

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program Application

Project Narrative

Section 1: Project Data

Submission Date (to State of MD)	
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Applicant Information

Applicant Organization	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Applicant Contact Name	Molly Pickel
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Project Sponsor Organization	St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Park
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Project Information

Project Title	Shannon Farm Waterfront Access Development – Phase I
Park/Property Name	Shannon Farm
Property Title Holder	Commissioner of St. Mary's County
Property Address/Location	48055 Long Lane, Lexington Park MD 20653
LWCF Boundary Acreage	384 acres
Project Type	New Development
Has this property received previous LWCF/ORLP funding?	NO
Brief description of project and its impacts (100 words or fewer)	Develop a waterfront park with a trail and boardwalk, playground, parking area, and associated furnishings to provide access for people in the urban area of Lexington Park--California--Chesapeake Ranch Estates, MD and surrounding communities. This will improve outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting and enhancing the natural environment along the Chesapeake Bay shoreline.

Section 2: Project Overview

1. **What are the property's physical features (e.g. terrain, water, built structures, existing amenities)? Quantify where possible. (e.g. 50 acres of forested land)**
 - a. Shannon Farm is a 384-acre parcel located at 48055 Long Lane, Lexington Park, Maryland. This heavily wooded site is currently undeveloped. Over half of the site (222 acres) is located within the Critical Area and contains over 3,000 linear feet of Chesapeake Bay shoreline. There are approximately 66 acres of wetlands on the property. Those classifications are: E2US2P (Estuarine, intertidal, unconsolidated

shore, sand, irregularly flooded), and E1UBL (Estuarine, subtidal, unconsolidated bottom, subtidal). The parkland is designated as Resources Conservation Area and the size of the forest onsite qualifies as a Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) Habitat.

2. What are the current uses of the property? Note whether those uses will be discontinued or remain in place when the project is completed

- a. At present this is an undeveloped park awaiting the implementation of the Master Plan improvements.

3. What site constraints exist, such as utilities, easements, rights-of-way, contamination history, or other physical or legal limitations

- a. There is a Deed of Conservation Easement (Liber 4109 Folio 29) on this property that outlines the easement purpose and allowable activities that may occur on the property and the intention of which is to keep the parcel as natural and undeveloped as possible while still allowing public access and recreational uses. Commercial activities are limited to rental kayaks and canoes for recreational purposes, small fishing piers, and snacks and beverages from temporary carts or vehicles. The county provides the NAVY with an easement monitoring form annually.

Development Description (only if project includes development)

1. What are the planned physical improvements and facilities?

- a. The property is currently undeveloped. St. Mary's Department of Recreation and Parks ("the Department") developed a master plan and engineered design plans for a passive park onsite that would allow beach access but also preserve the forest and wetlands of the site. The project will consist of the following new construction:
 - i. Engineered design for shoreline stabilization (to be constructed in a future phase)
 - ii. Parking lot, including striping, signage, wheel stops, and bollards
 - iii. Vehicular gate
 - iv. Playground
 - v. 1.2-mile trail/boardwalk to the beach
 - vi. ADA beach access/track chair
 - vii. Interpretative environmental education signage
 - viii. Park rules, entrance, and LWCF acknowledgment signs
 - ix. Equipment storage building
 - x. Gatehouse
 - xi. Site work/grubbing
 - xii. Shoreline Stabilization Plans
 - xiii. Stormwater management and landscaping, including
 - 1. Bioretention facility
 - 2. Turfgrass, native plants, tree and shrub planting

This project will be ADA accessible. The main access route will be a 10' wide asphalt trail. The trail is under 5% slope for the entirety of its length. There are 2' wide shoulders along the length of the trail. A 14-foot-wide boardwalk will be constructed along this access route. Most of the boardwalk segments are over areas of forested wetlands. The boardwalk will use helical piers to minimize disturbance. The playground will be a natural playground with a nautical theme. A natural playground is a play environment that consists of elements and textures from the earth such as tree logs, tree stumps, boulders, plants, drainage paths, among others instead of a traditional steel playground structure. The trail and boardwalks have been designed to accommodate small emergency vehicles, such as an ambulance. The route will have controlled access and not be open to private vehicles.

2. **What are the expected impacts on the natural landscape? Note whether they are temporary disturbances or permanent changes.**
- a. There will be temporary and permanent impacts to the FIDS habitat, wetlands and Critical Area. All environmental impacts have been mitigated and will be approved and permitted by Maryland Department of the Environment, Army Corp of Engineers and the Critical Area prior to the grant award date. As the design plans indicate, this project only disturbs two percent (8.11 acres) of the entire acreage with more than half of that (5.51 acres) restored at the conclusion of construction.
 - b. Permanent positive impacts will be made through the development and implementation of the shoreline stabilization portion of the project, which will undergo engineering/design as part of this grant and be constructed in a future phase. The shoreline is experiencing major erosion.

Population Description

1. **What is the most recent census population of the Qualifying Urban Area? You can [use this map](#) to identify the name of the Qualifying Urban Area and select from the list below, which includes population from the 2020 census. 62,352**

<u>Lexington Park--California--Chesapeake Ranch Estates, MD</u>	<u>62,352</u>
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2. **What is the community's low-income status? (**
- The Census Geomapping tool shows Lexington Park MD at 13% poverty level and a median family income of 79.4%. The California-Lexington Park encompasses 3 low-income census tracts. The median family income for the surrounding areas as low as 68%.

Section 3: Merit Review Criteria

In the following section, please provide evidence that the project will have a benefit in each of the categories used for merit review. Bullet points from the NOFO are included below each question to

provide guidance; they can be kept as sub-headers for your response, or they can be deleted once you have provided an answer.

Increasing Access to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

To what extent does the project support the following priorities:

1. Create or significantly enhance access to park and recreational opportunities -in a qualifying area

- a.** This new park construction will create new ADA water access to the Chesapeake Bay, ADA trail/boardwalk with interpretative signage, a playground and parking for the new park facility. The park will be open to the public for seasonal operations. The trail passes through several unique ecosystems, and signage will inform the public about them. Citizens will be able to hike, swim, kayak, fish, picnic and enjoy other related water activities. This addition of opening a 384-acre park with direct water access to the Chesapeake Bay is a very substantial addition to the outdoor recreation activities provided to St. Mary's County and the State of Maryland. 85% of the Chesapeake Bay shoreline is privately owned, this project adds over 3,000 liner feet of shoreline for the public. Future phases of the Master Plan will include a shoreline restoration project, restrooms; additional beach access points and a waterfront play area.

2. Provide recreation opportunities in low-income communities in which access to parks is not adequate to meet local needs

Shannon Farm will be the closest public access point to the Chesapeake Bay for citizens living in Lexington Park MD. Lexington Park MD has 11% of the total population for the county. The proposed new park construction is to provide additional passive recreational and waterfront activities Due to significant shoreline erosion the project also contains design and engineering for the shoreline restoration project to ensure access for the future. The county has 13.8% people living below the federal poverty rate, and several tracts with median income below 80% (tracts 24037875905, 24037876001, 24037875904, and 24037875903). Nearly 14% of people in Lexington Park have disabilities in the area compared to 9% of the total County. Passengers that utilize free county public transportation will be able to request a stop at the park entrance.

It is clear that the current level of service for water access is not adequate to meet local needs: for example, Point Lookout Park, a State Park in southern St. Mary's County has had to implement a reservation system due to consistently reaching capacity on summer weekends. Overflow from the State Park falls to the County system, and this newly developed waterfront park will help meet that need. Low-income residents of the Lexington Park area will be able to enjoy the waterfront much closer to home.

3. Increase safety in parks, including facility related security installations within or adjacent to public parks and recreation areas

- a. The park will be staffed during the weekends to provide oversight through the highest attendance time. Due to the trail's length of over one mile, the trail and boardwalk have been designed to allow for emergency vehicle access and turn around. The route will have controlled access and not be open to private vehicles. St. Mary's County Recreation and Parks want to be able to control access to the beach; therefore, there will be a manned gatehouse with arm at the entrance to the parking lot.

Alignment with Community Needs

To what extent does the project:

- 1. Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and public land volunteerism;**

- a. The entire project proposed will increase the opportunities for outdoor recreation by adding an additional 384-acre park that includes water access for the public.
- b. The Department will actively seek out partnerships with private organizations to provide opportunities for volunteerism. The Department met with environmental/educational groups in August of 2026 to discuss the opportunities for environmental education that will be available at our waterfront parks. Attendees included St. Mary's Public Schools, St. Mary's Soil Conservation, Maryland Extension Office, SoMD Audubon and more. Opportunities are endless but include ideas such as, environmental education, invasive species identification and removal, nature trail building, native plantings, erosion/sea level rise education and more. St. Mary's County Recreation and Parks hired its first full-time Volunteer Coordinator in 2026 with the intention on expanding volunteer operations in all its parks, facilities, programs and events. Once Shannon Farm is constructed, this park will be included in target market outreach.

- 2. Engage and empower low-income communities and youth;**

- a. The Department will open the park to public schools and youth groups from churches, Scouts, Young Marines, Boys and Girls Club and others, free of charge to host events and activities to increase environmental education and access to the Chesapeake Bay. The park will be free to enter Monday through Friday during peak season and seven days a week during off season. The park can host field trips for Summer Camp programs including Camp Discovery; a program developed specifically for children with Autism. All camps provide 50% scholarships for children with financial needs.

- 3. Support Park and recreation programming provided by local governments, including cooperative agreements with community based eligible nonprofit organizations.**

- a. The Department of Recreation and Parks actively seek out cooperative agreements with community organizations to enhance the recreational programming offered to the community. The Department has over 30 current agreements in place that work with community organizations to provide programming and services. Agreements

range from allowing the use of parks for the use of special events, sporting activities, youth programming to community garden operation and educational session promotion. Some relevant partner examples that could be created include Events, volunteer and educational activities from the Lexington Park Business Association, Community Development Corporation, St. Mary's County Master Gardeners Association, the SOMD Audubon and more. Recreation and Parks met with over 17 organizations in August of 2026 to start discussions on future environmental education programming partnerships.

- b. The park entrance will be located adjacent to the Home-Grown Farmers Market. The two will share parking and the playground with users. The Home-Grown Farm Market is a producer-only market that sells fresh produce, flowers, plants, meats, cheeses and baked goods while promoting sustainable agriculture. The market accepts cash, credit and debit cards, EBT and WIC vouchers, offering a location where low-income individuals can use benefits to purchase farm fresh food. Passengers that utilize free county public transportation can request a stop at the Farmers Market, which will also allow them to access the park.

4. Provide evidence of community engagement.

- a. During the Master Planning for this specific project, the first concept developed was presented to the County and community stakeholders. However, residents of local communities were concerned about the additional traffic that would be brought in along Long Lane and about having a roadway behind their homes. After much discussion, a new access road coming in from Three Notch Road (MD 235) was agreed upon and the current design was developed. Thus, eliminating the communities' concerns and maintaining the goal of the Park Master Plan.
- b. Every five years the Department undergoes a master planning process. This comprehensive plan evaluates parks, recreation and land conservation data. This data is reviewed against extensive citizen input and long-range goals are developed. Citizen Input is gathered through social media posts, community outreach events (8), online surveys, comment cards and stakeholder meetings (30 organizations). Chances for public input are readily available, accessible and distributed throughout the County. The acquisition and/or development of property to provide public access to water and/or water-based activities has been listed as a goal based on citizen request since the first plan in 2005. In the current and active Plan developed in 2022; water/beach access was overall the 3rd most requested service by the public. The Department is currently obtaining citizen input for the 2027-2032 plan, and this reoccurring theme is once again requested by the public. Current surveys for this plan indicate water access was in the top percentage of requested items. The current ongoing outreach showed 22% of the people surveyed wanted funding spent on additional bikeways, pedestrian and natural pathways and 18% wanted funding allocated for new outdoor parks and facilities. Some citizens' comments from the ongoing public outreach include:

- “I would love to see a swimming/ beach area at the lake. Also, canoe and kayak rental concessions.”
- “Snow Hill Park: Recommend stairs or ramp down to beach, as hill is very steep. Would also like to see bathrooms with running water. Some mapped trails around the fields/property would also be nice.”
- “There are so many opportunities to make the county more beautiful and available to the citizens! This would include better water access to the Bay.”

Community outreach is currently open for the next five year Master Plan can be found at: <https://engageberrydunn.mysocialpinpoint.com/st-marys-county-lpprp-update/> The Department is also in the process of a statistically significant survey with in the entire county to provide an accurate representation from the citizens versus relying on responses from any one special interest group that attending community sessions in large numbers.

Leveraging Resources in Support of Recreation

To what extent does the project:

1. Take advantage of coordination among various levels of government

- a. The Navy, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, The Conservation Fund and St. Mary’s County have worked toward protecting this property for several years with the final purchase happening in September of 2014.
 - This project advances the goals for the specific project Master Plan and the overall Department Master Plan, Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). This master plan is part of the County’s Comprehensive Plan by reference and is supported by many other County and Maryland State Plans (LPPRP, pg. 14) This project will assist the County in closing the critical gap of access to the water.
 - This project aligns with the State of Maryland’s Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, which serves as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This project supports Goal Three, “Increase and improve opportunities for all segments of the population to access close-to-home land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities” (p. 154) by providing water access and trails in an area where the availability of such places is not adequate to meet the demand.
 - The purchase of Shannon Farm Park was an effort between Federal, State and Local governments. The purchase was funded by Navy REPI contribution of \$2,340,000; and the balance coming from Maryland DNR’s Program Open Space funds in the amount of \$1,660,000.
 - There is a Deed of Conservation Easement on this property with the US NAVY that outlines the easement purpose and allowable activities that may occur on the property and the intention of which is to keep the parcel as natural and

undeveloped as possible while still allowing public access and recreational uses.

- Partnership with St. Mary's County Public Schools Natural Resources Class at the Technology Center would have an additional park to add to their schedule for invasive species identification and removal.
- St. Mary's County 2050, the county's draft Comprehensive Plan (pg. 6) Vision 2 states "Investments in parks and open spaces will enhance livability for residents and visitors, and shoreline resiliency efforts will address vulnerability to hazards such as erosion, storm surge mitigation, and nuisance flooding." Once this plan is accepted by the Commissioners this Fall, the entire County has made recreation and environmental resources a priority for the next 24 years, opening the door to more partnerships and potential funding sources.

2. Establish or expand public private partnerships, with a focus on leveraging resources

- a. The Department is very active in seeking out and offering partnerships with the community in its parks. This new park will offer the same opportunities for public private partnerships. The Department has dozens of agreements and MOUS with private organizations in the community to provide additional services and amenities to our parks and recreational services. Some current partnership examples that could be duplicated include:
 - Partnership with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society to provide native gardens and blue bird houses.
 - Partnerships with the Patuxent Land Trust to clear invasive species.
 - Partnerships with the Southern Maryland Mountain bikers to provide hiking/biking trails throughout the property.

3. Support innovative or cost-effective ways to enhance parks and other recreation opportunities or the delivery of services.

- a. Green infrastructure stormwater management techniques will enhance the park with native plantings in the disturbed areas for the trail and boardwalk that will attract beneficial wildlife including butterflies and other pollinators.
- b. Maintaining the parkland acreage for passive use maintains tree canopy, mitigating the effects of shoreline erosion, flooding and maintaining the natural habitats of the forest interior dwelling species.
- c. The park hours will revolve around daylight time, eliminating the need for any lighting structures throughout the park.

Promoting Conservation and Ecological Benefits

1. Create wetlands (subject to Safe Harbor Agreements) providing habitat, water quality improvements, flood mitigation, and outdoor recreation opportunities;

- a. The purchase of Shannon Farm in 2014 ensured space for additional passive recreational and waterfront activities for citizens; helped to buffer the PAX River Naval Air Station from future encroachments; and protected natural resources and

the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Had the county and local governments not stepped in to purchase this property it would have been a planned unit development (PUD) that was approved in mid-1980's allowing for over 400 home sites; This would have had a devastating impact on the extensive wetlands on property. This ORLP grant will increase outdoor waterfront access and recreational activities for the public, while maintaining existing wetlands.

2. Invest in natural infrastructure for shoreline stabilization and habitat restoration; or

- a. The grant request includes funding for a shoreline stabilization design plan, the construction of which will be carried out in a future phase. The property has significant erosion occurring along the entire 3,000 linear feet of Chesapeake Bay shoreline. The shoreline of Shannon Farm is like many shorelines along the Chesapeake Bay; it includes marshes and forested upland banks with fronting sand beaches. Wave action is directly eroding the upland banks along much of the shoreline. The Park Master Plan options will be evaluated to the effectiveness of stabilizing the beach, creating habitats for wildlife, improving the water quality, the storing of carbon. The most effective plan forward will be designed through this grant, and construction will occur once permits are received, as part of a future phase. The ORLP-funded boardwalks will reduce the impact on wetlands. The piers that the boardwalk will be built upon require a much smaller amount of land disturbance than an asphalt trail. Additionally, it does not add impervious surface. ORLP-funded meadow planting will occur in the disturbed areas off the trail. These native meadows will provide excellent habitat for native species. Most of the site will remain undeveloped with the access route and beach front being the primary developments.

3. Provide benefits such as community resilience, reduced heat islands, improved air/water quality, or wildlife habitat.

- a. This passive park offers numerous opportunities for physical, mental and social health to the community. Walking in nature, exploring the forest, swimming, fishing and boating in the bay, all provide public health benefits.
- b. This park property is less than a mile from the Patuxent River Naval Air Station (PAS) where in 2012 study was conducted upon the request of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for the presence of terrapins. The study found a very active terrapin population. Since that time, PAS has created an annual nesting survey and nest protection program that protects 100+ nests every year and results in around 1000 hatchlings being released each year. It is reasonable to assume the protection of Shannon Farm shoreline will protect and increase habit of the terrapin population in the area.
- c. The phase one construction proposed in this park will open the door for the addition of future amenities to enhance public outdoor recreation in the future.

Project Feasibility

To what extent does the project:

1. Have a sound and reasonable project plan?

- a. At the time of grant award, the construction project will have engineered design plans and all related approvals and permits. The bid package for shoreline restoration design and project construction will be made public in July of 2027 or at the time of the grant award if it falls after this date.

2. Have a clear, feasible, well-detailed budget, including a plan to meet the 1:1 match requirement and minimize administrative costs?

- a. Construction cost estimates are provided directly by the architect and engineering firm who completed the design plan and permitting based on current market prices for material and labor. Design and Construction contingencies were set at 10%, on the higher end of the standard due to complexity of the boardwalk. The Construction manager costs are derived directly from the current county contracting rates. The Commissioners of St. Mary's County have earmarked \$5,372,034 in County Bonds for the Shannon Farm Park project and \$6,148,934 in FY29. Staff are also investigating other grant opportunities to assist with additional matching funds from Maryland's Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space annual allocation.

3. Demonstrate the ability to complete the proposed scope of work and maintain the project in the long term.

- a. The Department of Recreation and Parks have an excellent track record maintaining timelines and grant restrictions. A contracted construction manager will be hired under the supervision of the Departments Project Manager. Daily reports and weekly meetings with the construction manager and contractor to assist with maintaining the schedule and mitigate any challenges.

REFERENCE:

1. Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan – www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/lpprp.pdf
2. Shannon Farm Master Plan- www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/shannonfarmmasterplan.pdf
3. St. Mary's Count Comprehensive Plan Draft- www.stmaryscountymd.gov/Docs/SMC_PublicHearingDraft_26.05.11.pdf
4. 2013 - 2025 Terrapin Program Data Summary edited (attached)