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FEATURED

## Terrapin Nature Park gets mapped, marked with GPS

By MIKE DAVIS mdavis@kibaytimes.com Updated Jul 14, 2016



PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS

Phil Starkey, ranger supervisor for the parks department, shows a map of Terrapin Nature Park and its new GPS coordinated poles throughout the park for pedestrians to use to locate themselves in need of emergency services help. The program began at the park July 1 after a year of work.

STEVENSVILLE — For the past year, Phil Starkey, ranger supervisor for the parks department, along with the county's Department of Emergency Services and the Geographic Information Systems department worked on a grid and mapping system for Terrapin Nature Park to aid with lost or injured persons walking throughout the park.

And since July 1, the 276-acre nature park, located at 191 Log Canoe Circle in the Chesapeake Bay Business Park, has been mapped and marked with 10 foot tall poles every 500 feet marking various locations along the trails so in an emergency situation pedestrians can quickly locate themselves to responding police or emergency service units.

With a total of 30 poles that are GPS coordinated to the 9/11 center varying in blue, yellow and red paint, each with associated lettering and numbering, pedestrians in need now have a quick way to notify responders of their location. Each colored pole has an A, B or C designated to it to match which grid in the park they are in. Poles in blue marked with the letter A are in the northern part of the park, red paint and B markings are designated for the middle of the park and yellow paint and C markings are designated for the southernmost part of the park.

When an incident in the middle of last summer forced emergency service units into the park to locate a car on fire, they had difficulty finding it due to the park's size. Afterward, the three parties began discussing ways to improve safety and response at the park, Starkey said

Two weeks before the system was implemented, Starkey said a person went into cardiac arrest on the beach but responding units had a tough time finding the person as they searched up and down the beach. Had the system been in place, the person in need could have said they were at the A6 location and the unit's GPS would have located exactly where that pole was.

"[When] somebody calls for an ambulance, they need an ambulance," Starkey said. "They don't need somebody to be wandering around for 20 minutes looking, trying to find them."

As a person enters the trail system from the parking lot, a sign with an enlarged park map dictates where all of the poles are located throughout the park. Starkey said brochures are being created with information about Terrapin Nature Park on one side and the map with the various points on the other side that will be available at the parking lot entry area.

Though the poles help people know their exact location for a crisis situation, the poles are not connected to a telephone, so anyone in need of help must have a cell phone on hand to make the initial call for help.

Starkey said this is the only park in the county that uses this mapping system. Because most of the parks in the county are 40 to 50 acres and have better visibility, he said, a system like this is not as crucial in those locations. The Cross Island Trail, a six and a half mile trail spanning from Terrapin

Nature Park to the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitor Center at the Kent Narrows, has mile markers with GPS coordinates for emergency service units.

Starkey said the nature park has four rangers designated to the grounds, working from sun up to sun down on various days. With the addition of new park rangers, now up to a total of seven, Starkey said he hopes his team can eventually spend more hours at the park as all of the rangers are not full time yet.

Not only can the poles help responders locate a person in need, Starkey said, but the poles are also good tools for the rangers to use to direct people to certain locations in the park. The rangers can tell a person to turn at certain poles rather than use general terms to try and direct somebody the fastest way back to the parking lot, for example.

For more information, contact the Department of Parks and Public Landings at 410-758-0835.

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