

PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks is designated by the Worcester County Commissioners to administer the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space. Worcester County's priorities over the next five years, as determined by the 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (Revised 2018), will be the acquisition and development of additional recreational lands in the northern part of the county, as well as, an emphasis on the modernizing and updating of existing facilities.

The following items are provided to describe Worcester County's growth management procedures for parks and recreation programs. These items are:

1. Major Parks in Growth Areas.
2. Preserve and Protect Sensitive Areas.
3. Rural Area Park Development.
4. Environment Protection and Stewardship.
5. Natural Resource Conservation.
6. Parks and Recreation Contributions to Economic Growth.
7. Infrastructure.
8. Partnerships Create Financial Resources.

Major Parks in Growth Areas:

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks successfully located their parks in planned population centers throughout the county. Through strategic planning, the larger county sports complexes have been positioned close to the growth areas and population centers. Additionally, Ocean City and Ocean Pines have public recreational facilities and programs that support recreation in these densely populated areas of the county. Concurrently, small parks are easily accessible to the rural areas and surrounding communities.

While parks are maintained throughout the county, the majority of the parks are located in the northern part of Worcester County where most growth is concentrated. Major park development has taken place at all county parks, particularly the parks located in the northern part of Worcester County.

Preserve and Protect Sensitive Areas:

The park planning and master planning process includes sensitive areas protection. Invasive plant species are managed to protect native flora. Where appropriate, parkland is managed to encourage natural habitat. Prudent stewardship will ensure that the county's parks and natural resources are protected for many generations to come.

Rural Area Park Development:

Through Program Open Space funding, the county has acquired and preserved open land in existing population centers in the rural areas. These smaller county parks located in the county's rural villages, such as Bishopville, Girdletree, Newark, Stockton and Whaleyville; help to maintain the rural quality of these less populated areas while also meeting the recreational needs of the citizens in the immediate surrounding areas. These parks fall within the limits of the established villages and can easily be reached with a minimal walk or bicycle ride.

Environment Protection and Stewardship:

The protection of the Chesapeake Bay has been an on-going priority of Worcester County. Protection of Maryland Coastal Bays has also been incorporated into Worcester County's long-term vision. Acquisition and protection of waterfront properties has been a high priority in the fast-developing northern portion of the county. Three bayfront parks have been acquired since 2003.

In 2003, the land for Homer Gudelsky Park, a passive beach park located on the Sinepuxent Bay was donated to Worcester County by the Gudelsky family. This park overlooks Ocean City and is locally known as an excellent fishing spot. In the agreement to convey this park to Worcester County, permission was granted to deposit spoil material from the Shantytown Channel onto the park. The park suffers considerable erosion throughout the year and the annual replenishment of sand is necessary for the park to maintain its existence.

Providing coastal stewardship was an essential factor in the decision of Worcester County to lease the Isle of Wight Park, as of July 2004, from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. This park is primarily surrounded by water that affords visitors the opportunity to participate in fishing, crabbing, clamming, kayaking and canoeing, along with picnicking and exploring this natural island on the Isle of Wight Bay.

The 2006 addition of a 574-acre parcel, Greys Creek Nature Park, located in northern Worcester County affords the County a unique opportunity to conserve one of the most ecologically significant properties along Maryland Coastal Bays. The property was purchased with \$6,500,000 of State and local Program Open Space funds and titled in the name of Worcester County to be managed as a passive recreation park and environmental education complex by the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. Located at the top of Maryland Coastal Bays, the property offers views of Ocean City's skyline across the Assawoman Bay. This acquisition will protect coastal habitat and eliminate the threat of residential and commercial development on a property that sits at the center of one of the most biologically diverse areas in the mid-Atlantic region. This property is planned to serve as a base for environmental education programs, as well as a passive park with walking/hiking trails. Area schoolchildren will be able to utilize this site as a hands-on classroom for nature study.

Three intergovernmental programs – Chesapeake Bay Tributaries Strategies Implementation Team, the Ocean City and Vicinity Water Resources Feasibility Study, and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program – have been significant elements in the stewardship of our waterways. Worcester County faces a momentous challenge to protect these valuable water resources for all citizens of Maryland while also affording recreational opportunities.

Natural Resource Conservation:

Worcester County has strategically located parks in close proximity to existing developed areas and growth centers throughout the county. It is through this type of careful park planning that the county can continue to conserve resources while achieving efficient development patterns.

Since 2000, Worcester County has aggressively pursued funding for land protection in areas not

targeted for growth, and over 8,500 acres have been permanently protected.

In March 2010, Worcester County was awarded \$299,692 by the Maryland Energy Administration. These grant funds were utilized to provide engineering, construction, and installation of a complete Grid-Tied Photovoltaic System adjacent to the Recreation Center, which will supplement energy to the Recreation Center. This will help the County conserve energy.

Parks and Recreation Contributions to Economic Growth:

Worcester County understands the contribution of accessible recreational facilities to the economic growth of the county. The Worcester County Recreation Center opened its doors to the public on July 11, 2005, effectively creating a new base for all Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks programming operations to be administered. In 2016, a 6,000 square foot addition to the Recreation Center was completed. This addition houses a multipurpose room, conference room, weight room, aerobic workout room, and additional bathrooms. These new areas provide more programming options to be provided to our participants. This facility is a major recreational facility drawing users from both within and outside of the county. The facility also provides an economic boost to both existing and new businesses in Snow Hill and Worcester County.

Land and water recreational programs provided by the county attract visitors who contribute to the local economy.

Infrastructure:

Worcester County has identified both supply and demand of recreation facilities and acreage to serve current needs and anticipated future needs through 2023. However, the county recognizes the “need” and has identified recreational lands in the northern portion of the county where growth is concentrated.

Partnerships Create Financial Resources:

Worcester County relies on effective and innovative strategies and partnerships. Support and collaboration from Program Open Space, the Worcester County Commissioners’ capital improvement and park improvement funds, and additional grant funding are all financial resources that are critical elements in assuring optimum use of the financial resources that are available for parks and natural resource protection. In addition, it should be noted that Worcester County requires that new development include active and/or passive recreation and nature areas in support of the environment.

PART 2 - 2023 ACQUISITION PROJECT

Pocomoke Park Acquisition Project:

The citizens of Worcester County are fortunate to receive the support of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space, which is a significant factor in the acquisition of parkland located throughout the county. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks plans to use funds from the 2023 Program Open Space allocation for future acquisition of a parcel of land, approximately .56 acres in size, in Pocomoke, Maryland. This

plot of land is centered within walking distance of the majority of houses in Pocomoke City limits, making this a feasible location for the public without reliance on an automobile. In return, this project will add to the quality of life of the local citizens as well as make Pocomoke a more desirable place to live. Once acquired, we plan to construct a playground, picnic shelter and other passive recreation opportunities on this parcel.

Berlin Lions Club Acquisition Project:

The proposed project consists of the acquisition of an approximately 25-acre property located next to the county owned Northern Worcester Athletic Complex in Berlin, Maryland. The property is located off Rt. 113. The Lions club property currently consists of 6 baseball/softball fields and a permanent concession stand. The existing adjacent county owned property consists of five (5) multi-purpose fields, (1) one baseball field. Purchasing this property will allow us to make necessary upgrades and allow for growth. The proposed property is currently the home base for Berlin Little League.

PART 3 – 2023 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

GREYS CREEK NATURE PARK – BISHOPVILLE, MARYLAND

Greys Creek Nature Park is a 574-acre parcel of land located in Bishopville, Maryland. The establishment of this park has protected significant coastal habitat and eliminated the threat of high-density residential or commercial development on a property that sits at the center of one of the most biologically diverse areas in the mid-Atlantic region. Preservation of this tract along Maryland’s Coastal Bays provides an extraordinary opportunity to conserve natural habitat, safeguard wildlife habitat, and protect the water quality of Assawoman Bay. The property contains upland coastal forest and extensive sensitive non-tidal and tidal saltwater wetlands. The property is titled in the name of Worcester County and will be managed as a passive recreation park and environmental education complex by the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. The following are planned for FY 2023:

1. Greys Creek Nature Park – Park Development– The project will focus on the development of two parcels east and west of Swans Gut. The project scope will consider public parking, a trailhead and upland trails, and structural amenities necessary to further the environmental education/passive park experience. The State is currently in the planning phase where developing water access and water trails are concerned. Both design solutions will be complimentary. Land Water Conservation requested using POS funds as a match.

POCOMOKE PARK PROJECT – POCOMOKE, MARYLAND

1. New Park Development – The project is requested to develop a new park in Pocomoke, Maryland. The parcel of land to be developed is a total of .56 acres and is located within walking distance of majority of Pocomoke City. This park will be a recreational outlet for youth, adults and visitors to the town to have a place to “play” in a safe and fun environment. The amenities that the department plans to install in the future include a playground, picnic shelter and other passive recreation opportunities.

JOHN WALTER SMITH PARK – SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

John Walter Smith Park is an 80-acre parcel of land with approximately 50-acres developed as an athletic complex to serve the citizens of Worcester County, Maryland, particularly in the central section of the county. John Walter Smith Park is located on Public Landing Road in Snow Hill, Maryland, and was purchased with Program Open Space funding. The park was named after the late Governor of Maryland, John Walter Smith, who resided in Snow Hill. John Walter Smith Park is the home of the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. On Monday, July 11, 2005, a state-of-the-art recreation center, which houses a climate, controlled 40,000 square-foot gymnasium with retractable bleachers, a walking track and courts that can be used for soccer, basketball, and a variety of sports opened its door to the public. The flooring system throughout the gym was designed for an increased return of energy that is highly efficient. Essentially, it provides the most “bang for the buck” for experienced runners and track participants. It also provides a shock-absorbing cushion that is ideal for walkers and joggers, particularly those who suffer from arthritis or have past injuries. Along with the Recreation Center, John Walter Smith Park has a senior league field, four little league fields, two softball fields, seven soccer fields, one Frisbee golf course, two tennis courts, two basketball courts, a sand volleyball court, a pavilion, a playground, a concession stand with restrooms and other site amenities. Several storage buildings have been erected on the site to accommodate the many programs administered at John Walter Smith Park. Through the contributions of the Worcester County Commissioners and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space funding, this park was built to serve the citizens of Worcester County, Maryland and the regional areas. The following are planned for FY 2023:

1. Recreation Center Addition – This is a request for additional storage space and to remodel two existing offices into a large activity room that will be used for additional programming and events. These offices will be replaced in the existing courtyard area and front lobby. This would allow staff to have better access to the public, which would help with programming.

NORTHERN WORCESTER ATHLETIC COMPLEX – BERLIN, MARYLAND

The Northern Worcester Athletic Complex is a 76-acre parcel of land located in Berlin, Maryland. This land was purchased specifically for constructing an athletic complex to serve the citizens of Worcester County particularly in the northern end of the County. To date, one senior league field, four multi-purpose fields, and one football field have been constructed. The senior league field, one multi-purpose and the football field have been equipped with lights. In addition to the athletic fields, an entrance sign and garden, service road, parking areas, a pavilion, and playground have been added. The most recent addition, at this site, was a permanent concession stand and bathroom facility that meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Several organizations use the permanent concession stand to serve refreshments and provide restrooms for patrons of the park. Program Open Space has played a significant role in the development of this park. The following is planned for FY 2023:

1. Multipurpose Field & Parking Development Project – This project is being requested to address multi-purpose field and parking deficits identified in the 2017 LPPRP. The scope would include the development of new additional regulation, irrigated, Bermuda grass multi-purpose fields. This project would include irrigation on the new fields,

sunshade, upgraded lighting and equipment to maintain the maintenance and upkeep of the parks. In addition, due to the anticipated increase in playing field surface, additional parking capacity will need to be address. It is estimated that at a minimum 32,800 additional square feet of parking will be needed in order to accommodate 100 additional parking spots.

PUBLIC LANDING – SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

Public Landing is an unincorporated community 6.5 miles east of Snow Hill in Worcester County, Maryland; Public Landing is located on Chincoteague Bay, at the end of Maryland Route 365. Public Landing enjoyed great popularity during the 1920s and early 1930s, when rides, a bowling alley, and other amusements were open, and the shallowness of Chincoteague Bay permitted public bathing. A large hurricane in 1933 destroyed Public Landing's waterfront. In addition to the pier being rebuilt. Most recently thirty (30) boat slips were constructed that will have electricity and water. Public Landing is a favorite spot for both visitors and locals. The following is planned for FY 2023:

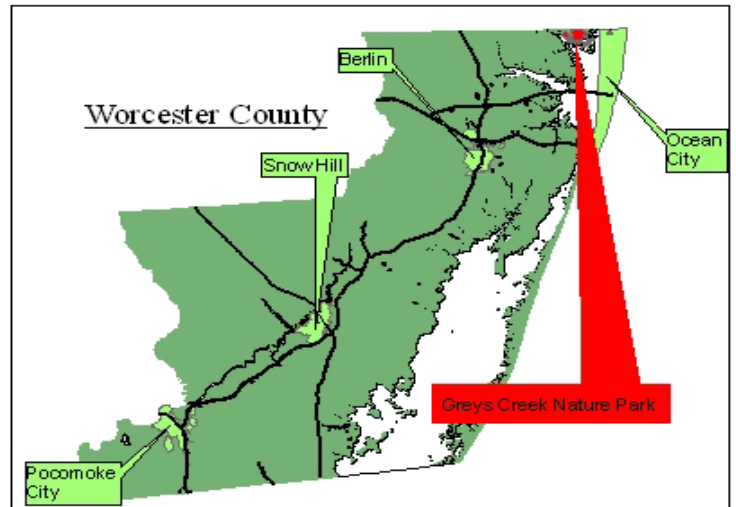
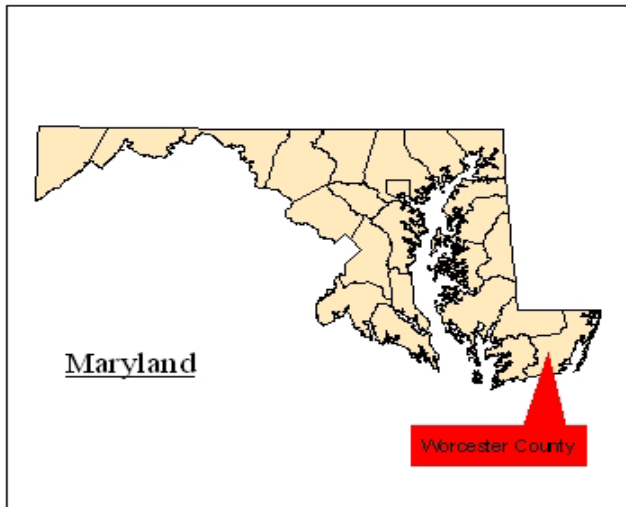
1. Park Development – This project is being requested to address needs of the local community as well as promote tourism to Worcester County. The plans are to install a 12' by 24' picnic pavilion on the beach area. This addition will allow an opportunity for citizens to have picnics, weddings, shade, and serve as a safety shelter in the event of thunderstorms. The plans are also to install a waterless bathroom system for park visitors to use. This style bathroom will accommodate a much larger volume of people than the current port-a-let on site.

SHOWELL PARK – SHOWELL, MARYLAND

Showell Park is a 21-acre parcel of land located in Showell, Maryland. With three softball fields, two tennis courts, a pavilion, and two newly constructed playgrounds, this park serves as a gathering place for residents at the northern end of Worcester County. Due to its proximity to Ocean City, this park is often used in conjunction with the Town of Ocean City's softball complex at Northside Park for weekend softball tournaments. In an effort to continue to provide the growing population of Worcester County and surrounding areas with quality facilities, the following project is proposed in 2023:

1. Bathroom & Concession Stand Project – Additional funds are being requested to finalize the construction of a permanent concession/restroom facility on site. Showell Park, while heavily used, is the only of our larger parks not to have a permanent facility. These funds will be used to install higher fencing on the fields, closest to the concession stand, to insure the safety of citizens. The higher fences keep the balls into their contained area.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
GREYS CREEK NATURE PARK
SPM 11, Parcel 2
574 Acres

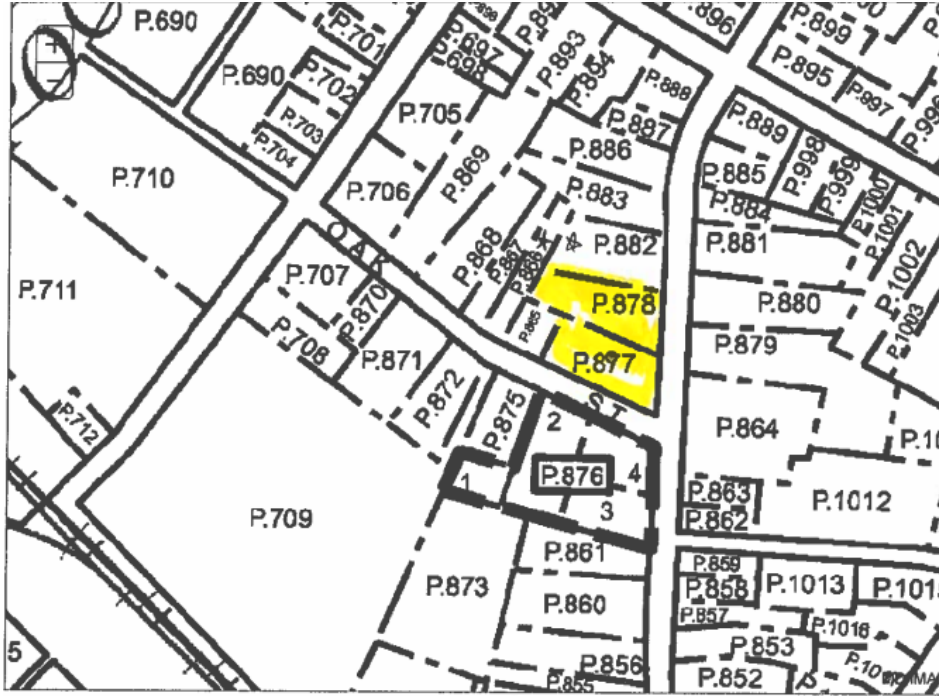


Maryland Department of Natural Resources

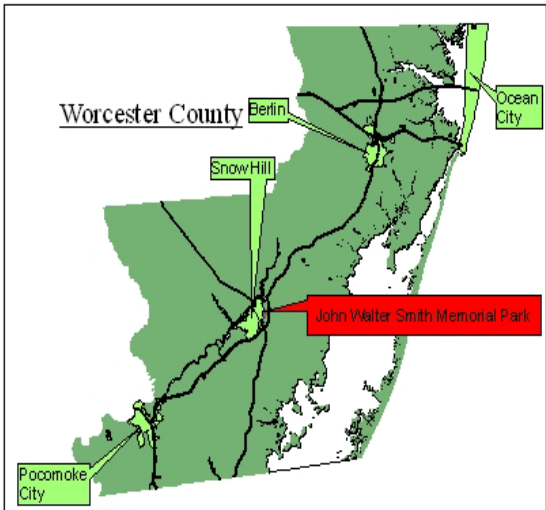
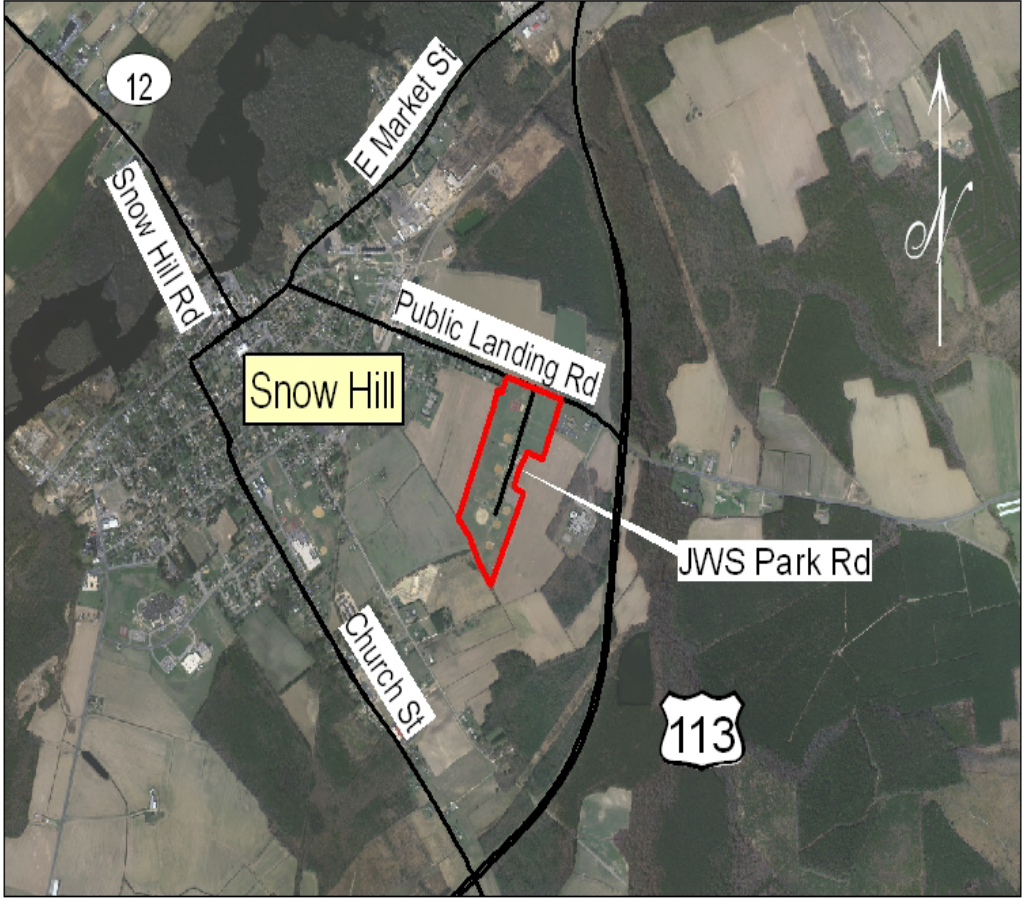
Program Open Space

Pocomoke Park Acquisition Project

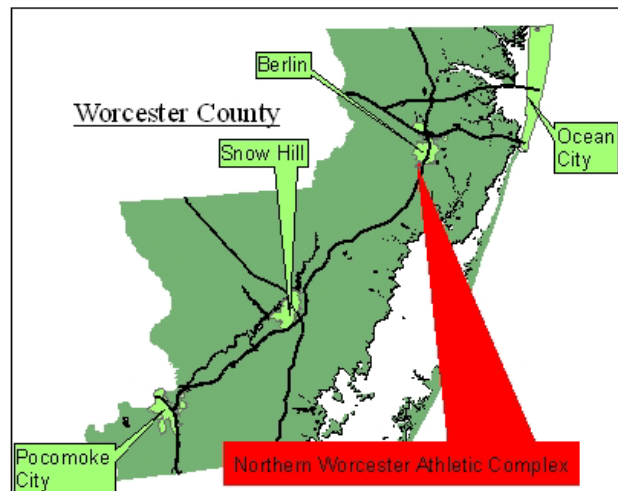
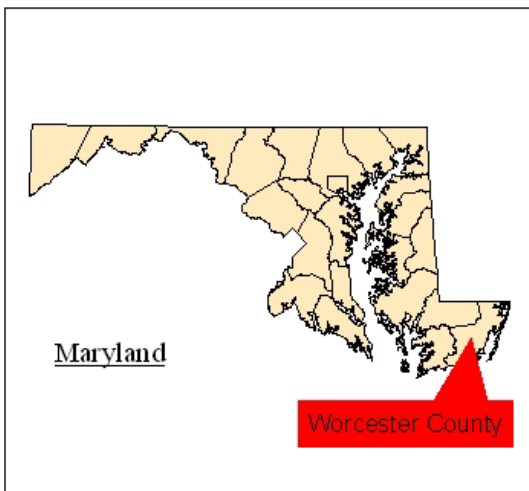
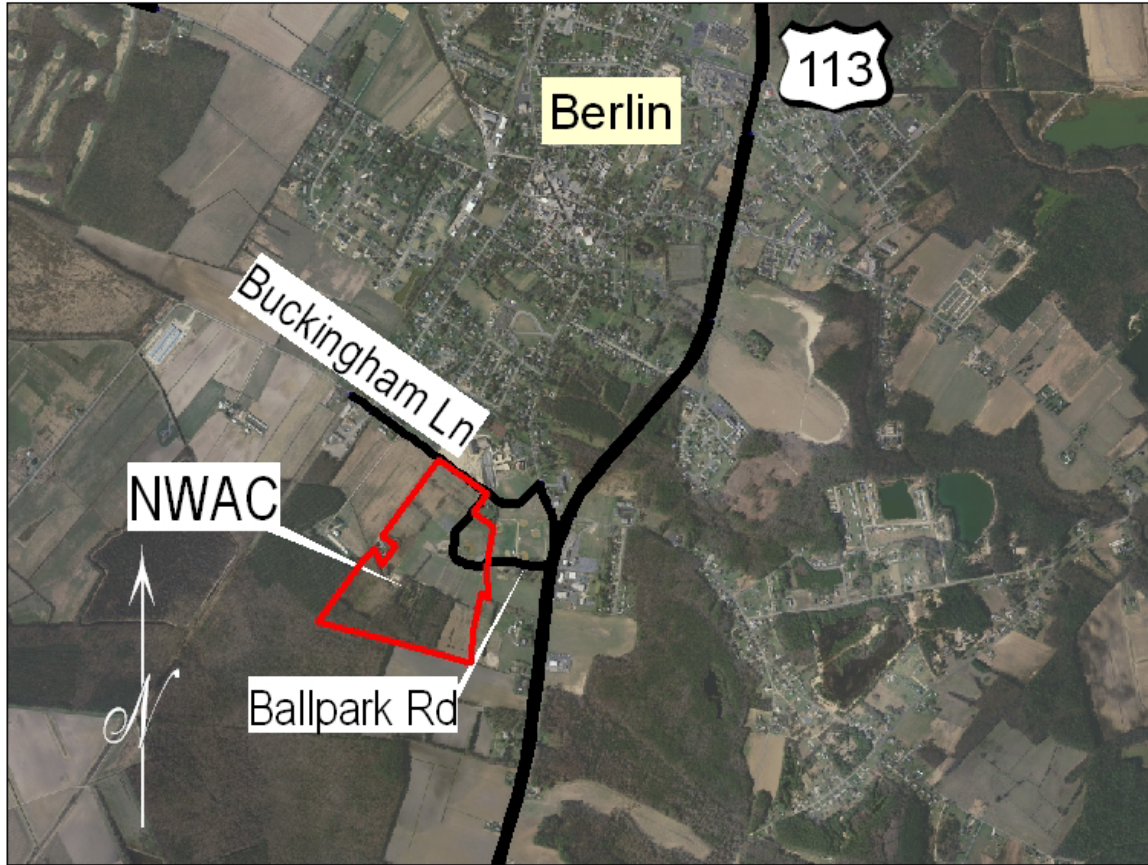
.56 acres



Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
JOHN WALTER SMITH MEMORIAL PARK
SPM 63, Parcel 140
80 Acres



Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
NORTHERN WORCESTER ATHLETIC COMPLEX
SPM 32, Parcel 276
76 Acres



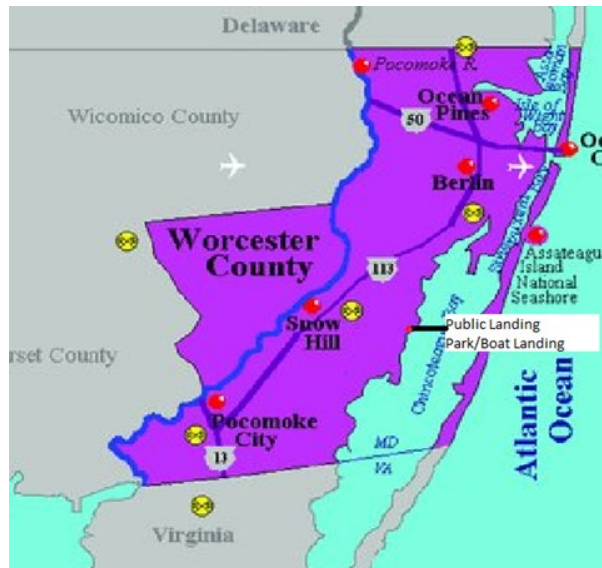
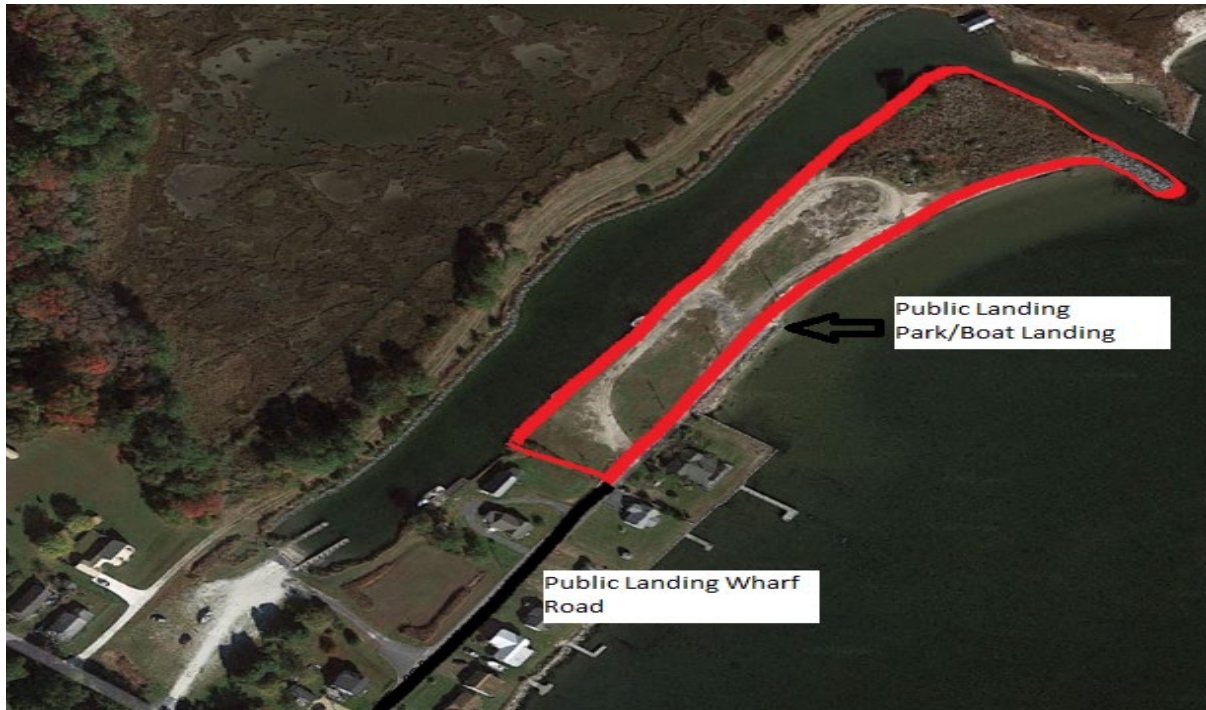
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Program Open Space

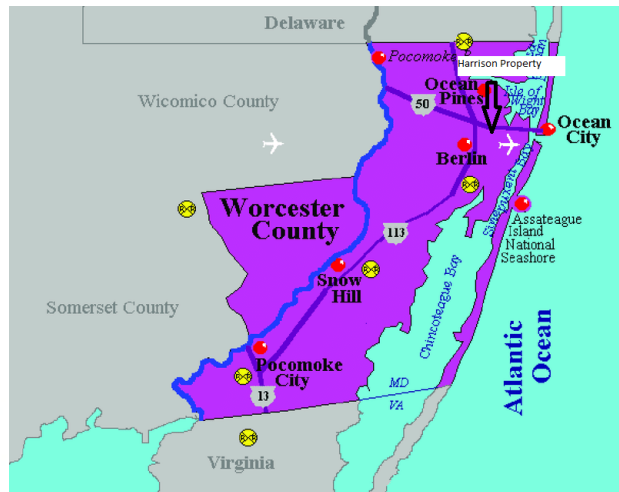
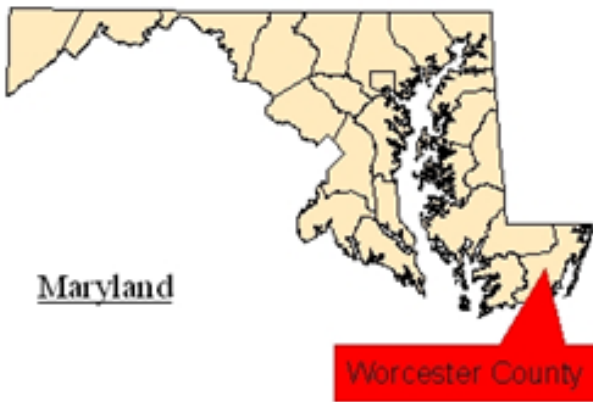
Public Landing Park/Boat Landing

SPM 65, Parcel 76

11.6 acres



Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
Sports Complex, Harrison Property Acquisition Project
Tax Map 25, Parcel 89
95.521 acres



Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
SHOWELL PARK
SPM 15, Parcel 220
21 ACRES

