

GOOSE CREEK

ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS



APRIL 2023



CANOE CRUISERS ASSOCIATION

RIVER ACCESS COMMITTEE - SPRING 2023

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New in This April 2023 Edition

Since making our suggestions for the Goose Creek Water Trail to the Loudoun County Parks Planning Commission in April 2021, the Canoe Cruisers Association has focused more tightly on the ten miles of the lower Creek – that is, between Evergreen Road/ SR 621 and the Potomac. We have refined our ideas about which features of the currently navigable sections are essential for its preservation as a viable community resource. We present them here. The ongoing development of the eastern part of the County lends urgency to this appeal for action.

The essential features below are presented proceeding upstream from the Potomac. First comes the 3.5-mile mild whitewater section from the Fairfax Dam to the Potomac, requiring a water flow of at least 200 cfs*. Then comes the 7.1-mile flatwater Reservoir and Francis Dam Reach, useable at very low water flows. Next is the 8.1-mile slow-flowing section above the Leesburg USGS gauge at Evergreen Mills/ SR 621) from Lime Kiln Road, requiring ca. 300 cfs.* These volumes afford enough water to avoid grounding out on pebbles and occasional rocks. We suggest no improvements upstream from Lime Kiln Road, as this section is infrequently navigable.

* cubic feet per second

Essential Features – From the Potomac upstream

- 1 - Improve the Take-out and Trail at **Kephart Landing**
- 2 - Assure Access to the **Tuscarora Creek Delta** and a Right of Way to KLB Park
- 3 - Assure Boaters' Use of the Left Bank at **Golf Course/Cooks Mill Rapid**
- 4 - Assure Access on **Left Side** below Reservoir Dam
- 5 - Improve the **Portage at Reservoir Dam** and Reopen the Access Road
- 6a - Advise on the New Canoe/Kayak Landing at **Hennessey Tract**
- 6b - Maintain the Current **Landing at Sycolin Road**
- 7 - An Assured Easement over **Francis Dam**
- 8 - A Put-in at **Evergreen Mills Road**
- 9 - A Landing along **Lime Kiln Road**

Not recommended: Landings near **Middleburg** and at **Old Stone Bridge**

DETAIL

1 - Improve Take-out and Trail at Kephart Landing

The landing at the end of the whitewater part of the Creek is heavily used by the public, resulting in muddy conditions. The Parks placing of wood chips on the trail each year is much appreciated. However, at the riverbank, in high water these float away. Placing

large gauge gravel, or heavy stepping stones would improve the experience of both the boating and non-boating public.

2 - Assure Use of Tuscarora Creek Landing and Right of Way to KLB Park

Kayakers and canoeists put into the Creek at this pebbly beach at the mouth of Tuscarora Creek to paddle upstream to play in Golf Course Rapid. This cannot be done from Keep Loudoun Beautiful (KLB) Park (old Route 7) because one must paddle up the rapid there. A short right of way or easement across the bottom of the old parking lot is needed to carry boats to this landing from the road. A seasonal toilet is needed.

3 - Assure Boaters' Use of the Left Bank at Golf Course/Cooks Mill Rapid

Boaters have used the left bank of the rapid for recovery in case of spills, for picnicking, and for carrying boats up to the dam when paddling upstream from Tuscarora Creek to run the rapid repeatedly. The Parks should assure that this traditional practice by the public continue by purchase or an easement.

4 – Assure Access on Left Side below Reservoir Dam

For superior, long-term access to the Lower Goose, we advocate a landing on river-left below the dam, so whitewater boaters needn't paddle for a mile and a half down the reservoir.

5 - Improve the Portage at Reservoir Dam and Reopen the Access Road

The 20-foot Dam has been portaged on the right (east) side since it was built athwart a navigable waterway (The 1840s Goose Creek Canal passes under it.) The take-out at the bottom end of the reservoir is marshy, and the portage path has a steep downslope. We suggest gravel be placed at the take-out and stone steps down the side of the dam. Hearford Road from Belmont Ridge Road to the dam should be reopened to the public after its 22-year closure.

6a – Advise on New Canoe/Kayak Landing at Hennessey Tract

The purchase of this 25-acre facility for the creekside trail is most welcome and allows us to reprise discussions about a small-boat landing on the property. The CCA has worked on other stream access projects and has useful insights on such structures. We understand this project could take several years to realize.

6b - Maintain the Current Landing at Sycolin Road

While the Hennessey project is pending, the put-in and take-out spot on the other (left, west) bank is critical, as there is no public access to the Creek for miles upstream and down. It is vulnerable to any effort to broaden Sycolin Road (SR 643).

7 - An Assured Easement over Francis Dam

At most frequent (low) flows, 1½ miles down from Evergreen Mills, boaters can ease their craft down this low 1840s-era dam's gently sloping stone face. At higher levels they can run the rapid that forms here. A sluice could be constructed to ease the descent and a picnic spot set aside below the dam.

8 - A Put-in at Evergreen Mills Road

To facilitate paddling on the five flatwater miles of the Creek above Sycolin Road boaters need a way to launch from the next stream crossing - Evergreen Mills Road (SR 621). The watercourse downstream is flat and slow-flowing, suitable for novice boaters. Currently, parking and access to the Creek is very difficult, due to swift traffic passing across the bridge. The northeast quadrant (left bank just downstream from the bridge) has a beach ideal for launching. Loudoun Parks should establish a landing and acquire and build some parking spaces there.

9 – A Landing along Lime Kiln Road (SR 733)

Above Evergreen Mills Road the Creek runs 3 miles through the woods below Banshee Reeks Park until reaching U.S. 15 and Lime Kiln Rd, which it parallels for 5 miles. Along this road a landing with off-road parking should be established. Crooked Bridge Road or the mouth of the North Fork or the spot near Steptoe Hill Road (SR 763) where Lime Kiln Road leaves the Creek would be excellent sites.

A couple of put-in places far up the Goose were considered but found not worth the County's investment, as this part of the Creek is seldom navigatable. Boaters entering there informally will need little county assistance.

CANOE CRUISERS ASSOCIATION

Since 1956 the Canoe Cruisers Association has brought together kayakers and canoeists interested in paddling the Potomac River Basin and adjacent watersheds with members from across the Greater Washington, DC area. We value diversity and welcome people at all levels of ability.

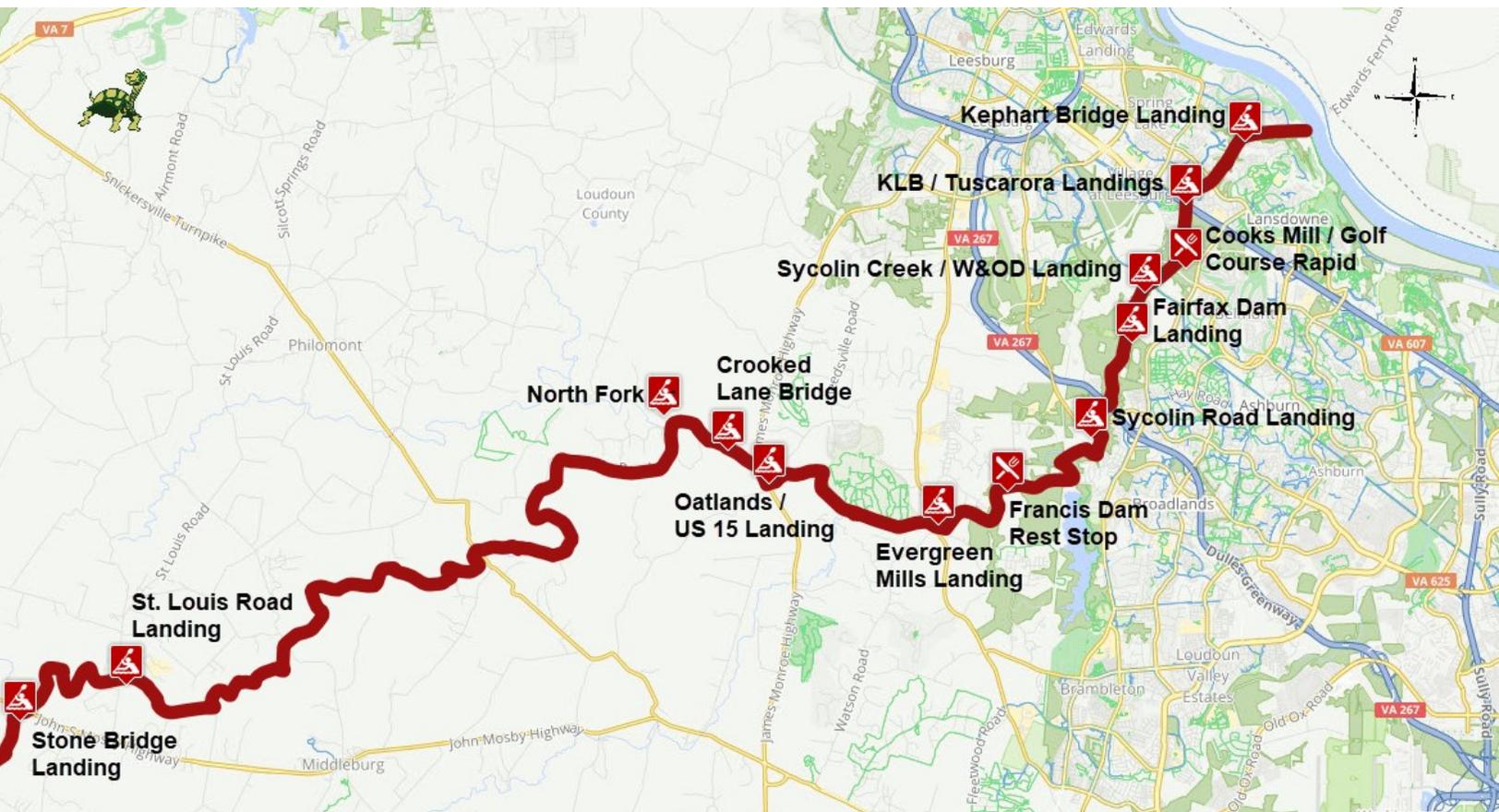
We coordinate paddling trips, teach classes, promote river safety, host the annual CCA downriver race, and organize river access and water conservation efforts.

The CCA River Access Committee seeks to maintain and expand access to local streams, suggesting improvements to authorities like the C&O Canal National Historical Park and advising on stream gauges to the U.S. Geological Survey. We emphasize improved access points for the elderly, disabled veterans, and youth.

GOOSE CREEK - IMPORTANCE TO PADDLERS

Goose Creek is an essential paddling resource for Loudoun County residents and other members of the public. The section in Loudoun County is recognized for its whitewater and flatwater and is a destination for water safety training and education.

Lower and Middle Goose Creek in Loudoun County



Because of its large watershed, Goose Creek in Loudoun County is navigable more often (130 days per year) than any other local tributary of the Potomac River, and it has high water quality, limited debris accumulation, and in recent years, new landing sites.

Since 2018, we have run 18 trips with over 100 paddlers along the lower Goose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Kephart Bridge / Riverpoint Drive Landing: 39.5908, -77.2965

This is an ideal landing site, with off-street parking, a portable toilet, and a natural surface trail to the water. Paddlers use it to go across the Potomac to Edwards Ferry or downstream to Elizabeth Mills & Bles Park.



A path provides access at Kephart Bridge Landing.

Mostly paddlers use it as a take-out to park their downstream cars, then drive to Sycolin Road to park and put boats into the reservoir for a three-hour paddle down the lower Goose. Placing gravel at the water's edge would improve the muddy landing spot.



The lower Kephart Bridge Landing path is eroding.

Keep Loudoun Beautiful (KLB) Park: 39.5148, -77.3069

CCA is grateful for Loudoun County's canoe and kayak landing facility improvements at KLB Park.



A recently upgraded path provides safe and minimally invasive access at Keep Loudoun Beautiful Park.

The new boat-landing is a good, simple, and cost-effective design. Equally, removing the old Route 7 bridge piers eliminated a hazard in a rapid that picked up dangerous timbers. We suggest removing the No Parking signs on either side of the Golf Club Road cul-de-sac and adding a portable toilet as at Kephart Bridge Landing.

We also suggest access to the **Tuscarora Creek** pebble beach - 100 yds across the bottom of the former golf club parking lot. Such a trail, of crushed bluestone, could be completed as an Eagle Scout project. This beach is used by anglers and for kayaks heading upstream to surf in and run Cooks Mill/Golf Course Rapid. This “extra” landing is needed because boats, if launched at KLB, cannot ascend the KLB Rapid.

Cooks Mill/Golf Course Rapid: 39.0746, -77.5126

This rapid, of medium (Class II+) difficulty, is the most interesting on the Goose – and attracts paddlers coming upstream (0.3 miles) from Tuscarora Creek beach. We land on the west side beach by Cooks Mill ruin, drag boats upstream, relaunch, and run the rapid. Repeat. We suggest assuring that boaters can use this shady beach for this purpose and as a rest stop.



Tuscarora Beach – Put-in for Cooks Mill/Golf Course Rapid.

Sycolin Creek/W&OD Trail Put-In: 39.0721, -77.5201

At the Two Creeks Trail Area, this access point off the W&OD Bike Trail on river-left (west) is about 200 yards from the old RR bridge over the Creek. It is not a landing in the sense that anyone would want to take out there, but it is a listed access point by American Whitewater. Currently, it is the first possible put-in, 2.6 miles after Sycolin Road Bridge.

Fairfax Dam: 39.0558, -77.5256

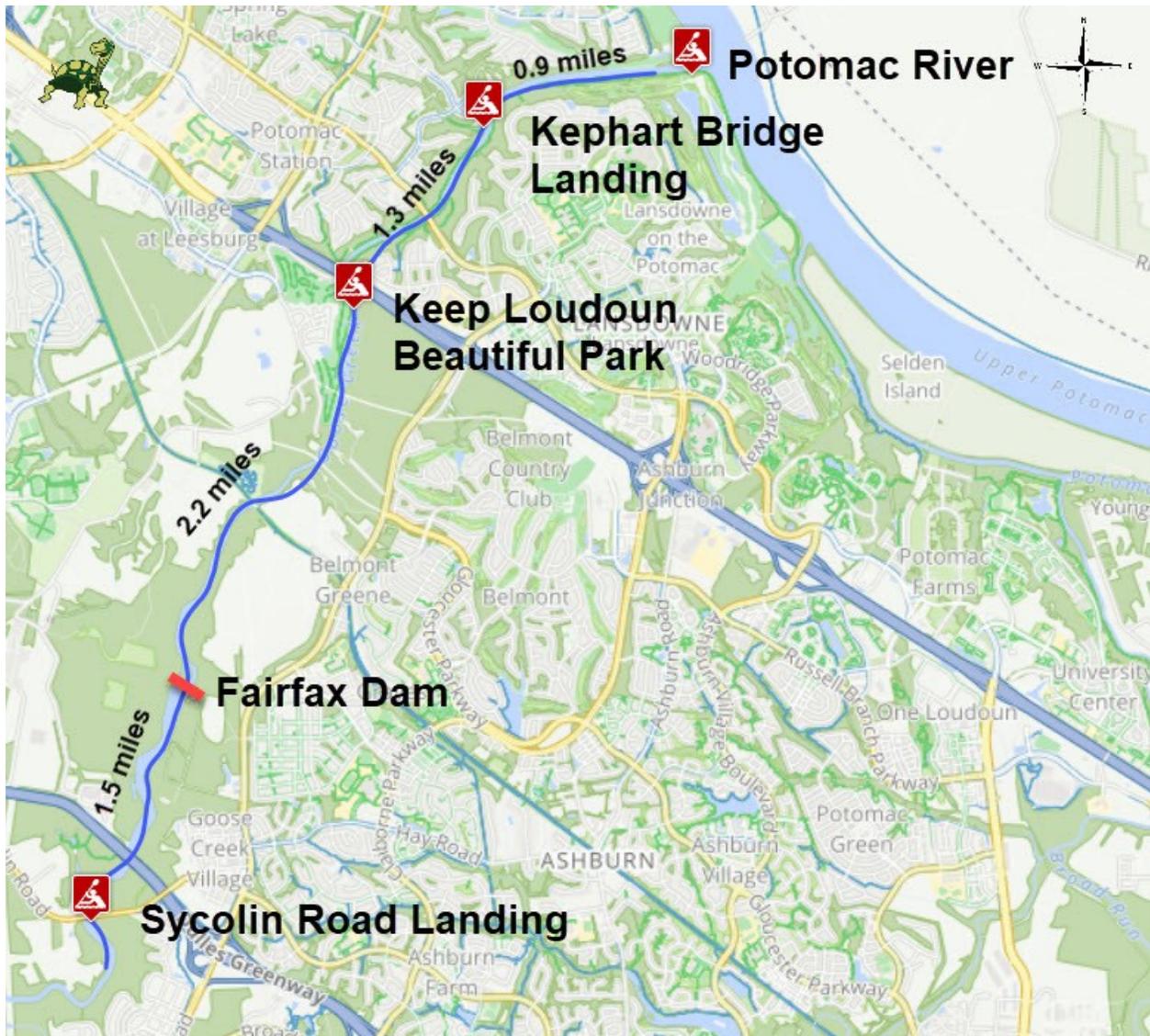
Boaters have been bypassing this 20-foot-high structure since it was built in 1961. Until 9/11/2001, it was the standard put-in place. Boaters currently carry or let their boats down by rope on the steep trail on the right (east) side.



Fairfax Dam – Portage is to the left.

Steps might be built for those preferring that method. At the water's edge below the dam, improved access to the Creek put-in is needed. Boaters should be requested by signs or in brochures to notify the Park when floating wood blocks the put-in to the Creek.

We recommend that the portage around the right (east) side of the dam be improved. This allows for boating trips from Sycolin Road Bridge up to six miles to the Potomac and exposure to a greater variety of water types ranging from flat water to gentle rapids up to Class 2+.



Improved access to Goose Creek at the Fairfax Dam allows for boating trips up to six miles to the Potomac.

Restored Road Access

Access from Belmont Ridge Road along Hearford Lane - as before 9/11 – should be restored. Many whitewater and fishing types do not enjoy paddling down the reservoir to get to the flowing water. There is parking for about 30 cars, more than anywhere else along the Creek.

A set of large orange buoys provide warning and protection to paddlers at the dam. A natural landing site is on the buoys' right that connects to a gated and locked access road.

Fairfax Dam Reservoir – 39.0559/-77.5262 - A formal landing is needed ca 100 feet upstream from the dam's top. Currently, it is mud; a gravel base would be preferable. Signs pointing boaters up the parking lot to the dam's right-wing, where one connects to the steep trail to the Creek, would be helpful.



Large buoys provide warning and protection from the Fairfax Dam to recreational boaters.

NB: There is little danger here – the large orange buoys keep paddlers far from the lip. Signs should warn the ignorant of the danger of high water. There is a prominent river staff gauge on the dam, which should be marked in standard green/yellow/red to warn boaters about proceeding downstream.



Warning signs at the Fairfax Dam's upstream landing site on the buoys' right. This connects to a gated and locked access road.



Descending at the Fairfax Dam is problematic.

Hennessey Tract at Sycolin Road Bridge: 39.0395, -77.5358

This new acquisition will include a canoe/kayak landing to be realized over the next few years.

Sycolin Road Bridge: 39.0395, -77.5358

Since 2018, paddlers use a minimally invasive landing site at Sycolin Road Bridge (SR 643) to enter the Creek using a narrow channel close to the bridge on the Creek/Reservoir-left (west) side.



This informal put-in at Sycolin Road Bridge provides access through an overgrown channel.

CCA recommends that this landing be preserved until the Hennessey Landing is completed.

Beaverdam Landing or Rest Spot: 39.0276, -77.5421

This is on river right (south) at the foot of Beaverdam Reservoir just upstream from the big "S" turn. This location needs further research as to its feasibility.

Francis Lock & Dam: 39.0274, -77.5473

Francis Lock & Dam needs a picnic rest spot (see photo below), immediately downstream on river-left (north). A sluice through this low dam might be established to facilitate running it in low-water conditions.



A picnic spot below Francis Dam.

Evergreen Mills Landing: 39.0183, -77.5757

Evergreen Mills Rd (SR 621) is a two-lane road with no pull-out near the bridge. The USGS Leesburg stream gauge is on river-left (north) above the bridge. A landing spot should be established on river-left below the bridge. The land is relatively flat, with a sandy beach, allowing boats to be launched into the very top of the flatwater behind Francis Dam.



Beach below Evergreen Mills Road.

Oatlands/US 15 Landing: 39.0271, -77.6219

The best landing area is at river left (east) above the bridge, inside a left-tending bend in the Creek. This location needs further research as to its feasibility.

Three Possible Landings along Lime Kiln Road

1. Crooked Bridge Lane: 39.0377, -77.6403

Just off Lime Kiln Rd (SR 733), one mile up from U.S. 15, there is parking for six cars on both sides. The landing spot is over a small beach on river right (south).



Crooked Lane Bridge Landing.

2. Mouth of North Fork: 39.2288, -77.3899

Since the North Fork adds about 40% in volume to the Creek's flow, this is the practical head of navigation at medium water. About 100 yards from Lime Kiln Road on the left bank of North Fork is a gentle slope down to a beach, ideal for a natural put-in into the main Creek. Five miles downstream is Evergreen Mills Road.



Beach at Mouth of North Fork (entering from left).

3. Near Steptoe Road/ Highlands Camp: 39.1453, -77.4112

With less streamflow than at the North Fork, this location, while affording three more miles of paddling, is less desirable as a put in than at the North Fork.

UPSTREAM - St. Louis Road (SR 611) and Goose Creek Stone Bridge: 39.9874, -77.7949

This landing spot is on N.W. bank from the bridge, opposite the USGS Middleburg stream gauge. The current informal entry into the Creek is sufficient.

First put-in in Loudoun County. Parking for ten cars at the Northern Virginia Parks lot. Put-in is 200 yds down to the Creek, downstream of the old stone bridge on river left (west). A carve-out of the bank here would facilitate access.

CCA River Access Committee*

- Gordon Lang, Chairman
- Jim Byrne (Loudoun County Kayakers)
- Pam White
- Jack Findling
- Dr. Gregory F. Maassen
- Hildy Ferraiolo
- Ed Gertler
- David Cottingham
- Alf Cooley

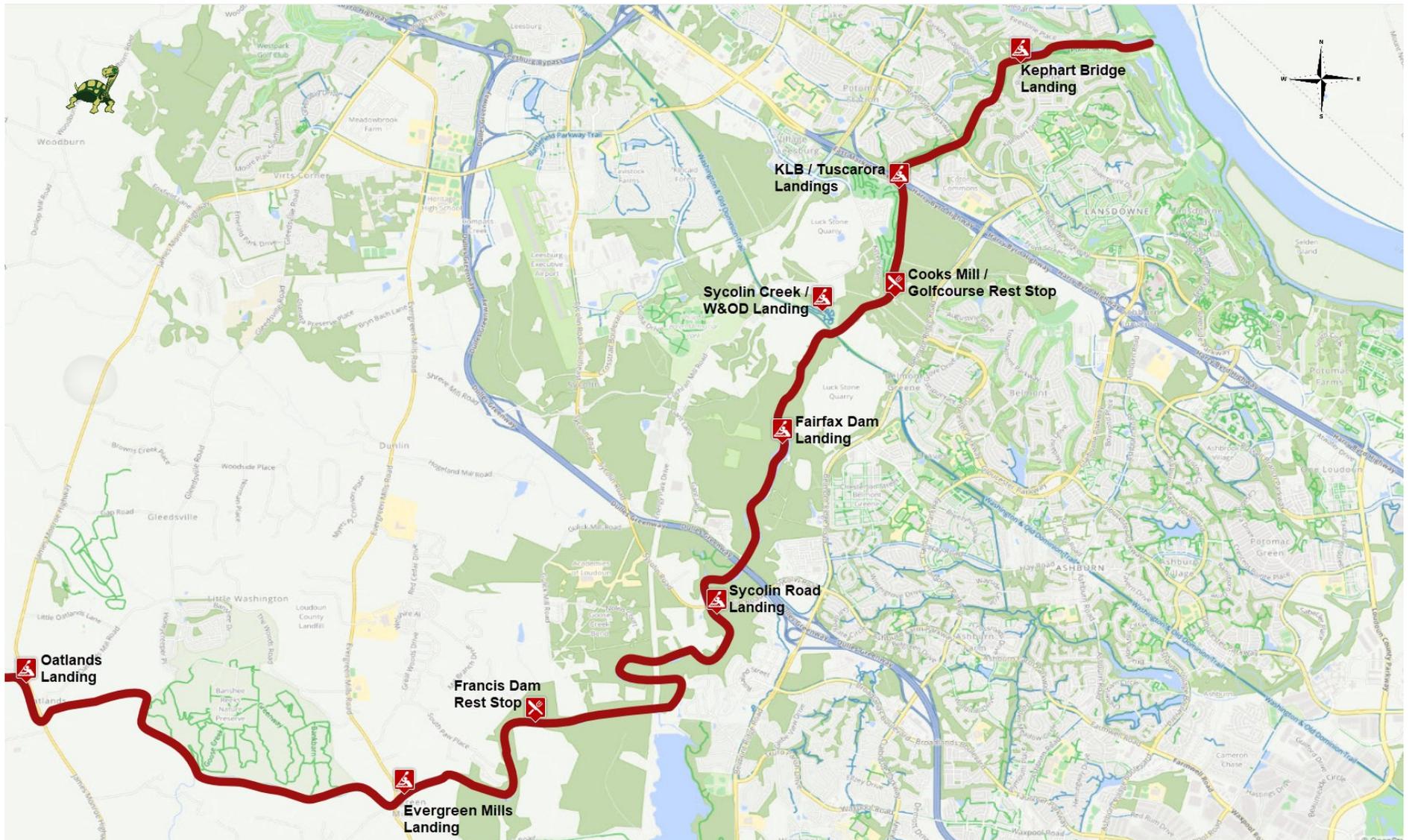
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This report is on the CCA homepage: www.canoecruisers.org

* Members engaged in Loudoun County.

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MAP of LOWER GOOSE CREEK



Signs

Engaging signs, other than the usual prohibitory messages, can help park visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience. The CCA could help with signs about paddling at the various landing points.

For each entry point: Tell paddlers and others where to go – how far it is – that there is a dam, or a Class II+ rapid in “n” miles. And depending on water levels: what could be dangerous and when the Creek will be too shallow.

Signs could alert paddlers to the Leesburg and Middleburg gauges and what their readings imply with respect to paddle-ability and possible danger.

Online Resources

Similar to those available at Banshee Reeks Park, online guidesheets could inform boaters of the put-ins and waypoints, difficulties, stream-gauge readings, and how to use the water trail safely and responsibly. The CCA could furnish ideas.



REFERENCES

Guidebooks, all by CCA members, which describe paddling the Goose (and which sections), with number of pages about the Creek:

Ed Gertler – Exploring Virginia's Waterways – 2022 (*Delaplane to Potomac, Including Little River From Halfway Road*), Route 626, 4 pp.

Ed Grove – Classic Virginia Rivers – 1992 (*Fairfax Dam to Potomac section*) – 2 pp.

Roger Corbett – Virginia Whitewater – 2000 (*Delaplane to Potomac – incl. Little River from Aldie section*) – 6 pp.

Roger Corbett & Louis Maticia – Blue Ridge Voyages, Vol. 3, An Illustrated Guide to Ten White Water Canoe Trips – 1972 – 12 pp.

Randy Carter - Canoeing White Water - River Guide - 1967 (*Middleburg to KLB Park section*) - 3 pp.

Steve Ettinger – Capital Canoeing and Kayaking – 2013 (*Markham to Potomac section*) – 4 pp.

Sycolin Road Bridge to the Potomac – American Whitewater database at:

<https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/river-detail/1937/main>

Goose Creek and Reservoir Trip Coordinator Sheets – see 3 Goose documents:

https://canoecruisers.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=394800&module_id=492200

Two Goose Creek Maps by Ron Canter, CCA - and Notes and

Bibliography: https://canoecruisers.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=86&club_id=394800&item_id=49432