

# ***522 Acres in Charles Co. Slated for New Wildlife Management Area***

*Board of Public Works Approves Program Open Space Acquisition*

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*By Maryland Department of Natural Resources*

ANNAPOLIS (Feb. 21, 2018)—The Board of Public Works today unanimously approved a Maryland Department of Natural Resources acquisition of 522 acres in Charles County for the development of a new Wildlife Management Area that will provide both conservation and recreation benefits.

Adjacent to county managed land, the site will provide numerous recreational opportunities for Southern Maryland residents and visitors, including birding, hiking, hunting and trapping. The new property will be managed by the Wildlife and Heritage Service.

The acquisition will permanently protect agricultural fields and forested uplands as well as stream corridors and ravines. The property drains into Popes Creek and its 60-acre estuarine marsh, much of which has been protected by the county.

Popes Creek Valley has been identified as a Natural Heritage Area. The acquisition will further protect the creek's wetlands, which support an uncommonly high diversity of flora and fauna, and large woodlands that provide essential habitat for forest interior dwelling species such as songbirds.

"This acquisition is a win-win for environmental advocates and outdoor enthusiasts," Maryland Natural Resources Secretary Mark Belton said. "This incredibly beautiful property, right off the Potomac River, will protect ecologically-sensitive habitat, wetlands and woodlands while providing an excellent location for outdoor recreational activities and opportunities, be it hiking or hunting."

The property also provides important scenic value along the Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway and the Booth's Escape National Scenic Byway.

The Program Open Space acquisition was leveraged with funds from the U.S. Navy Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program through the U.S. SHARES

Department of Defense.

The department also worked in cooperation with The Trust for Public Land to complete this acquisition.