

Proposed Improvements to North Hero State Park

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation



MEETING FORMAT

- Presentation of Overall Project:
 - History of North Hero State Park
 - Project Goals
 - Project Overview
- Presentation of Changes from First Public Involvement Period
- Open Period for Feedback

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%**
- Funding Source: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
 - Funding allocated to Vermont State Parks to improve stormwater management in developed parks
 - Engineering estimate of \$382k. Includes removal of 4 toilet buildings, 18 leantos, and other associated campground infrastructure from inventory that would cost \$2-3m to replace or restore to working condition.

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 STARTING IN 2012**, currently managed by seasonal volunteers or staff from neighboring parks.

NORTH HERO STATE PARK

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND PROJECT GOALS

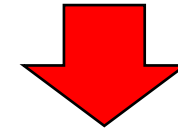
CURRENT CONDITIONS

- 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, lean-tos)
- No formal attendance numbers recorded, trail counter estimates of approximately 10 visitors/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 wetland connectivity and function.
- Improve recreational universal accessibility throughout park.
- Improve parking area at entrance to accommodate more vehicles and bus parking.

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

Permitting & Public Outreach

Permitting:

- Dept of Historic Preservation (architecture and archeology)
- Stormwater
- Wetlands
- Act 250 (*in progress*)

Public Outreach:

- First meeting held on May 16, 2023

Public Outreach (cont.)

- 2nd Public Meeting August 8, 2024
- Final comment period open until Monday August 19th
- Summarized public questions and comments will be posted on project page after August 19th with responses from FPR.
- Any adjustments to project plans or park operations plans will follow.

Bidding and Construction

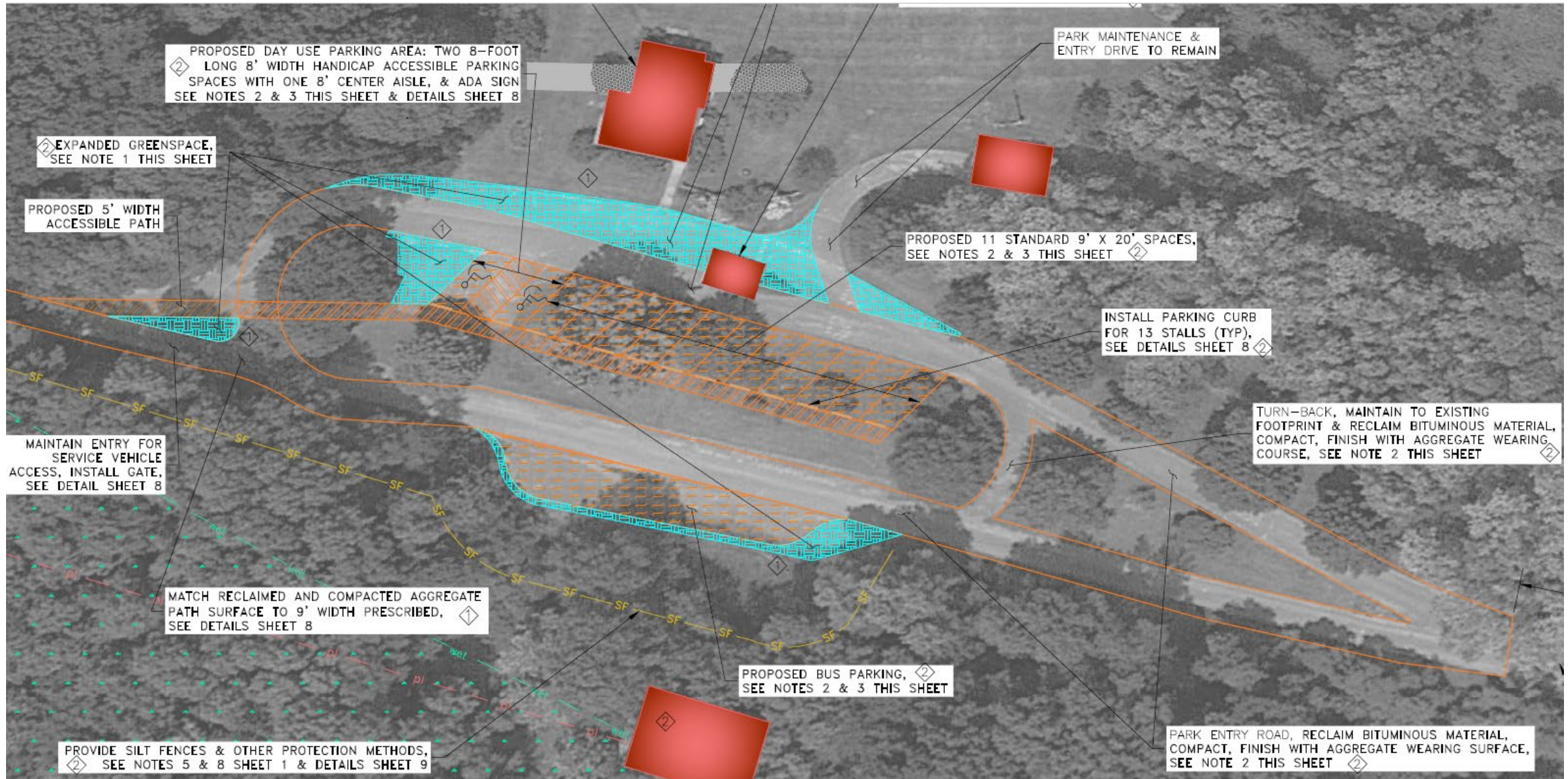
- Targeting Winter/Spring 2025 construction

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 reconfigured parking area in the winter to increase recreational opportunities year-round.
- Converting the existing mile-long main park road into a 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



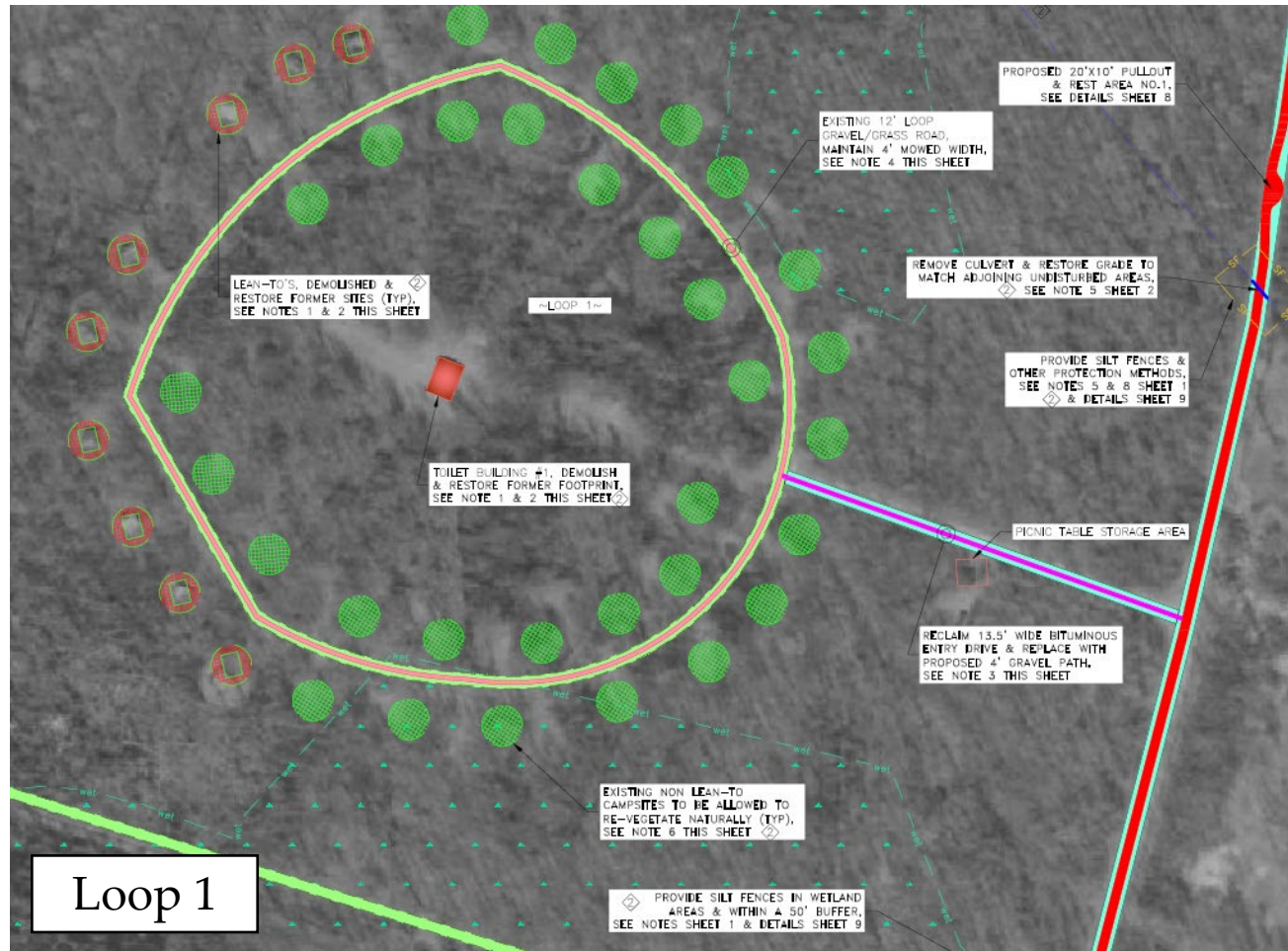
PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK

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 or emergency vehicles.

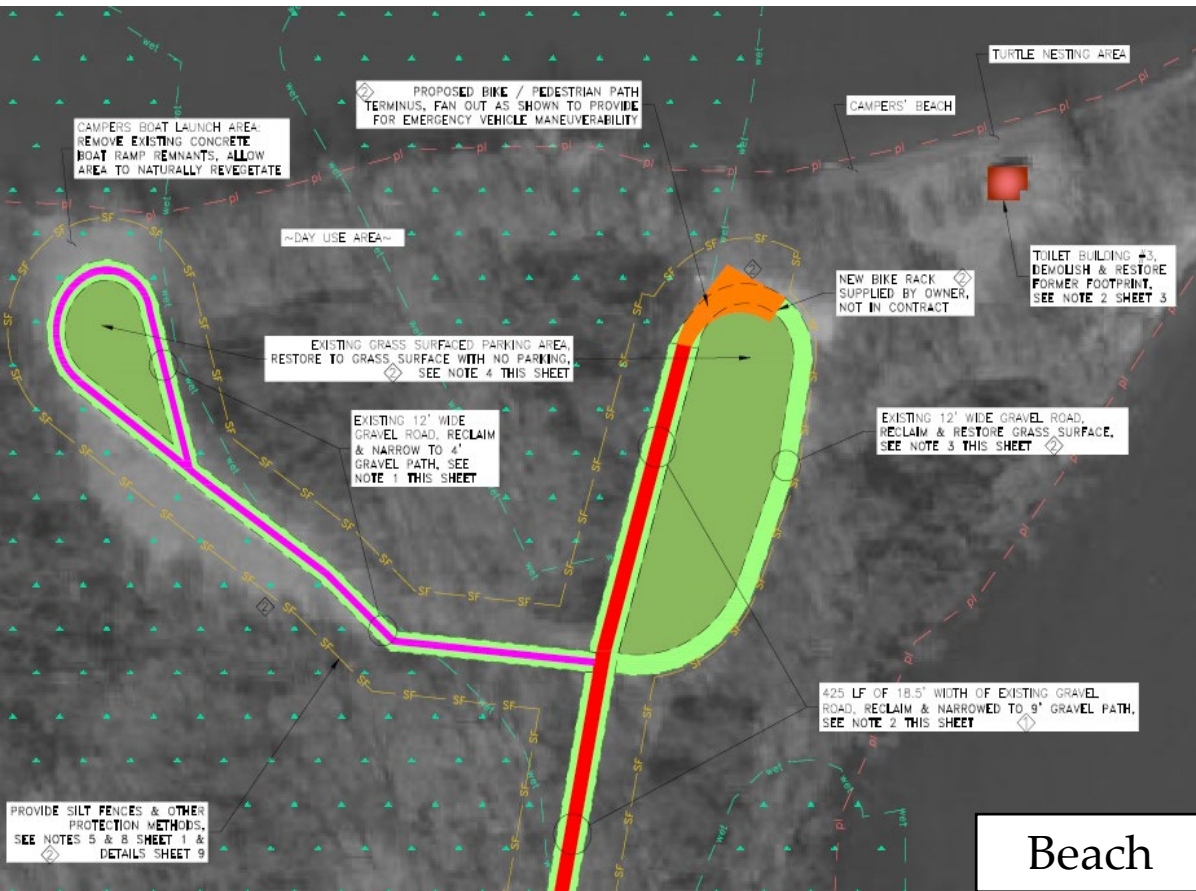
PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTH HERO STATE PARK



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

- REMOVE STRUCTURES AND FOUNDATIONS OF LEAN-TO SITES AND TOILET BUILDINGS, SEE NOTES 2, 3, & 4 SHEET 1.
- FOR LEAN-TO SITES AND TOILET BUILDINGS FOOTPRINTS IN VARIOUS STAGES OF RE-VEGETATION:
 - TILL TO 8" DEPTH,
 - IMPORT 2" OF TOPSOIL AS AMENDMENT TO EXISTING SITE SOILS, AND
 - SEED, RAKE IN AND STRAW MULCH.
- RECLAIM BITUMINOUS ENTRY DRIVES AND CONSTRUCT 4' WIDE GRAVEL PATHS IN NEW SHOULDER AREAS THAT ARE OUTSIDE OF THE PROPOSED PATH FOOTPRINT:
 - REMOVE ALL RECLAIMED BITUMINOUS MATERIAL,
 - SCARIFY AND TILL EXISTING BASE SOILS,
 - PLACE 4" OF IMPORTED TOPSOIL, AND
 - SEED, RAKE IN AND STRAW MULCH.
- EXISTING LOOP GRAVEL/GRASS ROADS WILL BE ALLOWED TO RE-VEGETATE NATURALLY, EXCEPT FOR 4' WIDE WALKING PATHS, WHICH ARE TO BE MOWED.
- DO NOT MOW IN ALL NON-LEAN-TO SITES THAT ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF REFORESTATION TO ALLOW FOR PASSIVE REFORESTATION.

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 potential 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 106 Associates to assess the defunct camping infrastructure of the park from a historic preservation lens.
- 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.



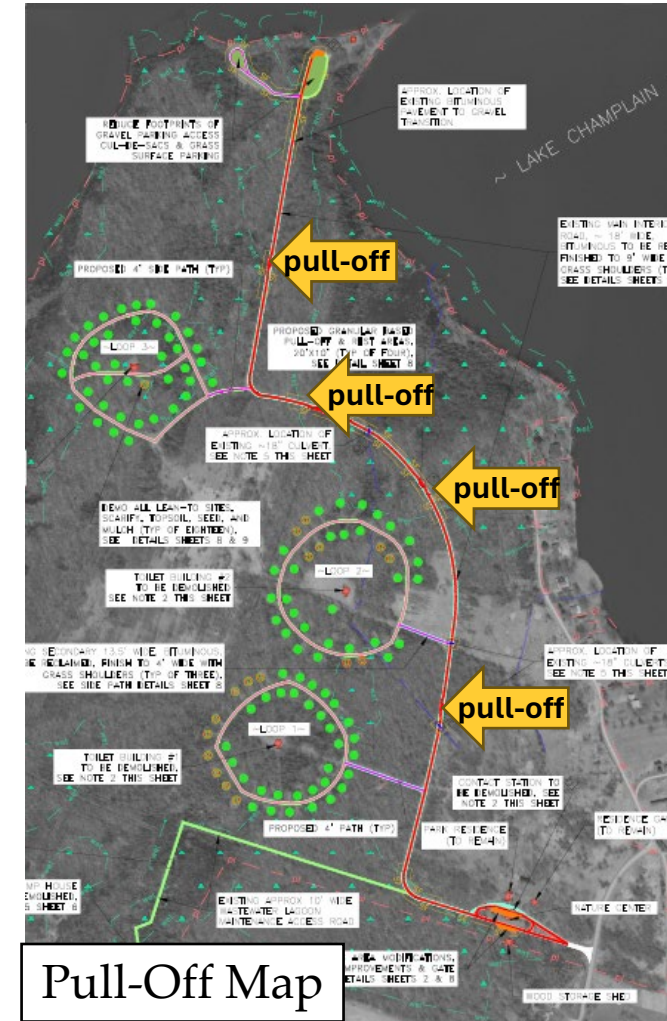
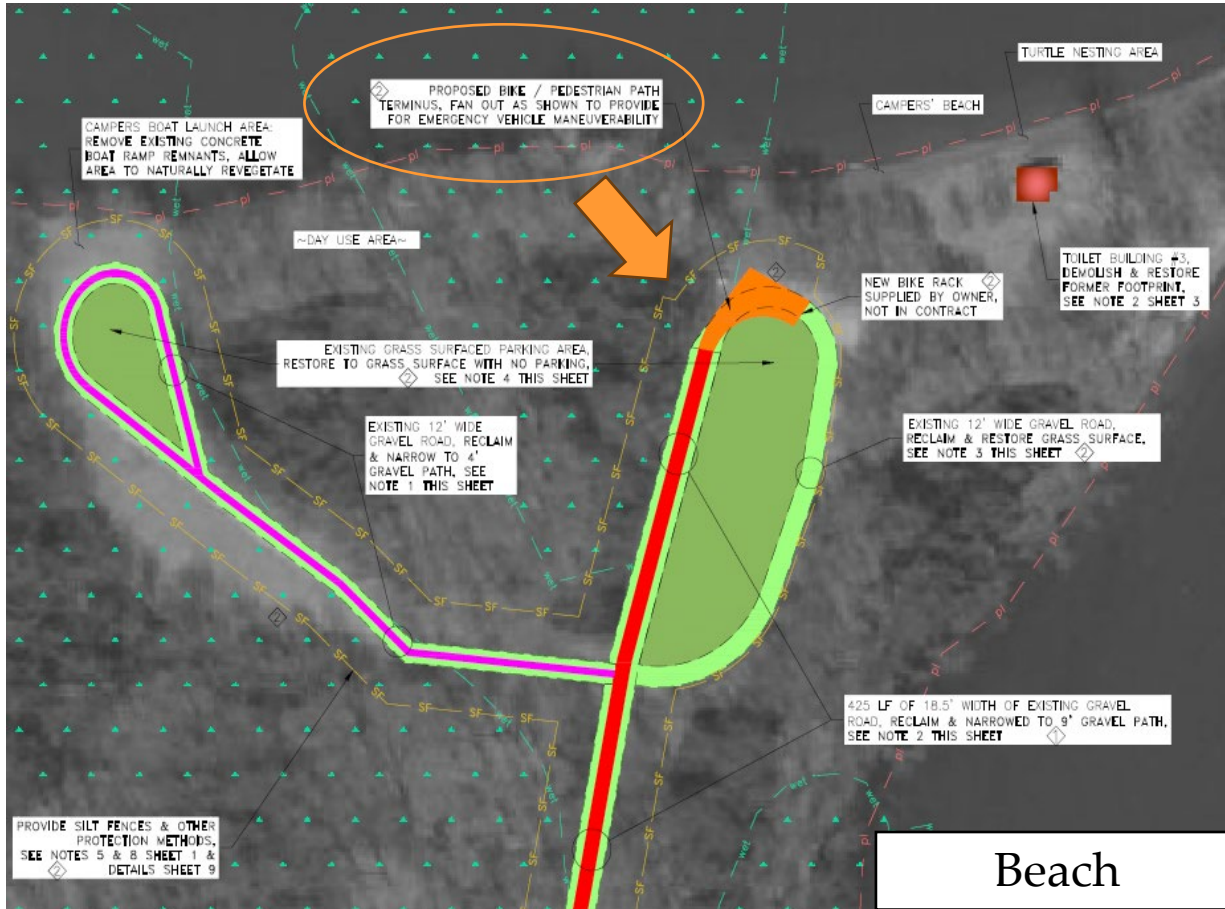
CHANGES FOLLOWING FIRST PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PERIOD

- Following the public involvement period in 2023, the following adjustments were made to the plan:
 - Widened of the main walking/biking pathway from entrance parking area to the water.
 - Further improved wetland connectivity, focused on old service road and defunct lagoon areas.
 - Planned for increased outreach regarding Other Power-Driven Mobility Device (OPDMD) user passes at North Hero State Park.

CHANGES FOLLOWING FIRST PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PERIOD

- Widening of main pathway to beach:
 - Main pathway will be open to limited vehicle traffic:
 - FPR, DFW, and USDA maintenance vehicles
 - Emergency vehicles via Knox Box
 - Visitors with mobility impairments (OPDMD permit holders)
 - Adjusted width from 8 feet to 9 feet to better accommodate larger vehicles. Retained 4+ foot wide mowed road shoulders on both sides of road.
 - Reworked four pull-offs/rest areas along pathway to dimension of 20' x 10'.
 - Adjusted path terminus to fan out for vehicle turn-around purposes.
 - Verified engineered ability of path to withstand occasional heavy vehicle traffic.

CHANGES FOLLOWING FIRST PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PERIOD



CHANGES FOLLOWING FIRST PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PERIOD

- Improving Wetland Connectivity
 - Investigated former access road to wastewater treatment lagoon on southern end of parcel with DEC Wetlands program. Incorporated recommended grade dips into plan for former access road to provide better wetland connectivity and decrease damming effect.
 - Specified that lagoon berms will be graded to match existing undisturbed surface topography once lagoon is decommissioned.
 - Incorporated bus parking pull-off into existing impervious footprint, rather than adding additional impervious surface near wetland buffer.



CHANGES FOLLOWING FIRST PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PERIOD

- Clarifying access for visitors with mobility impairments
 - ANR policy allows for use of other power-driven mobility devices (OPDMDs) on State land by those with mobility impairments.
 - North Hero SP will remain classified for Class III OPDMDs on the main pathway, allowing for use of vehicles over 50” wide to be used as mobility devices.
 - OPDMD pass holders will be provided information for getting through the gate.
 - Information on OPDMDs passes will be posted on the North Hero SP website and at the park following construction.

OPDMD User Pass Application:

<https://anrweb.vt.gov/FPR/OPDMD/application.aspx>

Please fill out the fields below and click the [Submit] button to obtain a user pass for the use of Other Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) on Agency of Natural Resources Land

Name:

Address:

Town:

State:

Zip:

Phone#:

Email Address:

Date of Birth:

Duration of pass:

What classes of OPDMDs will you be using:

CLASS I: Small (vehicle width less than 36 inches)

CLASS II: (ATVs, vehicle width of 36 to 50 inches)

CLASS III: (UTV, autos, vehicle width more than 50 inches)

Region (select all that apply)

North-East North-West South-East South-West Central

Please tell us some trails/areas that you will be accessing and what kind of activities you will engage in so that we can better target our efforts to increase accessibility:

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- FPR is soliciting public feedback on this project through Monday August 19th.
- Comments may be shared during this meeting or directed to:
Emily White, Parks Regional Manager
Emily.White@vermont.gov
please include “North Hero Public Comment”
as email subject line
802.595.1044
- FPR will be compiling questions and comments from this meeting and from email/voicemail feedback. Responses to all feedback will be provided in writing on the public involvement page for this project no later than August 30th.

<https://vtstateparks.blogspot.com/2024/07/second-planning-meeting-north-hero.html>

