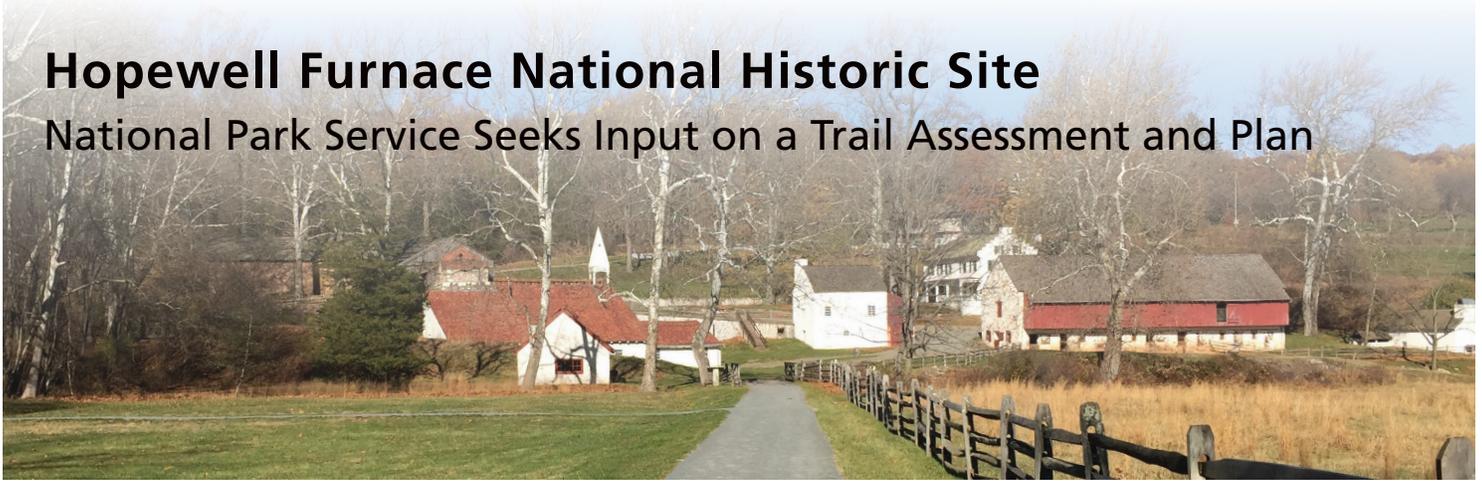




Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site

National Park Service Seeks Input on a Trail Assessment and Plan



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The National Park Service (NPS) is initiating a trail plan and environmental assessment for Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (the park). The NPS will assess the current trail system, including its connections to adjacent public land and regional trail systems, and develop a plan for pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle use. I invite you to participate in the development of a new trail plan for the park. Please take a look at the early information in this newsletter, plan to join us at one of our public meetings on April 11 and 12, and/or send in any thoughts and comments you might have. Details about the public meetings and ways to comment are included in this newsletter. This is an exciting time for the park as we become better connected to the great natural areas and cultural sites all around us. I encourage you to get involved with the process and add your voice to the plan for the trails within the park. We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Sincerely,

David Blackburn,
Site Manager



Public Meetings

The park welcomes public input on potential opportunities and challenges to be considered during development of this plan. Please join park staff for one of two public meetings, where the park will present the purpose of and need for this project, initial objectives for the trail system, and additional information about the planning process.

Meeting Details

April 11, 2017 at 6:30 pm
April 12, 2017 at 1:00 pm
Warwick County Park Meeting Room
382 County Park Road
Pottstown, PA

A brief presentation will be made by park staff, followed by Q&A and time to review the materials provided.

How to Comment

The park will provide comment forms at the public meetings. Comments can also be entered directly into the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/HOFU>

or mail your comments to:

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
David Blackburn, Site Manager
2 Mark Bird Lane
Elverson, PA 19520

**Comments are requested
by May 12, 2017**

Why Create a Trail Plan?

There are several reasons why the NPS is assessing the park's current trail system and developing a plan for pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle use.

The need for accurate information. Since the establishment of the park in 1938, its 848 acres have been traversable via a series of historic roads, traces, and trails. Throughout the years, the trail system has changed with the addition of new segments, the abandonment of others, and ad hoc adjustments to their routes. Today, the park has an incomplete understanding of trail conditions, routes, usage, signage, and impacts on cultural and natural resources. Existing trail maps do not accurately depict access points, routes, or types of trail use permitted. There is a need for modern, accurate information to aid the NPS in making decisions about trail management.

Growth of regional trail systems and new ways to access the park. The park is surrounded by additional protected lands, including the 7,526-acre French Creek State Park, the 612-acre Crow's Nest Preserve of the Natural Lands Trust, and extensive lands protected by the Pennsylvania State Game Commission (see map on page 3). Hopewell's trail network connects to these adjacent lands, although in a haphazard way. Additionally, all the lands are increasingly connected to regional trail networks, such as the Horse-Shoe Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail. These regional trail systems offer ways to access to the park without using an automobile.

Growth of bicycle use in the region. Road biking and mountain biking are growing in popularity throughout the region. As demand increases, so does the need to clarify locations appropriate for bicycle use. Permitted bicycle use varies between the park and protected lands with which it shares common boundaries. The park currently permits bicycles on paved roads and on Green Lane, but bicycles are not permitted on trails. French Creek State Park allows mountain biking on several of its multiuse trails, some of which connect to Hopewell's hiking trails. Crow's Nest Preserve does not permit biking. State Game Land bicycle access varies from tract to tract and is off-limits for general recreational use by non-hunters during hunting season. Continuity and signage for designated uses is inconsistent, however, leading to confusion for visitors and resource damage along trails not suitable for bicycling.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide a complete assessment of the existing trail system, evaluate existing connections to surrounding public lands and their trail systems, understand the impact of the park's trail system on sensitive cultural and natural resources, and develop feasible alternatives for a sustainable limited multiuse trail system. The plan will be accompanied by an Environmental Assessment that carefully considers all potential impacts of proposed alternatives.

The term *multiuse* is defined as self-propelled transportation, which may include bicycle, foot, equestrian, snowshoe, and/or cross country skiing.

Initial Objectives for Trails

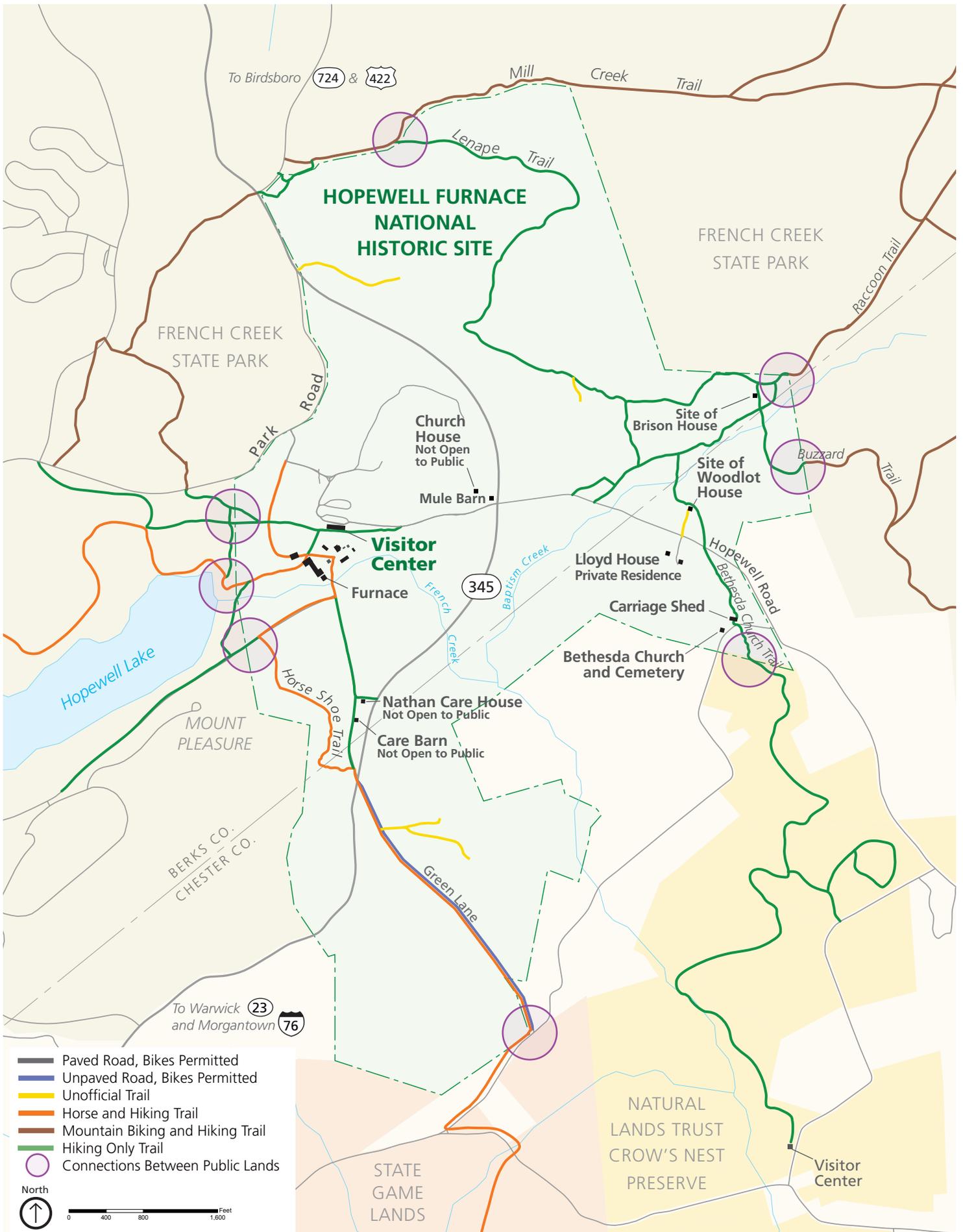
Connectivity. Improve the connections between the park and surrounding public lands and regional trail systems.

Trail Use. Define appropriate uses for each trail segment including hiking, equestrian, and/or biking.

Impact on Natural and Cultural Resources. Identify needed changes to the trail system, such as potential new corridors for re-routing trail segments, to avoid or eliminate direct impacts on natural and cultural resources.

Sustainability. Maximize long-term sustainability of the trail system through appropriate routing and the identification and implementation of appropriate surface composition and support structures for all trail segments.





What We've Done So Far

- Accurately re-mapped all existing official trails and unofficial trails (unplanned trails created by visitors travelling off of the official trails) in the park
- Inventoried usage and conditions of all trails

Tell us What you Think!

The park is looking for input from the public, including but not limited to the following questions:

1. What do you value most about the park's current trail system?
2. What do you see as issues currently facing the park's trails system?
3. Where do you see opportunities for improvement?
4. What challenges need to be addressed?

Comments can be submitted online via the park's PEPC website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/HOFU>. If you do not have internet access, you can mail your comments to: Hopewell Furnace National Historical Site, Attn: David Blackburn, Site Manager, 2 Mark Bird Lane, Elverson, PA 19520.

What's Up Next

The table below outlines the planning process, highlighting where we are now.

Winter 2016/17	Initiate Trail Assessment and Plan/Environmental Assessment
Spring 2017	Public and Agency Scoping Period ← WE ARE HERE
Summer 2017	Analysis of Public Comment, Alternatives Development
Fall/Winter 2017	Prepare Trail Assessment and Plan/Environmental Assessment
Winter 2018	Public Review of Trail Assessment and Plan/Environmental Assessment
Spring 2018	Analysis of Public Comments, Preparation of Decision Document
Summer 2018	Announcement of Decision

Items in [blue](#) represent opportunities for public involvement.

