



DELBERT HOSEMANN
Secretary of State

CAT ISLAND FACT SHEET



Introduction to Cat Island

Cat Island is the western most island of the four barrier islands that form the southern boundary of the State of Mississippi. (See Figure 1) The island lies roughly 8 to 10 miles south of the mainland coast of Mississippi and is the only Mississippi barrier island with significant acreage remaining in private ownership. The other three Mississippi barrier islands were conveyed by the State to the United States in 1972, and are under the control of the National Park Service as part of Gulf Islands National Seashore.



Figure 1. Location of Cat Island, Mississippi

Ownership History

Cat Island was discovered by the French in 1699. Juan De Couevas acquired the island by Spanish land grant in the 1780's. The Boddie family purchased the island in stages between 1911 and 1934. In the late 1960's and early 1970's a small subdivision was platted with a canal system and 45 lots on about 10 acres. The United States purchased 533 acres for the National Park Service's Gulf Island National Seashore in 2002.



Figure 2. Current ownership of Cat Island parcels. The area outlined in red is the proposed CELCP acquisition area (Parcel D).

In 2011, British Petroleum (BP) purchased 492 acres to facilitate oil spill cleanup activities after the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Except for a few lots in the subdivision the Boddie family owns the remaining 520 acres. (See Figure 2)

The Island

Cat Island, having an unusual “T” shape and consisting of approximately 2000 acres, is a well-known recreation site. Current use is mainly that of a natural area with low impact activities—swimming, sunbathing, camping, hiking and fishing. The waters surrounding the island are especially bountiful and a popular area for wade fishing.



Figure 3. Recent aerial imagery of Cat Island from 2010.

Except for the subdivision, which now contains only a couple of houses, the remainder of the island is in a relatively pristine state with a mixture of pine/oak maritime forest, estuarine marsh, sand dunes and beaches. It contains unique, threatened and disappearing habitat types and is home to a number of rare, threatened, endangered species of plants and animals. (See Figure 3)

Acquisition Opportunity

Over the past 15 years, the State has acquired approximately 36,000 acres of coastal habitat for the Coastal Preserve System conserving and protecting the major watersheds feeding the Mississippi Sound. The Boddie family has expressed interest in selling additional acreage on Cat Island to the State for permanent conservation and preservation. This additional acreage is outlined in red and labeled as Parcel D on Figure 4. (Also see Figure 5) Parcel D contains approximately 175 acres of which approximately 93 acres are uplands.



Figure 4. Recent aerial imagery of Cat Island showing Parcel D outlined in red.

The acquisition would be a significant addition to the Coastal Preserve System and would insure that the island remains in a natural condition providing enhanced public access to coastal resources for recreational purposes.

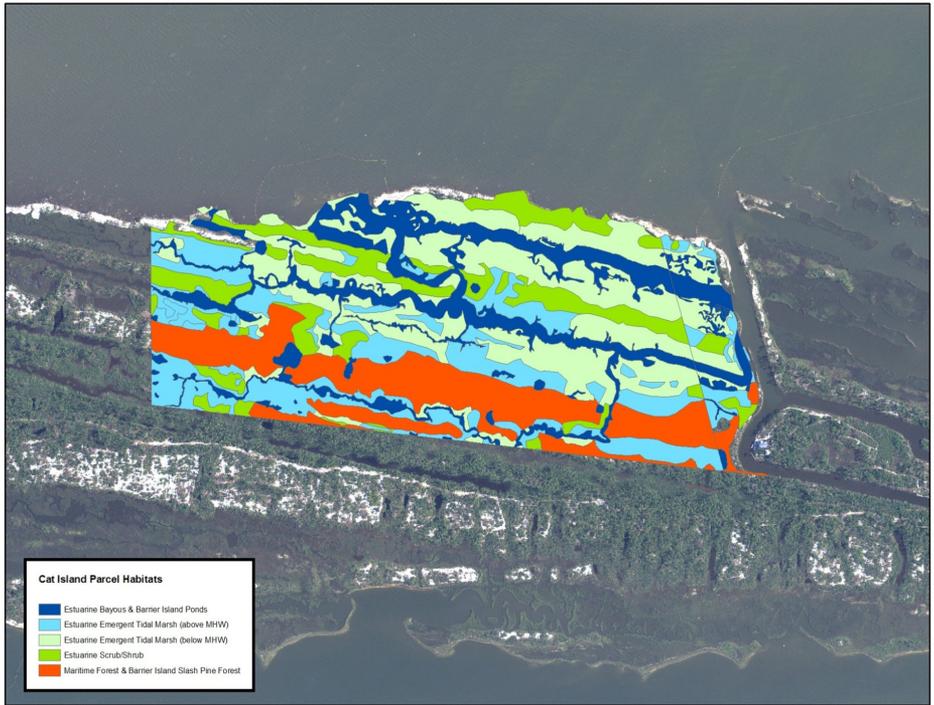


Figure 5. Coastal habitats found within Parcel D.

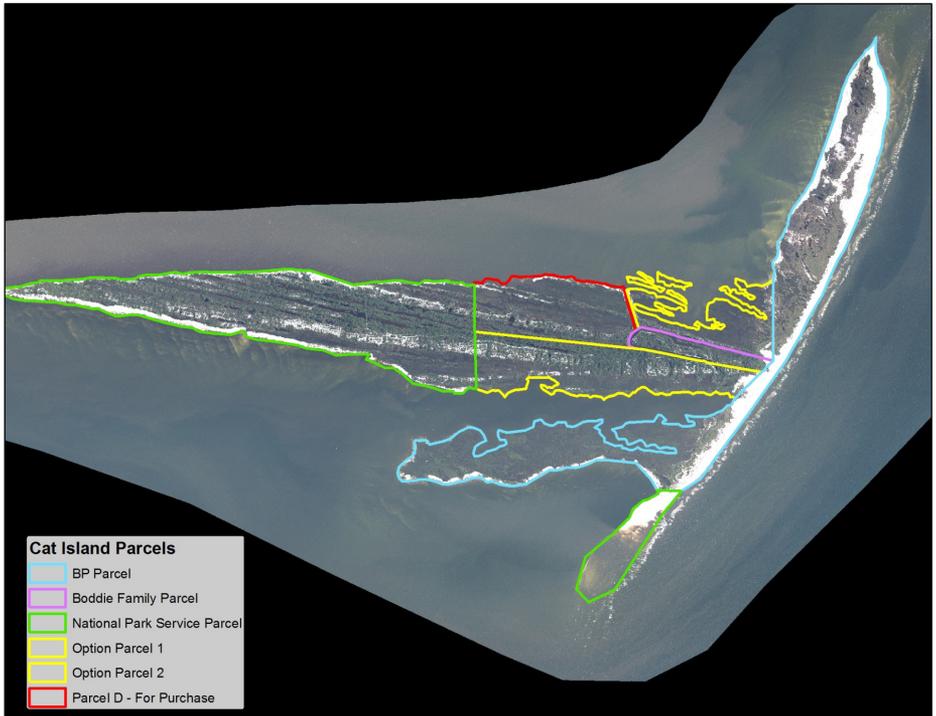
The Army Corps of Engineers has funding totaling \$439 million through the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program for barrier island restoration. However, the funding only allows the money to be spent on areas that are publicly owned. Restoration of the barrier islands is crucial the protection of Mississippi's waters and the coastal mainland.

Funding Sources: The State has applied for a grant from the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) in the amount of \$1,206,575 to be applied to the purchase of additional acreage on Cat Island. The grant will require an equal match from the State. The State is currently holding \$1,277,944 in the Deer Island Acquisition and Reclamation Fund. The Secretary of State is proposing legislation that would allow this money to be applied to the acquisition of additional acreage on Cat Island. If approved, this would provide the required grant match. The Deer Island Fund money is the product of a bond issue that

was paid off in November 2012. Efforts to acquire the remaining sixteen privately owned acres on Deer Island have proved fruitless. Reallocation of this cash on hand to the acquisition of additional acreage on Cat Island would be the best use of these funds consistent with the spirit of the original bond issue.

Based on current appraisal, additional funds of approximately \$1,250,000 may be required to consummate this purchase. The Mississippi Legislature would anticipate funding \$250,000 per year from tidelands funds to complete this payment. Prior bond payments on the Deer Island Bonds were over \$1 million dollars per year. In addition, the State would be granted an option, at no additional cost, to purchase the all but approximately 50 acres of the remaining Boddie interest. The additional option will be for approximately 300 acres with a time limit to be negotiated. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6. Option Tracts are outlined in yellow and the remaining area to be retained by the Boddie Family is outlined in purple.





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