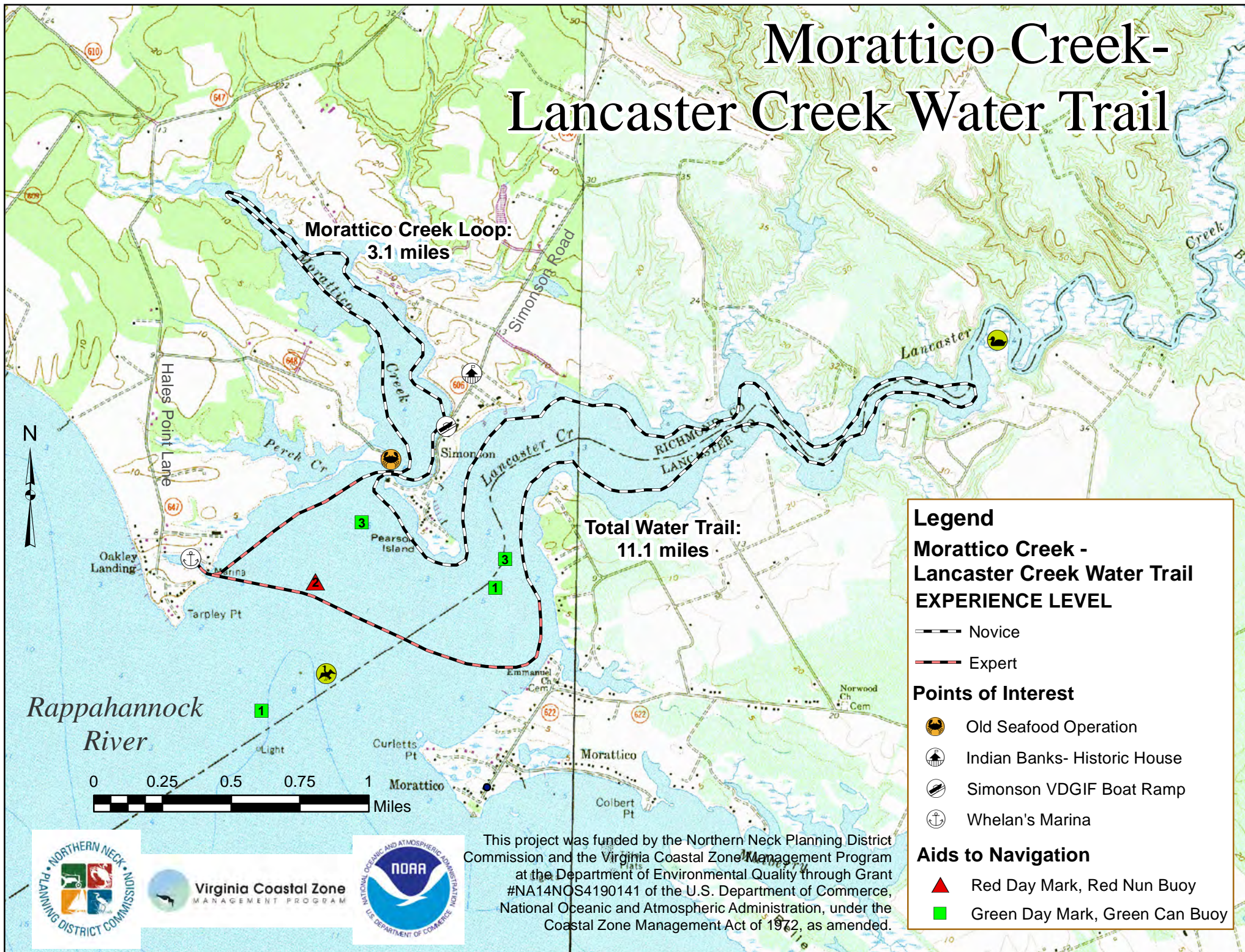


Morattico Creek- Lancaster Creek Water Trail



Morattico Creek- Lancaster Creek Water Trail

Morattico Creek Loop:
3.1 miles

Total Water Trail:
11.1 miles

Legend

Morattico Creek - Lancaster Creek Water Trail EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Novice

Expert

Points of Interest



Old Seafood Operation



Indian Banks- Historic House



Simonson VDGIF Boat Ramp



Whelan's Marina

Aids to Navigation



Red Day Mark, Red Nun Buoy



Green Day Mark, Green Can Buoy

This project was funded by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality through Grant #NA14NOS4190141 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



The Morattico-Lancaster Water Trail is relatively sheltered and ideal for beginning paddlers, except for the mouth of the creek where advanced paddling experience is recommended except on the calmest days.

The Morattico-Lancaster Water Trail is located on the border of Richmond and Lancaster Counties; in fact, Lancaster Creek forms the boundary between the two localities. The area around these counties is steeped in history from early Indian settlement, to a visit by John Smith on his second voyage in August of 1608, to colonial settlement. The Moraughtacund Indians settled this area and met with Captain John Smith when he traveled up the Rappahannock River. Over the many years, Morgaughtcund morphed into Morattico, which became the name of a creek and a nearby village in Lancaster County.

In this area of the Rappahannock River, the salinity begins to lessen. Crabs and oysters can still be found in this area; however, this is near the upper limit of their habitat. The salinity levels are highly dependent on the amount of rain that occurs upstream, in dry years, the upper limit extends further up the Rappahannock, while in wet years the upper limit creeps downstream.

Morattico and Lancaster Creeks pass on both sides of the Simonson Peninsula, where the public boat launch ramp is located. The Simonson public boat launch ramp, owned by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was closed in 2001 due to its deteriorating condition and state budget cuts to funding that would have rebuilt the boat ramp. A local fund raising drive in Richmond County raised \$18,935 towards rebuilding of the boat ramp, as the citizens recognized the importance of public access to state waters for their county. Simonson was rebuilt in 2002, and is one of three public boat launch ramps in the county, and the closest to the mouth of the Rappahannock River.



Currently unused seafood processing facility
on Morattico Creek

When launching at the boat ramp and heading downstream, visitors can see an old seafood processing building located on the right bank of Morattico River. The white cinderblock building was built sturdy and will probably be around for many more decades. Watermen still crab in this area; however, most are small owner operator outfits that operate from their residences. Oyster aquaculture is the newest innovation that local watermen are embracing. Growing out oysters in cages placed on the creek bottom, in floating cages, or in bags and baskets allow watermen to eliminate any loss of oysters from natural predation, most notably from the cow nose ray. By growing out oysters that have been genetically modified to not reproduce (called triploid oysters), the oysters reach market size sooner, since the oyster does not expend any energy trying to reproduce. Another benefit of the triploid oyster is that it reaches maturity before oyster diseases that have decimated natural Chesapeake Bay oyster beds (MSX and Dermo) have a chance to infect the oyster. Oyster aquaculture is likely to increase as most local experiments have proven to be profitable.

If you are interested in angling, Morattico and Lancaster Creeks are home to perch, catfish, rockfish, as well as spot, croaker and bluefish near the mouth of the creek in the summer. Live bait is especially effective; however, small artificial grubs and spoon lures can entice some of the more aggressive game-fish to attack. In the upper reaches of Lancaster Creek, the extensive marshes that line both sides of the creek offer excellent habitat for waterfowl.

To reach the Simonson Public Boat Launch Ramp, travel out of the Town of Warsaw on Rt. 3 East approximately 12 miles and take a right turn onto Rt. 608, Farnham Creek Road. Travel a mile on Farnham Creek Road and take a left onto Rt. 606, Simonson Road. Simonson Public Boat Launch Ramp is located on the right of Simonson Road, while parking is located on the left side of the road, approximately one eighth of a mile from the end.

