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PUBLIC MEETING RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

VALENTINE CREEK PARK WATER ACCESS – Project# P567418

The Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) thank you for your interest in and attention to the planned Valentine Creek Park.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) and DRP received questions and comments from 224 people. There was a total of 97 participants at the October 23, 2025 meeting at Southshore Elementary School, of which 91 were residents, and the remaining six included the DRP and DPW staff, and members of the design team. Comments were received from 238 people during the period following the Public Meeting.

The public comment period ended on November 6, 2025. This serves as a summary of those comments. A complete listing of those comments is posted on the DRP website at: <https://www.aacounty.org/recreation-parks/capital-projects/valentine-creek-park>

A recorded copy of the October 23, 2025 Public Meeting is available at this link.

<https://www.aacounty.org/planning-and-zoning/development/community-meetings/community-meeting-calendar/past-meetings-closed>.

In an effort to address the overarching themes of the questions, we offer the following summary of questions posed and synopses of the answers:

County government/Community meeting processes

- *Comments in favor of kayak access appeared to come from individuals outside our community. It raises concerns that input from non-local groups—potentially with political or financial influence—is being weighed more heavily than those of adjacent residents who will bear the direct impact.*
- *Will the comments from the meeting on 10/22 be posted? Where and what is the timeline for posting comments regarding the Valentine Creek project? Will there be future well-advertised public meetings regarding this project and not just another meeting for stakeholders?*
- *Why wasn't the public notified of this meeting?*
- *The Conservancy's October 1 post on their website referred to consultation with "community leaders" in the design of Concept D.2. To our knowledge, no members of the VCCA Board were invited or consulted in that process. We would appreciate clarity on which leaders were included, and whether the full Conservancy Board formally convened and voted on its stated position.*

Since this is a County Park, all County residents are able to express their opinions on this project. The comments to the meeting will be posted here: <https://www.aacounty.org/planning-and-zoning/development/community-meetings/community-meeting-calendar/past-meetings-closed>

The survey that was mentioned was a 2017 and 2022 county wide survey called the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) survey. Public input and stakeholder advice was solicited through a public online survey and a series of public "Town Hall" meetings. The LPPRP survey identified "Public water access: boat ramps, fishing piers and swimming beaches..." as a "primary deficit" in the County parks system. Every 5 years County residents are able to provide input on what kind of parks and amenities they would like in the County. A summary of the 2022 findings can be found here: <https://www.aacounty.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/aacounty-lpprp-20220705.pdf>

The Department of Public Works mailed notices 28 days in advance of the meeting to the property owners within 300' of the property boundary - a total of over 300 mailings. This is the same regulation that is followed by all developers. The meeting notification was posted on the Office of Planning and Zoning Community meeting page, on DRP's calendar of events, and the Department's Capital project webpage. Another public meeting will be held prior to construction.

A stakeholder meeting was held on September 16, 2025. Representatives from the Arden on the Severn, Herald Harbor, and Valentine Creek community associations, the Severn River Association, the Crownsville Conservancy, and community members who had an interest in water access and maintaining the hiking trails in the park, along with members of the Severn River Commission and Maryland DNR were invited to participate. The attendees included three local communities, a water access representative, a trail user, the Severn Riverkeeper, the Severn River Association, the Crownsville Conservancy, and several Valentine Creek homeowners.

Background/History

- *I have heard that since the purchase was used with this money, the DNR requires that this land has to include public access or the money has to be given back-it's a clause in the agreement. I have some questions about this- First of all is this true? If this is true, what qualifications does this land have to meet to fit the public access requirements? Can it arguably be accessible as is?*
- *At the meeting it was stated that a survey had been distributed to residents to gather ideas for the site's use. To our knowledge, and after speaking with many neighbors, most in the Valentine Creek community, never received such a survey.*
- *I understand that the land was purchased using POS funding and as such, the County stipulates that it must be developed in some format for public use. Is it possible to purchase it with other County funds and reimburse the POS funding?*
- *If the property is already open and actively used for recreation, then it already meets the Program Open Space criteria for public access. Why, then, is additional disturbance needed?*

The Department of Natural Resources' Program Open Space provided funding for the acquisition of the property for Valentine Creek Park in 2018. The restrictive covenants associated with Program Open Space require a permanent dedication to public recreational use. The land cannot be converted from outdoor public recreation or open space use to any other use without the written approval of the Secretary of the DNR and other state officials.

The County's 2017 and 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans both identify a need for increased public access to the Bay. Council District 6 residents ranked water access, beach swimming, and access for cartop watercraft as their second highest want in the surveys and public input to those plans.

The County application that was submitted to DNR in part reads: This project presents an opportunity for a car-top boat launch for trailer boats to address the Severn River. Further on, it lists the benefit as water access while preventing the development of homes in this area. The DRP purchased this property with the intention of

providing water access for the public.

Park Operations

- *How will the county monitor motorcycle and bicycle traffic and others that may remain after hours?*
- *What is the deterrent for overnight stays and campfires?*
- *County representatives indicated that park rangers would patrol the site. Please explain.*

The County can use a variety of methods including signage clearly indicating park rules and regulations (hours), physical barriers (i.e. electronic gates) if needed, patrols/working with partners in law enforcement, and community reporting.

As the Valentine Creek Park project moves forward to increase public access, Park Ranger units assigned to the location would adjust their patrol to provide increased presence at the site. Currently, Rangers patrol similar operations like Spriggs Farm Park, Homeport Farm Park, and Jack Creek Park one/two times on weekdays and daily on Saturday/Sunday/Holidays. The same patrol schedule would apply to Valentine Creek Park.

Traffic Impacts

- *Can a full traffic study be done to ensure safety in the Valentine Creek Community? Would a traffic light be necessary at the intersection of Old Herald Harbor Road and Valentine Creek Road?*
- *You stated that the concerns about the safety of the intersection at Old Herald Harbor Road, and management of increased traffic and speed limits must be addressed by someone at DPW. Do you have that contact information?*
- *Increasing the volume of traffic will increase the number of accidents on our road (Valentine Creek).*
- *Valentine Creek Road was recently resurfaced and already shows cracks and potholes. Additional traffic will only accelerate deterioration.*
- *This area already has a record of traffic accidents, and adding more vehicles and boat trailers would only make conditions more dangerous.*
- *Concerns about narrow street and safety to residents walking on the street.*
- *Concerns about overflow parking blocking emergency vehicles and parking on lawns*
- *Our very narrow street, with no shoulder or sidewalk is not conducive to traffic or boats*
- *This project would dramatically increase the existing hazards at the intersection with Valentine Creek Road.*
- *Concern about traffic on road and children playing*
- *Currently the width of Valentine Creek Drive is 18-20'. The proposed roadway for the project is stated to be 24'. If that is the standard, then how can Valentine Creek Drive, which is only 18-20 feet wide, be considered safe, especially with the expected increase in traffic.*
- *How will EMS have access to the park when the gate is closed?*
- *What is the enforceable plan to prevent excess visitors from parking on Valentine Creek? These vehicles would block emergency vehicles, trash trucks and residents attempting to tow boats and trailers. This has not been an issue in other parks however if it arises DRP will address the situation.*
- *The lack of sidewalk forces residents to walk in the roadway increased risk of accidents*

On October 1, 2025, DRP and DPW met with Erik Terry from the BOH (Bureau of Highways) to discuss the traffic concerns at Valentine Creek and Old Herald Harbor Road. Based upon the amount of traffic that is predicted (30 cars per day), it is unlikely an increase in accidents will occur however BOH (Bureau of Highways) is willing to meet with the community to address their concerns. All of these comments have been provided to BOH for consideration. The contact information for traffic concerns can be addressed to Nestor Flores pwflor11@aacounty.org and Erik Terry pwterr00@aacounty.org. Based on police records, there have been no reported accidents on Valentines Creek Rd from 2020-2024.

A traffic study can be done to address any operational issues if there are any. The Bureau of Highways (BOH) typically works with small groups of 5-10 people. They will be reaching out to members of the Valentine Creek, Arden, and Herald Harbor Community Association to discuss community concerns. For more information, traffic control guidelines can be found here: <https://www.aacounty.org/public-works/highways/traffic-engineering-maintenance/neighborhood-traffic-control>

The majority of kayakers transport via cartop. Trailers are rarely used. The site will be designed for cartop vehicles only. "No Trailers" signs will be posted at the entrance. The County anticipates no more than 20-30 park users per day on the weekend. If parking on the street becomes a problem, the County may install 'no parking' signs along the Valentine Creek Road. Emergency services have gate access to the site at all times. This procedure is successfully in place in other County gated areas.

Design Details

- *This trail will traverse very rough terrain and passes over several gullies. How much grading do you anticipate?*
- *I want to see the existing hiking trails remain.*
- *The fishing pier is in a shallow mudflat and it will be difficult to fish.*
- *Will the County be pursuing a waiver for ADA accessibility? Concerns about excluding residents with disabilities.*
- *A pier placement in the proposed plan is a terrible idea that would result in the need to dredge the creek for construction access.*

Approximately 11,200 square feet of steep slopes for the access road and 13,000 square feet of steep slopes for the trail will require grading. At this time, timber steps with a kayak slide is proposed to minimize grading and traverse the steep slopes closer to the water.

The existing trails will remain and crossings with proposed improvements will be incorporated into the design.

The Department of Recreation and Parks remains committed to providing accessible and inclusive recreation activities throughout Anne Arundel County while also preserving the natural character of unique outdoor environments like Valentine Creek.

This Park sits on very steep natural terrain, which limits the types of improvements that can be made without significantly altering the landscape. The modifications required to create an ADA-accessible route to the waterfront and other park features would involve major grading and structural changes that would fundamentally change the natural environment and purpose of this park, which is intended to remain an undeveloped nature area.

Pier construction at the proposed location will not require dredging. The contractor will be able to access from both land and water to build both the pier in shallower and deeper water depths. No dredging is proposed as part of this pier construction.

Permitting and County Codes

- *How does this development comply with the Critical Area Designation of an RCA (Resource Conservation Area)?*
- *County Code §17-6-404 prohibits disturbance of steep slopes unless no feasible alternative exists. How will construction on these slopes affect erosion and sedimentation into tidal waters?*

Critical Area code allows for development of water-dependent activities with the appropriate approvals.

Mitigation requirements for all tree removals and new lot coverage will be determined per Critical Area requirements. Proposed mitigation planting plan (buffer management plan) will be developed to meet the requirement. The Buffer Management Plan will be developed during the 60% design phase and will be reviewed and approved by the Office of Planning and Zoning and the Critical Area Commission as part of the grading permit review.

A modification per County Code § 17-2-108 will be applied for disturbance to steep slopes. Erosion and sediment control (ESC) measures are installed prior to disturbance of the steep slopes and will remain in place until the disturbed area is stabilized. The ESC plan is reviewed and approved by AACo Soil Conservation District and MDE for General Permit for Discharges of Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity

Environmental Concerns

- *How many trees will be removed as part of this project?*
- *We request a full inventory of specimen tree slated for removal.*
- *How/where will the replacement plantings occur?*
- *Concerns about wildlife impacts*
- *Are there wetland impacts?*
- *Have the impacts on waterfowl been analyzed?*
- *What are the impacts on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV)?*
- *How will the cutting of trees have an impact on wildlife?*
- *The removal of mature trees that are currently holding the shoreline in place would be devastating.*
- *How will nutrients from the development be prevented from entering the waters?*
- *Wildlife and Environmental Concerns: It was suggested that DNR found no issues with wildlife. However, this contradicts local knowledge and observations. Valentine Creek is home to box turtle breeding grounds and terrapin turtles. Their presence deserves serious biological study before any construction*
- *The proposed fishing pier will kill the nearby SAV and destroy breeding grounds for great and little blue herons*
- *A commercial landfill company wants the contract to dump demolition and construction waste - profitable destruction of a large delicate watershed natural environment.*
- *The project will cause pollution.*
- *Please publish the environmental package (NRI/FSD, FIDS, wetlands, specimen trees, stormwater)*
- *The project will cause erosion*
- *Concern about FIDS habitat*
- *The dredging would destroy the local habitat.*
- *Adding a paved access road and parking lot will fragment habitat, introduce runoff, and degrade a sensitive shoreline that functions best when left undisturbed.*
- *The area is deemed nonswimmable.*

One of the key goals for the Project is to minimize the environmental impact. The current concept has reduced parking from 40 spaces to 10 spaces reducing the impacts to the environment. The parking area has also been relocated outside of the critical area and on flatter terrain to further reduce environmental impacts.

The Concept Plan with the Tree Survey indicating trees to be removed can be found at:

<https://www.aacounty.org/recreation-parks/capital-projects/valentine-creek-park>. Currently, there are no specimen trees (trees over 32" DBH) that are proposed to be removed; however, as design progresses from concept phase, limits of disturbance may change and a couple of specimen trees may be impacted.

Mitigation requirements for all tree removals and new lot coverage will be determined per Critical Area and Forest Conservation requirements. Proposed mitigation planting plans will be developed to meet the

requirement. Replanting onsite will occur to the maximum extent practicable. The mitigation plans will be developed during the 60% design phase and will be reviewed and approved by the Office of Planning and Zoning and the Critical Area Commission as part of the grading permit review

Through the state, federal, and local permitting processes, any necessary time of year restrictions for construction will be determined to prevent impacts to flora and fauna during critical spawning and growing seasons, including but not limited to wintering waterfowl, FIDS, fish, etc. There are zero impacts to wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV).

Erosion and sediment control (ESC) measures are installed prior to disturbance of the steep slopes and will remain in place until the disturbed area is stabilized. The ESC plan is reviewed and approved by AACo Soil Conservation District and MDE for General Permit for Discharges of Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity.

As part of the design criteria and meeting Stormwater Management Requirements, all of the rainwater will be captured and treated before it enters the waterway. The Project will address stormwater management requirements through Environmental Site Design. Conceptual footprints that meet preliminary SWM requirements are shown on the enclosed concept plans. A Stormwater Report with detailed computations will be developed as the project progresses from concept design. The SWM computations and plans will be reviewed by DPW Engineering Division through the grading permit review process.

There are no plans in Valentine Park to allow a landfill to dump materials. There are no plans to dredge as part of this project. The proposed pier is for fishing and not for swimming. Creating a swimmable beach area is not part of this project.

The Project design is in accordance with the Guide to the Conservation of FIDs in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, June 2000 to minimize the impacts to FIDS habitat. Regulatory agencies may include a time-of-year restriction permit condition that prohibits construction during the breeding season of FIDS habitat. Refer also to information in the Valentine Creek Water Access Feasibility Study which is posted on DRP's website.

Use and Operation

- *What are the proposed hours of use? Where will the port-a-potties be placed and how often will trucks need to pump them out? How large are the septic trucks?*
- *There needs to be corresponding speed limits in place 365 days beginning at Severn Narrows all the way inland to Severn Run. Shore line erosion has dramatically increased with the current speed limit settings and continually rising tides.*
- *How will damage to the street from large construction trucks be mitigated?*
- *Also, being that the park is public there is no way to vet the people who are accessing the park. Has there been any consideration to assess a daily or annual fee to enter the park?*
- *Strangers in a Family-Oriented Area: Increased traffic will bring an influx of visitors unfamiliar to the neighborhood, raising concerns about theft, trespassing, and safety for all.*

There would be one port-a-pottie on site near the parking area and it is anticipated a service truck would need to access the park once or twice a week to pump it out. The septic trucks are single axle trucks under 26,000 lbs. The port-a-pots would be seasonal use only.

The Park will be accessible through the gate system from dawn to dusk. All vehicles who enter the park will have to fill out a form on-line to get a QR code to access the park. County parks are public parks and are available for anyone to use. A fee is not proposed at this park.

The Park is currently patrolled by park rangers once during weekdays and daily on weekends and holidays and this will continue.

Any concerns regarding motorized boat vessel speeds can be directed to MD DNR.

The contractor will be responsible for any damage to roadways as part of the construction documents.

Kayak Launch

- *How will the kayak launch be used during low tide in a mud flat?*
- *How long is the trail to the kayak launch?*
- *How many people will use a kayak slide?*
- *How many kayakers will use such a long path and steep slope?*
- *The trail from the proposed parking lot to the kayak launch area apparently is to be a pervious surface. What specifically is the type of surface?*
- *Launching speedboats and kayaks and paddleboards together is dangerous.*
- *There will be low usage by kayakers due to the steep terrain.*
- *How will the kayak usage/rentals be managed? Where do the proceeds go?*
- *Please define what a 'dedicated kayaker' is.*

Mean low water at the kayak launch is -0.82, and mean high water is +0.30'. The existing sand area will be replenished with proposed sand so the launch starts at +3.0' and extends to -1.0 feet so it is accessible during low and high tides. The slope of the proposed soft launch is 10:1.

The trail from the proposed parking lot will be 2,200 linear feet. The surface material of the trail will vary depending on the slope. Flatter segments can utilize mulch or stone and the shorter, steeper segments will be asphalt or timber steps. Anyone who wishes to access the water from this site may utilize the trail. A kayak slide may be utilized for easier transport of kayak up/down the steeper terrain segments. Kayak storage areas and/or rentals are also being explored. The proposed design is for a soft launch and will not allow for use by motorized vessels.

Alternative Sites

- *Why can't Jonas Green Park and Truxton park in Annapolis be used instead? Why can't county funds be used to upgrade them?*
- *Why can't Brewers Pond be used instead?*
- *Why can't the existing public boat launch at Smith's Marina be used? Why can't the County subsidize the parking fee there?*
- *Why can't Bargagni Rd be used instead? This may be a better site of development for the county, especially since the new county firehouse will be opening soon at the intersection of Sunrise Beach and Generals, leaving the old Herald Harbor fire department space more accessible.*
- *Why can't Sherwood Forest be used instead?*
- *Why can't Arlington Echo be used instead?*
- *Why can't the parking lot at Arden be used?*
- *Suggest the public park at the DPW water tower and hike throughout the park*
- *Suggest parking at Herald Harbor Volunteer Fire Dept*
- *Please investigate Snodgrass Road or Bishop Trail as alternative access points*

Anne Arundel County has an ongoing program to improve water access throughout the County. Numerous studies and Capital Projects have been performed to ensure widespread access for cartop vessels including

kayaks and stand-up paddle boards. The Upper Severn River in particular lacks public access as a majority of the shoreline is privately owned. The primary purpose of this project is to increase free County public water access to the Sever River. For more information on why

Truxton is a City of Annapolis Park and is already operating as a soft launch and recreational boat launch for City residents. Improvements to Jonas and Anne Catharine Green Park are currently in design, in partnership with the Resilience Authority, to increase public recreation and access in the County.

The opportunities for improvements to Brewers Pond Natural Area included in the Water Access Study for Non-Vessel Uses, February 2025, only proposed foot traffic to the water, not access for non-motorized vessels and therefore it does not meet the goal of this project. Limited parking is available along Sahlin Farm Road as the access easement into the Brewers Pond NA property is not intended for vehicular traffic.

The Crownsville Hospital Park does not provide public water access which is what this project's goal is. The purpose of this project is to provide free public water access.

Smith's Marina is private and requires a fee. The County previously discussed use of the Smith's Marina but due to limited parking on site no reasonable accommodations could be made.

The Bargagni Road Site has limited shoreline access insufficient at this time for a public water access site.

Sherwood Forest is a private, gated community and not accessible to the public.

Arlington Echo is a school facility with controlled access and is not open to the general public.

Parking in Arden Park would be over one mile from the proposed water access point, three times as far as currently proposed. Crossings over Gumbottom Branch, Plum Creek and numerous wetlands would be required.

Parking at the water tower would potentially be a safety concern for DPW and is twice the distance of the proposed parking with two stream crossings. It is disconnected from the park parcel.

Parking at the Herald Harbor Volunteer Fire Department would potentially be a safety concern for DPW and is twice the distance of the proposed parking with two stream crossings. It is disconnected from the park parcel.

Both Bishop Trail and Snodgrass Road would have two stream crossings to get to the proposed water access site. Opportunities to access tidal waters on this side of the park are limited due to the extensive marsh complex and potential impacts to wetlands.

Costs

- *What is the total cost of the proposed facility to build and install?*
- *What is the estimated cost of maintaining the facility?*
- *Will users be charged a storage fee and/or a launch fee?*
- *Could you provide the estimated cost of the entire project including ongoing costs for annual maintenance, bathrooms and park staff?*
- *Does the County have any estimates of the cost per linear foot for the Valentine Creek Drive extension, the cost of the parking lot and storm water management associated with the extension and parking lot?*
- *With the project down to just 10 parking spots, is it worth the bang for the buck for use of county money?*
- *What are the cost comparisons to this and similar projects?*

The projected probable cost of construction is approx. \$1,233,508. Future maintenance will be handled by the County's Recreation and Parks staff. No specific estimate of maintenance is available at this time.

Homeport Farms Park is a similar project that included installing a new access road, 31 parking spaces, and an access path for a soft kayak launch on Church Creek. The total cost was \$307,568. With escalation costs the total in 2025 would be \$650,000. While the parking size and configuration is similar, there are a few key differences including: an access road that is wider, paved and requires a guardrail, installation of a fishing pier, longer trail to launch, and installation of one or two stormwater best management practices.

There will be no fee to launch a kayak from the park. Kayak storage areas and/or rentals are being explored and no cost information is available at this time.