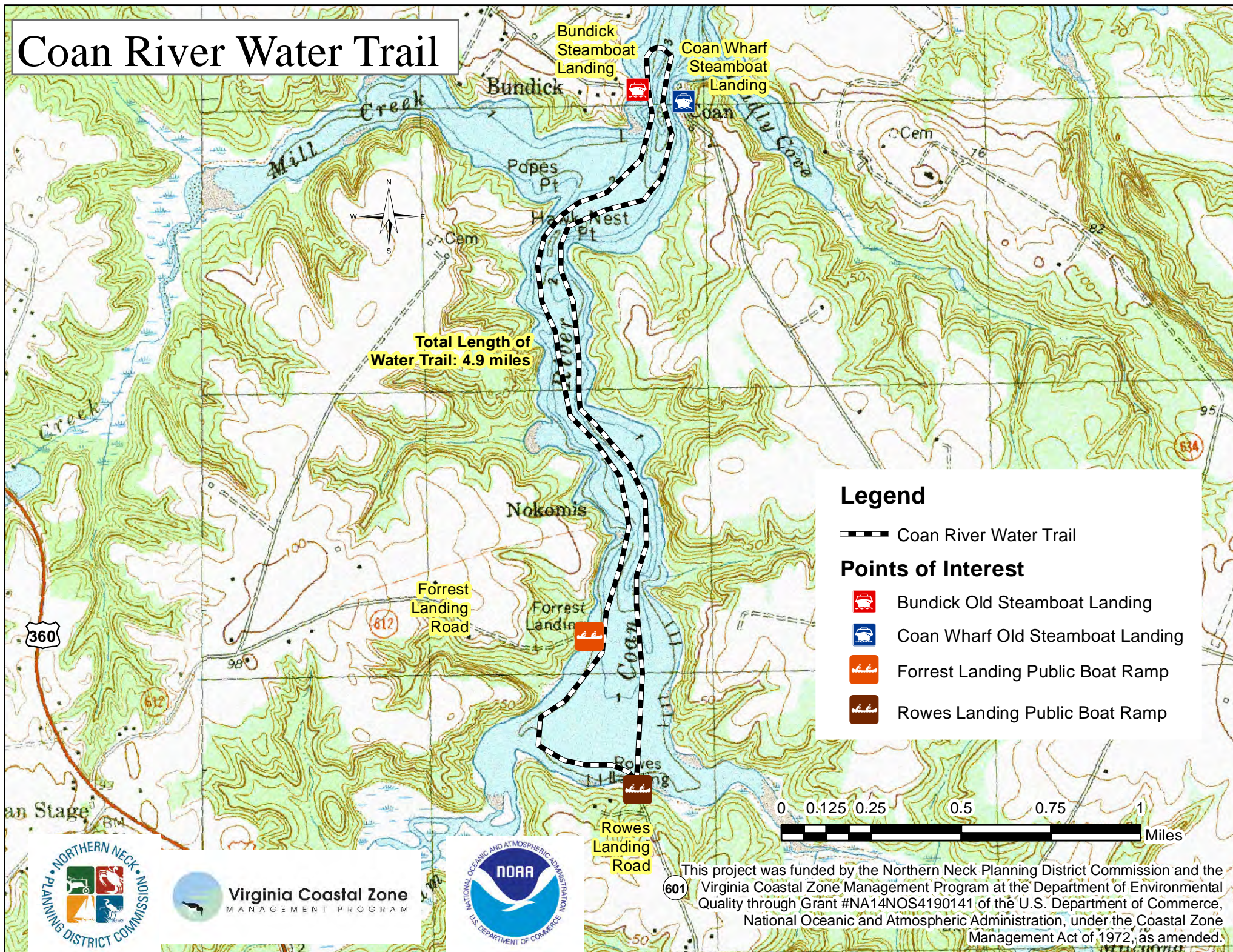
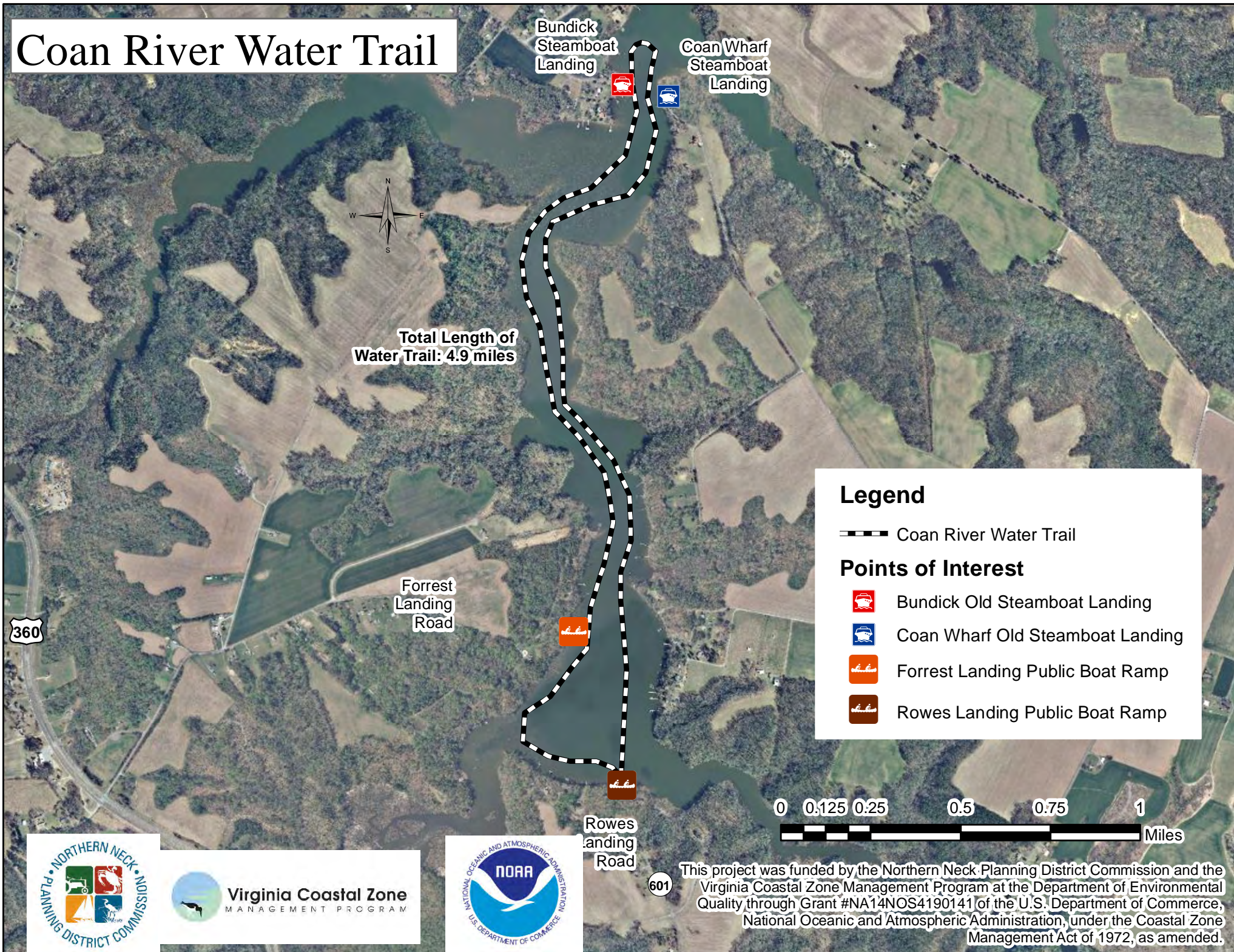


# Coan River Water Trail





# Coan River Water Trail





The Coan River is the first major river on the Virginia side of the Potomac River as you travel upriver from Smith Point where the river meets the Bay. The name of the river comes from the Chickacoan Indians that inhabited the area before European settlers arrived. Rowes Landing, near Heathsville, is the access point for the Coan River Water Trail. Nearby Forrest Landing can also be used to access this water trail.



*Rowes Landing from the Coan River*

Rowe's and Forrest Landing are located very near the upper reaches of the Coan River, near the county seat of Heathsville. The two headwater streams that feed the Coan River are located on either side of Rowes Landing, and both have extensive marsh systems that line the banks. These marshes would be a great place for birdwatchers to spot green herons, kingfishers and other coastal birds. During the War of 1812, on August 7, 1814, ten British ships and smaller vessels appeared on the Coan River. The invaders sent three barges to capture three American schooners near Northumberland Court House (Heathsville). The Lancaster County militia repulsed the attack until British reinforcements arrived. Before leaving, the British seized the schooners and destroyed property at Northumberland Court House. Several years later, on October 4, 1814, two British detachments of 3,000 infantry invaded Northumberland County from the Coan River. After initially resisting, the outnumbered militia retreated.

The British captured arms, ammunition, and personal property before debarking.

Early colonists designated Coan Wharf as a tobacco shipping center, but the wharf never grew to its potential. Instead of tobacco, the Coan River region became a magnet for canneries, fish processing and packing plants. Coan Wharf is located at the northern turnaround point on this water trail, and was a bustling steamboat port in the late 1800s and early 1900s. No evidence of a steamboat landing at Coan Wharf remains.



*Coan Wharf - old Steamboat Landing*

On the opposite shore from Coan Wharf, is the historic steamboat wharf of Bundick. Bundick still has a wooden bulkhead present and it is possible to envision what the dock may have looked like during the Steamboat. The Coan River is surprisingly narrow at this point, although the river still boasts a relatively deep channel at 8 feet. The steamboats brought manufactured goods from Philadelphia, Baltimore and Norfolk to the Northern Neck and carried back canned goods, fresh fish and produce, and of course, passengers. It was a two day trip to Baltimore from the Coan River ports, as the steamboats were not very fast, and they stopped at multiple ports along the way. In the Northern Neck in the late 1800s to early 1900s the steamboats were the only transportation and functioned like railroads did in other parts of Virginia.

If you fish the Coan River in the late Spring into the Summer, you can catch spot, croaker and a relative newcomer to the area, puppy drum. Other species likely to be caught are perch, striped bass and the occasional catfish. To catch most of the species, you can go the traditional route and use a bottom rig with a sinker and squid or bloodworms as bait. However, using a small 1/4 to 3/8 ounce jighead, topped with a curly tail grub, will require more finesse, but may yield larger fish. Two techniques to try with the jig are a slow bounce on the bottom retrieve for bottom feeding species like croaker and spot, and a slow steady retrieve for striped bass and perch. Vary your lure retrieve to see what the fish like that day!

Directions to Forrest Landing follow:  
In the village of Callao (at the intersection of Rt. 202 and US 360) head east on US 360 towards Heathsville. The speed limit on the road reduces from 55 mph to 45 mph as you near Heathsville, look for Rt. 601 Rowes Landing Road on the left. Take 601 and follow until you reach the end of the road, where you will find Rowes Landing Public Boat Ramp.

