

Wake County Southeast Park Master Plan Support

Southeast Wake County, North Carolina



from top; Floodplain forest near beaver pond; Atamasco lily (*Zephyranthes atamasca*)

Located in the southeast corner of Wake County, North Carolina, Southeast Regional Park is made up of several disjointed parcels of land totaling approximately 300 acres. It is located in a historically agricultural area of the county, and several cleared fields still exist on the property. However, the park supports a rich variety of habitats, including mature forest, extensive wetlands and beaver ponds, a section of Middle Creek and its tributaries, broad floodplains, steep terrain, and rock outcrops. Situated on the transition zone between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain physiographic regions, the park supports ecosystem characteristics of both, and

A study of a park's natural resources informs a master plan and reveals the presence of a plant species native to mountains 150 miles to the west.

provides visitors the unique opportunity to experience steep, upland forests reminiscent of the mountains, and the broad, flat, forested floodplain and wetlands of Middle Creek, typical of the Coastal Plain.

In order to continue supporting the recreational needs of the park's growing adjacent communities while also protecting and strengthening it's natural, cultural and historical resources of the park, the County initiated a master plan to guide the parks' future.

As a key member of a master planning team led by Surface 678, Biohabitats characterized the Park's natural resources to inform the planning and design processes. This included locating the boundaries of wetlands, reviewing the mapped hydrology and revising where necessary,

assessing invasive plant extents and identifying species, and conducting a landscape ecology analysis to identify habitat patches and corridors within the park and understand habitat dynamics between the park and surrounding areas. In the process, Biohabitats discovered that mountain laurel (*Kalima latifolia*), a species native to the mountains 150 miles to the west, had persisted on the park's north-facing slopes since the Ice Age. Biohabitats' analysis indicated that by preserving the park property, Wake County Parks and Recreation protected a valuable link in the regional landscape ecology network.

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