

Dragon Run Steering Committee © 2004

Middle Peninsula
Planning District Commission
P.O. Box 286
Saluda, VA 23149
Phone: 804-758-2311
Fax: 804-758-3221
Email: dragon@mppdc.com
<http://www.mppdc.com/dragon>

Dragon Run Watershed Management Plan

One of Chesapeake Bay's most pristine waterways, the Dragon Run plays a central role in the Middle Peninsula's culture and identity

Partnerships and Funding

The Dragon Run Special Area Management Program (SAMP) is founded on **partnerships**. Partnerships build **group commitment** and direct collective funding and expertise toward project goals. The Dragon Run SAMP is a **locally-driven** effort that leverages funding from state and federal sources. It is essential to the project outcome that **strong local leadership** exists in the Dragon Run Steering Committee. This represents **passion and energy** on the part of community members. It is equally important that the project receives support from key state and federal agencies based outside of the watershed. External **funding** and **expertise** buoy the long-term commitment of the local community.

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The fresh and brackish Dragon Run makes its way through miles of intact cypress swamp before it reaches Chesapeake Bay

Dragon Run Watershed

The Dragon Run watershed harbors some of the largest and most intact swamp forest and woodland communities in Virginia. It is mostly undeveloped and encompasses approximately 140 square miles (90,000 acres) of rural landscape – primarily forests, farms, and wetlands. The spring-fed fresh and brackish water stream meanders forty miles through nontidal and tidal cypress swamp in Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, and Middlesex Counties before emptying into the Piankatank River and Chesapeake Bay.



Mission

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 the watershed

Dragon Run - A Special Area

Natural resources—forestry and farming—have been the bedrock of the Dragon Run watershed's economy for centuries. These land uses, together with extensive swamps, are the main reasons that the Dragon Run remains wild and secluded.

While development pressure is currently low, the potential for significant land ownership changes threatens to disrupt the rural character and fragment productive farm and forest land. Likewise, habitat fragmentation jeopardizes the Dragon Run's unique natural communities.

The Dragon Run Special Area Management Program, a partnership between the Virginia Coastal Program and the Dragon Run Steering Committee, is designed to gather stakeholders to plan for the watershed's future. Substantial common ground defines the community's vision for proactively preserving the Dragon Run for future generations and safeguarding both natural resources and traditional uses, including landowners' property rights.



Extensive bald cypress and aquatic vegetation make the Dragon Run Swamp unique in the Chesapeake Bay watershed



A picturesque rural landscape contributes to a high quality of life in the watershed

Watershed Goals

Establish a high level of **cooperation and communication** among the four counties within the Dragon Run watershed to achieve consistency across county boundaries

Foster **educational partnerships** and opportunities to establish the community's connection to and respect for the land and water of the Dragon Run

Promote the concept of **landowner stewardship** that has served to preserve the Dragon Run watershed as a regional treasure

Watershed Actions

*Designate a **Unified "Planning Area"***

*Implement **Tools to Preserve Farm, Forest, and Natural Resources***

*Address **Public and Landowner Access Issues***

*Control **Invasive Species***

*Perform **Watershed Education and Landowner Stewardship***

*Encourage and Support **Sustainable Economic Development***

*Monitor **Watershed Management Plan Implementation***



Traditional uses like forestry and hunting work side-by-side to fuel the watershed's economy



The Dragon Run watershed encompasses 140 square miles of forests, wetlands, and farms



The Dragon Run Swamp offers spectacular and challenging recreational opportunities