Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

Buffalo National River

Arkansas

March 2024

In Memory of Colin Heffern

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buffalo National River staff are dedicated to serving all park visitors to help them find meaning in the resources of the park and its stories. Recently, park staff embarked on a journey to ensure that key experiences are available to all visitors, regardless of race, nationality, socioeconomic status, or ability. Park staff conducted an accessibility self-evaluation of park facilities, services, activities, and programs and drafted a transition plan that identifies opportunities for improvement and outlines critical steps towards implementing responsive solutions parkwide.

This accessibility self-evaluation and transition plan (SETP) resulted from the work of a National Park Service (NPS) interdisciplinary team, including planning, design, and construction professionals and interpretive, resource, visitor safety, maintenance, and accessibility specialists. The team developed site plans identifying the location of accessibility barriers and opportunities for each assessed park area and crafted an implementation strategy to assist park staff in scheduling and performing required actions and documenting completed work. The team also assessed park policies, practices, communication, and training needs to improve access to elements of the park that lie outside of direct physical and programmatic access. The goals of the SETP are to (1) document existing park barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities; (2) provide an effective approach for upgrading facilities, services, activities, and programs; and (3) instill a culture around creating universal access.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Buffalo National River has made many strides to improve physical accessibility throughout the park. Campsites and picnic areas are often located on low sloping areas and positioned on concrete pads. A newly added ramp brings visitors close to the shoreline at the Buffalo Point River Access. Many visitors come to the area to enjoy the rivers, and the park currently has many drive-down locations to access the water, opening up the river experience to many people who would otherwise struggle to access the park's primary experience.

Recurring findings related to physical accessibility were identified for features and facilities, such as parking, outdoor recreation routes, hiking trails, river access routes, and visitor information areas, such as kiosks, bulletin boards, interpretive panels, and waysides. Often, these facilities and features had surfaces that were not firm and stable, slopes that exceeded allowable standards, and items out of reach range or that were difficult or heavy to operate. Restroom amenities regularly did not meet required standards, and amenities offered for picnicking and camping, such as tables, fire rings, and water spigots, did not always meet appropriate access route and clearance standards. Some signage was also missing or had insufficient or misplaced information.

Park staff have opportunities to provide access to unique experiences in the park. Improved water access at a minimum of one river access point in each district would open up one of the most quintessential experiences at Buffalo National River to many visitors with limited mobility. Moving forward with updates to areas like Collier Homestead that

have amenable terrain would present meaningful experiences to a wide swath of the public.

PROGRAMMATIC ACCESSIBILITY

Buffalo National River has made improvements to programmatic accessibility in recent years. Audio versions of the park's publications, brochures, and maps are available, and contact information is available for visitors who have accessibility-related questions. The physical conditions of walks, talks, and tours, such as slopes and surfaces, are communicated in relevant publications and tactile maps, and models are used to enrich park programs.

Recurring findings related to program accessibility were identified for park publications, waysides, exhibits, and programs. Many interpretive waysides had font and contrast issues and were difficult to read; alternative formats, particularly braille and large print, were limited; assistive listening devices were not available; sign language interpretation was not available; and captions and audio description were not provided on all on-site park videos.

Significant ways in which programs could be improved include expanding the availability of alternative formats for publications and making them available on their website. Additionally, improving trailhead signage parkwide would provide visitors with specific information about trail conditions and enable them to decide for themselves if a trail is usable to them. Providing this same level of information online would help visitors better plan and prepare for their trip.

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1916, the National Park Service has preserved, unimpaired, the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system, while also providing for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of current and future generations.

Many national parks were founded because of their stunning views, extreme and unique geography, challenging and sensitive natural environments, and historic and fragile structures. Buffalo National River and other parks exist because of their history and resources. The NPS mission balances protection of resources (natural and cultural) with visitor enjoyment. Facilities, services, and programs were designed and built in parks to accommodate visitors and help them better understand each park purpose and significance.

However, many facilities were constructed before the passage of laws and policies requiring the National Park Service to provide access to the widest cross section of the public, including the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The accessibility of commercial services in national parks is also governed by applicable federal laws. After 100 years of operation, the National Park Service continues to work towards a more inclusive environment.

Visitors today have unique needs and expectations, and the agency must adapt to meet changing demands. Modern scientific research and visitor trend analysis provide new insights into accessibility opportunities and challenges in the national park system. According to 2020 Center for Disease Control data, there are approximately 61 million people with disabilities in the United States, and this number is expected to rise in the coming years as more people reach retirement age (65 and older). This information helps the National Park Service understand changing visitation patterns, the nexus between resource stewardship and accessibility, and the impacts of managing visitors, resources, and infrastructure with the reality of unpredictable funding. Planning can help identify solutions to challenges and provide a trajectory full of opportunity for current and future visitors. The National Park Service is committed to making park facilities, services, programs, and employment opportunities accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.

Buffalo National River's existing general management planning documents continue to provide relevant guidance, which may be supplemented through development of additional planning documents such as this one. The accessibility SETP is a component of the park's planning portfolio. This plan documents park barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities and provides an effective approach for upgrading park facilities, services, and programs. In addition, the plan helps inform management decisions regarding project prioritization, funding, and compliance.

ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLAN

The creation of a transition plan is mandated by regulations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as they apply to the US Department of the Interior, which states that "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance." The act requires parks to document architectural barriers and identify solutions, time frames, and responsible parties to improve and increase accessibility.

This plan was prepared to provide Buffalo National River staff with a tool for addressing overall needs associated with making the park accessible when viewed in its entirety. The plan is based on an understanding of key park experiences and establishes a methodical process that identifies, prioritizes, and outlines improvements to park accessibility. The plan proposes strategies for implementation over time and in a manner consistent with park requirements and protocols.

ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLAN PROCESS

The process for creating a SETP involves seven steps:



1. **Identify Key Park Experiences and Park Areas** – The interdisciplinary team began by identifying the key experiences available to visitors at the park. Key park experiences, which help determine the park areas to assess in step 2, are iconic and important experiences for visitors to understand the purpose and significance of the park. Park legislation is the foundation for key park experiences, which are identified through park purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and programs (these can be found in the park's foundation document at http://npshistory.com/publications/foundation-documents/buff-fd-2018.pdf.

   The key park experiences identified for Buffalo National River include the following:

   a. Witness this entirely free-flowing river protected for its full length and demonstrating both the challenges and successes of achieving balance between natural forces and human activity.

   b. Explore the remarkable diversity of a landscape continuously transformed above and below ground through ages of water erosion and the weathering processes of karst.

   c. Understand the unique characteristics of the Ozark Mountains that, from prehistoric to modern times, have called to people seeking to use the area's resources, leading to the establishment of a cultural landscape.

   d. Enjoy a diverse and challenging array of recreational opportunities created by the park's unique natural features, from water-based activities like canoeing, kayaking, and fishing to terrestrial pursuits like hunting, camping, picnicking, and horseback riding.

e. Learn about the convergence of unique natural conditions along the Buffalo River corridor, which create bountiful opportunities for scientific discoveries, advances in ecosystem management, and support for rare biological communities.

f. Discover solitude and inspiration among cascading waterfalls, reflective pools of water, expanses of wilderness, and the awe-inspiring natural beauty of a landscape sought for centuries to enrich the human spirit.

g. Connect to the relevancy of the cultural and natural resources of Buffalo National River and become inspired to become stewards of these resources into the future.

h. Participate in and contribute to ongoing science as the basis for managing park resources.

To prepare for step 2, the team then listed all developed areas of the park in which visitors have access.

2. **Determine Park Areas to Assess** – In some instances, not all park areas can be assessed during this process due to time and funding constraints. Therefore, the interdisciplinary team determined which park areas to assess based on the number of key park experiences, visitation level, diversity of activities and programs, distribution, and unique characteristics. The areas selected for assessment provide the best opportunities for the public to access all key park experiences. Areas not assessed will be assessed and improved as part of future facility alterations or as components of a future planned construction project (see appendix C for park areas not assessed).

3. **Identify Facilities, Services, and Programs in Each Park Area** – The team identified all facilities, services, and programs in each selected park area to ensure that all physical and programmatic visitor amenities in each park area were reviewed for accessibility. The comprehensive lists of facilities, services, and programs were the basis for conducting assessments and documenting barriers.

4. **Conduct Accessibility Assessment** – On-site, the interdisciplinary team assessed each park area and identified physical and programmatic barriers to accessibility. The team then reviewed possible solutions and explored options to provide universal access. In some cases, programmatic alternatives needed to be examined because eliminating physical barriers is not always possible due to historic designations, environmental concerns, topography, or sensitive cultural and natural resources. Therefore, a range of programmatic alternatives was considered to provide access to key park experiences for as many visitors as possible.

5. **Draft Transition Plan** – Following the assessment, the team added field results to an implementation strategy table and drafted conceptual site plans to display the locations of barriers and opportunities. An implementation strategy can be complex because of the large range of coordination efforts associated with scheduling accessibility improvements. All improvement efforts need to consider park activities and operational requirements. Improvement efforts need to consider

park activities and operational requirements to determine how and when to implement a solution. While some changes can be done quickly at little or no cost, others may be integrated into existing projects or planned as separate projects, and more complex solutions may require advanced planning and requests for funding. Based on these considerations, the team identified an implementation time frame and a responsible park staff member for each barrier and solution. Implementation time frames are based on NPS staff's ability to complete the improvements within normal scheduling of park operations and planned projects and are as follows:

   a. Immediate (0–1 year)
   b. Short term (1–3 years)
   c. Mid-term (3–7 years)
   d. Long term (longer than 7 years)

6. **Conduct Public Involvement** – Public involvement occurs at the draft stage of the transition plan; however, it is recommended that at the beginning of the SETP process, park staff initiate public outreach efforts with organizations representing people with disabilities. The draft plan will be released for a 30-day period to solicit input from the public, including people with disabilities and organizations that represent people with disabilities, to provide comments and thoughts on whether the document represents a reasonable review of the park's barriers and a feasible and appropriate strategy for overcoming the barriers.
7. **Finalize Transition Plan** – After the comment period has closed, park staff will analyze all comments to determine if any revisions to the plan are necessary. Those revisions will be made before the implementation strategy is finalized. Once finalized, a notification will be sent to the public to announce the plan's availability.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The park superintendent is responsible for implementing and integrating the accessibility self-evaluation and transition plan, and the accessibility coordinator assists the superintendent by documenting improvements, keeping the plan updated, and communicating to park employees. It's recommended that park staff employ trained consultants and involve the disability community to assist with addressing accessibility improvements to ensure that design and implementation meet the needs of visitors with disabilities. Creating parkwide accessibility requires staff awareness, understanding, and appropriate action. Because of fiscal constraints and limited park resources, staff will need to determine which improvements will benefit the greatest number of visitors with disabilities. Suggested implementation time frames and relative costs need to be factored into all accessibility investment decisions.

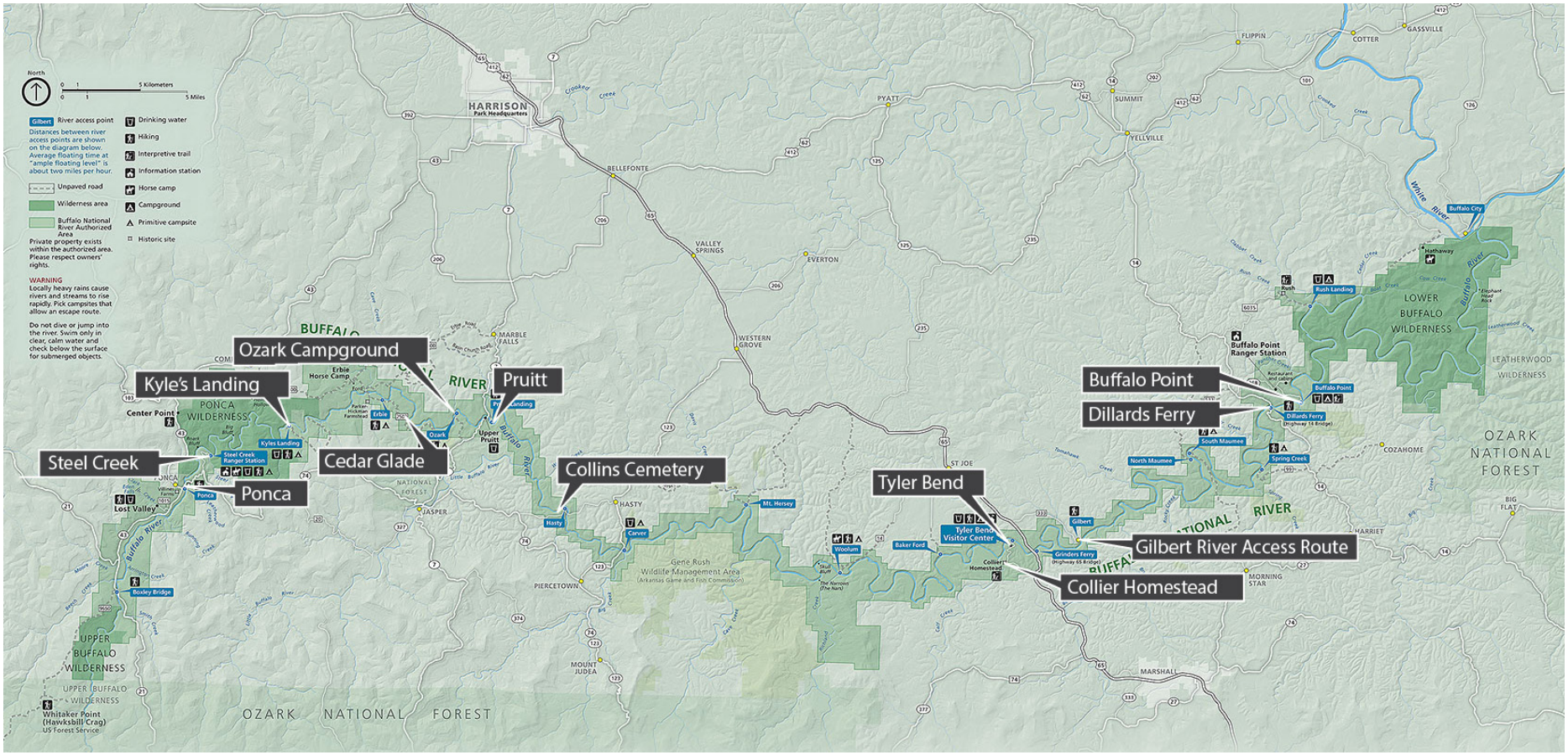
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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

PARK AREAS ASSESSED

The interdisciplinary team assessed the following park areas for accessibility during the planning effort. Areas not assessed are in appendix C.

Buffalo Point	Dillards Ferry	Ponca
Cedar Glade	Gilbert River Access Route	Pruitt
Collier Homestead	Kyle's Landing	Steel Creek
Collins Cemetery	Ozark Campground	Tyler Bend



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR PARK AREAS ASSESSED

The Architectural Barrier Act requires that any building or facility designed, constructed, altered, or leased with federal funds be accessible and usable by any individuals with disabilities. The Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards and the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS) were adopted for federal facilities in 1984 and 2006, respectively. Subsequently, in 2011, standards for recreational facilities were incorporated into ABAAS as chapter 10.

Depending on the date of a building's construction or alteration, different design standards apply. The interdisciplinary team used ABAAS to conduct the transition plan facility assessments. Although a barrier may be identified by the current assessment for improvement, facilities are only required to follow the standard in place at the time of construction and/or alteration. Therefore, barriers may not be in violation of ABAAS. However, any renovation or upgrade of that building is required to meet the most current standard at the time of work. In addition, we followed Harpers Ferry Center Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media for facility and program assessments.

This document does not include strategies for transitioning employee workspaces to be accessible. In the event that an employee with a disability is hired at Buffalo National River, the supervisor and employee will discuss the employee's needs. The supervisor will then determine what accommodations are reasonable in the given work environment and determine a plan of action to meet those needs.

For each park area, this document provides an overview of findings and recommended solutions in a brief narrative and bulleted list and provides corresponding site plan(s) that illustrate existing conditions. For details on each barrier, solution, and time frame, see the companion implementation strategy table at https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BUFF_SETP. It is important to understand that the site plans and recommendations are conceptual and will require further design development and historic and environmental compliance before construction. SETPs are not to be used as a section 106 compliance review submittal. Consult with cultural and natural resource staff before proceeding with recommended actions. During the implementation phase, the interdisciplinary team must reassess the project site conditions, refer to ABAAS, and consult with the local disability community to ensure that specific design and programmatic solutions are correctly addressed.



BUFFALO POINT VISITOR CENTER

The Buffalo Point Visitor Center is a common destination for gathering information about the park and water conditions and to take advantage of the facility's restrooms and vending machines. Some interpretive elements are also offered, along with a mailbox for visitors to send word of their travels to family and friends. The service counter heights are the primary interior barriers, but the center's biggest challenge is the site layout. Slopes are fairly level, but the marked accessible parking is not fully compliant, and routes connect to the visitor center but not to the restrooms, which are located on the exterior side of the building via a narrowly paved route. While a picnic table is provided, it is not accessible and is located on a small, defined pad, which restricts having clear space on any usable side. Park staff should explore practicable options to improve the front area of the building's layout, given the historic nature of the structure and landscape.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Buffalo Point Visitor Center include the following:

- **Car Parking:** Provide designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve route widths and slopes, and eliminate vertical obstructions.
- **Restrooms:** Improve restroom interiors and stall features.
- **Service Counter:** Improve the service counter to be wider, and provide adequate knee clearance.
- **Site Features:** Provide accessible drinking fountains, improve the clear space around the picnic table, and ensure operable part of site features are within reach range and have a clear approach.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Visitor Center Site Plan





BUFFALO POINT CAMPGROUND

Buffalo Point Campground is the park's largest and most-developed campground, featuring services such as a contact station, amphitheater, picnic shelters, dump station, and showers. The campground offers a variety of overnight opportunities, ranging from walk-in tent sites and group sites to RV sites with water and electrical hookups. The area supports many experiences, including picnicking, hiking, river access, and interpretive programming. Most of the campsites in the campground loops contain fairly level slopes, providing many candidate sites with a comprehensive range of accessible amenities. Primary barriers to accessibility were at parking areas and routes to facilities that were generally located upslope from the campsites due to extreme flooding conditions. Constructed features at campsites, such as picnic tables, fire rings, and grills, are largely inaccessible, requiring slight modifications or replacement to improve accessibility.

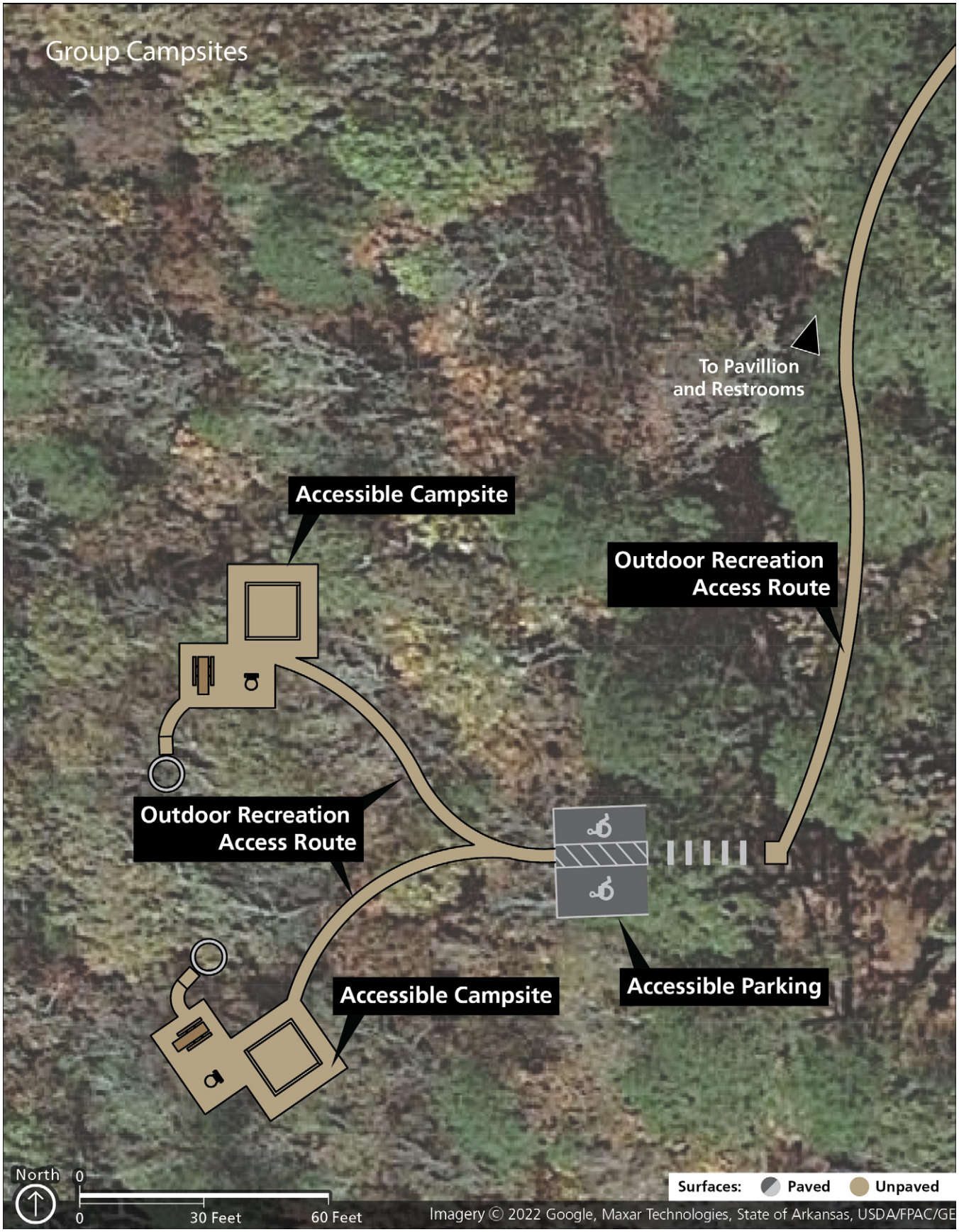
Proposed accessibility improvements at the Buffalo Point Campground include the following:

- **Car Parking:** Improve the slopes and surfaces of parking areas, and provide designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve the slopes and surfaces of routes connecting parking areas to campsites, picnic areas, restrooms, and other facilities and services.
- **Campsites:** Improve campsites that include accessible features.
- **Restrooms:** Improve restroom interiors and stall features.
- **Picnic Facilities:** Improve the clear space between tables, and add accessible picnic tables.
- **Amphitheater:** Improve wheelchair and companion seating locations.

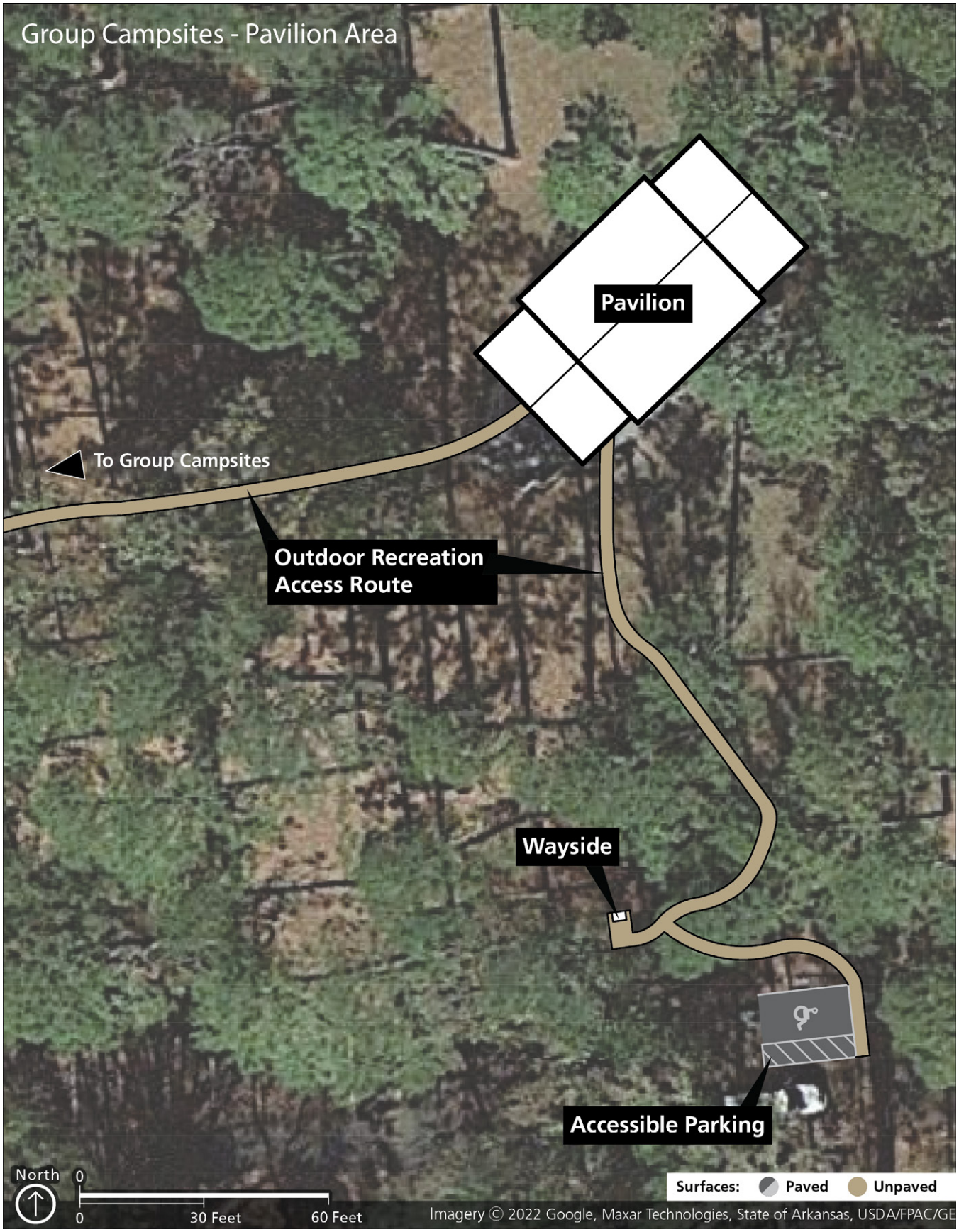
- **Signage and Waysides:** Improve clear space slopes and surfaces in front of units, knee space, and accessible content.
- **Site Features:** Improve the clear space and operable parts for site features such as trash and recycling receptacles, grills, and water spigots.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

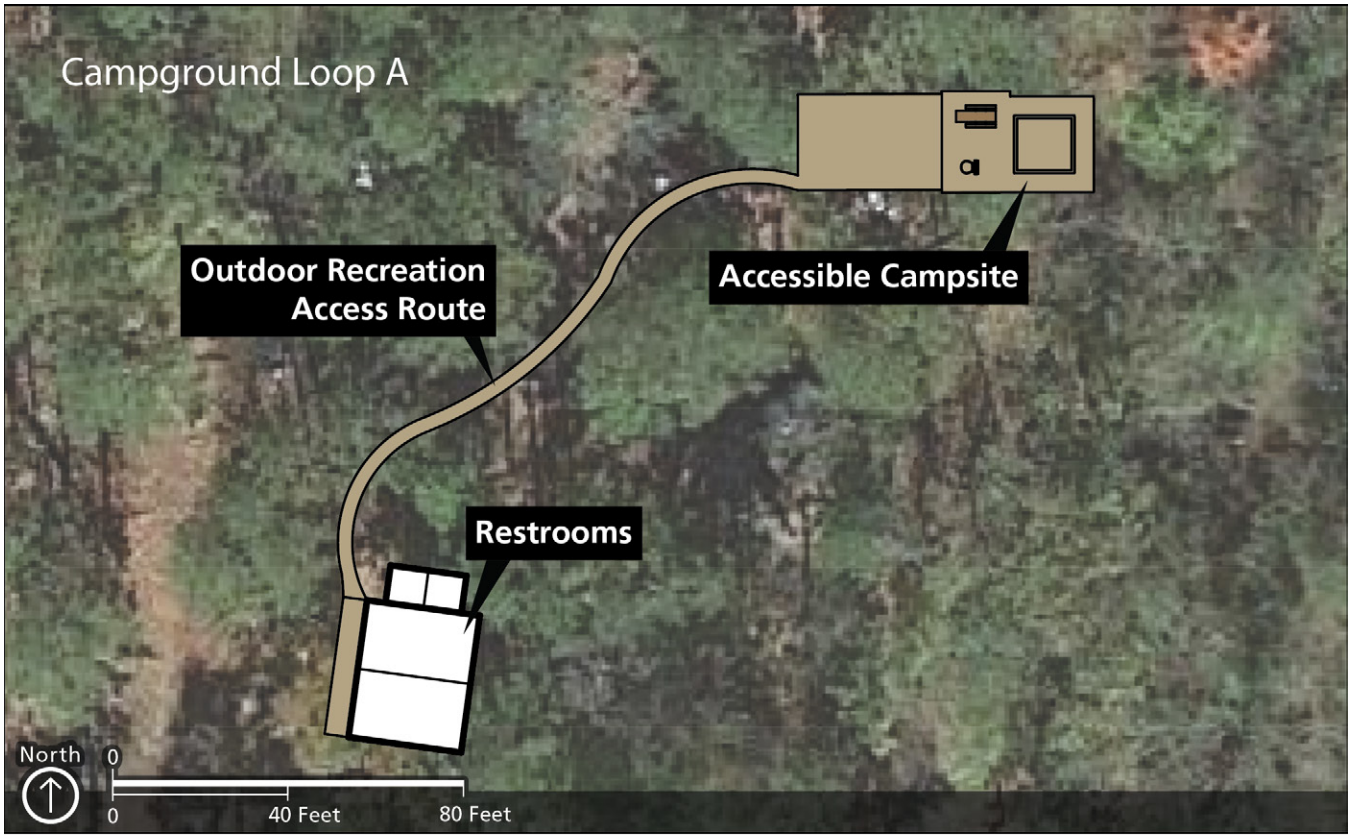
Buffalo Point Group Campsites Site Plan



Buffalo Point Group Campsites Pavilion Site Plan



Buffalo Point Campground Loop A Site Plan





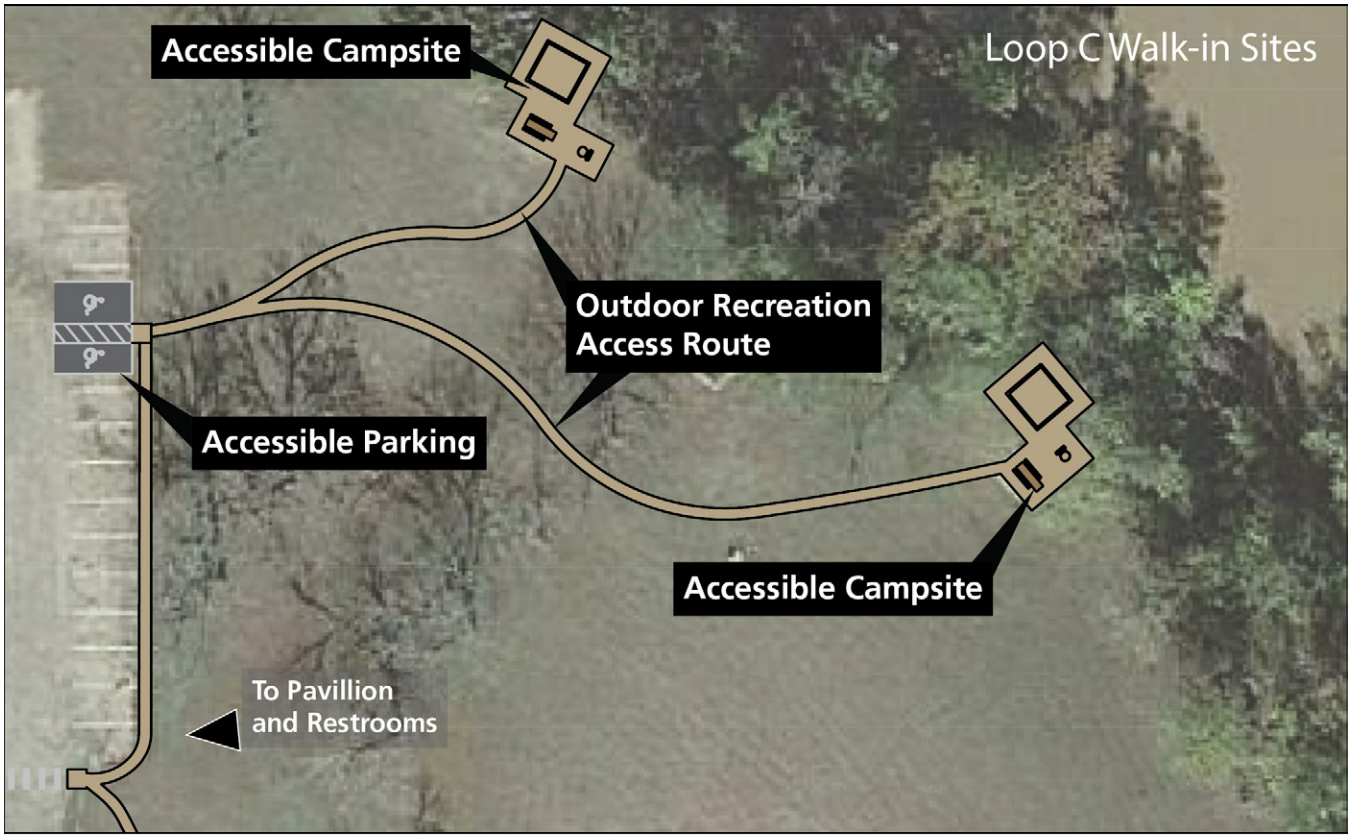
Buffalo Point Campground Loop B Site Plan



Buffalo Point Campground Restrooms and Pavilion 3 Site Plan

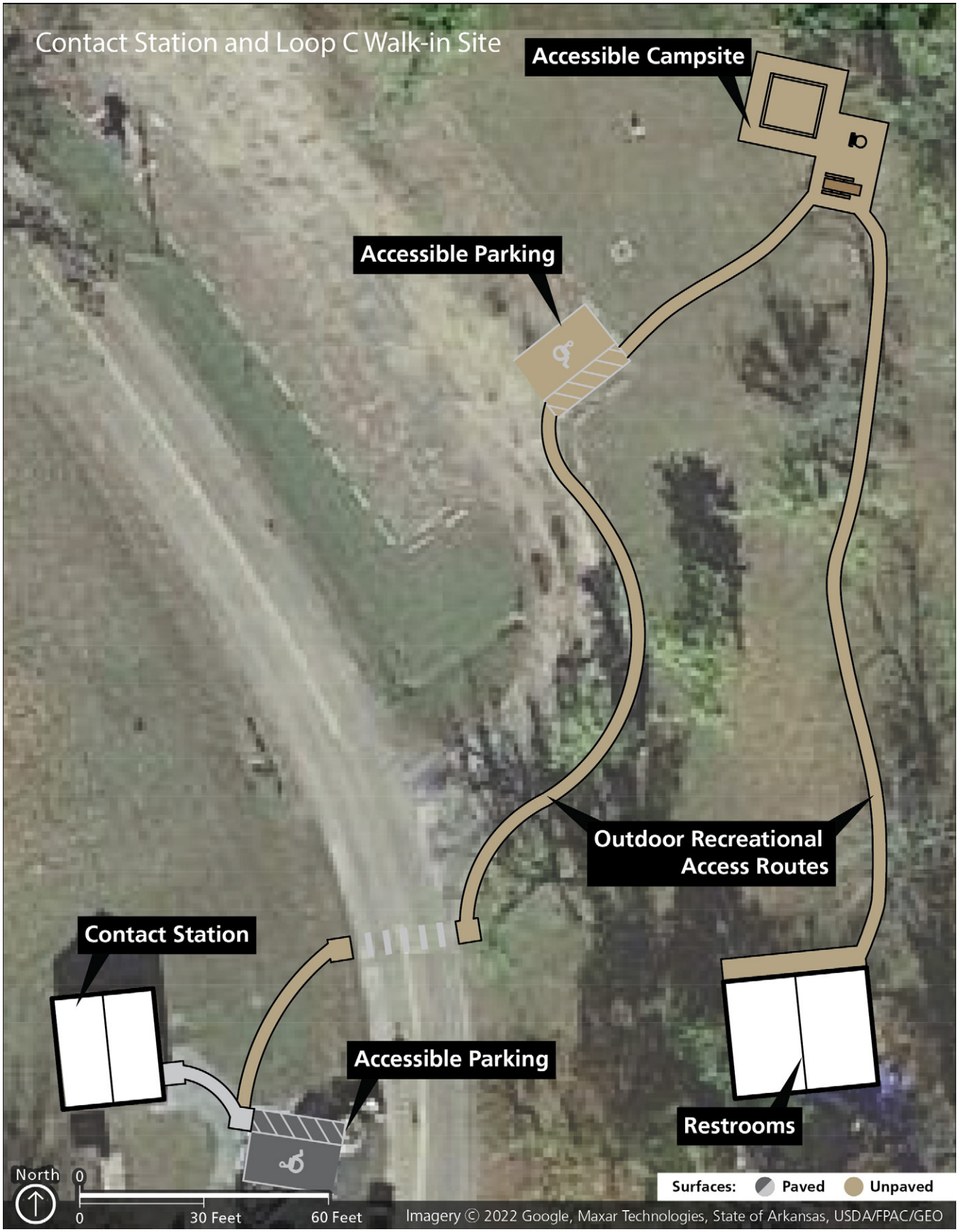


Buffalo Point Campground Loop C Walk-in Sites Site Plan





Buffalo Point Campground Loop C Walk-in Sites and Contact Station Site Plan



Buffalo Point Campground Amphitheater Site Plan



Buffalo Point Campground – Loop E Site Plan





BUFFALO POINT RIVER ACCESS

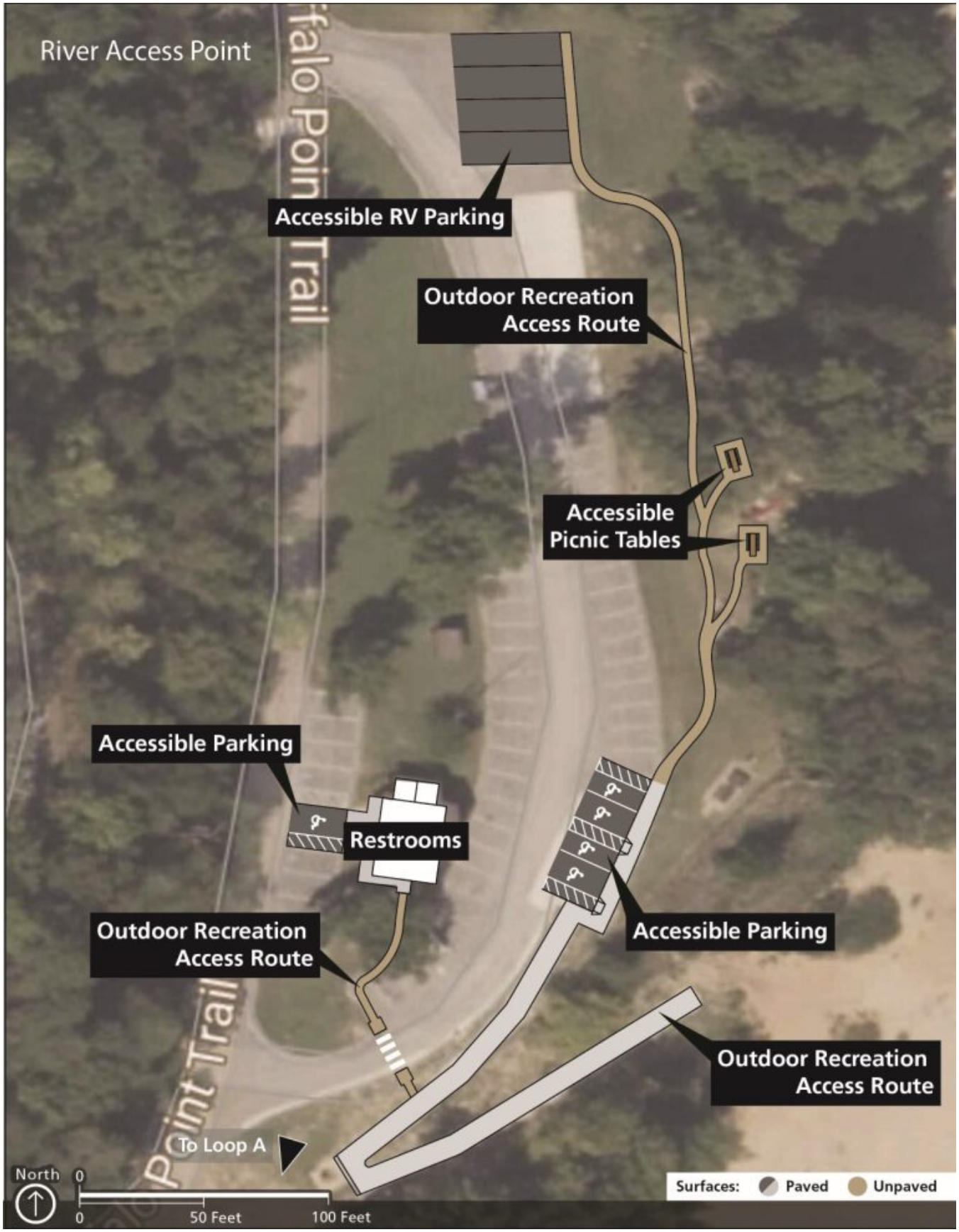
The river access point at Buffalo Point is one of the more popular locations for water access. Visitors enjoy wading, kayaking, and simply relaxing along the water's edge. Due to its location at the base of a steep drop-off, park staff have put substantial effort towards improving accessibility at the river access point, from the paved parking stalls above the site to the ramped pathway leading to a small viewing area near the water. Extreme flooding conditions limit opportunities for accessible gravel bar access, and the viewing area ends abruptly at a series of steep stone steps leading to the wide gravel bar. While a few solutions were discussed on-site, none were seen as practicable given the frequency and intensity of the damage caused by flooding. As a popular hub of the lower district, any improvements made to the Buffalo Point Campground and river access point will have a substantial impact on visitors' experience, including those with disabilities.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Buffalo Point River Access Point include the following:

- **Routes:** Improve routes connecting parking to picnic facilities.
- **Parking:** Improve access aisles, and add designated van-accessible stall and designating signage.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Buffalo Point River Access Site Plan





BUFFALO POINT RESTAURANT

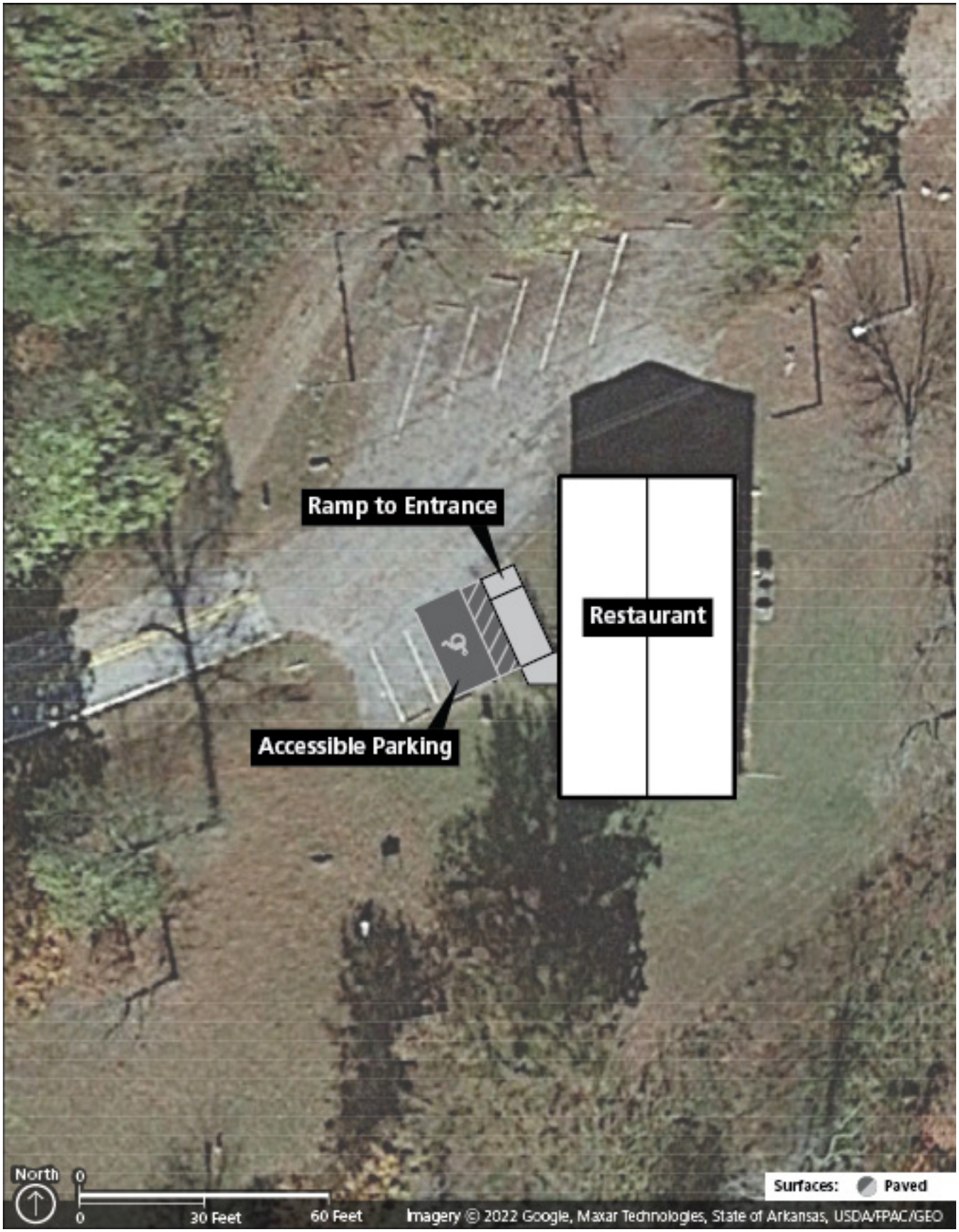
The Buffalo Point Restaurant is the only restaurant within the park boundary. Located just down the road from the lodging units, a single marked accessible parking stall and ramp are provided in front of the building. However, the hilltop position poses challenges for both parking and routes to the restroom and restaurant entry, which requires improvement to the ramp to make it more accessible. The building's modest exterior gives way to sweeping views of the river valley upon entry. Accessing both sweeping views and a good meal is easily achieved once visitors have entered the building. Minor adjustments to table heights and service counters would improve accessibility for many visitors.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Buffalo Point Restaurant include the following:

- **Parking:** Improve slopes and van-accessible compliance with designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve ramped access and routes connecting to accessible parking.
- **Restrooms:** Improve restroom interiors, and add tactile signage.
- **Restaurant Interior:** Improve knee space under dining surfaces and height adjustments for self-service areas.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Buffalo Point Restaurant Site Plan





BUFFALO POINT LODGING

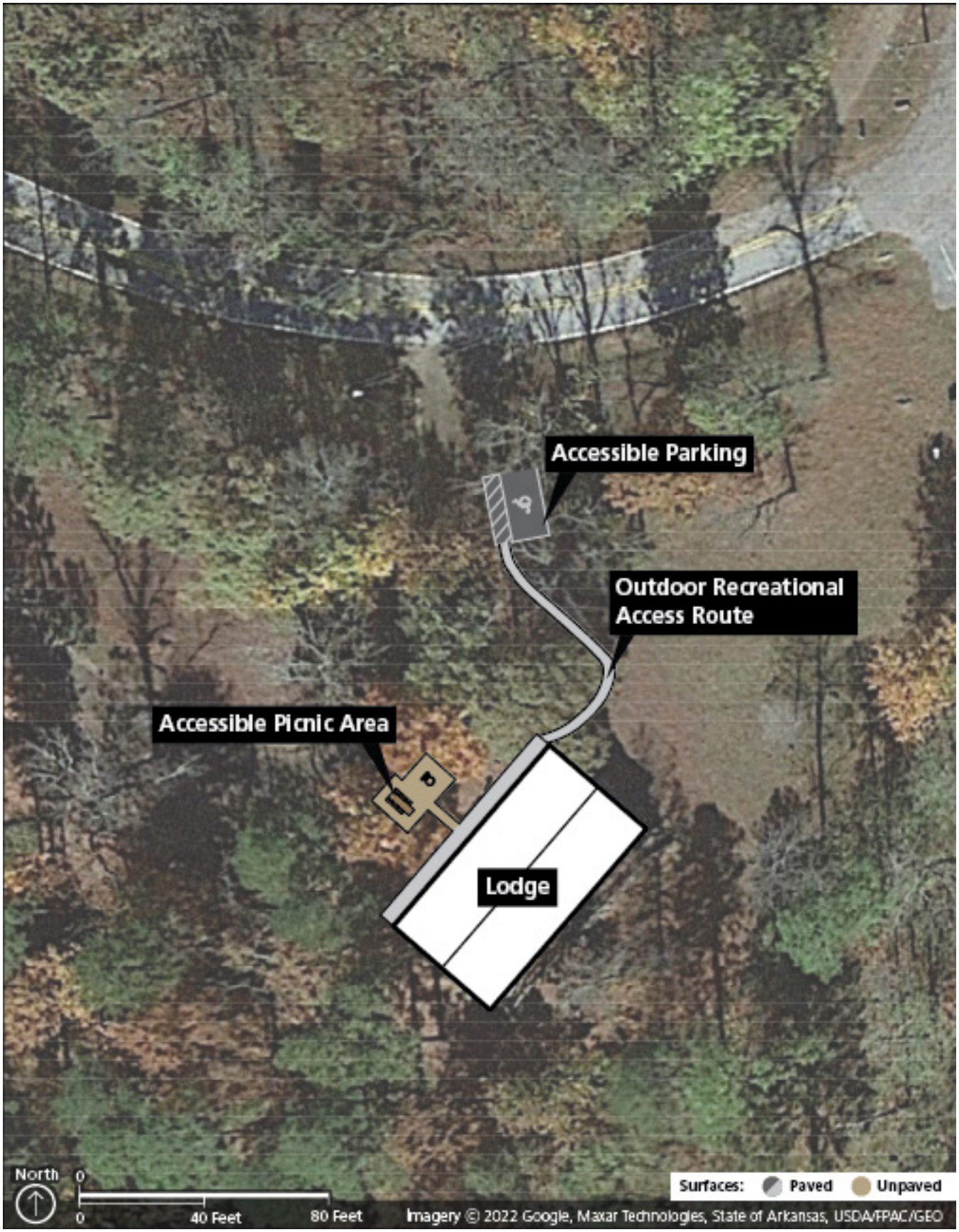
In the Lower District, Buffalo Point Concession operates the only accommodations within the park boundary. Located at Buffalo Point, rustic cabins (built by the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] around 1939), the four-unit lodge (also constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps), and modern duplex cabins are available for rent. None, however, are fully accessible, largely due to threshold barriers at entries and space limitations that make maneuverability a challenge. Despite some limitations on practicable solutions, given the historic nature of the facilities, many opportunities exist to improve accessibility in other areas, including currently informal car parking areas and for outdoor features like fire rings, grills, and picnic tables that could be modified or upgraded. Intentionally exploring appropriate modifications to improve accessibility into and within the units is strongly encouraged and would open this unique experience up to many visitors for whom Buffalo Point lodging is not currently an option.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Buffalo Point Lodging area include the following:

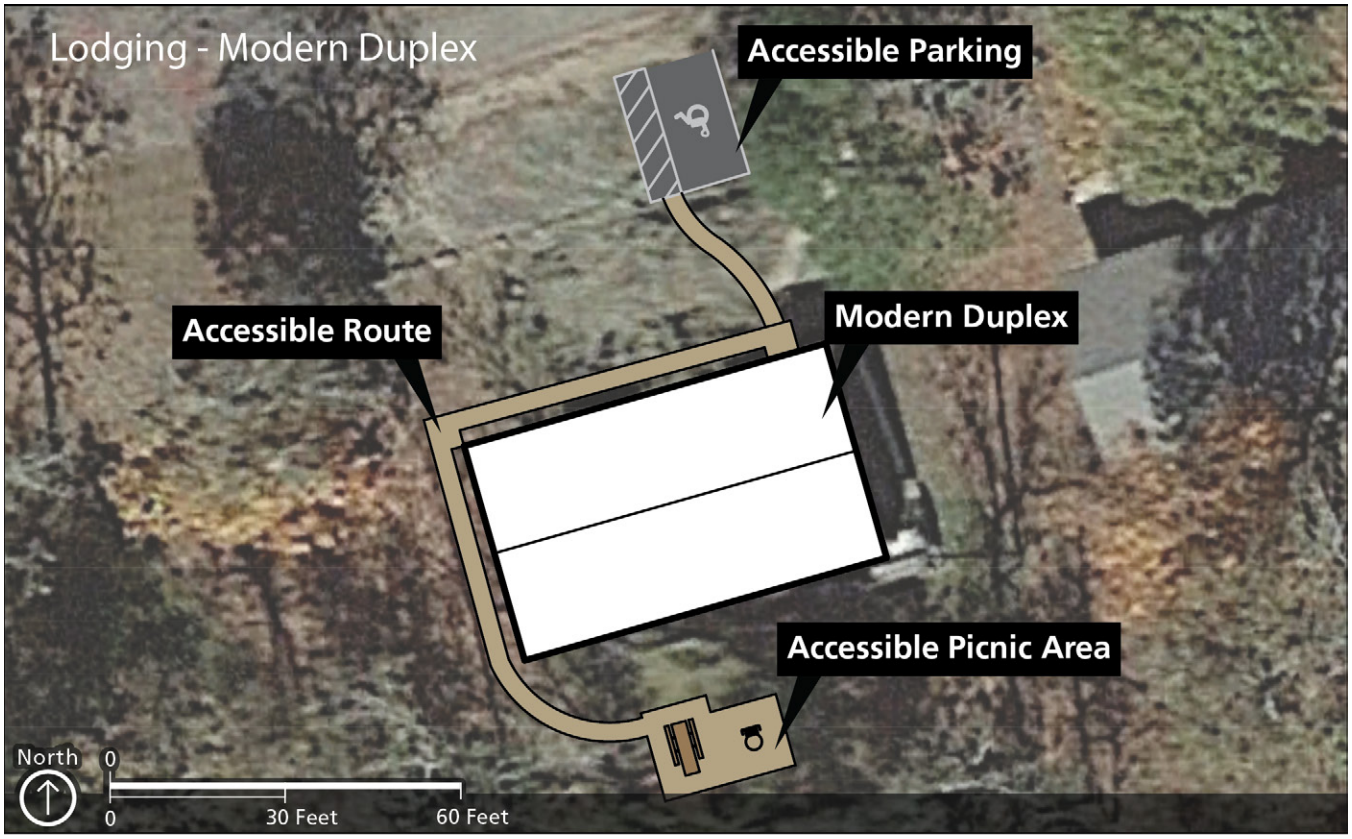
- **Parking:** Add accessible parking locations and designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve the width of routes, remove threshold barriers, improve doorway entries to buildings, and add compliant handrails along stairs.
- **Lodging Interiors:** Improve dining and work surfaces, add accessible features to restrooms, and relocate items to within accessible reach range.
- **Site Features:** Improve the clear space around site elements and operable parts for grilling and fire building surfaces, and add accessible picnic tables.

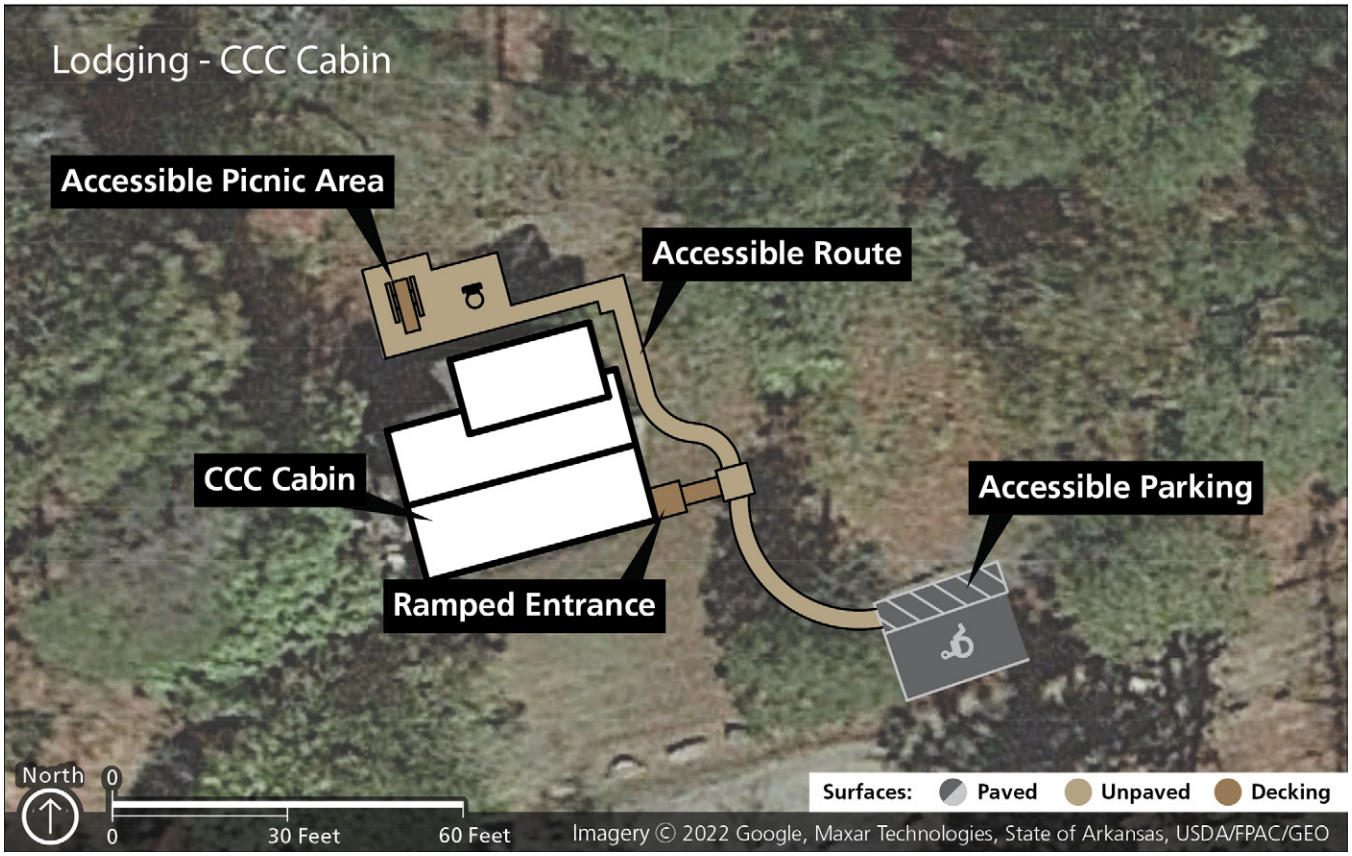
Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Buffalo Point Lodge Site Plan



Buffalo Point Modern Duplex and CCC Cabin Site Plans







CEDAR GLADE

Cedar Glade is a favorite spot for locals and park visitors alike, offering an intimate fireside picnic setting and river access down a steep embankment. Accessing Cedar Glade requires traveling a gravel road, and the parking area is also unimproved. Slopes at the trailhead remain fairly level; however, the natural surface does have roots, rocks, and leaf litter scattered throughout. While providing access to the water's edge using this trail is likely impracticable, providing information on-site to visitors about the location of the nearest accessible water access point would allow visitors with mobility impairments to find an alternative location for the same experience.

Proposed accessibility improvements at Cedar Glade include the following:

- **Parking:** Add accessible parking with designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve slopes and surfaces of routes.
- **Site Features:** Improve the clear space around site elements and the height of fire building surfaces, and add accessible picnic tables.
- **Trailhead Signage:** Add required trailhead information.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Cedar Glade Site Plan





COLLIER HOMESTEAD

Located in the Tyler Bend area, an easy walk from a gravel trailhead takes visitors to the Collier Homestead. The Collier family homesteaded one of the last parcels available along the Buffalo River in 1932. The remaining structures offer visitors a glimpse into the start of a new life in a new land. A short spur trail leads visitors to an overlook offering expansive views of the river valley below. A current park project will improve the trailhead and the trail leading to the homestead and the overlook. Currently, the trailhead lacks designated accessible parking and required trailhead information. Trails from the trailhead to the two destinations are fairly level and currently feature a wide, crushed rock surface. Minor slope and surface improvements will make this experience one of the more physically accessible experiences in the park. The cultural landscape at the homestead site has some undulating surfaces, but direct physical access to the structures is limited given their historic nature. However, the primary structure does have a ramp attached to it, which greatly broadens the options for what is considered practicable for the area.

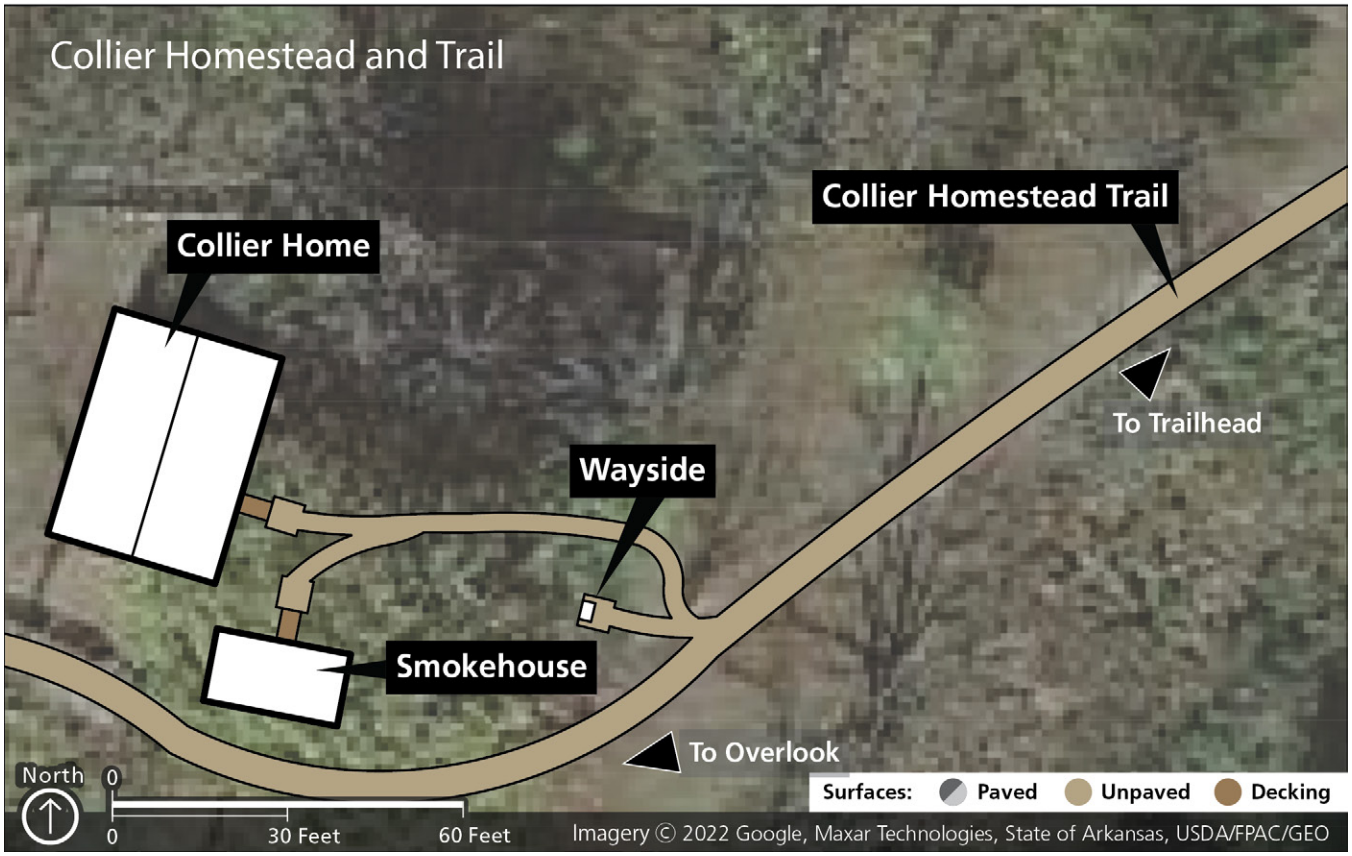
Proposed accessibility improvements at the Collier Homestead include the following:

- **Parking:** Add designated accessible parking stalls.
- **Routes:** Improve ramped access and entry widths.
- **Trailhead Signage:** Add required trailhead information, improve the clear space in front of the sign; and improve the contrast of content.
- **Interpretive Waysides:** Improve the clear ground space and contrast of wayside content.
- **Overlook:** Improve the railing design for unobstructed viewing.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Collier Homestead Site Plans







COLLINS CEMETERY

The Collins Cemetery is an old family cemetery plot the public and family members can access, though access is not widely advertised as a public experience. The area has no facilities supporting it other than an unstriped dirt lot where cars can park. Surfaces and routes throughout the small area are generally level but are littered with natural debris such as leaves, sticks, and rocks. The immediate burial area is fenced off with a small entrance and has an undulating surface of occasionally maintained turf. Space between plots is narrow, so accessibility improvements are limited if respectful use is to be maintained. An improved accessible parking area and an accessible route around the family plot would greatly improve access for park visitors and family members who have mobility limitations.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Collins Cemetery include the following:

- **Parking:** Add designated accessible parking.
- **Routes:** Improve the slopes and surfaces of routes and viewing areas.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Collins Cemetery Site Plan





DILLARDS FERRY

Dillards Ferry is a high-energy area featuring a popular river access point and opportunities for picnicking. Several picnic sites and a large gravel bar are serviced by a large parking area, drive-down water access, and two restroom facilities. Above the river is a high road bridge, enhancing the perceived enormity of the riverbed. Currently, accessible parking and restroom access are two of the most challenging barriers at the site. The large gravel lot is unstriped with an undulating surface leading down towards the water's edge. Restrooms are located on either side, but only the primary facility has an adjacent informal parking area, and none of the restrooms are designated as accessible. The route from the parking area to the adjacent picnic sites contains steep slopes, and improvements here would offer some of the most impactful benefits towards accessibility. Continuing route surfaces to the picnic sites are more even and require minor improvements. The picnic sites themselves need accessible features, though some do currently exist, such as accessible picnic tables. Currently, no route connects any accessible parking area to the water's edge. While vehicles have access to the water, once the car is parked in the parking lot, there is no accessible route connecting visitors to the water's edge. This situation is a frequent challenge along the banks of the Buffalo National River, and park staff are dedicated to optimizing access to this unique experience where most practicable.

Proposed accessibility improvements at Dillards Ferry include the following:

- **Parking:** Add designated accessible parking stalls.
- **Routes:** Improve slopes and surfaces of routes, and add routes to water access.
- **Restrooms:** Improve accessibility for restroom interior features, add designating signage, improve entry width.

- **Picnic Area:** Add accessible picnic tables with improved clear space, and improve fire building and grilling surfaces.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Dillards Ferry West Site Plan



Dillards Ferry East Site Plan





GILBERT RIVER ACCESS ROUTE

Gilbert River Access Route is a popular destination for both land and water trail adventures. Visitors can either access the water at this location or they can catch the Gilbert Trail to Shine Eye, one of the area's popular day hikes. The area is subject to heavy flooding, so while overnight camping is permitted, the area does not have designated sites or current facilities other than a vault toilet. The park has plans to redesign the restroom and river access point parking and access area, which will greatly improve the physical accessibility of Gilbert River Access Route and the experiences it supports.

Proposed accessibility improvements at Gilbert River Access Route include the following:

- **Parking:** Add designated accessible parking stalls.
- **Routes:** Add routes connecting parking areas to the restrooms and other site features, and add routes to water access.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Gilbert River Access Route Site Plan





KYLE'S LANDING

Another popular destination for visitors, Kyle's Landing, features opportunities for camping, picnicking, hiking, and river access. Accessing the site requires using a dirt road, so a high-clearance vehicle is recommended. While campsite features, such as picnic tables and lantern hooks, generally need to be improved for accessibility, the restrooms also need improvements, including appropriate grab bars in accessible stalls and stall widths for urinal access. Slopes at the trailhead and throughout the site are generally level except for routes to the water's edge, where erosion has cut the bank down and mostly destroyed the trail down to the river. Park staff have plans to redesign the restroom and the river access point parking and access area, which will greatly improve the physical accessibility of Kyle's Landing and the experiences it supports.

Proposed accessibility improvements at Kyle's Landing include the following:

- **Parking:** Add designated accessible stalls at restrooms and the trailhead.
- **Campsites:** Add designated accessible campsites with improved accessible features such as fire rings and lantern hooks.
- **Restrooms:** Improve accessibility for restroom interior features, and add designating signage.
- **Site Features:** Add accessible drinking fountains, and improve operable parts and clear ground space in front of site features like trash and recycling receptacles.
- **Information Boards:** Improve content and graphic accessibility, and include trail condition information.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Kyle's Landing Campground Site Plan





OZARK CAMPGROUND

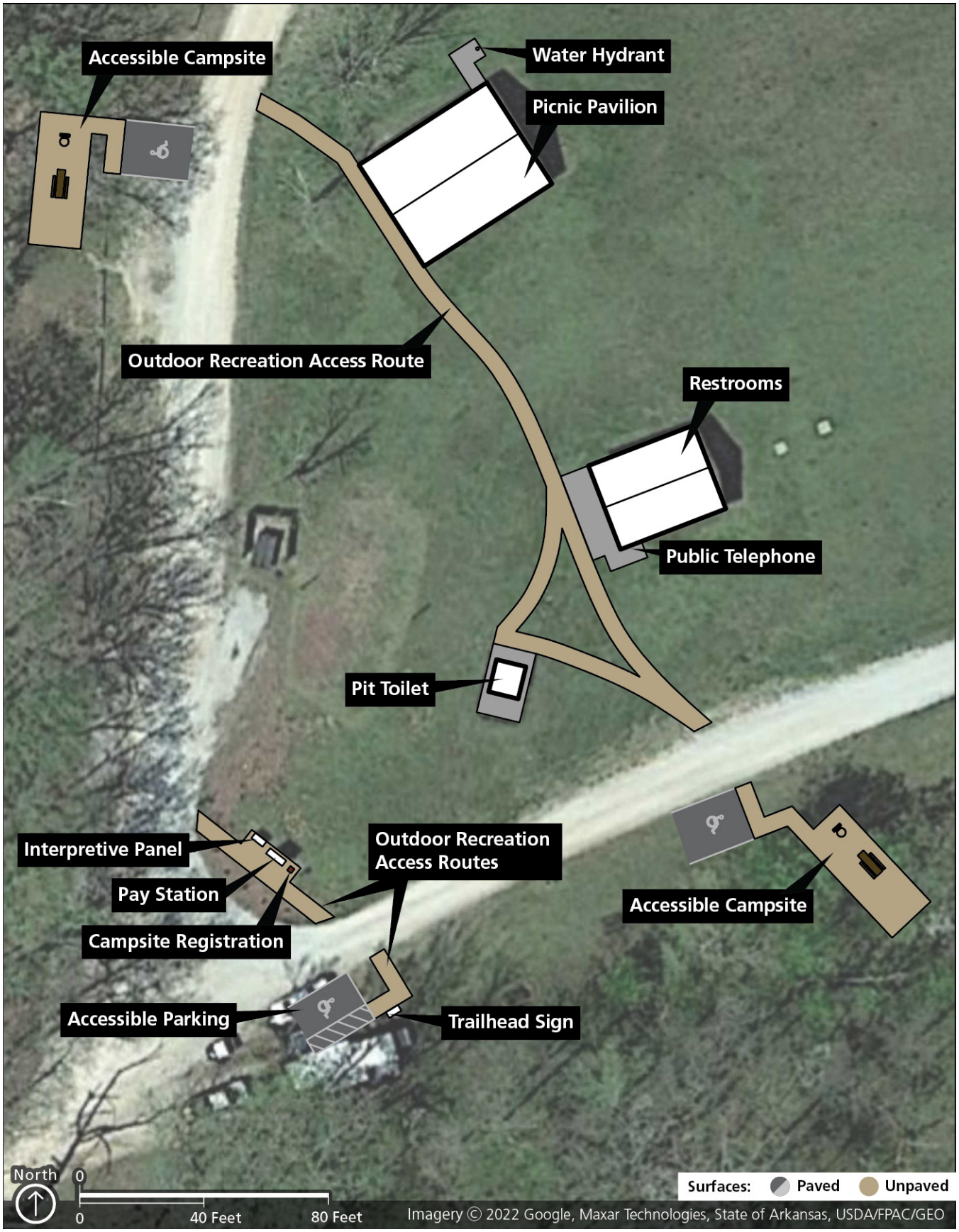
Ozark is a popular campground off Highway 7 north of Jasper, Arkansas. The campground is open year-round, with 31 campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis. The site has two restroom facilities. One seasonal restroom facility has flush toilets, and the other is a pit toilet available year-round. In the center of the campsite is the Ozark Pavilion, where picnic tables, a barbecue, and electric hookups are provided. The campground also offers a trailhead for the Buffalo River Trail and river access. The terrain at Ozark Pavilion is gentle, and minor changes could improve accessibility.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Ozark Campground include the following:

- **Parking:** Add accessible parking by the river access point, and improve the parking station's location and operation.
- **Routes:** Add routes connecting on-site facilities and services, and improve route surfaces.
- **Campsites:** Add designated accessible campsites with improved accessible features such as picnic tables, fire rings, and lantern hooks.
- **Restrooms:** Improve the accessibility for restroom interior features, add designating signage.
- **Trailhead:** Add trail information, and improve approach to signage.
- **Site Features:** Improve clear ground space and operable parts, and add a TTY unit to the public telephone. Add accessible picnic tables, and improve the grill and water hydrant.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Ozark Campground Site Plan



Ozark River Access Point Site Plan





PONCA

Ponca is a popular hand canoe launch and trailhead for the Buffalo River Trail. The launch provides access to one of the most scenic sections of the Buffalo River and is popular with both private boaters and park concessioners. The parking area has one pit toilet. The canoe access is rocky with a steep drop-off. The site is also a popular swimming/wading area, and visitors can fish from the low-water bridge. An access route, either permanent or removable, could allow all visitors to experience the Buffalo River at this location.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Ponca area include the following:

- **Parking:** Add van-accessible parking by the river access point.
- **Routes:** Add routes connecting on-site facilities and services.
- **Restrooms:** Improve accessibility for restroom interior features, and add designating signage.
- **Trailhead:** Add trail information, and improve the approach to signage.
- **Interpretive Panel:** Improve written and graphic content with accessible clear space at the approach.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Ponca Site Plan





PRUITT

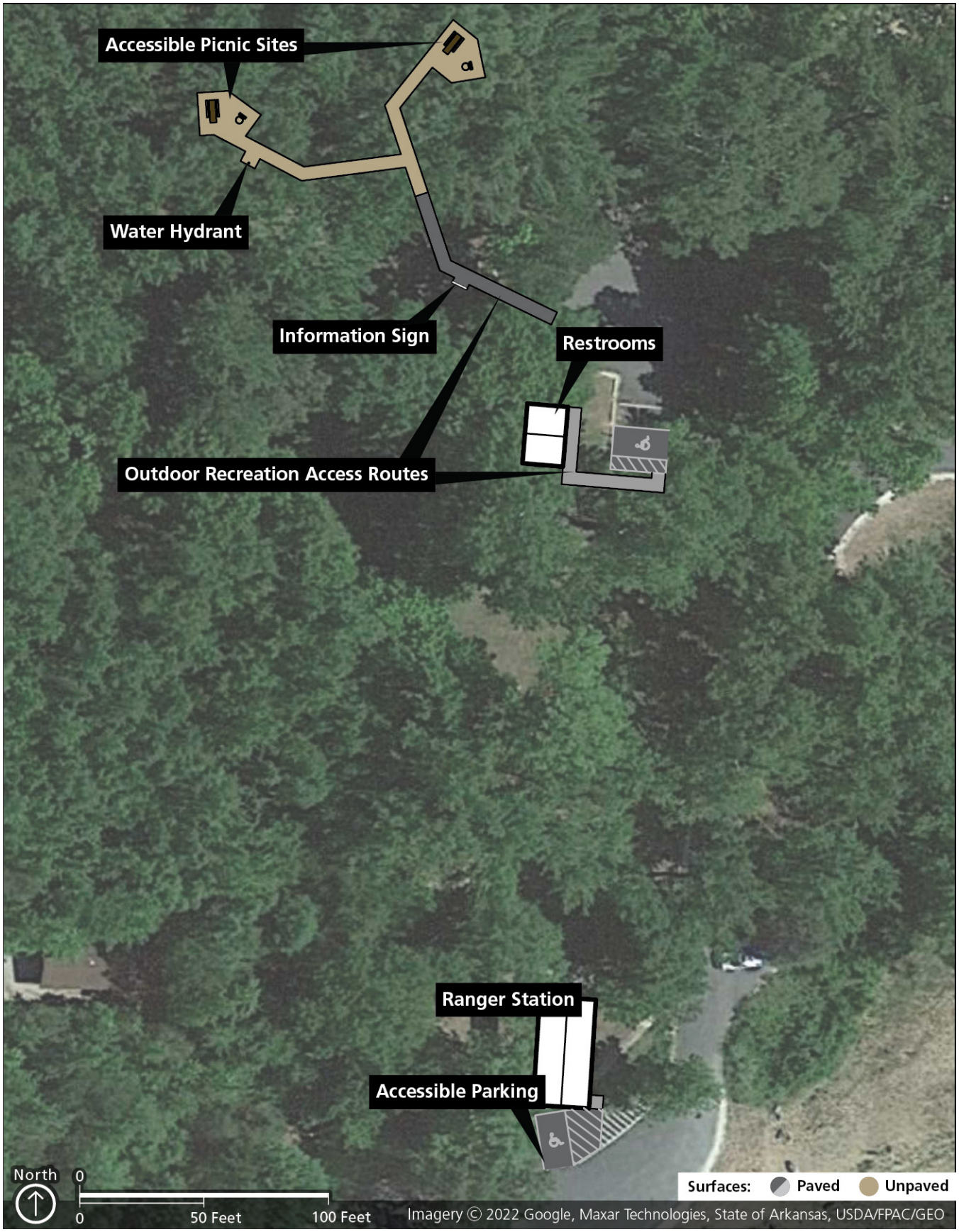
Pruitt Landing has a parking area, restrooms, a Mill Creek trailhead, and a boat launch. Depending on water levels, a large gravel bar can form at the canoe launch area. Water levels can change dramatically at this location, influencing accessibility at the launch. The Pruitt day-use area has a picnic area, restrooms, Buffalo River Trailhead access, and a parking area with accessible parking. The slope is generally mild throughout the site, and it may have had accessible paths in the past that have deteriorated. These paths could be repaired to outdoor recreation route standards with minor improvements.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Pruitt area include the following:

- **Parking:** Add van-accessible parking at the restroom and river point access, and improve slope, surface, and dimensions of existing stalls.
- **Routes:** Improve route slopes and surfaces, and add new routes connecting site facilities and services.
- **Restrooms:** Improve accessibility for restroom interior features, add or relocate designating signage.
- **Trailhead:** Add trail information, and improve the approach to signage.
- **Site Features:** Add accessible picnic tables, and improve the accessibility of grills and water hydrant clear space.
- **Information Sign:** Improve the legibility of content and clear approach.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Pruitt Picnic Area Site Plan



Pruitt Trailhead and River Access Point and Restroom Site Plan







STEEL CREEK CAMPGROUND

The Steel Creek Campground is a popular hand launch, equestrian campground, and tent camping area along the Buffalo River. The campground offers spectacular views of the Everton Formation Bluffs. The campground has 26 tent-only sites and 14 sites for campers with horses/stock animals. A canoe launch offers a gentle slope into the Buffalo River. Nineteen of the campsites are reservable on Recreation.gov, and 21 sites are first-come, first-served. The terrain is open and gently sloped throughout the site. No designated Architectural Barriers Act sites currently exist, but with small improvements, several sites have a high potential for conversion with limited investment. A small visitor contact station is in a historic building near the horse campsites. The campground has two water restrooms and one pit toilet. The pit toilet and restroom near the boat launch need minor changes. The flush restrooms near the campsites require minor interior changes, but no accessible route to the building exists. The boat hand launch is close to the road, but fluctuating water levels can increase or decrease accessibility at this location. The site's gentle gradient and amount of space could be beneficial for developing a more accessible launch area. Because of the nature of river launches, take-out points would also need to be considered.

Proposed accessibility improvements at the Steel Creek Campground include the following:

- **Parking:** Add van-accessible parking at ranger station and river access point, improve slopes, surfaces, and dimensions of existing stalls, add designating signage.
- **Routes:** Improve route slopes and surfaces, add new routes connecting site facilities and services, and remove threshold barriers and entrances.
- **Restrooms:** Improve accessibility for restroom interior features, and relocate designating signage.

- **Campsites:** Designate accessible campsites with improved accessible features such as picnic tables, fire rings, and parking stalls.
- **Trailhead:** Add trail information, and improve approach to signage.
- **Site Features:** Improve the accessibility of features such as the pay station, grills and water hydrant operable parts and clear space, improve operable parts, and add a TTY unit at the public telephone.
- **Interpretive Panel:** Improve the accessibility of content, and clear the approach.
- **Information Counter:** Add an accessible height counter space.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

Steel Creek Campground North and South Site Plans



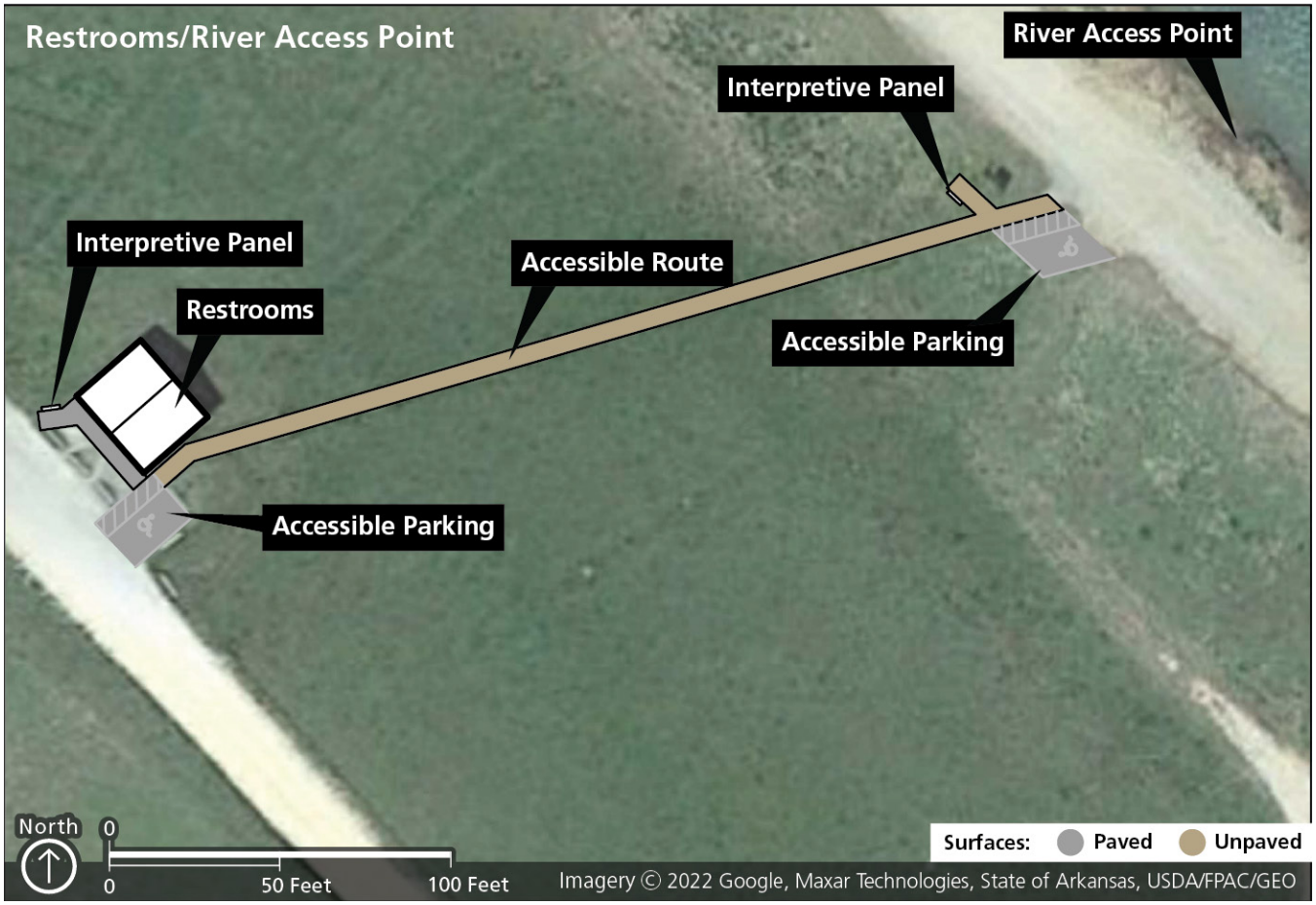


Steel Creek Equestrian Campground Site Plan



Steel Creek River Access Point and Ranger Station Site Plans







TYLER BEND

Tyler Bend Campground is a developed campground in the middle district of the park. The campground has 28 drive-in sites, including 2 RV sites, 10 walk-in sites, 5 group sites, and a pavilion. The campground is a short distance from the park's main visitor center. An amphitheater at the site hosts ranger programs during the summer. The campground has flush restrooms, showers, a dump station, and potable water. The restrooms are mostly accessible and require only minor modifications. The slopes are generally mild in the area, and several campsites and an amphitheater could be made accessible with limited modifications.

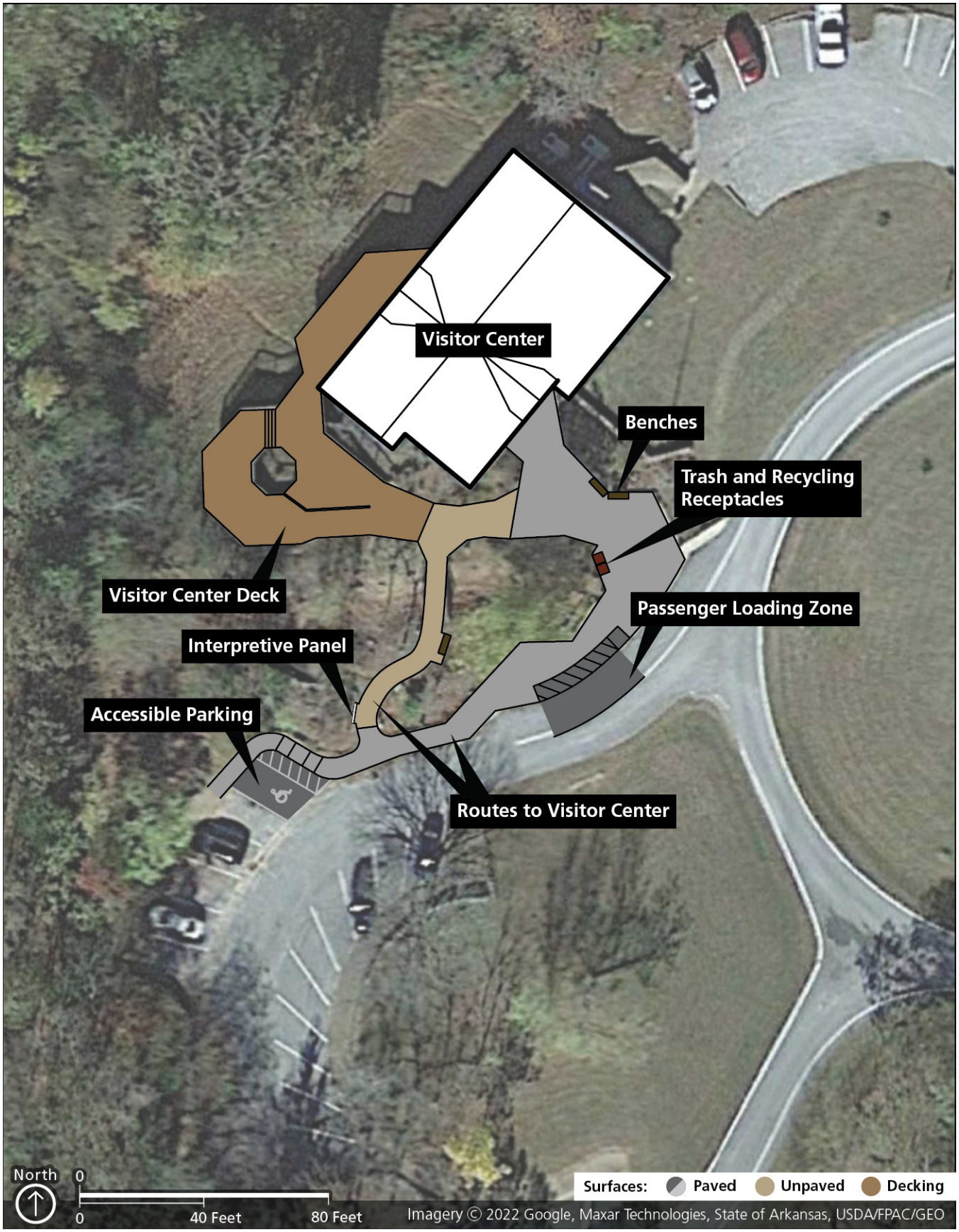
Proposed accessibility improvements at Tyler Bend include the following:

- **Parking:** Improve slopes, surfaces, and signage for van-accessible parking, add accessible oversized vehicle parking, improve slopes at the passenger loading zone, improve handrails at ramps, and widen interior routes.
- **Routes:** Improve curb cuts, route slopes, and surfaces; clear doorways; and improve the operable parts of door openers.
- **Restrooms:** Improve the accessibility of restroom interior features, and add designating signage.
- **Site Features:** Improve operable parts and clear space at features such as trash and recycling receptacles and benches, add accessible drinking fountains, and improve reach ranges and assistive signage at bookstore.
- **Interpretive Panel:** Improve the accessibility of content and graphics, and improve viewing distances of content.
- **Information Counter:** Improve the surface area of accessible height counter space.

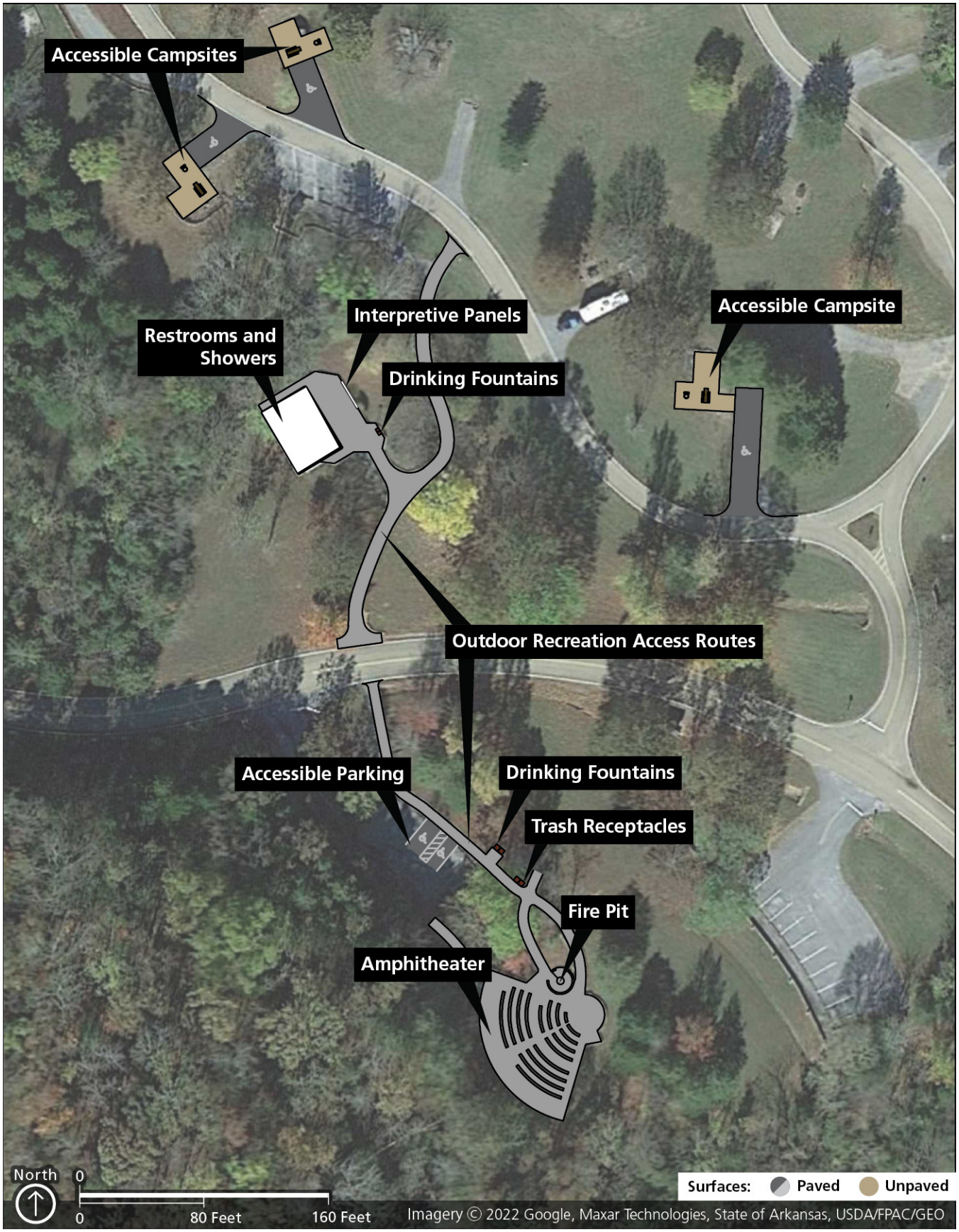
- **Theater:** Add designating signage and wheelchair seating areas, and provide assistive listening devices.
- **Exhibits:** Add audio description and open captioning, improve the accessibility of graphic and written content, and accommodate forward approaches.
- **Campsites:** Designate accessible campsites with improved accessible features such as picnic tables, fire rings, and parking stalls.
- **Trailhead:** Add trail information.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

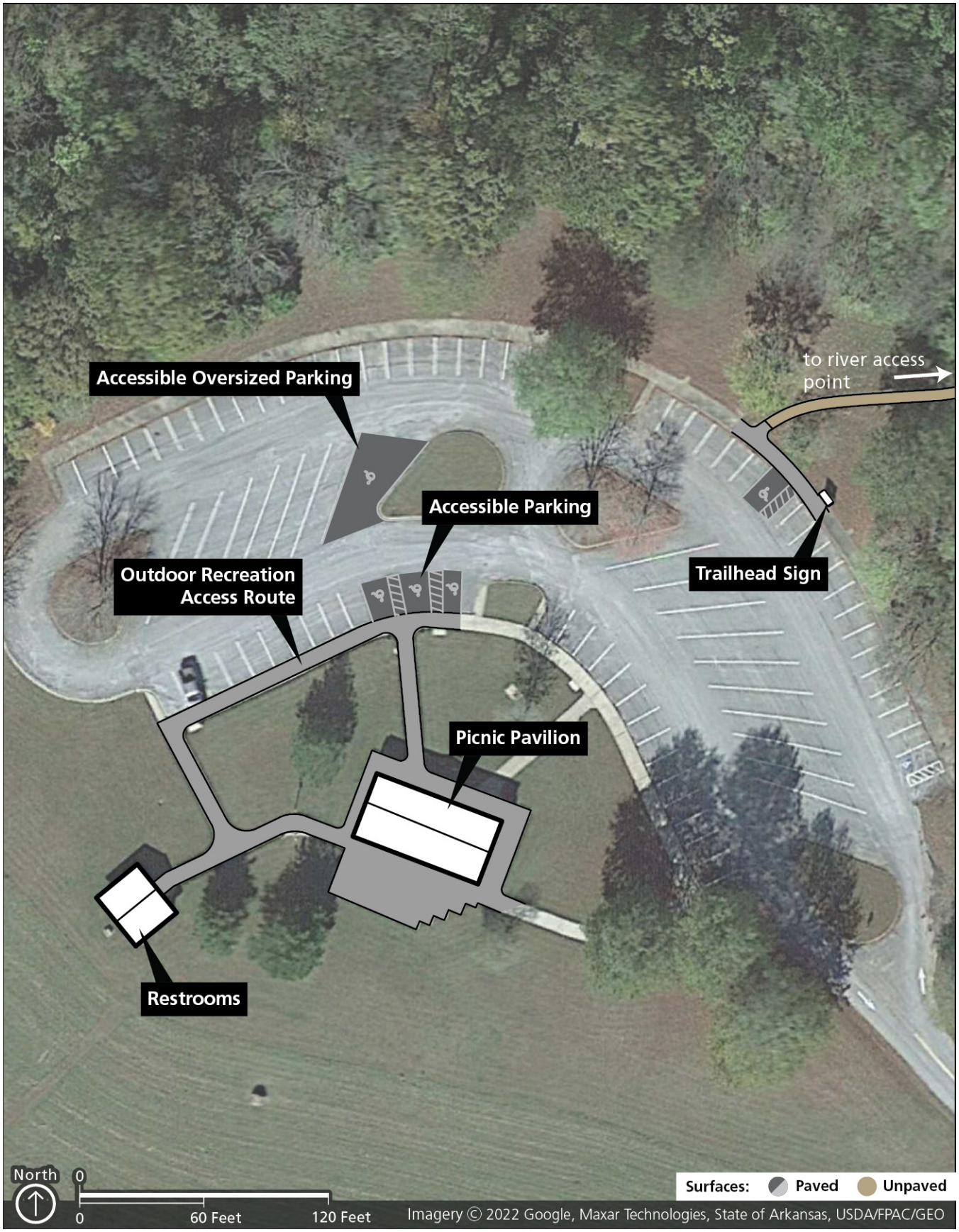
Tyler Bend Visitor Center Site Plan



Tyler Bend Campground Site Plan



Tyler Bend Day Use Area Site Plan





BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER PROGRAMS

Buffalo National River showed strengths in its audio versions of publications and providing accessible content and information on its website and on social media. The park does not currently offer braille or large print versions of publications and does not offer sign language interpretation. Unique opportunities exist to offer more detailed information related to physical conditions of park areas on the website to engage staff and further support visitors with disabilities. Buffalo National River staff are aware of these areas for improvement and are committed to addressing them.

Proposed accessibility improvements to parkwide programs include the following:

- **Publications:** Add an accessibility guide, and add large print and braille versions of publications, brochures, and maps.
- **Audiovisuals:** Add open captioning and audio description for on-site videos.
- **Website and Social Media:** Improve accessibility information shared on the park's website.
- **Walks, Talks, Tours, and Special Events:** Add alternative formats for program materials, provide sign language interpretation assistive listening systems, and provide real-time captioning for programs.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.



BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER POLICIES, PRACTICES, COMMUNICATION, AND TRAINING

Buffalo National River showed strengths in its policies for other power-driven mobility devices and service animals in the park. The park does not currently offer standard operating procedures for communication with law enforcement, emergency preparedness, or accessible seating. Unique opportunities exist to offer regular accessibility training and improve outreach to the disability community to engage staff and further support visitors with disabilities. Buffalo National River staff are aware of these areas for improvement and are committed to addressing them.

Proposed accessibility improvements to policies, practices, communication, and training include the following:

- **Staff Training and Park Protocols:** Add employee training on accessibility, add standard operating procedures for law enforcement and emergency preparedness related to accessibility, and add guidance for making access and seating at publicly accessed spaces accessible.
- **Communications and Partnerships:** Improve outreach to local disability groups.

Details of the identified accessibility barriers and their recommended solutions and target time frames are available in the implementation strategy table.

CONCLUSION

Buffalo National River staff are committed to providing all visitors with the opportunity to connect with and learn about the park's unique natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Accessibility improvements identified in the Buffalo National River SETP will make it easier for individuals with cognitive, hearing, vision, and mobility disabilities to discover, understand, and enjoy the range of experiences available at the park. Park staff will continue to work towards accommodating all visitors while sustaining its legacy to preserve and protect its unique combination of distinctive size, completeness, and wild qualities and its associated natural, scenic, and historical resources.

The primary goal of the plan is to consider universal design strategies and document modifications needed to provide access to park facilities, services, activities, and programs for all visitors. As park staff work towards implementing the plan, physical access to and within assessed park areas will be improved, and park information and programs will be enhanced or created for all visitors across the breadth of key experiences at Buffalo National River. From accessible kayaking and hiking opportunities to special events and nature programs, visitors of all abilities will have the opportunity to experience this truly unique national treasure.

The Buffalo National River SETP is a living document intended to be used as a guiding reference for the park as staff implement accessibility upgrades and document accessibility accomplishments. As barriers to accessibility are removed and/or improved, changes will be updated in the implementation strategy table. Park staff will conduct periodic reviews to evaluate and update conditions to reflect accomplishments and document new programs or other changes that occur over time. Revisions to the plan may include conducting additional assessments for areas not originally conducted as a part of this plan.

Over time, the results of this collective effort will make Buffalo National River a truly welcoming and accommodating place for all visitors and will provide equal opportunity to access the places, resources, stories, and experiences at the park.

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APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY LAWS, STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, AND NPS POLICIES APPLICABLE TO BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

As a national park, Buffalo National River is required to comply with specific federal laws that mandate that discriminatory barriers be removed to provide equal opportunities to persons with disabilities. The following laws, design guidelines, and director's orders pertain to Buffalo National River.

LAWS

- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 – https://www.access-board.gov/aba/guides/
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/43/17.550
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – http://www.section508.gov/
- Effective Communication – http://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm
- Reasonable Accommodations – http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/reasonable-accommodations/
- Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices – https://www.ada.gov/opdmd.htm
- Service Animals – https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm
- 43 CFR, Section 17.549 Program Accessibility: Discrimination Prohibited – http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/43/17.549
- 43 CFR, Section 17.550 Program Accessibility: Existing Facilities – http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/43/17.550
- 43 CFR, Section 17.551 Program Accessibility: New Construction and Alterations – http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/43/17.551

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DIRECTOR'S ORDERS AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

- Director's Order 16A: *Reasonable Accommodation for Applicants And Employees with Disabilities* – https://www.nps.gov/subjects/policy/upload/DO_16A_5-4-1999.pdf
- Director's Order 42: *Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities* – https://www.nps.gov/subjects/policy/upload/DO_42_11-3-2000.pdf
- National Park Service *Management Policies 2006*, Section 1.9.3 Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities – https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1548/upload/ManagementPolicies2006.pdf

GUIDELINES

- Draft Accessibility Standards for Public Rights-Of-Way – https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/

- Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media – https://www.nps.gov/subjects/hfc/accessibility.htm

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

Many of the resources listed below for trainings, accessibility assessments, project development, and implementation are currently located on the Pacific West Region Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Planning SharePoint site (https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/sites/nps-PWR-AccessibilitySETP?CT=1649343052705&OR=OWA-NT&CID=204c2563-b913-0894-1cae-52bc8f021fcf). In the near future, this information will be available to all NPS staff and will be uploaded to the Park Facility Management Division's "Accessibility for Visitors and Employees with Disabilities" web page (https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/sites/nps-pfmd/SitePages/Access-for-Visitors-and-Employees-with-Disabilities.aspx). This information includes specific accessibility resources for concessions, facilities and maintenance, interpretation and education, and law enforcement staff. Resources include the following:

- A glossary of accessibility terms
- Reference information and links to laws and policies
- Accessibility assessment checklists and videos
- Accessibility training links and materials
- Templates that help track and document accessibility actions and an accessibility guide
- Guidance for making historic sites accessible
- Guidance for service animals in parks, accessible publications and programs, signage, and audio description
- Disability dialogue information and trainings
- Guidance for preparing PMIS packages for accessibility improvements
- Trail assessment protocols and summary sheets

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APPENDIX C: PARK AREAS NOT ASSESSED

The following park areas were not assessed for this plan. The selection process determined that key park experiences provided in these park areas were available in an equivalent way in the areas that were assessed. If any park area not assessed is improved by new construction or alterations in the future, the area will be assessed and improved to comply with current accessibility standards. These areas will be improved as a part of future facility alterations or as a component of a future planned construction project.

- Blue Hole Picnic Area and Primitive Campground
- Boyhood Home
- Boxley Bridge River Access Point (RAP)
- Boxley Trailhead
- Camp Orr Boy Scout Camp
- Carver RAP and Campground
- Cavers Camp
- Cecil Cove Trailhead
- Center Point Trailhead
- Compton Trailhead
- Erbie Horse Camp
- Erbie RAP and Campground
- Grinders Ferry RAP
- Hasty RAP
- Hathaway Gap Trailhead
- Hide-Out Hollow Trailhead
- Lost Valley Pulloff
- Lost Valley Trailhead
- Maumee North RAP
- Maumee South RAP and Campground
- Mill Creek Trailhead
- Mt. Hersey RAP
- Parker/Hickman Homestead
- Rush Historic Site
- Rush Landing RAP and Campground
- Shimmer Horn Trailhead
- Shine Eye Day Use Area and Single Campsite
- Spring Creek RAP and Campground
- Tony Bend Research Learning Center (Buffalo Point)
- Twin Falls Trailhead
- Villines Farms
- Woolum RAP and Campground

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APPENDIX D: CONTRIBUTORS

BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

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BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER
ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLAN
MARCH 2024

This accessibility self-evaluation and transition plan has been prepared as a collaborative effort between Buffalo National River staff, Regional Office staff serving Interior Regions 3, 4, and 5, and Denver Service Center staff and is recommended for approval by the superintendent.

Approved Date

Angela Boyers, Superintendent, Buffalo National River

As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

Buffalo National River BUFF 173/193082

March 2024

[Back Cover]