

Photo Credit: John Zuke

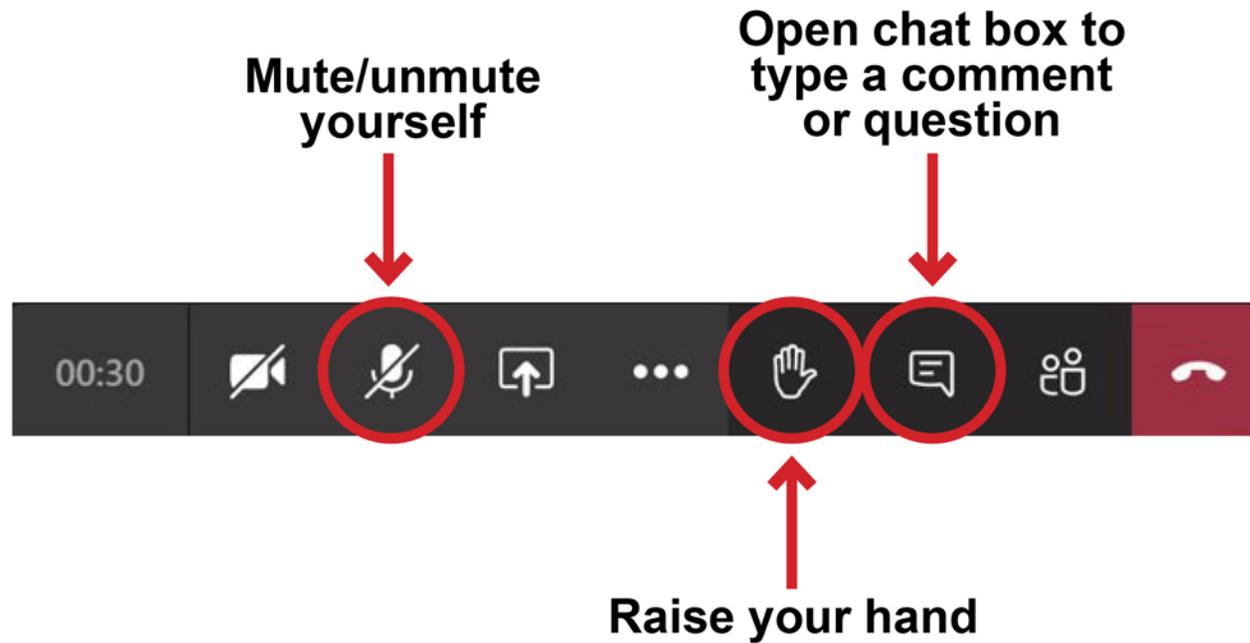


Catoctin Mountain Park Comprehensive Trail System Plan Environmental Assessment + Section 106

Public Scoping Meeting
March 10, 2021



Meeting Housekeeping





Agenda

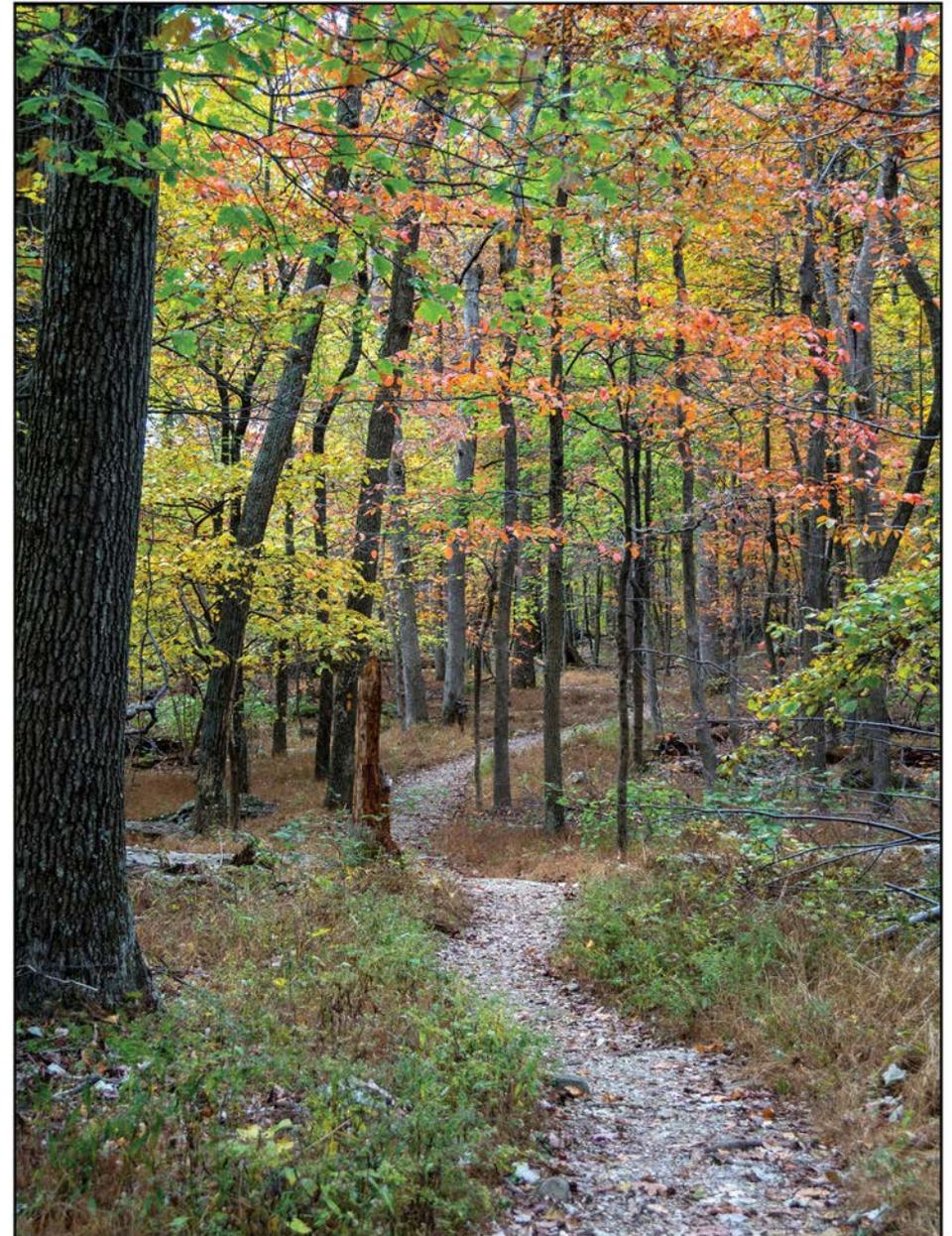
Welcome + Purpose of Meeting

Project Background

NEPA + Section 106 Process

Existing Conditions

Proposed Trails Plan



Hog Rock Trail (Photo credit: John Zuke)



Welcome + Purpose of Meeting





Purpose of Meeting

- Conduct public scoping and consulting parties meeting
- Present initial ideas for the Comprehensive Trail System Plan
- Encourage public feedback on the Plan and identify issues, concerns and ideas



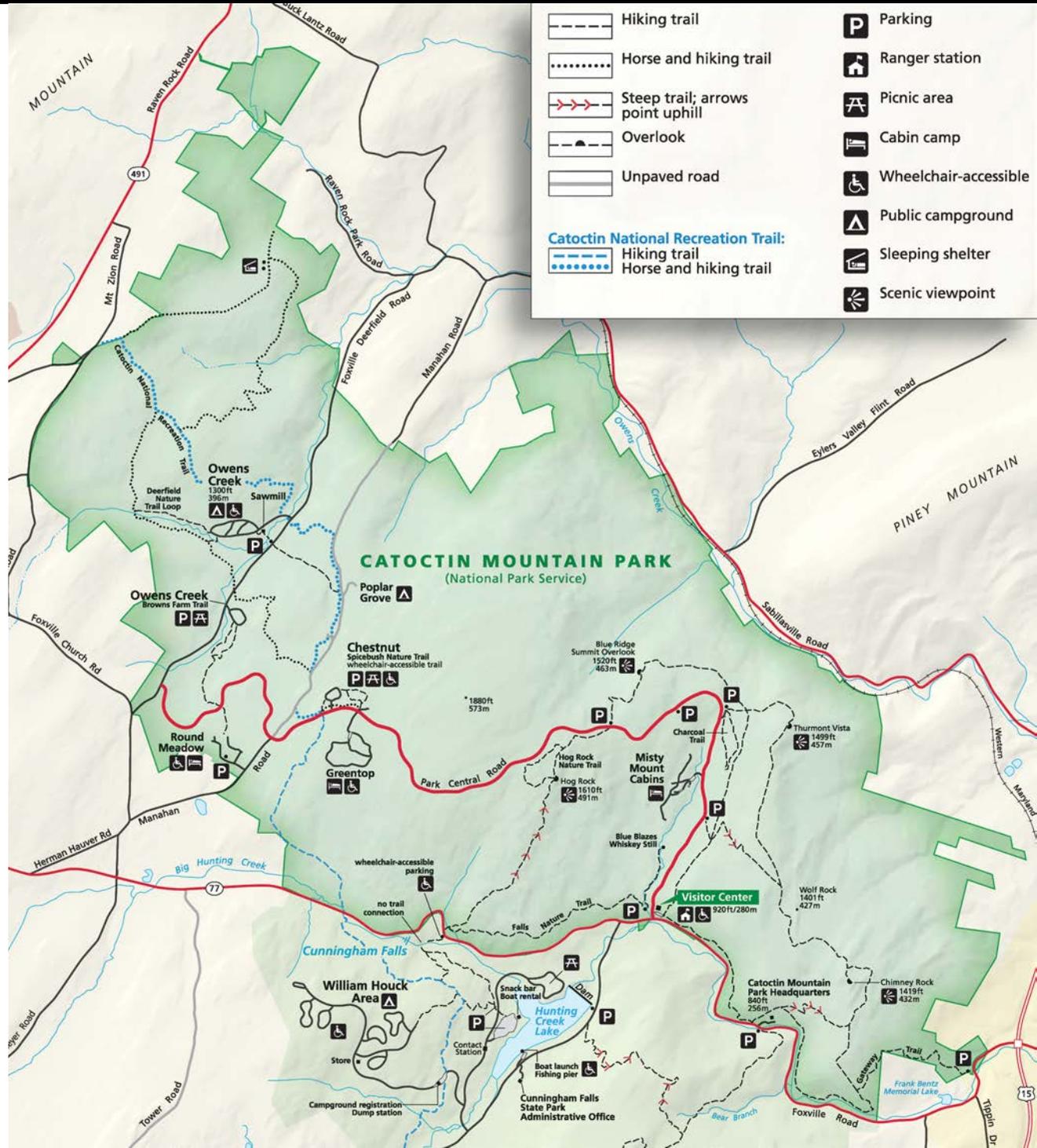
Project Background





Project Background

- The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a Comprehensive Trail System Plan for Catoctin Mountain Park.
- The 5,784-acre park is located in Frederick County, Maryland and comprises the easternmost ridge of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
- The park contains:
 - Approximately 25 miles of developed trails
 - Approximately 6 miles of trails open to horseback riding
 - Universally accessible trails
 - Opportunities for cross-country skiing, rock climbing, and bouldering
 - Historical and interpretive exhibits
 - Several scenic overlooks
 - Picnic areas
 - Historic cabin camps
 - Tent campgrounds





Project Background

- A number of the park's trails were designed as part of the park's original master plan and built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration crews in the 1930s and 1940s.
- NPS has maintained these trails for over 80 years without a comprehensive plan to guide the design, management, and overall cohesion with the park's evolving mission and goals.



Blue Blazes Whiskey Still Trail trailhead



Chimney Rock/Wolf Rock Trail between Chimney Rock and Park Headquarters



NEPA + Section 106 Process





Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide comprehensive guidance for enhancing Catoctin Mountain Park's trail system and visitor experience throughout the park in a manner that is sympathetic with the natural and cultural surroundings and balances resource protection with intended trail uses and long-term management. The proposed project is meant to provide park managers with a framework by which they can manage and maintain existing trails; close/realign existing trails when needed; add new trails and access points where appropriate; and, where feasible, create trails that are universally accessible to meet the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS).



Blue Ridge Summit Trail



Accessible picnic site at Chestnut Picnic Area



Need

The Plan is needed to address the following concerns and on-going issues affecting the park's trail system:

- Over the years, trail segments were added incrementally, without cohesive planning. The resulting trail system has connection issues and is difficult to maintain.
- Many trails have eroded and degraded due to poor design and alignment, resulting in safety and environmental concerns.
- Some features of interest (e.g., rock climbing) and overnight facilities within the park are not connected to the trail system, which forces visitors to drive to trailheads or walk along roadways to access trails from parking areas.
- The park does not provide adequate accessible trails to points of interest.



Trail between Chimney Rock and Wolf Rock



Camp Greentop



Need (*continued*)

The Plan is needed to address the following concerns and on-going issues affecting the park's trail system (*continued*):

- Visitor use of the park's trails and parking lots is not evenly distributed throughout the park. A majority of visitors utilize the parking lots in the east side of the park, which lack connections to trails in the west side of the park.
- Trail orientation signage and naming conventions within the park are not standardized.
- The park lacks formal connections to, and integration with, local and regional trail systems.
- Some trail crossings of roadways, including Route 77, are unsafe for pedestrians.



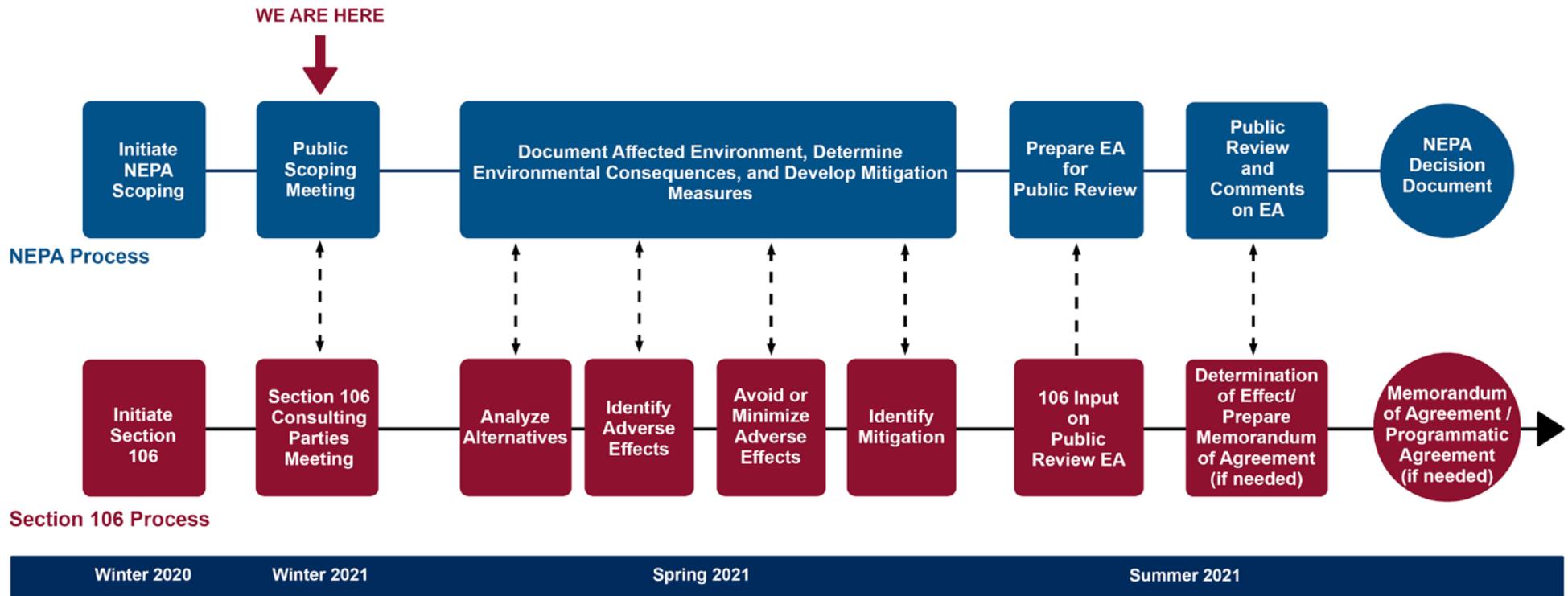
Visitor Center Parking Lot



Cunningham Falls Trail crossing of Route 77



NEPA + Section 106: A Coordinated Approach



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

- Established a national policy for **protecting the environment** and requires evaluation of alternative actions
- Goal is to ensure **informed decision-making**
- Can conclude with an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD)

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

- Established a process to **protect resources** listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places, and requires that effects on historic resources are taken into consideration
- Goal is to **minimize potential harm** and damage to historic properties
- Can conclude in one of the following: No Historic Properties Affected, No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties, or Adverse Effect to Historic Properties and an associated Memorandum of Agreement with Consulting Parties



What will the EA Address?

The proposed project could:

- Add new vehicle and pedestrian access points to the park
- Open new areas of the park to the public
- Provide more connected and looped trail experiences
- Expand recreation opportunities
- Improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation within the park
- Modify trails that are listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places

Section 106 Participants

- Maryland State Historic Preservation Office
- Tribal Historic Preservation Offices



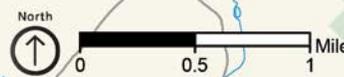
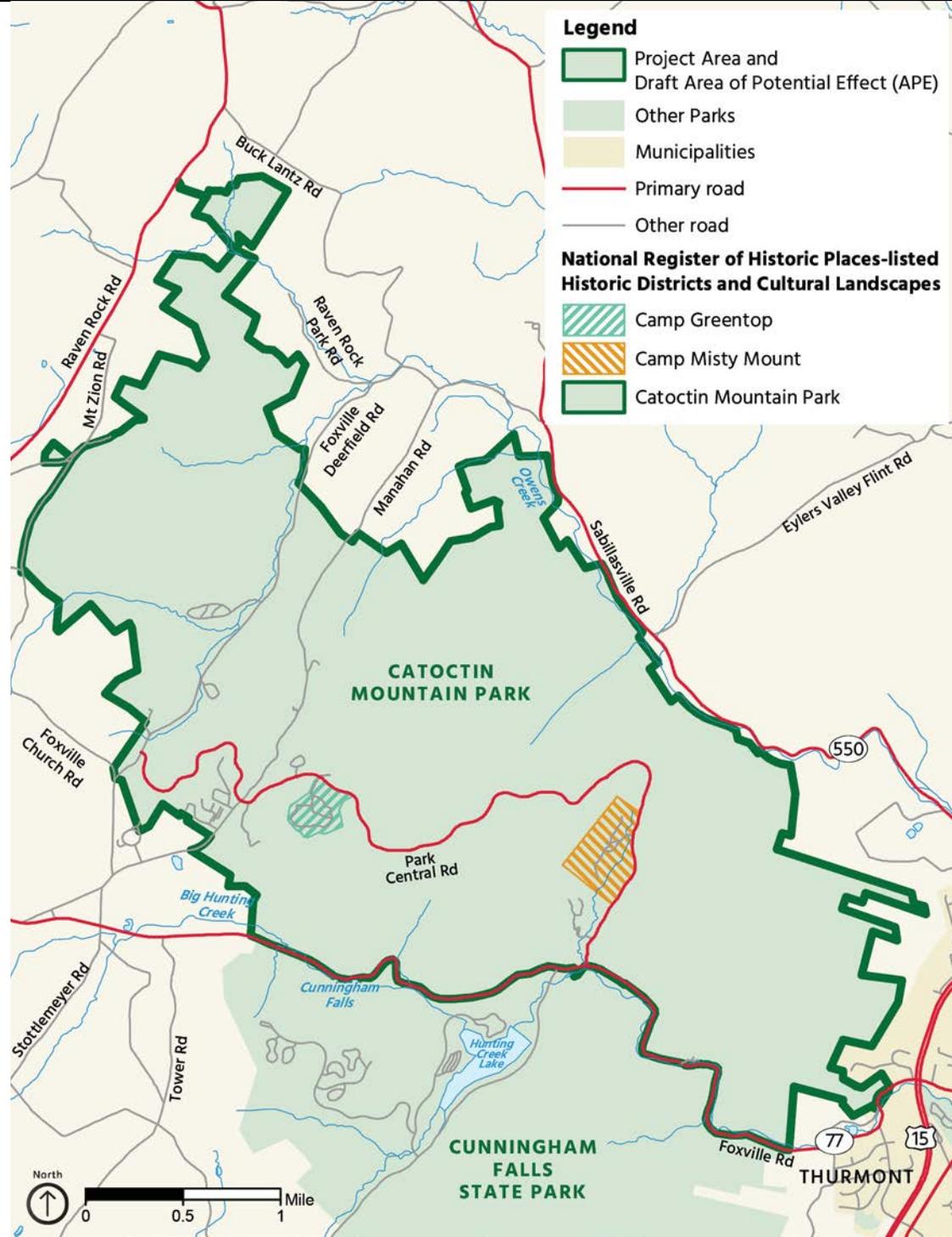
Brown's Farm Trail trailhead at Owens Creek Picnic Area



Camp Misty Mount



Section 106 Historic Resources





Existing Conditions





Existing Park Map

- Hiking trail
- Horse and hiking trail
- Steep trail; arrows point uphill
- Overlook
- Unpaved road

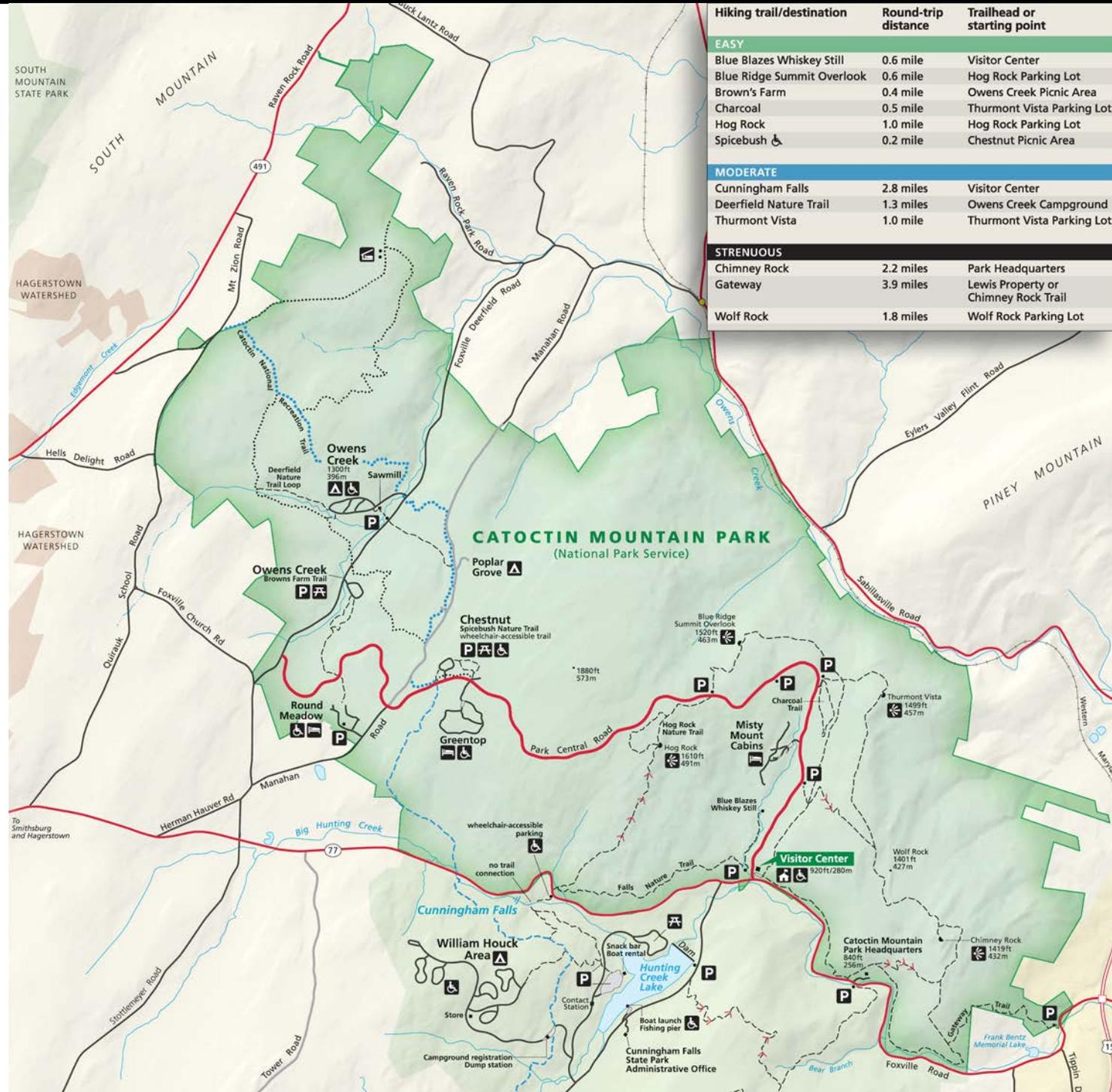
Catoctin National Recreation Trail:

- Hiking trail
- Horse and hiking trail

- Parking
- Ranger station
- Picnic area
- Cabin camp
- Wheelchair-accessible
- Public campground
- Sleeping shelter
- Scenic viewpoint

Park Central Road is closed for 2.5 miles from the visitor center for winter recreation mid-December to mid-March.

North



Hiking trail/destination	Round-trip distance	Trailhead or starting point
EASY		
Blue Blazes Whiskey Still	0.6 mile	Visitor Center
Blue Ridge Summit Overlook	0.6 mile	Hog Rock Parking Lot
Brown's Farm	0.4 mile	Owens Creek Picnic Area
Charcoal	0.5 mile	Thurmont Vista Parking Lot
Hog Rock	1.0 mile	Hog Rock Parking Lot
Spicebush ♿	0.2 mile	Chestnut Picnic Area
MODERATE		
Cunningham Falls	2.8 miles	Visitor Center
Deerfield Nature Trail	1.3 miles	Owens Creek Campground
Thurmont Vista	1.0 mile	Thurmont Vista Parking Lot
STRENUOUS		
Chimney Rock	2.2 miles	Park Headquarters
Gateway	3.9 miles	Lewis Property or Chimney Rock Trail
Wolf Rock	1.8 miles	Wolf Rock Parking Lot

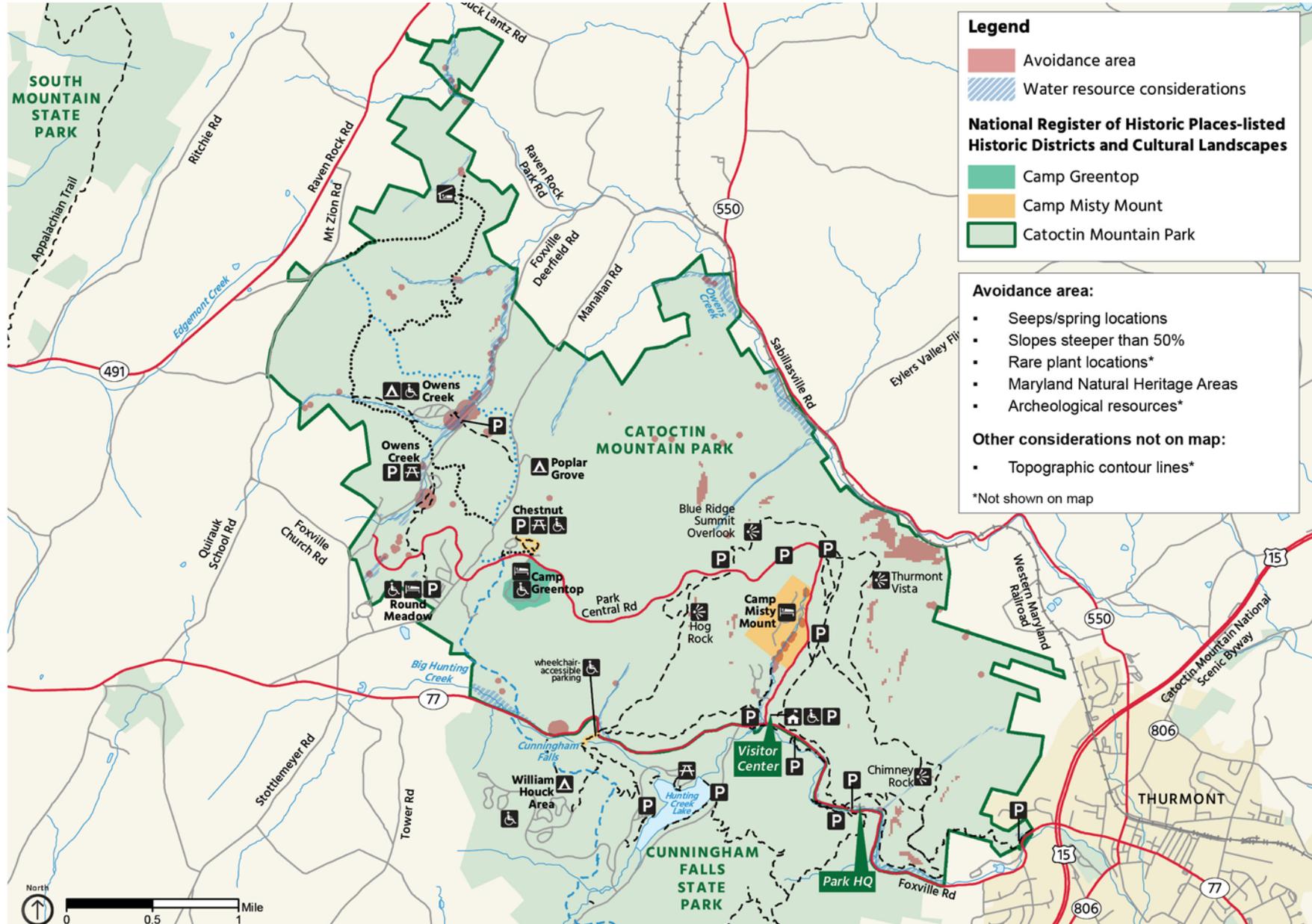


Existing Resources within the Park

- Water features
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Seeps/springs
- Topography
- Rare plants
- Maryland Natural Heritage Areas
- Cultural landscapes
- National Register of Historic Places-listed historic districts
- Archeological resources



Existing Considerations + Constraints





Proposed Trails Plan

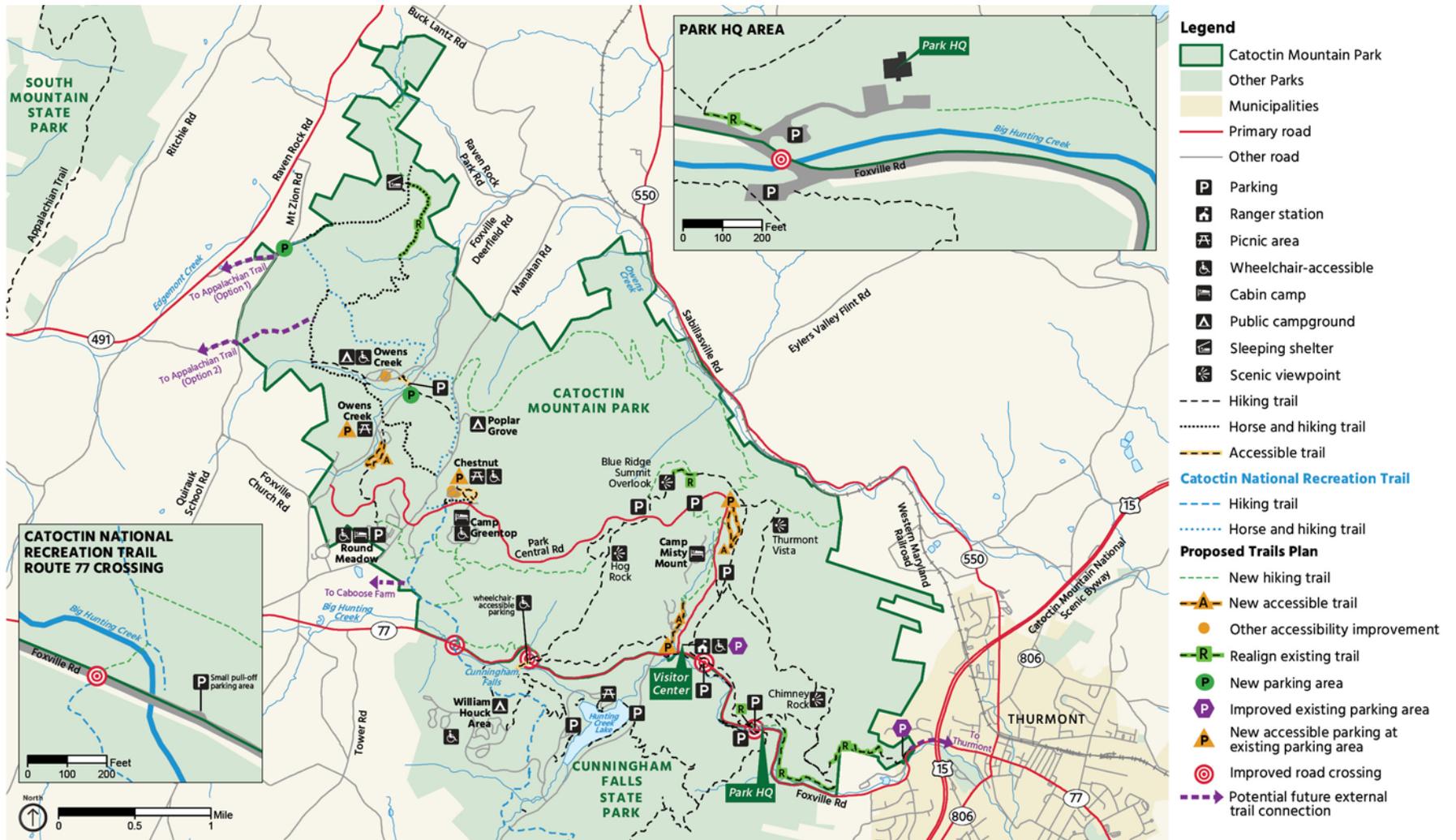




Proposed Trails Plan

The proposed trails plan includes the following elements:

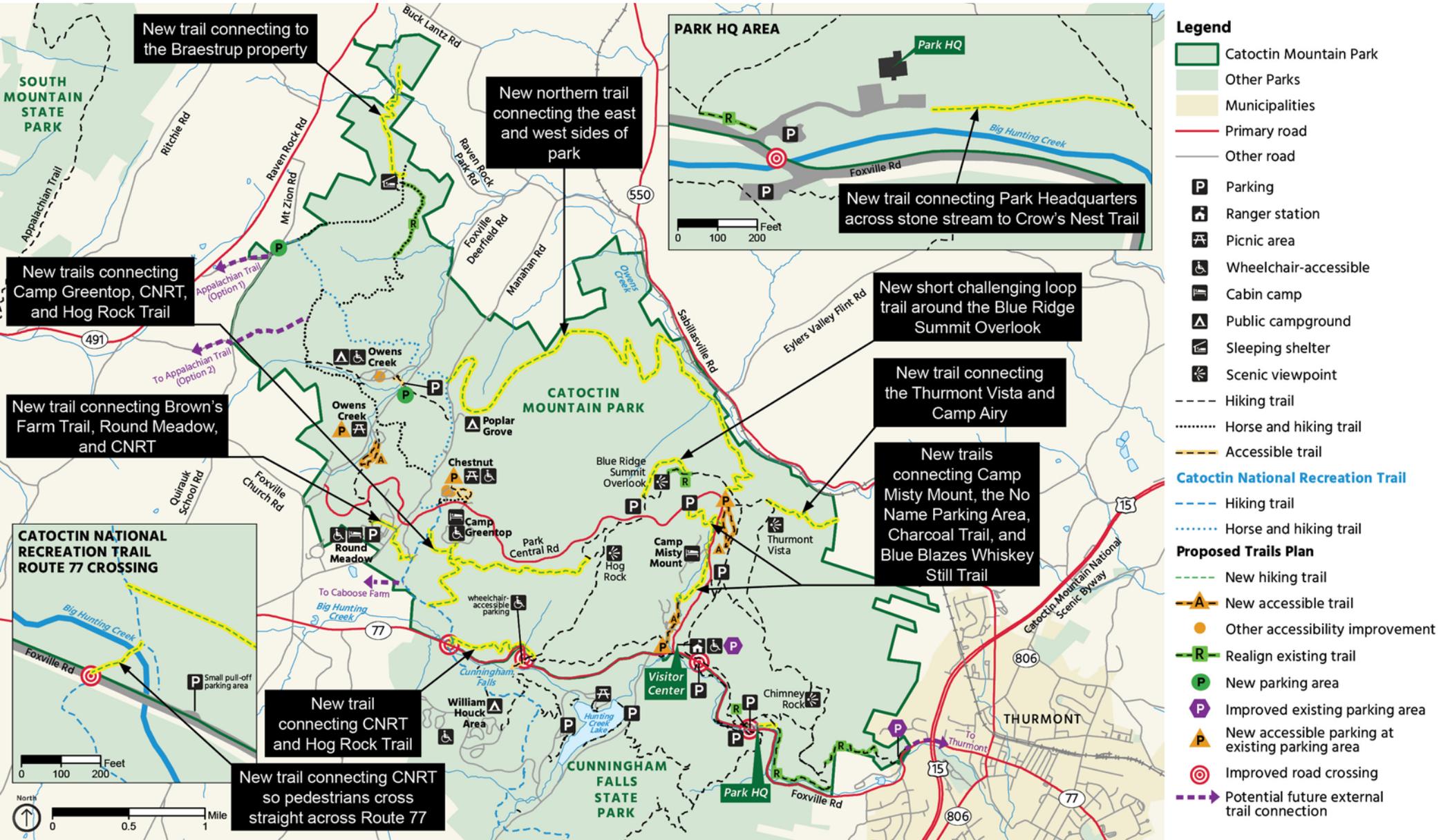
- New hiking trails
- New accessible trails and amenities
- Realigned existing trails
- Improved road crossings
- New and improved existing parking areas
- Potential future external trail connections





Proposed Trails Plan

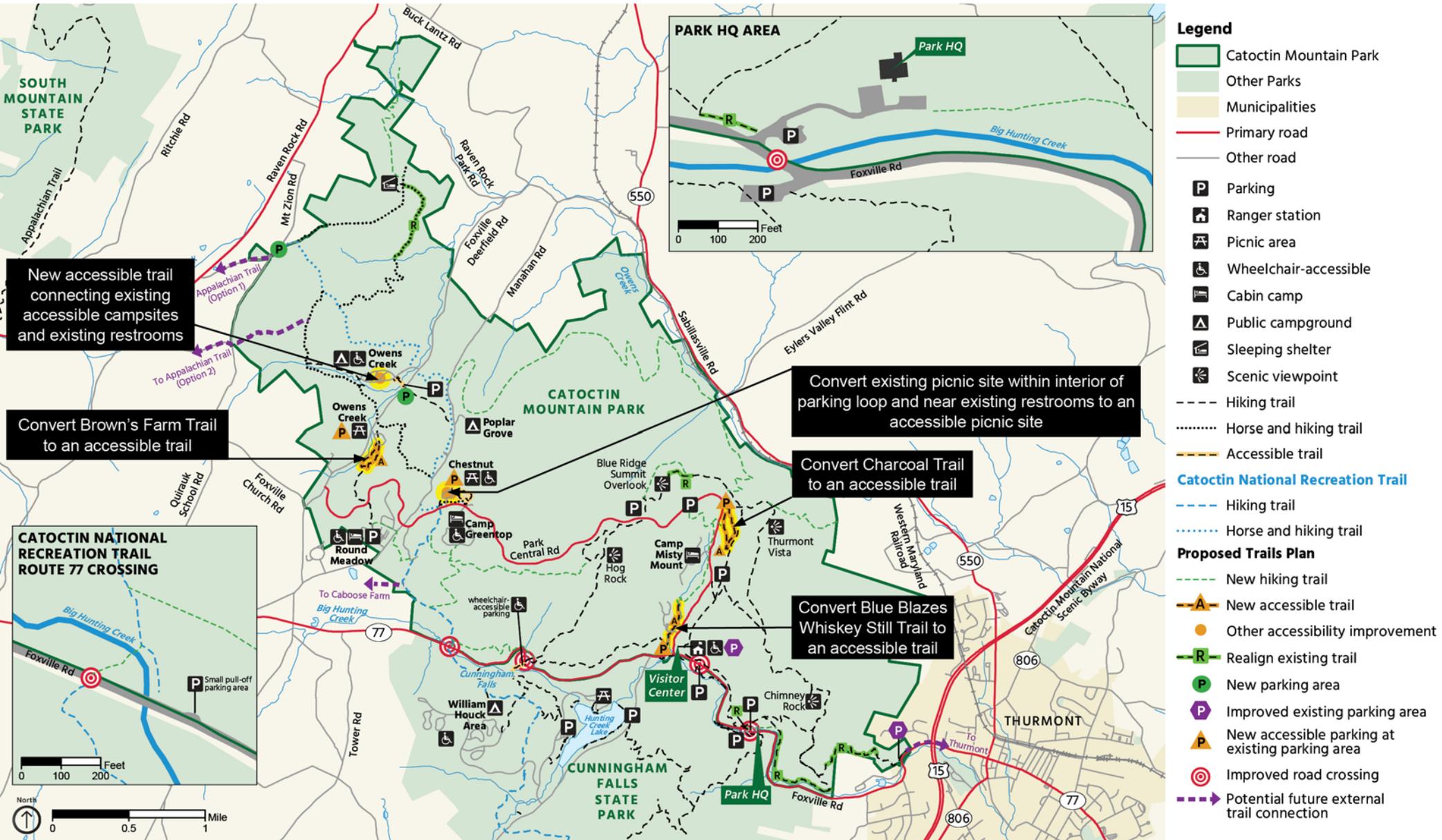
New Hiking Trails





Proposed Trails Plan

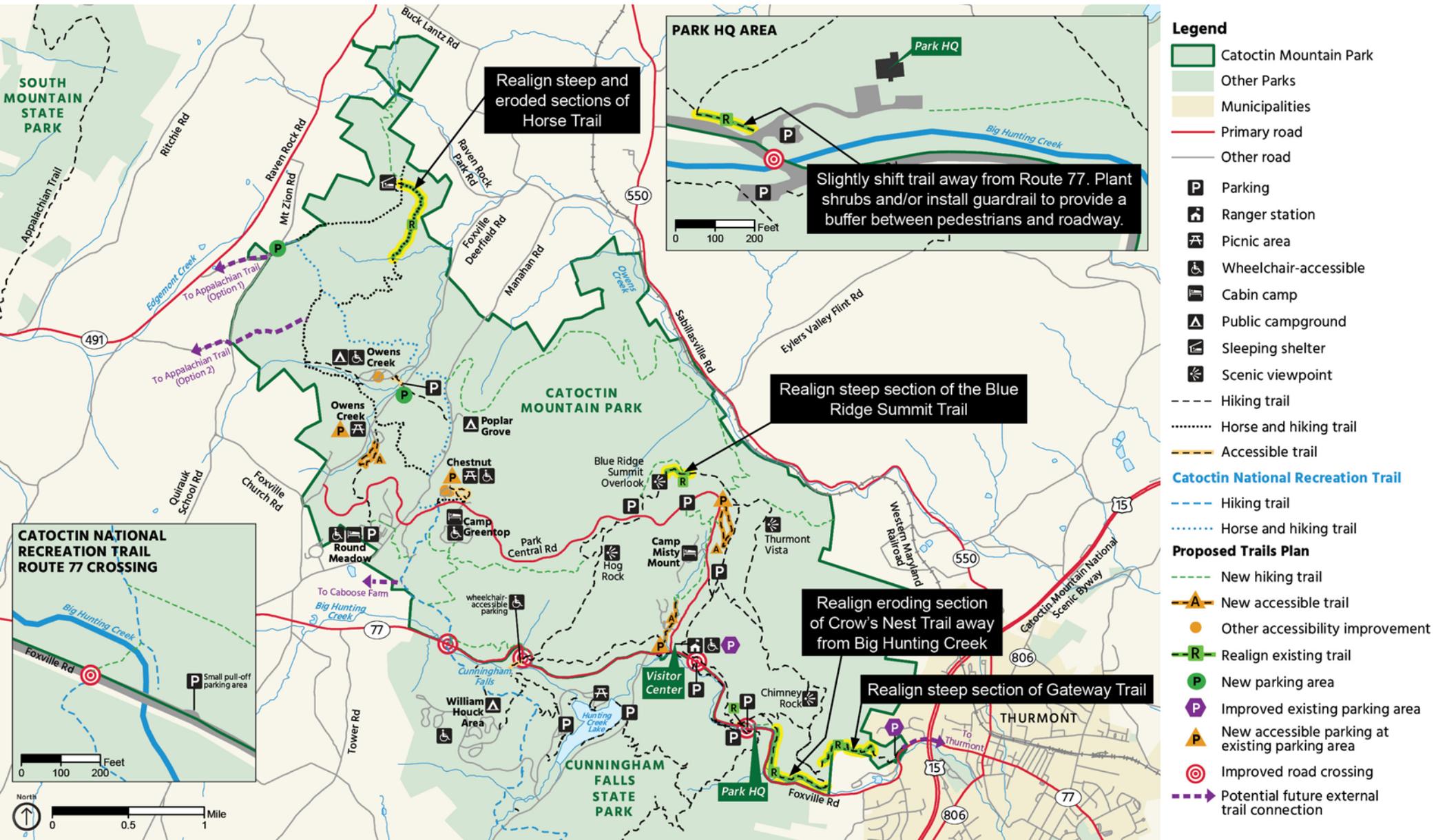
New Accessible Trails and Amenities





Proposed Trails Plan

Realigned Existing Trails





Proposed Trails Plan

Improved Road Crossings

