

# Proposed Improvements to North Hero State Park

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation



# OVERVIEW

- History of North Hero State Park
- Project goals
- Project steps
- Improvements
- Historical preservation
- Questions/Comments

## **Vermont State Parks Mission Statement:**

“To conserve and interpret on behalf of the people of Vermont their natural, cultural, historic, and scenic heritage, and while so doing, to provide recreational opportunities and economic benefit.”

## **Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation Mission Statement:**

To practice and encourage high quality stewardship of Vermont’s environment by: Monitoring and maintaining the health, integrity and diversity of important species, natural communities, and ecological processes; Managing forests for sustainable use, including providing and promoting opportunities for compatible outdoor recreation; Providing related information, education and service

# PROJECT CONTEXT AND FUNDING SOURCE

- State of Vermont's 3-Acre-Rule (Act 64, Vermont Clean Water Act)
  - Properties with 3 acres or greater of impervious surface must either:
    - Implement stormwater control measures to treat all runoff from impervious surfaces OR
    - **Reduce impervious surface area by at least 25%**
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): funds specifically designated for Vermont State Parks to improve stormwater management in developed parks

# HISTORY OF NORTH HERO STATE PARK



- **399 ACRES ACQUIRED IN 1963**, over 1/3 of acreage lies below 100' elevation (Lake Champlain flood stage)
- **CAMPGROUND BUILT BETWEEN 1968 AND 1970**, created with imported fill from borrow pit on southern parcel. Fill dumped in seasonally-inundated low-lying areas to create raised roadway and campsites.
- **CAMPGROUND CLOSED DUE TO WASTEWATER SYSTEM FAILURE AND LOW VISITATION**; an unfeasibly large mound system would be required for a maximum of approximately 30 campsites.
- **UNSTAFFED FROM 2012 – 2017**
- **CURRENTLY STAFFED BY VOLUNTEERS AS A DAY USE AREA**

# NORTH HERO STATE PARK

## CURRENT CONDITIONS AND PROJECT GOALS

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Day use park with an unstaffed contact station
- Parking area plowed in winter; snow piled in main road to deter vehicle access beyond parking area
- Failed wastewater system, new system replacement is both cost and space prohibitive
- Aging camping infrastructure in poor condition (contact station, roads, toilet buildings, leantos)
- No formal attendance numbers recorded, trail counter estimates of approximately 20 cars per day

### PROJECT GOALS

- Transition park to meet day use standards, providing a quality recreational experience.
- Reduce impervious surface to comply with stormwater regulations and to reduce environmental impact
- Improve recreational accessibility throughout park
- Improve parking area at entrance to accommodate more vehicles and bus parking
- Improve wetland connectivity

# PROJECT STEPS

## Design Development

- Completed by ANR Agency Facilities division in consultation with Department of Environmental Conservation's Stormwater Program

## District Stewardship Team Review

- Reviewed by District Stewardship Team in 2022, comprised of land managers from all three departments within the Agency of Natural Resources: Environmental Conservation, Fish & Wildlife, and Forests, Parks & Recreation.
- Minor changes made to DD set based on spiny softshell turtle conservation program
- Rare, threatened, and endangered plant species review completed

## Public Outreach/ Permitting

Permitting (*in progress*):

- Dept of Historic Preservation (architecture and archeology)
- Stormwater
- Wetlands
- Shoreland
- Act 250

## Finalize Construction Documents

- *Next Step once public comments and permitting feedback received*

## Bidding and Construction

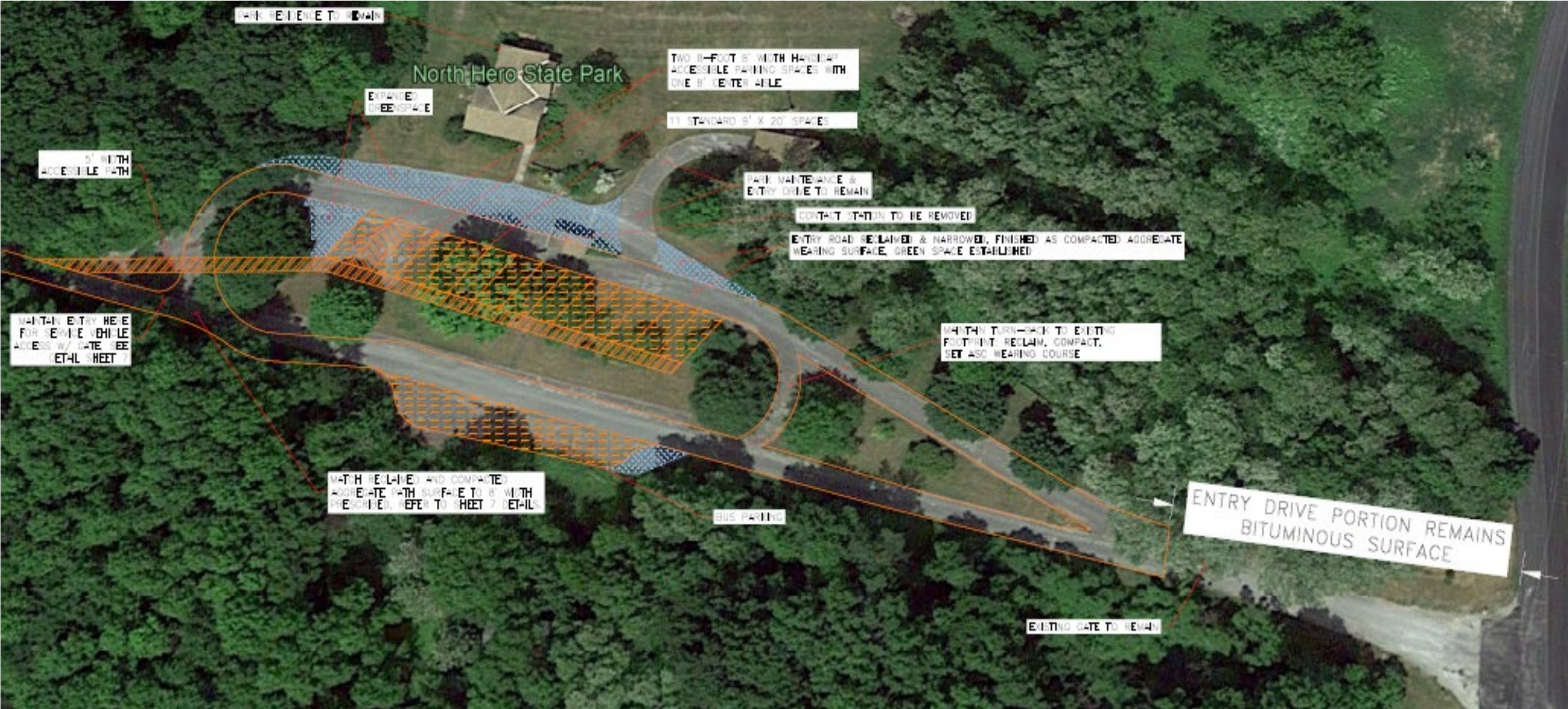
- *Bidding 2024*
- *Construction 2024/2025*

# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK



- Reconfiguring of the park entrance, including the addition of two accessible parking spaces, bus parking, and extra green space.
- Plowing the parking area in the winter to increase recreational opportunities year-round.
- Converting the existing mile-long main park road into an eight-foot-wide walking and bicycling path that meets current Americans with Disabilities Act standards.
- Rehabilitating three 1/3-mile looped walking trails off the main entrance road.
- Enhancing stormwater management through the removal of over two acres of impervious surface in the park.

# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK





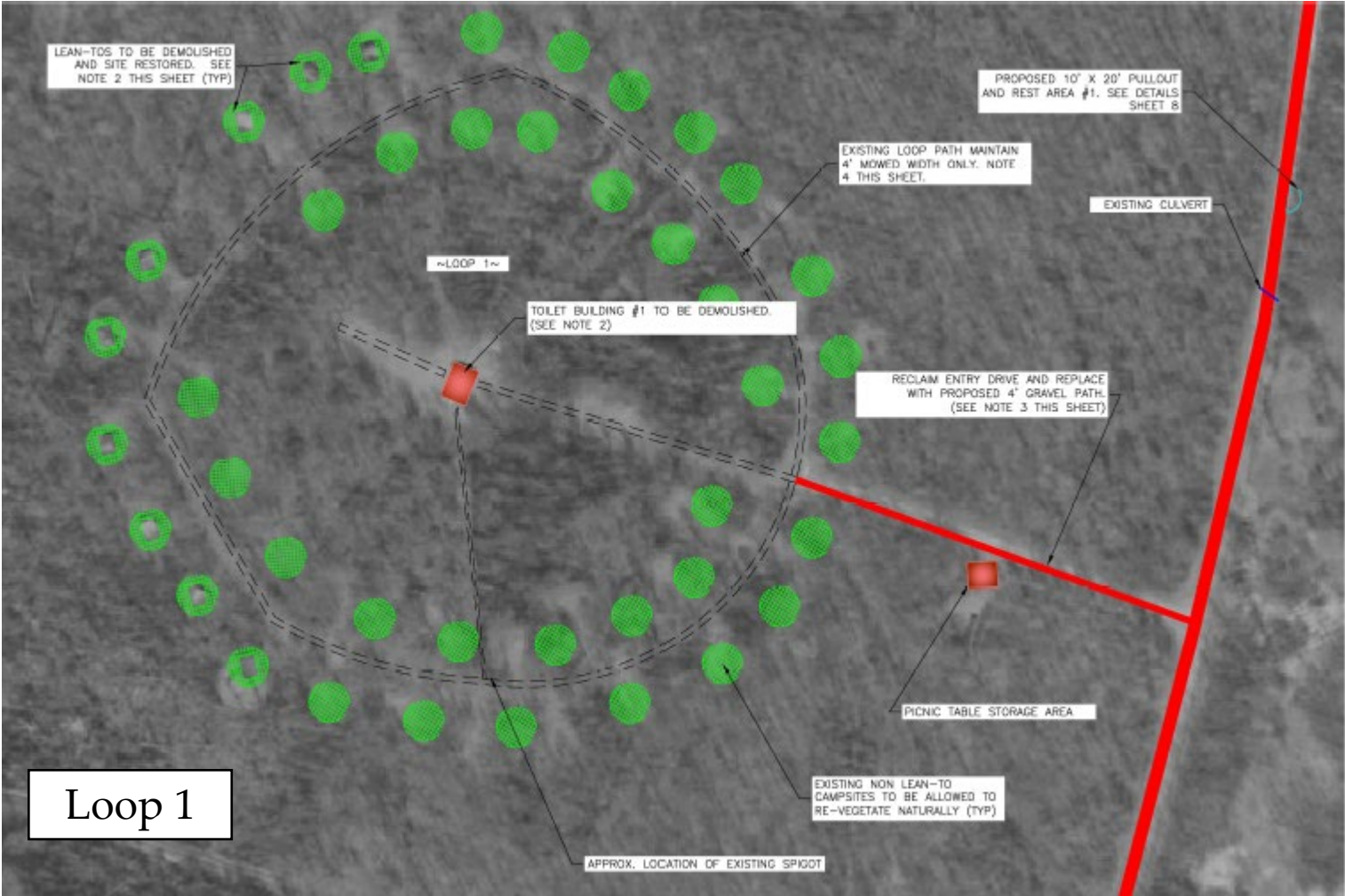
# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK

Main Road



- Convert the existing mile-long main park road into a walking and bicycling path that meets current Americans with Disabilities Act standards, including shallow dips for wetland connectivity.
- Reclamation of asphalt road surface into base material, topped with two inches of 1/2" minus sur-pak.
- Remaining existing road width becomes grass road shoulders with occasional safety pull-offs for maintenance vehicles.

# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK



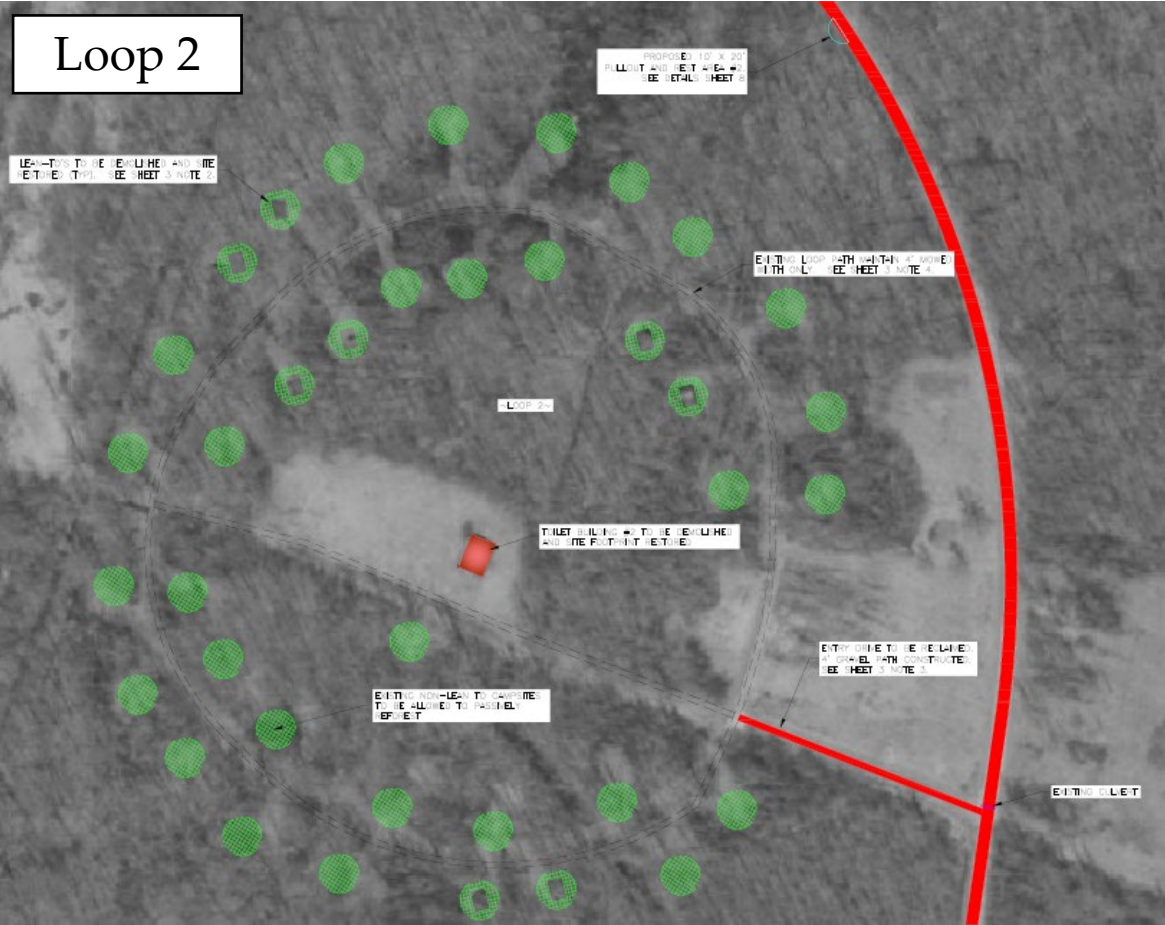
Loop 1

CONSTRUCTION NOTES FOR CAMPING LOOPS 1, 2, AND 3:

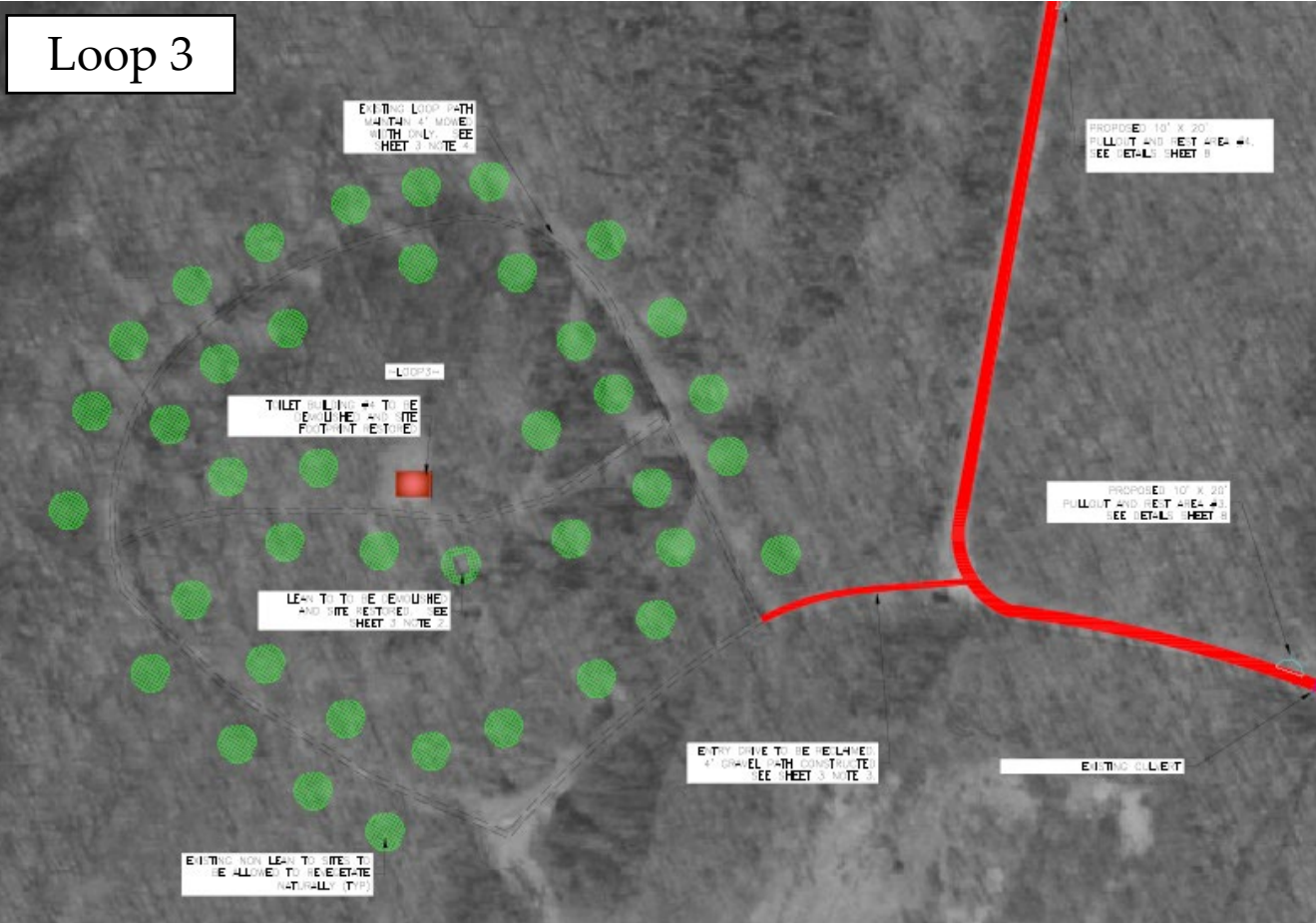
1. AREAS TO BE MAINTAINED SOLELY FOR DAY USE PATH ACCESS.
2. LEAN-TO SITES AND TOILET BUILDINGS TO HAVE STRUCTURES REMOVED. SEE GENERAL NOTES 2, 3, AND 4 SHEET 1 FOR SCOPE OF WORK RELATED TO SLABS, CRAWL SPACES AND FROST WALLS.
3. LEAN-TO SITES IN VARIOUS STAGES OF RE-VEGETATION TO BE TILLED TO 8" DEPTH. IMPORT 2" OF TOPSOIL AS AMENDMENT TO EXISTING SITE SOILS. SEED, RAKE IN AND STRAW MULCH.
4. ASPHALT ENTRY DRIVES TO BE RECLAIMED AND 4" WIDE GRAVEL PATHS CONSTRUCTED. ALL SHOULDER AREAS FORMERLY ASPHALT SHALL HAVE RECLAIMED MATERIAL REMOVED, EXISTING BASE SOILS SCARIFIED AND PLACE 4" OF IMPORTED TOPSOIL. SEED, RAKE IN AND STRAW MULCH.
5. EXISTING LOOP PATHS WILL BE ALLOWED TO RE-VEGETATE NATURALLY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 4" WIDE WALKING PATH TO BE MOWED.
6. ALL NON-LEAN-TO SITES ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF REFORESTATION AND WILL BE PROTECTED FROM MOWING TO ALLOW FOR PASSIVE REFORESTATION.

# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK

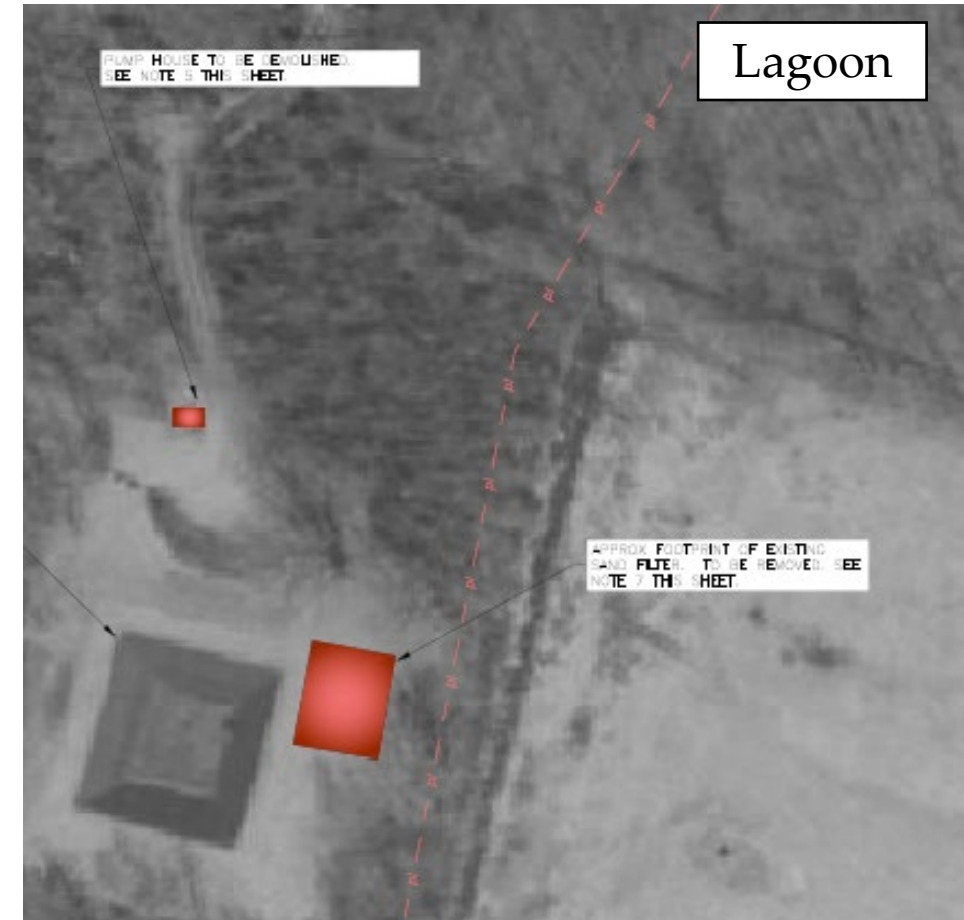
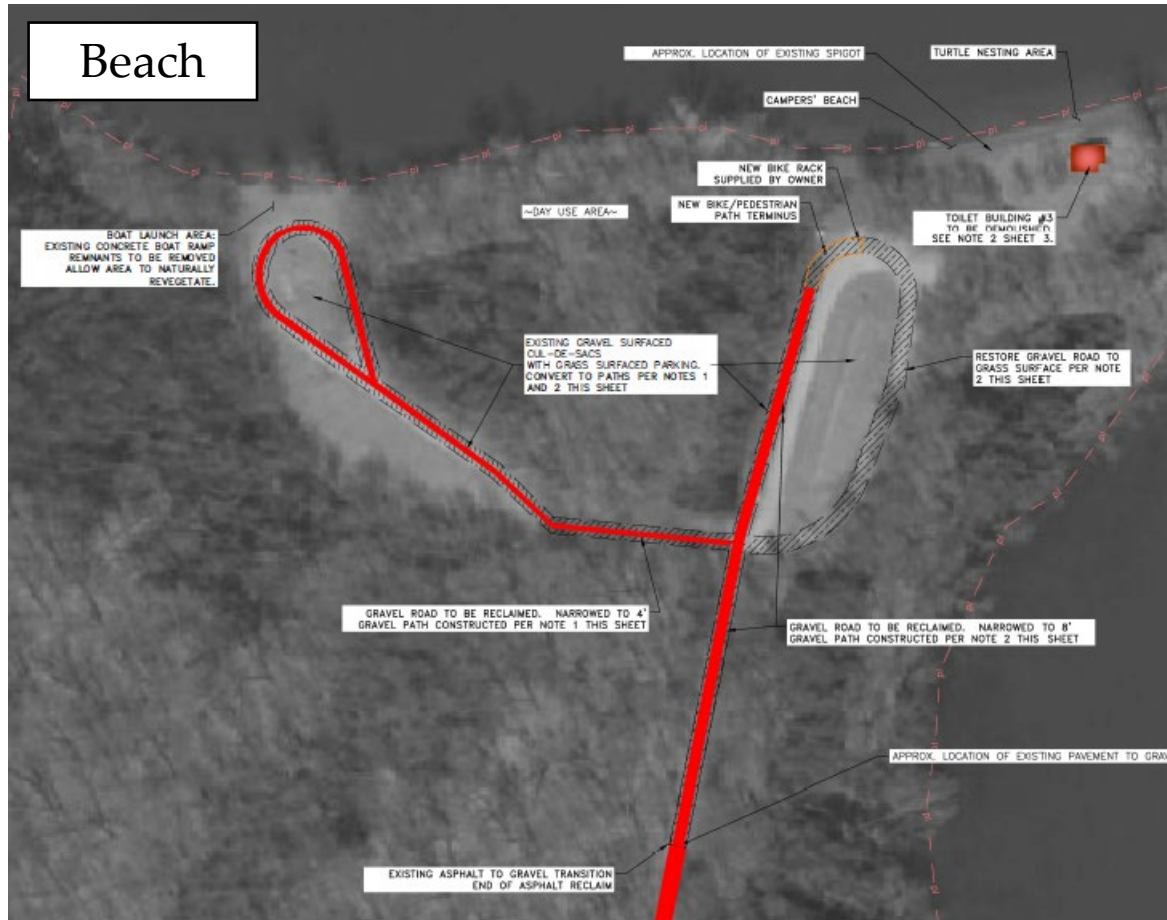
Loop 2



Loop 3



# PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK



# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Spiny Softshell Turtle Program:** The Department of Fish & Wildlife will be continuing the spiny softshell turtle monitoring program at North Hero State Park. The multi-use path down to the beach will occasionally be utilized by Fish & Wildlife and USDA Wildlife Services vehicles; roadside pull-offs have been worked into the road design for safety.
- **Camping Demand:** The closure of North Hero State Park's campground has left a void in public campground availability in northern Grand Isle county, while camping demand in the area remains high. The Alburgh Bluffs property was acquired from TNC in 2022 in part due to suitability for campground development.
- **EMS Services:** A Knox Box will be placed on the swinging gate at the park entrance so the multi-use path can be used for emergency response within the park.
- **Accessibility/OPDMD:** The multi-use path will be constructed to ADA standards, while the loop trails will be constructed to accessible trail standards. The Other Power-Driven Mobility Device designation at North Hero State Park will remain – OPDMD pass holders will be provided access beyond the gate.

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION – ARCHITECTURAL MITIGATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- In 2022, FPR hired architectural historian Scott Newman of 106 Associates to assess the defunct camping infrastructure of the park from a historic preservation lens.
- UVM Consulting Archaeology Program will be taking core samples along the road to ensure roadbed is indeed fill.
- In January 2023, FPR went before the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to discuss the removal of historic campground infrastructure. The following mitigation was proposed by FPR and accepted by ACHP:
  - The installation of interpretive panels explaining North Hero State Park’s historical significance.
  - Retaining the foundation walls of toilet buildings.
  - A comprehensive statewide assessment of mid-century modern (MCM) resources throughout Vermont State Parks.



# QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- We want to hear from you!
  - What do you like about the proposed plan?
  - What do you wish we included or didn't include?
  - Is there anything else we should consider about future operations at North Hero State Park?
  - What do you have questions about?
- Additional comments may be directed to:

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