



Foundation Document Overview

Prince William Forest Park

Virginia



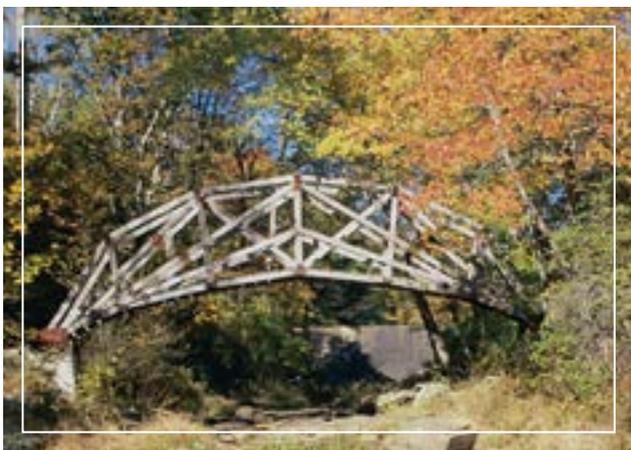
Contact Information

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Purpose



PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK offers recreational opportunities rooted in its legacy as the model for the New Deal-era recreational demonstration area program, and preserves, protects, and interprets a diverse array of natural and cultural resources.



Significance

Significance statements express why Prince William Forest Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Prince William Forest Park is home to the largest protected Eastern Piedmont forest in the United States.
- Through the protection of a large percentage of the Quantico Creek watershed, Prince William Forest Park provides outstanding opportunities for education and scientific study.
- During World War II, Prince William Forest Park served as a training site for the Office of Strategic Services, the United States' first centralized intelligence agency; the changes to the landscape from their occupation and use of the park provide tangible connections to this clandestine chapter in American history.
- During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration transformed a landscape of sub-marginal farmlands into the Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area; today the park contains the largest concentration of CCC and WPA structures in the national park system.
- Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area was the model for the recreational demonstration area program, a New Deal-era (1933–1938) initiative that built parks for the nation's urban youth and families.
- During a time of racial segregation, Prince William Forest Park was the first recreational demonstration area in the southern states to provide opportunities for African Americans to connect with the outdoors through cabin camping opportunities.
- Prince William Forest Park protects the longest intact section of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail found within the national park system.
- Prince William Forest Park provides diverse recreational opportunities and solitude within one of the most densely populated regions of the United States.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Recreation and Renewal.** Rooted in its legacy as a recreational demonstration area, Prince William Forest Park provides a wide range of recreational opportunities through recreational vehicle, tent, and cabin campsites; 37 miles of forested trails for hiking, running, solitude, and natural quiet; reservoirs and streams for fishing; scenic roads for biking; outstanding habitat for wildlife viewing; and backcountry areas for backpacking, solitude, and natural quiet.
- **Natural Landscape.** Once a place of sub-marginal farm lands, silted streams, and clear-cut forests, Prince William Forest Park has restored the native Eastern Piedmont forest and Coastal Plain ecosystems through the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps and modern-day resource stewardship. The plants, animals, streams, and geologic features that make up this natural landscape provide outstanding opportunities for education, research, and recreation.
- **Recreational Demonstration Area Legacy.** Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area (now known as Prince William Forest Park) was the model for the RDA program, the first national program to construct parks specifically for urban and underprivileged populations. The Chopawamsic model showcased the societal benefits of parks, providing craftsmanship skills to those who constructed and maintained the parks; environmental rehabilitation to the landscape; and life-changing outdoor educational experiences for urban youth, single mothers, and families, a legacy still carried on at Prince William Forest Park today.



- **Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area Landscape.** Constructed of native materials by laborers and craftsmen from the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration during the 1930s, the Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area landscape includes original bridges, dams, lakes, trails, roads, water towers, vegetation, and CCC cabin camps. These structures and their purposeful integration into the natural landscape provide an excellent example of NPS rustic style architectural and landscape design and CCC and WPA craftsmanship.

Other Important Resources and Values

Prince William Forest Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail.** An exceptionally well-preserved segment of the route runs through Prince William Forest Park. The allied armies of Gen. George Washington marched along this route to the siege of Yorktown, a pivotal event in the Revolutionary War.
- **Water Quality of the Quantico Creek Watershed.** Streams in the Quantico Creek watershed that are protected within the park are some of the most unspoiled in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Water quality indicators, such as acidity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, clarity, and plant and animal species diversity and abundance, are all well within healthy levels. This healthy water quality allows the streams to serve as baseline standards to which other streams in the region can be compared.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species.** Prince William Forest Park protects habitat for a variety of threatened and endangered species including the small whorled pogonia, velvet sedge, star-nosed mole, and American ginseng.
- **Office of Strategic Services Landscape.** Prince William Forest Park was the site of the Advanced Special Operations and Communications Training Schools for the World War II era Office of Strategic Services, America's first centralized intelligence agency. The park preserves a vast physical landscape left by the agency, including all five cabin camps; shooting, mortar, and demolition ranges; bunkers and mock tank remnants; and the Burma Road.
- **Museum Collections.** The museum collections associated with Prince William Forest Park include ethnographic and oral histories and more than 30,000 objects, including biological specimens, archeological objects, and records such as work orders, maps, photographs, and blueprints from the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration.

- **Archeological Resources.**

The archeological record at Prince William Forest Park contains evidence of continuous human use of the area dating from American Indian use of the site to the modern day. Significant historical periods represented in the archeological record include the period of American Indian use, early settlements and communities, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the CCC and OSS eras.

- **Other Cultural Landscapes.**

Prince William Forest Park's layered history provides opportunities to protect and interpret a variety of cultural landscapes beyond the five main cabin camps. These landscapes include building foundations, features, and landscapes such as the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine and bridge; the Poor House; 45 known cemeteries; the Greenwood Gold Mine; settlements including Hickory Ridge, Batestown, and Joplin; American Indian camps; Civil War skirmish sites; historic road traces; witness trees; and mill sites. There are also ethnographic resources associated with cultural landscapes throughout the park.



Interpretive Themes



Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Improving Quality of life.** As a model site for the nationwide RDA Program, Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area (now Prince William Forest Park) tells the story of sweeping New Deal programmatic reform aimed at providing economic relief to farmers, training and jobs for the unemployed, and memorable summer camp experiences for economically deprived

urban populations from Washington, D.C. Prince William Forest Park continues to provide opportunities for residents of the metropolitan area and visitors alike to improve their health, fitness, and well being.

- **Opportunities for Natural Resource Stewardship.** The oasis of protected land within Prince William Forest Park preserves irreplaceable habitats for plant and animal communities of the piedmont ecoregion and Quantico Creek watershed. In a sea of suburban sprawl, the park serves as an outdoor laboratory for scientific research and environmental education and as a gateway for all visitors to develop a conservation and preservation stewardship ethic.
- **A Military Legacy.** From Revolutionary War generals to today's United States Marine Corps, Prince William Forest Park continues to protect and share its proud military history and forges a greater appreciation for the sacrifices and service of our armed forces.
- **Human Relationship with the Land.** The lands of Prince William Forest Park preserve a record of diverse relationships between humans and the environment from prehistoric times to the present day. People shaped the landscape and in turn are shaped by the landscape.



Description



Prince William Forest Park is located approximately 35 miles south of Washington, D.C., in Prince William County, Virginia. Totalling nearly 15,000 acres, the park is the largest protected natural area in the region and

is the third largest national park in the state of Virginia. It is also the largest example of a Piedmont forest in the national park system, serving as a sanctuary for a diversity of plants and animals, which are threatened by increasing development in Northern Virginia.

The park is at the transition between the rolling Piedmont Plateau and the low-lying Atlantic Coastal Plain. These two zones meet within the park at the “fall line,” where land level

drops from the harder rocks of the piedmont and flow over the softer sedimentary rocks of the coastal plain, resulting in unique geological features such as waterfalls and rock outcroppings. Parts of the Quantico Creek watershed are also within the park, contributing to the beautiful natural landscape that the park preserves.

The hills within Prince William Forest Park have been inhabited for at least 9,000 years. Many diverse groups, including American Indians, African Americans, loggers, miners, and European settlers, have called the parklands home. These various human inhabitants contributed to a diverse landscape that features historic roads, town sites, and mines. Traces of this human history can still be seen throughout the park, with stone piles marking property corners, old fences, and gravestones in family cemeteries.

Description *(continued)*

First established in 1933 as Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA), Prince William Forest Park was created as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal—a nationwide effort aimed at fighting the effects of the Great Depression. It was built as a new type of park, where low-income, inner-city children and families could escape the city and experience nature. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) created programs to reduce unemployment and teach job skills, constructed roads, bridges, dams, and cabin camps throughout the park, which remain today as a reminder of the park's RDA history.

The family camps closed for three years during World War II when the park became a top-secret paramilitary installation.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the first centralized intelligence agency in the U.S., operated two training schools in the park for spies, teaching recruits to gather intelligence, decipher codes, and interpret covert radio transmissions. Many physical remnants exist from this time period, including the modified cabin camps; bunkers; and areas used for armament practice such as firing, mortar, and demolition ranges.

The park returned to recreational use in 1946 and was established under its present name in 1948. While the region has become increasingly urban, Prince William Forest Park still serves as a place where visitors can engage nature while immersed in the natural landscape that has recovered from a distinctive period of American history.

