



2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

NOVA Parks – the best of Northern Virginia through nature, history, and great family experiences

INTRODUCTION

NOVA Parks (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority) has been a unique organization for over sixty years. The only regional park authority in Virginia, NOVA Parks has 34 parks and 12,335 acres in six jurisdictions—the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, and the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun.

Conservation and entrepreneurship are two of the defining and unique characteristics that make NOVA Parks different. NOVA Parks was originally founded as a conservation organization, and today it owns more parkland adjacent to the rivers of the region than any other public lands organization. NOVA Parks was also established as an inclusive park agency in a time when that was not the norm. NOVA Parks is nationally unique in generating 88% of its operating revenues from park enterprise. NOVA Parks creates exceptional value to our member jurisdictions by generating the revenue required to support and grow this dynamic agency and serve the public from enterprise operations, such as holiday light shows, golf, event venues, waterparks, campgrounds, and more.

Innovative approaches are how NOVA Parks looks at conserving natural and historic resources, making parks more central to the community's life, and funding all of these vital community needs.

A Unique Team and Culture

The combination of an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit blended into the roots of conservation have come together to create a unique organizational culture. NOVA Parks team members take great pride in their ability to operate significant and unique destinations and high-demand attractions. The NOVA Parks culture is one where new ideas are embraced, and growth and development are a way of life. The NOVA Parks team knows their work matters and makes for a better region. This strategic plan builds on the best strengths of our organization and the individuals who give their talents and energy to achieving these and other goals.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

- Plant over 50,000 trees creating new areas of forest
- Create or improve trails with a focus on sustainability and an investment of over \$6 million
- Create a W&OD Visitor Center
- Create a new wetland park for environmental education and sustainability
- Invest in electric vehicles and mowers, and take other steps to lower carbon footprint
- Add five new parkland properties, and manage existing parkland to better sequester carbon
- Expand cultural events and festivals
- Lead effort to commemorate the Declaration of Independence with interpretive efforts focused on liberty, justice, and freedom
- Expand partnerships with community groups
- Grow entrepreneurial revenues to support park improvements
- Create a team and programs that are reflective of our changing and diverse community





NOVA Parks Vision 2027

The implementation of this strategic plan will serve our many communities and result in a greater regional park system, a stronger Northern Virginia community, and an improved world. Parkland will increase, and park amenities and services will be developed and improved. Our land management will help to offset carbon. Our programs will attract new and growing interest in our historic and natural resources and our unique recreational opportunities. The region's youth will be engaged in parks. The brand of NOVA Parks will be known both locally and nationally.

The next five years will be critical for our environment. NOVA Parks will work with our many partners, both public and private, to set a national example of how public park agencies can reduce their impacts through energy conservation, growth in parkland, and thoughtful land management.

Visitors to NOVA Parks' many facilities will feel at home and welcome. A sense of belonging will result from being inclusive of the stories that are told through our interpretive efforts. Appreciating the cultural diversity of our region and providing exceptional customer experiences will be our top priorities. These efforts will result in an even larger portion of our population using and enjoying the offerings of NOVA Parks, and experiencing the physical and mental benefits of parks.

Environment and belonging may be the things the public sees and will experience through NOVA Parks, but those benefits can only be realized if backed by strong organizational fundamentals. Attracting and retaining a top-quality team and building innovative new facilities, processes, and programs are some of the most essential components to our future success. As a largely self-funded organization, generating revenues needed to support and grow the system is critical to building a NOVA Parks that can reach its full potential. By building on the passionate and diverse team that makes up NOVA Parks and reinforcing the qualities of our dynamic culture, this vision will become a reality.

MISSION: “NOVA Parks – the best of Northern Virginia through nature, history, and great family experiences”

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Function of Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives identify areas of strategic priority and provide the broad, overarching organization for agency actions.

Together, goals and objectives:

1. *Provide focus for actions and aspirations*
2. *Shape a designated timeframe for improvements*
3. *Create direction for investments of time, skills, and resources*
4. *Clarify what the agency will and will not do*

Generally, goals describe elements of the vision, defining what is achievable through the daily execution of the mission. Objectives – and therefore specific strategies or recommendations – fit within the scope of each goal.

Goals:

1. *Overarching areas of strategic priority*
2. *Broad descriptions of intent*
3. *Outcome, rather than specific activity*

Objectives:

1. *Framework for individual actions*
2. *Descriptions of what needs to be done*
3. *Measurable metrics (e.g., “increase,” “reduce,” “consolidate,” “improve,” “distribute,” etc.)*
4. *Timeframes for actions (by year)*

Goals and Objectives for NOVA Parks

The following goals and objectives are intended to help guide improvements, operations, conservation, and services in NOVA Parks over the next five years. Although the goals are numbered, they are not listed in order of priority.

Strategic Pillar 1: Environment

Natural resource protection, sustainability and resiliency are at the core of NOVA Parks’ mission and history. Actively acquiring and managing many of the largest intact natural areas in the region, the environment has always been at the core of who NOVA Parks is. In the coming years, our park system will grow, and the ecological value of our lands will be enhanced. These efforts will assist in addressing the cause of climate change and help our region to become more climate resilient.

Natural Resource Banking is an exciting new focus that includes Carbon Banking, Stream Banking, Nutrient Banking, and Wetland Banking. In all of these projects, habitat is restored and enhanced, usually with significant new plantings of native trees and other vegetation.

Goal 1.1 – Manage, sustain, and protect parklands and natural resources by addressing the causes of climate change, enhancing carbon sequestration, and improving and protecting natural habitats.

Objective 1.1.1 - Plant more than 50,000 new trees by 2027.

Objective 1.1.2 - Create or redesign trail systems at Beaverdam and along the Bull Run/Occoquan trail with the goal of making them environmentally sustainable. Phased improvements will be measured in 2023, 2025, and 2027.





Goal 1.2 – Expand the park system with new lands.

Objective 1.2.1 – Update the criteria for determining lands to target for acquisition by 2023.

Objective 1.2.2 – Expand and acquire at least five new properties by 2027.

Goal 1.3 – Protect areas with rare or endangered species.

Objective 1.3.1 – Target land acquisitions that offer the potential for significant habitat restoration by 2025.

Objective 1.3.2 – Open the Cattail Ordinary property as a passive use park by 2027.

Objective 1.3.3 – Improve habitat by identifying and restoring at least ten areas with native plantings by 2027.

Goal 1.4 – Expand leadership role in natural resource banking.

Objective 1.4.1 – Implement resource banking at select NOVA Parks, including Piscataway Crossing, Bull Run, Algonkian, Springdale, and Gilberts Corner Regional Parks, by 2025.

Goal 1.5 – Measure NOVA Parks’ carbon footprint and implement measures to lower it.

Objective 1.5.1 – Continue to measure NOVA Parks’ annual Carbon Footprint with the goal of a sustained two percent annual reduction by 2027.

Objective 1.5.2 – Introduce electric vehicles into the fleet starting in 2024.

Objective 1.5.3 – Introduce electric mowers into use by 2024 (if commercial-grade units are available).

Objective 1.5.4 – Convert golf carts at Brambleton from gas to electric by 2024.

Objective 1.5.5 – Install new electric vehicle charging stations at a minimum one park by 2024 and at five parks by 2027.

Objective 1.5.6 – Implement three new IT solutions that reduce vehicular trips and/or paper use by 2025.

Goal 1.6 – Build and retrofit innovative, green buildings.

Objective 1.6.1 – Invest in low-impact, green building techniques for new structures of over \$1 million.

Objective 1.6.2 – Expand solar energy use to three additional parks by 2027.

Objective 1.6.3 – Reduce carbon footprint with more efficient HVAC systems throughout the system with \$100,000 per year in Capital funding for upgraded systems.

Goal 1.7 – Target invasive species in high-impact areas with partnerships and resources.

Objective 1.7.1 – Complete the prescribed invasive species management plan at Upton Hill and Occoquan by 2023.

Objective 1.7.2 – Implement accelerated invasive species work along the W&OD Trail by 2024.

Objective 1.7.3 – Build community partnerships to generate invasive species volunteers at four new parks by 2027.

Goal 1.8 – Provide outreach and educational opportunities related to natural resource conservation.

Objective 1.8.1 – Develop six nature-focused interpretive efforts geographically spread throughout the region that educate and engage the public in interactive ways about ecosystems by 2024.

Objective 1.8.2 – Expand program offerings through the Roving Naturalist to engage the next generation of conservationists by 2024.

Objective 1.8.3 – Develop and Implement a Trash Free Park program that will include a pilot section of the W&OD by 2025.

Strategic Pillar 2: Belonging

The end result of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are parks and programs that engage the various cultures and communities represented in Northern Virginia and create a sense of belonging. NOVA Parks is well known by the many community groups in Northern Virginia that use and value the parks. A sense of belonging can also be enhanced with exceptional customer experiences and dynamic programs and offerings that engage the public in the many places managed by NOVA Parks.

Goal 2.1 – Build and support effective community partnerships with ethnic groups.





Objective 2.1.1 – Partner with NAACP chapters and similar organizations to further build inclusive programs by 2025.

Objective 2.1.2 – Partner with the Korean American Cultural Committee on efforts around the Korean Bell Garden focusing on the 2026 fifteenth anniversary.

Objective 2.1.3 – Identify groups to partner toward increased Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by 2027.

Goal 2.2 – Build and support effective community partnerships with history, environment, and tourism groups.

Objective 2.2.1 – Build and maintain a minimum of (6) significant partnerships with organizations focused on telling a more inclusive history with cultural resonance by 2027.

Objective 2.2.2 – Promote Black history displays at Bull Run Regional Park by 2023.

Goal 2.3 – Engage official and unofficial friends groups to help NOVA Parks build public support and achieve its goals.

Objective 2.3.1 – Develop and engage existing friends groups and community partners to better advance the park system by 2025.

Goal 2.4 – Enhance the quality of life through beneficial and successful programs, partnerships, and events to meet the needs of our diverse community.

Objective 2.4.1 – Expand Black & Hispanic birding programs by hosting programs at a minimum of (3) new locations by 2026.

Objective 2.4.2 – Expand cultural festivals/activities with at least three new groups by 2027.

Objective 2.4.3 – Unveil Native-American displays at Piscataway Crossing Regional Park by 2023.

Objective 2.4.4 – Provide a minimum of seven innovative and experiential history programs dedicated to the diverse stories and events connected to NOVA Parks sites by 2027.



Objective 2.4.5 – Identify and perform outreach to Title 1 schools and economically disadvantaged populations to improve quality of life through parks, programs, and resource conservation in areas near regional parks by 2027.

Goal 2.5 – Promote a sense of belonging through quality customer interactions and experiences.

Objective 2.5.1 – Enhance engagement with friends groups and other partner organizations with the hiring of a Manager of Community Engagement by 2023.

Objective 2.5.2 – Substantially improve ADA accessibility throughout the parks with \$400,000 per year in budgeted improvements starting in 2023.

Objective 2.5.3 – Create a scholarship program to remove economic barriers for select NOVA Parks outdoor activities and camps by 2023.

Objective 2.5.4 – Expand and update customer service training for the front-line team to include diversity awareness by 2024.

Goal 2.6 – Provide regional leadership for America’s 250th commemoration in Northern Virginia with programs focused on freedom and justice.

Objective 2.6.1 – Initiate leadership planning for regional efforts to mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2023, and support through 2026.

Objective 2.6.2 – Develop a calendar of events and displays related to the themes of liberty and justice by 2024.

Goal 2.7 – Develop and refine a variety of inclusive strategies to effectively attract and serve our community.

Objective 2.7.1 – Review park policies and practices to identify and remove systemic barriers to inclusion by 2024.

Objective 2.7.2 – Provide Spanish website translation by 2025.





Strategic Pillar 3: Our Team

The center of any organization is its people. The culture of NOVA Parks is innovative, and the employees pride themselves on honesty and providing exceptional customer experiences. With a changing job market, NOVA Parks' challenge will be to build on the best elements of our culture while attracting and retaining the talent we need to serve the community.

Goal 3.1 – Build a system that enables NOVA Parks to attract and retain a diverse and capable workforce representing our community.

Objective 3.1.1 – Diversity hiring training for team engaged in recruitment at least every other year starting in 2023.

Objective 3.1.2 – Review progress based on team diversity percentages data from 2023, 2025, and 2027.

Objective 3.1.3 – Create proactive recruitment strategies to build the workforce for tomorrow by 2023.

Objective 3.1.4 – Create Customer Service Training 2.0 by 2024.

Objective 3.1.5 – Create Employee Committee to make recommendations on seasonal recruitment and retention by 2024.

Objective 3.1.6 – Further develop an incentive system for team referrals by 2023.

Objective 3.1.7 – Expand outreach to area universities to attract interns and recruit team members by 2025.

Goal 3.2 – Maintain an employee compensation plan that is competitive in Northern Virginia.

Objective 3.2.1 – Conduct a full-time compensation study by 2023.

Objective 3.2.2 – Take measures to address competitive compensation based on the study by 2023.

Objective 3.2.3 – Study pension plan changes designed to attract and retain employees by 2024.

Objective 3.2.4 – Review and implement effective seasonal and part-time compensation annually, keeping ahead of changes to minimum wage, starting in 2023.

Goal 3.3 – Build a sustainable and engaging organizational culture.

Objective 3.3.1 – Improve our team morale by empowering the employee committee on uniforms to make recommendations toward having outstanding uniforms by 2023.

Objective 3.3.2 – Develop a plan for multiple annual team building events by 2023.

Objective 3.3.3 – Develop a program for recruiting full-time team members from the ranks of seasonal and part-time employees by 2023.

Goal 3.4 – Create tools and mechanisms for effective internal communications.

Objective 3.4.1 – Create an internal newsletter to engage and inform our team of accomplishments and initiatives by 2023.

Objective 3.4.2 – Reinstate the annual All-Team Meeting to increase team engagement and communication by 2023.

Goal 3.5 – Provide consistent opportunities for team training and leadership development for all levels of employees.

Objective 3.5.1 – Develop preferred training goals for key operational positions by 2024.

Objective 3.5.2 – Develop professional development and skills training opportunities for all team levels by 2025.





Strategic Pillar 4: Building the Future

In 2021 the NOVA Parks Board's Strategic Initiatives Committee worked on developing a collection of capital projects that will help NOVA Parks build a stronger park system. Along with the projects currently in the five-year Capital Budget, these projects envision a bold future with the purpose of creating innovative facilities that serve and engage the public in new ways.

Goal 4.1 – Implement NOVA Parks Strategic Initiatives Projects. These signature projects will be among the most noteworthy in the region and include:

- W&OD Trail Visitor Center
- Gateway Wetlands Park
- Pohick Bay expanded camping and associated amenities
- Occoquan indoor/outdoor Adventure Center
- Hemlock Facility Update

Objective 4.1.1 – Develop financing plans for Strategic Initiative Projects

- Financing for W&OD Visitor Center and Gateway wetlands park will be developed by 2023.
- Financing for Pohick Bay Camping will be developed by 2024.
- Financing for Occoquan Adventure Center will be developed by 2025.
- Financing for Hemlock improvements will be developed by 2026.

Goal 4.2 – Expand Dual Trails along the W&OD Trail.

Objective 4.2.1 – Partner with the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority to design and expand the capacity of the W&OD Trail in congested urban areas, building on the success of the Falls Church section.

- Arlington Section design by 2024.
- Vienna Section design by 2027.
- Reston/Herndon Section design by 2027.

Objective 4.2.2 – Develop plans for Arlington County Dual Trails along the W&OD and initiate community engagement by 2024, and construct when permits are approved.

Goal 4.3 – Expand funding for the rolling five-year Capital Plan.

Objective 4.3.1 – Maintain Capital Maintenance funding at a level to support the upkeep of current facilities.

Objective 4.3.2 – Expand funding for energy improvements like HVAC, insulation, Solar, EV, and Charging stations starting in 2024.

Objective 4.3.3 – Invest in the preservation and restoration of historic structures.

Objective 4.3.4 – Install a new fire suppression system in the Carlyle House by 2023.

Objective 4.3.5 – Fund endowment for Capital with no-recurring revenue sources starting in 2023.

Objective 4.3.6 – Improve Campground WiFi by 2024.

Objective 4.3.7 – Study improved technology in the areas of both waterpark pumps stations and golf course irrigation by 2026.

Goal 4.4 - Create new cutting-edge, innovative park facilities.

Objective 4.4.1 – Open Reservoir Park at Beaverdam in Ashburn in partnership with Loudoun Water by 2024.

Objective 4.4.2 – Engage with the leaders in the City of Fairfax to plan and implement the Gateway Regional Parks Wetlands Project by 2024.

Goal 4.5 – Provide facilities and amenities that are inclusive and accessible to all patrons.

Objective 4.5.1 – Continued implementation of NOVA Parks ADA Plan for existing facilities while ensuring all new amenities meet required standards for accessibility.

Objective 4.5.2 – Create new and improved trails with an investment of over \$6 million by 2027.

Goal 4.6 – Engage with the City of Alexandria in planning the future of Cameron Run Regional Park.

Objective 4.6.1 – Engage public in visioning the future of Cameron Run in coordination with the City by 2025.





Strategic Pillar 5: Revenue & Efficiency

NOVA Parks is unlike other governments and park agencies, with 88% of the funds that support operations coming from the various park enterprises. The success in all categories of this plan is completely dependent on our entrepreneurial ability to generate revenue, operate efficiently, and maximize use of resources.

Goal 5.1 – Grow net enterprise revenues at a rate greater than inflation.

Objective 5.1.1 – Enhance the performance of NOVA Parks’ light shows with a goal of increasing revenue by 3% annually from 2023 to 2027.

Objective 5.1.2 – Increase retail sales revenue by 5% annually by 2024.

Objective 5.1.3 – Offer facilities/programs for corporate team building/retreats by 2027.

Objective 5.1.4 – Create destination camping facilities by 2026.

Goal 5.2 – Implement new marketing methods and tools to promote operations.

Objective 5.2.1 – Expand digital marketing and the use of data to reach new and existing customers by 2023.

Objective 5.2.2 – Promote the unique brand identity of NOVA Parks by 2025.

Goal 5.3 – Be an industry leader in efficiency and best management practices.

Objective 5.3.1 – Implement three new process automation improvements by 2027.

Objective 5.3.2 – Team training to include agency budget development and accounting by 2027.

Objective 5.3.3 – Fund an endowment to support capital projects from non-recurring revenues like telecom and natural resource banking starting in 2023.

Objective 5.3.4 – Fully support all debt service obligations through the Enterprise Fund for the River View and Climb Upton by 2023.

Goal 5.4 – Exemplify maintenance standards that make NOVA Parks destination sites.

Objective 5.4.1 – Expand the use of preventive maintenance software to ensure quality park facilities for the community by 2025.

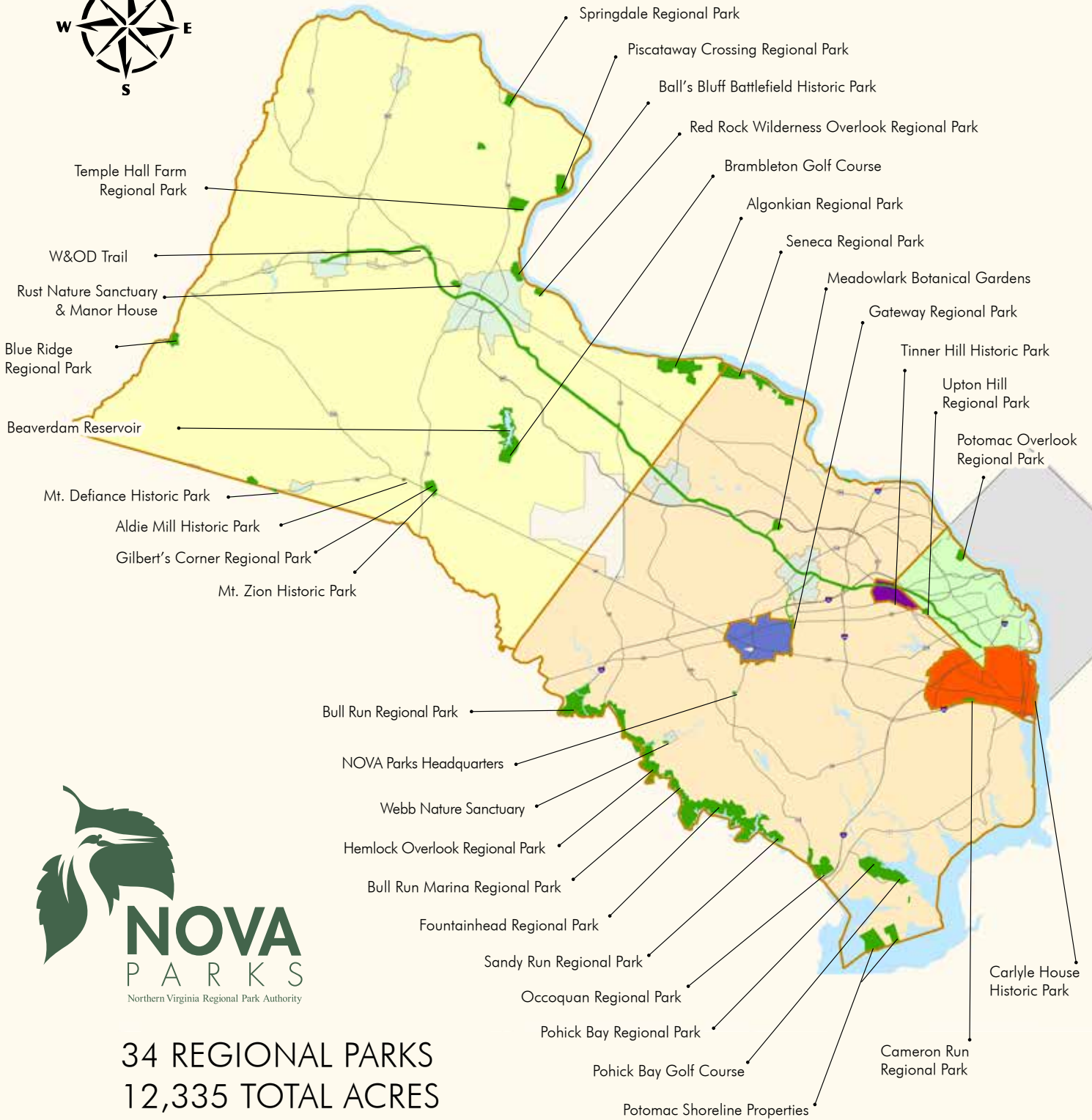
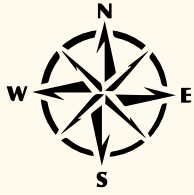
Goal 5.5 – Continue to develop, automate, and enhance accounting and other processes.

Objective 5.5.1 – Create key information dashboards for Park Managers by 2024.

Goal 5.6 – Build IT structure and systems to make NOVA Parks a leader in our field.

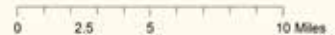
Objective 5.6.1 – Implement an intranet for NOVA Parks by 2024.





34 REGIONAL PARKS
12,335 TOTAL ACRES

Loudoun County	Fairfax County	Arlington County
City of Fairfax	City of Alexandria	City of Falls Church



**DISCOVER
WHAT'S
NEXT**



novaparks.com

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