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Refuge Land Acquisition: Helping Preserve Back Bay's Wildlife Heritage

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The once-renowned waterfowl populations and bass fishery of Back Bay, Virginia have declined dramatically in recent years. Lands surrounding Back Bay are increasingly threatened by on-going and potential land development. These lands serve as an important filter for pollutant and sediment-laden runoff from adjacent areas. The boundary of the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge was expanded in 1989 to include an additional 6,340 acres of brackish marsh, forested swamp, and "critical edge" upland habitat, important to a variety of wildlife species and for its natural filtering effect. Within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's policy of working with willing sellers, the Refuge hopes to acquire and manage the land to improve its value to wildlife and reduce the amount of sediment and pollutants flowing into Back Bay. Refuge acquisition plans support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international strategy for cooperation, to aid in the recovery of declining waterfowl populations. Refuge acquisition alone will not be enough to solve the current problems of the Back Bay resource; recovery is dependent on the cooperation and assistance of State and local governments, private organizations and individual citizens.