

areas where traffic would be diverted from could occur during rehabilitation. In addition, routine maintenance, such as repainting pavement markings, sign repair, and snow/ice clearing operations, affects the capacity of the bridge as these activities influence the availability of travel lanes.

c. Transportation Significance

The Nice Bridge facility is part of the NHS and STRAHNET, indicating its importance as a transportation element for both the public and military facilities. Facilities that are part of the NHS and STRAHNET should be designed to the highest standards, including providing consistent bridge and approach roadway features. As previously mentioned, the existing features of the Nice Bridge are not consistent with the approach roadways and the bridge has been designated as functionally obsolete due to the limited vehicular capacity.

The Charles County Commissioners have identified the Nice Bridge as a major limiting factor in the path of evacuation from Southern Maryland and the Washington, DC metro area to points south. With its capacity currently limited to two lanes, this bridge would create a major bottleneck in the event of a natural disaster or a Homeland Security incident. In addition, the *2006 Charles County Comprehensive Plan* recommends increasing the capacity of the bridge to improve traffic flow, alleviate congestion, and provide an evacuation route of greater capacity.

US 301 also provides the main access into and out of Naval Support Facility (NSF) Dahlgren. The Navy performs research, development, testing, and evaluation operations critical to the defense of sailors, ships, facilities, and infrastructure at NSF Dahlgren. US 301 and the Nice Bridge provide important infrastructure that supports local and regional mobility for the Navy's operations and employees at NSF Dahlgren.

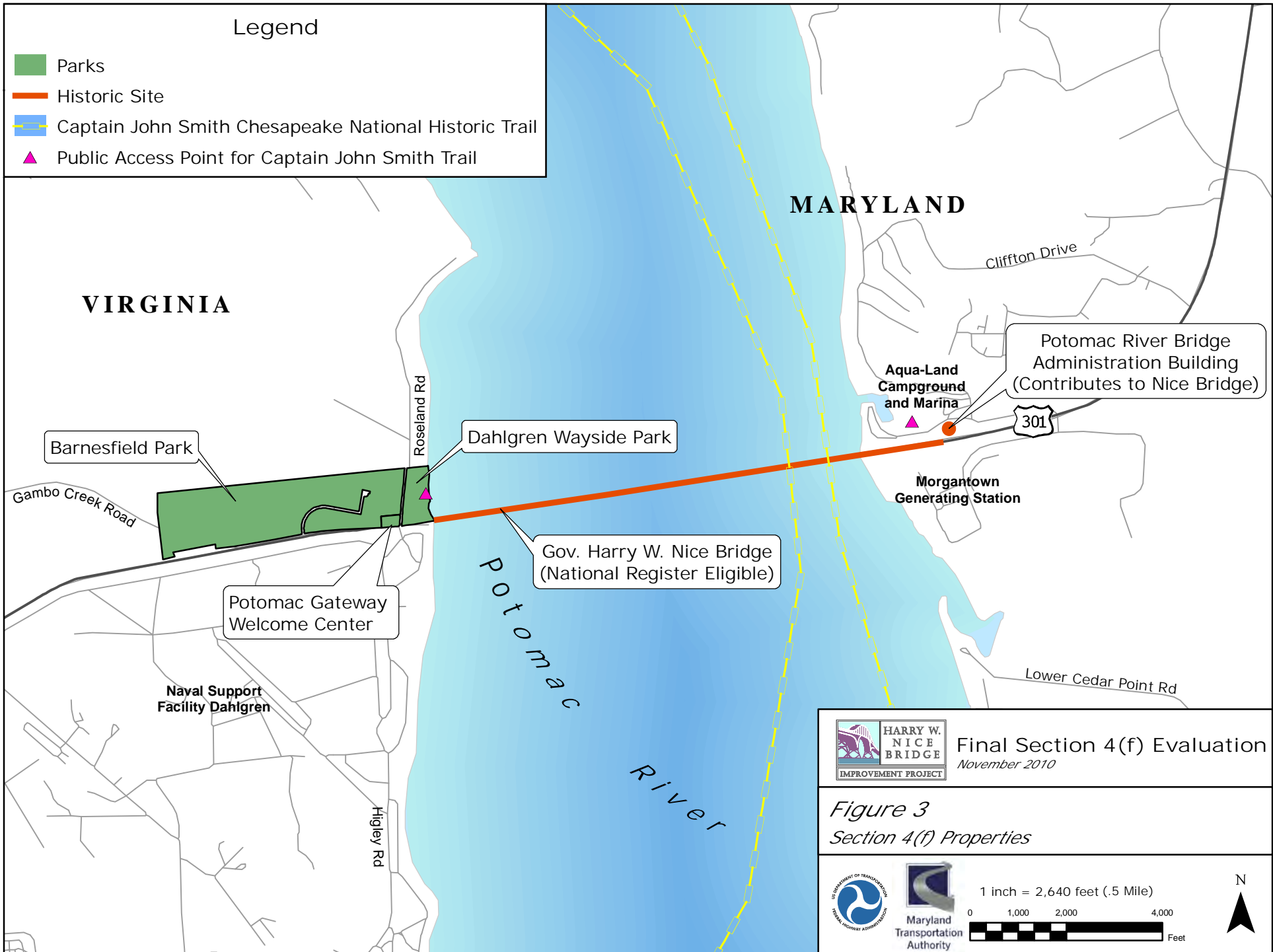
5. Purpose and Need Conclusion

In general, the Nice Bridge meets current AASHTO geometric design standards for horizontal alignment, vertical grades, transition areas, and sight distance and has acceptable structural inspection ratings. As part of the NHS and STRAHNET, the Nice Bridge should provide a cross section consistent with the US 301 approach roadways. Transportation improvements are needed to address capacity limitations and traffic operation effects of the inconsistent bridge features as compared to the US 301 approach roadways, including the 3.75 percent grade on single lanes in each direction, the lack of roadside shoulders or buffer areas, and the reduction of lanes from the four 12-foot lanes on US 301 to the two 11-foot lanes on the Nice Bridge. As a result of these geometrical inconsistencies, the bridge is rated functionally obsolete. The most frequent type of crash reported on the bridge was opposite direction, which can be attributed to only one lane in each direction with no separation of opposing flows of traffic and minimal offsets on the structure.

In addition, planned future maintenance and rehabilitation of the Nice Bridge deck could require long-term lane closures or complete nighttime bridge closures which would result in substantial travel time delays. Improvements to the Nice Bridge are needed to maintain a safe crossing (i.e., replace bridge deck, improve load rating of structural members) and to provide sufficient capacity to carry passenger vehicle and truck traffic on US 301 across the Potomac River in the design year 2030; improve traffic safety on US 301 at the approaches to the Potomac River crossing and on the bridge itself; and provide the ability to maintain the transportation significance of the bridge by improving two-way traffic flow during wide-load crossings, incidents, poor weather conditions, and when performing bridge maintenance rehabilitation work.

IV. SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES

There are five Section 4(f) properties within the project area as shown on *Figure 3*:



- Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge, Maryland Inventory of Historic Places (MIHP) No. CH-376 (includes the Potomac River Bridge Administration Building as a contributing resource);
- Barnesfield Park;
- Dahlgren Wayside Park;
- Potomac Gateway Welcome Center; and
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

A. Historic Properties

The Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (Nice Bridge) was constructed between 1938 and 1940 and opened to traffic on December 15, 1940. Initially called the Potomac River Bridge, the Nice Bridge was renamed in April 1968 to honor Maryland Governor Harry W. Nice, whose administration oversaw the planning and construction of the bridge. The 1.7 mile bridge carries US 301 across the Potomac River connecting Charles County, Maryland and King George County, Virginia. The Nice Bridge, which is owned by MDTA and the subject of the project, is a metal cantilever bridge and is the only known example of such bridge in Maryland. *Photos 1* and *2* provide views of the major bridge features.



Photo 1: Nice Bridge from the Virginia shore



Photo 2: Nice Bridge from travel lanes

Very few significant alterations have occurred to the Nice Bridge since construction; therefore, the bridge retains the integrity of all original components. The Nice Bridge is also associated with significant historical events because of its role in encouraging inter- and intrastate transportation and commerce. It was the first bridge to provide direct roadway access from Maryland into Virginia south of Washington, DC. Therefore, the Nice Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A for its association with significant historical events and under Criterion C for its distinctive method of construction.

The Potomac River Bridge Administration Building (Administration Building), which is located adjacent to the north side of US 301, approximately 0.3 mile east of the Potomac River, is a contributing resource to the Nice Bridge. The Administration Building (*Photo 3*) was constructed in 1940 to house the administration, maintenance, and police functions of the Nice Bridge. The original building consists of a one-story, T-shaped, brick block built in three distinct sections. Despite additions in *circa* 1960 and 1983, the building retains sufficient integrity dating to its period of construction



Photo 3: Administration Building

and is a contributing resource to the Nice Bridge.

Regardless of the previous additions, the size of the building is inadequate to support its current maintenance functions. The building also does not meet current building codes or handicap accessibility standards. Additional information on the historic characteristics of the Nice Bridge and the Administration Building can be found in the 2008 *Nice Bridge Improvement Project Determination of Eligibility Report for Maryland*.

B. Publicly-Owned Public Park Properties in Virginia

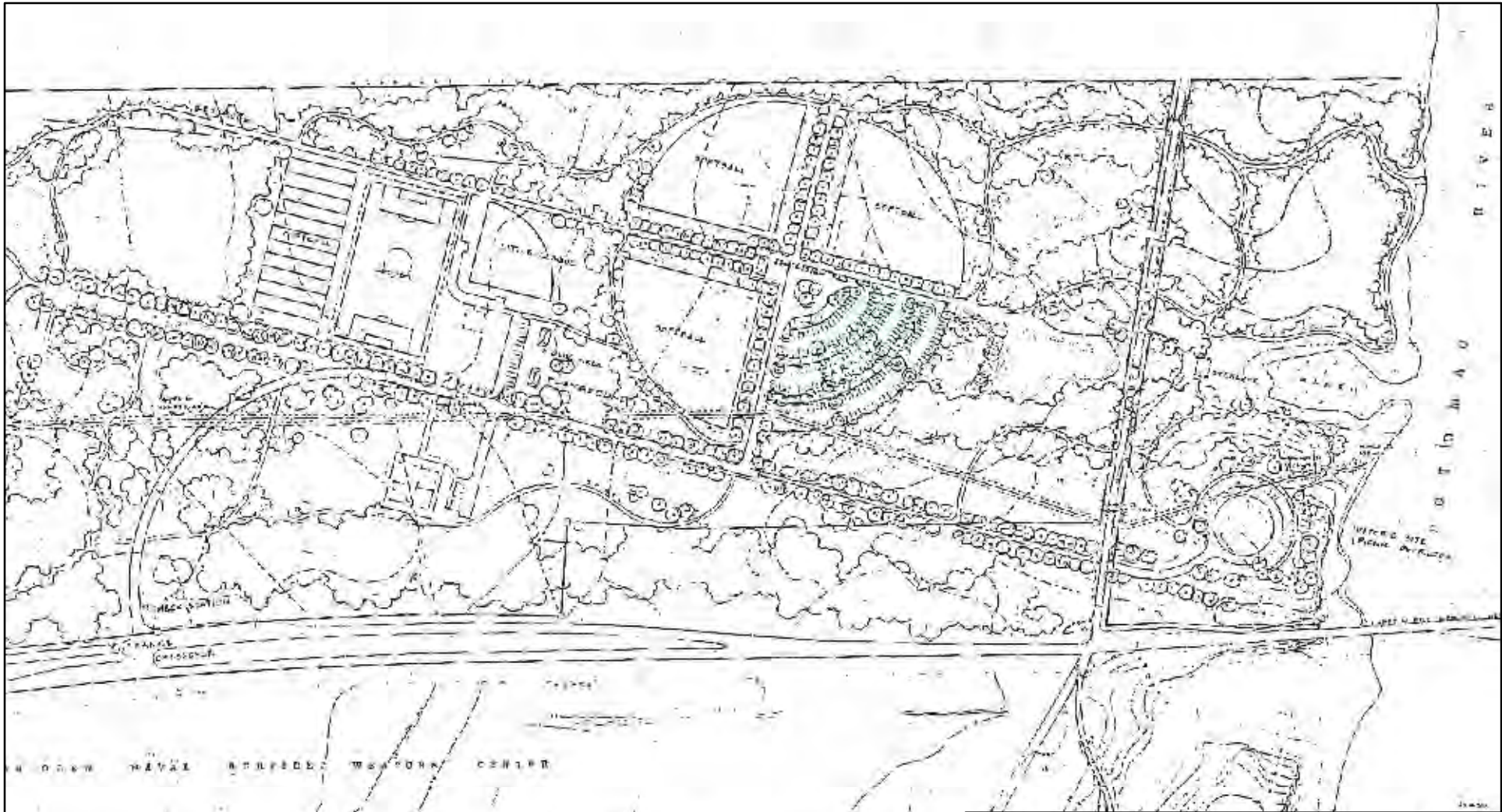
The land located north of US 301 adjacent to the Potomac River in Virginia includes Barnesfield Park, Dahlgren Wayside Park, and the Potomac Gateway Welcome Center. Each provides public park and recreational facilities and all are Section 4(f) properties. Below is a timeline documenting acquisition and land transfers related to these properties:

- In 1972, three parcels were acquired together through the Federal Lands to Parks Program by the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation, which is now the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and King George County, Virginia: Parcel A (acquired by King George County, now Barnesfield Park); Parcel B (acquired by the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation, now Dahlgren Wayside Park); and Parcel C (acquired by King George County, includes the Potomac Gateway Welcome Center building).
- In January 1980, a single site development plan was prepared for Parcels A, B, and C under the name “Barnesfield Park.” The plan shows substantial development of ball fields, picnic sites, trails, parking lots, access roads, concessions, and restrooms (*Figure 4*). Today, much of the plan has been implemented, however, some elements remain incomplete (e.g., the pedestrian access from the ball fields to the Potomac River), while others have been added (e.g., the Potomac Gateway Welcome Center).
- In 1984, Parcel B (now Dahlgren Wayside Park) was acquired by King George County from the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation.
- In 2008, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) acquired 2.1 acres of Parcel C (including the Potomac Gateway Welcome Center) from King George County. Ownership of this 2.1 acre portion of Parcel C was transferred with the consent of the US Department of the Interior (DOI).

There are several deed restrictions and covenants that originate from the 1972 Federal Lands to Parks Program acquisition which apply to all three parcels. These restrictions and covenants remain in place as part of the current land ownership arrangement and include:

- The land must remain available as a public park and recreational facility in perpetuity;
- The land may not be transferred except to another government agency with the purpose of maintaining park and recreational use, and through the consent of the US DOI; and
- At any time, the United States of America may choose to reacquire the relevant properties (or portions of the properties) if deemed necessary for national defense purposes.

Although all three parcels originated as one administrative unit, they are treated as separate Section 4(f) properties in this evaluation because they serve distinct park and recreational objectives and are maintained by two different agencies (King George County and VTC).



BARNESFIELD PARK

KING GEORGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA



Final Section 4(f) Evaluation
November 2010

Figure 4
1980 Barnesfield Park Site Plan



Figure Not to Scale



1. Barnesfield Park

Barnesfield Park is a 146.5-acre public park located along the north side of US 301, just west of Roseland Road in King George County, Virginia. Access to the park from US 301 is provided via Barnesfield Road.

Barnesfield Park provides many opportunities to the public for active and passive recreation. Amenities at the park include two football/soccer fields, two softball fields, one lighted baseball field, one Little League® baseball field, two playgrounds, two picnic shelters, one sand volleyball court, one asphalt surfaced basketball court, a wooded trail, and a ten-station fitness trail. Parking for 200 vehicles is available within the park. Concession, restroom, and maintenance buildings are also located on the property. **Photos 4 and 5** provide views of some of the park amenities.

The park is owned by King George County and is operated by the King George County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). As described previously, the park was acquired in 1972 through the Federal Lands to Parks program, and as a result has several property restrictions and covenants that must be considered as part of any land conversion. The officials with jurisdiction are King George County and US DOI.



Photo 4: Barnesfield Park playground and picnic shelter



Photo 5: Barnesfield Park ball fields

In a letter dated February 12, 2007, DPR stated that “As Barnesfield Park and Dahlgren Wayside [Park] are currently the County's only park facilities...the significance of these facilities is extremely important. These facilities play a major role in the County's ability to meet the needs of those participating in [recreation] programs.” (See **Appendix B**.)

In 1985, DPR received \$240,000 from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to improve ball field, utilities, concession, restrooms, playground, parking, landscaping, and support facilities at Barnesfield Park. As a result of this funding, all of Barnesfield Park is protected under Section 6(f) of the LWCF Act. Based on information from the National Park Service (NPS) in 2008, the LWCA funds were used to improve amenities located within Barnesfield Park only.

2. Dahlgren Wayside Park

Dahlgren Wayside Park is a 14.7-acre public park located adjacent to the north side of US 301 along the Virginia bank of the Potomac River. Access to Dahlgren Wayside Park is provided from US 301 via Roseland Road.

Dahlgren Wayside Park provides the public opportunities for recreational activities including fishing, canoeing/kayaking, sunbathing, and picnicking. The park includes a sand beach along the Potomac River

(450 feet long by 60 feet wide), boat access for small watercraft, picnic tables, and a parking area. **Photos 6** and **7** show some of the amenities at Dahlgren Wayside Park.



Photo 6: Dahlgren Wayside Park shoreline



Photo 7: Dahlgren Wayside Park picnic areas

The park is owned by King George County and is operated by the King George County DPR. As described previously, the park was acquired in 1972 through the Federal Lands to Parks program, and as a result has several property restrictions and covenants that must be considered as part of any land conversion. As stated in DPR's February 12, 2007, letter, the park has been identified as a significant public recreational facility for the County. The officials with jurisdiction are King George County and US DOI.

3. Potomac Gateway Welcome Center

The Potomac Gateway Welcome Center (Welcome Center) is located on a 2.1-acre parcel between Roseland Road and Barnesfield Park north of US 301. Access to the facility is provided by an entrance directly from US 301 west of the US 301/Roseland Road intersection.

The focal point of the property is the Welcome Center building, which was built in the early 1990s (**Photo 8**). The building housed information for the public (e.g., brochures and maps about local attractions, exhibits highlighting events and activities) about King George County and Virginia's Northern Neck region. The Welcome Center also had restroom facilities.

The Welcome Center property was acquired by King George County from the United States in 1972, along with Barnesfield Park and Dahlgren Wayside Park. VTC acquired the property from King George County in 2008. Ownership of the property was transferred with the consent of the US DOI, and the property maintains all of the deed restrictions and covenants placed on it as a result of the 1972 Federal Lands to Parks transfer. The officials with jurisdiction are VTC and US DOI.



Photo 8: Potomac Gateway Welcome Center

In the fall 2008, the Welcome Center was closed to the public as a result of the economic downturn and limited funding availability. It is currently anticipated that the Welcome Center will reopen once funding becomes available; however, a schedule for re-opening has not been set by VTC. The Welcome Center property has not been specifically identified as a significant park and recreation resource by VTC or by King George County. Nevertheless, the 2008 deed states that the property continues to

have a public park and recreational purpose, and DOI indicates that the Welcome Center is an approved element of the original Barnesfield Park property.

4. Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (Captain John Smith Trail) is America’s first national historic water trail. Designated under the National Trails System Act (16 USC 1241-1251), the trail follows the route of Captain John Smith as he explored the Chesapeake Bay between 1607 and 1609.

Pursuant to 23 CFR 774.13(f), certain trails, paths, and bikeways, including National Historic Trails established under the National Trails System Act, are excepted from Section 4(f) requirements unless the affected trail section(s) are defined as historic sites. Since the trail segments near the Nice Bridge project are not considered historic sites, potential impacts to the Captain John Smith Trail do not require Section 4(f) approval. Therefore, the Captain John Smith Trail is not discussed further in this evaluation. Regardless of this exception, the project would bridge over the Captain John Smith Trail and therefore would not impact its continuity.

V. USE OF SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES

Modified Alternate 7 would require the use of four Section 4(f) properties, as summarized in *Table 7*.

Table 7: Use of Section 4(f) Property

Property	Description of Use
Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge Historic Site	Removal of historic bridge and contributing Administration Building
Barnesfield Park	2.2 acres wooded buffer from 146.5-acre park (<i>de minimis impact finding</i>)
Dahlgren Wayside Park	2.2 acres of 14.7-acre park, affecting park entrance road, parking area, picnic area, and beach
Potomac Gateway Welcome Center	Entire 2.1-acre parcel, removal of building

Modified Alternate 7 would result in removal of the historic Nice Bridge and contributing Administration Building (*Figure 5*).

Modified Alternate 7 would require approximately 2.2 acres of land from the 146.5-acre Barnesfield Park, affecting a wooded area that buffers the park facilities from US 301, but would not impact any recreational facilities, including the ball fields, concession areas, or parking lot (*Figure 6*). King George County was notified via the Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation of FHWA’s intent to issue a Section 4(f) finding of *de minimis* impact for Barnesfield Park, and has concurred that Modified Alternate 7 would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that make the property eligible for Section 4(f) protection (see concurrence dated July 20, 2011 in *Appendix B*). Therefore, FHWA is issuing a finding of *de minimis* impact for Barnesfield Park pursuant to 23 CFR 774.3(b). The *de minimis* finding does not affect MDTA’s and FHWA’s obligation to address requirements of the Federal Lands to Parks Program or Section 6(f) of the LWCF Act for impacts to Barnesfield Park.

Modified Alternate 7 would require approximately 2.2 acres of land from the 14.7-acre Dahlgren Wayside Park (15 percent of the total acreage of the park), including a portion of the park entrance road, a parking area, a portion of the picnic area, and a portion of the beach area (*Figure 6*).

Modified Alternate 7 would require acquisition of the entire 2.1-acre Potomac Gateway Welcome Center parcel (*Figure 6*). The Welcome Center building would be removed.