



Top: Riverbend Regional Park (photo credit: NPS archive)

Chapter 1

Foundation for Trail Development

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**National Historic and National Scenic Trails
within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
- Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and Scenic Byway

Chapter 1

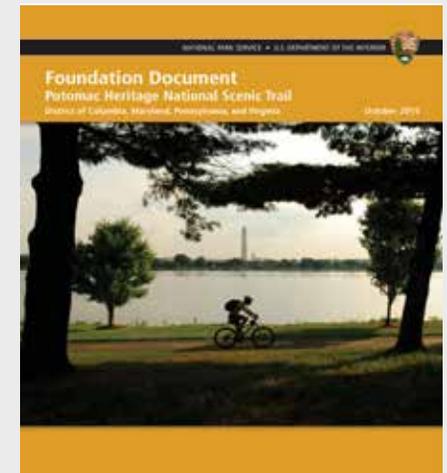
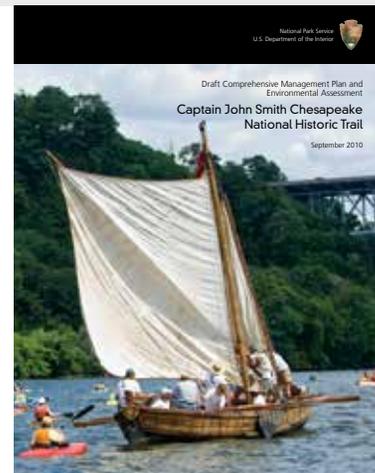
Foundation for Trail Development

Executive Order 13508

In May 2009, President Obama issued Executive Order 13508 on Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration. In the Executive Order, President Obama declared the Chesapeake Bay a “national treasure” and ushered in a new era of federal leadership, action and accountability. The purpose of the Executive Order is “to protect and restore the health, heritage, natural resources, and social and economic value of the nation’s largest estuarine ecosystem and the natural sustainability of its watershed.” The Executive Order contains goals to create new public access to the waters of the Chesapeake and to conserve landscapes to maintain water quality, habitat, sustainable working forests, farms, maritime communities and cultural, community and indigenous values. Specifically, a commitment was made to add 300 new public access sites and protect an additional 2 million additional acres of lands identified as high conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level by 2025 including 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality.

The development potential of these trails is fundamentally affected by 1) the specific objectives defined for the individual trails in their enabling legislation and comprehensive management plans, and 2) the resources and existing conditions upon which development objectives and trail enhancements are predicated.

While there are some federally owned properties along the trail routes, the majority of the public lands along the trails are owned by state park or local government agencies in Virginia and Maryland. Coordination with these agencies' management, development and conservation strategies to identify partnership opportunities for mutually beneficial projects is critical to the goal of promoting the national trails along the Potomac River.



Supporting Legislation and Plans

The National Trails System Act

The National Trails System Act of 1968 (the Act) [82 Stat. 919, Public Law 90-543], as amended, creates a national system of trails to provide for the outdoor recreational needs of an expanding population and to promote the preservation of and access to the outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation. The Act declares that trails should be established primarily near the urban areas of the Nation and secondarily within scenic areas and along historic travel routes. The purpose of the Act is to provide the means for attaining these objectives by instituting a national system of recreation, scenic and historic trails, and by prescribing the methods and standards by which additional components may be added to the system.

Supporting Planning Documents

Comprehensive Management Plans (CMPs) for both the *Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail* (CAJO) and the *Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail* (STSP) provide the guidance needed by the National Park Service (NPS) and partners to achieve the legislative mandates and visions for the trails (and the Star-Spangled Scenic Byway). The Foundation Document: *Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail*, complemented by local and regional plans and by statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plans, provides guidance for NPS staff, trail segment management partners and volunteers in development and management of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Interpretive plans have been completed for all three national trails.



Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (CAJO) commemorates the explorations of Captain John Smith on

the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from 1607 to 1609, tracing approximately 3,000 miles of his voyage routes. Established in 2006, it is the first water-based national historic trail. The promise of the trail is to help millions of people in the region and elsewhere experience, envision, come to understand and care to protect present-day resources that are reminiscent of what explorers and native inhabitants of the region may have experienced over 400 years ago. The trail is significant as: Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake Bay region, and his subsequent writings and maps, encouraged English settlement of Virginia, the Bay area and the eastern seaboard; the Chesapeake Bay region of 1608 was home to complex societies of thousands of native people; and the Bay's rich natural resources helped attract English settlement.

Purposes of the trail are to:

- Commemorate the exploratory voyages of Captain John Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in 1607-1609;
- Share knowledge about the American Indian societies and cultures of the seventeenth century;
- Interpret the (historic and contemporary) natural history of the Bay; and
- Provide recreational land and water experiences on the trail.



"...Heaven and earth have never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation, were it fully manured and inhabited by industrious people. Here are mountains, hills, plaines, valleyes, rivers, and brookes, all running into a faire Bay, compassed but for the mouth, with fruitful and delightsome land. "

-Captain John Smith, Excerpt from publication referencing his maps and observations while exploring the Chesapeake Bay, 1607-1609

Key interpretive themes:

- Captain John Smith's voyages on the Chesapeake, and his subsequent maps and writings, profoundly impacted world politics and the evolution of our nation by spurring European settlement of the Bay region and the eastern seaboard, influencing colonial affairs for more than a century, disrupting the native peoples' lifeways in the mid-Atlantic, and increasing human influences on the Bay environment.
- Substantial and sophisticated societies of native peoples existed in the Chesapeake region centuries before Smith arrived and although their communities were disrupted and some were ultimately displaced by European colonization, many descendant tribes sustain their identities and cultural values in the region today.
- During the 17th century, Captain John Smith encountered a verdant and varied ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay region and though much has changed during the intervening centuries, there are still places where such beauty and diversity endure, and efforts are underway to conserve and restore aspects of the Bay's integrity.

Left: Map of Virginia and Chesapeake Bay inspired by explorations of Captain John Smith in the early 1600s



Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail

The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (STSP) was established in 2008 to commemorate the people, places and events that led to the birth of the

National Anthem during the War of 1812. The trail, coupled with the Maryland- Designated Star-Spangled Banner Scenic Byway, traverses approximately 560 miles of land and water routes in Virginia, the District of Columbia and Maryland along which British forces and American defenders travelled and fought. It traces the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac, Patuxent and Patapsco rivers, along with land routes stretching from Solomons to North Point. The trail commemorates an historic travel route of significance to the entire Nation; is recognized for its potential to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of America's expanding population; and its land and water routes offer outstanding recreational opportunities along the historic roads and scenic waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Purposes of the trail are to:

- Protect the sites, landscapes and routes significant to understanding the people, events and ideals associated with the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region and the story of the Star-Spangled Banner;
- Provide educational and interpretive opportunities related to the War of 1812 and its relevance to modern society; and
- Foster improved opportunities for land- and water-based recreation and heritage tourism.

Key interpretive themes:

- Almost thirty years after gaining independence, Americans resisted a land and water invasion by Great Britain
- Military events in the Chesapeake Bay region became central to the outcomes of a broader three-year struggle that established a foundation for the United States' economic independence and military strength.
- During the War of 1812, individuals in the Chesapeake Bay region endured great political, economic and emotional upheaval and faced personal choices that profoundly impacted domestic life, influenced the evolution of U.S. government and commerce and had ramifications far beyond the battlefield.



- In the early 1800s, the Chesapeake Bay region – due to its central location on the eastern seaboard, network of navigable waterways, robust natural resources and fertile agricultural lands – served as a hub for trade, industry and government, making it a prime target for the British.
- The United States flag and “The Star-Spangled Banner” anthem – symbolizing the resilience of the new nation and the American character – inspired a renewed sense of nationalism in U.S. citizens after the War of 1812. These endure today as potent international icons of the United States of America.



Top: Cannons and Flag at Fort McHenry (photo credit: NPS archive)



Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (POHE) is a developing network of trails between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands in western

Pennsylvania. Authorized in 1983, POHE was also recognized administratively in 1985 as a “unit” of the National Park System. At present, the POHE network includes approximately 710 miles of existing and planned trails and routes, recognized through “memoranda of understanding” between the NPS and various POHE segment management partners in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. As articulated in the Foundation Document:

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail designation provides a means to establish an inter-connected trail network between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands and offers—through partnerships with and among agencies and citizen groups—exceptional hiking and other non-motorized recreational and educational experiences rich with geographic, ecological, historical, and social diversity. With the Potomac River as the namesake and a primary resource, the POHE corridor and evolving network are significant in a national context.

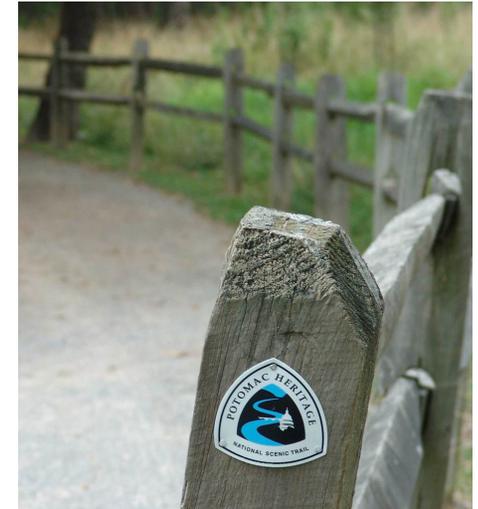
Purposes of the trail are to:

- Provide coordination among citizen groups; local, regional and state agencies; and federal land managers in the development and management of a braided network of trails for hiking and other non-motorized forms of travel within a corridor between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Laurel Highlands of western Pennsylvania;
- Serve as a national meeting ground of ideas and practices, reflecting a desire for the conservation of lands and waters, for educational opportunities combined with outdoor recreation, and for a celebration of regional diversity and distinctiveness;
- Increase environmental awareness for cleaner rivers and streams in the trail corridor; and
- Provide technical assistance and financial support to citizen groups; local, regional and state agencies; and federal land managers in support of the above.



Key Interpretive Themes:

- Between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands, the trail corridor includes portions of five distinct physiographic regions. Each region, in different ways, has inspired and shaped hundreds of human generations with beauty, abundance and utility.
- The corridor designated for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail expresses George Washington’s vision of a “great avenue into the Western Country.” The first president’s association with the Potomac River strengthened his life-long goal of “the practicability of an easy and short communication between the Waters of the Ohio and Potomac.”
- The great national conflict of the Civil War is reflected in microcosm within the trail corridor, with the Potomac River often acting as a boundary between North and South.
- The Potomac River is recognized nationally as a model of successful restoration and serves as an ongoing challenge for sustained ecological health.



- As a boundary between north and south and an east to west route into the North American interior, the Potomac River has been a crossroads of opportunity, diversity and conflict.
- Routes connecting the Potomac River with the Forks of the Ohio provided an essential context for the development of the United States Republic.

Top: Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail marker on fence post (photo credit: Donald E. Briggs)



“Recreational opportunities are premised on reasonable water quality.”

-Don Owen, Potomac River Watershed Circuit Rider, Land Trust Alliance

Top Left: The Cherry Blossom of the Potomac Riverboat Company fleet (photo credit: NPS Chesapeake Bay Office)

Bottom Left: Canoe trailer (photo credit: Sultana Education Foundation Instagram feed)

Top Right: Mount Vernon Trail along the Potomac River (photo credit: NPS archive)

Recreational Opportunities and Visitor Experiences

The Potomac River offers a broad spectrum of visitor opportunities. As the fourth largest river on the Atlantic Coast, the river can vary from Class V rapids to a stream-like route, and from a bustling urban waterway to wide open “big water.” Users can find remote areas with hidden rivers and creeks, as well as busy port towns with ample amenities.

Visitors travel to historic sites, parks and wildlife refuges to reconnect with the outdoors and their heritage. These places and the recreational opportunities they provide are a significant source of the rich quality of life in the Chesapeake region. The existing and developing trails within the Potomac River corridor encompass diverse land and water routes, and connect with an array of public recreation and historic sites. The routes vary from the 18-mile

Mount Vernon Trail, to hiking trails within Douglas Point State Resource Management Area and the Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route, to the 40-mile Occoquan Water Trail and the Point Lookout Water Trail. Driving routes include the George Washington Memorial Parkway and numerous scenic byways. Sites range from the popular Great Falls Park, with an annual visitation of nearly 500,000 visitors, to the remote Friendship Farm Park in southern Maryland.

Recreational and educational experiences offer a forum for visitors to explore the major interpretive themes of each trail. Through the use of recreational facilities and interpretive media and programming, residents and visitors can understand and appreciate Smith’s 17th century explorations on the Bay, American Indian cultures past and present, the ramifications of the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region, and the lasting legacies of America’s colonial period.



“For over 20 years, Atlantic Kayak has been leading paddling tours to significant sites along the Potomac, which pre-dates two of the three national trails represented in this area. Experiences include paddling the bird-rich region of Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve near Alexandria; getting a water-based history tour of Georgetown; and visiting the tribal grounds of the Piscataway Indian Nation along Piscataway Creek. Strengthening the connections to trail resources on these tours with NPS interpretive stories would add to the experience.”

-Judy Lathrop, Owner, Atlantic Kayak Company

Important visitor-related resources include:

- Developed water trails throughout the Bay region
- Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System
- Existing public access sites, including those providing boat launches, beaches, swimming, fishing, camping and wildlife viewing
- Hiking trails and bicycling routes
- Scenic byways and auto tour routes
- Heritage tourism historical and cultural sites
- Federal, state and local parks/protected areas
- Visitor centers and contact stations
- Visitor support services including lodging, food service, rental equipment, etc.

Between Great Falls and Point Lookout, the Potomac River, its tributaries and the sites along their shores offer a wide variety of educational and recreational trail-related visitor experiences. There are a multitude of visitor support facilities, particularly between Great Falls and Mason Neck. The D.C. metropolitan area abounds with visitor attractions and associated amenities. Southern Maryland and Virginia’s Northern Neck boast myriad historic sites and quaint waterfront communities. Interpretive and educational opportunities are available at key sites throughout the Potomac corridor, including the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, the City of Alexandria, National Harbor, Mount Vernon, Piscataway Park and Westmoreland State Park. The three trail designations can serve to support existing and new partnerships necessary to enhance the robust menu of visitor opportunities and connect key sites along the Potomac River.

Top: Paddling along the Occoquan River (photo credit: Chris Spielman)