

# **Newtown Neck State Park Master Plan Final**

**Department of Natural Resources  
Maryland Park Service**

**February 16, 2016**

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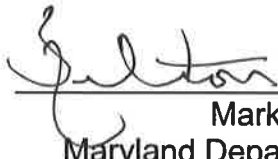
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Approval of the Master Plan for Newtown Neck State Park has been granted on this  
23 rd day of MARCH, 2016.



Mark Belton, Secretary  
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

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# Newtown Neck State Park Master Plan

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## **Introduction**

This master plan has been prepared by the Department of Natural Resources to guide the conservation, use, development, and management of Newtown Neck State Park. This master plan provides background information on the property and lays out a vision for the future. The purpose of this plan is to provide for the protection, conservation, and effective management of this ecologically and culturally significant property for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Newtown Neck State Park is a unique property and State ownership and management will ensure that important recreation, heritage tourism, wildlife management, and environmental protection opportunities will be actively pursued and implemented for residents of and visitors to St. Mary's County, Southern Maryland and the State.

## **Chapter 1: Overview of Newtown Neck State Park**

### **Location**

Newtown Neck State Park is located on the Potomac River in western central St. Mary's County. The property is located west of Route 5 at the end of Newtown Neck Road (Route 243). It is approximately eight miles from the town of Leonardtown, which is the county seat for St. Mary's County. The property is a narrow peninsula, approximately three miles long and varying in width from one-half mile to slightly more than a mile wide, with St. Clement's Bay to the west, the Potomac River to the south, and Breton Bay to the east.

### **History**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jesuit Priest Father William Treacy described the area that is now Newtown Neck State Park as "one of the most hallowed spots on this continent." This description highlights the uniqueness of the property and its connection to history, religion, and the area's natural resources that are woven together in the rich and complex story of the founding of the country and related struggles for freedom and independence. It is believed that the rich natural resources of the area attracted American Indians that occupied the area as early as 4000 B.C. With easy access to the Potomac River, Breton Bay, and St. Clement's Bay, the American Indians fished and tilled the soil, raising beans, maize, and tobacco. There is evidence suggesting that the Piscataway and Europeans may have occupied the peninsula together at some point. Prior to the colonization of the Newtown Neck peninsula by English colonists, the English adventurer Captain John Smith was known to have traveled the area between 1607 and 1609 and mapped out the Newtown Neck shoreline and its indigenous communities.

In 1640, Leonard Calvert, the first proprietary Governor of Maryland conveyed Newtown Neck to William Bretton. A small town began to develop on the property, and the English settlers and the local Indians traded with one another. Around this time, Jesuit priests in the area accepted a donation of land to erect a church and graveyard. In 1662, St. Francis Xavier Church was constructed on the property after colonial discrimination against Catholics, which had previously plagued English colonists, had diminished. In 1668, Father Henry Warren purchased the 700 acres on which the Manor of Little Bretton was built from Mr. Bretton for 40,000 pounds of tobacco, to establish a central hub for Jesuit mission work to be conducted within the area and

surrounding colonies. The Newtown Neck Catholic community was able to engage public worship and education until 1688 when friction with Protestants reached a tipping point. The passage of a law in 1704 further restricted the Catholic's religious freedom, and the chapel closed that same year. The parish remained viable by practicing in a chapel attached to Newtown Manor, and sometime between 1704 and 1719, the original St. Francis Xavier Church was burned down. In 1731, the current St. Francis Xavier Church was constructed with no religious markings, and in 1789 the present day Newtown Manor was constructed.

Local history of the area includes mention of Newtown Neck, and the presence of British soldiers during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. In 1776, although the manor house was significantly damaged during the war, it is believed that it may have been used as a hospital for wounded soldiers. During the War of 1812, Newtown Neck served as a strategic landing site for British troops that marched to Leonardtown. Following the War of 1812, occupation of the peninsula by the Jesuits continued. An elaborate and unique addition was constructed on the church in 1816, to accommodate a sacristy, confessional, and formal entry area. There were also significant improvements made to the manor house to accommodate formal parish events. In 1868, the missionaries relocated their headquarters to Leonardtown; however, they maintained ownership of the farm and manor house and agricultural use of the land continued on many of the same fields that are farmed today.

Worship and services at St. Francis Xavier Church continued after the missionaries left, and the Church was a focal point of the surrounding community. Some parishioners traveled by boat to the Church. Members of the Church indicated that there were paths to the Church from the Breton Bay and St. Clement's Bay.

The establishment of new religious structures on the peninsula sparked interest in the excavation of the old Newtown Neck settlement, and in the 1920s and 1930s archaeologists began mapping out potential excavation sites. Leading the effort to uncover the Newtown Neck settlement artifacts was Judge William J. Graham, an avocational archaeologist from Washington, working in cooperation with Smithsonian archaeologists. Their objective was to find and preserve the area's rich Native American and English Colonial history. However archeological investigations of the Newtown Neck area temporarily ceased when the property was put to a different use in support of military research and testing.

From 1942 to 1947, physicists from John Hopkins University (JHU) and the Navy Bureau of Ordnance conducted recovery test field operations for various types of electronic fuse parts to be used in World War II. The fuses were tested through controlled launches onto the Newtown Neck property to detect the reliability of components used in the Navy's development of explosive munitions during the war. After deployment, the munitions were recovered and returned to the JHU Applied Physics Laboratory in Silver Spring Maryland to undergo further testing. Although a majority of these wartime munitions were recovered, a small minority of the fuses remained on the Newtown Neck peninsula.

After the Navy's lease of the property ended in 1947, archaeological surveys on the Newtown Neck property resumed, and many areas on the peninsula have since been deemed areas of

cultural sensitivity and worthy of protection. The acquisition of the Newtown Neck peninsula property by the Department of Natural Resources in 2009 has provided an unprecedented opportunity to continue archaeological survey work and study of the area while also protecting these significant cultural resources. Additionally, the use of the property as a State Park that provides access to the public will allow visitors to learn about the rich and varied history of Newtown Neck. The peninsula's role in Maryland's history provides opportunities for visitors to learn about and explore a variety of themes including Native American occupation, European settlement, religious freedom, tobacco farming, slavery, and three significant wars.

### **St. Francis Xavier Church and Newtown Manor House**

Although not located on Newtown Neck State Park property, St. Francis Xavier Church and Newtown Manor are an important element of the peninsula's historic landscape. The Church and manor house are located approximately one half mile south of the northern boundary of Newtown Neck State Park and remain an historic attraction of the Newtown Neck area. It is believed that the settlement's Jesuit priests began missionary work with the local Indians and settlers beginning in the 1630s and 1640s, and in 1649 the Jesuit mission of the area was formally established. In 1668 the Jesuit priests purchased the manor of Little Bretton and the surrounding 700 acre farm. Tenants and overseers of the church conducted farm work on the property to provide the necessary income to support the area's Jesuit community and their religious activities. Throughout the later decades of the seventeenth century the settlement served as the county's seat and religious center, but in 1695 the county seat was moved to Leonardtown. In 1868 the settlement ceased to serve as the county's religious center, and the Jesuit headquarters relocated to Leonardtown.

The original church and manor date back to the mid-seventeenth century, a product of early Jesuit Catholic settlement in the region, and stood as a testament to the region's religious roots. Although the original church chapel and Bretton Manor house were believed to have burned down sometime prior to 1719, a new chapel-house and manor were constructed in the mid and late-eighteenth century, respectively.

In 1967 the St. Francis Xavier Church, the Newtown Manor, and the nine and one-half acres on which the two structures are built were transferred to the Archdiocese of Washington. In 1972, St. Francis Xavier Church and the Newtown Manor House were added to the National Register of Historic Places and underwent restoration efforts. To celebrate completion of the restoration work, a dedication ceremony was held in the fall of 1984. In 2009, the remaining Jesuit land holding of Newtown Neck (approximately 750 acres) was purchased by the State of Maryland as part of the Maryland Province Properties. To this day, St. Francis Xavier Church, Newtown Manor, and the surrounding Archdiocese property are cared for and maintained by the parish, continuing a long tradition of religious and community service in the area.

### **Acquisition**

In 2009, the State of Maryland purchased the Newtown Neck State Park property from the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergyman as part of a major conservation initiative with The Conservation Fund that involved four properties in three counties, 19.5 miles of shoreline, and approximately 4,500 acres. The purchase of the "Maryland Province Properties" was a unique



opportunity to acquire large undeveloped and ecologically significant lands that had been in continuous ownership by the Society of Jesus since the early 1600s. These properties played an important role in Maryland's history, including occupation by American Indians, exploration by Captain John Smith, early colonial settlement in Maryland, and these public lands provide opportunities to tell the story of the significance of religious freedom and tolerance in the New World.

The ten acres around St. Francis Xavier Church and the historic Manor House were retained by the Archdiocese of Washington as a privately held inholding. St. Francis Xavier Parish has approximately 300 parishioners, and services are held on Saturdays, Sundays, several weekdays, and Holy Days. In addition, there is a parish hall that is used for numerous parish activities and events. The pastor lives in the rectory on the property.

### **Naming the Park**

Part of the process of establishing a new State park and planning for future improvements and recreational access is selecting a name for the property that is significant and meaningful. In many cases, names are tied to important natural or cultural resources that can facilitate an understanding of how the property fits into the larger regional landscape. Historical research of the property includes references to the land grant to William Bretton where the property was referred to as the Manor at Little Britton, Bretton's Outlet, and Britton's Neck. It seems that use of the name "Newtown" may have been based on the use of the name "Newtown Hundred" which referred to the general area of modern-day Loveville, Hollywood, and Leonardtown. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Newtown Hundred was divided into two separate districts: Upper and Lower. The park and surrounding lands were included in the Upper Newtown Hundred. Around this time, the Jesuit-owned property was referred to as "Newtown Manor" or the "Manor at Newtown."

Historically, it is not unusual for peninsula landforms to be referred to as "necks;" however, it is not clear when the area where the State park is located was more formally named and officially mapped as Newtown Neck. Historic United States Geological Survey maps refer to the general geographical area as Newtown Neck, perhaps in recognition of the significance of the Newtown Manor House. During the time the property was used by the Navy, it was identified as both the Newtown Neck Recovery Test Field and Newtown Neck Proving Ground. There do not appear to be any relevant historic references to the area with the spelling "Newtown" with an "e."

In naming this park, it is the Department of Natural Resources' desire to acknowledge both its cultural and natural resources. The name "Newtown Neck State Park" reflects the history of the property, its geographic location, and its unique configuration as a narrow strip of land heavily influenced by surrounding waterways.

### **The Planning Process**

The development of a park master plan is essential to ensuring a vital and sustainable park that provides recreational opportunities and conserves natural and cultural resources. In general, the planning process involves identifying general goals; analyzing the site's natural and cultural features; developing a list of desirable uses, activities, and facilities; preparing a suitability map; developing one or more design alternatives; and selecting and refining a preferred alternative to

become the master plan for the park. The Newtown Neck Master Plan Advisory Committee was actively involved in all of these stages of the planning process and played an important role in balancing diverse user interests and desires.

This master plan process was started in 2009 when the Newtown Neck State Park property and three other properties, totaling 4,500 acres, known as the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus Properties (Maryland Province Properties), were acquired. During that year, an internal workgroup composed of DNR staff from the Forest Service, the Park Service, and Land Acquisition and Planning, as well as staff from the MD Historical Trust collaborated to develop a stewardship plan and a general approach to managing the four properties. A targeted stakeholders meeting was held in November 2009, and in April 2010, a visioning plan entitled “A Vision for the Future: Uniting and Interpreting the Province Properties” was released. This vision plan outlined some general goals for the properties and included the need to develop more specific plans for each property. Before any significant amount of work on a more detailed plan for Newtown Neck State Park was done, planning efforts were delayed due to the discovery of munitions on the property in 2012. After extensive research and evaluation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that culminated in a determination that the property could be safely used as a park, planning work for the property started again in April 2014.

This master plan represents an eighteen month effort by the Department of Natural Resources staff using a variety of information collection methods and resource materials to comprehensively evaluate the recreational and resource protection opportunities and challenges at Newtown Neck State Park. In its efforts to ensure that the needs and desires of Maryland’s citizens are thoughtfully considered throughout the planning process, the Department used a variety of methods to solicit the opinions and recommendations from stakeholder groups, the local community, and the public. Throughout the planning process, the public was invited to participate using the following methods:

#### **Newtown Neck Master Plan Advisory Committee**

A 25 member Newtown Neck State Park Master Plan Advisory Committee was formed with members representing various stakeholder groups that had expressed interest in Newtown Neck State Park or had been part of the initial planning effort for the Maryland Province Properties. Advisory Committee members participated in formal master plan meetings with Park Service staff, held informational meetings with and solicited comments from the groups they represented, and made recommendations to elected officials.

DNR staff met formally with this group eleven times during the plan development process. Initial meetings focused on defining the master plan process, assessing the property’s natural features, and evaluating significant cultural resources and how to protect them. The group then worked to identify desirable uses, activities, and amenities proposed for the park and to review the suitability map prepared by DNR staff. The suitability map was used to develop three concept plans that were presented to the public leading to recommendations that would be incorporated into a final draft master plan.

### Open House Events

DNR staff hosted two open house events at Newtown Neck State Park to provide an opportunity for local residents and visitors to visit the park and interact with DNR staff. At the first open house event on September 27, 2014, resource inventory maps of the property were available for review, and visitors were encouraged to tour the property, discuss their knowledge of the property, and share their ideas for how the park should be used in the future. Visitors were invited to participate in a web-based survey that included questions about desired uses and amenities at the park.

A second open house event was held at the Park on June 20, 2015, and the three concept plans for the property were available for visitors to review. This event provided an opportunity for participants to look at the concept plans, ask questions about proposed uses, and take a survey that included questions about preferred uses, activities, and amenities on all three plans. The survey included a question asking participants to select a preferred plan.

### Design Charette

A design charette was held at the College of Southern Maryland, following the first open house event on Sept. 27, 2014. At the charette, DNR staff provided an overview of the planning process and presented maps and background on the natural and cultural resources at the park. Attendees were then split up into groups and given the opportunity to participate in two hands-on planning activities. The first activity involved identifying uses, activities, and amenities that they felt were appropriate and desirable at the park. The second activity involved locating the various activities and associated infrastructure on a large map of the property. At the end of the charette, each small group reported on their discussions and presented their map.

### Community Meetings

During the initial planning process for the four Maryland Province Properties, the community around Newtown Neck State Park expressed their desire to be involved in the planning process and the need to provide specific outreach to St. Francis Xavier Parishioners. In addition to several community members participating on the Advisory Committee, community meetings were held at the St. Francis Xavier Parish Hall on Aug. 18, 2014 and June 4, 2015. These meetings provided an opportunity for local residents and St. Francis Xavier Parishioners to provide information to DNR staff about the community and historic use of the property and for DNR staff to address concerns about how park visitation would be managed.

### On-Line Surveys

In an effort to make the most effective use of electronic media to facilitate public awareness and participation in the planning process for the park, the park's web-site was used to provide information to the public about the planning process and as a platform for participation in two on-line surveys. The first survey, posted on-line and available at the open house in the fall of 2014, provided an opportunity for participants to provide basic information about themselves and desired park activities and amenities. They were also asked to identify the most important goals and stewardship objectives for the property. In late spring of 2015, a second survey available on-line and at the second open house, was used to evaluate the three concept plans and provide an opportunity for participants to select their preferred plan.

## Chapter 2: Regional and Local Context

### Regional Setting

Newtown Neck State Park is located in the DNR's Southern Region, which includes St. Mary's County, Charles County, Calvert County, Prince Georges County, and Anne Arundel County. Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County are similar in landscape features, intensity of development, population, and growth rate. St. Mary's County along with Charles County to the west and Calvert County to the east, compose the Southern Maryland Tri-county Area, which is considered the area where most regular park visitors reside.

The Southern Maryland Tri-county Area contains significant natural resources and is largely affected by the Chesapeake Bay, the Potomac River, and the Patuxent River. These bodies of water provide many of the recreational opportunities in the area and adjacent lands include much of the region's important historical sites. These tidal waterways and contiguous land areas serve as important connections for southern Maryland's cultural heritage.



In addition to Newtown Neck State Park, there are four other State parks in St. Mary's County. These include Greenwell State Park in Hollywood, Point Lookout State Park in Scotland, St. Clement's Island State Park in Colton's Point, and St. Mary's River State Park in Callaway. Beyond St. Mary's County, the Tri-county Area's State parks and land units include Calvert Cliffs State Park (Calvert County), Chapel Point State Park, Chapman State Park, Purse State Park, and Smallwood State Park (all in Charles County). The southern Maryland tri-county also includes Doncaster State Forest, Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area, Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area, and Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, which provide further opportunities for the public to connect with the natural environment and engage in outdoor recreation.

## **Local Setting**

St. Mary's County is situated on a peninsula in Southern Maryland and covers a land area of approximately 360 square miles. The waters of the Chesapeake Bay, Patuxent, Wicomico, and Potomac Rivers surround the peninsula to form over 500 miles of shoreline. St. Mary's county is Maryland's southern-most county on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, and the county is bordered to the north by Charles County. St. Mary's County has two primary development districts and population centers, Lexington Park, and the incorporated town of Leonardtown. These jurisdictions are the primary commercial and institutional centers for St. Mary's County and provide a wide variety of services. Leonardtown is the County seat of St. Mary's County. Newtown Neck State Park is easily accessible from both the Lexington Park and Leonardtown areas via MD State Route 235 and MD State Route 5 to Newtown Neck Road (MD State Route 243.) The Newtown Neck area is approximately seven miles south of the local city of Leonardtown.

## **Demographics**

The Newtown Neck area is one of several peninsulas that surround the small town of Leonardtown. According to a 2010 census profile from the Maryland State Data Center's Department of Planning the total population of Leonardtown was 2,930, home to 1,428 male (48.7%) and 1,502 female (51.3%) residents representing approximately 3% of St. Mary's County total population of 105,151 people.

According to Census Bureau estimates, St. Mary's County has experienced population growth in recent years, increasing by 5% from April of 2010 to July of 2014. One should expect Leonardtown as well as the Newtown Neck area to demonstrate a similar rise in population to that of St. Mary's County as a whole. The median age of the Leonardtown area's population was comparatively older (41 years) than St. Mary's County population median age of (36 years). The ethnicity of the population of St. Mary's County was recorded as 78.6% Caucasian, 14.3% African American and 2.5% of the population Asian. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (2014), the median household income of St. Mary's County was \$78,274 in 2013, and the 2010 census indicated that the average household size in St. Mary's County was 2.72 persons and the average family size was 3.18 persons. Between 2010 and 2013 St. Mary's County was the third fastest growing County in Maryland. Growth in the County is reinforced by jobs at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station and with defense contractors that support operations there. Changes in the Navy's infrastructure and military base realignments has led to a great increase in the county's workforce, and as of 2013 St. Mary's County had the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest unemployment rate in the state of Maryland.

Although St. Mary's County residents may lie closest to the Newtown Neck area, it is expected that the general Southern Maryland population will utilize the park as well. Charles and Calvert County are contiguous to St. Mary's County, and many people employed in St. Mary's County live in Charles and Calvert County, positioned to the northwest and northeast, respectively.

According to the previously cited 2010 census profile from the Maryland State Data Center's Department of Planning, Charles County was home to 146,551 residents and Calvert County was home to 88,737 residents. The gender percentages of these counties are similar to St. Mary's

County. With regards to race, the ethnicity of Calvert County is similar to St. Mary's, whereas Charles County is more racially diverse with the County's total population cited as (50.3%) Caucasian, (41%) African American, and (3%) Asian.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (2014), median household incomes for Charles County and Calvert County were slightly higher than that reported for St. Mary's County and household and family sizes were similar. It is likely that Newtown Neck State Park would attract visitors from neighboring Charles County and Calvert County, and those recreational activities, park amenities, and special events that would appeal to the residents of St. Mary's County would also be of interest to other residents of Southern Maryland.

The coastlines of the southern Maryland tri-county area lie within close proximity to many of the state's metropolitan cities and military bases, offering plenty of opportunities for residents to seek employment. Between 2010 and 2013 St. Mary's County was the third fastest growing County in Maryland, but from 2000 to 2012 St. Mary's County was the fastest growing county in Maryland. Growth in the County is suspected to be bolstered by migration from the DC and Baltimore metro areas, as well as the appeal of jobs at the Naval Air Station along the Patuxent River. Increased development in St. Mary's County has led to a great increase in the county's workforce, and as of 2013 St. Mary's County had the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest unemployment rate in the state of Maryland.

### **Recreation and Tourism Opportunities**

The Newtown Neck State Park master plan has been developed with the general goal of providing the public with access to a minimally developed, passive use property with a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation and a focus on water access and cultural resource protection and interpretation. The preservation of the property's scenic beauty and historical resources serve as central priorities for the park's development and represent an important tourism opportunity that will mesh well with plans for tourism in St. Mary's County.

The Park has the potential to provide quality, deeply rewarding outdoor experiences to visitors and residents alike. Its close proximity to Leonardtown, the County's only incorporated town and a "tourism hub," the Park has the potential to have a positive economic impact on the town. The County has initiated work on a tourism and hospitality master plan, and Newtown Neck and the County's four other state parks will be important focal points.

Currently, Newtown Neck State Park includes numerous beaches, acres of forest, and a variety of trails. County tourism staff has indicated that overnight paddle-in campsites, fishing areas and a transient pier, along with the hiking, birding and hunting opportunities, fit well with local objectives to develop the St. Mary's County's nature and outdoor recreation assets. Newtown Neck State Park also presents opportunities to link with other State and federal trail and byway projects.

Upon completion of the park's development, Newtown Neck State park will provide a variety of unobtrusive facilities and accommodations which will be attractive to visitors seeking a unique

outdoor experience. Paddle in campsites and kayak launches will provide canoers and kayakers the opportunity to easily access the shores of Newtown Neck State Park from the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Water Trail. A youth camping area will be available for reservation and will allow groups of scouts and others to have a safe and secure camping experience. The shoreline and beaches will provide opportunities for water access and fishing and the planned upland trails will be available for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. The park's tidal ponds, overlooks, marshes, forests, hedgerows, and meadows will provide year round bird-watching opportunities, and a planned educational pavilion will encourage use of the park by school groups looking to learn about the variety of habitats and ecosystems that comprise the coastal plain. The park's wealth and diversity of resources provides something for everyone.

## **Chapter 3: Resource Assessment and Analysis**

### **Existing Land Use**

Newtown Neck State Park is a relatively undeveloped peninsula that is dominated by agricultural fields, forest, open field areas, and marsh. The park is bordered to the north by the St. Francis Xavier Church Cemetery and residential development. The eastern, southern, and western boundaries are the waters of Breton Bay, the Potomac River, and St. Clement's Bay.

The agricultural fields are leased by a local farmer and have historically been planted with corn and soybeans. There is a network of farm roads throughout the tilled areas, which defines field edges and parallels the shoreline. These unimproved dirt and gravel farm roads provide vehicle access to most of the fields. There is an existing 12-car parking area and a "natural" soft kayak launch at the northern end of the property on a protected cove off of Breton Bay. Traveling south on Newtown Neck Road, St. Francis Xavier Church, the parish hall, the rectory, and the historic Newtown Manor House are located to the east. This ten acre outparcel is not part of the park and is maintained by the St. Francis Xavier Parish.

Approximately, one mile south of the northern boundary of the park, there is the main developed area of the property, the Russell Tract. A portion of this developed tract was acquired separately from the remainder of the park, and the State took ownership of the property in August of 2014. Development in this area consists of a dwelling, six large barns, one large L-shaped equipment shed, a garage, three outbuildings, and two small sheds. The house has a well, septic system, and electric service. The well also provides water at one of the outbuildings. This area has an asphalt entry road and several gravel roads that provide vehicular access to all of the buildings and parking around the barns and equipment shed.

The paved portion of Newtown Neck Road extends past the Russell Tract, and there are approximately 150 acres of mixed hardwood mature forest to the east. This forested area includes about 1.25 miles of unimproved farm roads that provide access to three fields and to Fresh Pond. These fields are not currently being tilled, and pioneer tree species are beginning to colonize the area. A mowed path is currently maintained around the field edges. On the western side of Newtown Neck Road, there is a farm road that leads to an eight-car parking area that is primarily used by hunters. There are two building foundations in this field area that are believed to have been part of the munitions testing operation at Newtown Neck.

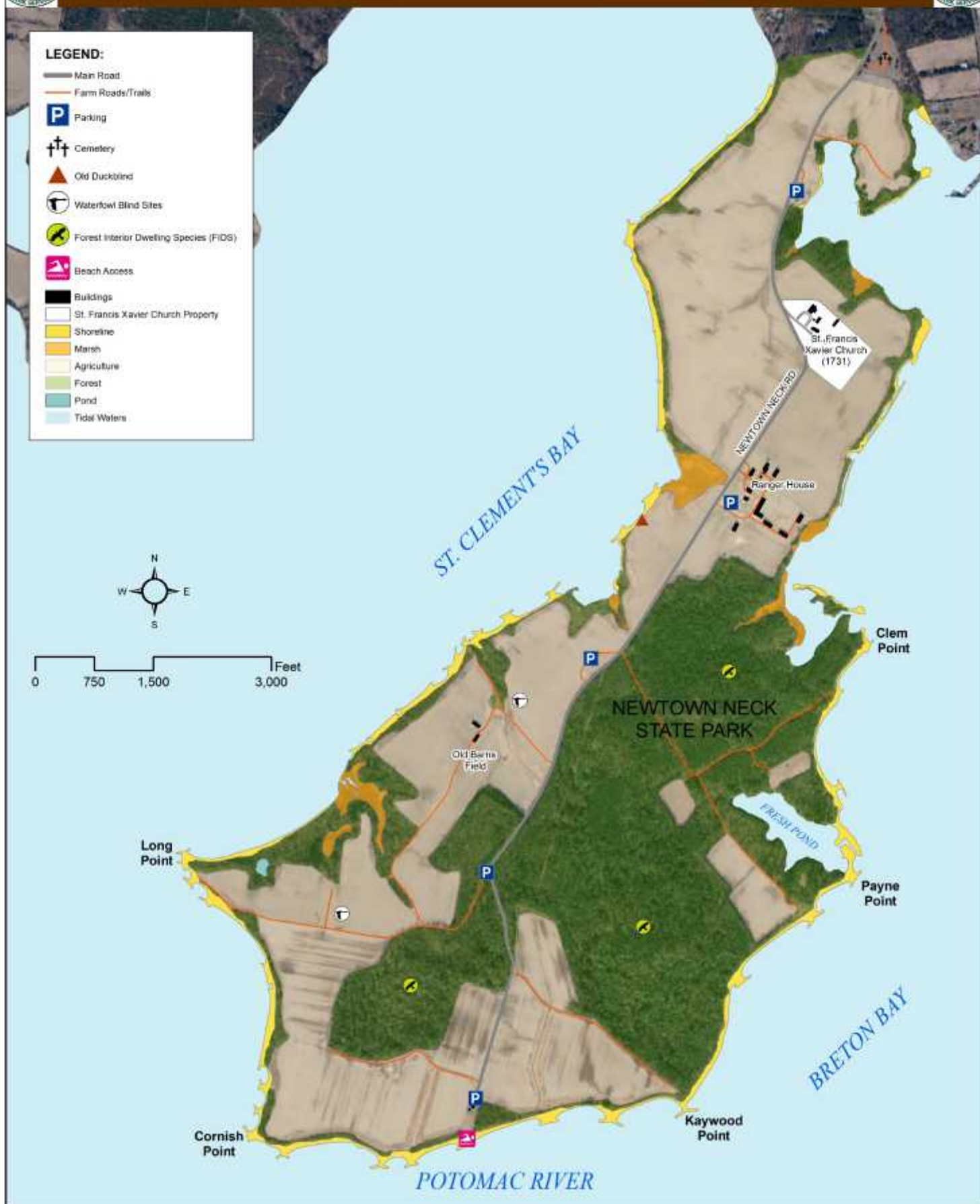
In this area, there are two old barns in an existing grass strip between tilled fields. The barns are not historically significant, and they are in poor condition. There is a farm road that extends from Newtown Neck Road to the barns and continues south providing access to the fields on the western side of the park.

Newtown Neck Road extends to a wood frame house at the southern end of the property, but approximately one half mile before the house, the road surface changes from tar and chip to gravel. A farm road extends southwest from the main road providing access to southwestern fields and Long Point, and there is a four-car parking area at this junction. The road ends at the front yard of the two-story wood frame house, identified as the Lacey House.





# MAP 1: EXISTING LAND USE



This dwelling is currently vacant, is not historic and is in poor condition. There is a wood shed behind the house that is also in poor condition. There is an existing parking area that accommodates eight vehicles, and there are approximately two acres of mowed lawn area around the Lacey House. A post and rail fence restricts vehicular access south of the Lacey House, and there is easy walking access from the parking area across the lawn to the beach.

## **Soils**

Soil information is helpful in planning for management, restoration, and development activities because soil types differ in texture, stability, and drainage and these qualities affect its suitability for various purposes. The soils at Newtown Neck State Park have been a primary factor influencing how the property has been developed and will continue to determine the location and type of development and resource restoration activities proposed at the park. Soils on the site are generally identified as an Othello-Mattapex Association. This association mainly borders the Potomac River and includes both poorly drained and moderately well-drained soil types. The better drained soils are quite suitable for agriculture and other uses. The poorly drained soils usually require artificial drainage if they are used for farming. In addition to Tidal marsh soils, the park is characterized by four primary soils types or series: Othello, Mattapex, Woodstown, and Sassafras.

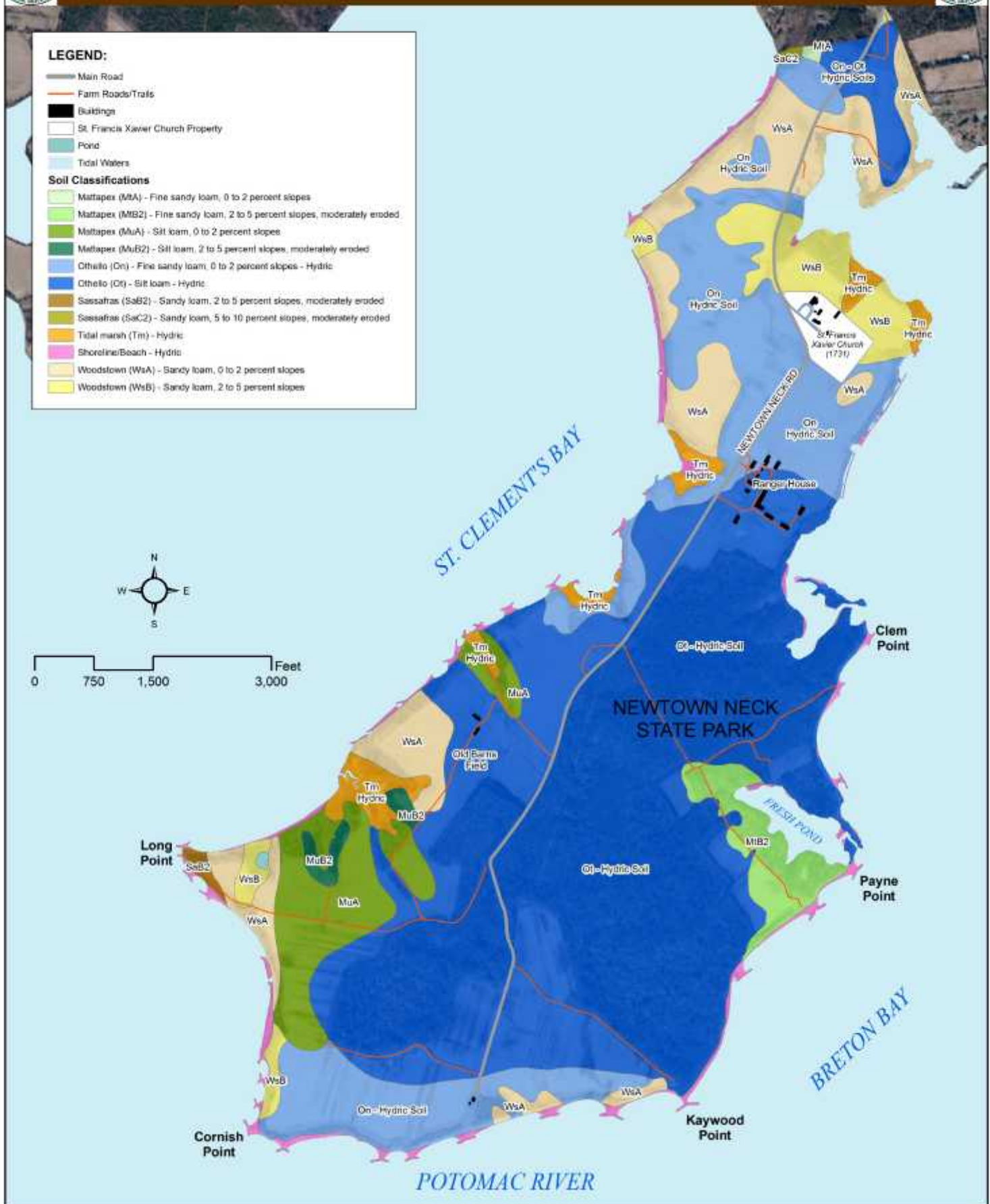
The dominant soil series at Newtown Neck State Park is Othello, with Othello silt loam, Ot, found on approximately 60 percent of the site. Othello soils are heavy, poorly drained soils, and the seasonal water table is high. The low-lying topography and extensive network of streams and marshes at Newtown Neck result in soils staying wet for long periods and low infiltration rates. These soils severely constrain non-farm uses and development activities. Othello fine sandy loam, On soils, are also found on approximately 150 acres at the park. Similar to Othello silt loam, this soil type is also poorly drained, and the high water table affects its potential for non-farm uses. It can be artificially drained. Most of the acreage at the park that has Othello soils is currently forested or farmed. The master plan proposes expansion of existing forest in areas with these soil types.

Othello soils are considered hydric soils for purposes of applying Maryland's Critical Area regulations. When hydric soils are present, the minimum 100-foot Critical Area Buffer is required to be expanded to the limit of the hydric soil or 300-feet, whichever is less. Hydric soils are adjacent to approximately 60 percent of the shoreline at the park; therefore the delineation of the Buffer will be an important element of planning for development of any new roads, parking lots, and structures. Every effort will need to be made to locate facilities at least 300 feet from tidal waters and wetlands.

Mattapex soils are moderately well drained and are often found along rivers and waterways in Southern Maryland. They are formed by silty sediments on top of older, coarser material. MtA, MtB2, and MuA, and MuB2 are the Mattapex soils found in the southwestern quadrant of the property and the area south of Fresh Pond. These soils are generally suitable for agriculture and other resource-based activities; however, they are characterized by a seasonally high water table.



## MAP 2: SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS



The third prominent soil series at Newtown Neck State Park are Woodstown sandy loams. These soils comprise approximately 150 acres of the property. Woodstown soils are moderately well drained and like the other soils at Newtown Neck are often characterized by a seasonally high water table. With good management, these soils are suitable for agriculture and other uses.

There are five areas at Newtown Neck State Park where Tidal marsh (Tm) soils are mapped. This soil series includes areas along tidal waterways that may be occasionally to frequently inundated with tidal waters and are frequently to continuously wet. Soil materials vary in these areas and may consist of sand, clay, and muck. The salinity in adjacent waterways typically affects the plant species that grow in Tidal marsh areas. Most Tidal marsh areas are regulated as wetlands and are not suitable for agriculture or development activities.

There are small areas of Sassafras soils on the peninsula. These well-drained sandy loams are productive agricultural soils and suitable for many other uses. Unfortunately, the USDA soils mapping identifies these soils in only two small areas of the property.

This property has been actively farmed since it was settled, and the Matapeake, Woodstown, and Sassafras soils are considered either prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. However, the extensive areas of Othello soils are classified as having hydrological constraints and ditches have been constructed on portions of the property to provide drainage. Othello soils are characterized by low water infiltration rates due to moderate to high clay composition and are susceptible to higher runoff rates and swelling when wet. These heavy soils with high swelling capacities are slow to drain and may require special consideration when proposed for development.

## **Topography**

Newtown Neck State Park is located in the Atlantic Coastal Plain, which is characterized by generally flat to slightly rolling topography underlain by soils consisting of unconsolidated sediments including gravel, sand, silt, and clay. Elevations at Newtown Neck range from sea level to approximately 15 feet above sea level. Much of the property is quite low-lying and poorly drained. Areas of steep slopes, defined as slopes of 15% or greater, are minimal and are generally adjacent to the shoreline. The highest areas of the property are at the northern end of the peninsula with lower elevations in the middle of the property south of the Russell Area. The wetland complex on the western side of the property is relatively low lying with significant areas just a few feet above sea level. There are areas of slightly higher elevation around Fresh Pond and at the eastern side of Lacey Beach.

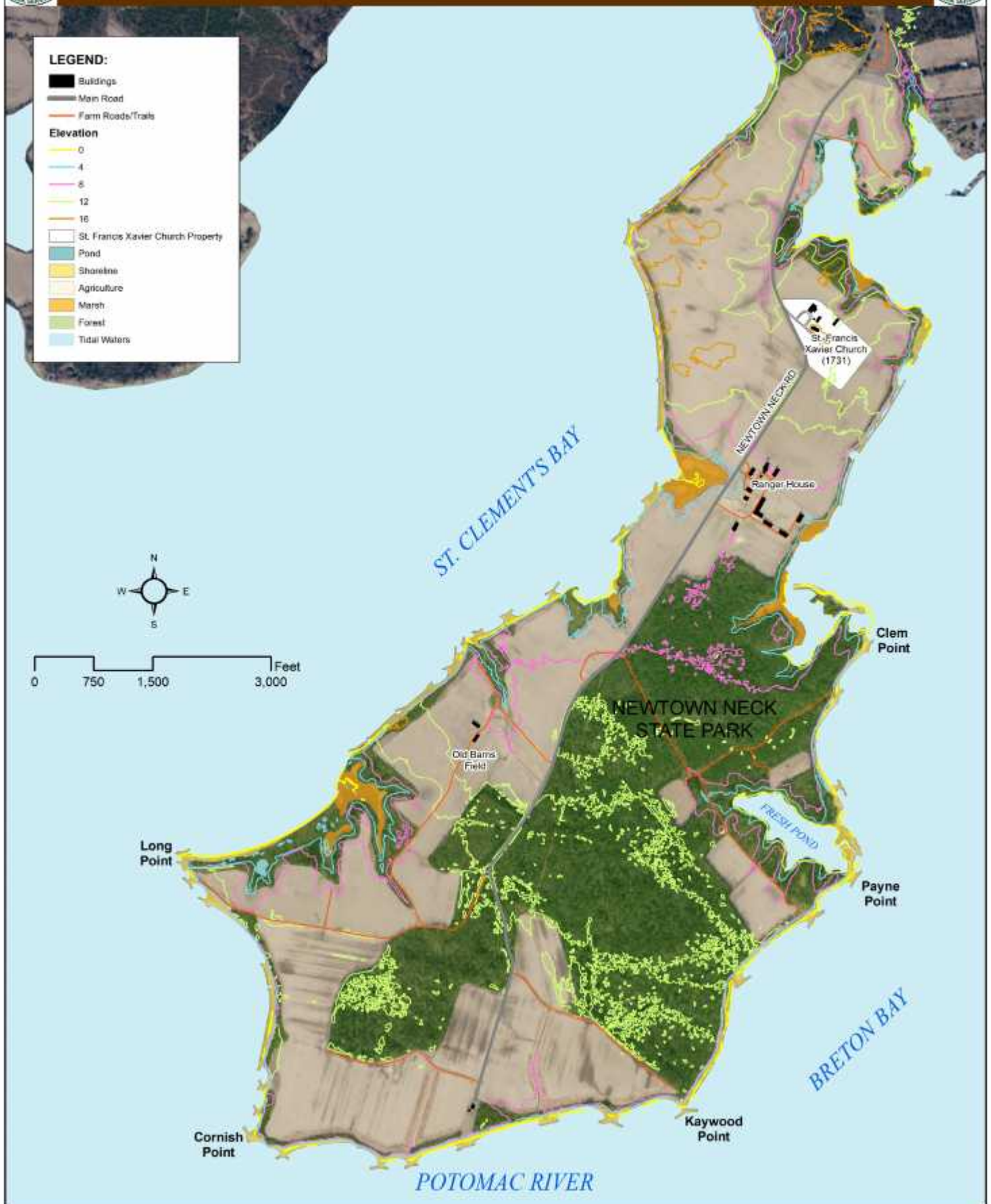
## **Floodplain**

The configuration of St. Mary's County as a peninsula bordered by the Chesapeake Bay, the Patuxent River, and the Potomac River makes significant areas of the County susceptible to flooding during severe storm events. Low-lying properties with broad stretches of shoreline, significant areas of wetlands, and a large number of tributaries can be particularly vulnerable. Newtown Neck State Park's long, narrow shape and miles of shoreline make it an area where the flood risk is high, particularly in certain locations on the property.



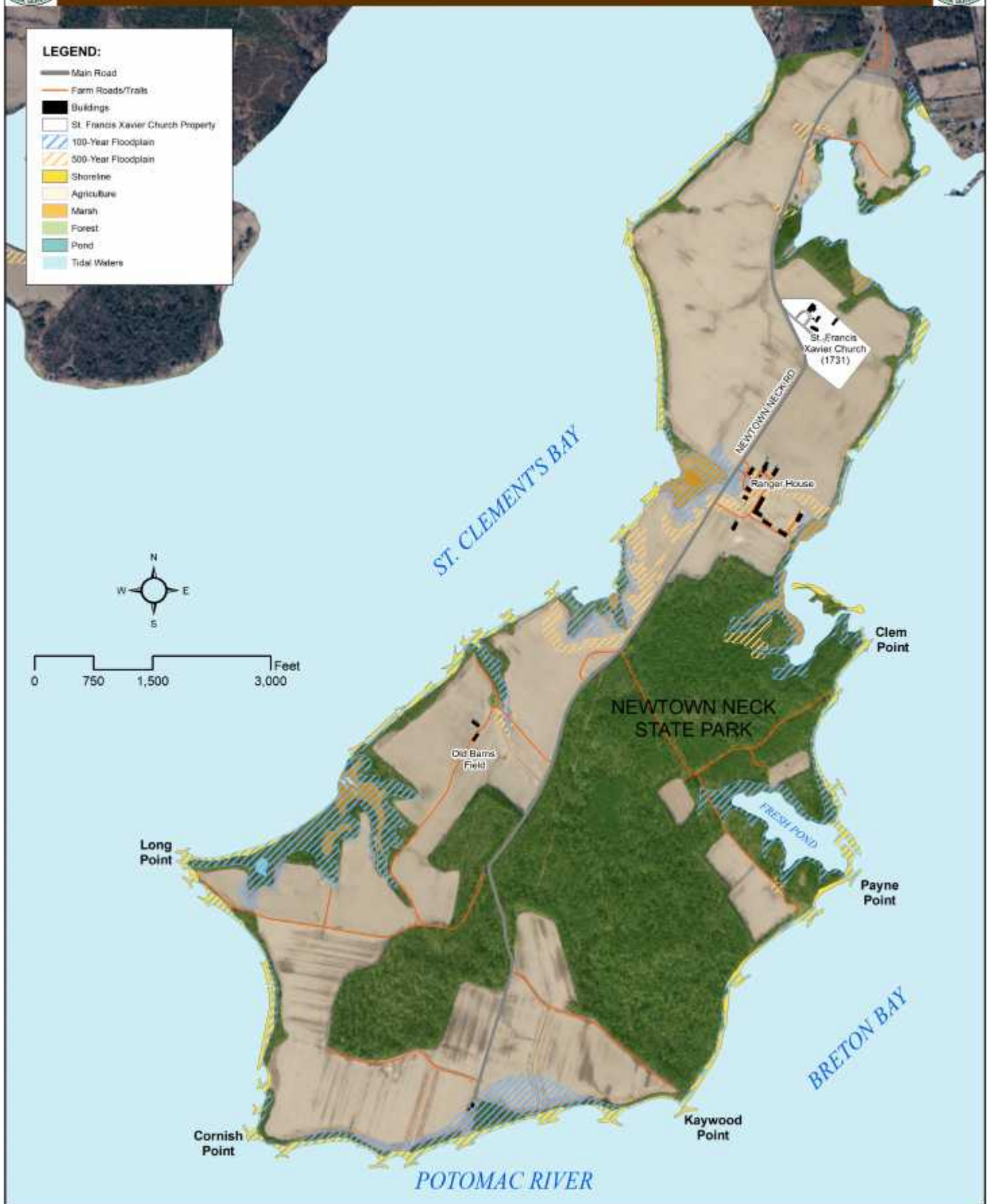


## MAP 3: TOPOGRAPHY





## MAP 4: FLOODPLAIN



Flood zone mapping is used to identify the flood risk in specific areas, and to establish base flood elevations for structures and utilities. In general, construction and development in flood hazard areas should be avoided because it may result in the loss of life and property, health and safety hazards, and expenditures associated with flood protection and relief. Construction and development in the floodplain can also adversely affect natural resources by interfering with the movement of water and natural drainage patterns, accelerating the velocity of floodwaters, and increasing the risk of pollutants entering tidal waterways and wetlands.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the primary agency that oversees the implementation of floodplain regulations and programs. According to FEMA's flood insurance rate maps for St. Mary's County, the coast of the Newtown Neck Peninsula exclusively contains two distinct types of floodplain zone classifications. The least predominant zone classification on the peninsula is referred to as a 100 year floodplain or base flood elevation, and contrary to its title, the zone is susceptible to annual flooding to a certain degree. The most predominant zone classification on the peninsula is referred to as area upland of the region's floodplains, sometimes referred to as Zone X, and is at minimal-risk of flooding. An area designated as an effective 100 year floodplain has a one percent annual chance of experiencing flooding, whereas areas designated as an effective 500 year floodplain or upland (Zone X) have a 0.2 percent to very minimal annual chance of experiencing flooding. The Newtown Neck low lying inlets and coastline within extreme proximity to the waters of Breton Bay, St. Clement's Bay, and the Potomac River fall within the 100 year floodplain, while the upland zone occupies the large areas in between the shoreline. According to FEMA's flood insurance rate maps, a significant portion of the shoreline on either side of the Russell area is within the 100 year floodplain, as well as the shoreline north of Long Point and Payne Point. Some areas of Newtown Neck Road lie entirely within the 100 year floodplain, specifically the north-west corner of the Russell Area, which means that the only access road leading into Newtown Neck State Park may be inaccessible during heavy storms, or progressively over time as the regional sea level rises.

### **Sea Level Rise Vulnerability**

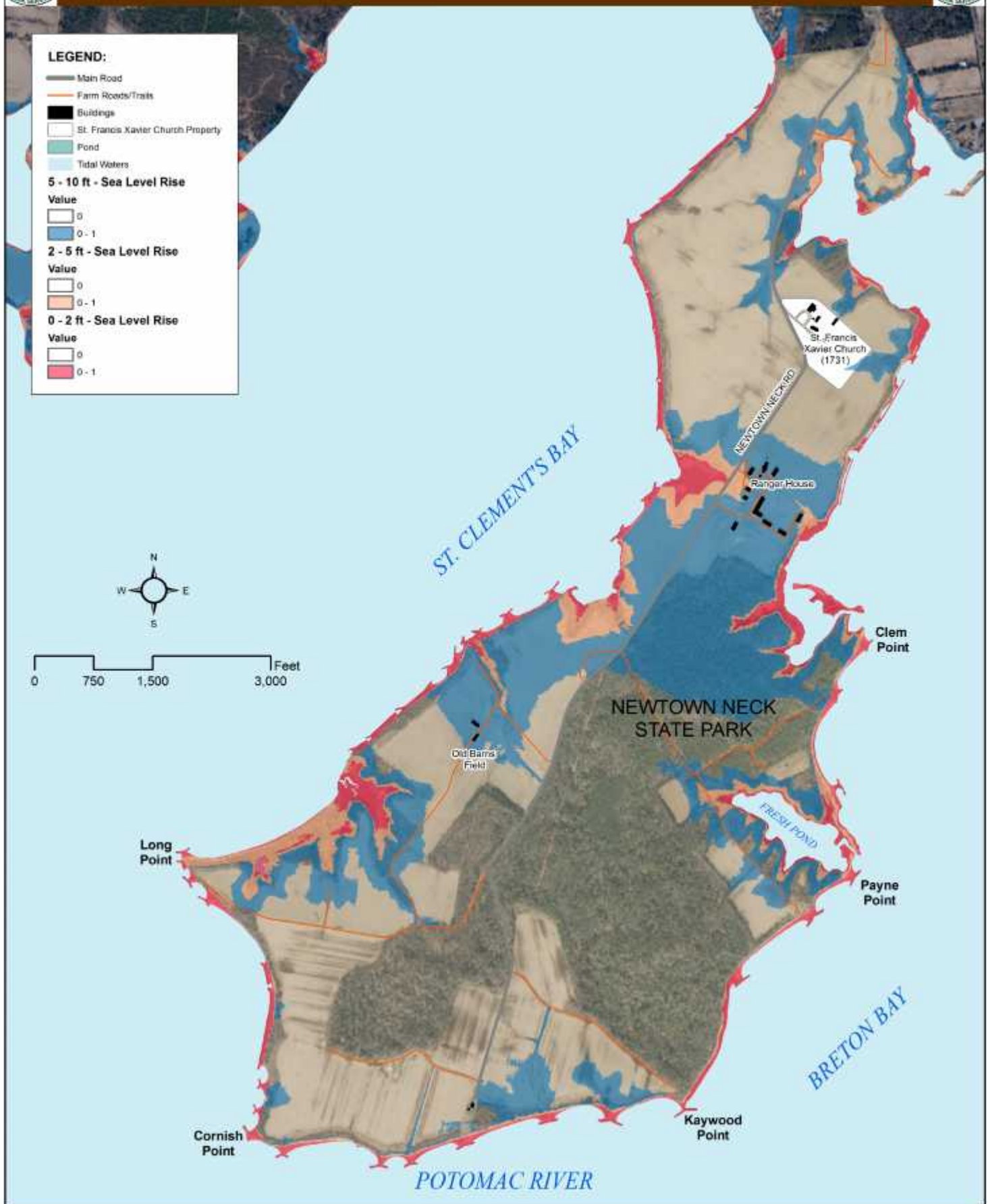
With an increasing awareness and understanding of climate change, it is accepted that Maryland will be affected in a variety of ways, including increased risk for extreme events such as storms, floods, fires, and drought. With more severe storm events predicted and increasing development of floodplain areas, there is an understanding that low-lying areas along Maryland's shoreline and coasts increasingly vulnerable to increased erosion and inundation. Planning, adaptation, and mitigation are necessary to minimize the anticipated effects.

Sea level rise describes the increase in the mean level of the world's ocean surfaces relative to land, and may result in a loss of shoreline and increase the risk of flooding at both a global and regional scale. Due to Newtown Neck State Park's narrow shape and relatively low elevation above sea level (approximately 13 feet or less), the area is especially prone to long-term coastal inundation events as a result of sea level rise. Anticipated sea level rise of between 0 to 2 feet would result in small areas of land on the fringes of the peninsula being submerged in water, specifically the areas immediately near the property's tidal inlets. The wetland area opposite the Russell Area would also be significantly affected. Although specific predictions have not been made, scientists have speculated that changes of this magnitude may be experienced in some





# MAP 5: SEA LEVEL RISE VULNERABILITY





areas in the next 50 years. A 2 to 5 foot change would significantly affect the peninsula with a significant loss of useable land in the Russell Area and along the eastern side of the Park. It is likely that Newtown Neck Road would be adversely affected by this degree of inundation. An additional rise in sea level, in the 5 to 10 foot range would result in a dramatic change in the peninsula, to the extent that the southern end of the property could become physically separated by a large expanse of wetlands or open water, creating an island. If there were a relative change in sea level of up to 10 feet, the entire Russell Area as well as a majority of Newtown Neck's shoreline and marsh habitats would flood. Clearly, regional sea level rise poses a threat to the diverse ecosystems and planned infrastructure at the park and must be considered beyond the master plan stage, but as part of the site planning and design process as well.

## **Wetlands**

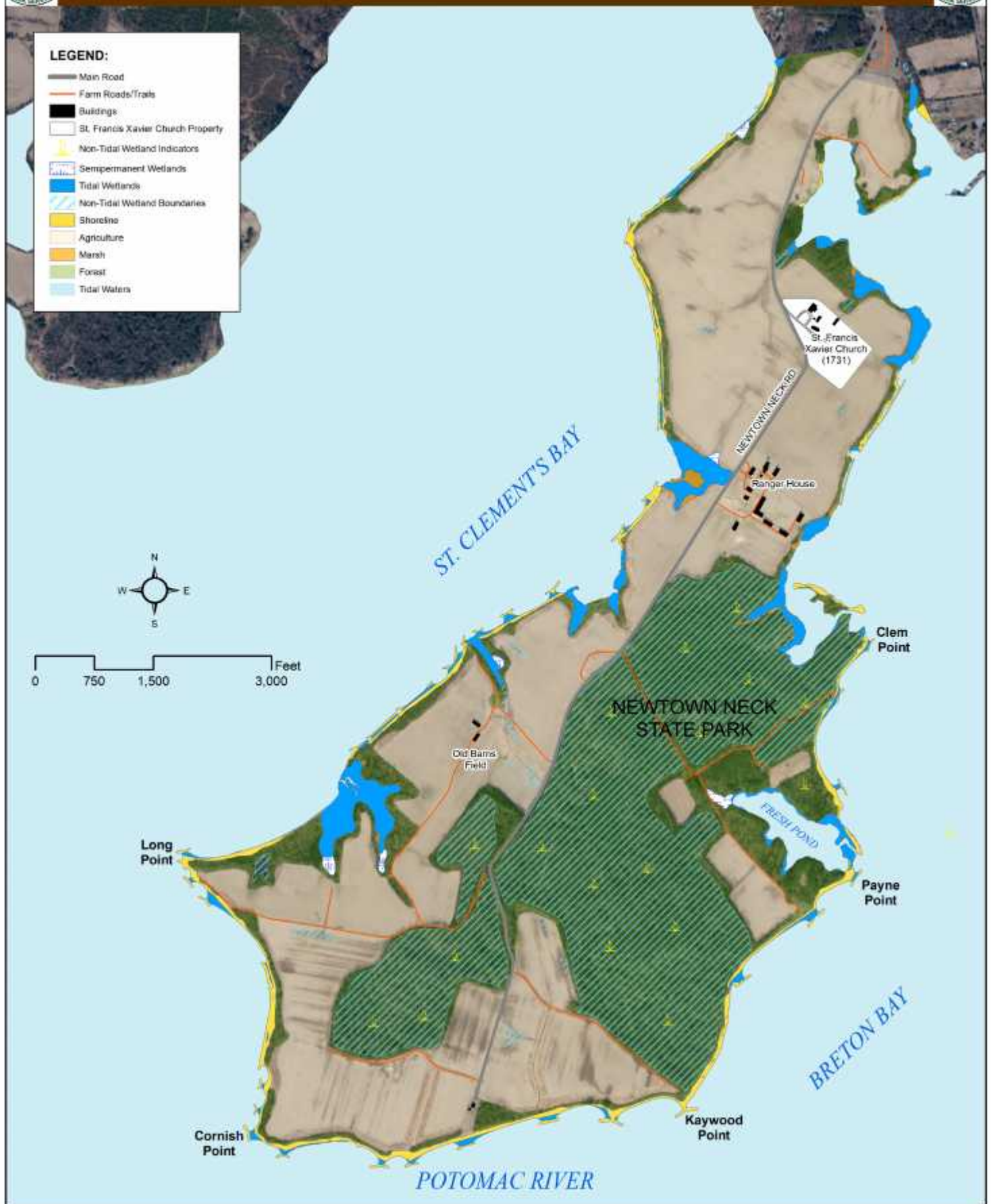
Newtown Neck State Park is a peninsula bordered by three major tidal tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, including Breton Bay to the east, the Potomac River to the south, and St. Clement's Bay to the east. The shoreline of these waterways and the contiguous tidal and nontidal wetlands define and characterize the coastal plain landscape of Newtown Neck State Park. These resources also enrich the Park's biodiversity providing habitat for a broad range of fish, wildlife, and plant species.

A wetland is generally defined as areas where saturation with water is a dominant factor affecting the types of plant communities, the nature and appearance of the soil, and the appearance of the surrounding landscape that is frequently affected by standing water or saturated conditions. A wetland must possess one or more of the three following traits: the land periodically supports vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (hydrophytic vegetation), the substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil, and the area is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.

Newtown Neck State Park contains two separate classes of wetlands, estuarine (tidal) and palustrine (nontidal). These classes of wetlands have distinct characteristics, yet are often found in interrelated systems and in close proximity to each other. Tidal wetlands often consist of a mix of deep and shallow water habitats and are often vegetated with salt tolerant species such as *Spartina alterniflora* and *Spartina patens*. Estuarine wetlands contain primarily saltwater that is occasionally, and to varying degrees, diluted by freshwater runoff from nearby land. In Maryland, tidal wetlands are identified as areas affected by the daily or periodic rise and fall of the tide. Nontidal wetlands are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation and typically are characterized by hydric soils and found in areas where there is evidence of saturation or hydrologic impacts, such as buttressed tree trunks and water stained debris. Bogs, marshes, swamps, and floodplains are loosely classified as palustrine wetlands, and may contain brackish water. Palustrine wetlands include all wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, and persistent emergents, as well as wetlands that occur in tidal areas, but where the elevation of the area is such that the tidal inundation is not daily or periodic.



## MAP 6: TIDAL AND NON-TIDAL WETLANDS



Within the Park, the tidal wetlands are located primarily along the immediate shoreline and at four tidal marshes on the western side of the property and at a tidal inlet and tidal pond on the eastern side of the property. The palustrine (non-tidal) wetlands of the park are generally located inland, but in some areas are contiguous with tidal wetlands. There is a large area of nontidal wetlands in the forested area on the eastern side of the property. The presence of wetlands is likely responsible for the mature forest in the area. Because this area is seasonally wet, it is possible that early efforts to farm the area were abandoned. Portions of this part of the property are relatively dry and farm roads through the area are generally passable. This type of wetland is often described as a wetland mosaic, which is essentially a patchwork of wetland and upland areas that are integrated in such a way that delineation of the boundaries of each “wetland patch” is not practical.

Newtown Neck State Park’s wetland resources are a significant contributing factor to the settlement of the peninsula, as well as a dominant factor in where and how the property was developed over time. By their nature, wetlands provide significant environmental benefits and are intrinsically valued for their contributions to the timber, fishing, hunting, and tourism industries. Wetlands offer unique aesthetics that provide and promote recreational activities, such as fishing, kayaking, and bird watching. Moreover, wetlands provide a great number of ecological services; wetlands provide drainage during flood events, maintain healthy water quality in nearby waterways, facilitate the recharge of groundwater, sequester carbon to mitigate global warming, and preserve biodiversity through the provision of habitat for many fish, bird, and mammal species.

The wetlands of Newtown Neck State Park are subject to the regulatory authority of the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and wetlands and their buffers are protected from disturbance and alteration by State law and regulations. Tidal wetlands require a minimum 100-foot Buffer, which is regulated through the Critical Area regulations, and nontidal wetlands require a 25-foot buffer that is regulated through the wetlands and waterways provisions in COMAR. Regulated activities include major disturbance such as the construction of a pier or pedestrian bridge, as well as minor projects such as stormwater outfalls or the installation of living shorelines for erosion control. These activities require authorization by the MDE and may require mitigation if the project will result in a loss of wetlands or wetland functions that meets certain thresholds.

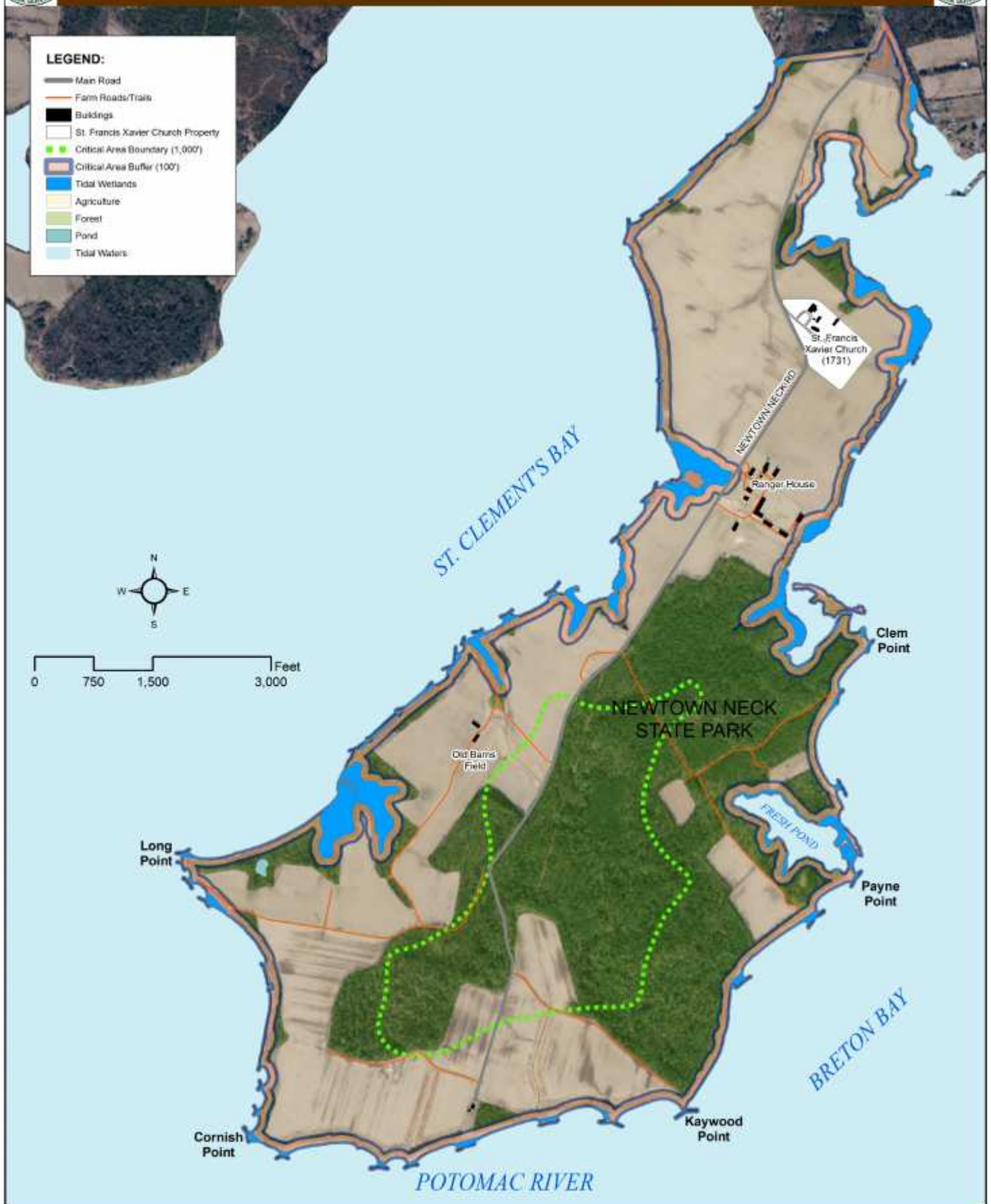
In general, every effort will be made to implement the master plan without significant alteration or disturbance to wetlands at Newtown Neck State Park. Permissible water dependent activities such as pier construction, kayak launch installation, and living shoreline installation will be closely coordinated with DNR and MDE experts to ensure that there are no adverse effects on water quality or wetland resources.

### **The Critical Area**

The Critical Area Act of 1984 identifies all land within 1,000 feet of the mean high tide line of tidal waters and the landward edge of tidal wetlands and all waters of and lands under the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as the “Critical Area”. The law was created to lessen the adverse impacts that discharged pollutants from point and non-point sources may have on the



## MAP 7: CRITICAL AREA





water quality of the Bay, as well as to conserve fish, plant, and wildlife habitat within the Critical Area. The law also establishes land use policies which direct the nature and intensity of growth and development and influence strategies to mitigate and offset the adverse effects of human activity within the designated Critical Area. Newtown Neck State Park is surrounded by tidal tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay; therefore, most of the Newtown Neck Peninsula is within 1,000 feet of tidal waters and tidal wetlands and is subject to the State's Critical Area regulations and oversight by the governor-appointed Critical Area Commission.

### **Resource Conservation Areas**

Of the approximately 500 acres of Newtown Neck State Park within the Critical Area, all of this acreage is designated as Resource Conservation Area (RCA). RCA lands are areas characterized by primarily natural environments such as wetlands, forests, abandoned fields, and by resource utilization activities such as agriculture and forestry. Park activities and the construction of recreation related infrastructure may occur on lands designated RCA, but projects must follow the policies and standards for these areas set forth in State law and regulations, including the following:

- The ecological values, biological productivity, and diversity of RCA areas shall be conserved, protected, and enhanced.
- Breeding, feeding, and wintering habitats for wildlife using the Bay, its tributaries, and other coastal habitats shall be protected.
- The land and water resource base that is necessary to maintain and support resource utilization activities such as agriculture and forestry shall be conserved.
- Forest and woodland areas shall be conserved for the water quality benefits they provide.
- Development and redevelopment activities shall comply with the development standards for Limited Development Areas including limits on lot coverage, forest clearing, and construction on steep slopes and requirements to address stormwater quality and provide forest cover on unforested sites.

### **Habitat Protection Areas**

In addition to the general requirements for development in the Critical Area, the regulations include "Habitat Protection Areas." These are designated sensitive environmental areas that receive special protection under Maryland's Critical Area Program. These areas are significant because they provide essential habitat for fish, wildlife, and plant species native to Maryland's coastal plain. The following areas are designated as Habitat Protection Areas in the Critical Area:

- Critical Area Buffer
- Nontidal Wetlands
- Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species

- Significant Plant and Wildlife Habitats
- Anadromous Fish Spawning Areas

Newtown Neck State Park has extensive areas of Critical Area Buffer. The Critical Area Buffer is an area of at least 100 feet in width that is located directly adjacent to tidal waters, tidal wetlands, and tributary streams. The Critical Area regulations include standards for the Buffer because maintaining or planting a protective buffer of native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants provide the following significant environmental benefits:

- Reduce the amount of sediment, excess nutrients, and potentially harmful substances in stormwater runoff;
- Stabilize slopes and the shoreline to minimize erosion;
- Maintain an area of habitat along shorelines and streams that can provide important corridors for wildlife.

The Critical Area Buffer is required to be expanded beyond 100-feet, up to 300 feet, when the Buffer is contiguous with hydric or highly erodible soils. Because approximately 80 percent of the park is characterized by hydric soils, development activities in most areas will require a 300 foot Buffer. The Critical Area regulations prohibit new structures and land disturbance within the Buffer unless the project involves construction of a water dependent facility, such as a pier. Application of the Critical Area Buffer provisions will significantly affect the location of all proposed amenities and infrastructure at Newtown Neck State Park.

### Significant Plant and Wildlife Habitats

The Habitat Protection Areas that require special protection measures under Maryland's Critical Area Program include a category identified as "Significant Plant and Wildlife Habitats." These areas are important and require a comprehensive approach to conservation to ensure that populations of the affected species stay viable locally and State-wide. The following habitats may be found at Newtown Neck State Park:

- Colonial water bird (e.g. heron, egret, and tern) nesting areas
- Historic waterfowl and staging concentration areas
- Riparian forests (identified as forested areas of 300 feet in width along streams, tidal waters, and wetlands)
- Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat is identified as relatively undisturbed forest tracts of 50 acres or more which support breeding populations of forest interior dwelling birds (e.g. vireos, warblers, flycatchers, and woodpeckers)
- Natural Heritage Areas (officially designated sites consisting of communities of plants and animals that are considered to be among the best State-wide examples of their kind)

At Newtown Neck State Park, the forested areas are considered FIDS habitat and portions of the western shoreline include riparian forests. These areas are required to be conserved, and efforts

will be made to increase and enhance these habitats. Although no colonial water bird nesting sites have been identified at Newtown Neck State Park, there is an active heron rookery across St. Clement's Bay from the property. Activity of these species will be monitored to ensure that new nesting sites are identified and appropriate protection measures implemented. The shallow water areas surrounding the Newtown Neck peninsula are identified as historic waterfowl staging and concentration areas. These areas are mapped in order to provide protection for a variety of waterfowl species that congregate in St. Clement's Bay, the Potomac River, and Breton Bay. Certain activities along the shoreline, such as pier construction or the installation of shoreline erosion control structures are restricted during the fall and winter.

### **Critical Area Review**

All development and redevelopment activities in the Critical Area are subject to the review and oversight of the Critical Area Commission. Development, as defined by the Critical Area regulations, includes redevelopment, and means "a human activity that materially affects the condition or use of dry land, land under water, or a structure." The Critical Area review of all development activities will be initiated as part of DNR's internal review and will involve coordination with Commission staff to present major projects for approval by the Critical Area Commission.

### **Shoreline and Streams**

As a peninsula, Newtown Neck State Park offers approximately seven miles of undeveloped shoreline surrounded by the waters of the Potomac River, Breton Bay, and St. Clements Bay. These waterways and associated wetlands and tributary streams are dominant features at the park and create the varied and diverse ecosystems that make the park unique and beautiful.

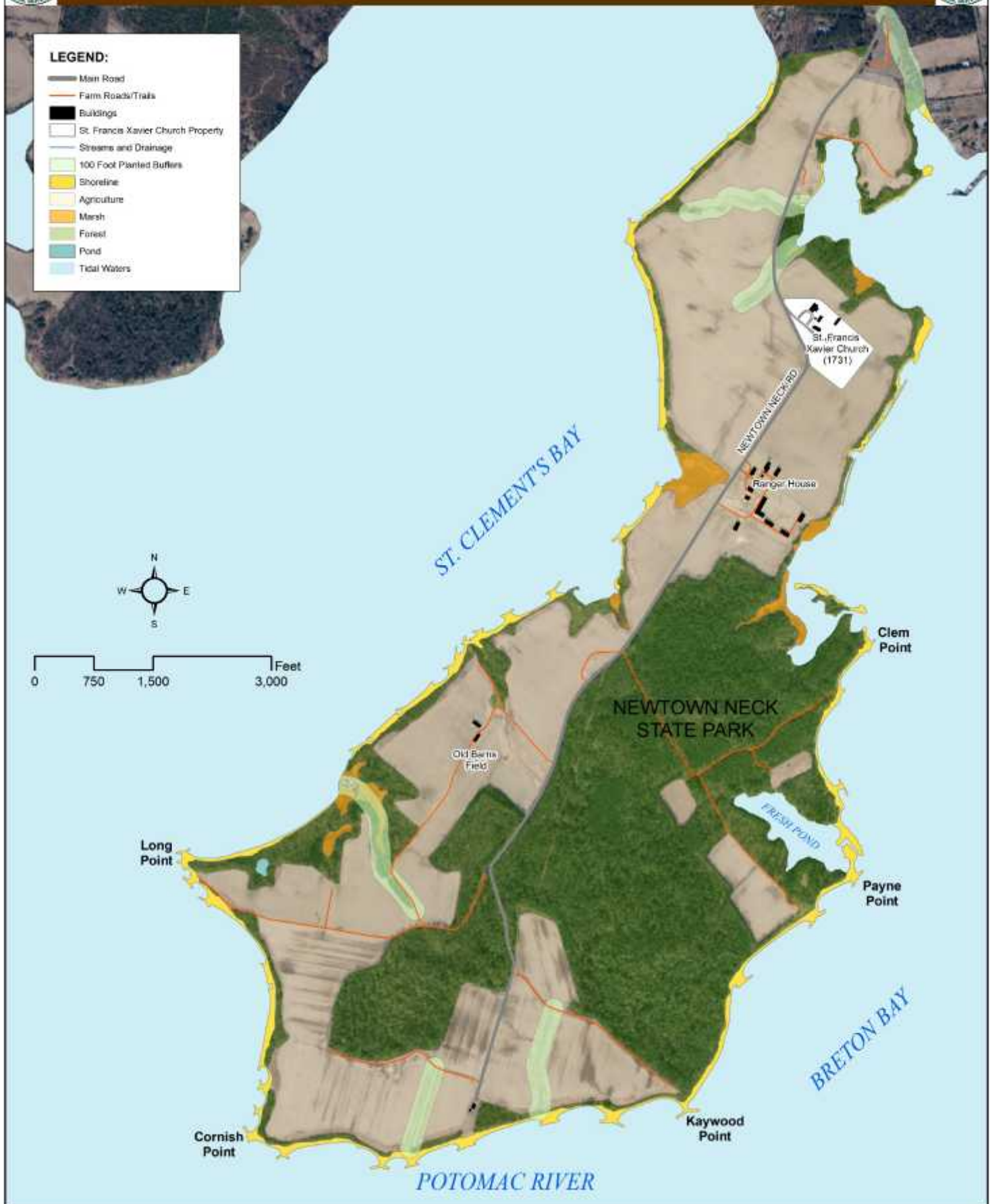
### **Shoreline**

The shoreline of the property is reinforced intermittently by detached-breakwater structures known as "tombolos", narrow rock breakwater structures that run generally parallel to the shoreline and are connected to the shoreline by thin pieces of sandy beach. These connections are typically well vegetated with a mix of *Spartina alterniflora* and *Spartina patens*, as well as salt bush, bayberry, and marsh elder. The tombolos serve to buffer the shoreline of the Park from wind driven waves, strong tidal currents, and boat wakes, while preserving the sediment deposition essential for the preservation of the park's beaches. Most of the shoreline is well protected by the existing tombolo structures; however, there are a few shoreline areas on the southeastern side of the peninsula that appear to have experienced some additional erosion and upland slumping since the tombolos were constructed in 2004 and 2005. Monitoring of this area will be needed to ensure that the shoreline remains stable and the rate of erosion does not increase.

Although a majority of the Newtown Neck peninsula is protected by tombolo structures, the north-western shoreline of the Newtown Neck peninsula adjacent to St. Clement's Bay is protected by several stretches of planted marsh protected by a low stone sill. These "living shorelines" areas prevent upland sediments from eroding, move the highest wave energy impact area away from the toe of the bank or bluff, and serve as a physical buffer between wind driven waves and the land. In addition to stabilizing the bank, living shorelines have proven to be



## MAP 8: STREAMS AND STREAM BUFFERS





beneficial to natural resources by providing important nursery habitat for juvenile fish and crabs. Living shorelines have also proven to be durable during storm events and high tides by allowing floodwaters to move over top of them while the dense root systems of the marsh grasses hold the bank in place.

The tombolo structures have facilitated the preservation of numerous stable sandy beaches at Newtown Neck that are available for walking, wading beachcombing, and fishing. The sandy bottom and shallow water along the Potomac River shoreline make this area the most desirable areas for beach access.

### **Streams**

There are three primary natural intermittent streams on the property and two “constructed” intermittent streams that were originally drainage ditches. The two streams at the northern end of the property drain into Breton Bay. Both streams drain generally from west to east becoming slightly wider before discharging into wetland areas adjacent to Breton Bay. Although the stream channels are well vegetated near Breton Bay, there is only a modest grassed buffer on the streams where they cross the northern agricultural fields. The stream on the southeastern side of the property that drains from east to west into St. Clement’s Bay is part of a network of tidal and nontidal wetlands and is a component of a functionally diverse aquatic ecosystem that offers a variety of natural resource observation and education opportunities. The two streams located east and west of the Lacey House are constructed agricultural ditches that connect with the seasonally high water table and function as intermittent streams. Portions of all of the streams could be enhanced by increasing the amount and diversity of vegetation adjacent to the watercourse.

### **Forests and Plants**

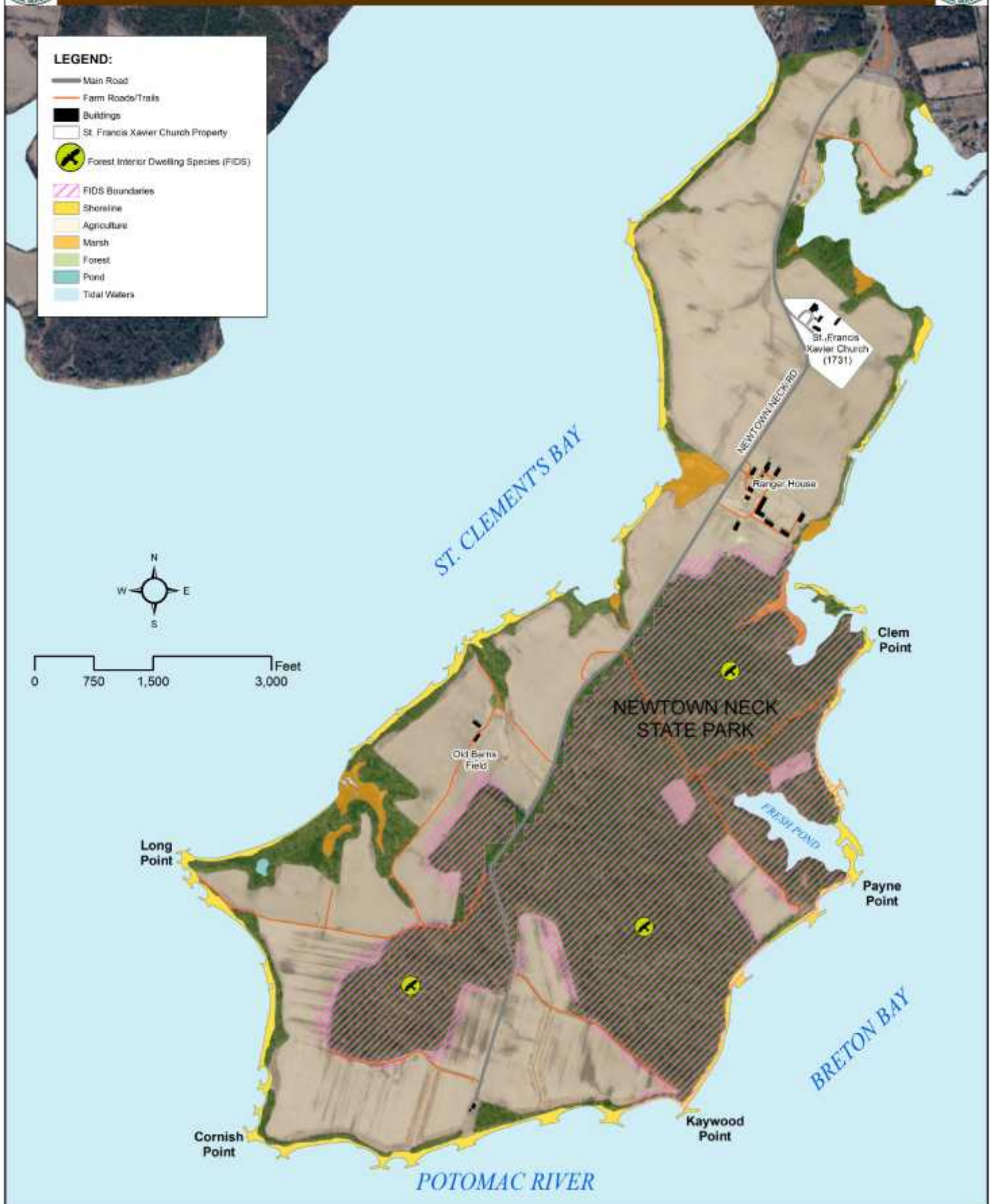
The property consists of a mix of vegetation communities including mature forest, immature forest, shrub-scrub forest, native grass meadows, tidal and nontidal wetlands, and agricultural lands. At the southern end of the property, there are approximately 175 acres of mature forest. This forested area is divided by Newtown Neck road and the western farm road into three distinct tracts. Although the forest is divided, the entire forested area has been classified as Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat.

There are significant areas of shrub scrub forest adjacent to the wetlands areas on the western side of the property. Riparian buffer planting along the shoreline has improved the habitat quality and diversity of these smaller forested areas, but future management may be required to minimize competition and promote greater species diversity.

The master plan proposes to increase existing forest cover and to promote the inclusion of a variety of oak species to enhance wildlife habitat. Commercial timber harvesting is not proposed within the park. The woodlands on the property will be monitored for insect infestation and disease, as well as the presence of hazardous trees. Trees that threaten the overall health of the woodland or pose a threat to park visitors will be removed. Additional trees will be planted in appropriate areas to offset the loss of any living trees. Forest clearing associated with park



## MAP 9: FOREST INTERIOR DWELLING SPECIES (FIDS)



improvements will be minimized, and all disturbed forested areas will be replaced at a minimum one-to-one ratio.

## **Wildlife**

The peninsula configuration of Newtown Neck provides some unique opportunities for wildlife observation, particularly waterfowl. The network of forest, open fields, forested buffers, grassy hedgerows, and marsh provide an interesting mix of habitats for a variety of wildlife species. The mammals found on the property are typical of those found throughout Southern Maryland and include deer, raccoon, fox, rabbits, and opossum. Otters have also been seen on the property. There is currently no evidence of beaver activity of the property.

The fields and meadow areas are attractive to songbirds and the existing forested area provides breeding and nesting habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds that spend the winter in South America. Based on the size, composition, and age of this forested area, it has been classified as Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat. Most of this forested habitat is within the Critical Area; therefore conservation of the habitat is required in accordance with the Critical Area regulations. Although many of the bird species identified as FIDS are relatively common, growth and development threaten the large contiguous forest tracts that these species require to maintain viable populations.

The extensive shoreline and wetland areas and the two protected tidal ponds provide excellent habitat for ducks, shorebirds, and wading birds. These areas are also used by amphibians and reptiles. A variety of fish and shellfish species are found in the open water areas of the Potomac River, Breton Bay, and St. Clement's Bay.

## **Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species**

An on-site survey for rare, threatened, and endangered species has not been conducted. An initial screening of DNR's Sensitive Species Project Review Area database does not include any "sensitive species" habitats on the Newtown Neck State Park property; however a heron rookery is located northeast of, and across St. Clement's Bay from the Park. Park staff and park visitors have noticed a lot of Great Blue Heron activity at Newtown Neck; however, a true rookery consisting of multiple nests has not been identified on the property. Herons sometimes move from an existing rookery to another shoreline area and initiate a new rookery, so monitoring of the riparian forests for heron activity will be ongoing.

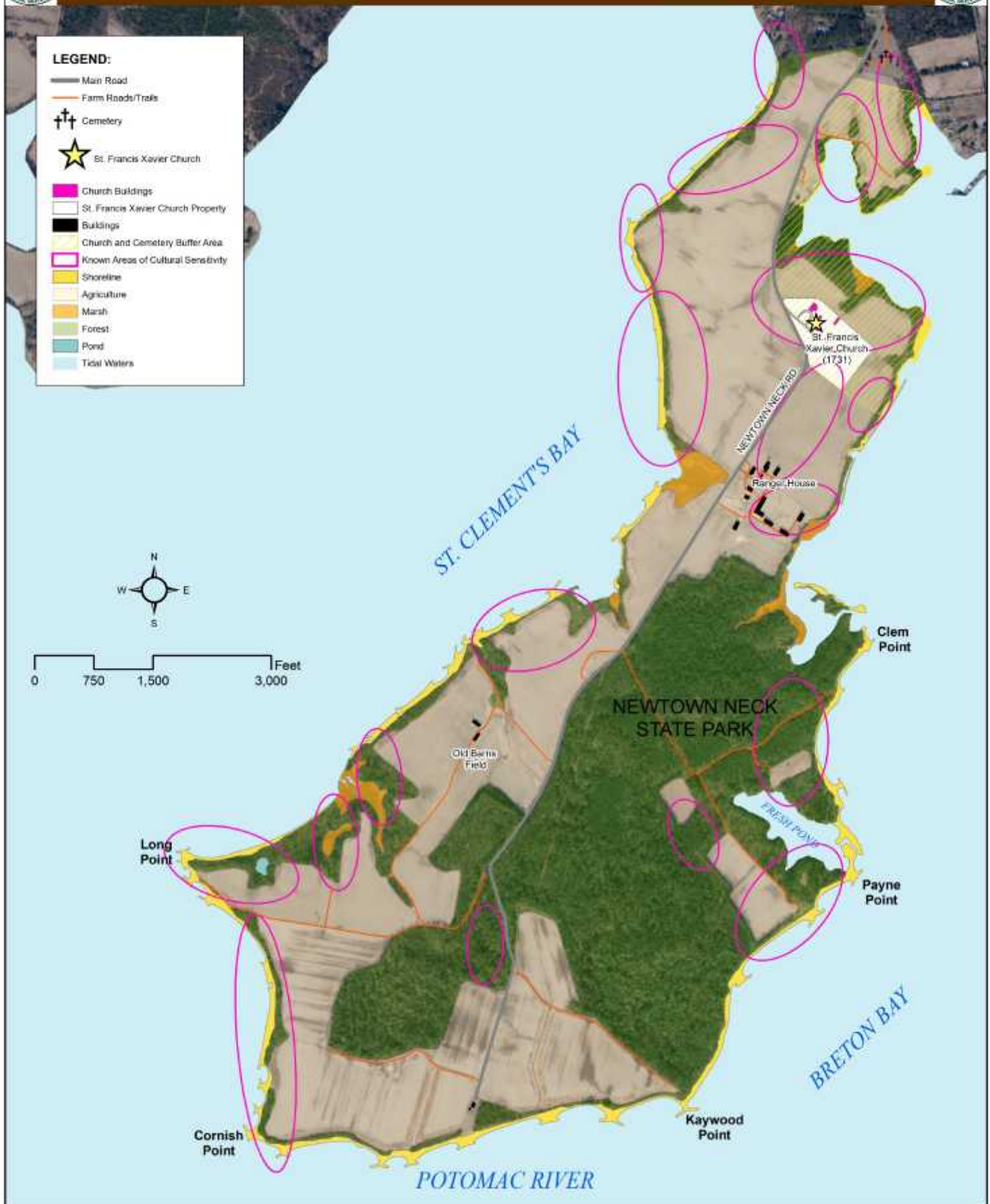
## **Cultural Resources**

In assessing the wealth of natural resources found at Newtown Neck, it is no surprise that early occupation of the property took place when hunters and gatherers arrived in the area. As described in a previous chapter, it is likely that American Indians may have lived along the banks of the peninsula 5,000 years ago. As a result of this early occupation, and possibly continuous settlement and activity of some kind since then, there are numerous cultural resources on the property.

At the beginning of the master plan process, 40 archaeological sites had been identified on the park property with two additional sites found on the St. Francis Xavier Church property and two



# MAP 10: CULTURAL RESOURCES





sites that cross property boundaries. A significant amount of archaeological investigation has taken place on the property, although it is not comprehensively documented. The information that has been collected suggests that the park property has been occupied from the Late Archaic period (4000 BC - 1000BC) through the present.

Prior to DNR's acquisition of the property, at least four formal projects or studies were conducted on the property yielding considerable information about the various settlements and activities on the property. Significant sites that warrant further research and study have been identified and reported to the Maryland Historical Trust and are generally located within the areas defined on the Cultural Resources Map. This does not mean that there are not other significant areas of cultural resources to be found on the property through additional survey work, but rather it identifies where there were concentrations of artifacts found during these prior evaluations.

In the summer of 2015, St. Mary's College of Maryland undertook Phase I archaeological investigations at two locations on the property as part of a field school in archaeological survey and as a project employing archaeological crew. Ten students, two project supervisors, and a lead professor collected Phase I-level data from areas surrounding both the Russell house and the Lacey house. Before fieldwork began, the team obtained a terrestrial archaeological permit for work on state lands from the Maryland Historical Trust and laid out a survey grid using satellite and GPS technology

Once the grid was set, the project crew excavated 2,106 shovel tests, and all artifacts were collected. Of the excavated shovel tests, 1,442 contained artifacts. Brick and oyster shell fragments constituted the largest portion of recovered materials, but many other artifact types were also collected. Some shovel tests contained a single brick fragment while others contained bricks, ceramics, and other materials. Further processing, study, and research is planned for this fall of 2015, which will facilitate a more detailed description and assessment of the historic significance of the surveyed areas

In the areas surveyed, the group has reported preliminarily that there was a considerable amount of mid- to late 18th - and early 19th -century materials, probably evidence of slave quarters and other operations related to Jesuit activities at Newtown. At least one site – near the Russell house – appears to have been occupied through the late 19th and well into the 20th century. Evidence for pre-Contact Native American settlements was also encountered, including a shell midden in the vicinity of the Lacey house and two shell middens in the vicinity of the Russell house. None of these middens appear to be very large or widespread, suggesting smaller settlements that were repeatedly occupied. Based on our understanding of Native American history and culture, these middens must date no earlier than c. 1000 BC and are probably much more recent. A single projectile point – a Levanna point dating ca. 900-1250 AD was recovered.

In evaluating the findings around the Russell House, the soil stratigraphy was notable for its depth and complexity and demonstrates that a great deal of filling took place in the area west and just south of the Russell house. These layers speak to a kind of landscape modification (filling of wetlands) that would not be allowed today. This information, the artifacts collected, and the

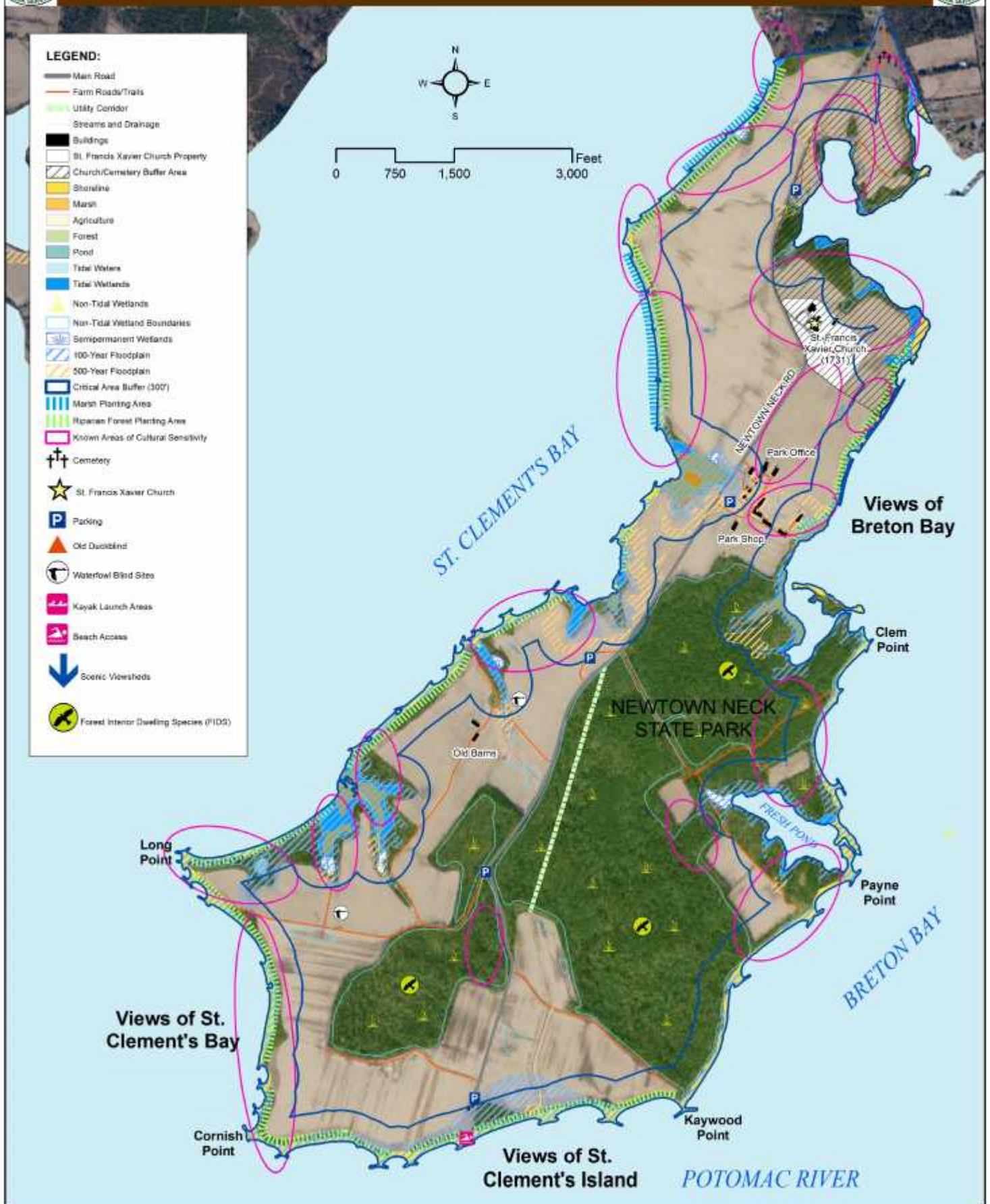
remains of structures believed to have been associated with the WWII testing reveal the relationship between humans and the landscape that was typical of the Chesapeake watershed. Clearly, it is important to not only protect the important cultural resources at Newtown Neck State Park, but to continue to investigate, analyze, and study these resources for the purpose of telling new, meaningful, and relevant stories about the property to 21st-century audiences.

### **Environmental Suitability Assessment and General Site Analysis**

The information and maps in this chapter provide an overview of the significant resources at Newtown Neck State Park and some of the regulations, standards, programs, and policies that have been put in place to protect them. A composite map of a many of these resources was put together to provide a way to identify areas suitable for specific uses, activities, and infrastructure. The “Environmental Suitability and General Site Analysis Map” provides a “snapshot” of the development constraints and opportunities and was used to develop the Concept Plan.



# MAP 11: SUITABILITY



## **Chapter 4:       The General Plan**

### **Overview**

The overall vision for Newtown Neck State Park is to maintain the property in much the same way as it has been maintained prior to State ownership as a working farm with limited public access to the property for passive, nature-oriented use, education, and recreation. Ownership by the State will ensure that the property is permanently protected from development and that natural and cultural resources are conserved and enhanced. As part of the master plan process, the following seven goals will direct land use decisions and investment at Newtown Neck State Park.

### **Goals**

1. Maintain the integrity and biodiversity of existing forested areas, tidal and nontidal wetlands, streams, and shoreline buffer areas.
2. Conserve, protect, and enhance biological productivity and diversity through the implementation of sustainable land and habitat management practices, including agriculture, forestry, and hunting.
3. Maintain and protect existing historic and cultural resources and conduct additional archaeological and cultural survey work to discover, document, and interpret the history of the site and the region including the roles of American Indians, colonists, African Americans, farmers, watermen, and World War II troops and scientists.
4. Maintain and promote passive recreation activities such as hiking, kayaking, bird watching, and horseback riding and provide appropriate accommodations to minimize user conflicts.
5. Restrict and limit new development and roads and enhance the natural environment by implementing appropriate resource restoration activities, such as meadow and wetland creation, stream and stream buffer enhancement, and shoreline planting.
6. Protect the architectural character of facilities at the park by ensuring new buildings, structures, and planting are consistent with the rural agricultural landscape and utilizing existing buildings and infrastructure to the extent practicable.
7. Preserve and protect the religious rights and historic significance of St. Francis Xavier Church and cemetery and the Newtown Manor House by creating a conservation buffer around the church and Manor House, extending to the cemetery and the waterfront.

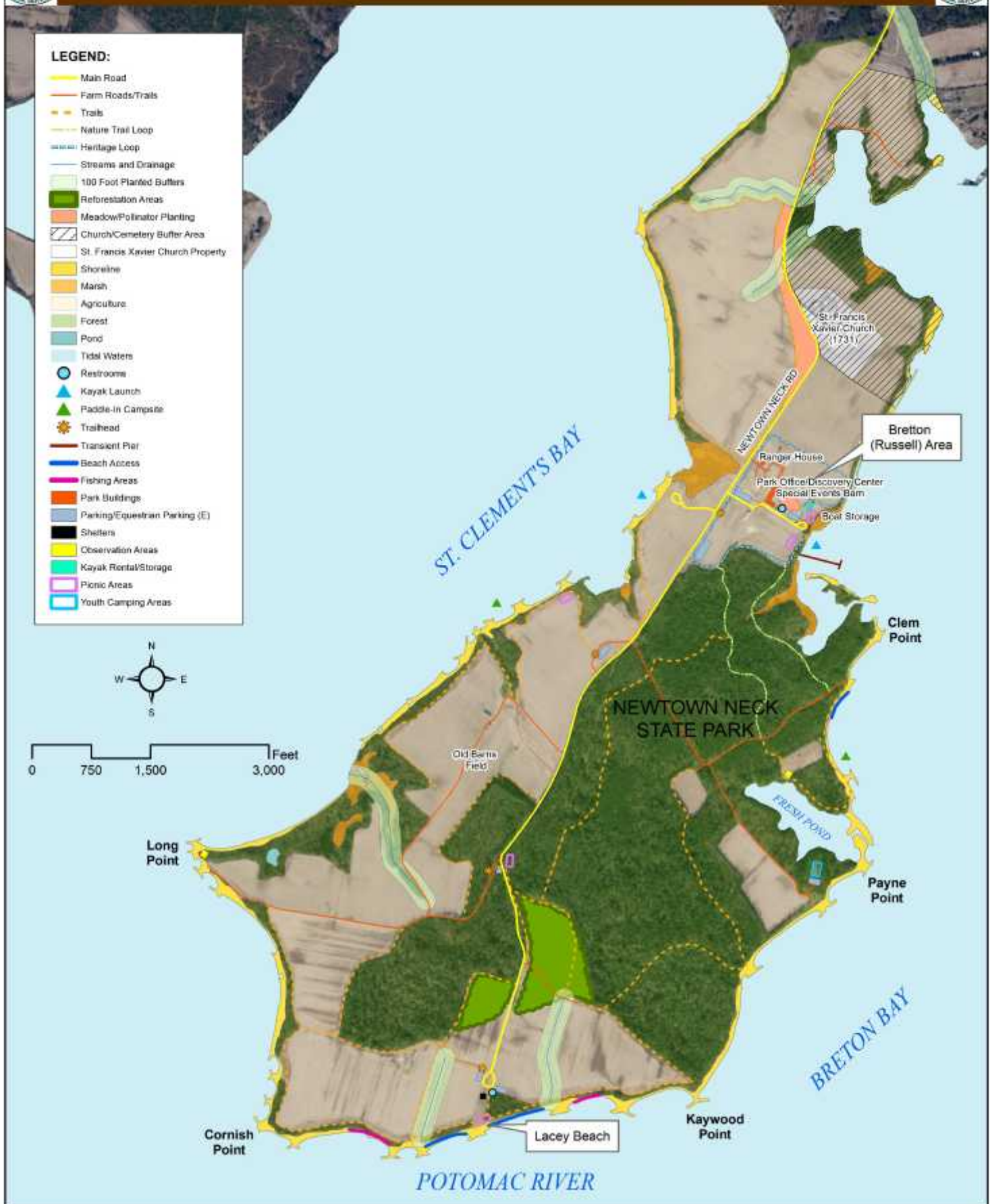
### **Guiding Themes and Character**

The overall guiding themes for Newtown Neck State Park are to conserve, protect, and enhance natural resources and to identify, learn from, and preserve cultural resources. These basic principles direct the management and development of the property while also allowing for passive recreational activities and cultural resource interpretation.





## MAP 12: CONCEPT PLAN



The general character of the site is that of a lightly developed, traditional agrarian landscape, with buildings and infrastructure clustered in a few areas and connected by dirt or gravel roads. The surrounding lands are cultivated fields or natural forest, meadows, or wetlands. Except for the 1970s-era Rambler in the Russell Area, existing structures are traditional in their design and materials and geared toward simple functionality.

## **Master Plan Elements**

The proposed plan for the property is based on maintaining the property's rural character while accommodating modest improvements to enhance passive water and nature oriented recreation. The property will be managed for natural and cultural resource conservation, resource utilization, water quality improvement, and habitat protection and enhancement. The elements included in this master plan promote the goals of the master plan and make use of existing buildings and infrastructure to the extent practicable.

### **Main Road**

The existing main road into the property runs more or less directly south, approximately through the center of the property. The road is a partially State maintained, partially County maintained tar and chip road for the northern 0.7 miles. The southern 0.2 miles are a gravel road. The only modifications proposed to the existing road are to repair some areas in need of stabilization and to construct a loop road at the southern end to provide improved access and a turnaround area for two proposed parking lots, a pavilion, and a composting toilet at the beach.

In an effort to minimize impacts to the existing St. Francis Xavier Parish property, DNR will work cooperatively with parish representatives to develop a design to demarcate and separate the entrance to the church property from the road. Entrance posts, fencing, landscaping, and signage are design elements that can be used to clearly define the boundaries of the church property.

### **Conservation Buffer Area Around St. Francis Xavier Church**

The Department is committed to maintaining a compatible relationship with St. Francis Xavier Church. In order to ensure that parishioners are able to enjoy the landscape around the Church in a manner similar to how it was experienced prior to acquisition by the State, no structures or recreational amenities are proposed in the area around the Church. This area, extending from the southern boundary of the church property north to the northern property boundary and from Newtown Neck Road to the Breton Bay shoreline will be maintained as a "conservation buffer."

### **Multi-Use Trails**

The plan includes the establishment of approximately 10 miles of shared use pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails that will include some new trails, as well as existing trails and farm roads. Trail establishment will take place over time with efforts made to ensure that all new trails are located and constructed in a sustainable manner. In general, the multi-use trails will be natural surface, single-track trails that are located to minimize clearing and disturbance. Because much of the property is low-lying and characterized by poorly drained, hydric soils, trail construction

will likely involve turf-block reinforcement, puncheons, and turnpikes to maintain a dry and passable trail surface.

### **Cultural Heritage Trail**

Newtown Neck State Park is a property with a rich history and there are opportunities to tell a variety of interrelated stories including early occupation of the property by American Indians, exploration by Captain John Smith, settlement by European colonists, and resource utilization and continuous ownership by the Jesuits for almost 400 years. The Cultural Heritage Trail will be an improved surface, ADA accessible loop trail starting at the Main Visitor Parking Area and extending approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile around the main activity area. The trail will include signs and appropriate outdoor exhibits for interpretation of historic and cultural resources and archaeological sites

### **Nature Trail**

Newtown Neck State Park provides access to diverse natural resources and access to a variety of ecosystems and habitats that are typical of a natural coastal plain landscape. Due to the park's close proximity to several elementary schools and middle schools, it is highly desirable to provide nature-oriented outdoor education programs. A one to one and a half mile nature trail starting at the main visitor parking area is proposed to provide both a setting for school programs, as well as a short self-guided walk for park visitors. The nature trail will extend from the Cultural Heritage Trail; through the forested areas on the eastern side of the park where there are areas of forested nontidal wetlands and vernal pools. The new trail will connect with an existing trail that leads to a beach area just south of Clem Point, providing opportunities to view and explore beach and shoreline habitat. There will also be a connecting trail that leads to Fresh Pond, a tidal pond that provides habitat for a wide variety of bird and mammal species. The focus of this trail will be on interpretive elements and programming about ecosystems and native fish, plant, and wildlife species.

### **Two Comfort Stations**

Two composting toilet facilities are proposed to be installed. These units do not require power, water, or a sewer or septic connection. The units are approximately eight feet by ten feet, and they will be designed to match the barn style of the existing buildings on the property. One of the units will be located near the main visitor parking area, and the other unit will be located at the primary beach access at the southern end of the property.

### **Two Kayak Launches**

Both State and local strategic recreation plans have identified the need to provide additional public access to the water, particularly for kayaks and canoes. Two kayak launches are included in the plan, and it is anticipated that these launches will provide opportunities for paddling trips around the Newtown Neck Peninsula, as well as a longer and more challenging excursion to St. Clement's Island State Park. There is an existing kayak launch at the park that is popular and used by visitors during the summer months. In order to facilitate better launch access to Breton Bay, more parking, and better monitoring of the launch area by park staff, the plan includes relocating the launch to the Bretton (Russell) Area. The plan includes a second launch on the western side of the property that will provide access to St. Clement's Bay and will facilitate

optimum access for kayakers in varying wind and tide conditions. The second launch is located across the main road from the eastern kayak launch in an area with a stable, sandy beach. A narrow gravel road with a turnaround will be constructed to provide a kayak drop-off area. The construction of a second (western) launch will facilitate an approximately five mile long kayak excursion around the southern end of the park to the eastern launch. There is an established water trail from the Port of Leonardtown Winery down McIntosh Run and south along Breton Bay that will tie into the two canoe/kayak launches and paddle-in camp-sites at Newtown Neck and link them with the Captain John Smith Water Trail. The location of the two kayak launches will also facilitate access between Newtown Neck and St. Clement's Island State Park.

The kayak launches will be designed as "soft launches," consisting of a stabilized "sand wedge," approximately 25 feet wide and extending from the bank approximately 15 – 20 feet into the water. Marsh plantings with a low stone sill if needed will be used to keep the sand in place. There is a low bank at both locations, so no major grading or bank disturbance is proposed.

### **Two Paddle-in Campsites**

Newtown Neck State Park is strategically located along The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. The property's undeveloped shoreline and long stretches of easily accessible sandy beach provide a perfect setting for "primitive" paddle in camp-sites. Two sites are included in the master plan with the option of identifying a third site depending on demand. One site is located on the eastern side of the property, north of Payne Point in a protected cove with a broad sandy beach and adjacent open forest areas. A second site is located on the western side of the park on St. Clement's Bay, approximately one mile north of Long Point. This site is also characterized by a broad sandy beach and nearby forest cover. If a third site is proposed in the future, it would be desirable to designate a site near Cornish Point that would be easily accessible from the Potomac River.

Each "primitive site" will require reservations and will be limited to six people. The sites will be identified with a small sign, so paddlers will be able to access the location easily from the water and will know that they are camping in a designated area. Paddlers will practice "Leave No Trace" principles. During the summer months, sanitary facilities will be provided within walking distance of the paddle-in campsites. Modest road improvements will be needed to provide vehicular access to allow for the placement and maintenance of portable toilets.

The planned kayak launch facilities and paddle-in campsites will facilitate paddle trips from Newtown Neck State Park to St. Clement's Island State Park. St. Clement's Island State Park is only accessible by water and is located approximately two miles from Newtown Neck State Park, traversing St. Clement's Bay and the Potomac River.

### **Beach Access**

Newtown Neck State Park includes approximately seven miles of undeveloped shoreline, and approximately five miles of the shoreline consists of easily accessible sandy beaches. In 2004 and 2005, the Jesuits implemented a major shore erosion control program that involved the use of offshore stone tombolos. Tombolos work by reducing the effects of wind and wave action on the shoreline thereby minimizing erosion and can direct wave action and reduce wave velocity

facilitating the deposition of sand. Typically, the installation of tombolos includes stabilizing the connecting landform with marsh plantings. Over time, a shoreline protected with stable tombolos and with a good source of sand will result in a series of curved beaches between the structures. The size of the beaches depends largely on the amount of sand moving in the surrounding waterways. The project at Newtown Neck has been successful resulting in both a stable shoreline and sandy beaches.

At the southern end of the property, the beach fronts on the Potomac River, and the beautiful views, stable sandy bottom, and shallow water make this area an ideal location for beach access. Two major beach access areas are proposed in this area, and these will be designated for beach access, with fishing restricted in this area to minimize user conflicts. A third beach access area will be designated on the eastern side of the property south of Clem Point. There is relatively deep water in this area, and it is a popular location for boaters to pull onto the beach or anchor near the beach.

### **Fishing Areas**

There are numerous locations on the peninsula that are appropriate for fishing, and visitors will have access to “favorite fishing holes” during normal park hours. There will be two designated fishing areas on the Potomac River shoreline. The western fishing area is approximately 1,000 feet east of Cornish Point, and the eastern fishing area is approximately 1,000 feet west of Kaywood Point. Although park visitors will not be limited to fishing only in the designated areas, two fishing areas are identified on the Potomac River beach in order to minimize potential conflicts between visitors that are fishing and visitors that are using the beach for walking, wading, or beach-combing.

### **Operational (Ranger) House**

The existing brick one-story house on the property will be used as an operational house by Maryland Park Service staff. This will improve security at the property by maintaining a consistent staff presence. The house is currently in good condition, but the roof needs to be replaced, and minor repairs are needed to weatherproof windows and doors. The existing heating system does not meet current code requirements, so repair or replacement will be required. The interior of the house will be painted, and new floor and ceiling finishes installed to replace areas with water damage and mold.

### **Park Buildings**

In addition to the Ranger House, there are 11 barns, sheds, and outbuildings in the Russell Area. The two barns located north of the Ranger House are in good condition. One of the barns has a one-story “stripping room” addition, which has experienced water damage, is in poor condition, and is proposed to be removed. The barn itself will be repaired and repainted. There is a meat house and pole barn east of the Ranger House, and these structures have structural problems, are in a deteriorated condition and will be demolished. An existing outbuilding in good condition is currently being used as a maintenance building by park staff, and an existing garage will be renovated to provide additional secure equipment and mower storage. The southeastern barn located close (and perpendicular) to the shoreline is proposed to be demolished to accommodate the canoe/kayak launch parking lot. The remaining barns in the Russell Area will

be repaired and repainted to accommodate the agricultural use of the property. The largest outbuilding, the L-shaped equipment shed, is proposed to be modified and used as a special events barn, park office, and discovery (nature and cultural resources) center. Improvements to the building will be made over time with short term projects including some minor structural repairs, lighting, and electricity to facilitate use of the structure for special events at the park. Any new structures or modifications to existing structures will be sensitive to the simple and traditional agricultural vernacular of the area. Exterior colors and materials will be consistent with existing structures.

### **Parking**

In general, the number of parking spaces determines the number of visitors that can use the park at a given time. In determining an appropriate number of parking spaces, consideration is given to the type of user, the length of the visit, and the recreational opportunities available. At Newtown Neck State Park, it is important to provide reasonable public access to the property and the waterfront for a variety of passive, nature-oriented recreation activities while protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources and providing a high quality outdoor experience.

In assessing use and activity at similar State parks and reviewing more detailed visitation statistics at Greenwell State Park, located approximately 20 miles from Newtown Neck, the proposed parking will be similar to that provided at Greenwell State Park. The concept plan includes 80 to 100 parking spaces in seven small gravel lots. There will be three parking lots located at the main visitor area. In addition to the kayak launch parking area with ten spaces, and the equestrian parking area with ten spaces, there will be a 20 to 30 car gravel parking area located on the east side of Newtown Neck Road and south of the Ranger House.

Continuing south down Newtown Neck Road, there is an existing 10-car grassed “hunter parking” lot, which will be improved with gravel and additional signage for general use. There is another existing four-car gravel parking lot located further south on Newtown Neck Road, and this lot will be maintained. Newtown Neck Road ends at the existing Lacey House, and the road improvements include construction of a gravel loop road which will provide a turnaround area, improved access for emergency vehicles, and access to two 12 to 15 car gravel parking lots.

### **Equestrian Parking**

Newtown Neck State Park provides excellent trail riding opportunities for equestrians. The property provides wooded trails, open field areas, and easy access to sandy beaches at several locations for riders of all skill levels. The property has historically been used by a local fox chasing group, and this use, as well as recreational trail riding is proposed to continue with appropriate management to ensure the sustainability of the trails. Fox chasing activities will be on a reservation basis and will be at the discretion of the park manager. A gravel parking area with ten pull-through horse trailer spaces will be constructed at the southern end of the Bretton (Russell) Area. This parking lot will be designated for equestrian use and will accommodate a limited number of equestrians for fox chasing and trail riding. The equestrian parking lot is located away from the main visitor parking area to separate equestrian activities from other park activities while still providing easy access to multi-use trails. Water from an existing well will be provided to the parking area.

### **Beach Pavilion**

There is an existing two-story wood-frame dwelling at the southern end of the Park, located approximately 300 feet from the shoreline. The house is in poor condition and would require major restoration and structural repairs, as well as lead paint and asbestos remediation in order to be adaptively re-used. It is not practical or desirable to renovate the structure; therefore, it will be razed. The existing building footprint, approximately 1,100 square feet, will be used to construct a small, open-sided, pavilion. The pavilion will be available for public rental, as well as to accommodate school groups, scout troops, and other organizations that want a protected gathering area. The pavilion will accommodate groups of 80 to 100 people, and will have water and electric service, as well as a fireplace. The structure will be designed to reflect the farm vernacular of the property and the legacy of small tenant house structures, like the Lacey House, that historically characterized large farms in the region.

### **Overlooks/Observation Areas**

Overlooks and nature observation areas can serve as trail destinations and can serve to highlight unique natural areas or significant plant and wildlife habitats. A rest area and bench will provide an opportunity to enjoy a tranquil moment and to learn about natural resources or areas of historic significance. Two overlooks are proposed. The eastern overlook, located on the northern shoreline of Fresh Pond is accessed via a trail through a meadow and provides an outstanding view of the heavily forested shoreline of this tidal pond. Herons, osprey, swans, and ducks are often seen in this area. A western overlook is proposed at Long Point. It is believed that this area may have been a site of Native American use or settlement, and it provides a unique vantage point of the Potomac River, St. Clement's Bay, and St. Clement's Island that lends itself to interpretation of the history of Newtown Neck.

### **Boat Storage**

There are two barns near the shoreline of Breton Bay in the Russell Area. The southern-most barn is in poor condition, and it is proposed to be razed. After the barn is taken down, the footprint of this barn will be used to create a small (approximately ten car) parking area for the kayak launch. The location of the lot will facilitate the creation of a drop-off point close to the eastern kayak launch on Breton Bay. The northern barn, which parallels the shoreline, is in relatively good condition, requiring only minor repairs to the roof and siding. This barn will be repaired and used as a recreation equipment storage area. Its proximity to the shoreline and planned kayak launch and pier facilitate adapting it to store canoes, kayaks, paddles, personal flotation devices, etc. In the future, if there is sufficient demand, a portion of this barn could be made available to a concessionaire interested in renting kayaks, canoes, and other non-motorized watercraft at Newtown Neck. The relatively protected water in this area of Breton Bay is a good location for small boat access.

### **Picnic Areas**

Cooking and eating outdoors are extremely popular family activities at Maryland's State parks, and well-maintained and easily accessible picnic facilities are heavily used. To accommodate the demand for these types of facilities, the master plan includes the development of five picnic areas. Each picnic area is located close to parking and designed to provide spectacular views and access to trails or the beach. The picnic areas will be designed to be easily accessible and will

include a stabilized grass, reinforced turf or stone dust surface, five picnic tables, grills, and landscaping for shade and privacy.

Two picnic areas are located at the Bretton (Russell) Area, one on either side of the proposed kayak launch. These locations are desirable because the areas are level and implementation of a Critical Area Buffer Management Plan will allow for the creation of views of Breton Bay. A third picnic area is located at the fork in the road at the southern end of the property. There is a small parking area at the fork, and this location is popular for accessing the trails leading to Long Point and Old barns Field. A fourth picnic area is located on the western shoreline of the property with access from the hunter parking lot. This location provides good access to the trails on the western side of the property, as well as views of St. Clement's Bay. The fifth picnic area will be located near the main beach access at the southern end of the property and will provide shade and views of the Potomac River.

### **Natural Resources Police and Transient Pier**

Public access to the waterfront is an extremely important quality of life issue to residents of the State of Maryland, and providing safe, environmentally sound and sustainable access is a priority for the Department of Natural Resources. With approximately seven miles of accessible shoreline, Newtown Neck State Park provides an excellent opportunity for park visitors to access the water and for recreational boaters to visit the park. A pier is planned at the Park's main visitor area. The pier would be constructed as a T-head structure to facilitate temporary docking to load and unload passengers. The pier would be designed to include six to nine slips for temporary docking for visitors to the park, and they would be appropriate for use by smaller boats up to 26 feet. In addition, the pier would include two slips with eight-ton boat lifts to be used by the Natural Resources Police (NRP). NRP currently leases slips on Combs Creek and this is not an ideal location for rapid emergency response. An NRP presence at the park associated with docking facilities at Newtown Neck State Park will enhance safety and security at the property and in the surrounding waterways.

### **Youth Camping Area**

This property has been used intermittently for youth group camping, and there is a definite need for this type of amenity in Southern Maryland. The plan includes a designated youth camping area, just south of Fresh Pond. This area is accessible by an existing, limited-access park road, and there is a grassed field area close by that can be used for parking of chaperone vehicles. The youth camping area would be available by reservation only, and youth groups would be required to make arrangements for restroom facilities.



# BRETTON (RUSSELL) AREA



# LACEY BEACH



## Chapter 5: Resource Protection and Management

### Conservation and Stewardship Objectives

Newtown Neck State Park is an ecologically diverse peninsula that includes a variety of natural areas intermingled with active agricultural areas. Outside of the farmed areas, human activity and disturbance has been minimal, so the existing forest, meadows, ponds, streams, and wetlands are naturally functioning ecosystems in good condition. The purpose of resource management activities will be to protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources and to minimize alteration of the natural landscape.

The following stewardship objectives will guide resource management decisions and efforts at Newtown Neck State Park:

- Maintain and promote traditional agricultural uses, employing appropriate Best Management Practices to support wildlife and protect water quality.
- Protect and enhance tidal and nontidal wetland resources.
- Promote ecological restoration activities to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Promote passive nature-oriented recreation activities such as bird watching and hiking and ensure that user conflicts are minimized.
- Discover, document, and permanently protect archaeological and historic resources.

### Past Restoration Activities

The Newtown Neck peninsula is a lightly developed property where aside from St. Francis Xavier Church and Parish Hall, past land use has been primarily agricultural and extremely low density residential. Although the natural resources on the site are considered environmentally sensitive and there was use of the site associated with the military's lease of the property in the 1940s, the low level of human activity and associated disturbance has allowed the property to remain relatively free of trash, pollutants, and degraded conditions and maintained high levels of biodiversity and ecosystem function. With the ongoing implementation of a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan by the farmer, there has been little need to date for intensive environmental restoration activities.

In the last fifteen years, there have been two major resource restoration activities at Newtown Neck State Park, a shore erosion control project and a riparian buffer planting. The first of these involved the installation of tombolos and stone sills along the shoreline of the western, southern, and eastern shoreline of most of the park. A portion of this major project included the installation of a living shoreline on the northwestern waterfront area. The living shoreline involved the installation of a stone sill waterward of the existing toe of the bank, backfilling the intertidal area with sand, and planting native marsh grass species, *Spartina alterniflora* and *Spartina patens*. This living shoreline has matured successfully with other native shrubs and herbaceous plants colonizing the areas and enhancing the water quality and habitat benefits of the marsh.

The second restoration activity involved the planting of riparian forest buffers along most of the shoreline of the property. This project was initiated in 2009 as part of a massive effort by the State to improve water quality and habitat wherever feasible on State-owned lands. The lack of forested buffers of a significant width contributes to excess sediments and nutrients being washed into tidal tributaries and ultimately the Bay causing the degradation of aquatic habitat and dependent species.

Planting plans were developed for all DNR-owned properties that did not have functioning forested buffers of at least 100 feet adjacent to tidal waters and wetlands. The approach involved planting a mix of native hardwood whips and providing tree tubes for deer browse protection. In the five years since the planting took place, the riparian buffers have matured and are functioning properly to buffer adjacent waterways from the adverse affects of nutrients and sediments in runoff from active agricultural lands.

### **Agriculture**

Farming and related activities, including those related to tobacco production, have taken place on the Newtown Neck peninsula since the 1600s, and are an important part of the property's culture and heritage. The location of fields, forested areas, meadows, and riparian buffers are closely linked to the location of prime agricultural soils and past and current agricultural practices. Currently, approximately 350 acres of the property are in agricultural use and leased to a local farmer through 2019. Except for some acreage adjustments to accommodate improved stream buffers, expansion of existing FIDS habitat, and the establishment of pollinator meadow areas, it is desirable to maintain agricultural uses on the property.

Appropriate soil conservation and water quality plan practices such as crop rotation, cover crops, riparian buffers, and nutrient management are required to avoid adverse impacts on water quality and wildlife habitat. The farmer leasing the land will work cooperatively with the St. Mary's County Soil Conservation District and DNR staff to ensure continued responsible and sustainable farming practices on the property.

### **Wildlife Management**

The recreational activities proposed for Newtown Neck State Park are passive and nature-oriented and therefore the visitor experience at Newtown Neck will be enhanced by the presence of wildlife. Because the property is only sparsely developed, and there has been very little intense human activity on the property, populations of most common wildlife species are stable and well adapted. Because the primary visitor areas will be located in generally open areas that are already developed, significant impacts to wildlife are not anticipated. Park staff will work cooperatively with DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service to manage the property to maintain viable, healthy, and sustainable populations of wildlife species currently found on the property. Ecological restoration activities, including the creation of additional forest and the planting and management of pollinator meadow habitat will be designed to increase biodiversity for a number of species.

## **Hunting**

Prior to the State's acquisition of the property, there were a variety of hunting opportunities on the Newtown Neck peninsula. This tradition continued when the State acquired the land except for the period when the park was closed to address the discovery of munitions. Hunting deer, upland game, waterfowl, and turkey is an important part of the area's history, provides recreational opportunities for local residents, and helps maintain sustainable wildlife populations.

The hunting program at Newtown Neck will continue with reservations required for all hunting activities and subject to a "hunting prescription" that will be evaluated each year and modified as necessary to adjust the number of hunters at any given time, the timing of seasons for certain species, the location of field blind sites and waterfowl shoreline sites, and the location of "no hunting zones" and "safety zones" as needed.

In general, hunting will not be permitted on Sundays or on days when school groups are scheduled to visit the park for educational activities. The reservation system will be managed by the DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service in cooperation with the MD Park Service and will be used to ensure that user conflicts are minimized. Hunters will be required to park in designated areas and sign in each day.

## **Proposed Restoration Activities**

Although the existing natural resources at Newtown Neck State Park are in good condition with a variety of habitat types and ecosystems present, there are opportunities to enhance and diversify the existing natural resources. The following restoration and enhancement efforts have been identified and are included in the phasing plan. It is likely that additional opportunities will be identified in the future.

### **Forest**

The property has a large mixed deciduous forest that covers approximately 175 acres. Although a park road traverses this area, the majority of this forest block is on the eastern side of the property, and there is almost complete canopy coverage over the road with no plans to widen or alter the road in this area. Because the forested areas on the property have been identified as Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat, it is highly desirable to expand the forest resources on the site adjacent to the existing forest. Due to growth and development throughout Southern Maryland, forest fragmentation and loss of large forested tracts is a significant concern. Expansion of existing FIDS habitat to fill in some existing open field areas and to expand the forest on the east side of the road at the small parking area where the gravel portion of the road begins is planned.

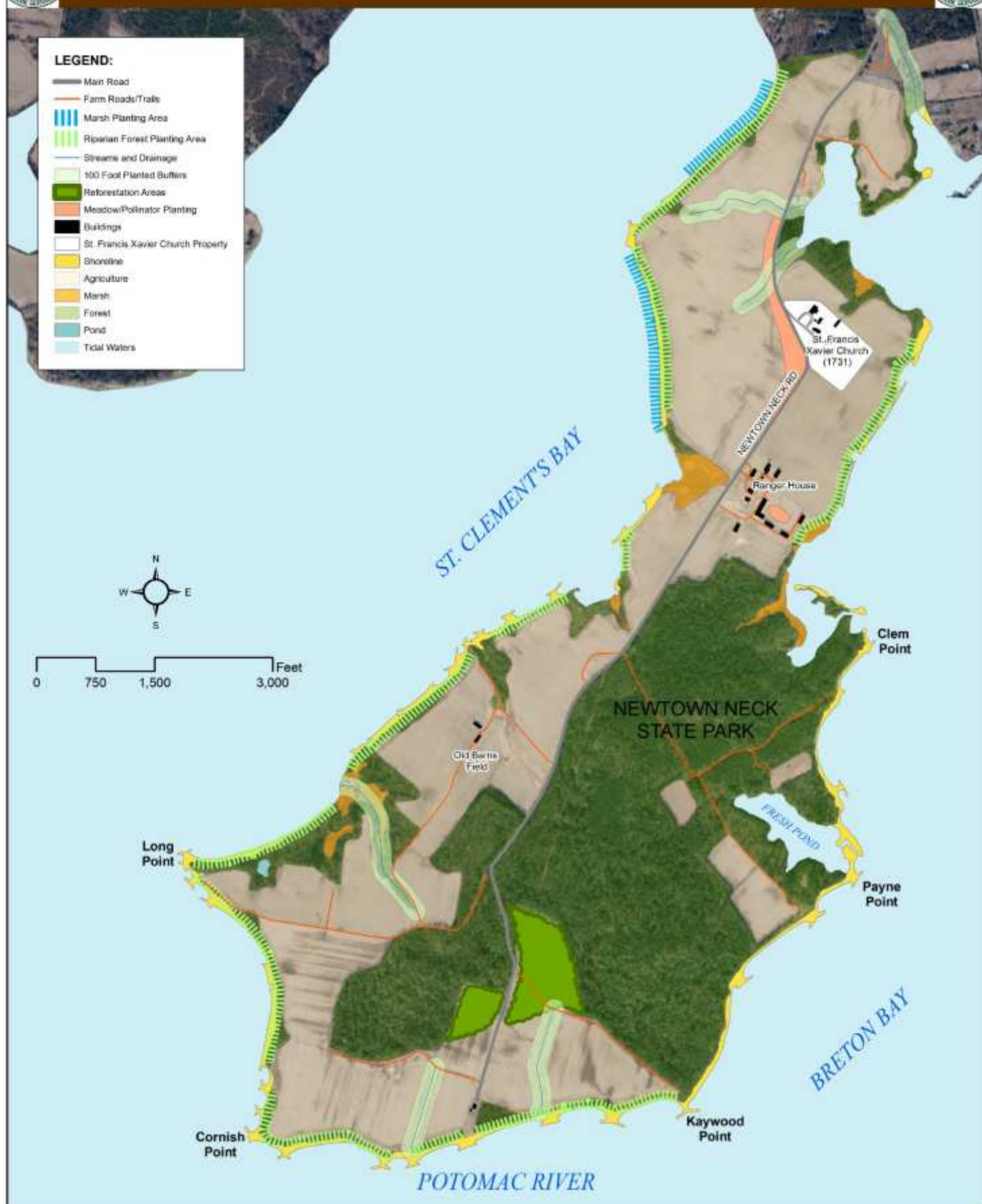
### **Pollinator Meadow**

Over the last several years, there has been a dramatic decline in the populations of many common native pollinator species, including bees and butterflies. This change has become a cause of significant concern for that agricultural community. Insect-pollinated fruits and vegetables are central to our diets and, pollinators help sustain healthy and productive plant communities. Loss and degradation of habitat and increased use of pesticides have been





# MAP 13: RESOURCE RESTORATION



identified as significant causes of pollinator population declines. Efforts are underway to restore pollinator populations from the ground up by restoring pollinator habitat and ensuring a viable food source in the form of flowering meadows from spring to fall. At Newtown Neck State Park, the existing agricultural fields, grassed buffers along drainageways, and grassy areas adjacent to roadways provide opportunities to establish pollinator habitat.

DNR staff will work to identify suitable areas of varying sizes to establish pollinator habitat where practical. This will involve the conversion of areas from tilled fields or mowed lawn to flowering meadow. More importantly, it will also involve educating visitors about a stewardship ethic that involves growing not mowing and a change in the traditional “aesthetic” of clipped turf to a more natural appearance.

### **Stream and Drainage Area Buffers**

In order to maintain and enhance the water quality and biodiversity of wetlands and streams at Newtown Neck, efforts will be made to enhance existing stream and drainage area buffers. For existing streams, buffers will be increased to 100 feet and where appropriate, additional tree and shrub planting will be implemented. For the drainage area buffers that cross existing agricultural fields, efforts will be made to provide enhanced wildlife corridors and additional grassland bird habitat.

### **Cultural Resource Protection, Investigation, and Interpretation**

The Department is committed to protecting significant cultural resources sites, continuing archaeological survey and investigation work, and making the history of the Newtown Neck peninsula an important element of the visitor experience at Newtown Neck State Park. DNR staff will work closely with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) on all of these efforts. As part of the master planning process, some cultural resource survey work was initiated in 2015 in the areas of the property that are the focus of most public use and are likely to become the most important visitor amenity areas. Additional grant funds have been secured to continue work on the project this fall, and a comprehensive report will be prepared at the end of the project.

A generalized map of known significant cultural resource sites was prepared by DNR staff and reviewed by MHT as part of the initial suitability analysis. MHT agreed that awareness of the general locations of the sites was important moving forward as individual projects are planned and designed. In addition to completing the Phase 1 archaeological survey work at the Russell Area and Lacey Beach, additional archaeological survey work is desirable in the latter phases of implementation of the master plan as resources allow. While required archaeological survey work will be performed prior to any land disturbance, it is desirable to continue to investigate the history of the property to better understand the stories of American Indians, European settlers, the Jesuits, African Americans, and scientists working on World War II munitions. This information will be used to develop exhibits and displays in the Discovery Center, as well as develop and enhance interpretive elements on the Cultural Heritage Trail.



## Chapter 6: Plan Phasing

### Proposed Improvements and Management Strategies

Chapter 4 outlines the features, improvements, and resource management activities planned for Newtown Neck State Park. In order to ensure that the goals for the park are effectively implemented and that planned improvements are developed in an environmentally sensitive, sustainable, and minimally disruptive manner, a fifteen year phasing plan is proposed. The phasing plan will allow existing grant and stabilization funding that is available now to be used to provide basic park amenities, while planning for larger capital improvement projects in the future. Resource restoration and enhancement activities will be ongoing through all of the phases.

### Phase I (2015 – 2020)

PHASE I - PLAN ELEMENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>Phase 1 Archaeology Survey at Bretton and Lacey Areas</b> Conduct archaeology field work, wash and catalog artifacts, prepare report	\$50,000	\$25,000 LWCF Grant \$15,000 MHAA Grant \$10,000 Other
<b>Main Road - Park Entrance Improvements/Modifications</b> Relocate main signs, replace gates, add directional signs	\$2,000	\$2,000 LWCF Grant
<b>Main Road – Provide Church Buffer</b> Design and implement appropriate buffer elements (signage, landscaping, etc.) and plant pollinator meadow adjacent to road to identify and separate Church property from the park	\$10,000	\$10,000 DNR
<b>Main Road – Cul de Sac at Beach</b> Design and construct cul-de-sac at the end of main road to provide access to pavilion, parking, restrooms	\$15,000	\$15,000 LWCF Grant
<b>Trails</b> Establish and provide five trailheads and directional signs on five miles of multi-use trails located on existing trails and farm roads	\$25,000	\$17,000 RTP Grant \$8,000 LWCF
<b>Comfort Stations</b> Install composting toilets at Bretton (Russell) Area and Lacey Beach	\$52,000	\$52,000 LWCF Grant
<b>Trails – Cultural Heritage Loop</b> Identify a ¾-mile trail around the Bretton (Russell) Area with maps/signage for interpretation of historic and cultural resources and archaeological sites	\$5,000	\$5,000 Other
<b>Trails – Nature Observation Loop</b> Identify a 1-mile nature observation trail loop extending southeast from the main parking area toward Fresh Pond with maps/signage for education and interpretation about natural resources	\$5,000	\$5,000 Other
<b>Identify Overlooks</b> Identify two overlook/nature observation areas, install benches	\$4,000	\$4,000 Other
<b>Kayak Launch – East</b> Design and install soft kayak launch on Breton Bay	\$30,000	\$30,000 Ches. Conserv.

PHASE I - PLAN ELEMENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>Demolish East Barn</b> Demolish deteriorated structure and remove utilities	\$15,000	\$15,000 Stabilization
<b>Construct Parking Lot and Access Road to East Kayak Launch</b> Design and construct and access road and a 10-car gravel parking lot on the footprint of the East Barn at the Russell Area	\$46,000	\$46,000 LWCF
<b>Kayak Launch - West</b> Design and install access road and soft kayak launch on St. Clement's Bay	\$40,000	\$30,000 Ches. Conserv.
<b>Paddle – in Campsites</b> Install two paddle-in campsites, one north of Payne Point and one north of Long Point	\$1,000	\$1,000 DNR
<b>Beach Access</b> Designate two beach areas, one east of the Lacey House and one west of the Lacey House, and provide signage and life-saving station	\$4,000	\$4,000 DNR
<b>Demolish Lacey House</b> Demolish Lacey House	\$35,000	\$35,000 Stabilization
<b>Construct Education Pavilion</b> Design and construct 1,000 SF open-sided educational pavilion at beach	\$74,000	\$74,000 LWCF
<b>Construct Beach Parking Lots</b> Design and construct two gravel parking lots with gated access from the new cul-de-sac	\$60,000	\$60,000 LWCF
<b>Fishing Areas</b> Designate two fishing areas along the Potomac shoreline, and provide signage and fishing information bulletin boards	\$2,000	\$2,000 DNR
<b>Ranger House</b> Make modest repairs to Russell House for use as an operational house by Park staff	\$33,200	\$33,200 Stabilization
<b>Construct Main Visitor Parking Lot</b> Design and construct gravel parking lot at the Bretton (Russell) Area with landscaping and stormwater management	\$63,000	\$63,000 LWCF
<b>Construct Equestrian Parking Lot</b> Design and construct gravel equestrian parking area with 10-truck and trailer pull-through spaces, landscaping, and stormwater management	\$40,000	\$40,000 LWCF
<b>Youth Group Camp-site and Road Improvements</b> Establish youth group camp-site with signs and fire ring and improve access road and grassed parking area	\$10,000	\$10,000 Other
<b>Construct and Equip Three Picnic Areas</b> Install three picnic areas each consisting of a reinforced turf or improved surface, five picnic tables, and grills	\$30,000	\$30,000 LWCF
<b>Repair Tobacco Barn and Demolish Stripping Room Addition</b> Repair roof and siding and demolish deteriorated addition	\$16,000	\$16,000 Stabilization

PHASE I - PLAN ELEMENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>Repair North Barn</b> Repair roof and siding, and paint entire structure	\$25,000	\$25,000 Stabilization
<b>Demolish Meat House</b> Demolish deteriorated structure and remove utilities	\$5,000	\$5,000 Stabilization
<b>Repair Garage/Storage Building</b> Repair garage/storage building and upgrade electric to meet code	\$4,500	\$4,500 Stabilization
<b>Demolish Pole Barn</b> Demolish deteriorated structure and remove utilities	\$7,000	\$7,000 Stabilization
<b>Repair Maintenance Shop</b> Repair roof, windows, and doors, and upgrade electric to meet code	\$5,500	\$5,500 Stabilization
<b>Repair Equipment Shed</b> Repair roof, structural elements, and siding and paint structure	\$35,000	\$35,000 Stabilization
<b>Repair Waterfront/Boat Barn</b> Repair roof and siding, and paint entire structure	\$16,000	\$16,000 Stabilization
<b>Repair Tractor Barn</b> Repair roof and siding, and paint entire structure	\$16,000	\$16,000 Stabilization
<b>Repair Osprey Barn</b> Repair roof and siding, and paint entire structure	\$16,000	\$16,000 Stabilization
<b>Demolish Old Barns in "Old Barns Field"</b> Demolish deteriorated barns	\$20,000	\$20,000 Stabilization
<b>Replace Failing Culverts and Address Water Quality Concerns</b> Replace failing and deteriorated culverts and direct discharges of erosive runoff into tributaries	\$50,000	\$50,000 Stabilization
<b>Remove Debris/Dump-sites</b> Clean up existing dump-sites and dispose of material at approved locations. Restore area to prevent unauthorized access	\$25,000	\$25,000 Stabilization

## Phase II (2020 – 2025)

PHASE II - PLAN ELEMENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>Phase 1 Archaeology Survey at Long Point</b> Conduct archaeology field work, wash and catalog artifacts, prepare report	\$15,000	\$15,000 Other
<b>Construct and Equip Two Picnic Areas</b> Install three picnic areas each consisting of a reinforced turf or improved surface, five picnic tables, and grills	\$30,000	\$30,000 LWCF
<b>Conduct Shoreline Study, Enhance Shoreline and Construct Natural Resources Police/Transient Pier</b> Conduct a study of the shoreline of Breton Bay near the Russell Area to identify enhancement opportunities and optimum location for a nine slip transient pier	\$500,000	\$500,000 WWI
<b>Rehabilitate and Renovate Equipment Shed for Special Events</b> Design and renovate existing equipment shed to create an area appropriate for special events. Provide utilities.	\$75,000	\$75,000 CIP
<b>Construct Park Office in Equipment Shed</b> Design and construct office space and storage in existing equipment shed to provide work area for two rangers and seasonal staff.	\$75,000	\$75,000 CIP
<b>Trails</b> Establish and provide five trailheads and directional signs on five miles of multi-use trails located on existing trails and farm roads	\$25,000	\$25,000 RTP Grant
<b>Trails – Cultural Heritage Loop</b> Construct ADA-accessible trail with benches, and interpretive stations to tell the story of the history of Newtown Neck	\$30,000	\$15,000 DNR \$15,000 Other
<b>Trails – Nature Observation Loop</b> Install high quality interpretive signage with connections to exhibits and interactive activities in the Discovery Center	\$15,000	\$15,000 Other
<b>Construct Discovery Center – Phase I</b> Design and construct a natural and cultural resource discovery center in existing equipment shed	\$100,000	\$100,000 DNR
<b>Increase FIDS Habitat</b> Expand and diversify existing Forested Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat by planting 30 acres of native hardwood trees	\$5,000	\$5,000 DNR
<b>Provide Pollinator Meadow Habitat</b> Identify 20 acres of potential pollinator habitat and work cooperatively with lease-holding farmer to implement a pollinator meadow plan	\$20,000	\$20,000 Other

### Phase III (2025 – 2030)

PHASE III - PLAN ELEMENT	TOTAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>Phase 1 Archaeology Survey at Fresh Pond</b> Conduct archaeology field work, wash and catalog artifacts, prepare report	\$15,000	\$15,000 Other
<b>Construct Discovery Center – Phase II</b> Develop new and improve existing exhibits to educate visitors about the natural and cultural resources at the park	\$100,000	\$100,000 DNR
<b>Increase FIDS Habitat</b> Expand and diversify existing Forested Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat by planting 30 acres of native hardwood trees	\$5,000	\$5,000 DNR
<b>Increase Pollinator Meadow Habitat</b> Identify 30 acres of potential pollinator habitat and work cooperatively with lease-holding farmer to implement a pollinator meadow plan	\$30,000	\$30,000 Other

## **Chapter 7:           Management and Operations**

### **Operations**

Newtown Neck State Park is managed as part of the Point Lookout State Park Complex. The Park will largely be operated as a day use facility that opens at dawn and closes at dusk with the exception of the paddle-in campsites and the youth group camping area. (The numbers of reservations for these activities are anticipated to be low based on activity at nearby Greenwell State Park with perhaps 15 reservations per year for paddle-in sites and six per year for the youth group campsite.) Park operations are developed and adjusted around four objectives:

#### Provide Excellent Visitor Services

The MPS strives to provide an outstanding natural and cultural resource based recreational experience for all park visitors. Every effort is made to ensure that visitors enjoy the park's amenities in a safe and secure manner and that facilities are clean and in good repair.

#### Maintain a Flexible Structure

The MPS utilizes a park organization structure that is designed to allow flexibility and autonomy at the park level while coordinating with Department-wide goals and objectives. A team approach is used to ensure that field staff has adequate administrative, technical, and maintenance support.

#### Support Team Morale

The MPS fosters a culture of attention to detail and a dedication to meeting the needs of park visitors by developing a highly skilled and well-trained workforce and providing varying types and levels of support when warranted.

#### Engage Citizens

The MPS welcomes the active involvement of community residents in both using and maintaining the State's parks. The Newtown Neck community has expressed a strong interest in plans for the park, and efforts will be made to develop partnerships to facilitate volunteer support for implementation of the goals for the park.

### **Management and Staffing**

As part of the Point Lookout State Park Complex, Newtown Neck is one of five State Parks in St. Mary's County, and except for St. Clement's Island (the smallest park in the Complex and only accessible by boat), it currently has the lowest visitation. The Complex Manager rotates among the parks on a weekly and as-needed basis. There is one full-time contractual Ranger and one seasonal maintenance staff assigned to the park. Administrative services are provided by the Point Lookout Complex team, and they are the primary staff involved in procurement, revenue management, records maintenance, and routine administrative tasks.

### **Special Events**

In addition to beautiful views, a variety of trails, and long stretches of accessible water frontage, the park includes several level grassy field areas, a well-maintained lawn area with frontage on the beach, and several large barns. These amenities are ideal for a variety of special events,



particularly those that focus on highlighting and promoting natural and cultural resources. It is likely that the planned Cultural Heritage Trail and ongoing archaeological investigation will provide opportunities for archaeology field days. As work continues to develop the trail network, there will also be opportunities for First Day Hikes and waterfowl observation events that may focus on the tidal ponds. The park's proximity to the Leonardtown Town Center and the numerous tourism and visitor events held in Leonardtown will provide opportunities to promote events and increase visitation at the park. The park's proximity to St. Clement's Island State Park also provides tourism opportunities that will be enhanced by the construction of the proposed pier.

## **Other Issues**

### **Ordnance**

In January 2012, multiple projectiles were found near the shoreline by park staff. Military EOD responded and detonated the projectiles, which was followed by a more comprehensive search of the area by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). During this sweep, an additional 24 projectiles were found and detonated. After this discovery, the USACE provided safety handouts and additional guidance to the Department of Natural Resources. The safety information outlined a "3Rs Protocol" of Recognize, Retreat, and Report. Ultimately the decision was made to close the park to the public, until further investigation and analysis could be completed.

The USACE served as the lead agency to initiate a Formerly Used Defense Site Eligibility review to gain an understanding of the nature of the materials found on the property, assess the risk associated with future discoveries, and determine an appropriate course of action relative to federal responsibility for further investigation and clean-up of the property.

Through 2012 and 2013, the USACE conducted extensive research and determined that the Newtown Neck State Park property was used by Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab to conduct testing of electronic fuze parts from 1942 to 1945. In 1946, the Navy Bureau of Operations took over the fuze testing on the property. During this period, the scope of the testing involved four firing fields. A variety of buildings, structures, roads, and utilities were installed to accommodate the testing and the staff involved with the project. Recovery of the munitions for further analysis in a laboratory was critical to the research, and 95% were recovered.

In early 2014, the USACE provided a pre-report final assessment to DNR Leadership that the research indicated that any munitions debris found on the site associated with the former testing activity was inert. In April 2014, the park reopened with the "3Rs Protocol" in place, and an operations plan identified the State Fire Marshall as the lead agency and primary point-of-contact when munitions are discovered.

In May 2014, the USACE released a final report based on historical research and the site visit. The report concluded that there is evidence of only inert munitions debris remaining on land and in the surrounding waters that is related to military activities at the property. The report specified that both JHU and Navy operations were limited to testing fuze components, and no high explosives were used in the tests. Black powder was used to create a puff of smoke, but the

powder was not contained in the shell. The report stated that the fuzes themselves are not a concern because of the shelf life of the batteries. The report concluded that while munitions debris has been found on the property, there is no reason to believe that any Munitions of Explosives of Concern (MEC) or that a Munitions Constituents (MC) hazard exists.

There have been some additional munitions discoveries since the park reopened; however, in each case, the 3Rs Protocol was implemented, the Fire Marshall's Office notified, and the material safely detonated. All park staff is trained on the proper procedures to follow if munitions are found, and information is posted and available at all park bulletin boards advising visitors about the possible presence of munitions, and the steps to follow in notifying authorities. Park staff periodically conducts planned "debris sweeps" of the Lacey Beach and other areas where munitions have been found, and additional sweeps are conducted after major storm events. These sweeps are sometimes conducted in coordination with the State Fire Marshall's Office and have been coordinated with some diver training. The sweeps will continue to be a part of standard park operations periodically throughout the year.

### Aquaculture Leases

Newtown Neck State Park is situated on a peninsula with direct access to the Potomac River, St. Clement's Bay, and Breton Bay. The shoreline of most of the property has been protected with a tombolo system that has created and stabilized extensive stretches of sandy beach that are ideal for a variety of water oriented activities. The beaches are appropriate for swimming, wading, fishing, and providing boat-in access to the property. There is an established water trail from the Leonardtown Wharf Park that travels south along Breton Bay, and will tie into the two canoe/kayak launches at Newtown Neck and link the proposed paddle-in campsites to the Captain John Smith Water Trail. The unique characteristics of the property provide many opportunities for visitors to enjoy the shoreline and the waters adjacent to the Park.

Since the State acquired the property, there has been a renewed interest in shellfish aquaculture throughout the State, and several projects have been proposed in St. Mary's County. The relatively shallow waters and mostly sandy bottom that characterize the waterways around the Newtown Neck peninsula, as well as the area's proximity to the Potomac River present good potential opportunities for aquaculture operations. The protected and easily accessible waters of Breton Bay and St. Clement's Bay offer potential sites for a variety shellfish aquaculture farming equipment.

Following approval of the master plan for Newtown Neck State Park, and in accordance with standard review procedures, applications for shellfish aquaculture leases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Applications will be evaluated to ensure that proposed aquaculture activities are consistent with DNR's renewed focus on promoting the aquaculture industry and assisting interested parties with commercial shellfish aquaculture projects while also considering the master plan's focus on providing a variety of types of water access and water-oriented recreation opportunities to Park visitors. When shellfish aquaculture leases are proposed near the shoreline of Newtown Neck State Park, Fisheries Service Aquaculture Division, will provide the applications to MD Park Service staff, so that the proposals can be evaluated relative to the

location of beach access, boating facilities, recreational fishing and crabbing, waterfowl hunting, and aesthetics. The type and configuration of equipment proposed to be used on the lease will be considered to the extent that it may affect the use of the shoreline and adjacent waters by Newtown Neck State Park visitors. Park Service staff will work cooperatively with Fisheries staff to evaluate applications, identify areas where recreational use of the shoreline is limited and where aquaculture projects can be accommodated, and to assure that conflicts between park users and leases are minimized.

## Chapter 8: Summary

In the short time that Newtown Neck State Park has been open to the public, it has quickly become a popular destination for community residents and visitors. The Park's wealth of natural and cultural resources, its historic significance, and its geography and physical features make it ideal for a variety of nature and history oriented activities, as well as outdoor recreation. It provides opportunities for a variety of users with varying interests.

The approach to planned improvements outlined in this master plan is to minimize alterations to the property, so that the appearance of the landscape will change very little when the plan is fully implemented. Most of the proposed amenities involve modifications to existing structures and facilities to accommodate increased access by the public. As detailed designs are developed, efforts will be directed to adapting existing structures and installing and constructing improvements so that they are not obtrusive and blend well with the rural character and farm vernacular. To the extent practicable, existing barns and buildings will be used, and parking and roads will involve modifications to existing farm roads and farm service areas.

Two primary activity areas are identified in the concept plan, and these areas are already developed. The main activity area will be located at the Russell Area and will include parking, a restroom, facilities for water access, and picnic areas. No new structures are proposed in this area, and existing buildings will be adapted for park buildings including a park office, nature center, and special events barn.

The secondary activity area will be located at Lacey Beach. An existing dwelling will be razed and a pavilion will be constructed on the footprint. The pavilion will be used to provide a gathering area for school groups, public rental, and others conducting programs at the southern end of the Park. Existing informal parking and access to the area will be improved with a loop road and two small gravel parking areas. A restroom and picnic areas are also planned for this area.

The natural and cultural resources that characterize Newtown Neck State Park make it the beautiful, interesting, and special place that made it a priority for acquisition by the State for use as a park. Protection and conservation of these resources are at the forefront of this master planning effort and will remain a priority as more specific site development and restoration plans are developed.

DNR's internal review process will ensure that the MD Historical Trust, the Critical Area Commission, the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the various DNR units are involved in the decision making process for projects included in this plan. DNR has created a robust internal review process that ensures that all improvements on State lands are thoughtfully considered and properly executed.

The next 15 years will be an exciting time at Newtown Neck. Successful implementation of the master plan will yield a landscape that looks very similar to the way the property appears today, but with the addition of carefully designed amenities that provide opportunities for visitors to fully experience the wonder of, and understand the many stories behind, this beautiful and special place.

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