



Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Preliminary Trails Management Plan

2021



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CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA PRELIMINARY TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Background

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (“CHAT” or “park”) contains a rich assemblage of natural resources, and the park’s green space provides a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities as well as cultural and educational activities. The park is used as a valuable outdoor recreation resource by over 6 million people located within the Atlanta metropolitan area as well as visitors from around the world. The Chattahoochee River begins in northern Georgia, passes through Lake Lanier and the suburbs north of Atlanta, and continues to the Georgia–Florida border as a tributary to the Apalachicola River, totaling 540 river miles. On August 15, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation that set aside the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area as a unit in the national park system. The park contains 48 river miles and is located in an urban and suburban area between Lake Lanier and Atlanta, Georgia.

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area needs a trail management plan to address trail construction and maintenance alternatives for developing and managing a parkwide trail system integrated with other recreational trails in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Most of the park’s 65 miles of designated trail system consists of legacy social trails, utility corridors, and relic roads. These legacy trails lack connectivity to neighboring park trails, degrade water quality through erosion runoff, and damage plant habitat. The park currently has no comprehensive trail plan nor has the park addressed the feasibility of rerouting trails over/around creeks and washouts, provided for closure of unsafe trails, or identified user groups and designated trail uses. Additionally, the park needs to plan for providing backlog maintenance to bring the park trails up to best management practice standards.

Between 2008 and 2013, grant-funded, volunteer-built trail improvements at the park’s Sope Creek unit became extremely popular with users and local governments. Various cooperators and neighbor groups have approached the park about improving trails at other units and connecting with trail networks beyond the park’s boundaries. The recent Chattahoochee RiverLands Greenway Study reconsiders the region’s relationship to the river and proposes a 125-mile uninterrupted multiuse linear network of greenways, blueways, and tributary trails connecting people to parks, the river, and other key destinations. Portions of the proposed greenway connect to units at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, and the National Park Service (NPS) is committed to advancing these regional trail connections. Chattahoochee National Park Conservancy, the park’s primary philanthropic partner, helped fund the initial trail condition assessment that ultimately informed this preliminary trail management plan.

Trail Management Plan Purpose, Needs, and Goals

Purpose

The purpose of the trail management plan will be to provide guidance for improving trail conditions and connecting the 15 park units (Figure 1) within the national recreation area as part of a sustainable, accessible, and regionally integrated trail system.

Need

The trail management plan is needed to:

- develop a more cohesive trail network within and between individual park units within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and the Atlanta regional trail network;
- enhance visitor use and the visitor experience; and
- protect natural and cultural resources through sustainable trail management practices.

Goals

The trail management plan would aim to:

- provide management guidance and direction to increase trail lifespan and minimize maintenance needs while staying within park personnel and budgetary constraints;
- protect park resources and limit impacts from increased trail use;
- reduce visitor use conflicts;
- create a trail system that acts as a common thread between 15 individual parks units;
- enhance or enable appropriate connectivity with existing or planned regional trail networks; and
- identify opportunities for trail-related partner projects with local municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area Georgia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

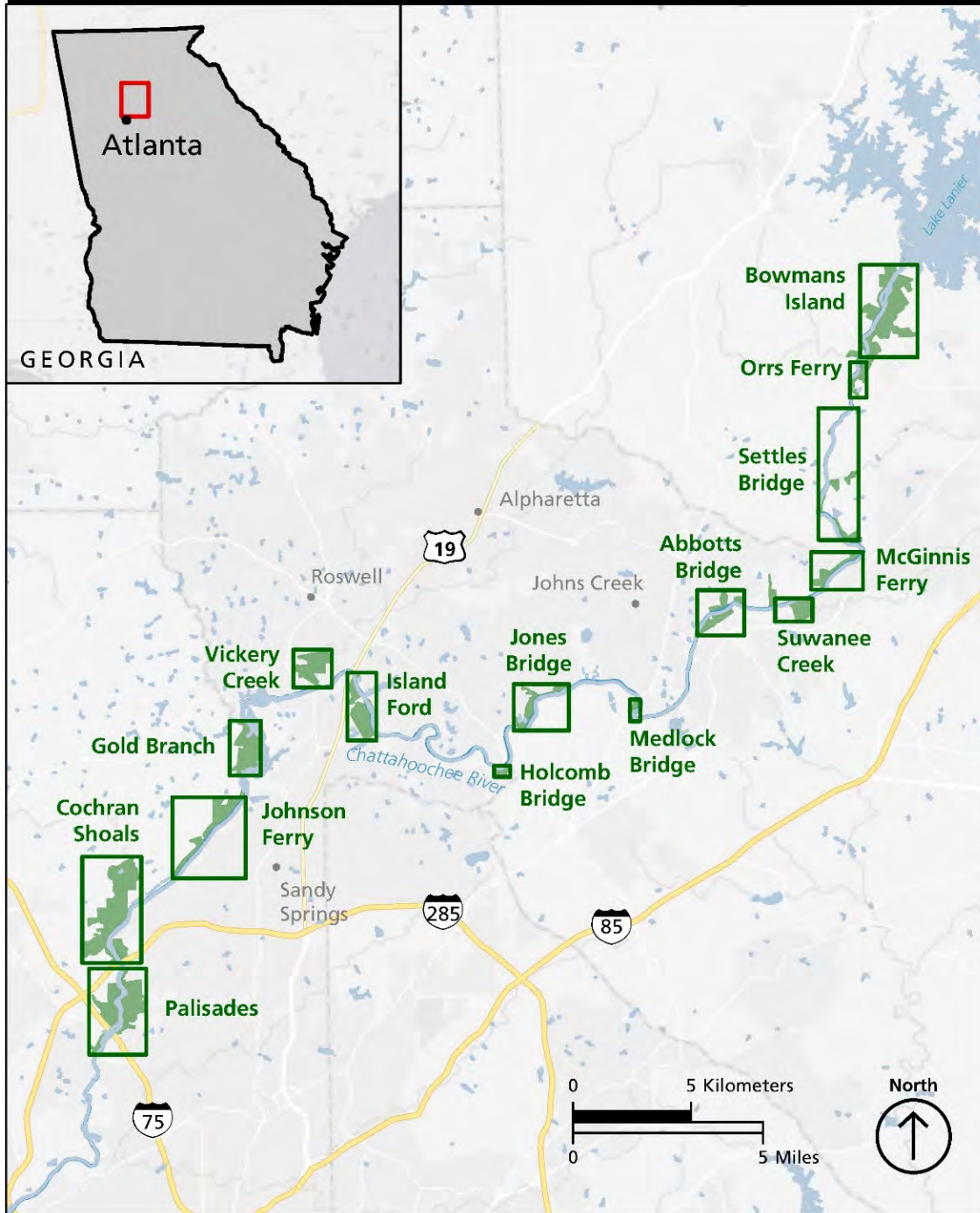


Figure 1. Units of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

DESIRED CONDITIONS FOR TRAILS

Zoning

Management zoning is used by the National Park Service to identify and describe the appropriate variety of natural resource conditions, cultural resource conditions, and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in the different areas of a park. The zoning for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is established in its general management plan (GMP). The zones provide a description of desired conditions at a high level. The trail management plan would update or affirm these zones, and in some cases, trail planning has led to suggestions for amendments to the current GMP zoning.

Desired Conditions for Trails by Unit

The park's trail planning effort would tier from the general management plan and provide implementation-level direction for the trails. As such, this report refines the desired conditions for trails and provides additional detail to the desired conditions described in the general management plan. These conditions have been developed for each unit.

The desired condition statements include descriptions of the most likely visitor uses in a unit; however, these are not the only uses allowed in the unit. Instead, the descriptions are merely the most appropriate uses, given the conditions, and represent how the National Park Service would manage the unit. The descriptions do not necessarily preclude other allowed uses.

Bowmans Island

Desired Condition Statement

West segment — Visitors would experience a quieter and more tranquil setting than in many of the other units, with ample opportunities for solitude, especially on weekdays. A sense of being closer to the North Georgia Mountains would prevail and be reflected in the higher degree of challenge associated with trail-based recreation that excludes equestrian and bicycle use. Opportunities to access the river and riverbank for fly fishing would be plentiful, although the trails would also serve hikers, trail runners, birders, and those accessing bouldering sites.

East segment — Visitors would experience an even quieter and more tranquil setting and more opportunities for solitude as compared to the west segment of Bowmans Island. Visitors would feel like they have space, and they would have a relatively low probability of encountering many other users compared to the west segment or other units of the park. A sense of being closer to the North Georgia Mountains would prevail and be reflected in the higher degree of challenge associated with trail-based recreation. Any new trails would serve hikers and trail runners seeking a longer and more interesting trail experience with sizeable ups and downs. Trails would provide some access to fly fishing and bouldering sites.

Orrs Ferry

Desired Condition Statement

This unit does not have desired land-based visitor experience. As there is no formal land-based public access to this unit, management of Orrs Ferry would be primarily as a buffer zone to protect the riverbank from adjoining development. This unit would be left in a natural condition, as much of it is in the river floodplain.

Settles Bridge

Desired Condition Statement

Both water-based and land-based recreational users would have opportunities to experience the Settles Bridge area. This day-use area would feel connected to surrounding land-based trails and would serve as a convenient place for water trail users to stretch their legs and picnic before, during, or after some time on the river. As such, visitors would encounter other users with some frequency on relatively easy trails. Trails would provide river access for anglers, as well as connections for short- to medium-distance hikes.

McGinnis Ferry

Desired Condition Statement

While there would be relatively few visitors to this unit, those that do visit would find a pleasant opportunity to experience the outdoors in a former white pine tree farm adjacent to a wetlands complex. Recreational opportunities, including trail hiking and wildlife viewing, would be informal and casual, and few other visitors would be encountered.

Suwanee Creek

Desired Condition Statement

This unit does not have a desired trail-based visitor experience. As there is no formal land-based public access to this unit, management of Suwanee Creek would be primarily as a buffer zone to protect the riverbank from adjoining development. Most of the unit would be left in a natural condition as much of it is wetland; minimal to no development would occur here. Across the river from the Rogers Bridge Park in the city of Duluth, the area known as Rogers Bridge West is maintained as an early successional field where bird watching is a common visitor activity.

Abbotts Bridge

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors would have opportunities to experience Abbotts Bridge as individuals and in medium to large groups. The area would have a family-friendly and group-friendly atmosphere. Social experiences with friends and family would prevail, while opportunities for solitude and tranquility would occur on weekdays and less-busy times. As many of the visitors to Abbotts Bridge would have little outdoor experience, trail opportunities would be flat and easy. Trails would primarily serve novice hikers and those looking to stretch their legs after a picnic. Although the pavilion area would continue to have a relatively manicured feel, the trails would

introduce “wild” and natural places to visitors who have not had many experiences with natural settings. River users would continue to have access to put-in and take-out areas, as would anglers who occasionally use the trail system.

Medlock Bridge

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors to this area would have opportunities to rest, access the river, enjoy a picnic lunch, and/or take a short, easy stroll through the forest. A feeling of ease and relaxation would prevail and serve as a respite from the hustle of the surrounding area. Visits would often be short. Anglers would have plentiful access to the riverbank, and boaters would continue to use the area as a launch. As most of the unit is immediately adjacent to Highway 141, this area would have a developed feel.

Jones Bridge

Desired Condition Statement

North segment — Visitors to the North segment of Jones Bridge would have diverse social opportunities to access and enjoy this scenic stretch of the Chattahoochee River. Many of the trail users of this unit would be fishing, although hiking, picnicking, and wading into the river would also be popular recreational activities. Visitors would have ample opportunities to experience the shoals, whether by fishing, viewing, participating in educational ranger-led and special-use programming, or wading. This unit provides one of the best opportunities for visitors to get into the river, and that experience would be readily available. Trail-based opportunities would be easy and serve fitness walkers, dog walkers, anglers, large educational groups, picnickers, and other users.

South segment — Visitors would have opportunities to experience the Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center (CREEC)/south segment of Jones Bridge as individuals and in medium to large groups. The area would have a family-friendly and group-friendly atmosphere, although opportunities for solitude and tranquility would occur on weekdays and less-busy times and as visitors move further away from the education center towards the river. Educational and interpretive experiences would be prevalent and a major focus of this area. As many of the visitors to the CREEC area would have little outdoor experience, trail opportunities would be flat and easy. Trails would serve novice hikers and urban campers but would also be enjoyable for fitness walkers, dog walkers, avid hikers, and occasional trail runners who may increasingly access this area. Although the area around the education center would have a manicured feel, it would provide an introduction to “wild” and natural places for visitors who have not had many experiences with natural places.

Holcomb Bridge

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors to Holcomb Bridge would have the opportunity to access and enjoy this undisturbed forestland bordered by the Chattahoochee River to the north and Crooked Creek to the west. Trail-based opportunities would be primarily a short, easy stroll through the forest providing respite from the hustle of the surrounding area. Trail opportunities would also serve fitness walkers, dog walkers, anglers, and other users seeking a short trail-based experience. Experiences would tend toward more solitude and experiences in small groups.

Island Ford

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors would experience diverse trail-based opportunities at Island Ford. Large, loosely organized hiking groups would be able to experience the trails, as would individuals and smaller groups. Visitors would have social experiences such as picnicking as well as launching and landing on the river with friends and family. Cultural experiences would also be plentiful, as visitors would have opportunities to see and learn about historic resources associated with the Civil War and American Indian life. Trails would provide a diversity of hiking experiences, such as easy hiking to fishing access near the river and more moderate effort required for trails in the uplands.

Vickery Creek

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors to Vickery Creek would have access to several trails for hiking and trail running. Trail use would be more fitness oriented than in some of the other units in the park, with difficulties ranging from moderate to hard, though a quiet and relaxed walk in the forest would also be possible. Opportunities to experience the trails in small groups of friends and families would be abundant. Trails would also provide safe opportunities to hike along, swim, and fish in Big Creek.

Gold Branch

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors would experience a quieter and more tranquil setting than in many of the other units, with some opportunities for solitude. The unit would feel different from many of the other units at Chattahoochee River. The unit's large geographic area, along with the low density of the surrounding area would lend a low-density mountain backcountry feel to the Gold Branch trails, and a diverse range of challenging trail experiences would enhance this feel. The trail system would utilize the topography to provide active and scenic opportunities for birding, hiking, and trail running, including longer duration hikes and runs that include both ridgetop and water-adjacent trail experiences.

Johnson Ferry

Desired Condition Statement

North — Visitors would experience diverse trail-based opportunities in the north portion of Johnson Ferry. Visitors would be able to experience the trails as individuals and in smaller groups and would have social opportunities around the boat launch and covered pavilion. Cultural experiences would be plentiful, as visitors would have opportunities to experience the Hyde Farm cultural landscape — including 20th-century historic structures, terraced fields, and woodlands — as well as the 19th-century river crossing site of Johnson Ferry. Trails would provide diverse hiking experiences, including easy hiking and fishing access near the river, and more moderate effort required for trails in the uplands near the Hyde Farm. Development associated with the concession operation, including raft and kayak rentals, is appropriate.

South — This unit does not have a desired visitor experience. Management of this unit should be primarily as a buffer zone to protect the riverbank from adjoining development. Any existing trails and amenities in this unit would be restored to a natural condition.

Cochran Shoals

Desired Condition Statement

Visitors to Cochran Shoals would experience a fun, social, fitness-oriented trail system throughout the unit. The trail system would feel welcoming to a wide diversity of visitors with varying ability levels and would function as an urban backyard for frequent visitors. These frequent visitors would develop connections with the place and with each other. A high density of visitors would be expected at most times, especially on weekends. Encounters with other visitors would be consistent and frequent. Trail difficulty would range from flat and easy on the fitness loop to moderate and more difficult in the Sope Creek area. The trails would serve casual walkers, hikers, birding groups, trail runners, and mountain bikers, many of whom are visiting for a morning, lunchtime, or evening workout. The trail system would be intuitive and sustainable.

Palisades

Desired Condition Statement

Despite its location inside the Atlanta perimeter, the Palisades unit would have rustic, forested feel evocative of the North Georgia Mountains. Visitors would have opportunities to connect with nature and experience solitude and relative peace and quiet, despite high visitor use at times. The trail system would feel welcoming to a wide diversity of visitors. Trail difficulties would range from challenging hill climbs in Indian Trail and Akers Mill to more moderate riverside walks in the Whitewater area. Visitors would have opportunities to experience some of the iconic scenery in the park as well as the biodiversity the Palisades have to offer. Trails would serve hikers, fitness walkers, and dog walkers. The trail would be sustainable.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Introduction

This section describes the current trail conditions and proposed parkwide and unit-specific trail management strategies as supported by maps in appendixes A and B. The current trail conditions provide a basis for which to compare and evaluate the proposed management strategies. This section identifies unit-by-unit proposed changes to the trail system, including new trail construction and natural rehabilitation of portions of the existing system, and presents an approach to address the purpose and need for the trails plan as described in the introduction. The proposed strategies in this section were derived from recommendations of an interdisciplinary planning team and a contracted trail design firm that utilized feedback and input from the public and stakeholders during an external civic engagement process. Table 1 summarizes the differences between the current trail system and the proposed trail management plan. Trails proposed in the regional greenway study are excluded from the proposed trail management plan mileage shown below.

Table 1. Comparison of Existing and Proposed Trail System by Mileage

Trail Designation	Current Conditions	Proposed Plan*
Total miles of pedestrian-only trail	51.4	74.6
Total miles of multiuse (equestrian and pedestrian) trails	3.2	0
Total miles of multiuse (bicycle and pedestrian) trails	10.9	12.9
Total miles of designated accessible trails (subset of total)	0	4.0
Total trail system mileage	65.5	87.5

*Excludes potential greenway mileage

Current Management Conditions

This section describes what a continuation of current management looks like and serves as a baseline for comparing and considering the proposed trail management plan. Under current management conditions, the park would continue to manage trails without a comprehensive plan for a sustainable trail system. Trail construction, reconstruction, and restoration would occur on a case-by-case basis. The existing designated trail system would continue to be provided and undesignated trails would continue to comprise much of the trail system; no changes in allowed trail uses would occur. Trails would continue to be managed and maintained without regard to any specified trail class or maintenance standard. The park would continue to implement temporary trail closures as needed to protect visitor safety and park resources in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR § 1.5. Access to the trail system would continue to occur from a variety of disparate access points with varying levels of signage.

Maps of the existing designated trail system are included in appendix A. The following table (Table 2) summarizes the existing trail mileage by park unit at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. For allowed trail use, pedestrian-only includes hikers, trail runners, anglers, wildlife watchers, and others traveling by foot. Other use types are noted where they are allowed.

Table 2. Existing Trail Mileage and Allowable Use

Park Unit	Mileage of Designated Trail	Allowed Trail Use
Bowmans Island	5.4	Pedestrians and equestrians (3.2 miles of multiuse)
Orrs Ferry	0	Pedestrian only
Settles Bridge	1.7	Pedestrian only
McGinnis Ferry	0	Pedestrian only
Suwanee Creek	0	Pedestrian only
Abbotts Bridge	0.4	Pedestrian only
Medlock Bridge	1.5	Pedestrian only
Jones Bridge	4.6	Pedestrian only
Holcomb Bridge	0.7	Pedestrian only
Island Ford	4.9	Pedestrian only
Vickery Creek	7.4	Pedestrian only
Gold Branch	4.9	Pedestrian only
Johnson Ferry	3.6	Pedestrian only
Cochran Shoals	19.6	Pedestrians and bicycles (9.4 miles of multiuse)
Palisades	10.7	Pedestrians and bicycles (1.5 miles of multiuse)
Total	65.5	

Proposed Trail Management Plan

Overview

The Chattahoochee trail system would be redeveloped to improve its overall sustainability, protect the park’s resources, and improve the visitor experience and circulation. The overall mileage of designated trails available for public use in the park would increase substantially, and a focus would be placed on improving the quality of the trails to better serve visitors and achieve greater resource stewardship. Visitor activities such as hiking, walking, exercising leashed pets, wildlife watching, and running would continue on park trails. Bicycling would continue to be allowed on designated trails in the Cochran Shoals unit, Palisades unit, and on trails designated as part of the potential greenway (see the “Potential Greenway” section). The limited equestrian use that does occur on a few park trails at Bowmans Island would be phased out.

Physical sustainability — or how a trail’s position on the landscape affects its ability to manage water and limit erosion — would be addressed by restoring trails to natural conditions, including trails with steep or fall-aligned gradients and trails with very low gradients in low and flat areas. These trails would be replaced with trails that (1) allow for water drainage without causing excessive erosion by following more gradual grades, (2) are side hill- or cross slope-aligned (generally perpendicular to the fall line), (3) incorporate short dips in the trail called grade reversals, and (4) include an outsloped tread.

Social sustainability — or how visitors interact with the park and each other — would be addressed by (1) improving the trail tread and access to desirable destinations, (2) generally rerouting trails into corridors better suited to recreation, (3) formalizing access to the trail system through trailheads and trail access points that connect the park with surrounding communities, (4) addressing circulation issues to decrease user conflicts, and (5) improving wayfinding and navigability through intuitive design and signage.

Managerial sustainability — or the ability of park staff, partners, volunteers, and contractors to manage and maintain the trail system — would be addressed by (1) designing trails in alignments that require less ongoing maintenance and are therefore less costly to maintain, (2) defining an overarching vision for the trail system that park staff and stakeholders can work toward, and (3) outlining relative priorities for trails-related projects to guide the investment of time, energy, and financial resources by park staff and partners.

While improving the physical, social, and managerial sustainability of the trail system generally means a shift away from the use of relic roadbeds and utility corridors toward more purpose-built trails, in some cases these existing routes would continue to be used to minimize new disturbance and protect historic resources. In the case of the potential greenway, many of these previously disturbed corridors would be used where appropriate to minimize new disturbance associated with a wider trail corridor.

Table 3 summarizes the resulting trail mileage in the proposed management plan. The resulting trail mileage is a summation of existing trails and adopted social trails, plus new trails, minus trail restoration. Approximately 22 miles of trails would be added to the official trail system, resulting in a 33% increase in trail mileage. These trail additions do not account for the potential greenway trail mileage, which would result in an even higher total count of trail mileage. Many actions or strategies would apply parkwide, while others are unit specific. Maps of the proposed trail management actions and resulting trail system are presented in appendix B and described in following sections. Trails proposed in the regional greenway study are excluded from the proposed trail management plan strategies and mileage by unit shown in table 3.

Table 3. Proposed Trail Management Plan Strategies and Mileage by Unit*

Park Unit	Existing Official Trail Mileage	Trail Restoration Mileage	New Trail Construction Mileage	Adopted Social Trail Mileage	Proposed Resulting Trail Mileage*	Fully Accessible (subset of proposed total)	Multiuse — Bicycle and Pedestrian (subset of proposed total)
Bowmans Island	5.4	0.8	4.7	3.3	12.5	0.4	0
Orrs Ferry	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Settles Bridge	1.7	0.5	1.9	0.0	3.1	0	0
McGinnis Ferry	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Suwanee Creek	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Abbotts Bridge	0.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.4	0.9	0
Medlock Bridge	1.5	0.3	0.3	0.0	1.5	0	0
Jones Bridge	4.6	0.3	0.6	0.0	4.9	0.6	0
Holcomb Bridge	0.7	0	0	0.0	0.7	0	0
Island Ford	4.9	0.6	2.2	0.0	6.5	0	0
Vickery Creek	7.4	3.8	4.7	0.0	8.3	0	0
Gold Branch	4.9	1.6	1.9	0.0	5.2	0	0
Johnson Ferry	3.6	1.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0	0
Cochran Shoals	19.6	6.6	12.2	0.4	25.6	1.3	11.4
Palisades	10.7	4.1	8.5	0.0	15.1	0.7	1.5
Totals:	65.5	19.7	38	3.8	87.5	4.0	12.9

*Totals exclude the potential greenway

Trail Classes and Types

The park has adopted the US Forest Service (USFS) National Trail Classification System, which prescribes development-scale and intended design and management standards (USFS FSH 2309.18, 2008). Based on this system, the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area trail system can be divided into five distinct classes depending on user type, need for access, and terrain. Trails would be built according to the design standards and/or condition descriptions for the five distinct trail classes as established in appendix C. In addition to class, this proposed trail management plan also identifies four types of trails. Each trail type has a distinctive use and visitor experience that informs its design and construction. Trail types include:

Type 1: Natural surface single track pedestrian-only trail

Type 2: Natural surface multiuse trail (bicycle and pedestrian)

Type 3: Fully accessible trail (wheelchair accessible)

Type 4: Crushed aggregate multiuse trail (bicycle and pedestrian), which includes the "fitness loop" and the "potential greenway"

Most trails in the park would be class 3 and class 4 trails constructed of natural tread surfaces. They would generally be single lane, although some variance in trail width to limit visitor conflicts, adhere to GMP zoning conditions, and provide for use appropriate to the proposed type of trail. For example, in some areas of Vickery Creek, Cochran Shoals, Palisades, and other higher-use trails, wider trails would be necessary to prevent excessive conflict. Some trails, including the potential greenway and fitness loop, would be natural surface class 5. Management would generally be user based, meaning that trails would not be widened if it is not necessary to do so.

Trailheads and Trail Access Points

Public access to the park's trail system and connection to local communities would be facilitated by a system of designated trailheads, primary trail access points, and secondary trail access points. Modifications to parking and supporting infrastructure would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Trailheads — Trailheads are developed areas on federally owned and NPS-managed lands that include a parking lot, trail access signage, and trail access (usually a spur or connector trail that links with the broader trail network). Trailheads may also include other facilities such as restrooms, waste and recycling receptacles, shade structures, benches, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and fitness equipment.

No new trailheads would be constructed, and existing trailheads would be maintained. The locations of trailheads would be included on park trail maps and other widely distributed wayfinding information. Refer to the maps in appendix B for locations of trailheads.

Primary Trail Access Points — Primary trail access points are undeveloped areas on federally owned and NPS-managed lands that include trail access signage and trail access. They typically do not include any other facilities, although may include benches, bicycle racks, and other basic amenities. They are primarily positioned where the NPS trail system exits (or enters) the park

and intersects with an external trail system or municipal sidewalk/path. Primary trail access points also include natural gathering points within the park where trail access occurs, such as at boat launches.

Existing primary trail access points would be maintained, and a few additional points would be designated in strategic locations. The locations of primary trail access points would be included on park trail maps and other widely distributed wayfinding information. Refer to the maps in appendix B for locations of primary trail access points.

Secondary Trail Access Points — Secondary trail access points are areas on lands not owned or managed by NPS and which include trail access signage and authorized trail access. These secondary trail access points are typically owned and managed by park neighbors such as homeowners' associations or apartment complexes.

The National Park Service would work with park neighbors to designate authorized secondary trail access points. The National Park Service would partner with these neighbors to ensure trail access signage is consistent with signage found in the park so that visitors using these access points are aware they are entering NPS lands and are aware of important safety, wayfinding, and regulatory information. The National Park Service and its partners would maintain access to secondary trail access points. The locations of secondary trail access points would not be included on park trail maps and other widely distributed wayfinding information, although they could be shown on maps in the immediate vicinity, including on the signage at the trail access point. The locations of authorized secondary trail access points would be determined in partnership with park neighbors upon implementation of the plan and are therefore not included in the maps in appendix B.

Unauthorized Trail Access — Unauthorized trail access occurs when park visitors access the trail system without using a trailhead, primary trail access point, or designated secondary trail access point. Unauthorized trail access contributes to the creation of unauthorized visitor-created trails which threaten park resources, negatively impact visitor experience, and are generally not physically or managerially sustainable.

These unauthorized visitor-created trails would be restored to natural conditions as described in the "Restored Trails" section. NPS trail managers would work with park neighbors to consolidate unauthorized trail access routes into designated primary and secondary trail access points when it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

Trail and Trailhead Naming

Trails, trailheads, and trail access points throughout the park would be formally named and designated. These names would be used on signage, maps, and other informational materials to improve wayfinding, trip planning, and sense of place.

Signage and Trail Markers

Trails and destinations would be clearly marked with signs. Signage located at trailheads and trail access points would be standardized and improved to (1) provide an inviting gateway to the park units, inform visitors they are entering an NPS site, (2) set appropriate expectations about the experiences visitors are likely to have, and (3) provide wayfinding information and basic

rules and regulations. Trail markers would be installed at trail junctions and destinations as necessary. Where appropriate, existing postholes and disturbed areas would be used for new sign installations and dog waste stations would be included. Signage design would be coordinated with regional trail systems that intersect with park units and would incorporate multiple languages and symbols to better communicate with the significant non-English speaking visiting population.

Potential Greenway

The Chattahoochee RiverLands, a collection of Atlanta-area cities, counties, non-governmental organizations, and federal land managers, is currently planning for a greenway along the Chattahoochee River. The greenway study area spans a 100-mile corridor through the Metropolitan Atlanta Region, from the Bowmans Island/Georgia Highway 20 area to Chattahoochee Bend State Park in Coweta County. The study area focuses on a 1-mile buffer on both sides of the Chattahoochee River with links to the larger watershed and metropolitan region. The greenway's purpose is to maximize connectivity between Chattahoochee River parks, communities, destinations, and the waterway itself by creating a multiuse, multimodal trail that follows the river. The Chattahoochee RiverLands intends to design the greenway to balance needs of access and conservation.

Since this ongoing partnership effort will likely call for a greenway to be included in many parts of the national recreation area, this preliminary trail management plan identifies several units where a "potential greenway" would be appropriate. The unit-specific descriptions below and the maps in appendix B describe the general locations. The "potential greenway" in the park would be a hardened surface (crushed aggregate or similar) multiuse trail. Allowed uses on a potential greenway would include pedestrians and bicyclists, and the width would vary by location, but generally be between 5 and 10 feet. Any potential greenway inside the national park would not be paved, as is consistent with the Metropolitan River Protection Act, but rather would consist of permeable surfaces to protect water quality and prevent erosion. The potential greenway in the park units would be designed to give greenway users the feeling of being in a national park immediately upon entering and a sense of place apart from local parks. The maps in appendix B identify approximately 10 miles of potential greenway corridor, but this mileage is not included in the overall system mileage reported in table 3.

The potential greenway is included in the trail management plan to aid and direct planning efforts of the Chattahoochee RiverLands group. Any future construction of the potential greenway would be through the efforts of this partnership. Maps in appendix B display the appropriate corridors for the greenway as it crosses NPS lands. These corridors have been selected with consideration to the protection of resources and connectivity to park and external destinations and trail systems. The mileage presented in table 3 above does not include the multiuse (bicycle and pedestrian) greenway. If the greenway was designated along routes proposed by this plan, 3.2 miles of the existing multiuse fitness loop in Cochran Shoals and Rottenwood Creek Trail in Palisades would be designated to serve the greenway, and 0.2 miles of existing pedestrian-only trail in Settles Bridge would be converted to greenway. An additional 6.2 miles of greenway would be designated in the Cochran Shoals, Gold Branch, Johnson Ferry, Jones Bridge, McGinnis Ferry, Palisades, Settles Bridge, and Vickery Creek units. In total, 9.6 miles of greenway corridor would be opened on park lands, and of those 9.6, 6 miles would be a

new multiuse opportunity. The addition of potential greenway trails on park lands would result in a 15% increase of trail mileage.

Accessibility

All trails and supporting infrastructure, such as parking, routes, built features, and signage would be constructed and modified according to the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS) as required unless the National Park Service determines that a qualifying condition for an exception is met. Technical requirements for trails under ABAAS provide conditions for exceptions to certain standards that apply only to the specific segment of trail where the condition is present. The conditions believed to warrant exception would be documented. Where it is believed the full length of trail does qualify for exemption, individual segments of the trail must first be documented as meeting exemption conditions. All other reasonable design approaches should be exhausted before using exceptions. Conditions of trails, including length, surface type, typical and maximum running and cross slopes, minimum tread width, and identification of obstacles would be shared with visitors through signage, printed and digital media, and staff contact so that visitors can make their own informed decisions about which trails to use.

In addition to the accessibility standards applied to all park trails, the proposed trail management plan has identified opportunities for the development of fully accessible trails in locations where topography could support their installation (i.e., trail type 3 identified above). The maps in appendix B identify approximately 4 miles of fully accessible trail.

Restored Trails

Many of the park's current official trails are not sustainable and/or do not provide a desired trail experience. Under the proposed trail management plan, many of these trail segments would be restored to natural conditions. Restored trails would be obscured and blocked from public access to avoid continued use. Restoration would include reshaping of soils to pre-trail conditions, planting or transplanting of local/native vegetation, and obscuring the visual corridor. The extent of revegetation, obscuring, and blocking efforts would vary depending on the location and specific conditions for each route. In some instances, recontouring of the trail may involve the placement of gravel or other soil material to stabilize the trail. Natural recovery by native plant species is preferable to planting or seeding; however, planting or seeding would prevent unacceptable erosion or resist competition from nonnative invasive species. Water management structures would need to be created in this process to eliminate long-term water-based erosion along these routes. Temporary educational/closure signs may also be placed to discourage use. A crew of two to four equipment operators would typically stabilize trails using graders, tractors, and other assorted heavy equipment.

Unauthorized Visitor-Created Trails

Existing unauthorized visitor-created trails, or social trails, in the park would be restored to natural conditions (as described above) or designated as part of the trail system, where appropriate. Unauthorized trails that are not designated on the maps in appendix B as "adopted social trail" or that do not provide access to a designated secondary trail access point would be restored to natural conditions. One exception is unauthorized trails that access the riverbank

(short “anglers’ trails”), which would generally be left in place due to the impracticality of restoring them.

Invasive Species Management

Adaptive management may require the use of herbicides to control the spread and infestations of nonnative vegetation. The actions would include the use of hand tools or mechanized equipment to remove the vegetation and may include the use of herbicide to control a population and prevent the establishment and spread of the species. Only a Georgia-certified pesticide applicator would apply herbicide under appropriate environmental conditions. The herbicide used would vary, depending on the target species and would be appropriate for the environmental conditions (e.g., certified aquatic safe when working in wetlands).

Trail Rehabilitation

Some existing trails require “heavy maintenance” or rehabilitation to establish proper drainage. This one-time maintenance effort could include earthwork to establish drainage ditches, grade reversals, rock armoring, and brush clearing. The maps in appendix B note the trails requiring this rehabilitation. These trails would generally follow their current alignment.

Final Alignments for Trails

The new trail alignments shown on the maps are based on field surveys and GIS analysis. The new trail alignments have been determined at the corridor level, defined as the trail tread and the area above and to the sides of it. Final trail alignments would fit within the approximately 60-foot-wide corridor, but trail class and type would determine the trails themselves. Final trail alignments would be determined on the ground upon implementation in consultation with park natural and cultural resources specialists, which could result in minor adjustments to the trail locations shown on the maps. If there is a need to align a trail outside of the identified corridor, the amended alignment would undergo additional review to avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive resources, and the change would be documented as an amendment to the trail management plan.

Implementation

In order to successfully implement a future trails management plan, the National Park Service would likely hire a full-time trail lead who would work with park staff, contractors, and volunteers to implement the plan actions and conduct routine maintenance of the trail system. Qualified professional trail construction contractors may be hired to complete some of the construction or rehabilitation as needed. Individual volunteers and volunteer groups would continue to provide a valuable service by assisting the park with trail maintenance activities, monitoring trail conditions, providing information to visitors, and protecting resources. The trail lead and volunteer program coordinator would collaborate on implementation efforts.

All trails and destinations would undergo routine maintenance activities that would include repair and replacement of trail markers. Some areas may require annual or semiannual maintenance, while other areas may not require maintenance for five or more years.

New trail development and the restoration of unsustainable trails would take place as funding and staffing allow. Park staff would develop the implementation schedule after this planning effort is complete. Over time, staff could modify the implementation schedule based on funding, staffing, and equipment availability and whether user groups and organizations can partner/assist with trail development and restoration efforts.

The next section describes the site-specific actions in this preliminary trail management plan based on near-term (one to two years), mid-term (three to five years), and long-term (five or more years) action items. These timelines for action reflect the relative priority order of these actions.

Unit-Specific Descriptions

Bowmans Island

Since Bowmans Island is the largest land unit in the park and furthest from downtown Atlanta, opportunities for longer loop circuits and an aerobic fitness challenge would be provided. The unit would accommodate access for river trips and fishing on both sides of the river.

On the west side of the river, three unsustainable and redundant fall-aligned trails on relic roadbeds and one entrenched trail at the base of the floodplain would be restored to natural conditions. New contour-aligned routes on hill slopes would maintain connectivity to facilitate looping opportunities that provide more of a backcountry forest immersion experience with chances for solitude.

On the east side of the river, a designated trail system would be developed to replace the existing unauthorized, user-created system. Around 3.3 miles of relic roadbeds currently used as informal trails would be restored to natural conditions to protect water and landscape quality, and 4.4 miles of side hill-oriented trails would be constructed in the upper elevations to highlight steep slopes and exposed rock faces. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Assess and relocate bridges.
- Construct water management structures (grade reversals) on trails that would be maintained in the system.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Construct a hardened riverside trail on the west bank to form the core of the trail system. This trail would be predominately located on historic floodplain levees and include four structures that access major pools and fishing locations, serve as river launches, and provide views of the river. The riverside trail and structures would be built to be widely accessible and would be armored to protect from high river flows. Much of the riverside trail could be boardwalk. To retain a sense of adventure, a set of rock steps would connect the floodplain trail to the upland trails near a steep rock face and bouldering location.

- Restore unsustainable trails and provide improved, contour-aligned routes that provide longer loop opportunities.
- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points.
- Improve primary trail access point at Trout Place Road.

Long-Term Actions:

- Develop a multiloop trail network on the portion of the unit east of the river. The new network would be integrated with trails on the west side of the unit and a designated trailhead would be constructed south of Highway 20/Cumming Highway (and would connect with the trail system via an underpass). This trailhead would lead to an improved river access or angler's access trail, which would include raised tread maintenance and minor relocation onto adjacent levees. Attempting to make a loop with this dead-end trail would be discouraged.

Orrs Ferry

This unit does not have official trails, and as it is not accessible to the public, no designated trail system would be established. Management of the area would prioritize its function as a buffer zone to protect the riverbank from development.

Near-Term Actions:

- Remove outdated trail access point signage.

Mid- to Long-Term Actions:

- Continue to manage the unit in its natural condition.

Settles Bridge

The trail system at Settles Bridge would be developed to provide a better complement to the well-maintained boat step-down ramp. Around 1.1 miles of fall-aligned relict roadbeds would be restored to their natural condition to improve water and landscape quality. Parallel to the river, a new route higher on the adjacent hillside would be developed to provide an alternative and higher-quality pedestrian experience as compared to the current use of the utility corridor route. Additional short loops for river users taking breaks at Settles Bridge would be established. The National Park Service would work with Gwinnett County and other partners to provide connections to Settles Bridge Park and integrate the two parks' trail systems. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Explore partnership opportunities with Gwinnett County to improve trail connectivity and explore potentially sharing maintenance responsibilities.

Mid-Term Actions:

- In the northern portion of Settles Bridge, restore unsustainable trails and provide improved, gently sloping routes that provide trail-based opportunities. These trails

would establish connectivity to Settles Bridge Park and improve the overall navigability of the trail system.

- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points. Work with Gwinnett County to ensure that the Settles Bridge Park trailhead signage references the trails' connection to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.
- Connect to the potential greenway as appropriate. If constructed, the greenway would follow the existing utility corridor south after entering the unit via the access road. It would then continue further south along the river before crossing near Level Creek.

Long-Term Actions:

- At the southern end of this unit, restore unsustainable, unauthorized, user-created trails that travel through wet bottomland areas and provide an improved, gently sloping loop route.

McGinnis Ferry

A designated pedestrian trail system would not be established in McGinnis Ferry. Management of the area would generally prioritize its function as a buffer zone to protect the natural environment along the riverbank. However, future connectivity to the potential greenway could be established via an existing utility corridor through the unit. Refer to appendix B for the resultant trail system map.

Mid- to Long-Term Actions:

- Connect to the potential greenway as appropriate.

Suwanee Creek

As most of the Suwanee Creek unit is not accessible to the public, no designated trail system would be established. Management of the area would prioritize its function as a buffer zone to protect the riverbank from development. While some public access does exist at the Rogers Bridge area of the unit, it would also be managed as a natural buffer zone. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Remove outdated trail access point signage.

Mid- to Long-Term Actions:

- Continue to manage the unit in its natural condition.

Abbotts Bridge

The trail system at Abbotts Bridge would be developed to provide a better complement to the well-maintained boat launch, picnic pavilion, restrooms, and other facilities. Visitors could make a loop trip from the trailhead in multiple directions. The trail would connect the pavilion, restrooms, and parking facilities, and an easy 1-mile loop around the facilities' periphery would be developed for picnickers, boaters, and campers looking for a short walk. The existing trail

along the river would be rebuilt using turnpike or some other form of heavy elevated trail construction to provide durable access to the river. Much of the trail in this unit would be built to be more accessible, and some would be built to maximize fishing opportunities. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Clear encroaching vegetation and improve tread on the existing trail adjacent to the river.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Complete the loop trail that connects the pavilion area with the existing trail adjacent to the river.

Medlock Bridge

Since Medlock Bridge is a relatively small unit with a trail system, the three fall-aligned trails that access the one hilltop in the unit would be restored to natural condition, as they have minimal recreational value and encourage shortcutting and the creation of unauthorized, user-created trails. The restoration of these trails would reduce the maintenance burden and eliminate acute erosion issues, allowing for more maintenance focus on the loop around the high point. Along this loop and elsewhere, the trail would be realigned to stay in higher and drier areas, rather than lower, wet areas. Eventually, the southern spur trail along the river may connect to a trail that sits higher on the hillside to create a much longer stacked loop. The resulting trail system would benefit visitors seeking a longer recreational experience and continue to be valuable for picnickers, leisure hikers, and anglers. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Assess and address issues with bridges and stair facilities that may soon fail and present a safety risk.
- Replace aging wayfinding maps and reorient them based on the trail user's perspective.

Medium-Term Actions:

- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points to improve connectivity with the surrounding community.
- Reduce and restore the unsustainable trail system on the high point.
- Rehabilitate the picnic area.

Long-Term Actions:

- Monitor use of the hilltop area, and if use persists, consider developing a sustainable alignment that traverses the landscape and provides access to the rock outcroppings.
- Develop southern spur trail into a longer stacked loop adding about 0.3 miles of trail to the unit.

Jones Bridge

In the northern portion of Jones Bridge, a new widely accessible trail would be constructed to loop around the side hills and take advantage of uplands and small rock outcrops. The trail would encourage trail users to have higher-quality experiences off the existing administrative service road, which currently serves as a part of the trail system. The service road would be removed from officially designated trails (although it would remain on the landscape, as it is needed for administrative access).

In the southern portion of Jones Bridge, near the Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center (CREEC), several redundant trails would be restored to natural conditions to reduce the maintenance burden, eliminate “microloops,” and improve the ease of wayfinding. The trail system would be simplified to reduce unsustainable trails that tend to “creep,” widen, and contribute to erosion, while maintaining opportunities to experience all areas of the unit and conduct educational programs at CREEC. Access to the southern portion of the unit near CREEC would be improved. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Repair damaged trail signs.
- Designate the CREEC parking area as a trailhead to improve public access to the southern portion of the unit.
- Coordinate with CREEC regarding public access to the parking area and cultivate relationship with the River Glen homeowners association.
- Work with the adjoining landowner on an easement to allow for more sustainable alignment of the trail near the southern end of the unit.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Restore unsustainable fall-aligned and low-lying unauthorized trails and provide improved, contour-aligned routes that preserve longer loop opportunities. Develop a widely accessible trail in the northern portion of the unit.
- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points.
- Designate and improve the existing boat launch in the middle of the unit as a trailhead, with a few additional parking spaces and appropriate facilities.
- Redesign the northern trailhead to draw visitors onto the main trail instead of the sewer line easement.
- Redevelop existing trails through rolling contour alignment and full bench construction, taking advantage of topography to reduce the need and/or span of bridges and structures.
- Designate the grassy area near the CREEC facility as a primitive group campground for large groups. These groups would be permitted under a special use permit.
- Connect to the potential greenway as appropriate. After crossing the river just south of the shoals, the greenway would follow the utility corridor on the west bank before following the access road out of the unit. This alignment would provide connectivity

between the heart of the Jones Bridge unit and the county park across the river, provide an exciting visitor experience with the bridge just downstream from the shoals, and protect viewsheds.

Long-Term Actions:

- Explore possible connectivity with the Gwinnett County park across the river via a pedestrian bridge.

Holcomb Bridge

This unit does not include a proposal for new trail development or trail actions. The Crooked Creek Hiking Trail within the Holcomb Bridge Unit Environmental Assessment was completed in 2019. The city of Sandy Springs recently built the Crooked Creek Hiking Trail, which connects Holcomb Bridge to the proposed Crooked Creek Park and is managed by the city of Sandy Springs. This sustainably built natural surface foot trail is approximately 1 mile long and navigates around much of the perimeter of the unit, leaving no need for additional trail development. Refer to appendix B for resultant trail system maps.

Island Ford

At Island Ford, the trail system would be substantially redeveloped to provide opportunities for longer and more meaningful loops that take advantage of available acreage and the central ridge. Additional loops that avoid sensitive resources and hazardous road crossings would be added, and some smaller unauthorized trail loops that rely solely on relic corridors and contribute to erosion and navigation challenges would be restored to natural conditions. Trails would be designed to allow for easy hiking and fishing access near the river and more moderate aerobic effort in the uplands. Navigability and wayfinding would be improved, and access routes would be made clearer. Trails would access increased riverside viewpoints as well as a few scenic views in the uplands. Two fall-aligned relict roadbed trails and a steep, redundant trail would be restored to natural conditions. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Recently relocated trails would be improved to incorporate enhanced full bench construction, rolling contours, and positive cross slope.
- Clean out culverts and include some paved surfaces to divert runoff from step structures.
- Construct water management structures (such as grade reversals) on trails that would be maintained in the system.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Continue relocation and restoration efforts throughout the trail system to provide longer, more sustainable trail-based recreational opportunities.
- Restore unsustainable trails and provide improved, contour-aligned routes that provide longer loop opportunities.
- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points.

- Construct a primary trail access point with a restroom in the field near the existing boat launch to serve as a formalized access for many of the lower trails.

Vickery Creek

At Vickery Creek, the trail system would undergo a full-scale redevelopment and environmental restoration to create a sustainable, manageable trail system with a high diversity of quality trail experiences. Although the unit has less acreage than some of the others in the park, the new trail system would be designed to provide recreationists with longer experiences that create the illusion of being on a larger land unit. Safety issues along Big Creek, including pipe crossings, cliffed-out trails, and steep, slick trails would be addressed through trail restoration and reroutes. The redesigned trail system would take advantage of the dynamic topography while avoiding sensitive resources and fall-aligned and steep gradient trails. About 4 miles of fall-aligned relict roadbeds would be restored to their natural condition, while around 3.2 miles of contour-aligned roadbeds would undergo heavy maintenance to better manage water.

At Allenbrook, the trail system would be adjusted to provide connectivity to the Roswell Historic Gateway Project trails, and efforts would be made to improve visitor safety as well as the experience of climbers and pedestrians at Lover's Leap. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Designate and develop appropriate primary and secondary trail access points.
- At Allenbrook, partner with the city of Roswell to align implementation of the Roswell Historic Gateway Project trails with trails in this plan.
- Examine safety issues at the earthen dam and take actions as necessary.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Restore unsustainable trails and provide improved, contour-aligned routes that provide longer loop opportunities in a smaller acreage land unit.
- Work with partners as needed to identify safer creek crossings away from high-risk utility pipe crossings. This could include bridges on non-NPS property associated with primary trail access points.
- At Allenbrook, complete large-scale stonework along one of the highly eroded unauthorized trails adjacent to the climbing crag to create a semiformal rock "scramble" route to facilitate sustainable unroped travel between the top and bottom of the crag. Formalize the belay and bouldering area at the bottom of the crag. Conduct water management uphill from the Lover's Leap overlook to mitigate runoff. Install interpretive signage at the top of Lover's Leap introducing casual visitors to the basics of sport and top rope climbing. This signage would provide physical/visual cues defining the overlook at an impressive vantage point and emphasize the importance of staying clear of the cliff edge and climbers' protective equipment.
- The Roswell Riverwalk may be designated a part of the potential greenway. No change would occur to the design or use of the Roswell Riverwalk.

Long-Term Actions:

- Explore and develop possible connections across Vickery Creek to the Ivy Mill ruin and Roswell's Riverside Park.

Gold Branch

At Gold Branch, the trail system would be redesigned to take advantage of the significant topography and be more conducive to hiking and running. Design would leverage the unit's large geographic area to create longer meaningful trail loops with a higher degree of challenge, while decreasing the number of intersections. Four fall-aligned relict roadbeds would be restored to natural conditions. To emphasize access to the forested backcountry setting and Bull Sluice Lake, 1.8 miles of contour-aligned trails would be constructed. To protect and enhance the backcountry-style setting, alternative access via primary and secondary trail access points would be minimized. Overall, the design would increase the sense of formality of the trail system to increase compliance with on-trail use and federal regulations. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Remove rebar hazards.
- Remove or move debris piles.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Restore unsustainable trails and provide improved, contour-aligned routes that include longer loop opportunities. Undertake redevelopment of the trail system to reduce junctions and enhance the nature of the backcountry-style experience.
- Formalize streamside trails through full bench, rolling contour construction and the installation of grade reversals along streamside trails to better manage water.
- Install a viewing structure and harden water access routes at the trampled streamside site on the north end of the trail system.
- Install a bicycle rack and weir at the trailhead to accommodate visitors arriving via the city of Roswell boardwalk and other popular pathways and bicycle routes. A sign on the rack would inform visitors that bicycles are prohibited in the unit.
- Designate and develop any appropriate primary and secondary trail access points (these would be kept to a minimum).

Long-Term Actions:

- Decommission a redundant trailhead near the service road.

Johnson Ferry

The ongoing Hyde Farm Plan and Environmental Assessment would determine actions in the northern portion of the Johnson Ferry unit. Under all action alternatives in that plan, a new 6- to 8-foot-wide trail would be constructed through the unit to connect the existing formal trails with Hyde Farm and the floodplain bottomlands.

The southern portion of this unit, where current use is extremely low, would be restored to natural conditions to reduce the maintenance burden and to allow park staff to focus on higher-priority areas that have greater impact on visitor access and experience. All existing trails and infrastructure, including the gravel parking area, access road, pavilion, and mowed area, would be removed and restored to natural conditions. Future management of this unit would be primarily as a buffer zone to protect the natural environment of the riverbank.

Cochran Shoals

At Cochran Shoals, the most highly visited unit within the park, the trail system would undergo a full-scale redevelopment and environmental restoration to create a sustainable, manageable trail system with a high diversity of quality trail experiences. As bicycles are allowed in many areas of the unit, the redesign would separate user groups as much as possible by overlaying two largely separate trail networks — one for pedestrians and the other for bicycles and pedestrians (multiuse) — that allow different user groups to achieve their desired experiences (fitness, mileage, and challenge versus efficient direct travel) and feel welcoming to users of all ability levels. Trail intersections and points of conflict would be reduced to the greatest extent possible, and directional travel would be used in some locations to create a more intuitive system. The total trail mileage would likely remain about the same, with a slight increase in the Sope Creek area. In the Powers Island area, some problematic trails would be restored, and a desirable loop around the perimeter would be created to attract more hiker use. In the Gunby Creek area, a more usable system attractive to a wide diversity of users would be developed to relieve some of the use pressure on the Sope Creek area. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Establish a regime of grading the fitness loop trail to improve drainage and prevent potholes. Boardwalks in flood-prone areas could minimize trail creep.
- Designate and develop primary and secondary trail access points to address the significant unauthorized trail use in this area.
- Develop educational campaigns and leverage peer-to-peer education to improve compliance with pet leash, waste pickup, direction of travel, sharing the trail, and other regulations.
- Correct the inaccurate mileage markers along the fitness loop trail.
- Continue to issue special-use permits for track and cross-country teams, run clubs, and other groups to prevent overuse, spread out impact, and provide education to these user groups.
- Reduce administrative vehicular traffic on the fitness loop through increased use of bicycles or utility terrain vehicles.
- Allow class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes anywhere traditional nonmotorized bicycles are allowed.
- Expand partnerships with mountain biking and hiking organizations interested in helping with trail maintenance and restoration.
- Remove largely unused picnic tables at Sope Creek trailhead.

- Near the Sope Creek trailhead, raise and resurface the trail tread around Sibley Pond. Develop a widely accessible trail to the interpretive sign above the Marietta Paper Mill foundation.
- At Powers Island, inspect bridge footings and reset if necessary. Remove ineffective maintenance structures on southern leg of upland trail.

Mid-Term Actions:

- In the Powers Island area, restore unsustainable trails and provide an improved, contour-aligned trail loop through the rock outcrops near the northern terminus of the floodplain route that climbs to the upper elevations of the property, connects formally to the surrounding neighborhood and office park, and descends back to the paved trailhead parking area.
- At Columns Drive, expand the size of the parking infrastructure to accommodate vehicles.
- At Gunby Creek, restore unsustainable trails and provide an improved, contour-aligned system attractive to nature walkers, birders, and botanical societies that visit for the large diversity of native and rare plants as well as trail runners, track teams, lunch walkers, and other groups. Develop one bicycle route to access the fitness loop from this area.
- In the Sope Creek and fitness loop areas, restore unsustainable trails and provide an improved, contour-aligned system that maximizes separation of bicycle use from other user groups.
- The fitness loop may be designated a part of the potential greenway. No change would occur to the design or use of the fitness loop.

Long-Term Actions:

- Explore improved connections to the Rottenwood Creek pathway.
- Reduce the use of “no bike” signage at bicycle gates to reduce perceptions of conflict between bicyclists and pedestrians and improve the quality of the natural experience.

Palisades

At Palisades, the trail system would undergo a full-scale redevelopment and environmental restoration to create a sustainable, manageable trail system with a high diversity of quality trail experiences. Wayfinding would be improved significantly to reduce the navigational challenges many visitors experience here. Many trails would be relocated from ridge tops to hillsides. The redesign of the Palisades trail system would highlight the area’s topography as well as the unit’s primary attractions including river overlooks, a large diversity of rare native plants, a nonnative bamboo stand, and beach areas, while maintaining its unique character. These destinations would serve as anchor points for the trail system. More river overlooks would be added to the system on the west side of the river, similar to the existing observation deck on the east side of the river. The bamboo stand would be highlighted as a destination and designated as a “quiet area” to provide a unique visitor experience. The total trail mileage would remain about the same and would be tied into the redesigned parking area that is under development at the Indian Trail trailhead. Refer to appendix B for proposed rehabilitation and development and the resultant trail system maps.

Near-Term Actions:

- Begin to replace bridges and puncheons that are nearing the end of their life cycle.
- Designate and develop primary and secondary trail access points.

Mid-Term Actions:

- Restore unsustainable trails and provide an improved, contour-aligned system.
- Implement a phased trail redevelopment and environmental restoration process, coupled with public education and peer-to-peer assistance in changing visitor behaviors and attitudes.
- Develop a partnership to play a primary maintenance role on the hiking trails.
- Establish a trail connection to the bamboo stand and establish a “quiet area.”
- Establish a comprehensive trail system that highlights the granite outcrops, cultural resources, and native plant species.
- Designate the Rottenwood Creek Trail as part of the potential greenway. No change would occur to the design or use of the Rottenwood Creek Trail.

APPENDIX A: UNIT MAPS, CURRENT MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS

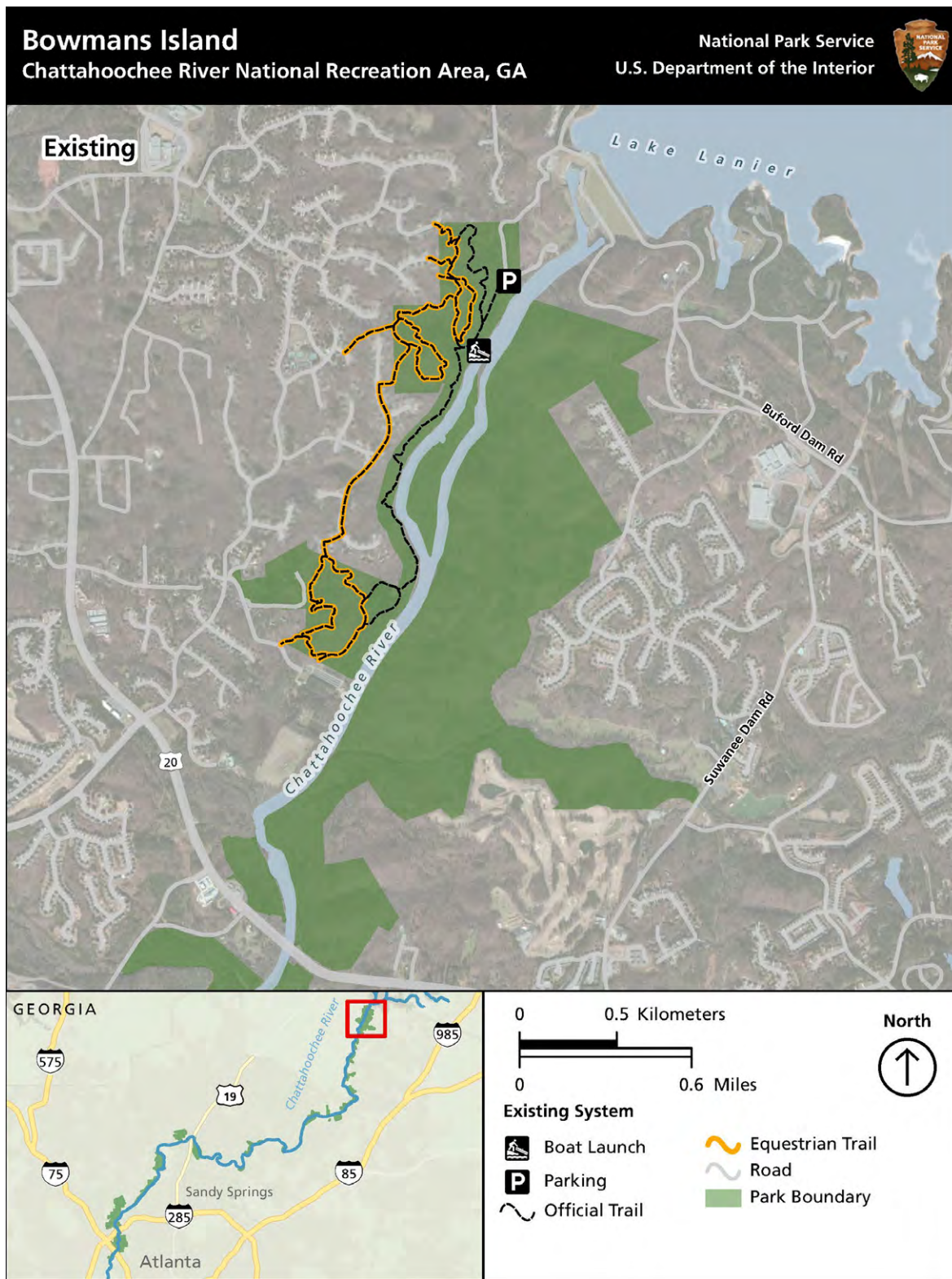


Figure A-1. Existing Trail System — Bowmans Island

Bowmans North Detail

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

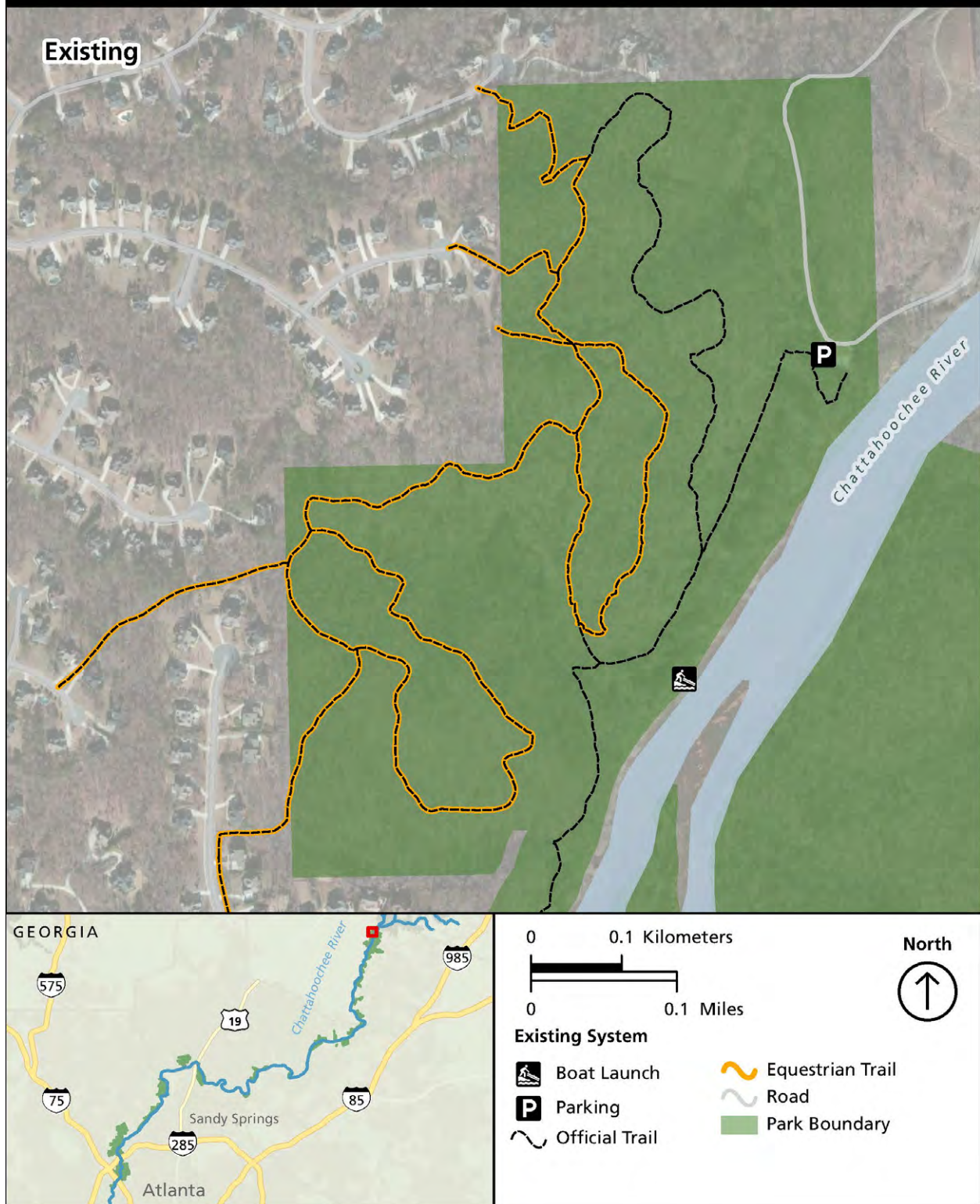


Figure A-2. Existing Trail System — Bowmans Island North

Orrs Ferry

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

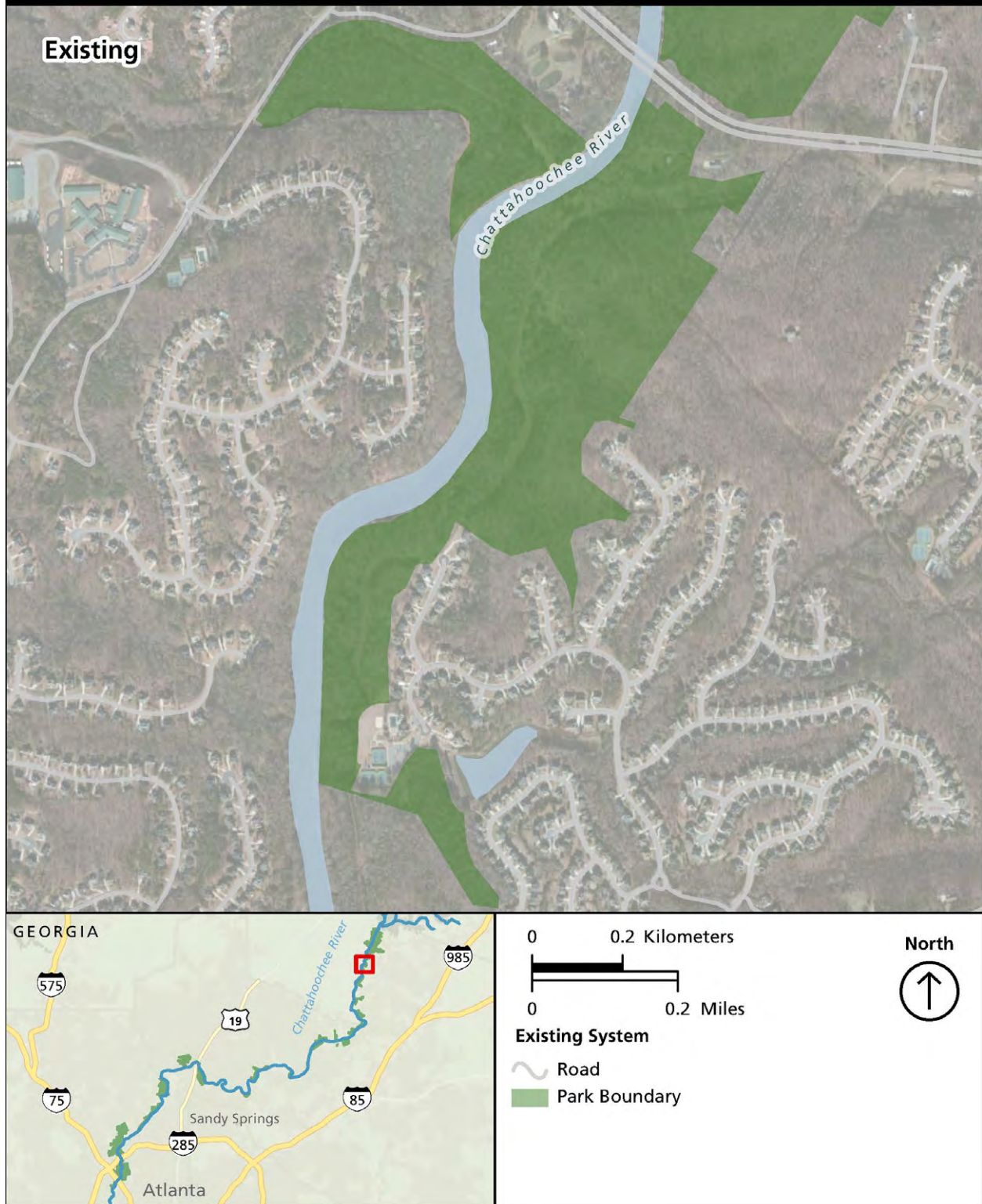


Figure A-3. Existing Trail System — Orrs Ferry

Settles Bridge Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

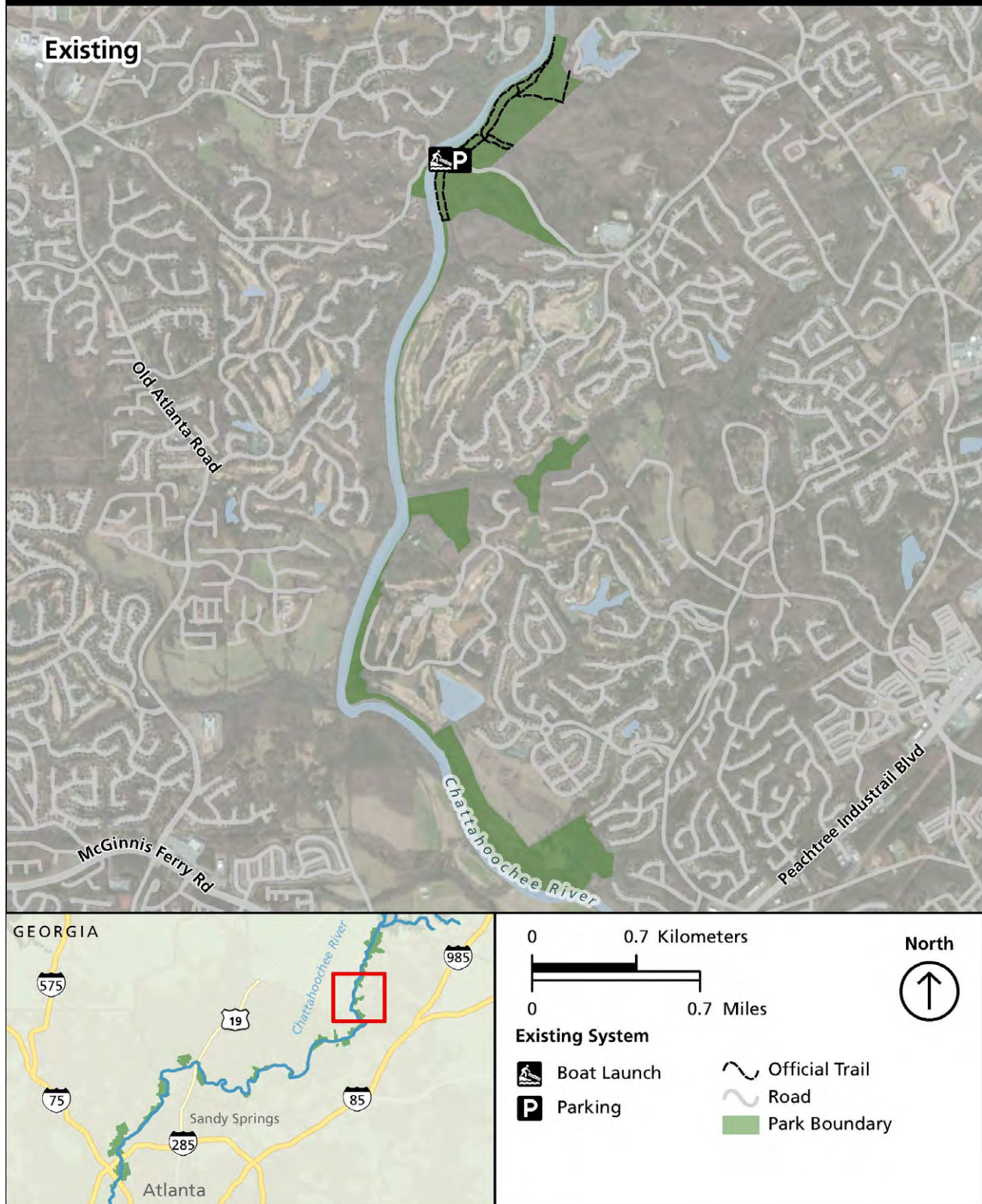


Figure A-4. Existing Trail System — Settles Bridge

Settles Bridge North Detail

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

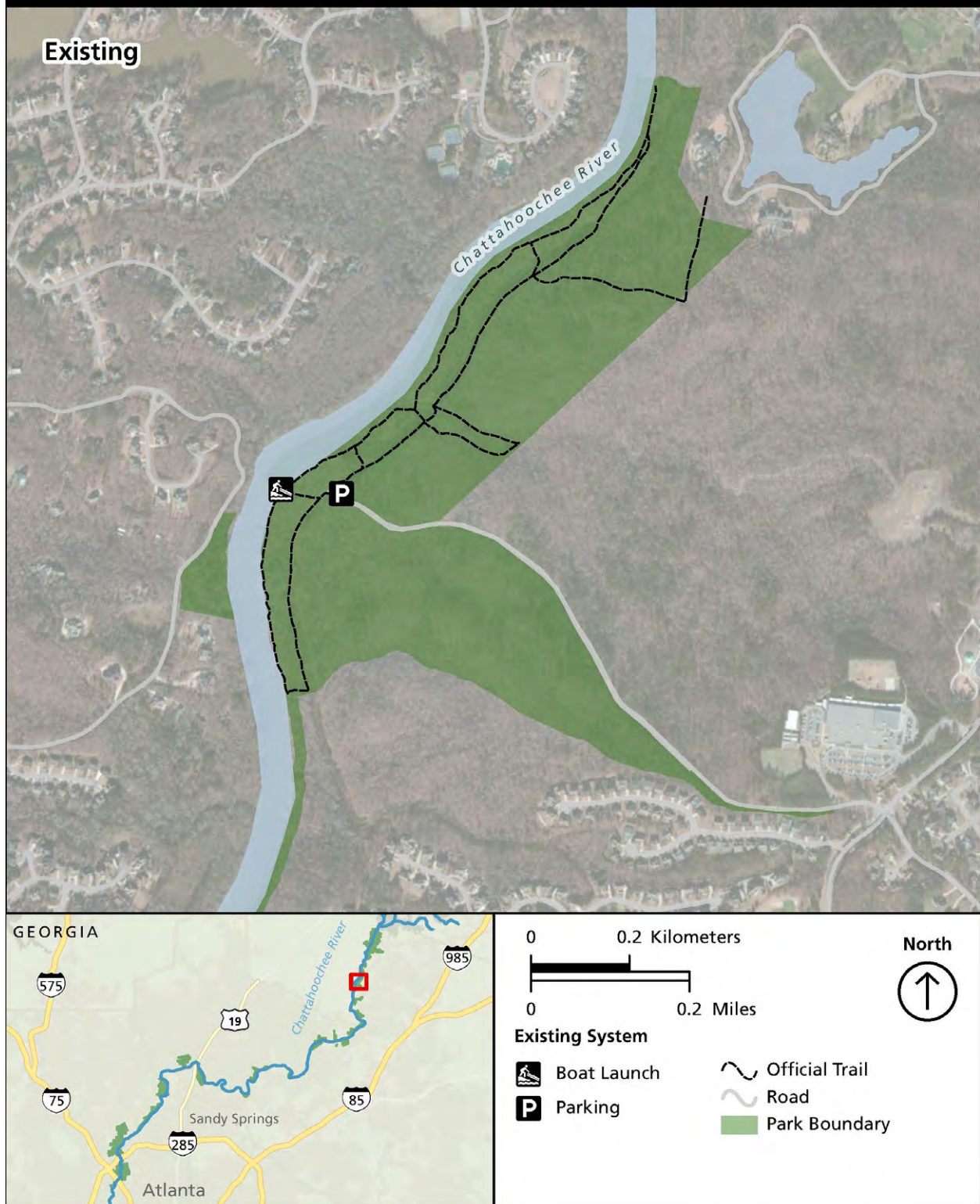


Figure A-5. Existing Trail System — Settles Bridge North

McGinnis Ferry

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Figure A-6. Existing Trail System — McGinnis Ferry

Suwanee Creek

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Figure A-7. Existing Trail System — Suwanee Creek

Abbotts Bridge

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

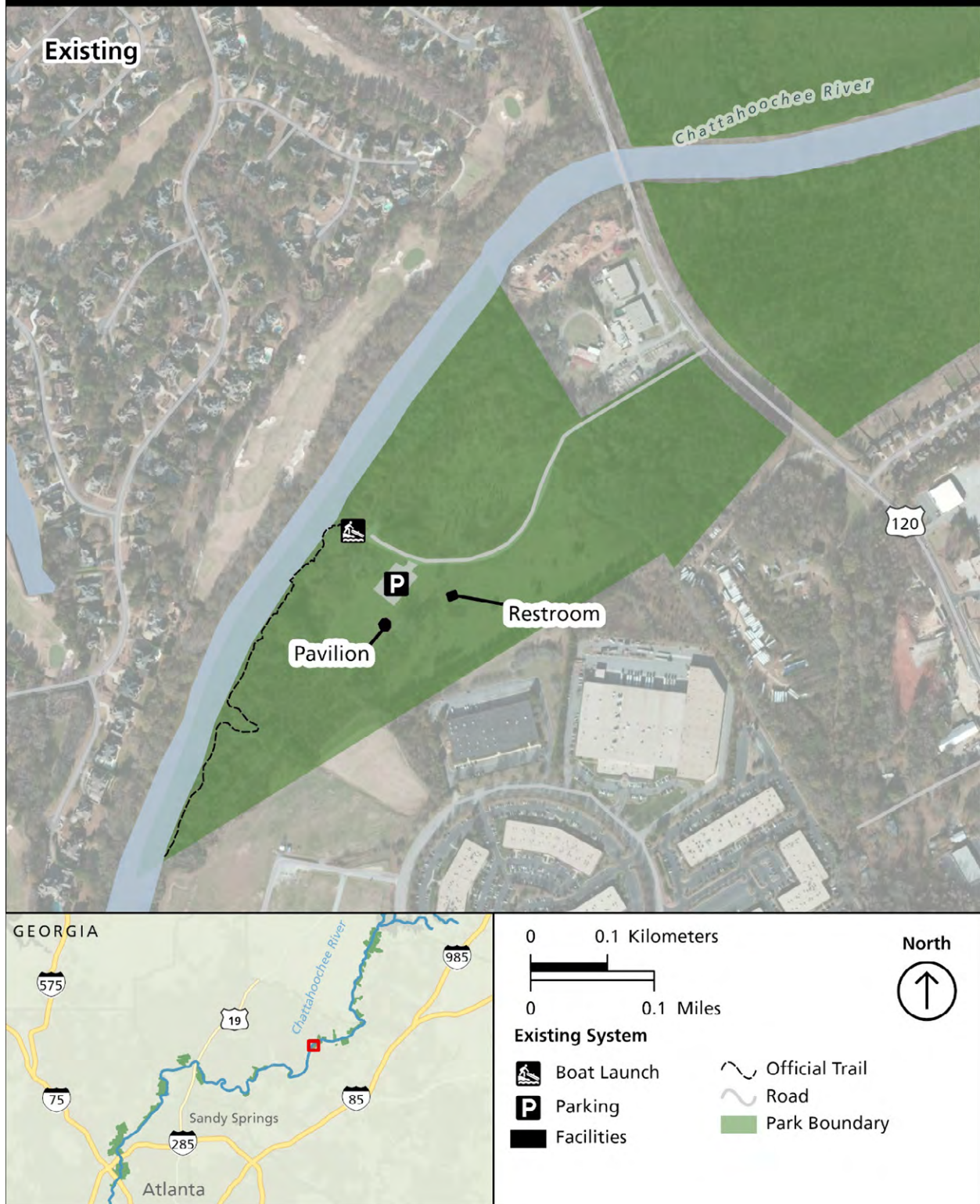


Figure A-8. Existing Trail System — Abbotts Bridge

Medlock Bridge

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

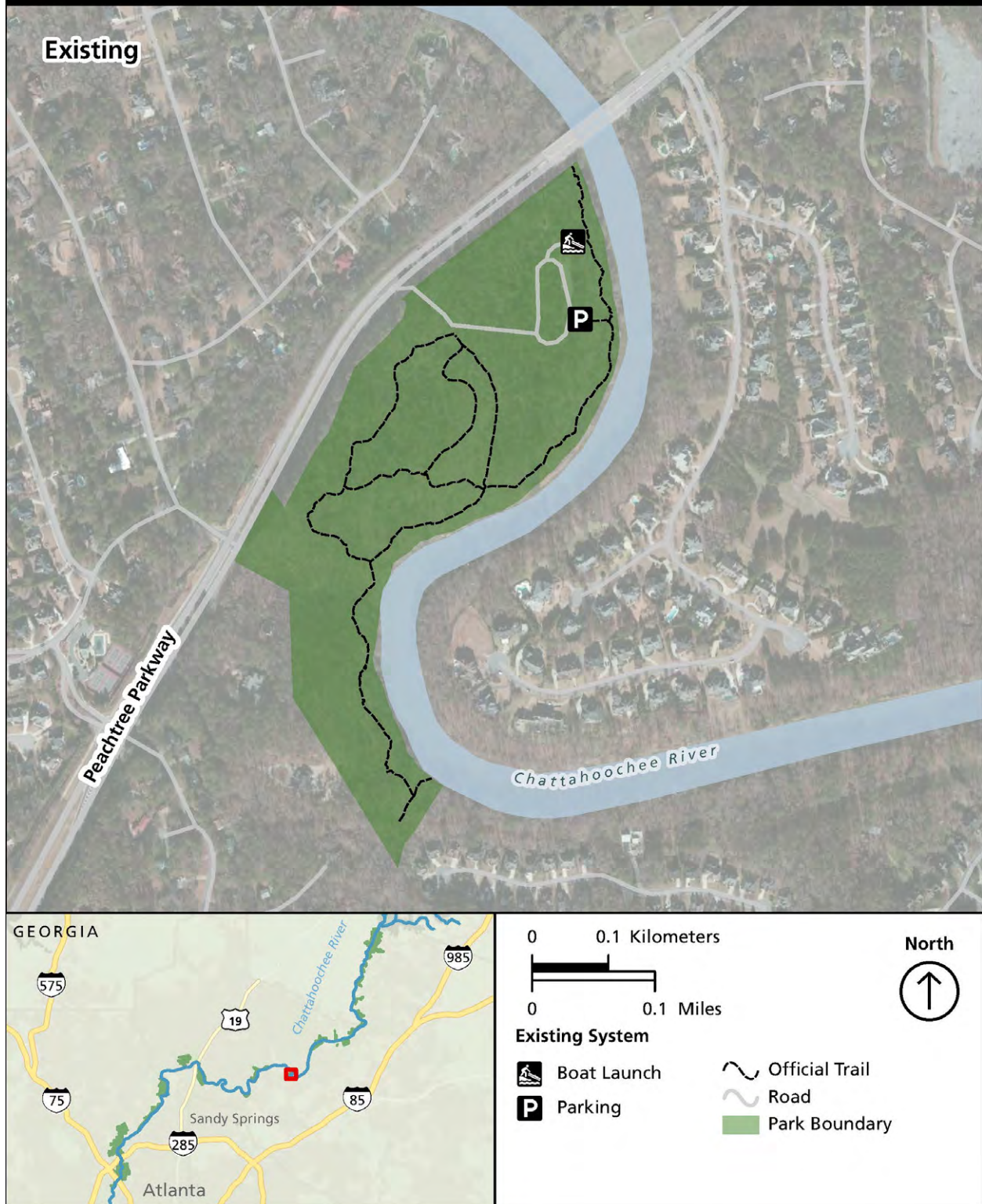


Figure A-9. Existing Trail System — Medlock Bridge

Jones Bridge North

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

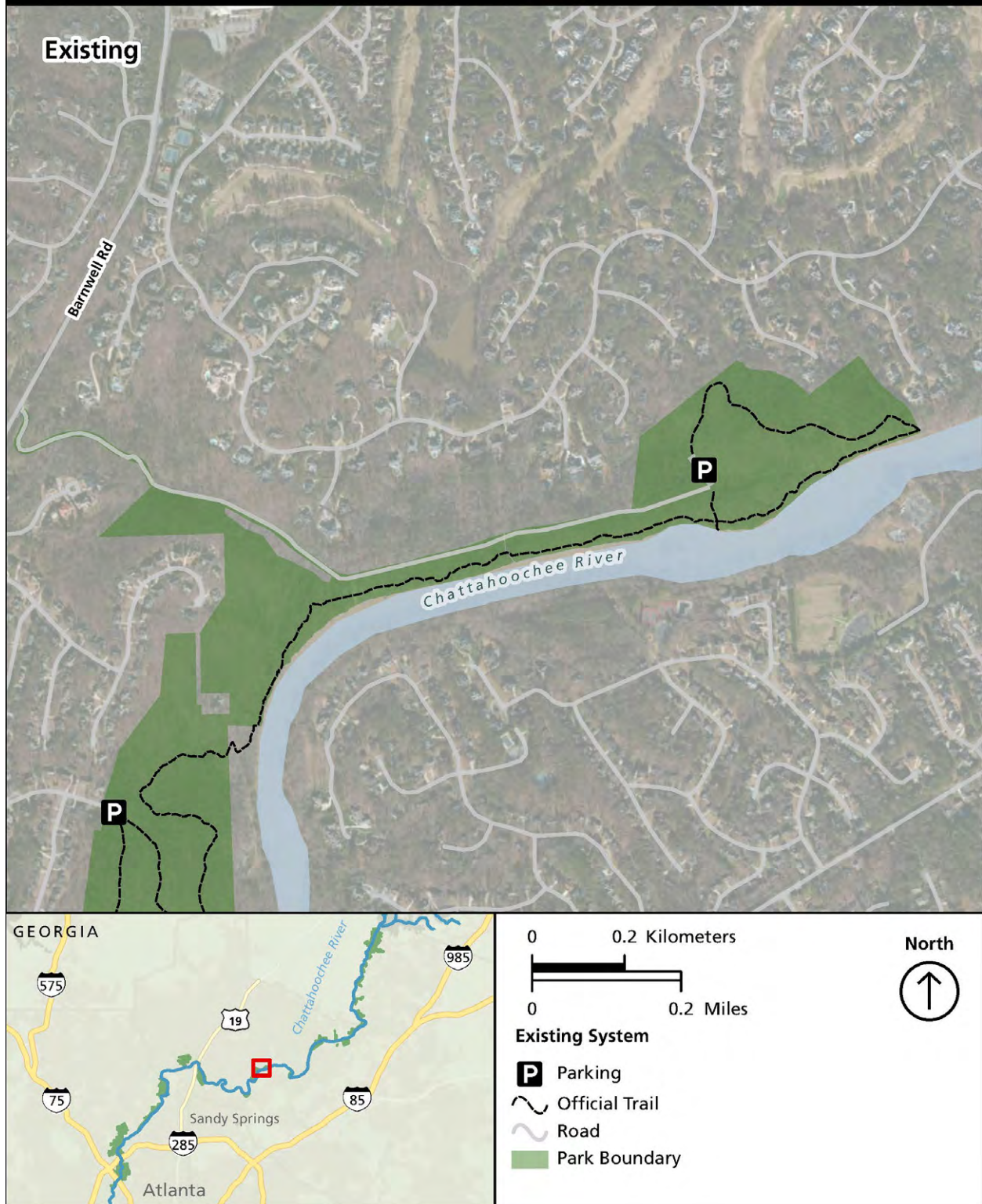


Figure A-10. Existing Trail System — Jones Bridge North

Jones Bridge South

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

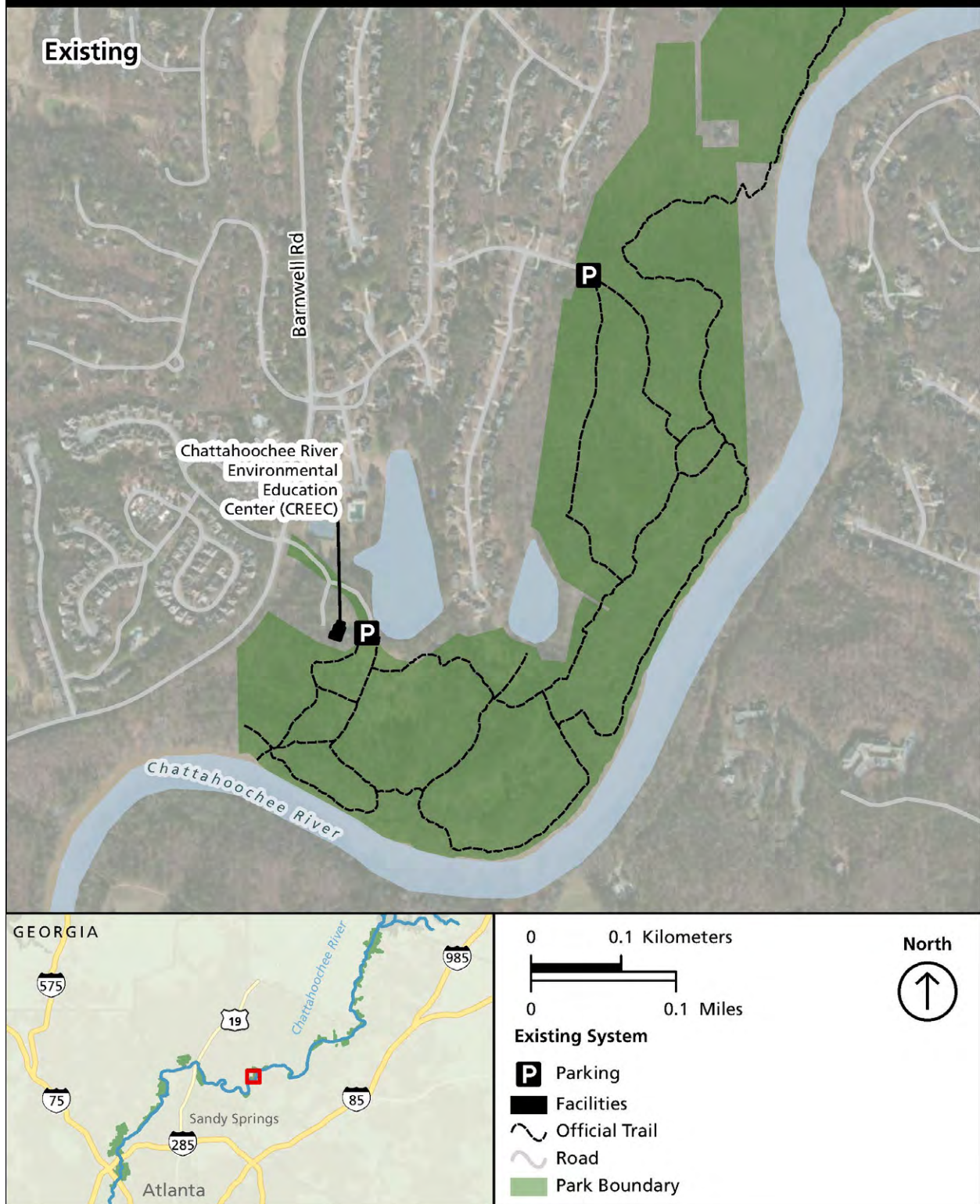


Figure A-11. Existing Trail System — Jones Bridge South

Holcomb Bridge

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

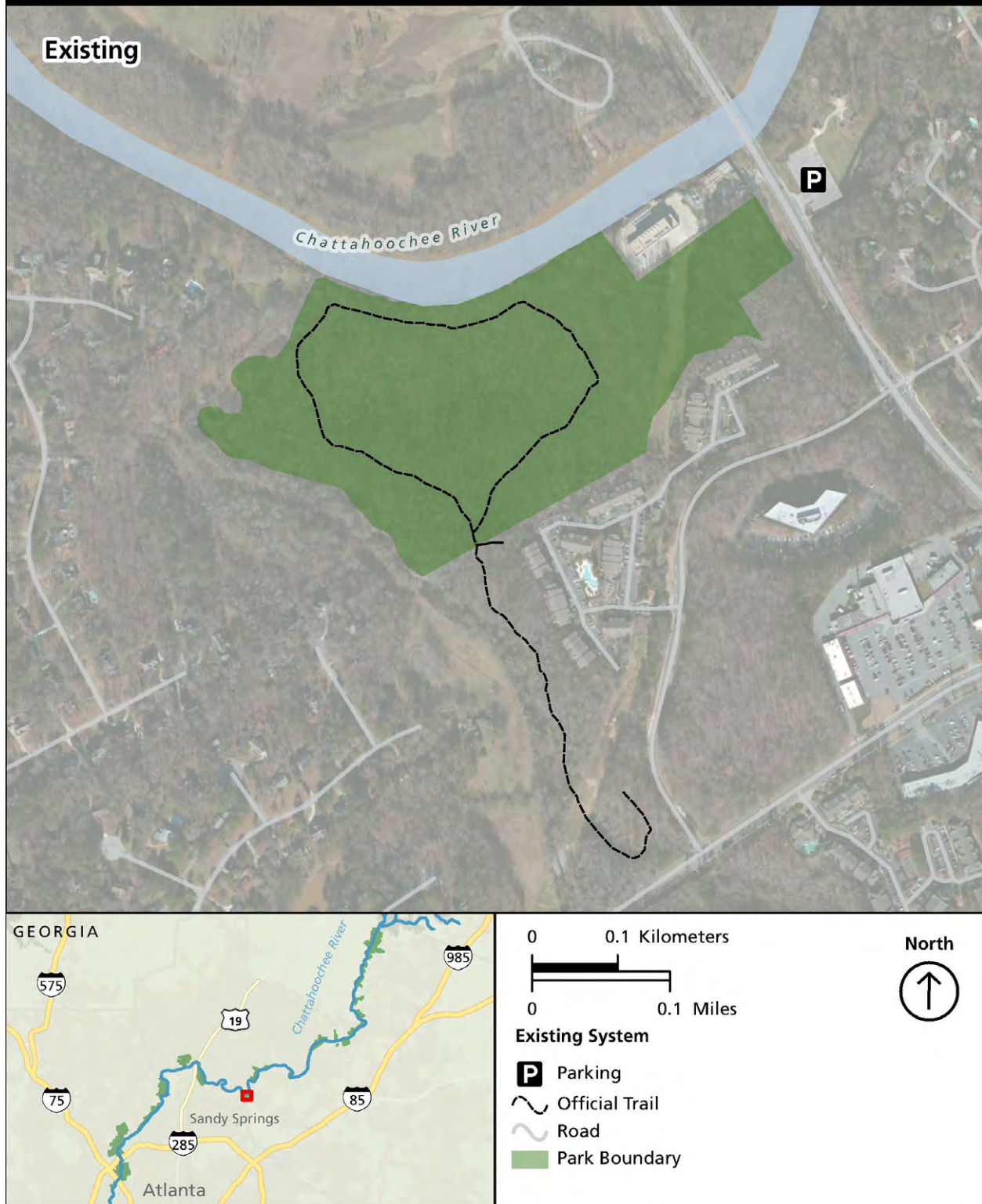


Figure A-12. Existing Trail System — Holcomb Bridge

Island Ford North

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

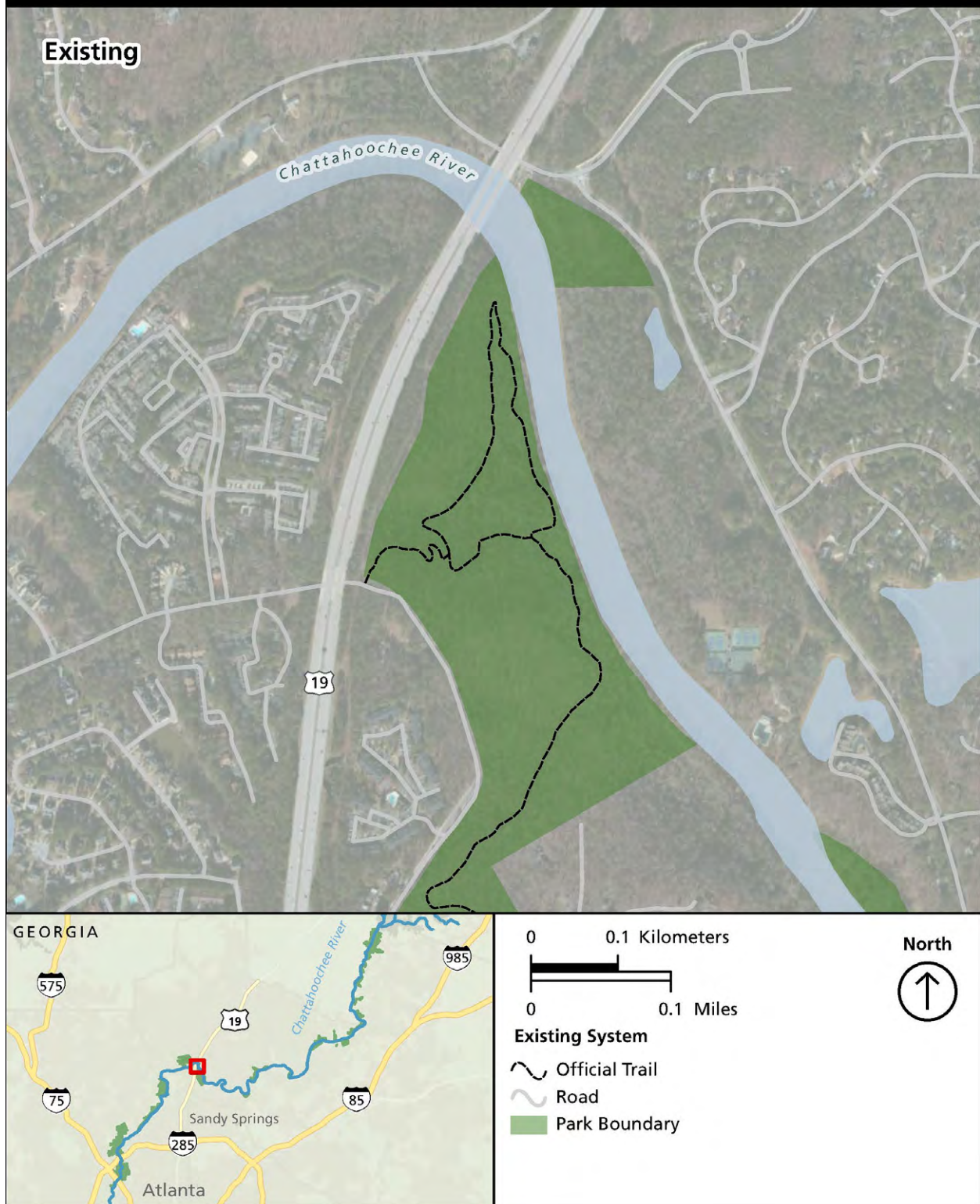


Figure A-13. Existing Trail System — Island Ford North

Island Ford South

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

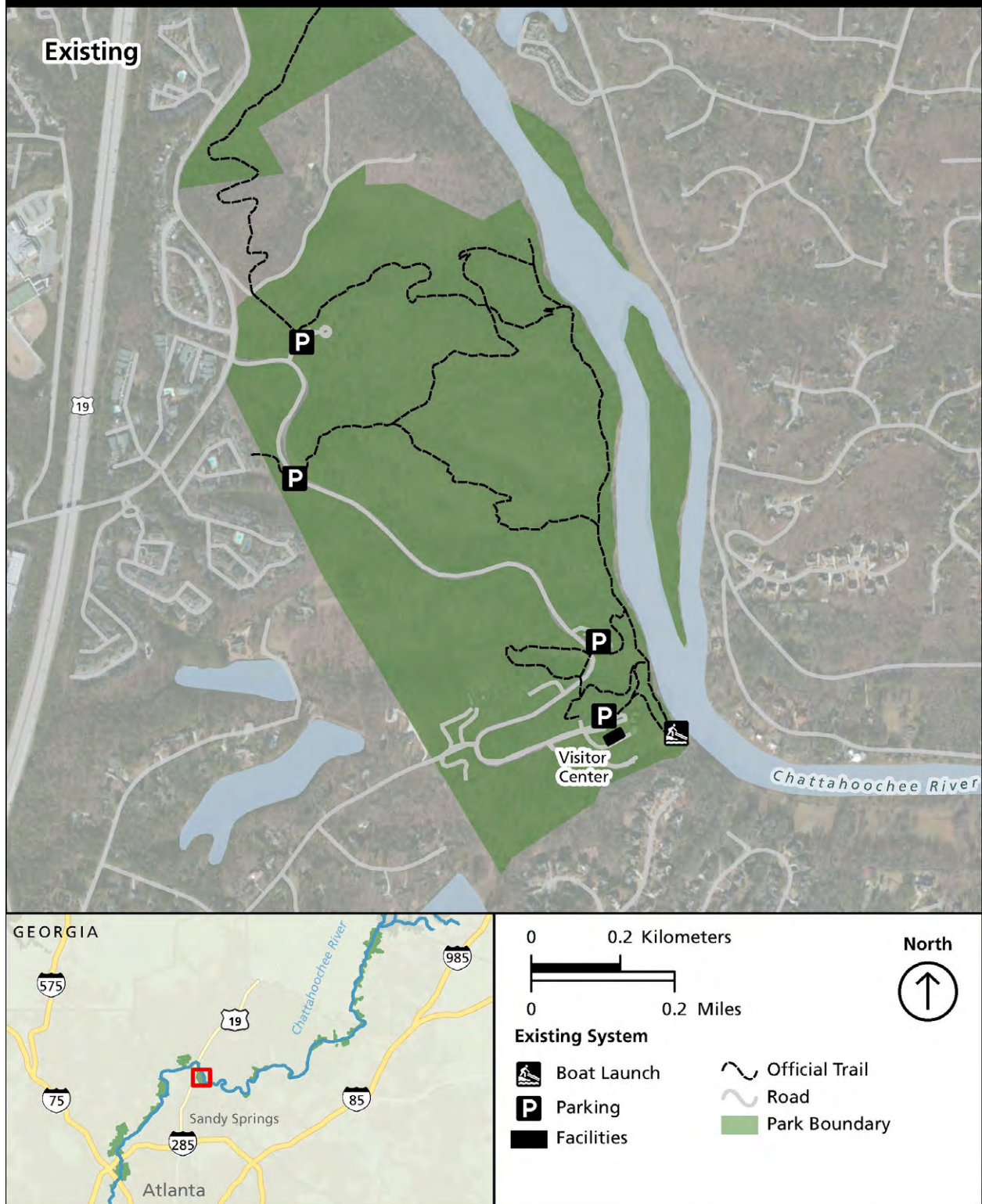


Figure A-14. Existing Trail System — Island Ford South

Vickery Creek

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

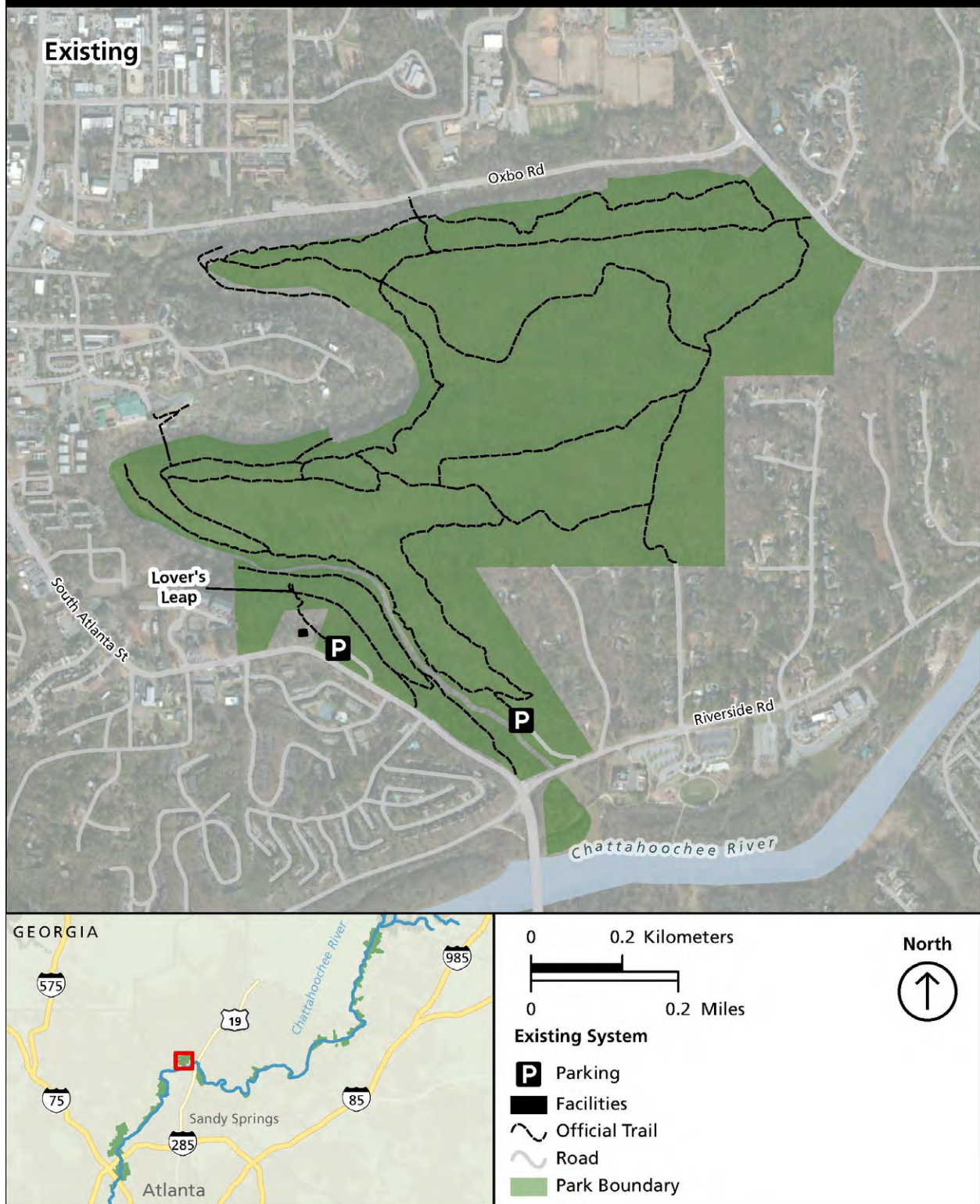


Figure A-15. Existing Trail System — Vickery Creek

Gold Branch

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

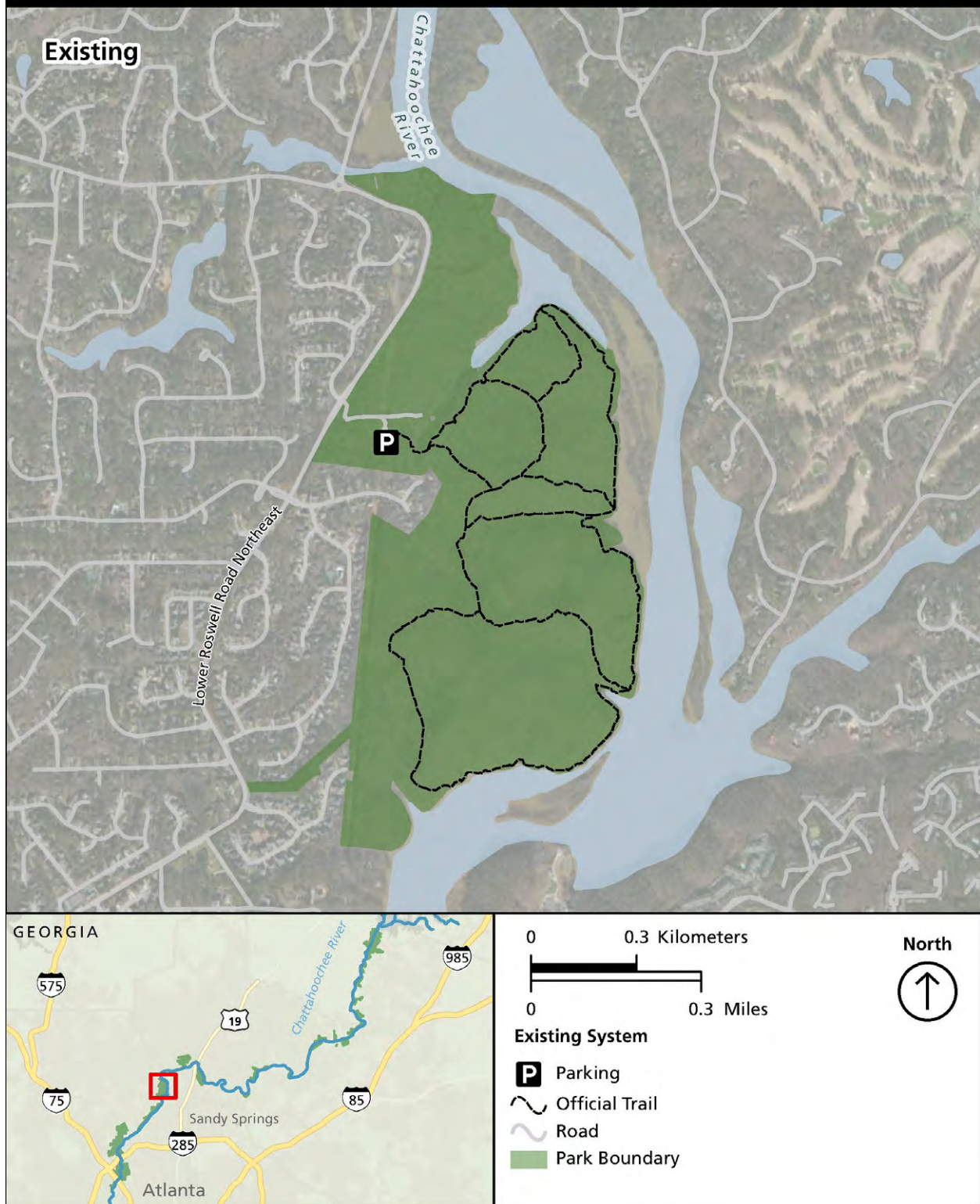


Figure A-16. Existing Trail System — Gold Branch

Johnson Ferry Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

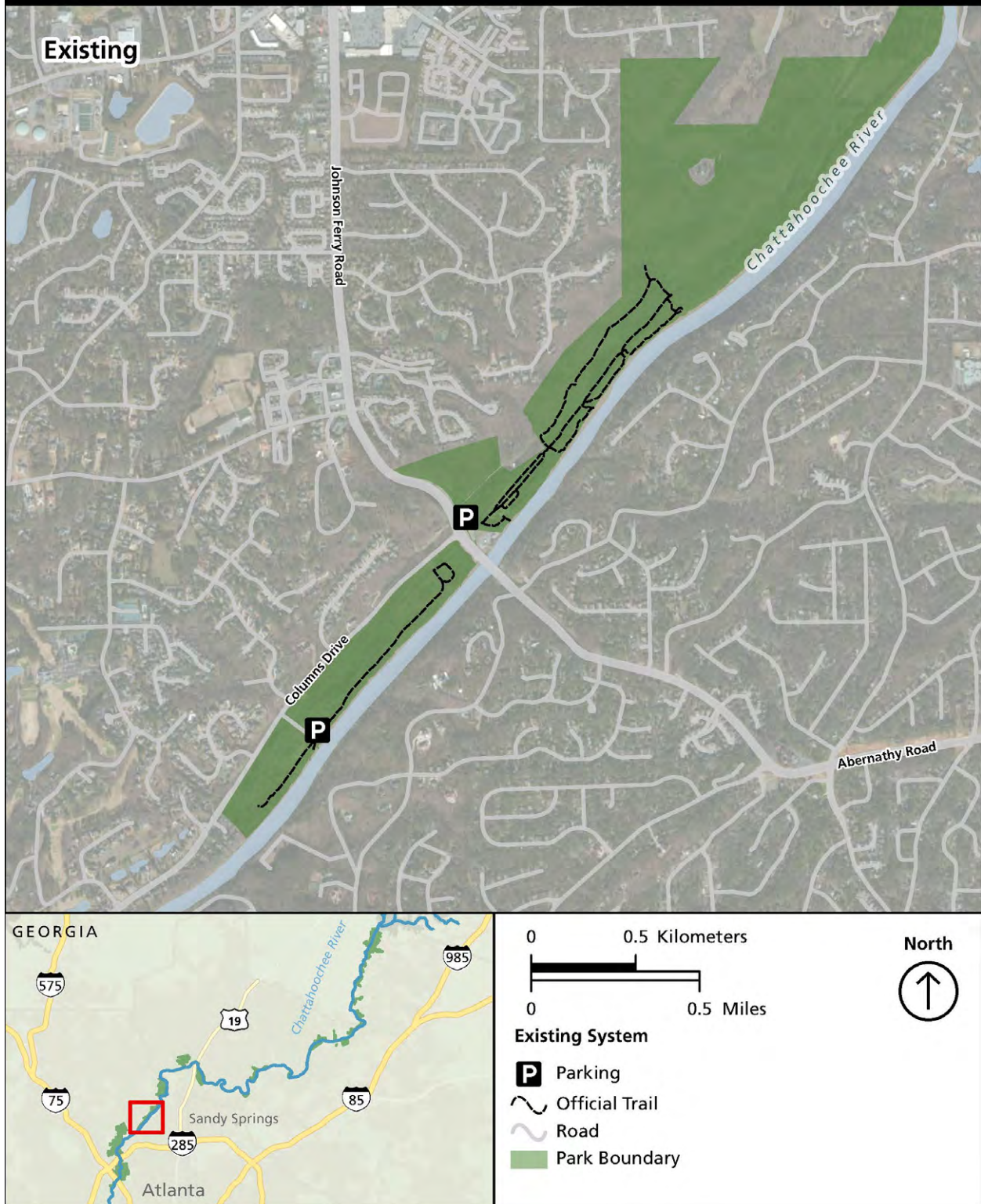


Figure A-17. Existing Trail System — Johnson Ferry

Cochran Shoals - Sope Creek Trailhead

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

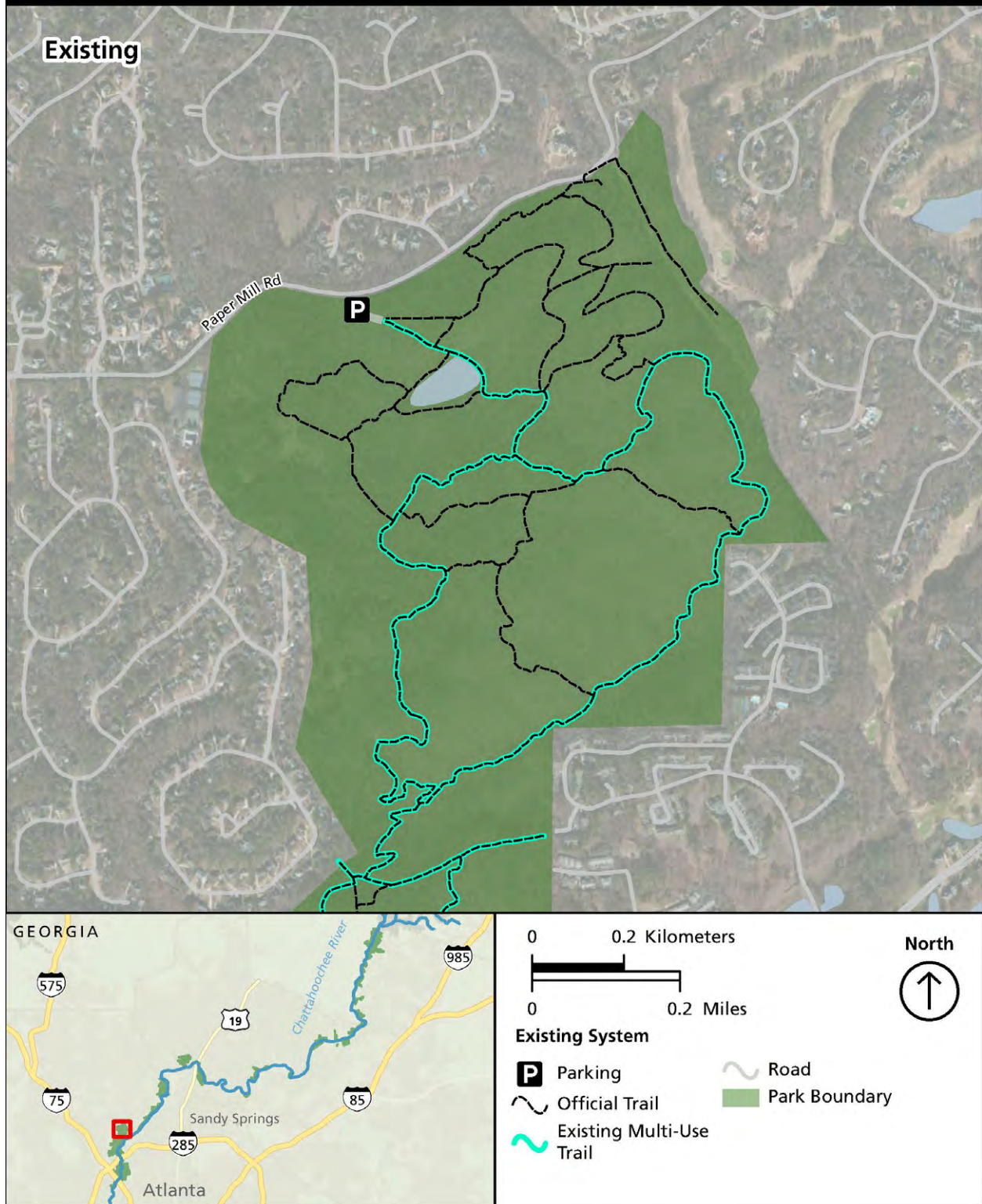


Figure A-18. Existing Trail System — Cochran Shoals, Sope Creek Trailhead

Cochran Shoals - Columns Drive Trailhead

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

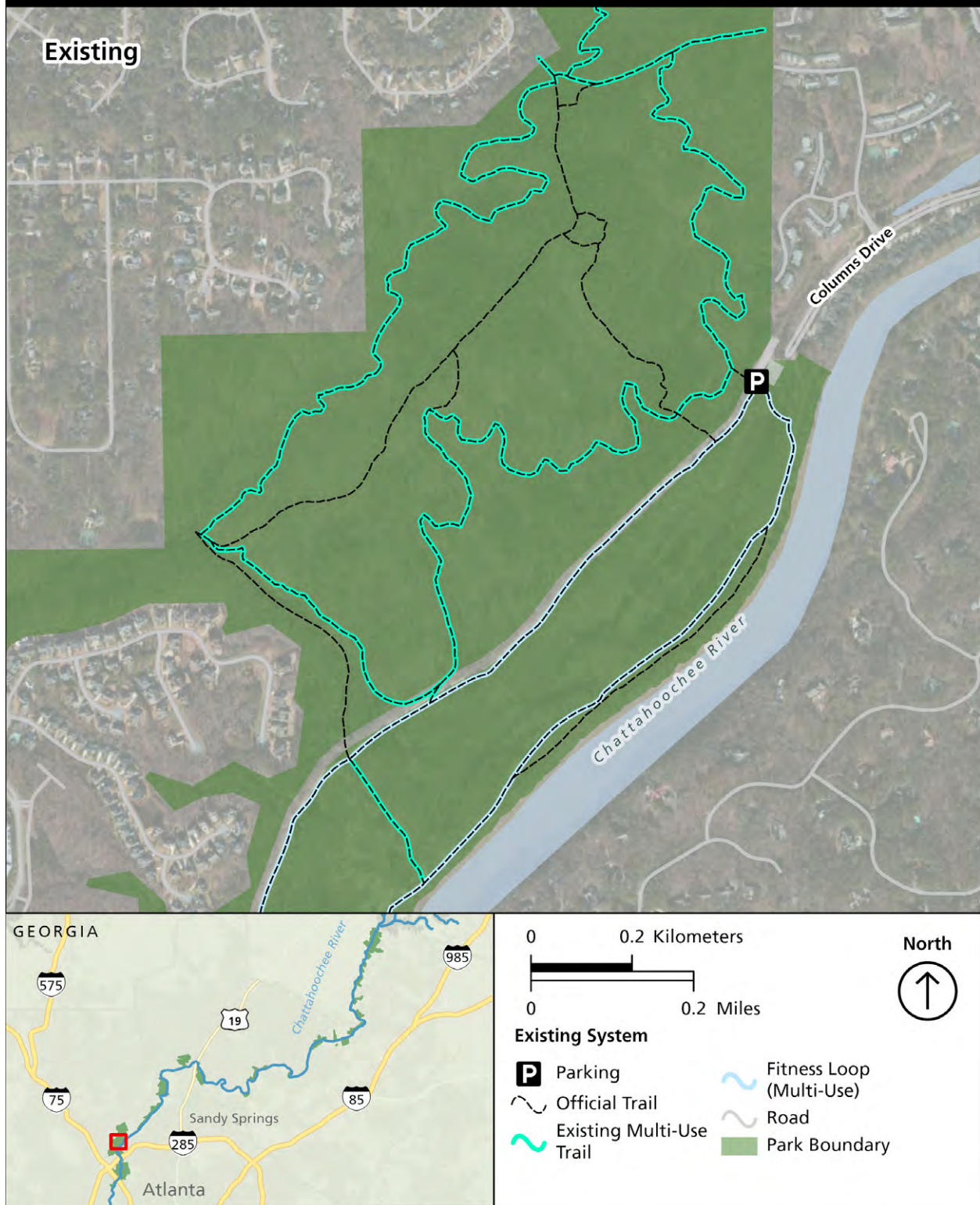


Figure A-19. Existing Trail System — Cochran Shoals, Columns Drive Trailhead

Cochran Shoals - Interstate N/Powers Island

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

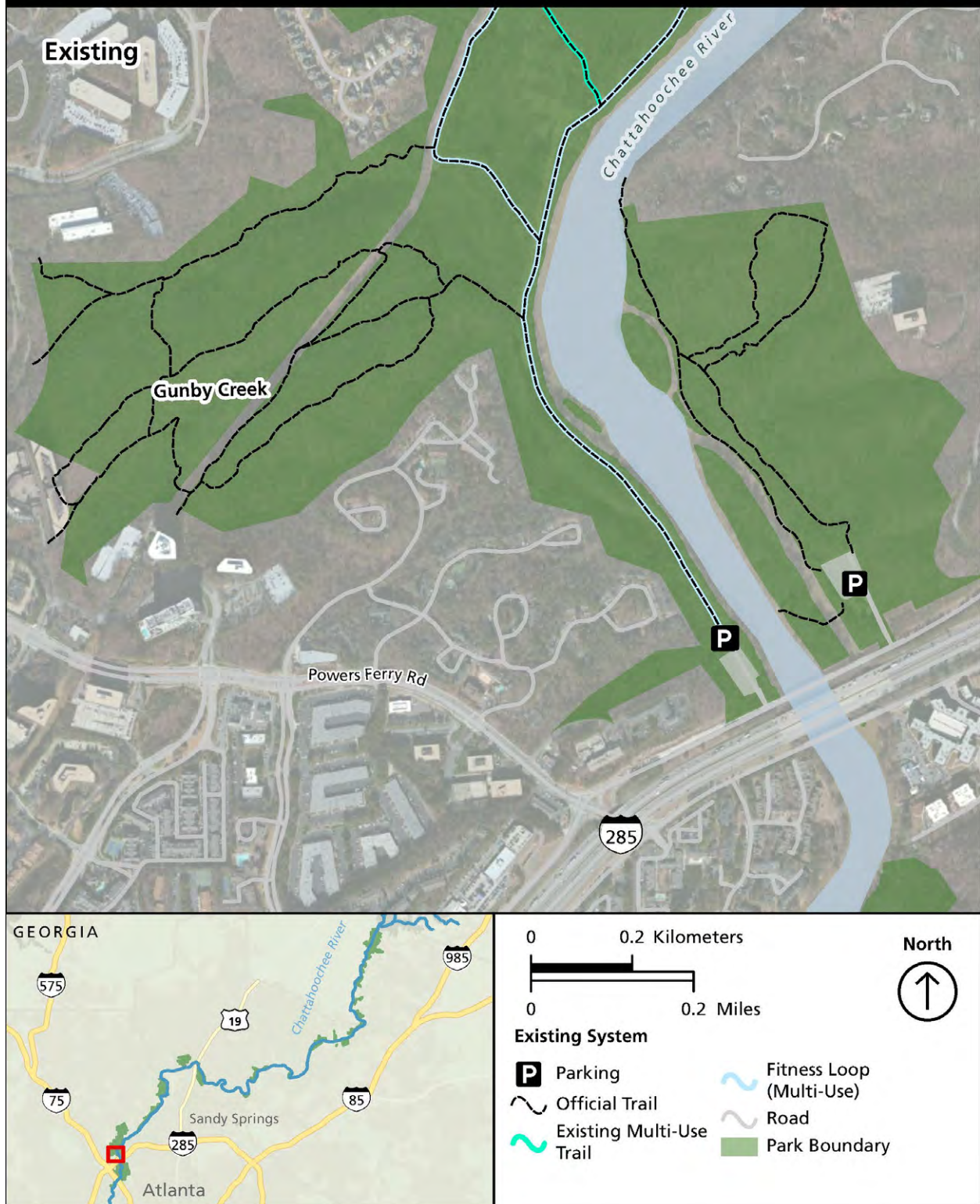


Figure A-20. Existing Trail System — Cochran Shoals, Interstate North/Powers Island

Palisades North

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

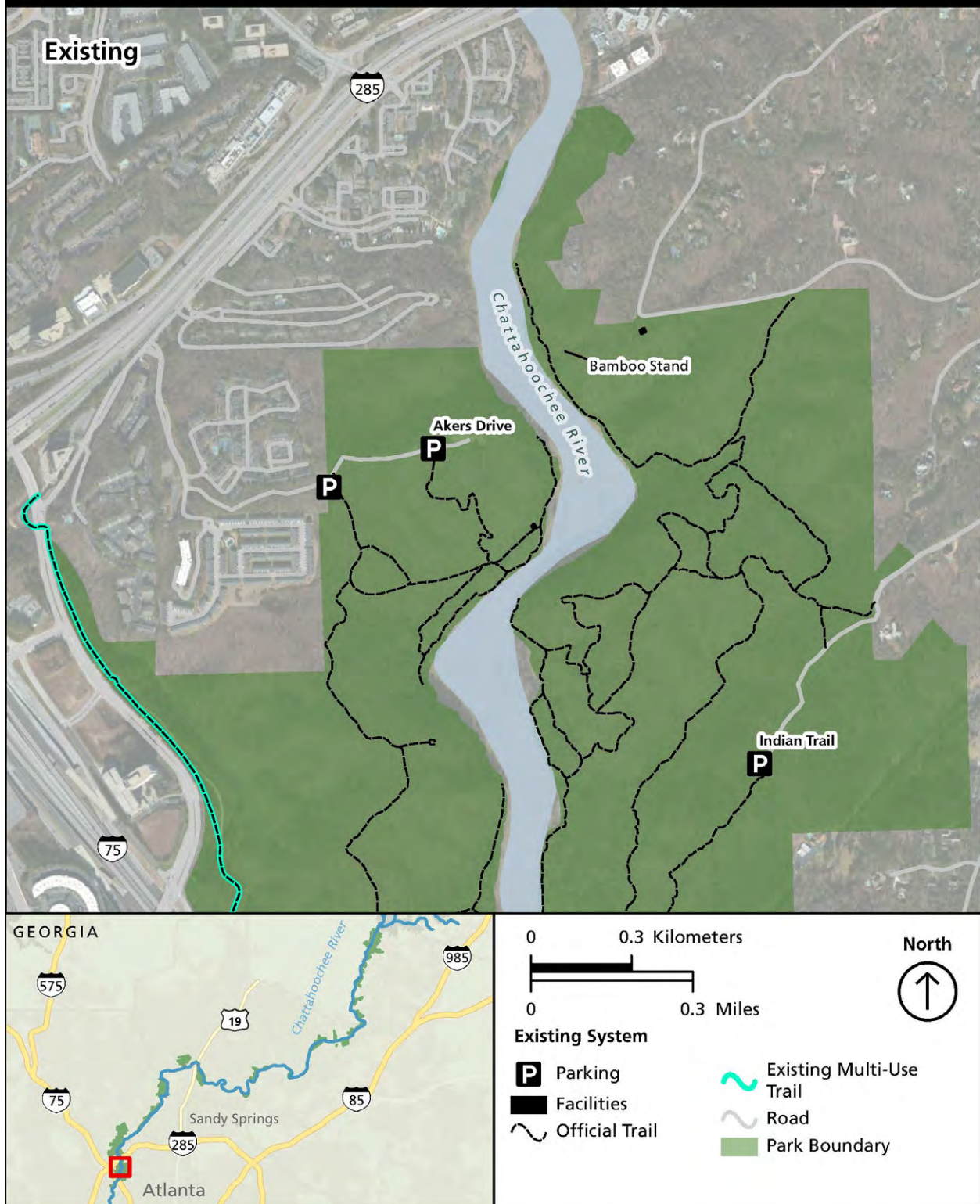


Figure A-21. Existing Trail System — Palisades North

Palisades South

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

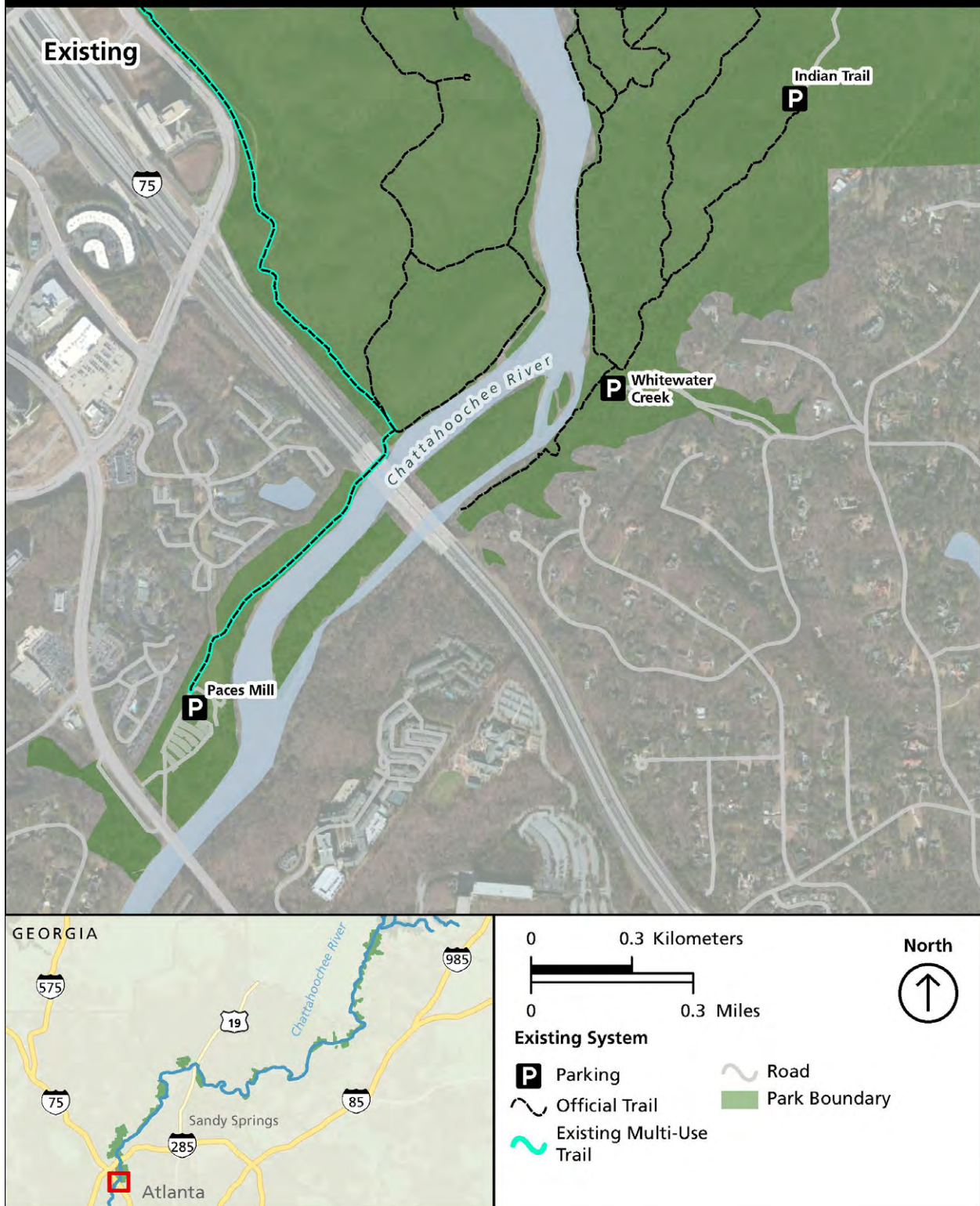


Figure A-22. Existing Trail System — Palisades South

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APPENDIX B: UNIT MAPS, PROPOSED TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN ACTIONS AND RESULTANT TRAIL SYSTEM

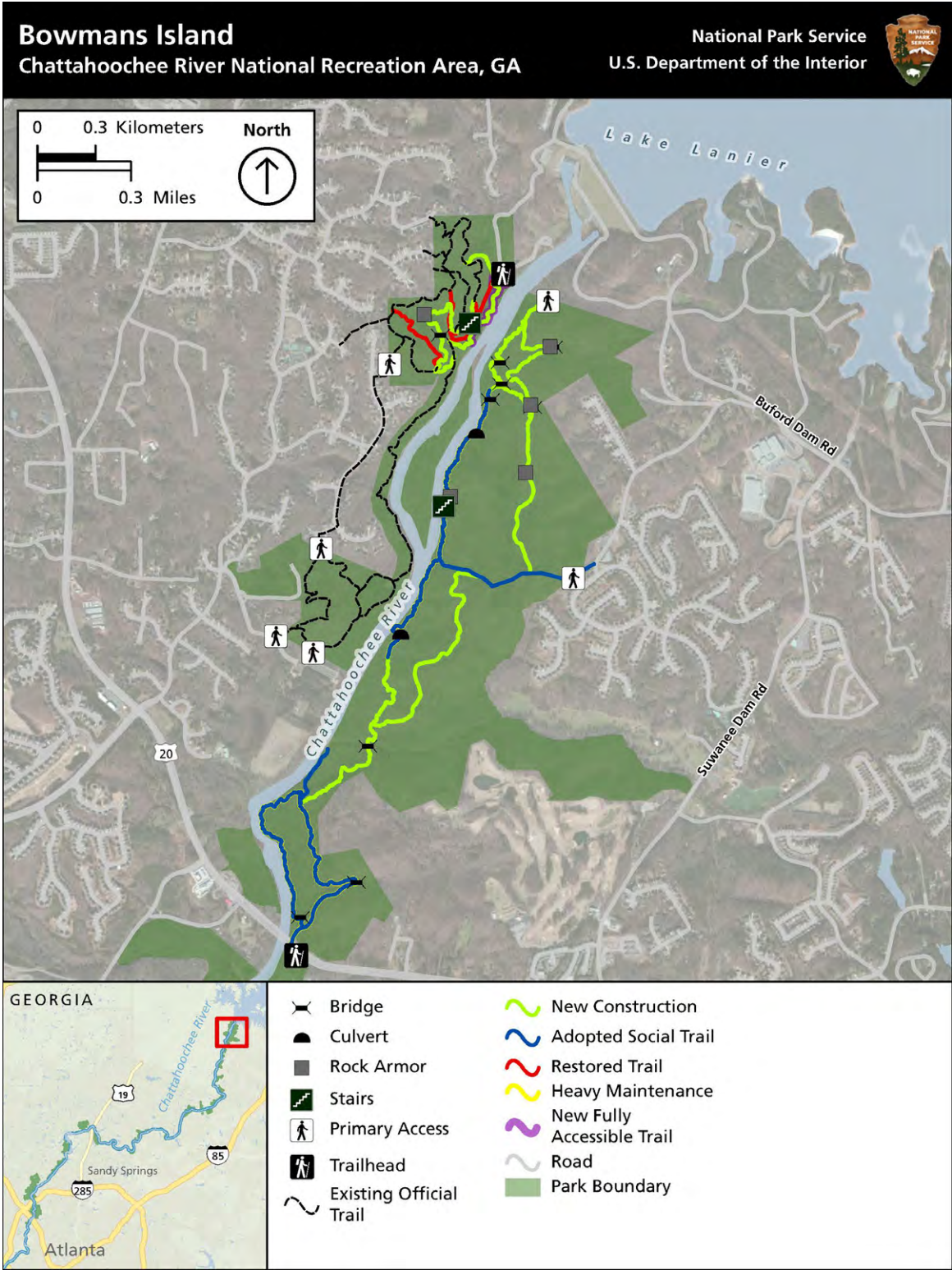


Figure B-1. Bowmans Island — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

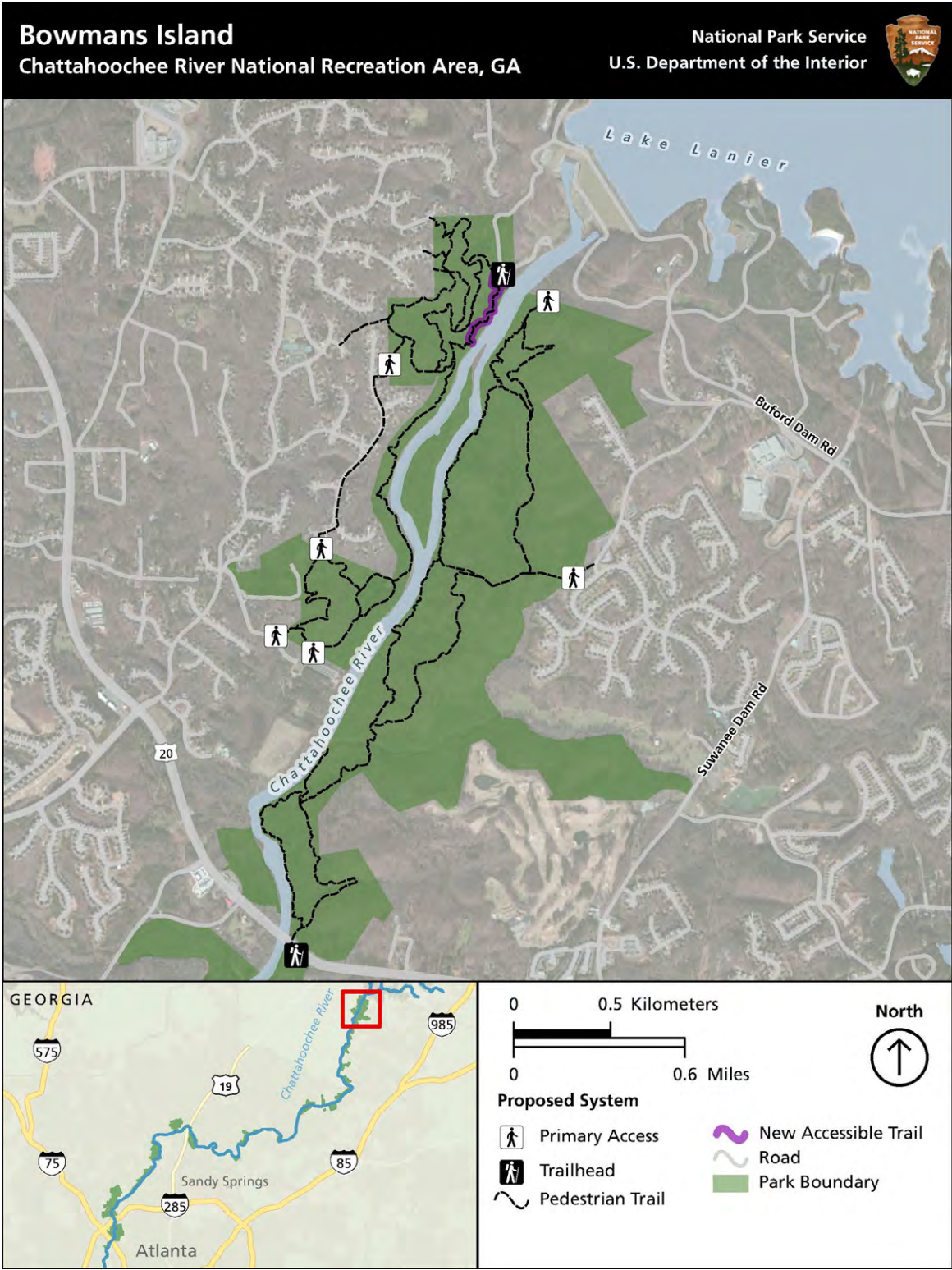


Figure B-2. Bowmans Island — Proposed Resultant Trail System

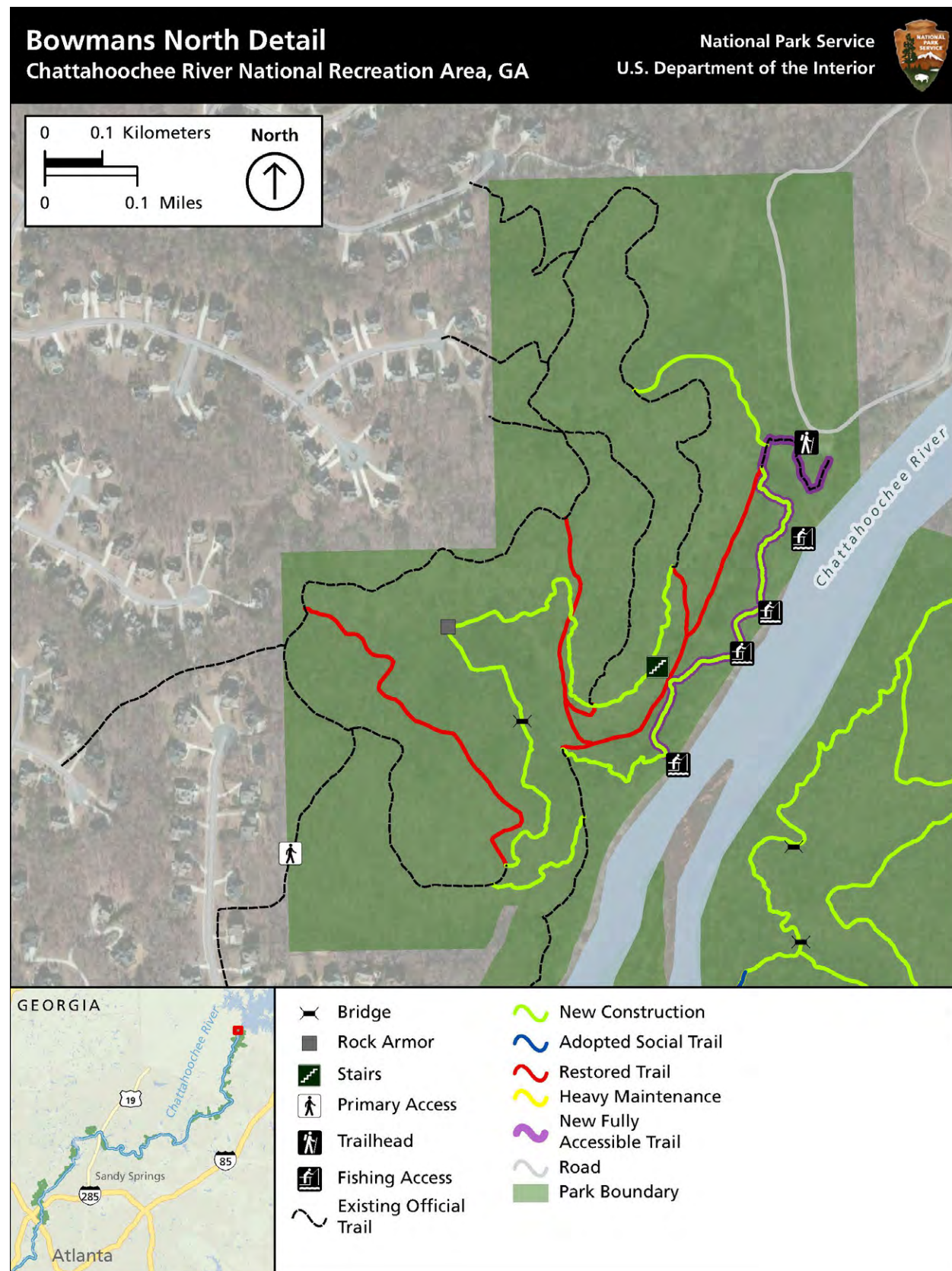


Figure B-3. Bowmans Island North — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

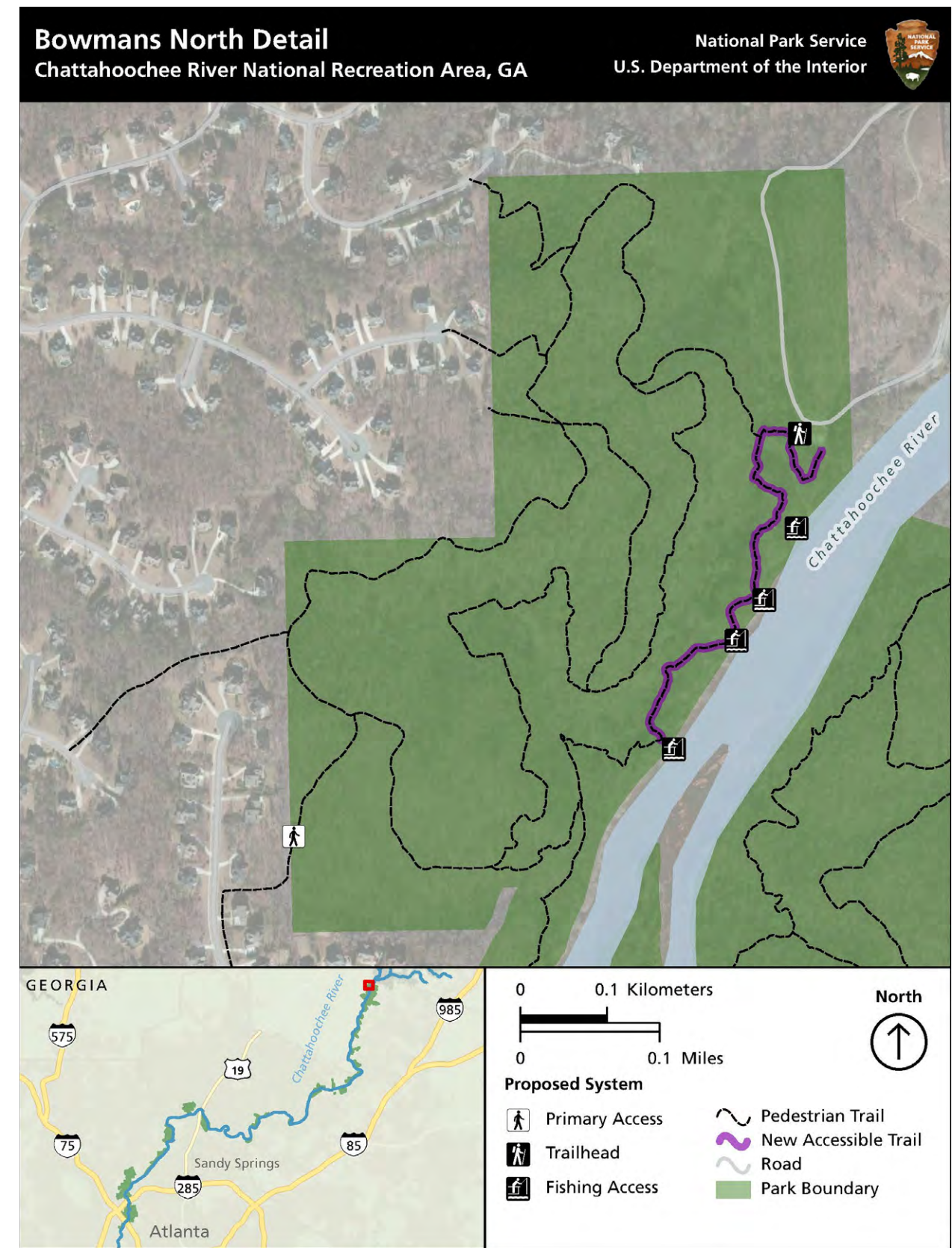


Figure B-4. Bowmans Island North — Proposed Resultant Trail System



Figure B-5. Orrs Ferry — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

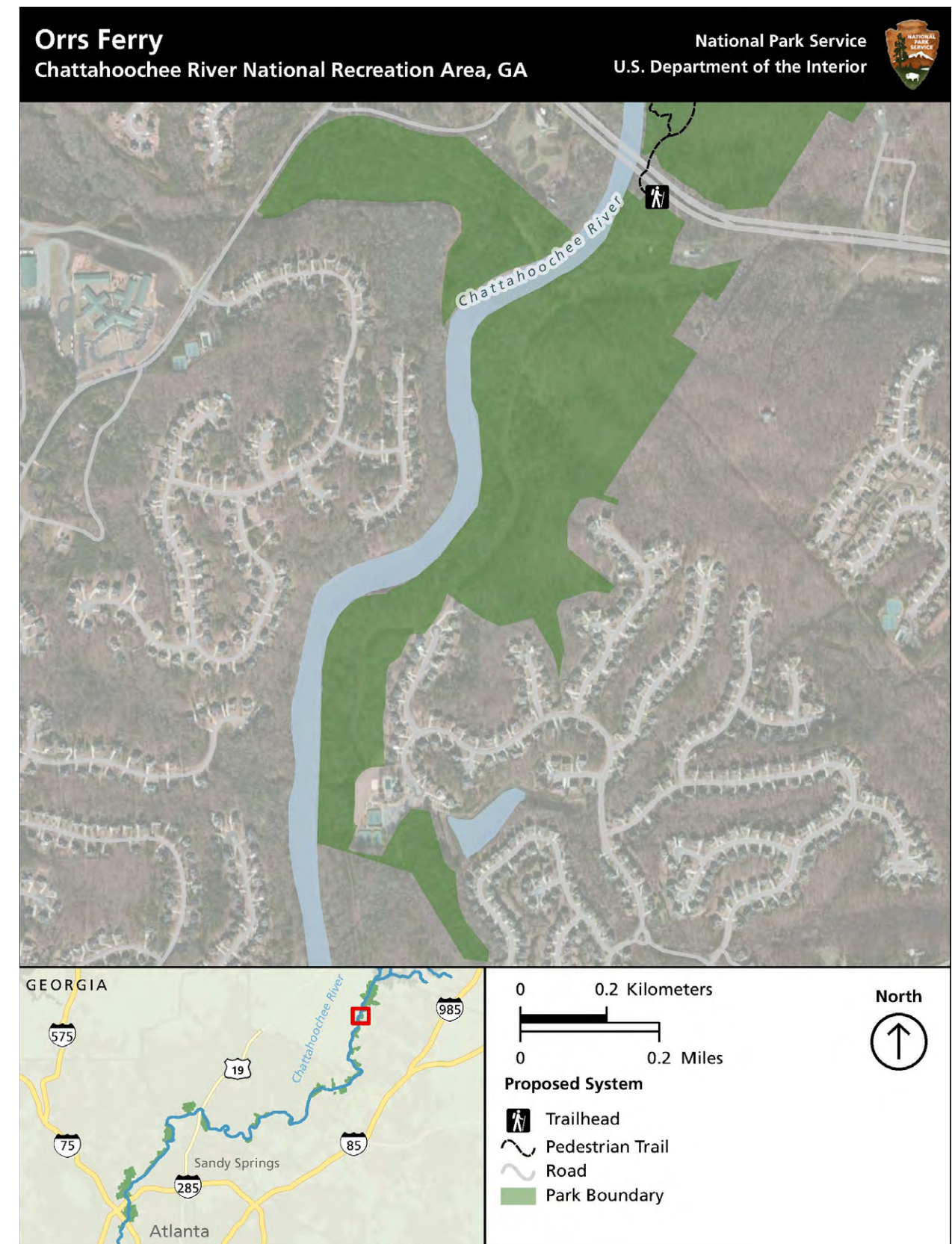


Figure B-6. Orrs Ferry — Proposed Resultant Trail System

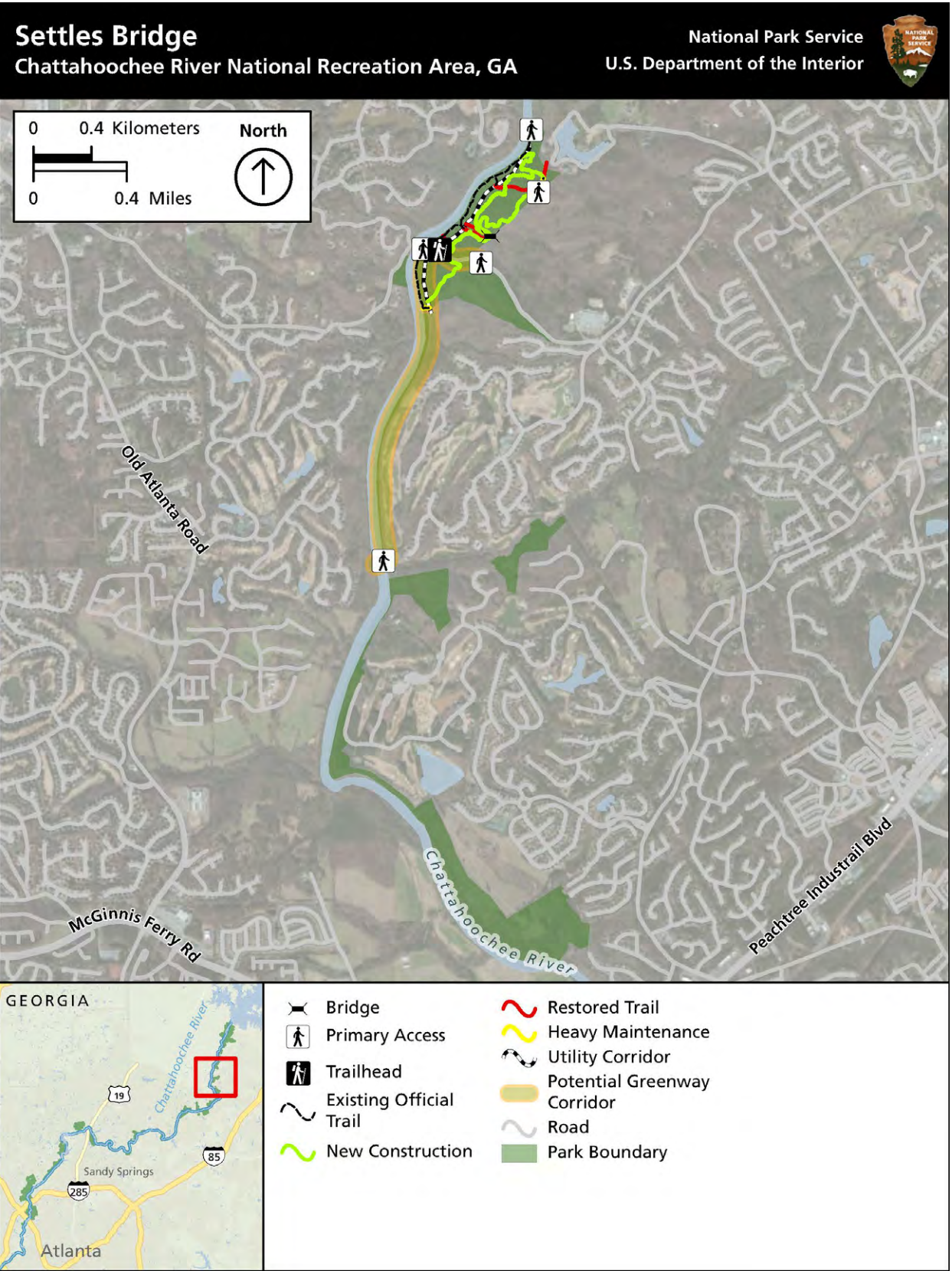


Figure B-7. Settles Bridge — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

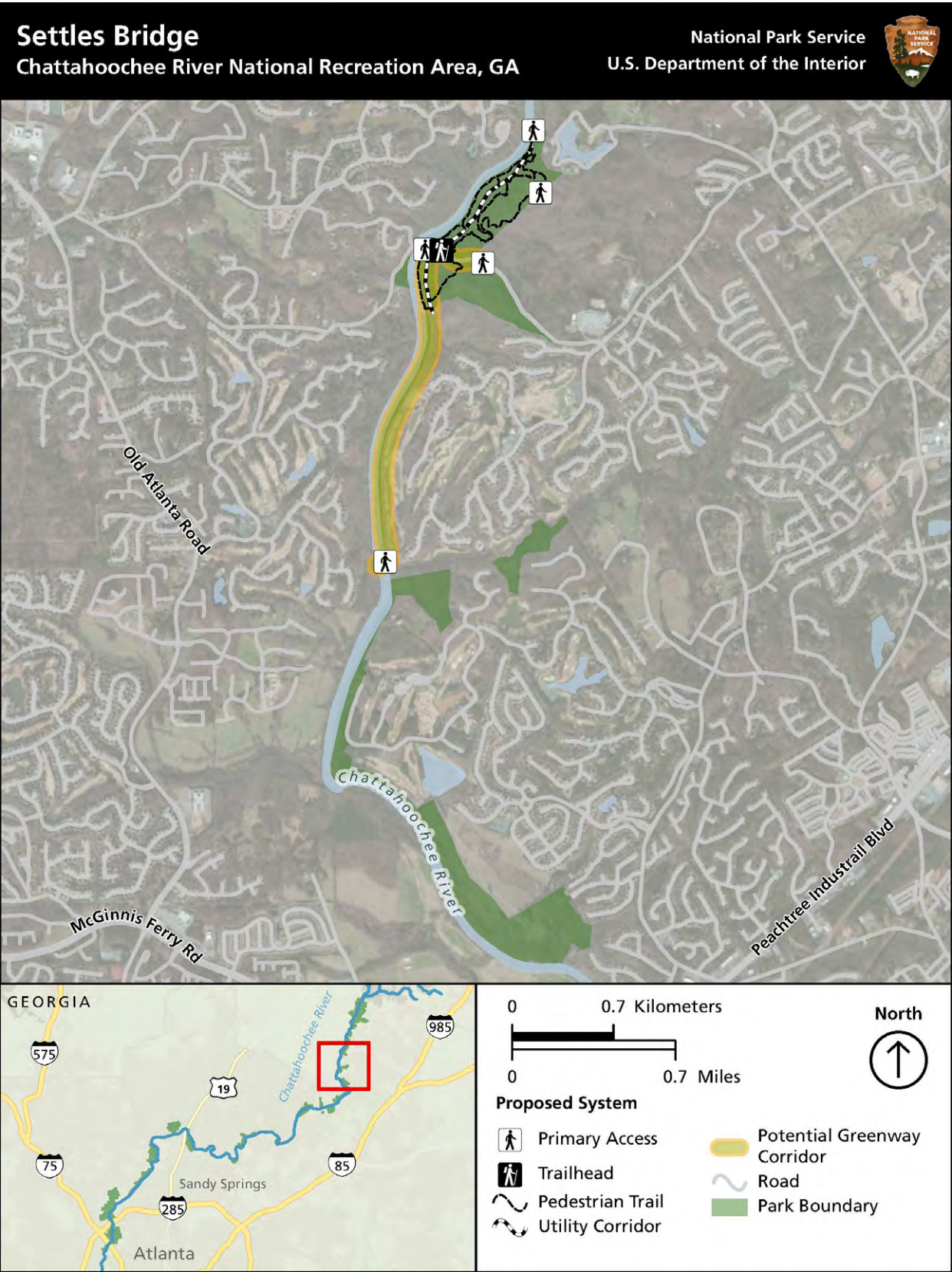
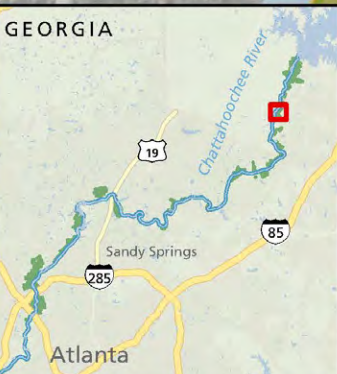
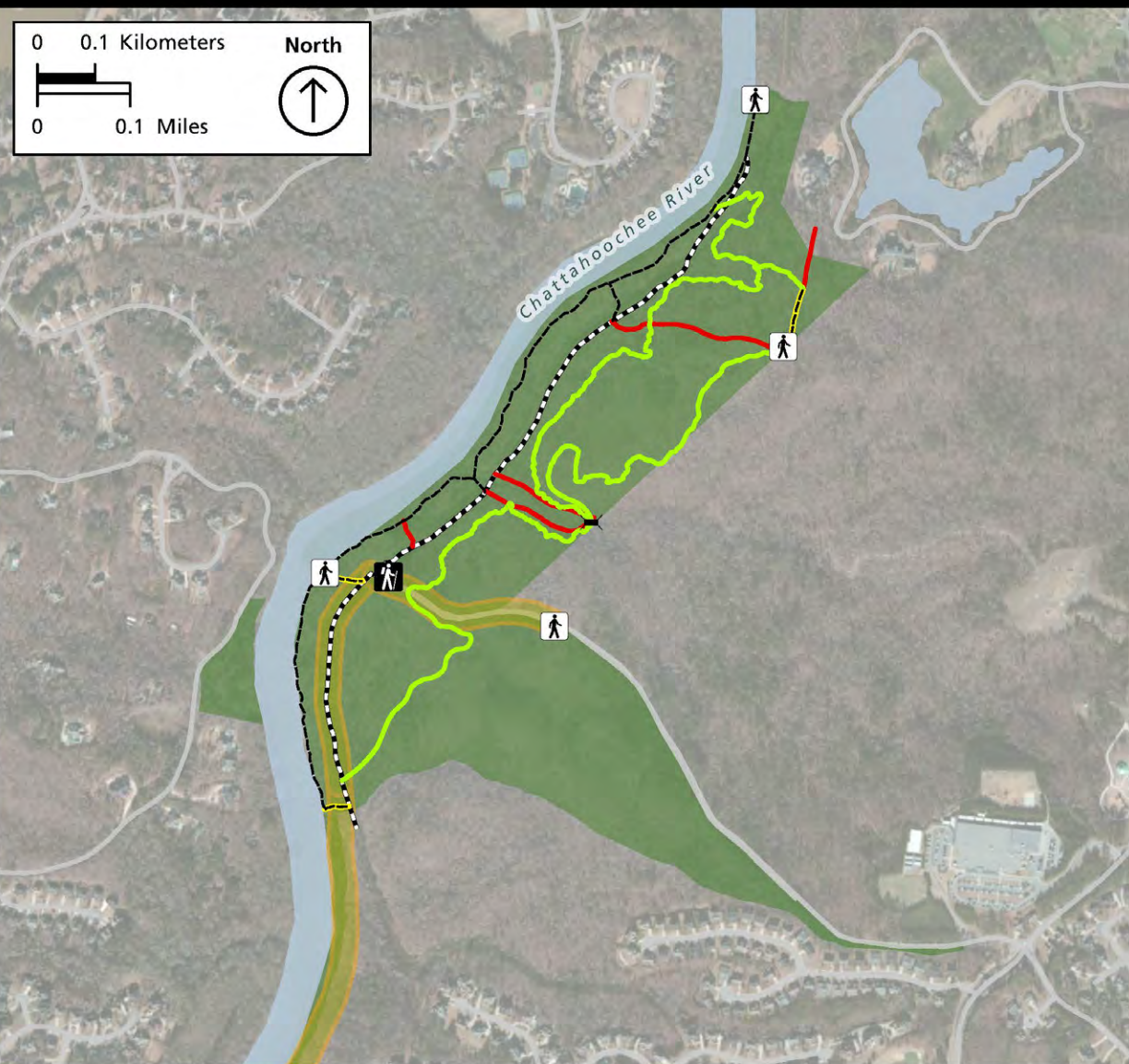
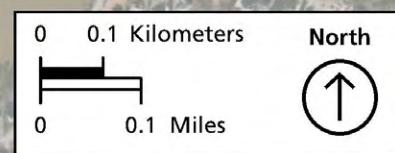


Figure B-8. Settles Bridge — Proposed Resultant Trail System

Settles Bridge North Detail

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



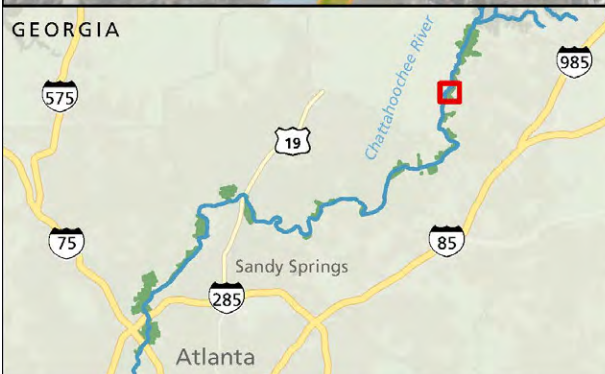
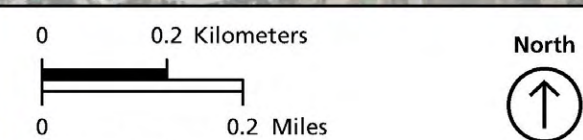
- Bridge
- Primary Access
- Trailhead
- Existing Official Trail
- New Construction
- Restored Trail
- Heavy Maintenance
- Utility Corridor
- Potential Greenway Corridor
- Road
- Park Boundary

Figure B-9. Settles Bridge North — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

Settles Bridge North Detail

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, GA

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- Proposed System**
- Primary Access
 - Trailhead
 - Pedestrian Trail
 - Utility Corridor
 - Potential Greenway Corridor
 - Road
 - Park Boundary

Figure B-10. Settles Bridge North — Proposed Resultant Trail System



Figure B-11. McGinnis Ferry — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy



Figure B-12. McGinnis Ferry — Proposed Resultant Trail System



Figure B-13. Suwanee Creek — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy



Figure B-14. Suwanee Creek — Proposed Resultant Trail System

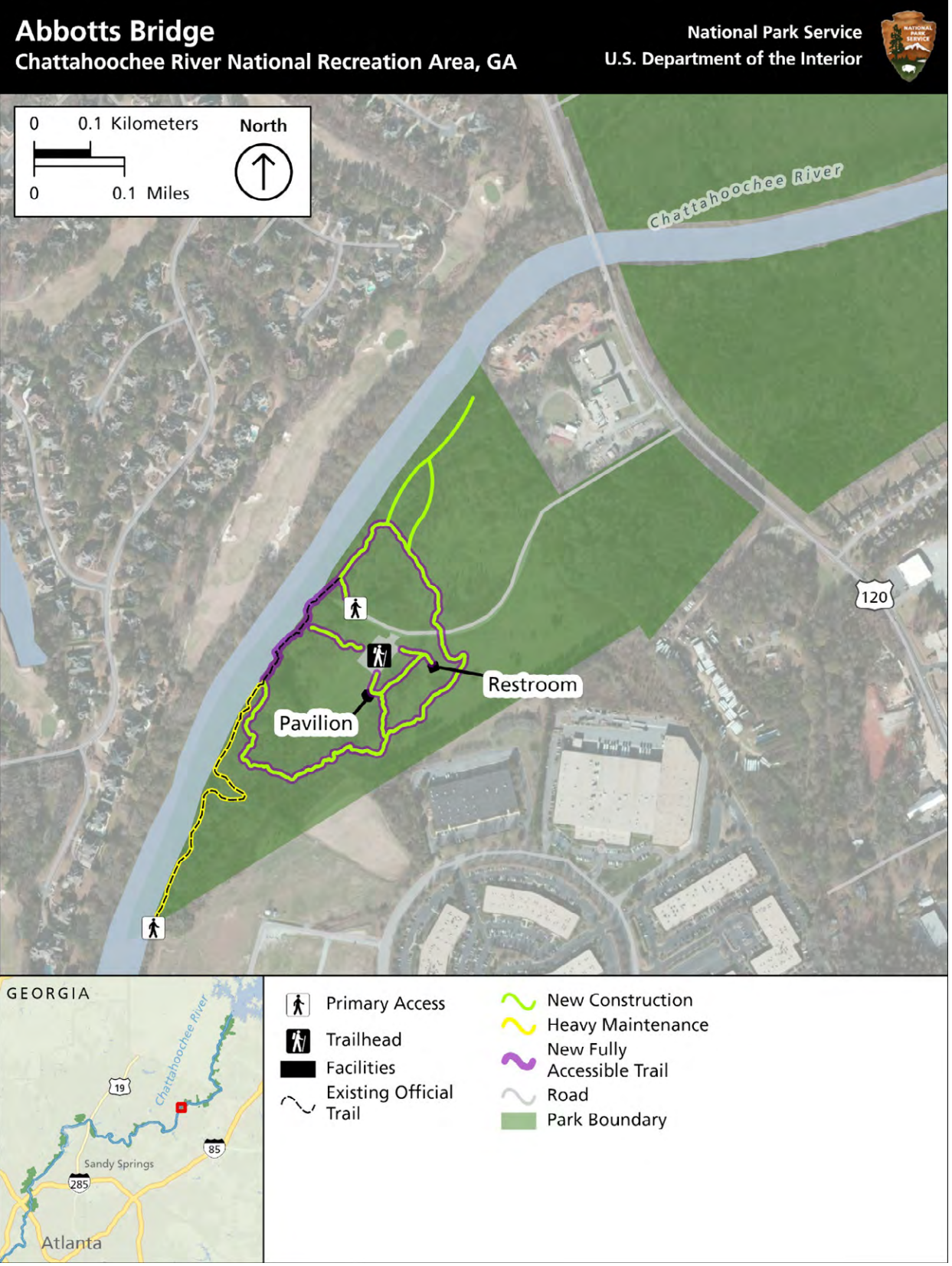
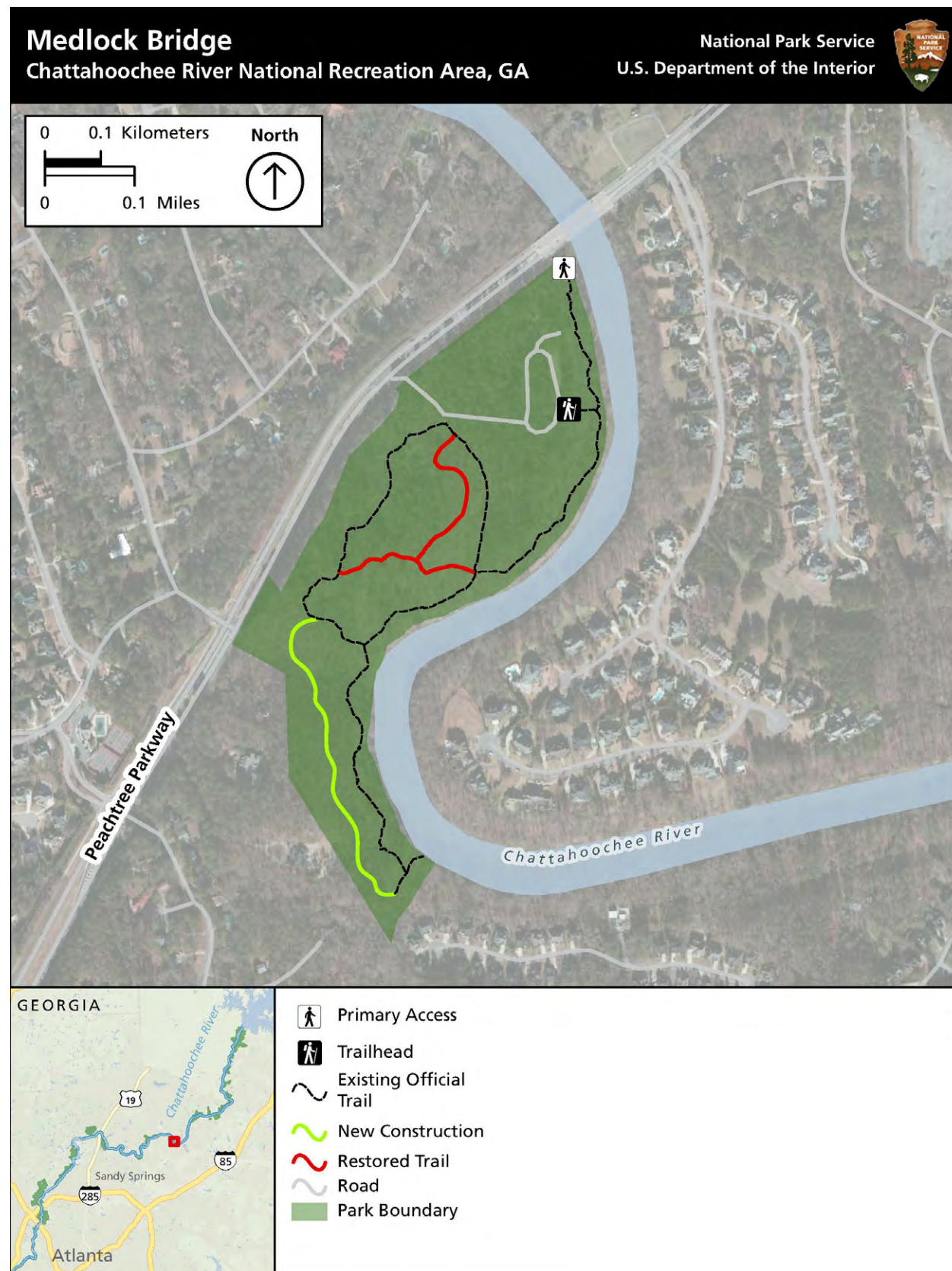


Figure B-15. Abbotts Bridge — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy



Figure B-16. Abbotts Bridge — Proposed Resultant Trail System



SFigure B-17. Medlock Bridge — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

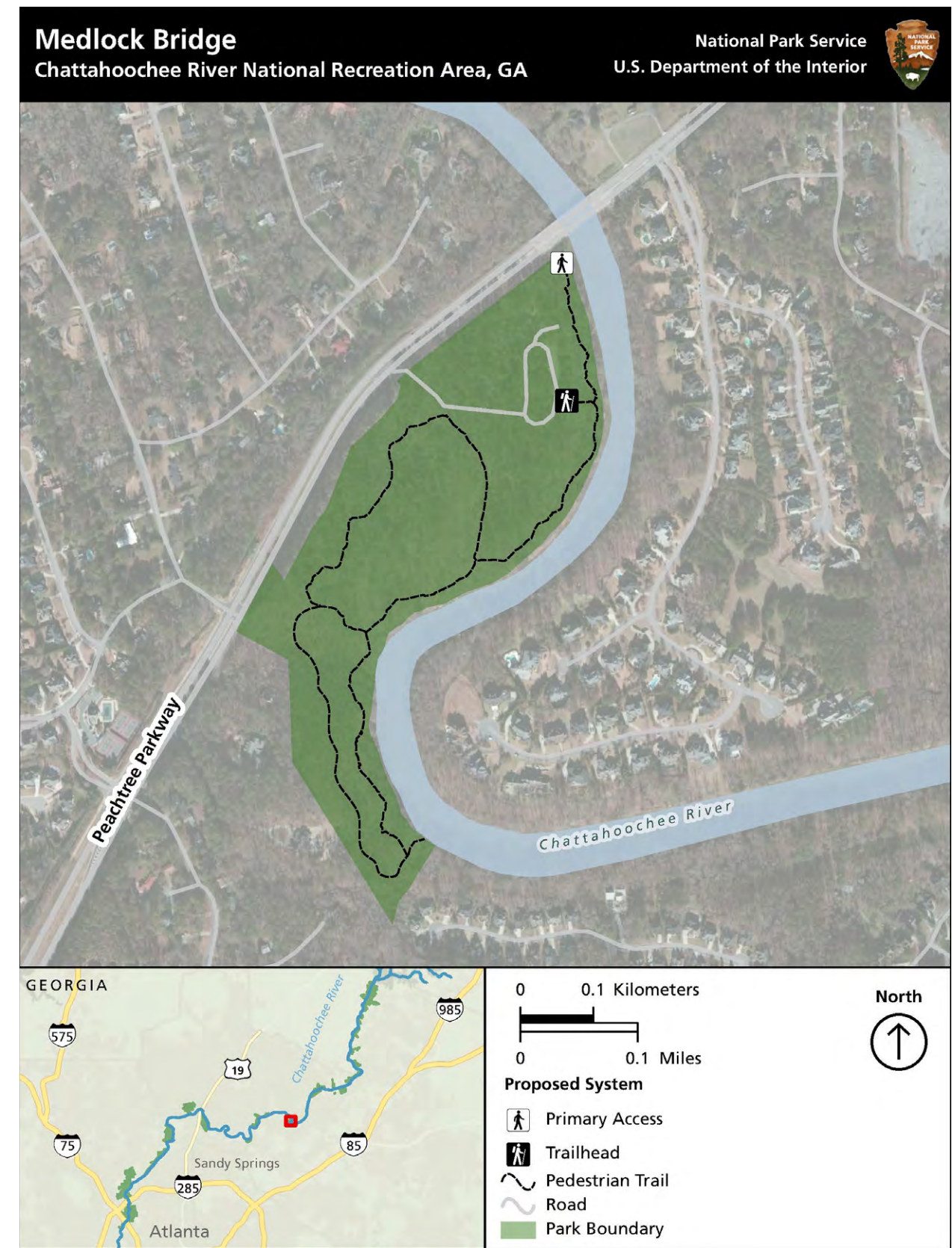


Figure B-18. Medlock Bridge — Proposed Resultant Trail System

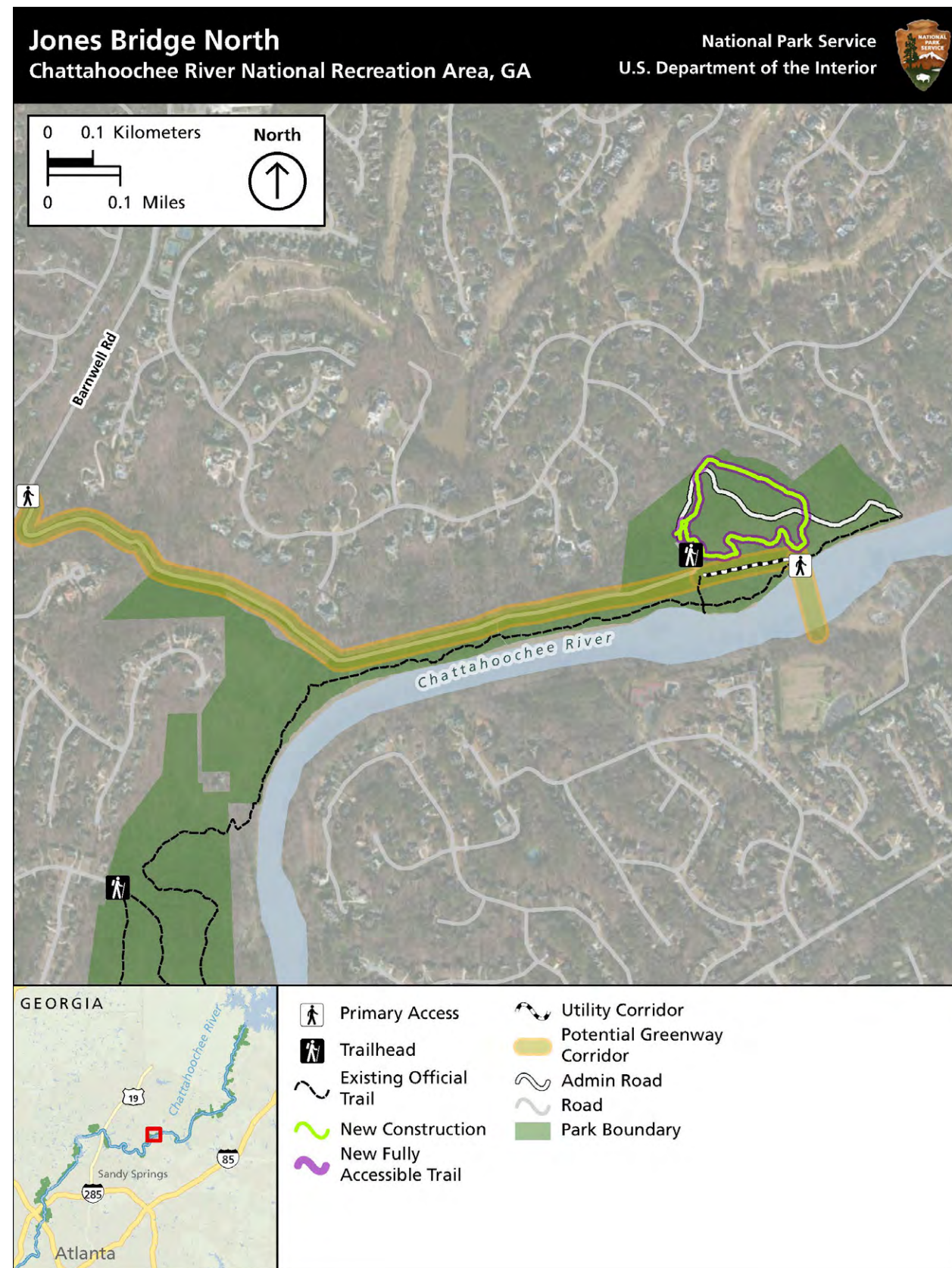


Figure B-19. Jones Bridge North — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

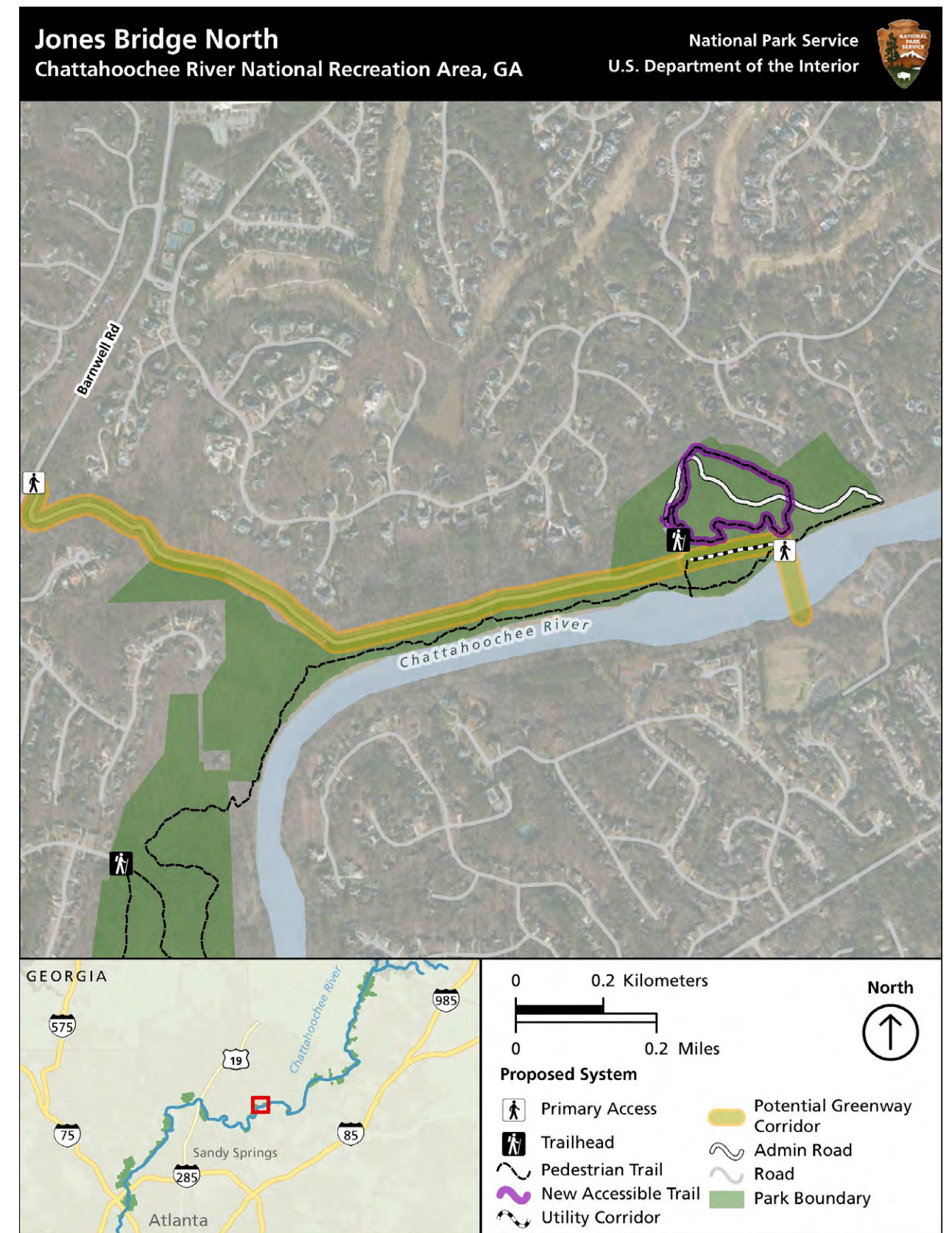


Figure B-20. Jones Bridge North — Proposed Resultant Trail System

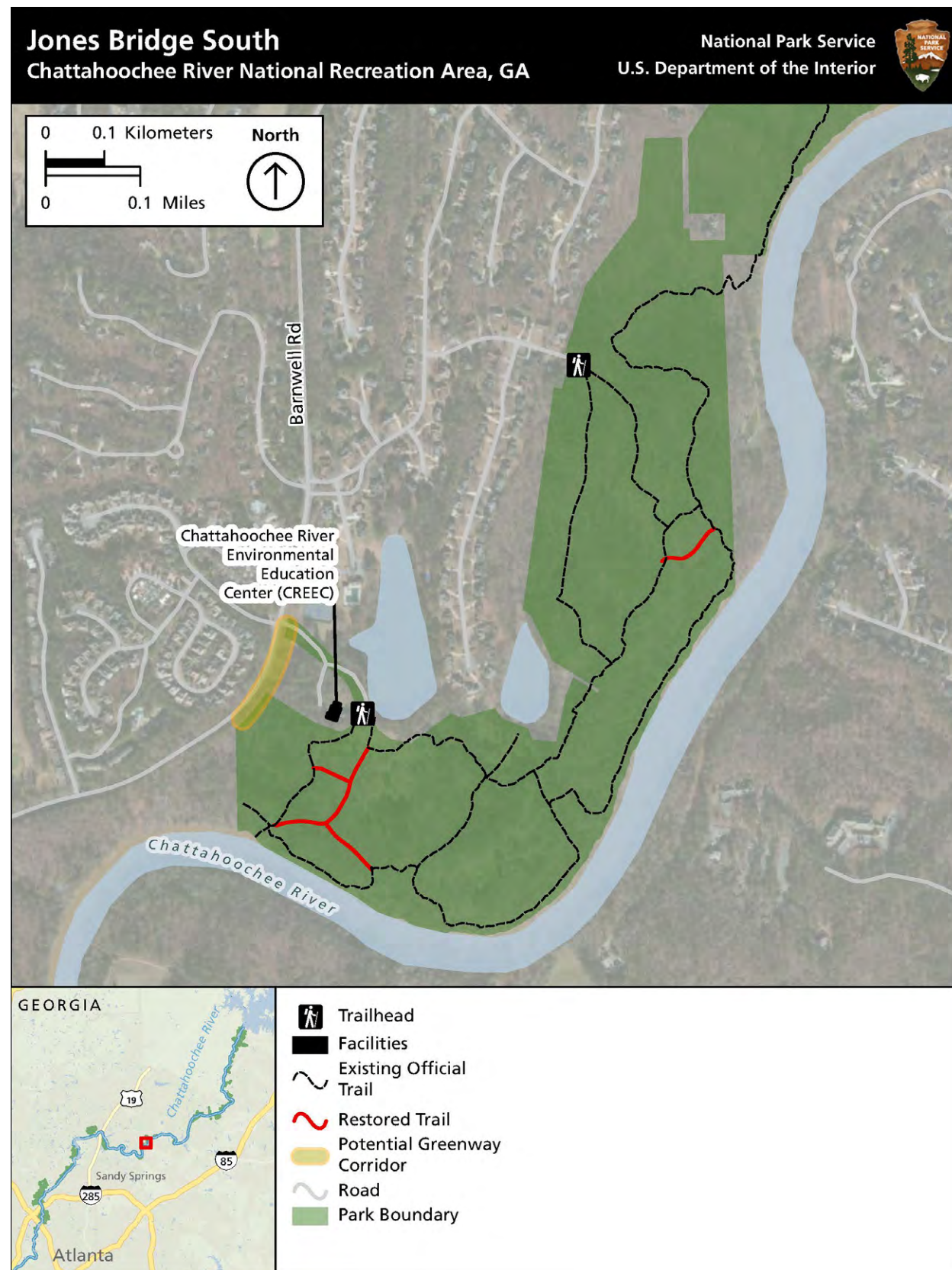


Figure B-21. Jones Bridge South — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

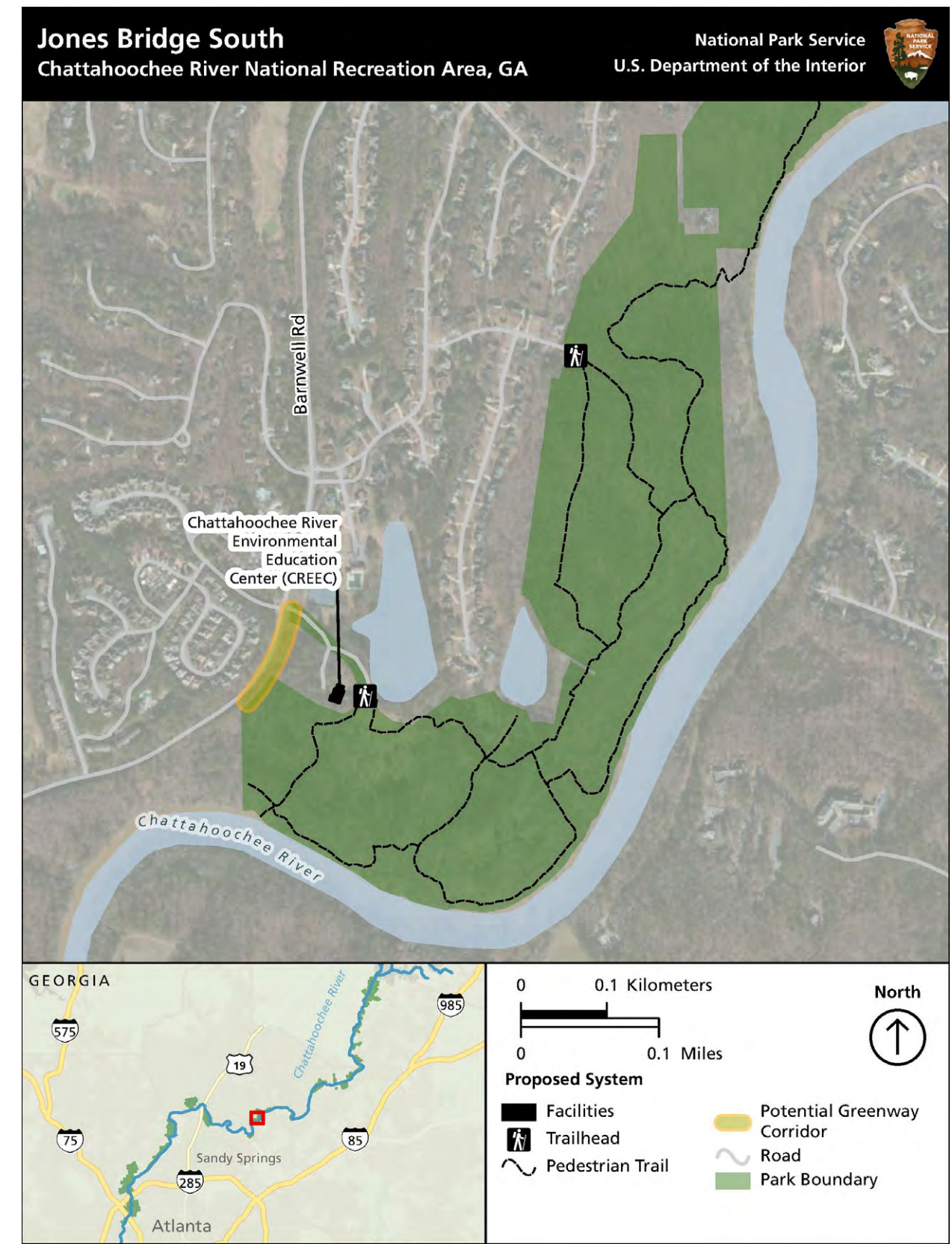


Figure B-22. Jones Bridge South — Proposed Resultant Trail System



Figure B-23. Holcomb Bridge — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy



Figure B-24. Holcomb Bridge — Proposed Resultant Trail System

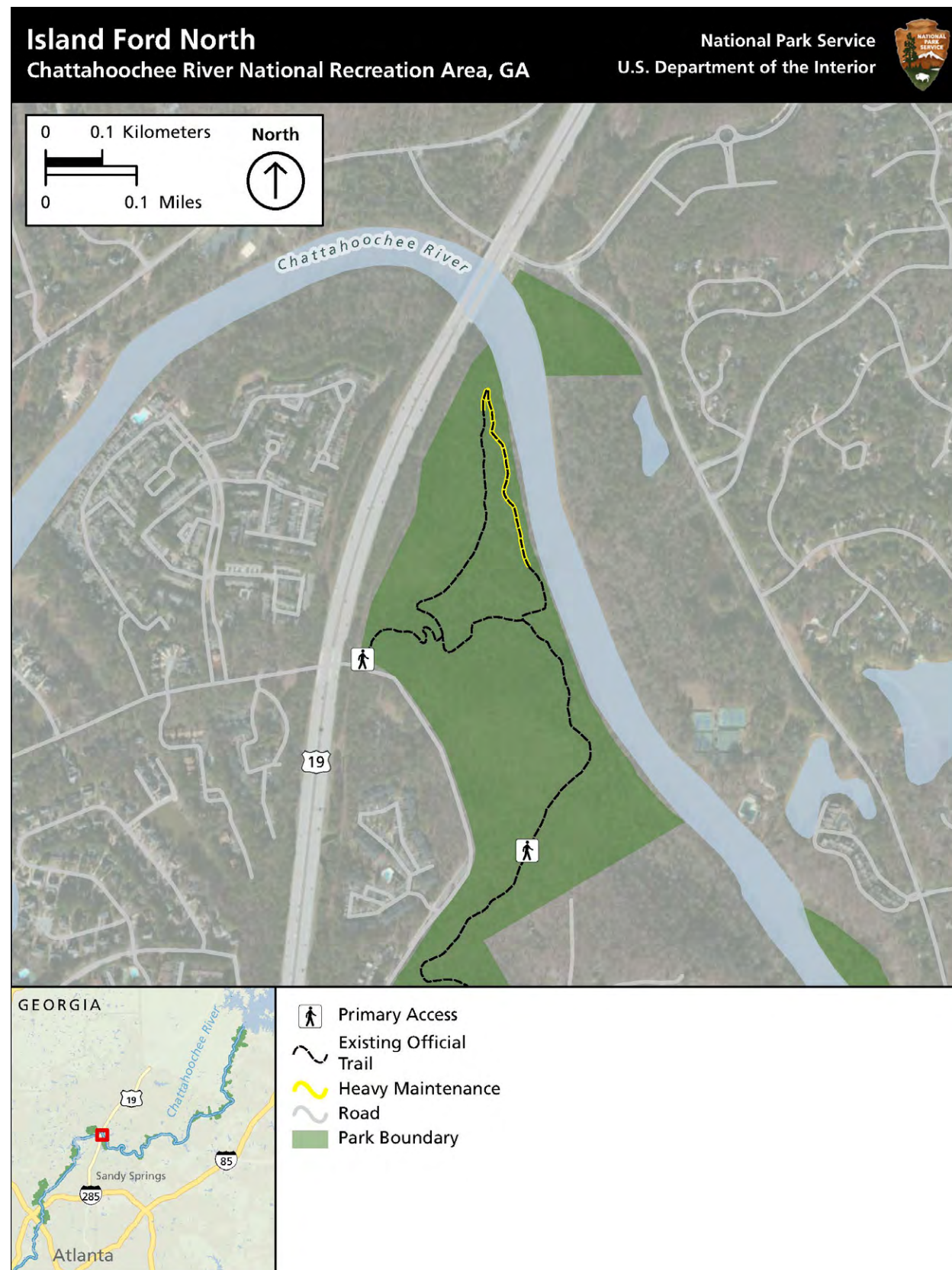


Figure B-25. Island Ford North — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

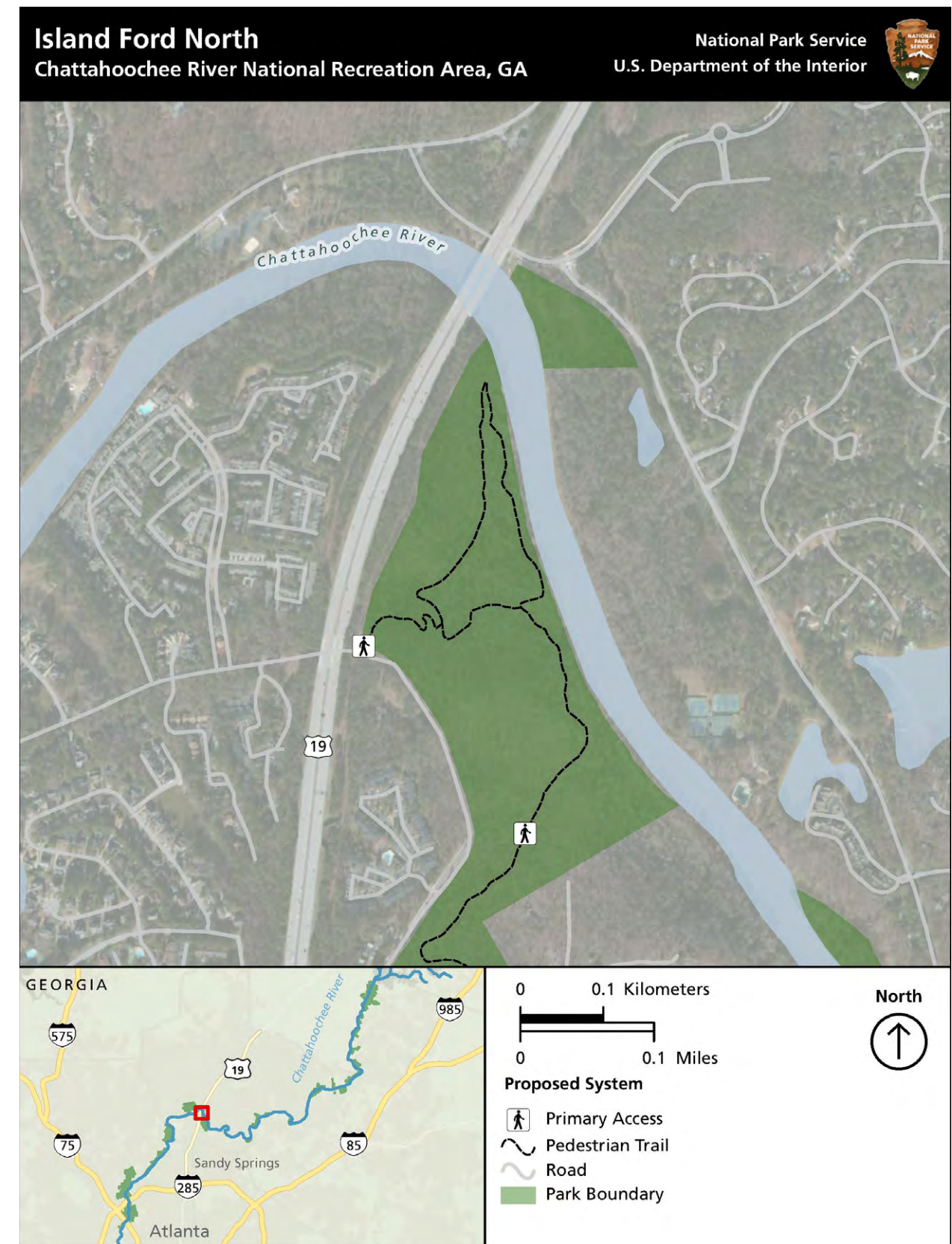


Figure B-26. Island Ford North — Proposed Resultant Trail System

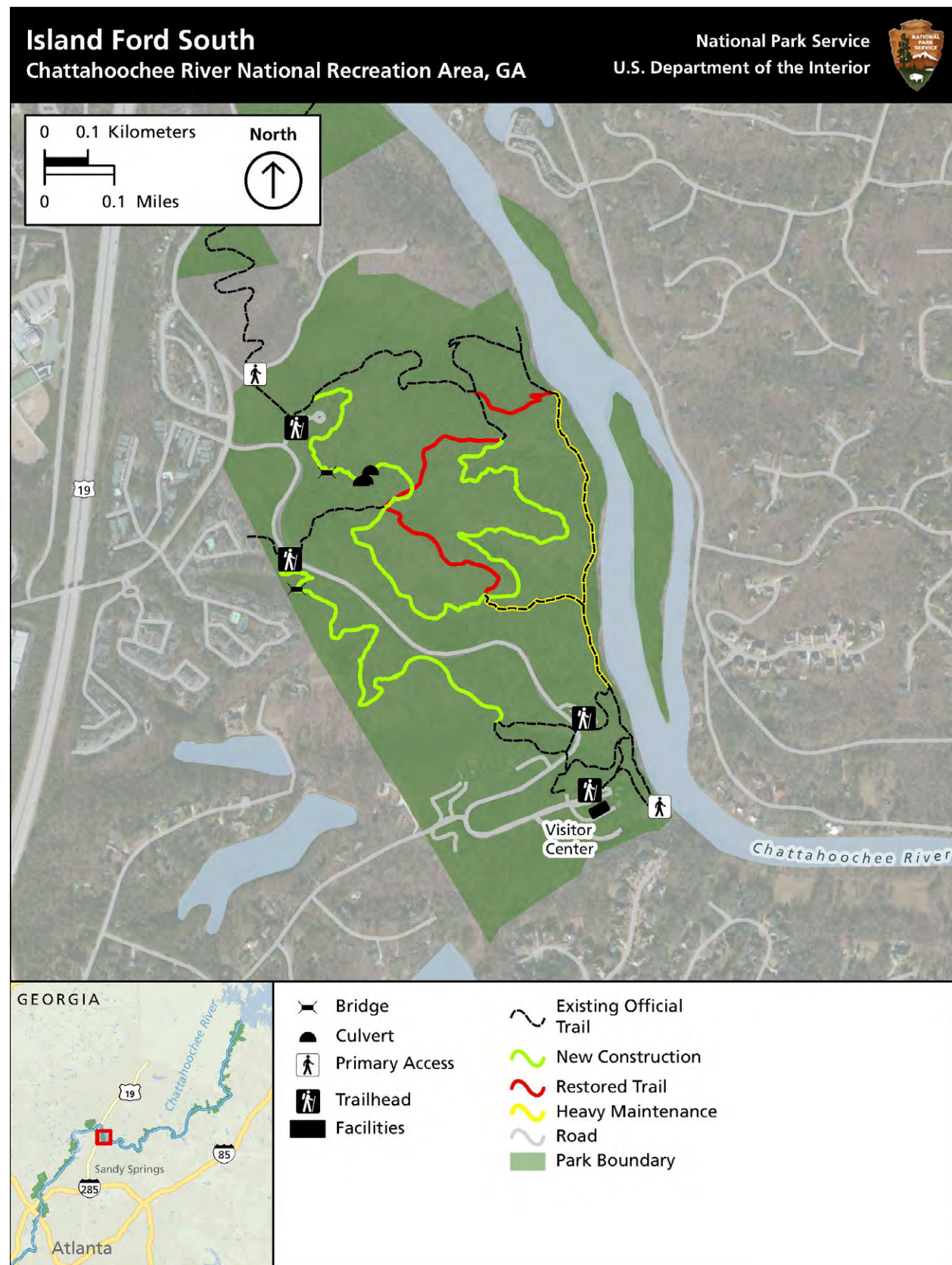


Figure B-27. Island Ford South — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

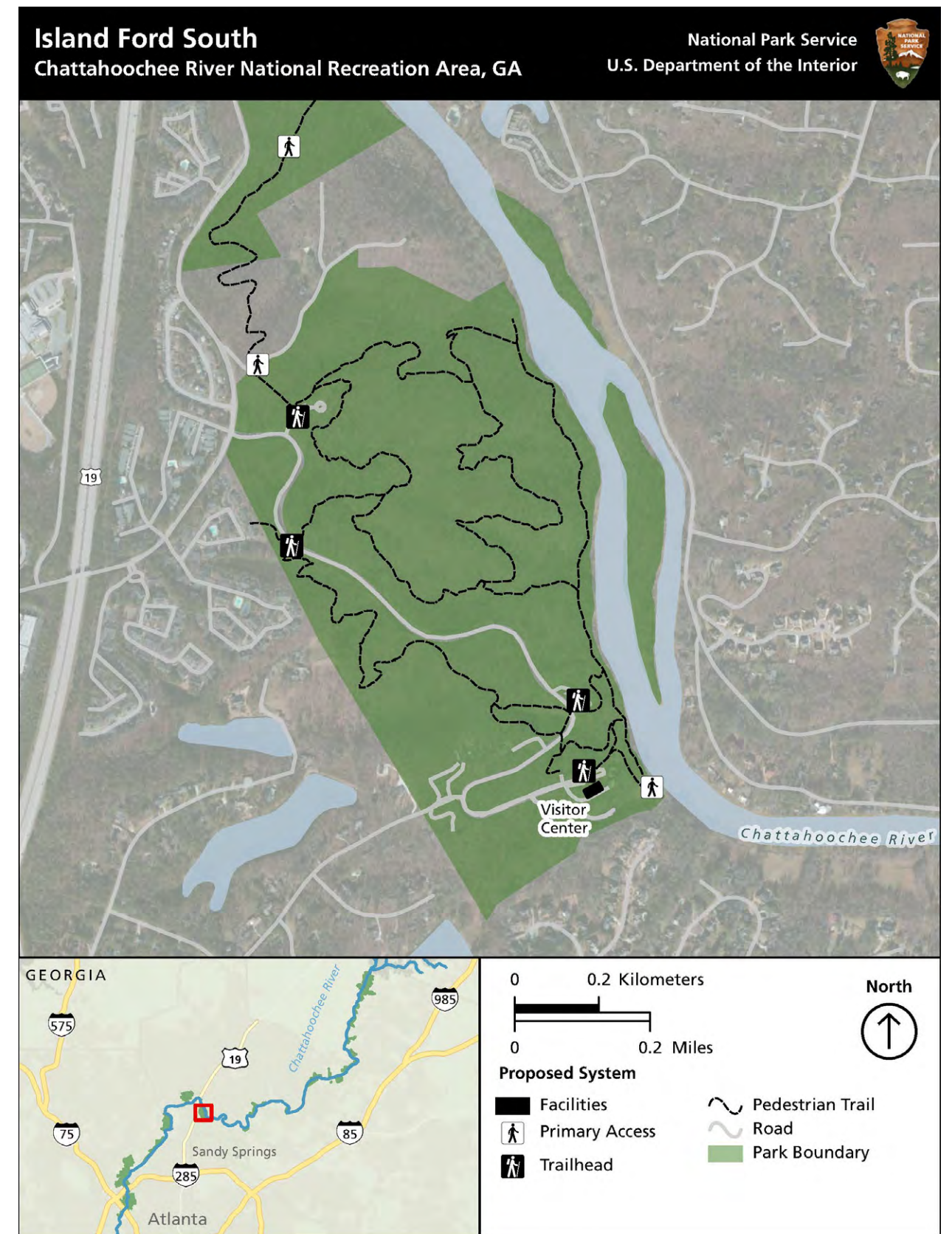


Figure B-28. Island Ford South — Proposed Resultant Trail System

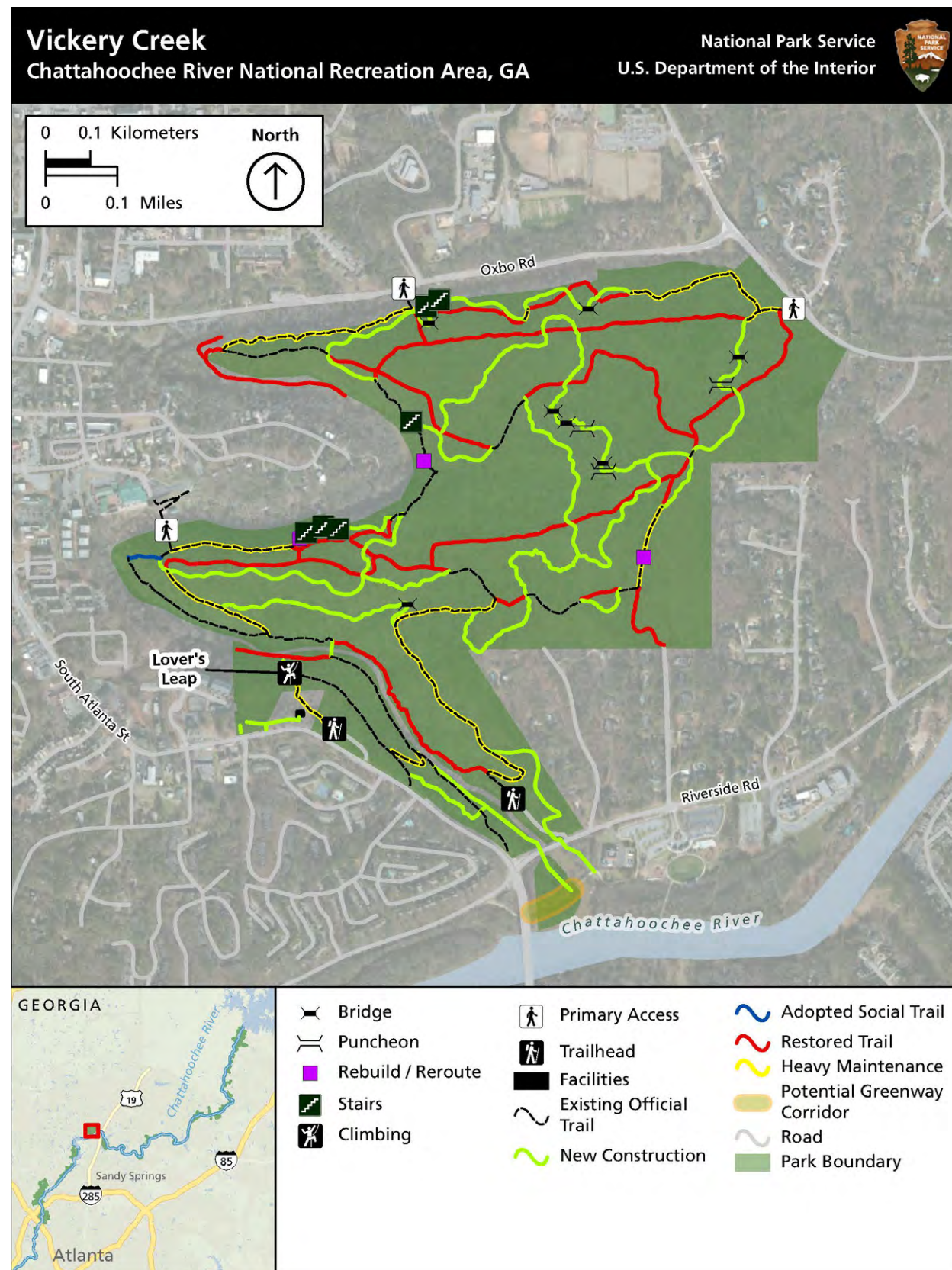


Figure B-29. Vickery Creek — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

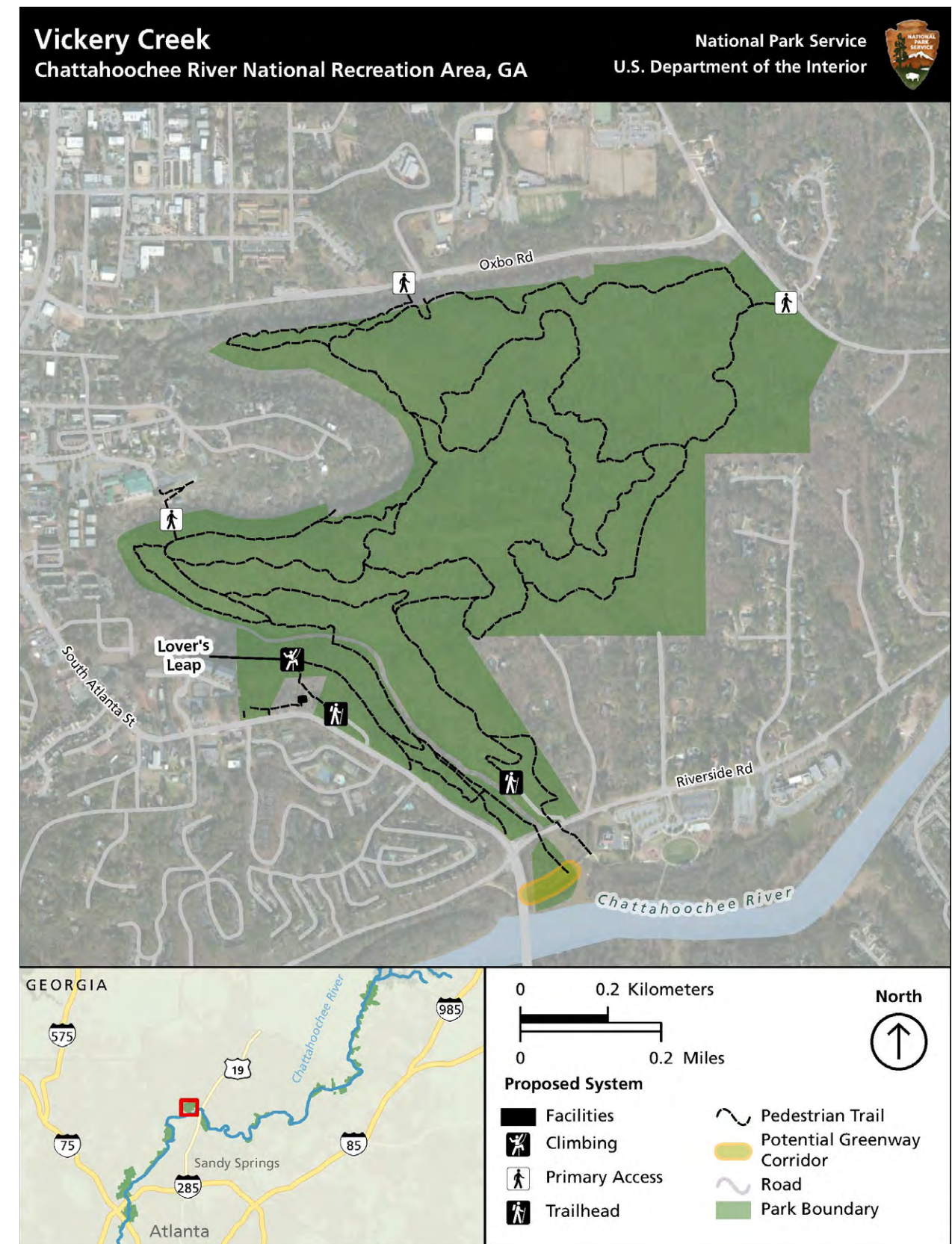


Figure B-30. Vickery Creek — Proposed Resultant Trail System

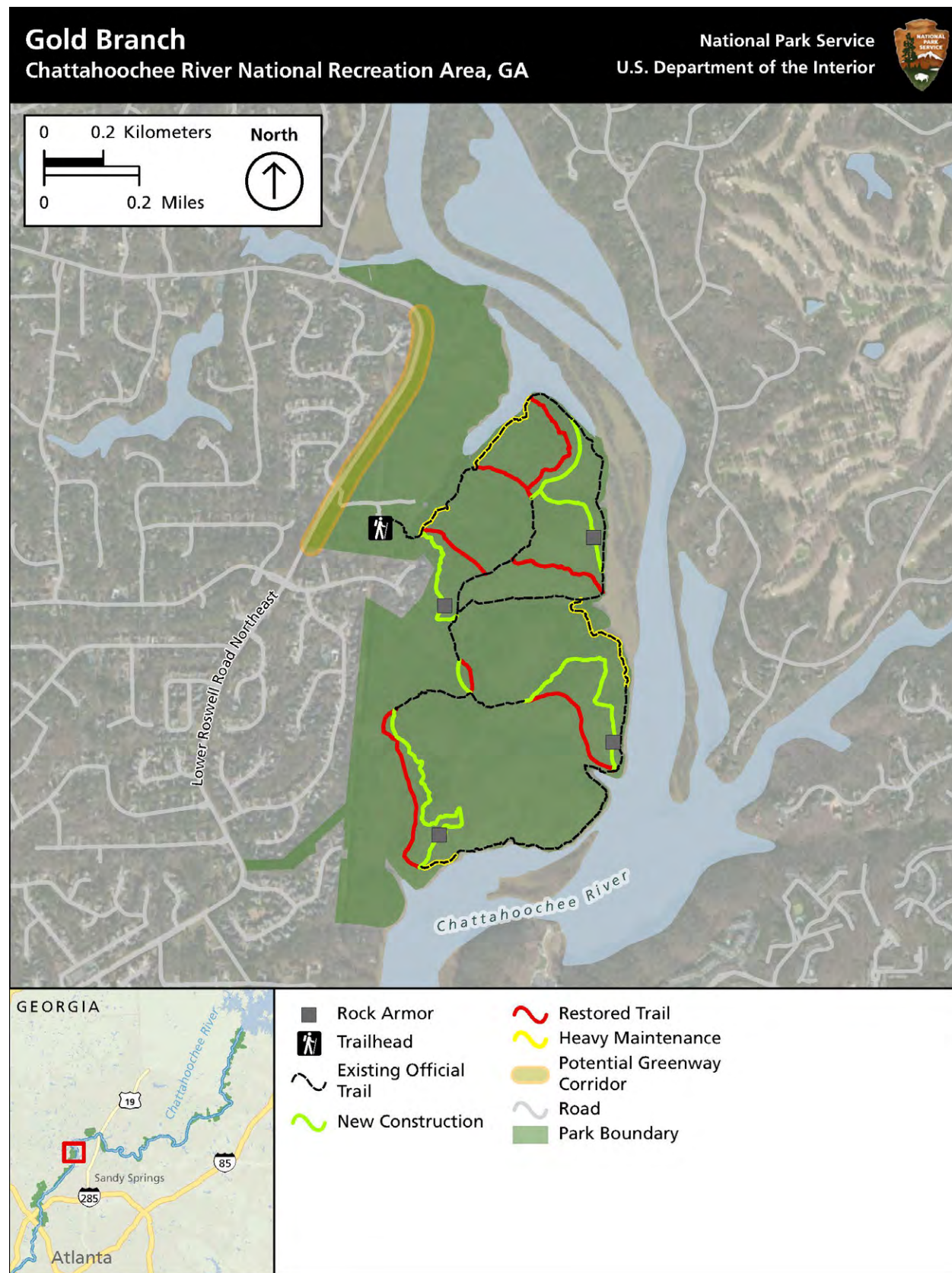


Figure B-31. Gold Branch — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

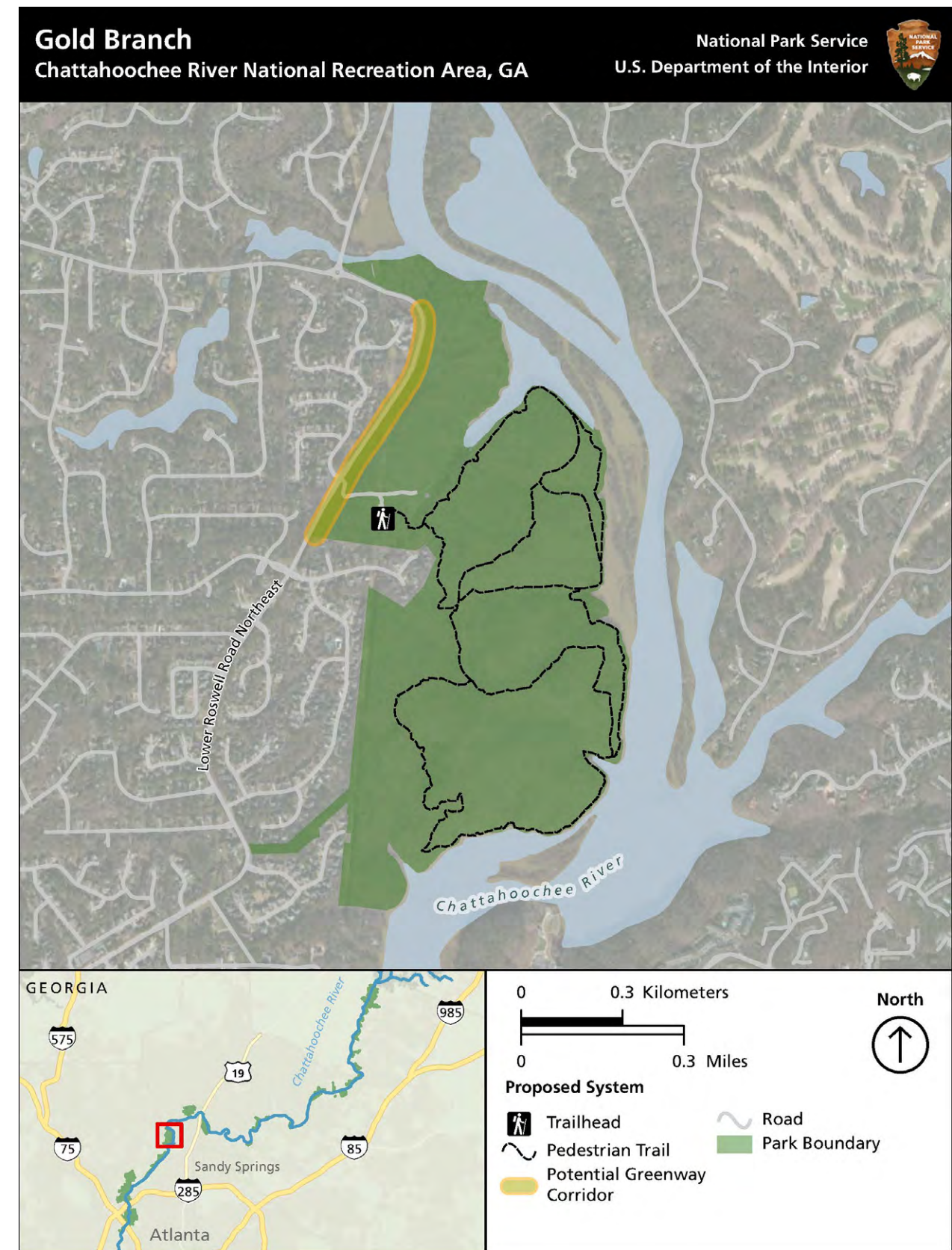


Figure B-32. Gold Branch — Proposed Resultant Trail System

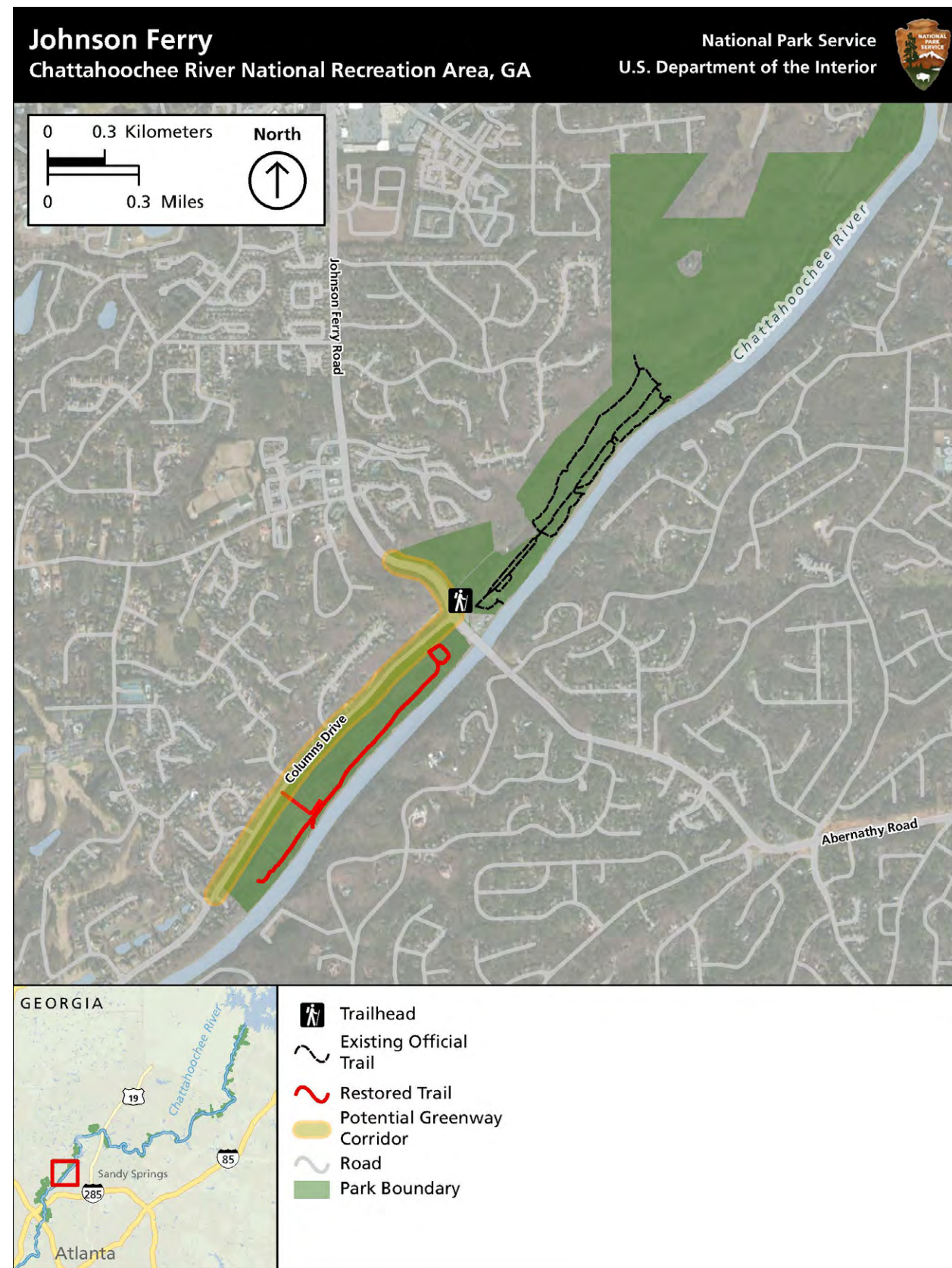


Figure B-33. Johnson Ferry — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

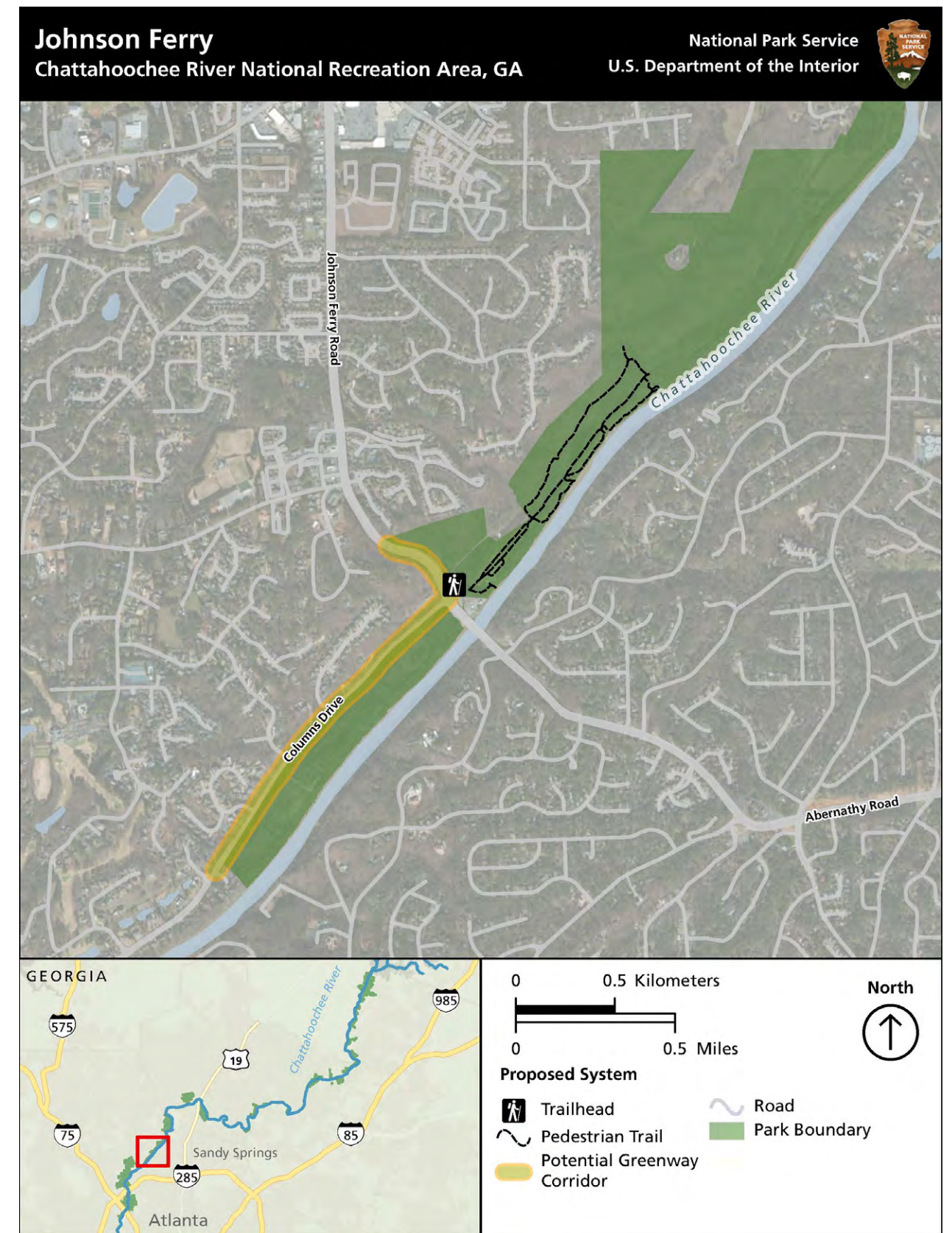


Figure B-34. Johnson Ferry — Proposed Resultant Trail System

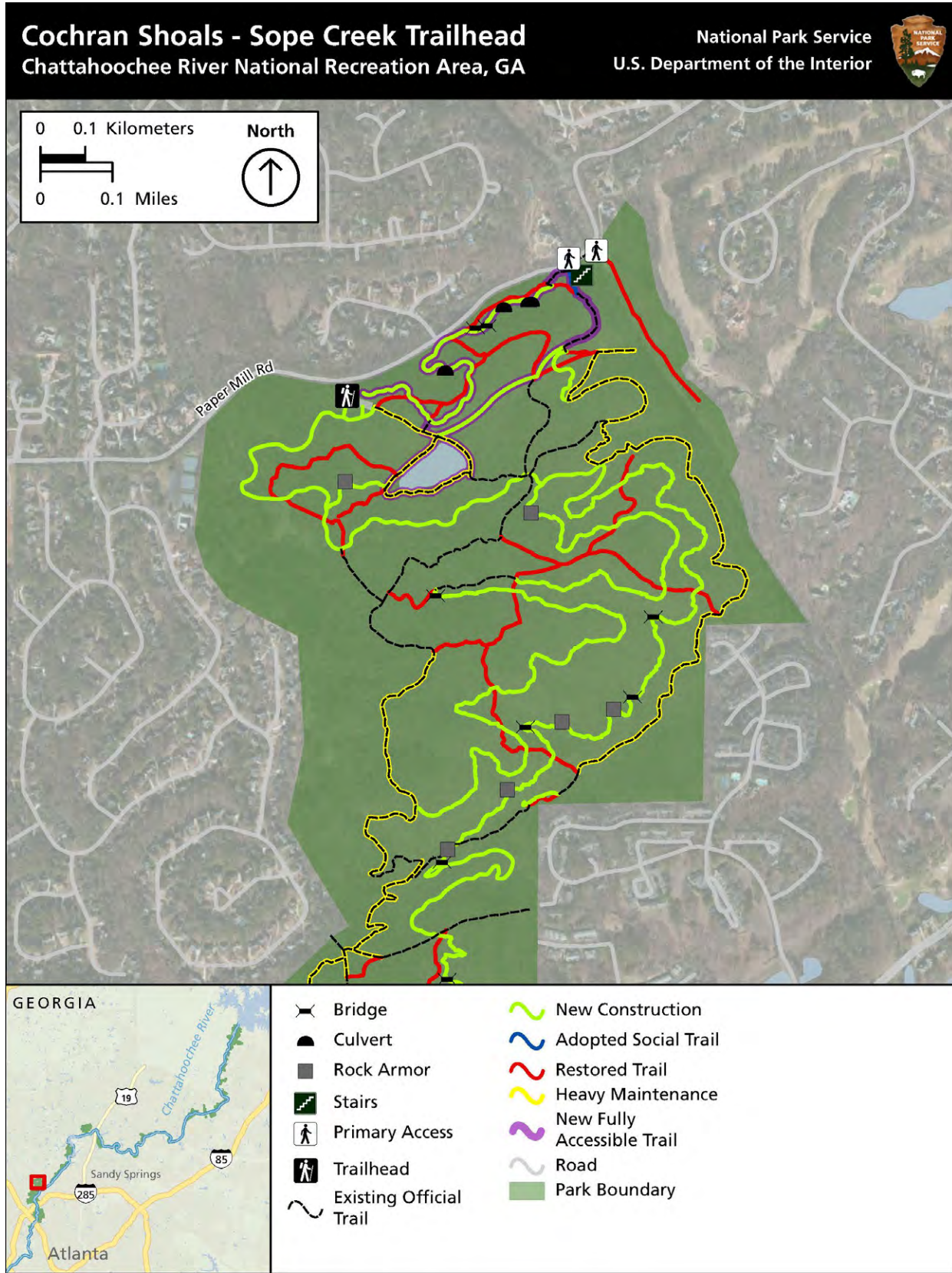


Figure B-35. Cochran Shoals, Sope Creek Trailhead — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

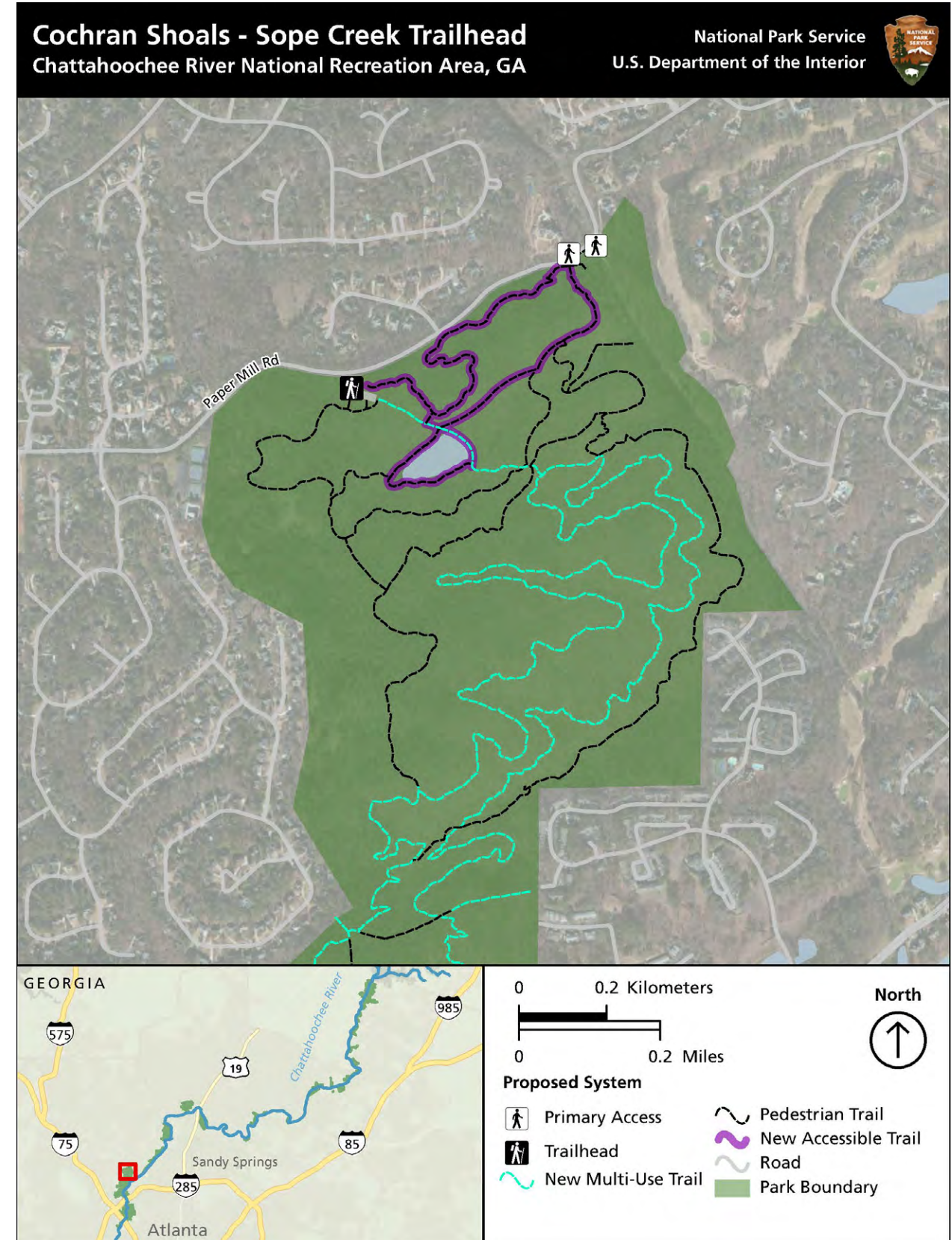


Figure B-36. Cochran Shoals, Sope Creek Trailhead — Proposed Resultant Trail System

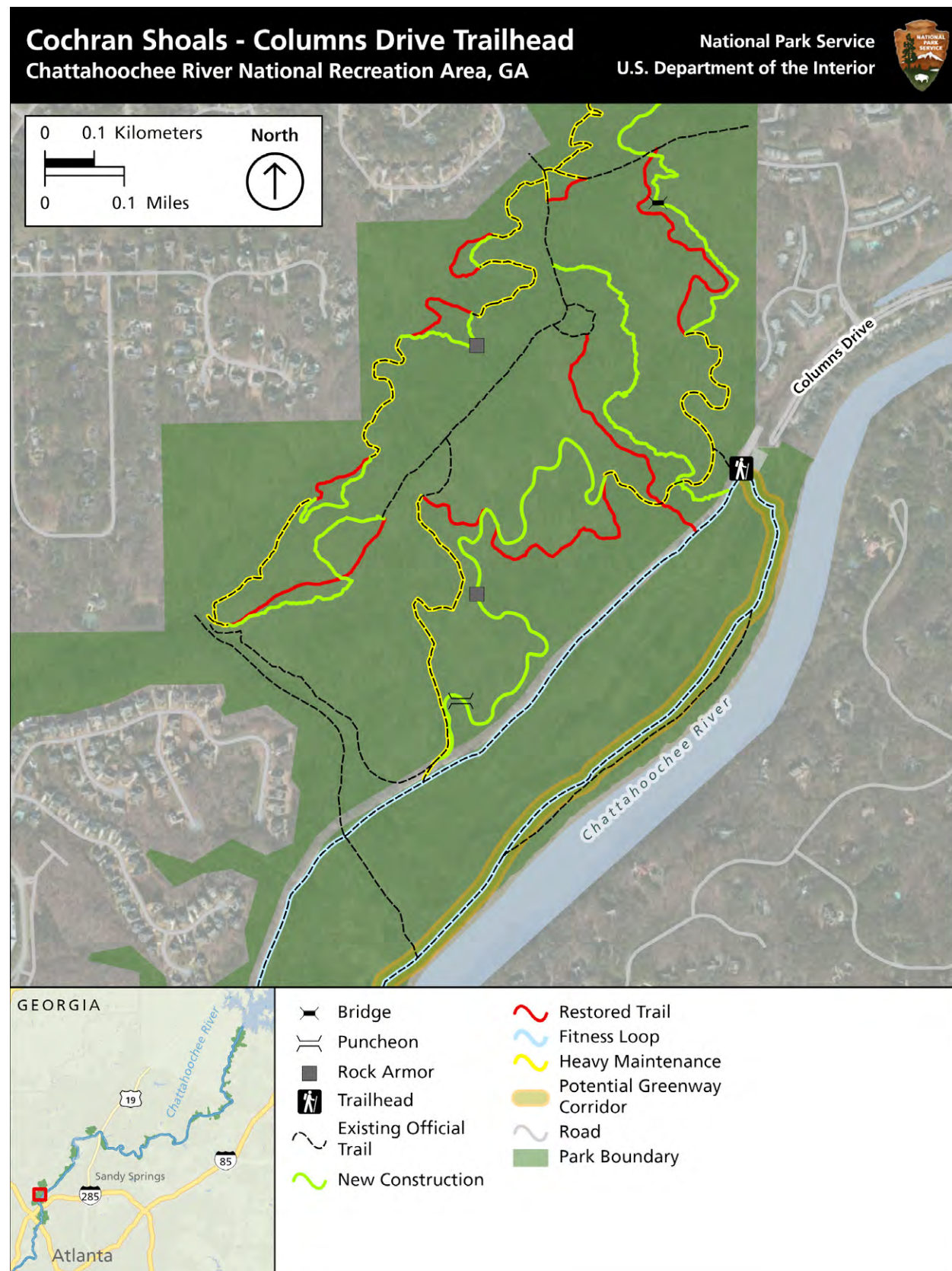


Figure B-37. Cochran Shoals, Columns Drive Trailhead — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

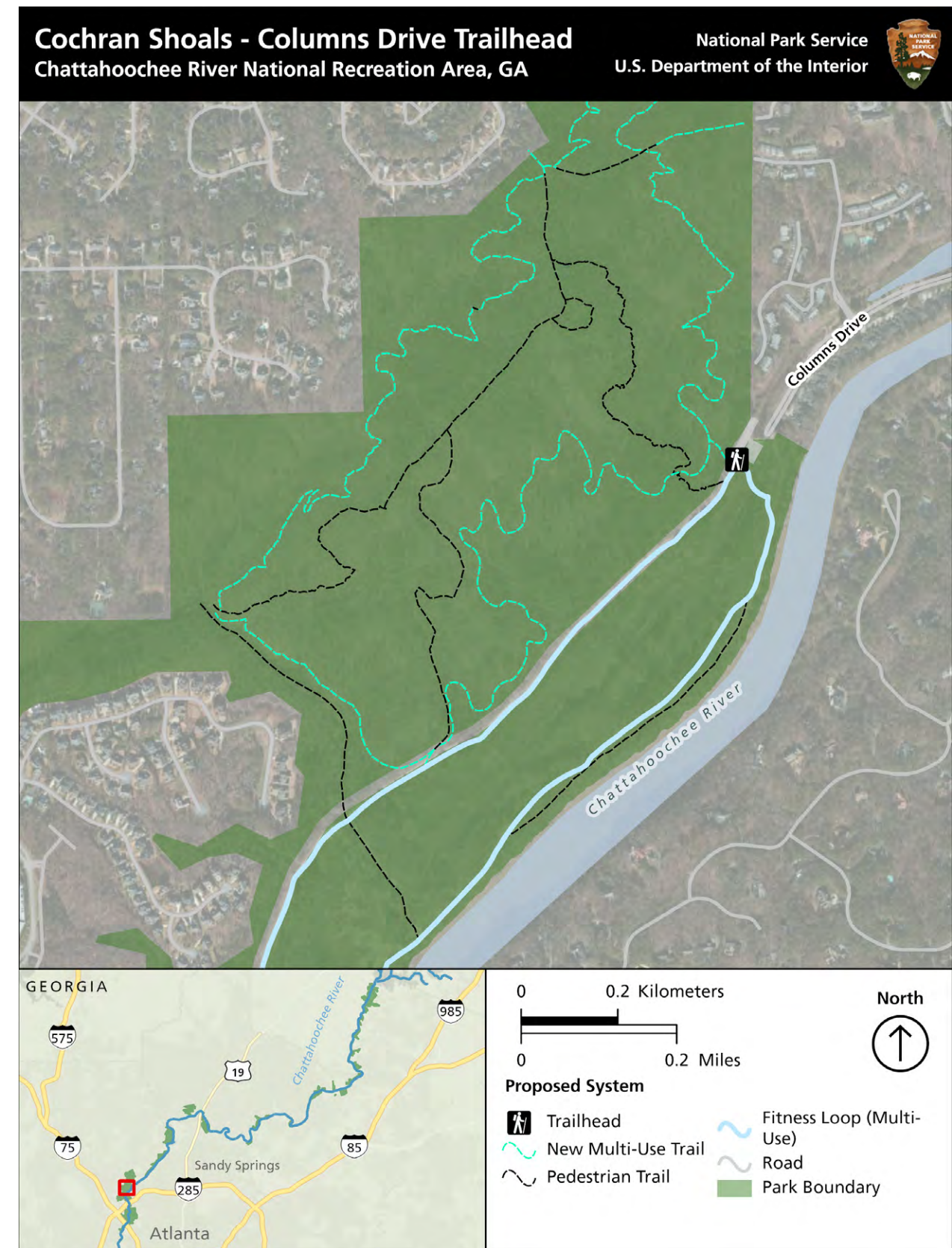


Figure B-38. Cochran Shoals, Columns Drive Trailhead — Proposed Resultant Trail System

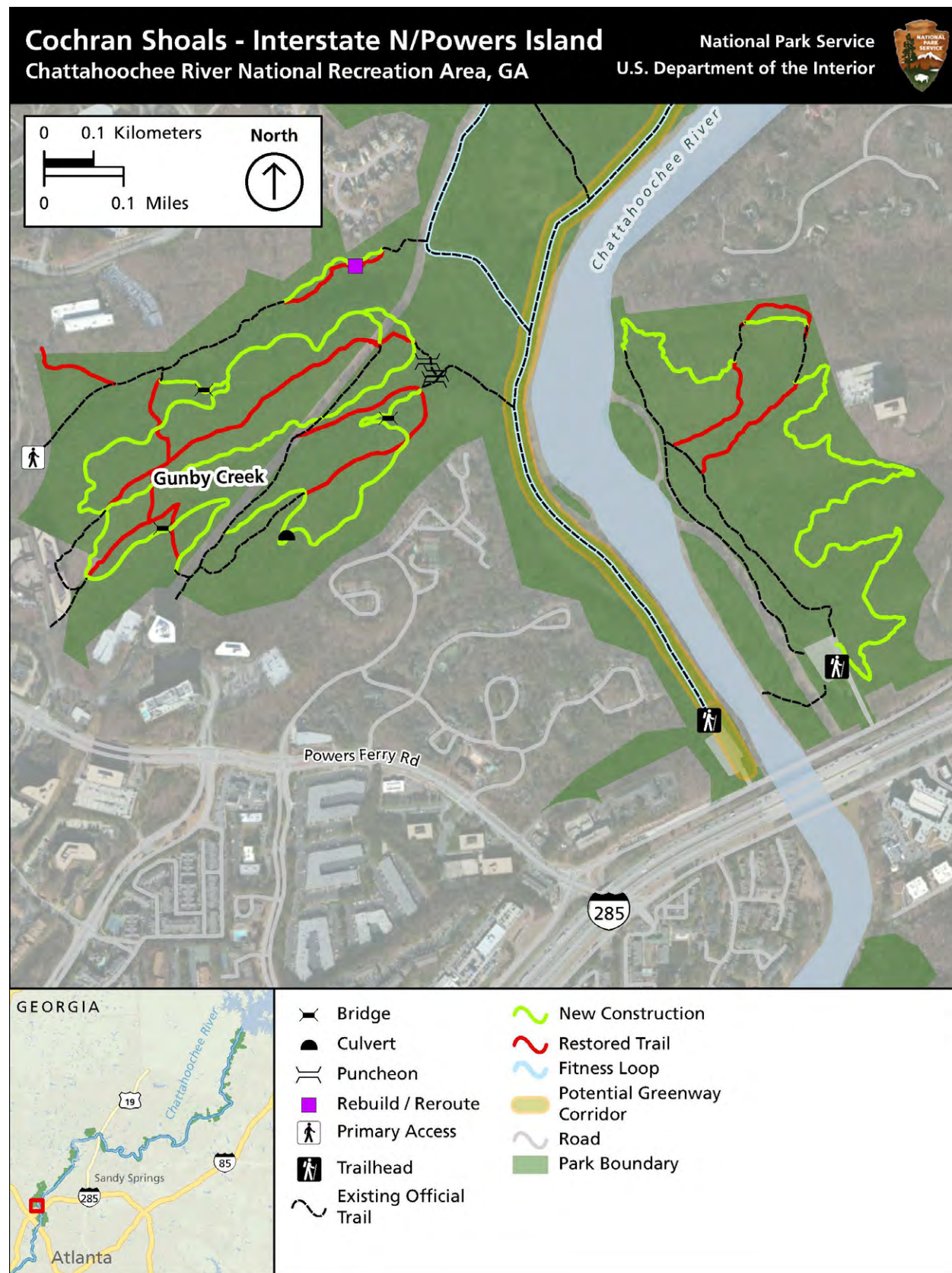


Figure B-39. Cochran Shoals, Interstate North/Powers Island — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

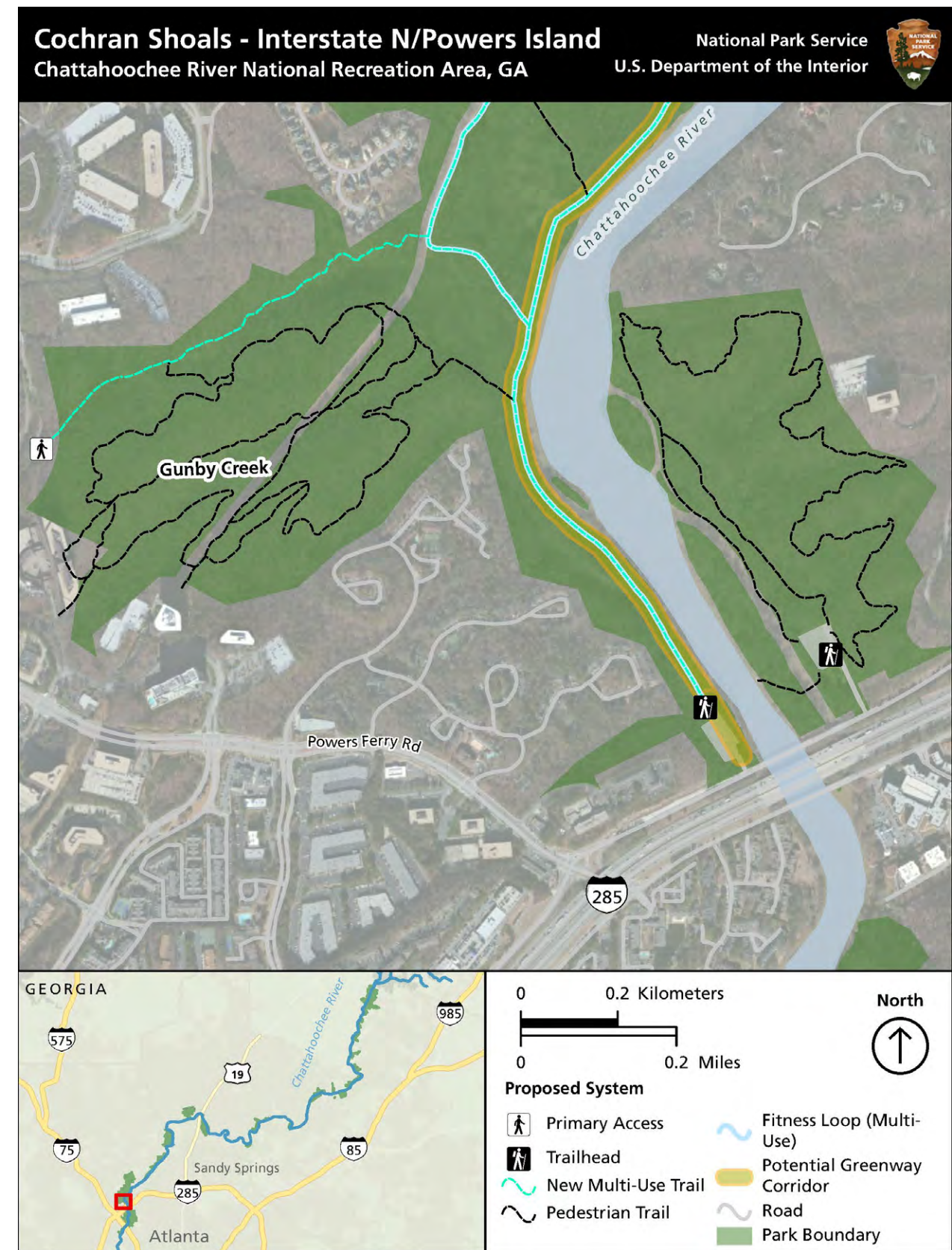


Figure B-40. Cochran Shoals, Interstate North/Powers Island — Proposed Resultant Trail System

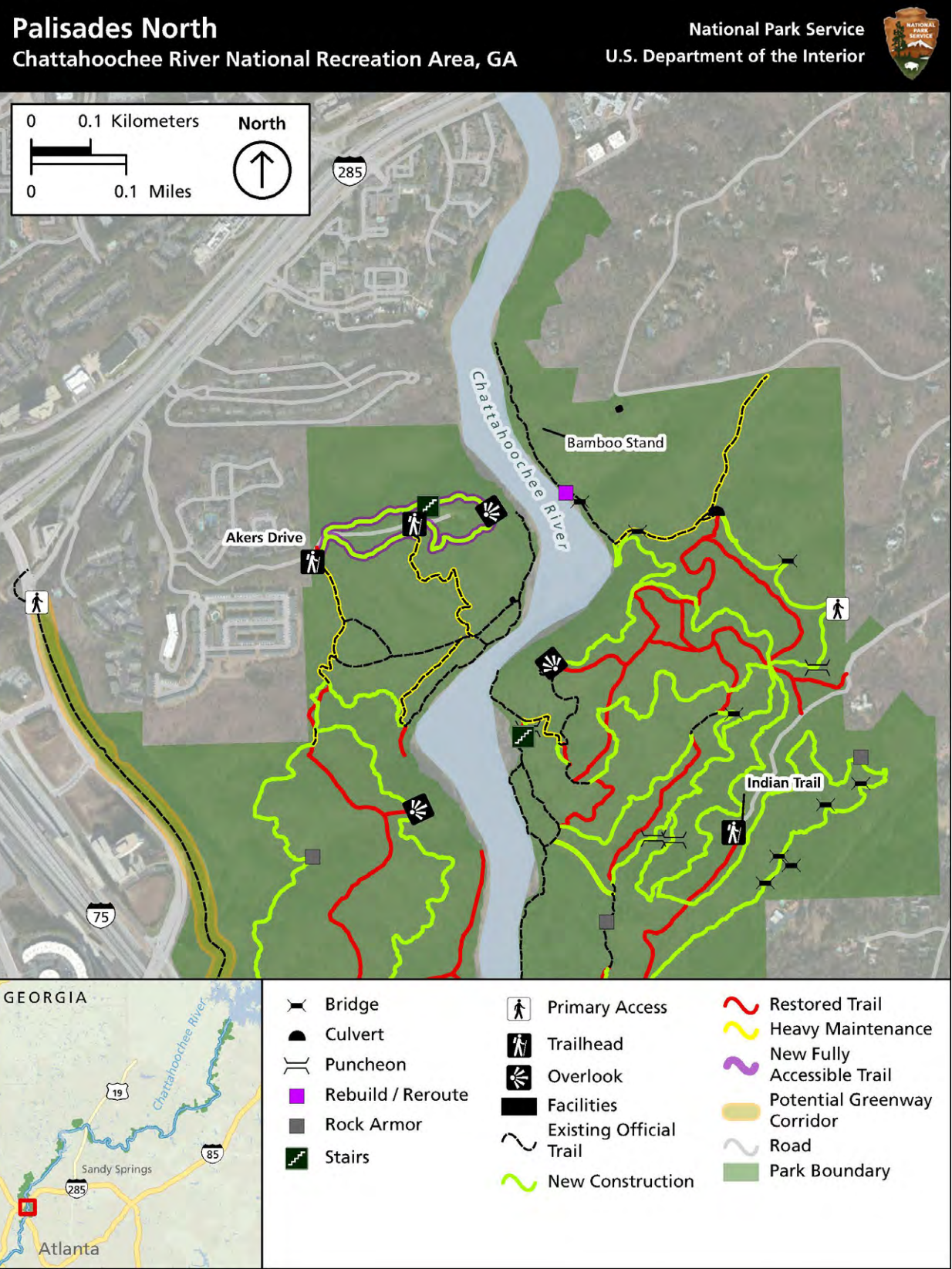


Figure B-41. Palisades North — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

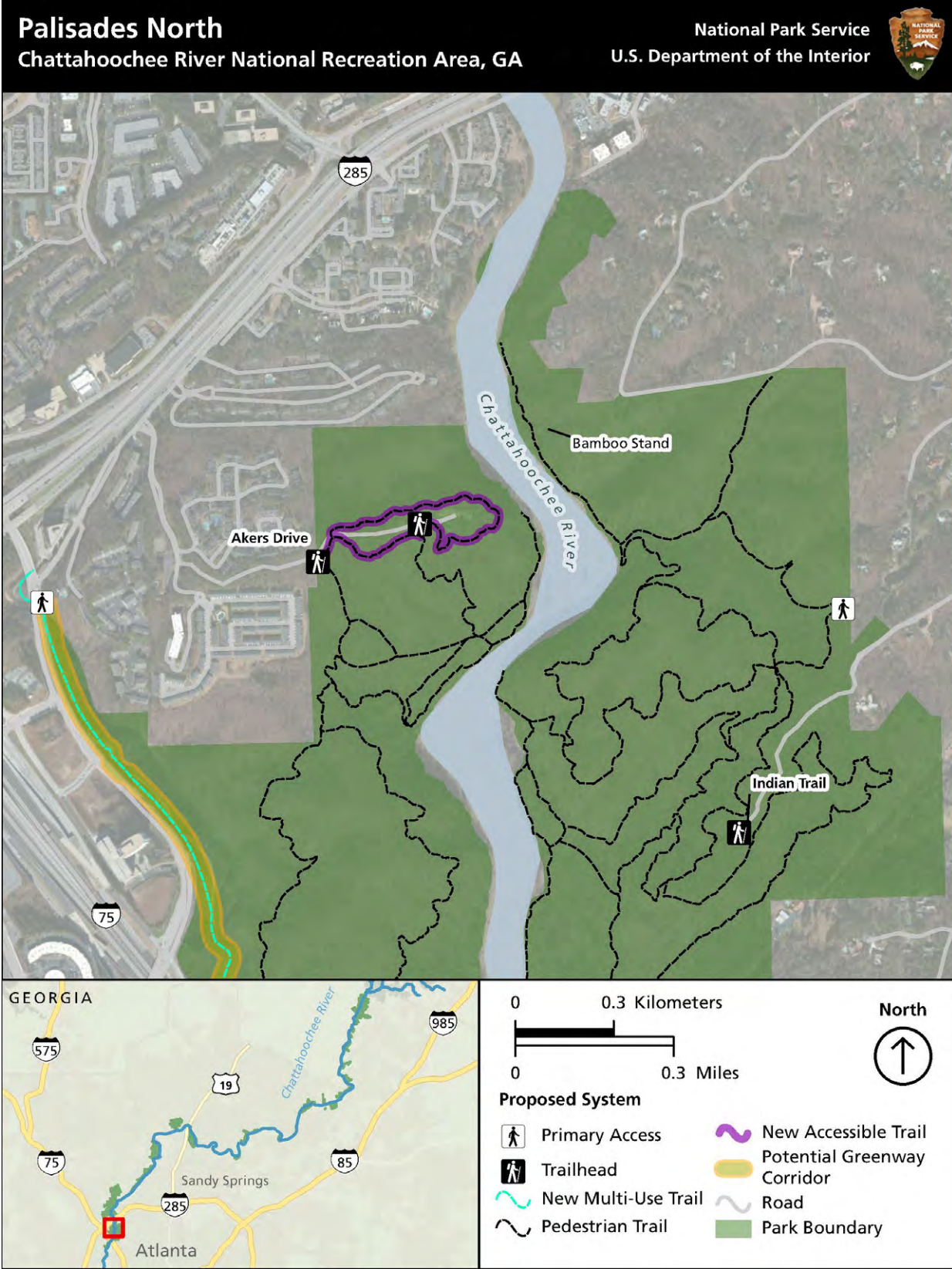


Figure B-42. Palisades North — Proposed Resultant Trail System

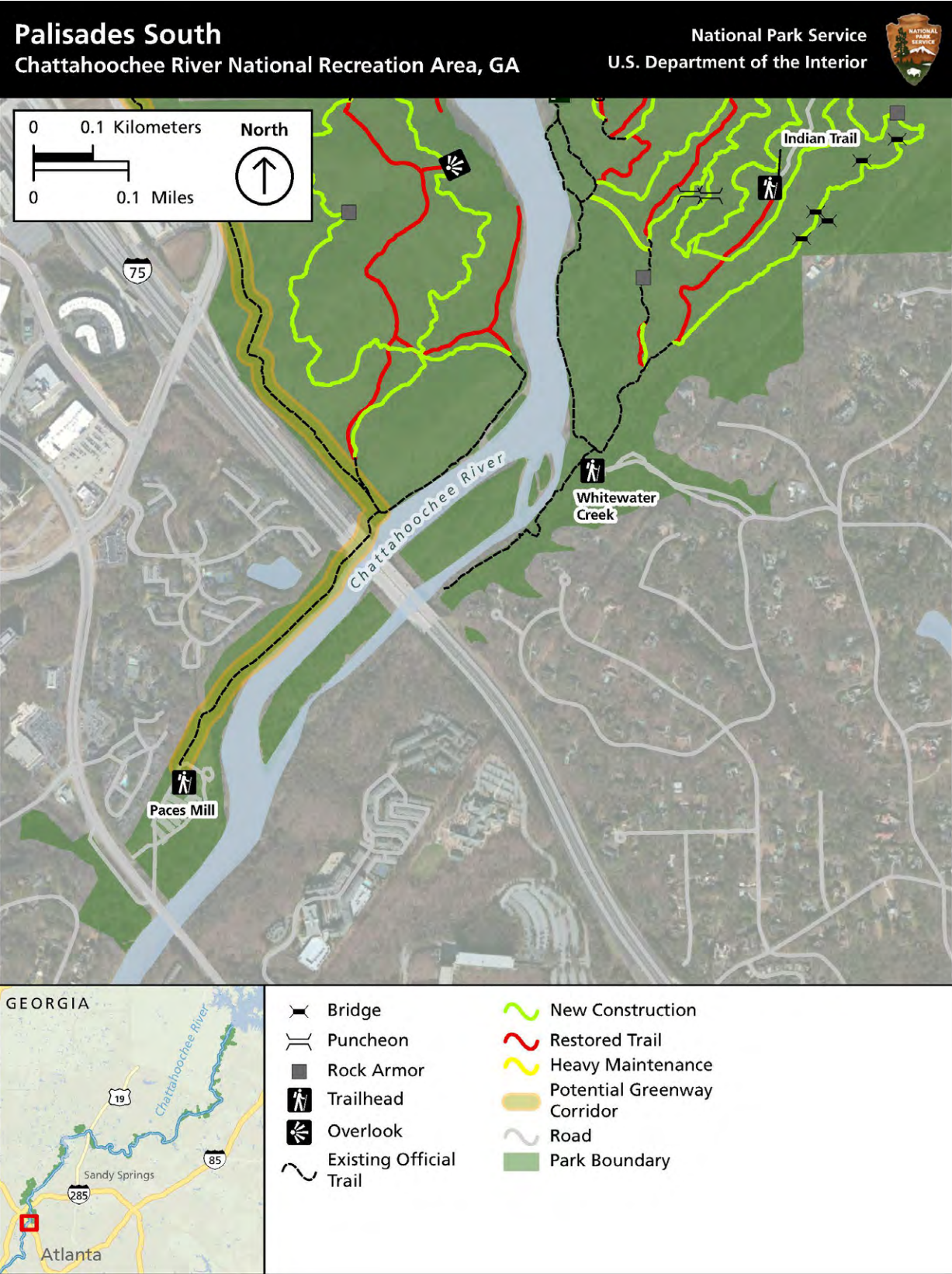


Figure B-43. Palisades South — Actions Associated with Proposed Strategy

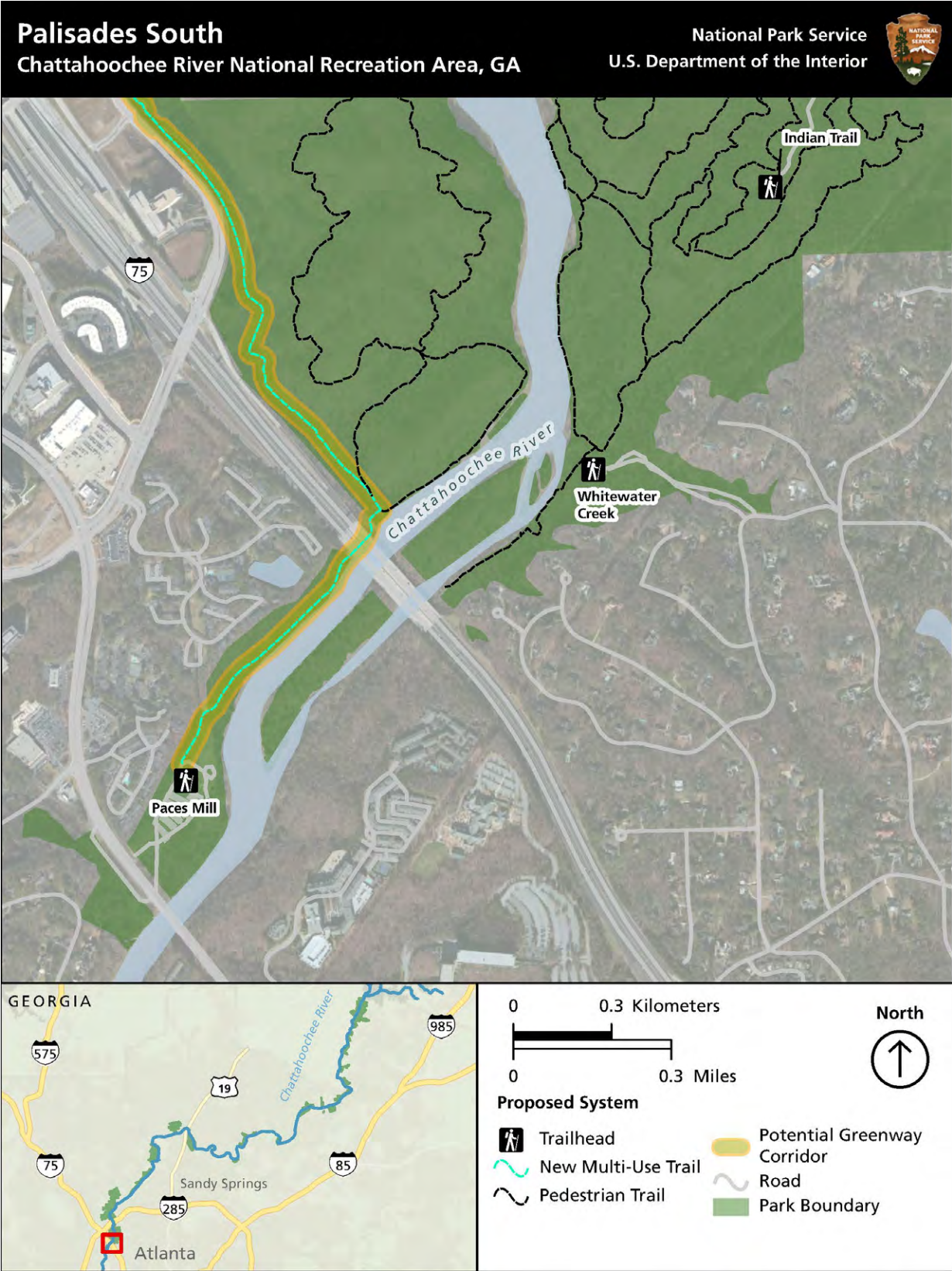


Figure B-44. Palisades South — Proposed Resultant Trail System

APPENDIX C: TRAIL CLASSES

Trail Attributes	Trail Class 1 Minimally Developed	Trail Class 2 Moderately Developed	Trail Class 3 Developed	Trail Class 4 Highly Developed	Trail Class 5 Fully Developed (Greenway, Fitness Loop)
Tread	Tread intermittent and often indistinct 0"-12" wide May require route finding Predominantly native materials	Tread continuous and discernible, but narrow and rough 6"-18" wide Typically native materials	Tread continuous and obvious Up to 36" wide Native or imported materials	Tread wide and relatively smooth with few irregularities; may be hardened Up to 60" wide Native or imported materials	Tread wide, firm, stable, and generally uniform Up to 180" wide Commonly hardened with asphalt or other imported material
Obstacles	Obstacles common, naturally occurring, often substantial and intended to provide increased challenge Narrow passages; brush, steep grades, rocks and logs present	Obstacles may be common, substantial, and intended to provide increased challenge Blockages cleared to define route and protect resources, vegetation may encroach into trailway	Obstacles may be common, but not substantial or intended to provide challenge Vegetation cleared outside of trailway	Obstacles infrequent and insubstantial Vegetation cleared outside of trailway	Obstacles not present Grades typically < 8%
Constructed Features	Structures minimal to nonexistent Typically no bridges	Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity; typically constructed of native materials Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access	Structures may be common and substantial; constructed of imported or native materials Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access	Structures frequent and substantial; typically constructed of imported materials Bridges as needed for resource protection and user convenience Trailside amenities may be present	Structures frequent or continuous; typically constructed of imported materials May include bridges, boardwalks, curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and similar features
Signs	Route identification signing limited to junctions Route markers present when trail location is not evident Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent Destination signing, unless required, generally not present Information and interpretive signing generally not present	Route identification signing limited to junctions Route markers present when trail location is not evident Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent Destination signing typically infrequent outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness Information and interpretive signing not common	Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing may be common Destination signing likely outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness Information and interpretive signs may be present outside of wilderness	Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing common Destination signing common outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness Information and interpretive signs may be common outside of wilderness	Route identification signing at junctions and for user reassurance Route markers as needed for user reassurance Regulatory and resource protection signing common Destination signing common Information and interpretive signs common
Recreation Environment	Natural, unmodified	Natural, essentially unmodified	Natural, primarily unmodified	May be modified	May be highly modified

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under US administration.



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CHATAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA • PRELIMINARY TRAILS MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021

