Application of the Sea-Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM 5.0) to Parker River NWR

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January 22, 2009

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Introduction

Tidal marshes are among the most susceptible ecosystems to climate change, especially accelerated sea level rise (SLR). The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES) suggested that global sea level will increase by approximately 30 cm to 100 cm by 2100 (IPCC 2001). Rahmstorf (2007) suggests that this range may be too conservative and that the feasible range by 2100 could be 50 to 140 cm. Pfeffer et al. (2008) suggests that 200 cm by 2100 is at the upper end of plausible scenarios due to physical limitations on glaciological conditions. Rising sea level may result in tidal marsh submergence (Moorhead and Brinson 1995) and habitat migration as salt marshes transgress landward and replace tidal freshwater and brackish marsh (Park et al. 1991).

In an effort to address the potential effects of sea level rise on United States national wildlife refuges, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service contracted the application of the SLAMM model for most Region 4 refuges. This analysis is designed to assist in the production of comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs) for each refuge along with other long-term management plans.

Model Summary

Changes in tidal marsh area and habitat type in response to sea-level rise were modeled using the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM 5.0) that accounts for the dominant processes involved in wetland conversion and shoreline modifications during long-term sea level rise (Park et al. 1989; www.warrenpinnacle.com/prof/SLAMM).

Successive versions of the model have been used to estimate the impacts of sea level rise on the coasts of the U.S. (Titus et al., 1991; Lee, J.K., R.A. Park, and P.W. Mausel. 1992; Park, R.A., J.K. Lee, and D. Canning 1993; Galbraith, H., R. Jones, R.A. Park, J.S. Clough, S. Herrod-Julius, B. Harrington, and G. Page. 2002; National Wildlife Federation et al., 2006; Glick, Clough, et al. 2007; Craft et al., 2009.

Within SLAMM, there are five primary processes that affect wetland fate under different scenarios of sea-level rise:

- **Inundation:** The rise of water levels and the salt boundary are tracked by reducing elevations of each cell as sea levels rise, thus keeping mean tide level (MTL) constant at zero. The effects on each cell are calculated based on the minimum elevation and slope of that cell.
- **Erosion:** Erosion is triggered based on a threshold of maximum fetch and the proximity of the marsh to estuarine water or open ocean. When these conditions are met, horizontal erosion occurs at a rate based on site-specific data.
- **Overwash:** Barrier islands of under 500 meters width are assumed to undergo overwash during each 25-year time-step due to storms. Beach migration and transport of sediments are calculated.
- **Saturation:** Coastal swamps and fresh marshes can migrate onto adjacent uplands as a response of the fresh water table to rising sea level close to the coast.

- **Accretion:** Sea level rise is offset by sedimentation and vertical accretion using average or site-specific values for each wetland category. Accretion rates may be spatially variable within a given model domain.

SLAMM Version 5.0 is the latest version of the SLAMM Model, developed in 2006/2007 and based on SLAMM 4.0. SLAMM 5.0 provides the following refinements:

- The capability to simulate fixed levels of sea-level rise by 2100 in case IPCC estimates of sea-level rise prove to be too conservative;
- Additional model categories such as "Inland Shore," "Irregularly Flooded (Brackish) Marsh," and "Tidal Swamp."
- *Optional.* In a defined estuary, salt marsh, brackish marsh, and tidal fresh marsh can migrate based on changes in salinity, using a simple though geographically-realistic salt wedge model. This optional model was not used when creating results for Parker River NWR.

Model results presented in this report were produced using SLAMM version 5.0.1 which was released in early 2008 based on only minor refinements to the original SLAMM 5.0 model. Specifically, the accretion rates for swamps were modified based on additional literature review. For a thorough accounting of SLAMM model processes and the underlying assumptions and equations, please see the SLAMM 5.0.1 technical documentation (Clough and Park, 2008). This document is available at http://warrenpinnacle.com/prof/SLAMM

All model results are subject to uncertainty due to limitations in input data, incomplete knowledge about factors that control the behavior of the system being modeled, and simplifications of the system (CREM 2008).

Sea-Level Rise Scenarios

The primary set of eustatic (global) sea level rise scenarios used within SLAMM was derived from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2001). SLAMM 5 was run using the following IPCC and fixed-rate scenarios:

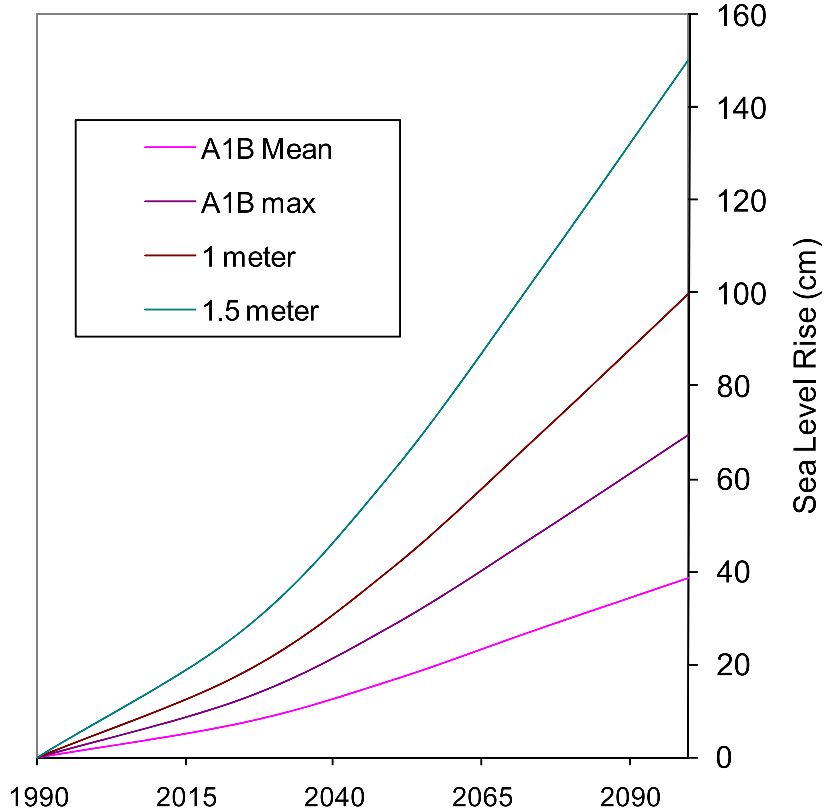
Scenario	Eustatic SLR by 2025 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2050 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2075 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2100 (cm)
A1B Mean	8	17	28	39
A1B Max	14	30	49	69
1 meter	13	28	48	100
1.5 meter	18	41	70	150

Recent literature (Chen et al., 2006, Monaghan et al., 2006) indicates that the eustatic rise in sea levels is progressing more rapidly than was previously assumed, perhaps due to dynamic changes in ice flow omitted within the IPCC report's calculations. A recent paper in the journal *Science* (Rahmstorf, 2007) suggests that, taking into account possible model error, a feasible range by 2100 might be 50 to 140 cm. A recent US intergovernmental report states "Although no ice-sheet model is currently capable of capturing the glacier speedups in Antarctica or Greenland that have been observed over the last decade, including these processes in models will very likely show that IPCC

AR4 projected sea level rises for the end of the 21st century are too low." (US Climate Change Science Program, 2008)

To allow for flexibility when interpreting the results, SLAMM was also run assuming 1 meter, 1½ meters of eustatic sea-level rise by the year 2100. The A1B- maximum scenario was scaled up to produce these bounding scenarios (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Summary of SLR Scenarios Utilized



Methods and Data Sources

Elevation data used are based on a combination of the LiDAR and the National Elevation Dataset (NED). The coastal portion of the refuge is covered by high-resolution LiDAR data derived from a 1997 survey (Fig. 2b).

The NED for the northern portion of the refuge was derived from a 1987 USGS map, while the southern portion was derived from a 1997 USGS map. The contour intervals in this map are approximately ten feet. Because of the significant uncertainty in elevations between the shoreline and the ten foot contour, marsh elevations not covered with LiDAR are estimated as a function of tidal range.

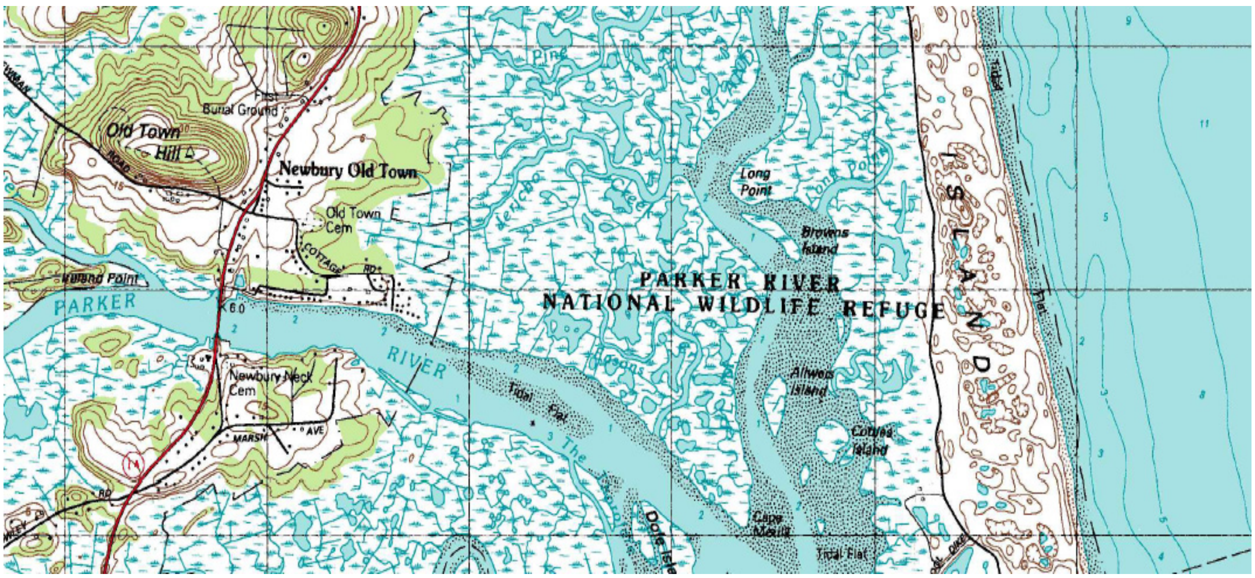


Figure 2a: Parker River Excerpt from USGS Map.

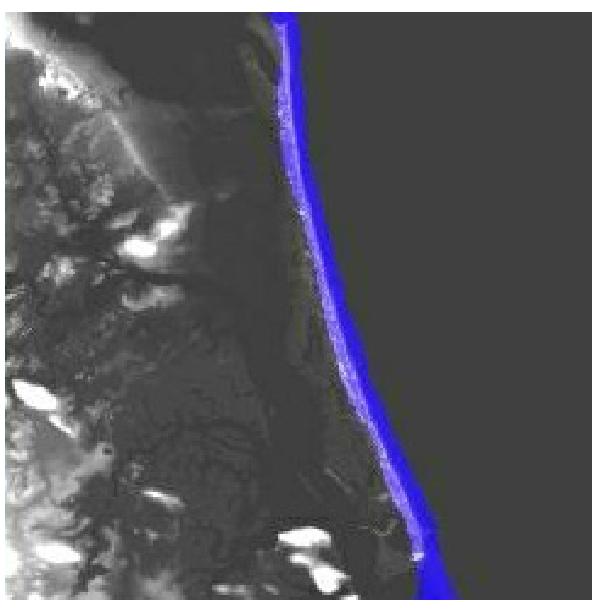


Figure 2b: LiDAR Coverage in Blue

The National Wetlands Inventory for Parker River is based on a photo date of 1986. An examination of the NWI map overlaid on recent satellite photos indicates no significant changes since the inventory was taken, except for a small coastal portion on the southern tip of Plum Island (Fig. 3a). Note, however, that this area is outside of the refuge but has an impact on the contextual results.

Figure 3a: Coastal Discrepancy of Around 170 Meters Indicated with Red Line.

Converting the NWI survey into 30 meter cells indicates that the approximately six thousand four hundred acre refuge (approved acquisition boundary including water) is primarily composed of the categories as shown below:

Brackish Marsh	36.2%
Estuarine Open Water	23.5%
Dry Land	16.9%
Tidal Flat	12.6%
Ocean Beach	3.6%
Inland Fresh Marsh	3.1%
Saltmarsh	2.3%
Inland Open Water	1.2%

Based on the NWI coverage, there are a few diked and impounded wetlands – mainly inland fresh marsh -- within the Parker River NWR (Fig. 3b). Areas demarcated as protected by dikes were assumed to be protected in this modeling analysis.

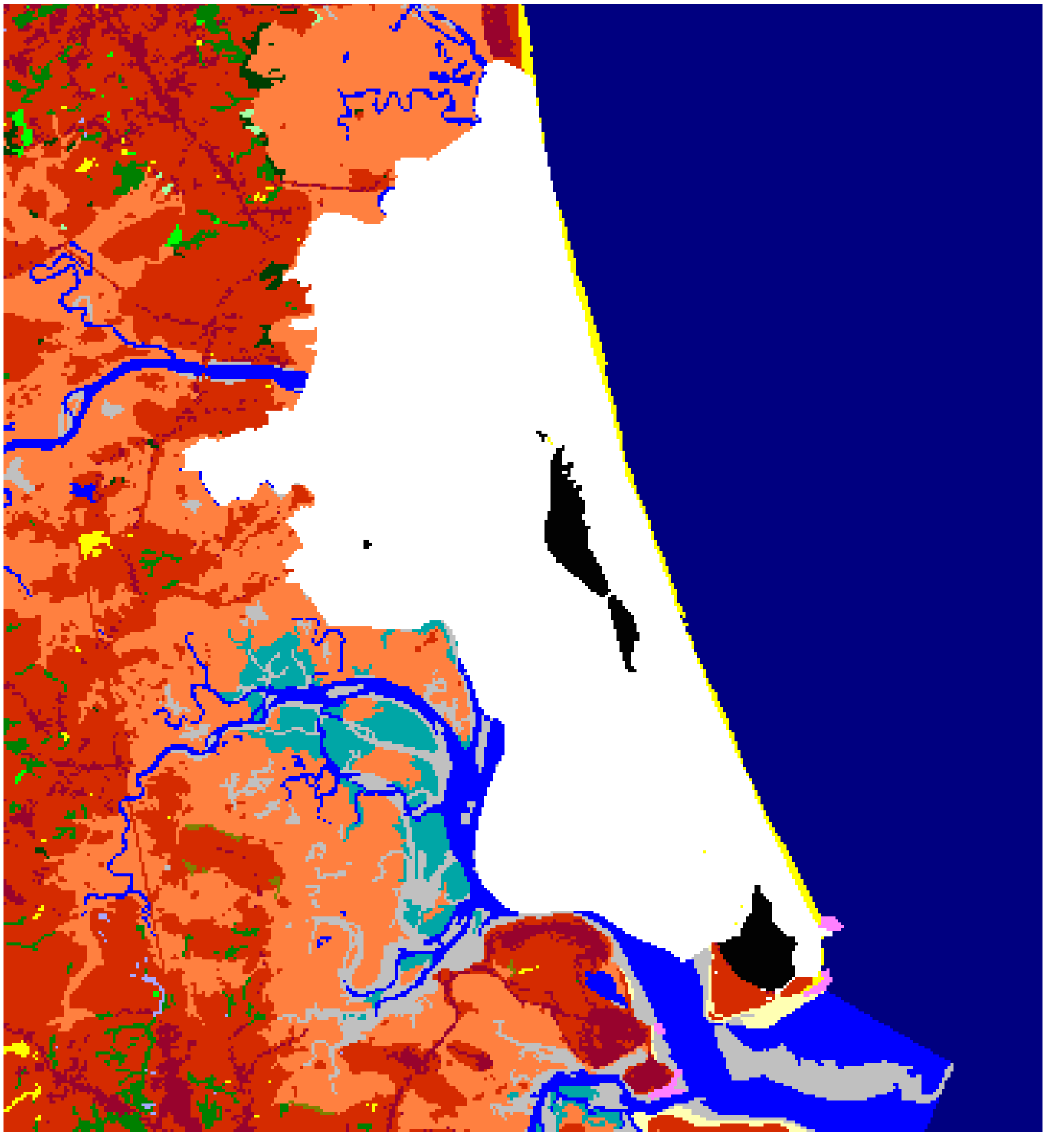


Figure 3b: Diked Locations Indicated in Black within NWR in White.

The historic trend for sea level rise was estimated at 1.76 mm/year using the value of the closest station (8419870, Seavey Island, ME). This measured rate is similar to the global average for the last 100 years (approximately 1.5-2.0 mm/year). Any effects of isostatic rebound that have affected this region for the last 100 years are captured within that historic trend; that same rate of isostatic rebound is projected forward into the next 100 years.

The tide range at this site of 2.7 meters was estimated using the average of the closest NOAA oceanic gage at the north end of Plum Island (8440452, Plum Island, Merrimack River Entrance, MA).

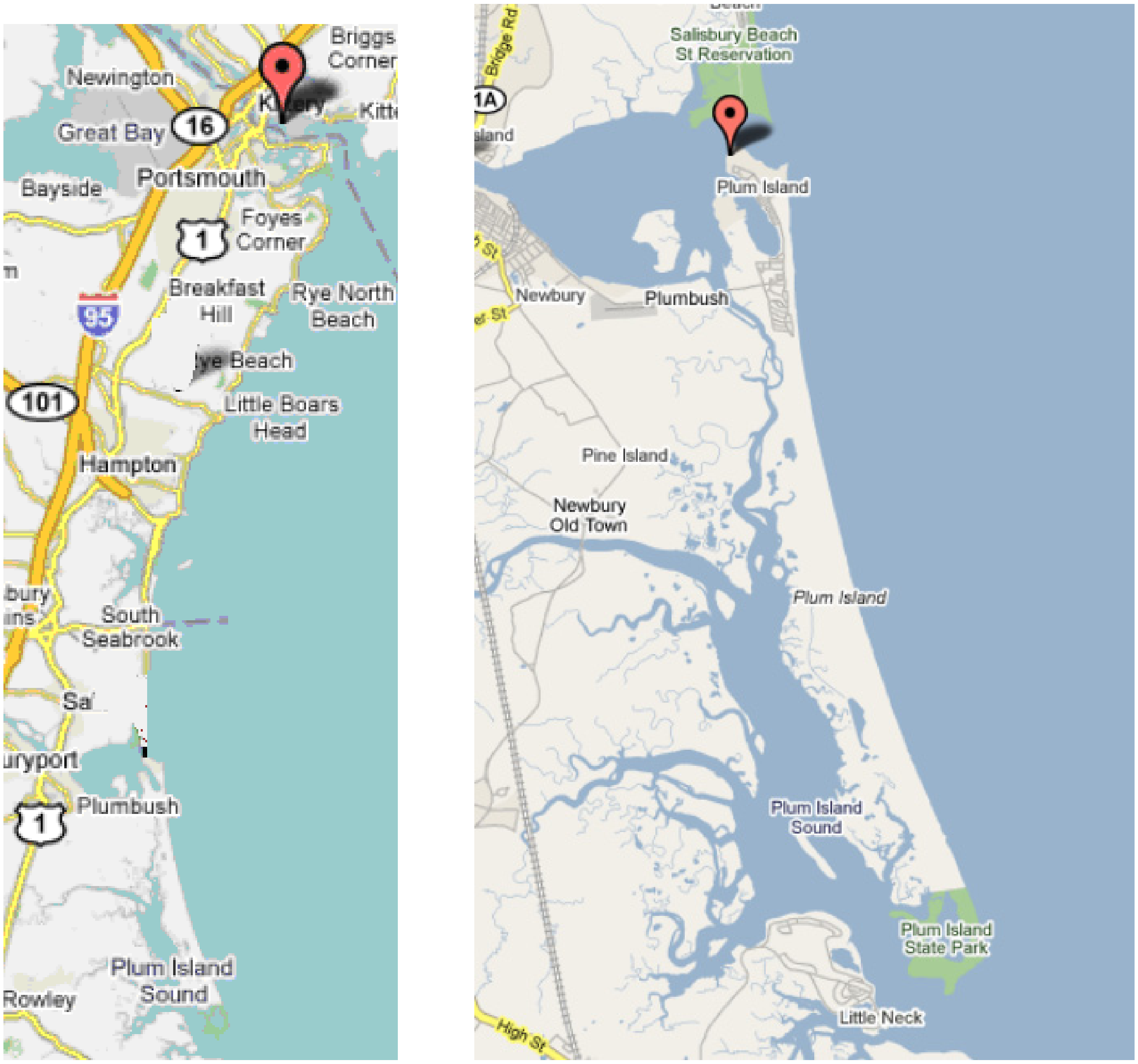


Figure 4: NOAA Gages that Provided (a) Historical Sea Level and (b) Tide Range Information.

Accretion rates in salt and brackish marshes were set to 2.58 mm/year, and the rates in tidal fresh marshes to 5.9 mm/year (J.E. Goodman et al., 2006).

Modeled U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge boundaries are based on Approved Acquisition Boundaries as published on the FWS "National Wildlife Refuge Data and Metadata" website. The modeling team contacted Refuge Manager Graham Taylor to ensure model parameters were consistent with local knowledge.

The cell-size used for this analysis was 30 meter by 30 meter cells. However, the SLAMM model does track partial conversion of cells based on elevation and slope. (Since the LiDAR data produce a more accurate DEM, only the elevations of wetlands classes lying outside of the LiDAR data (in the NED data) in Parker River were overwritten as a function of the local tidal range using the SLAMM elevation pre-processor.)

SUMMARY OF SLAMM INPUT PARAMETERS FOR PARKER RIVER

Description	Parker River North	Parker River South	Parker River LiDAR
DEM Source Date (yyyy)	1987	1997	2000
NWI_photo_date (yyyy)	1986	1986	1986
Direction_OffShore (N|S|E|W)	E	E	E
Historic_trend (mm/yr)	1.76	1.76	1.76
NAVD88_correction (MTL-NAVD88 in meters)	0	0	0
Water Depth (m below MLW- N/A)	2	2	2
TideRangeOcean (meters: MHHW-MLLW)	2.654	2.654	2.654
TideRangeInland (meters)	2.654	2.654	2.654
Mean High Water Spring (m above MTL)	1.765	1.765	1.765
MHSW Inland (m above MTL)	1.765	1.765	1.765
Marsh Erosion (horz meters/year)	1.8	1.8	1.8
Swamp Erosion (horz meters/year)	1	1	1
TFlat Erosion (horz meters/year) [from 0.5]	0.5	0.5	0.5
Salt marsh vertical accretion (mm/yr) Final	2.58	2.58	2.58
Brackish March vert. accretion (mm/yr) Final	2.58	2.58	2.58
Tidal Fresh vertical accretion (mm/yr) Final	5.9	5.9	5.9
Beach/T.Flat Sedimentation Rate (mm/yr)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Frequency of Large Storms (yr/washover)	50	50	50
Use Elevation Preprocessor for Wetlands	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE

Results

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge is predicted be vulnerable to sea level rise scenarios. Irregularly flooded marsh (brackish) – which makes up more than one third of the refuge -- loses from 52 - 100% between the 0.69 meter and 1.5 meter sea level rise scenarios. Under lower scenarios, this loss is primarily due to conversion to regularly flooded marsh (saltmarsh). Comprising just under 17% of the refuge, dry land is expected to lose between 16% and 46% across all scenarios.

SLR by 2100 (m)	0.39	0.69	1	1.5
Brackish Marsh	15%	52%	80%	100%
Undev. Dry Land	16%	23%	35%	46%
Tidal Flat	59%	62%	52%	-100%
Inland Fresh Marsh	0%	0%	1%	1%
Dev. Dry Land	45%	53%	69%	81%
Swamp	91%	96%	97%	99%
Tidal Swamp	51%	75%	80%	100%
Tidal Fresh Marsh	0%	10%	81%	100%

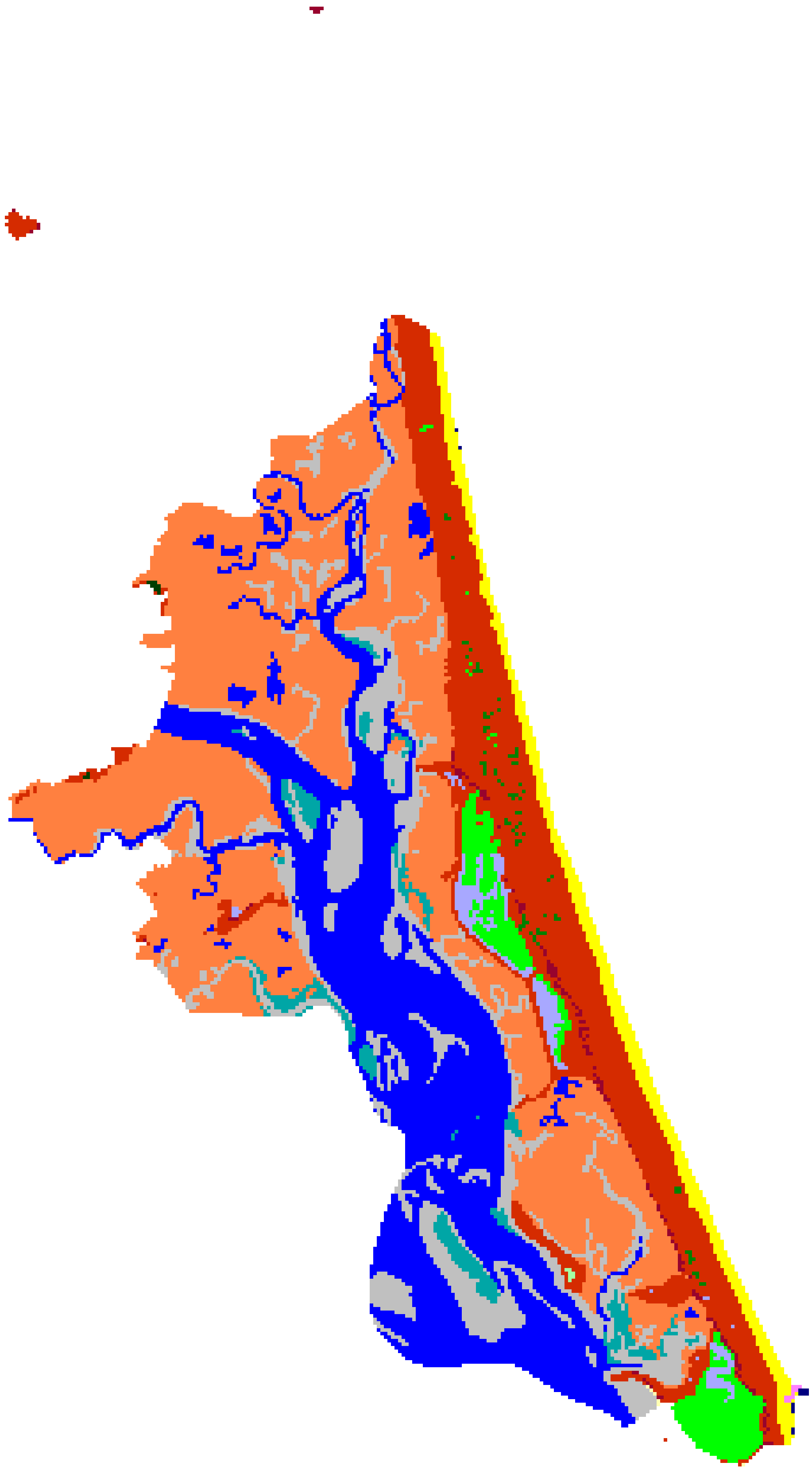
Predicted Loss Rates of Land Categories by 2100 Given Simulated Scenarios of Eustatic Sea Level Rise

Maps of SLAMM input and output to follow will use the following legend:

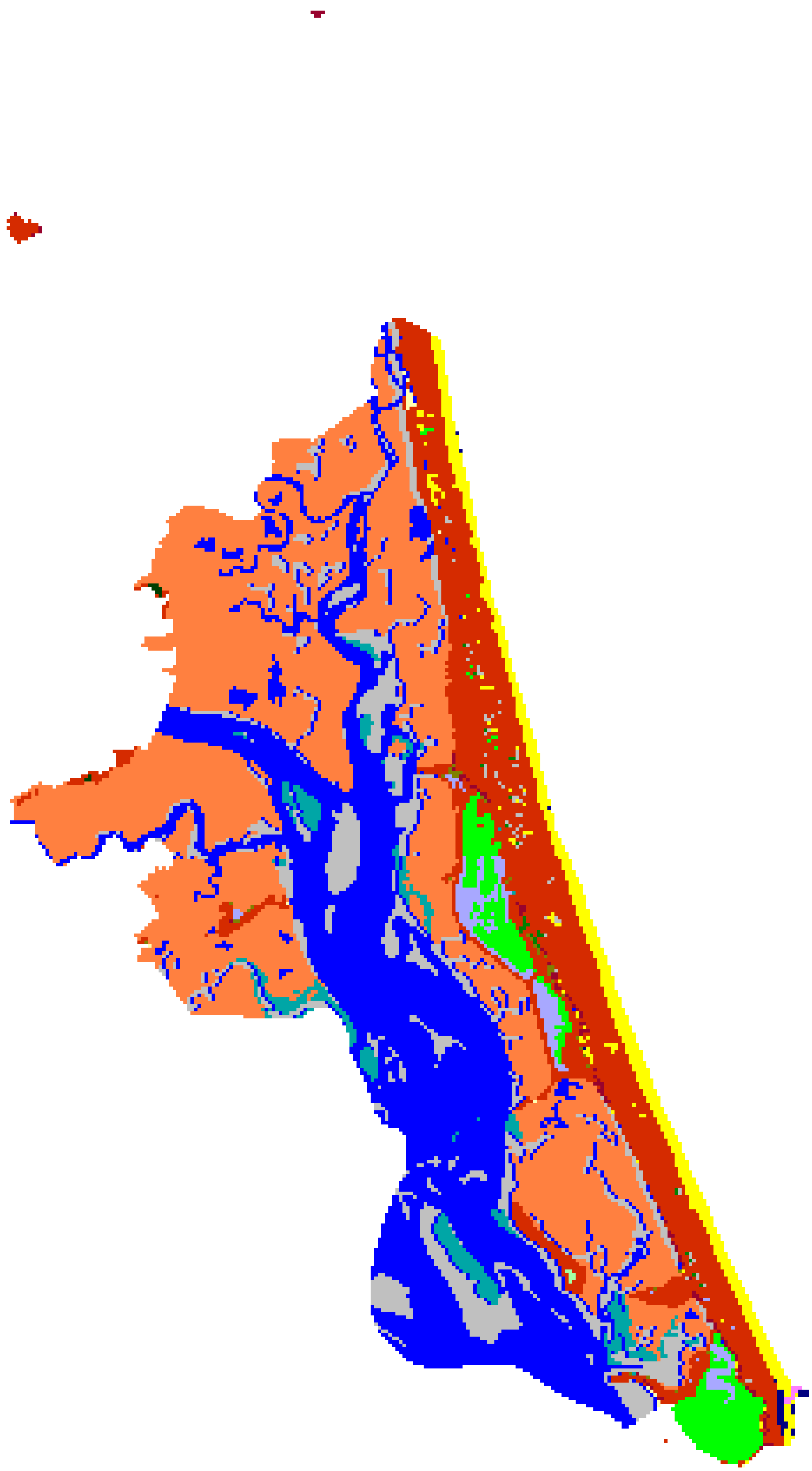
Parker River
IPCC Scenario A1B-Mean, 0.39 M SLR Eustatic by 2100

Results in Acres

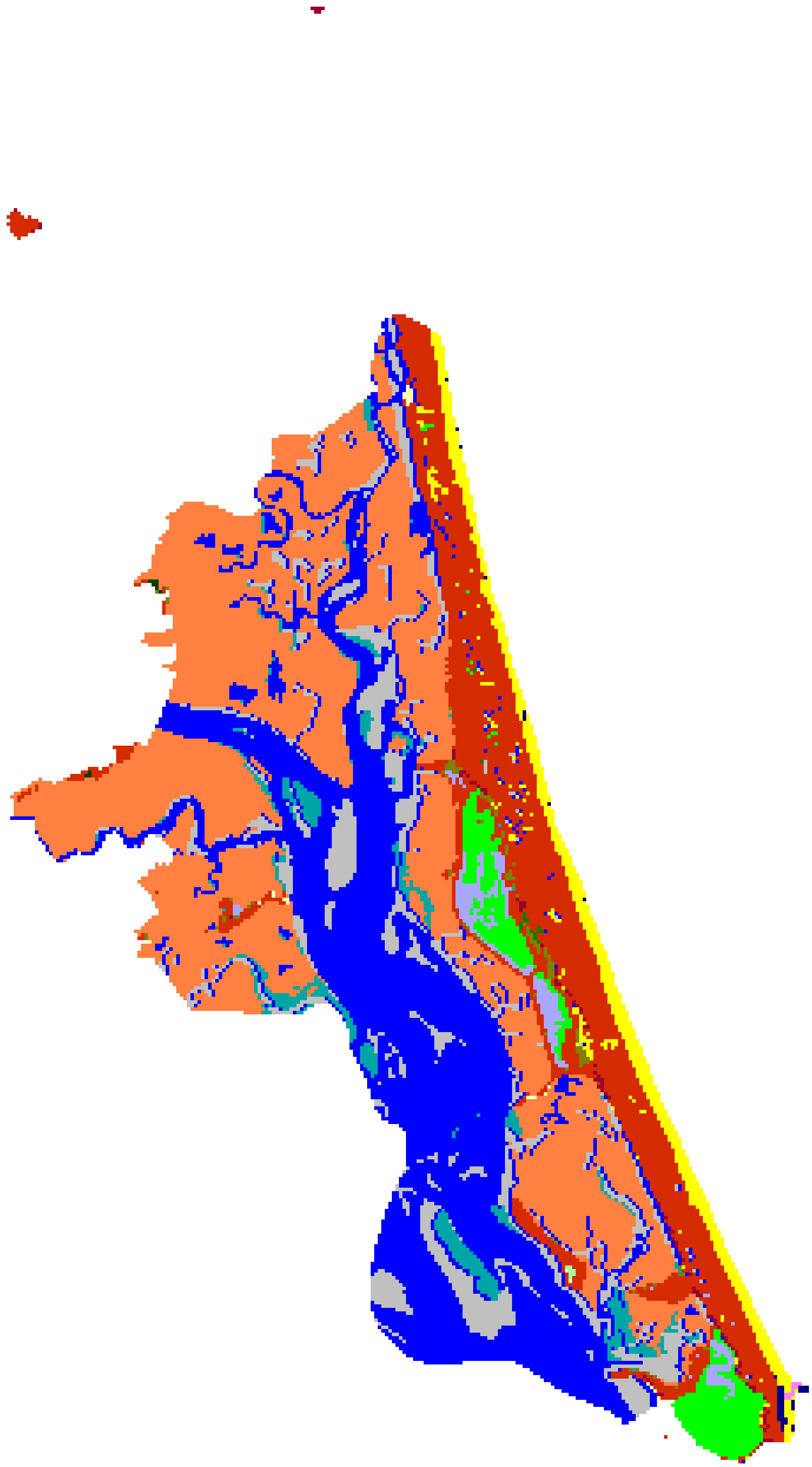
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Brackish Marsh	2306.2	2254.6	2203.6	2082.2	1955.6
Estuarine Open Water	1500.3	1726.6	1878.7	1995.7	2104.2
Undev. Dry Land	1041.0	1000.5	966.3	919.0	872.5
Tidal Flat	803.3	651.4	518.4	415.9	326.8
Ocean Beach	226.4	243.2	251.8	258.5	264.1
Inland Fresh Marsh	197.3	197.3	197.3	197.3	197.3
Saltmarsh	149.7	150.3	190.8	306.1	423.1
Inland Open Water	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9
Dev. Dry Land	38.5	26.8	24.8	22.8	21.1
Swamp	21.1	5.9	3.0	2.4	1.9
Open Ocean	2.9	9.6	11.7	15.6	20.0
Tidal Swamp	2.7	2.5	2.1	1.6	1.3
Rocky Intertidal	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Tidal Fresh Marsh	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
Estuarine Beach	1.3	5.7	7.4	13.0	23.5
Trans. Salt Marsh	0.0	16.2	34.8	60.6	79.3
Total (incl. water)	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**



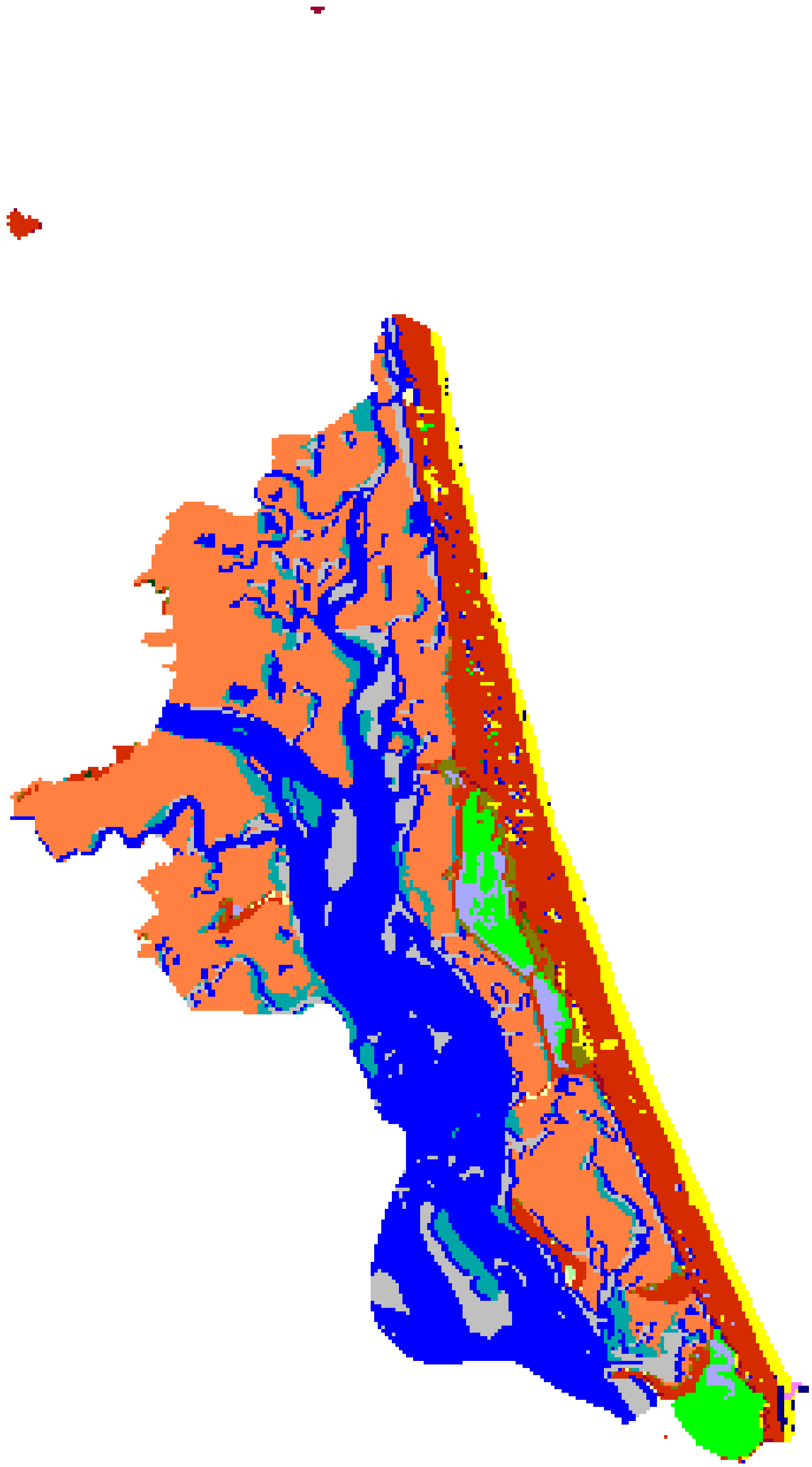
Parker River NWR, Initial Condition



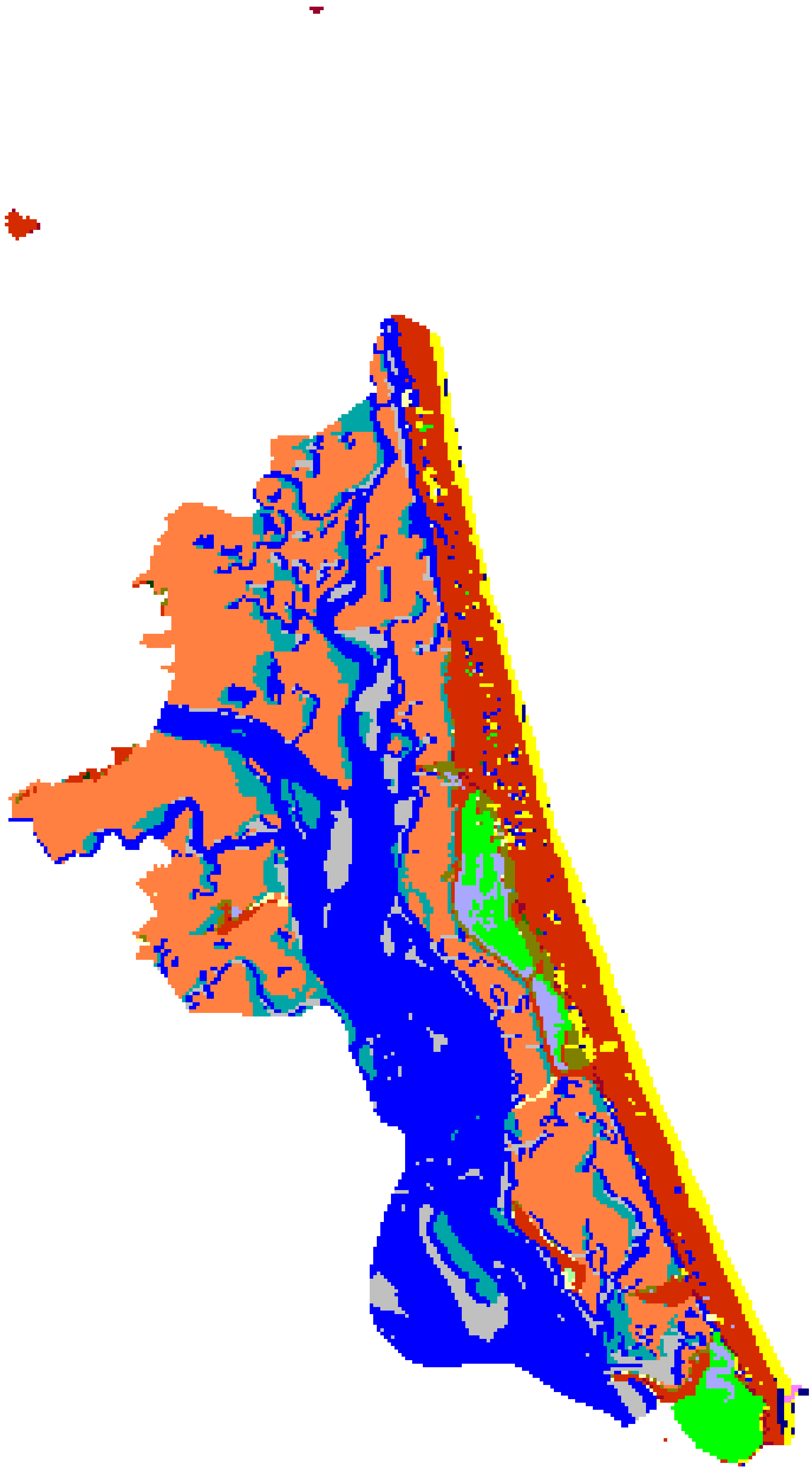
Parker River NWR, 2025, Scenario A1B Mean



Parker River NWR, 2050, Scenario A1B Mean



Parker River NWR, 2075, Scenario A1B Mean

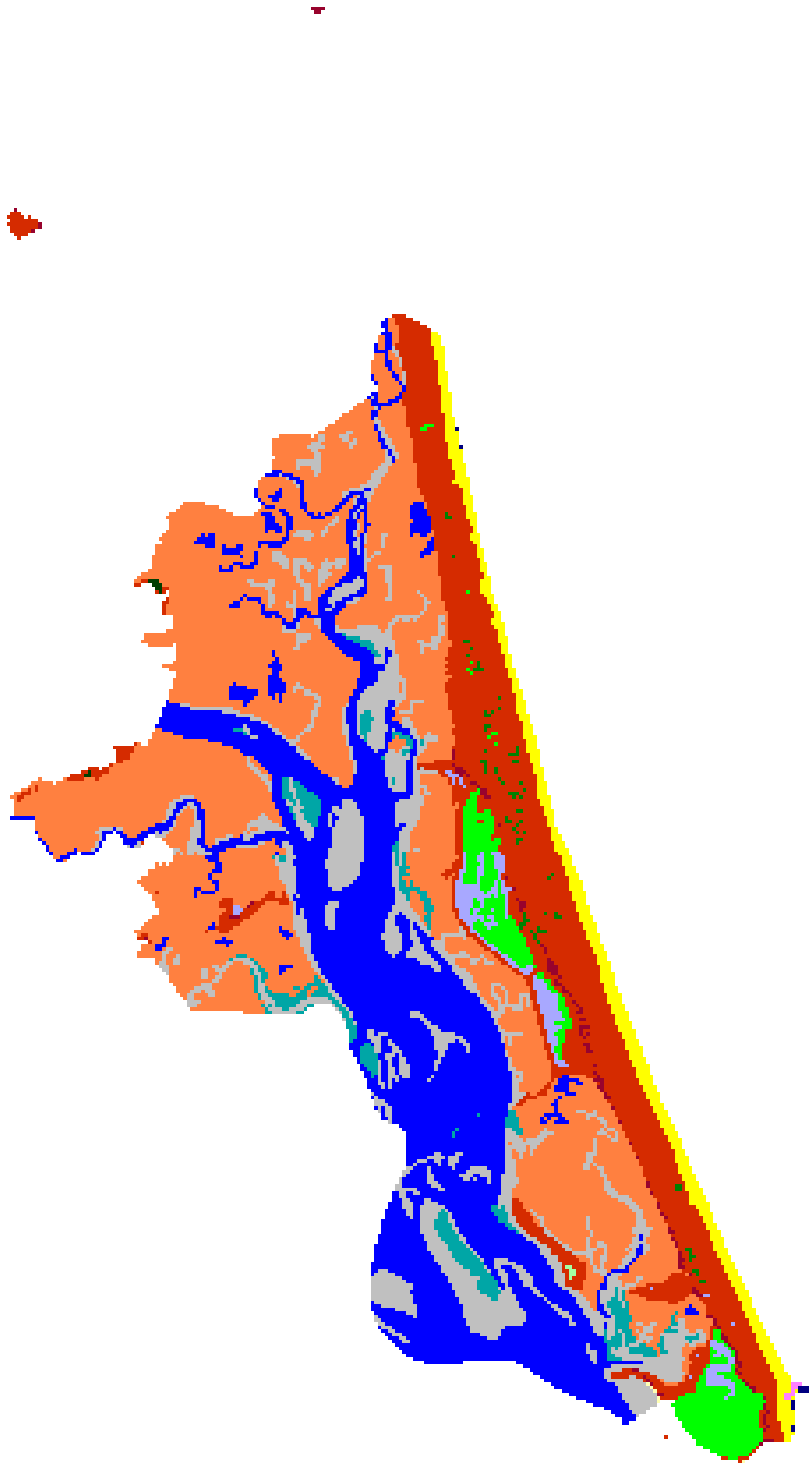


Parker River NWR, 2100, Scenario A1B Mean

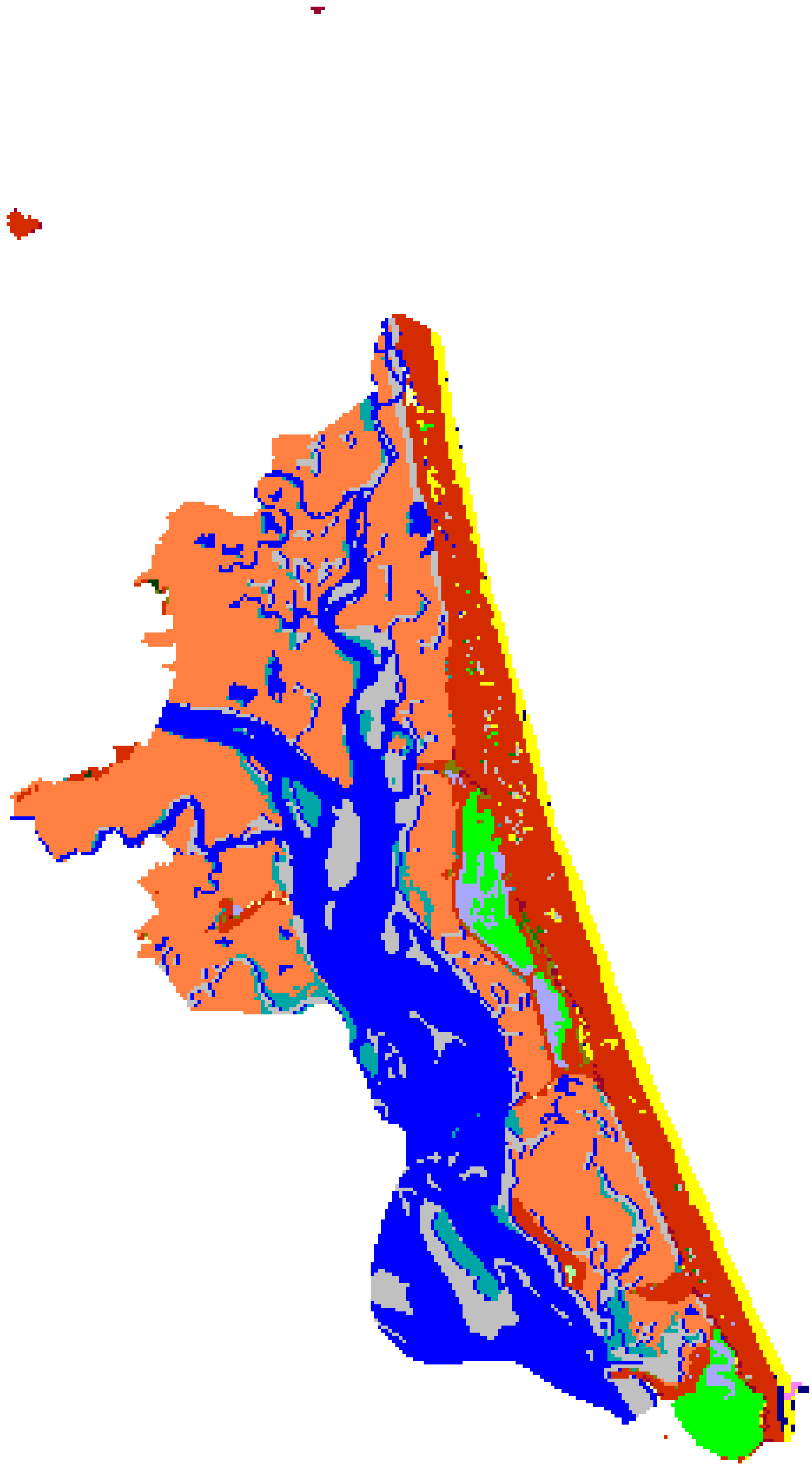
Parker River
IPCC Scenario A1B-Max, 0.69 M SLR Eustatic by 2100

Results in Acres

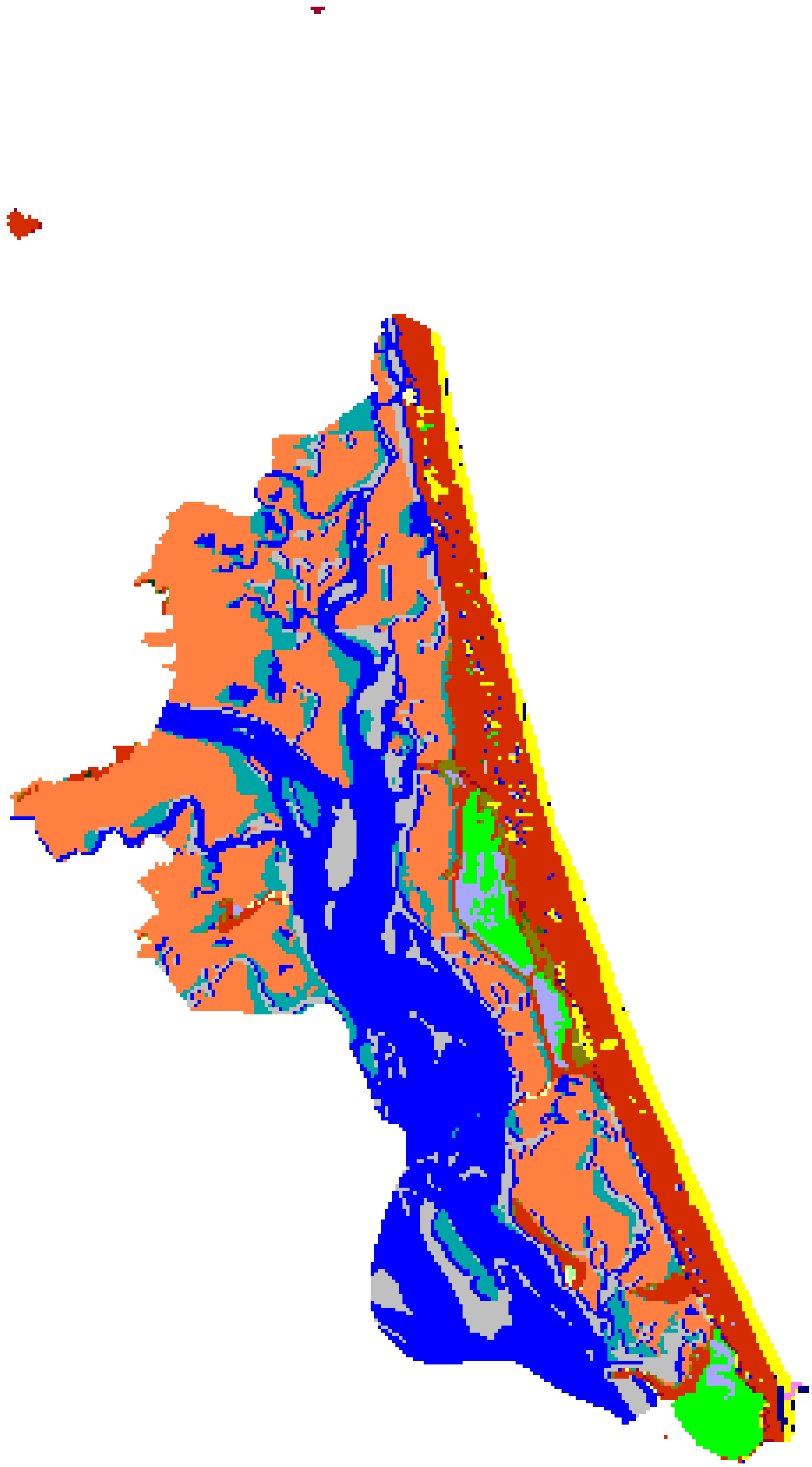
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Brackish Marsh	2306.2	2170.9	1926.2	1542.8	1113.8
Estuarine Open Water	1500.3	1746.5	1919.4	2072.8	2218.2
Undev. Dry Land	1041.0	983.4	919.5	841.8	798.3
Tidal Flat	803.3	638.4	495.8	385.8	303.4
Ocean Beach	226.4	248.2	259.7	267.7	265.9
Inland Fresh Marsh	197.3	197.2	197.2	197.2	196.3
Saltmarsh	149.7	228.6	454.8	809.3	1205.9
Inland Open Water	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9
Dev. Dry Land	38.5	25.8	22.9	20.0	17.9
Swamp	21.1	5.6	2.5	1.4	0.8
Open Ocean	2.9	10.7	16.9	28.2	46.5
Tidal Swamp	2.7	2.2	1.5	0.9	0.7
Rocky Intertidal	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Tidal Fresh Marsh	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.4
Estuarine Beach	1.3	8.8	13.9	27.6	32.8
Trans. Salt Marsh	0.0	24.5	60.3	95.1	90.2
Total (incl. water)	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**



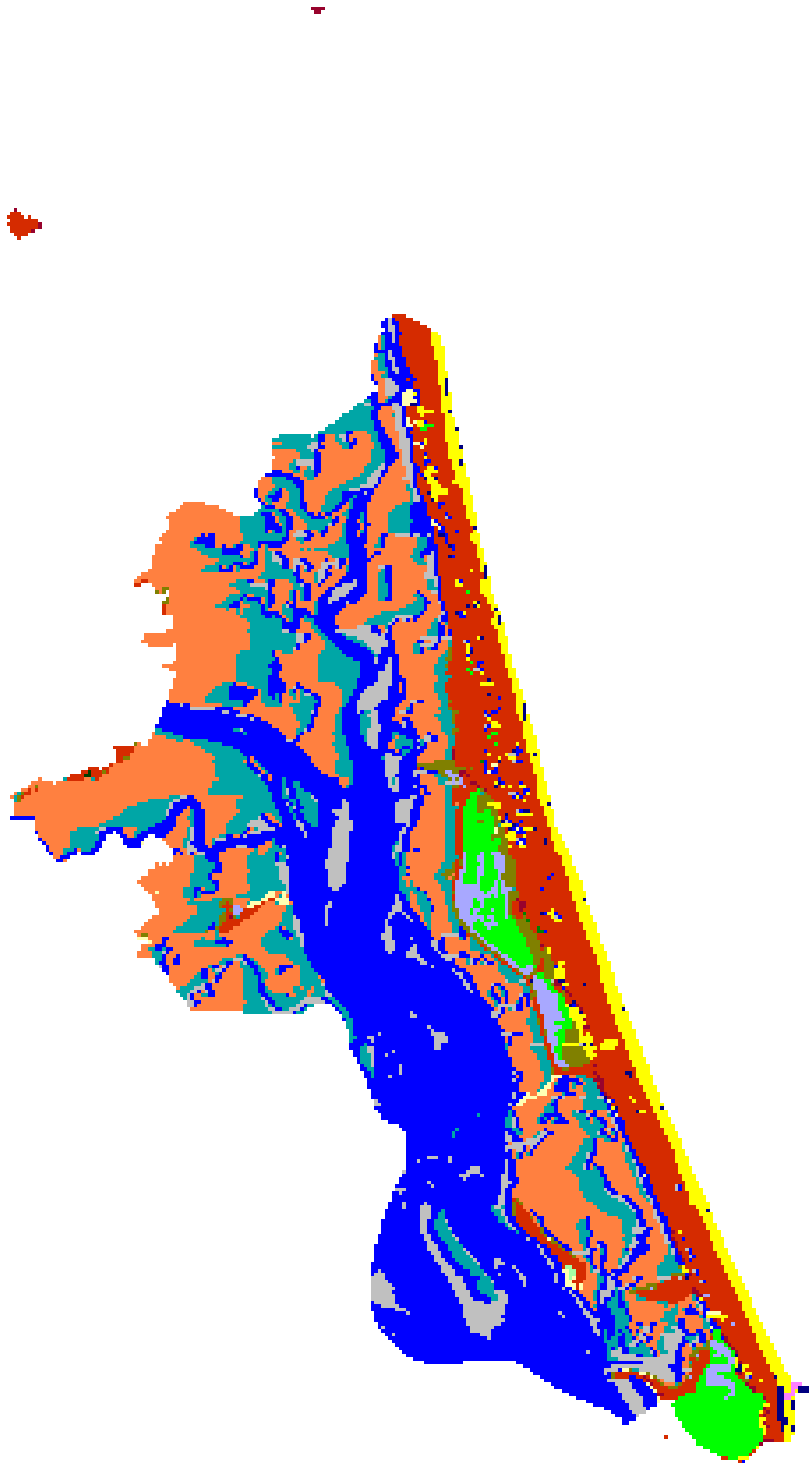
Parker River NWR, Initial Condition



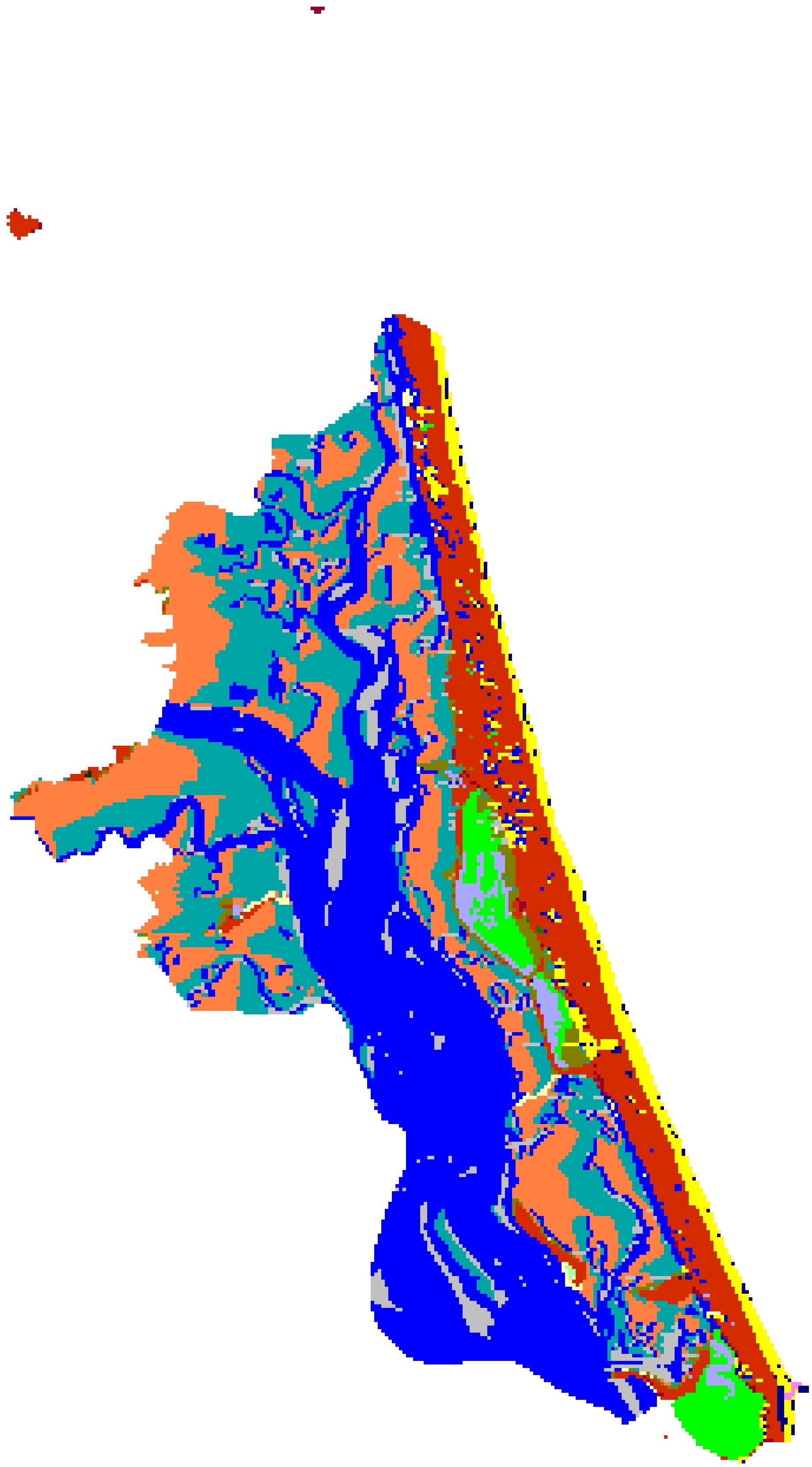
Parker River NWR, 2025, Scenario A1B Maximum



Parker River NWR, 2050, Scenario A1B Maximum



Parker River NWR, 2075, Scenario A1B Maximum

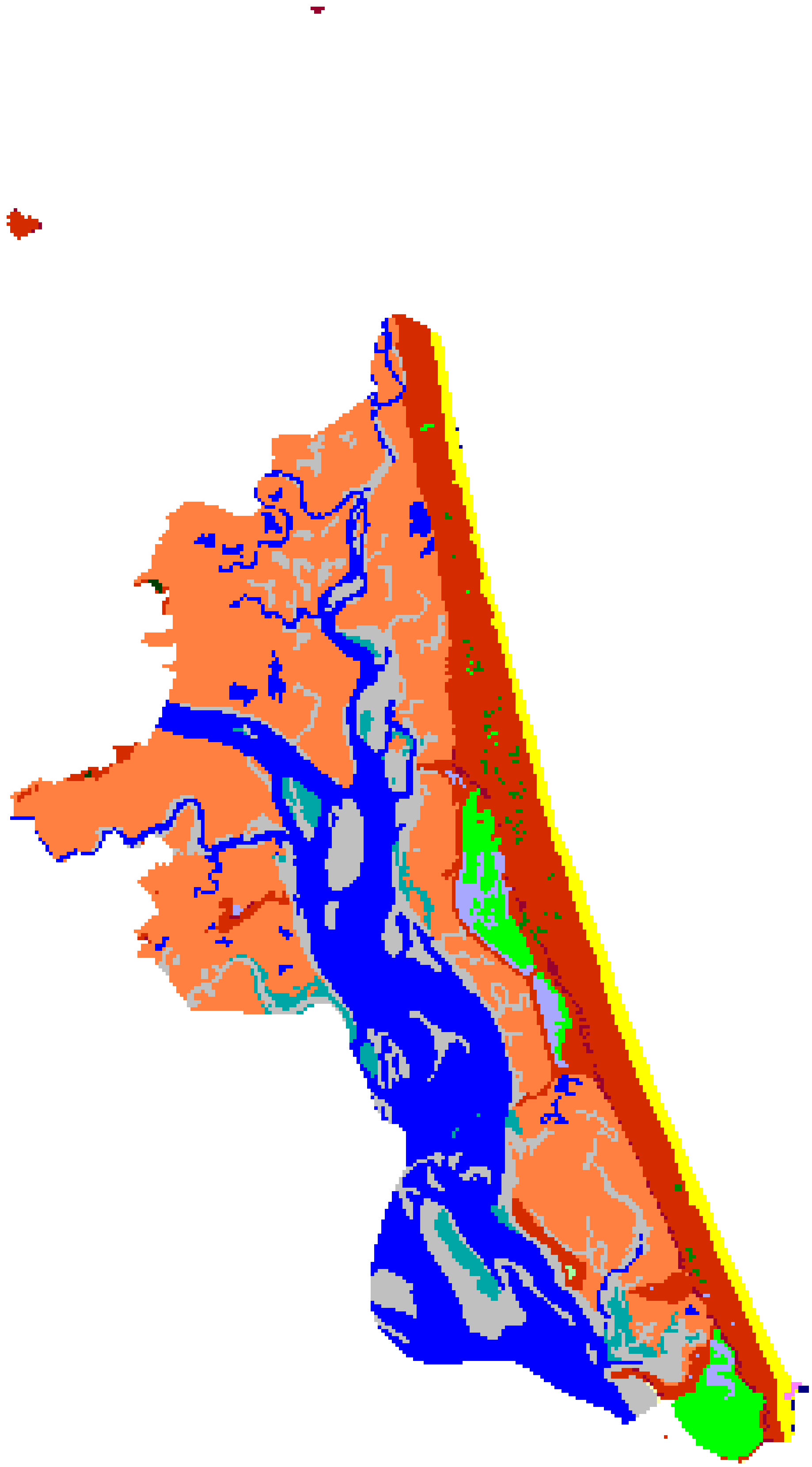


Parker River NWR, 2100, Scenario A1B Maximum

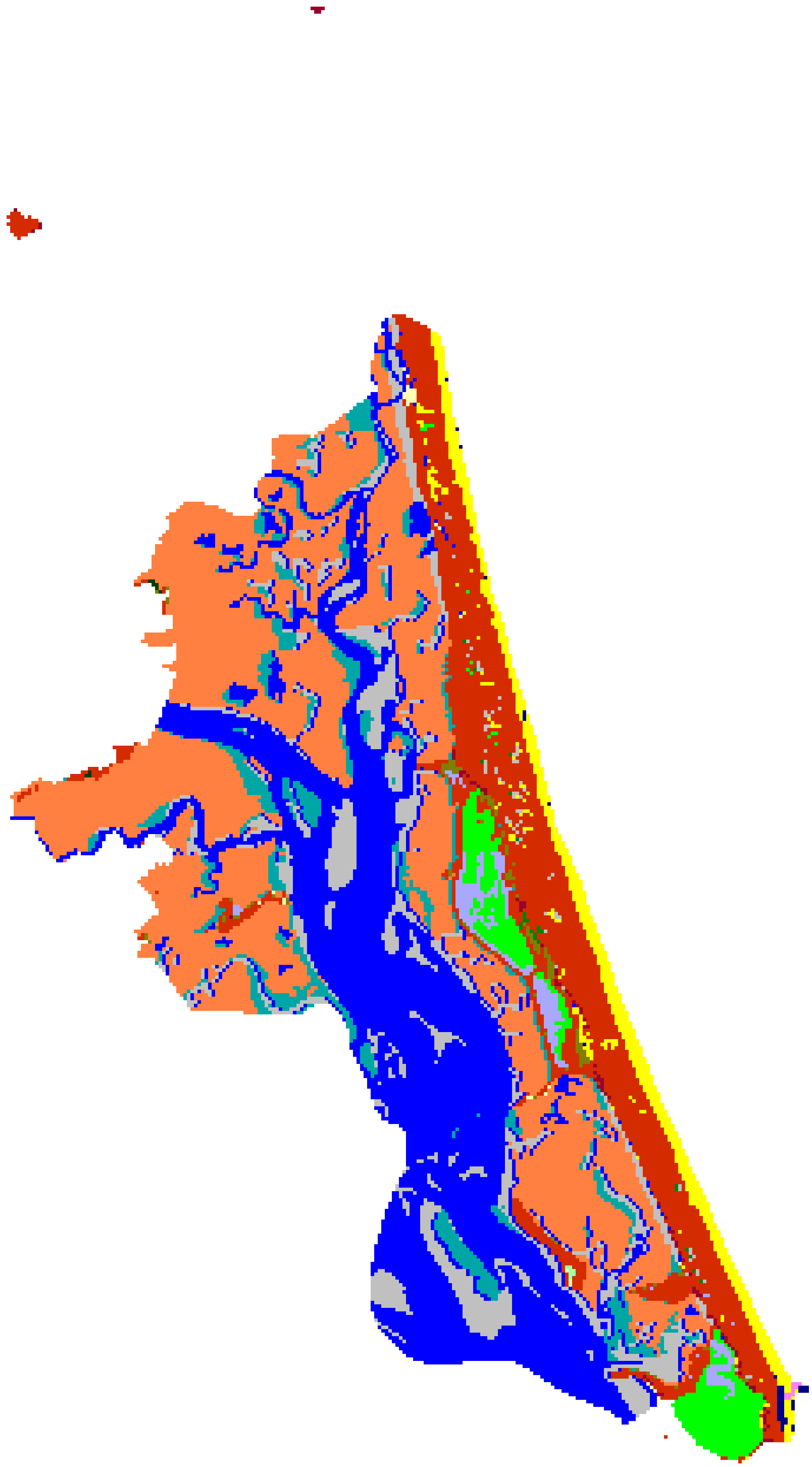
Parker River
1 Meter Eustatic SLR by 2100

Results in Acres

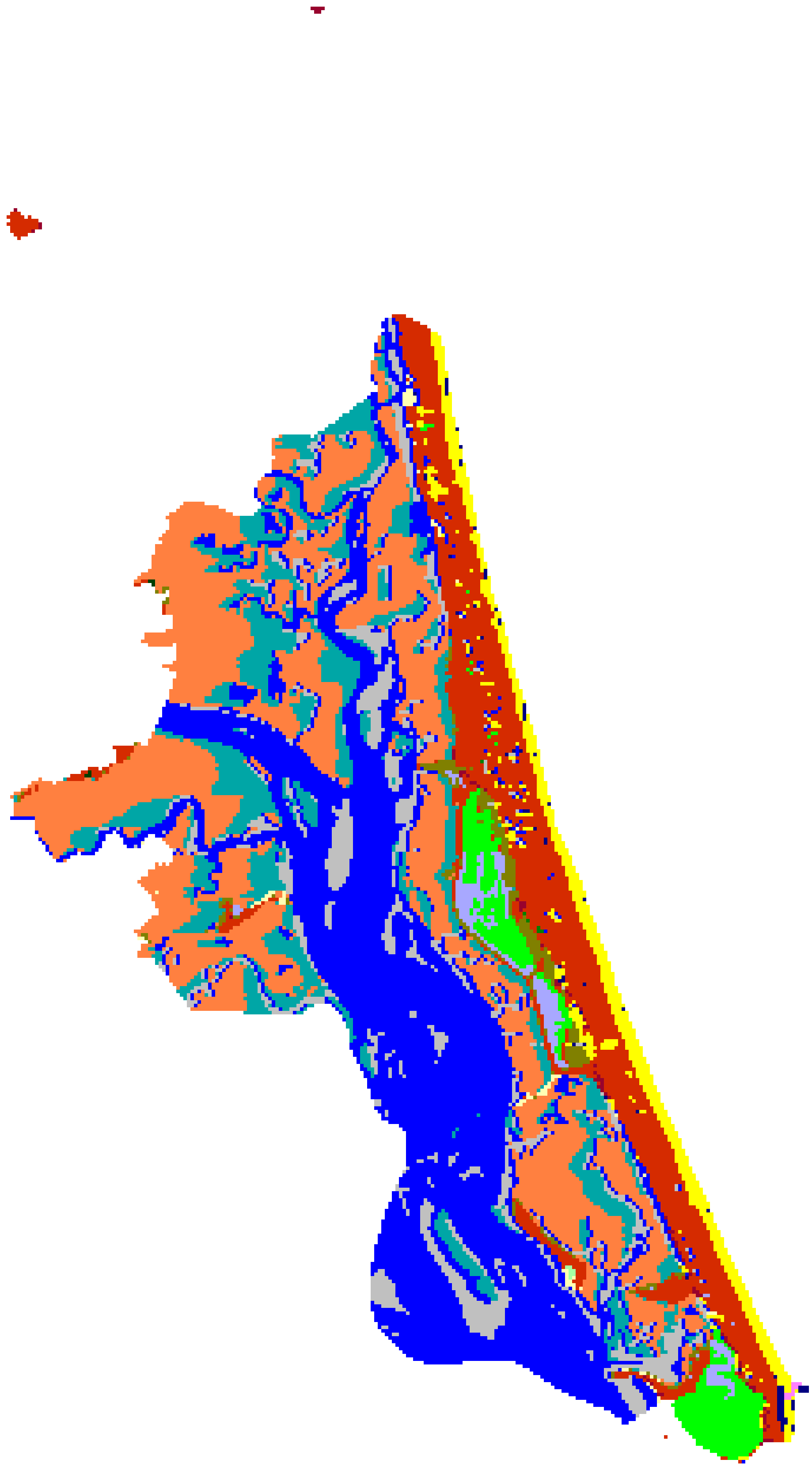
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Brackish Marsh	2306.2	2034.6	1595.8	947.2	458.2
Estuarine Open Water	1500.3	1772.4	1968.6	2163.1	2379.3
Undev. Dry Land	1041.0	962.1	868.9	799.0	676.9
Tidal Flat	803.3	622.5	469.0	344.9	382.2
Ocean Beach	226.4	253.2	265.8	261.7	260.9
Inland Fresh Marsh	197.3	197.2	196.3	195.2	195.0
Saltmarsh	149.7	357.1	768.8	1393.0	1715.1
Inland Open Water	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9
Dev. Dry Land	38.5	24.8	20.9	17.9	11.8
Swamp	21.1	5.1	1.8	1.0	0.7
Open Ocean	2.9	12.1	24.2	52.4	112.9
Tidal Swamp	2.7	1.9	1.1	0.7	0.5
Rocky Intertidal	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2
Tidal Fresh Marsh	1.6	1.6	1.4	0.9	0.3
Estuarine Beach	1.3	8.8	20.3	30.6	58.4
Trans. Salt Marsh	0.0	39.0	89.4	84.6	40.3
Total (incl. water)	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**



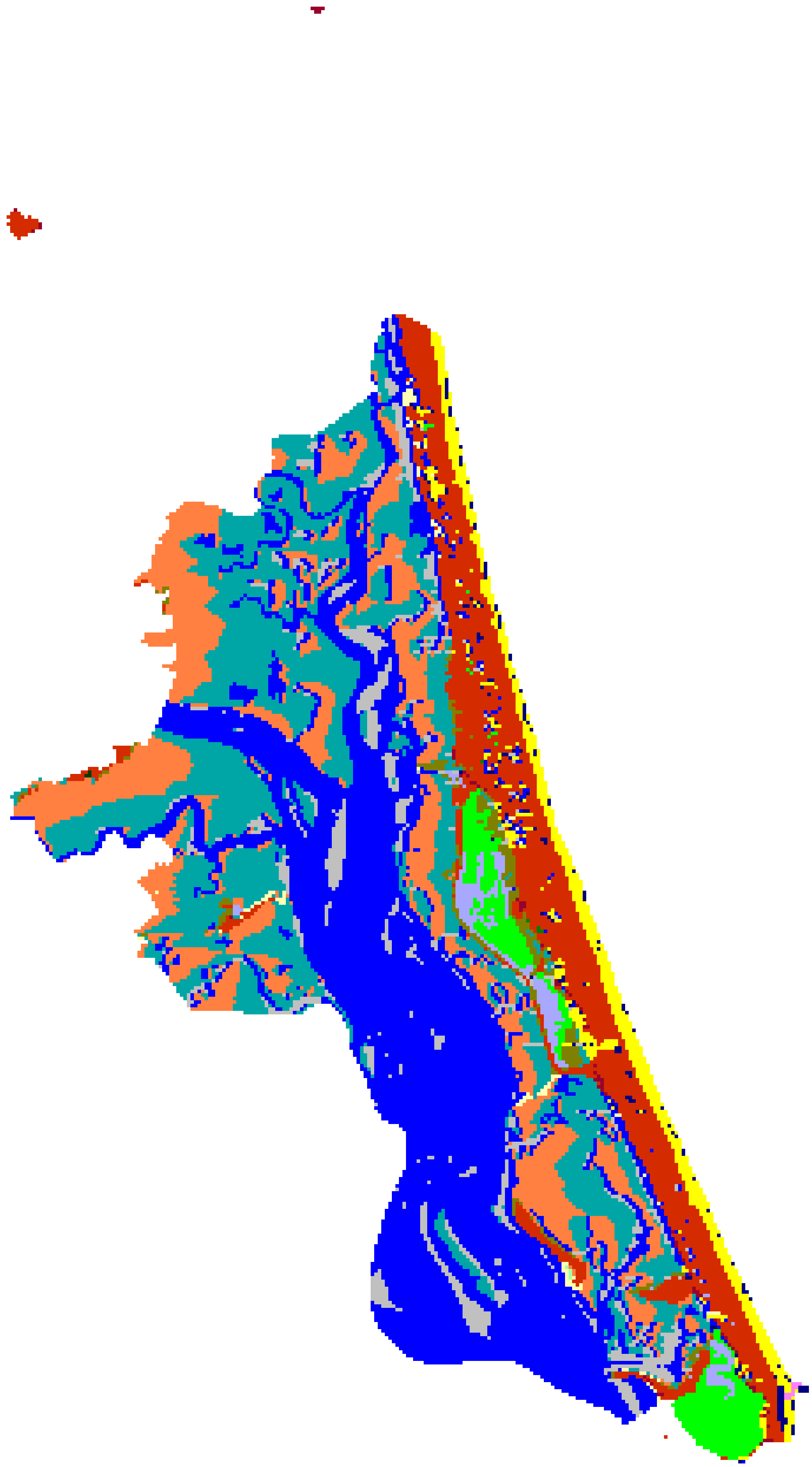
Parker River NWR, Initial Condition



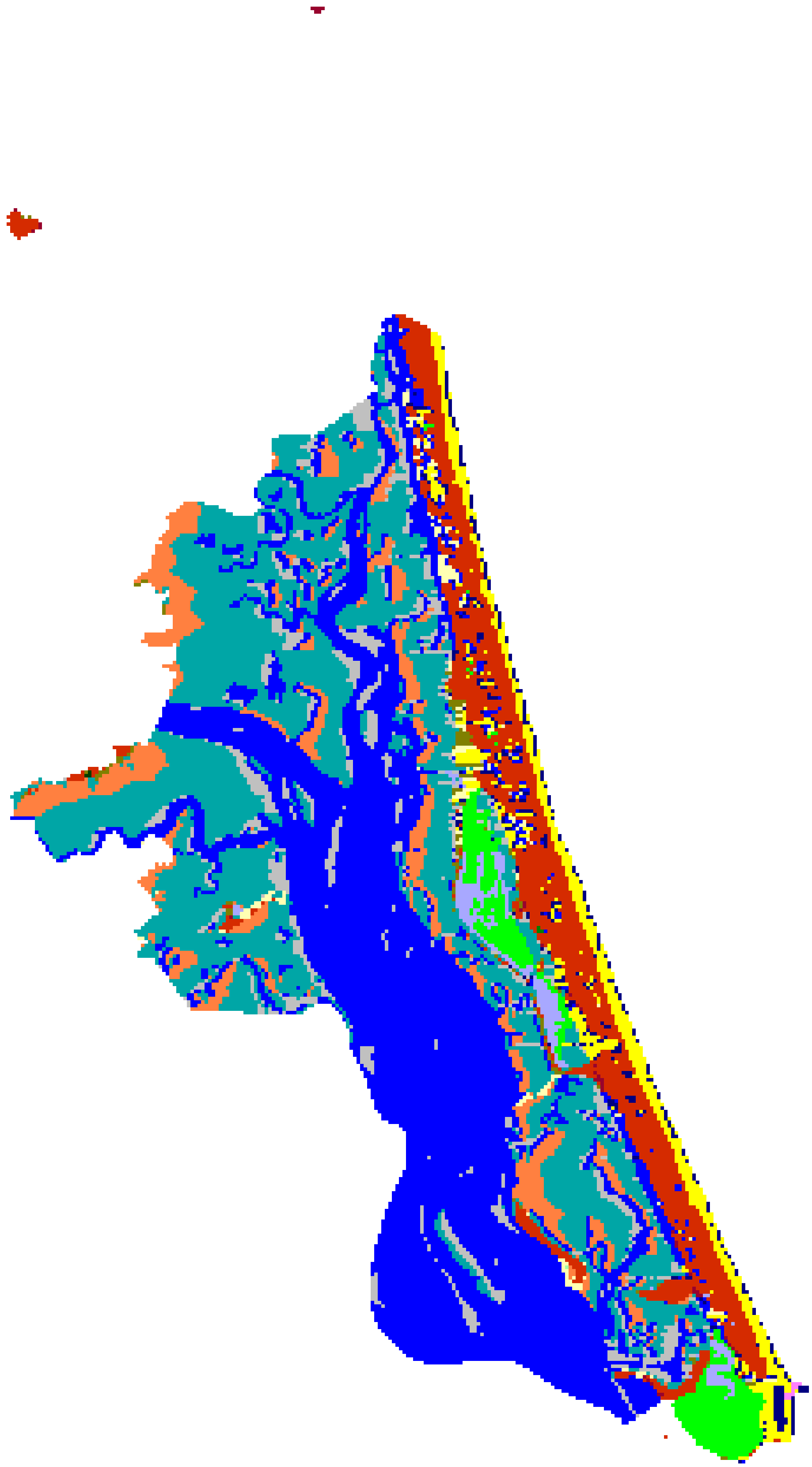
Parker River NWR, 2025, 1 meter



Parker River NWR, 2050, 1 meter



Parker River NWR, 2075, 1 meter

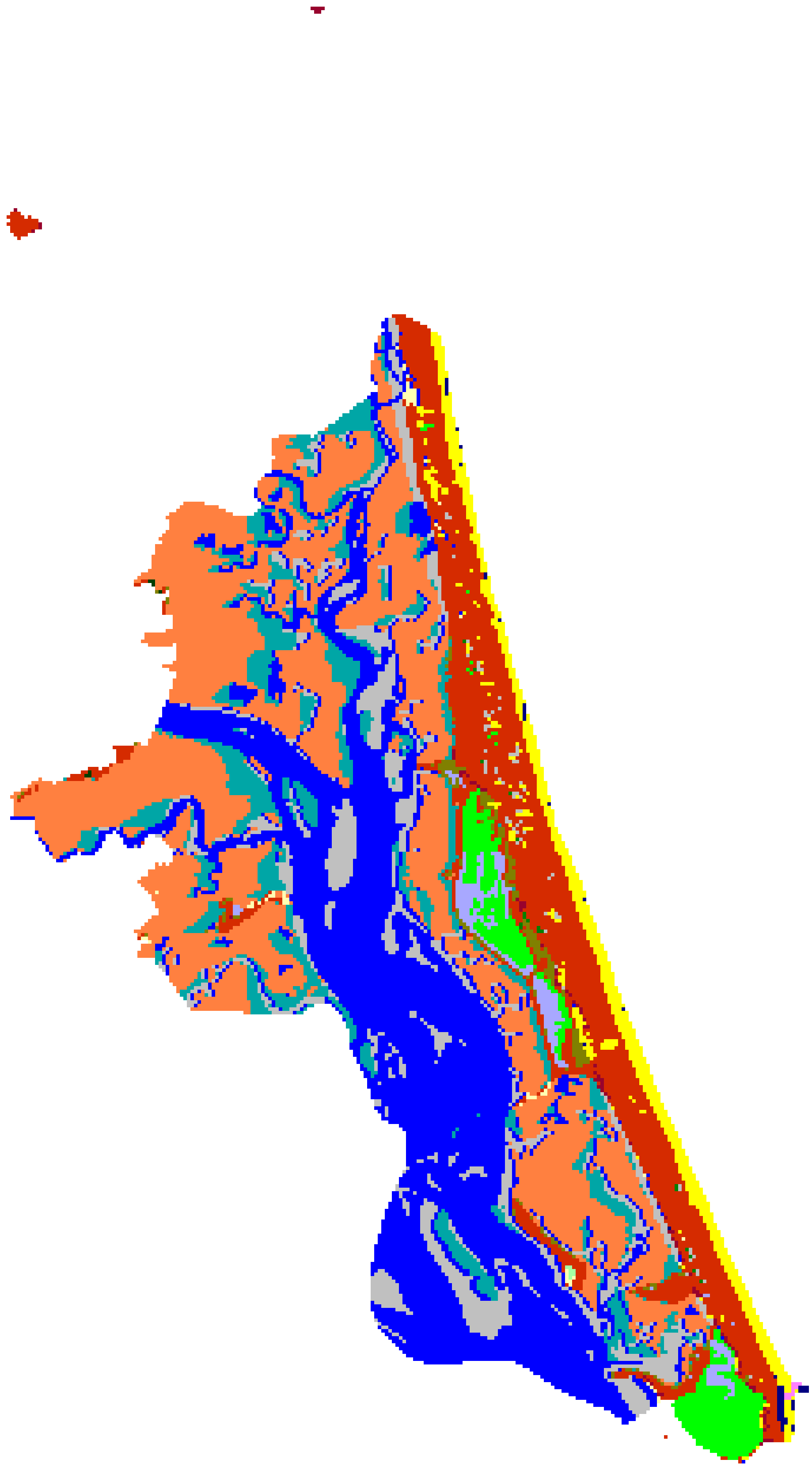


Parker River NWR, 2100, 1 meter

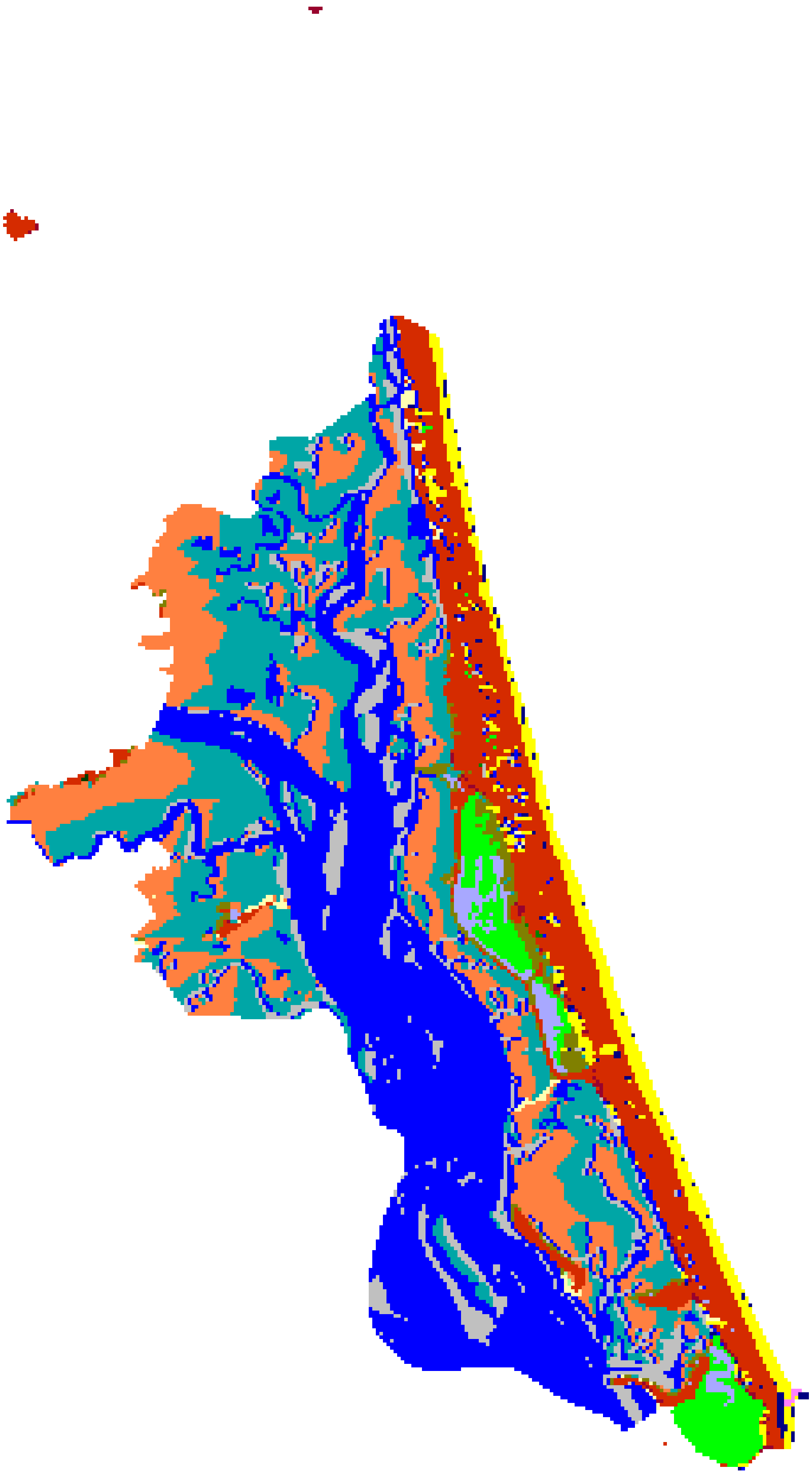
Parker River
1.5 Meters Eustatic SLR by 2100

Results in Acres

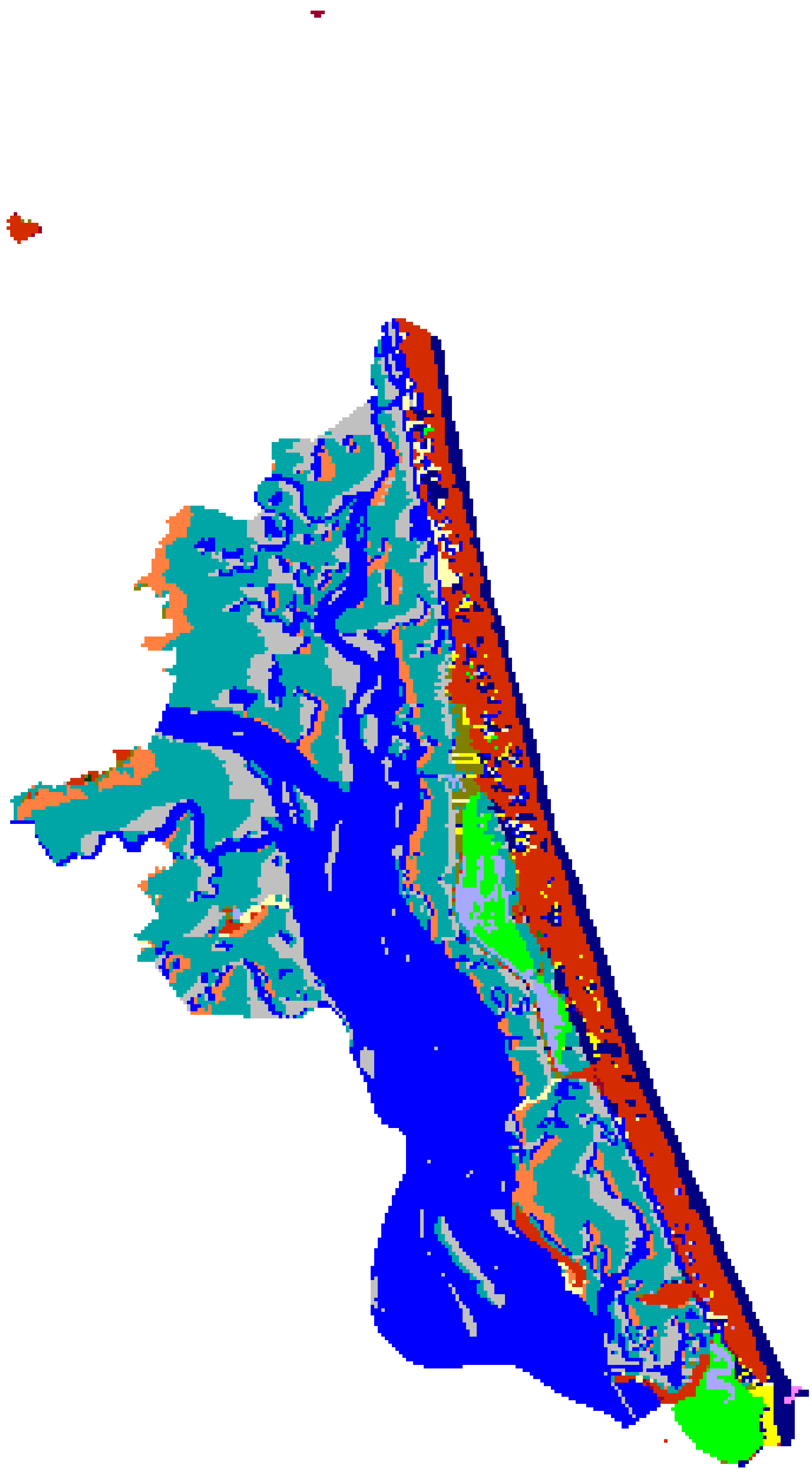
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Brackish Marsh	2306.2	1798.6	1026.5	292.6	3.9
Estuarine Open Water	1500.3	1816.2	2059.8	2355.6	2578.6
Undev. Dry Land	1041.0	925.4	817.6	663.2	564.2
Tidal Flat	803.3	596.1	413.6	643.2	1605.6
Ocean Beach	226.4	260.9	232.6	38.9	22.3
Inland Fresh Marsh	197.3	196.3	195.0	194.8	194.4
Saltmarsh	149.7	578.3	1321.5	1642.3	818.1
Inland Open Water	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.7
Dev. Dry Land	38.5	23.1	18.9	11.0	7.5
Swamp	21.1	4.5	1.1	0.7	0.3
Open Ocean	2.9	15.8	76.4	337.3	412.5
Tidal Swamp	2.7	1.4	0.7	0.4	0.0
Rocky Intertidal	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.1	1.8
Tidal Fresh Marsh	1.6	1.4	0.6	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Beach	1.3	15.1	31.6	60.1	76.2
Trans. Salt Marsh	0.0	59.1	96.5	52.3	9.6
Total (incl. water)	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**	**6373.6**



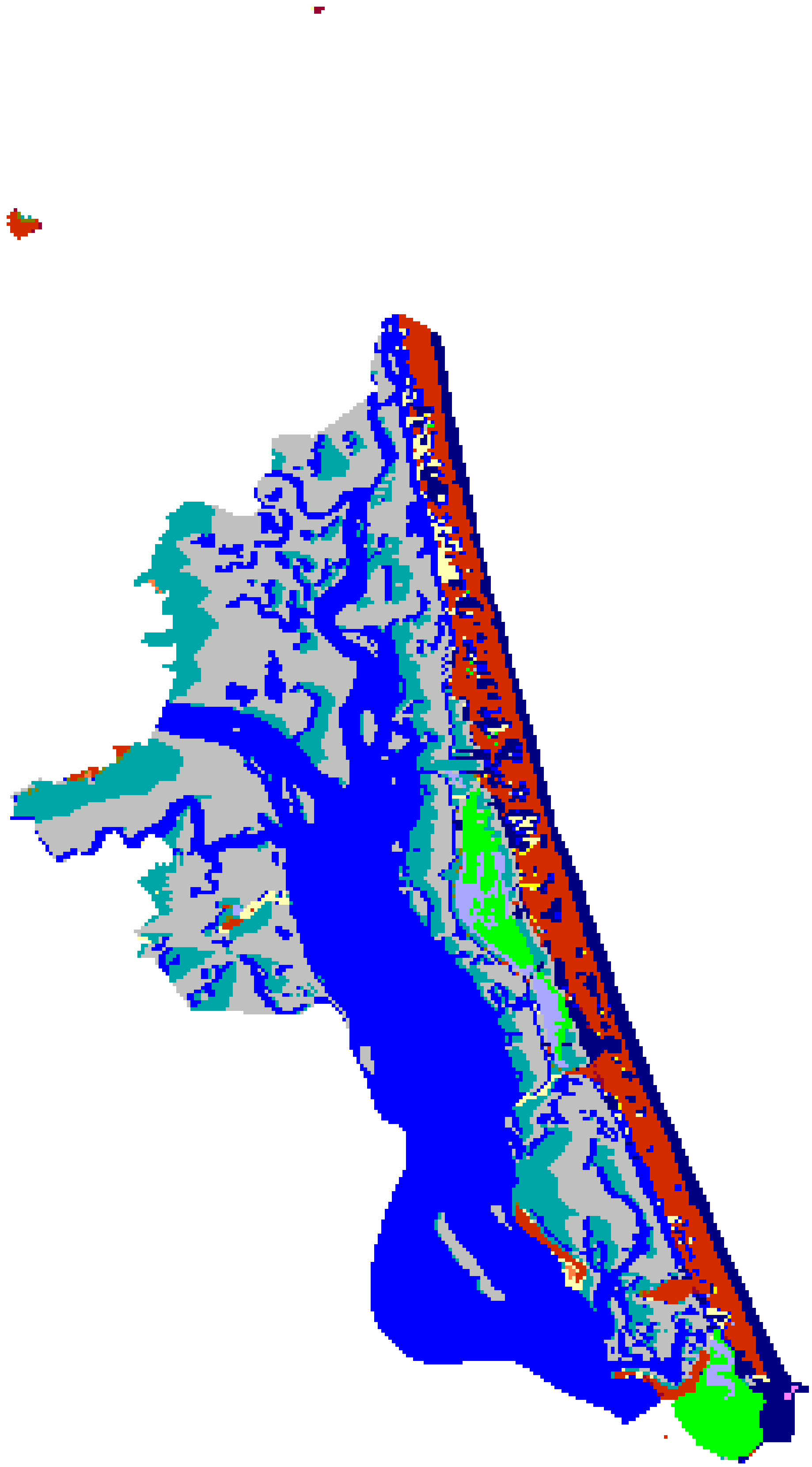
Parker River NWR, 2025, 1.5 meter



Parker River NWR, 2050, 1.5 meter



Parker River NWR, 2075, 1.5 meter



Parker River NWR, 2100, 1.5 meter

Discussion:

Model results for Parker River indicate that at least 15% of irregularly flooded marsh in the refuge will convert to regularly flooded marsh. In the most extreme scenario, 100% of irregularly flooded marsh is lost in the refuge by 2100, much of this converting to tidal flats and open water.

Marsh elevations are subject to uncertainty due to low-vertical-resolution NED data. Because of this, elevations for irregularly flooded marshes were estimated based on tidal range, a significant source of model uncertainty. Increased flooding is predicted to significantly change the ecological balance of marsh from brackish marsh to more regularly flooded saltmarsh or even tidal flats and open water under the 1.5 meter scenario.

Model results for eastern portions of this refuge are primarily based on high-quality LiDAR elevation data for this site. This reduces uncertainty in model results for that portion of the map. Accretion rates for marshes at this location were derived from regional measurements, and were assumed to remain constant over time in this simulation, which is an additional source of model uncertainty.

The SLAMM model accounts for the local effects of isostatic rebound by taking into account the historical sea level rise for each site. The historical rate of land movement is predicted to continue through the year 2100 (i.e. the rate of isostatic rebound is assumed to remain constant).

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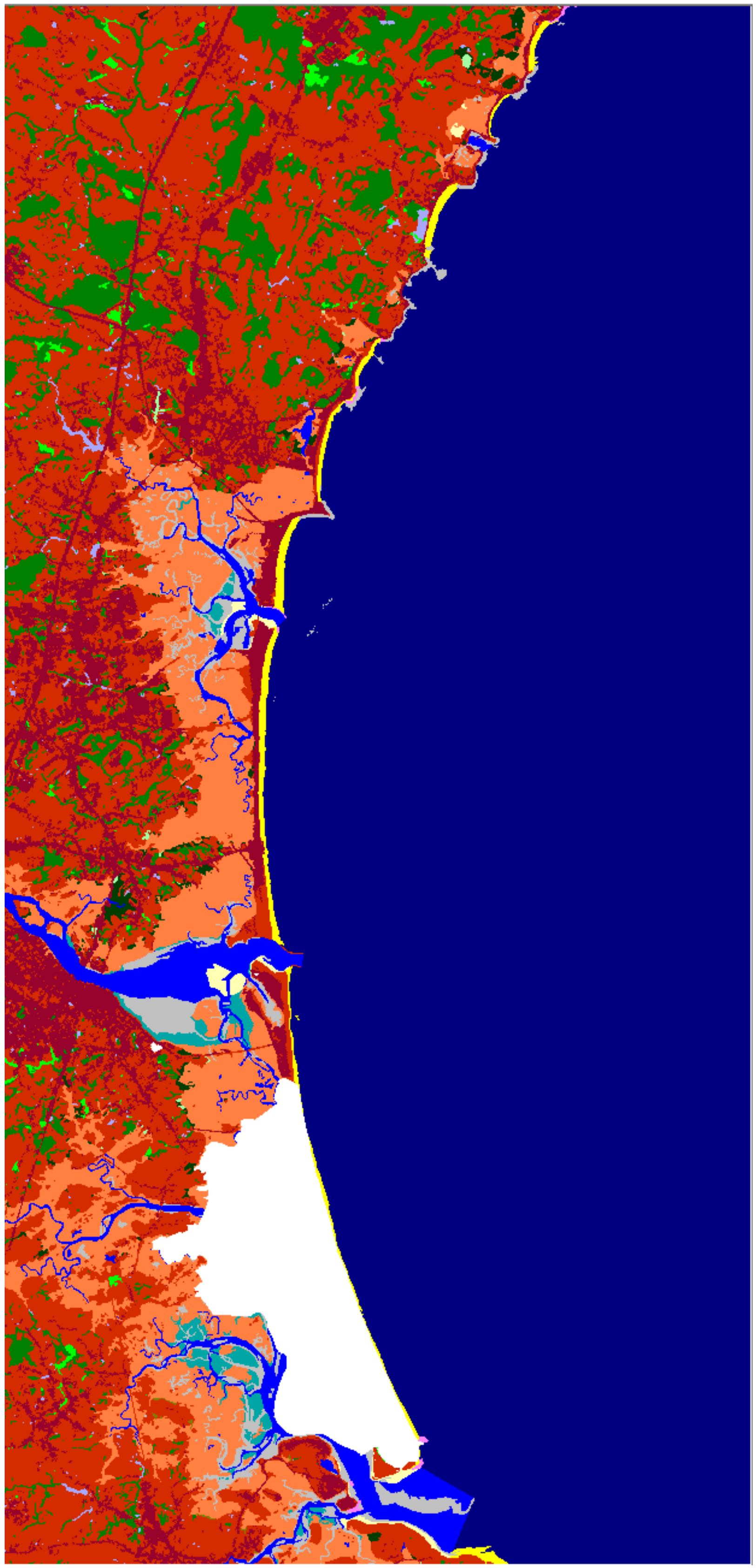
Appendix A: Contextual Results

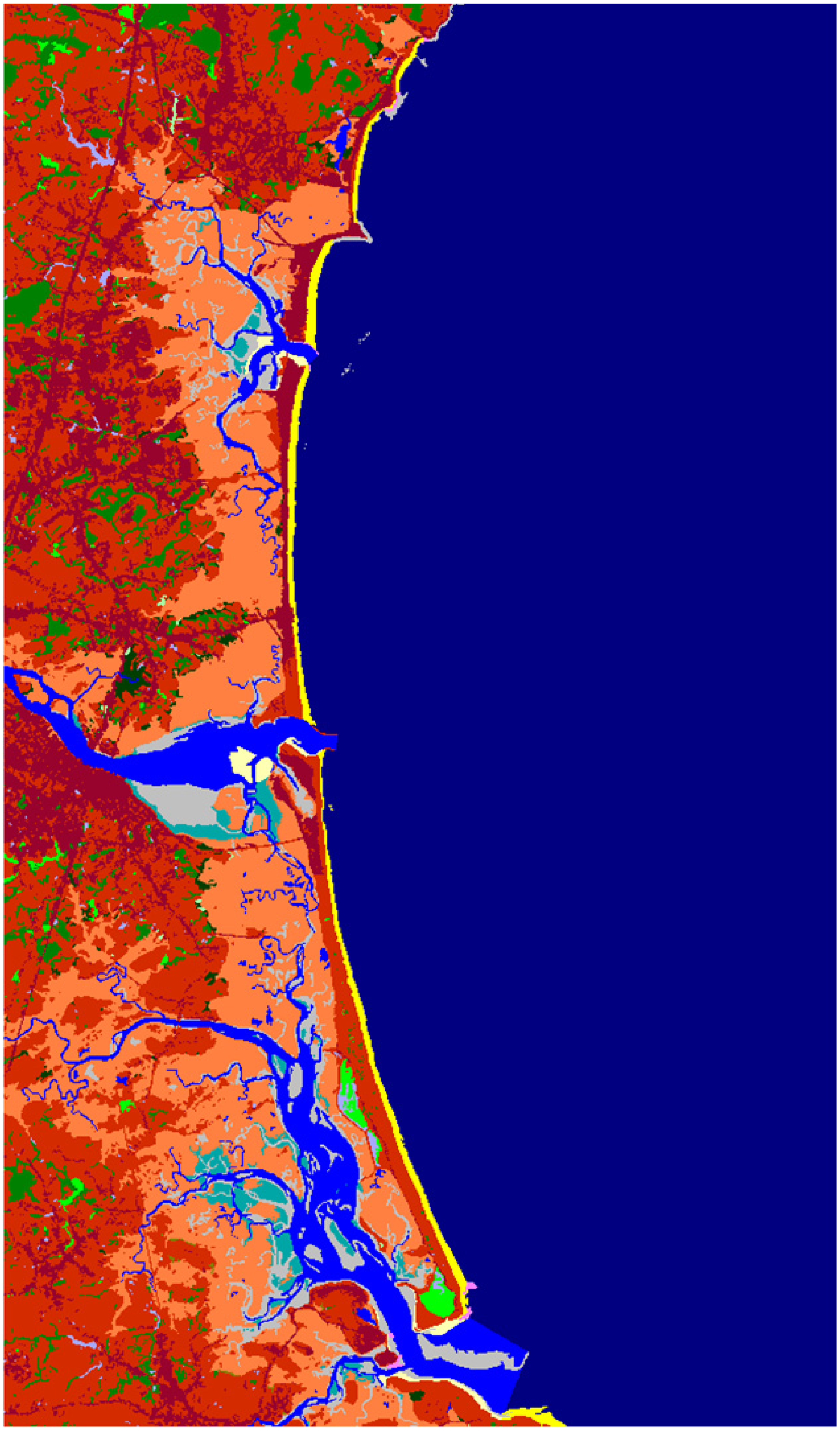
The SLAMM model does take into account the context of the surrounding lands or open water when calculating effects. For example, erosion rates are calculated based on the maximum fetch (wave action) which is estimated by assessing contiguous open water to a given marsh cell. Another example is that inundated dry lands will convert to marshes or ocean beach depending on their proximity to open ocean.

For this reason, an area larger than the boundaries of the USFWS refuge was modeled. These results maps are presented here with the following caveats:

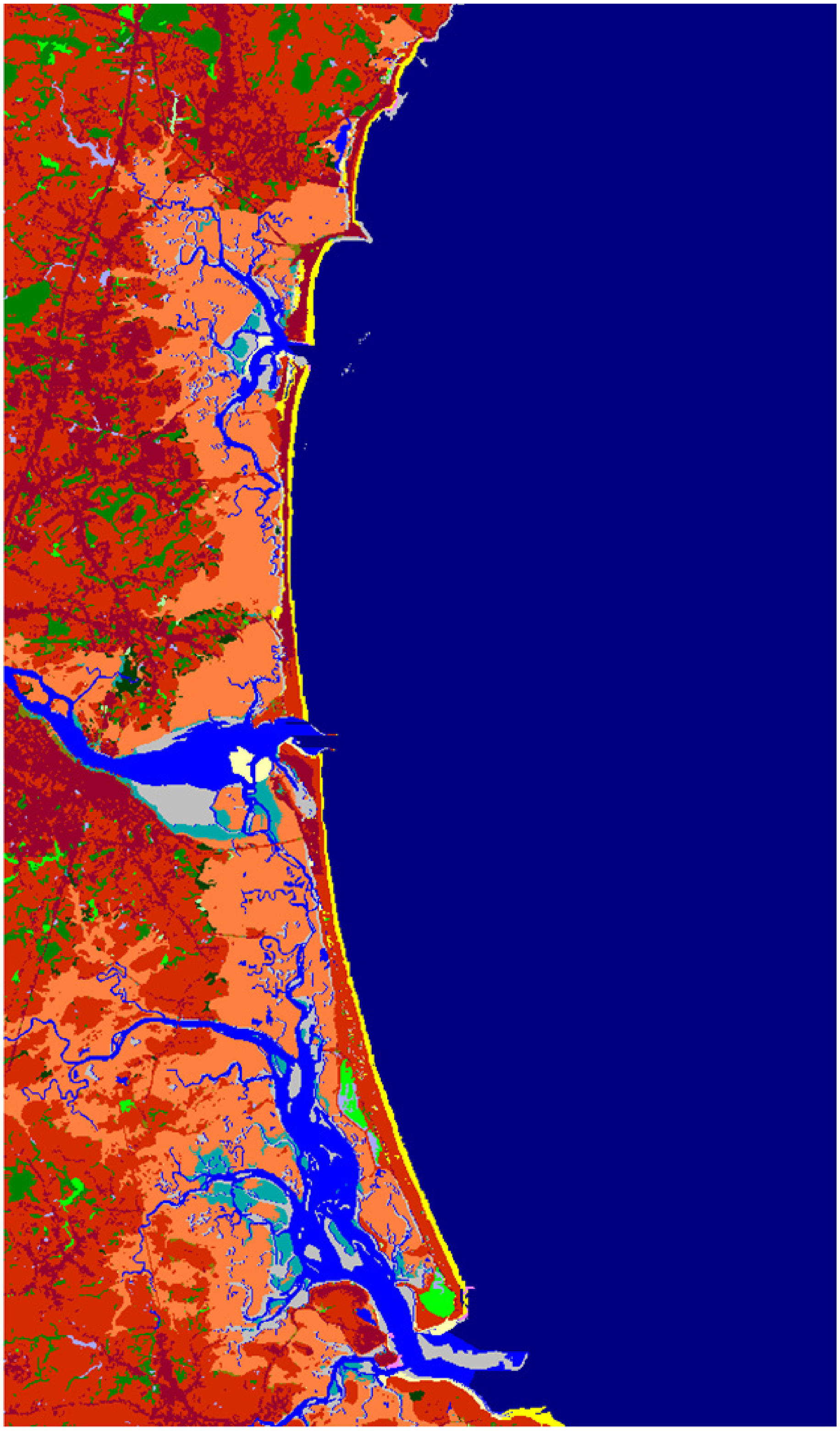
- Results were closely examined (quality assurance) within USFWS refuges but not closely examined for the larger region.
- Site-specific parameters for the model were derived for USFWS refuges whenever possible and may not be regionally applicable.
- Especially in areas where dikes are present, an effort was made to assess the probable location and effects of dikes for USFWS refuges, but this effort was not made for surrounding areas.



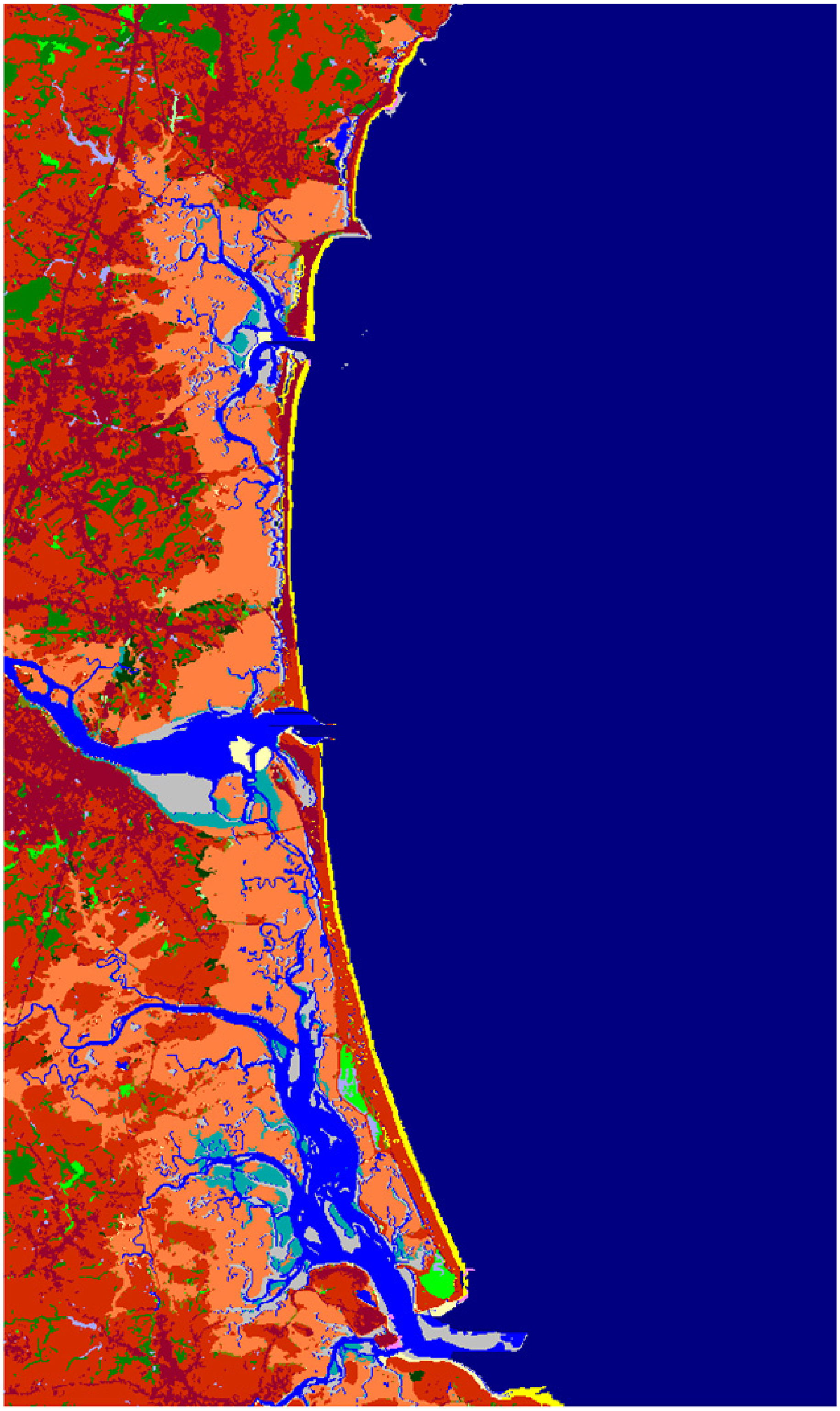
Location of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (white) within simulation context



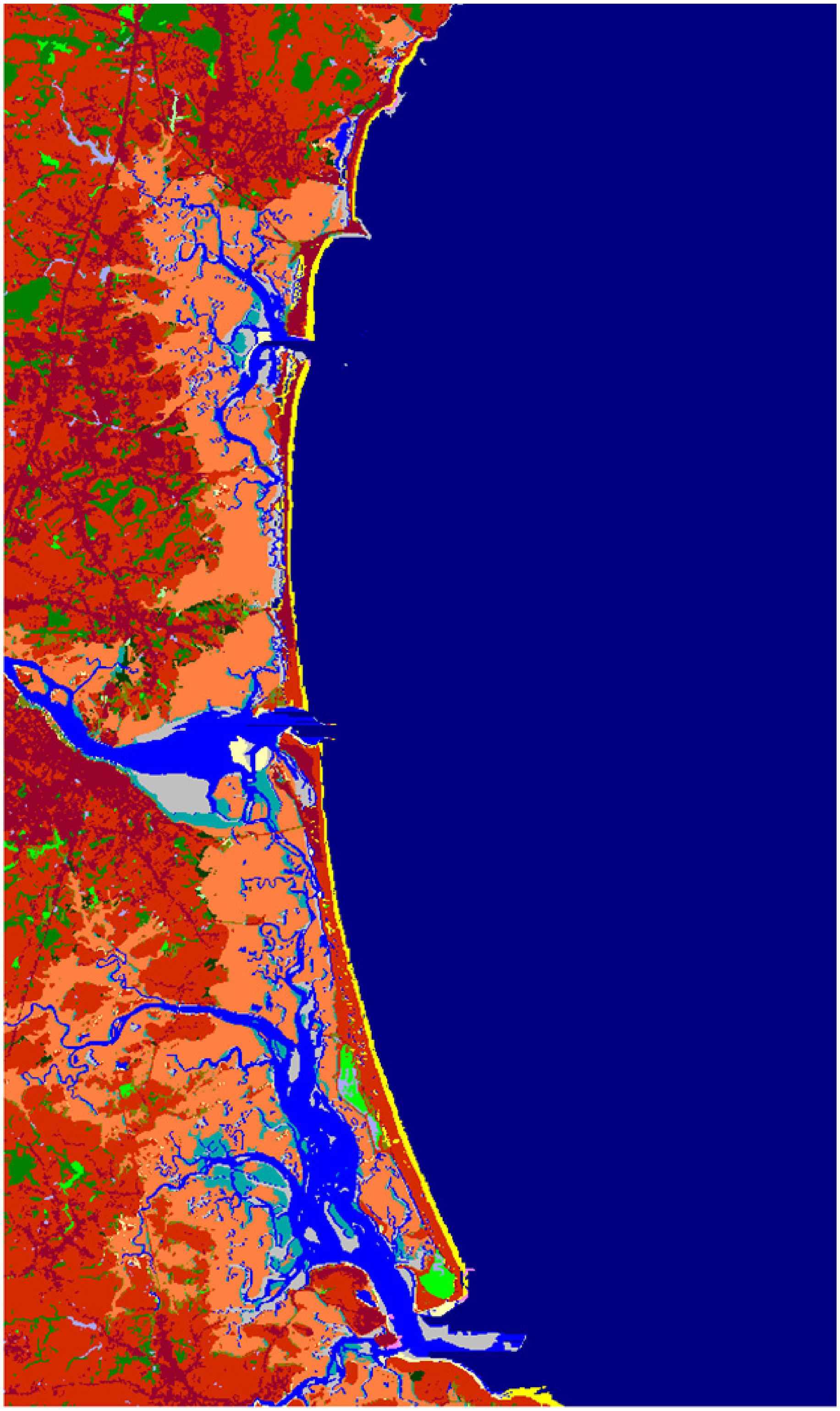
Parker River Context, Initial Condition



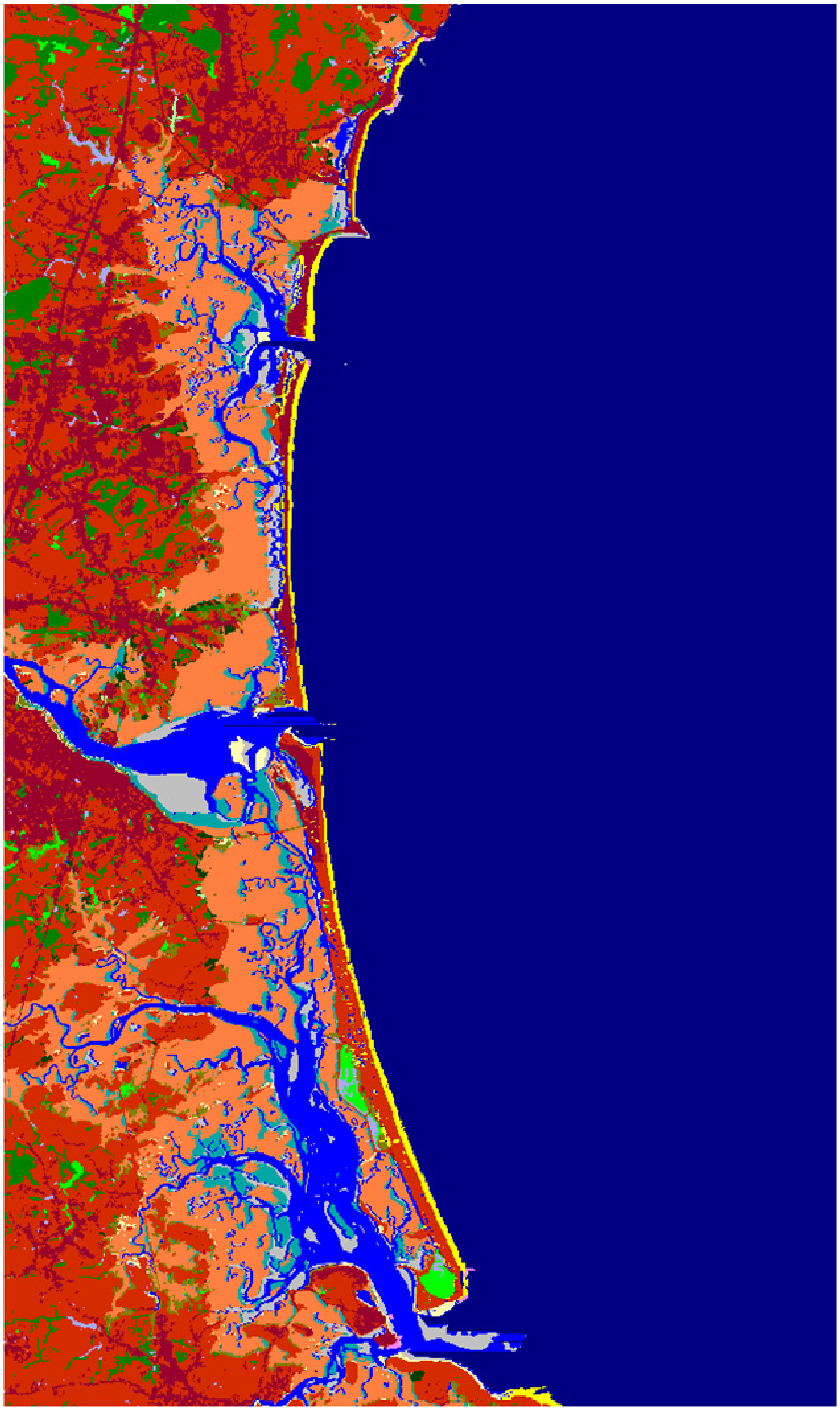
Parker River Context, 2025, Scenario A1B Mean



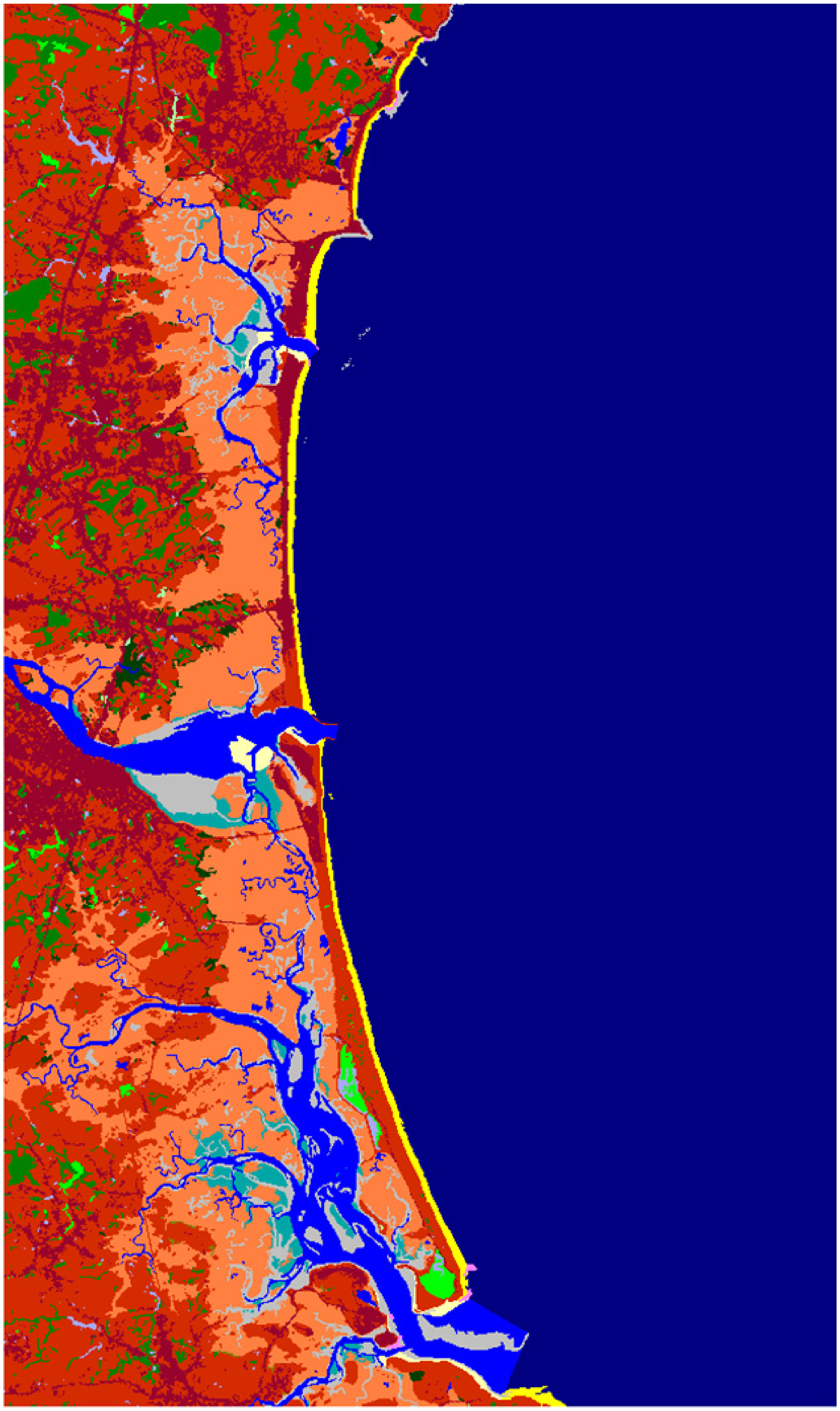
Parker River Context, 2050, Scenario A1B Mean



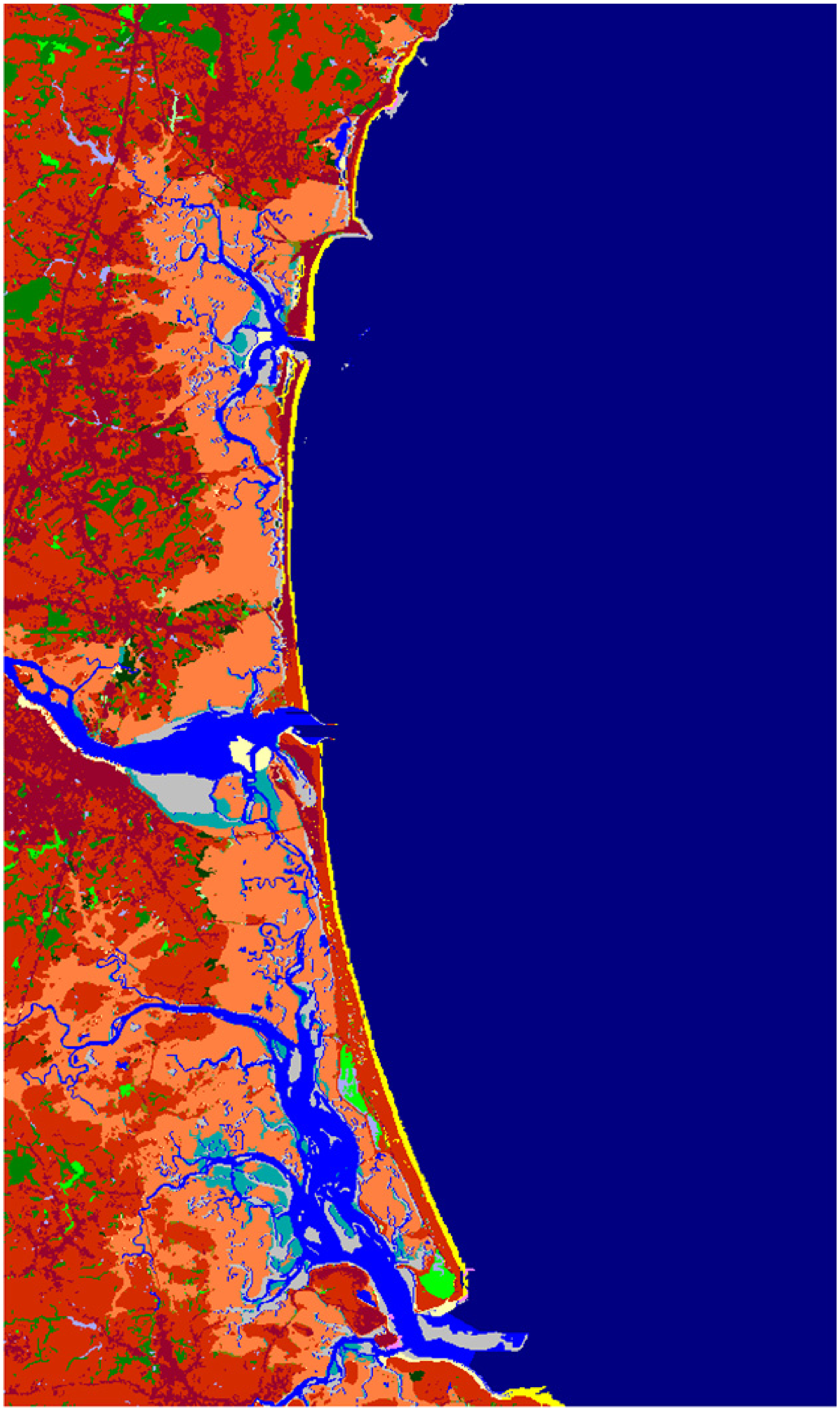
Parker River Context, 2075, Scenario A1B Mean



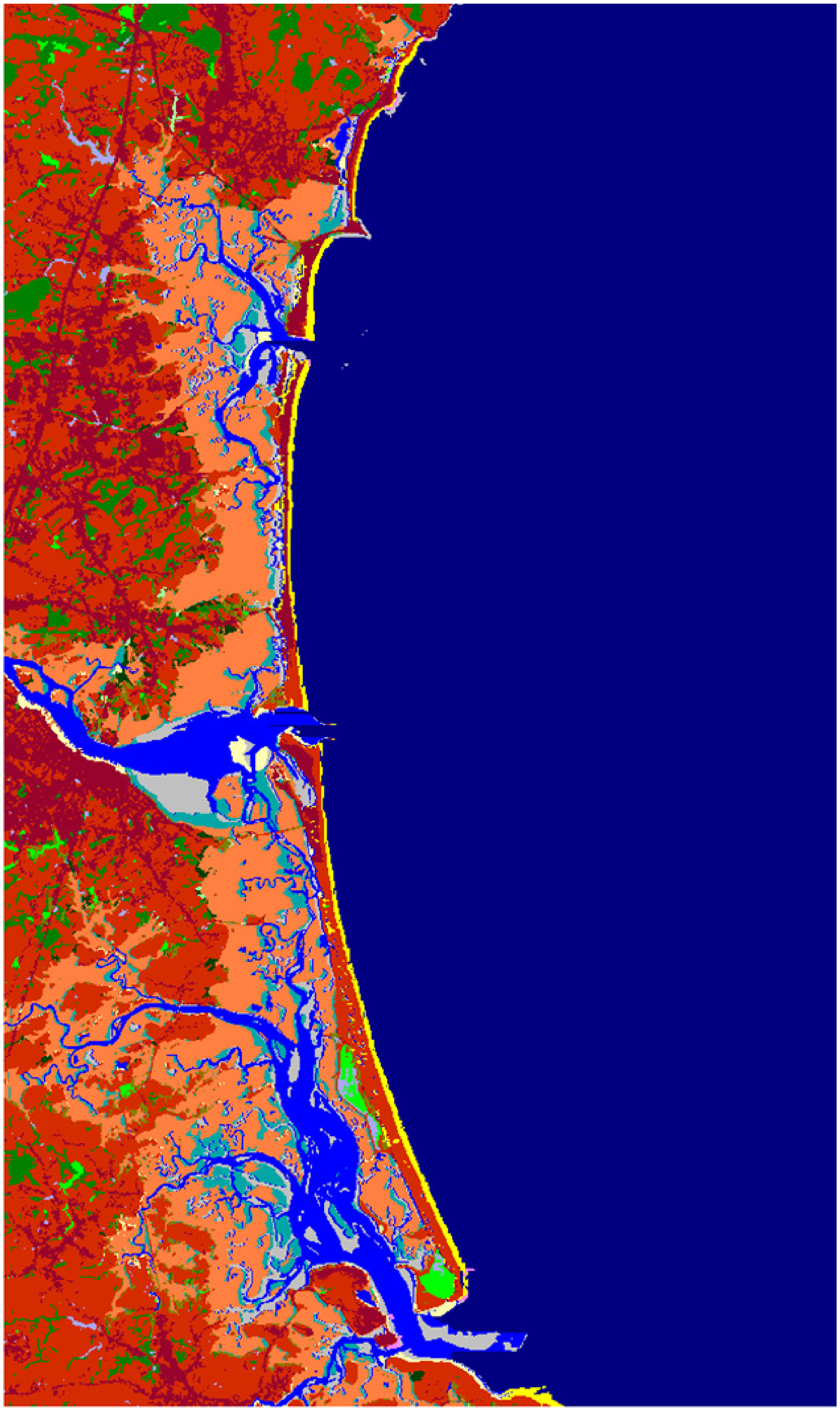
Parker River Context, 2100, Scenario A1B Mean



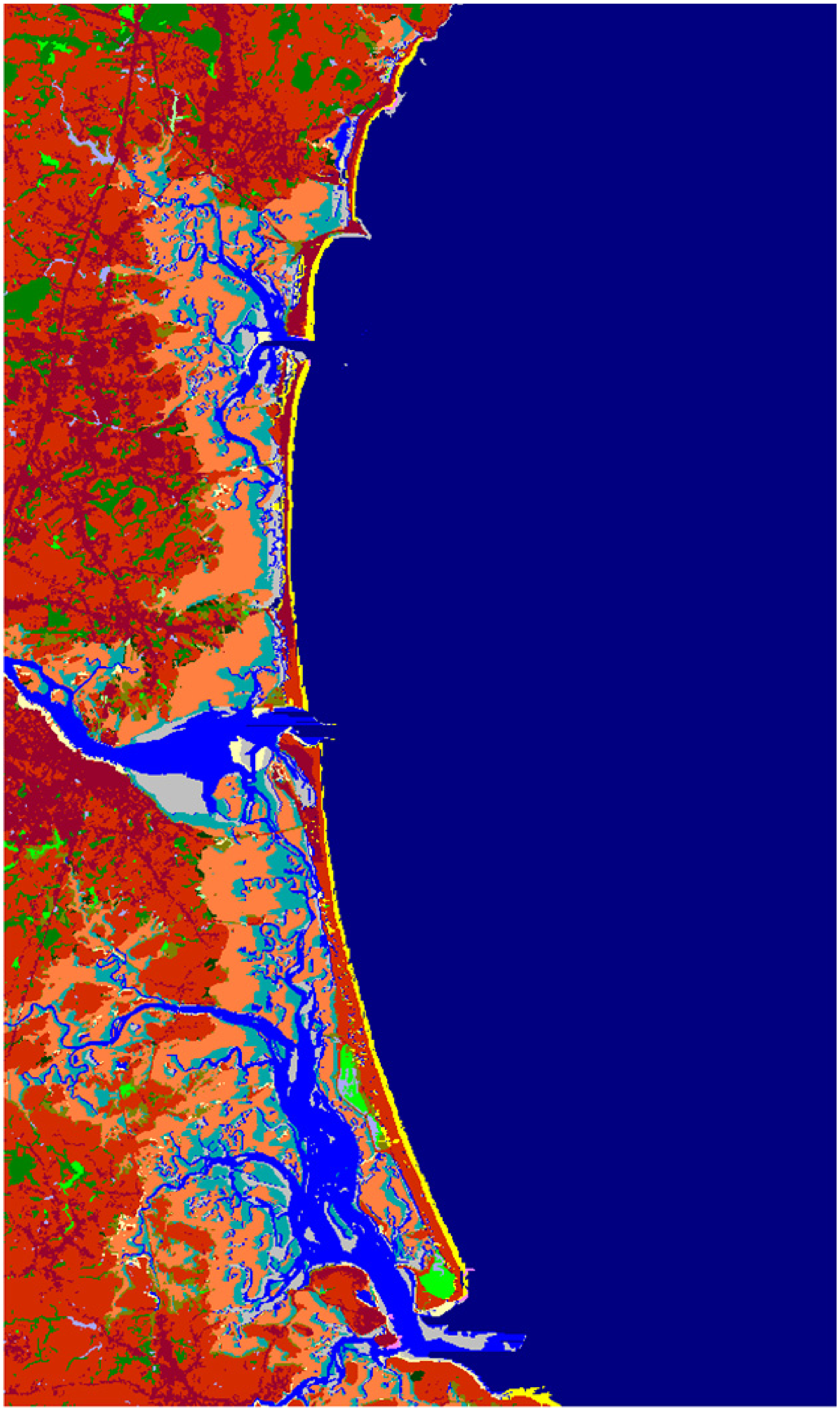
Parker River Context, Initial Condition



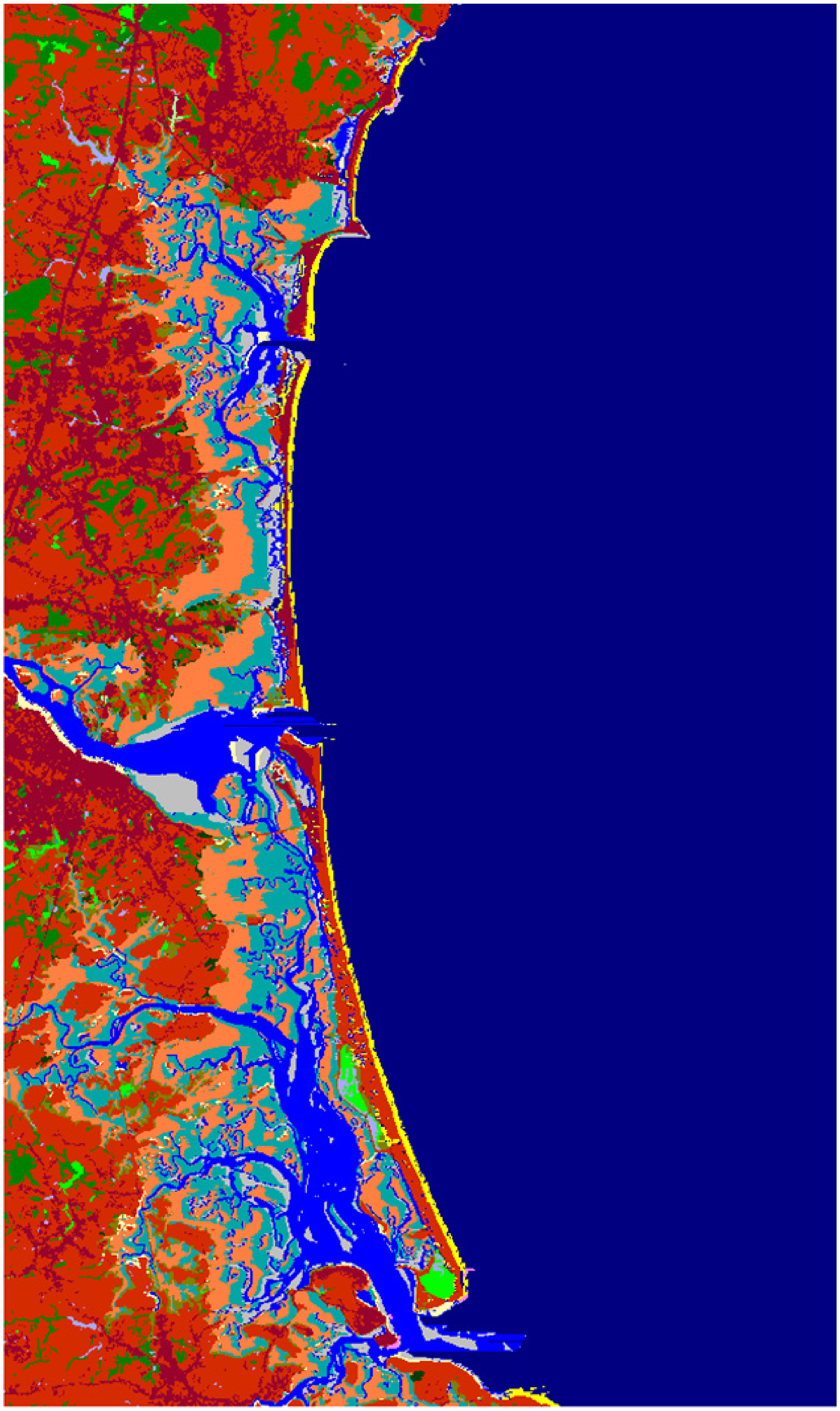
Parker River Context, 2025, Scenario A1B Maximum



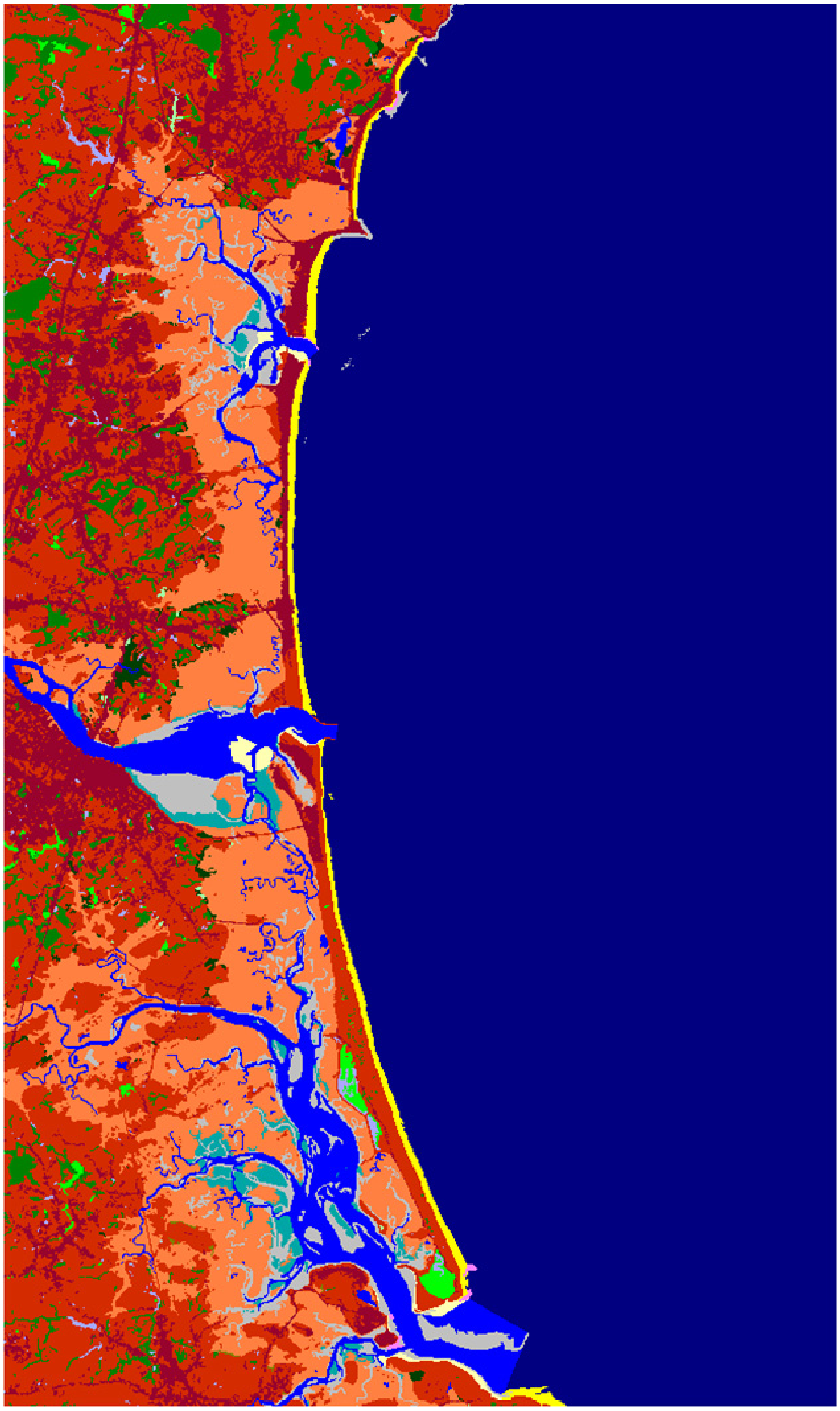
Parker River Context, 2050, Scenario A1B Maximum



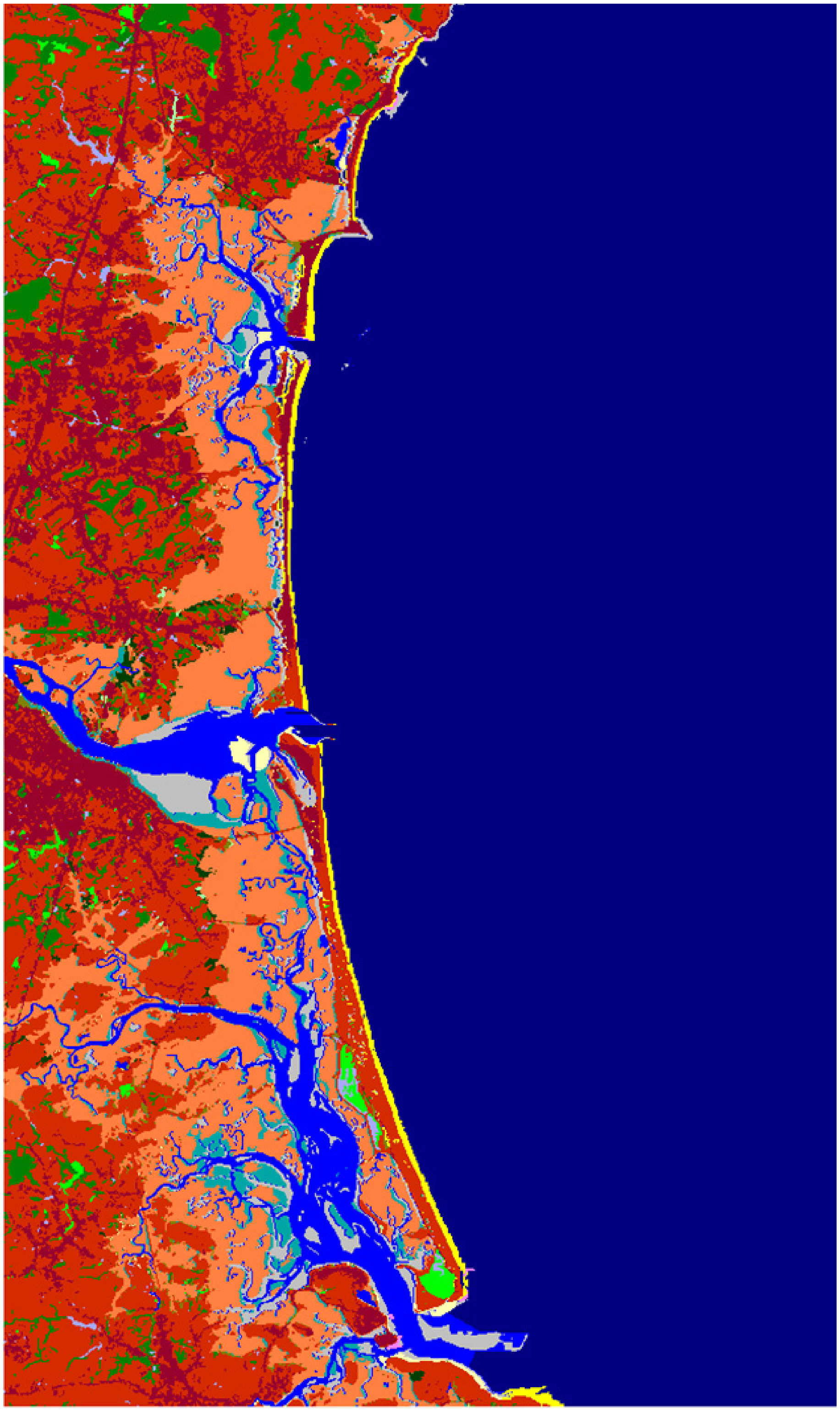
Parker River Context, 2075, Scenario A1B Maximum

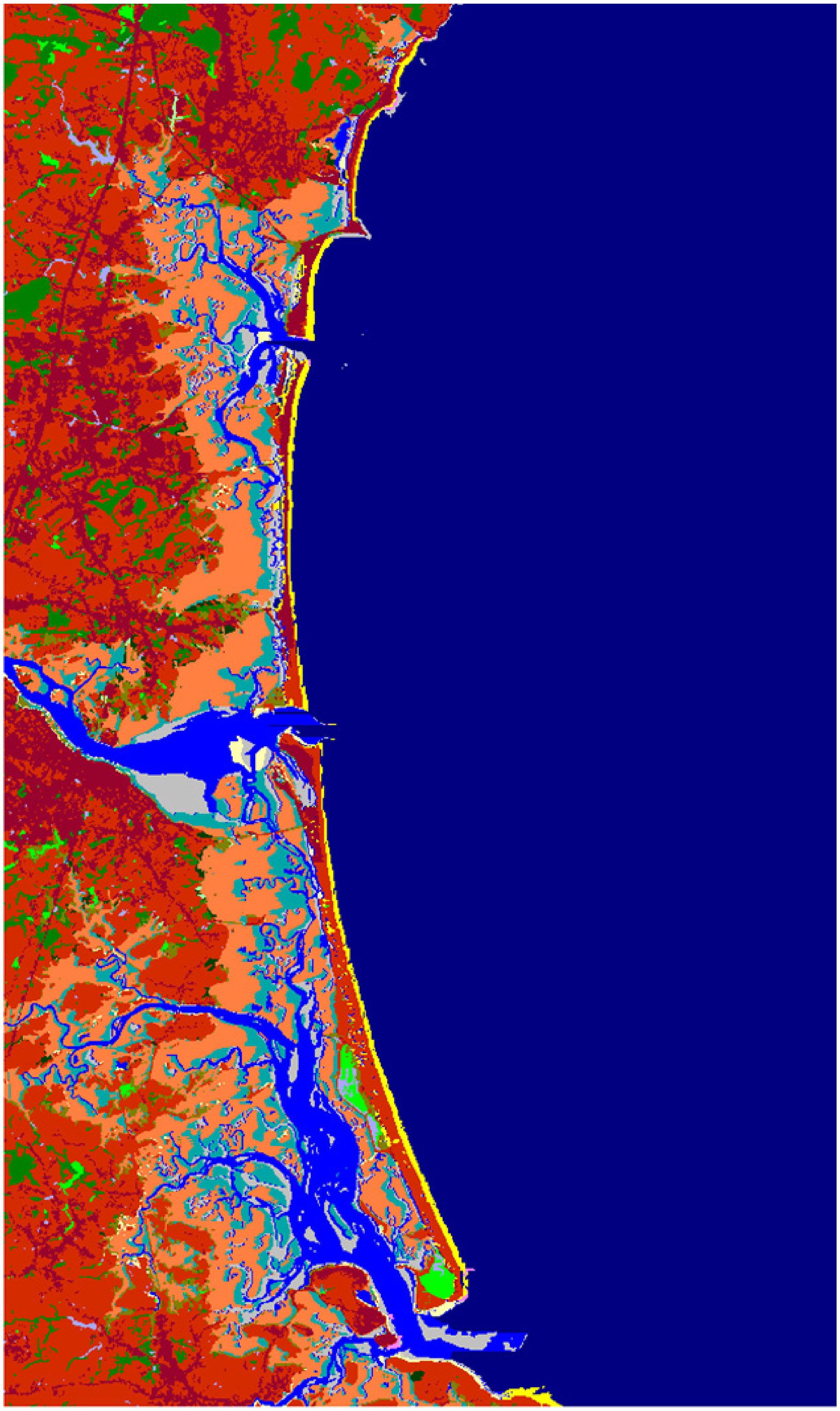


Parker River Context, 2100, Scenario A1B Maximum

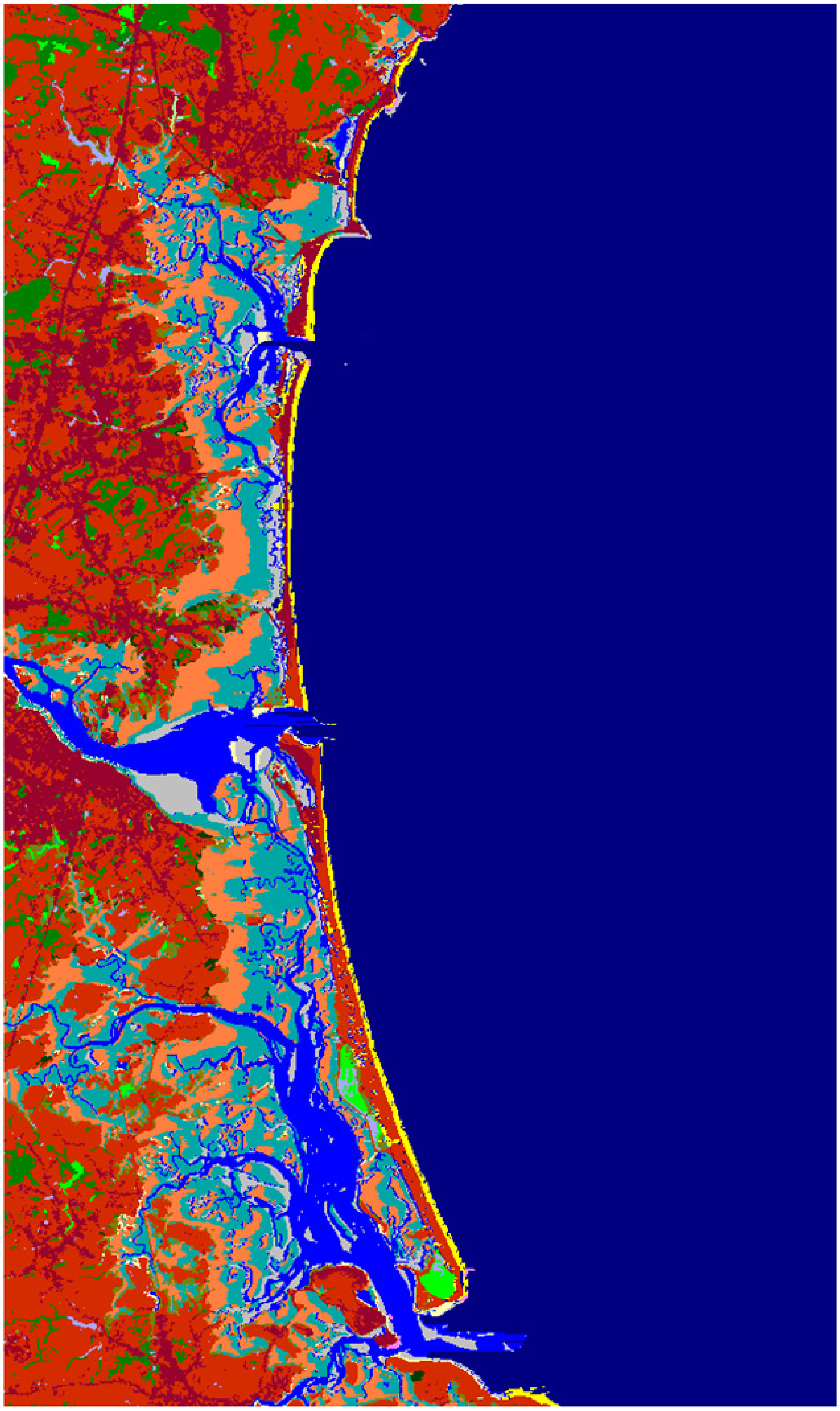


Parker River Context, Initial Condition

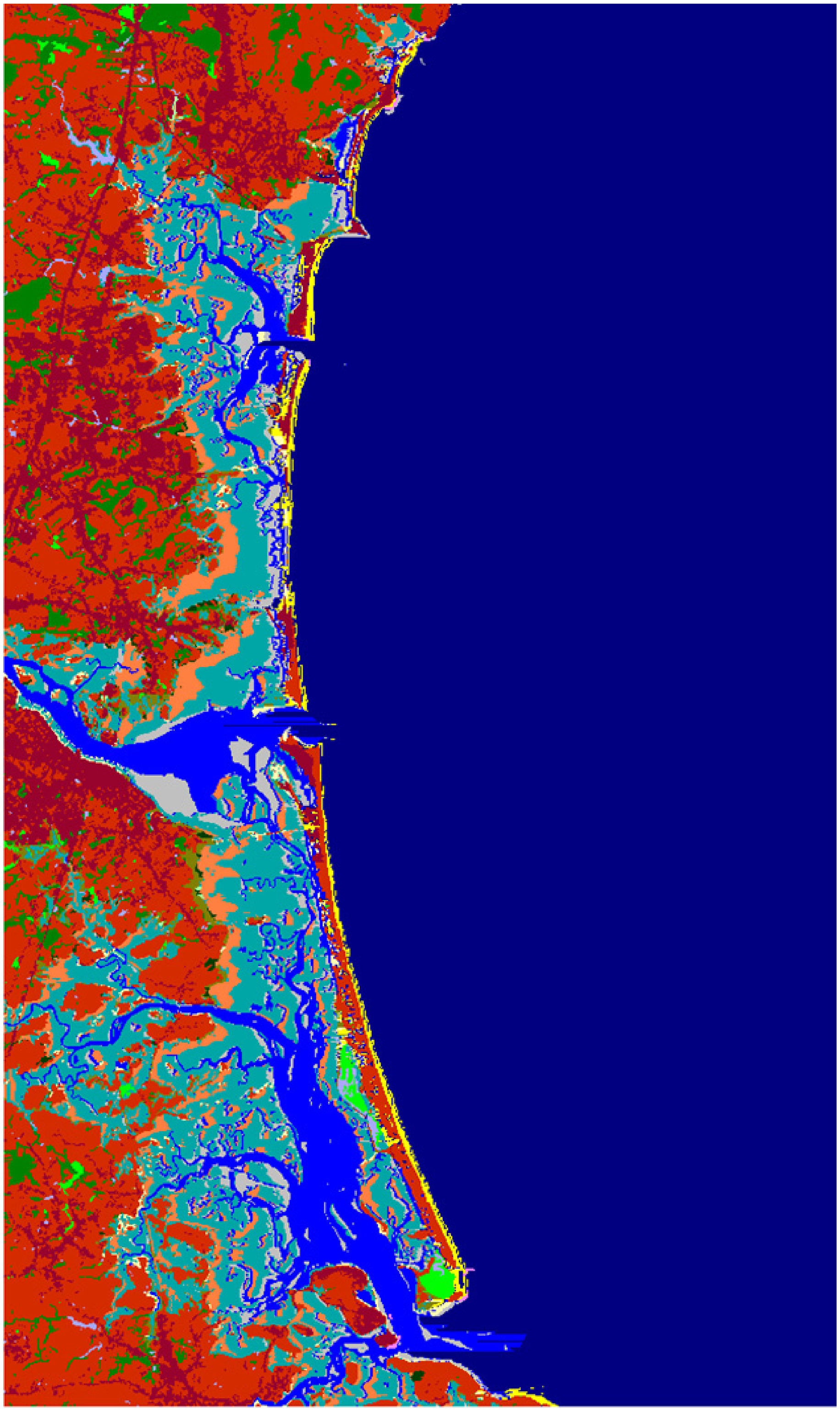

Parker River Context, 2025, 1 meter



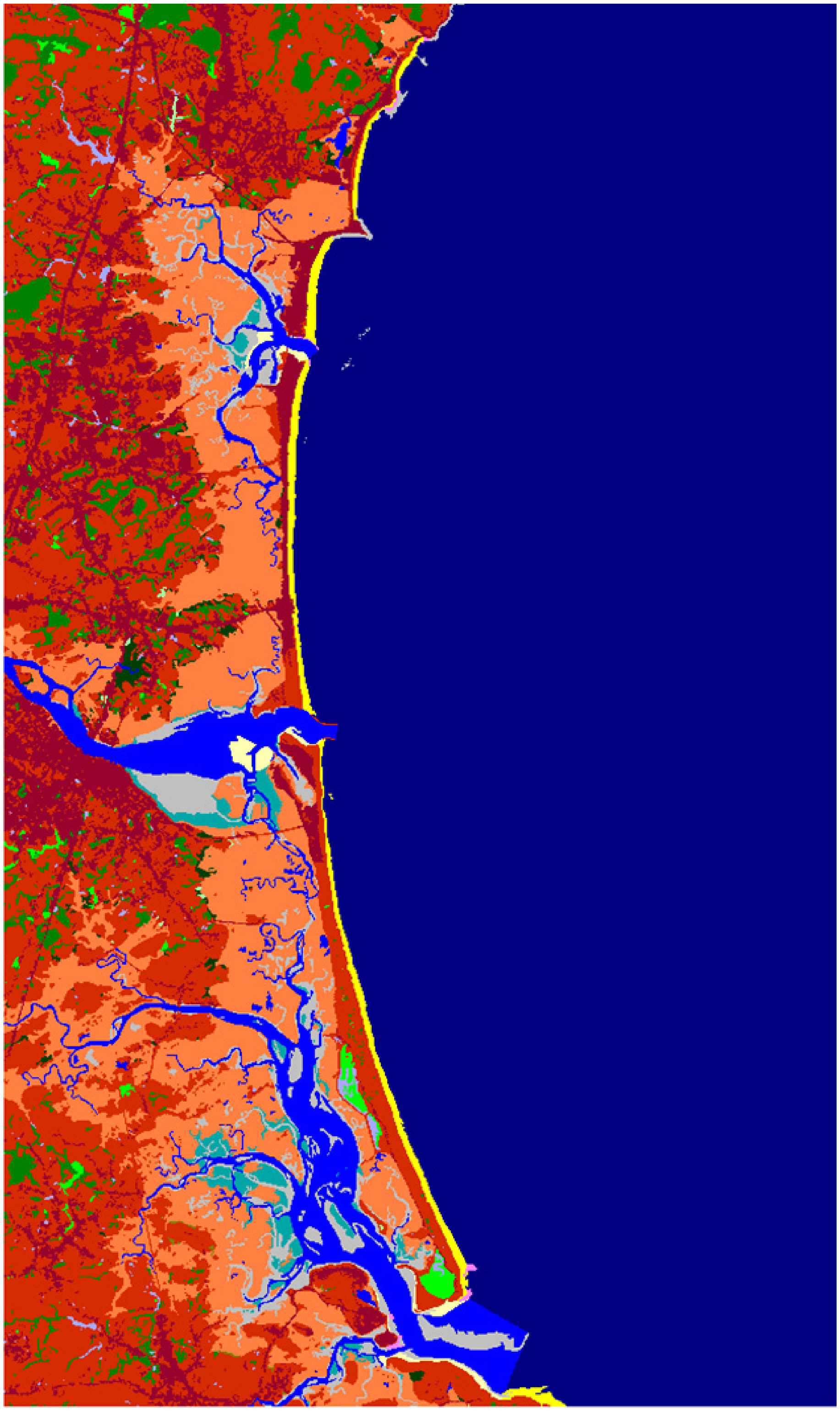
Parker River Context, 2050, 1 meter



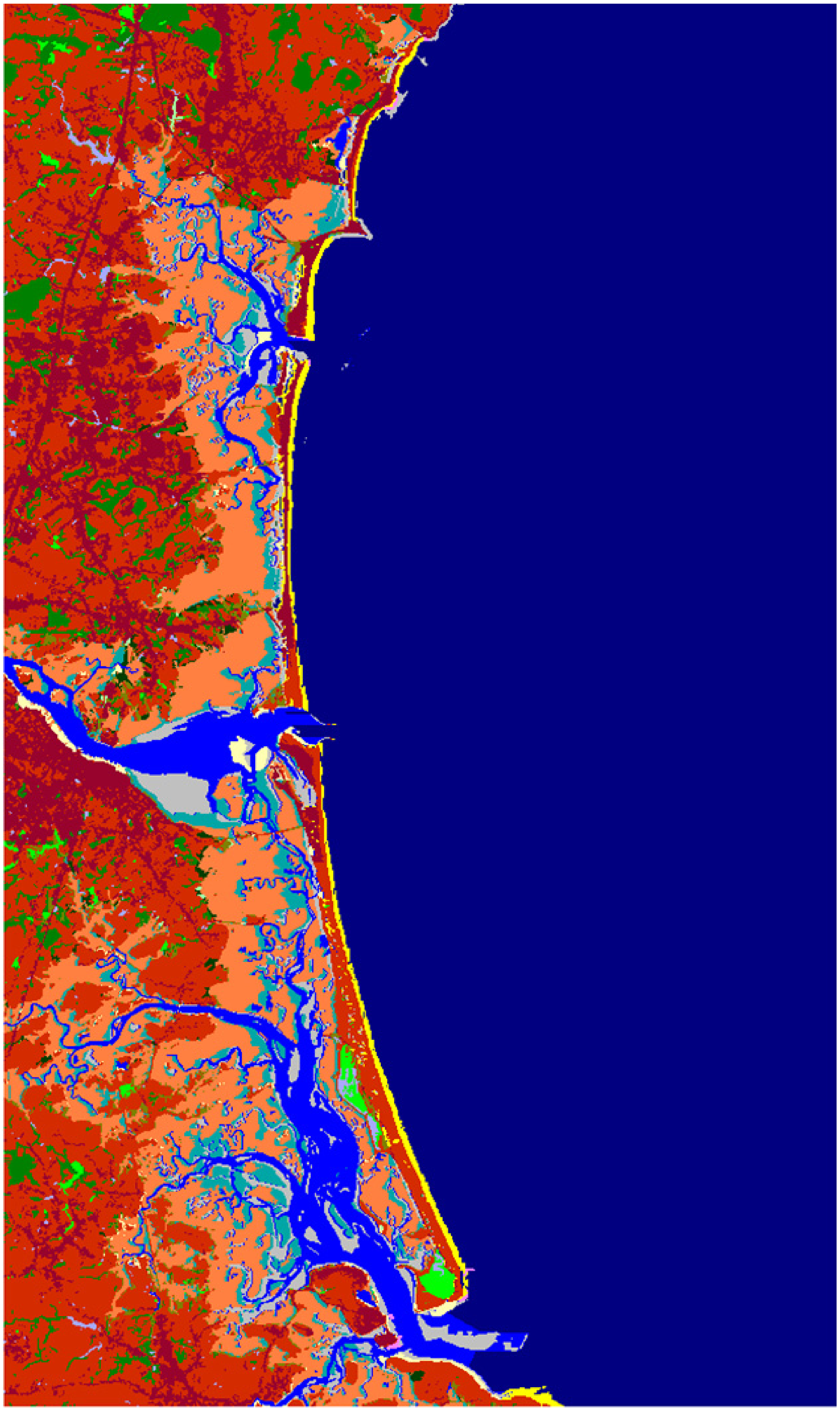
Parker River Context, 2075, 1 meter



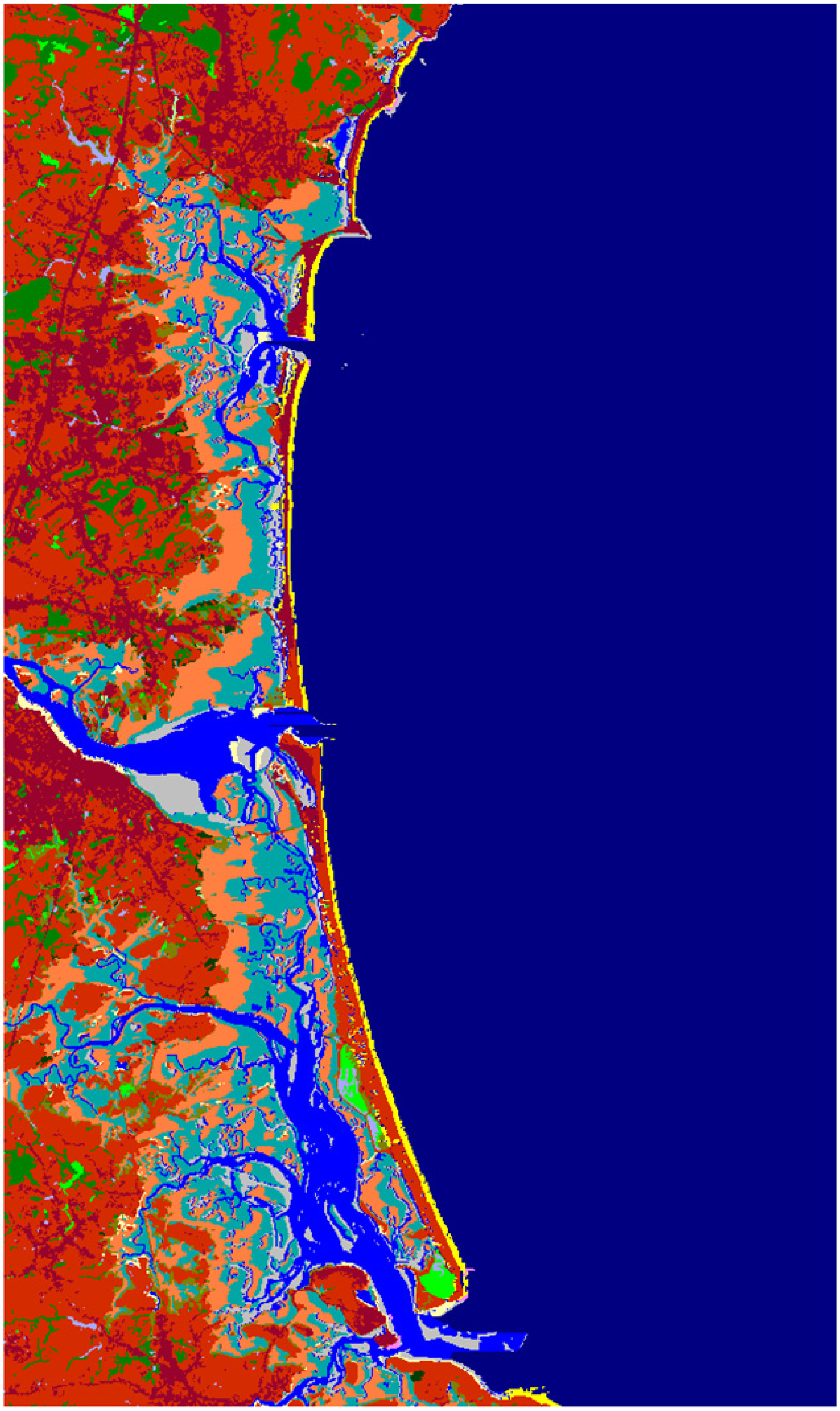
Parker River Context, 2100, 1 meter



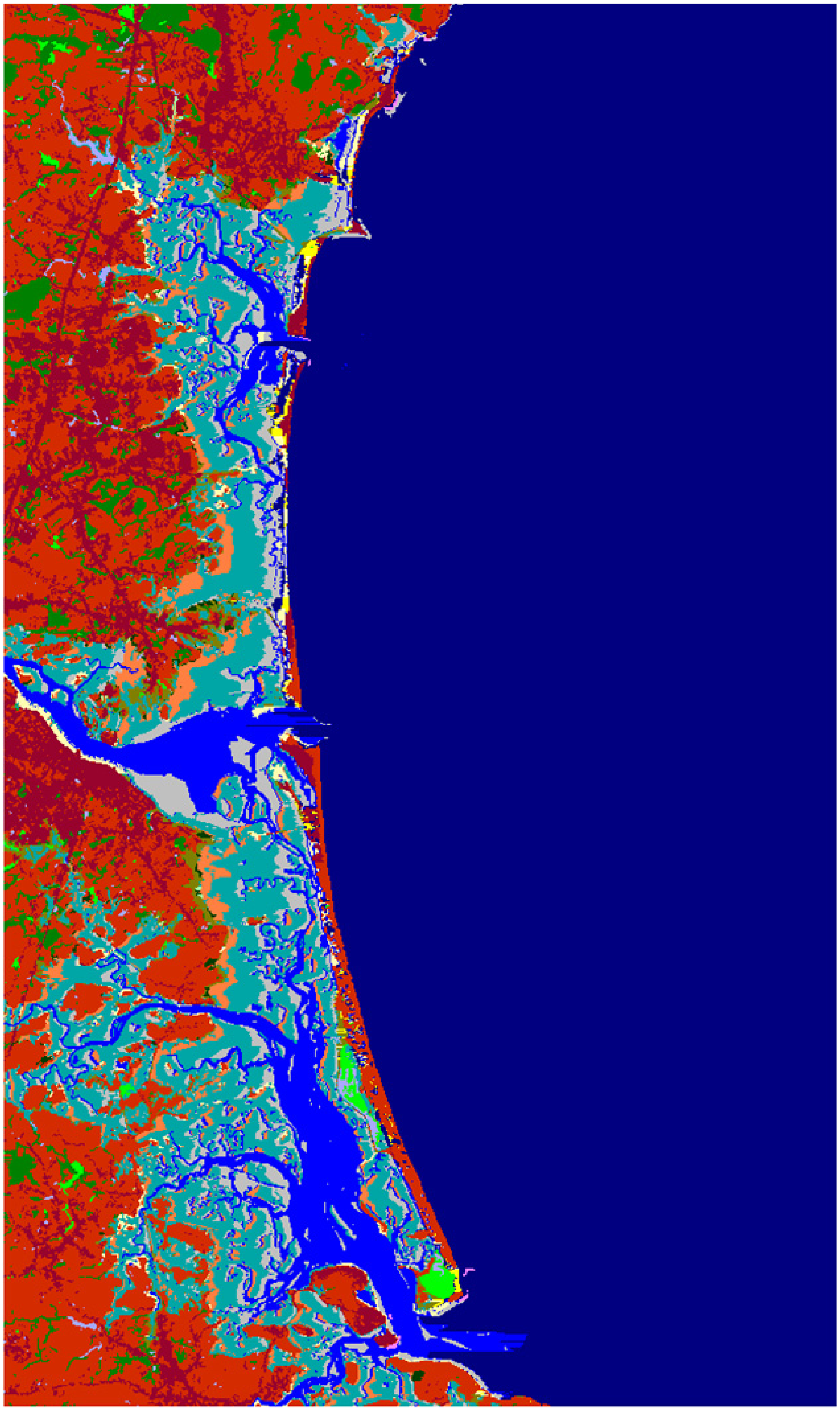
Parker River Context, Initial Condition

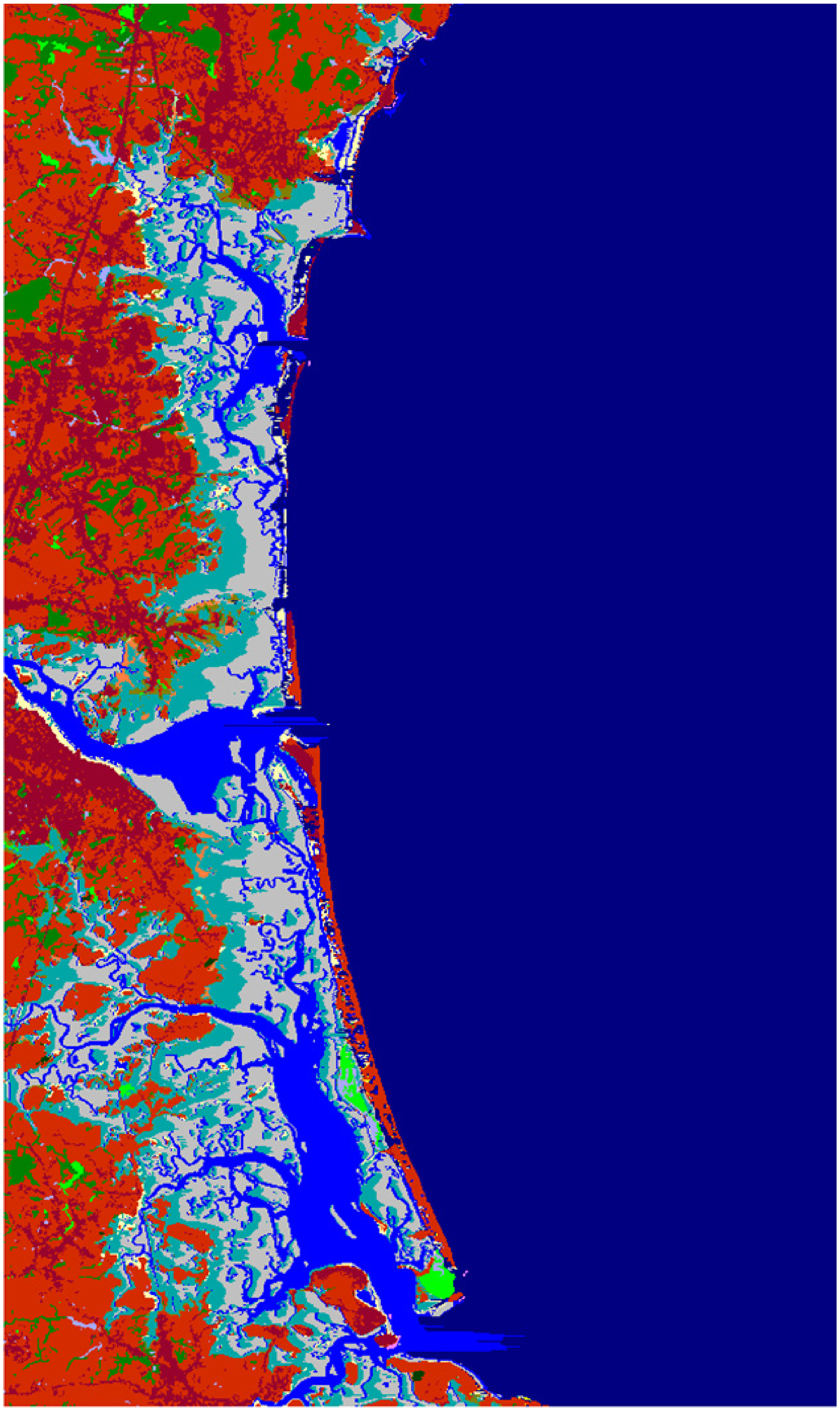


Parker River Context, 2025, 1.5 meter



Parker River Context, 2050, 1.5 meter


Parker River Context, 2075, 1.5 meter


Parker River Context, 2100, 1.5 meter