**ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE**

The Scuppernong River Swamp is protected by Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and Pettigrew State Park. The natural area harbors high quality examples of several natural communities and is characterized by tannic waters, swamp forest, and diverse wetland habitats. The Scuppernong River is a blackwater river that begins north of Lake Phelps and drains to Albemarle Sound. The river widens into a broad estuary and encompasses extensive wetlands along the river as well as those along tributaries. The scuppernong grape, a varietal of muscadine grape, is the NC state fruit. It was first discovered along this river, and its name comes from the Algonquian word “ascopo,” which means “sweetbay tree.” This site’s value for wildlife is heightened by its proximity to other protected areas like the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and the lower portion of the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge. The site has high recreational potential, and many people fish along the river or paddle it for birding or sightseeing.

**FLORA & FAUNA**

Plant communities here vary with hydrology, salinity and elevation. Cypress and swamp blackgum trees are common in the canopy, along with Atlantic white cedar, sweetgum, red maple, pond pine and green ash. Other plants include sweetbay, red bay, ti-ti, fetterbush, sweet pepperbush, Virginia chainfern, netted chainfern, and various sedges. Rare plants include silvery sedge, seven-angled pipewort and riverbank evening-primrose. Animals documented at the site include black bear, river otter, bobcat, several frog and turtle species, bald eagle, osprey, wood duck, American woodcock, orchard oriole, green and great blue herons, and many other birds. Rare animals include the Rafinesque’s big-eared bat, spotted turtle, American alligator and black swamp snake.

**THREATS**

Brackish water intrusion—due to accelerated sea level rise and declining river flows—is a key concern at this site. In recent years, portions of the forest are dying as they are affected by increasing salinity, and former swamp forest is slowly becoming marsh. Polluted runoff affects water quality, and invasive species like alligatorweed and Phragmites also present a threat.

**ACCESS**

This site features a ¾ mile interpretive boardwalk as part of the Walter B. Jones Sr. Center for the Sounds and is part of a 17-mile paddle trail. Details online here www.fws.gov/refuge/Pocosin_Lakes.

**SOURCES**

An Inventory of the Natural Areas of Tyrrell County, NC
NC Natural Heritage Program