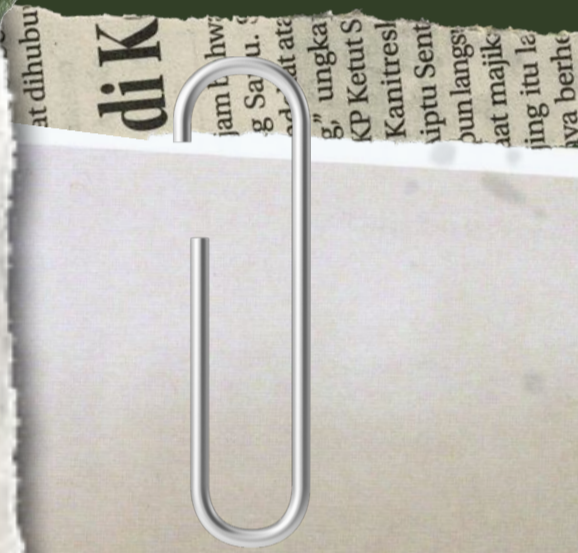


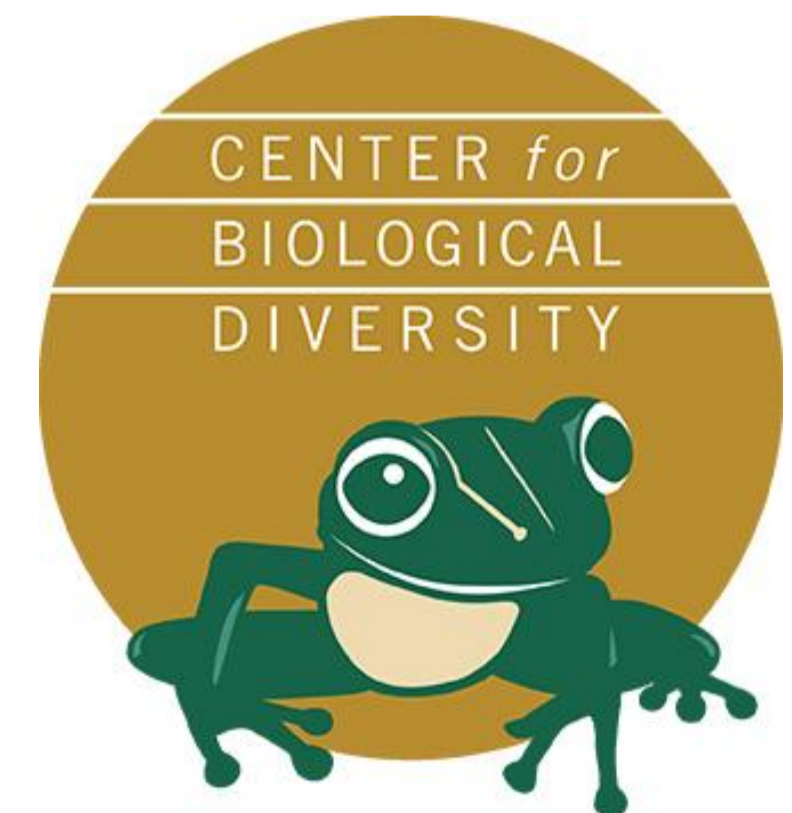
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH 17:00 PM  
**CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE**

# **PROPOSED LAND EXCHANGES**

**PUBLIC TOWN HALL**



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



# BASIC HOUSEKEEPING



**THIS SESSION WILL BE RECORDED**

## WHAT WE'LL COVER

- **Brief Intros, Helpful Terms, & NPS-Stated Purpose Of Plan**
- **Review the agency's public info on all 4 proposed Land Exchanges**
- **Defenders of Wildlife:**
  - **FOIA Results**
  - **Private vs Public Timeline**
  - **Unanswered Questions**
- **Wild Cumberland:**
  - **Fully-Redacted FOIA**
  - **Context: Other Agency Plans & Events**
  - **What You Can Do**
- **Questions/Discussion**

# HELPFUL TERMS

## **PUBLIC LAND EXCHANGE:**

Any transaction other than a sale that transfers publicly owned land (federal, state, county or municipal) from one owner to another (typically a private owner)

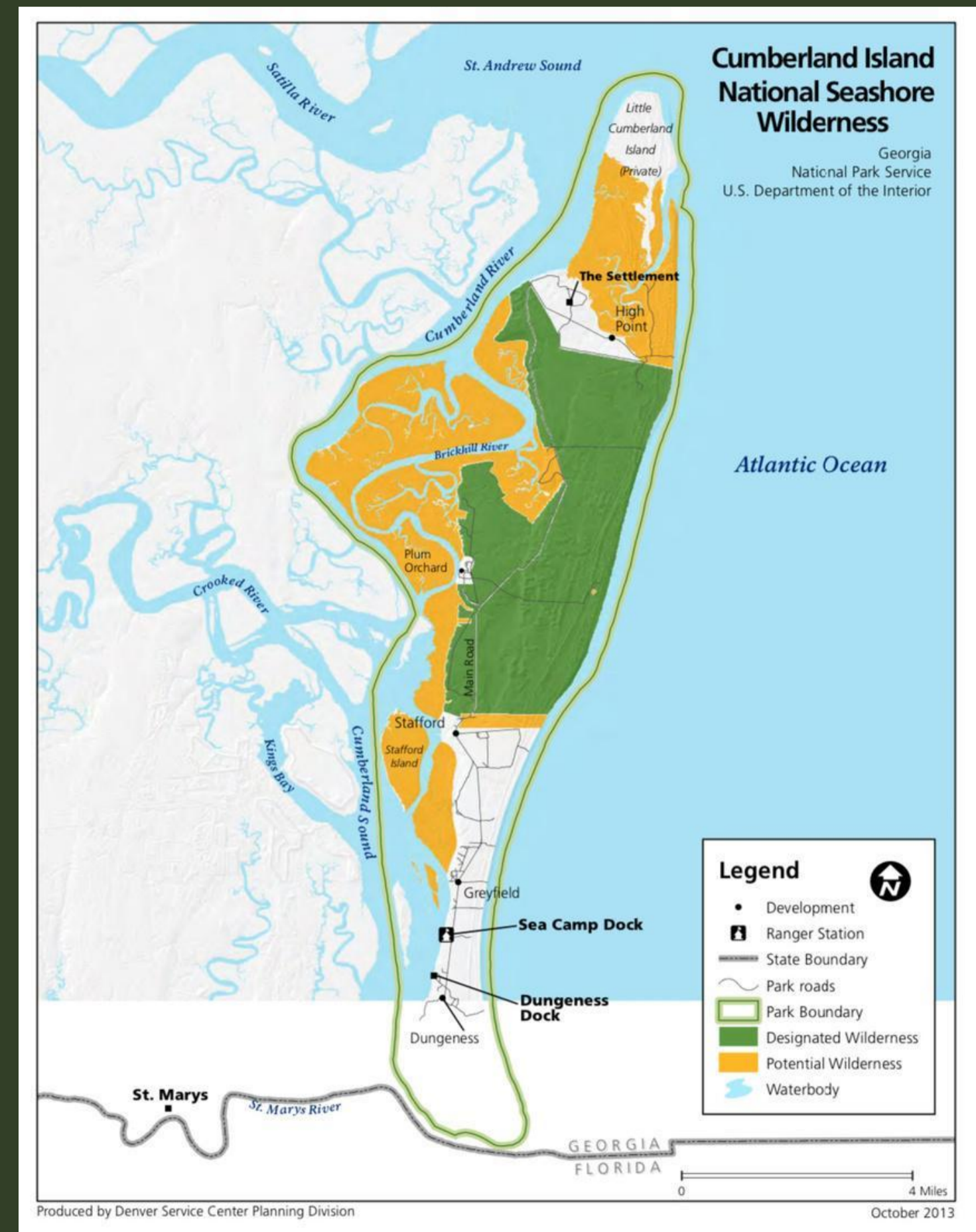
The exchange may include a financial payment to equalize the value of the trade.

## **RETAINED RIGHT:**

Owners receive payment for their property & transfer title to the federal government, but retain the right to occupy it under *specific* agreements - for a defined period of time.

## **FEE SIMPLE:**

Standard property ownership



**YELLOW = Potential Wilderness**  
**GREEN = Wilderness**

# HELPFUL TERMS, *continued*

## **WILDERNESS:**

Wilderness Areas are officially designated through congressional action and a presidential signature and afforded the **highest level of land protection**

## **POTENTIAL WILDERNESS:**

Potential Wilderness is a category of federal land that is protected and managed the same as Wilderness & is intended to become Wilderness, but hasn't been designated yet because of temporary conditions.

The land management agency responsible for managing Potential Wilderness must eliminate these temporary, non-conforming conditions.







# CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE ACT (1972)

*16 U.S.C. § 459I ET SEQ. DESIGNATES THE ENTIRE ISLAND AS A NATIONAL SEASHORE, AND AUTHORIZES THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO RECOMMEND AREAS FOR A WILDERNESS DESIGNATION & TO PURCHASE OR ACQUIRE “LANDS, WATERS, AND INTERESTS THEREIN.” 16 U.S.C. § 459I, -1, -8.*

*PROPERTY ACQUIRED BY THE SECRETARY MUST, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, BE PRESERVED “IN ITS PRIMITIVE STATE,” ID. § 459I-5(B).*

# PROPOSED EXCHANGES: (2024) NPS-STATED PURPOSE

*“By exchanging property with private landowners, the NPS seeks to relocate private interests to other areas where it is more appropriate and less impactful on visitors.”*

-  Establishing **continuity & connectivity** of the Park to expand wildlife corridors & increase resource management efficiency
-  **Safeguarding critical habitat** for federally protected species such as sea turtles & nesting shorebirds
-  Facilitating **additional designation of Wilderness**
-  **Preventing or limiting private development** on or near significant cultural and natural resources

# EXCHANGE 1

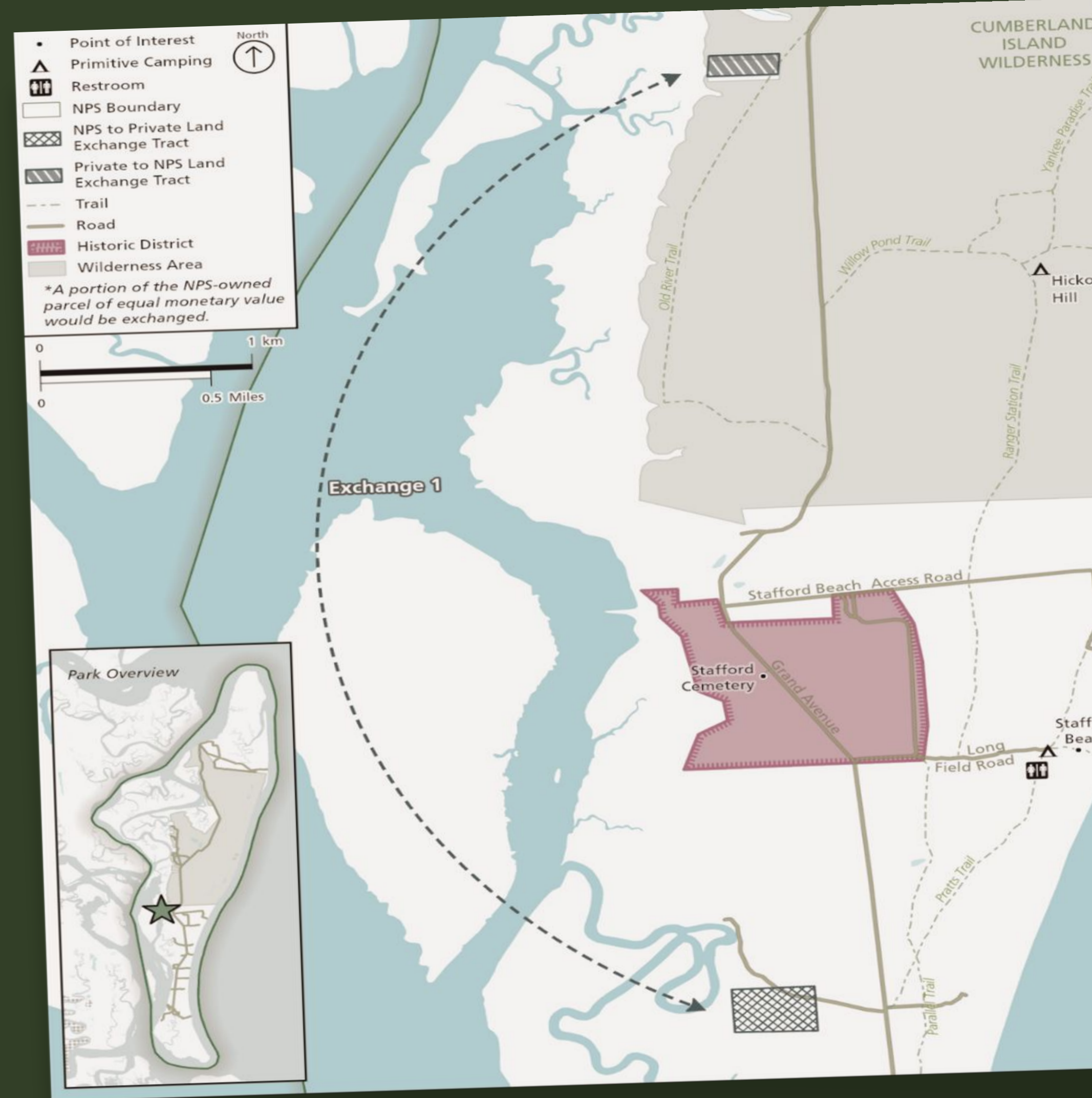
MCFADDEN: WILDERNESS & OLD HOUSE RD

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION:

- 10-acre tract understood to already be designated as *Potential Wilderness*:  
“Nancy Copp Wilderness Trust”

## DISPOSAL:

- NPS-owned property with water, a dock, utility lines and access roads
- **Located between two other proposed exchanges that also put adjacent property into private ownership**
- Parcel is bordered by federally-designated Potential Wilderness



# EXCHANGE 2

## FOSTER: STAFFORD & OLD HOUSE RD

### PUBLIC ACQUISITION:

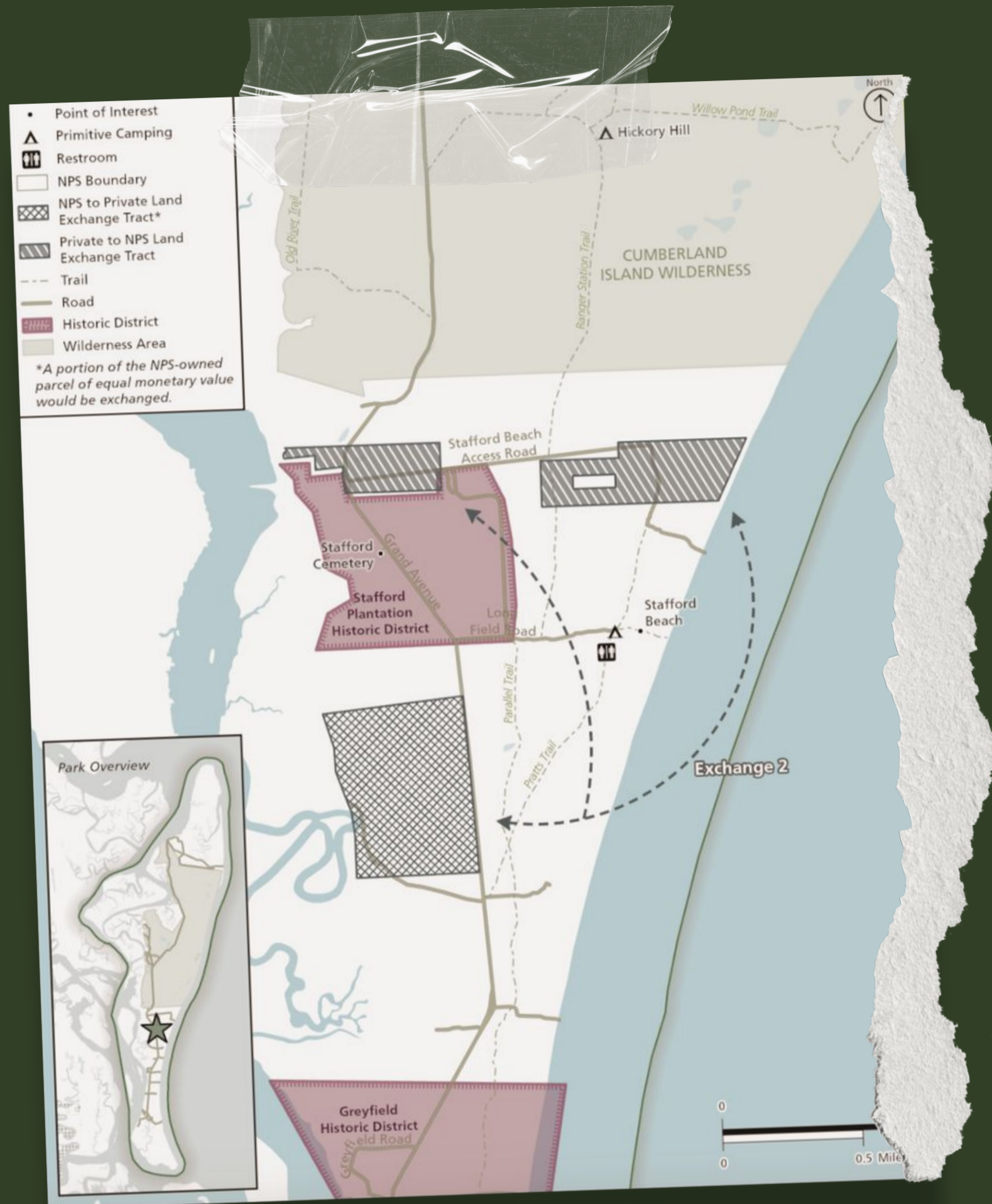
- Two parcels adjacent to Stafford, approximately 132 acres
- **UNDISCLOSED** if facilitates public access to the Stafford chimneys (located on private property but recently stabilized & reinforced by NPS)



Stabilization completed 10/04/2021 –  
04/25/2022

### DISPOSAL:

- NPS-owned property with water access, a dock, utility lines, & access roads
- Parcel is bordered by federally-designated Potential Wilderness



# EXCHANGE 3

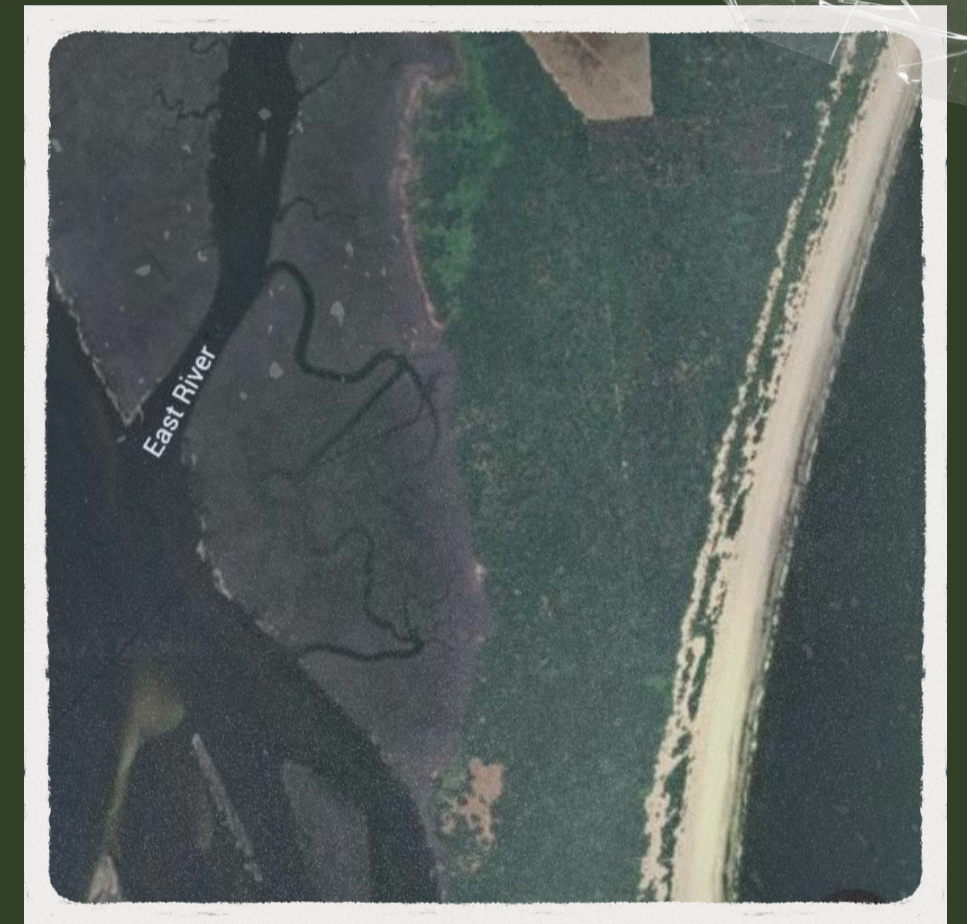
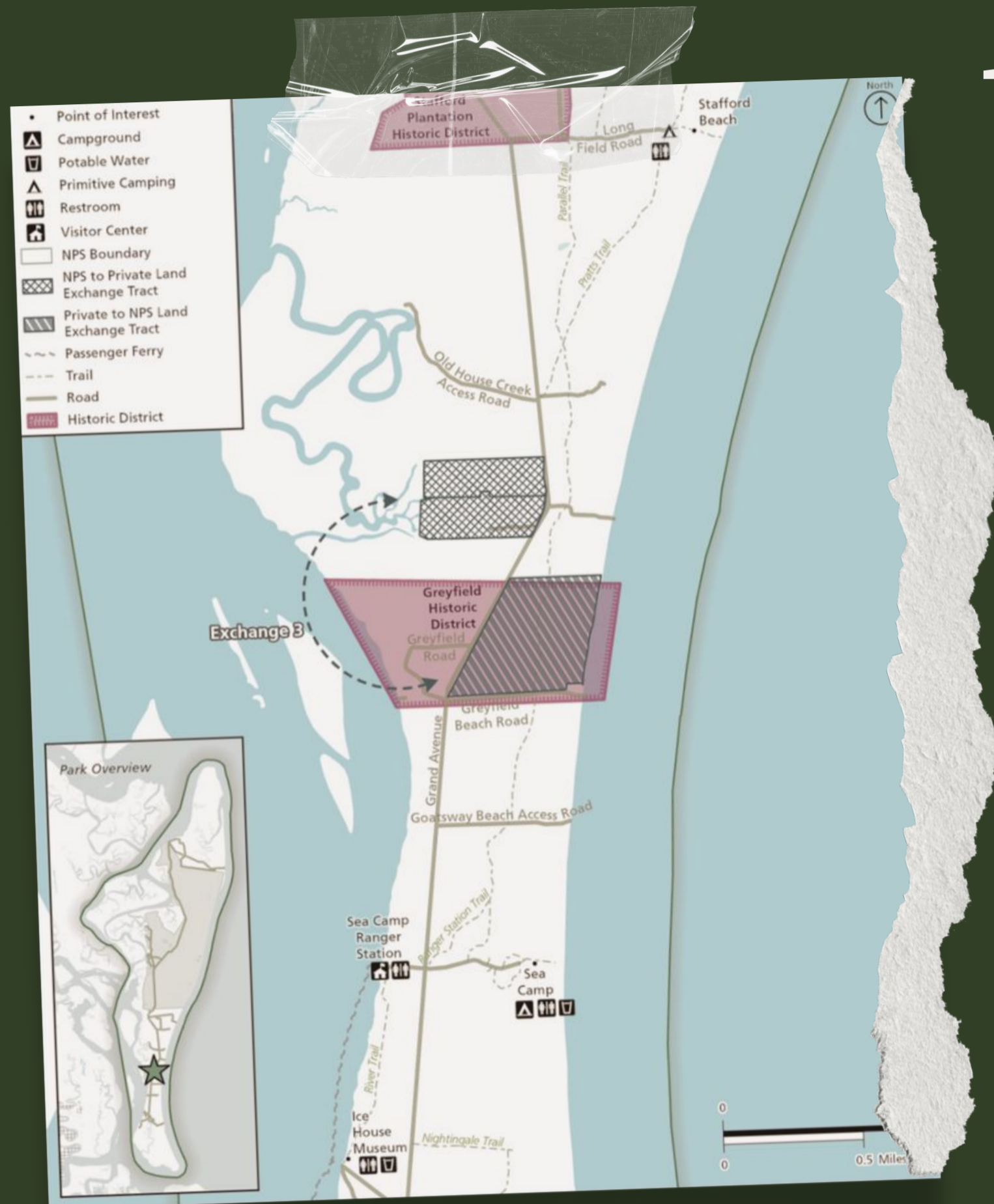
## FERGUSON: GREYFIELD & DAVISVILLE

### PUBLIC ACQUISITION:

- Property east of the road & directly across from the privately-owned Greyfield Inn
- Approximately 136 acres

### DISPOSAL:

- NPS-owned property in an area known as “Davisville”
- Features 4+ residential buildings
- Currently serves as NPS staff / volunteer housing
- Parcel is bordered by federally-designated Potential Wilderness



# EXCHANGE 4

## CANDLERS: LUMAR & HIGH POINT

### ACQUISITION:

- Approximately 95 acres adjacent to Sea Camp ranger station & campground (“LUMAR”)
- Extensive litigation (see *Center for a Sustainable Coast*) associated with this parcel, challenging dock construction; parcel owners requested rezoning; Camden Co. proposed rezoning ALL fee simple property on the island → *NPS took over negotiations*

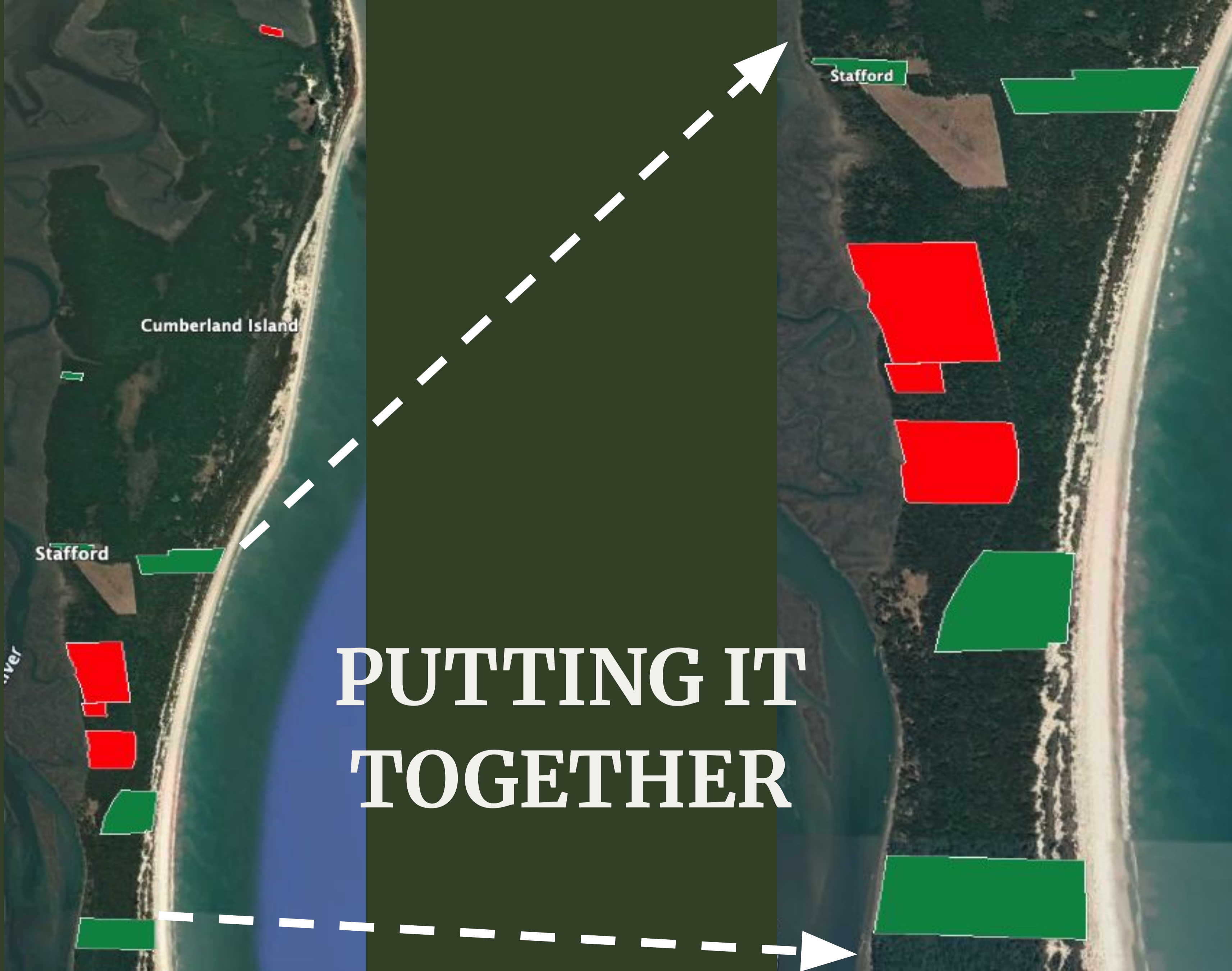
### DISPOSAL:

- “High Point”, a NPS-owned property adjacent to federally-designated Wilderness & Potential Wilderness
- The Candler family **already sold High Point to the Trust for Public Lands for \$9.6 M & ownership was transferred to the NPS in 1982**
- Occupants have held a Retained Right agreement to occupy the property since that time



**NOT SPECIFIED:**  
Ownership & operation of LUMAR dock, High Point air strip, & High Point hangar





**PUTTING IT  
TOGETHER**

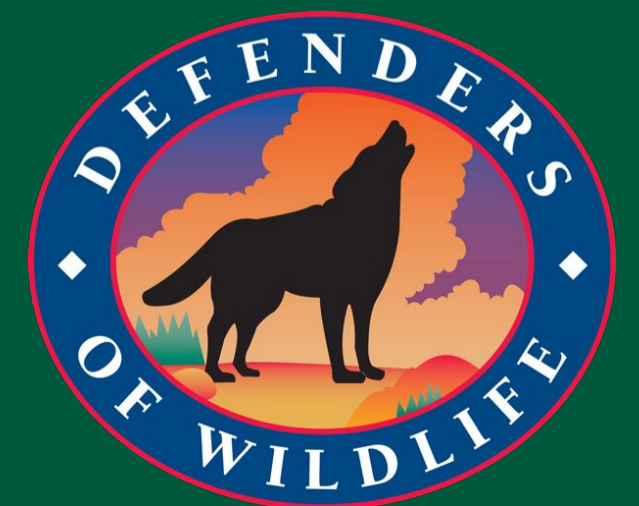


# Following the Paper Trail

*What the Cumberland Island Land Exchange FOIA Request Revealed*

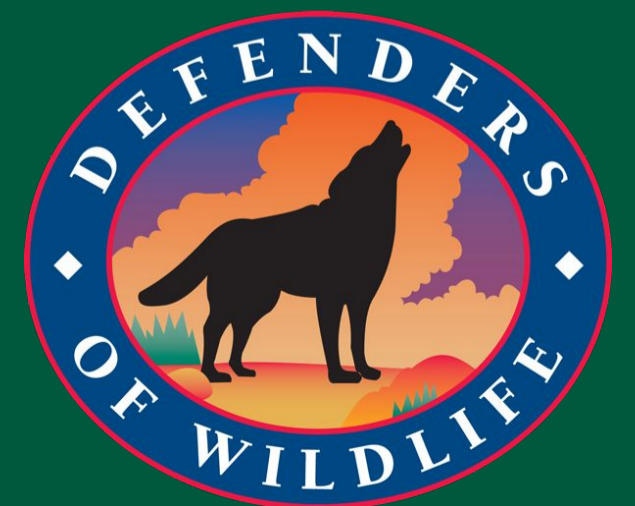
- **September 2024:** NPS launches civic engagement process – the public is told exchanges are still under development
- **September 2024 - March 2026: No communication from NPS**
- **March 17, 2026:** Camden County Commission Meeting
  - Commissioners vote “no” on LWCF letter of support for exchanges
- **March 2026:** Defenders of Wildlife’s FOIA reveals the extent of exchange planning to the public.

## The Public Timeline



- **Summer 2025:** NPS develops draft exchange agreements and deeds.
  - *July 2025:* Draft McFadden exchange agreement and deed prepared.
  - *September 2025:* Draft Foster exchange agreement and deed prepared.
- **Fall 2025:** NPS transmits proposed exchange documents to private landowners.
- **November 2025:** Foster signs a preliminary exchange agreement.
- **January 2026:** Additional executed Foster documents transmitted to NPS.
- **February 2026:** NPS requests letters of support for LWCF funding from state and county

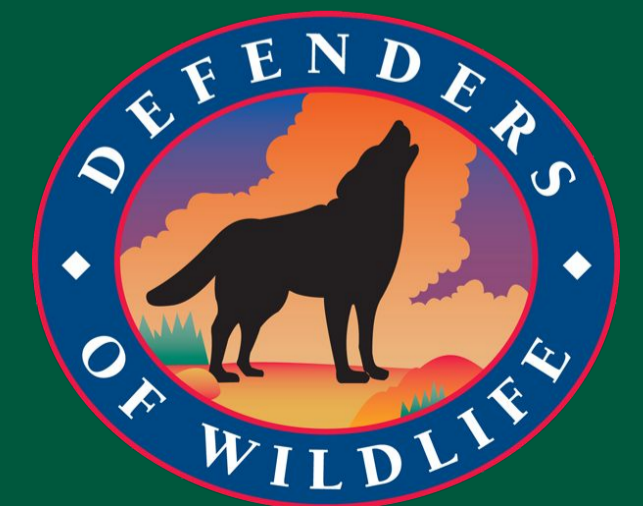
## The Private Timeline



- The McFadden exchange (#1) would transfer **~20 acres** of federal land to private ownership for **~10 private acres**.
- The Foster exchange (#2) would transfer **~60 acres** of federal land to private ownership for **~122 private acres\***
- Draft deed restrictions allow residential development – at least 15,000 sq ft and 35 feet tall (3 stories).
  - This could amount to 8 new residences in total
- New access easements would be granted across park lands and roads.
- **Public land inside a national seashore would be transferred into private ownership with residential development rights that do not exist today.**

*\* Note: Private acreage estimate is based on Defenders' GIS analysis of the Foster Preliminary Exchange Agreement map (Exhibit 1). Other reports indicate 90 private acres could be exchanged. Details will be finalized at closing.*

**Exchanges would enable new private development**



- Exact boundaries remain undefined.
- Final legal descriptions had not yet been completed.
- Surveys & acreage are still being negotiated.
- Appraisals have not been finalized.
- The public has not seen the final parcel configurations or a map featuring cumulative changes.
- We only have FOIA documents for 2 out of the 4 exchanges.
- **The public has not been kept informed and environmental reviews have not occurred as promised.**

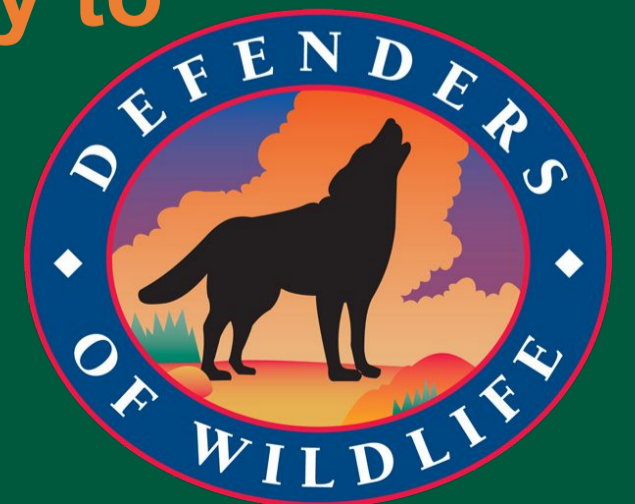
**Major Questions Remain  
Unanswered**



- Cumberland Island is one of the last largely undeveloped barrier islands on the Atlantic Coast.
- The island supports nationally significant wildlife habitat, federally designated wilderness, nesting sea turtles, shorebirds, maritime forests, and coastal wetlands.
- Land exchanges would permanently transfer public land into private ownership, facilitating development.
- Once federal land is transferred, it is difficult or impossible to recover.
- While this is happening, numerous other issues at the Seashore remain unresolved
  - Wilderness Management Plan
  - Feral Horse Management Plan
  - General Management Plan Update
  - Visitor Use Management Plan

**The public deserves transparency and a meaningful opportunity to engage before irreversible decisions are made.**

**Why this matters...**



# RELATED TO TRANSPARENCY

## WC FOIA

**FULLY  
REDACTED**

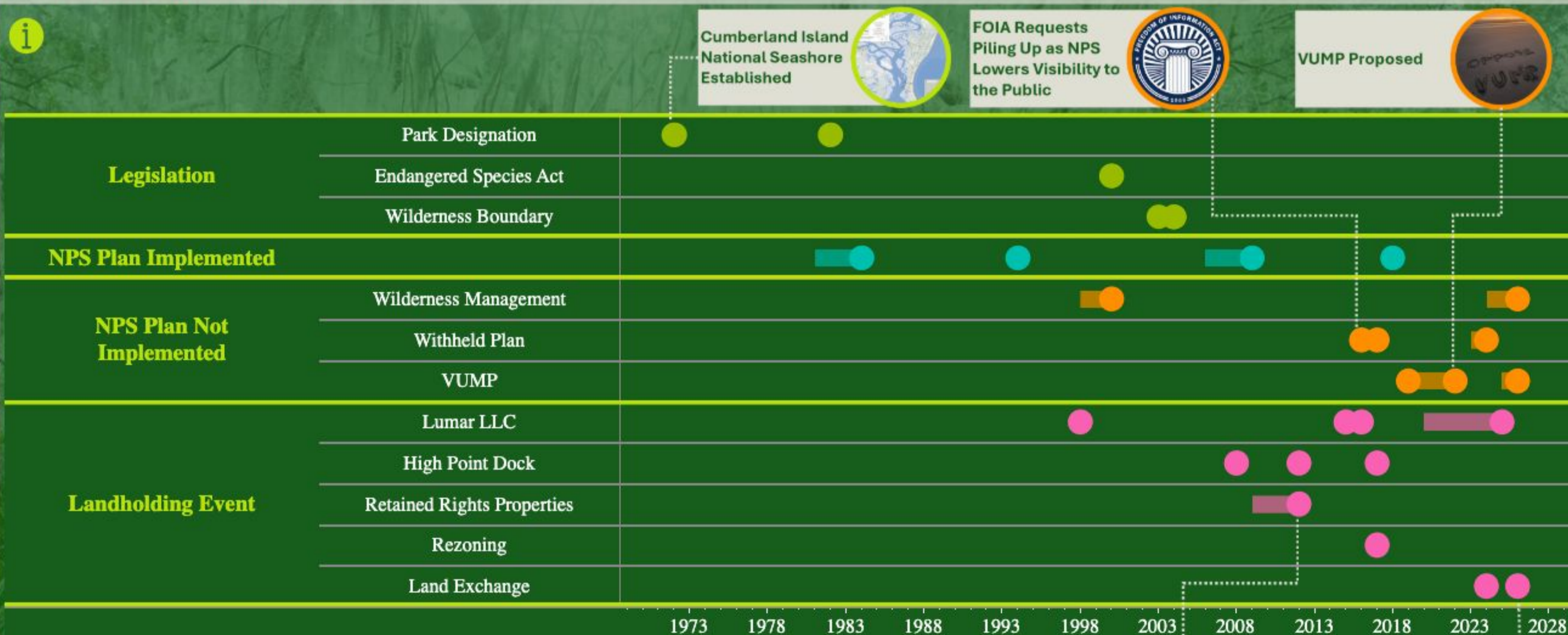
- Wilderness Character Baseline Assessment was requested via FOIA (2024)
- Content received (2026)
- Wilderness & Potential Wilderness comprise 56% of Cumberland Island
- Never been a Wilderness Management Plan implemented

(b) (5)

# OTHER PLANS & EVENTS: *in context*

## Protecting Cumberland Island

54 Years of Successes and Failures



Cumberland Island National Seashore Established



FOIA Requests Piling Up as NPS Lowers Visibility to the Public



VUMP Proposed



FRPMP Conveyed Retained Rights Private Properties to NPS



Land Exchange Proposed by NPS with Little Visibility to the Public



# OTHER PLANS & EVENTS: *in context*

## Protecting Cumberland Island



54 Years of Successes and Failures

### How Do We Categorize Events?

#### Legislation

Legislative events capture two types of events: 1) laws Congress has enacted to designate and amend the Cumberland Island National Seashore; and 2) litigation against entities on Cumberland Island violating legislation, such as the Endangered Species Act.

#### NPS Plan Implemented

Events in the NPS Plan Implemented category include select management plans the National Park Service (NPS) has developed, reviewed with the public input, and implemented at Cumberland Island National Seashore that affect parkwide management and future planning.

#### NPS Plan Not Implemented

Events in the NPS Plan Not Implemented category include management plans the National Park Service (NPS) has developed but not implemented. They may have solicited public input on a plan but then modified or withheld the plan from implementation (e.g., the Visitor Use Management Plan), or they developed a proposal but did not seek public input (e.g., the Wilderness Management Plan).

#### Landholding Event

Landholding events involve the attempted or successful purchase, transfer, or altered use of land on Cumberland Island. Purchases and exchanges have occurred between both the National Park Service (NPS) and private inholders (i.e., private land owners) and between inholders. Land has transferred from inholders to NPS following the expiration of retained rights agreements. Private inholders have also taken steps to rezone or alter their land use, such as building a dock.

### Want more information on an event?

Events that have a reference URL will open when you click on the event. Hover over an event and look for the red text on the pop-up to see which events have more information to offer.

1973 1978 1983 1988 1993 1998 2003 2008 2013 2018 2023 2028

Retained Rights  
Private Properties  
to NPS

Wild Exchange  
Proposed by NPS  
with Little Visibility  
to the Public

# OTHER PLANS & EVENTS: *in context*

## Protecting Cumberland Island

54 Years of Successes and Failures



Cumberland Island National Seashore Established



FOIA Requests Piling Up as NPS Lowers Visibility to the Public



VUMP Proposed



**NPS Plan Implemented;**  
1984; NPS General Management Plan Implemented  
NPS General Management Plan (GMP) implemented  
*\*Reference Available. Click to Open Tab.\**

FRPMP Conveyed Retained Rights Private Properties to NPS



Land Exchange Proposed by NPS with Little Visibility to the Public



# WHAT CAN YOU DO?



**CONTACT** your Congressional representatives! Let them know you are concerned about the Cumberland Island Land Exchanges. Demand transparency, accountability & adherence to Cumberland Island National Seashore's legislative intent.



Request that their office urge NPS to stop advancing & funding the proposed land exchanges until a formal oversight review is conducted – and results are public.



Visit [wildcumberland.org](http://wildcumberland.org) for resources & more information



# QUESTIONS?

