

The Chesapeake Paddler



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Jack Creek Park, before and after

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Jack Creek Park, an Anne Arundel County Park on the east coast of Shady Side, has been a favorite spot of mine as a stop on my annual paddle to work and as a destination in itself with a sandy beach, beautiful woods of oak and holly (where bald eagles sometimes perched), and an expansive grassy field.

For many years, access to the park was difficult. It was



Prior beach access was via a rough half-mile trail.

either by boat or a half-mile walk to the water. The park has gone through many changes, from the erosive effects of rising sea levels to new construction to mitigate those effects and allow easier access to a new a canoe/kayak launch.



Jack Creek Park shoreline in days past before the effects of wind and waves.

In 2003, on my first paddle to work, the park had a peninsula sticking out into the Bay. After a while it got severed by a channel. At first it was a tight and shallow squeeze for my kayak, but soon it got wide and several



In the early 2000's, the original shoreline was severed to form a small island.

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Park, from page one



In 2018, Anne Arundel County embarked on a restoration effort to repair the damaged beach and access trail.

feet deep. For several years, I enjoyed swimming out to the island from the beach.

By 2018, the island had split in half, and on at least one stormy day in 2019, and again in April 2020, it was underwater. Meanwhile, waves had chewed at the park's shore and the forest.



Park improvements included repairs to the access trail, beach protection and a new kayak launch.

By 2018, the original trail through the forest required lots of detours and scary steps over eroded gaps. The park was officially closed and construction started on a shore protection project, which included a public kayak launch.

The project was finished in March 2020, but the

coronavirus outbreak caused the cancellation of the planned opening ceremony. The park, however, has been open and offers lots of open space, but the beaches were small patches of sand laced with wires to protect newly planted beach grass, and with only narrow gaps in the new breakwaters. They seem to be designed to prevent swimming and boat access away from the launch.

I'll confess to feeling nostalgic for the park as it was, with a stretch of wild shoreline and lots of solitude, reachable only by a long walk or by boat. But it was eroding fast, and there is a need for public access to the Bay.

Boat access was difficult for those who don't live in a waterfront neighborhood. Paddling here is very weather-dependent since the shore is exposed. Overall, Jack Creek Park is a great natural asset for the residents of Anne Arundel County.



A new parking lot expands public access, but be sure to get the gate access code before you visit.

(Editor's note: CPA members, including Lisa Arrasmith, have been strong advocates for expanded public access for kayaking and other water-related activities.

Jack Creek and several other Anne Arundel parks have a gated entrance. Visitors must submit an [online form](#) to get the access code before visiting.)

For more information about Jack Creek Park, go to:

<https://www.aacounty.org/locations-and-directions/jack-creek-park>

Photos by Paul Fofonoff and [The Public Water Access Committee](#).