

Water Trails in Franklin Point State Park

By Paul Fofonoff

Franklin Point State Park is located on the western shore of the Bay, at the bottom end of the Shadyside peninsula. I began sea kayaking in this area in 2002, and have enjoyed the beauty of the Bay and its occasional challenges. The Bay here is calm much of the time but, with 200 miles of fetch to seaward, and maybe 50 miles to the north, it can change rapidly. The creeks are shallow, so a NW wind or the monthly tidal cycle can leave you with a very narrow, shallow channel, and a whole lot of mud. I have observations on our two launching areas and our four potential water trails. For reference, I currently have a 16-foot sea kayak, and usually use a spray skirt to keep waves out.

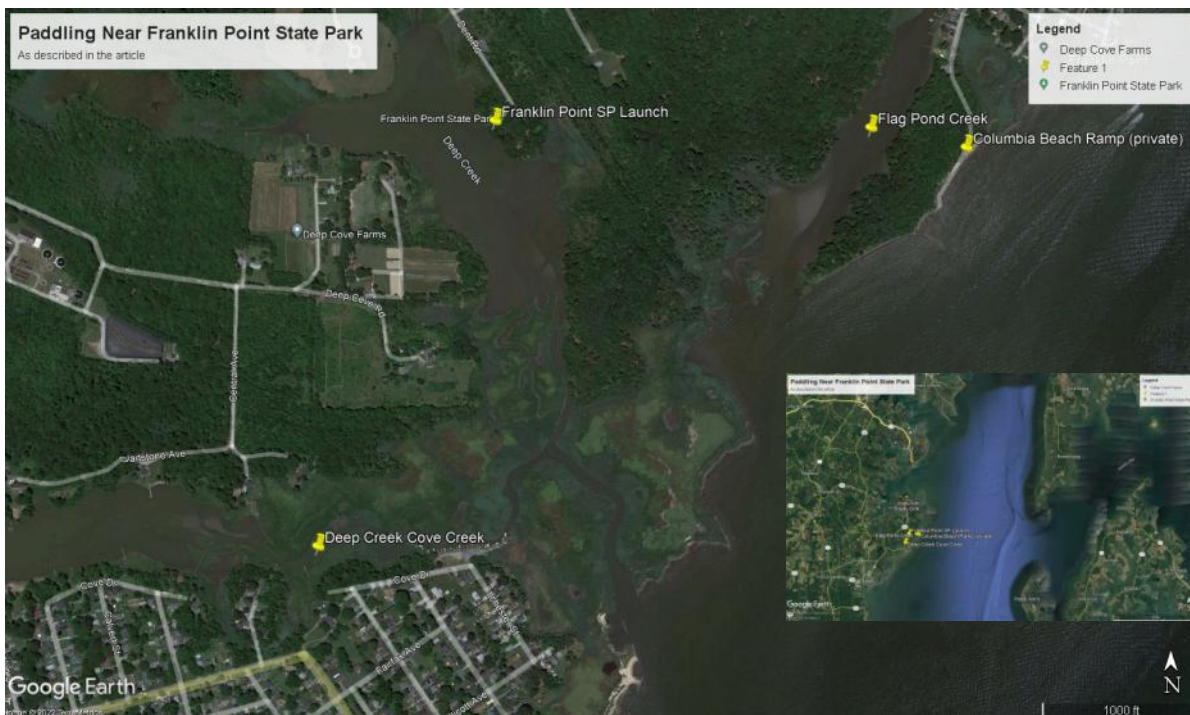
Columbia Beach—I use the neighborhood ramp. To reach Flag Pond Creek, or Deep/Deep Pond Creeks, I paddle along 0.5 to 1 mile of shoreline. On late summer afternoons, winds of 10-25 mph can raise considerable waves. Without a spray skirt, you're likely to get water in your boat. Conditions can change rapidly with afternoon Bay winds, and even faster with thunderstorms. With riprap, there's no safe place to land until you reach the mouth of Flag Pond Creek. There are small patches of sandy beach along the Bay before you get to Deep/Deep Pond Creek.

Dent Road—Deep Creek is misnamed, at least the upper portion, as it widens into a pond. On a NW wind, it's nearly bare mud, with small channels for water. On a normal low tide, it's easy to get stuck here, and it helps to know that the water is deeper near the edge of the pond and too shallow to paddle in the middle. Once you get down past the pond section, the channel is deep. The creek curves to the west, and the branch to the left leads to the Bay. The branch straight ahead becomes Deep Cove Creek. The shallow water and mud at the Franklin Point SP launch here is challenging, but it's a safer location for casual paddlers, and gives you alternatives if conditions are difficult on the Bay.

Flag Pond Creek—As you enter the creek from the Bay, waves can get bigger, until you hit a shallow sandbar, where you can run aground at low tide. As you enter the creek, water is deeper on the right (east). There's a nice park-like spot, Dick's Lookout, on the loop trail, but it's only accessible at high tide, and even then requires a few steps in the mud, and pushing through reeds. However, it's a good lunch or rest stop when you can get to it. The channel shifts and changes direction as you approach the Narrows between the lower and upper pond. The Narrows is currently blocked by fallen trees, and would be a major job to clear. An earlier couple of trees could be passed at high tide, but now the upper pond is cut off completely.. The upper pond is nice with a high tide, with good views of marsh and forest.

Deep Creek—I've described it already. It's nice with a high tide, but can be frustrating otherwise. The channels could be marked with posts to keep people out of the mud. Entering Deep Creek from the Bay is dramatic, with trees rising above the reeds.

Deep Cove Creek can be reached from Columbia Beach, through the Bay, bearing left, or by the Franklin Point SP launch from Dent Road down to the branch. This portion of the creek is dredged, with a small marina in the Franklin Manor neighborhood. You'll pass houses on the R (S) side of the creek, until it widens into a wide pond-like section, with only a few houses. This section narrows



into a creek through marshes lined with tall trees. At high tide, you can paddle a long way into semi-wilderness. Some of the R (N) shore is undeveloped public property, the former 'Turtle!! Run!!!' development purchased by the county.

This may be more detail than anybody wanted, but at least at high tide, this park offers some beautiful paddling.

Happy Trails on land and water!