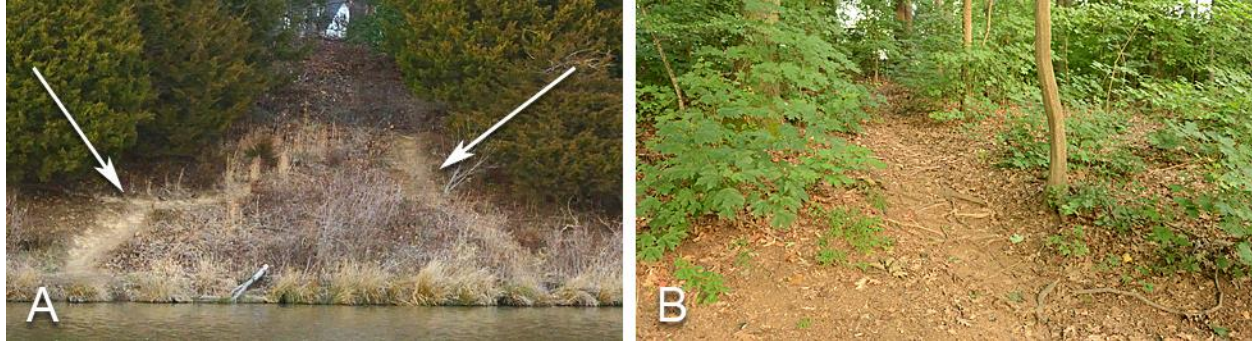


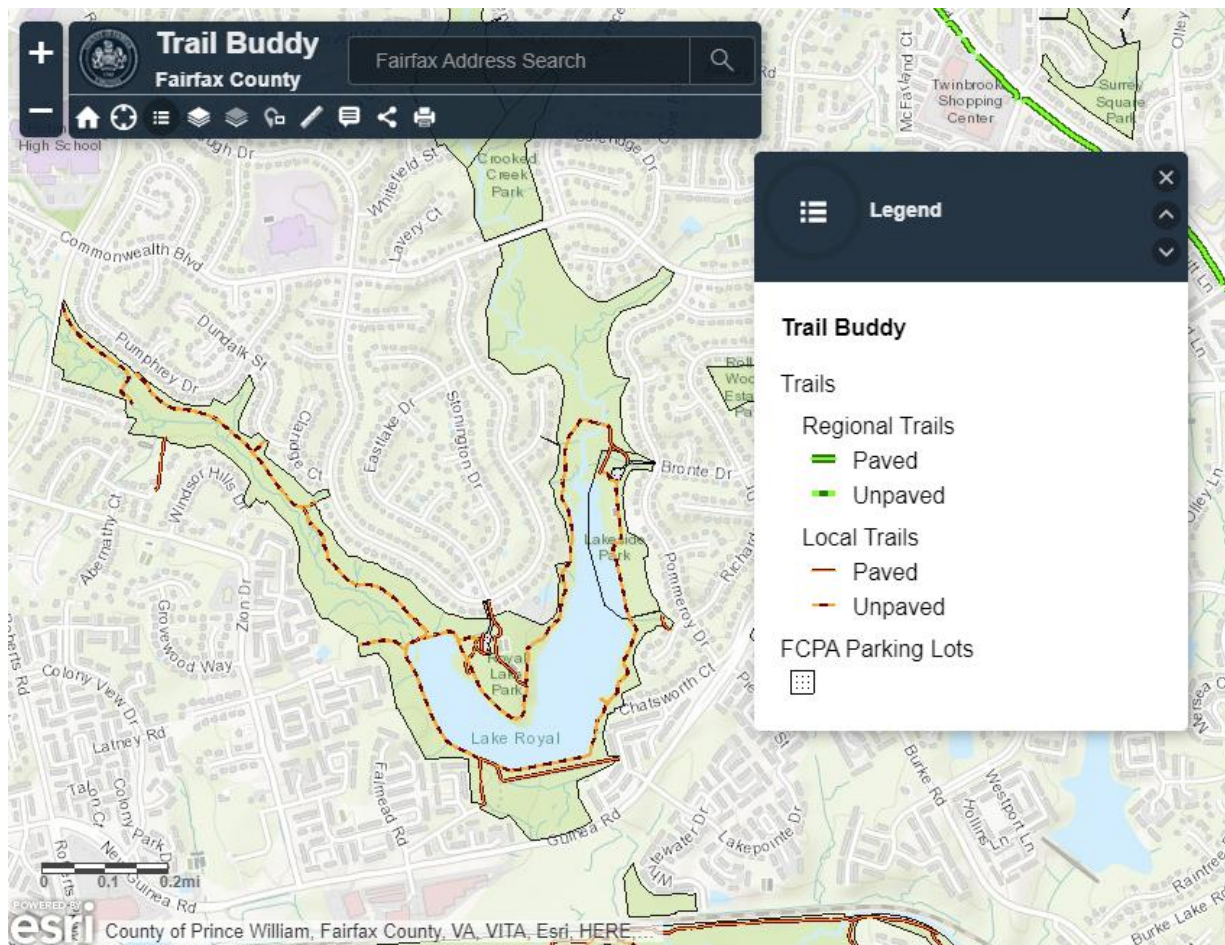
## Taking a Look at Trails: Part 4

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Starting with [Part 1](#), this series studies different aspects of trails. Part 4 is the final installment.



**Figure 11.** One common reason people make social trails is to access fishing holes (A). Social trails along shorelines escalate bank erosion and destroy the wetland plants where their soil-retaining roots are needed most. Another motive is when neighbors want personal access from their home to the main trail (B). In addition to the inherent impacts brought by trails, pathways leading to private property can be used by unintended intruders such as trespassers and burglars.



**Figure 12.** Before exploring a park for the first time, trail maps assist the trekker to gauge the travel distance. At the park, these maps help the user know where to go and prevent folks from getting lost! Some

trail websites display maps based on crowdsourced input and GPS data as contributors wander the trails. Besides showing the legitimate trails, many of these private maps often display social trails, which should be avoided.

Official trail maps are the best guides for people and to preserve the environment that visitors come to experience. Maps of authorized trails within Fairfax County are available at Trail Buddy <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/parks/trails/trail-buddy>. Whereas this webpage is supported by the Fairfax County Park Authority, it features additional areas such as Great Falls National Park and green spaces within the City of Fairfax. This image shows the official trails completed around Royal Lake Park and Lakeside Park.

Further reading about trails and sustainability:

<https://www.americantrails.org/resources/building-sustainable-trails-key-design-elements>

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/eesc/science/sustainably-designed-trails-recent-recreation-ecology-findings-design-factors>

<http://finatrails.com/>

<https://www.sustainabletraildesign.com/>

<https://www.patc.net/>

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/trails/stream-valley-trail-presentation-082820.pdf>

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trails/>

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/plandev/trail-management/trail-development-strategy-plan.pdf>

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