

CHAPTER ONE – PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PLAN

Introduction

Situated only one hour from Washington D.C. on the tidal, lower Potomac River, the Nanjemoy Peninsula is one of the most ecologically and culturally significant landscapes remaining in the State of Maryland. Migratory waterfowl and wading birds find shelter and abound in over ten miles of undisturbed shoreline, and an extensive network of wetlands and forests also harbor some of Maryland's finest examples of rare and endangered plants and animals. Nanjemoy's outstanding natural attributes are equally matched by its archeological resources and history – early Native American sites in the region offer a rare insight into indigenous cultures well prior to European settlement, and dozens of sunken ships lie in Malloys Bay along the Potomac.

For several years, it was readily apparent that the region had a wealth of significant resources. A statewide "Green Infrastructure" assessment identified Douglas Point on the Nanjemoy Peninsula as a crucial ecological hub and a critical link in Maryland's greenway system. How could a plan of action preserve this valuable landscape, while contributing to the long-term economic needs of the local communities? How could the required financial and human resources be structured to implement this ambitious land conservation initiative? The answer: an innovative partnership involving the State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources (DNR); U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM); Charles County; The Conservation Fund (TCF); and other non-profit land trusts. In December 2000, the partners signed an agreement that provided for a coordinated strategy for land acquisition, long-range planning, community involvement, and on-going stewardship (See Appendix 1.)

With TCF serving as lead negotiator, the State and the Federal governments secured funding to start the acquisition of the key properties from willing sellers along the Potomac shoreline. In 2001, Maryland launched the landmark GreenPrint Program, designed to save the most threatened ecological and irreplaceable natural resources in the State. The State committed \$3 million specifically to help secure the first property at Douglas Point, owned by the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO). The supportive actions of Maryland's Congressional Delegation yielded an additional \$3 million in Federal funds through BLM to help with the first acquisition. GreenPrint funds also secured a second key tract to the north of Douglas Point, the Wilson Farm at Malloys Bay. Also during 2001, BLM acquired the former Maryland Point Naval Observatory on the southern end of Nanjemoy Peninsula, which had been declared excess property by the Navy. This tract is also included in the Lower Potomac River planning area (See Appendix 11).

What is the future vision for these public lands? Working with the local communities, other interested participants, and the Charles County Government, BLM and DNR embarked on a public planning process for this project. With BLM serving as project lead to fulfill its legal requirements, and DNR providing additional resource planning and

technical support, the completed plan will identify recommendations for future public use, resource management, and recreational opportunities.

In cooperation with the local communities and the County, the outcome of the public planning process will establish a framework for the future management, operations, and stewardship of these public lands, as well as enlist the assistance of an already extensive and highly involved, community volunteer network. By working with the County and communities, the planned integration of heritage tourism and recreational opportunities on these public lands will continue to help diversify the local economy.

Description of Planning Area

The coordinated management plan (CMP) focuses on two watersheds located in southern Charles County on the Nanjemoy peninsula (See Map 1). Totalling approximately 53 square miles, the following third order watersheds have been identified by the U.S. Geological Survey and the DNR:

Watershed #1 (DNR identifying code - 021401020789): Approximately 33 square miles, this watershed begins at Chicamuxen Creek and proceeds southward to its terminus at Smith Point. The watershed includes the Chicamuxen Creek, Reader Run, and Mallows Bay drainage systems.

Watershed #2 (DNR identifying code – 021401010708): Approximately 20 square miles, the second watershed begins at Smith Point and for the purposes of this study, proceeds in a southerly direction and terminates at Riverside. The drainage includes Thorne Gut and the Mudds Marsh drainage systems.

In addition, as the map shows the planning area has been slightly modified to include all of the remaining acreage of the former-PEPCO tract based on comments received during the scoping phase. This change will allow BLM to acquire the tract if it should be offered for sale in the future by Maryland Rock, Inc.

Purpose and Need for Action

In December 2001, the Bureau of Land Management completed the Douglas Point Land Acquisition Planning Analysis (PA), which authorized purchase of approximately 550 acres of land (BLM 2001). DNR acquired 700-acres with Program Open Space funds.

Because the Douglas Point PA provided only very general management guidance for the land, a comprehensive land use plan must be prepared to provide specific land use allocations and to make determinations required by BLM's planning regulations and handbook.

Map 1. Planning Area



Vision and Concept for Plan

The CMP provides basic land management decisions for the Federal and State lands within the planning area. It is especially important for the BLM properties, which are not currently covered by a planning document.

The overall goal of the CMP is to provide a vision for conservation on Federal and State lands within the planning area. When it is approved, the plan will immediately authorize certain activities for the public's use and enjoyment of the area. Other activities will require additional site planning before they can be authorized.

The complex process of building a shared vision began with the Community-Based Partnerships and Healthy Ecosystems workshop held in Waldorf, Maryland in April 2001. The formal scoping process, which concluded in May 2002, built upon community efforts to develop its long-term vision, and brought in other voices to discuss concerns and opportunities. From the scoping meetings and written comments, a set of issues were developed that linked similar opportunities into themes, such as recreational uses, cultural and historic resources, and sustainable economic development. Planning alternatives were developed from these themes, by emphasizing different management strategies and varying levels of activities and use.

The plan establishes land uses for existing public land units (Douglas Point, Maryland Point Naval Observatory, Purse State Park, and Wilson Farm). Some of these properties such as the federally owned Douglas Point tract, were acquired under specific mandates, and therefore have restrictions on certain uses.

The rest of the planning area contains private land or lands owned by not-for-profit organizations. For this latter class of properties, the plan will not make any land use determinations. Instead, the plan will establish a screen for future proposed acquisitions based on the goals made in the plan.

While a definitive common vision was never articulated during the scoping process, and all stakeholders were not unanimous in their support for the details of proposals that follow, some fundamental points of ecosystem conservation and human use did evolve and suggest that overall management should:

- Maintain the area's rural character
- Create opportunities for sustainable economic development
- Protect the region's cultural, historic and natural resources
- Provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors

Overall Plan Goal

It is the goal of the Lower Potomac River Coordinated Management Plan to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, cultural and historic preservation and

interpretation, and natural resource conservation and education that support sustainable economic development while maintaining the region's rural character.

This statement guided the planning team's work as it developed the programmatic themes and plan alternatives. Planning themes contain more specific actions. The team identified four themes:

Planning Themes and Opportunities

Given the interconnectedness of the land to resources, it follows that the planning themes interrelate. That is, a valuable recreational experience generally requires some type of cultural or natural resource draw. Similarly, heritage tourists prefer to have nearby services, such as restaurants, gas stations, or shopping. Using these themes as a basis, the planning team developed a set of alternatives, which are found in Chapter 2.

Recreation

Hunting

Camping

Trails

Greenways

Blueways

Universal access

Water access

Fishing

Cultural and historic preservation and interpretation

Prehistoric Native American

Early contact

American Revolution

War of 1812

Mallows Bay "Ghost Ships"

Maritime Heritage

Scenic Byways

Natural resource protection and management

Matrix blocks

Special status species

Open space preservation

Sustainable economic development

Outfitters and guides

Local services

Planning Alternatives

This process of developing goals, objectives, and themes produced a list of four alternatives (Chapter 2). Although the alternatives combine each of the planning themes,

they differ based on levels of use intensity and other factors. That is, one alternative may encourage active recreational uses, while minimizing projects that would promote natural resource protection and enhancement projects. That is not to say that natural resource protection would be ignored, but rather it would not be the focus of management activities and budget strategies.

Legislative Constraints

The Douglas Point tract was acquired by the DNR with Program Open Space funds (describe) and by BLM with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Under the terms of the LWCF and Congressional language found in the two appropriation acts, some activities normally associated with public lands may not be allowed.

Planning Criteria

BLM's land use plans are made up of many decisions and determinations that are based on dozens of Federal laws, regulations and policies. These mandates, known as *planning criteria*, ensure that BLM addresses all applicable environmental, social and economic issues when it develops its plans. Identifying these criteria up-front in a planning process serves two purposes. First, it provides public notification of the laws that BLM and its partners believe are germane to this plan. Second, it allows the public the opportunity to identify other criteria that may have been missed by the government.

These criteria only affect lands that are or may be managed by the BLM. It is BLM's intent to manage its lands cooperatively with the State of Maryland, which may also affect land management. In no instance, however, can the federal lands be used for purposes that conflict with the direction outlined in these planning criteria.

Overall Planning Criteria

- Proposed uses for BLM land at Douglas Point will be consistent with the intent of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act, Congressional direction in the appropriation act that authorized purchase of the tract and the LWCF funding requests submitted to and approved by the Department of the Interior. Future acquisitions may provide for different land uses and development opportunities.
- A primary goal of the plan will be to foster conservation of open space and protection of crucial wildlife habitat and cultural resources and to provide for low impact recreational opportunities. Only land uses that are found to be compatible with this goal will be considered in the plan.
- Development on the BLM portion of the Douglas Point tract will be limited to facilities that directly support the plan's goals. Examples of possible facilities include trails and trailheads, restrooms, primitive campgrounds and interpretive displays.
- The Maryland Point property, acquired by BLM from the Department of the Navy pursuant to the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, may be

considered for more intensive land uses and facilities development than other BLM properties acquired with LWCF funds.

- Public safety concerns at the Maryland Point property require that this property remain closed to the public until it has been determined to be safe for public use.
- The plan will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and all other applicable laws (see Appendix 10).
- To the greatest extent possible, the plan will meet the State's and BLM's land use planning and management needs.
- The plan will be prepared under the principles of community-based planning and management and will offer opportunities for meaningful public involvement.
- The plan will emphasize the natural, cultural and historical resources of the Nanjemoy Peninsula and lower Potomac River shoreline.
- The plan will identify specific opportunities and priorities for recreational use and education related to the BLM and DNR Douglas Point properties. (The Douglas Point properties will be managed as a single Federal-State land management unit.)
- The plan will identify criteria for possible future acquisitions within the planning area. Any acquisitions would be dependent on the availability of willing sellers and funding.
- Land disposal of the Federally-owned portion of the Douglas Point tract will not be considered as it is prohibited by the terms of the LWCF.
- Mineral leasing will not be considered as a viable use of the Federal mineral estate below the BLM-owned tract at Douglas Point as this would be inconsistent with the mandate of the LWCF and Congressional intent in the appropriations acts.
- The plan will recognize the State's responsibility to manage wildlife, including hunting and fishing within all Federal and State-owned land units.

In addition to the above criteria, there are other specific procedural activities or performance levels contained in federal laws and executive orders that BLM must undertake or achieve prior to finalizing land use plan decisions. For a complete list of the relevant federal laws and executive orders, see Appendix 10.

BLM Strategic Plan

In the year 2000, BLM released its second strategic plan prepared under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). Organized around three goal categories that contain eight mission goals, the plan describes accomplishments expected under an assumed level-budget scenario between the years 2000 to 2005. All BLM land use plans must be consistent with the following goals outlined in the strategic plan:

Sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations by:

- Serving current and future publics
- Restoring and maintaining the health of the land
- Promoting collaborative land and resource management
- Improving business practices and human resource management

Scoping Goals

The scoping process identified additional goals specific to the Lower Potomac River Planning area, including:

- Identify allowable land uses for the Douglas Point tract for public enjoyment of the many conservation, recreation, and cultural resource values located on the Nanjemoy peninsula, while maintaining the ecological integrity of the region;
- Identify allowable land uses for the former Maryland Point Naval Observatory, which is under BLM's sole jurisdiction;
- Identify allowable uses for the Wilson Farm property and Purse State Park;
- Identify activities required for full implementation of the land use plan; and
- Identify other resource management needs.

The goals stated above are similar to the planning criteria, yet distinguished by the fact that they seek to identify all possibilities for use of the lands and resource management needs once the criteria have established the preliminary standards for any alternatives to be considered feasible.

State and Local Laws and Programs

BLM is required to be consistent with state and local laws and ordinances to the maximum extent possible. Consistency will be determined through on-going dialogue with State and local officials and by conducting a formal Governor's Consistency Review towards the conclusion of the planning process as required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. For a list of applicable state and local laws and programs, and program descriptions and various land unit designations, refer to Appendices 10 and 11.

Maryland's Public Lands

The mission of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is:

The Department of Natural Resources preserves, protects, enhances and restores Maryland's natural resources for the wise use and enjoyment of all citizens.

Each year, thousands of visitors enjoy DNR's public lands for a variety of outdoor (natural resource-based) recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, boating, fishing, hiking, hunting, mountain biking and camping. The Department manages over 435,000 acres of public lands and protected open space in the State, and they represent some of the most significant ecological and cultural landscapes found in Maryland. This extensive public lands system reflects two major objectives of the Department: "A conserved and managed Statewide network of ecologically valuable private and public lands," and "Diverse outdoor recreation opportunities for Maryland citizens and visitors."

DNR's Land Unit Designations

The Department's land units are designated according to their significance, resource management practices and recreational focus, or by a special act enacted by the Maryland General Assembly. Land Unit Designations include State Parks, State Forests, Natural Resource Management Areas, Natural Environment Areas, Wildlife Management Areas, Fish Management Areas, State Wildlands, and newly acquired Undesignated Areas.

Issues to Be Addressed

A planning issue is a matter of wide public concern over resource management. The issues, developed during scoping and described in the Scoping Report, stress the ecological interrelationship between federal, state and non-governmental land management. The resulting main topics of the issues to be addressed throughout the course of the planning process are listed below:

- Ecosystem Protection
- Cultural and Historic Resource Conservation, Protection and Interpretation
- Sustainable Economic Development
- Public Water Access and Recreation
- Land Access and Recreation
- Off-Road Vehicles
- Maintenance and Administrative Access
- Special Designations
- Ecosystem Monitoring and Scientific Research
- Planning Area Boundary
- Management Budget and Funding

