

Thompson Island Trail - Proposed Improvements

Proposed Trail Improvements:

- Follows existing alignment.
- 6' wide, approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long starting at trail head and ending just prior to Lewes/Rehoboth Canal.
- Surface hardened with stone topped with stone dust.
- Regraded (slightly raised) where necessary for drainage.

Proposed Boardwalk (Replaces existing short wooden structure):

- 6' wide, 130' long to span State wetlands.
- Deck height above marsh varies from 2 - 3 feet (higher than existing structure, less prone to flooding).
- Fiberglass grated deck for light penetration to wetlands plants below.
- Supported by preservative treated wood framing on galvanized steel helical anchors.
- Curbing along edge of boardwalk except where height above marsh exceeds 30" handrail is required. Handrail is wood framed with see-through wire mesh.
- Bench is proposed just south of boardwalk.

Proposed Boardwalk/Vista:

- Observation deck/viewing area (approx. 20' x 26').
- Upper and lower level deck. Upper level will allow person in wheelchair to enjoy scenic view without sight obstruction of safety rail, as their line of sight will be elevated above the top of rail.
- Treated wood deck & framing.
- Galvanized steel helical anchor supports.
- Handrail - Wood framed with see-through wire mesh.
- Observation deck is terminus of trail improvements.

Proposed 3-car stone parking lot (approx. 42' x 45'):

- For use by Park staff, rangers, and 14-passenger van for visits by special arrangement.
- Not for public use.
- 12-foot wide vehicular access road to parking lot; access restricted by bollards.
- Screened from neighbors by existing trees.

Community access connections:

- There appear to be nine existing "social trail" connections from the adjoining properties. Parks proposes to enhance 4 and close the other 5 connections. Based on input from the communities, the number and location of connections to remain could change.
- Enhanced community connections would consist of hardening the surface with stone (5' wide) and installing a section of split rail fence on either side to create a gateway effect. These improvements would end at Parks property line inside the woodline.

General Information:

- The trail construction will have no impact on trees because it follows the existing alignment and is only 6 feet wide (i.e. it stays within existing footprint). The parking lot construction avoids mature and significant trees.
- The boardwalk, by changing this section of trail from at-grade (where wetlands are trampled) to elevated boardwalk, results in overall reduction of impact to wetlands. In addition, the grated deck allows light penetration to support growth of wetlands plants beneath the deck.
- Trail is currently for pedestrian use only (no bikes, no dogs) and will continue to be so.
- All work is designed to be in conformance with Articles of Dedication for the Nature Preserve.
- Archaeology: Trail improvements avoid archaeological impacts by following the footprint of the existing trail. In the proposed parking area, Parks' Cultural Heritage staff conducted shovel tests, identified no sites, and concluded that no further archaeological testing in the proposed parking area was necessary.
- Proposed improvements are completely ADA Accessible.
- Source of funding for improvements: Federal Recreational Trails Program.
- Schedule: Anticipated start of construction in late summer and completion in late fall. (duration approximately 4 months)
- In 1990, the Division purchased 165 acres for public outdoor recreation and conservation use in perpetuity. In 1999, an additional 26 acres was purchased bringing the total to 191 acres.
- The Preserve is composed of three parcels of land: Wolfe tract, Little Neck tract, and Thompson Island tract.
- The preserve includes a variety of vegetation, wildlife, and important cultural resources and, according to the Master Plan, is virtually the only undeveloped land close to Rehoboth and Dewey Beaches.