



Management Direction Statement

Seven Islands State Birding Park

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Introduction

Purpose of Management Direction Statement

Management Direction Statements provide strategic management direction for all state parks that do not have an updated full management plan. MDS do not negate the need for future more detailed management plans. Management Direction Statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and directional statements from other planning processes.

Setting and Context

The diverse natural landscape of aquatic and grassland habitats makes Seven Islands State Birding Park a premier birding destination with more than 190 species of birds sighted. The park encompasses 416 acres along the French Broad River in Knox County, approximately 19 miles east of Knoxville. This peninsula of land features more than eight miles of natural trails, rolling hills and views of the Smoky Mountains. In addition to being a wildlife refuge popular for hiking and wildlife observation, the park is a research and educational facility for schools and other groups and a demonstration area for land use and habitat management techniques. Songbirds, hawks and waterfowl can be seen along the meadow trails and several old barns are a favorite refuge for barn owls. For paddlers and anglers, there is a small canoe/kayak launch that provides access to the French Broad River.

Park Mission

Primary theme of park: Habitat Management
Secondary theme of park: Recreational Birding

The mission of Seven Islands State Birding Park is to manage diverse bird habitat, and to create unique opportunities for the public to observe and learn about the conservation of birds and their critical habitats.

Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

Habitat management at Seven Islands State Birding Park focuses largely on establishing and maintaining native warm season grass fields inter-seeded with native pollinator attracting forbs. Native grassland habitat is in serious decline in recent history along with the species that rely on it. Managing for the Northern Bobwhite serves as the target species for establishing grassland management objectives.

Recreation and Tourism

BIRDING

From the novice to the professional, birders and researchers find Seven Islands an ideal location for avian observation. The park is located along the migratory path of many bird species and during the breeding season birds can be found nesting at the refuge. Popular sightings include Purple Martins and Tree Swallows. Easily heard singing well into the summer are; Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting. In winter, hundreds of sparrows can be found, especially Field, Savannah, Song, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned. Guests can easily spend several hours strolling through the park's varied habitats enjoying the scenery.. Mornings are usually the best time for birding but late afternoons, before dusk can also be rewarding.

FISHING

Bordering the park, the French Broad River holds over 50 species of fish including crappie, bluegill, sauger and several varieties of bass. A small boat launch is available.

HIKING

Over eight miles of scenic mowed trails wind around the refuge, up the ridges and down to the waterfront. Stretching from the parking area to the French Broad River is the 1.2 mile paved greenway. This trail is mostly flat and ideal for bird watching as it is sandwiched between open fields of wildflowers and farmland. The Seven Islands Loop Trail (partially ADA accessible) passes through native warm-season grass fields along the river and through wetland and wooded areas the trail highlights the parks diverse habitats and is ideal for wildlife observation.

Cultural Heritage

Seven Islands State Birding Park was formerly the Kelly family farm. The home site was established in 1890. The Kelly's farmed the land and used it to graze dairy cows. Cow bone graveyards can still be discovered on the property. Three quilt barns and two homes have been preserved.

The property is bordered on three sides by the French Broad River. Historically the end of the peninsula at 'Kelly Bend' was the site of a dredging operation and small family farm owned by the Creswells. The sand spoils that can be found at the end of Kelly lane are a relic of this operation. Oral histories continue to be collected for the property.

Significance in the Tennessee State Park System

Seven Islands State Birding Park is Tennessee's first and only state park whose specific mission it is to provide quality habitat for bird species and excellent viewing opportunities for the birding community.

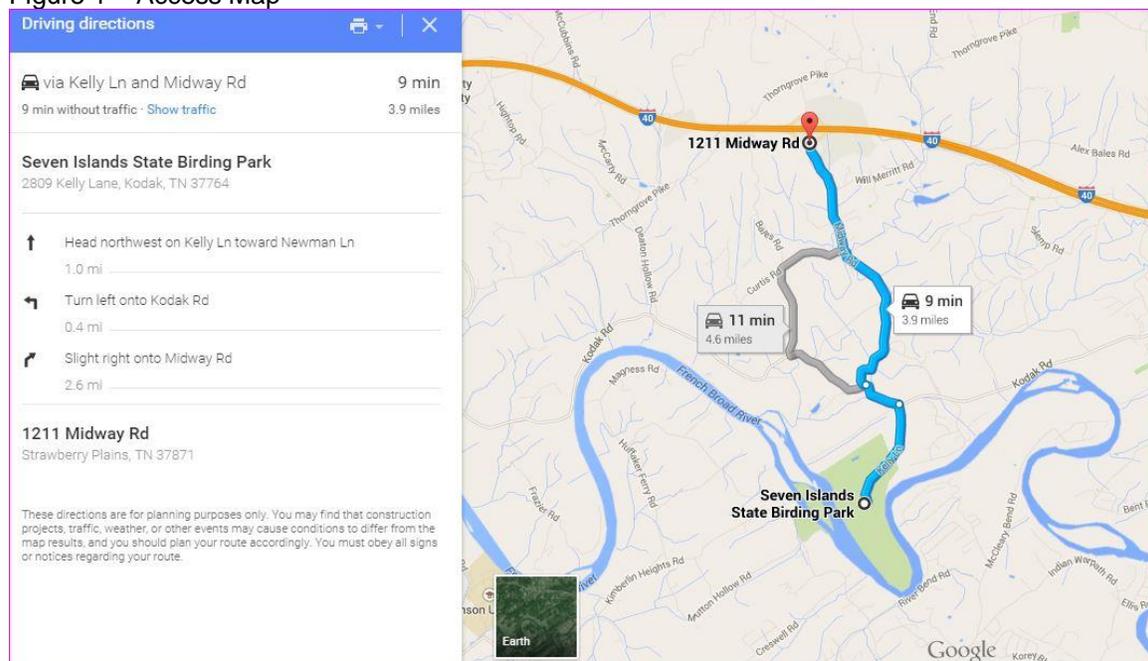
Seven Islands is the cornerstone property of a larger effort in the Tennessee State Park system to bring more birdwatching related tourist to the state, including the newly created Tennessee State Birding Trail.

Land Uses, Leases and Interests

Access

HWY 40 to EXIT 402 Midway Rd to Kodak Rd to Kelly Ln

Figure 1 – Access Map



Leases

NONE

Conservation Easement and Declaration of Restrictive Covenants held by The Seven Islands Foundation, Inc.

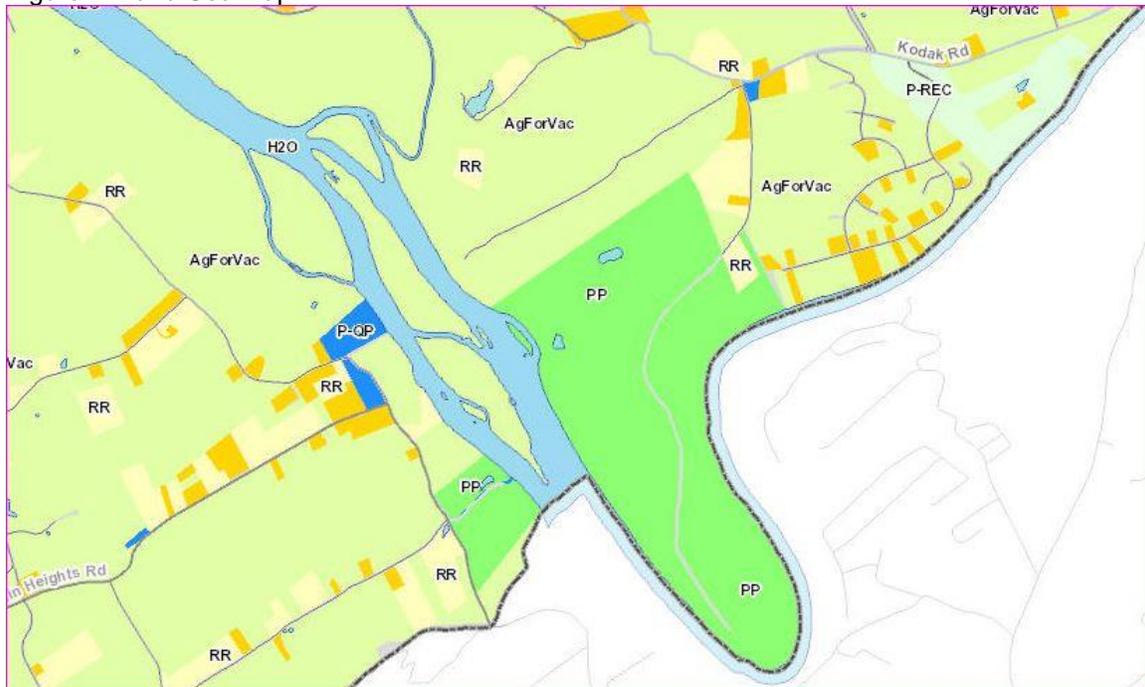
Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

Porta-Johns at entrance and boat launch, picnic tables in entry barn, 'ghost house' for general use,
Bird watching, hiking, biking (restricted to paved greenway), fishing, park programming, and park office (not open to public, meetings by appointment)

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

Neighboring properties are residential and agricultural. *Seven Islands Golf Course* is located near-by.

Figure 2- Land Use Map



Related Agency Interests

University of Tennessee- Knoxville utilizes Seven Islands State Birding Park as an outdoor classroom area and for various undergrad and post grad research initiatives.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interest

Ijams Nature Center utilizes Seven Islands State Birding Park for Nature hikes that they offer to their members.

Members of *Knoxville Ornithological Society* conduct bird banding at Seven Islands State Birding Park.

Boy Scouts of America groups, camera clubs, hiking clubs, home schoolers, and various school groups frequently utilize the park.

Organized groups that utilize park

Seven Islands is noted as a research and demonstration area. Bird banding surveys began in late 2004, when the University of Tennessee and the *Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society* established a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station. The MAPS program utilized monitored mist netting and banding at a network of stations staffed by professional biologists and trained volunteers. During the first field season, 387 birds were banded, representing 30 species. Monitoring bird populations during breeding season helps to determine future conservation practices.

Mark Armstrong and a group of dedicated volunteers continue to operate bird banding stations at Seven Islands throughout the year.

Role of Park

Seven Islands is unique in its mission to manage and protect critical habitat for resident and migratory birds. Seven Islands provides the public with a rare opportunity to view, and learn about, a myriad of native Tennessee flora and fauna in a peaceful and beautiful setting.

Seven Islands offers programming for the mind and body of its visitors. Programming is focused on environmental education and stewardship, and encourages outdoor activity and physical fitness.

Management Commitments and Issues

Direction from Previous Planning

Seven Islands State Birding Park is a former dairy farm. During the time the property was known as Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge it was being transformed from over-grazed and mismanaged fescue fields, to native warm season grasslands. A habitat assessment and management plan were created by previous land manager, Wayne Schacher. These documents detailed and guided the conversion of the land from farmland to land managed intentionally for

wildlife. Ground nesting birds, specifically the Northern Bobwhite, was identified as an 'umbrella' species to guide management objectives.

There is a conservation easement held by the Foothills Land Conservancy restricting land use and development.

A new resource management plan was created in 2017 to establish new habitat management objectives. The new plan draws on aspects of the previous document to expand upon the original groundwork while expanding and improving the park's various habitats, while keeping considering the restrictions of the conservation easement.

No previous documentation is available for budgeting or revenue generation at Seven Islands State Birding Park.

Management Issues

Theme	Issues
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South side of the park known as Mutton Hollow Landing is across the river and 40 minutes away by roadway. This makes it a challenge to patrol and maintain.
Protecting Ecological Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully managing and maintaining early successional habitat requires active involvement from park staff in order to introduce and record regular disturbance (disking, herbicide, burning, mowing). • A comprehensive, long term, habitat management plan and careful record keeping are critical. • Encouraging research from outside entities • Educating the public through signature programming and demonstration areas • Improve park sustainability
Protecting Recreational Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining trails and mowed areas • Boat launch areas need to be improved to address safety issues and user experience
Protecting Cultural Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings on property need to be maintained for public enjoyment and park operations • Oral histories need to be collected in order to better tell the park's story
Park Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional ranger position needed

Management Strategy

Priority Management Objectives	Priority Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Ensure park is safe for public use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Access improvement on the South Side of the river. ✦ Greater exposure leading to greater use by the public ✦ Weekend evening patrols ✦ Permeant public restrooms ✦ Partnering with local TWRA and law enforcement to patrol problem areas of the park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Protect the park's ecological values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ 10 year habitat management plan ✦ Seasonal management plans ✦ Record keeping for research and management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Protect the park's recreational values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Provide trail maps ✦ Maintain existing trail system ✦ Expand/ improve trail system ✦ Add wildlife watching platforms and other structures ✦ Plant food plots for enhanced wildlife viewing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Protect the park's cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Collect oral history ✦ Enlist friends group in helping to maintain historical structures ✦ Additional interpretive signage

Priority Strategies Involving Capital

Priority Strategies	
Strategy #1	Permanent Public Restrooms
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For public use and comfort • To improve user satisfaction • To improve sanitary conditions • To make revenue generating event space rental more attractive
Estimated Capital Cost	\$50,000 One at the main trailhead (flush)

Priority Strategies	
Strategy #2	Improve Boat Launch and River Access Areas (funded and in progress)
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve visitor satisfaction • Encourage the use and protection of the French Broad River Corridor • Improve visitor safety • Reduce vandalism and crime in these areas • Reduce mowing and improve habitat
Estimated Capital Cost	<p>\$65,000 Mutton Hollow Landing Phase I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutton Hollow Landing- materials to be paid for by TVA, work being completed by Knox County Highway Dept. <p>\$15,000 Mutton Hollow Landing Phase II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic security gate <p>\$175,000 Seven Islands Landing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase I assessments and road materials to be paid for by TVA • Road construction by Knox County Public Works & Engineering • Boat launch and bank stabilization by TWRA • Parking area and meadow/wetland enhancement by TSP • Restrooms and storage by TSP

Priority Strategies

Strategy #3	Improve Trail System, Signage, and Maps, Benches & Mowing contract
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe and comfortable visitor experience • Expand access with ADA trail • Encourage outdoor recreation • Create improved birding opportunities • Enhance interpretive opportunities • Maintain trail system and picnic areas to a high standard • Improve quality of visitor experience • Add benches for comfort
Estimated Capital Cost	<p>\$32,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$13,000 for one mile of new trail • \$7,000 for one half mile of trail renovation, including extensive invasive removal • \$6,000 New informational kiosks for entryway and boat launch areas, and new directional trail signage • \$6,000 Benches (sponsored at \$500 for 12 benches through Friends of SISBP) <p>15,900</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 weeks of mowing per year

Priority Strategies	
Strategy #4	Enhance entrance with Wild Yards Native Plants Garden & Parking lot
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey ‘take-home’ message to public • Outreach will benefit native plant/animal communities outside park boundaries • Improve the ‘first impression’ of the park • Create gateway to the ADA pedestrian trail and bridge
Estimated Capital Cost	<p>\$85,000*</p> <p>Grading and prep, plant and seed cost, plant installation, interpretive signage, permeable paths, sculpture (*Paid with grant and SISBP operational funding)</p>

Priority Strategies

Strategy #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back Country Island Camping
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue generation • Increased access and use options to the park • Encourage the use and protection of the French Broad River Corridor
Estimated Capital Cost	<p>\$26,000* primitive platform campground and kayak/canoe landing area *Estimate does not include cost of ADA accessible pedestrian bridge and loop trail</p>

Priority Strategies	
Strategy #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Acquisition
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and protect cultural and natural resources • Restore and manage imperiled grassland habitat • Expand park recreational offerings • Addition of visitor's/ interpretive center and gift store
Estimated Capital Cost	TBD- based on market appraisals

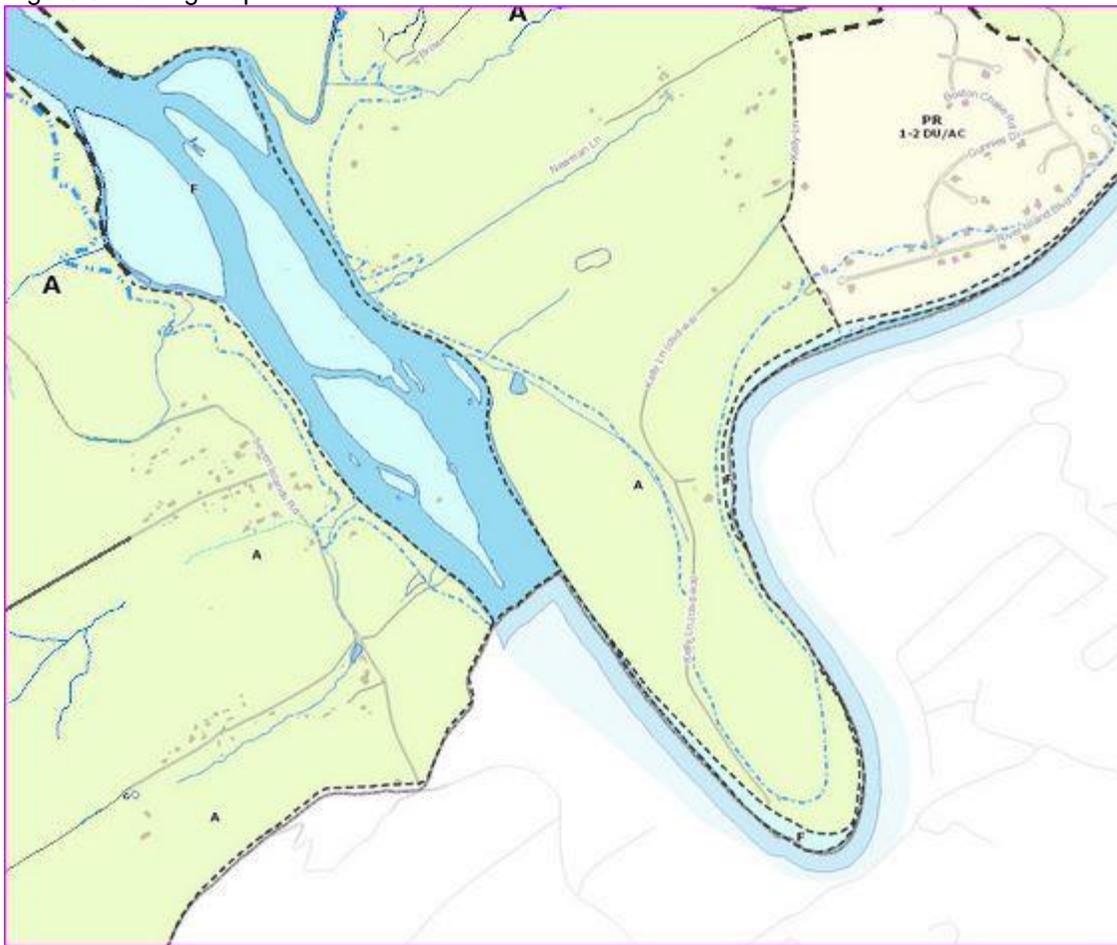
Preliminary Zoning

Zone A

Agricultural and Estate
Open Space
Form District

Zone F

Figure 3- Zoning Map



Facility, activity or use	Acceptable Uses
Inn Rooms	N
Restaurant (buffet)	N
Conference Center	N
Marina (large boats)	N
Golf Course	N
Cabins (Rustic)	N
RV Campground	N
Camping Cabins	Y
Villas	N
Camp store	Y
Laundromat	N
Campground (no hookups)	Y
Camping (primitive, back country, walk-in)	Y
Camping (wilderness, no designated site)	M
Vending Machines	M
Snack bar (short order)	N
Group lodge	N
Group camp	Y
Undeveloped Primitive Group Camp	Y
Wrangler camp	
Recreation lodge or building	M

Facility, activity or use	Acceptable Uses
Sports leagues	N
Disc Golf	N
Basketball Court	N
Softball Field	N
Volleyball Court	N
Horseshoes	Y
Tennis courts	N
Permanent Archery Range	N
Archery	N
Playground systems	M
Open play fields	M
Swim Beach	N
Swimming pool	N
Skateboard/Rollerblade Areas	N
Geocaching/Orienteering/Adventure Races/Off Trail Use (permit only)	Y
Mushroom and berry picking (on trail for on site personal consumption)	Y
Interpret/Campfire Area	Y
Gun range	N
Hunting (no facilities)	N
Miniature golf	N
Shuffleboard	N

Facility, activity or use	Acceptable Uses
Horseback riding	N
Trails--day hiking	Y
Trails-overnight	N
Trails-mountain bike	N
Trail shelter-day hike	Y
Trail shelter-overnight	N
Trails- interpretive	Y
Trails-ATV (off road)	N
Trails-fitness	Y
Trails-accessible	Y
Trails-equestrian	N
Rental horses	N
Bicycle rental	N
Trails-bicycle (paved)	Y
Picnic area w/ shelters	Y
Picnic area w/o shelters	Y
Special events (commercial)	M
Special events (non-commercial)	M
Gift Shop/Book Store	M
Mounted Ranger Program Stables	N
Maintenance building	Y

Facility, activity or use	Acceptable Uses
Parking	Y
Bait shop	M
Fishing-no facilities	Y
Fishing dock	M
Fish cleaning station	M
Boat launch/ramp	Y
Boating -- motorized	Y
Boating -- non-motorized	Y
Boat rental	M
Interpretive boat tours	M
Roads-paved	Y
Roads-gravel	Y
Museum	M
Interpretive kiosks	Y
Natural, Cultural, Interpretive Resource Programs	Y
Visitor, Interpretive, staff office/center	M
Scientific research/Laboratory	M
Electric distribution system (Underground)	
Water distribution system	
Telephone service (Underground)	
Sewer collection system	Y

Activity/ Use Matrix for Seven Islands State Birding Park

Amphitheater	M	Scenic overlook	Y	Staff residence	Y	Toilets	Y
Ball field (developed)	N						

Y = allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan
 M = may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives
 N = not allowed
 N1 = allowed for expressed management purposes only
 N2 = present and allowed to continue, but not normally allowed

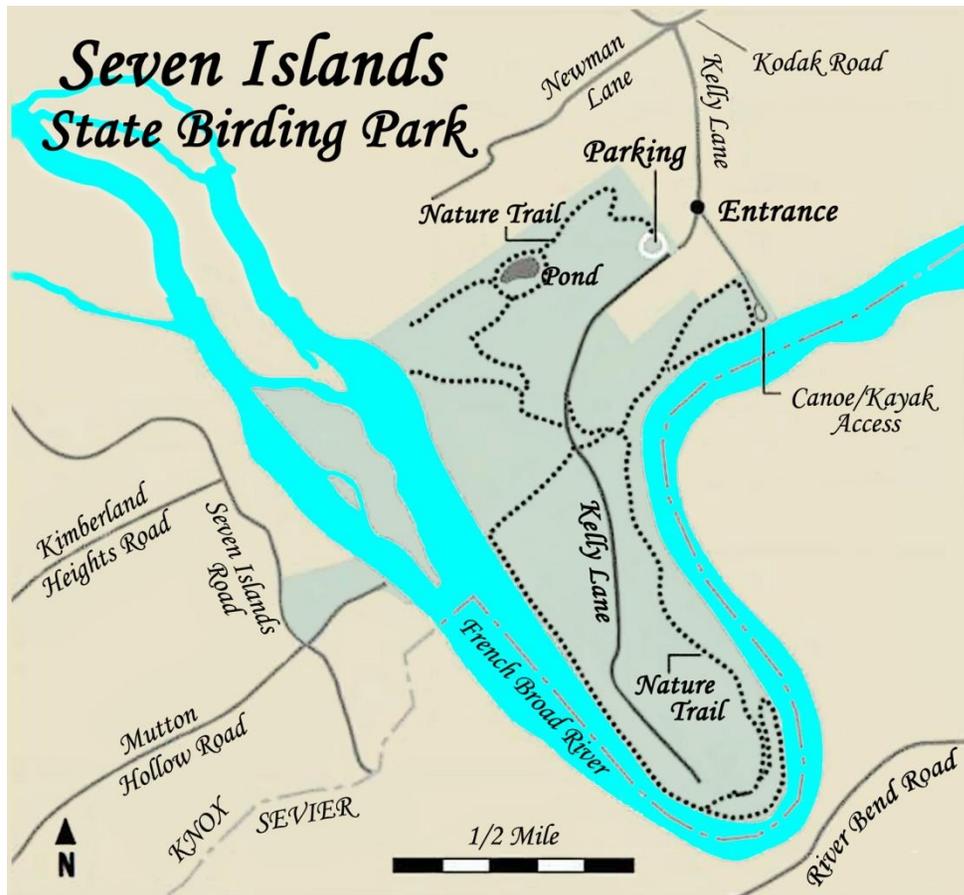


Figure 4 – Park Map

Figure 5 – Aerial Photo



Figure 6 – Proximity Map

