

Key Attributes when Creating Community Conservation Areas/Ambassador Lands

Think “PARKS”

Parking

Parking areas that are visible from the road, feel safe, and are well-managed, accessible for groups/school vans/buses, and are located and designed to be good neighbors to abutting landowners.

Accessible by Trail

Consider who your users will be and how your trail design can connect them to different elements of the landscape. Trails in your “core” loops often benefit from being wide enough to avoid ticks, allowing people to walk side-by-side, and are children-friendly. How are you factoring in mobility-challenged users in a manner that is meaningful to them? Are there other ways you can be inclusive and welcoming?

Recreation & Rest Areas

Clarify what you want your visitors to experience. Community conservation areas are designed to connect people to people as well as to the landscape. This means providing areas for gatherings, resting along a trail suitable to the user, and often places for kids to run and interact with the land/water. Consider safety, visitor comfort, seasonal experiences, and different user requirements (elderly, mobility-challenged, etc.). Creating levels of use/intensity can help provide a variety of experiences for different visitation experiences. How will you design for groups to visit on their own or for planned programming (schools, community organizations, etc.)? What requirements might they have?

Kiosk & Maps

Community conservation areas are designed to have frequent, local users rather the majority of the visitors being one-time. Design your kiosks and materials to be interactive and seasonally-relevant for repeat users. Focus on visual depictions and skimming; avoid technical language; consider those who are not trained at map reading. Identify and address language or cultural barriers.

Signage

Consider first impressions to ensure a welcoming experience. Avoid signage that forbids activities without explaining why; understand how to develop a stewardship ethic through use and programming. Plan for clearly marked signage along your trails—assume users who are not comfortable bushwhacking. Clarify your organizational feel/brand in the overall experience, including your signage. Factor in vandalism and bored kids.

