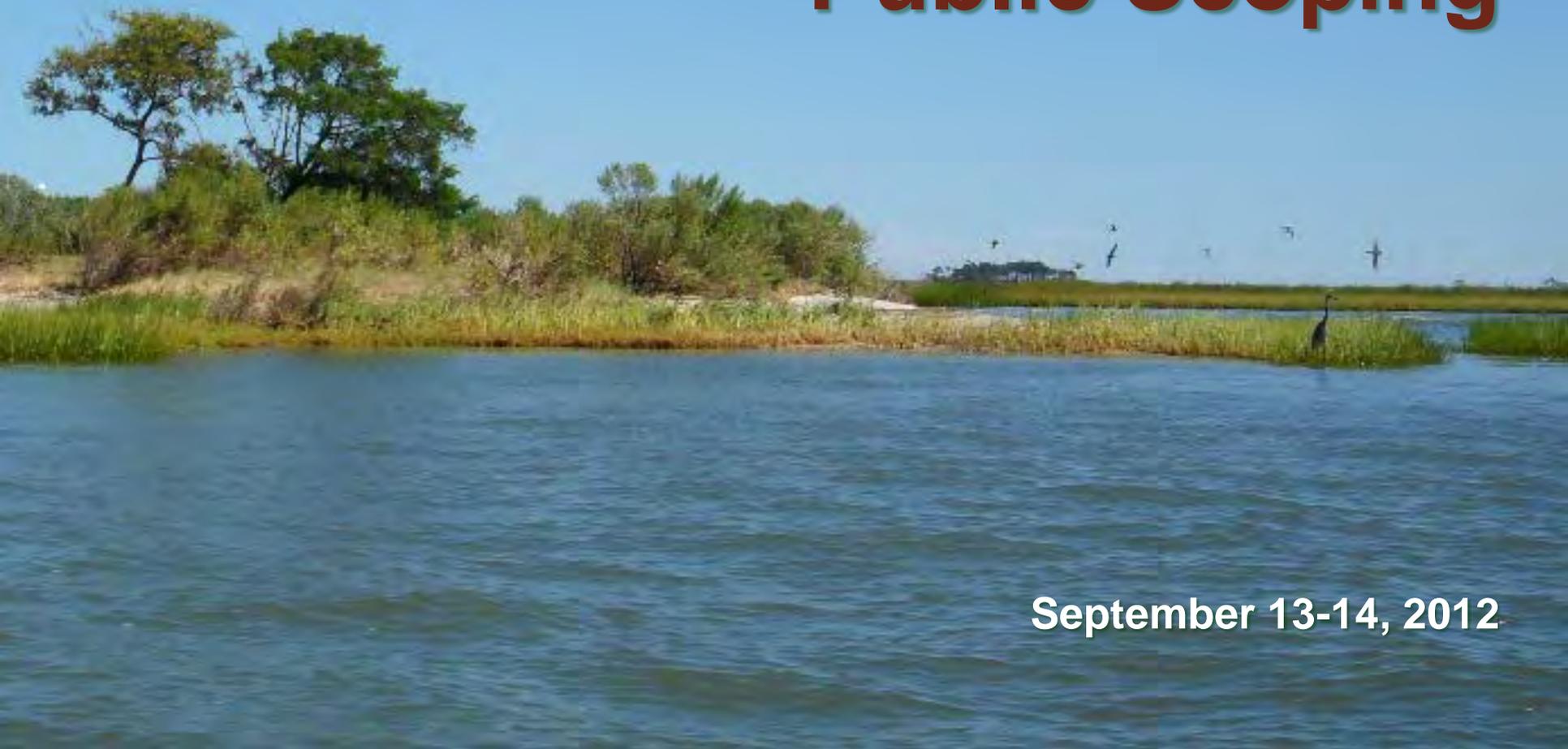




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Plum Tree Island NWR: Public Scoping



September 13-14, 2012



# Refuge System Mission

“To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources\* and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

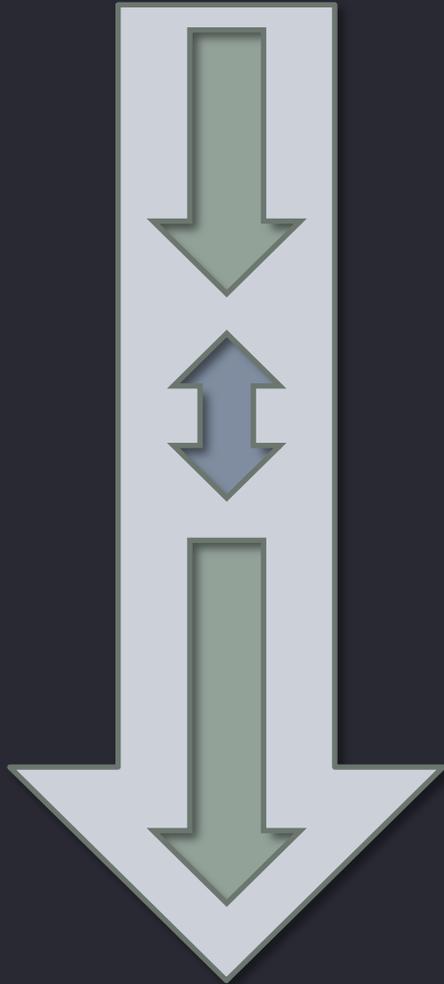
\*Federal trust resources are a priority

- Endangered and threatened species
- Migratory birds
- Migratory and inter-jurisdictional fish
- Certain marine mammals
- Wetlands

# What is a CCP? Why is it important?

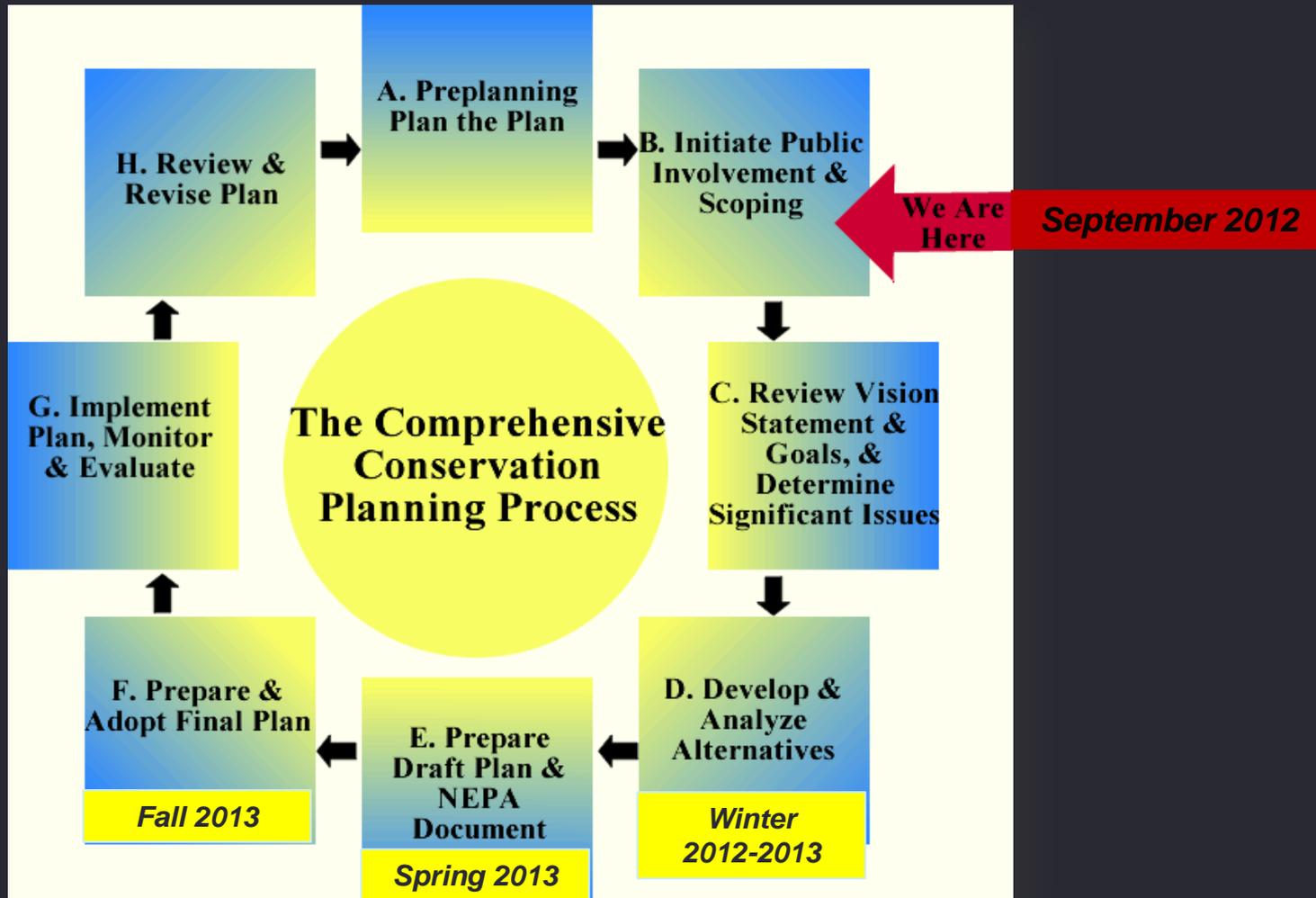
- Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)
- A 15-year strategic plan for the Refuge
- Fulfills laws and Service policy, and helps achieve agency mission and refuge purposes
- Includes a vision for the refuge
- Defines goals, objectives, and strategies for all refuge programs; identifies staffing and facilities
- Addresses key issues identified by the Service, other agencies, the public, and partners
- Encourages partner, public, and community involvement in planning and implementation
- Provides continuity and consistency in refuge management

# Refuge Planning



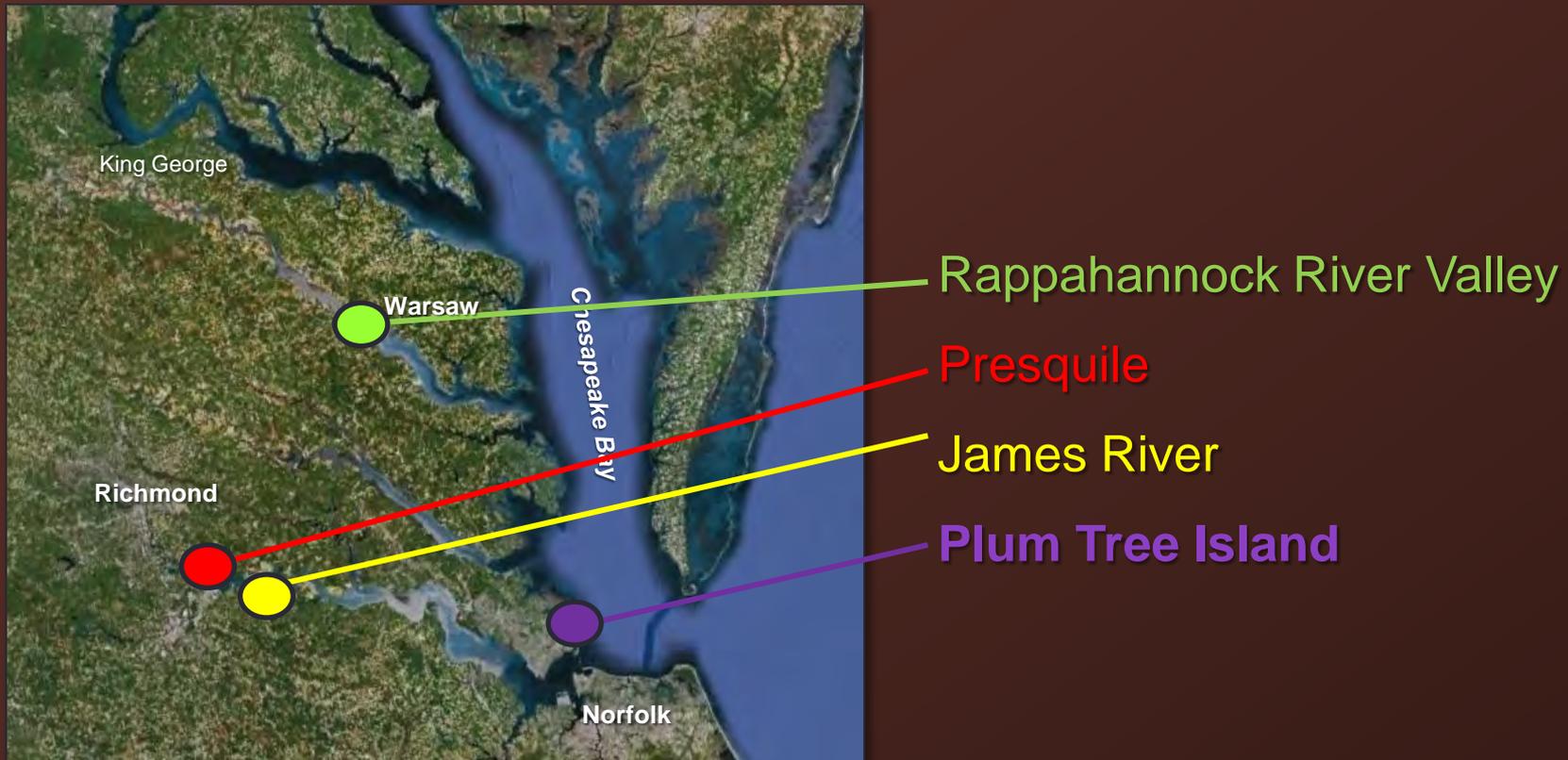
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission
- Refuge System Mission
- Refuge Purpose
- National/Regional Goals and Priorities
- **Ecosystem Goals and Objectives**  
*(in development)*
- **Refuge Vision**
- **Goals**
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Monitoring and Feedback

# CCP Process



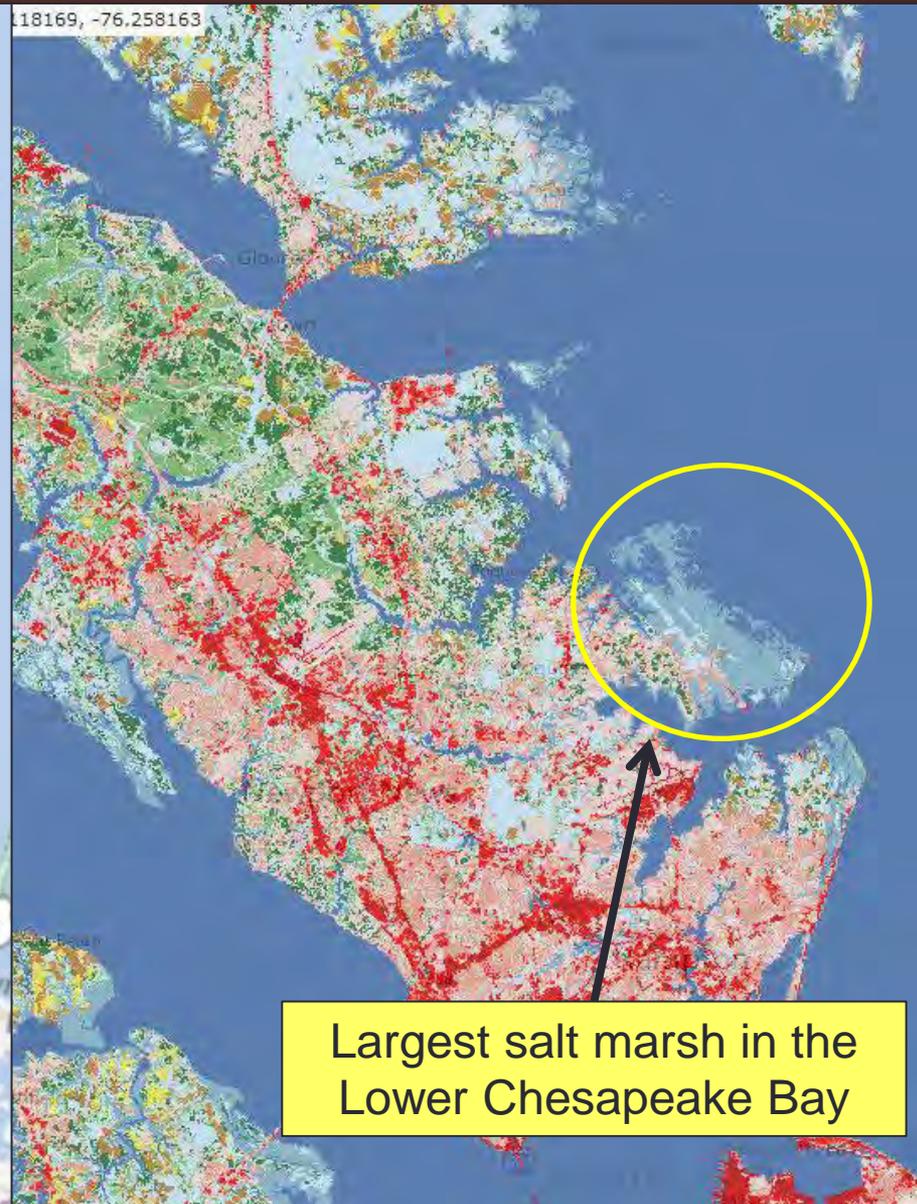
# Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

- One of the four refuges in Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR Complex (administrative unit)



# Refuge Vicinity

# Land Cover



Largest salt marsh in the Lower Chesapeake Bay

# Historic Land Use and Activities

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 9500 B.C.   | Evidence of Virginia Indians presence dates from Paleo-Indian period through to European Contact  |
| 1608-1609   | Captain John Smith's first and second voyages   |
| ...         | Europeans historically used area for stock grazing, hunting, and fishing  |
| 1917        | Acquisition of land by U.S. Government – Department of Defense  |
| 1917 - 1959 | Practice target, live bombing, gunnery, rocket firing, munitions handling training site   |
| 1958        | Three children seriously injured by interacting with unexploded ordnance  |
| 1959        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Certificate of Clearance for Surface Ordnance</li><li>- NASA began test free-flight aircraft models and vertical take-off and landing airplanes</li></ul> |

# Refuge Establishment

May 1971 -  
June 1972

Transfer of 3,275 acres to the Department of Interior with reservation of rights:

- Emergency jettison zone for ordnance and fuel
- Free flight zone for experimental model aircraft testing

April 24, 1972

Plum Tree Island NWR established under authorities:

- GSA Transfer Authority (16 U.S.C. § 667b)  
“... particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program.”
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. § 742f(b)(1))  
“... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ...”
- Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 715d )  
“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”

# Recent History

- 1990 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service views these as important, scarce, and vulnerable wetlands in the northeastern United States
- 1992 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed work that identified the former bombing range eligible for clean-up
- 1993 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigated and approved a refuge boundary expansion in consultation with the public
- 1996 Acquired 15-acre tract
- 1997 Acquired 211-acre Cow Island tract
- 1999 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opened Cow Island to waterfowl hunting
- 2004
  - Unexploded ordnance were discovered in shallow water along southern portion of refuge
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designated a temporary Danger Zone on waters to protect public health and safety
- 2009 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Shaw Environmental initiated development of a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS)
- Today 3,502 acres Federally owned land within refuge  
+ an additional 2,119 acres within the approved acquisition boundary



Approved Acquisition Boundary

Federally owned lands  
 (3,502 acres)

Privately owned lands  
 (2,119 acres)

## *Draft Vision Statement*

Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge encompasses the largest contiguous salt marsh ecosystem in the lower Chesapeake Bay. Located along the Atlantic Flyway, the refuge offers diverse salt marshes, tidal streams and long, wooded ridges that support millions of waterfowl, marsh and wading birds, and shorebirds throughout the year. Sandy beaches offer secluded habitat for breeding and nesting wildlife, including the Federally threatened northeastern beach tiger beetles.

The refuge offers rare opportunity for Hampton Roads area residents and visitors to safely enjoy expansive views of abundant wildlife thriving in these important, vulnerable, and scarce salt marshes. In partnership with others, the refuge's wildlife habitats support the rich traditions of hunting, fishing, and boating in the Chesapeake Bay.



# Vegetation

Vegetation class	Acres
Emergent wetland	2033
Water	880
Scrub/shrub wetland	75
Unconsolidated shore	40
Forested wetland	27
Mud flat	10



# Wildlife

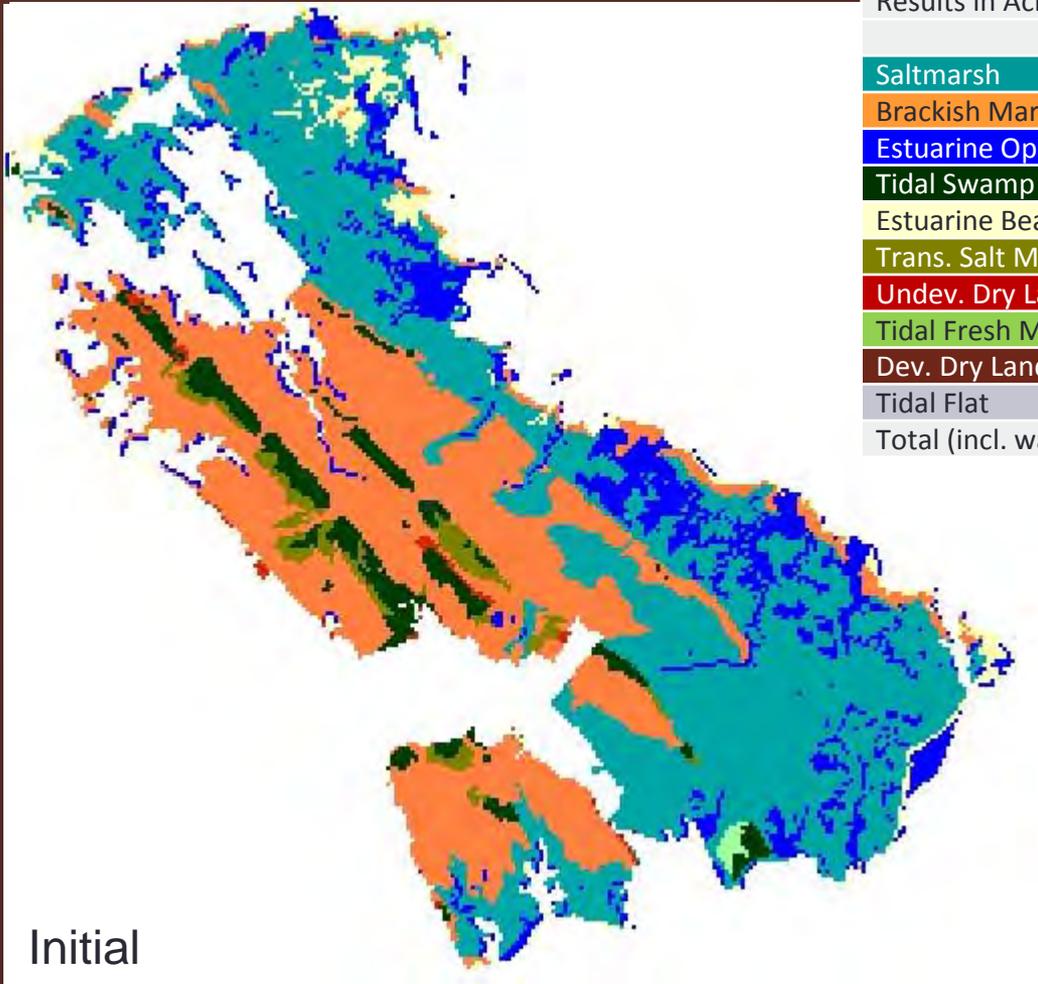
- Noteworthy bird observations
  - Foraging: sharp-tailed sparrow, little blue heron, black-necked stilt
  - Breeding: black duck, northern harrier, sedge wren
  - Wintering: black duck, mallard, Canada goose

## 76 Species Sighted at PTI in 1989 + Messick Marsh in 1992

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Common Loon	Osprey	Short-billed Dowitcher	American Crow
Brown Pelican	Bobwhite	Dunlin	Fish Crow
Double-crested Cormorant	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	Semi-palmated Sandpiper	House Wren
Tundra Swan	Green-backed Heron	Great Black-backed Gull	Marsh Wren
Canada Goose	Tricolored Heron	Laughing Gull	Sedge Wren
Snow Goose	Little Blue Heron	Herring Gull	Catbird
Mallard	Snowy Egret	Common Tern	Starling
Black Duck	Great Egret	Forster's Tern	Prairie Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Great Blue Heron	Least Tern	Yellow Warbler
Green-winged Teal	American Bittern	Sandwich Tern	Common Yellowthroat
Canvasback	Glossy Ibis	Black Skimmer	Indigo Bunting
Greater Scaup	Clapper Rail	Mourning Dove	Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Virginia Rail	Kingfisher	Seaside Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	American Oystercatcher	Chimney Swift	Song Sparrow
Bufflehead	Whimbrel	Eastern Kingbird	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-breasted Merganser	Black-necked Stilt	Tree Swallow	Red-winged Blackbird
Vulture	Willet	Purple Martin	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-shouldered Hawk	Greater Yellowlegs	Rough-winged Swallow	Boat-tailed Grackle
Northern Harrier	Lesser Yellowlegs	Barn Swallow	American Goldfinch

# 2 meter sea level rise scenario



Plum Tree Island NWR					
2 Meters Eustatic SLR by 2100					
Results in Acres					
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Saltmarsh	2129.4	2110.7	1904.5	1.7	187.0
Brackish Marsh	1642.6	1629.7	1.8	179.8	9.6
Estuarine Open Water	630.0	655.4	1629.9	3464.1	4692.8
Tidal Swamp	238.4	238.4	237.4	57.8	41.4
Estuarine Beach	175.0	149.7	54.8	0.1	0.0
Trans. Salt Marsh	114.8	114.8	0.0	19.8	2.9
Undev. Dry Land	25.4	25.4	25.4	5.7	2.9
Tidal Fresh Marsh	11.8	11.8	11.7	11.5	11.3
Dev. Dry Land	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.3
Tidal Flat	0.0	31.6	1102.0	1227.0	19.9
Total (incl. water)	4968.9	4968.9	4968.9	4968.9	4968.9

# Current Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

- Waterfowl hunting – Cow Island only
- No other public uses



# Existing Partnerships

- National Park Service
  - Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
  - Chesapeake Bay Watertrails and Gateways Network



# Issues to Address in CCP

- Landscape Scale/Ecosystem-wide Issues
  - climate change, roles within regional land protection, water quality
- Land Management Issues
  - management, restoration, monitoring, inventories, research
- Public Use Programs
  - range or quality of programs, access, conflicts, impacts
  - priority public uses and secondary public uses

Fishing  
Hunting

Wildlife observation  
Photography

Environmental Education  
Interpretation

# Issues to Address in CCP

- Facilities, Infrastructure, Staffing Issues
  - safety, suitability, accessibility, additional needs
- Community Relations/Outreach/Local Economy
  - tourism, quality of life, local impact
- Agencies and Partner Coordination
  - regional planning, technical assistance, volunteer opportunities





**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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*<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/plumtreeisland>*

