

Welcome to Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Planning Website

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority has developed a General Management Plan (GMP) for the 223 acre the Regional Park to help guide future planning and resource management of this historic battlefield park.

The GMP for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park includes the following:

- Identification of park mission, purpose and significance statements
- An inventory and description of the existing natural resources
- A history, inventory and description of the existing cultural resources
- A description of current Park programming
- An inventory and description of the existing public recreation facilities
- Identification of various park resource management zones and a description of the activities appropriate for each zone.
- Opportunities for future plans and projects



The GMP was approved January 2004 by the NVRPA Board. Other park Implementation Plans may then be developed in the future for the park. A key element in the planning process is public involvement and the Regional Park Authority encourages citizens to comment on all draft planning documents and to attend scheduled public meetings.

This document, including the color site maps, can be reviewed on this web site: www.nvrpa.org/ballsbluff.

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Copies of the planning documents noted above can be obtained by contacting NVRPA's Planning and Development Department at 703-352-5900. Direct questions regarding the Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park planning process or this website to NVRPA Planning Department at 703-352-5900 or Plandev@nvrpa.org. To speak at public meetings, contact NVRPA Public Information Officer Carol Ann Cohen, 703-359-4603.

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General Management Plan
for
BALL'S BLUFF REGIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK
Fairfax County, Virginia

Prepared for
**THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA
REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Development of the General Management Plan for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park should be viewed as the first part of an integrated plan to manage the park. It is an active and ongoing process for making choices about how to effectively plan and manage the resources we steward, how to achieve goals and objectives identified in the Policy Plan and how to uphold the mission of NVRPA. The General Management Plan (GMP) will serve as an

important problem-solving tool, assisting in park planning, development, operations and management.

This plan provides a management framework for park resources, designating resource management areas or "zones" within the park, each having appropriate recreational uses and development designated, in order to sustain park resources. The delineation of management zones is based upon an evaluation of many factors, including the established purpose of this park, the nature and significance of the park's natural and cultural resources, the ability of each site to support identified uses, the desired visitor experience and park management objectives.

The approved GMP is a comprehensive plan that will vary in detail with the size and complexity of a given park, which will guide subsequent planning and project implementation. Detailed plans and studies detail specific management practices for each of the respective resource management zones, consistent with the approved GMP. All future plans and projects will be consistent with the direction established in the GMP. The GMP components will be reviewed periodically and revised or amended as necessary to reflect new issues or changes in management objectives.

Throughout the park planning process, opportunities for public participation and comment will be provided. These may include public meetings and workshops, informal work sessions on specific issues and public review and comment on draft documents. Involvement of the public will be initiated at the earliest stages of the planning process, before planning decisions have been made.

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INTRODUCTION

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's *Policy Plan* establishes policies and procedures to guide the Authority in the management, operation and administration of the regional park system. It articulates the role of the Park Authority and includes a Park Classification System that provides the framework for development and revision of individual park management plans. Individual park management plans, in turn, provide the basis for the development and operation of each park.

Creation of a park's General Management Plan (GMP) should be viewed as the first part of an integrated park planning process. All future plans and projects for a park will be consistent with the direction established in the park GMP.

Typically, more detailed implementation plans such as Resource Management Plans, Conceptual Development Plans or Interpretive Plans, detailing specific uses and management practices for each park, may be generated, consistent with the approved GMP. Implementation plans and future projects are prioritized and funded through the five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

I. THE PLANNING PROCESS

A. THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Seven key elements form the foundation of a General Management Plan (GMP) and are guided by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) *Policy Plan*. The scope of the elements, the order in which they are initiated and the methods used to complete them may vary in different situations, however, all elements are necessary to implement a General Management Plan. Key elements include: assembling an interdisciplinary project team; developing a public involvement strategy; developing statements of Park mission, purpose and significance; analyzing existing

resources; describing potential uses and resource conditions; allocating management areas or zones within the park; and recommending management action plans. Public comment on the draft GMP is considered throughout the process, prior to finalization and adoption by the NVRPA Board.

B. PURPOSE OF THE GMP

The General Management Plan (GMP) represents the first step in the formal process used by the NVRPA in planning, developing and managing park resources. Created to fulfill the stated goals and objectives of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority as described in the NVRPA *Policy Plan*, the GMP serves as a guide to ensure that resource protection and recreational facility development remain balanced and compatible with one another.

The NVRPA *Policy Plan* includes a park classification system that helps focus planning for individual parks. This system categorizes each of NVRPA's nineteen parks based upon the purpose and defining criteria for that type of park.

Mission, purpose and significance of a park are derived from its classification and form the foundation of park planning. Demographics and adjacent land uses are also considered in development of the GMP to provide a context for future planning.

- Park Mission states the broad vision for the future of a specific park, supporting the overall mission of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.
- Park Purpose articulates the specific reasons why a park was created and included in the NVRPA system.
- Park Significance clearly defines the most important things about park resources and values, based upon the park purpose.

Extensive research is conducted to determine the existing natural and cultural resources within the park and to identify park facilities and recreational opportunities. Based upon this research, resource management zones have been established, accompanied by potential uses for each zone. From this research, primary interpretive themes can be identified in the GMP to help identify the visitor opportunities that could be provided in the park. These management zones and their permitted uses will serve to control all future development of the park.

With a finalized GMP, other, more detailed management plans can be undertaken. Suggestions for additional plans, future projects and further studies are identified in each General Management Plan.

The GMP should be updated and reviewed periodically to ensure existing and proposed uses for the park are accurately represented and should be consulted prior to any site-specific decisions being made.

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C. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GMP

Goals and objectives are visions for the future of the Regional Park Authority. The goals and objectives of a General Management Plan support the larger goals and objectives of NVRPA as stated in the *Policy Plan*.

- GOAL: Meet park planning, development and operations challenges using innovative solutions.
 - Provision of a clear direction for management decisions based on the purpose of the park, the General Management Plan contributes to effective decision-making, flexible planning and management of the park.
- GOAL: Acquire, protect and manage natural and cultural resources by developing and implementing long-range strategies.
 - Establishment of a resources database is accomplished by conducting resource inventories that are used to identify park management zones and potential lands for acquisition.
- GOAL: Balance facility development and high quality service
 - Consideration of visitor use surveys and demographics of potential park focus planning efforts upon the visitor's needs. With this information, staff can provide needed facilities and programs at the highest level of service.
- GOAL: Manage park resources through the establishment of specific use areas.
 - Identification of one or more resource management zones for the entire park site bases usage and management actions on the existing resources, the park mission, purpose and significance and upon impact guidelines established for each of the resource management zones.

(Refer to [Appendix A](#), *NVRPA Policy Plan, Goals and Objectives*, for details.)

D. NVRPA PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The NVRPA Park Classification System, as defined in the *NVRPA Policy Plan*, includes six categories, each with its own defining purpose and criteria. These criteria identify the purpose of each park; provide resource management and use policies and planning and development guidelines for the park. While the system is comprehensive, it is not mutually exclusive. Parks may qualify for more than one classification.

Regional Shoreline Park	Preserves land along rivers and other regionally significant water bodies for public use and enjoyment. The purpose is to protect valuable water resources of the region, to promote public access to these water resources and to enhance the recreational, educational, environmental and scenic value of regional water bodies.
Regional Trail and Greenways Park	Provides a linear corridor along streams, rivers and other natural landscapes. Primarily for pedestrian,

	equestrian and bicycle uses, a regional trail or greenway may extend through two or more jurisdictions or link components of the regional park system.
Regional Recreational/ Special Multi- Use Park	Contains recreational facilities that, because of their specialized nature, cost or demand, are not generally offered by local park and recreation agencies.
Regional Conservation Park	Places in public ownership large tracts of undeveloped land to protect and preserve the land's unique environmental, ecological or scenic value.
Regional Historical Site	Preserves structures, archaeological sites, battlefields and cemeteries deemed significant to the history of Northern Virginia.
Regional Land Bank	Provides NVRPA with an administrative mechanism to hold undedicated lands on a temporary basis pending a decision on classification.

(Refer to [Appendix B](#), *NVRPA Policy Plan, Park Classification System*, for details.)

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E. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

From the information derived from park resource inventories and the resulting constraints and opportunities identified within the park site, a framework for park resource management was developed. The management framework integrates the research, site analysis and basic data information about the park into the General Management Plan by designating specific resource management areas or "zones."

Resource Management Zones

Resource management zones define particular areas within a park that share similar management concerns and challenges. Each resource management zone has a unique combination of park resources, visitor and facility uses and a defined management direction, consistent throughout all NVRPA properties.

Recommendations for appropriate kinds and levels of activity, included in the following glossary of potential uses and consistent with the goals of the park, determine what activities should and should not occur within each

management zone.

Evaluation of proposed activity or project is based upon a variety of factors in addition to potential impacts on cultural and natural resources described in the GMP. Different management actions may be taken in different zones depending upon the types and levels of uses and facilities and their anticipated impact on the existing park resources. Inclusion in the list of potential uses does not indicate that such use would automatically be approved or endorsed by NVRPA. Other factors influencing management actions may include the availability of capital funding, availability of park staff and maintenance resources and the impact on adjacent properties and existing park activities.

Zone Descriptions

- Sensitive Resource Protection Zone

Identifies a protected area or fragile feature that may be lost through human impact, such as areas of threatened or endangered species or a historic feature. Neither visitors nor development will be permitted within these areas.

Potential uses permitted:

- Research
- Resource protection
- Resource management

- Natural Resource Protection Zone

Protects existing habitats and identifies areas that warrant restoration. May include areas identified as an outstanding resource or areas considered undevelopable because of site constraints. Human impact to these areas shall be minimal; environmental degradation will be prohibited. Vehicular traffic, structures and facilities will be strictly regulated.

Potential uses permitted:

- Research
- Resource management
- Interpretation and education
- Low impact recreation
- Limited support infrastructure

- Cultural Resource Protection Zone

Protects existing cultural resources and provides opportunities for educational and interpretive use. Cultural resources may exist within any other zone. Cultural resource surveys will be undertaken prior to any land-disturbing activity.

Potential uses permitted:

Research
Resource management
Interpretation and education
Low impact recreation
Limited support infrastructure
Historic restoration

- Recreation Zone

Provides visitors with a variety of recreational experiences. May include existing or future recreational facilities, park infrastructure and visitor services. Research and analysis of potential cultural or natural resources will be completed prior to any site development or land disturbing activity.

Potential uses permitted:

Research
Resource management
Education/ Interpretation
Low impact recreation
High impact recreation
Support infrastructure

F. GLOSSARY OF POTENTIAL USES:

- **LOW IMPACT RECREATION** - Includes recreational activities that are determined to cause minimal disturbance to the park's natural and cultural resources and require little if any infrastructure. Many recreational activities could be categorized as low impact or high impact depending upon their intensity and frequency of use. For example, most hiking trails would likely be categorized as low impact. However, if a hiking trail were heavily utilized to the point at which it caused severe environmental degradation, the trail activity could be classified as a high impact recreational use.
- **HIGH IMPACT RECREATION** - Includes recreational activities that are determined to cause noticeable but acceptable levels of disturbance to the park's resources. High impact recreational activities may require substantial infrastructure development. Examples of high impact recreational activities may include golfing, organized sports requiring athletic fields and picnic areas requiring large shelters and parking areas.
- **INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION** - Involves communicating information specific to the significance of the park, including the unique characteristics of the resources associated with the park and the relationships of human and natural systems, to increase visitor enjoyment and involvement in resource protection. Interpretive programs and educational workshops, brochures, displays and signage at the park are methods of conveying this information.
- **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** - Involves the understanding of natural processes, recognition of human influence upon the land and the need for stewardship of that land. Resource Management Plans will establish guidelines for managing natural, cultural, recreational or facility resources existing within the park. The selection, integration and implementation of

resource management plans and actions will be based upon ecological, sociological and economical consequences of the proposed action on park resources. These plans and recommended actions may include protection, mitigation, interpretation, monitoring and administration of park resources.

- RESEARCH - Involves the investigation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, the revision of accepted theories or the development of practical applications in light of new facts. One time, periodic or ongoing research could include archaeological and historic surveys and studies, water and air quality monitoring studies and vegetation and wildlife inventories. Public agencies, educational organizations, professional consultants or volunteers could be authorized by NVRPA to conduct this work
- SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE - Includes development necessary to support major park operations and activities. Support infrastructure may include visitor centers, specialized recreational facilities, administrative and maintenance facilities, roads, parking areas, utilities, etc.
- LIMITED SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE - Includes facilities limited in scope and impact but critical to provide minimal support of park operations and activities. Special care will be taken during the planning, design and development of limited support infrastructure in Resource Protection Zones in order to protect existing park resources. Where feasible, the Park Authority shall utilize design and development techniques that avoid or minimize negative impacts to existing resources. Limited support infrastructure may include the following:
 - Recreational facilities and trails supporting low impact activities and causing minimal disturbance to the environment and existing park resources.
 - Small structures, such as shelters or restroom facilities that do not exceed 800 square feet in size.
 - Essential utilities and access routes for park maintenance and emergency vehicles provided there are no other feasible alternatives available.

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II. BALL'S BLUFF REGIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK GMP

The General Management Plan (GMP) for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park- is intended to help guide future planning, development and management of the 223-acre Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park.

A. PARK DESCRIPTION

Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Washington,, D.C. and 1 _ miles from the historic Town of Leesburg, in Loudoun County, Virginia. The 223-acre park site surrounds one of the smallest national cemeteries, where 54 Union soldiers are buried; only one of whom has been identified. The land comprising Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park was acquired to preserve the site of the 1861 Civil War battlefield and national cemetery and to provide a riparian buffer for the Potomac River. The national cemetery and seventy-six acres of the park site

were designated a National Historic Landmark in 1984.

A gravel entrance road and parking area accesses the national cemetery and a natural surface interpretive trail provides visitors an opportunity to learn about the Battle of Ball's Bluff. The Potomac River and the privately owned, nearby, 400-acre Harrison Island fronts the property to the east and Town of Leesburg parkland exists to the northern and southern boundaries; a residential subdivision now adjoins the western boundary of the park.

B. BACKGROUND

In 1986, the Beus Corporation owned a 470-acre tract surrounding the national cemetery and its entrance road. The corporation proposed developing approximately 300 acres for residential use, proffering to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) 168 acres, including the entire Potomac River frontage and the historic bluffs, for open space purposes. The proffer also provided that a separate area, removed from the battlefield site, be designated for use by the Town of Leesburg to develop park facilities and athletic fields for community use. NVRPA accepted a 168-acre tract in 1986, in an effort to attain a long-range goal: to acquire and preserve lands along the Potomac River for recreation and conservation. A concept plan for the establishment of a historic park was proposed in 1986 with the assistance of the National Park Service (NPS). In 2000, an adjacent 141-acre parcel, locally known as the Walde property, was acquired by NVRPA and further divided with the Town of Leesburg, who purchased 86 of the 141 acres. This action preserved a significant open space adjacent to the existing battlefield park and results in a total of 223 acres for the park.

The 55 additional acres retained by NVRPA provide an important visual buffer and protection for the core battlefield area this land surrounds, as recommended in the NPS 1986 proposed Concept Plan for Ball's Bluff Battlefield Park.

C. PARK CLASSIFICATION

A Park Classification System has been developed to work in conjunction with individual Park Management Plans, to plan develop operate and maintain each of the Authority's parks. While the system is comprehensive, it is not mutually exclusive and a park may qualify for more than one classification. Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park qualifies for more than one classification, based upon the purpose and defining criteria for the classification of parks as described in the NVRPA Policy Plan. The primary classification for this park is that of a Regional Historic/Cultural Park and the secondary classification is that of a Regional Shoreline Park.

- Regional Historic/Cultural Parks preserve structures and/or sites deemed significant to the history or culture of Northern Virginia. Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is considered a Regional Historic/Cultural Park because it preserves the Civil War battlefield site of the 1861 Battle of Ball's Bluff, surrounding the seven acre National Cemetery property, a National Historic Landmark. Regional Shoreline Parks preserve riparian lands for watershed protection and public recreational water access.
- Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is considered a Regional

Shoreline Park because it preserves lands adjacent to the Potomac River, a source of regional drinking water. The park also provides several trails accessing the shoreline, primarily used for fishing and hiking.

(Refer to [Appendix B: NVRPA Policy Plan, Park Classifications](#) for details.)

D. PARK MISSION

The mission of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is to provide opportunities for public enrichment through interpretation of Virginia Civil War history, to protect riparian lands and other natural resources of the Potomac River watershed and to provide a public space for education and scenic and recreational enjoyment.

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E. PARK PURPOSE

- Educating the public about the importance of the Battle of Ball's Bluff in the early history of the Civil War, through interpretive displays and programs.

Preserving and protecting existing cultural resources and interpreting the history of human activity and interaction of the natural systems of the Potomac River basin.

Fostering awareness, appreciation and stewardship of the natural environment through educational interpretation of park natural resources.

Conserving the natural environment within the Potomac River watershed relative to protection of water quality within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

- Preserving and protecting natural resources including rare, threatened or endangered species.

F. PARK SIGNIFICANCE

- The park surrounds Ball's Bluff National Cemetery and preserves the historic site of the Ball's Bluff battlefield. Seventy-six acres within the park, including Ball's Bluff National Cemetery, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The park provides public and private groups and individuals an opportunity to understand the importance of the Battle of Ball's Bluff, the largest Civil War engagement to take place in Loudoun County, Virginia.

The park's vegetative community types, unique landforms and site hydrology offer opportunities for interpretation of and education about stewardship of the park's diverse natural resources.

The undeveloped parkland provides critical habitat for numerous plant and wildlife species and contributes to a larger expanse of adjacent, undeveloped land along the upper Potomac River shoreline in Loudoun County.

The park's location, with its extensive tree cover and existing vegetation, contributes to protection of water quality in the Potomac River Basin and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- Documented historic and prehistoric cultural resources within the park demonstrate the significance of the land throughout human history in the northern Virginia region.

G. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Vicinity of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is located near the historic Town of Leesburg in Loudoun County, Virginia, a growing commuter residential area outside of Washington D.C. Leesburg, and Loudoun County in general, is experiencing rapid growth and development of formerly rural, agricultural lands. Pockets of privately owned farms and open spaces remain within the vicinity of the park, evoking the rural character once typical of the region. Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park site falls within two political jurisdictions and is subject to all regulations, ordinances and requirements of Loudoun County or the Town of Leesburg, as appropriate. The recently acquired 55 acres at the northern end of the park lies within the boundaries of Loudoun County; the remaining 168 acres, including the National Historic Cemetery, lie within the boundary of the Town of Leesburg. Presently, a Town Boundary Line Adjustment Plan is under consideration to incorporate the 55-acre parcel into the jurisdictional boundary of the Town of Leesburg, placing the entire park within the Town of Leesburg's jurisdiction. **The Comprehensive Plan** The Town of Leesburg completed a *Comprehensive 20 Year Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails and Greenways Master Plan* in 2002. This Master Plan builds upon several important concepts incorporated in the 1993 Greenways and Trails Master Plan, developed cooperatively by the Town of Leesburg, Loudoun County, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and others and the 1997 *Leesburg Town Plan*, the current plan guiding land use. A major component of both plans included establishment of a county-wide network of greenways and trails, including the planned multi-jurisdictional Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Priorities of the *Comprehensive Parks Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* include: acquisition of open space for new park sites; implementation of the 1993 *Greenways and Trails Master Plan*; creation of "greenway" trail linkages along rivers and streams; connection of existing and planned parks; protection of wildlife habitat along rivers and streams; identification and protection of important cultural resources. Implementation of one or more of these activities could involve, directly or indirectly, Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Revisions incorporated in the *Loudoun County General Plan*, 2001 and the newly adopted Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance (2003) could significantly impact future development at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park, if the proposed annexation is not adopted. **General Site Conditions** The park today remains largely undisturbed, with second growth forest covering the site of the battlefield and former pastures of the past. The topography of the park site is typical of a dissected piedmont plateau characterized by generally flat uplands over red sedimentary rock formations, with steep-banked stream valleys draining intermittent and unnamed streams directly into the Potomac River. Four intermittent unnamed streams traverse the park property, one of which feeds a small retention pond off the park entrance road. The park site has eight different vegetative community types, dominated by basic oak - hickory forest on the uplands and mixed hardwood forests in the stream

valleys in the southern half of the park. Existing park infrastructure includes a one-mile long Battle of Ball's Bluff interpretive trail and gravel entrance road, with parking for 50 cars. Several natural surface footpaths traverse the park, some of which follow old roads, farm paths or other features associated with past development and some of which are social trails, newly created by visiting neighbors. **Park Resources** Baseline inventories of natural and cultural resources and existing conditions assessments were prepared for NVRPA in 2002. Development of these documents was based on available existing resource information as well as field reconnaissance surveys. These reports document and evaluate existing park resources and their conditions and make recommendations for further study. They provide a basis from which park management plans for park resources will evolve and will guide planning decisions for future recreational use and development. **NATURAL RESOURCES**

- Topography

The topography of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is that of a dissected plateau, with generally level areas at the same elevation as the uplands to the west of the park, and north-south running ridges created by deeply cutting stream channels draining to the upper Potomac River. The relatively flat terrain of the park drops sharply at the Potomac River on the eastern boundary of the property. The park is underlain primarily by Ball's Bluff siltstone, a sedimentary rock formation. Small areas of limestone and dolomite occur in the northeast corner of the park, in the stream beds and in a thin strip near the Potomac River shoreline, forming "bluffs" overlooking the Potomac River. This stone was once quarried within the local area and on site as marble and used in construction of the columns for the U.S. Capitol building.

Site elevation ranges from approximately 300 feet above sea level across the plateau area, dropping about twenty feet at the bluffs, then dropping sharply to the floodplain of the Potomac River.

Slopes and Soils

More than fifty percent of the park is characterized by steeply sloped stream channels, with grades ranging from fifteen (15%) to greater than twenty-five percent (25%). The majority of slopes within the park have the potential to be highly erodible if unprotected by vegetation. Unprotected slopes of more than 15 percent are especially susceptible to soil loss by erosion. Soils within the Leesburg Triassic basin consist of materials eroded from the surrounding Piedmont and Blue Ridge provinces, with bedrock close to the surface. The Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park site is composed primarily of three types of silt loam soils, which generally have poor drainage and a high potential for erosion.

Hydric soils are those that are saturated, flooded or ponded anaerobic soils. These soils exist in small areas in the floodplain of the Potomac River and are subject to seasonal flooding.

Water Resources

Site hydrology at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park consists of four watersheds for each of the steeply sloped, unnamed perennial streams. These streams drop dramatically, approximately 170 total feet, in the half mile from their origins, and drain directly to the Potomac River. All four streams exhibit severe impacts from sedimentation due to erosion caused by land development upstream, which has degraded or destroyed streambed habitat. A small storm retention pond, formerly a silt pond, exists on the western side of the park and offers some protection from storm flows for one nearby stream. The largest aquatic feature of the park is the Potomac River on the eastern boundary. During normal base flow conditions, a floodplain bench lies six to ten feet above the waterline; during high seasonal flows, the floodplain bench is submerged and the water of the Potomac River backs up several hundred feet into the four unnamed streams and other tributaries that drain the park. Lands within the Potomac River watershed, including Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park are subject to Federal and State mandates and requirements of the Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 1988.

Loudoun County has recently established a River and Stream Corridor Overlay District (RSCOD), adopted January 2003, to protect the county's water resources. Two sets of policies, one for surface water and one for ground water, will establish County water goals, define protective measures and management objectives and establish development parameters for areas around water resources. Portions of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park will be subject to these regulations unless or until the Town of Leesburg Boundary Line Adjustment (annexation) is approved.

Plant Communities

Eight different plant communities, some with multiple forest cover type, have been identified at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park. The nature of these plant communities is most strongly influenced by site topography and previous land use patterns. The following Ecological Community Groups have been identified at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park: Mesic Calcareous Cliffs This community type is naturally rare and inherently protected as a result of locations on inaccessible, dangerous bluffs. The mesic calcareous cliff community type is found in a narrow strip on the eastern edge of the park, comprising the steep bluff overlooking the Potomac River. This area is included in the newly adopted Limestone Conglomerate Area developed by Loudoun County to protect the unique geologic characteristics, natural beauty and quality of water of these limestone conglomerate areas. Portions of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park may be subject to Loudoun County regulations governing land use and development in this area of the park. Basic Mesic Forest This community type is comprised of mixed hardwood forests, located in fertile, low-lying habitats on the Coastal Plain, Piedmont and major mountain valleys and are typically found in deep ravines and occasionally well-drained floodplain terraces. Basic mesic forest continues to be lost to clearing and to invasive weeds. This community type is found on site in a narrow strip on the floodplain of the Potomac River on the eastern boundary of the park.

Basic Oak-Hickory Forest This community type is composed of mixed hardwood forests of upland habitats over basic rocks such as diabase and metabasalt. Communities of this type are scattered throughout the Virginia Piedmont and low slopes of the Blue Ridge. This community type is becoming increasingly rare and has historically been lost to agricultural land uses, conversion to sylvacultural pine stands and most recently, to urban development. Most, if not all the communities in this group can be considered rare in the state. This community type is the most common found at Ball's Bluff, predominantly on eastward facing slopes, and ridge tops.

Chestnut Oak Forests The forests dominated by chestnut oak are found on dry, rocky, upland soils. American Beech and American Holly are minor trees associated with these forests, as are red maple and black gum as understory species. Chestnut oak forest is the second most commonly found community within the park, covering large portions of the ridge tops and top of the bluff overlooking the Potomac River.

Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forests These hardwood forest communities are found in dry, infertile habitats occupying uplands ravines, lower slopes and well-drained "flatwoods." Although these community types of forest still cover many mountainous areas within the state, their quality and extent has been reduced by repeated logging. Mesic mixed hardwood forests dominate the stream valleys in the southern half of the park, particularly on north facing slopes.

Piedmont Oak-Beech Forests This type of mixed hardwood forest is typically found on north-facing bluffs, on steep ravine slopes with nutrient-poor soils. Dense colonies of mountain laurel and evergreen rhododendrons form a continuous shrub layer. This forest type is restricted to the north facing slopes of the northernmost stream valley of the park.

Old Fields

These communities are commonly found in abandoned fields and clearings in the early stages of succession, with dominant species of Broomsedge, tall fescue and broad land weeds. This community is found in small patches where periodic mowing and clearing occur, particularly along the entrance road, parking lot and areas adjacent to the cemetery.

Exotic and Invasive Plant Species

An exotic species is defined as any species not native to a geographic area. Exotic species are often present as naturalized species or are planted as landscape trees and shrubs. An invasive species is one that escapes from cultivation, spreads rapidly and occurs in greater abundance than may be desirable. If not actively managed, these species may displace other native plant species.

Nine exotic species were identified within Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park as potentially invasive. Those identified include: multiflora rose; Japanese honeysuckle; common chickweed; garlic mustard; ground ivy; ivy-leaved speedwell; and Japanese stilt grass and most recently, kudzu vine.

Wildlife

Most of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is covered with second

growth forest, providing habitat for several orders of vertebrates. Approximate numbers of wildlife species are known or expected to occur at the park and adjacent to the Potomac River. Included are: 31 species of amphibians and reptiles, 118 species of birds and 24 species of mammals. Habitat types in which each species is likely to occur correspond to the plant communities described above.

The large area of unbroken habitat within the park makes a significant contribution to the biological corridor along the Potomac River, especially for larger mammals and birds of prey, with requirements for large, undeveloped tracts of land for foraging and population regeneration.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) identifies natural heritage resources as: the habitat of rare threatened or endangered plant and animal species; unique or exemplary natural communities; and significant geologic formations. Natural heritage resources have not been documented for the Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park site but have been identified for Loudoun County as a whole. Two forest community types and one vascular plant species, listed as Natural Heritage Resources by the State of Virginia, exist with the park. These include Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forests and Basic Oak-Hickory Forest and the wildflower, white troutlily. The forest community types have not received a global or state ranking for rarity of species but are listed; the white troutlily is listed as S2 by the state, defined as very rare or imperiled.

It is probable that one or more bird species, including the bald eagle, as well as invertebrate, reptile and plants species potentially exist on site. Additional surveys of the project area for these species could yield additional resources.

- Wildflowers

Many vascular plant species including spring wildflowers have been observed within the park. Amateur and professional horticulturalists and biologists, visit annually to identify and record types, relative numbers and locations of native wildflowers and ferns. To date, more than sixty wildflower species have been located and identified.

Several observed wildflower species are considered to be rare within the state. These include yellow and white trout lily, blue cohosh, false mermaid weed, green violets and harbinger of-spring. Others, including the small whorled pogonia, have not been observed but may exist in areas within the park that are known to provide suitable habitat. Additional rare or threatened species may be identified with a comprehensive wildflower survey.

(See [Appendix C](#), *Natural Resources Inventory and Existing Conditions Assessment Report for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park* for details).

(Refer to [Appendix C](#): *Natural Resource Inventory and Existing Conditions*

Assessment for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park, and [Appendix E: Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Resource Inventory Maps](#) for details.)

Cultural Resources A cultural resources assessment of the 223-acre Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park site was conducted to identify the known resources and indicate the potential for previously unidentified archaeological resources within the boundaries of the park. An earlier study focused on a 20-acre portion of the park site, including the proffered acreage set aside for development of the Town of Leesburg community park. Although the entire Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is included within the Ball's Bluff Battlefield as defined by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, no previously inventoried architectural resources or archaeological sites have been located within the park limits.

- Prehistoric Resources

While no prehistoric sites have yet been recorded in the project area, four sites located within a one-mile radius of the park have been identified. A previous archaeological pedestrian survey of ground surfaces at certain locations within the park noted the presence of quartz lithic flakes and shatter; lesser amounts of Rhyolite were noted on the ground surface. These artifacts were left in situ and no sites were formally inventoried. Indications resulting from the two surveys indicate a high potential for prehistoric archaeological sites within the park. Potential prehistoric sites within Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park may date to the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods approximately 2000 to 3000 years ago, particularly along perennial streams which were utilized quite heavily during these times by human populations in this region.

Soils, geologic formations and hydrological features associated with Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park would have been desirable for prehistoric occupation. These suitable site characteristics continued to attract human habitation and agricultural use throughout the history of the property.

- Historic Resources

Identified historic resources most frequently related to this property are associated with the Civil War, however, recorded history of the site reveals European ownership as early as 1649. Previously identified historic resources within a one-mile radius of the park include one historic site and five architectural resources. In addition, the yet un-inventoried antebellum Jackson House is located approximately 1,500 feet west of the main entrance to the park. Skirmishing is known to have occurred around this privately owned house during the opening stages of the Battle of Ball's Bluff. In the years following the American Revolution, Loudoun County was dominated by farmers with relatively small land holdings, raising grain and livestock for export. Overland routes and water routes on the C&O Canal facilitated transportation of goods to markets in Georgetown and Alexandria. Several grain mills and warehouses existed nearby, including Smart's Mill and White's Ferry to the north and Elizabeth Mills, Chichester Landing and Edwards Ferry to the south. Numerous farm roads and carts paths connected local farms with these destination points and were undoubtedly used by troops

during the Civil War. These remain evident today. Loudoun County, with numerous fords across the Potomac River and the divided loyalties of its citizens during the Civil War, invited military movement and remained a contested area throughout the war. Confederate and Union troops met in battle on October 21, 1861, on the site of the present-day park, at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. Though small in terms of soldiers involved, it was the largest Civil War battle to take place in Loudoun County and had lasting influence. As a result, the U.S. Congress developed standards on the conduct of war. In 1865, a permanent cemetery was established, to re-inter those Union soldiers buried in the days following the battle that took place on Colonel Burgess Ball's farm, 1861. Designated Ball's Bluff National Cemetery in 1937, the .057-acre cemetery and access road, are owned by the Veterans Administration of the federal government. On April 27, 1984, the cemetery and the 76 core acres of the battlefield were designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior. The walled cemetery encloses twenty-five headstones memorializing 54 soldiers, only one of whom has been identified. Two individual monuments outside the cemetery walls memorialize Confederate Private Clinton Hatcher and Union Colonel Edward Baker. Other significant above-ground resources include a military earthwork of ditch-berm construction and three excavated pits approximately sixteen feet in diameter near the cemetery. The remains of the earthwork run north then east for approximately 268 feet total and was likely associated with a network of Confederate defenses around Fort Evans that was south of the park site. The excavated pits are likely remains of quarrying activities for the stone used in construction of the cemetery wall.

Early maps of Loudoun County show no evidence of a domestic occupation of the site and mid-twentieth century U.S.G.S. maps continued to indicate that no standing structures were present on site through the early 1950's.

(Refer to [Appendix D: Cultural Resources Assessment for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park](#) and [Appendix E: Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Resource Inventory Maps](#) for details.) **Recreational Resources** The park offers opportunities for interpretation of historic resources, particularly the Civil War, prehistoric archaeological sites and significant natural resources. A one mile long natural surface trail with interpretive displays, together with reenactments and special events featuring the Battle of Ball's Bluff provide a wealth of information on the history of Virginia and the nation. This Regional Park functions as part of a larger biological corridor of the Potomac River shoreline, linking federal, regional and local park lands and private open space and providing habitat for numerous species of wildlife and several rare plant species. Informal nature trails provide numerous opportunities for wildflower sightings and identification. These trails are used by local college professors, professional botanists, horticulturalists and nature lovers. A shoreline hiking trail was envisioned along the Potomac River, at the earliest stages of park planning, as part of the NVRPA long-range goal for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park. Included as part of the 1986 NPS Concept Plan, the proposed trail was to link various historic sites within Loudoun County to one another. This trail will be realized upon completion of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, with the adoption of a final alignment. Several other informal, or social trails traverse the park

and are used by neighboring communities for hiking and dog walking. Proffer conditions under which NVRPA acquired lands for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park stipulated allowance for an area, outside the battlefield area, to be designated for community park use.

An approximately five-acre parcel, located at the southern half of the park, adjacent to the Potomac Crossing Subdivision, will be leased by the Town of Leesburg to fulfill this requirement. Proposed facilities will include athletic courts, a picnic shelter and restroom, a play structure, fitness trail and parking lot.

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H. SITE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints For the purposes of this plan, site constraints are defined as areas within the park where the existence or condition of a certain resource or resources, present significant constraints to future development. Constraints to facility development at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park can be attributed to both physical site conditions and cultural and natural resources. Physical site constraints include poor soils, steep slopes and the 100-year flood plain. Other conditions outlined in Loudoun County's River and Stream Corridor Overlay District (RSCOD) limit development potential in the drainage ways and valleys that cover much of the site. Significant constraints are associated with the presence of the battlefield and national cemetery and the associated National Historic Register Boundary, limiting development within the central portion of the site. Rare plant species and forest cover community types may preclude development in certain portions of the site. Development constraints that could not be mapped relate to the possible presence of unidentified archaeological sites, both prehistoric and historic and threatened or endangered species. A high potential for these resources exists within much of the park property, requiring site-specific investigations of proposed development areas during the design and development process to ensure avoidance or minimization and mitigation of any adverse impacts on those resources. Additional constraints associated with existing site development, such as the existing cemetery, the existence or absence of utilities, or areas of sensitive natural resources, may preclude use of certain areas for other purposes. Off-site conditions that could potentially limit site development and park uses such as local zoning regulations or restrictions imposed by overlay districts, also may be considered constraints for the purposes of this General Management Plan.

Opportunities Based upon existing physical and environmental site constraints, several ridge-top areas within the park could offer potential for limited development on site, if not restricted by existing cultural resources. These ridge tops run west to east, between the four drainage ways, across the site. Areas with limited facility development potential present opportunities for alternative uses of these lands for low impact activities such as environmental and cultural interpretive trails, hiking and birding. The Potomac River frontage, stream valleys and hillsides may provide opportunities for these types of activities, unless otherwise indicated by additional natural or cultural resources surveys.

Conclusion

The majority of the site is constrained by physical features and known significant cultural and natural resources, resulting in limited facility development potential. Although limiting to facility construction, these site

characteristics lend themselves to interpretation, and educational study and resource preservation.

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I. PARK RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ZONES

Resource management zones for Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park conform to the resource management and use guidelines in NVRPA's *Policy Plan* and park classification for Regional Historic/Cultural Parks and for Regional Shoreline Parks. Resource management and use policies and planning and development guidelines for these classifications indicate inclusion of a Cultural Resource Protection Zone, emphasizing preservation, conservation or restoration of cultural areas, a Natural Resource Protection Zone, emphasizing conservation, preservation or enhancement of natural resources and a Recreation Zone, emphasizing provision of a variety of recreational experiences. Identification and delineation of management zone boundaries within Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park was based upon physical site constraints and opportunities, existing site resources, current land use and potential for future uses and management within the park. The majority of the park site lies within one or more resource protection zones. One approximately 8-acre area designated by a development proffer condition, will be used for recreational purposes as a Town of Leesburg community park. (Note: See [Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park Management Zones Map](#), for details.) **Cultural Resource Protection Zone**

The function of this zone is to protect existing cultural resources and provide opportunities for education and interpretation of history of human occupation of the site. Resource management and use within this zone emphasizes preservation, conservation and restoration where appropriate, of the historical and cultural areas within the park. Facility development will be restricted and will not adversely affect historic and cultural resources. Long-term objectives for this park include development of a visitor center, interpretive facilities and programs and encourages revenue generation. Potential uses permitted:

- Research
- Resource management
- Interpretation and education
- Low impact recreation
- Limited support infrastructure
- Historic restoration

Cultural resources at Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park may exist within any of the resource management zones. Therefore, cultural resource surveys will be conducted to identify potential sites or features prior to any potential site development or land-disturbing activity. **Natural Resource Protection Zone** The primary purpose of this zone is to protect existing natural resources and habitats and to identify areas that warrant special resource management. This management zone may include areas identified as outstanding natural or cultural resources or areas considered undevelopable because of site constraints. Human impact to the environment shall be minimal. Vehicular traffic, structures and facilities will be strictly regulated. Potential uses permitted:

- Low impact recreation Interpretation and education Resource management Research
- Limited support infrastructure

Recreation Zone The primary purpose of the Recreation Zone within Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park is to provide local citizens with nearby recreational facilities, as stipulated with development proffer conditions. This zone will include development of various recreational facilities, park infrastructure and site amenities. Potential uses permitted:

- Low impact recreation High impact recreation Interpretation and education Resource management Research
- Support infrastructure

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J. PARK OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park has no on-site staffing but is managed by Upper Potomac Properties staff at nearby Temple Hall Farm Regional Park. Scheduled programs and events such as re-enactments are coordinated through this staff.

K. PARK VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park offers visitors a self-guided tour throughout the year, on the one-mile long loop trail, featuring displays interpreting the Civil War battle.

Guided tours are available May through October, and Civil War enthusiasts have opportunities to participate in or view re-enactments and special events scheduled periodically.

L. FUTURE PLANS AND STUDIES

Planning Projects The General Management Plan is the foundation of the park planning process and provides the basic data and guidelines for all future actions. Plans and projects should be completed utilizing current data and implemented as funding, staffing and priorities allow. Subsequent plans to the GMP could include:

- Park Operations and Management Plan Resource Management Plans Interpretive Plan
- General Management Plan revisions

NVRPA is currently studying the feasibility of the development of joint-use visitor's center facility with the Town of Leesburg, to serve Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park and the town's adjacent Veterans Park. **Research Projects and Studies** Future planning and management of Ball's Bluff Regional Battlefield Park could benefit from additional studies and research into the following areas as funding and staffing becomes available:

- Additional research on the Battle of Ball's Bluff Detailed natural

resource inventories Historic and prehistoric archaeological investigations

- Visitor use surveys (periodic)

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M. LAND ACQUISITION

A stated goal of the NVRPA is to protect regionally significant resources through acquisition of strategic lands as they become available and to incorporate the management of these resources into General Management Plans. Acquisition of lands may proceed by the dedication process, purchase or other means.

As financial and staffing resources and other special opportunities become available, NVRPA should determine potential acquisition sites to provide areas for resource protection, recreational use and water access, as part of a regional greenway system.

N. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

Design and construction projects are implemented through NVRPA's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in order to provide sufficient Regional Park lands and facilities to meet the growing needs of Northern Virginians. Typically, the CIP involves a five-year plan for development projects throughout the Regional Park system. Projects included on the current CIP (FY 1999-2004) include construction of a Park Office and Interpretive Facility and improvements to the entrance road. All development plans should be implemented under the guidelines presented in the General Management Plan. Detailed resource surveys should be conducted to identify potential heritage resources and rare, threatened or endangered species, prior to potential site development or land disturbing activity. [Return to Top](#)

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