

# MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT REPORT

August 15, 2005

## GEORGIA'S STONE MOUNTAIN PARK



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## INTRODUCTION

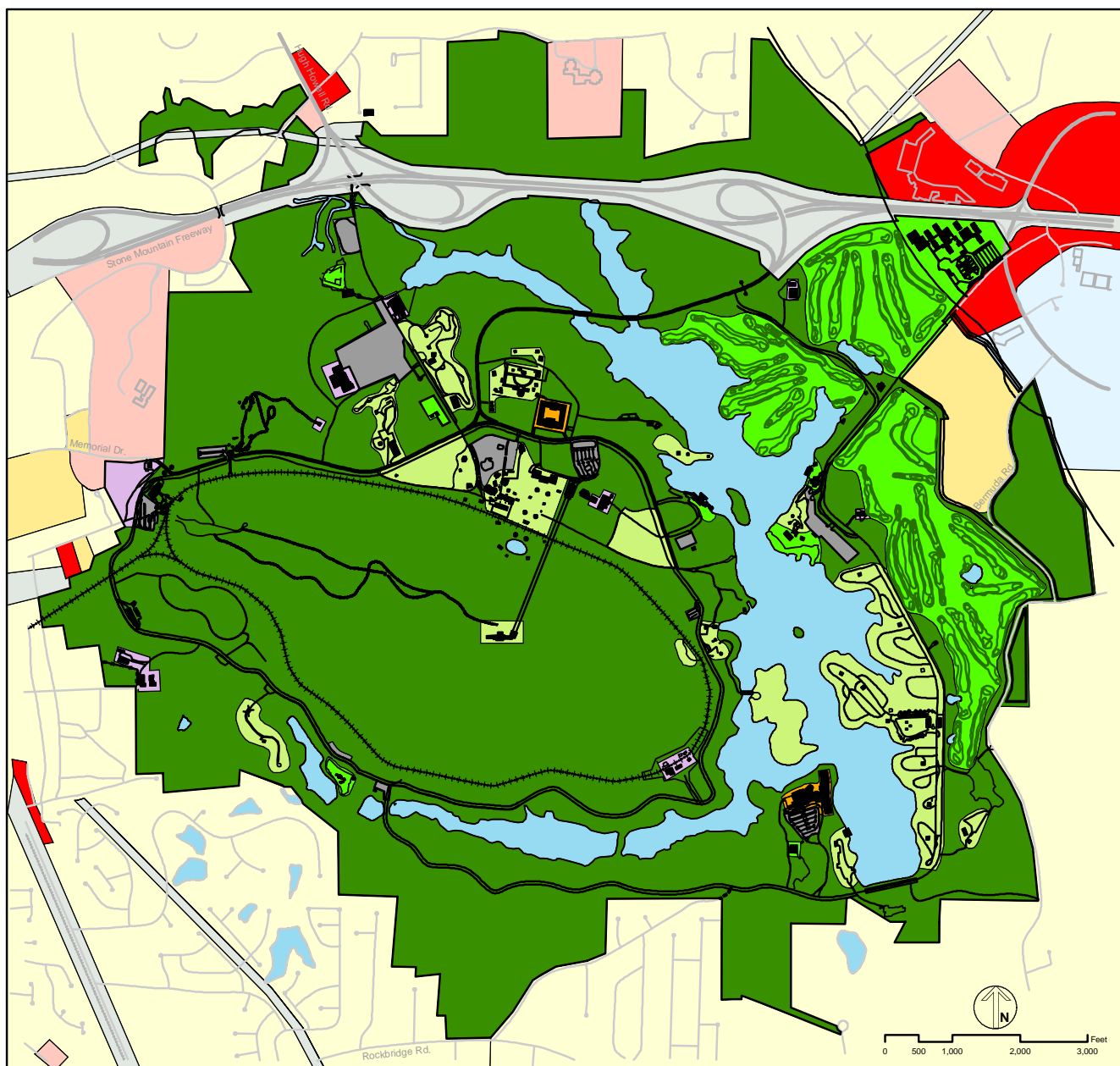
Georgia's Stone Mountain Park is located 16 miles east of downtown Atlanta. The Park is comprised of approximately 3,200 acres of woodlands and features as its centerpiece, Stone Mountain, one of the world's largest exposed granite monoliths. Within the Park's boundaries there are also several lakes that cover a total of approximately 362 acres – Stone Mountain Lake is the largest at 323 acres. Often considered to be the State's greatest natural tourist attraction, several million people visit Stone Mountain Park every year, making it one of the highest attendance attractions in the United States.

The Stone Mountain Memorial Association (SMMA), a State authority that is self-supporting and receives no tax dollars, is responsible for Georgia's Stone Mountain Park. SMMA has nine board members appointed by the Governor for four-year terms (except for the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources who serves as long as he/she holds the position of Commissioner). SMMA holds title to all the Park's land and determines overall policies and practices. An appointed Chief Executive Officer supervises day-to-day operations. SMMA was formed in 1958 to purchase the Mountain and surrounding land for a park to serve as a memorial to Southern history and a place of recreation for Georgia's citizens and visitors. In its role as a memorial, a large sculpture commemorating the Confederacy has been carved on the north face of the mountain overlooking a broad memorial lawn and adjacent museum. Visitors can also tour a collection of antebellum period structures that have been relocated to the site and assembled into an interpretive/educational display depicting a typical plantation of that era. In its recreational role, the Park includes a wide range of activities such as water and sports activities, lodging, museums and educational exhibits, and a series of festivals and special events venues. Several rides and attractions including a full size excursion train, riverboat, and a cable car to the top of the Mountain are also provided (See the Existing Land Use Map on the following page).

In 1998, SMMA entered into a long term public/private partnership with Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation (HFEC), a private business enterprise with an established track record in operating entertainment and recreation venues, to manage all commercial operations in the Park – lodging, attractions, retail food, merchandise, and special events. Per the terms of that agreement, SMMA now supervises the lease with HFEC and retains the right to review and approve any proposed new development to insure compatibility and consistency with the Park's goals. SMMA also provides public safety, public works, historical and environmental education services within the Park and maintains the Natural District.

Stone Mountain Park is financially self-sufficient. All Park operations, maintenance and capital improvements are funded through lease and miscellaneous revenues. No state tax revenue is used to fund the Park.

SMMA's mission is to sustain, enhance, and protect Stone Mountain Park, its facilities and environs, by striving for excellence through an enriching experience that addresses the area's historical, natural, cultural, and recreational resources for all our guests.



## Legend

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# GEORGIA'S STONE MOUNTAIN PARK EXISTING LAND USE

SMMA envisions Stone Mountain Park as a unique destination for visitors worldwide, which provides a rich atmosphere of natural beauty, educational experiences of the natural environment and Southern heritage, recreational activities, and entertainment, while protecting the environment and maintaining a safe serene, and inviting experience for all who visit.

SMMA has adopted the following goals:

- Enhance the natural areas of the Park as both a recreational and educational experience for guests and increasing the amount of green space, so that the Park as a natural resource reaches its maximum potential.
- Maintain all SMMA areas of the Park in a neat, clean and aesthetically pleasing condition so that guests can relax and enjoy the natural beauty of the Park.
- Provide first-rate public safety services and maintain a real and perceived sense of safety for guests in an environment that allows them to feel both safe and welcome.
- Monitor and enforce Lease requirements in order to protect the financial and public interests of the Association, while reviewing the operation of the Park for customer service, affordability, recreational, and entertainment value.
- Maintain an effective and efficient employee workforce through appropriate employee training, development and compensation.

Early development of the Park was guided by a Master Plan that was prepared in 1958. During the past forty six years, that plan has been updated occasionally as warranted, with the most recent major update adopted in 1992 in preparation for the then pending 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Although still fundamentally sound, the 1992 Master Plan was based on an organizational structure in which the SMMA was primarily responsible for all Park operations and assets. With the change in operational structure that has resulted from the shift to a public/private partnership in 1998, it was determined that the Master Plan should be amended to reflect the differences in Park operations and programs that have occurred since 1992. This document summarizes the relatively subtle adjustments to the Master Plan that have occurred since 1998 and provides an overview of the amended plan for continued stewardship of Stone Mountain Park's assets.

# 1. HISTORY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Stone Mountain Park has a long and complex history that spans the past ninety years. Following is a brief overview of the major milestones of the development process during that period.

## STONE MOUNTAIN PARK PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

1914	Use of Stone Mountain as a permanent Memorial to the Confederacy is conceived.
1916	Gutzon Borglum is hired by the Stone Mountain Confederate Monumental Association (a private, non-profit association which had a twelve year lease on the north face of the Mountain) to carve a Confederate memorial.
1917	Work on the carving is suspended due to World War I.
1923	Work on the carving resumes.
1925	Borglum is dismissed and Augustus Lukeman is hired as sculptor. Lukeman removes Borglum's work and begins his own design.
1928	Lease expires and work on carving stops.
1941	State of Georgia creates a State Park Authority to establish a park and complete carving efforts initiated in the 1920s.
1942	DeKalb County Commissioner Scott Candler negotiates 10-year option for Mountain and surrounding 2,000 acres of land for the development of a state park under State Park Authority but Authority is deactivated during World War II.
1949	Governor Herman Talmadge reactivates State Park Authority.  Robert and Company (RAC), Architects and Engineers prepare first Master Plan. The plan featured scenic drives and overlooks, small lakes, a Memorial Hall complex with meadow, picnic and camping, recreation fields, a swimming pool, boathouses, a bus terminal, a road to the Mountain top and also a potential tram near the walk-up trail.
1950	<i>Stone Mountain Memorial Park</i> , an economic feasibility study is prepared by the Joseph K. Heyman Company for the State Park Authority.
1958	Georgia House passes Bill 946 establishing the Stone Mountain Memorial Association (SMMA).

A RAC team led by Andre Steiner prepares a new Master Plan for SMMA. Significant elements include creation of a large lake partially encircling the Mountain; mass plantings of flowering trees and shrubs, scenic drives and trails, marina, open-air theater, a museum, a "Tara" historical exhibit, a Botanical Garden featuring native plants, the administration building, a restaurant with views of the Memorial, a bus waiting shelter, bus terminal on Mountain top as well as an observation and fire control tower and a memorial plaza; support facilities such as a maintenance headquarters and shop, storage buildings, service and repair shops, a gasoline station, first aid station and police station, parking areas and picnic shelters distributed through out the Park. The area north of the Mountain is to be limited to "the development of facilities that will contribute to the park's natural, historic, and scientific interests." Playgrounds and organized games are to be placed away from the Memorial.

1958-63      The Master Plan evolves in order to accommodate changes in the Park's program and acquisition of additional land, etc. The resulting revised plan is very similar to the basic layout of major park elements (i.e. road system, lakes, major structures, etc.) that are in place today. The core Stone Mountain Park layout, infrastructure, and architecture is developed and built in this six-year period under General Manager Scott Candler (1958-1963).

*Association developments:* Confederate Hall, Memorial Hall Complex (museum, information center, restaurant, and souvenir shop), Mountain Top Facilities and Halfway House, West Gate, Stone Mountain Inn, Plantation Complex, Service Station, Marina, Antique Auto Museum, Horse Show Ring, dam(s) and lake impoundments, prison camp for Park labor, road system, and parking.

*Concessionaire Developments/Concessions:* Railroad, Stone Mountain Scenic Railroad Company; Aerial Tram, Stone Mountain Airways, Inc.; Stone Acres Plantation Interiors, Mrs. Christie McWhorter; and Car Collection at Antique Auto Facilities by C.T. Protsman of DeKalb County.

1961      Harold Cox, English horticulturalist, joins Stone Mountain Park staff to develop greenhouses and assist in Park landscaping.

1964      Carving under Walter Hancock begins in July utilizing the original design by Augustus Lukeman.

Development Plan is compiled for SMMA: *Economic Potentials of Stone Mountain Memorial Park* authored by Raymond O. Herman and William B. Keeling, The Bureau of Business Research, College of Business Administration, University of Georgia, January. This plan recommends that SMMA focus on a park dedicated to Southern culture and history.

1964-68      Improvements under GM General Harold Maddux (1963-1968) include: completion of the marina, streetlights added to Park arteries, grist mill complex and mill race put into operation, campground purchased from concessionaire by SMMA and improved, covered bridge moved to Park,



four parking lots, equestrian facilities and a lighted football field are added.

1965 Stone Mountain Inn officially opens April 14 - operated by Berlio of Georgia Inc.

A plan for the expansion and development of Park as an educational place that commemorates Southern culture in all its diversity and that projects an image of public service is presented by Dr. William Keeling, Director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Georgia (UGA). Keeling's presentation to the SMMA is based on a 1964 UGA study (see above - 1964).

1966 Revised Master Plan completed by RAC that shows established Park plan but also identifies historic elements, buffer zones, and areas of no development and/or requiring study. Visual Analysis Study is prepared by RAC Associates for Master Plan of Development.

1967 Group visit from the American Society of Landscape Architects occurs and their negative reaction to overall Park development sparks a formal resolution: "The current combination of different architectural styles, inappropriate structures, discordant colors and bizarre development is damaging to the long-range appearance and harmonious enjoyment of this great treasure."

Landscape design by Griswold, Winter and Swayne, a Pittsburgh firm, for the base of the carving and area east to Memorial Hall is approved. This design includes: a meadow, bridge, sculptures, and a reflecting pool at base of the Mountain.

1968 Thomas Elliott, an engineering consultant to the Park on staff with RAC, becomes General Manager (1968-1975).

A Survey of Visitors to Stone Mountain Park is compiled by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Georgia. Family visitorship predominates, visitors most enjoy the Mountain and scenic beauty of the Park, scenic railroad and skylift are the most popular attractions, and prices receive the most criticism.

Improvements: Completion of beach, 18-hole Championship Golf Course designed by Golf Course Architect Robert Trent Jones is completed and Golf Pro Bobby Troy Moody is hired.

First year all concessionaires agree to engage in coupon sales allowing visitors to enjoy each attraction with a coupon that is good for a year. (Adult \$5.50, child \$3.20)

State Board of Regents approves a permit to construct 700-foot broadcasting tower on Mountain with a 25-year lease.

- 1969 Work on the Memorial Area at Mountain base is halted by public debate on design. The North Georgia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the state professional community suggests that the proposed design detracts from the carving and the natural beauty of the Mountain.
- 1970 Memorial is dedicated. Vice President Spiro Agnew officiates.
- 1973 Past and future Park development is assessed by a RAC team led by Andre Steiner and Jim Cothran and initial concepts for the establishment of specific districts are explored. No major changes in the Long Range Plan result from this assessment.
- 1975 Planners at RAC complete land use inventory and site analysis study under special contract in the mid-1970s. Design consultation on planning with RAC ends in 1975.
- George Willis becomes GM (1975-1983).
- 1977 Association acquires concessions to the skylift, plantation, inn, restaurants and gift shops.
- Improvements include: water slide at beach, a sports complex with miniature golf, tennis courts, a roller skating trail and a planning for an ice skating chalet.
- 1981 Association acquires Scenic Railroad concession.
- 1983 Public controversy over Park management leads to a call for a park and recreation professional to run Park. Other issues include the need for better construction management, and handicap accessibility.
- 1983 Larry Allen becomes GM in October. Allen (1983-1994) sees the Park as tourist mecca and seeks development that would make the Park profitable year round. Profitability of current attractions is evaluated and emphasis is placed on replacement buildings and repair of existing facilities.
- Capital projects under construction when Allen comes on board: Ice Chalet, the Animal Forest designed by Wild Kingdom's Jim Fowler (replaced earlier game ranch) and the Mountain Top Theater. The non-profitable Ice Chalet and the Animal Forest were closed in 1990s.
- Major improvement is purchase of laser projection system and the establishment of Laser Show, a positive economic turning point for Park, bolstering visitorship.
- 1986 Train Station is constructed - historic design attributed to Jerry Deagan.
- 1989 Completion of Evergreen Conference Center and an additional 18 holes at golf course.

- 1990 Summer Olympics Planning – Stone Mountain Park is considered a major Olympic venue for seven events in 1996 Atlanta bid for games. A Master Plan is needed for Park to successfully commit to participation.
- 1991 RAC team led by Robert Benson and comprised of specialty subconsultants Sasaki Associates (Olympic venues), Hammer-Siler-George (economics), and B&E Jackson Associates (infrastructure) is retained by SMMA to update the Master Plan in order to prepare Stone Mountain Park for the major impacts anticipated from hosting several events during the 1996 Summer Olympics.
- 1992 RAC team develops Master Plan that establishes the expectations and terminology for future development of the Park, identifying four districts: the Natural District, the Recreation District, the Events District, and the Park Center District. The Master Plan vision is as follows:
- Respond to visitor needs, including local, regional and out of town visitors with respect to the quality of the Park experience;
  - Be financially self-sustaining;
  - Promote preservation and enhancement of the Park's natural resources and unique features; and
  - Memorialize Southern history.
- 1994 New Golf Clubhouse is constructed.
- 1996 Three Olympic events - archery, cycling and tennis - are held at Park. The Tennis Center is the principal legacy facility. Exhibits at Memorial Hall are refurbished and updated by PRD, LTD, of Virginia. New aerial tramway replaces original tram to top of Mountain. Top of Mountain complex is completely renovated. A new North Gate is added to improve traffic flow during major events.
- 1998 Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation (HFEC) is selected to manage commercial aspects of Stone Mountain Park in privatization of Park handled under current CEO Curtis Branscome (1994 to present).
- After privatization, SMMA concentrates on the development of the Park's historic and natural resources through cohesive interpretative and education programs. Educational staff is hired and a cooperative partnership is developed with Fernbank Science Center for programs.
- 2001 Development of Outdoor Quarry Exhibit designed by Jerry Deagan. Evergreen Conference Center lodging expanded. HFEC develops "The Great Barn" children's attraction.
- 2002 HFEC develops "Crossroads," a recreation of a 1870s Georgia town as an attraction. The prison work camp on west side of Park is demolished.

- 2003            Improvements include: restoration of the Olympic archery range to a songbird habitat, trail extensions, bike lanes on Robert E. Lee Boulevard in conjunction with mandatory one-way automobile traffic.
- 2004            Expanded educational mission for Confederate Hall prompts a major renovation and renaming to the Confederate Hall Historical and Environmental Education Center. The building now houses new exhibits on local geology, ecology and history as well as classroom space.

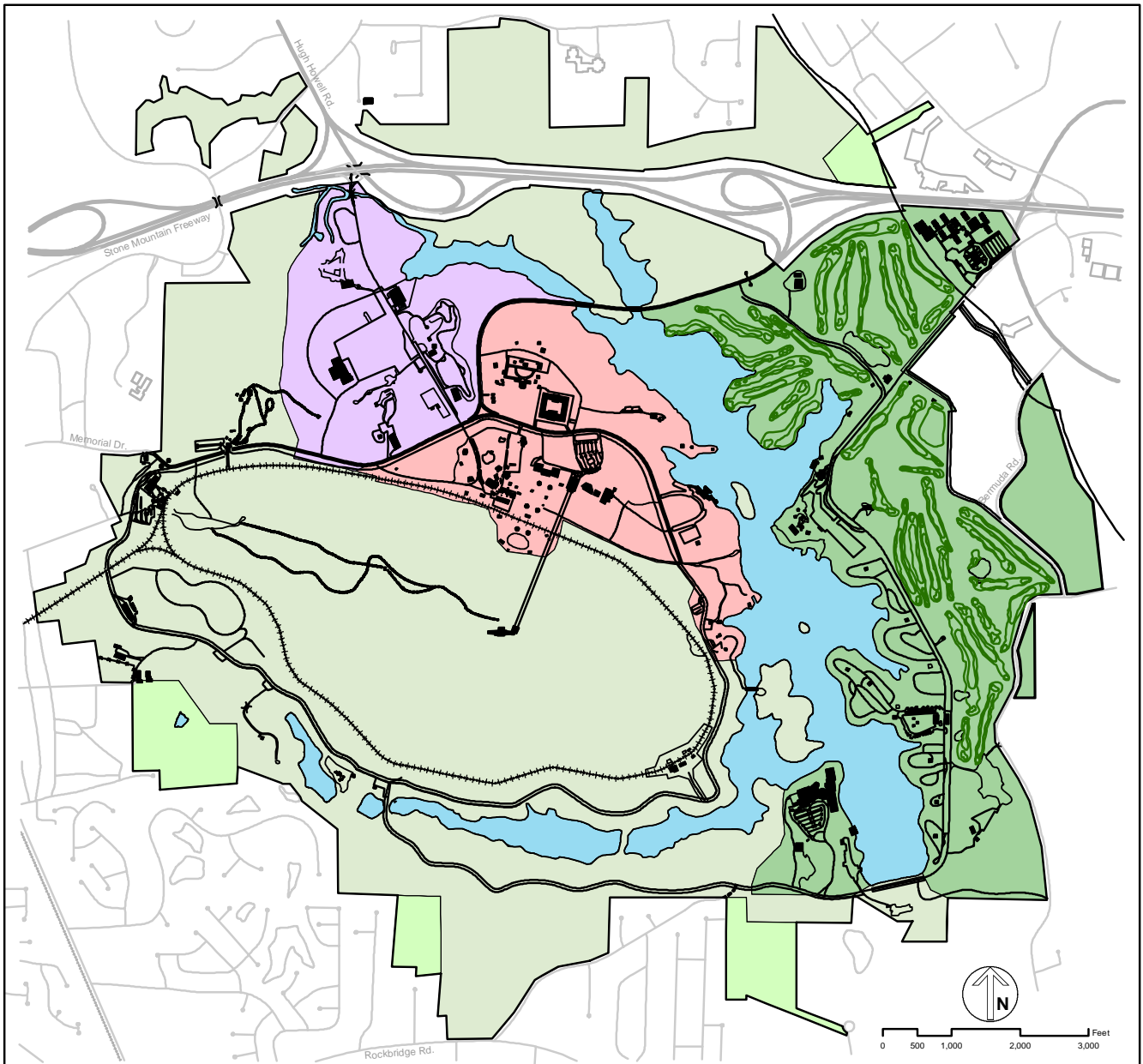
## **2. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE 1992 MASTER PLAN**

The 1992 Master Plan was derived from the Park's historic legacies of nature, recreation and history. Central to the organizational structure of the plan was the designation of four primary land use districts within the Park - Park Center, Natural, Recreation/Resort and Events Districts. District locations are illustrated graphically in the diagram on the following page. Within these districts, the character and intensity of land uses and vehicular access is zoned to be consistent with the underlying themes and land use policies for each district. Each district consists of a careful balance of uses, which combine to create the district's unique quality and character. The land use district plan provides Park visitors with easy orientation to uses and activities within the Park. The land use plan also functions as a general zoning plan to guide future development within Stone Mountain Park.

Since Master Plan adoption in 1992, this basic districting concept has proven to be an effective, simple and fundamentally sound organizational tool in the decision making process related to land use issues that inevitably arise during the passage of time. Therefore, the use zones associated with these districts, as described in the 1992 Plan and updated in Section 4, will remain as guidelines for future land use policy decisions related to Stone Mountain Park.

On July 22, 1999, the Stone Mountain Airport property (acquired in 1997) was added to the Recreation District. On September 20, 1999, the 1992 Master Plan was amended to remove 2.6 acres from the Natural District (property that was no longer owned by SMMA because it was swapped for 4.0 acres in the Monteagle Subdivision in the settlement of a lawsuit), to add the 4.0 acres thus obtained to the Natural District and to move 13.92 acres which includes the Stone Mountain Lake dam and property south of the dam to the Park limits from the Recreation District to the Natural District. Other land parcels that have been acquired in recent years, as they have become available at a reasonable cost, have been placed in a reserved category for future use determination (Newly Acquired Property).

Approximately 10 acres located within the Natural District directly adjacent to the western boundary of the Park (the old prison site) has been set aside for a consolidated location for all of the Park's public works functions in a new SMMA Maintenance Facility. This site will need to be adequately buffered from adjacent non-Park property and will allow for most traffic to access the maintenance facility directly from the outside without entering the Park.



## Legend

- Park Center District
- Events District
- Recreation District
- Natural District
- Newly Acquired Property
- Lakes

August 15, 2005

# GEORGIA'S STONE MOUNTAIN PARK PARK DISTRICTS

### **3. PRIVATIZATION AND THE LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

In 1998, SMMA entered into a long term public/private partnership with Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation (HFEC), a private business enterprise with an established track record in operating entertainment and recreation venues, to manage all commercial operations in the Park – lodging, attractions, retail food, merchandise, and special events. Per the terms of that agreement, SMMA now supervises the lease with HFEC and retains the right to review and approve any proposed new development to insure compatibility and consistency with the Park's goals. SMMA also provides public safety, public works, historical and environmental education services within the Park and maintains the Natural District.

On September 18, 2000, SMMA approved the "Stone Mountain Park Long Range Plan" submitted by its Lessee, HFEC. SMMA determined at that time that the HFEC plan was consistent with the 1992 Master Plan; however, some exceptions, guidance and comments were noted. That approved plan is made a part of the 2005 Master Plan with the following conditions applying:

- Nothing in the plan indicates that free and easy access by the general public to the Memorial Lawn for viewing the carving will be restricted. However, it must be stated as a guiding principle that this free and easy access will in no way be restricted.
- Nothing in the plan indicates that pedestrian access through the Park Center District will be restricted. However, it must be stated as a guiding principle that pedestrian access through the Park Center District must be maintained both on the Cherokee Trail and on sidewalks so that a continuous walking trail is maintained around the mountain.
- The "Animal Exhibits" area in the Park Center Plan must be designed with appropriate buffers so as to minimize the visual impact on visitors entering the Park on Jefferson Davis Drive. The design of the "River Front Landing" must show this same concern for its visual impact from the road and the lake. A forested buffer area of a width to be determined by SMMA after further study must be maintained.
- Any development must accommodate any special plant populations in the area. The only identified area of concern within the proposed plan is the area on both sides of Carillon Drive just east of John B. Gordon Drive, an area designated as a preservation area.
- In the Recreation/Resort District, the placement of "Golf Villas" adjacent to The Commons is appropriate but the location of the water park in the primitive camping area on the lake across from Evergreen Conference Center and Resort raises concerns. If the water park is located in this area, great attention must be paid to adequately buffering it so that it will not negatively impact Evergreen and the quiet enjoyment of the lake.

- It is accepted that the amount of retail in a location will be driven by the market. However, the type of retail must be governed by the theme of the area that the retail operation is in.
- Whether they are described as “indoor roller coasters” or “indoor adventure rides,” the acceptability of this type of attraction is contingent upon the demonstrated capability to house such an attraction in an acceptable location with an acceptable building profile and façade so as not to create an “amusement park” atmosphere.
- All new or redeveloped parking areas must be landscaped with trees and shrubs to reduce the impact of large, open paved areas.
- Every effort should be made to preserve existing trees and other vegetation. Where preservation is not possible, the Lessee shall follow its corporate policy of planting two trees for each tree removed.
- Whenever it becomes necessary to relocate any existing public picnic area, such relocation shall not result in a concentration of public picnic areas in one location.
- While the narrative content of the plan is specifically excluded from the approval process, there are some items that must be commented upon. “Rooftop seating for the Laser Show...on top of the existing Memorial Hall building” is not acceptable and is not in keeping with the character of this building. “A small theater to be incorporated into the existing space at the top of the Mountain” is not acceptable even if it is used for nature programming because it is not in keeping with SMMA’s goal of maintaining a low level of organized activity at the top of the Mountain.

SMMA’s principal accomplishments since privatization in 1998 can be summarized as follows:

- Launched an environmental education program by hiring two additional environmental educators and renovating Confederate Hall as an education and exhibit center.
- Improved visitor safety by replacing the safety fence around the top of the Mountain, adding safety rails above the Halfway House and installing 20 emergency call boxes in remote locations.
- Improved the Park’s internal road system by repaving Stonewall Jackson Drive from the Main Gate to Evergreen; raising granite curbs to restore their storm water and traffic channeling capacities; as well as reconstructing and providing improved access to the Gristmill/Covered Bridge/Quarry Exhibit areas.
- Renegotiated the lease with HFEC, preserving the financial integrity of SMMA and adding the Georgia Tennis Foundation to operate the tennis facility.



- Renovated and stabilized the former Olympic archery/cycling site as a songbird habitat.
- Demolished outdated structures in the Natural District, including the prison, fishing hut, pedestrian bridge at the old Wildlife Trails and the Whistlestop Restaurant.
- Improved the walkup trail by constructing a new restroom and entrance plaza at the trailhead near Confederate Hall.
- Re-roofed the Covered Bridge and repaired deteriorated structural members.
- Improved the Children's Playground by constructing a dedicated and separated grilling (cooking) area, construction of a new restroom, and relocating Robert E. Lee Boulevard so that the parking lot is directly adjacent to playground.
- Added approximately 100 acres to the Park through acquisition of adjacent parcels:
- Built the History of Quarrying Exhibit – "Raising a Ledge: Stone Mountain Quarrymen – The Granite Industry".
- Completed the nomination of the former quarrying areas and the Mountain itself to the National Register of Historic Places and obtained State approval of the nomination. (Federal approval is still pending - this is normally a formality after State approval.)
- Worked with the PATH Foundation to bring the Atlanta/Stone Mountain bike path into the Park utilizing the out of service railroad track connection on the west side of the Park near the greenhouse.
- Worked with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation to relocate the Cobb House back to Athens.
- Improved organizational infrastructure through the purchase of a new fire truck, relocated the public safety boat dock and shelter to a more serviceable area and created a central record storage area.

The major investments by HFEC in the first five years of their lease included a \$35 million addition in Park Center called "Crossroads", a themed entertainment, shopping and food service/dining attraction modeled after an old Southern town; and an 85-room expansion of the Evergreen Conference Center and Resort at a cost of \$6 million.

Activities to date of both SMMA and HFEC have been consistent with the 1992 Master Plan. Also, the current mission and goals remain consistent with the 1992 Master Plan.

## 4. MASTER PLAN REFINEMENTS

The 2005 Amended Master Plan continues with the theme of *Three Legacies: Nature, Recreation, and History*. It recognizes that Stone Mountain Park continues to serve as a central park for a large urban area and the rest of the State, as well as a destination or stop over resort for out of state visitors. SMMA has a legislative mandate to maintain the Park as a memorial to the Confederacy and a place of public recreation.

As mentioned previously in Section 2, the central organizational element of the Stone Mountain Park Master Plan since 1992 has been the designation of four primary land use districts within the Park. Within these districts, the character and intensity of land uses and vehicular access is zoned to be consistent with the underlying themes and land use policies for each district. Each district consists of a careful balance of uses, which combine to create the district's unique quality and character. All proposed amendments to the 1992 Master Plan are in accordance with the established themes and land use policies for the district in which they are to be located and recognize the changes in operational structure that were introduced in 1998 when the lease with HFEC was initiated. Proposed programmatic elements are briefly described in the following paragraphs and their locations illustrated in the Long Range Plan on the following page.

### A. Park Center District:

The Park Center District, as the name suggests, is located at the general geographic center of the Park at the north base of Stone Mountain. It is, and will remain, the principal activity center for the Park and accommodates most of the Park's higher intensity active use attractions, restaurants, retail shops and museums, all of which are permitted uses in the district. Park Center also functions as the primary arrival area and transportation hub for Park visitors. The main train station and the main parking lot(s) are, and will continue to be, located in Park Center.

HFEC is primarily responsible for physical facilities in the Park Center District. Their Long Range Plan, which was approved in September 2000, defines several new, upgraded or expanded attractions within the district. In summary, they are:

- Further expansion of the entertainment, shopping and food service opportunities in the recently constructed Crossroads Village complex west of Memorial Hall.
- Development of a "Gateway to the South" complex east of Memorial Hall to serve as a visitor introduction to the wonders of Stone Mountain Park and to the region known as "The South". This complex will incorporate state of the art technology as well as hands-on learning experiences.
- The existing Marina and Riverboat operations and associated facilities will be upgraded and expanded to focus on the story of life and travel on Southern Rivers. A variety of entertainment, dining and shopping venues will be included.
- Upgrading and expansion of the Stone Mountain Inn themed in a Southern Estate style.





- Existing Facilities
- Proposed Facilities
- Proposed Parking

# GEORGIA'S STONE MOUNTAIN PARK

## LONG RANGE PLAN



- The story of Southern wilderness will be told in the Spirit of Southern Wilderness attraction with a variety of environmental and ecological interactive experiences. Plants, birds and animals that are, or were, native to the South will be featured. This attraction is proposed north of the Antebellum Plantation between John B. Gordon Drive and Stone Mountain Lake.
- A “Southern Village” attraction comprised of an expanded and reprogrammed Antebellum Plantation will tell the story of rural life as it was in the historic South.
- Expansion of the main central parking area is proposed west of Memorial Hall and Crossroads to accommodate anticipated increased parking demands. This will necessitate relocation of the Triangle Picnic Area northward into the Events District on Old Hugh Howell Road near the North Gate.

During the past twelve years, several program elements that were proposed in the 1992 Master Plan have been eliminated after undergoing detailed feasibility and cost analysis. These include the realignment of the Stone Mountain Railroad through the heart of the Park Center District near the Antebellum Plantation area as well as the removal of the Skylift from the Mountain’s north face.

#### **B. Natural District:**

The Natural District includes Stone Mountain, the lakes and the majority of the Park’s relatively undisturbed woodlands. The intent of this district is to define a zone, which includes most of the Park’s natural resource assets, that can be managed and preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. No commercial development and no development designed to promote active organized recreational activity are permitted. Passive recreational activities such as hiking, walking, cycling, fishing, birding, scout group camping, etc. are encouraged. Support facilities such as restrooms, educational exhibits, trails and simple shelters and basic comfort/maintenance amenities are permitted but must be designed to have minimal impact on the natural environment.

Planned improvements in this district are limited to a new SMMA Maintenance Compound to be constructed on the former prison site located on the western boundary of the Park. Any other planned improvements will be related to maintenance and enhancement of existing assets, as well as passive recreation facilities such as trails, educational facilities and utilities/infrastructure, etc.

Significant 1992 Master Plan Natural District program elements that have been deleted or altered due to feasibility and/or cost related issues include the proposed incline railway to the Mountain top, the Olympic rowing course on Stone Mountain Lake, and relocation of the Children’s Playground to Park Center. Also, the 1992 Plan provision to close Robert E. Lee Boulevard on the south side of the Mountain from Confederate Hall to the Grist Mill area to all vehicular traffic except for emergency and service uses has been modified due to the success of the current alternative configuration (one-way vehicular circulation

confined to a single lane with the remaining lane dedicated to bicycle/pedestrian usage).

#### **C. Recreation District:**

The Recreation District is located on the east side of Stone Mountain Lake. Uses within this district include 36-holes of golf, the campground, Evergreen Conference Center and Resort and the Tennis Stadium and Courts. The Stone Mountain Airport property in this district was acquired to provide parking for events in the tennis stadium. The Association has no plans to develop the airport property for active recreational use. However, a private party may develop the area in the future as a sports/recreational complex.

HFEC's long range improvement plans in this district include the proposed addition of rustic rental cabins in the vicinity of the Campground/Golf Course area. Also included in the area near the Stone Mountain Lake dam is a Southern wilderness themed water park featuring lazy rivers, slides and unique back woods water play elements.

#### **D. Events District:**

The Events District is located west of Park Center on both sides of Old Hugh Howell Road west of its intersection with Robert E. Lee Boulevard. Primary uses in this district include major festival events, picnicking, corporate outings, active recreation areas, warehousing/storage, and maintenance/service facilities including SMMA's public safety operations. Future development within this district should conform to the active nature of the existing uses.

HFEC has proposed constructing a new Special Events Building in the vicinity of the north end of the Events Meadow. This structure will support existing events and expand the Park's ability to host a wider variety of events.

## 5. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

As in 1992, the principal transportation and circulation challenge at Stone Mountain Park remains the parking and traffic congestion demands associated with major events and festivals such as the Saturday night laser show, Yellow Daisy Festival and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. In order to address these persistent and pervasive issues in a comprehensive manner, SMMA and HFEC jointly commissioned a professional Traffic and Pedestrian Circulation, Parking and Way-Finding Study. The purpose of the study was to define the underlying problems that cause or contribute to these long-standing issues and to develop recommendations for programmatic and physical solutions.

The results of this study are reported in the "Traffic Circulation & Parking Study Final Report" by Day Wilburn Associates, Inc., dated December 2004. That report is incorporated into this "Master Plan Amendment Report" by reference and significant elements are summarized in narrative and graphic form in this section.

It is a basic principle of the analysis that the main Park entrance will remain the east entrance from the Stone Mountain Freeway (Main Gate) and that the North Gate should be modified to help it better function as a Park exit. The emphasis on this circulation pattern is to keep major traffic movements oriented to the Freeway and away from adjacent neighborhoods.

The basic goals of the study were to make the Park more user friendly, preserve the Park's atmosphere, take into account multiple uses (events, picnics, venues, etc.), identify non-capital intensive improvements and make sure the plan is grounded in reality.

There are specific improvements recommended in the study that are designed to correct particular bottlenecks. Three of these are recommended as priorities in the revised Master Plan. These are as follows:

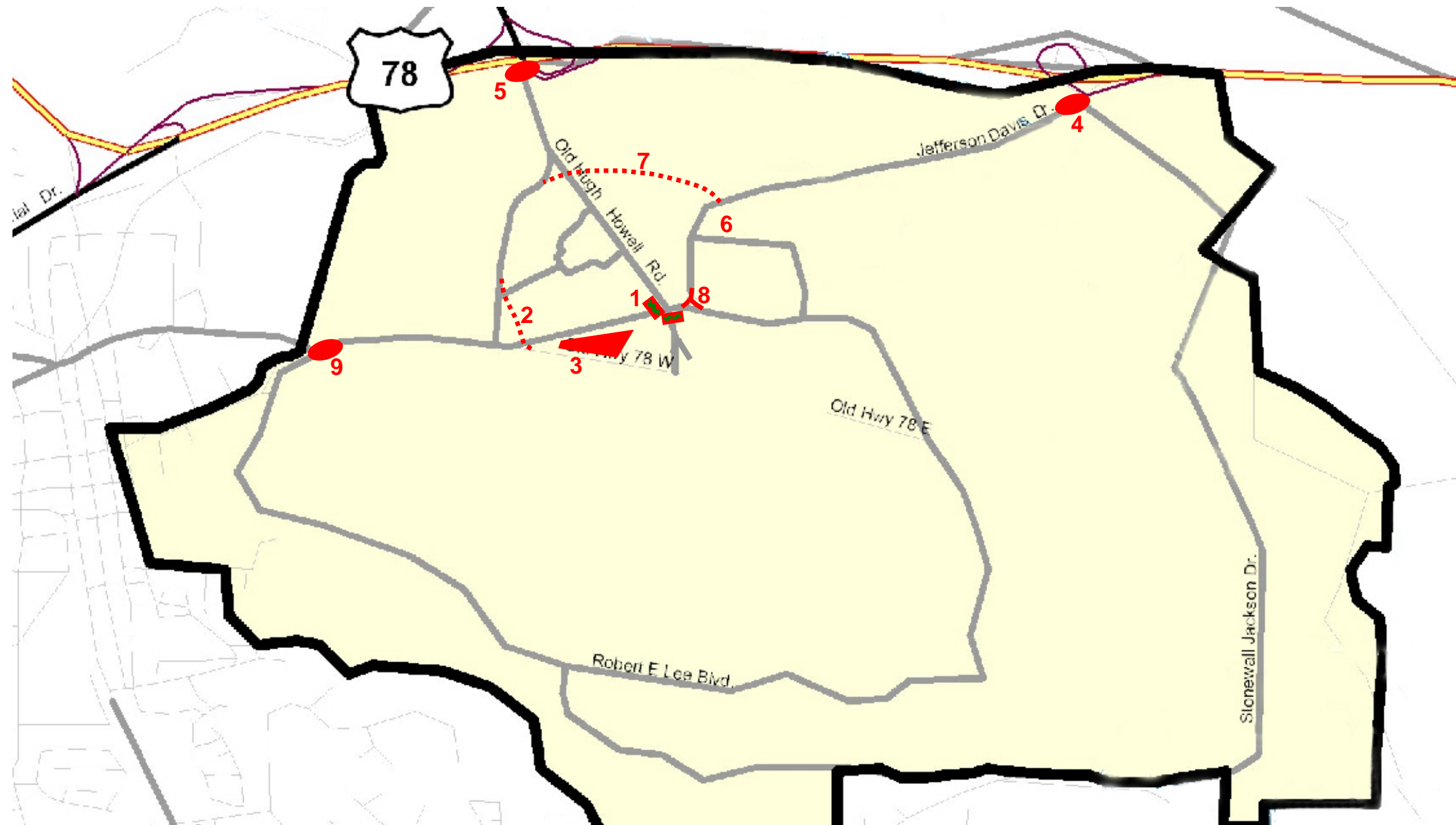
1. Correct the pedestrian/vehicular conflict at the Robert E. Lee/Old Hugh Howell Road intersection. Pedestrian tunnels have been recommended but the alternative of a pedestrian bridge over the intersection will also be evaluated.
2. Increase capacity of Old Hugh Howell Road as an exit by making both lanes into exit lanes.
3. Improve the exiting capacity of the Main Gate by rearranging ticket booths and improving lane markings.

Operational changes at the West Gate are not considered a high priority and are reserved for future consideration. The recommendation for the reconfiguration of the Jefferson Davis/Robert E. Lee intersection from a "Y" to a "T" intersection is also reserved for future consideration based on the impact of the implementation of other improvements.

Of the “Park-Wide Improvements” discussed in the study, the following are recommended as priorities in the amended Master Plan:

1. Construct a parking lot in the Triangle Picnic area. Boundaries of the parking lot would include a sixty-foot setback (buffer) from Robert E. Lee Boulevard and using the existing creek bed as the eastern boundary.
2. Construct a new parking lot north of John B. Gordon Drive at its intersection with Jefferson Davis Drive.
3. Construct a new connecting road from the intersection of Old 78 Highway with Robert E. Lee Boulevard northward to intersect with the existing Service Drive.
4. Wider sidewalks, as recommended in the study, should be constructed as resources allow.

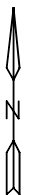
As recommended in the study, a connecting roadway between Jefferson Davis Drive and Old Hugh Howell Road, south of the southern “finger” of Stone Mountain Lake and lying along the northern boundary of the Events Area and the Public Safety Building, should be reserved for future consideration based on traffic demand.



## Legend

1. Pedestrian Separation
2. Connecting Roadway - Robert E. Lee Blvd.
3. New Parking Lot
4. Main Gate Improvements
5. North Gate Improvements
6. New Parking Lot -  
(Not Approved by SMMA Board 8/15/05).
7. Connecting Roadway - Jefferson Davis Dr.
8. Intersection Improvement
9. West Gate Improvement

Source:  
Traffic Circulation &  
Parking Study by  
Day Wilburn Associates, Inc.



Not To Scale



## **6. MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

### **A. Summary Management Statement**

The 2005 Master Plan for Stone Mountain Park continues to respect the inherent value of the site's existing natural resources and assumes a responsible managing role of land stewardship by the Park's administrators. Management of the site's natural resources reflects a commitment to long term restoration of those areas that have been disturbed, as well as conservation and preservation of the remaining natural areas as intact as possible. Development must be planned and contained within the capacity of the land itself, in order to insure that the site's natural resources will remain as a legacy for the enjoyment of future generations.

### **B. Summary Management Recommendations**

1. Maintain the integrity of the land as a whole:
  - Pursue a land use planning policy that is consistent with the preservation of the sites existing natural resources, lakes, woodlands, protected habitats and Stone Mountain.
  - Avoid development that allows further fragmentation of the site's natural resources.
  - Avoid planting of non-native ornamentals within the Natural District.
  - Be stringent about plans for eradication of invasive plant species and prevention of spread of these exotics.
  - Manage introduced animal populations to prevent impact on native species.
2. Manage forest tracts to preserve their diversity and longevity:
  - Utilize a professional forestry consultant as needed to assist in forest assets management.
3. Continue to inform the visiting public with interpretive information about the Park's natural resources and history:
  - Continue to increase public awareness and appreciation of the Park surroundings as a living environment.
  - Continue to enhance and renew the Park's educational endeavors-strengthen programs, interpretive signage, tours and classes.
  - Encourage public involvement in, and support of, the Park's conservation through a volunteer/docent program.
4. Guide any rehabilitative management of areas eroded or damaged by heavy recreational use.
5. Continue to protect those populations and habitats that are especially fragile, i.e. vernal pools, flatrocks and associated species habitat areas:
  - Monitor the condition of protective measures; provide enforcement, and on-going monitoring of areas.
  - Make the public aware of the importance of these areas and species through the Park's interpretive program.
  - Be aware of ornamental plantings, which can impact these fragile areas (Species like Honeysuckle, Privet and Mahonia should be excluded from future plantings).

- Abide by the February 23, 1998 resolution regarding protection measures of the Fairy Shrimp habitat and support of activities promoting the recovery of the species.

### **C. Vegetation Management Recommendations**

Outlined below are management recommendations for the areas illustrated on the Natural Resources Map on the following page.

#### **1. *PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT/PROTECTED SITES:***

Following is a summary of recommendations for the management and treatment of endangered populations or species of concern or habitats requiring special protection, particularly on the rock outcrop or flatrock areas:

##### *Survey of Critical Species/Populations:*

Survey and map the Park to insure protection of areas identified by the 1996 inventory as habitats including populations of threatened or endangered species. Regularly map and inventory the Park (every 5 years), for the presence of invasive species to guide management and control of these exotics and prevent impact on populations of special plants.

##### *Management for Preservation:*

Provide ongoing long-term observation of communities supporting Amphianthus pusillus and Isotetes melanospora, granite outcrop communities/species, flatrock habitat/species and relic mature Piedmont forest types. Populations should be monitored for change and disturbance.

##### *Protective Measures:*

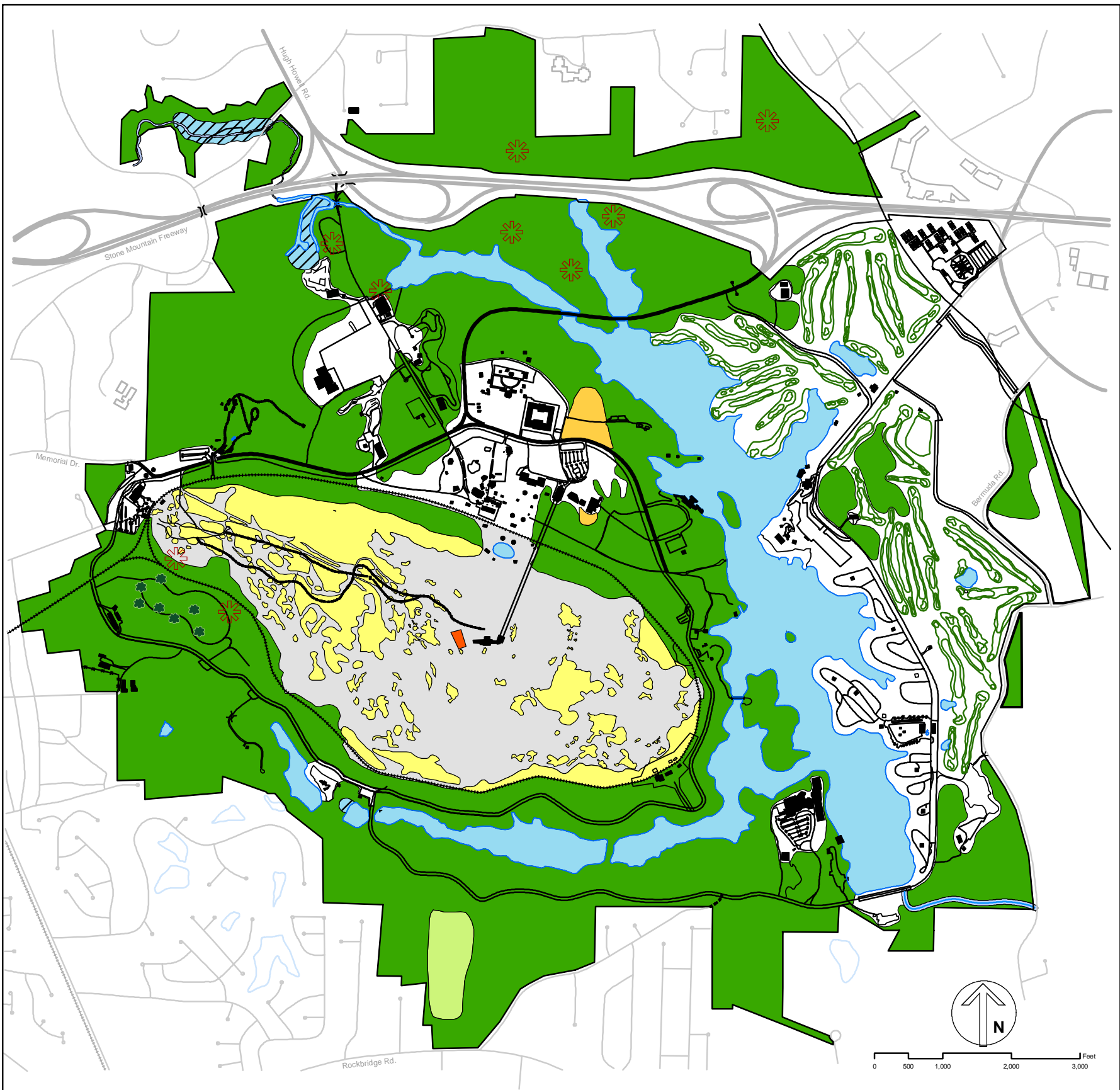
Preservation sites including endangered species should continue to be protected as outlined in the federal Endangered Species Act. Fences should be maintained and appropriate signage should be added to inform the public. Any new interpretive trails should be designed to channel and control visitor movements around protected sites to help lessen impacts on more sensitive areas.

##### *Enforcement:*

Preservation sites should be monitored and patrolled by Park security on a regular basis. Penalties may be necessary to enforce regulations, prohibiting littering, fire building, graffiti, removal of rare plants or other destructive activities.

##### *Interpretation/Education:*

Continue to work rare and endangered species and the importance of biodiversity into education programs. Additional interpretation could be added on the following topics: Indian and prehistoric settlements, wildflowers, butterflies and mammals.



**Legend**

- Stone Mountain
  
- Second Growth Forests - The woodlands, which cover the majority of the Piedmont province in Georgia, are composed of mixed hardwoods with Loblolly Pine. Several species of oak and hickory are the dominant hardwoods. Here, Sweet Gum, Sourwood and Tulip Poplar are among the associates. Dogwood, Persimmon, Bigleaf Magnolia and sapling hardwoods form the understorey. Most of the mature hardwoods are not likely to be much more than 50 to 70 years old, with some isolated mature trees over 100 to 150 years old.
  
- Mature Rock Outcrop - The much larger portion of vegetation growing on the outcrop is xeric in character, adapting to extreme climatic conditions. GADNR includes several species of concern.
  
- Flatrock Outcrop Communities - At the base of the mountain are areas of exposed granite that support unique vegetation. Yellow daisies are commonly found growing here. There are two flatrock areas designated by GADNR. They are located below the skylift pavillion and across from Stone Mountain Inn.
  
- Lakes - Created in the late 50's and early 60's, the 392 acres of lakes offer recreational and scenic opportunities to Stone Mountain users.
  
- Creeks - Stone Mountain Creek and several of its tributaries flow into the park from the north and west, and exit below the main dam at the southeast corner.
  
- Wetlands - Wetlands provide valuable functions such as storm drainage prevention, flood control, wildlife habitat, filtration and protection of public/private water supply. Regulation is administered by U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Wetlands are defined by soils, hydrology and vegetation.
  
- Endangered Species - The vernal pools found at the top of Stone Mountain are known to contain two aquatic species, *Amphianthlis pusillus* and *Isoetes melanospora*, which are listed on both state and federal endangered species lists.
  
- Songbird Habitat - Meadowlands maintained as an early successional songbird habitat area covered by wildflower, grasses and seed crops interspersed with scattered small trees and shrubs.
  
- Archeological Sites - These sites reveal the presence of American Indians at Stone Mountain as many as 10,000 years ago. Artifacts from Archaic and Woodland period Indians have been found in the park.
  
- Old Growth Trees - Isolated specimens of Piedmont forest trees more than 120 years old.

August 15, 2005

## 2. RESTORATION MANAGEMENT:

### a. *Recreational Areas:*

Some of the most heavily used recreational areas within the natural district are the nature trails. The nature trails must continue to be maintained and managed for the safety and accessibility of Park visitors. Management should include keeping the trails clean and free of large trees. Simple structures (bridges, boardwalks, stairs) are necessary in some areas to stabilize and repair damaged and inaccessible areas of the nature trails. Recommendations are included on a Park trail maintenance plan and these should be undertaken in addition to routine monitoring of trail conditions. New trails may be developed to improve access to the Park by the general public only when existing trails are effectively maintained and staff can commit to building and maintaining new trails. The “no bikes” rule on nature trails should continue to be enforced by Park public safety staff.

Rehabilitative management of areas eroded or damaged by heavy recreational use shall be guided by SMMA. Areas, which may need restoration, include campgrounds, picnic areas and Memorial Lawn. SMMA will assist HFEC with any plans to correct areas of severe erosion, soil compaction and loss of vegetation. Erosion control and revegetation methods will be suggested by SMMA and may include periods of rest for some overused areas to allow them to regenerate. Prior to any changes or redesign of permanent ornamental plantings, review will take place and recommendations made to include appropriate native species.

## 3. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT:

### a. *Managed Forests:*

Through careful management practices, the existing Piedmont forests should be preserved as one of the site's prime natural resources. As such, the managed forests are to be maintained primarily as conservation areas with only low levels of passive recreational uses permissible. The following summarizes management recommendations pertaining to the forested areas, as indicated on the management plan:

- Maintain forested areas intact, avoiding further fragmentation – where possible relocate or eliminate incompatible recreational uses, reforest/reconsolidate land use.
- Include a forestry consultant in decisions made by education, management and maintenance staff regarding woodland management.
- Protect soils/vegetation from damage or destruction (i.e. soil compaction/erosion, tree losses) through a moderated site use policy.
- Enforce regulations prohibiting vehicles or equipment without special authorization.

- Allow forested areas to mature to a climax Oak – Hickory hardwood association.
- Encourage a diversified age/species composition and well stratified vegetation from the canopy to ground layer.
- Remove or control exotic/invasive species especially where damaging the growth of native populations. Invasive species of concern in the Park that present a current threat include: Kudzu, English Ivy, Chinese and Japanese Privet, and Eurasian Water-Milfoil. Other, smaller populations of invasive species with potential to impact native plants in the Park include: Japanese Honeysuckle, Korean Lespedeza, Chinese Tallowtree, Tree of Heaven, Princess Tree, Wisteria, Mahonia, Bradford Pear, Nandina, Mimosa, White Mulberry, Periwinkle, Autumn Olive.
- Selectively thin edge areas to improve visual aesthetics and enhance wildlife populations. This may include removal of dense scrub along road edges, improving views down to lake edges, and other selected vistas or the creations of small glade openings.
- Removal of deadwood should be limited to trees with harmful diseases, insect infestations, or trees that are otherwise potentially hazardous to public safety.

*b. Buffer Lands:*

The buffer lands include mainly forested areas around the perimeter of the property, but also undeveloped parcels outside the main site. They would not receive any regular maintenance treatment with the exception of emergency maintenance in situations that might be potentially dangerous to public safety. Around the outer edge of the property, they serve an important function as a buffer zone both to screen and enclose the site. (These outer property margins should be a minimum of 150 to 200 feet wide). Maintaining dense barriers of scrub thicket vegetation and fencing may control access to these areas. Since these lands are contiguous with much of the managed areas, they serve as a significant reserve of land, helping to preserve the overall character of the site.

*c. Songbird Habitat:*

Maintenance is necessary to ensure the preservation of the early successional meadow and wildlife food plantings of the Songbird Habitat. The nature trail will also need attention to remain accessible to Park guests. Mowing of the spring and winter fields should be scheduled bi-yearly after species go to seed. An extension of the songbird habitat trail should be completed and will explore the edge and woodland habitat surrounding the meadows. Maintenance of a small water feature to be added to the area will also be necessary. An additional bird viewing platform and seating area for education programs are services that could also be provided within the Songbird Habitat.

## D. Vegetation Inventory: Summary Field Survey

### 1. STONE MOUNTAIN OUTCROP:

The vegetation of the Stone Mountain outcrop itself can be broadly categorized into three groups:

The Vernal Pool Species, colonizing the shallow pits in the granite surface.

The Herbaceous and Woody Plant Community, including lichens and mosses that vegetate the largest portion of the Mountain's surface.

The Ornamental Landscape, introduced to enhance the buildings and structures.

#### a. *Vernal Pools*

The vernal pools, locally referred to as solution pits or pools, are an extremely restricted habitat and likewise the species that inhabit them are highly specialized. The pools found at the top of Stone Mountain are known to contain two aquatic species, Amphianthus pusillus and Isoetes melanospora that are listed on both state and federal lists under endangered status. Both species are small and not easily apparent to the untrained eye. Amphianthus is 4-8 mm long, only found during the growing season when the pools are filled with water. In the summer, when the pools dry up, the plants enter a dormant state, disappearing into the mud or sediments. These plants should continue to be protected as mandated by federal law. A sign with interpretive information could be provided to explain the significances of the vernal pools habitats and inform visitors about their vulnerability to human impacts and how they can help protect them.

#### b. *Herbaceous and Woody Plant Community*

The much larger portion of vegetation growing on the outcrops is likewise xeric in character, adapted to the severe climatic conditions, i.e. drought, extreme hot and cold temperatures, and desiccating winds. Succulent, scaly or diminished leaves and dwarfed growth habits are examples of characteristics that typify this vegetation. A wide range of species has become established in the depressions, pockets and cracks, wherever the soil and sediments have accumulated. "Islands" of vegetation develop on the rock surface with canopy trees reaching only 25 feet at maturity. A typical association of vegetation forming such an "island" might consist of the following species:

- Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
- Eastern Red Cedar (*Junipers virginiana*)
- Winged Elm (*Ulmus alata*)
- Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)
- Wild Cherry (*Prunus* spp.)
- Scrub and Georgia Oaks (*Quercus prinus*, *Q. georgiana*)
- Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)
- Sumac (*Rhus copallina*)
- St. Johns Wort (*Hypericum frondosum*)
- Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium abroreum*)

Confederate Daisy (*Helianthus porteri*)  
Blazing Star (*Liatris graminifolia*)  
Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum montanum*)  
Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*)  
Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*)  
Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia compressa*)  
Red Moss (*Diamorpha smallii*)  
Moss species- Star Moss, Hairy Cap Moss  
Lichen species

Lichens and mosses, as well as, the “islands” of vegetation described above are also subject to damage by pedestrian trampling and vehicular traffic. This is especially evident along the tracks on the western slopes. Fortunately, extensive areas of this vegetation are already protected, because they are located behind the fence on the steeper slopes. The majority of the damage is occurring immediately alongside the walk-up trails and vehicle access route. Educational materials and signs can make guests aware of these sensitive areas and help protect them. Parallel to the main walk-up trail on the northwest side an extensive area has been indicated by the GADNR as including several species of concern. This and other areas noted should continue to be monitored carefully. As few hikers tend to stray significantly from the main trail into this scrub-type vegetation, the need to take additional protective measures is not critical.

c. *Ornamental Landscape*

The ornamental landscape plantings, which were used around the buildings at the top, are now overgrown and neglected. Many have declined in health and are not visually appealing. Ornamental plantings at the top of Stone Mountain should be phased out completely.

2. *BASE OF STONE MOUNTAIN:*

The vegetation at the base of the Mountain is categorized into three groups, excluding wetlands sites:

Second Growth Forests of mixed hardwoods and conifers.  
Flatrock Communities, on exposed granite surfaces at or near the base of the Mountain.  
Ornamental Landscape Plantings, concentrated around the main Park attractions.

a. *Second Growth Forests*

The Woodlands that cover the majority of the Piedmont plain surrounding Stone Mountain are composed primarily of mixed hardwoods with Loblolly Pine. Several species of Oaks (White, Black, Red, Post, and Southern Red) and Hickories (Pignut and White) are the dominant hardwoods. Sweet Gum, Sourwood and Tulip trees are among the more common associates. Dogwood, Persimmon, Bigleaf Magnolias and sapling hardwoods form the understory. On

the drier upland slopes Oak, Hickory, and Pine prevails. Along streambeds and wetter floodplains a much wider diversity of deciduous species is found, including Red Maple, Sweet Gum, Black Gum, Tulip Trees, and Water Oaks. Mature Loblolly Pine may sometimes dominate in small stands, but more typically occurs as a codominant or associate with other hardwoods. The Loblolly Pine is characterized in the natural community as an early successional species. The pine tends to seed readily along open edges, in abandoned fields or on poor soils of cleared sites, such as the borrow pit south of Venable Lake. As the Pines mature, the hardwoods growing in the understory eventually shade out and replace the pine canopy. Oak and Hickory are considered the regional climax type forest, though only relics of this original forest exist today.

Reports indicate that major clear cutting of forest around Stone Mountain occurred through the 1940's. As a result, most of the mature hardwoods are not likely to be much more than 60 to 70 years old. As mentioned earlier, small isolated pockets of mature stands (over 100 to 150 years old) may still be found. At Stone Mountain, the GADNR has noted two mature stands characteristic of the Piedmont, a dry Oak – Pine-Hickory stand around the base of Stone Mountain throughout much of the Natural District and an example of a wetter mesic forest type. This second type is located along a sandy streambed adjacent to the Mountain's north-facing slope. The Mountain itself may afford some protection from exposure to wind and extreme temperatures. The runoff from the rock surface supplies a considerable amount of water to this area. The mature stand is dominated by Sweet Gum that is particularly tall. Tulip Trees, Red Maples, and including Dogwood, Silverbell, Persimmon, Magnolias as well as shrubs and Oaks are some of the other associate species present. The understory is varied herbaceous species.

While stressed conditions were observed among stands where recreational uses are heaviest, much of the second growth forests appear healthy. There were few signs of major tree losses resulting from insect or diseases or other causes. Although Kudzu vines and other exotic species have invaded small sections of woods, they are not beyond control. Individuals from the Georgia Forestry Commission who regularly patrol the area feel the healthy condition of the forested areas may be attributed to the diversity of species present.

#### b. *Flatrock Communities*

At the base of the Mountain are several areas of exposed granite rock ledge, referred to as "flatrock". The perimeters, pockets and cracks of these rocks often support xeric type vegetation very similar to that found at the top and sides of the Mountain. At certain times of the year these areas are particularly colorful and attractive. Several showy wildflowers, such as, the yellow Confederate Daisy and purple Blazing Stars are commonly found growing here. Like the areas at the top of the outcrop, pedestrians and vehicles that may cross over these areas, inadvertently trampling the vegetation, threaten the flatrock habitat. There are several flatrock areas located off the northwest sides of the Mountain. Two such areas designated by the GADNR are located below the Skyline Pavilion and across from the Stone Mountain Inn adjacent to Carillon Road. Protective measures such as fencing or a less obtrusive type of barrier may be necessary to prevent or limit access to these flatrocks.



### *c. Ornamental Landscape*

Ornamental plantings have been used to enhance the appearance of key locations in the main Park area at: the East/West Gate, Foundations and grounds around major attractions, Memorial Hall Plaza, Memorial Lawn, Confederate Hall, Plantation, Pavilions and Parking lots and Major intersections. SMMA will guide any management or replacement of these ornamental plantings to ensure appropriate plant choices and landscape design.

## **E. Natural District**

### *1. THEME AND CONCEPT:*

The Natural District encompasses approximately 65% of the Park's total area and includes the Mountain in its entirety as well as the vast majority of the areas bordering the southern, western and northern Park boundaries. As the name implies, the underlying theme behind this district is the natural resource systems within Stone Mountain Park. Many of these resources are unique to granite outcrop ecosystems, and several are included in state and federal rare and endangered species lists. Also, large, relatively undisturbed natural areas are becoming increasingly rare in the rapidly urbanizing metropolitan Atlanta region. This protected district will insure that the significant natural resources within the district will be preserved and, where needed, enhanced for the long term enjoyment of current and future generations of Park users.

The conceptual focus of the plan for this district is the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the Park's natural resource systems while still allowing controlled access to these areas for low impact uses. Central to that concept is the permanent removal and/or relocation of as many existing vehicle intensive uses and man-made structures as possible. Old structures no longer in use, such as the old metal buildings behind the halfway house on the Mountain should be removed.

### *2. PROGRAM AND PHASING:*

The western gateway to the Natural District is Confederate Hall. It has been converted into an interpretive center/gateway which houses science exhibits, a theater for interpretive films and an information center. An interpretive area is to remain in the building at the top of the Mountain in order to provide information on the environments and inhabitants of Stone Mountain. The building serves as a shelter during inclement weather, provides limited comfort facilities as well as houses the Skylift terminal, machinery room, and a small Park Police radio antenna. Visitor access will be restricted to those areas of the upper plateau that do not contain rare or endangered species habitat. Outdoor interpretive displays will also be provided at strategic overlook points.

Existing Park maintenance shops, warehouses, and the greenhouse located south of the Mountain will be removed. Those functions (excluding greenhouse) will be

relocated into new facilities to be constructed by the services warehouses on Jeb Stuart Rd. Railroad shops and sidings will remain in their current location.

The Wildlife Trails area is to be renovated into a limited use outdoor classroom and research area managed by the Confederate Hall Education Center staff.

Gateways to the Natural District will also occur near the Grist Mill at the east end of the Mountain and in the vicinity of the Evergreen Conference Center.

### *3. CIRCULATION AND PARKING:*

Park visitor access into the heart of the Natural District will be provided by several methods including walking, biking, skating or driving on Robert E Lee or Stonewall Jackson Rd into the Natural District and riding the train.

Parking is provided at Confederate Hall. Parking is also provided at the east side of the Mountain at the existing Grist Mill Pavilion parking lot. A small parking area will remain at the Stonewall Jackson Drive gateway in order to facilitate limited hiker, bicyclist, and fisherperson access from the south side of the Park.

One lane of the existing Robert E. Lee Boulevard roadbed on the south side of the Mountain will remain for exclusive use by bicycle and occasional Park Police, emergency, and service vehicles. The existing paved walkway around the Mountain base and along Stonewall Jackson Drive will be maintained. Existing walking trails through woodland areas will be upgraded, improved markings and interpretive signage provided, and extended to the Confederate Hall gateway. The existing pedestrian pathway to the top of the Mountain will be maintained in its current location.

## **7. LONG RANGE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

SMMA is not responsible for providing capital improvements such as new attractions, retail facilities or lodging. Because of the privatization of the Park's commercial operations, the lessee (HFEC) now has this responsibility. However, SMMA is responsible for the basic infrastructure that supports the lessee's operations and for maintaining and improving the Natural District.

At the end of 2004, SMMA had cash assets of approximately \$20,000,000. This has accumulated over the years through an excess of revenue over expenditures. Due to the financial problems of the lessee, SMMA agreed to a rent reduction effective August 1, 2003, to last for five years. During this five-year period, SMMA is not projected to have an excess of revenue over expenditures but does anticipate being able to fully fund depreciation. This will leave SMMA in a strong cash flow position and will allow it to fund a capital improvements program of about \$27,000,000.

Significant capital projects have been completed in the past three years. Stonewall Jackson Drive, from the main gate to the Evergreen service drive, has been reconstructed. "Reconstruction" involved rebuilding the base of the road to accommodate truck traffic to Evergreen, a situation that was not anticipated when the road was first built. One hundred acres of vacant, adjacent property has been added to the Park. Confederate Hall has been renovated to house administrative offices on the second floor and an Education Center on the first floor. A large new restroom was built to accommodate persons walking up and/or around the Mountain and the plaza was rebuilt to provide an attractive "entrance room" to the Mountain.

Following is an annotated list of capital projects planned for the period 2005-2012. The assignment of a project to a particular year does not mean that it will actually be accomplished in that year. This is simply a target for planning purposes only. Each project will need to be further evaluated in sufficient detail in order to determine its design, utility and feasibility.

### **2005**

Lake Sewer Line Removal	\$1,250,000
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When Stone Mountain Lake was built in the 1960's, it covered a part of Highway 78 that passed through the middle of the Park at that time. There was an existing sewer line under the road that was left in place. It operates as a "force main," which means that sewage is pumped through it under pressure. This line needs to be relocated to reduce the potential environmental hazard.

Fencing/fencing repairs on Park Boundary	\$250,000
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The new property bought in the last three years needs to be incorporated into the Park's boundary fencing. In addition, the perimeter fencing is in need of repairs in many places due to damage by falling trees and holes caused by vandalism.

Property Acquisition (2005-2007) \$2,450,000

Property that is adjacent to the Park, undeveloped and available for purchase at a reasonable price will be evaluated for acquisition to increase the green space and natural beauty of the Park. A purchase option for approximately 32 acres of land that qualifies under the established criteria is pending, and three more parcels totaling about 82 acres have been identified as potential purchases over the next three years.

## **2006**

Storm Water System (2006-2007) \$1,200,000

Stone Mountain Park has 52 locations where storm water pipes cross public access roads. The pipes were installed in the early 1960's, a mix of concrete and corrugated metal. Over a two year cycle, we intend to repair or replace the entire system.

Upgrade/replace Emergency Communication System (2006-2007) \$1,500,000

The Park's current radio communication system was installed in 1986. It is outdated both by technology and physical wear.

Pedestrian Separation – Old Hugh Howell Rd./Robert E. Lee Blvd. (2006-2007) \$1,500,000

During heavy visitation periods and events at the Park, there are significant pedestrian/vehicular conflicts at the intersection of Robert E. Lee Boulevard and Old Hugh Howell Road. Pedestrian tunnels under, or bridges over the roadway are being evaluated in order to determine the best solution.

## **2007**

Playground Improvements \$150,000

The Children's Playground is a very popular facility and the aging equipment will need to be replaced.

## **2008 - 2012**

North Gate Connector \$1,500,000

A connector road to facilitate exiting traffic movement after major events is needed between Robert E. Lee Boulevard near the intersection of Old 78 Highway northward to intersect with the existing Service Drive.

Repave Roads \$2,000,000

All of the Park's roads except for the recently rebuilt Stonewall Jackson Drive need repaving.

Water/Sewer System Replacement \$10,000,000

The Park's water and sewer mains were installed over a long period of time on an "as needed" basis with no real planning for future expansion needs. There was very little attention paid to the standards for the pipes and fittings. The entire system has now been mapped and documented. The replacement system will be designed to accommodate future needs and will be installed to meet current standards. The proposed budget is to completely replace the water and sewer mains over a five-year period.

Lake Siltation Project \$3,000,000

Stone Mountain Lake was constructed in the early 1960's and since that time has been filling up with silt washed in from the fourteen square mile watershed that drains into the lake, primarily from the Mountain Industrial Boulevard and Smoke Rise areas. The proposed budget is for a three-year project to remove silt from the upper reaches of the lake starting in 2008.

New Public Works/Services Complex \$2,200,000

The Park's public works/services facilities are scattered in three locations within the Natural District. One central facility will be built at the old prison site. Its primary access will be from outside the Park in order to reduce vehicular traffic inside the Park. The old facilities will be removed from the Natural District.

## Proposed SMMA Capital Programs

*Rev. 7-11-05*

2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake Sewer Line Removal</li> <li>• Address Fencing / Fencing Repair on Park Boundary</li> <li>• Property Acquisition</li> </ul>	\$1,250,000 \$250,000 <u>\$650,000</u> \$2,150,000
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storm Water System Phase I</li> <li>• Upgrade Radio System</li> <li>• Pedestrian Separation - Hugh Howell/R.E. Lee</li> <li>• Property Acquisition</li> </ul>	\$600,000 \$1,000,000 \$750,000 <u>\$900,000</u> \$3,250,000
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground Improvements</li> <li>• Upgrade Radio System</li> <li>• Storm Water System Phase II</li> <li>• Pedestrian Separation - Hugh Howell/R.E. Lee</li> <li>• Property Acquisition</li> </ul>	\$150,000 \$500,000 \$600,000 \$750,000 <u>\$900,000</u> \$2,900,000
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Gate Connector</li> <li>• Repave Roads</li> <li>• Begin Replacement of Water/Sewer System (2008-2012)</li> <li>• Begin Program Addressing Lake Siltation</li> </ul>	\$1,500,000 \$2,000,000 \$2,000,000 <u>\$1,000,000</u> \$6,500,000
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water/Sewer System Replacement</li> <li>• Lake Siltation Project</li> </ul>	\$2,000,000 <u>\$1,000,000</u> \$3,000,000
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services Complex</li> <li>• Water/Sewer System Replacement</li> <li>• Lake Siltation Project</li> </ul>	\$2,200,000 \$2,000,000 <u>\$1,000,000</u> \$5,200,000
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water/Sewer System Replacement</li> </ul>	<u>\$2,000,000</u> \$2,000,000
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water/Sewer System Replacement</li> </ul>	<u>\$2,000,000</u> \$2,000,000
<i>2005 - 2012 TOTAL</i>		<u>\$27,000,000</u>