FINAL REPORT

Project Title: A Beautiful Woods – the Fee Purchase of 1.1 acres of dune woodlands to expand the Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve, Northampton County, Virginia (Lot 2)

Grant #: NA13NOS4190135 Task 10

October 21, 2015

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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 30, 2015, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) completed the fee purchase of a 1.145 acre lot in a ten lot subdivision that is adjacent to the Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve in Northampton County. This property is now owned by DCR and is permanently protected through its designation as open-space land and dedication as a Virginia natural area preserve. Funding for the purchase of Lot 2 and associated project expenses came from this $164,073 grant, plus $21,576 in FY12 306A funds (Task 10.2) and $117,351 FY14 306A funds (Task 10).

This project is located on the Southern Tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore. The Southern Tip partner agencies and organizations have endorsed a long range initiative to expand the Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve by purchasing two or more of the adjacent and undeveloped Chesapeake Bay front lots. The permanent protection of this single lot is a small but important part of the strategy to strengthen protection for coastal wildlife, natural communities and natural heritage resources of the Southern Tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore.

The Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve falls within a natural heritage conservation area that supports exceptional beach, secondary dune, wetland, and maritime forest habitats, and a federal and state threatened species of tiger beetle. This area on the Southern Tip of the Virginia's Eastern Shore falls within a critical migration corridor for songbirds. While DCR's protected properties at Pickett's Harbor provide permanent protection for these habitats, additional acreage is needed to strengthen protection for these rare resources.

The purchase of this lot at Pickett's Harbor was a protection priority for the Virginia CZM Program, DCR, The Nature Conservancy and all of the other Southern Tip partners for the reasons stated below:

1) The lot falls within a purple "Outstanding" area of the Virginia Ecological Value map; see www.coastalgems.org produced by Virginia CZM network agencies.
2) The lot provides protection for the state and globally rare Maritime Upland Forest (G2S2) that is part of an extensive occurrence found on the ten undeveloped lots at Pickets Harbor, the Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve and the adjoining dunes on the tract to the north. This natural community type is declining in Virginia with only a few outstanding examples left.
3) The lot provides increased protection for the Southern Tip Landbird Migratory Concentration Area (G3/S1). Pickett's Harbor also falls within Audubon's Lower Delmarva Important Bird Area, recognized for the critical habitat it provides for migratory songbirds.
4) The lot provides ample room for landward migration of habitats in the face of sea level rise and erosional forces.
5) Purchase of this lot would help to forestall future neighbor impacts to the preserve such as construction, visitor traffic and debris and disturbance of the natural heritage resources occurrences found here.
6) Purchase of this lot would reduce potential for neighbor and preserve management conflicts such as introduction of invasive species, pesticide use and access issues.

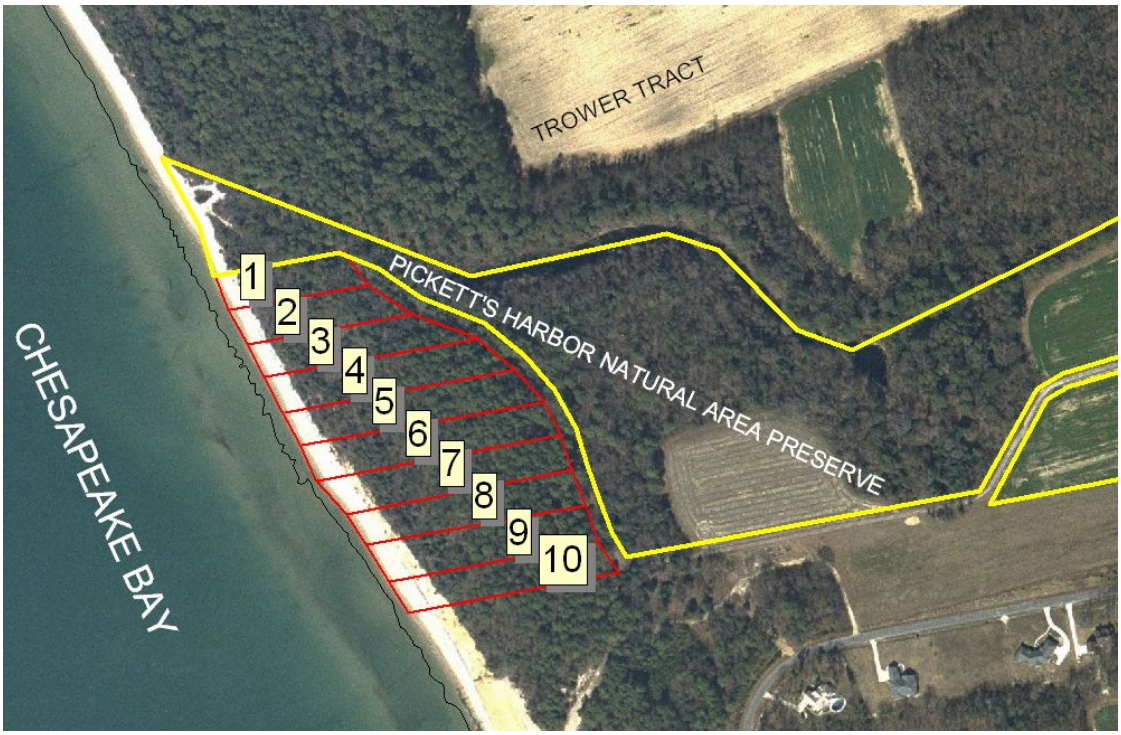
The Pickett’s Harbor Natural Area Preserve was first established in 1994 to help protect the high quality Chesapeake Bay beach and dune habitats found here. This preserve provides habitats that are critical for migrating birds, particularly songbirds, and for the likelihood of maintaining viable populations of the northeastern beach tiger beetle. Migratory songbird stopover habitats are especially critical because such huge numbers of birds must find places to rest and feed within such small areas, or "bottlenecks", like the southern tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore. Breaks in suitable habitat such as croplands and lawns create dangerous areas which the songbirds must cross at risk of being preyed upon by raptors that are migrating along with them

The Commonwealth of Virginia contracted with Mr. James Windley, MAI of Virginia Commonwealth Appraisals, Inc for a fee appraisal of Lots 1 and 2. The appraisal was completed and dated May 28, 2015. The appraisal was reviewed by James H. Boykin, PhD. and was approved by Dr. Boykin on June 24, 2015. Title work was completed by Bridge Trust Title Group of Virginia Beach. A Phase 1 environmental assessment and report and surveys of Lots 1 and 2 were completed for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation under the direction of Mr. Ben Brashears of Marsh & Legge Land Surveyors of Winchester Virginia.

Project Photos and Map

Forested dunes on Lots 1 and 2 purchased by VDCR. This photo is looking north and shows the Chesapeake Bay to the west of the protected property.

The dunes on Lots 1 and 2 support a maritime forest of loblolly pine and hardwoods.



DCR purchased Lots 1and 2 from the ten lot subdivision to expand the protection of the forested dunes and Chesapeake Bay beach habitats at Pickett's Harbor.

Funding partners sign for Lots 1 and 2 at the Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve.