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# News Release

## Sussex County purchases 41 acres near Seaford for river dredging site and public park

Georgetown, Del., May 27, 2010: Portions of a former golf course near Seaford will become home to Sussex County's newest public park, as County officials have purchased the property as part of a federal government plan to dredge the nearby Nanticoke River.

County officials this morning went to settlement on the Woodland Golf Park, agreeing to pay \$580,000 to acquire 41 acres of the approximately 52-acre parcel at the corner of Woodland and Lonesome roads west of Seaford. County Council earlier this week authorized the purchase, which was formalized this morning.

The agreement paves the way for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move forward on its years-long plan to perform maintenance dredging on a stretch of the Nanticoke River extending from the Delaware-Maryland line up to Seaford. The river, which flows to the Chesapeake Bay, is a vital waterway for barge traffic into and out of western Sussex County.

But the purchase also sets the stage for something more – a County park, one in which passive, open space would be made available for public use. Only about half of the acreage purchased is necessary for the dredging project, leaving the remainder to be converted into walking trails and other natural attractions.

“Sussex County is pleased to be a partner in this effort to strengthen our local economy, to safeguard our environment and to enhance recreational opportunities for our citizens,” County

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Administrator David B. Baker said. "The Nanticoke River dredging project will ensure that commerce continues to smoothly and safely flow along the river for years to come, and with it will come the wonderful byproduct of a passive park-like setting for our citizens and visitors alike.

"This is a big win for business, for the economy, and for the people of Sussex County," Mr. Baker said.

County officials plan to apply for a \$280,000 state parks grant in the coming weeks that would help defray the cost of the land purchase. The park could be ready for public use in about a year at the earliest, Mr. Baker said.

Meanwhile, about 20 acres of the site will serve as a location to deposit mud that will be pulled from the bottom of the Nanticoke River during the four-month-long, \$1.9 million project to restore to 12 feet the river's main channel depth. Once piped to the location, the excess dredge material will dry over an extended period of time before settling atop the soil. The site could be used again in the future if another dredge project is necessary.

In order for the federal project to progress, Sussex County, as the local government body, was obligated to provide a site for dredge material under an agreement with the Corps of Engineers, Mr. Baker said. County officials for the past couple years have been actively researching potential sites that would meet the project's needs.

Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers praised the land acquisition, saying that with this piece of the project puzzle now in place, their plans can move forward. Dredging of the Nanticoke could occur as early as 2012, depending on Congressional funding in the federal budget.

"This site is a good location along the river, sort of at the midpoint where we can send dredge material from both ends of the river," said Monte Franklin, chief of navigation for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District. "From everything we've seen to date, this is a very suitable location."

Further site sampling and geotechnical evaluations will be performed to ensure the parcel's viability. State and federal environmental agencies will be involved, along with the Corps of Engineers and the County, to minimize the project's effect on the local ecology.

Officials say the dredging project is essential to ensuring safe, efficient navigation for barges that transport grains, gravel and fuel along the Nanticoke. According to figures from the Delmarva Water Transport Committee, of which Sussex County government is a member, approximately 270 barges moved along the Nanticoke in 2009. Each barge has a capacity equal to about 150 tractor trailers.

County Council Vice President Michael H. Vincent said the Nanticoke River dredging project and requisite land acquisition have been among his top priorities since taking office in January 2009, and he is proud to see it coming closer to a reality.

"This is about jobs and preserving our economy," Mr. Vincent said. "We all know this river is an ecological jewel for the Delmarva Peninsula, but what many people may not realize is how vital this same river is to moving many goods and materials through our region.

"This purchase fulfills Sussex County's role in the process, and along the way there is the fringe benefit of being able to offer to the public a place to relax and enjoy some of the area's beauty," Mr. Vincent said. "But more importantly, it keeps the Nanticoke River open as a highway for water-borne commerce in Sussex County. It's my hope that will keep jobs here, and maybe even bring some new commerce in, as we sail on into the next decade."

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