

## Impacts of Recreation on Natural Resources

As the demand for recreational opportunities rises, population increases, and available undeveloped areas shrink, the impacts of recreation on natural resources become more pronounced. In order to preserve the value of natural areas it is critical to evaluate the footprint that various forms of recreation leave on the environment. Areas used for recreational activities must be managed to minimize such impacts.



Signs like this one located at The Fair Hill Nature Center should be followed at all times to ensure minimal impacts in environmentally sensitive areas.

Recreational activities include hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing, rafting and kayaking, bird watching, off-road vehicular travel, and cultural observations and explorations. Some recreational activities have more of an impact on the surrounding environment than others. Potential impacts include changes in water quality and surface flow, compaction and erosion of soil, non-native species introduction, and air and water pollution.

Many public recreation areas post information to help people apply responsible recreational practices. Some recreational clubs provide literature to ensure participants enjoy their favorite activities in a sustainable manner. The answers to many questions regarding responsible recreational practices can be answered using website sources like the ones listed below.



Trail widening has occurred where trail users have tried to avoid muddy places in the trail. When using trails hike or bike through muddy areas to prevent widening of the trail.

### Where To Get Help for impacts of recreation on natural resources

- Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources; <http://www.ccgov.org/home/showdocument?id=338>
- Recreational Activities in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; <https://www.nps.gov/chba/planyourvisit/things2do.htm>
- Maryland State Parks and Forests: Outdoor Adventures; <http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/default.aspx>
- Leave No Trace; <http://www.lnt.org/programs/principles.php>