

**CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
A PORTION OF THE DIFFICULT RUN STREAM VALLEY
(The Gabrielson Tract)**

DRAFT

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Following negotiation with the Fairfax County Park Authority in November of 1965, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson and his wife, Clara Speer Gabrielson, conveyed the deed to their home and twelve acres of land to the Fairfax County Park Authority on April 4, 1966. The sales contract dated April 11, 1966, specified that the property "... shall be maintained as a natural area with emphasis on continued development of an arboretum and botanical type park."

The Gabrielson's retained a life estate and continued to live on the site for a number of years.

In the ensuing years, little has been done with the site now referred to as the Gabrielson tract. However, a General Management Plan (GMP) was recently approved for the site. The GMP called for the development of a Horticultural Management Plan and Conceptual Development Plan. This document provides the planning framework for visitor use, some very modest development for access and circulation and general direction for horticultural activities at the site. More detailed horticultural planning will follow. The GMP is hereby incorporated by reference.

The FCPA comprehensive plan identifies the Gabrielson Tract as a satellite area of the horticulture program. As such, it is a special use area within the Difficult Run Stream Valley Park. It is proposed herein, in view of its special status and purpose, that it be designated by the FCPA Board as Gabrielson Park and reclassified as a special use area.

II. PURPOSE OF THE GABRIELSON TRACT

As defined in the General Management Plan, the purpose of the Gabrielson portion of Difficult Run Stream Valley Park is to:

- ▶ preserve, protect, restore, and interpret natural resources
- ▶ preserve, protect, restore, and interpret horticultural resources
- ▶ provide a variety of passive recreation for all county citizens

III. OBJECTIVES

To achieve the purpose of the park as described in the GMP and the above statement the following objectives have been formulated.

A. Access and Circulation

Provide access and circulation for modest levels of use commensurate with the nature of the resources of the park, the character of the surrounding community and the fact that the park is not staffed.

B. Horticultural Resources

Rehabilitate, restore and enhance the resources of the horticultural zone.

C. Restoration Ecology

As time and resources permit, eliminate exotic plants in selected areas of the natural resources zone and work to restore vernal and other native understory plants.

D. Wildlife Enhancement

Identify practical methods of enhancing the area for wildlife commensurate with other objectives and implement where possible.

E. Visitor Use

Provide basic facilities for the use of the site including trails and assembly facilities.

F. Interpretation

Provide for the interpretation of the horticultural and natural resources and of Dr. Gabrielson's life including his activities at the Gabrielson tract.

G. Cooperation With Others

Work with other groups, organizations and individuals to achieve the park's purpose through the implementation of these objectives.

IV. MANAGEMENT ZONES

This section modifies and expands the language of the General Management Plan to establish three management zones that will affect the uses and resource management of the Gabrielson tract.

A. Natural Resource Protection Zone

This zone occupies the majority of the tract or approximately ten acres and contains second growth forest on the uplands and flood plains.

B. Horticultural Resource Management Zone

This is a secondary zone located within the Natural Resource Protection Zone. It includes the areas that had obviously been planted during the Gabrielson's occupancy of the site including the upland areas, terraces, pond areas and portions of the adjacent flood plain. This area is approximately two acres in size.

C. Entrance Zone

During the preparation of the GMP, two Entrance Zones were established in order to identify the most likely areas to serve as the main visitor access points. The primary zone includes the Gabrielson house, driveway, garage and surrounding grounds which are reserved for the use of the renters of the house. The second zone is a natural surface entrance road south of the main driveway. Because the residence is also within the horticultural zone, any planting or landscaping of the grounds must be approved by FCPA. The basement of the house is reserved for Park Authority use and will not be rented.

V. VISITOR USE

The planned use of the site is to accommodate individuals and small groups for purposes of enjoying and learning about the horticultural and natural resources of the park. To assist in this effort, FCPA will work with other groups, individuals and organizations to develop programs, lead activities, and to help with the development and maintenance of the park. Groups wishing to have FCPA conduct guided tours of the park may call Green Spring Gardens Park to determine if group leaders are available.

A. Access & Parking

The Gabrielson Tract is designated as a special use area and as such may be expected to attract visitors from throughout the country. However, the planned levels of use are very modest and it is expected that parking needs at any one time for group use need not exceed four or five cars for visitors and perhaps one or two cars for FCPA staff. There are several potential sites where this amount of parking might be accommodated. Each will be discussed below:

The parking apron at the house, which is designated as an Entrance Zone in the GMP, can easily accommodate three or four cars and still provide any needed access for renters of the house and emergency vehicles. Accordingly, this area is proposed for use by FCPA staff, program participants and other visitors.

Another parking option considered was the triangle of VDOT land at the junction of Hunter Valley Road, Leeds Road and the outlet road. This area is not park land and it contains a deep depression in its center containing a storm drain. The area was rejected after consideration of the required improvements.

A third site, located on park land adjacent to the outlet road and just above the flood plain, was also considered. This area was rejected because of the number of trees that would be affected and the steepness of the slope.

Parking cars along Leeds Road may be possible. However, the shoulders are generally narrow, as is the road, and in some places are too narrow for parking. The inner edge of the shoulder is further constricted by drainage ditches deep enough to be very troublesome. Accordingly, FCPA does not wish to encourage parking on the road shoulders.

The second Entrance Zone identified in the General Management Plan is a natural surface roadbed just to the south of the house near the former vegetable garden site. With only minor improvements, this roadbed could provide a parking area for four or five cars and a school bus. No large trees would need to be cut and grading, if any, would be minimal. The site would not be visible from any of the nearby houses. This would also provide an excellent location for a trail head since it is very close to the horticultural subzone.

At the present time the Park Authority will provide parking for staff and visitors only at the parking apron of the house. If visitor use indicates a need for additional parking, the Park Authority may proceed with preparation of the second Entrance Zone as described above.

B. Trails

The trails proposed in this plan begin at the parking area and provide access to the representative portions of the horticultural and natural resource zones. Trails will be laid out to respect the privacy of the residential area. Gradients will be kept as gentle as possible to accommodate the widest possible range of physical abilities, but the steepness of the terrain, the fragile condition of the flood plain and the desire to maintain the character of the site would make universal handicapped accessibilities very difficult. Furthermore, the trail will be designated for pedestrian use only. The trail corridor will be marked for clearing and development upon approval of this plan. A corridor, eight feet high and six feet wide, will be the rule but exceptions will be made if necessary to preserve mature trees.

C. Basement of the House

The house itself has been extensively renovated and will be rented for the present. The basement of the house will not be rented to the tenant and will be available for use by FCPA for orientation and interpretive activities. There has been some consideration of using the house for interpretation and visitor services. The floor plan of the building coupled with structural, plumbing and electrical limitations, restrict potential for this use.

D. Interpretation

In keeping with the low key, natural area character of the park, interpretive activities by FCPA and cooperating entities may include:

- ▶ necessary signage for visitor use of the park (coordinate with FCPA Trail Planner)
- ▶ development of a trail leaflet (coordinate with FCPA Trail Planner)
- ▶ indoor and/or outdoor interpretive exhibits
- ▶ conducted tours by FCPA staff or others
- ▶ review of Dr. Gabrielson's journals at the Smithsonian archives for information useful for both interpretation and resource management
- ▶ possible collection of his books and duplication of portions of his journals.

A more detailed interpretive plan will be prepared to guide development of these activities. It seems logical that Dr. Gabrielson's life work as well as his horticultural activities at the site would be an important consideration of the plan.

E. Hours of Use

The park will be open from sunrise to sunset. Use at any other time must be approved by FCPA.

VI. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management will be directed toward providing trail access (see IV B above), restoration, rehabilitation and enhancement of the horticultural resources including terrace walls, ponds, etc.; restoration ecology in the natural resource zone, and clean up of trash and debris on the site. Additional management guidance will be provided for these activities through the preparation of a Resource Management Plan that will address the following topics:

A. Horticultural Management

- ▶ Identify and record the location of Dr. Gabrielson's plantings.
- ▶ Identify activities needed for restoration of the zone including removal of competing vegetation, repair of terraces, thinning, pruning, etc.
- ▶ Enhance restored areas as suggested by research and for improvement of the resource for visitor appreciation

B. Natural Resource Management

- ▶ Identify areas for ecological restoration
- ▶ Remove invasive exotics
- ▶ Acquire and plant native vegetation
- ▶ Wildlife enhancement (including horticultural zone)
- ▶ Trash and debris removal (including horticultural zone)

VII. COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

FCPA will actively seek the cooperation of other entities for development, restoration, enhancement, maintenance and visitor use and interpretation of the site.

TRANSACTION REPORT

Transmission
Transaction(s) completed

| NO. | TX DATE/TIME | DESTINATION | DURATION | PGS. | RESULT | MODE |
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| 385 | JAN. 5 8:44 | ORANTES-ALFARO | 0° 02' 15" | 007 | OK | N ECM |

Fairfax County Park Authority
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FAX TRANSMISSION

DATE: January 4, 1996

TO: Resource Management Committee

FROM: Lee Stephenson, Director 
Resource Management Division

Fax # 703 691 7923
Voice # 703 246 5664

NUMBER OF PAGES: 7

The attached draft Gabrielson Tract Conceptual Development Plan (CDP) is one of the agenda items on the Committee's agenda for the Tuesday, January 9 meeting.

The draft has also been conveyed to Chairman Strickland, in whose district Gabrielson resides. He may attend the Committee meeting. Even though CDPs have not routinely gone to committees in the past, the Chairman has requested that all action items route through the appropriate committee. We are happy to bring this document to the Resource Management Committee and request your approval (along with Mr. Strickland's) to bring it to the entire Board on January 24. Because of the high level of interest (now very positive, in most cases) in the community surrounding Gabrielson to get involved with the park, citizens are eager to review this document. Past communications to interested citizens have indicated we hoped to have the plan out for comment by January.

Thank you.

cc: