

Baseline Documentation Report for an Open Space Easement
and Natural Area Preserve Dedication
GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property
Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve
Accomack County, Virginia

Prepared by Irvine Wilson, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and
Primary site visit August 28, 2013
Completed September 13, 2013

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**GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property
Baseline Documentation Report for an Amended Open Space Easement and
Natural Area Preserve Dedication**

Easement Summary

This report documents the condition of land in Accomack County belonging to GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP that is to be placed in its entirety under an open space easement and dedicated as a natural area preserve. The property is approximately 104.35 acres and is composed of three contiguous tax parcels: 79-A-140, 79-A-141 and 79-A-142 (Figure 1). The easement will be held by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). DCR's Natural Heritage Program will monitor and enforce the terms of the easement.

Description of Conservation Property and Natural Features

The property is located on Whites Neck on the sea side of central Accomack County, less than a mile east of US Route 13. It is bounded on the west by Metompkin Road, on the north by Baker Road and Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve, on the east by the preserve and a private tract, and on the south but two additional private tracts and Whites Neck Road. There is no modern survey for the property and various sources provide a range of acreage values. Marsh and Legge Land Surveyors researched court records, located most of the probable corners and estimated the property to be 104.35 acres (Figure 2).

Elevation on the property ranges from approximately 15 feet on the east to 25 feet on the west. Except for manmade berms and ditches, no slopes on the property exceed 3 percent. There are no perennial or intermittent streams. It is likely that most precipitation falling on the property accumulates in low areas before evaporating or percolating into the ground. Ditches along the northeastern boundary (Photo 49) and along Whites Neck, Metompkin and Baker roads provide some drainage for the property, especially during major rainfall events, with overland flows ultimately reaching Gargathy Bay to the east. Two low areas on the property have been mapped by the National Wetland Inventory as Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland. While no hydrological studies confirm this, it is assumed that the property is part of the catchment area for groundwater that supplies the sea-level fen community just north of the property on Mutton Hunk Branch. (Figure 3)

Approximately 95 percent of the property is forest at varying stages of succession. Most of the forest communities have been heavily influenced by harvesting and planting, but, by and large, are characterized by native species. The most conspicuous invasive species observed during the site visit was Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*). It was abundant on the fringes of the forest adjacent to the trail. Table 1 and Figure 4 provide additional information on the various forest types on the property.

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Table 1. Forest types on GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property

Forest Composition	Acres
Early succession, planted loblolly pine, sweet gum	31
Mature planted loblolly pine	30
Mature pine-hardwood mix	14
Very early succession old field	2
Managed wildlife food plot and shooting lanes	4
Forested wetland, recently thinned	8
Mature pine-hardwood mix, recently thinned	16

Approximately 20 percent of the property lies within the Mutton Hunk Fen Conservation Site (Figure 5). This site encompasses eight natural heritage resource occurrences (Table 2), all associated with sea level fen communities, north of the eastern end of the property. No natural heritage resources are known to occur on the property.

Table 2. Natural Heritage Resources within Mutton Hunk Fen Conservation Site

Common Name	Scientific Name	Global Rank*	State Rank*	Element Occurrence Rank**	Last Observation Date
Sea-Level Fen	<i>Cladium mariscoides</i> - <i>Drosera intermedia</i> - <i>Eleocharis rostellata</i> Herbaceous Vegetation	G1	S1	B	2011-09-22
Tidal Oligohaline Marsh (Beaked Spikerush - Saltmeadow Cordgrass Estuarine Fringe Type)	<i>Eleocharis rostellata</i> - <i>Spartina patens</i> Tidal Herbaceous Vegetation	G3	S1?	CD	2003-09-10
Brown-fruited Rush	<i>Juncus pelocarpus</i>	G5	S2	C	1991-09-16
Northern white beaksedge	<i>Rhynchospora alba</i>	G5	S2	BC	2003-09-09
Ten-angled pipewort	<i>Eriocaulon decangulare</i> var. <i>decangulare</i>	G5T5?	S2	B	2003-09-09
White-top Fleabane	<i>Erigeron vernus</i>	G5	S2	B	2003-09-10
Southern Bladderwort	<i>Utricularia juncea</i>	G5	S2	C	1991-09-16
Seaside Goldenrod Stem Borer	<i>Papaipema duovata</i>	G4	S1S3	BC	2003-10-22

*Global and State Ranks represent the conservation status of a natural heritage element on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "critically imperiled" and 5 being "secure."

**Element Occurrence Rank represents the estimated viability of an occurrence. A = excellent; B = very good; C = fair; D = poor

The property shares approximately 0.9 mile of boundary with Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve (Figure 6). There are also numerous other protected lands in the vicinity, including Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast

Reserve, Saxis Wildlife Management Area, Marks and Jacks Islands Natural Area Preserve, and numerous conservation easements, including The Nature Conservancy's easement on the Bloxom property a short distance to the north (Figure 7).

Existing Structures and Improvements

The property is largely undeveloped. The only structures are two elevated hunting blinds located in the eastern half of the tract (Photos 16 and 46). One trail, approximately 0.7 mile long, leads to these blinds from Baker Road. The trail appears to have been maintained by periodically mowing a path 10 to 30 feet wide. Approximately 4 acres are maintained as a wildlife food plot and shooting lanes. (Figure 8)

Conservation Values

The open space easement and natural area preserve dedication on the property will enhance the conservation values protected by the adjacent Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve. Among these are:

- Preserving sea-level fen, and tidal oligohaline marsh natural communities, and habitat for ten-angled pipewort (*Eriocaulon decangulare* var. *decangulare*), northern white beaksedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), white-top fleabane (*Erigeron vernus*), brown-fruited rush (*Juncus pelocarpus*), southern bladderwort (*Utricularia juncea*), and seaside goldenrod stem borer (*Papaipema duovata*)
- Preserving nesting, feeding and resting habitat for neotropical migrant birds
- Preserving the watershed of Gargathy Bay and the associated wetland and marine communities
- Preservation of open space

Current Land Uses

It is evident from site visits, as well as from conversations with Gary Breeding, that current land uses are consistent with the proposed open space easement and natural area preserve dedication. The property is primarily used for hunting game animals, which is compatible with the conservation purposes of this easement. Indeed, white-tail deer hunting is important for management of the property because deer can rapidly become overpopulated and over-browse native vegetation.

Key to Photographs

Digital photographs were taken by Irvine Wilson during the primary site visit on August 28, 2013 at various points on the property as partial documentation of current conditions. Figures 10 and 11 show the locations for each photo point. Most of these locations were recorded at the time the photographs were taken with a hand-held GPS unit with 30-foot accuracy. Photographs were taken within 20 feet of each photo point recorded with the GPS. The approximate locations of other photo points were mapped using features readily discernible on aerial imagery and topographic maps. The label template for each photograph is

“**XX_ptY_ZZZd_Brief description.**” The alphanumeric code portion of this label represents the following:

- **XX** is the unique number assigned to each photograph for this report
- **pt Y** is the photo point shown on the map
- **ZZZd** is the compass bearing (in degrees) that the photographer was facing while taking the photo

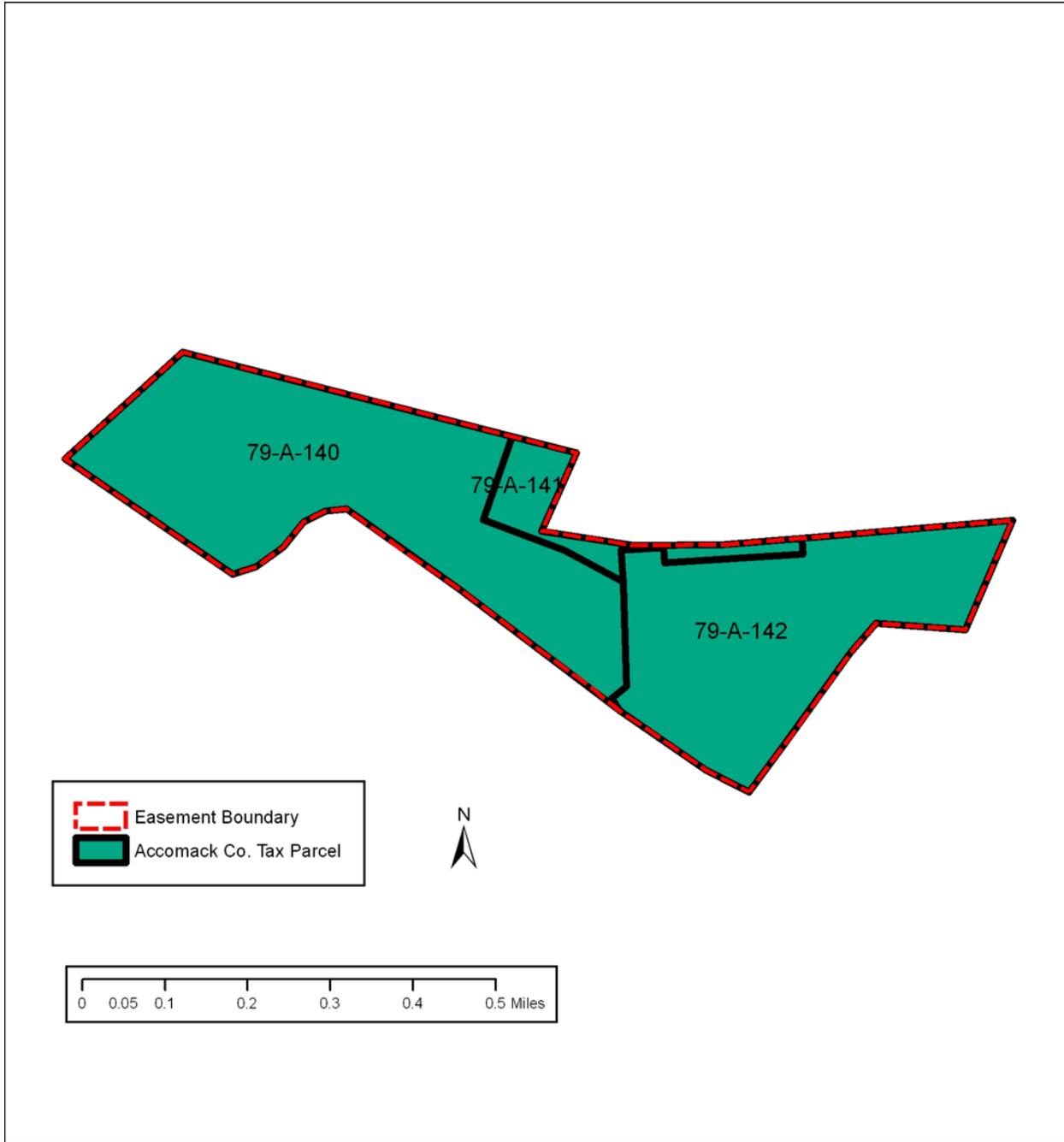


Figure 1. Tax parcels and easement boundary for GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property (parcel boundaries adjusted to match easement boundary, as determined by Marsh and Legge Surveyors)

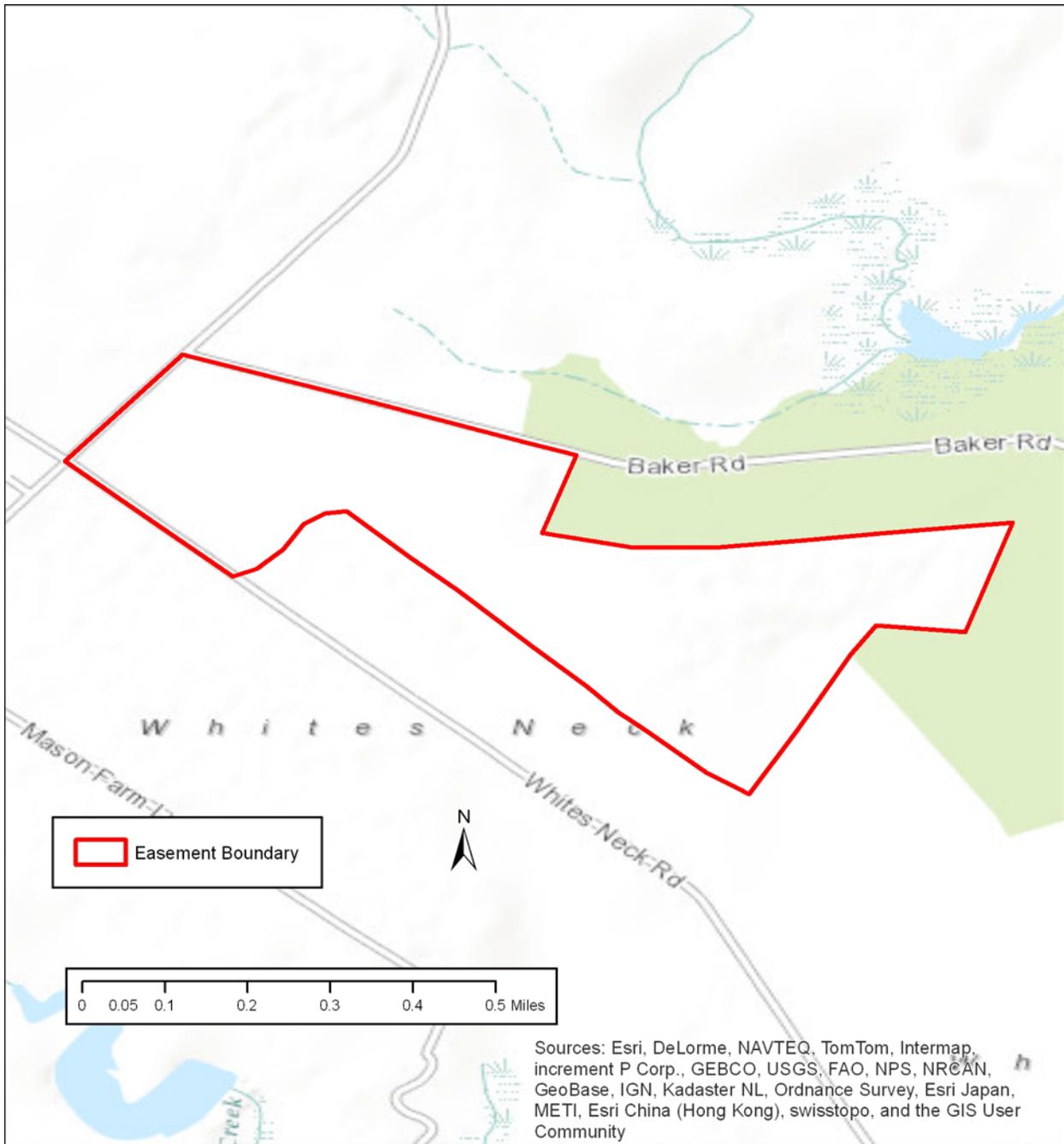


Figure 2. Property boundary for GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property, as determined by Marsh and Legge Surveyors by research of records and on-site investigation

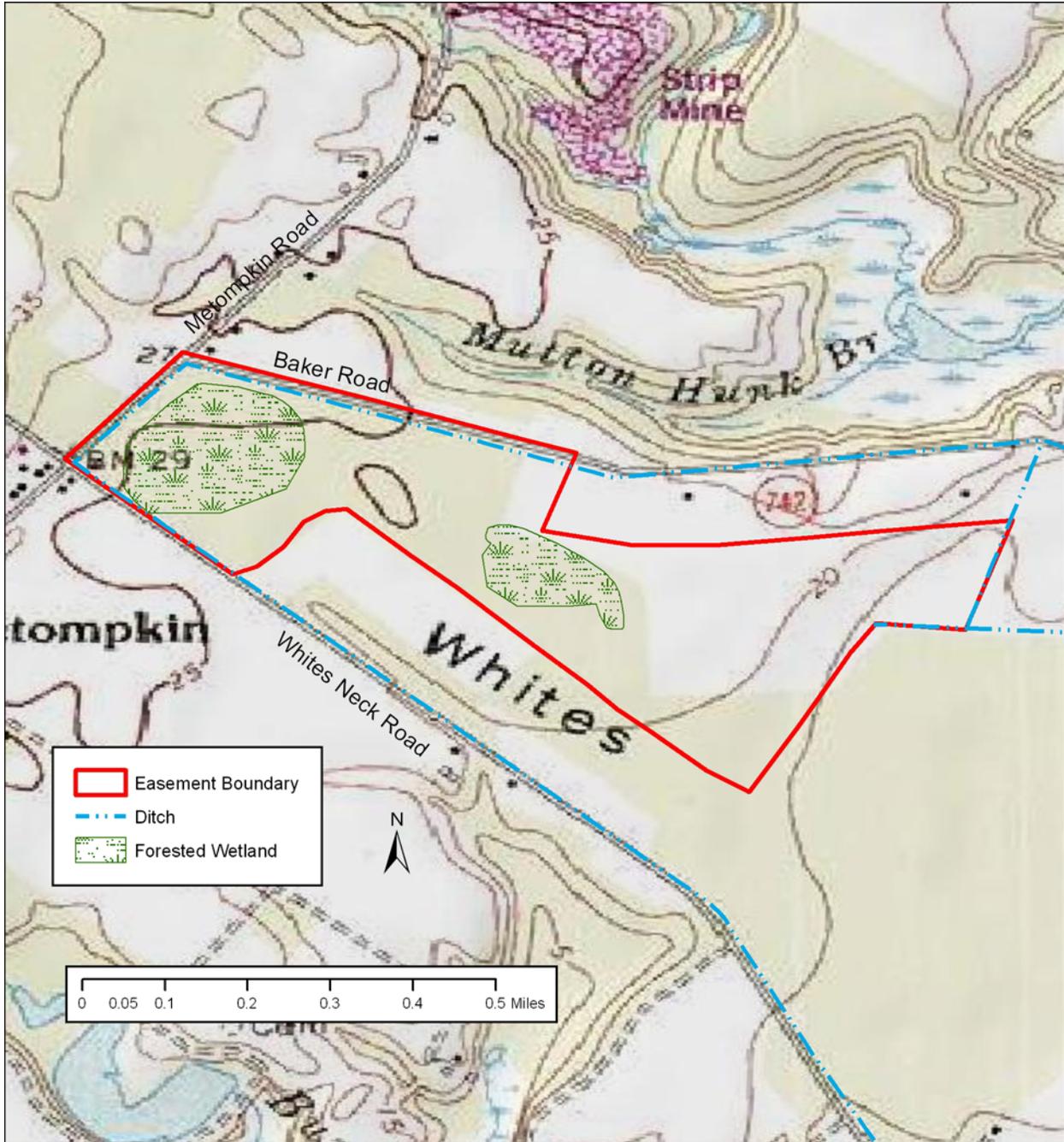


Figure 3. Topography, wetlands and water features for GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property

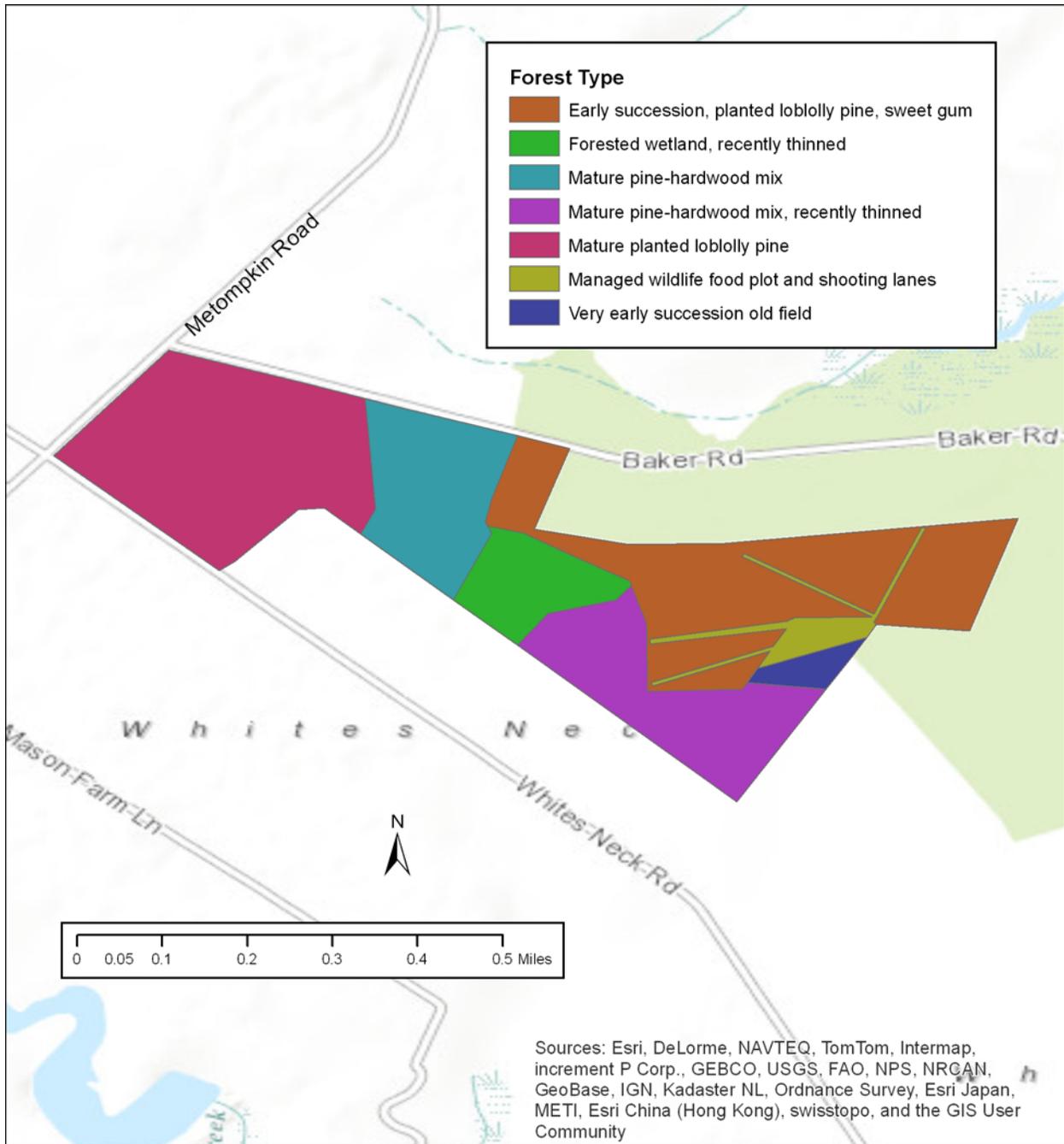


Figure 4. General forest types for GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP Property

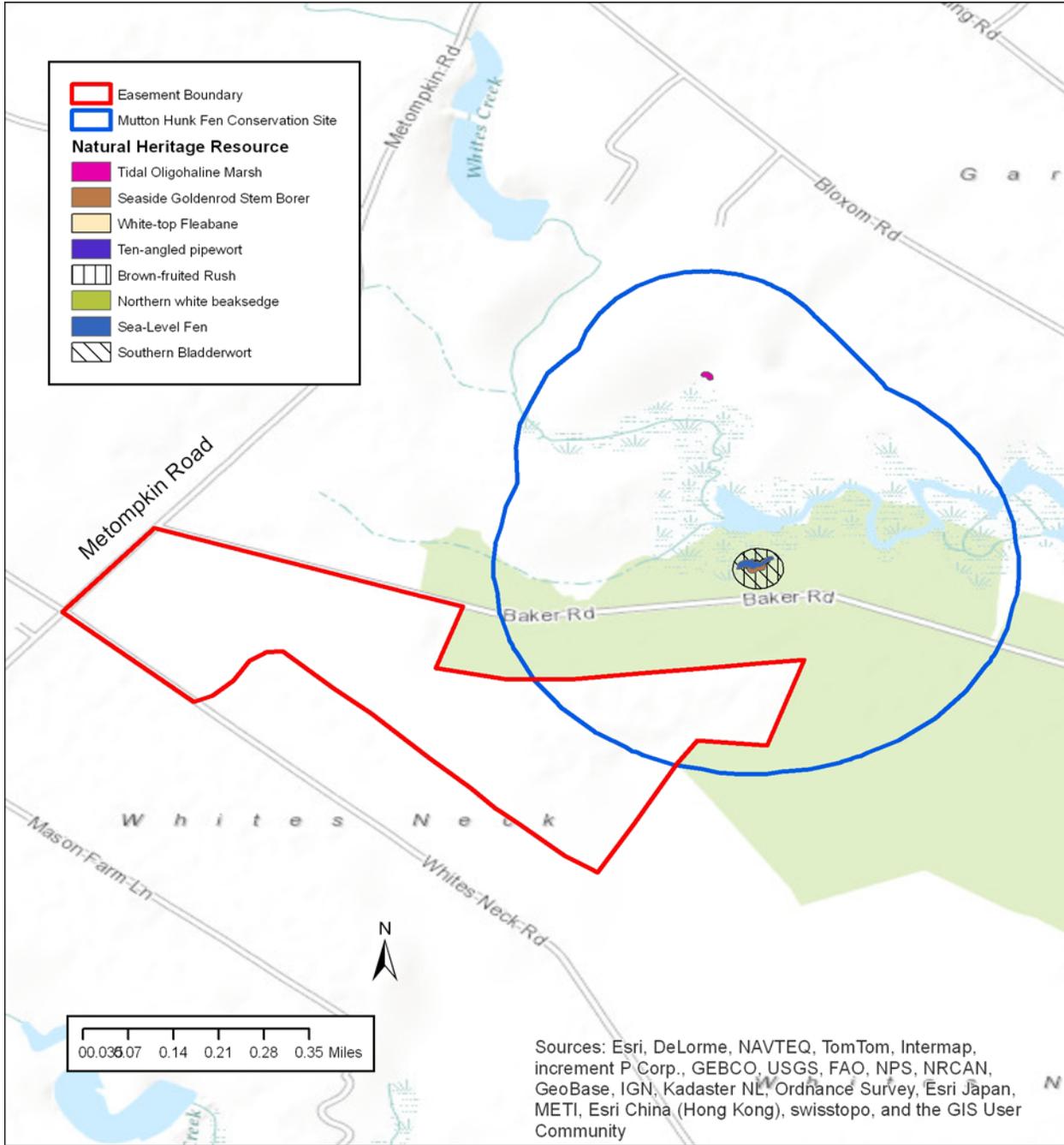


Figure 5. Mutton Hunk Fen Conservation Site and associated natural heritage resource locations relative to GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property

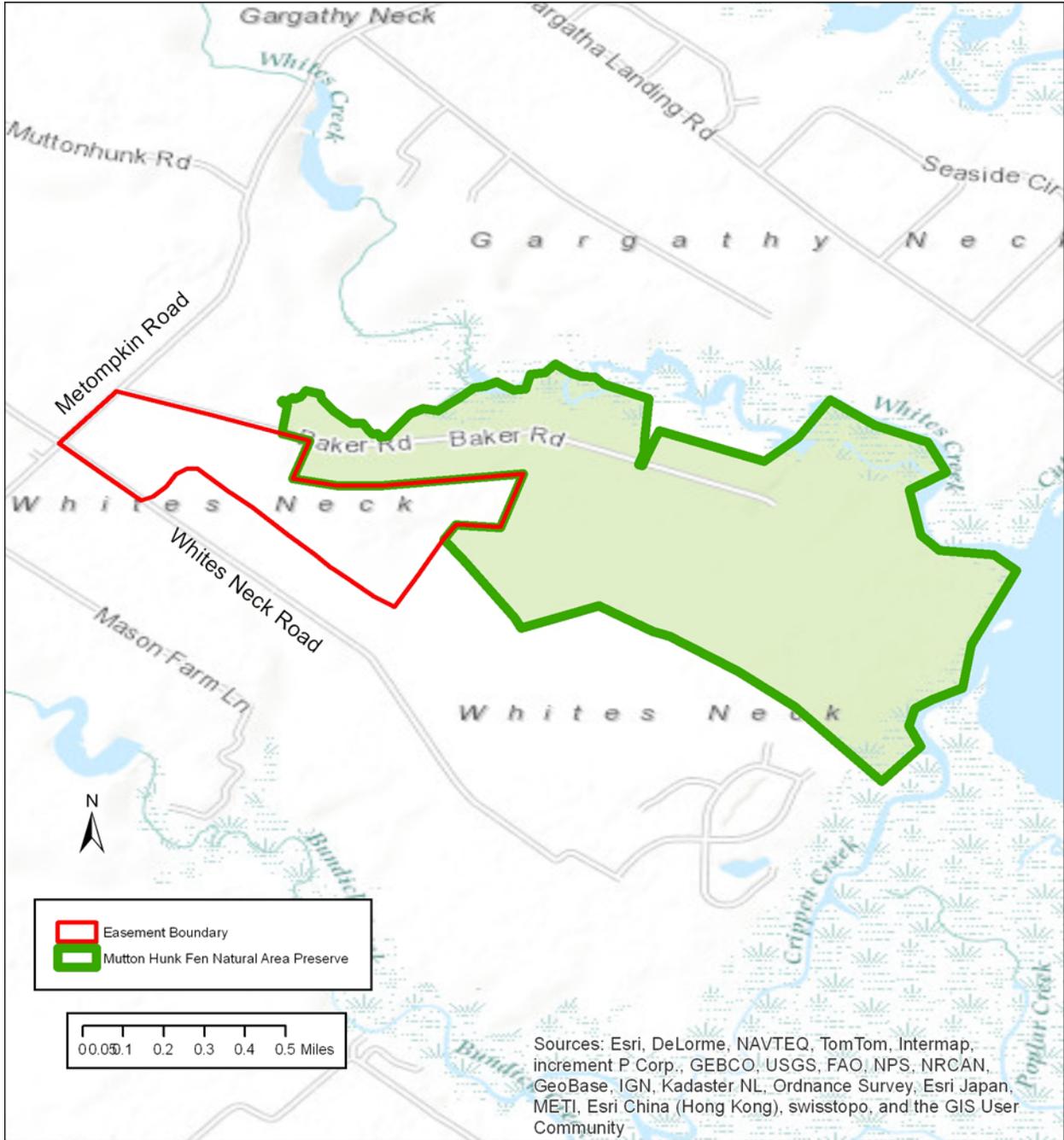


Figure 6. Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve in relation to GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property

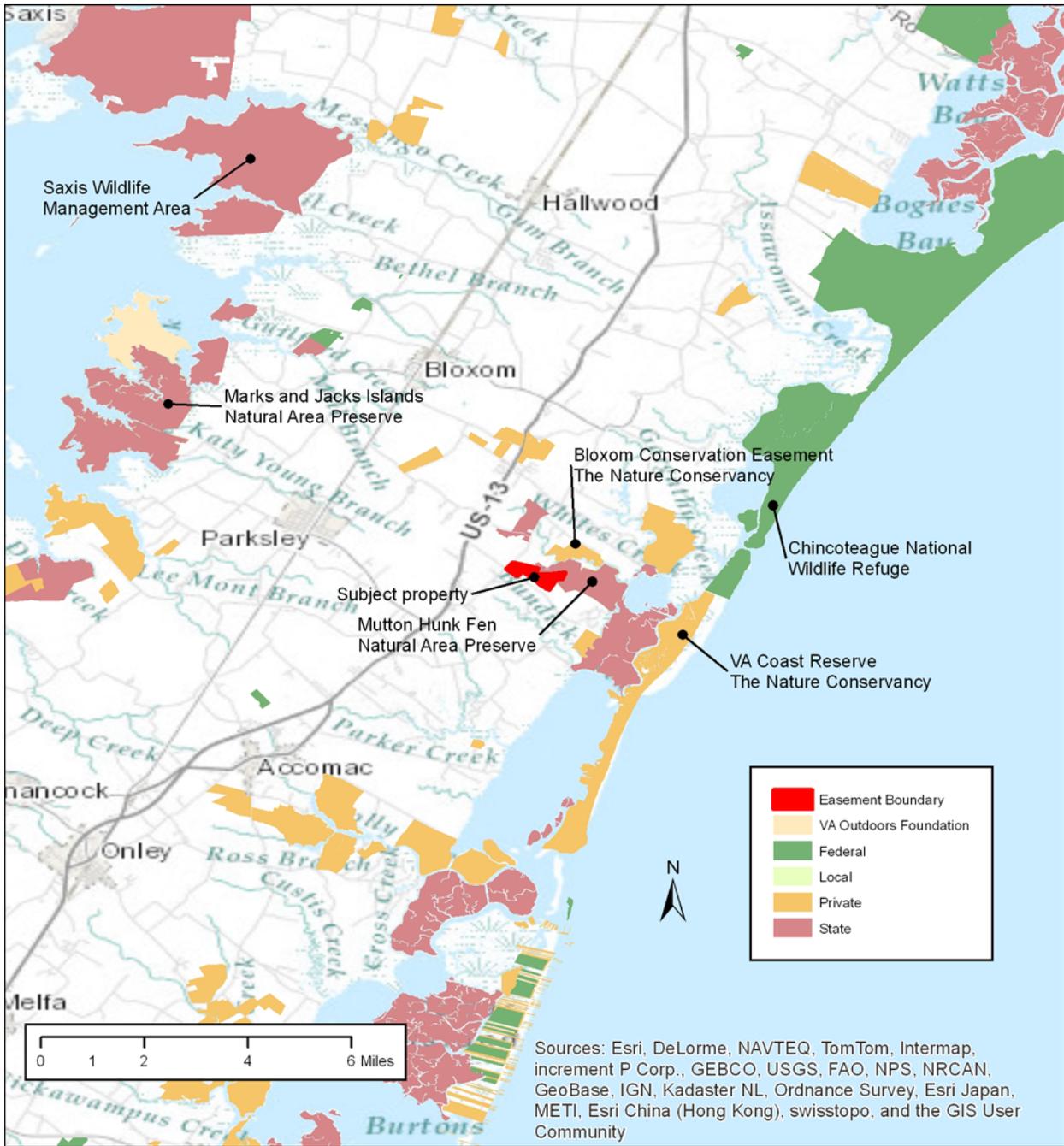


Figure 7. Protected lands in vicinity of GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property

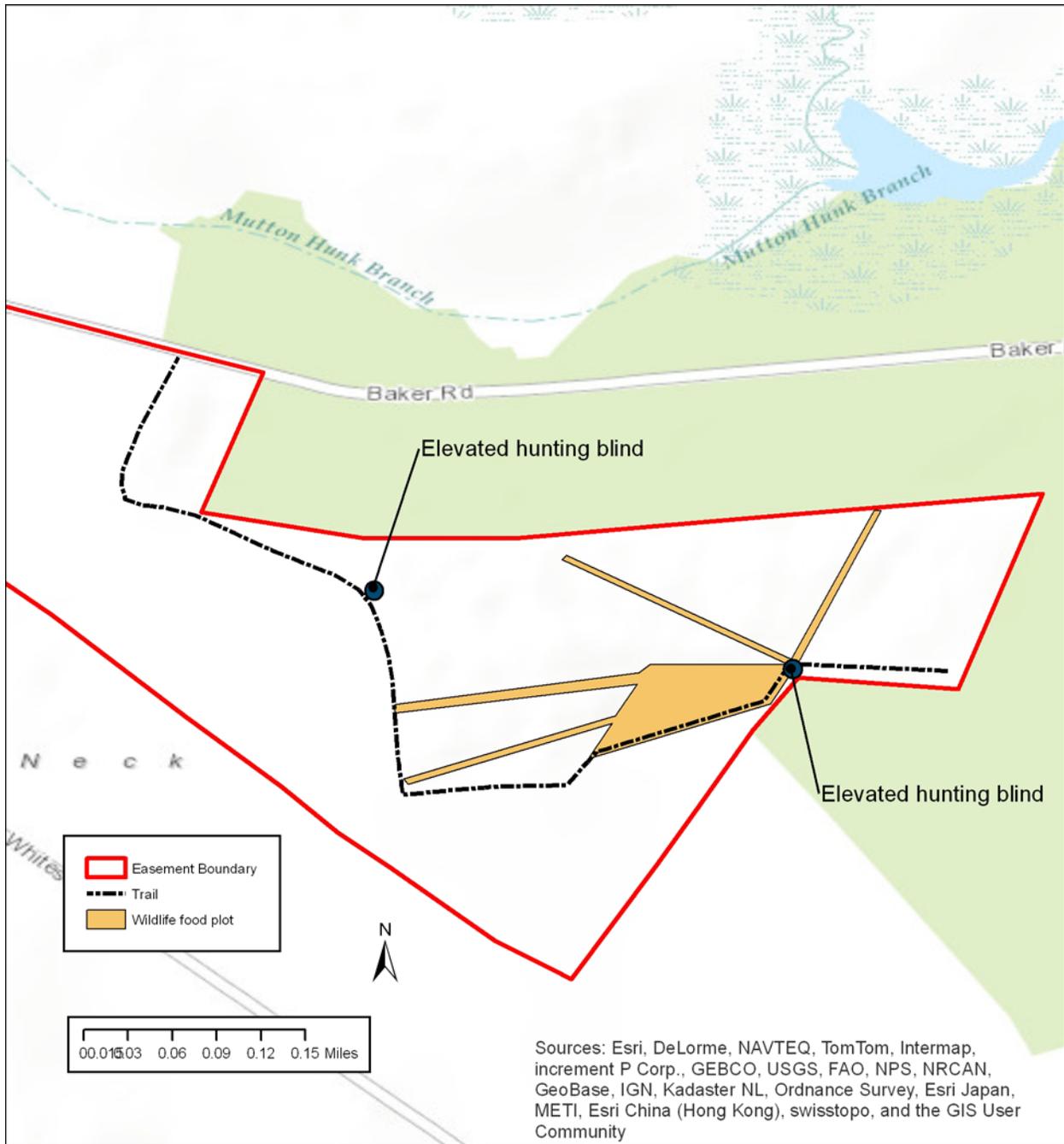


Figure 8. Manmade features on GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property.

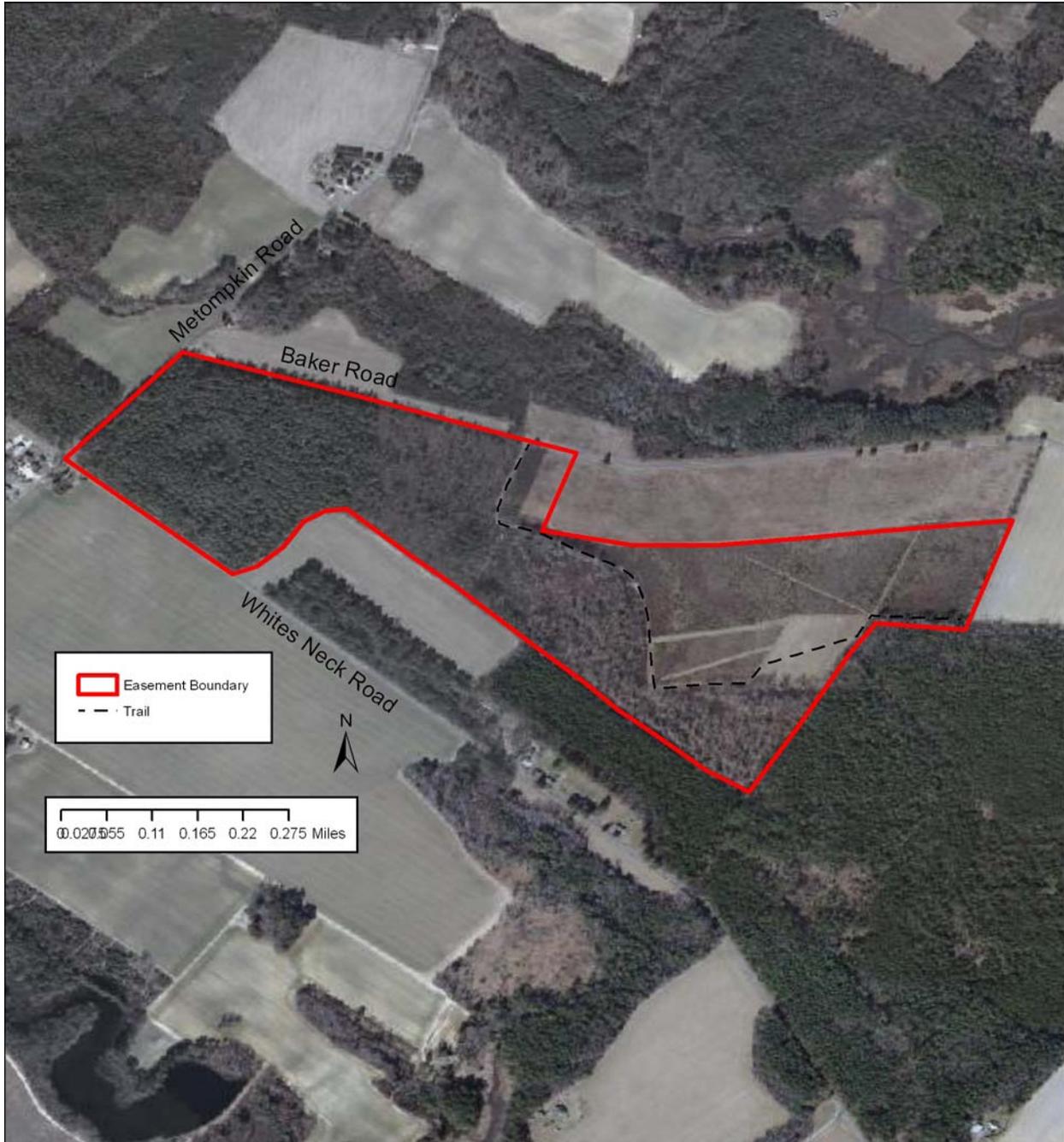


Figure 9. Aerial photograph of GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property (Virginia Geographic Information Network, 2009)

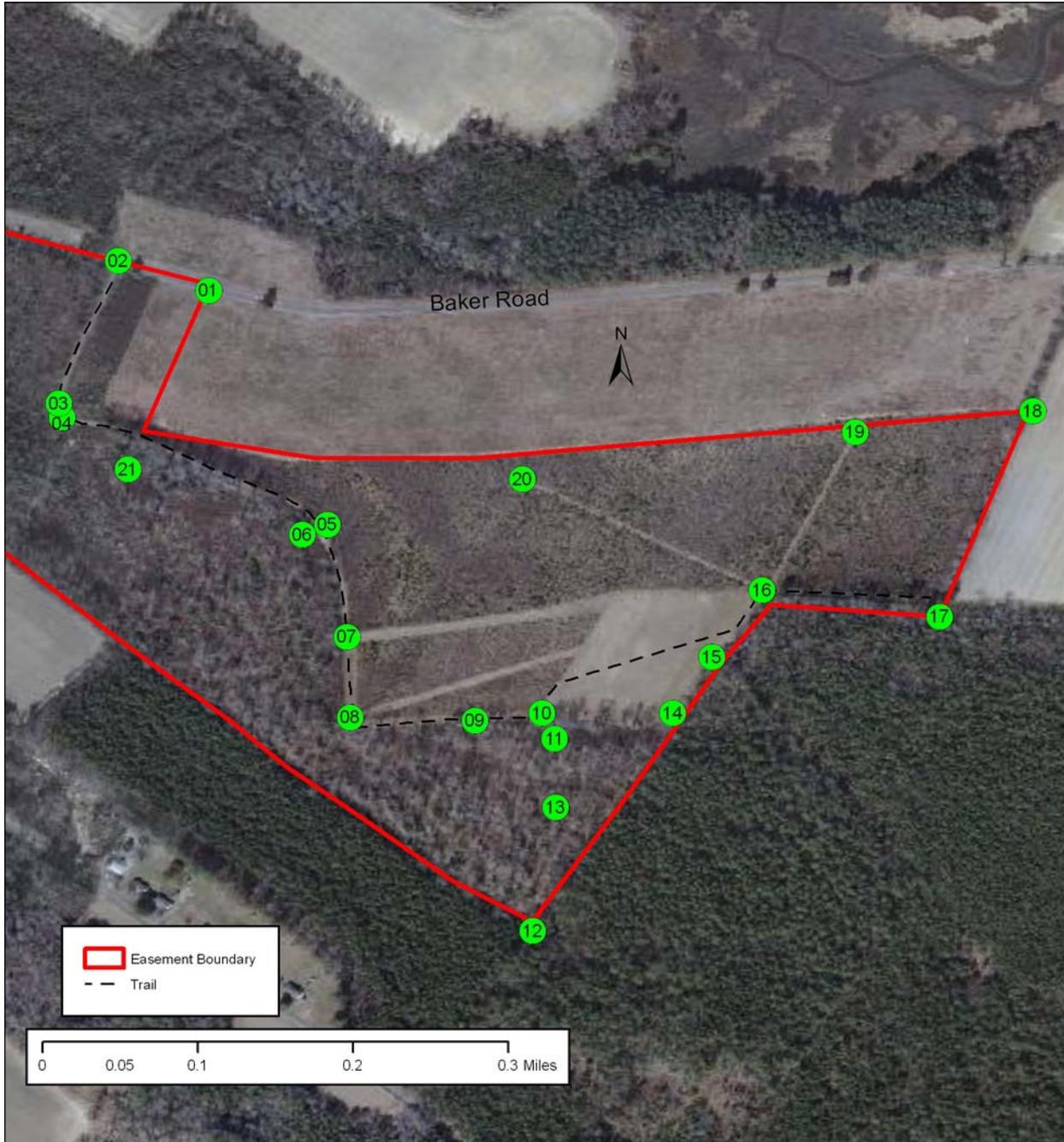


Figure 10. Photo point locations on eastern side of GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property



Figure 11. Photo point locations on western side of GRB Family Limited Partnership, LLLP property

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01_pt01_225d_East corner on Baker Rd at NAP



03_pt02_155d_At gate on Baker Rd



02_pt01_285d_East corner on Baker Rd at NAP



04_pt02_235d_At gate on Baker Rd



05_pt02_290d_At gate on Baker Rd



07_pt02_nad_Trash dumped at gate at Baker Rd



06_pt02_nad_Trash dumped at gate at Baker Rd



08_pt03_20d_View NNE along trail



09_pt03_130d_Mowed opening cutting corner at turn in trail



11_pt03_290d_Mowed opening at forest edge along trail



10_pt03_175d_View S along trail near turn



12_pt04_105d_View to ESE along trail at turn



13_pt04_250d_Mowed opening at forest edge along trail



15_pt05_180d_View S along trail near W hunting blind



14_pt05_40d_Overgrown shooting lane at W hunting blind



16_pt05_340d_Western elevated hunting blind



17_pt06_80d_Old overgrown road bed



19_pt07_0d_View N along trail at end of shooting lane



18_pt06_315d_Old overgrown road bed



20_pt07_95d_View E along shooting lane at intersection with trail



21_pt07_190d_View S along trail at end of shooting lane



23_pt08_75d_View E along shooting lane at intersection with trail



22_pt08_10d_View N along trail near turn and end of shooting lane



24_pt08_95d_View E at turn in trail



25_pt08_225d_View toward forest at turn in trail



27_pt10_60d_View ENE across wildlife food plot



26_pt09_95d_Disk harrow at side of trail



28_pt10_110d_View ESE across wildlife food plot



29_pt10_285d_View W along trail at edge of wildlife food plot



31_pt11_115d_Recently thinned forest



30_pt11_0d_Recently thinned forest



32_pt11_200d_Recently thinned forest



33_pt11_270d_Recently thinned forest



35_pt12_330d_Southern-most corner



34_pt12_30d_Southern-most corner



36_pt13_325d_Recently thinned forest



37_pt14_45d_Corner of regenerating old field



39_pt14_285d_Corner of regenerating old field



38_pt14_180d_Corner of regenerating old field



40_pt14_350d_Corner of regenerating old field



41_pt15_25d_Edge of regenerating old field at corner of NAP



43_pt15_240d_Edge of regenerating old field at corner of NAP



42_pt15_90d_Boundary corner of NAP on E line of subject property



44_pt16_30d_Shooting lane from near E hunting blind



45_pt16_110d_Trail along edge of NAP from near E hunting blind



46_pt16_150d_Eastern elevated hunting blind



47_pt16_200d_Wildlife food plot from near E hunting blind



49_pt17_330d_Ditches at corner with NAP



48_pt16_315d_Shooting lane from near E hunting blind



50_pt18_235d_NE Corner at NAP



51_pt18_285d_NE Corner at NAP



53_pt19_215d_N end of eastern shooting lane



52_pt19_130d_Young pine and sweet gum forest at N end of eastern shooting lane



54_pt19_310d_Young pine and sweet gum forest at N end of eastern shooting lane



55_pt20_130d_NW end of central shooting lane



57_pt21_0d_Thinned mesic hardwood forest



56_pt20_310d_NW end of central shooting lane



58_pt21_90d_Thinned mesic hardwood forest



59_pt21_180d_Thinned mesic hardwood forest



61_pt22_0d_Mature pine forest S of Baker Rd



60_pt21_270d_Thinned mesic hardwood forest



62_pt22_90d_Mature pine forest S of Baker Rd



63_pt22_180d_Mature pine forest S of Baker Rd



65_pt23_0d_Edge of ag field along S boundary



64_pt22_270d_Mature pine forest S of Baker Rd



66_pt23_45d_Edge of ag field along S boundary



67_pt23_110d_Edge of ag field along S boundary



69_pt24_110d_Edge of ag field at turn in S boundary



68_pt24_5d_Edge of ag field at turn in S boundary



70_pt24_280d_Edge of ag field at turn in S boundary



71_pt25_60d_Boundary corner at Whites Neck Rd



73_pt26_0d_Mature pine forest 20 feet NE of Whites Neck Rd



72_pt25_340d_Boundary corner at Whites Neck Rd



74_pt26_50d_Mature pine forest 20 feet NE of Whites Neck Rd



75_pt26_130d_Mature pine forest 20 feet NE of Whites Neck Rd



77_pt27_135d_Boundary corner at Whites Neck Rd and Metompkin Rd



76_pt27_90d_Boundary corner at Whites Neck Rd and Metompkin Rd



78_pt28_0d_Mature pine forest 60 feet SE of Metompkin Rd

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79_pt28_90d_Mature pine forest 60 feet SE of Metompkin Rd



81_pt28_270d_Mature pine forest 60 feet SE of Metompkin Rd



80_pt28_180d_Mature pine forest 60 feet SE of Metompkin Rd



82_pt29_155d_Boundary corner at Baker Rd and Metompkin Rd

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83_pt29_205d_Boundary corner at Baker Rd and Metompkin Rd



85_pt30_210d_Boundary along Baker Rd



84_pt30_140d_Boundary along Baker Rd



86_pt30_280d_Boundary along Baker Rd



87_pt31_0d_Mature pine forest 90 feet SW of Baker Rd



89_pt31_180d_Mature pine forest 90 feet SW of Baker Rd



88_pt31_90d_Mature pine forest 90 feet SW of Baker Rd



90_pt31_270d_Mature pine forest 90 feet SW of Baker Rd