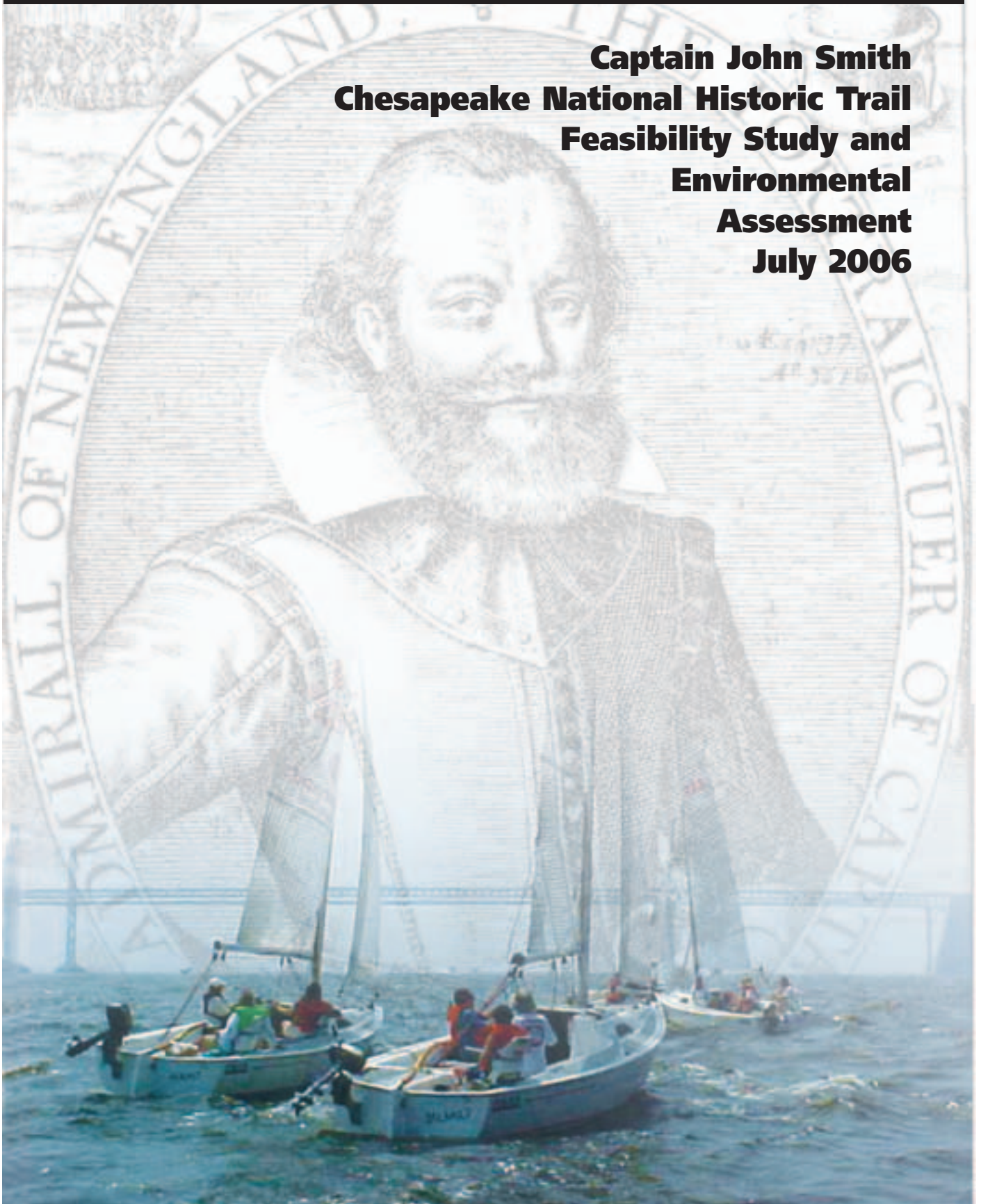


Produced by
National Park Service • Northeast Region
U.S. Department of Interior



**Captain John Smith
Chesapeake National Historic Trail
Feasibility Study and
Environmental
Assessment
July 2006**



Cover Photo courtesy of Bridget Shea/Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of designating Captain John Smith's 1607-1609 voyages of exploration around the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as a National Historic Trail (NHT) under the study provisions of the National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543, 16 USC 1241, et seq.). This report is intended to provide information necessary for the evaluation of national significance and the potential designation of a NHT, and to make a recommendation regarding such designation. Detailed management and interpretive recommendations would be developed through preparation of a Comprehensive Management Plan if the trail is designated.

The history, background, integrity, and national significance of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT have been researched and analyzed. The criteria for national historic trails, set forth in the National Trails System Act, have been applied, and the proposed trail meets all three criteria. Alternatives, and their respective environmental consequences, for the designation of the proposed trail have also been developed and are presented in this report.

Alternative A, the no action alternative, continues the existing management policies and authorities. There would continue to be piecemeal interpretation of Smith's voyages and no single organization or entity would be designated to oversee interpretation or development of a trail. This alternative will not result in any overall coordination of education or interpretation, nor of protection of cultural and natural resources.

Alternative B, the preferred alternative, takes advantage of the regional nature of the trail and the many organizations interested in and associated with the history of Captain John Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake Bay. This alternative calls for a partnership among federal, state, and local governments, a dedicated trail organization, and site managers to administer and maintain a federally-designated commemorative trail along the historic routes of Smith's voyages. Because of its emphasis on partnerships, this alternative provides the greatest flexibility for resource protection while creating a framework for interpretation and visitor experience.

Alternative C relies on the state governments for designation and management of a commemorative trail with only limited coordination through the federal government when federal property is involved. This designation is not recognized under the National Trails System Act and would not be a federal designation or a national trail. This alternative leaves the structure of the trail (one entire trail or a series of state trails) and the planning and management entirely up to state and local governments, which may lack the authority to coordinate or pool resources.

Comments on this document should be directed in writing to the Project Manager, Bill Sharp, NPS Northeast Regional Office, 200 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.

For further information regarding this document, please contact Bill Sharp at the address listed above, or by phone at 215-597-1655.

Our practice is to make comments, including names, home addresses, home phone numbers, and email addresses of respondents, available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their names and/or home addresses, etc., but if you wish us to consider withholding this information you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. In addition, you must present a rationale for withholding this information. This rationale must demonstrate that disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy. Unsupported assertions will not meet this burden. In the absence of exceptional, documentable circumstances, this information will be released. We will always make submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

SUMMARY



This is a summary of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment.

This report includes an evaluation of national significance and trail feasibility. Three alternatives for the proposed trail are presented, with one alternative recommended by the National Park Service (NPS).

The proposed national historic trail would commemorate the voyages of Captain John Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries during 1607-1609. The proposed national historic trail would also recognize the Native American towns and culture of the seventeenth century; call attention to the natural history of the Bay; complement the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Initiative; and provide new opportunities for education, recreation, and heritage tourism in the Chesapeake Bay region.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Providing protection, public access and interpretation of these historic routes and related resources has been a growing focus of both public and private initiatives in recent years, with the approach to the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown and John Smith's voyages of 1607-1609.

On August 2, 2005, as part of the Fiscal Year 2006 Interior Appropriations Act, President George W. Bush signed Public Law 109-54 and authorized the NPS to study the feasibility of establishing the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail.

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of designating the routes of Captain John Smith's Chesapeake Bay and tributary voyages as a national historic

trail (NHT) under the study provisions of the National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543, 16 USC 1241, et seq.). This report is intended to provide information necessary for the evaluation of national significance and the determination as to whether the designation of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail is feasible and desirable.

EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE, FEASIBILITY, AND SUITABILITY

To qualify as a NHT, a trail must meet three criteria defined in the National Trails System Act (see Appendix A). The criteria are set forth below along with an evaluation of how the proposed Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT meets all three. In addition, the Act requires that the feasibility of designating a trail be determined on the basis of an evaluation of whether it is physically possible to develop a trail and whether the trail is financially feasible.

In addition, the National Trails System Act states that NHTs should generally be “extended trails” at least one hundred miles long. The proposed Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT traces the routes of Smith’s 1607-1609 voyages, totaling about twenty-three hundred miles.

Criterion One for a NHT requires that a proposed trail follow as closely as possible the historic route.

A notable feature of John Smith’s voyages is the detailed journals he wrote and the maps he created. He saw more with his own eyes (and wrote more about it) than any other Englishman then in Virginia. He gathered data for a map that would guide English explorers and settlers for decades to come. The map, which he labored over for months,

distilled the information he had gathered on his voyages from both his own observations and the descriptions given by the Indians. Smith’s map was published in 1612 and formed the basis for his 1624 map as well. Thanks to Smith’s journals and map, most of the routes of the two voyages are known today and are described in detail below.

Criterion Two for a NHT requires that the trail be nationally significant.

Significance statements describe the importance of a trail to the history of the United States. They describe why a trail and its resources are unique within a broader regional, national, and international context. A significance statement for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT was authored by historian John Salmon, and examined by a team of scholars and experts in this subject matter. After revisions, the final statement was approved by the National Park System Advisory Board in March of 2006. The complete Statement of Significance is found in Appendix D. It explains in detail how the trail would meet both Criterion One and Criterion Two.

The proposed Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT is considered to be nationally significant for the Chesapeake Bay and river voyages of Captain John Smith it would commemorate. These voyages first revealed to Europeans the complexity and richness of the Chesapeake Bay region and the key roles the Bay came to play in the development of Great Britain’s Mid-Atlantic colonies. The maps and writings that resulted shaped colonial affairs for more than a century afterwards.

In reviewing the story of Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay voyages and the context in which they occurred, three themes stand out as most immediately related to Smith’s expeditions and their effects: Ethnic Heritage,

Exploration and Settlement, and Commerce and Trade.

- **Ethnic Heritage (Native Americans):** Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because they accelerated the processes that destroyed the Powhatan polity and disrupted the native peoples’ lifeways throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, and established the primacy of English culture in the region and beyond.
- **Exploration and Settlement:** Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of the impact of his subsequent maps and writings on English and colonial policy regarding the exploration and settlement of North America, as well as the transformation of the Bay’s environment.
- **Commerce and Trade:** Captain John Smith’s Chesapeake Bay voyages are nationally significant because of their impact on the commerce and trade of North America and the native peoples.

Criterion Three requires that a proposed NHT have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.

The potential recreational use and historic interest of the proposed Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT are derived from many factors, including the scenic setting of the trail; the existence and integrity of historic sites linked to the voyages; the long-established and substantial use of the Bay and its major tributaries for many types of recreation, including both motorized and non-motorized boating; hundreds of marinas and many other points of public access to the trail; the amount of land already in public or private protection along the voyage routes; and the presence of

a number of sites, partners and institutions in proximity to the trail that can provide interpretation and visitor services.

Finding: The NPS finds that the voyage routes fully meet the criteria for NHTs and recommends federal designation.

ALTERNATIVES

Three alternatives for the management and use of the proposed Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT are presented, including a “No Action” alternative (Alternative A) that would continue current management practices and policies, and two action alternatives (Alternatives B and C). These action alternatives explore different methods of achieving the vision and managing the proposed trail.

Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Existing Policies and Authorities)

The Captain John Smith voyage routes would not be federally designated as a national historic trail. Agencies, organizations, and individuals could continue their various approaches to the protection and interpretation of resources associated with Captain Smith’s voyages. It is unlikely that any single agency or private management entity would help coordinate, interpret, and protect resources and segments of the proposed trail. Recognition, management, and interpretation of the twenty-three hundred miles of potential water trail associated with Captain Smith’s explorations would occur within existing state and local programs. National recognition of the significance of Smith’s travels would occur in a piecemeal fashion.

Water trails developed by Maryland and Virginia and the existing Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network would be the primary

vehicles for telling the stories related to the trail and marketing the resources to the general public. The states, Colonial National Historical Park, National Wildlife Refuges, and members of the Network would implement their trail and interpretive activities focusing on parts of the John Smith story within the context of broader Chesapeake Bay and American Colonial themes. The Gateways Network's many independently managed partner sites would likely continue to enhance interpretation and public access, depending upon available funds and priorities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would continue to install interpretive buoys.

It is anticipated that public access would be provided by those sites now in public ownership. Existing federal, state, and local laws for historic preservation and shoreline protection would continue and private property rights would remain unchanged. County-level planning would continue to balance preservation of historic and cultural resources with the realities of development and shoreline access.

There would be no additional federal funding for this alternative.

**Alternative B:
Federal Designation
as a National Historic Trail
(The Preferred Alternative)**

Under this alternative, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail would be established by Congress as a national historic trail and would be administered by the NPS. This federal role, based on the administrative authorities of the National Trails System Act, includes coordination of resource protection and trail route marking, general oversight and promotion, interagency consultations, cooperative agreements, support of volunteers,

inventorying of high potential sites and segments, coordination of interpretive themes and media, compliance, certification of appropriate sites and segments, provision of limited financial assistance (when such funds are available), and support of the trail's advisory council. The NPS would coordinate closely with other federal agencies, in particular the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) interpretive buoy project, as well as state and local agencies, to coordinate consistent on-the-ground management to make the trail and its various routes and public sites fully available to the public. NPS, through the comprehensive management plan, would determine more precisely the various jurisdictions' roles in resource inventory, protection and monitoring, enforcement, proper use, interpretation, facility development, and maintenance.

One or more nonprofit trail organizations would coordinate with federal and state agencies, counties and municipalities, tribal organizations, landowners, and other interested parties, to assist in long-term planning, maintenance, volunteer recruitment, interpretation, trail and resource protection, and development along the trail's routes and sites.

The water in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries is under the jurisdiction of the bordering states. If the trail is designated a national trail, this would not change. The states have sufficient laws and regulations in place to address issues that may arise as a result of boat traffic along the trail. The establishment of the trail will not have any impact on the existing state and federal regulatory processes, nor place any additional requirements on property owners, regarding dredging or the use, maintenance or construction of marinas, docks, piers, slips, boat ramps or shoreline protection on private

or public lands. This study has determined there will not be a significant impact on private properties as a result of establishing the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT.

Initial federal costs to develop the comprehensive management plan required by this alternative and an initial interpretive brochure are estimated to be \$400 thousand. Phased costs such as access site development, interpretive sign development and installation, and any necessary archeological surveys are unknown at this time and will be estimated during the comprehensive management planning process. It is anticipated that these costs will be the responsibility of the trail partners.

Alternative C: Multi-State Designation as a Commemorative Trail

Under this alternative, the states may designate a Captain John Smith commemorative trail or series of trails, with associated resources to be managed by the states (MD, VA, DC, PA, DE) or a commission or a private entity. This designation is not recognized under the National Trails System Act and would not be a federal

designation or a national trail. The trail can be one entire trail or a series of state designated trails, which may later qualify for designation as a national recreation trail(s). The trail and its resources would be owned and managed by state and local governments or private entities, not the federal government. A local management entity would be created and would develop a comprehensive plan, including strategies for natural and cultural resource protection and interpretation. Given current state budget constraints, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia may lack sufficient resources to undertake a major coordinated initiative without federal support.

Selection of Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative B, federal designation as a NHT, is the environmentally preferred alternative because it provides the greatest degree of resource protection and enhanced visitor experience while allowing for individual property rights, diverse land uses, and balance between the existing population and the creation of a NHT.