

Thompson Island Nature Preserve Management Plan May 2016

Thompson Island was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve on June 12, 2004. The function of a nature preserve is to protect important features of the natural heritage of the State of Delaware and guarantee their existence for future generations. The State of Delaware through the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and specifically the Office of Nature Preserves agrees to administer the following management plan to protect and maintain the Thompson Island Nature Preserve in its natural ecological and cultural condition as specified below.

The Department reserves the right to impose regulations upon the use of the Nature Preserve by the general public; provided that such regulations are reasonably related to (a) ensuring the safety and health of persons utilizing the Nature Preserve, (b) ensuring natural and cultural resources located on the Nature Preserve are not materially and adversely affected by use by the general public, or (c) ensuring use of the Nature Preserve by the general public conforms with the requirements of law. Any use by the general public is limited to those areas designated for public use such as designated trails.

Our mission is to provide Delaware's residents and visitors with safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities and open spaces, responsible stewardship of the lands and the cultural and natural resources that we have been entrusted to protect and manage and resource-based interpretive and educational services. This Management Plan is intended to act as a guide to the management of natural, cultural and recreational resources of the Thompson Island Nature Preserve. The management recommendations set forth in this document have been designed based on site conditions and surrounding land uses at the time of writing.

As a matter of policy and of public record the Division of Parks and Recreation has the authority to set limits on the location and type of use of the Nature Preserve. The 2016 Management Plan for Thompson Island includes the following actions to allow recreational use and to protect the natural resources of Thompson Island.

Agreement between DPR and NIA

1. All provisions agreed upon in an Agreement between the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Nanticoke Indian Association (NIA) dated May 15, 2000 will be adhered to. A copy of the Agreement is attached herein. Further, section 14 specifically states that the NIA realizes that the Division will take steps to dedicate Thompson Island as a Nature Preserve to enhance the protection of the natural and cultural resources present there.

Rationale: It is imperative we recognize previous agreements with constituent groups.

Visitor Use/Access

An improved trail of approximately 3,500 feet in length and an overlook area will provide recreation opportunities to visitors. Access will be limited to this area by means of a post and rail fence. Bicycles are permitted on the existing stone surface trail.

Rationale: It was determined through an open process which included the adjacent community that the Park trail would culminate at an overlook area to better protect the resources in the Preserve.

Waysides

3. Waysides (individual 22"x36" embedded fiberglass) will be created and installed along the established trail according to the wayside plan dated June 4, 2013.

Rationale: This will help in providing an informational and educational experience to Park visitors.

Animal Control

4. Hunting takes place on the southern portion of the preserve and is initiated and led by Parks Staff and is used as a management tool to ensure ecological integrity of the natural resources on the Island. Access may be allowed to prohibited areas of the nature preserve for the purpose of white-tailed deer and resident Canada goose management. White-tailed deer have, and continue to have a significant impact on native plant communities in the nature preserve and hunting is the most effective method of population management. Egg addling and oiling, is a federally approved method for controlling populations of resident Canada geese. The Division uses this method in areas where resident Canada geese nest. While Thompson Island has yet to be surveyed for nesting resident geese, we may need to do so in the future.

Rationale: Hunting is permitted in the Nature Preserve and is utilized for species population management.

Scientific Research

5. Access may be allowed to prohibited areas by academic, non-profit organizations and government agencies to conduct scientific research. The result of such research may aid the Division in the management of the natural and cultural resources of the nature preserve and/or provide information that can be used in interpretive and educational programming and signage in the nature preserve. Such activities will require a research permit.

Rationale: Scientific Research is permitted in the Nature Preserve with proper approvals.

Programming

6. The Division reserves the right to conduct guided interpretive and/or educational programming within the Nature Preserve.

7. Rationale: Interpretive and educational programming is permitted in the Nature Preserve by Park staff.

Domesticated Animals

8. Pets shall remain on the trail within the nature preserve and as per park regulations. Pets must be kept on a leash not to exceed six feet in length, must be under proper control at all times, shall not be left unattended, and owners shall be responsible for the clean-up and removal of any feces deposited by the animal. No equine activity is allowed.

Rationale: There is no reason to keep pets out of the nature preserve, as long as they remain on the trail and regulatory compliance is maintained. If compliance is determined to be an issue, this will change.

Enforcement

9. A ranger will visit the site at least once a day. Their trip will include walking down to the overlook area, ensuring park regulations and Nature Preserve restrictions are adhered to.

Rationale: Enforcement is necessary for compliance with Parks regulations and this management plan.

The Thompson Island Nature Preserve Management Plan shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.