# Improving the Waterfront Parks

Enhancing Visitor Experience and Economic Growth
through Effective Interpretive Signage

## Analysis and Recommendations for Interpretive Signage at the Waterfront Parks

Waterfront parks offer unique opportunities for towns to boost economic development and attract visitors. Interpretive signage plays a crucial role in enhancing visitor experience, providing educational value, and encouraging repeat visits. This analysis examines the current state of interpretive signage at the waterfront parks and offers recommendations for new signs to optimize impact.

## Current State of Interpretive Signage

### Strengths

- **Informative Content**: Existing signs provide basic information about the downtown area and Cathance River/Merrymeeting Bay. They include maps.
- **Strategic Placement**: The sign at Mailley is located at a key location in the park. The kiosk at the head of the trail is also important.

### Weaknesses

- **Outdated Design**: The signs are weathered and lack visual appeal.
- **Limited Interactivity**: Current signs offer static information without engaging multimedia elements.
- **Accessibility Issues**: Signs are not easily accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities.
- **Lack of Signs**: There aren't enough signs to be effective

# Recommendations

## Enhance Visual Appeal

- **Classic Design:** Update signage in a “National Park” style,  with thoughtful graphics and colors that capture attention, while remaining “Bowdoinham-my”
- **Weather Resistant Structures and Panels:** High strength aluminum extrusions and posts, powder coated to ensure a durable finish on all components. NPS dark brown in color. High pressure laminate panels (10-year warranty)
- **Consistent Branding:** Use a cohesive design theme that reflects the town's identity and fosters a sense of place. All panels will incorporate the town cattails and duck graphic as part of the border. Background colors of the panels will remain consistent throughout.

## Incorporate Interactive Elements

- **QR Codes:** Integrate QR codes that link to additional resources, such as audio guides and the town website.

## Improve Accessibility

- Height, Angle of Viewing and Font Size: Present information in easy to view/read fonts.

## Foster Understanding of What’s Available in Parks - 1 sign

- **Welcome to the Waterfront:**  This could be upright, legible from a vehicle, installed at the entrance of Mailly Park/boat launch
- **List of Available Activities:** Directions to boat launch, restrooms, new park, trails, kayak launch
- **Key (and map) to all Interpretive Signs**

This sign will be approximately 3'x4'. We will need to check set backs from the railroad and double check visibility to and from parking lot.

**Highlight Local Culture and History** 5-6 signs, 24"x36" (map of the river may be 24"x48"

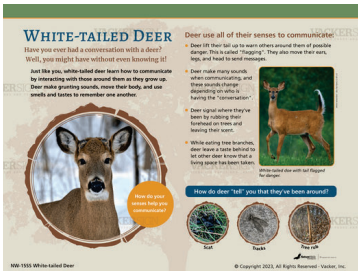
- **Storytelling Approach:** Use storytelling to convey the rich cultural and historical narratives of the area, with help from Frank Connors and the Historical Society. Much like the Bowdoinham History Book.
- **Local Art and Artists:** Feature artworks by local artists on or near signage to celebrate community talent. (If possible, for the map of town, the river and bay)

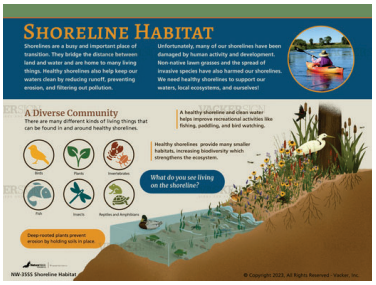
**Explain Trail Rules and Expectations-**One bulletin style kiosk at trail head, with a locking case.

- **Trail map, photos**
- **Event and Club Listings:** Advertise upcoming local events/clubs and festivals to encourage repeat visits.

**Highlight Flora, Fauna and Wildlife** 2-3 24"x36" signs

- **Locate Signs Where People Naturally Gather or Rest: o**n or nearby the kayak launch, at the bench on the trail, etc.
- **Nature Walk Signs in new park and on trails:** 5-6 18"x24"stock signs to engage the younger crowd. The signs on the trail should be smaller and simpler, possibly without frames, nestled into the existing vegetation.






Examples of
"Nature Walk" Designs

- **Plant identifier signs, where unique and/interesting vegetation is present:** 36" high, 6"x12" panel. These signs on the trail should be placed by the plants they describe. We should enlist the help of KELT for this.

This is an example of style,
but we would match
the dark brown color
of the larger sign for the post/frame

- **Trail Markers at all mile marks and intersections:** 42" high, 4"x4" posts. Structural grade recycled plastic reinforced with fiberglass

## Expected Outcomes

Implementing these recommendations is expected to:

- **Increase Visitor Engagement**: Interactive and visually appealing signage will capture and hold the attention of visitors.
- **Boost Local Economy**: By promoting local clubs and events, visitors are more likely to extend their stay and eventually spend more within the community.
- **Enhance Visitor Experience**: Improved accessibility and informative content will create a welcoming environment for all visitors.

## Conclusion

By adding interpretive signage to the waterfront parks, the town can significantly enhance its appeal to both residents and tourists. These efforts will not only contribute to economic development but also enrich the cultural and educational landscape of the community. Embracing modern technology, such as QR codes linking to the town website, will ensure that the waterfront parks remain vibrant and inviting destinations for years to come.