

FINAL REPORT

Project Title: Open Space Easement Purchase – Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve Addition - GRB Family Limited Partnership Tract

Grant #: NA10NOS4190205 Task 10

November 26, 2013

By Larry Smith

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation –
Division of Natural Heritage



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The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA, or any of its subagencies.

On September 24, 2013, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) purchased an open space easement and natural area preserve dedication on 104+/- acres of private forestland adjacent on the seaside of Accomack County. This tract lies adjacent to the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve. Funding for the easement purchase and associated project expenses came from this \$200,000 grant, plus \$55,073 of state bond funds.

Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve, which is now includes 515 acres, was established in 2005 to help protect a number of components of Virginia's coastal ecosystem. Central to the preserve is a globally rare wetland community known as a sea-level fen. The fen, which is characterized by predominantly freshwater marsh species, occurs at the upper edge of a saltwater tidal marsh and requires a steady supply of fresh groundwater to offset the saline influence of the tides.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation contracted for an appraisal for the easement purchase and submitted the appraisal for review to James H. Boykin, Ph. D. The initial review with comments to the appraiser was completed by Dr. Boykin on March 15. The appraisal was revised to address the comments raised by the reviewer, was resubmitted to the reviewer and was approved on June 25, 2013. Title work was completed. The boundary of the easement parcel was determined through deed research and field work by Mr. Ben Brashears of Marshe & Legge Land Surveyors. An easement baseline documentation report was prepared by DCR staff.

This property, while still privately owned, is now permanently protected and has been dedicated as an addition to the Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve. Through the sale of the easement, the landowner has relinquished the right to divide or develop the property, harvest timber, plant agricultural crops, graze livestock, or otherwise diminish the natural condition of the land. The owner has retained the right to hunt the property and to maintain the existing wildlife food plots.

The property protected with this grant encompasses a portion of the groundwater recharge area for the sea-level fen and supports 75 acres of forested land, 25 acres of which are forested wetlands. The easement will help preserve the quantity and quality of the groundwater reaching the fen by prohibiting destruction of the forest, construction of buildings and other impervious surfaces, alteration of surface and underground hydrology, mining and other major land disturbing activities, and broadcast application of pesticides.

Many coastal water quality issues result from impacts on the uplands. Agricultural practices increase silt and nutrient levels and introduce pesticide contaminants into the waterways. Residential and commercial developments cause similar problems though often at more intensive levels. Development on the Eastern Shore is increasing, leading to increased threats to the coastal estuarine/lagoon ecosystem. Thus protection of the upland properties, especially those close to the waterways and tidal marshes such as this tract, is essential to maintaining and restoring the health of the ecosystem. Furthermore, the uplands and the non-tidal wetlands associated with this property have their own intrinsic values worthy of protection.

Project Photos and Map



Seventy-five acres of this 104 acre parcel is forested with mixed pine and hardwoods.



The GRB Easement parcel fronts on portions of Baker Road, Whites Neck Road and Metompkin Road.



Funding partners sign at Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve.

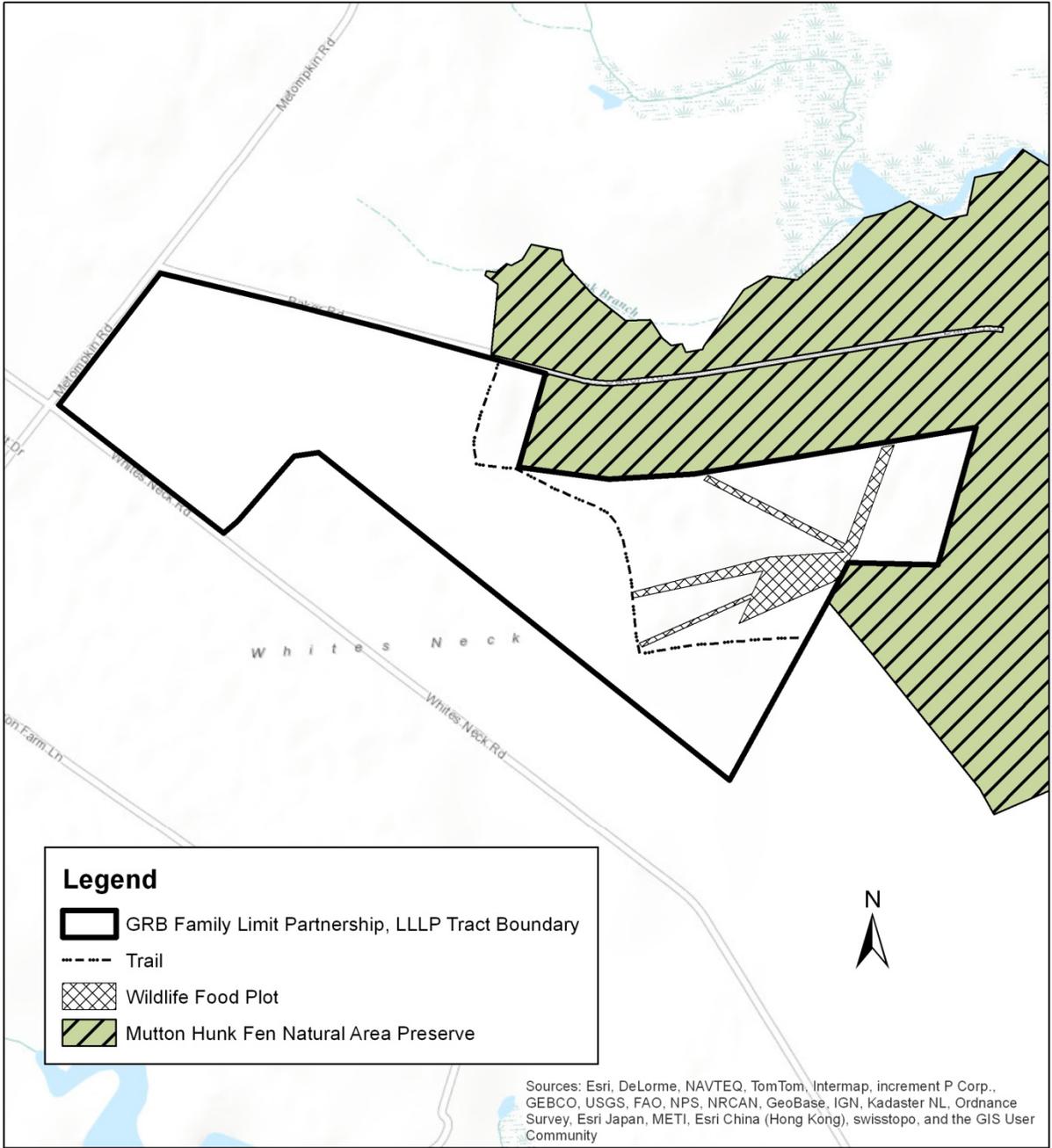


Exhibit A
 GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Tract
 At Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve
 Accomack Co., VA

Prepared by VA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation,
 Natural Heritage Program, I.T. Wilson; August 27, 2013.