

Fort Macon State Park General Management Plan



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Division of Parks and Recreation

Coastal Region

February 2017

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

MISSION STATEMENT:

Conservation: To protect natural diversity through careful selection and stewardship of state parks system lands;

Recreation: To provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities in the state parks system and throughout the state; and

Education: To encourage appreciation of natural and cultural heritage through diverse educational opportunities; for all citizens of and visitors to the State of North Carolina.

Our purpose: The State of North Carolina offers unique archaeological, geologic, biologic, scenic and recreational resources. These resources are part of the heritage of the people of this State. The heritage of a people should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.

PARK PURPOSE:

Fort Macon became the second North Carolina state park in 1924 when the United States deeded the fort and surrounding area to the state for one dollar, subject to a reverter clause requiring that the land be used as a public park. Local citizens, interested in increasing coastal tourism, supported establishing the park and developing visitor facilities.

Recreational resources of statewide significance are centered on Fort Macon and the beach. The restored 19th-Century fort provides historical education opportunities that are not available elsewhere in North Carolina, and the diverse coastal environment provides a broad range of educational opportunities. The undeveloped beach slopes gently into the usually calm ocean. These conditions create a prime location for beach activities, non-motorized water sports, swimming, fishing, bird watching, and walking. The natural setting also provides a tranquil experience away from the development found elsewhere on Bogue Banks. The park also offers one of the few ocean beaches on the East Coast accessible to mobility-impaired people.

The most significant biological resources are found in the Fort Macon Registered Natural Heritage Area, a 350-acre area that includes all the undisturbed land in the park. The area encompasses a sound-to-sea section of a barrier island and includes active and relict dunes, swales, salt marshes, and fresh water ponds. As other sites along Bogue Banks are used for commercial and residential development, this natural area becomes increasingly important. A high diversity of migratory bird species visit the park and its significant nesting habitats. The Crystal Skipper Butterfly, found only at the coast; and the Sea Beach Amaranth, a plant on the federal list of threatened species, live in the park, and the threatened Loggerhead Sea Turtle nests on the beach.

The broad expanse of seashore, with its rolling surf, dunes, waterfowl, and expansive horizon is a scenic resource of statewide significance. The maritime forests and marsh areas dominate the park's landscape and provide rare vistas that were commonplace only 50 years ago. The east-west orientation of Bogue Banks creates an unusual opportunity to view sunsets over the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, the original vistas from the fort have been restored to provide a view of the ocean and Beaufort Inlet. This gives a park visitor a clear understanding of the former role of the fort in controlling boat traffic entering Beaufort Harbor. Many people today are drawn to the park to watch the boats moving through the inlet, much like the sentries who once stood guard at the fort.



Visitor Center built in 2009

Significant geological resources include the dune formations and salt marsh that are increasingly rare on the North Carolina Coast. The location at the eastern tip of Bogue Banks exhibits the interaction between the sound, inlet, and coast line, as well as the related sand movement.

Fort Macon was authorized as a state park to protect its valuable historical, recreational, biological, scenic, and geological values. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of natural heritage.

II. HISTORY

In modern times, the danger of naval attack along the North Carolina coast seems remote, but during the 18th and 19th centuries, the region around Beaufort was highly vulnerable to attack. Blackbeard and other infamous pirates were known to have passed through Beaufort Inlet at will while successive wars with Spain, France and Great Britain during the Colonial Period provided a constant threat of coastal raids by enemy warships. Beaufort was captured and plundered by the Spanish in 1747 and again by the British in 1782.

Coastal defenses were needed to prevent attacks to defend Beaufort Harbor and began efforts to construct forts. The eastern point of Bogue Banks was determined to be the best location for a fort to guard the entrance to Beaufort Inlet, and in 1756, construction of a small fascine fort known as Fort Dobbs began there. Fort Dobbs was never finished, and the inlet remained undefended during the American Revolution.

Early in the 1800's, continued strained relations with Great Britain caused the United States government to build a national defense chain of coastal forts to protect itself. As a part of this defense, a small masonry fort named Fort Hampton was built to guard Beaufort Inlet during 1808-09. This fort guarded the inlet during the subsequent War of 1812, but it was abandoned shortly

after the end of the war. Shore erosion, combined with a hurricane in 1825, swept this fort into Beaufort Inlet by 1826.

The War of 1812 demonstrated the weakness of existing coastal defenses of the United States and prompted the US government into beginning construction of an improved chain of coastal fortifications for national defense. The present fort, Fort Macon, was a part of this chain. The purpose of Fort Macon was to guard Beaufort Inlet and Beaufort Harbor, the only major deep water ocean port in North Carolina.

Construction of the present fort began in 1826. Fort Macon was designed by Brig. Gen. Simon Bernard and built by the US Army Corps of Engineers. It was named after North Carolina's eminent statesman of the period, Nathaniel Macon. Construction began in 1826 and lasted eight years. Five-sided Fort Macon is constructed of brick and stone. Twenty-six vaulted rooms (also called casemates) are enclosed by outer walls that average 4 1/2 feet thick. The fort was completed in December, 1834, and it was improved with further modification during 1841-46. The total cost of the fort was \$463,790. As a result of congressional economizing prior to 1861, the fort was actively garrisoned only during the years of 1834-36, 1842-44 and 1848-49. Often, an ordnance sergeant acting as a caretaker was the only person stationed at the fort.



Shoreline

The War Between the States began on April 12, 1861, and only two days elapsed before local North Carolina militia forces from Beaufort arrived to seize the fort for the state of North Carolina and the Confederacy. North Carolina Confederate forces occupied the fort for a year, preparing it for battle and arming it with 54 heavy cannons. Early in 1862, Union forces commanded by Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside swept through eastern North Carolina, and part of Burnside's command under Brig. Gen. John G. Parke was sent to capture Fort Macon. Parke's men captured Morehead City and Beaufort without resistance, then landed on Bogue Banks during March and April to fight to gain Fort Macon. Col. Moses J. White and 402 North Carolina Confederates in the fort refused to surrender even though the fort was hopelessly surrounded. On April 25, 1862, Parke's Union forces bombarded the fort with heavy siege guns for 11 hours, aided by the fire of four Union gunboats in the ocean offshore and floating batteries in the sound to the east. While the fort easily repulsed the Union gunboat attack, the Union land batteries, utilizing new rifled cannons, hit the fort 560 times. There was such extensive damage that Col. White was forced to surrender the following morning, April 26, with the Confederate garrison being paroled as prisoners of war. This battle was the second time in history new rifled cannons were used against a fort, demonstrating the obsolescence of such fortifications as a way of defense. The Union held Fort Macon for the remainder of the war, while Beaufort Harbor served as an important coaling and repair station for

its navy.

During the Reconstruction Era, the U.S. Army actively occupied Fort Macon until 1877. During this time, since there were no state or federal penitentiaries in the military district of North Carolina and South Carolina, Fort Macon was used for about 11 years as a civil and military prison. The fort was deactivated after 1877 only to be garrisoned by state troops once again during the summer of 1898 for the Spanish-American War. An all-African American regiment that was part of the Third North Carolina volunteers staffed the fort. Finally, in 1903, the US Army completely abandoned the fort. In 1923, Fort Macon was offered for sale as surplus military property. However, at the bidding of North Carolina leaders, a Congressional Act on June 4, 1924, sold the fort and surrounding reservation for the sum of \$1 to the state of North Carolina to be used as a public park. This was the second area acquired by the state for the purpose of establishing a state parks system. Until 1928, when a toll bridge from Morehead City to Bogue Banks was completed, visitors arrived by boat. During 1934-1935 the Civilian Conservation Corps restored the fort, established public recreational facilities, and improved public access by constructing a road to the fort and a boat dock. At a ceremony on May 1, 1936, Governor J.C.B. Ehringhouse officially opened Fort Macon State Park as the first functioning state park of North Carolina.

At the outbreak of World War II, the US Army leased the park from the State and actively manned the old fort with Coast Artillery troops to protect a number of important nearby facilities. The fort defended the coastline against German submarine attacks on Allied ships. The fort was occupied from December, 1941, to November, 1944. On October 1, 1946, the Army returned the fort and the park to the state. Fort Macon was added to the National Register of Historic Places in February 1970.

Fort Macon State Park manages 424 acres as of June 1, 2016.

III. THEMES AND INVENTORY

THEME TABLE FOR FORT MACON STATE PARK

Theme Type	Theme	Fort Macon Significance	State Parks System Representation
Archeological/Historic	Cemetery	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Industrial	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Military	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Transportation	High	Adequate
Archeological/Historic	Underwater	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Campsite/Activity Area	High	Adequate
Archeological/Prehistoric	Underwater	High	Adequate
Archeological/Standing Structure	Military	High	Adequate
Biological	Estuarine Communities	High	Adequate
Biological	Estuarine Communities	High	Adequate
Biological	Maritime Forests	High	Moderate
Biological	Maritime Forests	High	Moderate
Biological	Maritime Grasslands	High	Adequate
Biological	Maritime Grasslands	High	Adequate
Geological	Barrier Islands and Shoreline	High	Adequate
Geological	Estuaries	High	Adequate
Scenic	Bays/Estuaries	High	Little
Scenic	Forests	High	Moderate
Scenic	Islands	High	Little
Scenic	Marshes	High	Moderate
Scenic	Rivers	High	Little
Scenic	Scenic Vistas	High	Moderate
Scenic	Seashores	High	Moderate

*See the Systemwide Plan for references to Theme and Inventory terms. Themes have both actual and “potential” future needs to be at a park.

ENLARGED AREA
FORT MACON STATE PARK



FACILITY INVENTORY - FORT AREA
 FORT MACON STATE PARK

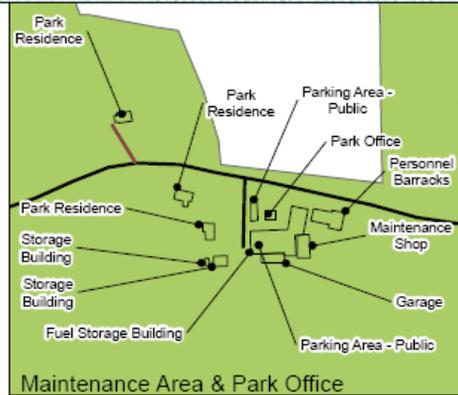


Fort Macon
 State Park
 Facility Inventory

August 2011



- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



TRAILS INVENTORY
FORT MACON STATE PARK

Trail Inventory	Hiking
Beach Trail	1.50
Elliott Coues Nature Trail	3.30
Fisherman's Path	0.25
Yarrows Loop	0.25
Fort Macon SP Totals (miles)	5.30

TRAILS:

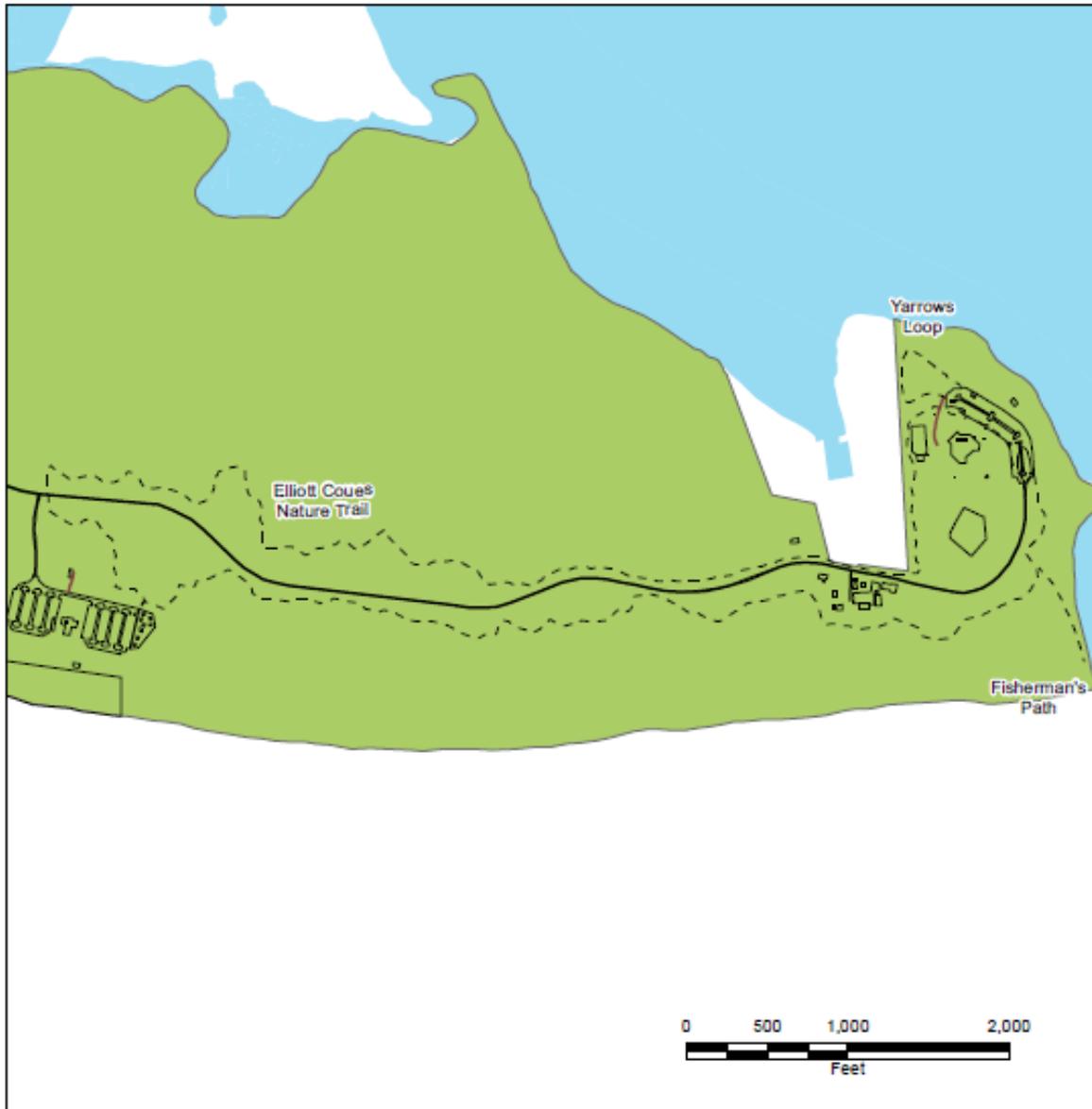
Beach Trail: is a 1.50-mile trail. The beach is always available for hikes. As you walk along the beach you may see one of the 302 different species of birds found in the park or watch dolphins playing in the ocean.

Elliott Coues Nature Trail: The trailhead is located at the north end of the Fort area parking lot. The Elliott Coues Nature Trail is a 3.0-mile park hiking trail that connects the Fort area with the Swim Beach area. Currently the first half of this trail is now open to the public. It stretches 1.50 miles from the north end of the Fort parking lot to the picnic area of the beach access parking lot and travels along the marsh and through the maritime forest. The other part of the trail will return to the fort area through the sand dunes that line the southern side of the park.

Fisherman's Path: The trailhead is located at the Fort Parking Lot. The path is 0.25 miles and leads to the large rock jetty along Beaufort Inlet.

Yarrows Loop: The trailhead is located at the Fort Parking lot. Yarrows Loop is a short quarter mile nature trail that starts and ends at the north end of the fort parking lot. Information and educational signs along the trail explain some of the common plants and animals that can be found in the park.

FORT MACON STATE PARK
TRAIL INVENTORY



Fort Macon
State Park
Trails Inventory

October 2016



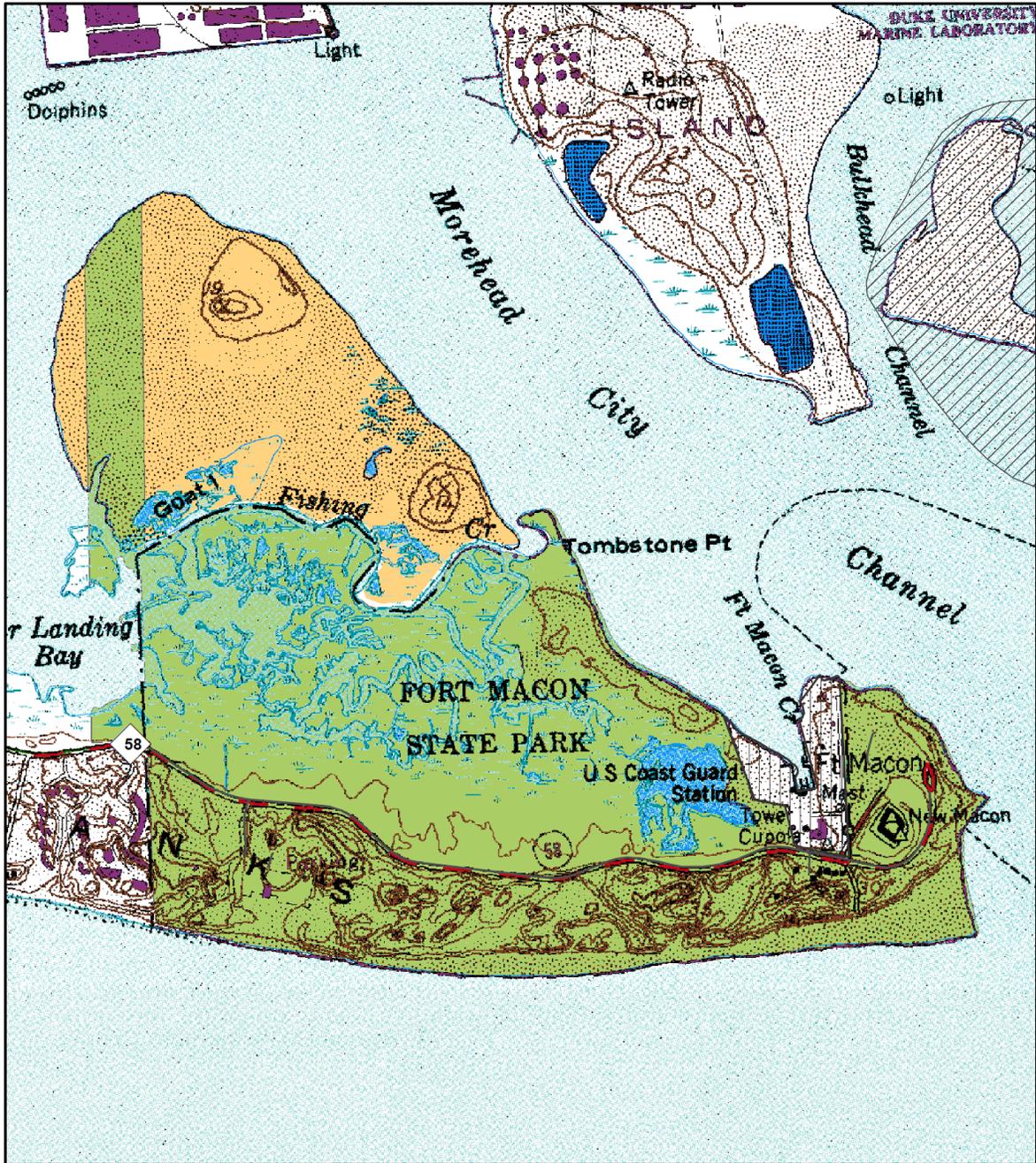
- Existing Trail
- Road - Paved
- Road - Unpaved
- Existing Facilities
- State Parks Unit



IV. PLANNING



LAND PROTECTION PLAN- NO CRITICAL ACRES NOTED
 FORT MACON STATE PARK



Fort Macon SP



Other Conservation Land

-  Federal
-  State
-  Other

October 2015

State Parks Unit

- Land Protection Plan**
-  State Parks Unit
 -  Primary resource protection
 -  Inholding
 -  Scenic protection
 -  Water quality protection
 -  Facilities development
 -  Buffer



PROJECT EVALUATION PROGRAM LIST
FORT MACON STATE PARK

Project #	Project Title	Cost
1	Equipment/Vehicle Storage Shed	\$631,544
2	Ranger Residence Upgrades	\$274,843
TOTAL		\$906,387

** Estimated project cost does not include contingencies, design fee, nor escalation.

1. Equipment/Vehicle Storage Shed

A proposed equipment and vehicle storage shed will be constructed in the grassy area behind the old park office and the parking area. The storage shed will be designed to be deep enough to store the boat and miscellaneous park vehicles. The old park office will be demolished by park staff as a separate project.

2. Three Ranger Residence Upgrades

Due to exposure to salt, this project provides for addition of a bathroom (100 SF), addition of two-car garage (440 SF) at each of the (3) ranger residences that were built in 1936, 1955, 1962. Driveway repairs or extensions and septic system upgrades will be included, as needed. The superintendent residence will also receive a bedroom addition (168 SF) and additional restroom. This will be a major maintenance project.



Ranger Residence



Aerial of Fort Macon State Park

PARK MAP
FORT MACON STATE PARK

