

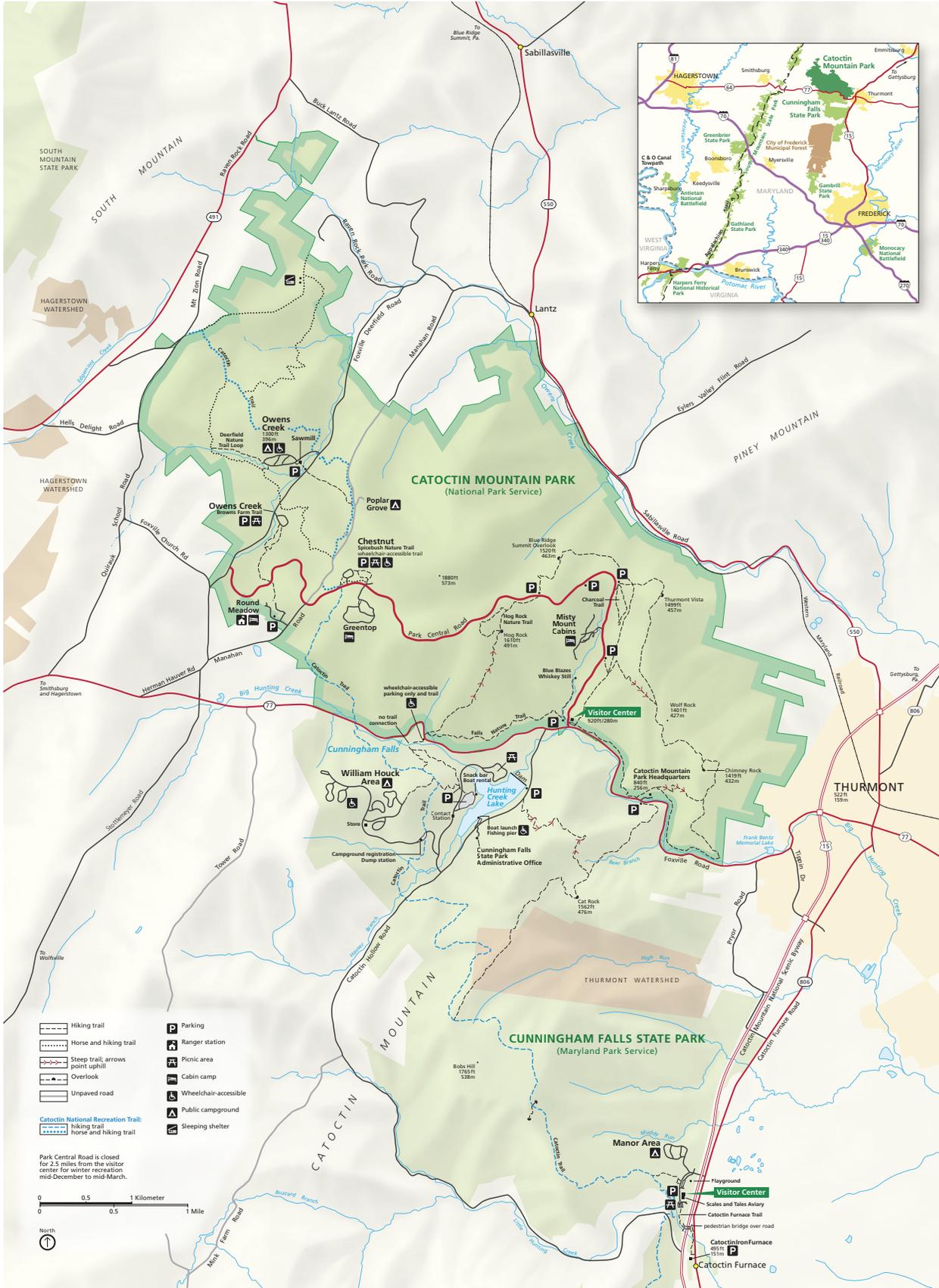
## Description of Catoctin Mountain Park

Catoctin Mountain, comprises the easternmost ridge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Here, the story of human habitation is written on the land. Years of clear-cutting the hardwood forests for making charcoal and building homesteads and farming the valley left a deep mark on the landscape. Previous to European incursions by second-generation Americans and German immigrants, small tribal groups led a semi-nomadic existence—they farmed, hunted, and fished the land and rivers. They also quarried rhyolite for the production of lithic tools. Evidence of their presence in western Maryland can be traced back 3,500 years. The name Catoctin is thought to have come from the Kittocton, an American Indian tribe or clan that once lived between the mountain and the Potomac River. In 1732, European American settlers began arriving in the Monocacy River Valley, where the native people were seldom seen. Farming and small industries, such as sawmills, gave way to a burgeoning charcoal and iron industry whose structures are still visible today.

Catoctin Mountain Park originated during the Great Depression. The federal government acquired over 10,000 acres in 1935 and established the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA) in 1936 with Executive Order 7496. The program created public parks out of marginal farmland near cities—most eventually became state or national parks. In 1936, a New Deal agency named the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (to be renamed the Works



Cabin camp circa Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area. NPS photo



Projects Administration in 1939) hired hundreds of local men to create maintenance shops, a visitor center, and cabin camps. Later, in 1939, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) set up camp in today's Round Meadow, tasked with returning the Catoctin landscape to native eastern hardwood forest. The WPA operated from 1933 to 1942 providing unskilled manual labor jobs related to conservation and the development of natural resources in rural lands owned by federal, state, and local governments. At Catoctin, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted trees, turned old farmland into open meadows, and restored the streams to their natural flow—all of which revitalized the land and brought back native plants and wildlife. The Civilian Conservation Corps also built roads, trails, cabins, guardrails, stone walls, and shelters, and conducted historic preservation projects and archeological work on nearby Catoctin Furnace. In 1965, the park was also the site of the first Job Corps Center. Today, the 5,748-acre Catoctin Mountain Park represents a spirit of regeneration—the second-growth forest, mountain streams, historic cabin camps, and facilities for persons with disabilities offer visitors diverse outdoor recreation opportunities near mid-Atlantic population centers. Hiking trails through red oaks, birches, dogwood, and other native forest species lead to high valley panoramas and one of the best trout fishing streams in the region.

In the spring of 1942, at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the National Park Service began to consider several areas for a presidential retreat. An existing camp area within Catoctin Mountain RDA known as Camp Hi-Catoctin was selected by the president. He christened the camp Shangri-La (named for the fictional Himalayan paradise). In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower renamed the retreat Camp David after his father and grandson, both named David.

In 1945, with the added significance of the establishment of the Presidential Retreat and “the historical events of national and international interest” that occurred there, President Harry S. Truman determined the area would “be retained by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior . . . in accord with the position expressed by . . . President Roosevelt.” Subsequently, in 1954, the existing 5,748-acre park was carved out of the Recreational Demonstration Area and designated Catoctin Mountain Park by the director of the National Park Service. The remaining 4,445 acres of the Recreational Demonstration Area south of Route 77 were transferred to the State of Maryland and became present-day Cunningham Falls State Park.

The buildings and structures built by the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, along with the site of the nation's first Job Corps Center, left a tangible presence that speaks to the nation's progress in times of great challenge.



Chimney Rock. NPS photo