



Rehabilitation of Paces Mill Unit

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is considering rehabilitating and reconfiguring the Paces Mill Unit (unit), which is the southernmost unit of the 15 land units comprising the national recreation area, and the last take-out point for casual rafters and kayakers. This newsletter includes an explanation of changes being considered, why the National Park Service (NPS) believes they're needed, and the desired outcome should the project come to fruition.

This newsletter is being distributed to NPS neighbors, partners, and stakeholders to solicit comments related to potential rehabilitation of the Paces Mill Unit, so please send your thoughts, ideas, and concerns, either online or in the mail.

You may comment online through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=76719> or send written comments to the address below.

Chattahoochee River National
Recreation Area
c/o Paces Mill Rehabilitation
1978 Island Ford Parkway
Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Your comments are most helpful if received by July 7. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

William L. Cox, Superintendent



Why is rehabilitation being considered?

- The unit lacks a strong NPS identity.
- The current parking lot configuration and signage results in poor vehicular flow.
- The current site design results in poor pedestrian flow.
- There are no formal changing rooms at the unit.
- The southern parking area is underused.
- Because there are no designated trails, visitors have created social trails in order to view the river.
- There are problems with existing utilities, including water and sewerlines.
- There has been serious flooding on the site. After storm events, water pools in certain areas of the parking lot.



The Desired Outcome of Rehabilitation

- The unit is more sustainable.
- The unit has a clear NPS identity and is a visual gateway to the national recreation area.
- Visitors have an improved, safe experience
- The unit has updated, high-quality educational and interpretive programming that improves visitor experience.
- The site more clearly promotes outdoor recreation and encourages compatible recreational uses.

Why Rehabilitation is Needed

The Paces Mill Unit is about 14 acres in size and highly used, with an estimated 250,000 visitors per year. The existing physical configuration of the unit is not efficiently meeting the needs of visitors and detracts from their enjoyment and safety. The National Park Service is considering rehabilitating the unit for a variety of reasons: (1) to resolve physical site design, appearance, and infrastructure concerns and deficiencies; (2) to enhance visitor enjoyment; and (3) to create a sustainable unit with strong NPS identity.

Areas That Would Not Change

Many areas of the Paces Mill Unit are not being considered for change, including the existing Georgia powerlines, the western portion of the unit that is within the Georgia Department of Transportation's right-of-way, the boat ramps, and the steep, wooded area on the northwest side of the unit.

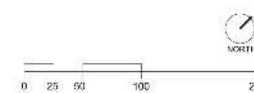




Rehabilitation Being Considered

A brief summary of rehabilitation being considered is outlined in the table below and shown on the illustration on the following page.

Topic	Description of Rehabilitation Being Considered
Parking	The current, primary parking area would be removed and the area restored to a native prairie habitat. A new parking area would be constructed north of the current parking lot replacing most of the area where the grass field is currently located. The parking lot would be sited to minimize the potential for vehicles to block traffic near the boat launch, would include a designated dropoff and pickup area, and trailer parking.
Visitor Contact Station	The current restroom facility would be removed and replaced with a new visitor contact station that would consist of three buildings and a pavilion/shade structure that would include a fee station. The other two buildings would be composed of about a dozen individual stalls that would serve as restrooms and contain changing space. Much of the signage around the unit would be moved to or near the contact station pavilion.
New Soft-Surface Trail and Elevated River Overlook	A new soft surface trail would be created between the picnic area and underneath the US 41 bridge. It would be set back from the river in compliance with the Metropolitan River Protection Act. An elevated overlook would also be developed along the trail to provide visitors a clear space to enjoy the scenic beauty and natural sounds of the flowing river.
Paved Multiuse Trail	A 10-foot-wide, multiuse, concrete trail would line the interior of the site, providing visitors an easy way to navigate the site and to recreate within the unit (walk, jog, bike, etc.).
Northern Elevated River Overlook	An elevated overlook would be developed near a large sign that alerts river users of the upcoming takeout point (this sign would remain for safety reasons). This location offers excellent views of the river.
River Amphitheater and River Access	The current rip rap under US 41 precludes safe river access and is not visitor friendly. It would be replaced with amphitheater seating that would act as rip rap but allow safe visitor use and river access.
Southern Boat Ramp and Vendor Pickup Area	The existing boat ramp would remain, and the current footprint would not change. Changes being considered include reconfiguring the parking spaces, including pull through trailer parking and the addition of some landscaping. Because this area is currently underutilized, commercial use operators would be encouraged to use this ramp to alleviate traffic at the northern boat ramp.
Utilities	Utilities would be improved throughout the site, mostly in the form of new infrastructure.
Stillhouse Trail (new trail link)	A new trail (Stillhouse Trail) is being considered on the southwest side of US 41. This trail segment is a missing link between the Paces Mill Unit and the Silver Comet Trail. One of the reasons for the high-use parking area southwest of the highway is to provide easy access to Silver Comet Trail.



CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NRA
PACES MILL UNIT
FEBRUARY 25, 2019