

APPENDIX E: RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WILDERNESS REVIEW



Forested wetland: USFWS

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- Summary and Conclusion of Wilderness Inventory Findings

Introduction

The purpose of a wilderness review is to identify and recommend to Congress lands and waters of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) that merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Wilderness reviews are required elements of comprehensive conservation plans, are conducted in accordance with the refuge planning process outlined in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual (602 FW 1 and 3), and include compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and public involvement.

The wilderness review process has three phases: (I) inventory; (II) study; and, (III) recommendation. In the inventory phase, we create wilderness inventory areas (WIAs) after mapping all Service fee-owned lands and waters on the refuge. We then evaluate each WIA against the minimum criteria for a Federal-designated wilderness. Any WIAs meeting the minimum criteria are identified as wilderness study areas (WSAs). This identification of WSAs completes the inventory phase. All WSAs are then evaluated further in the second, or “study” phase. Included in the study phase, we look at a range of management alternatives for the WSAs, including evaluating the implications of designation and management in conjunction with proposed CCP goals and objectives. Alternatives may include various amounts of wilderness designation and/or no wilderness designation.

The recommendation phase consists of forwarding or reporting the suitable recommendations from the Director through the Secretary and the President to Congress in a wilderness study report. The wilderness study report is prepared after the decision for the final CCP has been signed. Areas recommended for designation are managed to maintain wilderness character in accordance with management goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the final CCP until Congress makes a decision or the CCP is amended to modify or remove the wilderness proposal.

In conducting the wilderness review for Rappahannock River Valley NWR, we found no WIAs that qualified as WSAs. Our analysis of the inventory phase for this refuge follows.

Description of Wilderness Inventory Conducted for Rappahannock River Valley NWR

The wilderness inventory phase is the initial broad look at each planning area, using WIAs as a basis, to determine whether any areas should be evaluated further as WSAs. A WSA is an area of Service fee-owned, undeveloped land that retains its primeval character and influence, is without permanent improvements or human habitation, and further, meets the following minimum criteria for wilderness as identified in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act.



Banks of the Rappahannock River: USFWS

Minimum Wilderness Criteria

A WSA is required to be a roadless area or an island of any size, meet the size criteria, appear natural, and provide for solitude or primitive recreation.

Roadless — Roadless refers to the absence of improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use. A route maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road. Only Federal lands are eligible to be considered for wilderness designation and inclusion within the NWPS.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating the roadless criteria.

- A. The area does not contain improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use.
- B. The area is an island, or contains an island that does not have improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use.
- C. The area is in Federal fee title ownership.

Size— The size criteria can be satisfied if an area has at least 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless public land, or is sufficiently large that its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition is practicable.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating the size criteria.

- A. An area of more than 5,000 contiguous acres. State and private lands are not included in making this acreage determination.
- B. A roadless island of any size. A roadless island is defined as an area surrounded by permanent waters or that is markedly distinguished from the surrounding lands by topographical or ecological features.
- C. An area of less than 5,000 contiguous Federal acres that is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and of a size suitable for wilderness management.
- D. An area of less than 5,000 contiguous acres that is contiguous with a designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, or area under wilderness review by another Federal wilderness managing agency such as the Forest Service, National Park Service, or Bureau of Land Management.

Naturalness — The Wilderness Act, Section 2(c), defines wilderness as an area that “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable.” The area must appear natural to the average visitor, rather than “pristine.” The presence of historic landscape conditions is not required.

An area may include some human impacts provided they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole. Significant hazards caused by humans, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance from military activity and the physical impacts of refuge management facilities and activities are also considered in evaluating the naturalness criteria.

An area may not be considered unnatural in appearance solely on the basis of the sights and sounds of human impacts and activities outside the boundary of the unit. The cumulative effects of these factors in conjunction with land base size, physiographic and vegetative characteristics were considered in the evaluation of naturalness.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating naturalness.

- A. The area appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable.
- B. The area may include some human impacts provided they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole.
- C. Does the area contain significant hazards caused by humans, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance from military activity?
- D. The presence of physical impacts of refuge management facilities and activities.

Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation.—A WSA must provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and does not need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre. Further, an area does not have to be open to public use and access to qualify under this criteria; Congress has designated a number of wilderness areas in the Refuge System that are closed to public access to protect resource values.

Opportunities for solitude refer to the ability of a visitor to be alone and secluded from other visitors in the area. Primitive and unconfined recreation means non-motorized, dispersed outdoor recreation activities that are compatible and do not require developed facilities or mechanical transport. These primitive recreation activities may provide opportunities to experience challenge and risk; self reliance; and adventure. These two elements are not well defined by the Wilderness Act, but can be expected to occur together in most cases. However, an outstanding opportunity for solitude may be present in an area offering only limited primitive recreation potential. Conversely, an area may be so attractive for recreation use that experiencing solitude is not an option.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation.

- A. The area offers the opportunity to avoid the sights, sounds and evidence of other people. A visitor to the area should be able to feel alone or isolated.
- B. The area offers non-motorized, dispersed outdoor recreation activities that are compatible and do not require developed facilities or mechanical transport.

Supplemental Values.— The Wilderness Act states that an area of wilderness may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value. Supplemental values of the area are optional, but the degree to which their presence enhances the area's suitability for wilderness designation should be considered. The evaluation should be based on an assessment of the estimated abundance or importance of each of the features.

Summary and Conclusion of Wilderness Inventory Findings

We created WIAs from each of the thirteen separate refuge units owned by the Service in fee title within the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge acquisition boundary (map E-1). Our CCP Planning Team evaluated each of the units to determine if they retained their primeval character and influence, was without permanent improvements or human habitation, and further, met the minimum criteria for wilderness as identified in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act.

We determined that none of the thirteen units were primeval in character and influence, and without permanent improvements or human habitation and met the minimum criteria for wilderness established by the Wilderness Act. Therefore, we determined that none of the thirteen units qualify as WSAs, and will not be considered further for wilderness designation in this CCP. A summary of our CCP Planning Team Wilderness Review findings are listed in table E.1 in appendix E.



Eastern tailed-blue butterfly: USFWS

Table E.1. Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Review Finding Summary

Yes/No & Comments						
Wilderness Inventory Areas (Refuge unit and acreage; fee-title ownership only)	(1) has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unconfined condition. Or is a roadless island	(2) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;	(3) has outstanding opportunities for solitude;	(3b) has outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;	4) contains ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.	Parcel qualifies as a wilderness study area (meets criteria 1, 2, and 3a or 3b)
Styer/Bishop tracts: 109 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable	No. Tracts are too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Port Royal Unit: 123 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable	No. Unit is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	Yes. Historic cultural values	No
Toby's Point tract: 365 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable; former site of hotel.	No	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	Yes. Historic cultural values	No
Mothershead tract: 227 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Peter tract: 69 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Wilna Unit: 1,850 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable; admin buildings and main refuge access road	No, See (2)	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	Yes. Eagle roost site	No

Yes/No & Comments						
Wilderness Inventory Areas (Refuge unit and acreage; fee-title ownership only)	(1) has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unconfined condition. Or is a roadless island	(2) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;	(3) has outstanding opportunities for solitude;	(3b) has outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;	4) contains ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.	Parcel qualifies as a wilderness study area (meets criteria 1, 2, and 3a or 3b)
Hutchinson tract: 724 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable; two grain bins and barns and plans for pavilion and boardwalk	No, See (2)	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	Yes. Historic cultural values	No
Wellford tract: 154 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work noticeable; buildings	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Island Farm tract: 829 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work very noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	Yes. One of the largest marshes in the refuge in the boundary	No
Thomas tract: 239 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work very noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Laurel Grove tract: 463 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work very noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No
Rowland Tract: 6 acres	No	No. Imprint of man's work very noticeable	No. Tract is too small to provide opportunities for solitude	No opportunities for challenge, risk, self reliance or adventure. Access by boat or vehicle.	No	No