

Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary

Loudoun County, Virginia



One of the existing forested vernal pools at Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.

Wetland Restoration in the Potomac Watershed

Bordering an unnamed tributary to Limestone Branch, the 87+ acre Black Oak property is located within the Potomac River Watershed. The property will be established as a preserve to protect the significant assemblages of amphibian species that occur on site as well as the unique geologic features.

The site is located within 1,000 feet of Catoctin Mountain, with 8 other conservation lands located within 2 miles of the site, including Lucketts Ponds, a Natural Heritage conservation site. Out of the 7 obligate vernal pool species found in Virginia, 6 have been documented onsite.

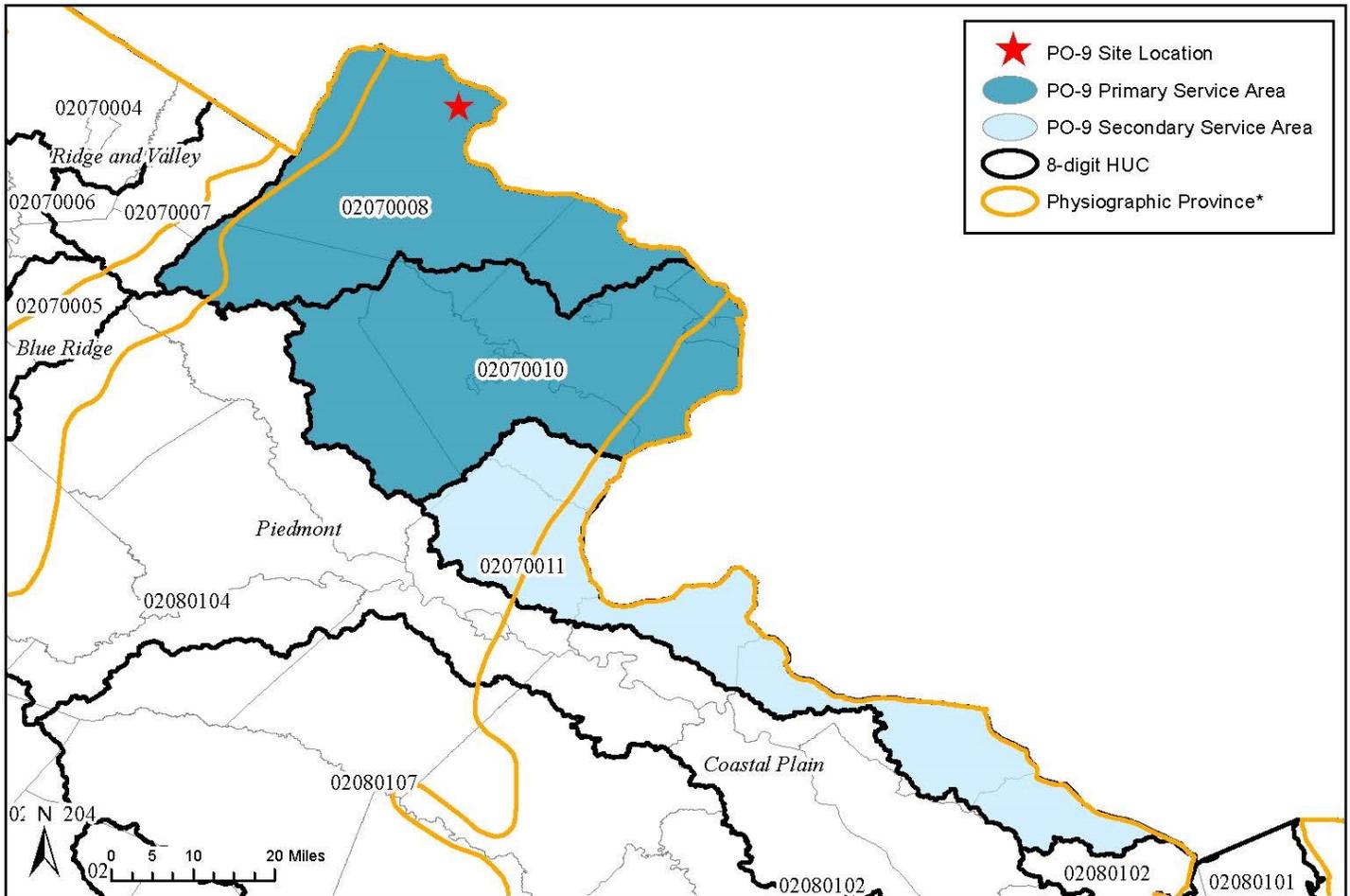
Quick Facts

- Will create 4+ acres of a connected matrix of wetlands that contribute to Limestone Branch and Potomac River.
- Will protect sensitive amphibian species such as Jefferson salamander, spotted salamanders and fairy shrimp.
- Will provide a wildlife corrector to surrounding conservation lands.
- Will protect rare karst features present on site.



Jefferson salamanders, fairy shrimp, and spotted salamanders, all of which are obligate vernal pool species, have been found onsite.





PO-9 Black Oak Service Area

The Black Oak property drains to the Potomac River. The project is expected to generate 9 non-tidal wetland credits, which will mitigate for impacts in the primary and secondary service areas shown in the above map.

Existing Conditions

The property is located in a unique region of the Piedmont underlain by a Leesburg Limestone Conglomerate of the Balls Bluff Formation, and is characterized by large boulder outcrops. The majority of the property is comprised of highly-disturbed old pasture that has had some scrub/shrub establishment in recent years. Invasive woody species have become established in these open areas and include autumn olive, tree-of-heaven, Japanese honeysuckle, and multiflora rose. In total, 11 vernal ponds have been located onsite (in various conditions) and are situated either in old-growth forest or in the abandoned agricultural fields.

Restoration Activities

Ecologists from the Virginia DCR - Natural Heritage Program have recommended that this site is highly worthy of conservation, restoration, and long-term management to protect and re-establish its unique geology, vernal pools, and salamander populations. Mitigation activities planned for the site include:

- Wetland creation
- Wetland enhancement (tree planting in existing vernal pools)
- Wetland preservation
- Trash removal and invasive control
- Upland buffer planting