

# Level Ponds: Wetland Restoration and Preservation

A Tributary to the Chesapeake Bay

**Site History:** Level Ponds is a 49-acre tract of land located on Virginia's Eastern Shore on the Delmarva Peninsula in Accomack County. This area once contained vast expanses of mixed-wood swamp forests and slow-moving rivers bordered by tidal wetlands. It has been significantly impacted over the previous centuries by deforestation and draining and the Chesapeake Bay is increasingly impacted by run-off and pollution. Level Ponds is located only 5,000 feet upstream of the Chesapeake Bay and about 25 acres of forest and wetland on this site had been converted and drained into open field. It was purchased by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 2010 so that it could be restored and returned to a functioning part of the natural landscape and contribute to cleaner waters in the Chesapeake Bay.



*Level Ponds after restoration.*



*Site construction.*

**Restoration:** Level Ponds restoration began in 2012. Project funding and implementation came from the Virginia Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, a cooperative agreement between TNC, US Army Corps of Engineers, and VA Department of Environmental Quality. First, the site was graded, field drains were removed, and ditches were plugged so that the hydrology of

the site would return to normal and allow restoration of wetlands. Then, over 7,000 trees were planted, native seed was spread, and invasive species control was performed to restore native vegetation.



*Tree planting.*

**Status and Outlook:** Monitoring began in 2013 and will continue until 2023 to ensure the success of native plants and the hydrology and stability of the site. As a result of the Level Ponds project, 49 acres of native wetland and forest are re-establishing and can once more contribute to the natural beauty and functioning of Virginia's Eastern Shore ecosystems. Level Ponds will be protected in perpetuity.



*Level Ponds before (left) & after (right) restoration efforts.*