Distance in Miles	Access Point
1. Creagerstown Park	5.3	Devilbiss Access
2. Devilbiss Bridge Access	13.7	Pinecliff Park
3. Pinecliff Park	6.0	Buckeystown Park
4. Buckeystown Park	5.6	Park Mills Access
5. Park Mills Bridge Access	1.9	Monocacy NRMA (Route 28)
6. Monocacy NRMA (Route 28)	1.8	C&O Canal NHP Access
7. C&O Canal N.P. Access	N/A	Potomac River access points

Potential Points for River Access

The above table reveals a need for additional access between Devilbiss Bridge Access and Pinecliff Park. The following table describes opportunities and constraints for potential access areas beginning at Route 77.

Possible River Access Points	Opportunities	Constraints
<b>Access Downstream from Double Pipe Creek</b>		
Route 77 Bridge	Publicly owned. Located 6.1 miles from Creagerstown Park. Bank slopes gently to water's edge.	Entire tract located on floodplain.
LeGore Bridge	Northeast quadrant offers space for limited parking. Located 3.2 miles upstream from Creagerstown Park.	Steep approach to parking area, and to shoreline. Ownership questions. Location less desirable than Route 77 Bridge.
<b>Access below Creagerstown Park</b>		
Hansonville	Located ½ day downstream from Creagerstown Park. Parking and ramp already exist. Publicly owned.	Now gated. Located on Route 15 with inherent management problems. Existing ramp requires reconstruction.
(A) Route 26 Bridge	Located 5.9 m. from Devilbiss Access and 7.8 m. from Pinecliff Park. NE quadrant has available space for parking. Currently leased by SHA.	Land reverts back to landowner once lease expires. Entrance into parking area may be less safe than entrance at southeast quadrant because a new ingress/egress would be necessary between Rt. 26 Bridge and Rt. 94
(B) Route 26 Bridge	SE quadrant has available space for parking. A traditional fishing access point. Entrance may be safer than NE quadrant.	Current access policy is by permission only. Located on busy intersection. River access may conflict with land use. Owners may not be interested in leasing a portion of their tract.
(C) Route 26 Bridge	SW quadrant is partially located on existing public land which may be accessed using entrance to proposed commercial development. Located at beginning of potential path system leading to Frederick..	A new ingress/egress may be necessary, as with NE quadrant. Approach slopes from SW quad to river may exceed 30 percent.



Riverside Center	Located 7.2 miles from Devilbiss Access, and 6.5 miles from Pinecliff Park. Floodplain donated to the city. Potential access would be located west of proposed Monocacy Blvd.	May be dependant on public funding. Floodplain implications.
Gas House Pike Bridge	Located 4.5 miles upstream from Pinecliff Park and 3.4 miles downstream from Route 26.	Limited area for parking on southeast quadrant. Limited sight distance from parking access. Put-in spot is in excess of 30% slope. Shoulder parking on the west side of bridge is safer, but boaters must cross road and pasture to get to put-in point.
<b>Access Below Pinecliff Park</b>		
Monocacy National Battlefield	At Route 355, site is located 1.8 miles downstream from Pinecliff and 4.2 miles upstream from Buckeystown Park. Public ownership with on-site management. Site master plan is currently under development.	The park has limited managerial resources and limited hours of operation.
Lilypons Bridge	County owned land is available on southwest quadrant of bridge along the approach to the old Lilypons Bridge. Bank slopes at <10% to rivers edge, adjacent to old abutment.	No funds for management. Ownership concerns.

1. The **Route 77 Bridge (Millersville Bridge)** access, a one acre parcel, is located on the southwest quadrant of the bridge, and has been closed due to management problems. The Monocacy Canoe Club has a key to the gate, which is kept at the Rocky Ridge Volunteer Fire Department.

2. Potential access at **Legore Bridge** is located on the northwest quadrant on privately owned land. The gate controlling a gravel access lane that slopes sharply down to the bank is in need of repair.

3. **Hansonville** access is a 12 acre property located off Route 15, and owned by the State Highway Administration. SHA constructed access to the river while widening Route 15 twenty-five years ago. Owing to management problems, the site has been gated for many years. SHA plans to retain the property for future public use based on the Monocacy Citizens Advisory Board's recommendation.

4. There are three possible access areas on **Route 26**. Two of these straddle the route on the east side of the bridge. These candidate sites may not have long-term appeal, owing to the burgeoning use of Route 26, particularly at its

intersection with Woodsboro Pike immediately east of Ceresville. The SW quadrant may have the same drawback, unless use can be made of the existing entrance.

5. The floodplain adjacent to the Riverside development was recently donated to the City of Frederick, and is eventually expected to be established as **Riverside Park**. Long term access may be located in the vicinity of the proposed Monocacy Boulevard bridge.

6. Access on the southeast quadrant of **Gas House Pike** is available on an informal basis. It receives no management from the county other than police enforcement. Shoulder parking is available on both sides of the road immediately to the west of the bridge. The private property owner on the southwest quadrant has built a structure allowing pedestrian access over his fence to the adjacent river.

7. **Monocacy River National Battlefield** is a 900 acre historical preserve managed by the National Park Service (NPS). The site borders the Monocacy upstream and downstream from I-270. NPS property is used now for fishing access, where anglers park along the shoulder of Rt 355. Formalized canoe access is potentially available at this general location, but management resources may be limited. If access cannot be considered at this time, there is the potential to make this historical area a stopover for non-motorized boats moving downstream.

8. Access at **Lilypons Road** bridge, where the old bridge abutment is located on the southwest quadrant, is already used on an informal basis. It receives no management from the county other than police enforcement.

#### Recommendations for Access

1. **Route 77** access is superior to LeGore Bridge owing to its ½ day distance from Creagerstown Park, its existing public ownership and favorable site limitations. Recommended as a tertiary access point, a permit system should be imposed in the interim, allowing citizens to utilize the site in return for a small fee plus a deposit. Ultimately, the site should be open sunrise to sunset, when the county has the available resources.

2. The SHA-owned **Hansonville** site should remain publicly owned and remain gated until Frederick County has the resources to manage it as an access point. The site should also be considered for a possible group camping area exclusively for boaters.

3. Owners of the Ceresville Mansion should be approached for a lease arrangement with the Frederick County Parks and Recreation Department. Once access has been secured at proposed **Riverside Park**, the lease may be terminated. A put-in at Riverside would be expected to receive moderate to heavy use.

4. Access should be discouraged on the southwest quadrant of **Gas House Pike** bridge due to poor sight distance to and from the road and limited parking. Use of the shoulder parking east of the bridge could continue to be used with the consent of the owner of the pasture.

5. The Monocacy Scenic River Board should work with the National Park Service to evaluate potential access points for the **Monocacy National Battlefield**. An environmental management plan is now being prepared.

#### Recommendations for Access Improvements

**Carrying Capacity:** Carrying capacity describes the degree to which a resource can absorb use before the resource is compromised. At some point, the river may become so crowded with boats that the recreational experience is diminished. It is difficult to quantify the point at which this threshold is reached. River use may be controlled to an extent by limiting the number of parking spaces at public access points. Some access points could be gated and keys distributed on a permit basis. Kiosks also could be installed at select access points with sign-in sheets and river use guidelines.

**Route 77:** Use is expected to be light to moderate at this tertiary access point; therefore, necessary improvements are minimal. The existing trail that extends from the gate should be widened to a minimum two lane width of eighteen (18) feet and terminate at a six (6) to twelve (12) car parking lot.<sup>1</sup> The lot, as well as a path extending to the bank, may be finished with gravel. An asphalt finish may be necessary in the future depending on level of use and flood dynamics.

**Devilbiss Bridge Access:** The put-in point at this tertiary access area is eroding, and now constitutes a minor hazard to recreators. It is recommended steps be constructed into the bank and other minor improvements made to alleviate erosion and enhance safety.

**Riverside Park:** Riverside will be a primary access point, with heavy use expected. A 25-car parking lot finished with asphalt should be extended from Monocacy Boulevard. The put-in point and the path leading to it should also be hardened with asphalt.

**Buckeystown Park:** The put-in point at this secondary access area is eroding, and becoming dangerous to recreators. Steps should be constructed in the bank, and other minor improvements should be made to alleviate erosion and enhance safety.

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<sup>1</sup> A one way road may cause safety problems on Route 77.

### Existing and Proposed Access

The following table summarizes the minimum adequate number and array of access points necessary to provide public use on the Monocacy River. Proposed access points are underlined. A map and schematic located in the back of the document provides additional illustration.

Additional access would improve recreational options particularly for anglers and float gunners. Consideration should be made for other river access points as opportunities arise, and provided funds are available for operations. These would include access at Biggs Ford, Hansonville, Lilypons, Gas House Pike, Monocacy National Battlefield and sites upstream from Double Pipe Creek.

<b>Access Point</b>	<b>Distance in Miles</b>	<b>Access Point</b>
<u>Route 77</u>	6.1 miles	Craegerstown Park
Craegerstown Park	5.3 miles	<u>Devilbiss Access</u>
<u>Devilbiss Access</u>	7.2 miles	Riverside Park
Riverside Park	6.5 miles	<u>Pinecliff Park</u>
<u>Pinecliff Park</u>	6.0 miles	Buckeystown Park
Buckeystown Park	5.6 miles	<u>Park Mills Access</u>
<u>Park Mills Access</u>	1.9 miles	Route 28 Access
Route 28 Access	1.8 miles	C&O Canal NHP Access

### Private Property Rights

Without volunteer cooperation from private landowners, only sites in public ownership are suitable for consideration as river access locations. Eminent domain will not be used to secure public access.

### Funding Requirements

**Design:** Funding requirements to design the proposed access points will be nominal in most instances. Design may be adequately performed by the local jurisdictions. For more complicated projects, funding for design is available through grants administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

**Construction:** Funding requirements for construction, which will in most cases include a gate, a small parking lot and, if necessary a pedestrian ramp, are more substantial. In 1996 dollars gravel work is based on \$0.48 per square foot. Asphalt paved with a 3 inch binder course and a 2 inch wearing course is estimated at \$0.94 per square foot.

A 20 car gravel parking lot would thus cost approximately \$3200. A 5 inch asphalt surface would cost approximately \$10,000 including a 4 inch gravel base. A 14 foot steel gate may cost up to \$3,000 installed and a small ramp an additional \$1000. Assuming the distance necessary to extend a road from the highway to the parking lot and from the lot to the ramp is 200 feet, the cost of the road would be estimated at \$2000 for a gravel surface, or \$5800 if finished with asphalt. Using these figures, if Riverside Park were developed using the high end figures, boat access would cost approximately \$20,000. If Route 77 were developed using gravel rather than asphalt, boat access may cost approximately \$9200, assuming all work is contracted.

These costs can be reduced using available staff resources and volunteers through community service programs..

### Funding Sources

The **Maryland Boating Access Program** provides public motor boat access and associated support facilities to sport fisherman entering Maryland waters. It is financed by the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program (and the later Wallopp Breaux amendment), through excise taxes of fishing gear, a portion of the motor boat fuel tax, duties on imported fishing tackle and boats and accrued interest. Maryland must delegate at least 12.5% of its annual apportionment to developing, upgrading and maintaining motor boat access facilities. Up to 75% of the project can be funded with Sport Fish Restoration (Wallopp-Breaux) funds, while the state, county or local government share must be at least 25%.

The **Waterway Improvement Fund** was established for the purpose of funding projects which improve and promote the recreational and commercial capabilities, conditions and safety of Maryland's waterways for the general boating public. Revenues for this fund are obtained from the 5% excise tax that is paid to the State of Maryland when a boat is purchased and titled in the state. The fund also receives a small percentage of the state motor fuel tax as a result of purchases made to fuel boats. Fund grants are administered by MDNR-Program Open Space-Waterway Improvement Program. Types of projects eligible for funding include construction of marine facilities beneficial to the general boating public.

It is important to note that both funds primarily apply to facilities designed for registered, gas-consuming boats. Facilities oriented to non-motorized boats may receive a lower funding priority.

### Maintenance

Funding for operations and maintenance is the most significant factor in implementing the river access plan. City and county funds for maintenance are limited. Frederick County Bureau of Parks and Recreation has staff patrolling its parks, including policing the area, removing trash and operating the gates. The option of

contracting some maintenance and operation functions to the private sector as a cost-saving measure should be considered.

### III INTERESTED GROUPS

River access planning and implementation will require a cooperative effort from the following local organizations and government entities:

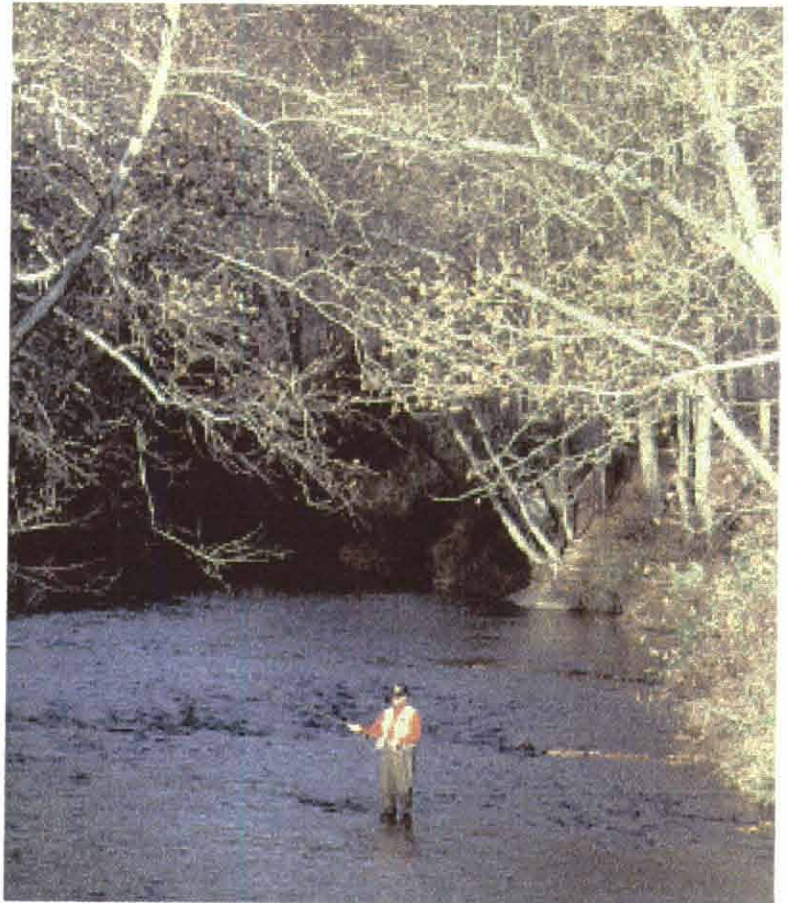
- Carroll County Board of Commissioners
- Carroll County Department of Planning and Development
- Carroll County Board of Recreation and Parks
- Catoctin Sierra Club
- Frederick County Board of Commissioners
- Frederick County Planning and Zoning
- Frederick County Bureau of Parks and Recreation
- City of Frederick Parks and Recreation Commission
- Local Sporting Clubs
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland State Highway Administration
- Monocacy Canoe Club
- Monocacy River Conservancy
- Monocacy Scenic River Citizens Advisory Board
- U.S. National Park Service

It is recommended that a committee be established consisting of the Frederick County Parks and Recreation Department, the City of Frederick Department of Parks, MD DNR, the Monocacy Scenic River Citizens Advisory Board, other government agencies and local sporting clubs to implement this plan. In the future, Carroll County also should have representation on the Committee if access points are considered on the upper Monocacy.

#### Brochure

In order to continue promoting the Monocacy's recreational and ecological resources, a brochure will be prepared by Maryland DNR and the recommended committee, and distributed by local recreational agencies indicating access points, historical points of interest and other appropriate information. Guidelines for proper river use, user responsibility and respect for private property and natural resources should be prominently displayed.

# Monocacy Scenic River Access Plan



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