

# **CARROLL COUNTY CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERLANDS FUTURE ACTION PLAN**

By

**Friends of McIntosh Reserve**

The following action plan is presented in advance of upcoming discussions on priorities for funding from SPLOST funds. It concerns the development of McIntosh Reserve and Moore's Bridge parks and their integration into the Chattahoochee Riverlands ([www.chattahoocheeriverlands.com](http://www.chattahoocheeriverlands.com)).

## **Summary/Priority**

1. McIntosh Park—Conference Center/Creek Museum/Park Office—Design, build and equip; estimated cost \$810,000.
2. McIntosh Park—Purchase land for suspension bridge access & abutment—approx. 60 acre strip above flood plain west bank.
3. Moore's Bridge Park—Staff--One mgr, two half-time--\$120,000 annual.
4. Moore's Bridge Park—Refurbish House for Park Hdqs.--\$75,000.
5. Moore's Bridge Park—Design, Build and equip—estimated cost \$2,615,000
6. Suspension Bridge—McIntosh Park to ChattBend State Park—Shared funding--\$1,700,000
7. Establish Interpark Connecting Trail—Moore's Bridge to McIntosh to CBSP--\$100,000

We are requesting that these projects be supported by SPLOST and the County over the next several years to realize the upgrades to our parks on the river. Income produced by a new clientele to McIntosh and the \$6,000,000 already invested in Moore's Bridge would begin to pay off.

**Introduction:** The Chattahoochee Riverlands Study sponsored by the Trust for Public Land, Atlanta Regional Commission, City of Atlanta and Cobb County has developed a concept for a trail system along the river corridor from Buford Dam to Chattahoochee Bend State Park (Chattahoochee Riverlands, 2020). The lower 30 miles of the proposed trail includes Moore's Bridge and McIntosh Reserve Parks, both in Carroll County and Chattahoochee Bend State Park (CBSP) in Coweta County. It is proposed to connect these three parks together with a trail which would include a suspension bridge across the river. This would enhance all three parks bringing the different ecosystems and histories into focus for an increasing population of visitors.

FOMR is proposing a plan of action for upgrades to McIntosh Reserve Park and Moore's Bridge Park in Carroll County to support integration into the Chattahoochee Riverlands trail system. This plan will be presented to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners and Carroll County Parks Department for consideration for future SPLOST funding. The actions are presented in a general order of priority recognizing that available funding and staffing will dictate accomplishments over time.

**McIntosh Reserve Conference Center/Creek Museum/Park Office:**

A temperature controlled conference center/Creek museum/office is needed at McIntosh Reserve which would serve multiple uses promoting education of the historical and environmental assets in the park. A secure place is needed to exhibit local artifacts and provide space for the park manager and Muscogee Tribal elders. This museum would focus on the Muscogee Creeks who are not well represented across Native American museums in the region. By starting now we would be able to capture the park manager's expertise in the museum development prior to pending retirement. The building would be best located across the road from the historic McIntosh cabin. There would be multiple uses of this building increasing the economic income to the park, however, priority would be reserved for educational presentations, museum and professional uses.

A preliminary design concept for a 3600 ft<sup>2</sup> building has been developed by FOMR. It includes two single restrooms, a small kitchen with counter, sink and microwave, a museum space and two offices. The building needs to bring a

commanding focus to the park and blend into the park's character with a rustic look. The cost of this project is estimated at approximately \$810,000. FOMR will explore possible private sources and the Muscogee Tribe for additional funding which could match SPLOST.

**Moore's Bridge Park**— A 485 acre park with 1.4 miles of river front served for more than a century as a frontier gateway to Carroll County. This park preserves and protects an area rich in Native American, Civil War and African American history. The story of Horace King, a freed slave and master covered bridge builder is uplifting history. In 2008, Moore's Bridge Park was purchased by Carroll County from the Trust for Public Land for \$4.474 million in SPLOST funding. TPL has assisted Carroll County in the development of a passive use recreation plan (Fig. 1) for this park. Only a few parts of the plan have been implemented.

A parking lot and restrooms have been constructed near the secondary entrance off Black Dirt Road. A new road leading to a parking lot and boat launch ramp was installed downstream from Snake Creek. Horse trails were developed through the western half of the northeast part of the park in 2014. These developments represent additional investments by the County of \$1.5 million for a total of \$6 million thus far. In 2019 the County signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) to build bike trails in the eastern half of the northeastern part of the park. The first phase of this effort began in January 2020 and is estimated to represent \$35,000 in donated time and materials by SORBA

The southwestern part of the park where the Moore House is located remains closed to the public. There is great concern for preservation of the Moore House and its historical value to the park. In cooperation with the Carroll County Historical Society a chain link fence was installed around the house by the County and a burglar alarm was added. Discussions with the Historical Society have focused on the need for an archeological study to verify the age of the house and the surrounding environment where outbuildings existed. The main entrance remains closed to visitors and no development has occurred except for the occasional mowing of some of the open land by the County.

There are a number of facilities in the County/TPL development plan that would enhance the park for picnicking, camping, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, canoeing and cycling that have not been constructed (Table 1). We envision management of special habitat units in the park to support native plants which attract for example butterflies, birds or bats.

Initial trail development by upstream counties and cities will be a blueway water trail down the river. A blueway trail already exists from Moore's Bridge to CBSP, however, a canoe/kayak access is needed near the campground at Moore's Bridge Park to accommodate floaters from upstream. This canoe/kayak access will be used for foot traffic only and will function as a dock. A primitive campground will be located in close proximity to the dock.

A bike/walking trail along the river from the boat ramp to the west park boundary is needed to make the connection with the Chattahoochee Riverland trail system. The trail will be connected with an interior trail system around the wetlands and open fields in the park. The fields need to continue to be managed for park activities and easy access to the historic house and relic bridge structures. The house should be used as the park headquarters/museum where visitors are directed for check in and payment of fees. This would eliminate the need for a separate entrance facility on the main entry road to the park. The main road through the park needs to be completed in order to access the boat ramp through the main entrance. The secondary entrance on Black Dirt Road should be restricted to reduce staffing needs.

**Staffing the Park:** Moore's Bridge Park requires staffing in order to get development and initial use underway. A full time manager is needed with two part-time assistants or UWG interns. A full time manager for Moore's Bridge Park with park and land management experience would bring the needed expertise to the county.

**Trust for Public Land:** TPL recently received a grant of \$17,000 from the Alice Richards Foundation to mow the fields and develop a plan for Moore's Bridge Park. A general plan exists and the County mows the open fields in the park. It is recommended that TPL redirect these funds toward control of invasive privet.

**Suspension Bridge**—There are two options for the site for a bridge across the river for hikers and bikers. A bridge crossing from McIntosh Reserve could be from the overlook which is above the flood plain. This would require cooperation with the land owner on the Coweta County side. A short trail easement would also be needed to intersect the Coweta county road to CBSP. The preferred option, however, would be for a short trail easement downstream from McIntosh to the west side of Acorn Creek where headlands on both sides of the river would allow a direct connection with CBSP by suspension bridge.

There are many existing suspension bridges in the Snake Creek/Banning Mills gorge that have been constructed by Mike Holder and his American Adventure Parks construction company. From discussions with Mr. Holder the cost of a suspension bridge across the Chattahoochee River would be around \$1.7 million. TPL has indicated a keen interest in this project as a philanthropic partner with Carroll County, Georgia DNR, GDOT and others.

**Trail Development**—Since TPL is experienced in acquiring and preserving land, they should be encouraged along with the County and FOMR to acquire or help procure the easements, leases or right-of-way for the trail development from Moore's Bridge to McIntosh and CBSP (Fig 2 Trail Map). The trail segment from McIntosh Reserve to a headland beyond Acorn Creek downstream from McIntosh Reserve presently owned by Muddy Waters Land & Timber LLC would need to be secured for a bridge across the river to CBSP. Muddy Waters Land & Timber LLC currently has that land for sale which could complicate this plan. Purchase of a 60 acre strip of land along the river bank above the flood plain connected to McIntosh Reserve would secure access and the site for the suspension bridge to CBSP.

The trail alignment in the Chattahoochee Riverlands Plan between the two Carroll County parks follows Ga Hwy 5 from Whitesburg to McIntosh and is unsatisfactory for safety reasons and cost. An alternate route has been investigated which avoids Hwy 5 using local roads and easements along powerlines. Beginning from McIntosh Reserve in the west, the trail follows an old road across land owned by Muddy Waters Land & Timber LLC to connect with East McIntosh Circle. Hwy 5 is avoided by utilizing the powerline

easement for 1/3 mile that connects to Reese Rd, which then allows access to Georgia Power property and powerlines. The trail would need to cross the railroad and some private land to connect with Old Fish Camp Rd. and thence to Moore's Bridge Park via Old Newnan Rd or other alternative.

Easements with Georgia Power and one timberland owner would need to be established and would provide a large part of the trail between the two parks. If the above land owners are willing to grant easements then the focus would turn to the parcels between Moore's Bridge Park and Georgia Power. It is not known what the terms of trail easements might include or the time periods involved but an estimated cost over 25 years might be around \$100k.

**Recap:** Initial focus will be placed on efforts to develop a Conference Center/Creek Museum/Park Office at McIntosh Reserve. Such a facility at McIntosh Reserve has been needed for a long time and would greatly enhance educational and cultural programs in the park. The estimated cost of this structure is \$810,000. Adjacent to McIntosh Reserve Muddy Waters Land & Timber has the land for the trail access and suspension bridge site to CBSP up for sale which could complicate this plan. River side and interior trail development (Trails--\$1,100,000) in Moore's Bridge Park is a priority along with completion of park development (structures--\$640,000; Roads and Parking--\$950,000), staffing and opening the park to the public. The potential for a suspension bridge to CBSP as part of the trail development has an estimated cost around \$1.7 million. A large part of a trail between Moore's Bridge, McIntosh Reserve and CBSP could use existing County and private roads to connect all three parks together with the Snake Creek Gorge as recommended by Chattahoochee Riverlands. The estimated cost of trail easements over a 25 year period could be on the order of \$100,000. A total investment of around \$5.3 million would begin to achieve coordinated use of these Riverland parks which will become important income generators for the County and the Whitesburg area providing outdoor recreation with historical enhancements.

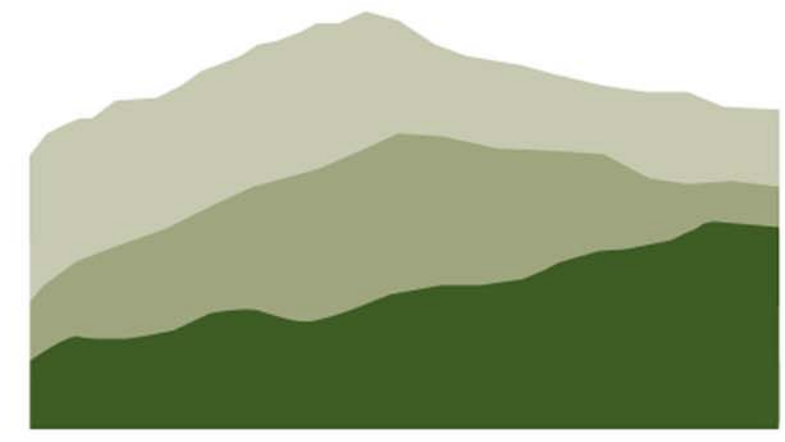
## Table 1. Moore's Bridge Projects

**EXISTING** -Entrance off Black Dirt Rd, parking lot and restrooms,  
boat ramp, road, parking lot

### **FUTURE** (from Park Plan)

<b><u>Structures</u></b>	<b><u>Cost Est (K\$)</u></b>
James Moore House (Park Hdqs/Museum, refurbish)	75
Guard Gates (1)	40
Restrooms (4)	80
Pavilion picnic (4), Nature (2),Campground (1)	270
Outdoor Amphitheater (1)	50
Tree Houses Wildlife Viewing (6)	120
Bridge Overlook (1)	5
<b><u>Roads and Parking</u></b>	
Main Park (Old Newnan to Black Dirt extension with one wooden bridge) ~3/4 mile	750
Parking Areas (Near house plus 3 satellite lots)	150
Secondary (Old Historic Newnan)	50
<b><u>Trails</u></b>	
Main Park along river bank	700
Park Trail System -	
Low Wetlands--Boardwalk through wetland	250
Upper High Lands—Arboretum/plant rescue	150





#### PARK OVERVIEW

Moore's Bridge Park is a 485 acre Master Planned Passive Recreation Park, located near Whitesburg, GA in Southeast Carroll County. The park buffers 1.4 miles of the Chattahoochee River, and is layered with history, including Civil War, Native American, African American and transportation. This site once served as the gateway to Southern Carroll County. Priority will be placed on conserving and interpreting the property's rich history and notable features.

Figure 1

# Carroll County

*The County of Opportunity*

#### GENERAL PARK USES

##### PICNIC / ACTIVITY AREA

The Picnic and Activity area is located adjacent to the western park entrance and is separated from other, more sensitive areas of the park. There will be outdoor pavilions with cooking grilles, tables and open areas for gatherings. A narrow loop road would be constructed of pervious materials and provide access to the pavilions and open fields for family gatherings and other outdoor activities.

##### Key Features:

- Open field areas
- Stream
- Existing Road access

##### Possible Uses:

- Educational / classroom visits
- Picnics
- Outdoor gatherings

##### CAMPING AREA

The Camping Area is located close to the west entrance of the park. The topography provides for great campsites along the creek, and this area serves as a Canoe / Kayak launch. Both Primitive-style and Traditional-style campsites are located to overlook the creek and Chattahoochee River. The area will be developed to reduce the impact to the adjacent creek and natural features.

##### Key Features:

- Dense forest
- Streams
- Natural overlooks

##### Possible Uses:

- Wildlife viewing (on-foot)
- Primitive & Traditional Camping
- Kayak / Canoe Launch / Return

##### PARK TRAILS

The Park Trails are a system of paths that meander through some of the most beautiful and forested natural areas within the park. Trails wind in and around the natural topography, and visitors will have the opportunity to work their way through hills, valleys, streams and forest. Interesting views are afforded from overlooks and the Tree Houses. Trails would provide opportunities for hiking, plant walks and wildlife viewing, with specific trails designated for an arboretum and connection to the proposed Nature Pavilion. Trails will be designed to have minimal impact on the surrounding environment, incorporate best management practices and will utilize low-impact materials. Trail Markers would be installed at regular intervals to orient and educate visitors.

##### Key Features:

- Dense forest
- River and Stream overlooks
- Wetlands

##### Possible Uses:

- Day-Hiking
- Primitive Camping
- Arboretum / Nature Center
- Plant Rescue & Preservation
- Wildlife viewing (from Tree Houses or on-foot)
- Educational walks / classroom visits
- Proposed Fishing Pond / Dock
- Boardwalk

##### PARKING AREAS

Parking areas are centrally located to accommodate multiple uses / sections of the park. Parking would be grouped to reduce the overall impact to the natural features of site, while utilizing non-imperious and ecologically friendly materials for construction and storm water management. Smaller, more natural parking areas would be spread throughout the park to accommodate specific uses.

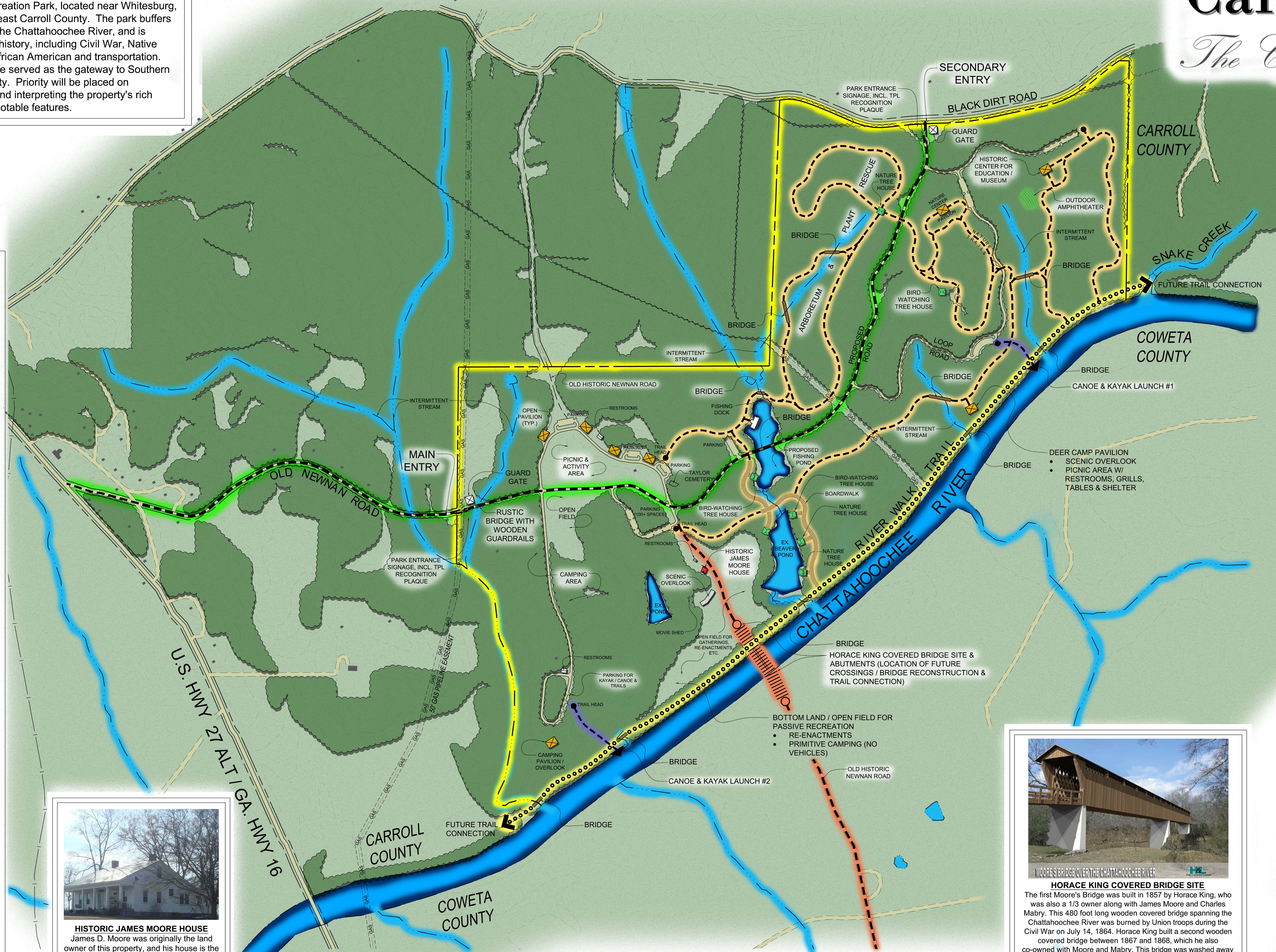
##### Key Features:

- Proximity to multiple uses
- Low Impact (Environmentally and Visually)
- Ecologically Friendly materials / construction
- Accommodate large groups



##### HISTORIC JAMES MOORE HOUSE

James D. Moore was originally the land owner of this property, and his house is the most historically significant feature still standing on the site. The James Moore house is centrally located within the park just above the former Horace King Covered Bridge site, and provides opportunities for many types of functions including education and historical events.



#### PARK FEATURES KEY

- HISTORIC JAMES MOORE HOUSE
- HORACE KING COVERED BRIDGE SITE
- OLD HISTORIC NEWNAN ROAD
- MAIN ENTRY & PARK ROAD
- POND
- AMPHITHEATER
- FOREST / WOODED AREA
- BOARDWALK
- PARK ROAD
- BRIDGE
- GUARD GATE
- TREE-HOUSE
- PAVILION
- RESTROOMS
- SCENIC OVERLOOK
- PARK TRAIL
- RIVER WALK TRAIL
- CANOE / KAYAK LAUNCH
- STREAM
- PARK BOUNDARY

#### TRAIL-HEAD MARKERS

- HISTORIC TRAIL MARKER
- MOORE HOUSE TRAIL MARKER
- COVERED BRIDGE TRAIL MARKER
- PARK TRAIL MARKER
- RIVER WALK TRAIL MARKER



##### HORACE KING COVERED BRIDGE SITE

The first Moore's Bridge was built in 1857 by Horace King, who was also a 1/3 owner along with James Moore and Charles Mabry. This 480 foot long wooden covered bridge spanning the Chattahoochee River was burned by Union troops during the Civil War on July 14, 1864. Horace King built a second wooden covered bridge between 1867 and 1868, which he also co-owned with Moore and Mabry. This bridge was washed away in the flood of 1881. During the early 1900's the Jones family acquired the site and erected a metal bridge across the Chattahoochee in 1917. Remnants of the 1917 metal bridge are still visible at the park site and the county's big vision is to reconstruct a Horace King style wooden covered bridge across the Chattahoochee such as the one depicted in the artists rendering. Initially, Carroll County will recognize the historical significance of the site with interpretive signage.

300 0 300 600 1200  
GRAPHIC SCALE



# Figure 2

Provisional Trail to link Chattahoochee Bend, McIntosh Reserve  
& Moore's Bridge Parks.

Friends of McIntosh Reserve, 2020

