

# BROWNE TRACT MANAGEMENT PLAN



*Prepared by:*



## MIDDLE PENINSULA CHESAPEAKE BAY PUBLIC ACCESS AUTHORITY

*In cooperation with:*



Virginia Coastal Program (Department of Environmental Quality)  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Virginia Department of Forestry  
The Nature Conservancy

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## Executive Summary

The Browne Tract Management Plan (BTMP) provides guidance in managing a portion of the 274-acre Browne Tract. The Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (MPCBPA) purchased the Browne Tract with grants from the Virginia Coastal Program at the Department of Environmental Quality, in order to protect coastal resources and provide public access within the Dragon Run watershed, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The BTMP represents a collaborative effort with dual ownership responsibilities. The process of developing the plan was designed to give maximum consideration to input by stakeholders to include local government officials, private organizations, and concerned citizens. This plan represents a management strategy for 137-acres of land straddling the boundaries of Essex and King & Queen Counties in eastern Virginia. The Department of Forestry will develop a management plan for the remaining 137-acres located in Essex County.

Section One provides an overview of the property and describes the process leading to development of this comprehensive management document. MPCBPAA staff met with stakeholders early in 2004 and collected input about the types of activities envisioned on the site.

Ultimately, MPCBPAA staff devised three alternatives to address proposed uses and concerns with respect to management of significant natural and cultural resources and development of future recreational facilities. MPCBPAA staff articulated stakeholder input in this document by grouping suggested uses into three alternatives. The emphasis of Alternatives 1-3 range from a focus on recreational usage and infrastructure development (Alternative 1) to a greater emphasis on natural resources preservation (Alternative 3). For instance, whereas horseback riding is a permitted use in all of the alternatives, Alternative 1 would allow for more intensive development of trail infrastructure to possibly include water troughs, jumps, and hitching posts. Additionally, more miles of trails could be constructed to accommodate future horseback riders in the area, giving Alternative 1 a *recreational emphasis*. Conversely, Alternative 3 would provide the same or fewer miles of trails but offer no infrastructure improvements, allowing the user to experience his or her natural surroundings and giving Alternative 3 a *natural resource emphasis*.

After careful consideration of management alternatives, the Authority decided to blend alternatives 2 and 3. A blending of alternatives is designed to offer balanced recreational use with conserving the area's unique natural and ecological characteristics. Specifically, this alternative seeks to increase multi-use recreational opportunities while protecting significant natural resources and improving land health.

The Authority plans to implement the following:

1. Establish recreational "use zones" to geographically separate activities that have a high potential for conflict and limit recreational access to conservation areas. Use zones include, but are not limited to hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and nature viewing;

2. Expand existing trail networks and create a limited number of new trails within these zones to establish linkages and accommodate compatible uses;
3. Install interpretive and directional signs and kiosks to enhance the recreational and educational experience of visitors and control visitation in high-use areas where there is an elevated potential for conflict;
4. Regulate maintenance of trails and facilities to enhance user experiences and minimize erosion;
5. Construct a new footbridge across the Dragon Run to replace the existing structure and manage access to Parcel A (See Map 3);
6. Establish one or more multi-purpose, water access sites;
7. Establish larger “resource protection zones” and “special management areas” to demonstrate best management practices for managing timber and other natural resources in these areas, to include the re-planting of native tree and plant species and mixed-hardwood forests;
8. Protect wildlife and improve wildlife habitat by creating corridors and open areas for movement;
9. Maintain forested buffers along streams to preserve water quality and protect riparian resources; and
10. Identifying areas that contain important riparian, wildlife, archeological, paleontological, or soil resources and limiting recreational usage in these areas.

Section Two describes objectives and management strategies for a number of recreational activities advocated by stakeholders, including horseback riding, biking, hiking, hunting, and education/interpretive activities. The section should not be interpreted to serve as a comprehensive recreational facilities plan, nor will all of these uses be permitted under the preferred management alternative. Rather, this section merely describes the range of recreational activities possible within the Browne Tract and articulates objectives and strategies for managing facilities designed to accommodate those activities.

Section Three contains appendices listing the names of stakeholders and the various uses they recommended during the stakeholder meeting held in early 2004.

## **SECTION ONE: MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **Introduction and Legislative Authorization**

The Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (MPCBPAA) has prepared this Browne Tract Management Plan (BTMP) to provide guidance in managing a portion of the 274-acre Browne Tract. This plan represents a management strategy for 137-acres of land straddling the boundaries of Essex and King & Queen Counties in eastern Virginia. The Department of Forestry will develop a management plan for the remaining 137-acres located in Essex County. The planning area is composed of approximately 137 acres in Essex and King and Queen County. (Maps 1 and 2)

Management guidelines developed in this draft BTMP apply to the Browne tract and do not address management of other Authority holdings or private lands. Virginia State Code, 15.2-6600 through 15.2-6625, known as the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority Act, directs the Authority to develop appropriate acquisition and site management plans for public access usage.

### **Purpose of and Need for Action**

The purpose of this BTMP includes developing a thorough, practical management document, for the public, that defines management policies and actions and describes management goals and objectives for the Browne Tract.

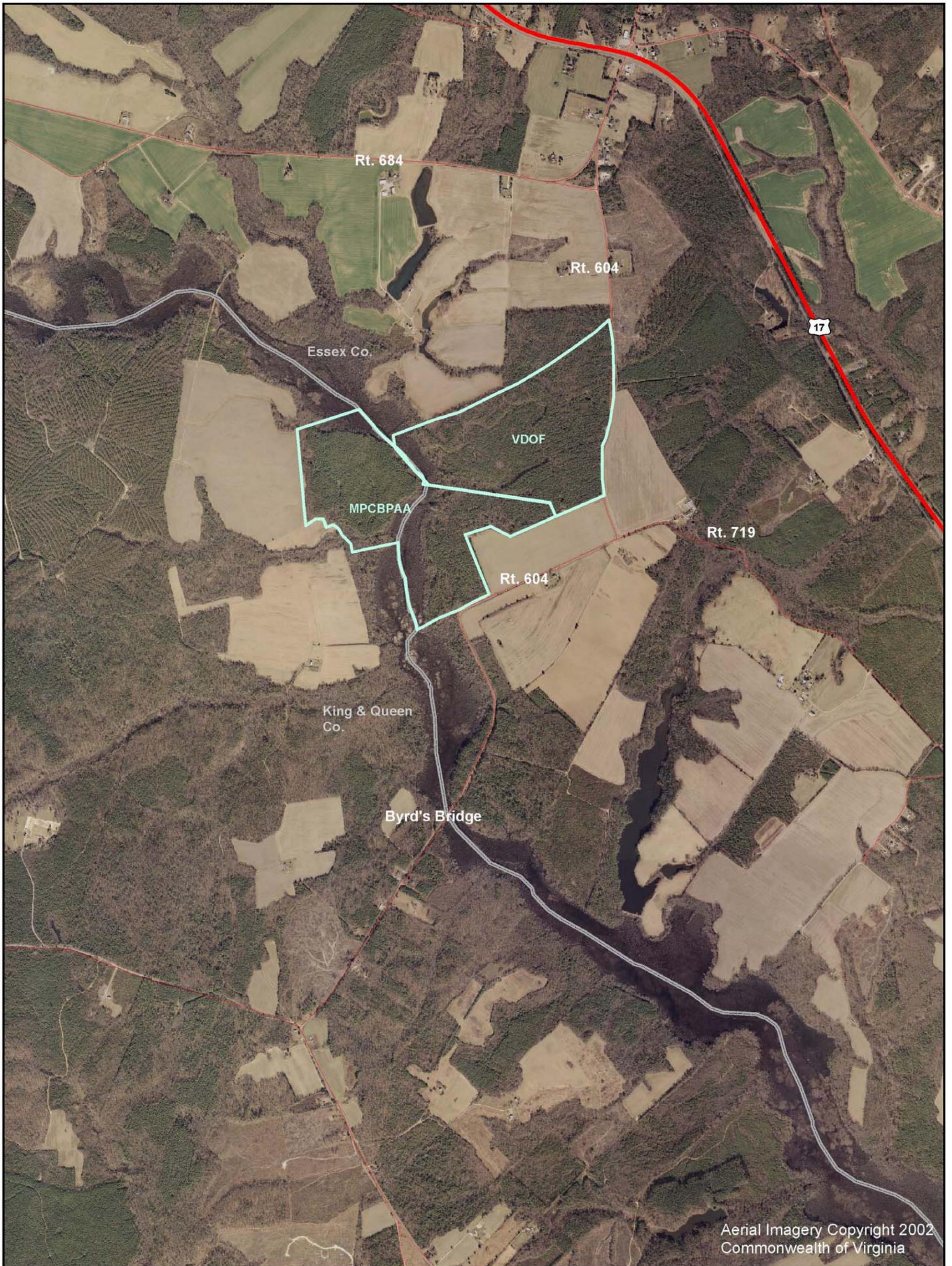
The planning process for the BTMP began on February 17, 2004, with a meeting of the stakeholders identified in Appendix 1 to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Browne Tract. Stakeholders were asked to brainstorm a list of uses and activities for the property. The guiding principle was the need to allow for as wide a range of activities as possible, while protecting Browne Tract's natural resource base for future use and enjoyment. The outcome was a list of proposed uses shown in Appendix 2.

In addition to stakeholders, the MPCBPAA received guidance from a variety of sources to assist in the development of the BTMP including the enabling legislation and input from MPCBPAA members, resource experts, Dragon Run watershed landowners and land management agencies. This plan represents the collaboration and communication of all of these diverse groups including local citizens; organizations; and local, state, and federal governments.

### **Browne Tract History**

The Browne Tract originally spanned 212 acres in Essex and 62 acres King and Queen (Map 1). The site occurs in a major forest belt on the Middle Peninsula. The Nature Conservancy classifies the site as an aquatic portfolio site, due to a highly diverse aquatic

**Map 1: Aerial Imagery of the Browne Tract**



system. Historically, the site has been managed for commercial grade saw timber, primarily loblolly pine. A small boardwalk at the end of a short forestry road provides access to the Dragon Run for car-top boat access and access to the King and Queen holdings. The site is characterized by sandy, loamy soils with relatively level topography (Map 2). The majority of upland soils are considered prime farmland. Overall, these soils support forest growth dominated by loblolly pine, Virginia pine, sweetgum, soother red oak and tulip poplar tree species. The Essex portion has 4,995 ft of frontage on the Dragon Run Swamp and approximately 2,500 ft of frontage on State Route 604. The King and Queen portion of the tract has 2498 ft of frontage on the Dragon Run Swamp. There are 38 acres of open water and scrub/scrub wetlands and 17 acres of forested wetlands. The forest wetland consists of mature hardwood (>75 years old). Of the remaining upland, the previous owner clear-cut 131 acres.

### **Browne Tract Restrictions**

The acquisition of all 274 acres of the Browne Tract was funded 100% by grants from the Virginia Coastal Program at the Department of Environmental Quality, and is subject to the terms of such grant. Specifically, the deed conveyed to the MPCBPAA contains the following language:

“Consideration for the acquisition was provided by grants #NA070Zo136 Task 8, dated September 1, 2003 and #NA 170Z1142 Task 8, dated September 1, 2003 from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Coastal Resource Management Program. Future disposition and use of the property is subject to restrictions contained in this grant, which are hereby incorporated by reference.”

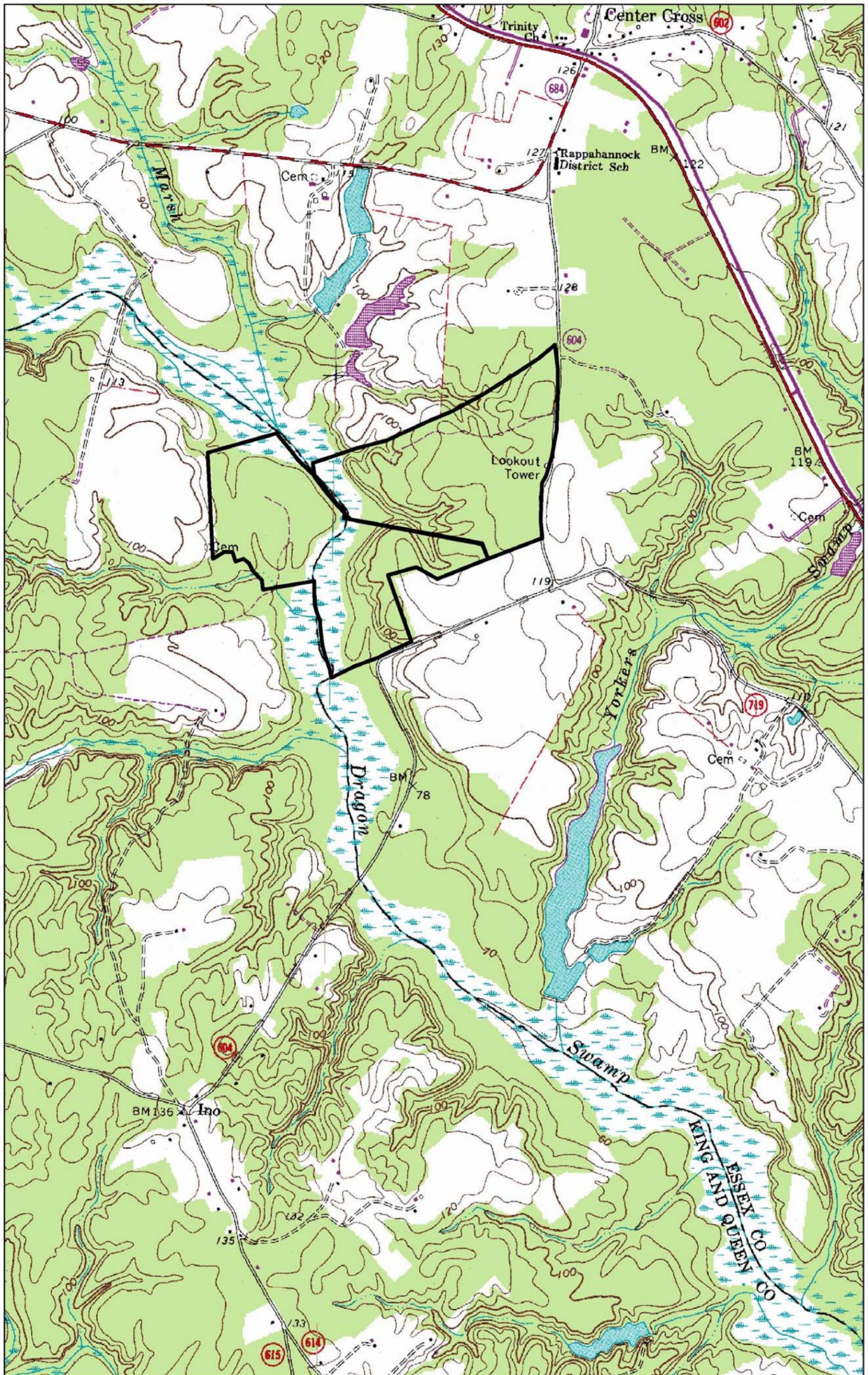
The acquisition of this tract supports the Virginia Coastal Program’s commitment to protecting geographic areas of particular concern in the coastal zone. In addition, preservation of this land supports the goals of the Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan (see <http://www.mppdc.com/projects/factsheet2.pdf> ) by protecting the natural resources, maintaining traditional uses and improving public access in the watershed.

This property will be managed in a manner that supports long-term passive public access, resource protection and sustainable traditional uses (i.e. forestry and hunting). A recent land survey divides the tract into three distinct parcels (see Map 3).

### **Browne Tract Division**

Although the original parcel contained 261 acres, one the conditions of the grant used to purchase the tract required half of the acreage to be deeded to the Virginia Department of Forestry to be managed accordingly. As a result, the property was surveyed and divided into three parcels (Map 3). Parcel C (approximately 129 acres) will be transferred to and administered by the Virginia Department of Forestry in a manner consistent with the agency’s management of the State Forest system. The MPCBPAA will retain possession of Parcels A and B as well an outlying three-acre parcel not shown in the survey and

Map 2: USGS Topographic Map of the Browne Tract (Quad 37076 G7 Dunsville)



**Map 3: Survey of the Browne Tract**



manage these lands to provide multiple benefits to the public. The MPCBPAA will manage, therefore, approximately 132 acres of the original Browne Tract purchase. Although the BTMP applies only to parcels owned by the MPCBPAA, the management alternatives presented below were influenced to a large extent by VDOF's management of similarly sized landholdings. MPCBPAA will continue to coordinate management activities with VDOF throughout the planning and implementation process.

## **Management Use and Alternatives**

Through an integrated planning process involving stakeholder participation, the MPCBPAA staff developed several alternatives for managing the Browne Tract's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The ultimate objective of these alternatives is to preserve and protect the unique ecological characteristics of the Browne Tract for the enjoyment of present and future generations, while maintaining current recreational trends and opportunities to the maximum extent possible. Each alternative emphasizes a combination of proposed uses based on a thorough consideration of the following factors:

- The level of impact proposed uses and alternatives are likely to impose on the health and integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources;
- The potential for conflict between uses as well as the nature of the anticipated conflict;
- The extent to which alternatives and uses advance the guiding principles and resource protection concerns of the MPCBPAA, including but not limited to how well each fulfills the purpose of the Browne Tract acquisition and addresses the need for the project; and
- The extent to which alternatives and uses meet all local, state and federal laws and regulations controlling the use of the property.

The emphasis of each of the management alternatives is described in detail below and summarized in Chart #1. When considered as a whole, the emphasis of these alternatives, as well as the objectives and implementation strategies associated with them, reflect the range of uses to which the Browne Tract could be put. These range from intensive management of the area's natural resources to intensive and extensive development of recreational opportunities, meaning both the *type of facilities* developed and the *number of facilities* or *total acreage* devoted to a particular activity. For instance, whereas horseback riding is a permitted use in all of the alternatives, Alternative 1 would allow for more intensive development of trail infrastructure to possibly include water troughs, jumps, and hitching posts. Additionally, more miles of trails could be constructed to accommodate future horseback riders in the area, giving Alternative 1 a *recreational emphasis*. Conversely, Alternative 3 would provide the same or fewer miles of trails but offer no infrastructure improvements, allowing the user to experience his or her natural surroundings and giving Alternative 3 a *natural resource emphasis*.

**Chart 1: Management Alternatives: Recreational vs. Natural Resource Emphasis**

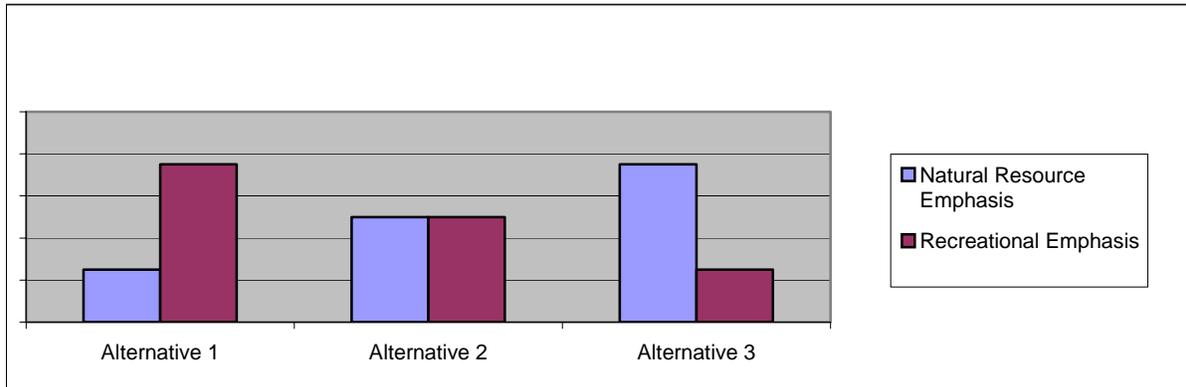


Chart 1 illustrates an important principle that guided the conception of these alternatives: Recreational opportunities vary inversely with natural resource management imperatives. Specifically, the emphasis of the alternatives, meaning the amount of land reserved for recreational purposes and/or the variety or recreational opportunities provided, decreases from Alternative 1 to Alternative 3 as natural resource management and environmental protection concerns are increasingly emphasized.

At first glance, Chart 1 appears to suggest that natural resource management and the provision of recreational opportunities are mutually exclusive. This, of course, is not necessarily the case. Although some recreational activities conflict with resource protection imperatives, other types of recreation enhance resource management strategies and vice versa. Nevertheless, these alternatives reflect the belief that only a certain number of activities and uses are possible within an area the size of the Browne Tract, and that small public lands cannot provide as many public benefits or meet as many expectations as larger holdings.

### **Description of Alternatives**

The emphasis, objectives, and implementation measures for each of the alternatives are described below.

#### ***Alternative 1***

##### Emphasis:

The emphasis of this alternative is to maximize multiple-use, recreational opportunities while conserving and protecting natural resources to the maximum extent possible.

##### Objectives:

Objectives for this alternative attempt to satisfy the increasing demand for a variety of recreational opportunities in the area. A variety of multi-use, recreational activities will be permitted except in specific areas where these activities conflict with the need to protect significant natural and cultural resources.

Recreational activities will be concentrated in certain areas or “zones” to limit conflict among user groups and mitigate dispersed recreational impacts. Traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and hiking will be preserved and enhanced to give users a more enjoyable experience. Opportunities for additional activities such as mountain biking, horseback riding, limited-access paddling, and educational/interpretive activities will be created by improving existing facilities and developing new infrastructure.

A small number of resource conservation or “special management” areas will be identified to establish sound natural resource management practices and limit certain recreational activities that are incompatible with these practices. In addition, certain recreational activities may not be permitted within environmentally sensitive areas.

#### Implementation:

Implementation of this alternative will require the creation and expansion of recreational facilities to include the following actions:

1. Establishing recreational “zones” to geographically separate activities that have a high potential for conflict and limit recreational access to a small number of resource conservation areas;
2. Expanding existing trail networks and creating new trails within these zones to establish linkages and accommodate compatible uses wherever possible;
3. Installing interpretive, directional, and informational signs and kiosks to enhance the recreational and educational experience of visitors and control visitation in high-use areas where there is an elevated potential for conflict;
4. Increasing regular maintenance of trails and facilities to enhance user experiences and minimize erosion;
5. Constructing a new footbridge across the Dragon Run to replace the existing structure and control access to Parcel A (See Map 3);
6. Establishing one or more multi-purpose, water access sites; and
7. Establishing several “resource protection zones” or “special management areas” to demonstrate best management practices for managing timber and other natural resources in these areas.

## *Alternative 2*

### Emphasis:

The emphasis of this alternative is to increase multi-use recreational opportunities while protecting significant natural resources and improving land health.

### Objectives:

Objectives for this alternative attempt to balance the increasing demand for recreational opportunities with the need to conserve natural resources and restore areas that have been impacted by development. Resource management and recreational activities will be concentrated in certain areas or “zones” to minimize conflict and mitigate dispersed impacts to significant natural and cultural resources.

Traditional recreation such as hunting, fishing, and hiking will be preserved and expanded as long as they do not conflict with ongoing natural resource management activities. Additional opportunities such as horseback riding, mountain biking, limited access paddling, and environmental/interpretive activities will be created with a bias towards low- to moderate-impact recreational uses.

This alternative will enhance the experience of visitors while limiting access to a larger number of resource protection and “special management” areas as well as areas containing important species and natural communities. Active monitoring of land health and user impacts will be needed to determine if resource management activities and efforts to preserve the unique natural characteristics of the area are compatible with recreational usage of the Browne Tract. Monitoring will also determine the extent to which timber harvesting and multi-use recreational activities impact ecological resources.

### Implementation:

Implementation of this alternative will require the expansion of recreational facilities and natural resource protection areas to include the following actions:

1. Establish recreational “use zones” to geographically separate activities that have a high potential for conflict and limit recreational access to conservation areas. Use zones include, but are not limited to hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and nature viewing;
2. Expanding existing trail networks and creating a limited number of new trails within these zones to establish linkages and accommodate compatible uses;
3. Installing interpretive and directional signs and kiosks to enhance the recreational and educational experience of visitors and control visitation in high-use areas where there is an elevated potential for conflict;

4. Increasing regular maintenance of trails and facilities to enhance user experiences and minimize erosion;
5. Constructing a new footbridge across the Dragon Run to replace the existing structure and control access to Parcel A (See Map 3);
6. Establishing one or more multi-purpose, water access sites;
7. Establishing larger “resource protection zones” and “special management areas” to demonstrate best management practices for managing timber and other natural resources in these areas;
8. Protecting wildlife and improving wildlife habitat by creating corridors and open areas for movement;
9. Maintain forested buffers along streams to preserve water quality and protect riparian resources.

### ***Alternative 3***

#### Emphasis:

The emphasis of this alternative is to maximize the conservation of natural resources on the Browne Tract while maintaining recreational opportunities to the greatest extent possible.

#### Objectives:

The objectives for this alternative give natural resource considerations priority over the creation for multi-use recreational opportunities. Resource management practices will attempt to restore land health and preserve the natural character of the area while enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities.

Traditional recreation such as hunting, fishing, and hiking will be preserved but limited to areas where these activities are compatible with resource management strategies. Recreational usage of environmentally sensitive areas or areas where significant ecological resources exist will be restricted or prohibited. Educational and interpretive opportunities will be expanded to expose visitors to the unique natural and cultural characteristics of the Browne Tract and efforts to preserve the area for the enjoyment of future generations. A limited number of opportunities for biking, horseback riding, and/or limited-access paddling may be created if evidence suggests that developing these new facilities will not significantly impact environmental resources or natural resource management.

This alternative will seek to educate visitors about resource management activities taking place in “special management” areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and places where land managers are re-establishing native, natural communities. Aggressive monitoring of environmental

indicators will be needed to determine if resource management activities are improving wildlife habitat, preserving and enhancing water quality, and restoring the health of land impacted by development. Monitoring will also determine the extent to which traditional activities such as timber harvesting, hunting, and fishing affect biological diversity and wildlife populations, as well as the nature of those impacts.

Implementation:

1. Confining recreational activities to appropriate areas and restricting or prohibiting recreational access to environmentally sensitive areas by creating “recreation buffer zones”.
2. Maintaining existing trail networks and creating a limited number of new trails where appropriate to establish linkages and accommodate compatible uses;
3. Installing interpretive and directional signs and kiosks to enhance the recreational and educational experience of visitors and control visitation in high-use areas where there is an elevated potential for conflict;
4. Increasing regular maintenance of trails and facilities to enhance user experiences and minimize erosion;
5. Constructing a new footbridge across the Dragon Run to replace the existing structure and control access to Parcel A (See Map 3);
6. Establishing one or more multi-purpose, water access sites;
7. Identifying areas that contain important riparian, wildlife, archeological, paleontological, or soil resources and limiting recreational usage in these areas.
8. Establishing “resource protection zones” and “special management areas” throughout the Browne Tract to demonstrate best management practices for restoring land health in these areas;
9. Using a high percentage of native tree and plant species to restore areas impacted by development;
10. Protecting wildlife and improving wildlife habitat to the maximum extent possible by creating corridors and open areas for movement;
11. Maintain forested buffers along streams to preserve water quality and protect riparian resources.

## **Environmental Considerations**

None of the alternatives described above are inherently detrimental to the area's natural and cultural resources. Although Alternatives 1 and 2 offer some potential for impacts to natural resources by allowing for increased recreational use and some timber extraction activities, adverse effects can be controlled through implementation of sound management practices. In Alternative 3, timber removal and "thinning" operations will be limited to only what is necessary to conserve and best manage natural resources, and only low-impact recreational opportunities consistent with these objectives will be permitted.

Nevertheless, the MPCBPAA should implement active management practices to fully protect natural resources and minimize impacts associated with increased usage. Management practices will need to address issues associated with recreational usage such as on-site sewage disposal, trash pick-up at parking lots and trailheads, and maintenance of trails and facilities. Additionally, the MPCBPAA should procure personnel and equipment to implement natural resource management strategies and conduct research. A number of resources are available including Coastal Program Technical Assistance and NOAA funds. The condition of the area's natural environment will depend on how well these facilities are maintained and how effectively management tasks are carried out. Failure to develop a set of sound management practices for addressing these issues will jeopardize implementation of the BTMP and measures necessary for restoring resources to full health.

## **Selected Alternative**

At the August 2004 meeting of the Authority, the MPCBPAA discussed and weighed the merits of each of the alternatives. The Board carefully considered the emphasis, objectives, and implementation strategies for each alternative and considered input provided at an earlier stakeholder meeting by concerned citizens, resource specialists, and other interested parties. The MPCBPAA selected Alternative 2, but planned to implement when appropriate specific strategies from Alternative 3. This "blending" of Alternatives 2 and 3 allows the MPCBPAA to pursue an approach to land management that emphasizes specific conservation strategies and passive recreational activities to be determined as the implementation process evolves.

The Authority will:

1. Establish recreational "use zones" to geographically separate activities that have a high potential for conflict and limit recreational access to conservation areas. Use zones include, but are not limited to hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and nature viewing;
2. Expand existing trail networks and create a limited number of new trails within these zones to establish linkages and accommodate compatible uses;

3. Install interpretive and directional signs and kiosks to enhance the recreational and educational experience of visitors and control visitation in high-use areas where there is an elevated potential for conflict;
4. Regulate maintenance of trails and facilities to enhance user experiences and minimize erosion;
5. Construct a new footbridge across the Dragon Run to replace the existing structure and manage access to Parcel A (See Map 3);
6. Establish one or more multi-purpose, water access sites;
7. Establish larger “resource protection zones” and “special management areas” to demonstrate best management practices for managing timber and other natural resources in these areas, to include the planting of native tree and plant species and mixed-hardwood forests;
8. Protect wildlife and improve wildlife habitat by creating corridors and open areas for movement;
9. Maintain forested buffers along streams to preserve water quality and protect riparian resources; and
10. Identifying areas that contain important riparian, wildlife, archeological, paleontological, or soil resources and limiting recreational usage in these areas.

The Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority will cooperate with all appropriate local, state, and federal authorities and agencies to implement the preferred management system and ensure that the process is collaborative and establishes practices that are consistent with the goals of the Browne Tract acquisition. MPCBPAA will cooperate with the Virginia Department of Forestry throughout the implementation of the preferred alternative. In addition, the Authority will consult with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to develop the best plan for managing hunting on the property. To the maximum extent possible, the MPCBPAA will seek agreements with adjacent landowners to allow emergency vehicles to right to access the King and Queen portion of the property, including possible easements or emergency right-of-way agreements.

## **SECTION TWO: OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Introduction**

This section describes the range of current and proposed recreational activities that currently take place on the Browne Tract, as well as the objectives and strategies for managing these activities in the future.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

The Browne Tract provides attractive settings for a variety of opportunities for low-impact, dispersed, non-motorized outdoor recreation and nature appreciation. A number of natural attributes add to the attractiveness of the Browne Tract for visitors, including: natural beauty and tranquility; spectacular views; unusual geological formations; variety in terrain, flora and fauna; wildlife viewing opportunities. Recreational activities must be managed to ensure compatibility with wilderness conditions and to ensure uses are not detrimental to natural and cultural resources and are consistent with visitor expectations.

Recreational activities inventoried to date include hunting of small and large game animals and game birds, horseback riding and wildlife viewing. A GPS survey of trails and facilities revealed that a number of unmarked and unmapped trails and routes used by local residents currently traverse the MPPRA-owned portion of the Browne Tract (Map 4). Concerns exist with respect to the ability of the informal trail network to sustain increased levels of use that could develop as a result of designating the area a public access site. Users have also voiced concerns about the potential conflicts between trail users including hikers, hunters, horseback riders, and mountain bikers.

In addition to the current recreational opportunities shown in Map 4, a number of facilities improvements should be made to accommodate proposed recreational activities and expand current opportunities including horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and sightseeing. Map 5 contains a conceptual map of recreational trails and facilities that could be developed in the area to accommodate these activities. Some of the infrastructure depicted in Map 5 follows the existing trail network shown in Map 4. In other cases, existing trails would have to be abandoned and new infrastructure built to implement the recreational facilities improvements depicted on the map.

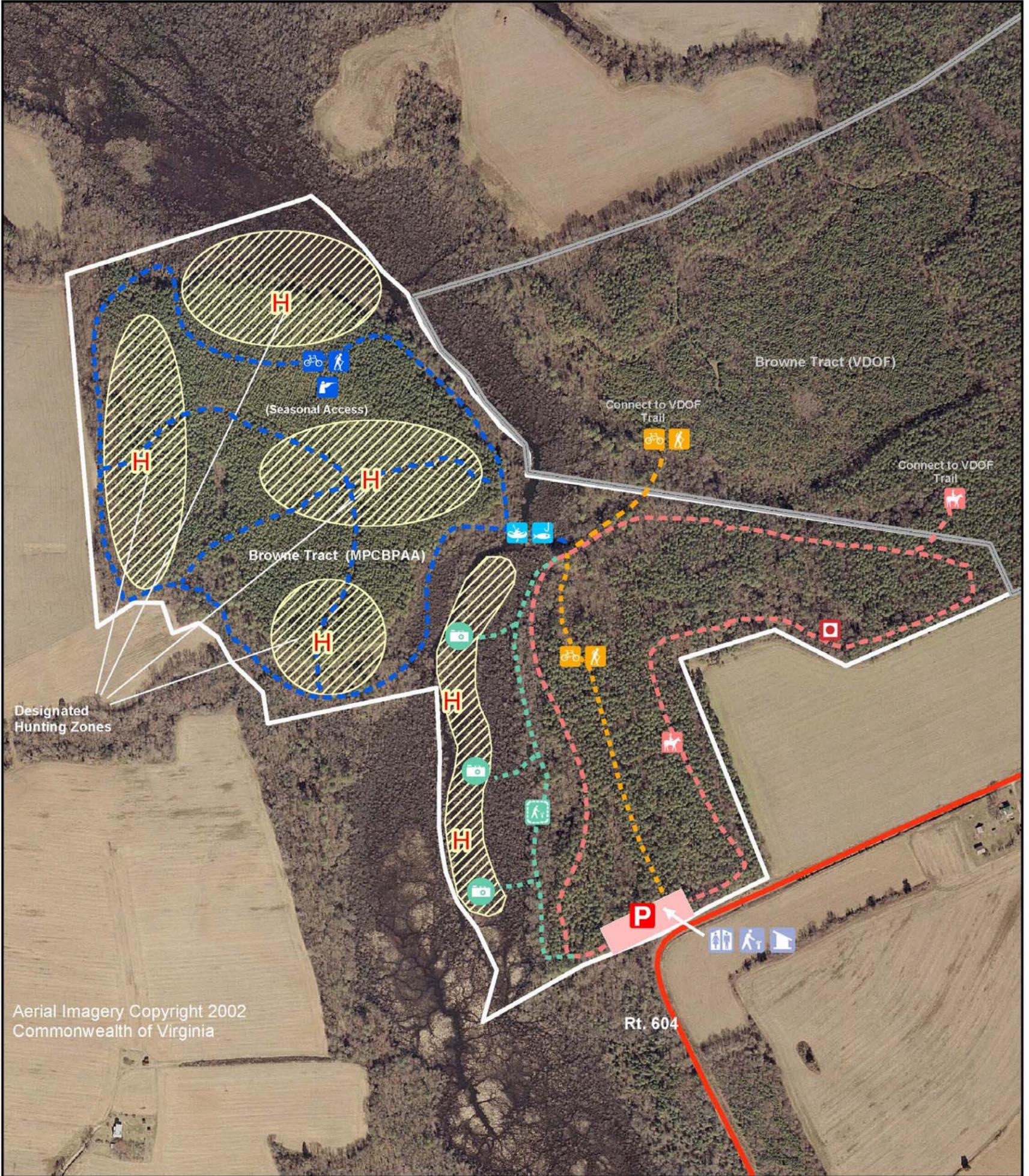
### **Recreation Objectives**

The following broad outdoor recreation objectives provide direction to the variety of possible recreation activities available to visitors:

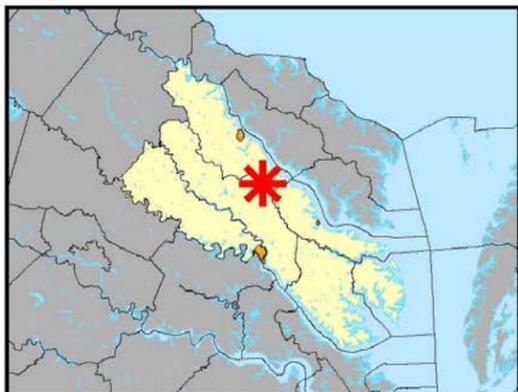


Map 5: Conceptual Recreation Trails and Facilities, Browne Tract (MPCBPAA)

**Browne Tract: Conceptual Recreational Trails and Facilities Map**



Aerial Imagery Copyright 2002 Commonwealth of Virginia



Legend	
	Hiking/Biking
	Hiking/Biking
	Seasonal Hunting
	Interpretive Trail
	Observation/ Education Platform
	Paddling/Fishing
	Horseback Riding
	Historical Point
	Signboard
	Refuse
	Restrooms
	Parking Area
	Hunting Area

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1. Maintaining the remote, roadless, non-motorized wilderness qualities of the Browne Tract while allowing for a range of compatible, low-impact, public recreation uses;
2. Ensuring public access to these the Browne Tract is not pre-empted by future possible commercial recreation activities, such as leased hunting lands;
3. Providing day-use recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, nature appreciation, photography, hiking, hunting, horseback riding, and appreciation of cultural heritage values;
4. Ensuring that recreation activities are managed and monitored for their potential impacts on natural and cultural values within the Browne Tract, particularly on wildlife ranges and populations;
5. Preserving traditional historic uses;
6. Enhancing visitor awareness and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the Browne Tract, as well as recreational practices and user safety;
7. Managing recreational activities to minimize conflicts between various user groups, to include prohibiting bicycle use on horseback riding trails and visa versa; and
8. Ensuring that recreation information, development, and use are compatible with conservation values and outdoor recreation features.

## **Recreation Activities**

This section describes activity-specific objectives and management strategies. The objectives and strategies for each of the recreational activities described below supports one or more of the broad objectives outlined in the preceding section.

### ***Horseback Riding***

#### Objective:

To provide recreational horseback riding so as to minimize impacts on the natural environment and wildlife habitat as well as minimize conflicts between certain user groups.

#### Strategies:

- Provide for horseback riding opportunities;
- Provide sufficient parking space to accommodate vehicles towing horse trailers;
- Develop signage at trailheads to inform horseback riders about trails where horses are permitted;

- Design and develop trails and other facilities to be used by recreational horseback riding groups so the potential exists for small group excursions;
- Limit the number of horses per group and/or the number of groups per season;
- Prohibit bicycle use on horseback riding trails to eliminate the potential for conflict; and
- Specify management activities and usage levels for horseback riding that includes (a) requirements for packing in weed-free, pellet feed for horses; (b) specifications for locating any permanent support facilities, such as corrals or loading/unloading facilities, outside of public access site boundaries; (c) a requirement to limit commercial horse use to designated trails and day trips, to the greatest extent possible; and (d) a requirement to establish mechanisms for monitoring the impacts of horse use on trail infrastructure.

### ***Biking***

#### Objective:

To permit bicycle use on roads and low elevation trails so there is minimal impact from erosion and potential conflicts with other users are kept to a minimum.

#### Strategies:

- Restrict bicycle use to existing roads and designated areas and monitor for impacts;
- Develop signage to inform bikers about trails where bike use is permitted and sections of trails where hikers may also be using trail facilities;
- Adjust use levels or areas of use based on impacts over time; and
- Prohibit horseback riding use on bike trails to eliminate the potential for conflict.

### ***Hiking and Nature Walking***

#### Objective:

To ensure the continued use of the area for non-motorized public recreation and offer a primitive, informal backcountry trail network for high-quality hiking experiences in a wilderness setting while protecting the natural environment from possible deterioration as a result of these activities.

Strategies:

- Permit public recreation opportunities that are non-motorized, including hiking and cross-country skiing;
- Develop signage to inform hikers about trails where foot travel is permitted and sections of trails where other users such as horseback riders or bicyclists may also be using trail facilities;
- Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy;
- Maintain and improve foot trails to increase the capacity of trails to withstand long-term use and recover from disturbance;
- Use natural routes wherever possible and avoid new trail development;
- Design trail facilities to minimize erosion; and
- Ensure that all signboards provide information on the undeveloped nature of the area.

***Parking Facilities***

Objective:

To provide adequate parking space and associated facilities at trailheads for recreational users.

Strategies:

- Develop parking area(s) and monitor use to determine future requirements parking facilities at trailheads;
- Provide sufficient parking space to accommodate school or church buses and vehicles towing horse trailers;
- Prohibit the development of vehicle access within area boundaries, except as provided for in the management plan with respect to (a) nature viewpoints for special observation and research; and (b) intensive recreation zones that may be required at a future date to accommodate special events;
- Install restroom facilities and trash receptacles at parking areas to reduce environmental impacts associated with increased recreational usage; and
- Post signboards at parking areas to provide information about the recreational opportunities offered in the Browne Tract and educate visitors about the unique natural and cultural characteristics of the area.

## ***Recreational Guiding***

### Objective:

To determine levels of use and management practices for guiding activities that are consistent with public access site objectives and protect natural values and develop a permit system to monitor use.

### Strategies:

- Require all commercial Guides to develop a business plan that is compatible with this management plan, and that can be updated and approved on a periodic basis consistent with the public access site use permit process;
- Monitor the effects of Guides use on the environment and visitor experiences, and adjust public access site use permits where the need is demonstrated to control environmental impacts from concentrated visitor use; and
- Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy and require that group's dispose of trash and litter in receptacles at parking lot.

## ***Managed Hunting***

### Objective:

To provide the general public with safe and managed hunting opportunities for small and large game as well as waterfowling opportunities.

### Strategies:

- Establish appropriate hunting areas for use during hunting seasons;
- Cooperate and consult with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to establish a system for managed hunting, including the creation of hunting "zones," and to control access to active hunting areas during the hunting season;
- Prepare a Hunting Management Plan that can be used as a decision-making tool for managing public hunting opportunities;
- Consider user group perspectives when designating hunting areas; and
- Subject all hunting activities to local, state and federal regulations.

## ***Trail Use and Maintenance***

### Objectives:

To maintain the informal nature of the trail network within the area, thereby minimizing concentrated trail usage impacts.

### Strategies:

- Prepare a trail inventory and trail management plan that can be used as a decision-making tool for managing public trail use; and
- Develop kiosks and signage to show users the location of different recreational trails and inform visitors of allowable uses on specific trails.

## **Aesthetic Values**

Although not a recreational activity in the strictest sense, aesthetic values enhance the experiences of recreational users by improving scenery within and adjacent to area boundaries and increasing opportunities for visitors to experience solitude and quietness.

Scenery is fundamental to the experience of visitors. Forested areas, wetlands, agricultural activities, all contribute to the scenery. Development in the area adjacent to the Browne Tract may affect the viewscape and the visitor experience. The MPCBPAA further recognizes that resource development activities will occur on adjacent lands.

### Objective:

To retain aesthetic features within the area so that the visual, water, and air qualities and wilderness atmosphere of the Browne Tract are protected.

### Strategies:

- Work within local and regional land use planning processes for surrounding lands, and with other agencies to protect values in the area and adjacent to public access site boundaries. This includes minimizing impacts on scenic values, water and air quality and of noise;
- Locate and design all public access site structures in harmony with the visual setting and the characters of the surrounding natural landscapes;
- Work with local communities in the planning of public access site facilities so that they are in keeping with the character of the area and blend with the natural setting; and

- Work with other agencies to develop a visual landscape plan for lands outside the public access site boundaries.

### SECTION THREE: APPENDICES

#### Appendix 1: Stakeholders List\*

#### February 2004 stake holders meeting and various other Browne Tract meetings

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Billy Mills	King and Queen County
Dorothy H. Miller	Essex
Lorna Anderberg	FODR
Robert E. Gibson	King and Queen County
Andy Lacatell	The Nature Conservancy
Ron Hachey	King and Queen County
Dave Slack	VA Dept of Forestry
Dean Cumbia	VA Dept of Forestry
Warren Coburn	VA Dept of Forestry
Chris Hundley	Essex
Edward Richards	Double Ten Hunt Club
John Lindsay	Double Ten Hunt Club
Scott Bray	Double Ten Hunt Club
Roger Leake	Double Ten Hunt Club
Ron Jenkins	Dept of Forestry
Prue Davis	Essex County
R. Gary Allen	Essex County
Gary Heiser	Dept. of Forestry
Janet Nestlerode	MPPDC
Michael Foreman	VA Dept of Forestry
Lewis Lawrence	MPPDC
David Fuss	MPPDC
Nelson Hillyer	VA Dept of Forestry
Julie Bixby	VA Coastal Program

**\*The stakeholders listed in this table have not approved the Browne Tract Management Plan, nor does the fact that they are listed in any way constitute an endorsement by any of the individuals of the information contained in this document**

Appendix 2: List of Proposed Uses

PROPOSED USE	TIME OF USE Y-yearly, S-seasonal	GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT P - PAA, D -DOF, B - Both	REVENUE POTENTIAL Y- yes, N-no	IMPACT ON RESOURCES H- high, M-med, L-low	POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS Y- yes, N-no
<i>Research forest practices</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Y</b>		
<i>Hiking</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>L</b>	
<i>Horseback riding</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>L</b>	
<i>Forest and habitat management</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Y BOTH</b>		
<i>Buffer demonstration</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Hunting ( all types)</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Y</b>
<i>Paddling</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Education/ school groups</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Workshops/ how to</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Bird watching</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Limited fishing</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>			
<i>Reptile watching</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Biking</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Research</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Restoration of species</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Wadding</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Water quality monitoring</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Hunter safety</i>	<b>S</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Parking</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Restrooms</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			
<i>Site history</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>B</b>			