

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOREST SERVICE

POCOMOKE RIVER WILDLANDS EXPANSION AND RECREATIONAL TRAIL PROPOSAL IN WORCESTER COUNTY



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT PROPOSAL: The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Maryland Forest Service is proposing to expand the Pocomoke River Wildlands and adjust the Wildlands boundary to create a public access passageway in Worcester County. The proposal consists of two main elements:

- (1) Expansion of the current boundary of the Pocomoke River Wildland by designating a newly acquired parcel of State Forest adjacent to the Pocomoke River as Wildlands. The proposed addition is comprised of the same forest type as the existing Wildland and will serve to expand and enhance the existing wildland river corridor.

- (2) Exempting the creation of a public access passageway through the existing Pocomoke River Wildland that will allow the creation of a recreational trail through the Wildland. The trail will be composed of natural surface in areas where elevation and site conditions allow, and an elevated boardwalk in those areas where a natural surface trail would not be sustainable.

PUBLIC BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL: The following primary public benefits are intended:

- (1) Ecological benefits: The proposed modification of the Pocomoke River Wildlands will increase the area of designated wildlands by approximately 79.63 acres, as well as extend the wildlands designation along the Pocomoke River by approximately 0.73 miles, providing a significant ecological benefit to the Wildlands.
- (2) Recreational benefits: The proposed public access passageway trail would create a new and unique opportunity for public enjoyment and understanding of the ecological benefits of the state Wildlands system. While State-designated Wildlands may be managed for passive recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, horseback riding and nature interpretation, it is extremely challenging for citizens of the state to access any of the state wildlands system (this is in contrast to the federal wilderness system, which is significantly more accessible for public visitation). The proposed passageway / trail would allow visitors to experience the Pocomoke River Wildland in an accessible manner that is currently not available and dramatically improve and enhance public understanding of the ecological significance of the Wildlands.
- (3) Tourism benefits: The proposal would greatly enhance outdoor tourism opportunities in Worcester County by creating a trail connection between the Town of Snow Hill and the Pocomoke River State Park Shad Landing area. Currently, the only option for visitors is to drive to either location, and there is no accessible way to experience the Wildland. The proposal would significantly expand trail opportunities for visitors to the Town of Snow Hill and the State Park, improving tourism opportunities in Worcester County and allowing visitors an opportunity, unique in the entire state, to see/visit/experience a wildland, which is in keeping with one of the Statutory purposes of establishing the wildlands system.

GENERAL BACKGROUND: DNR's 2019 acquisition of the Summerfield tract adjacent to the Pocomoke River State Forest has provided the opportunity for these two proposed actions. One of the purposes of the acquisition was to expand protection of the Pocomoke River corridor, and the proposal to designate the additional acreage to the existing Pocomoke River Wildlands dovetails with the purposes of the acquisition. Another purpose of the acquisition was to expand recreational trail opportunities on the State Forest, and this proposal would also dovetail with that purpose. Further, the proposed trail connection would be an extension of a complementary trail project initiated in the summer of 2020. This will benefit both the residents and visitors in Snow Hill and Pocomoke River State Park.

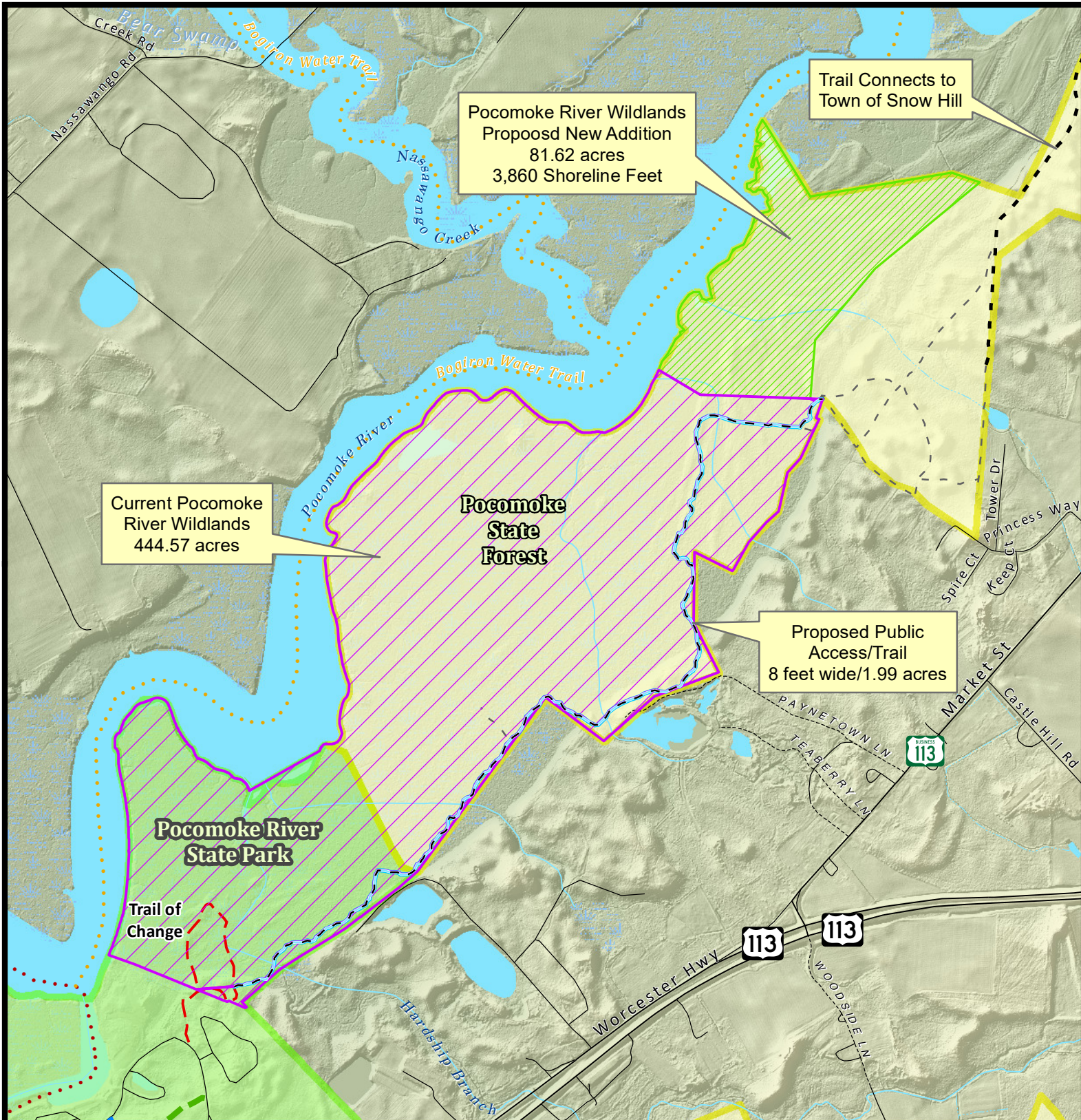
If there is sufficient public support for this proposal, the public access passageway / trail would be developed through a collaborative planning process between the Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Park Service, and the Town of Snow Hill with the intention of providing a unique ecological and historical

attraction in Worcester County that would allow visitors to travel from Snow Hill to Pocomoke River State Park and better understand the value of the Wildlands.

A Map of the Proposal is provided below

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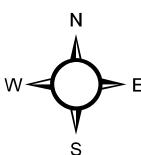


Legend

- Proposed Public Access/Trail - 8 ft. Wide
- Current Pocomoke River Wildlands - 444.57 ac.
- Proposed Public Access/Trail - 1.99 ac.
- Pocomoke River Wildlands Proposed New Addition - 81.62 ac.
- Pocomoke State Forest
- Pocomoke River State Park

1,320 0 1,320 2,640 3,960 Feet

This map is for planning purposes only.
This map is not a boundary survey.



Scale: 1:15,840
Prepared by: ASC
Date: 9/2/2020

