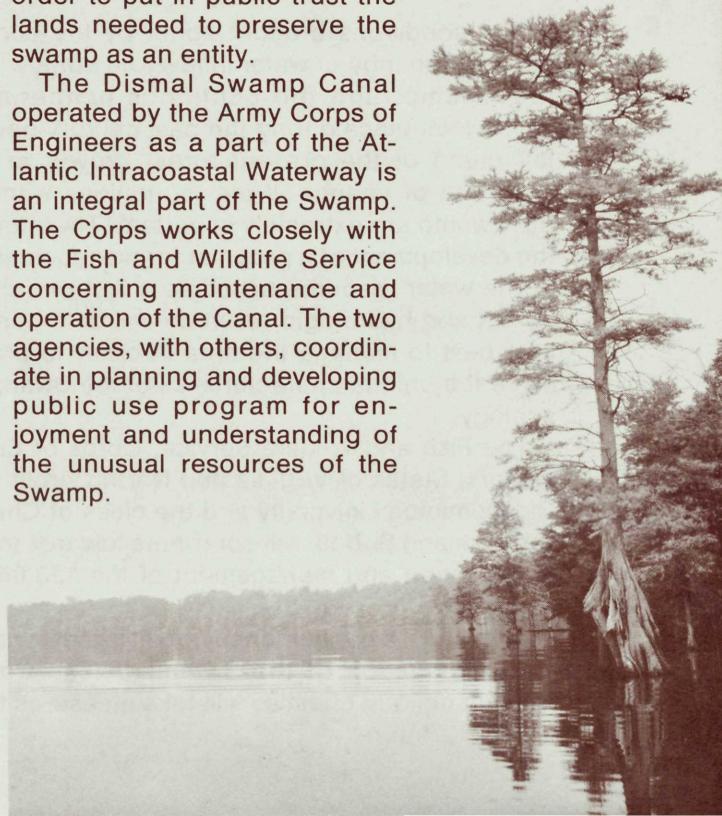


REFLECTIONS

When the possibility of preserving the Dismal Swamp came under discussion a few years ago, those persons dedicated to saving this unique area had only hope and commitment to a cause to sustain them. Then in 1972 at the insistence of a preservation-minded public, Congress enacted Public Law 92-478, authorizing a study to determine the feasibility of preserving the area as a public trust, tying in operation of the Dismal Swamp Canal.

Concurrent with legislative consideration for enactment of P.L. 92.478. The Union Camp Company turned over its land-holdings in the Swamp to the Nature Conservancy, who then deeded the land to the Department of the Interior with certain stipulations. As a result, a 49,000 acre portion of the Swamp became a part of the National Wildlife System administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; it was duly named the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge by Congress on August 30, 1974. Further acquisition of Swamp lands were also considered in order to put in public trust the lands needed to preserve the swamp as an entity.

The Dismal Swamp Canal operated by the Army Corps of Engineers as a part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway is an integral part of the Swamp. The Corps works closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service concerning maintenance and operation of the Canal. The two agencies, with others, coordinate in planning and developing public use program for enjoyment and understanding of the unusual resources of the Swamp.



U. S. ARMY, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
NORFOLK DISTRICT



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

DISMAL
SWAMP

CANAL
AND
REFUGE

What is the historical connection between the Dismal Swamp and the Dismal Swamp Canal?

The need for an inland waterway from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay area to Albemarle Sound, North Carolina was expressed as early as 1728, when Colonel William Byrd suggested a canal through the Great Dismal Swamp. George Washington also considered an inland route, but both men felt that the canal would be too expensive. However, interest continued, and the project was chartered by the Virginia Legislature with the support of Governor Patrick Henry in 1787. The canal was begun in 1793 and the cut-through completed in 1805; it was used to transport goods between Norfolk and the sounds of North Carolina. Only a few products like cedar shingles came from the Swamp itself.

Waters from Lake Drummond became necessary to supplement other sources for maintenance of levels in the canal.

How does the Dismal Swamp Canal influence the total ecology of the Dismal Swamp?

The canal locks and the control structure on the Feeder Ditch assist in providing stability of water levels in the Swamp. During periods of heavy rainfall, serious flooding would occur especially at South Mill, North Carolina, if the control structures were not maintained. Also, during drought, control of the water assists to prevent complete drying out of the Swamp which would leave it susceptible to habitat loss through fire and ultimate encroachment of undesirable plant and tree species. Such catastrophic change would eliminate the Dismal Swamp as we now know it.

Why preserve the Dismal Swamp?

The swamp offers important and unique ecological educational, historical, and recreational values as a refreshing contrast to the urban area of heavily populated Norfolk and greater Hampton Roads. It is a vast landscape of peat beds, vines and brier thickets, pines and hardwoods, cedar and cypress, flowers and "canebrakes". It presents a unique intermingling of northern and southern species of plants and animals. It is also the home for numerous rare plant and animal species and is one of the last true wooded wetlands along the mid-Atlantic region.

QUESTIONS

What is the relationship of the Dismal Swamp Canal to the companion route, Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal?

Both canal routes are operated by the Norfolk District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers as a part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway between Norfolk, Virginia and St. John's River, Florida.

The Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal is the wider, deeper, and more heavily used route because it can handle large tugs and barges; only one lockage is required. The Dismal Swamp Canal route is shorter, requiring two lockages, but it is more protected and is the more historic route. The locks on the two routes are the only ones on the entire Intracoastal Waterway. The A & C lock is actually a saltwater barrier while the Dismal Swamp Canal locks are lift structures.

Because it is more protected and of historical interest, many small yachts, outboards, and canoes use the twenty-two mile Dismal Swamp Canal rather than the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. Dismal Swamp is reported to be the oldest canal in America still in service. It directly links the Elizabeth River in Chesapeake, Virginia, with the Upper Pasquotank River near Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Is the swamp today what the colonists saw?

The Dismal Swamp area, even though greatly reduced from its original area, is still a large tree covered swampland or more accurately, a forested peat bog. The great stands of Cypress, gum, and Atlantic White cedar, however, are gone as a result of repeated lumbering operations. With the removal of these trees, shade tolerant understory species, such as red maple, flourished and have become the most prominent species in the Swamp.

Of the original wetlands area identified as forested peat bog, approximately 210,000 acres remain in Virginia and North Carolina and of this amount 123,000 acres are considered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be necessary for the survival of the Swamp. It has therefore been proposed as a national Refuge and for other public preservation purposes.

How will the character of the swamp be preserved?

The conditions brought about by the complex interchange of water inflow and outflow in the Swamp, and the continuous lumbering which took place during the past century have left much of the present forest growth in a condition of change. Water conditions within the Swamp are extremely important. Therefore the development of a program for management of the water resource becomes a first priority. Forest and hydrologic research will determine how best to manage the area in order to preserve the unique characteristics of the Swamp ecology.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, States of Virginia and North Carolina, Old Dominion University and the cities of Chesapeake and Suffolk will contribute towards the preservation and management of the 123,000 acre area.

Ultimately, an enlightened public is the key to the preservation of the Swamp. Those who value its unique qualities will take measures to ensure its future.

ANSWERS

THINGS



PLEASURE BOAT CRUISING

Private boat owners will find the leisurely trip on the Dismal Swamp Canal a delightful way to observe and enjoy the mood and character of the Swamp. This is best done by journeying to Lake Drummond by way of the Feeder Ditch connecting the Lake with the Dismal Swamp Canal.



FISHING ON LAKE DRUMMOND

Lake Drummond is within the National Wildlife Refuge and access is permitted from sunrise to sunset. Angling for pan fish on the Lake requires a Virginia state fishing license.

TO SEE

CAMPING

Limited camping facilities are available on a "first come—first served" basis at the Corps Lake Drummond Reservation. Insect repellents are a necessity during the summer months. Be careful with fires, and help keep the area clean.



Persons travelling up the Feeder Ditch by boat for a tour of Lake Drummond may wish to picnic at the Corps of Engineers Lake Drummond Reservation Area at the Spillway.

Boats 16 feet or less and weighing no more than 1000 pounds, can be elevated to the Lake Drummond level above the spillway by a small marine railway provided as a public service. Visitors should assist in elevating their boat and should sign the register placed nearby.

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BIRDING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Birders and nature photographers find a great variety of resident and migrating songbirds using the Swamp. Travel by boat or by foot or bicycle along established roads presents excellent opportunities to observe and photograph the Swamp.



