

Plum Tree Island

National Wildlife Refuge

Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Represented by the following Members of Congress:

Senator John W. Warner (R)
Senator George F. Allen (R)
Rep. Jo Ann S. Davis (R-1st)

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Managed as the Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes James River, Rappahannock River Valley, Plum Tree Island and Presquile NWRs.

Purpose

Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge was established to conserve wetlands and important migratory bird habitat in the lower Chesapeake Bay.

Public Use Notes

The entire 3,276-acre original refuge is closed to public use due to the potential presence of unexploded munitions left from its years of use as a gunnery and bombing range.

The 211-acre Cow Island Tract, acquired in 1997, was not part of the bombing area and is open to public waterfowl hunting.

Management Activities

When refuge staff discovered unexploded munitions in June 2004, the Army Corps of Engineers designated an area in the shallow waters around the southern end of the refuge as a danger area, closed to all access. In February 2005, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission designated a state closure area to coincide with the federal designation.

Due to the potential presence of unexploded munitions, there is no active habitat or wildlife management occurring on the refuge.



Blue-winged teal

Dave Menke/USFWS

Highlights

After the discovery of unexploded munitions, a multi-agency team was assigned to address the current threat to public safety.

By November 2004, the entire 13-mile refuge boundary was posted with "Danger - No Trespassing" signs along with the standard refuge "Closed Area" signs.

By February 2005, day markers designating the danger zone in waters around the southern end of the refuge were in place.

A public information campaign on the potential danger to boaters is underway in cooperation with the city of Poquoson.

The Northeastern beach tiger beetle, a federally listed threatened species, is found to be using the refuge beach.

Issues

Cooperating agencies modified the danger zone designation in waters surrounding the southern end of the refuge to minimize the loss of commercial and recreational opportunities, include fishing, crabbing, boating, hunting and shell-fishing.

The Army Corps of Engineers, in consultation with the refuge, EPA and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, is conducting a site investigation to determine if any areas around the refuge might be safely opened to public use, working with stakeholders to determine if a permanent danger zone should be established, designing and implementing a long-term risk management plan for the refuge, and will consider removing exposed munitions where feasible.



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