

Ecologically Diverse

Welcome to Suffolk Waterways

The Nansemond River watershed is a diverse array of waterways and saltwater tidal marshes providing a habitat for wildlife, protection from storms, and opportunities for crabbing, oystering, fishing, hunting and recreational activities. Enjoy paddling the creeks, birding, tracing the history, and observing the rich variety of flora and fauna. Discover the natural splendor and ecological diversity of Suffolk Water Trails.

Birds and Waterfowl

Paddlers should bring their bird identification books. One can spot eagles along all the creeks and the Nansemond River. Red-winged blackbirds stand out in the marsh grass. Great Blue Herons are permanent residents but the Great and Snowy egrets are transient summer residents of the wetlands. The osprey arrive in March to nest and raise their young, but leave in September for their winter quarters. All are fish eaters. Herons and egrets walk the shallows feeling for mollusks. Canada geese and brown pelicans have become permanent residents.

Crustacean and Molluscan Critters

The mud flats along the shoreline shelter species tolerant of the salty and brackish tidal water including blue crabs, oysters, clams, mussels, barnacles, periwinkles and other critters. Fiddler and marsh crabs help clear the detritus from decaying plants.

River's Edge Forest

The most notable trees along Suffolk creeks and rivers are the loblolly pine, red cedar, red maple and bald cypress. Berries of the wax myrtle, often known as southern bayberry, were used by colonists to make candles.

Mammals

Raccoons and native grey foxes roam the upland forest along the shorelines. Muskrats survive well in brackish wetlands, and feed on plants and mollusks. White-tailed deer graze on leaves, twigs, fruits and nuts, corn, alfalfa, lichens and other fungi.

Dolphins can be spotted in any of Suffolk's estuaries. Social creatures and traveling in groups called pods, the dolphins feed on bottom-dwelling fish, shrimp and squid. River otters live along rivers and creeks feeding on fish, frogs, shellfish and turtles. Since they are most active at night, spotting them is a rare treat.



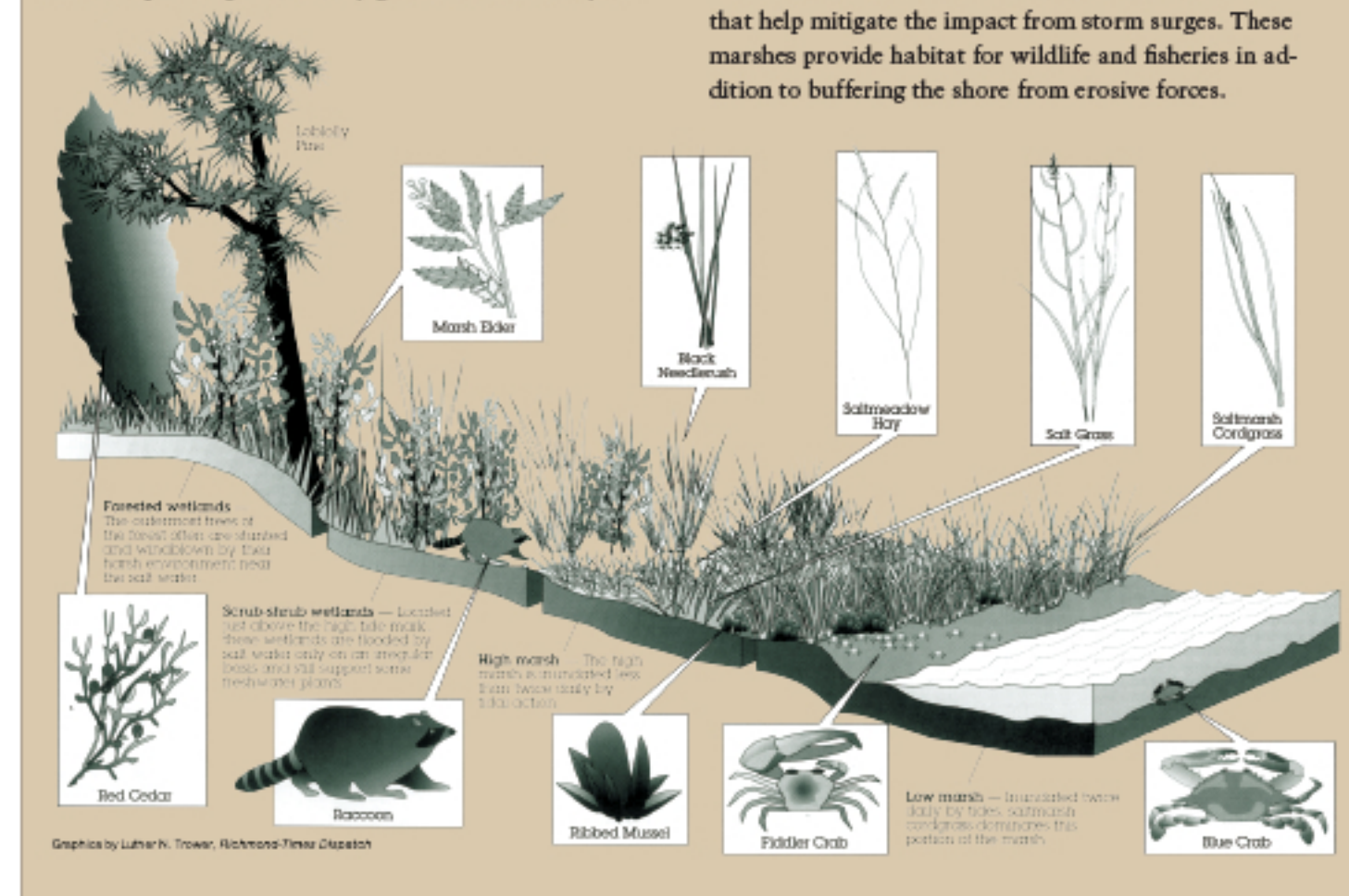
Left: 1. Brackish-water clam 2. Soft-shelled clam 3. Hard clam 4. American oyster. Right: 1. Marsh crab 2. Marsh fiddler crab 3. Marsh periwinkle 4. Marsh snail 5. Atlantic ribbed mussel 6. Common mud nassa. Illustrations from *Chesapeake Bay Field Guide* by C. White and K. Teramura.

Top Left: Red Maple. Lower Left: Wax Myrtle. Middle: Eastern Red Cedar. Right: Cypress. Illustrations from *Forest Trees of Virginia*, Virginia Department of Forestry and wax myrtle by Karla Smith.

Wetland Habitats

Suffolk has approximately 94,000 acres of wetlands including tidal, non-tidal, rivers, lakes and ponds, which serve as spawning and nursery grounds for a variety of

marine life. The lower Nansemond River, Chuckatuck Creek, Bennett's Creek, Knotts Creek, Streeter Creek and Hoffer Creek shorelines have extensive marshes that help mitigate the impact from storm surges. These marshes provide habitat for wildlife and fisheries in addition to buffering the shore from erosive forces.



This map was created by the Suffolk River Heritage / Crittenden, Eclipse & Hobson Heritage Foundation and the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance with the assistance of the City of Suffolk, Virginia Foundation of the Humanities, Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society, National Park Service, Volvo Penta and the Nansemond Indian Tribal Association. Cover photo of kayak by John R. Wass. Cover illustration of Indian Village "Saccata" by Willis-Selby from The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia. Map concept, research and development by Karla M. Smith and John R. Wass. Design by Etkin Associates Inc. Printed on Yupo Acetal synthetic paper.



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Chuckatuck Creek
 (Access through Crane Lake - Lone Star Lake Park) Public access to Chuckatuck Creek is near its headwaters in Lone Star Lake Park. The creek is tidal and best paddled with that in mind. The trail winds through marshes with great opportunity for birding. Flatwater conditions exist near the lakes, but more open water is encountered near the mouth. Distance: 7 miles to mouth.
 Trip: Plan to do a loop back to landing.
 Photo courtesy of John Wass



Lone Star Lakes Park
 Lone Star Lakes offers 11 lakes for fresh water fishing, nature trails and picnic areas with tables and grills. There's also a playground, a four-mile horse trail, archery range, model airplane flying field, fishing and crabbing pier, shoreline fishing areas and plenty of flora and fauna.
 Photo courtesy of John Wass



Cedar Creek
 Access to Cedar Creek is within Lone Star Lakes Park and provides a route to the Nansemond River. The creek is very shallow at low tide so plan your trip accordingly. Access to park is off Route 125, 1/2 mile east of Chuckatuck.
 Photo courtesy of John H. Shally II.



Freshwater Lakes
 The City of Norfolk owns and controls access to three freshwater lakes in Suffolk: Western Branch Reservoir, Lake Prince and Burnt Mills. The lakes are noted for trophy sunfish, white perch, yellow perch, and large mouth bass. To access these lakes, either a daily or annual boat permit is required. Permits can be purchased at the Lake Whitehurst fishing station on Shore Drive in Norfolk or at the Granby Municipal Building at 400 Granby Street in Norfolk. Call 757-664-6701 for more information. The City of Portsmouth owns and controls lakes Cohoon, Meade and Kilby, and allows boats for fishing only. Permits can be purchased at Cohoon-Meade Fishing Station on Pitchkettle Road or call 757-923-3219. More resources can also be found at Suffolk-Fun.com/play/fishing.
 Photo courtesy of City of Suffolk.



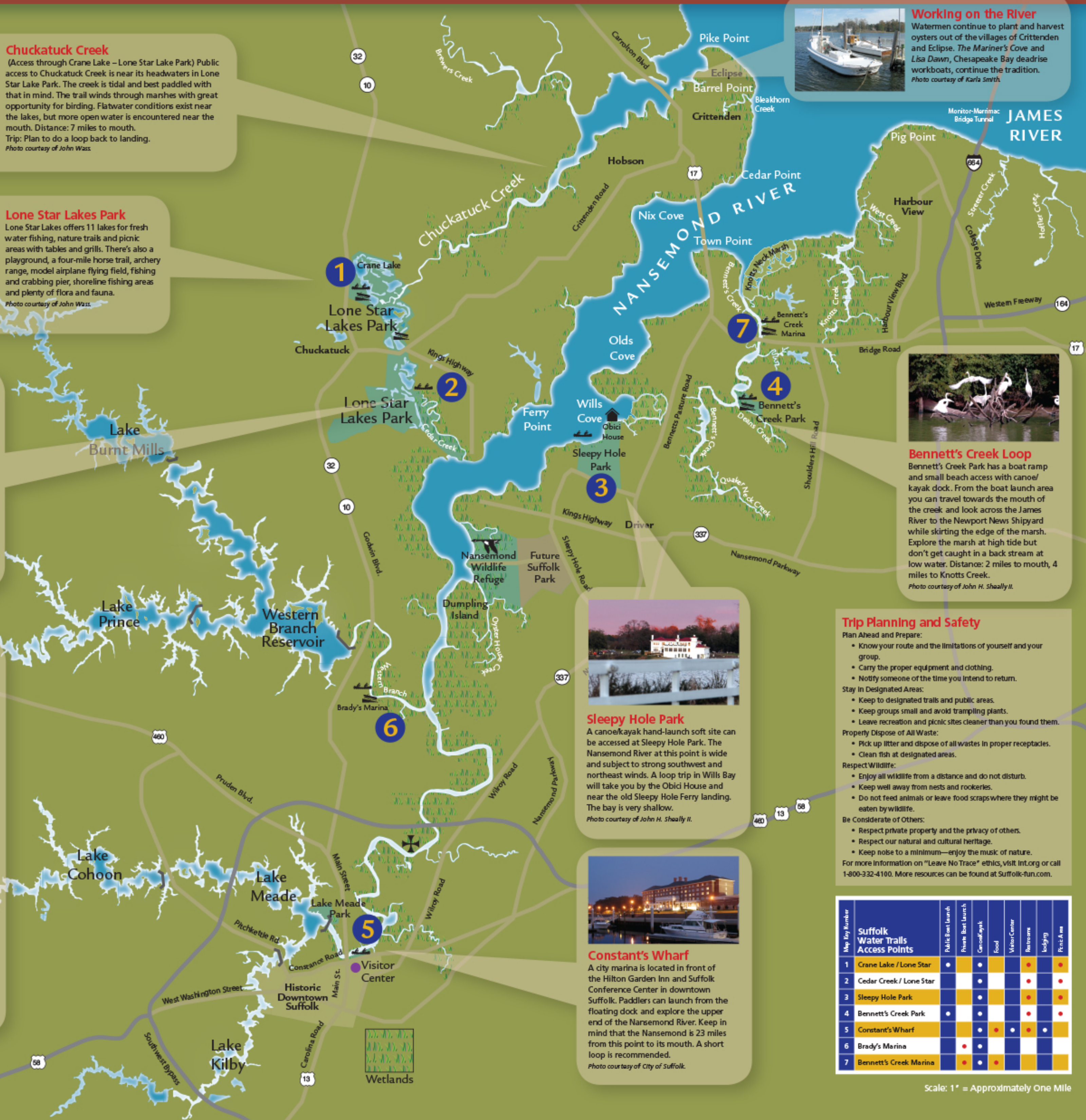
Working on the River
 Watermen continue to plant and harvest oysters out of the villages of Crittenden and Eclipse. *The Mariner's Cove* and *Lisa Dawn*, Chesapeake Bay deadrise workboats, continue the tradition.
 Photo courtesy of Karla Smith



Bennett's Creek Loop
 Bennett's Creek Park has a boat ramp and small beach access with canoe/kayak dock. From the boat launch area you can travel towards the mouth of the creek and look across the James River to the Newport News Shipyard while skirting the edge of the marsh. Explore the marsh at high tide but don't get caught in a back stream at low water. Distance: 2 miles to mouth, 4 miles to Knotts Creek.
 Photo courtesy of John H. Shally II.

Trip Planning and Safety

- Plan Ahead and Prepare:**
- Know your route and the limitations of yourself and your group.
 - Carry the proper equipment and clothing.
 - Notify someone of the time you intend to return.
- Stay in Designated Areas:**
- Keep to designated trails and public areas.
 - Keep groups small and avoid trampling plants.
 - Leave recreation and picnic sites cleaner than you found them.
- Properly Dispose of All Waste:**
- Pick up litter and dispose of all wastes in proper receptacles.
 - Clean fish at designated areas.
- Respect Wildlife:**
- Enjoy all wildlife from a distance and do not disturb.
 - Keep well away from nests and rookeries.
 - Do not feed animals or leave food scraps where they might be eaten by wildlife.
- Be Considerate of Others:**
- Respect private property and the privacy of others.
 - Respect our natural and cultural heritage.
 - Keep noise to a minimum—enjoy the music of nature.
- For more information on "Leave No Trace" ethics, visit In.org or call 1-800-332-4100. More resources can be found at Suffolk-fun.com.



Sleepy Hole Park
 A canoe/kayak hand-launch soft site can be accessed at Sleepy Hole Park. The Nansemond River at this point is wide and subject to strong southwest and northeast winds. A loop trip in Wills Bay will take you by the Obid House and near the old Sleepy Hole Ferry landing. The bay is very shallow.
 Photo courtesy of John H. Shally II.



Constant's Wharf
 A city marina is located in front of the Hilton Garden Inn and Suffolk Conference Center in downtown Suffolk. Paddlers can launch from the floating dock and explore the upper end of the Nansemond River. Keep in mind that the Nansemond is 23 miles from this point to its mouth. A short loop is recommended.
 Photo courtesy of City of Suffolk.

Map Key Number	Suffolk Water Trails Access Points	Public Boat Launch	Private Boat Launch	Canoe/Kayak	Fishing	Visitor Center	Restrooms	Logging	Picnic Area
1	Crane Lake / Lone Star	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2	Cedar Creek / Lone Star	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
3	Sleepy Hole Park	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4	Bennett's Creek Park	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5	Constant's Wharf	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
6	Brady's Marina	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7	Bennett's Creek Marina	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Scale: 1" = Approximately One Mile

Historically Rich

