

# Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan

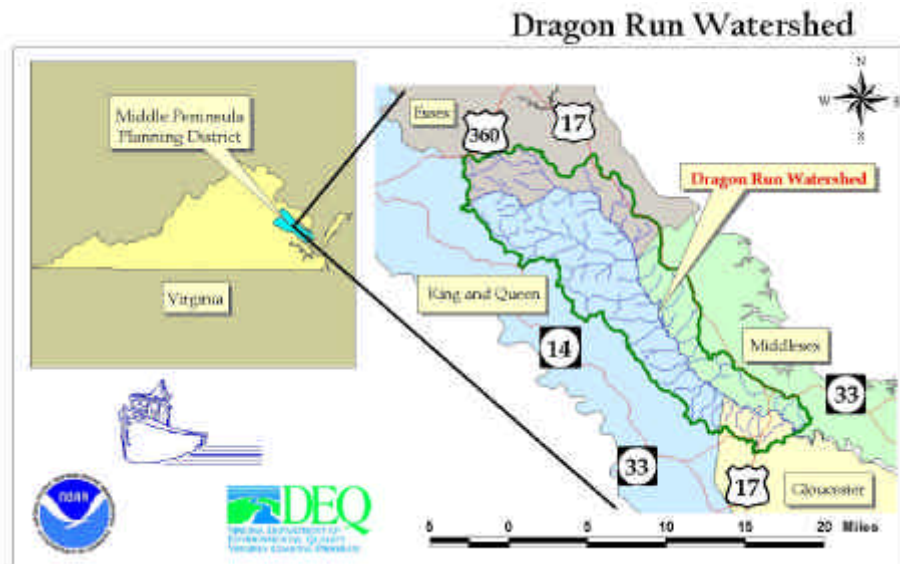
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## Where is it and who is involved?

The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and the Dragon Run Steering Committee are sponsoring the development of a Special Area Management Plan, or SAMP, for the 140 square mile (90,000 acre) Dragon Run Watershed on the Middle Peninsula of Virginia (see map). Each of the watershed's four counties - Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, and Middlesex - is represented by elected officials, citizen landowners, and stakeholders who have interests in the watershed.

## What is the mission?

The mission of the Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan is to support and promote community-based efforts to preserve the cultural, historic, and natural character of the Dragon Run, while preserving property rights and the traditional uses within its watershed. More than a paper document, the SAMP is a community effort to evaluate, integrate and coordinate policies and activities that affect the people and resources within the watershed.



## How is it funded?

Authorized by Section 309 (Enhancement Grants) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, the SAMP is funded by grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), administered by the Virginia Coastal Program at the Department of Environmental Quality.

## How did it get started?

Authorized by the Dragon Run Steering Committee, the SAMP began with planning forums for stakeholders in the watershed. The purpose of these initial planning meetings was to solicit a broad range of visions and perspectives about the future of the Dragon Run Watershed.

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## **Issues**

Currently, an Advisory Group, consisting of three working groups, is focusing on the following key issues in topic areas identified during the stakeholder planning forums:

### ***Local Government and Policy***

- Property rights / landowner independence
- Consistency among comprehensive plans and ordinances
- Cumulative impacts and carrying capacity of development
- Tax revenues and public services affected by land use changes
- Similar planning programs as models
- Uncertainty about lawmaking process at local government level
- Sewage disposal

### ***Traditional Uses and Habitat Management***

- Preserve Dragon Run's condition/species
- Open space preservation—traditional uses (e.g. farming, forestry)
- Recreation—hunting, fishing, paddling
- Economic and tax forces – fragmenting working farms and forests
- Assessment of Dragon Run health – water quality, anadromous fish, etc.
- Best Management Practices (BMP's) for forestry, agriculture, and development
- Conservation easements
- State agency information/data
- Private sector information/data

### ***Educating the Public and Public Access***

- Public education (e.g. Supervisors, citizens, children) about unique natural resources
- Personal connection to Dragon Run
- Access vs. property rights
- Fear of “loving the Dragon to death”
- Education vs. publicity
- Carrying capacity of access/recreation
- Future ecotourism pressure
- Land management options for landowners (e.g. easements, tax incentives, programs)

## **What will happen in the future?**

To address these issues and others that may arise, the Advisory Group will work to develop goals and objectives and action plans to achieve them. The Advisory Group's recommendations to the Dragon Run Steering Committee will be considered and may be presented to each county's Board of Supervisors. Some recommendations may entail working outside of local government, such as directly working with landowners. Additional SAMP activities will include collecting information, analyzing ordinances, and providing technical assistance.

## **For More Information or To Get Involved**

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