

## **Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands Refuge/Fort Belvoir**

Over the course of millions of years the Potomac River has gradually shifted its course and sediments have filled-in its old river bed. The main river once came through what is now Dogue Creek. Dogue Creek is in-between Mount Vernon and Fort Belvoir. Its mouth empties into the Potomac three miles west of Mount Vernon, near Woodlawn Plantation. The 1805 Woodlawn Plantation mansion was given by George Washington to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis and his wife Eleanor Custis Lewis, the granddaughter of Martha Washington. Dogue Creek and many of its tributaries are now a wondrous wetland that is little visited. Probably the best parts of it can be seen on the hiking trails and boardwalk in nearby Huntley Meadows Park (neither running nor cycling is allowed on the boardwalk in Huntley Meadows Park but it's very much worth a visit). Huntley Meadows Park is one of the largest parks in Fairfax County. The Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands Refuge adjoins Huntley Meadows Park to the southwest. The refuge was dedicated to its namesake, a Lt. Colonel in the Army Corps of Engineers. Fort Belvoir is an active military base which besides employing many of the self-described "Best Damned Engineers in the World," is resource for many of the areas military families. It has recreation facilities such as golf, swimming pools, gyms, and what was at one-time considered the largest commissary in country.

### **Getting There**

#### From the Capital Beltway

Take exit 1 headed south on Richmond Hwy., Rte. 1. After approximately 7.5 miles, turn right on Old Mill Rd. Go only half a mile, then turn right at the T-intersection onto Pole Rd (Meeres Rd. is to the left at the T-intersection). Turn left after only 0.2 miles into the Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands Refuge parking lot.

### **Area Routes**

#### Plantation Road (2.15 or 2.8 miles, I or II)

To see the wetlands without getting wet, follow the paved trail along Pole Rd. across Dogue Creek, then turn left. The sunny, flat trail meanders in-between Plantation Road and the wetlands, offering occasionally good views before returning to Pole Rd. The trail hardly gets any use so for that reason alone, makes it nice. As an option, add-on a very short loop (no bikes) around a pond in the refuge that offers a closer look at the nearby wetland. The pond is fished-in regularly.

#### Fort Belvoir (7.25 miles, VII)

Following the trail west from the refuge, the way is initially flat and shaded. The memory of that will quickly fade as you climb a steep hill (110 ft. in less than one-third a mile) up to Fort Belvoir. The trail becomes more of a sidewalk before reaching the top. A second paved trail is picked-up a little over half a mile ahead. That trail drops down into the Mason Run stream valley before climbing out again up another steep hill (70 ft. in less than one-quarter a mile). Using roads and sidewalks again, cross over Richmond Highway, Rte. 1 to a bluestone surfaced running trail. This trail is a 2.5 mile loop that goes around a golf course and is accurately marked-off in

quarter-mile segments. It's mostly flat, partially shaded and very pleasant. Keep an eye-out for errant flying golf balls however. After completing the loop, return the way you came.

### John Kingman Road (4.45, 6.8 or 5.75 miles, V, VII or VI)

This route goes out the same route as the Ft. Belvoir route (above), to the Mason Run stream valley. Once there, it turns upstream (north), and then follows the trail to John Kingman Road. Choosing to go right, gradually climb along the road through trees on the paved trail. At Woodlawn Road, turn around and return the way you came. Were the trail to continue to the right or if there was a sufficient shoulder along Woodlawn Road, you could make a loop however, the half-mile segment to Meeres Road is without either.

When first hitting John Kingman Road you can choose to go left. The trail continues to be pleasant at first, despite climbing a bit. After crossing Beulah Road however, the zoning becomes industrial. The chief reason for going this way is to get to the Fairfax County Parkway Trail (FCPT). On the way, pass a large complex on the left for the Defense Contract Audit Agency (think about the cost of mil-spec hammers and toilets and you'll know why the facility is so big) and descend along the sunny road to the FCPT. This part of the FCPT is not very aesthetically pleasing despite essentially being in the Accotink Creek watershed. The FCPT has long straight segments, it's too close to the highway, and all the shade trees were cut down when making the road. It's not as nice as the parts west of Route I-95. What it may one-day be good for is bicycle commuting but today, it hardly goes anywhere. Perhaps it will go somewhere, when or if the parkway is completed. For now use it for a run if you like barren stretches. Going west from John Kingman Rd., the trail essentially stops at Telegraph Road. Going east, it stops at Backlick Road. Return the way you came for either option.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Pohick Creek  
Fort Hunt Park

Pohick Bay Regional Park

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

Belvoir Grill - 703 780-8652

Paradise Restaurant - 703 781-8120

#### Entertainment and Edification

Woodlawn Plantation - George and Martha Washington's respective nephew and niece's home  
- 703 780-4000

Frank Lloyd Wright - Pope-Leighy House - moved next to Woodlawn - 703 780-3264

Mount Vernon - George Washington's home - 202 780-2000

Grist Mill Park - off Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy., Rte. 235 near Route 1

Huntley Meadows Nature Center - (703) 768-2525

Stone Mansion and Stoneybrooke Park - home of a friend of George Washington built this home  
in 1777 - 703 938-8835

## Plantation Drive

Distance: 2.15 or 2.8 miles

Rating: I or II; flat, mostly paved trails along wetlands; sunny

### 2.15 Mile Route

1.25 trail X on L

L 0.0 from the refuge parking lot on the trail along Pole Rd

R 1.55 trail along Pole Rd

0.1 bridge over Dogue Creek

1.95 Plantation Dr on R and trail X on R

<\*

R 2.15 refuge parking

BL 0.2 trail bears left along Plantation Dr

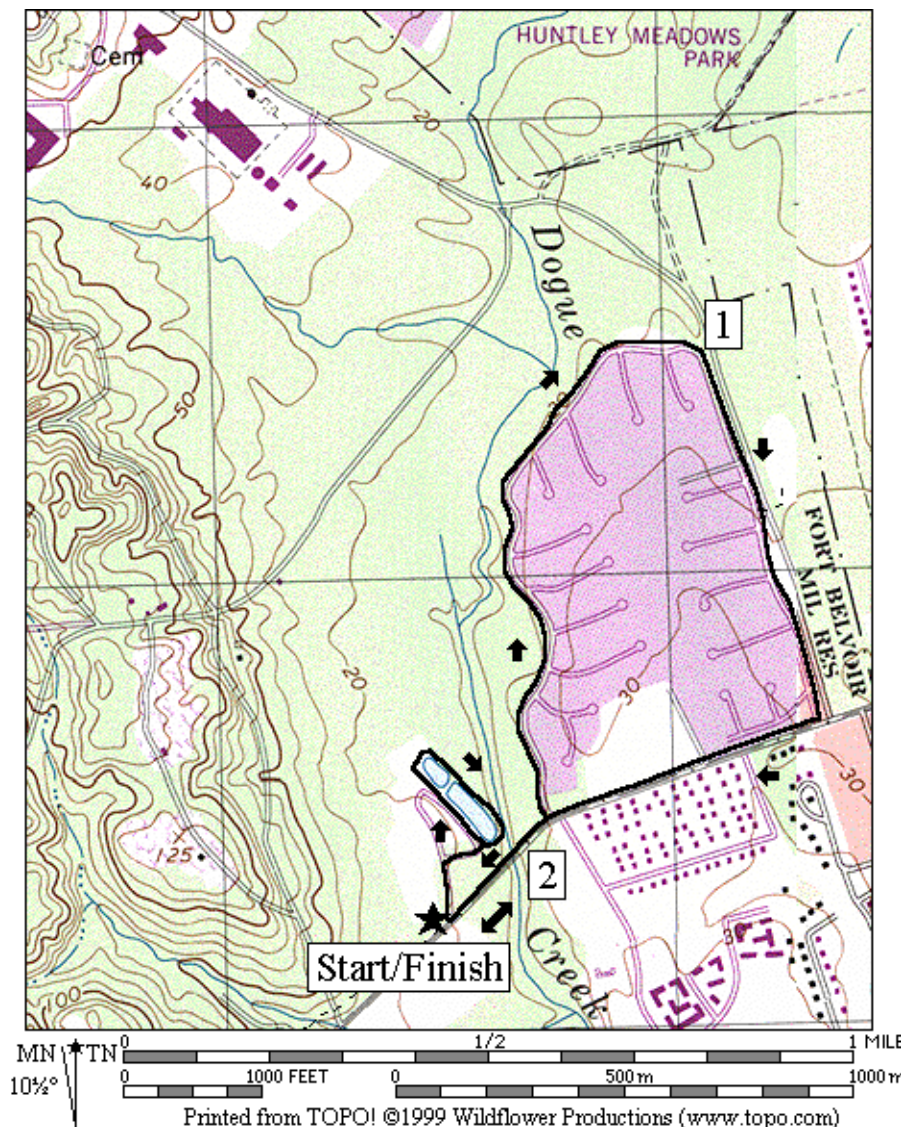
### \*2.8 Mile Route

R 2.15 through refuge parking to trail head (portable outhouse)

L 2.3 trail X at pond

L 2.65 trail X on L after looping the pond

2.8 refuge parking on Pole Rd



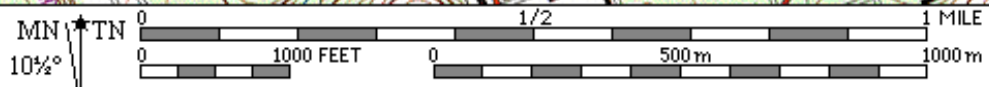
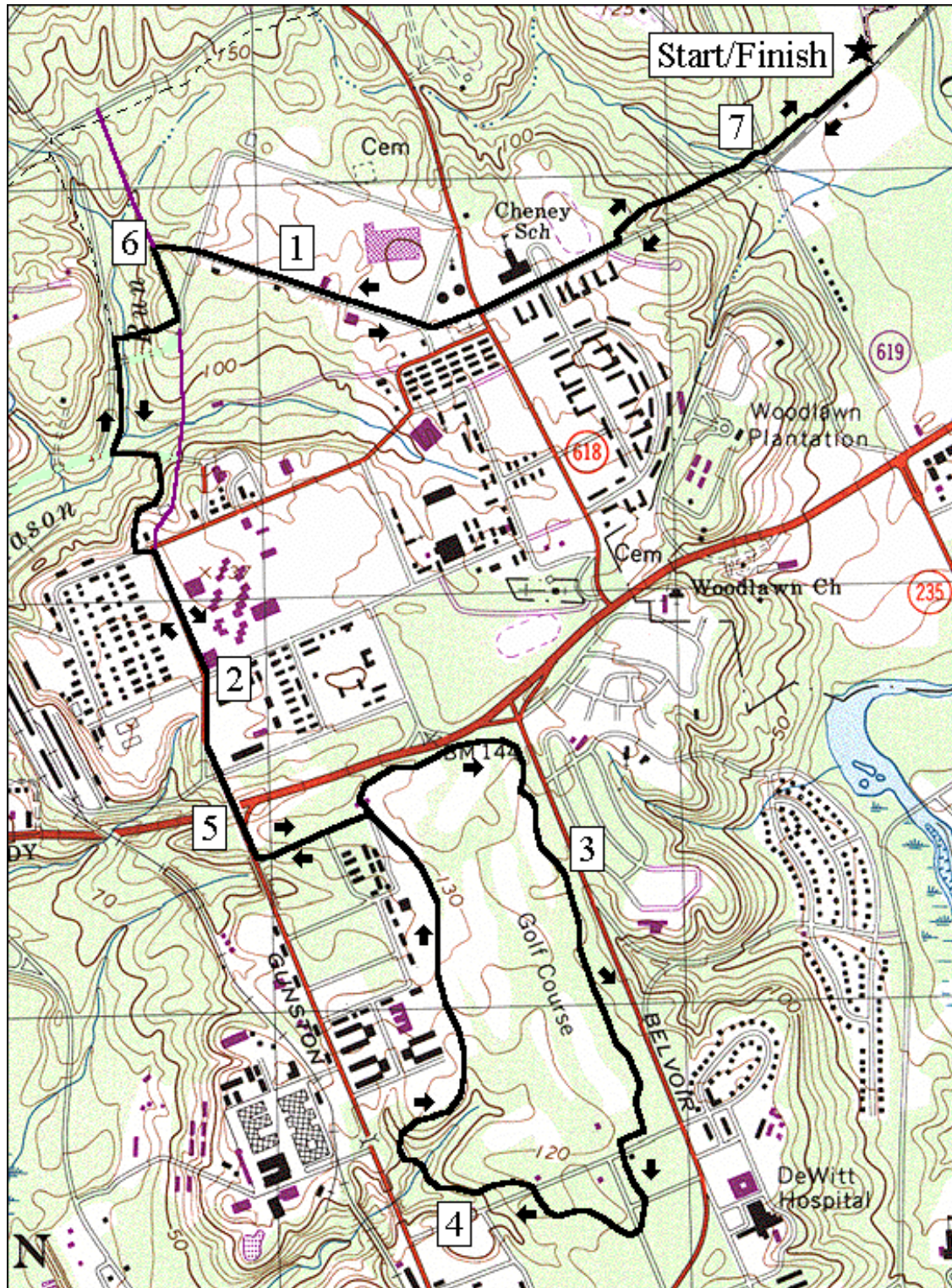
## Fort Belvoir

Distance: 7.25 miles

Rating: VII; paved trails and roads, some hills & a few good river views

- |    |      |  |      |  |
|----|------|--|------|--|
| R  | 0.0  | from the refuge parking lot on the paved trail along Pole Rd   | 3.7  | Mile Mark 0.0/2.5 near tennis (portable outhouse)      |
|    | 0.2  | Old Mill Rd on L; Pole Rd becomes Meeres Rd (begin hill ahead) | 3.85 | 9 <sup>th</sup> Street                                 |
|    | 0.7  | Woodlawn Rd, Rte 618; use walk; Meeres becomes Gorgas Rd       | 4.1  | bridge over stream                                     |
|    | 1.15 | Stonewall Jackson Dr   | 4.75 | Chapek Rd  |
|    |      |  | L    | 4.85 1 <sup>st</sup> Street (loop is completed)        |
| CL | 1.2  | Gunston Rd   | R    | 4.9 Gunston Rd   |
|    |      |  |      | 5.0 bridge over Richmond Hwy, Rte 1                    |
| R  | 1.35 | paved trail head on R (unmarked)                               |      |  |
|    |      |  | L    | 5.4 Abott Rd   |
| L  | 1.45 | at T at bottom of hill; Mason Run stream valley                | R    | 5.45 trail head on R; Mason Run stream valley          |
| L  | 1.8  | Abbott Rd (unmarked) at trail end & hilltop                    | R    | 5.8 trail X on R (unmarked)                            |
| CR | 1.85 | Gunston Rd (use sidewalk)                                      | L    | 5.9 Gunston Rd   |
|    | 2.2  | bridge over Richmond Hwy, Rte 1                                |      |  |
| L  | 2.3  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Street   | CR   | 6.0 Gorgas Rd; use sidewalk                            |
|    |      |  |      | 6.1 Stonewall Jackson Dr                               |
| L  | 2.35 | trail X (bluestone/unmarked loop)                              |      | 6.55 Woodlawn Rd, Rte 618; Gorgas Rd becomes Meeres Rd |
|    | 3.2  | Mile Mark 2  |      | 7.05 Old Mill Rd on R; Meeres Rd becomes Pole Rd       |
|    | 3.5  | 9 <sup>th</sup> Street   | L    | 7.25 into refuge parking lot                           |

# Fort Belvoir



## John Kingman Road

Distance: 4.45, 6.8 or 5.75 miles

Rating: V, VII or VI; mostly paved trails, some steep hills

### 4.45 Mile Route

- |    |      |  |    |  |
|----|------|--|----|--|
|    | 1.8  | Gunston Rd   |    |  |
| R  | 0.0  | from the refuge parking lot on the paved trail along Pole Rd   | U  | 2.2 Woodlawn Rd  |
|    | 0.2  | Old Mill Rd on L; Pole Rd becomes Meeres Rd (begin hill ahead) |    | 2.65 Gunston Rd  |
|    | 0.7  | Woodlawn Rd, Rte 618; use walk; Meeres becomes Gorgas Rd       | L  | 2.7 trail X; Mason Run stream valley >*                |
|    | 1.15 | Stonewall Jackson Dr   | L  | 3.0 trail X on L (unmarked)                            |
| CL | 1.2  | Gunston Rd   | L  | 3.1 Gunston Rd   |
| R  | 1.35 | paved trail head on R (unmarked)                               | CR | 3.25 Gorgas Rd; use sidewalk                           |
| R  | 1.45 | at T at bottom of hill; Mason Run stream valley                |    | 3.3 Stonewall Jackson Dr                               |
| <* |      |  |    | 3.75 Woodlawn Rd, Rte 618; Gorgas Rd becomes Meeres Rd |
| R  | 1.75 | trail X before John Kingman Rd                                 |    | 4.25 Old Mill Rd on R; Meeres Rd becomes Pole Rd       |
|    |      |  | L  | 4.45 into refuge parking lot                           |
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### \*6.8 Mile Route

- |     |      |                                |                                |      |   |
|-----|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|---|
|     | CL   | 4.3                            | John Kingman Rd (use sidewalk) |      |   |
|     |      | >**                            |                                |      |   |
| L   | 1.75 | trail X before John Kingman Rd |                                | 4.85 | Beulah St; paved trail head down hill   |
|     | 2.0  | Beulah St; use sidewalk        |                                |      |   |
| <** |      |                                | R                              | 5.05 | trail X; Mason Run stream valley (pickup cues at mile 3.0 on 4.45 mile route) |
| R   | 2.5  | Fairfax County Pkwy Trail      |                                |      |   |
| U   | 3.4  | Telegraph Rd                   |                                |      |   |
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### \*\*5.75 Mile Route

- |   |     |                           |             |     |  |
|---|-----|---------------------------|-------------|-----|--|
|   | U   | 2.85                      | Backlick Rd |     |  |
| L | 2.5 | Fairfax County Pkwy Trail | R           | 3.2 | John Kingman Rd (pickup cues at mile 4.85 on 6.8 mile route) |

# John Kingman Road

