

Machicomoco State Park 10-Year Master Plan Public Information Meeting

Taylor Jenkins, Environmental Program Planner

David Bryan, State Parks Planner

Lauren McMillan, Cultural Resources Manager



December 14, 2023



Logistics

- I. Sign-In Sheets
- II. Virtual Attendees and Chat Box
- III. Restrooms
- IV. Meeting Space Time
- V. Materials will be posted to DCR website after the meeting



Agenda

- I. Welcome to the Park
- II. Master Plan Process
- III. Park Background and Existing Conditions Overview
- IV. Public Input

Welcome to the Park

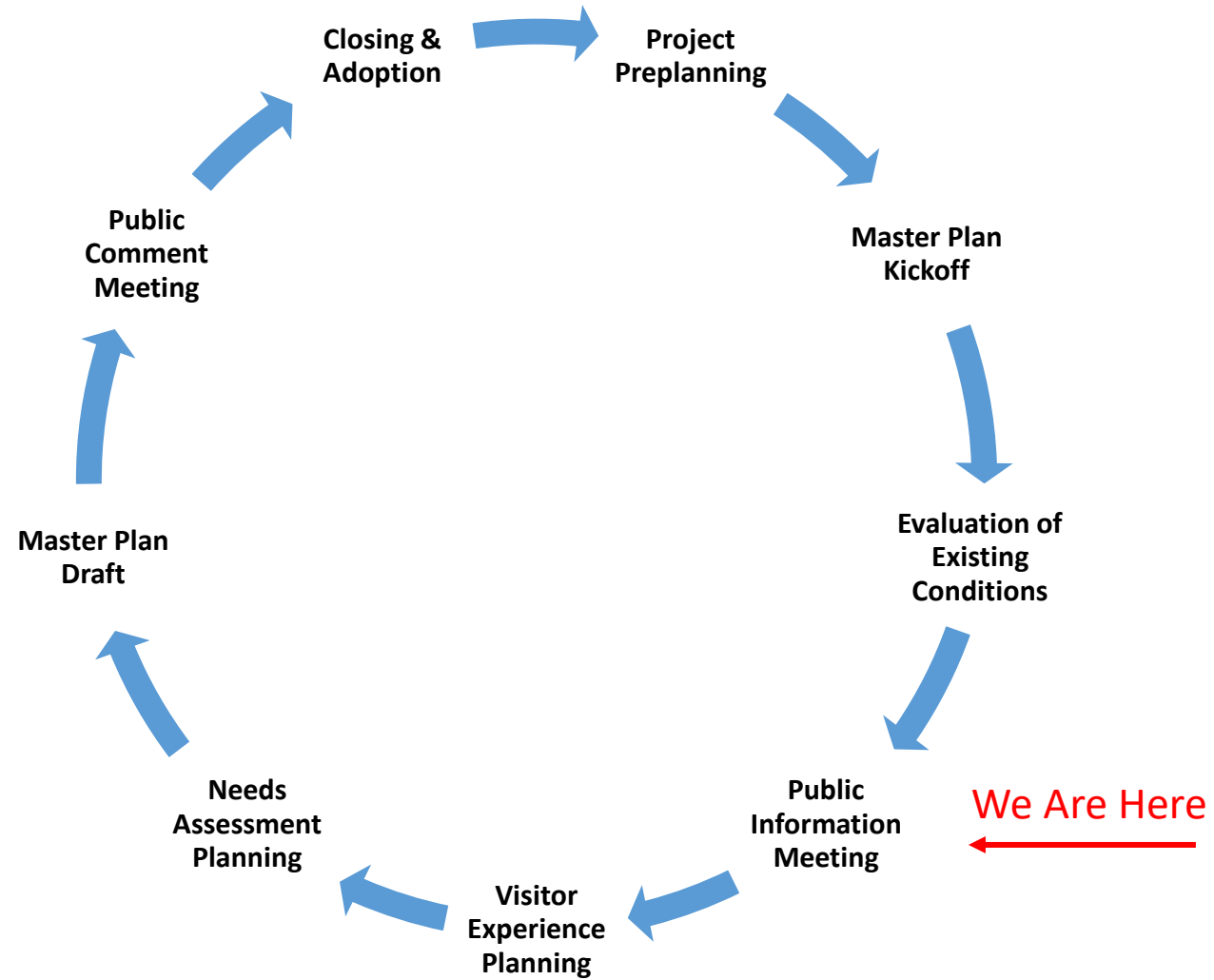


What is a Master Plan?

- All state parks must have a master plan pursuant to Virginia State Code
- Identifies natural, cultural, and physical resources as well as park needs
- Goal to create a functional, long-range Master Plan that guides future development and management of the park
- Integrate the Middle Peninsula unit under the Machicomoco State Park umbrella and determine usage



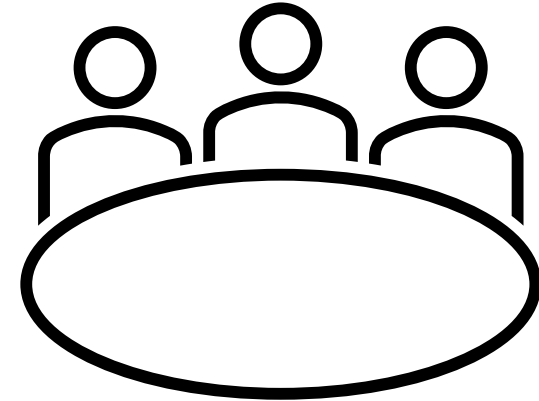
Master Planning Process



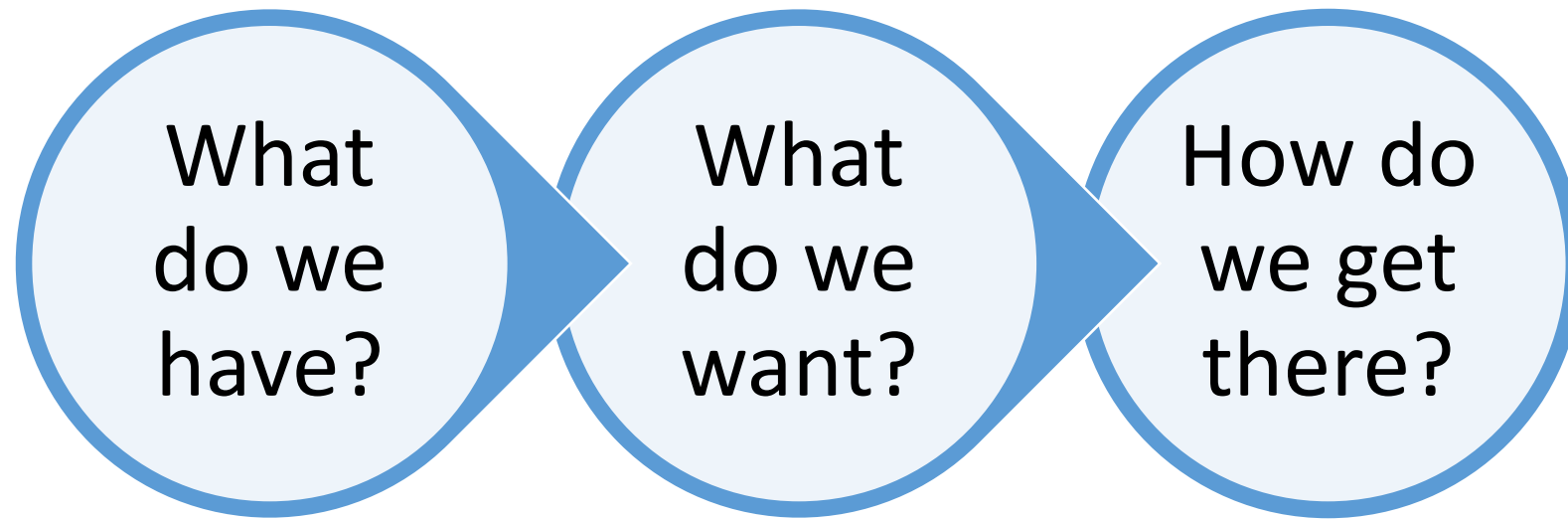
Master Plan Advisory Committee

Purpose and Role

- Made up of external stakeholders including government partners, tribal representatives, and content experts
- Provide specific stakeholder feedback and guidance for the Master Plan
- Meet four times during the Master Plan process

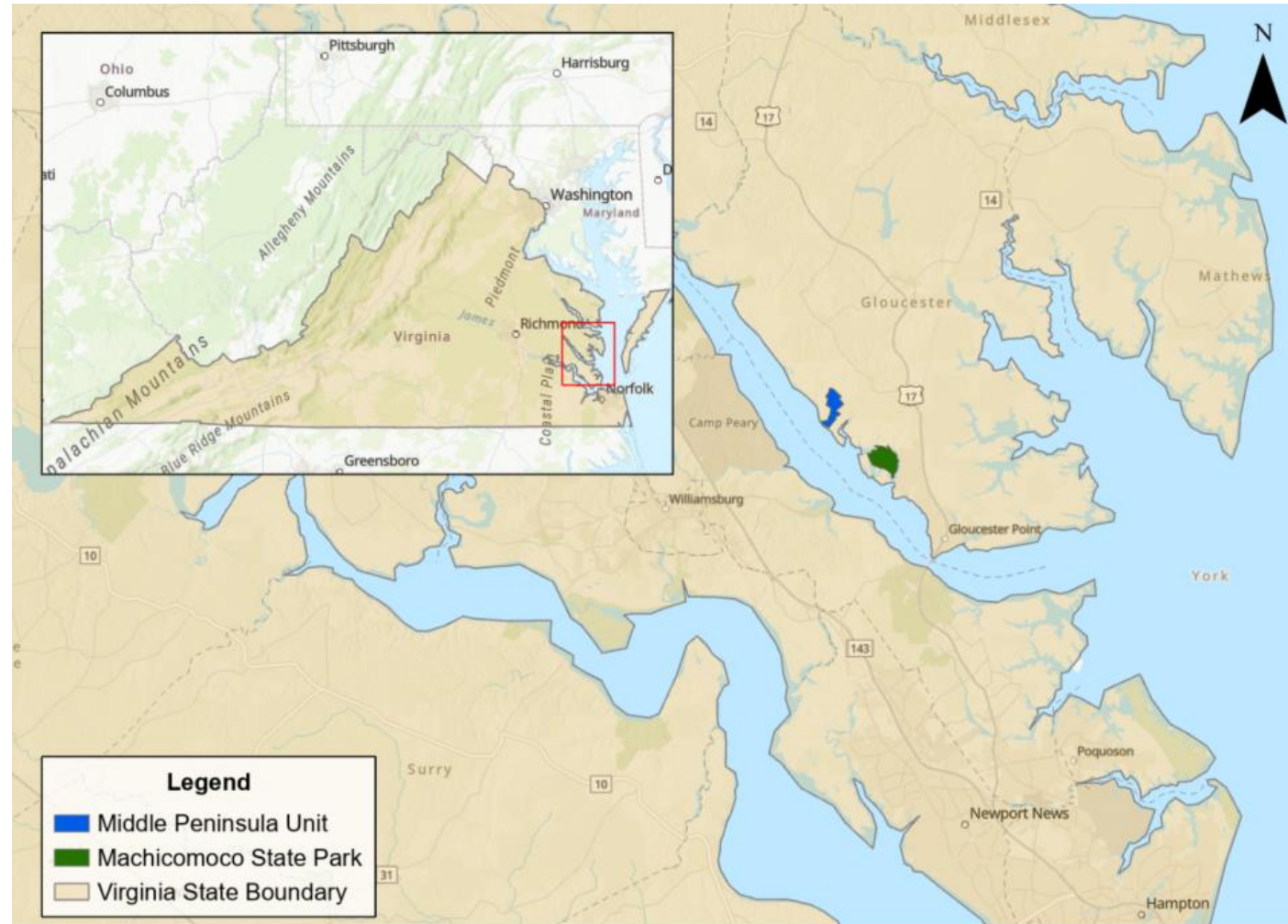


Master Plan Vision



Park Location

- Located along the York River in Gloucester County, VA
- Comprised of two properties totaling over 1,000 acres
 - Machicomoco State Park
 - Middle Peninsula Unit
- Surrounded by other historical and water-based recreation opportunities in the Middle Peninsula region



Basemap credits: arcgis.com

Park Background

Gateway to Werowocomoco

- Initial Master Plan for Timberneck Farm completed in 2018 envisioned the park as the “Gateway to Werowocomoco”
- Werowocomoco was a place of leadership and spiritual significance for Virginia Indian Tribes
- Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places



Source: NPS.gov



Park Background

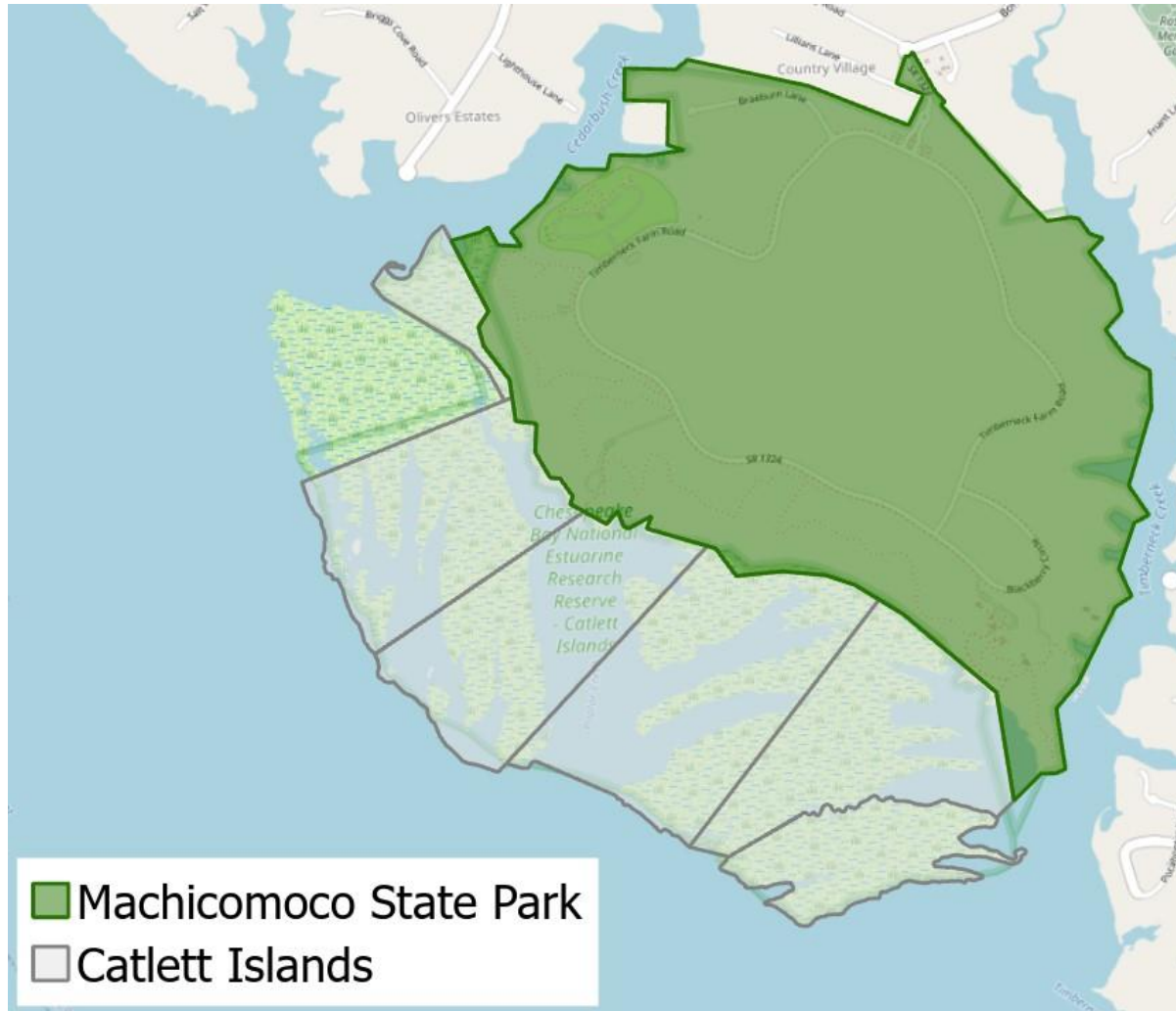
Machicomoco State Park

- Formerly a planned housing development
- Dominion Energy Surry-Skiffes Creek-Wheaton transmission line mitigation fund provided \$25M
- Land acquired by the Conservation Fund in 2016, transferred to DCR in 2020 and park began operations in 2021
- Currently highlights Virginia Indian history through interpretive programming educational displays
- Equipped for day and overnight use
- Timberneck House, c. 1793

Park Background

Machicomoco State Park

- 645 total acreage
- Adjoined to the Catlett Islands
- Conservation easement on the property held by DCR
- Two leases on property: agricultural lease and Timberneck House lease
- Surrounded by primarily residential land uses



Park Background

Middle Peninsula Unit

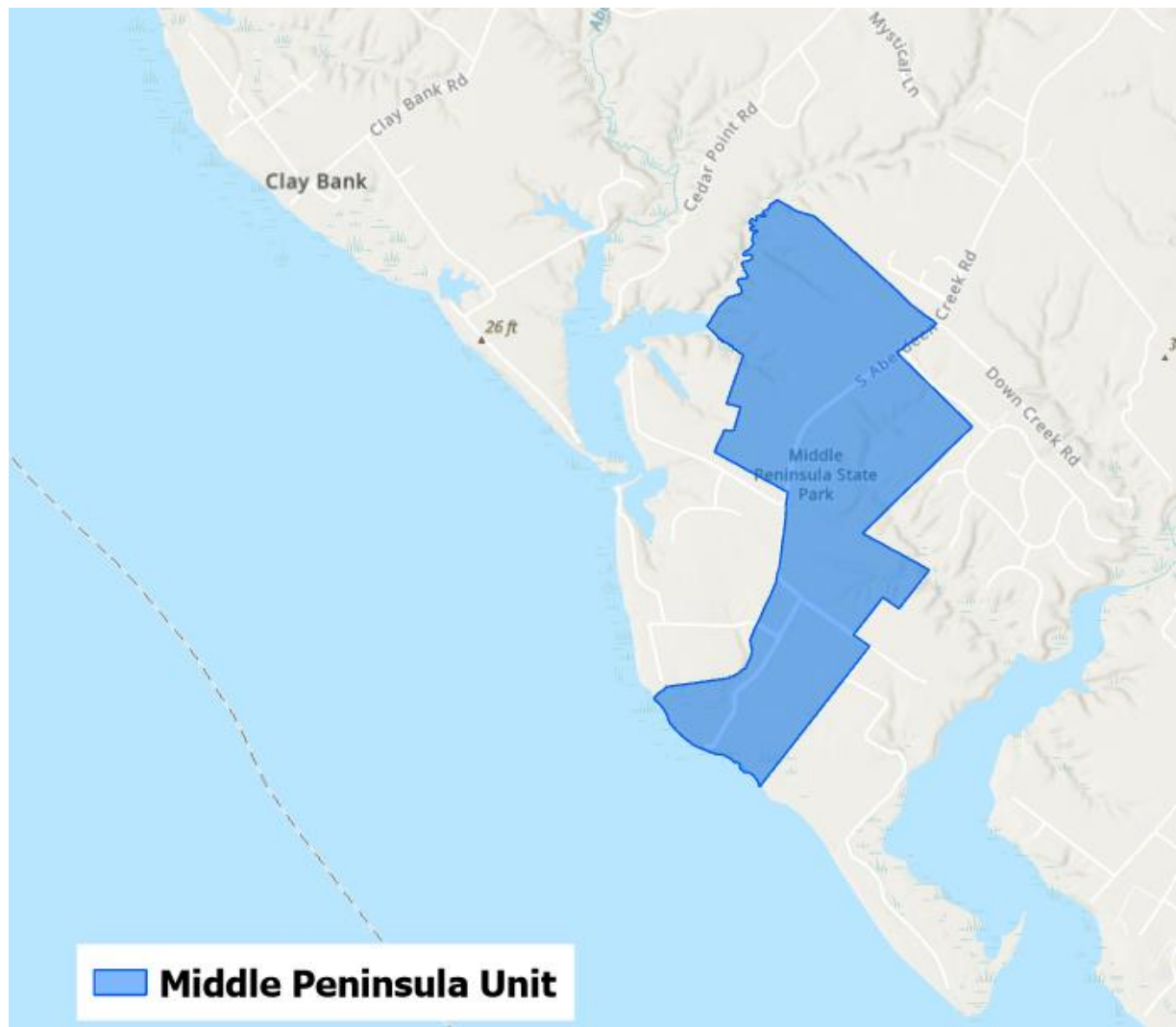
- 2002 Parks and Recreation bond referendum called for acquisition of land for a state park in the Middle Peninsula area
- Land acquired by the Trust for Public Land in 2005, ownership transferred to DCR in 2006
- Currently closed to the public and mostly undeveloped, with one service road for park staff to perform maintenance
- First Master Plan for Middle Peninsula State Park completed in 2010 with a subsequent update in 2015



Boundaries, Easements, and Acreage

Middle Peninsula Unit

- 431 total acreage
- Located adjacent to Rosewell Ruins and associated Visitor Center
- No easements on the property
- Existing agricultural lease
- Surrounded by residential and conservation land uses



Resources Review

What Makes The Park Special

- Physical Resources
 - Machicomoco State Park Only
- Natural Resources
 - Machicomoco and Middle Peninsula Unit
- Cultural Resources
 - Machicomoco and Middle Peninsula Unit





Physical Resources

Overview

- Entrance Building
- Maintenance Yard
- Full-Service Campground
- Outdoor Stage
- Car Top Launch
- Interpretive Area
- Timberneck House and Sheds
- Boat Slip/Floating Docks with Boardwalk
- Residential House and Garage
- Supporting Infrastructure such as Parking, Roads, Trails and Utilities



Entrance Building

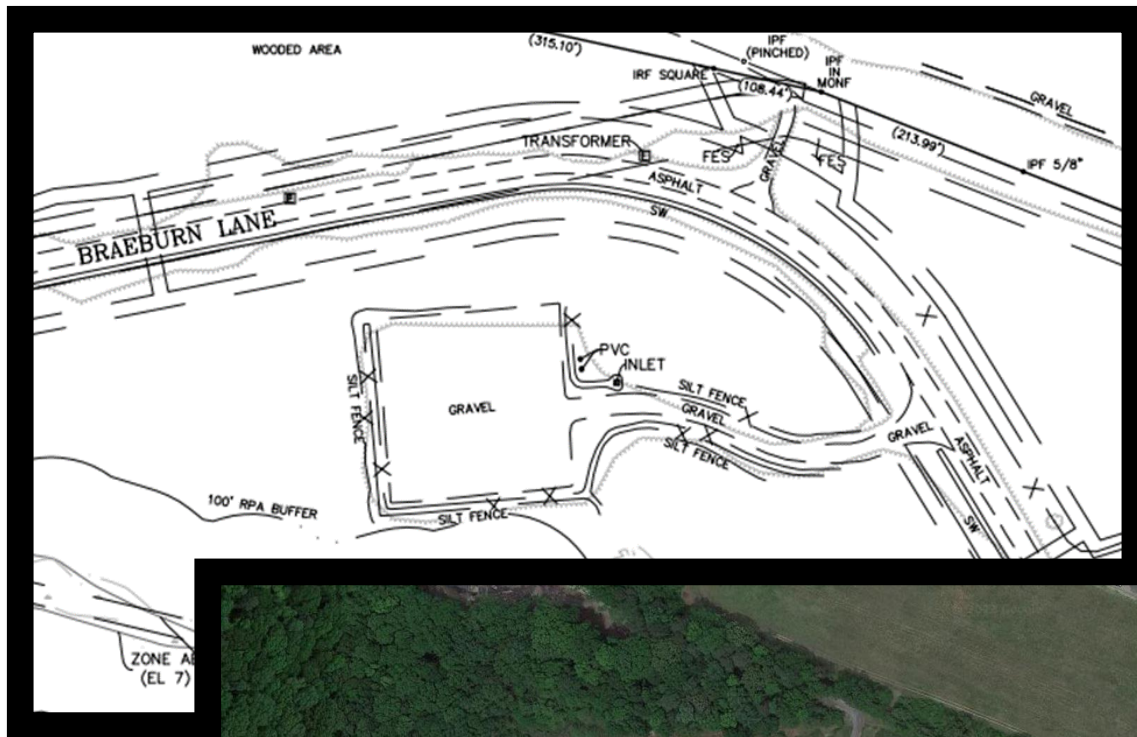
With Gift Shop, Office Space, etc.

- Originally built in 2007 as the gate house for the future gated community at Timberneck Farm.
- 1296 sqft; two-story wood building with metal roof; includes well and drainfield.
- Currently utilized as gift shop, office space and visitor center – though not adequate space for *all* those purposes.

Maintenance Yard

Soon to be Maintenance Facility

- 41,200 sqft maintenance yard.
- Constructed in August 2020.
- Virginia State Parks has designated funding for maintenance facility here; no date set yet for construction.
- Future facility will include three bay shop building with storage and office space; three bay pole barn; fuel storage; protective fencing.



Full-Service Campground

From Tents to RVs to Yurts

- Full-Service Campground, including:
 - 31 Campsites total:
 - 1 Camp Host
 - 13 E&W Sites (primarily utilized by RVs)
 - 14 Tent Pads (lumber, crush or pea gravel)
 - 3 Yurts (wood lattice and canvas)
 - 1 Yurt, 1 RV site and 2 Tent Pads are ADA Accessible
 - Campground Bathhouse (3330 sqft, cinder block with shingle roof).
- Dump Station across from campground entrance.
- Constructed in August 2020.

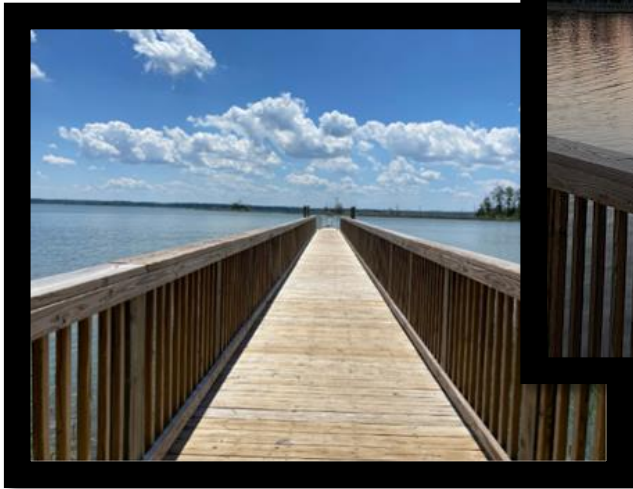


Outdoor Stage

And Five Benches



- Lumber Stage and Five Benches.
- Built in 2022 by Boy Scout Troop 133.
- Used for Events, Programming and Interpretive Education.
- Additional Benches to be added in Spring 2024 as part of a Rotary Club grant.



Car Top Launch

With Boardwalk Views of Catlett Islands

- 180+ Foot Boardwalk ending with ADA Accessible Kayak Launch.
- Beautiful views of the Catlett Islands.
- Open 9 months of the year; closed for winter waterfowl.
- Nearby loop for dropping kayaks, parking and two-unit vault toilet.
- Constructed in August 2020.

Interpretive Area (1)

The Heart of the Park

- Constructed in August 2020
- Indigenous-focused Interpretive Area featuring:
 - Open-Air Pavilion/Modern Rendition of a Yehakin (i.e. longhouse structure).
 - 1140 sqft
 - Made of metal, steel and black locust lumber
 - Interpretive Signs written by Dr. Martin Gallivan (W&M).



Interpretive Area (2)

The Heart of the Park

- Interpretive Area also Includes:
 - Stone Map of Tsenacommacah with the names of tribal locations and other points of interest denoted by brass markers.
 - Two picnic shelters (1460 sqft each, made of lumber and steel with metal rooves).
 - Comfort Station (865 sqft, lumber).



Interpretive Area (3)

The Heart of the Park

- Interpretive Area also Includes:
 - Interpretive Trail with various features that provide opportunities for visitors to learn key words of the Algonquin Language.
 - Interpretive Boardwalk with views of the Catlett Islands and Marshy Wetlands.
 - A Chronolog donated by VIMS/CBNEER, documenting changes through time.





Timberneck

House and Sheds

- Built by the Catlett Family from 1793-1797.
- Addition added in 1850s, with kitchen added in the 1930s.
- Fairfield Foundation currently restoring and repurposing the house for exhibits and overnight accommodations.
- 49 year lease includes three acres and outbuildings:
 - Smokehouse
 - Wellhouse



Boat Slip

With Boardwalk

- Floating boat slip initially built by the housing developer; approximate construction in 2008.
- Includes 20 mooring spaces for day use of the Park.
- The only place in the Park where guests can currently fish (with a saltwater license).
- Great place for seeing wildlife, especially cownose rays!

Ranger Residence

And Garage

- Home built in 1981
 - 2674 sqft
 - Wood with brick foundation/vinyl siding
 - Served by individual well and drainfield
 - Kitchen/laundry renovated in 2023
 - Serves as Chief Ranger residence; critical for law enforcement and public safety at the Park
- Two bay garage currently serves as temporary Maintenance Shop until the new one is constructed in the current Maintenance Facility lot.



Natural Resources Overview

- Abiotic Resources:
 - Watersheds
 - Floodplains
 - Soils
 - Wetlands
- Biotic Resources:
 - Ecological Cores
 - Ecosystems & Unique Management Areas (UMAs)
 - Sensitive Species and Communities
- Predicted Suitable Habitat
- Resource Management Priorities
- Other Natural Resources of Note



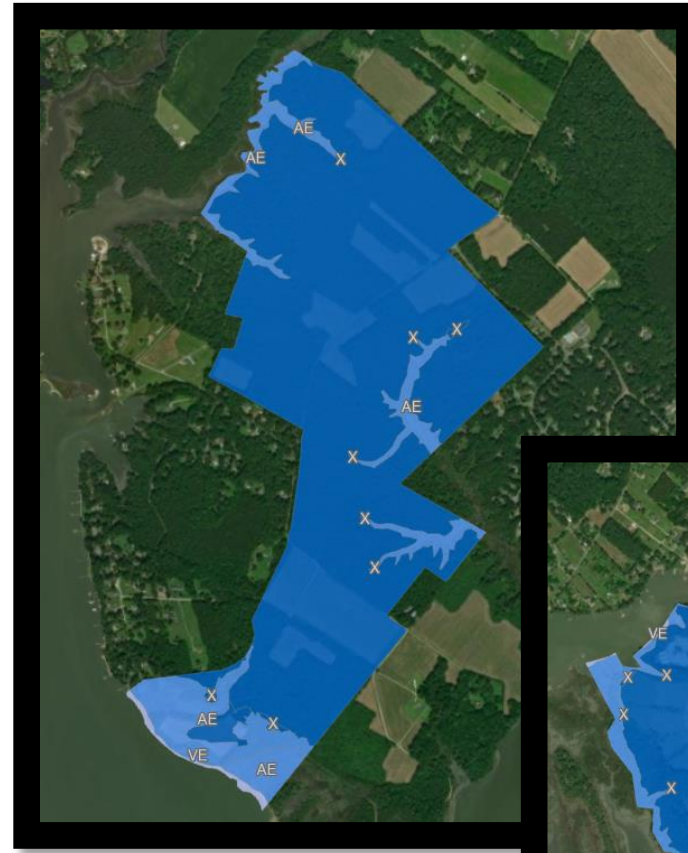
Abiotic Resources

Watersheds:

- Park wholly within York River watershed.

Floodplains:

- ~956 acres of Park land are categorized by minimal flood hazard.
- ~8 acres are classified as the 500 year floodplain with moderate flood risk.
- ~115 acres are classified as the 100 year floodplain; either Riverine or Coastal Special Flood Hazard Areas.



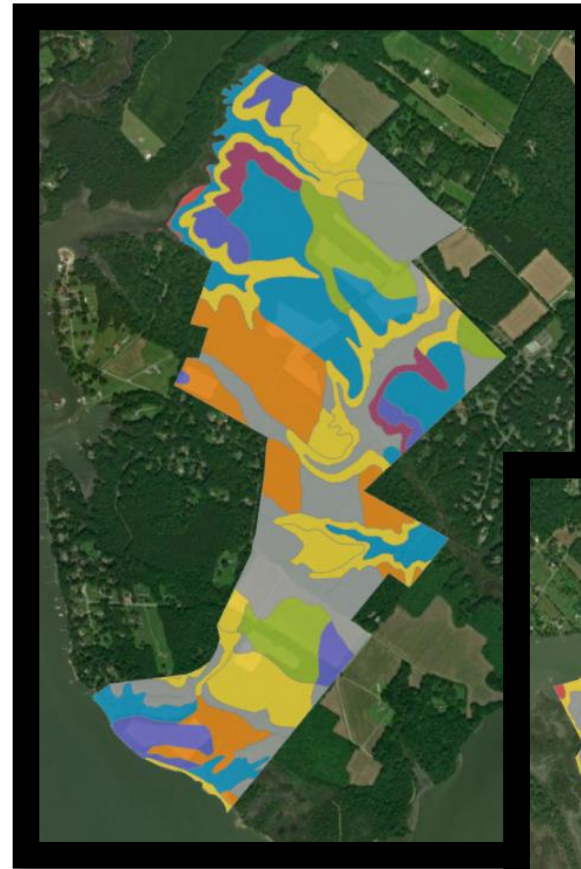
Abiotic Resources

Soils:

- Around 20 soils have been mapped.
- Top soils are sandy loams or loamy sands, generally well drained or moderately well drained.

Wetlands:

- ~31 acres of **Estuarine and Marine Wetlands**, largely intertidal, found along the shores and inlets of both tracts.
- ~33 acres of **Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands**, often slightly upland of the Estuarine and Marine Wetlands; includes tidal and non-tidal portions.
- ~30 acres of **Freshwater Emergent Wetlands**, largely located in the nontidal interior of the MA tract just southeast of the campground, isolated from the York River.



Ecological Cores (MA)

- From the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (VaNLA).
- Much of the Park is currently classified as a C4 Core of Moderate Significance (light green) or C5 Core of General Significance (dark green).
- Development within the Core areas is discouraged if possible in order to preserve ecological continuity and integrity.



From Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment, DCR-DNFI, Sept. 2023

Native Upland Ecosystems

- **Basic Mesic Forest**

- 16 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
- Found on fertile, mesic, low-elevation habitats, often upland of tidal marshes.

- **Mixed Mesic Hardwood Forest**

- 114 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
- The most common ecosystem in the Park;
- 77 acres are considered Natural Heritage resources with 125-150 year old trees.

- **Coastal Plain/Piedmont Oak-Beech/Heath Forest**

- 29 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit, largely on steep bluffs;
- 26 acres are considered Natural Heritage resources with good to excellent condition.



Credit: Gary Fleming, DCR

Native Lowland Ecosystems

- **Coastal Plain/Piedmont Bottomland Forest**
 - 11 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit, scattered in 6 stands;
 - Found in poorly drained areas along streams and backswamps.
- **Coastal Plain/Piedmont Seepage Swamp**
 - 6 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
 - Consists of mucky ravine bottoms saturated by constant groundwater seepage;
 - A high quality, globally and state rare Natural Heritage site.
- **Nonriverine Flatwood and Swamp**
 - 9.5 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
 - Deciduous, typically saturated forest in very flat, broad land areas.
- **Tidal Shrub Swamp**
 - 1.4 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
 - Tidal ecosystem with large hummock and hollows to flat areas;
 - No overstory; dominated by shrubs and herbaceous species.



Credit: Gary Fleming, DCR

Native Scrub and Marsh Ecosystems

- **Tidal Mesohaline/Polyhaline Marsh**

- 23 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
- Located on tidal inlets;
- Dominated by herbaceous *Spartina* spp. such as Big Cordgrass and Saltmarsh Cordgrass.
- Characterized by low biodiversity due to tidal flux and salinity changes.

- **Salt Scrub**

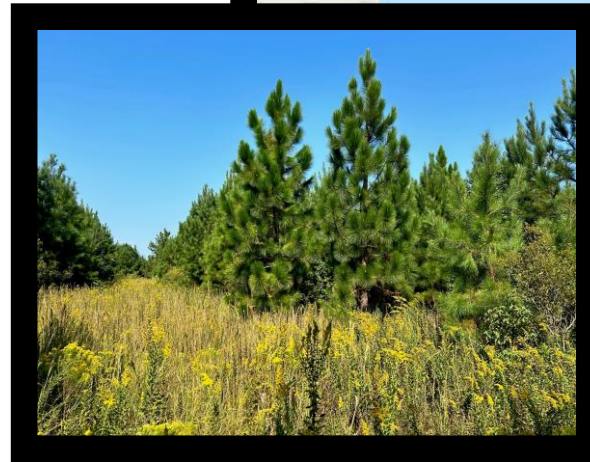
- 1.8 acres on Middle Peninsula Unit;
- Typical on a higher elevation than the more widespread tidal marshes and, as such, are only subject to irregular flooding;
- Highly influenced by high winds and salt spray;
- Dominated by herbaceous species.



Credit: David Bryan, DCR

Unique Management Areas (UMAs)

- After the development proposal dissolved, 47 empty residential lots were left behind in addition to the agricultural fields. These have been grouped into UMAs for management purposes.
- Most UMAs inside the loop are agricultural, but UMA 9 is a special Longleaf Pine management area.
- Most UMAs provide some type of early successional habitat (i.e. grassland and/or shrubland), but are quickly being taken over by invasive species such as Callery (Bradford) Pear, Japanese Honeysuckle, Tree-of-Heaven, and Chinese Privet.
- Additional agricultural UMAs at MP Tract.



Watchlist Species

- No known threatened and endangered species on either site.
- Two Watchlist Species on the Middle Peninsula unit:
 - Crested Coralroot Orchid (*Hexalectris spicata*)
 - Shadow Witch Orchid (*Ponthieva racemosa*)
- Both are uncommon in Virginia, but are not scarce enough to merit inclusion in Heritage's Rare Vascular Plant List.



Predicted Suitable Habitat

- The DCR Division of Natural Heritage utilizes special habitat modeling to create predicted suitable habitat (PSH) areas for rare plants and animals.
- No known PSH on either tract.
- Waters surrounding Machicomoco (off park property) may be habitat for Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*).
- Possibility for use as a topic for future programming.

Atlantic Sturgeon
Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus



Protected Status
ESA ENDANGERED
Carolina DPS

Chesapeake Bay DPS
New York Bight DPS
South Atlantic DPS

ESA THREATENED
Gulf of Maine DPS

Credit:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/atlantic-sturgeon>

Quick Facts

WEIGHT

Up to 800 pounds

LENGTH

Up to 14 feet

LIFESPAN

60 years

THREATS

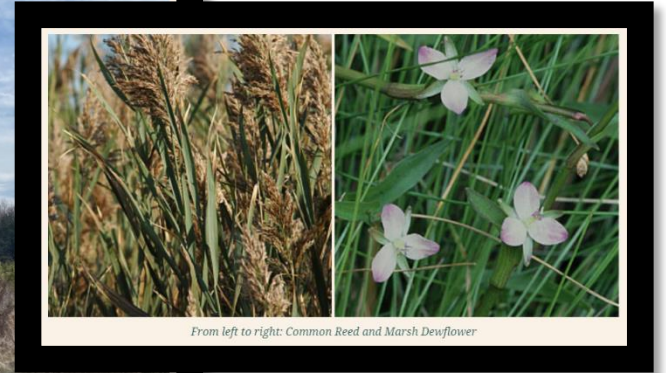
Entanglement in fishing gear, Habitat degradation, Habitat impediments, Vessel strikes

REGION

New England/Mid-Atlantic, Southeast

Natural Resource Management Priorities

- Management of Native Meadows, Early Successional Habitat, Forest Ecosystems, and Longleaf Pine stand.
- Treating Key Invasive Plants, including but not limited to:
 - Autumn Olive
 - Callery (Bradford) Pear
 - Common Reed
 - Marsh Dewflower
 - Japanese Honeysuckle
 - Japanese Stiltgrass
 - Tree-of-Heaven
 - Wavyleaf Basketgrass
- Treating Key Invasive Insects:
 - Emerald Ash Borer



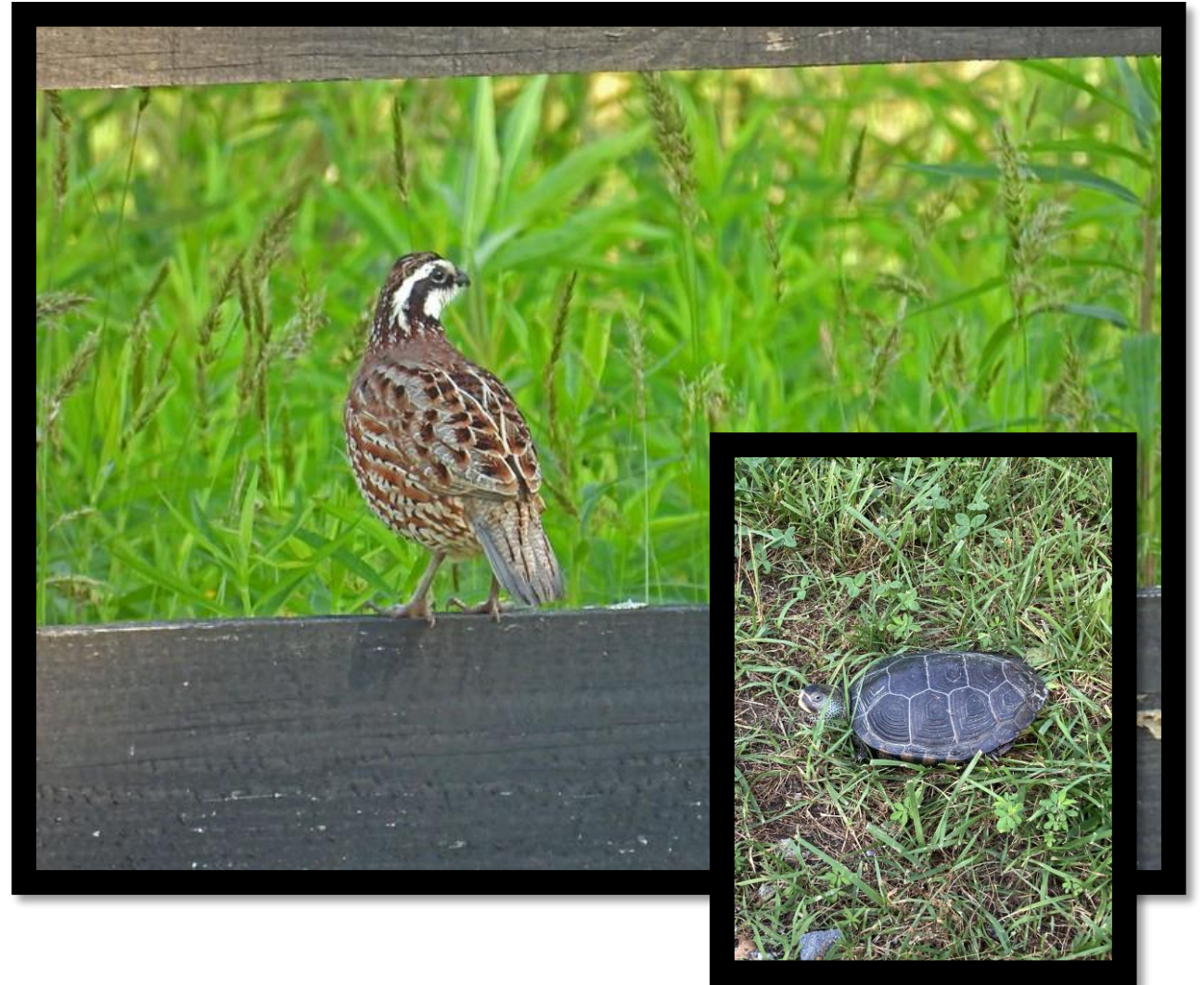
From left to right: Common Reed and Marsh Dewflower



From left to right: Japanese Stiltgrass, Wavyleaf Basketgrass, Japanese Honeysuckle. Images courtesy of the Tennessee-Kentucky Plant Atlas.

Other Natural Resources of Note

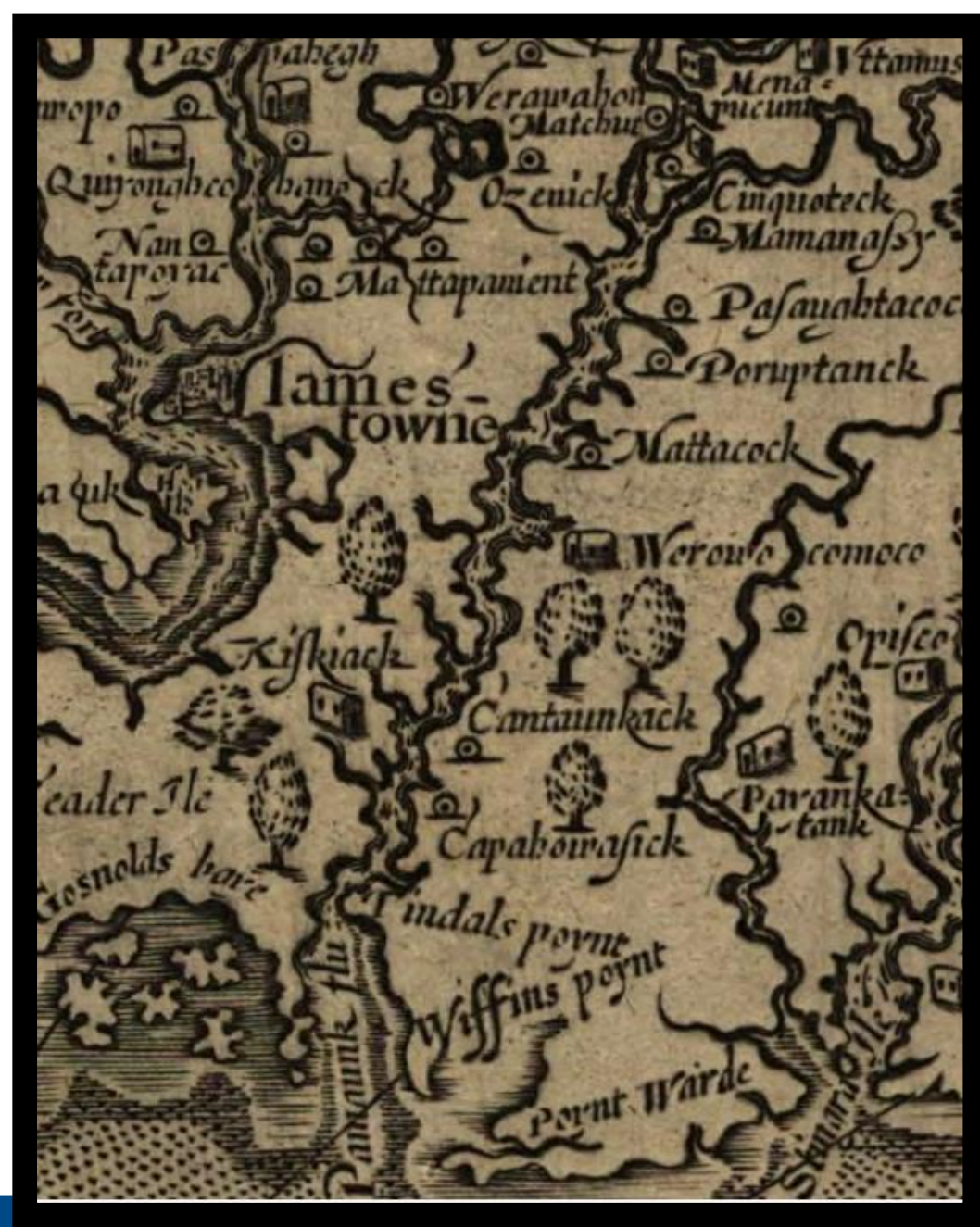
- Nesting Diamond-backed Terrapin, especially around the Car-Top Boat Launch.
- Machicomoco is a birder's paradise!
 - 160 documented bird species at the Park.
 - Shorebirds and wading birds are plentiful, drawn by the estuary.
 - Hotspot for migratory songbirds.
 - Abundant early successional birds.
 - Resident population of Northern Bobwhite quail!



Cultural Resources

Archaeological Sites, Historic Architecture,
Historic Cemetery

- Native American occupation at both tracts
 - Heavy at Machicomoco
- Small 17th-century components on both tracts
- Heavy 18th- and 19th-century components on both tracts



Cultural Resource Management Areas

Machicomoco Tract: Cultural Resource Management Areas



Middle Peninsula Tract: Cultural Resource Management Areas



Machicomoco Tract Summary

- Areas 1, 3, 5, 8, 9: Not Tested; Need additional research. High archaeological potential near the water.
- Area 7: Native American village and associated small procurement and camp sites. Small historic sites.
- Area 4: Timberneck Plantation
Small Native occupation
- Areas 2 and 6: Minimal testing. Small Native Woodland-era camps and lithic processing. Small late 18th-19th-century occupations



Area 7

- Native American Late Woodland village and associated small sites
 - Archaeological integrity intact
- Mid-late 17th-century domestic site
- Several smaller 18th- and 19th-century sites
- Full extent of site boundaries currently unknown



Area 7: Precolonial Native American Artifacts



Area 7: Mid- to Late 17th-century Artifacts



Area 7: Late 18th- and early 19th-century Artifacts



Area 4

- Timberneck and associated resources
- Small Native American Woodland sites
- Small 19th-century domestic sites
- Full extent of site boundaries currently unknown



Area 4: Timberneck Associated Resources

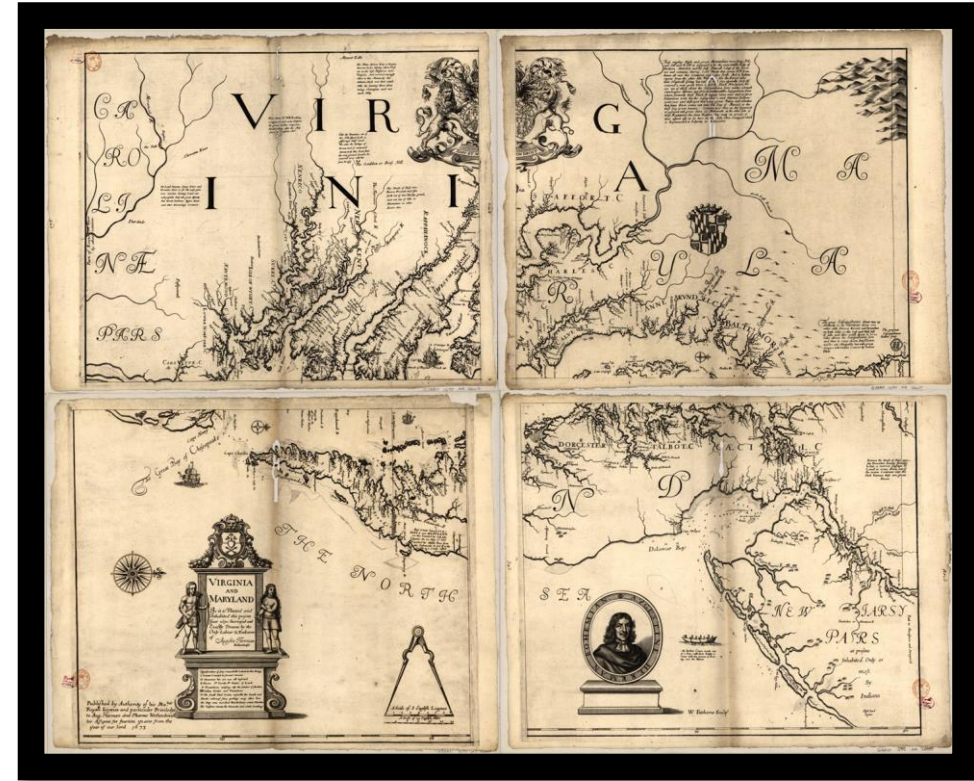
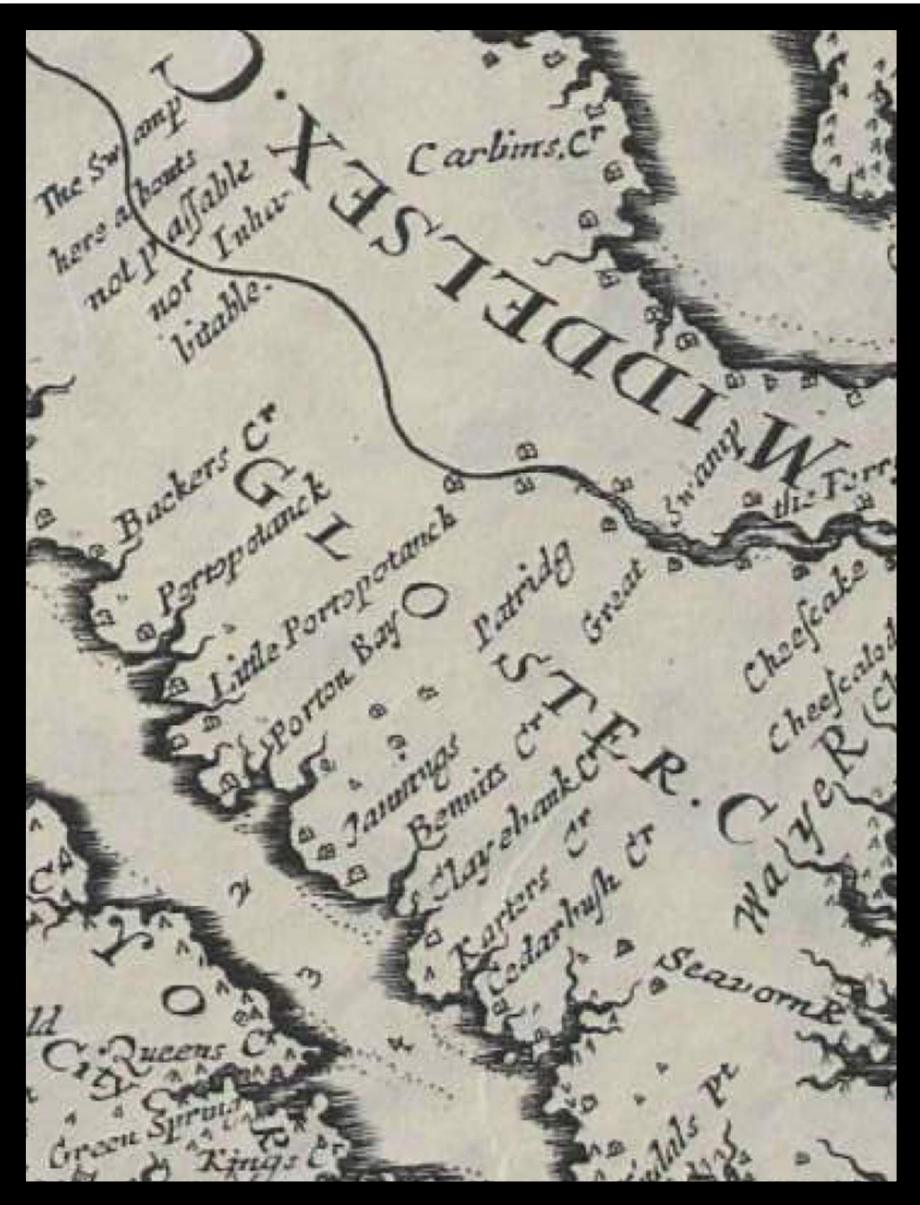


Catlett and Mann-Page Family Cemetery



Extant smokehouse and wellhouse

Area 4: Historic Evidence



Augustine Herman, 1670
Map of Virginia and Maryland

Area 4: Archaeology



Late 17th-18th-century Ceramics



19th-century Ceramics



Woodland Virginia Indian Ceramic

Areas 2 and 6

- Minimally tested at the Phase I level
- Small Woodland camps and lithic processing.
- Small late 18th-19th-century occupations



Areas 1, 3, 5, 8, 9

- Have not been tested
- Likely to identify additional sites associated with the Cedarbush Creek site (Area 7) and Timberneck (Area 4)



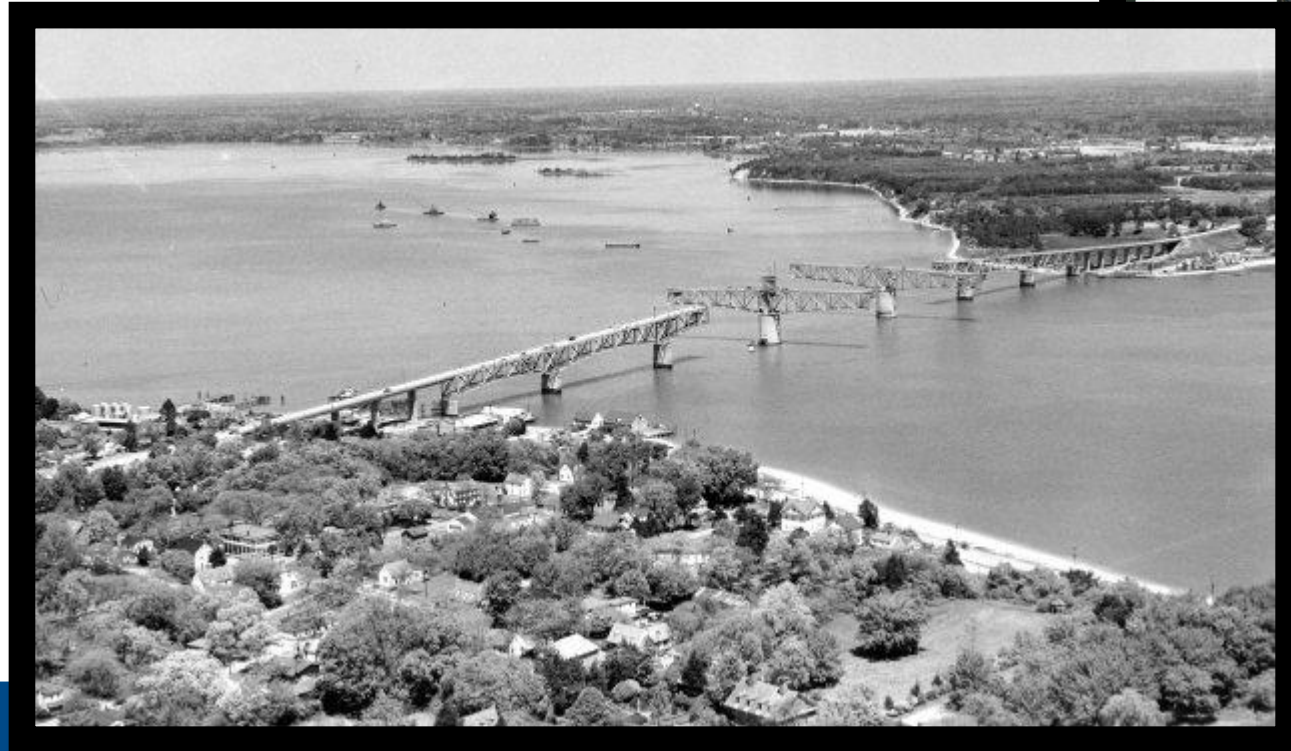
Middle Peninsula Tract

- 9 Identified Archaeological Sites
- Small pre-colonial Native sites
- 18th- and 19th- century sites associated with Rosewell
- All areas tested to varying degrees. Only Phase I.



Area 1

- Small Archaic and Woodland sites
- Very minimal historic components



Area 2

- Sites associated with Rosewell Plantation
 - 18th century-19th-century
- Low density of pre-colonial Native Sites
- High degree of archaeological integrity



Rosewell Plantation, Rosewell.org



Middle Peninsula Tract: Cultural Resource Management Areas

Areas 3 and 4

- Minimally tested
- Archaeological integrity not accessed



Public Engagement

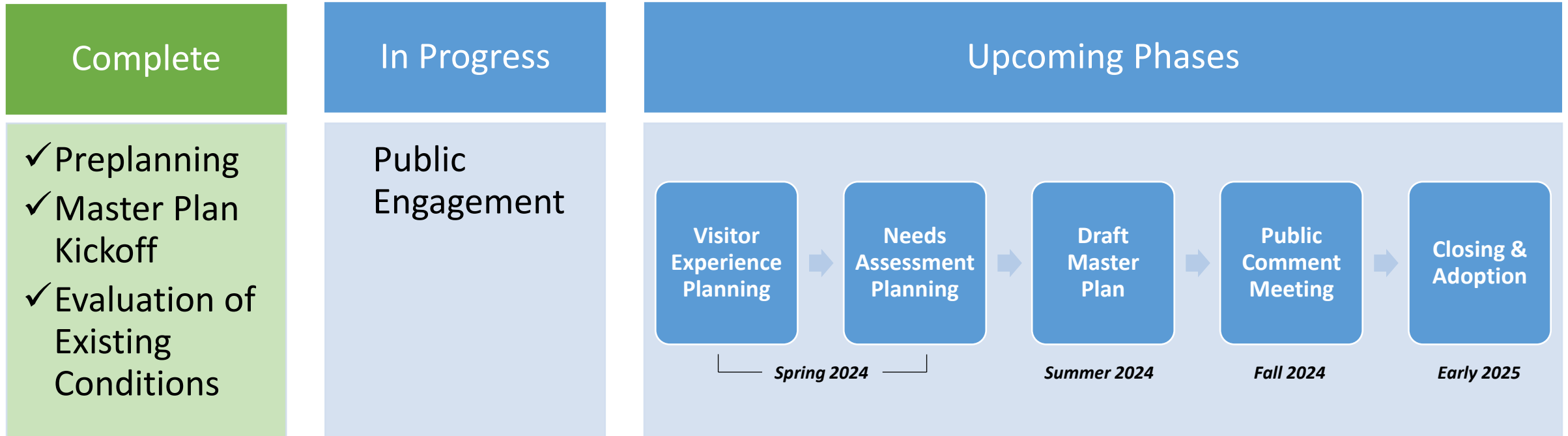
- Administering a public survey to solicit input on park purpose, experiences, and long-term development at the park
- Results will be used for Visitor Experience and Needs Assessment planning

Survey Link: <https://arcg.is/mST1u>

- **Close Date:** Monday, January 15, 2024



Master Plan Schedule



Next Steps

- Provide your input by completing the survey!
- Questions?
 - PlanningResources@dcr.virginia.gov
- Materials will be posted on the Master Plan website:
 - <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/ma-masterplan>

