

River Section 5 – Maryland Peninsula Area



Overview

This river section includes the sites and resources along the Maryland Peninsula portion of the Potomac from approximately Pomonkey Creek below Marshall Hall near Bryans Road, MD (north) to the Port Tobacco River near the 301 Bridge (south). National trail routes for POHE, CAJO and STSP are located within this region. The area is rich in conserved natural landscapes, American Indian heritage, John Smith-related history, and stories related to George Washington, Colonial settlement and agriculture, and War of 1812 British fleet activity and American defenses.

The Potomac surrounds nearly all of this section of south-central Maryland and extends through several wide coves well into the interior of the peninsula. There is relative isolation from adjacent river sections and even from the neighboring state of Virginia due to the shoreline being largely devoid of development and the river width averaging nearly 2 miles. While there are few large towns and a lack of major highways within this river section (The 2010 Census recorded over 150,000 residents in Charles County), there are several public conservation lands and multiple historic sites located here.

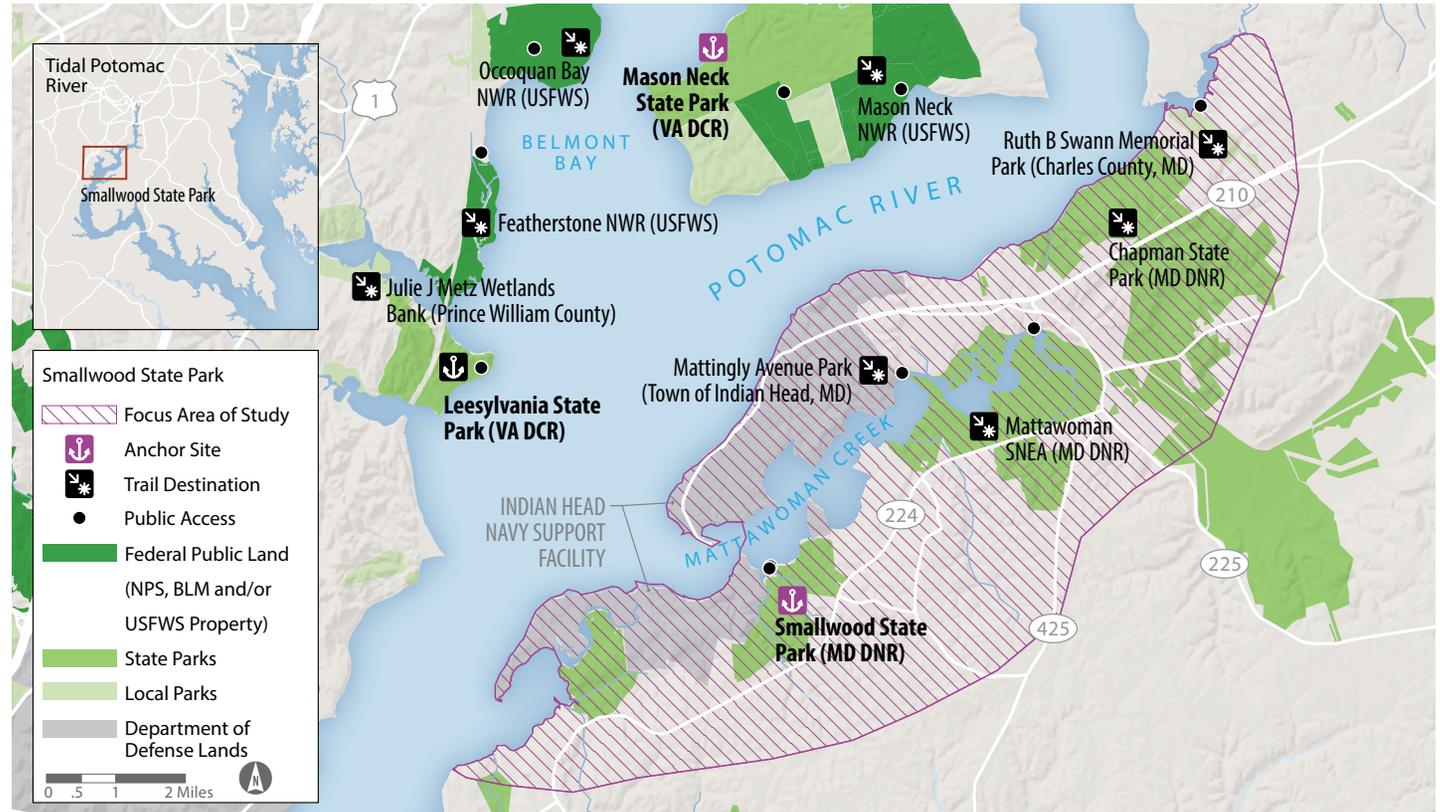
American Indian stories and known significant archeological sites, including those found around Nanjemoy and Mattawoman Creek, have been identified in this region.

This area is characterized by large tracts of undeveloped land and dense vegetation scattered with agricultural and rural residential communities along one of the most pristine shoreline landscapes on the Potomac. Many of these natural landscapes are identified as high priority evocative landscapes in the CAJO and STSP comprehensive management plans (CMPs). Charles County, founded in 1658, retains many of its agricultural characteristics; it was one of the most important regions for tobacco farming and port access in Colonial America, as reflected at Port Tobacco. Many of the first churches in the United States are located within this section and are highlighted along the Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway. It is known that John Wilkes Booth traveled through Charles County while fleeing Washington, D.C. after assassinating Abraham Lincoln. The story of the Ghost Fleet (of sunken ships) at Mallows Bay can be interpreted as part of WWI American Industrialization and as a vital marine ecosystem today.

Top: Fishing tournament at Smallwood State Park (photo credit: MD DNR)

Facilities within this river section include:

- Smallwood State Park (Maryland Department of Natural Resources/MD DNR)
- Chapman State Park (MD DNR)
- Purse State Park (MD DNR)
- Mattawoman State Natural Environmental Area (MD DNR)
- Nanjemoy Natural Resource Management Area (MD DNR)
- Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area (MD DNR)
- Douglas Point Special Recreation Management Area (US Bureau of Land Management/BLM)
- Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area (MD DNR)
- Friendship Farm Park (Charles Co., MD)
- Ruth B. Swan Regional Park (Charles Co.)
- Mattingly Avenue Park (Charles Co.)
- Mallows Bay Park (Charles Co./ MD DNR)
- Port Tobacco Village (Charles Co.)
- Segments of the Religious Freedom Trail (Maryland Scenic Byways Program, Maryland State Highway Administration)
- Segments of the Indian Head Rail Trail (Charles Co.)
- Thomas Stone National Historic Site (NPS)
- Chapel Point State Park (MD DNR)



Trail Components

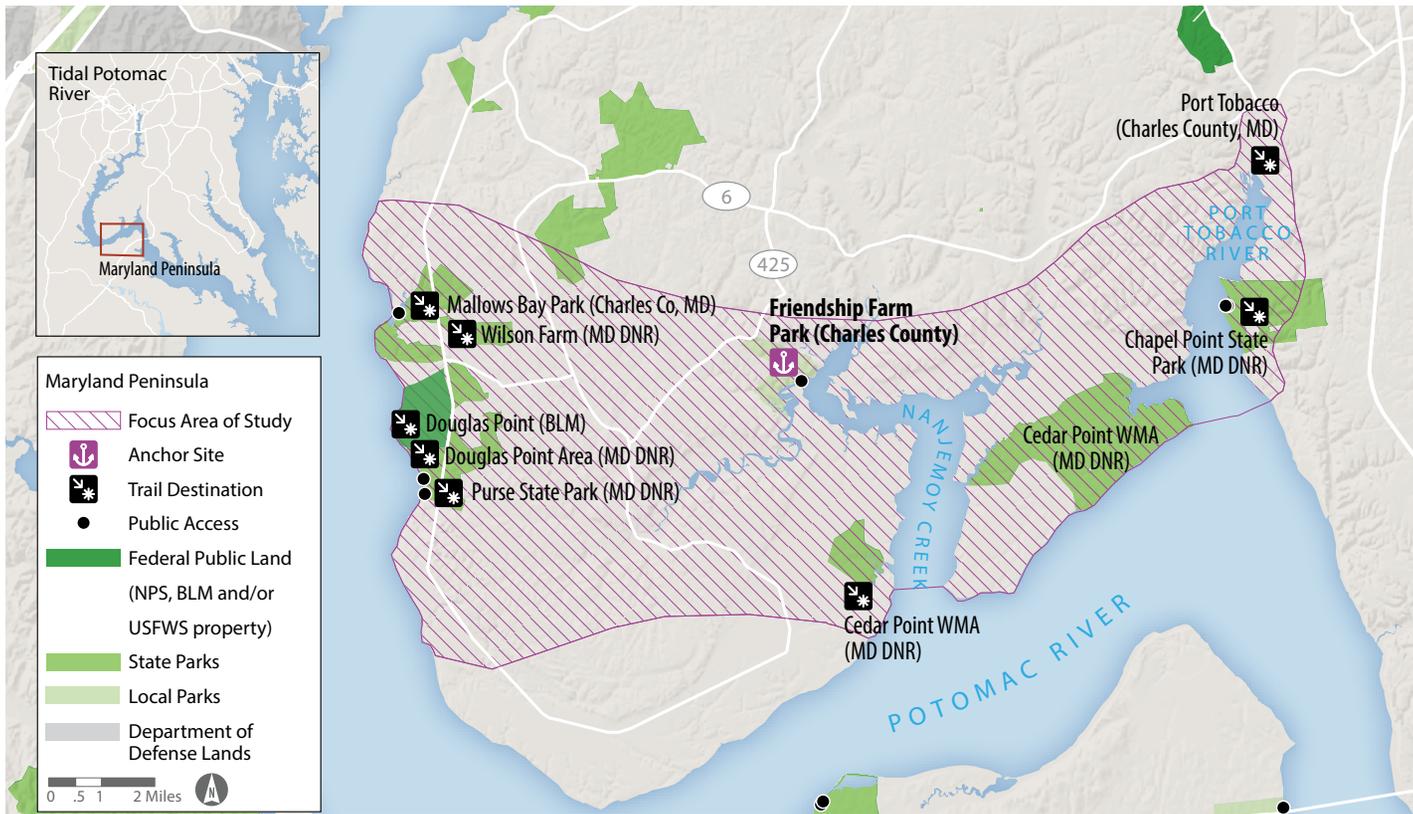
Trail components are existing publicly accessible lands that have been identified to support strategic planning relative to CAJO, STSP and POHE within this river section. The focus areas described below each contain one anchor site, which are viewed as first tier locations for trail development efforts as they already contain significant visitor support facilities. The next level of development would include additional trail components such as destinations and linking routes; enhancements would occur as resources and opportunities become available.

Focus Areas

- **Focus Area #1:** Indian Head, MD to Douglas Point Special Recreation Management Area
- **Focus Area #2:** Friendship Farm Park to Chapel Point State Park

Anchor Sites

- Proposed anchor site for Focus Area #1 is Smallwood State Park.
- **Smallwood State Park** (MD DNR) offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including camping, boating, fishing, hiking and picnicking. A visitor center, nature center, community art studio, museum and a marina are available.



Anchor Sites

Proposed anchor site for Focus Area #2 is Friendship Farm Park.

- **Friendship Farm Park** (Charles County) offers a large range of recreational opportunities including horseback riding, boating, fishing, hiking and picnicking. Sport fields and pavilions are additional facilities located on site.

Trail Destinations

- Chapman State Park; Ruth B. Swann Regional Park; Chapel Point State Park; Purse State Park; Mattawoman State Natural Environmental Area; Nanjemoy Natural Resource Management Area; Douglas Point Recreation Area; Mallows Bay Park; Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area; Mattingly Avenue Park; Port Tobacco Village; Thomas Stone National Historic Site

Linking Routes

- The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail includes a biking trail (Southern Maryland Tidewater Potomac Heritage Bicycle Route) and a hiking trail connecting significant sites and communities within the region. These primarily follow highways and local roads and connect to trail networks and public landings in adjacent river sections.
- The Indian Head Rail Trail is a 13-mile non-vehicular trail between Indian Head, MD and Route 301 in White Plains, MD. Cyclists, hikers and nature enthusiasts can experience the surroundings of mature forests, natural wetlands and occasional farmland.
- Several area paddling tours and cruising boat itineraries have been described in the CAJO Boaters' Guide.
- Public transit options are limited to commuter bus service to/from the Washington, D.C. Metro area; there are no known public bus or bike share programs in this river section.



Top: Mallows Bay (photo credit: Don Shomette Bay Journal article)

Bottom: Douglas Point (photo credit: Glen Brewster)



Linking Routes (continued)

Other trails or connecting routes within the region include:

- Maryland Religious Freedom Byway (200 miles from Port Tobacco to Point Lookout)
- John Wilkes Booth Trail <http://www.civilwartraveler.com/EAST/MD/booth.html>
- The Southern Maryland Arts, Culture and Agricultural trails <http://www.somdtrails.com/index.html>
- Maryland Indian Heritage Trail (under development)
- Water Trails in Charles County – Mattawoman Creek Water Trail; Lower Potomac River Water Trail; Friendship Farm Park Water Trail; Port Tobacco River Trail http://www.charlescounty.org/webdocs/tourism/publications/CC_Water_Trail_Map.pdf
- Several area paddling tours and cruising boat itineraries have been described in the CAJO Boaters' Guide.

Support Services

- The towns of Indian Head and La Plata have the highest concentration of commercial services. With close proximity to many of the parks and public land unit entrances, these towns offer a variety of restaurants, retail operations, lodging options and gas stations.

Top: Chapel Point State Park shoreline (photo credit: NPS Chesapeake Bay Office)

Bottom: Mattawoman State Natural Area site that appears to be used for informal paddle craft launching (photo credit: NPS Chesapeake Bay Office)

Top right: Friendship Farm Park in Charles County, MD (photo credit: NPS Chesapeake Bay Office)

Key Stories and Associated Resources

The following key stories associated with CAJO, STSP and POHE themes are relevant to the various trail components in this river section:



Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT

(Smith's explorations, American Indian cultures, natural history of Bay)

- Smith mapped the town of Potopaco here, but recorded no stories of interaction with the Indians or other adventures.
- Areas along the waterways of present-day Maryland were inhabited for thousands of years by various cultures of distinct indigenous peoples. At the time of European exploration, this coastal area along the Port Tobacco River was the territory of the Potopaco, whose settlement was mapped by John Smith. Overall, the largest tribe on the north side of the Potomac River was the Piscataway, which later absorbed some of the smaller tribes of the area.
- Research on the identification and mapping of Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs) as mentioned in the CMP have begun on the Maryland Peninsula. It is anticipated that high probable areas of ICL resources will be identified.

Features that support these stories include: evocative landscapes including Indigenous Cultural Landscapes; American Indian archeological findings in areas along the river; Mattawoman Creek; Nanjemoy Creek



Star-Spangled Banner NHT

(military events, individual contributors, Bay region as hub, icons of war)

- Battle of Indian Head (September 5-6, 1814)
- Mustering sites and camps for American Troops at Port Tobacco
- Observation posts atop a 90 foot hill near Chapel Point established by the U.S. Navy to observe British ship movements on the Potomac

Features that support these stories include: Indian Head Gun Battery Site, Chapel Point State Park, St. Ignatius Catholic Church; St. Thomas Manor; Port Tobacco Village



Potomac Heritage NST

(meeting ground of conservation ideas and practices, five physiographic regions, crossroads of opportunity, development of U.S. Republic)

- Port Tobacco Village, established in 1685 as a naval port for the British, is home to the Historic Port Tobacco Court House. The town remained a major port through the end of the Revolutionary War and is the original location of the Potopaco natives.
- Sweden Point Marina (at Smallwood State Park) was not always known as Sweden Point. It was once referred to as Sweetman's Landing. The area that is referred to as Grinder's Wharf (which is only a few exposed pilings today) was built on a naturally deep water channel in the Mattawoman Creek. The Grinder family was one of the major brick manufacturers in the Chicamuxen area. They in turn used Grinders Wharf to ship their brick out to the wholesalers. In the mid-1800s the wharf was used by the Washington Steamship Lines on the Potomac. The steamers would pick up water on their journey south to the Chesapeake Bay.
- Mallows Bay has the largest assemblage of historic shipwrecks in the US and is home to the largest "ghost fleet" of WWI wooden steamships - part of a massive national wartime program. Its archaeological and cultural resources cover centuries of history from the earliest Native American presence in the region to the roles that this area played in the Revolutionary, Civil and two World Wars, as well as in successive regimes of Potomac River fishing industries. In recognition of the ecologic, historic and cultural significance of this area, Mallows Bay is currently being considered for designation in the National Historical Register of Places (NHRP) and as a National Marine Sanctuary.
- Mount Aventine manor house, one of Charles County's most important antebellum houses, is located at Chapman State Park. The manor is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), was used as a signal point for Federal troops during the Civil War and retains its original patent boundaries from 1673.
- The Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway (NSB) exhibits offer self-guided interpretation of religious tolerance and separation of church and state at many of the nation's oldest churches and at significant sites within the river section.

Features that support these stories include: Port Tobacco Village; Mallows Bay Park; Chiles Homesite; Christ Episcopal Church Durham; Douglas Point Recreation Area, Thomas Stone National Historic Site; Smallwood State Park; Mattawoman SNEA



Top: Osprey at Mallows Bay (photo credit: Christopher A Koberg)

Proposed Trail Enhancements and Implementation Strategies

In addition to the cross cutting strategies which apply to all river sections, this river section provides or has near-term potential to provide a wide variety of desired visitor experiences for different types of trail users. Providing optimal trail-related visitor experiences in a way that highlights this area's resources, primary features and key stories could best be achieved as follows:

Site	Trail Component	Action	Description
Focus Area #1 - Indian Head to Douglas Point SRMA			
Smallwood State Park	 Anchor Site	Install Interpretive Kiosk	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of a three-panel kiosk installed at an area of congregation with CAJO, STSP and POHE panels to orient users to the Trails in a larger context and identify key trail spots along the Potomac River specifically within the Southern Maryland river section. The POHE panel on the exhibit could describe the military history of the site. CAJO and STSP panels could also relate site-specific information and also identify Trail sites to be seen further along the river to encourage visitors to explore beyond their immediate area and to understand where they are located in context to the entire Trail routes.
		Enhance Trail-Specific Interpretive Programs	Consider expanding, as resources allow, existing visitor programs, events and guided tours to include trail-specific information.
		Develop Watermen Heritage Tours	Explore potential to work with watermen in this area that may be interested in participating in the Watermen Heritage Tourism Training Program. Share NPS/approved written scripts to develop custom Watermen Heritage Tours if appropriate.
		Develop Paddle Itineraries	Launching from Smallwood State Park paddle itineraries could be developed that take people on Mattawoman Creek. Other tours, covering evocative landscapes, could potentially be developed which could connect with Friendship Farm Park, Chapel Point State Park, and/or Port Tobacco Marina.
		Expand Ferry Route	Smallwood State Park has a large marina that is within range of Mount Vernon and National Harbor. An evaluation could be made of the feasibility of extending the charter boat service and ferry south to Smallwood State Park from the Mount Vernon to National Harbor ferry route.
		Expand Water Craft Rentals	As staffing and funding permit, the possibility of providing seasonal canoe and kayak rentals could be considered.
		Provide Interpretation for Non-accessible DOD Lands	NSF Indian Head is visible from Smallwood State Park. Consideration could be given to the possible installation of interpretive panels at the park which could tell the story of the Posey Archeological Site, the Navy Proving Grounds and Powder Factory at Indian Head. This facility may not have the shoreline restrictions that other military institutions enforce, interpretation of the 5 historic districts reflective of important American Indian history could be explored.
Chapman State Park	 Trail Destination	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of Interpretive panels showing each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as referring visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
		Provide Camping Opportunities	When staffing and funding allow, consideration could be given to providing water-to-land primitive permit-only camping and related visitor facilities or improving an existing structure for overnight use.
Ruth B. Swann Regional Park	 Trail Destination	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	At trailheads, consideration could be given to interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be expanded/developed to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
Mallows Bay Park	 Trail Destination	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	Consideration could be given to the potential of installing interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
		Expand Camping Opportunities	If staffing and funding permit, consideration to incorporate water-to-land primitive permit-only campsites and related visitor facilities could be explored.
		Enhance POHE Interpretation	At Mallows Bay, the sunken wooden transport ships from the World War I era provide an exciting itinerary to explore shipwrecks and ecologic succession turning the wooden boats into habitat in the shallows of the Potomac shoreline. The potential of installing interpretive panels connecting these features to POHE and orienting the visitor to the larger trail-routes could be considered.

Site	Trail Component	Action	Description	
Focus Area #1 - Indian Head to Douglas Point SRMA				
Douglas Point Special Recreation Management Area		Trail	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	
		Destination	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.	
			Provide Wayfinding Signs	BLM is exploring installation of a wayfinding sign(s) for POHE bicycling routes and other uses such as the water-to-land soft landing at Douglas Point SRMA.
			Expand Camping Opportunities	Consideration, as staffing and funding allow, to incorporate water-to-land primitive permit-only campsites and related visitor facilities could be explored.
		Add Geocaching Site	BLM could consider the addition of a geocaching site as a way to introduce visitors to trail destinations.	
Mattawoman State Natural Environmental Area		Trail Destination	Enhance Public Access	
			An informal canoe/kayak launch at the end of Mattawoman Creek Road is currently being used for trips in and around Mattawoman Creek. The feasibility, as resources allow, of developing a formal launch site could be explored at this site to support additional paddling destination in the area such as Smallwood State Park and Mattingly Avenue Park.	
Mattingly Avenue Park		Trail Destination	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	
			Consideration could be given to the potential installation of interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.	
Indian Head Rail Trail		Linking Route	Trail Enhancements and Interpretation	
			Consideration could be given to providing signage at the trail head to tell the story of the White Plains Railroad. Appropriate signage on the trail could potentially help to show connections and provide interpretation and orientation for POHE, CAJO and STSP.	
Maryland Indian Heritage Trail		Linking Route	Trail Development and Interpretation	
			Opportunity to tell the correct American Indian story at key sites and link with other trail(s) resources. Interpret history of what was happening prior to Smith and European contact.	
Private Outfitters		Linking Route	Expand Public Transportation Service	
			Expansion of water taxi service could be considered to connect Smallwood to Piscataway and/or Fort Washington to the north, along with routes further south to Fairview Beach or Dahlgren Wayside Park in Virginia.	
Private Development		Support Services	Expand Trails Related Information	
			Mattingly Avenue Park, Sweden Point Marina, Aqualand Marina, Captain Billy's Crab House, Gilligan's Pier, Crabby Dick's and Port Tobacco Marina are areas where the public currently access the Potomac River via boat ramps, restaurants and marine-related service. Installing signage and giving the restaurants rack cards or paper menus with trail-specific park and significant site locations in close proximity to their establishment could be an effective way to reach a larger audience of existing Potomac river users.	
Focus Area #2 - Friendship Farm Park to Chapel Point State Park				
Friendship Farm Park		Anchor Site	Enhanced Facility Development	
			Charles County is implementing a development concept to expand services offered at this site. Elements include constructing a nature/interpretive center, events barn, amphitheater, hiking trails, boat and kayak launch, wedding venue, picnic and playground areas. Communication with the County is recommended to determine if they would be eligible to apply for future NPS Financial Assistance awards to strengthen the bonds between the County Park and national trails.	
			Add Interpretive Kiosk and Other Interpretive Panels	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of a three-panel kiosk installed at an area of congregation with CAJO, STSP and POHE panels to orient users to the Trails in a larger context and identify key trail spots along the Potomac River specifically within the Southern Maryland river section. The POHE panel on the exhibit could describe the military history of the site. CAJO and STSP panels could also relate site-specific information and also identify Trail sites to be seen further along the river to encourage visitors to explore beyond their immediate area and to understand where they are located in context to the entire Trail routes. Other interpretive signage could be considered on trail locations as appropriate.
			New Camping Opportunities	Consideration could be given to incorporate water-to-land primitive campsites, permit-only, and overnight car and RV campsites and related visitor facilities at this site.
			Expand Boat Launch Parking	The feasibility of expanding the existing parking capacity at the boat launch area or in close proximity to it to allow for more users could be explored.
		Provide Water Craft Rentals	As staffing and funding permit, opportunities to offer seasonal boat, canoe and kayak rentals could be considered.	

Site	Trail Component	Action	Description	
Focus Area #2 - Friendship Farm Park to Chapel Point State Park				
Chapel Point State Park		Trail	Enhance Public Access	When future plans for this site are considered, expanding visitor services to include new or improved universally accessible canoe and kayak launches, fishing piers and/or stabilized shoreline fishing areas could be explored.
		Destination	Provide Camping Opportunities	If applicable in future park management strategy, consideration to incorporate water-to-land primitive permit-only campsites and related visitor facilities could be explored.
			Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area		Trail	Enhance Public Use	When future plans for this site are considered, the potential may exist to explore a universally accessible canoe/kayak launch, shore fishing areas, new wildlife viewing sites and the feasibility of primitive water-to-land permit-only campsites.
Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area		Trail	Enhance Public Access	As staffing and funding allow, the potential of improving the existing paddle craft soft launch and primitive campsite could be explored. An appropriate toilet facility is needed for the site.
Port Tobacco Village		Trail	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of Interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
		Destination	Expand Trail System	Consideration to connect the existing trail system at the Village to new hiking trails leading to the water and marshes of Port Tobacco River could be explored.
Thomas Stone National Historic Site		Trail	Enhance Interpretive Signage/Information	Consideration could be given to the potential installation of Interpretive panels highlighting each of the parks in this river section giving context to how the individual sites fit into the larger stories of CAJO, STSP and POHE, as well as refer visitors to additional significant sites in the area. Touring itineraries could be developed or expanded to help visitors reach key park sites, river access points, and other trail-related points of interest.
Potomac Heritage Trail		Linking Route	Trail Enhancements	Consider consolidating and unifying the variety of different trails in this river section - specifically the signage along the roadways and sites along the highways - to offer a clear message to visitors about POHE. Civil War stories, historic slavery stories, Naval history, oldest active ordinance facility, steamboat era and Potomac as transportation corridor could be considered for incorporation into POHE interpretation in this section of the river.
Maryland Religious Freedom Byway		Linking Route	Trail Linkage and Signage	Consideration to consolidate and unify the variety of different trails in this river section - specifically the signage along the roadways and sites along the highways - to offer a clear message to visitors could be explored. Incorporation of action items highlighted in the Common Interpretive Strategy document published in October 2014 will be applied as appropriate.
Multi-Agency Trail Potential		Linking Route	Develop Linking Trail System	Coordination between Charles County, BLM, and MD DNR could potentially result in a multi-agency effort to connect existing trails within Douglas Point NRMA, Douglas Point SRMA, Mallows Bay Park, Purse State Park and Wilson Farm. This could potentially, as funds and resources allow, create a non-motorized trail route from Mallows Bay to Douglas Point SRMA and include themes and interpretation related to the national trails.
Three Notch Trail		Linking Route	Trail Enhancements	Efforts to expand Three Notch Trail are currently on-going; there is a long term goal to connect to the Indian Head Rail Trail. Work to support these efforts and include Trail-specific themes where applicable could be considered.
Maryland Indian Heritage Trail		Linking Route	Develop New Trail Linkage and Access	Planning efforts to connect CAJO trail resources, specifically American Indian historic resources and present-day sites of cultural significance, to the Maryland Indian Heritage Trail should be coordinated. Inclusion of pre-Colonial or pre-history American Indian stories before John Smith's era could be interpreted through this connection.
Private Campgrounds		Support Services	Develop New Public Campgrounds	Consideration to incorporate or expand water-to-land primitive, group permit-only and overnight car and RV campsites and related visitor facilities could be explored at private marinas such as Aqualand Marina, Goose Bay Marina and Camp Merrick.