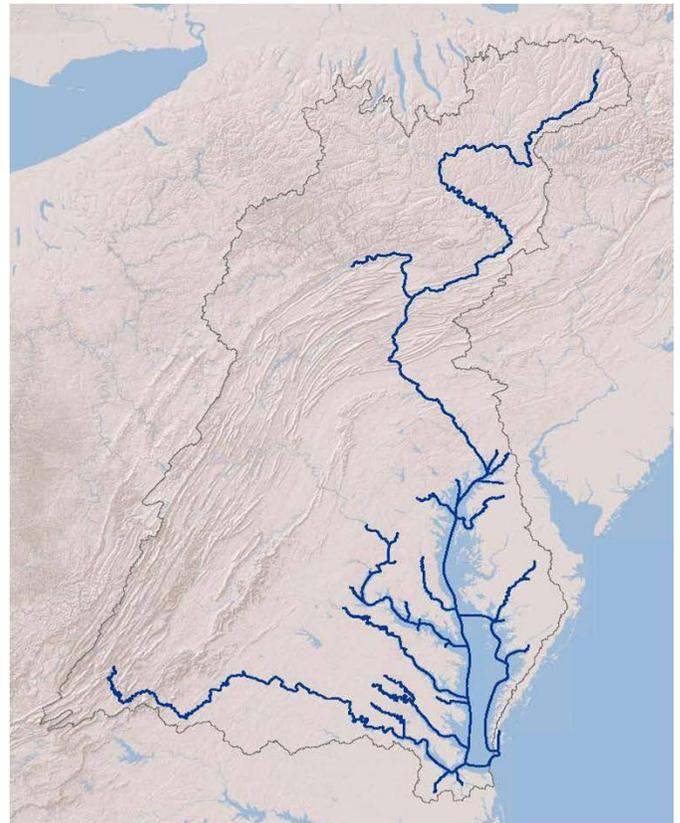




# State of the Trail Report

December 2013





## **Progress on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail**

This report provides a concise overview of the “state of the John Smith Trail” in 2013. It describes the status of continuing efforts to connect visitors with trail experiences, expand access to the trail, conserve landscapes that support visitor experiences and build partnerships for developing and managing the trail.

This report cannot hope to capture everything going on along a trail that extends from Norfolk, Virginia to Cooperstown, New York. But it does attempt to describe many of the important partnership efforts of the past several years--and their results. This includes trail-focused work being undertaken by many partners and the National Park Service.

Making the trail real is now the priority. The John Smith Trail is still very young, and its scope--made even larger in 2012 when expanded along the Susquehanna, Upper James, Chester and Upper Nanticoke rivers -- is vast. Full realization of the trail’s vision will occur over many years, and at different rates in different segments. But, progress is being made, as described in this report. The “State of the Trail” is organized around four key strategies:

- Connect people to trail experiences
- Improve access to the trail
- Conserve landscapes supporting visitor experiences
- Build and sustain collaborative partnerships for the trail

In addition to describing our collective accomplishments, this report also identifies near-term opportunities for the NPS, the Advisory Council, and partners to continue to provide interpretative and educational programming, expand access to the trail, and protect resources over the next two years.

# Connecting People with Trail Experiences

The John Smith Trail is fundamentally about providing ways for people to experience the stories and places important to American Indians, explored by John Smith and still evocative of the Chesapeake of long ago. Efforts to connect people with these experiences have focused on:

- Providing interpretive, educational and recreational programs along the trail
- Introducing the trail through digital media
- Marking the trail
- Developing trail maps & guides

## ***Programs along the Trail***

A number of partner organizations are leading regular interpretive, educational or recreational programs focused on experiencing different aspects of the trail. In addition, NPS and partners have created several self-guided programs. Examples include:

- *Sultana Projects Canoe & Kayak Trips*: Sultana Projects provides a regular schedule of guided paddling trips along the Trail, especially on the SassafRAS, Chester and Nanticoke rivers. Programs are in place for five-day overnight trips for kids and general paddling tours for all.
- *Captain John Smith Trail Chesapeake Bay Sea Kayaking Peer Leadership Expeditions*: Outward Bound Baltimore and the Chesapeake Conservancy have partnered to create a five day course for students focusing on conservation-based service projects and exploring the intersection of the natural and cultural history of the Chesapeake Bay.
- *James River Expeditions*: The James River Association, with support of Dominion Foundation, has offered extended summer canoeing trips along the James River segment of the trail since 2011. The 2013 expedition entailed three 8-day trips involving 8 schools, 7 teachers, and 36 students.
- *Site-based programs*: A number of sites along the trail offer various interpretive programming directly related to the trail, such as living history programs at Henricus Historical Park on the James.
- *Junior Ranger*: This program lets children learn about the trail from afar. Kids from ages 6 to 12 can download and complete the trail's Junior Ranger activity book and earn their own Junior Ranger badge for the trail.
- *Captain John Smith Geotrail*: Geocaching is a self-guided adventure game of seeking treasure with the help of a GPS device and clues. Worldwide, over 6 million people participate, and over 2 million caches have been placed – 59 of those caches are placed at partner sites along the John Smith Trail and thousands of people have visited them. Since the Geotrail opened in 2011, close to 350 trail geocoins have been awarded to participants who visit at least 20 caches.
- *Passport Cancellation Stamps*: Passport cancellation stamps are offered at three partner locations along the trail. Most collectors of cancellation stamps have a stamp passport book purchased through NPS partner Eastern National.

Consistently, NPS has heard that expanding these kinds of programs--especially guided programs--are essential to building visibility and use of the trail.



*Students on the James River Expedition*



*Students visit with a Living History interpreter at Henricus Historical Park*



*Sultana Projects offers young students experiences on the John Smith Trail*



*Young geocachers explore a cache container at Piscataway Park*

# Connecting People with Trail Experiences

## Digital Connections

Two websites help people learn about the trail – what it is, where to go, and what to do. The official NPS portal – [www.nps.gov/cajo](http://www.nps.gov/cajo) -- is complemented by [www.smithtrail.net](http://www.smithtrail.net) which includes more robust interactive capabilities.

Chesapeake Explorer, the official NPS mobile app for the Chesapeake Bay, includes all partner sites along the John Smith Trail, provides site information, suggested tours, custom tours, and is searchable by activity. In July, August, and September, 2013, the Baltimore CBS affiliate, WJZ-TV, and insurance company GEICO produced and aired three vignettes promoting the mobile app and encouraging people to use it to visit the trails.

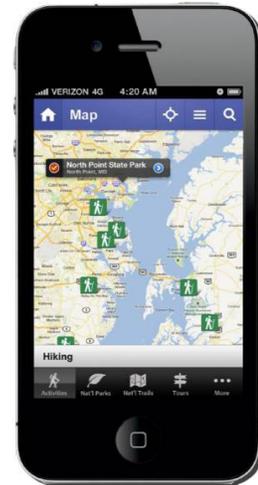
The trail is building a presence on social media via Facebook and Twitter. Efforts are currently focused on posting with simplicity to build audience. @ChesapeakeNPS and #ChesapeakeNPS.

## Marking the Trail

Recent trail marking has focused on installing orientation kiosks at 33 significant visitor sites along the trail, including 14 state parks in Virginia and Maryland. These three-sided kiosks include two panels, standard for all locations, and one site-specific or area-specific panel. Kiosks are installed at fourteen of the sites (indicated by an asterisk below) with installation of the others scheduled by April 2014.

Kiosk coverage by segment:

- *Tidal James* (including Chickahominy and Nansemond): ten kiosks installed or in process -- Chickahominy Riverfront Park\*, Chippokes Plantation State Park\*, Fort Monroe National Monument, Henricus Historical Park\*, Historic Jamestowne, Lawrence Lewis Jr Park, Windsor Castle Park (Smithfield), Bennetts Creek Landing, Sleepy Hole Park, and Constance Wharf. This substantially completes initial kiosk priorities as identified in James segment plan. Note there is also an extensive series of interpretive panels installed at sites along the James as part of John Smith's Adventures on the James developed by Virginia DCR.
- *York River*: two kiosks installed -- York River State Park\*, Waterman's Museum\*.
- *Tidal Rappahannock*: six kiosks installed or in process -- City Dock Park, Mount Landing Creek Water Trail, Deltaville Maritime Museum, Prince Street Tappahannock, Urbanna Town Marina, Belle Isle State Park\*.
- *Tidal Potomac*: eight kiosks installed or in process -- Caledon State Park\*, Leesylvania State Park\*, Mason Neck State Park\*, Piscataway Park/Accokeek, Point Lookout State Park, Smallwood State Park, Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve\*, Westmoreland State Park\*.
- *Nanticoke River*: two kiosks installed or in process -- Delaware Nanticoke River Water Trail, Town of Vienna\* . Note there are also four interpretive panels installed throughout Dorchester County.
- *Lower Susquehanna River*: one kiosk installed or in process -- Susquehanna State Park. Note there are also four interpretive panels installed along the Havre de Grace promenade.
- *Mid-Bay & Lower Eastern Shore*: six kiosks installed or in process -- First Landing State Park\*, Kiptopeke State Park\*, Sandy Point State Park, Janes Island State Park, North Point State Park, Hughlett Point Natural Area.



The mobile app Chesapeake Explorer helps visitors find trail sites and activities.



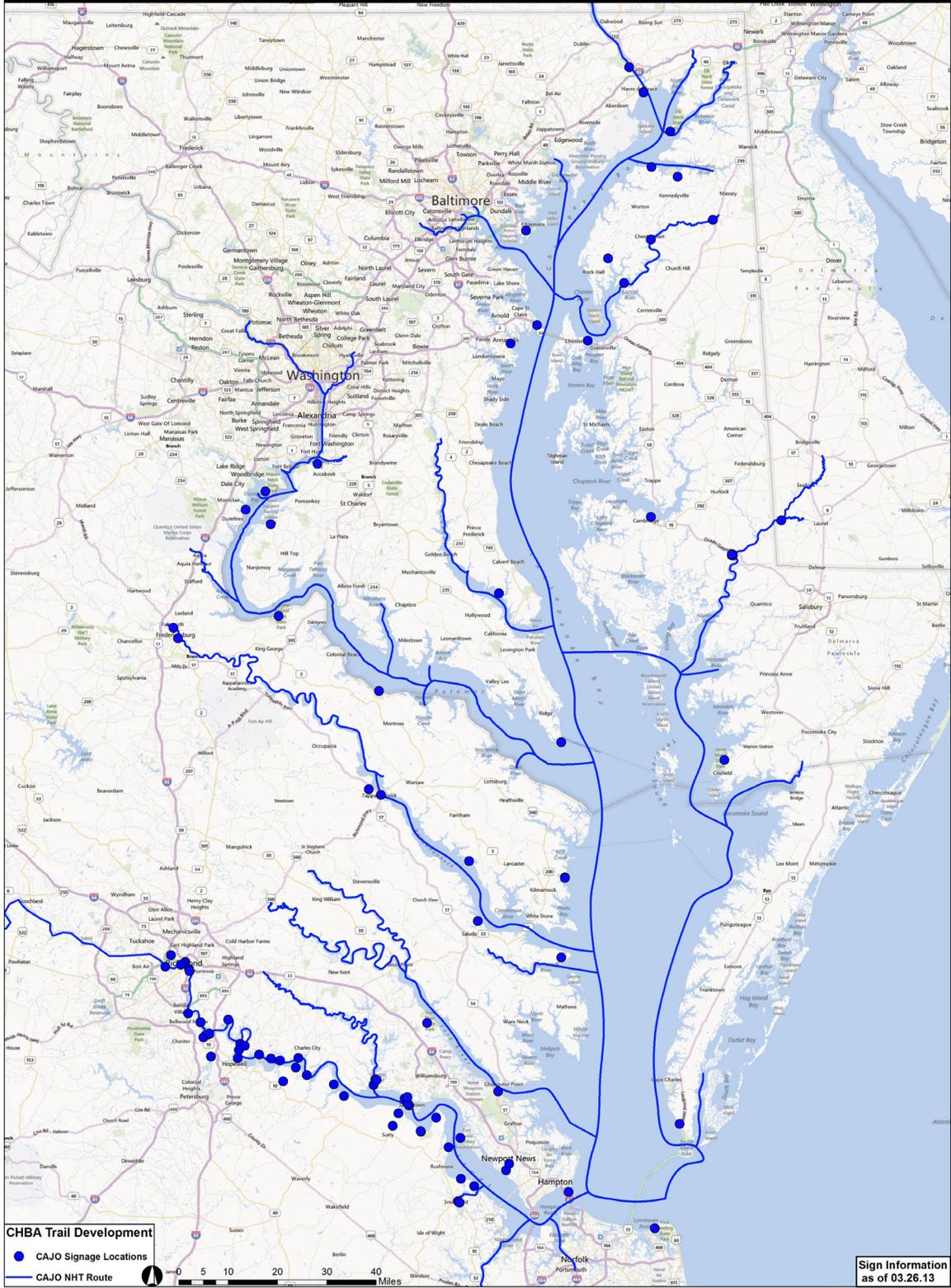
The entrance sign at Kings Landing Park in southern Maryland lets visitors know they are visiting the John Smith Trail.



Three-sided kiosk installed at Henricus Historical Park overlooking the James River.

# CAJO Existing and Proposed Interpretive Signs

National Park Service | Chesapeake Bay Office



**CHBA Trail Development**

- CAJO Signage Locations
- CAJO NHT Route

Sign Information as of 03.26.13

## Connecting People with Trail Experiences

Consistent trail access site waymarking is in place at thirty-three public access sites along the Sassafras and Chester river segments of the trail, but not yet in most other locations.

Efforts to provide way-finding signage or marking of the trail along key roads has not yet been initiated.

### Trail Maps & Guides

The overall trail brochure originally published in 2007 is outdated. A completely new trail brochure following the NPS unigrd system is under development and planned for distribution by the 2014 summer visitor season. It will complement the recently published brochure for the Star-Spangled Banner Trail.

Map/guides for specific trail segments are in place or under development for several river corridors:

- **Anacostia River:** A new map/guide to the Anacostia Water Trail, part of both the John Smith Trail and Star-Spangled Banner Trail, is nearing completion through a partnership with the Anacostia Watershed Society. This follows the NPS unigrd format.
- **James River:** A new map-guide to the tidal James segment of the trail will begin development soon and is projected for distribution by the summer 2014 visitor season.
- **Sassafras River:** Sultana Projects published a new map-guide for this segment of both national trails in 2012.
- **Chester River:** Sultana Projects also published a new map-guide for the Chester river segment of the John Smith Trail in 2012.
- **Chickahominy River:** The James River Association published a map-guide for the lower Chickahominy River segment of the trail in 2008.

The Boater's Guide to the John Smith Trail was published in 2011, identifying 52 itineraries for boaters along many portions of the trail. In 2014, NPS will be working with the American Canoe Association and other partners to evaluate how the existing guide is working and pilot enhancements and expansions, including Star-Spangled Banner itineraries, along the Potomac.

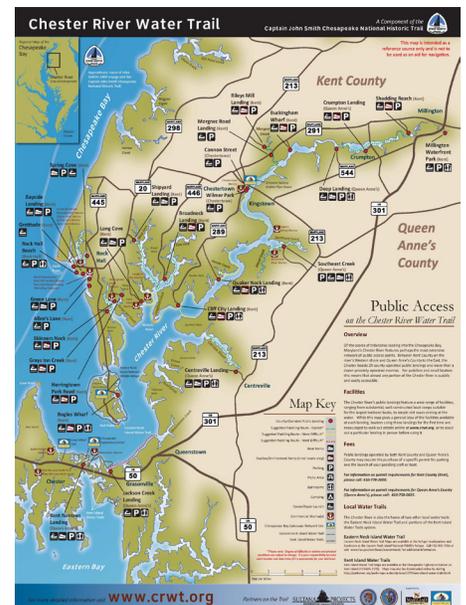
### Gaps to Fill

Developing the full suite of programs and media for connecting visitors to trail experiences is a major, long-term undertaking. Key gaps to address in the coming two years could include:

- Creating and implementing a strategy for engaging partners and outfitters in providing recognized or certified trail interpretive, educational and recreational programs.
- Implementation of priority projects identified through segment plans.
- Designing and carrying out a certified trail ambassadors program to engage partners at scores of sites in communicating with visitors and supporting trail tourism.
- Updating kiosk panel designs and other media to incorporate the 2012 trail expansion.



Sandy Point State Park (photo by Middleton Evans)



Trail partner Sultana Projects completed map guides for the Chester River and the Sassafras River.



Boys enjoy bank fishing at Point Lookout State Park (photo by Sarah Rogers).

# Improving Access to the Trail

There are hundreds of public access sites along the more than 2,000 mile route of the trail. However, many trail segments have large gaps with little or no easy public access for getting on or off the water. For example, along the southern shoreline of the James River there is one stretch of more than sixty miles with no public access sites. In addition, there is a growing interest in options for boat-in camping along the trail to allow for multi-day paddling trips; camping options are even more limited than public access sites.

Filling strategic gaps in trail access is a priority; this fits within the broader Chesapeake watershed goal of adding 300 new access sites by 2025. NPS collaborates with a Public Access Action Team to advance progress toward this goal and completed the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan* in 2013 to guide overall efforts. Trail segment plans provide further detail identifying specific access priorities along river segments.

Many partners are working to increase access along the trail. NPS provides technical and financial assistance to support access site planning and development. For 2013, NPS set development of canoeing and kayaking access sites along the James, Rappahannock, Nanticoke, Potomac, Patuxent and Lower Susquehanna as its top priorities.

## Access along the James River

A *Plan for the James River Segment* outlined a series of actions for making the trail real including several access improvements. Access sites developed over the past two years or that are now in development are advancing the plan along the James segment of the trail. These include:

- **Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park Boat Launch:** This launch, long-sought by Charles City County, opened in 2013 as John Smith Trail partners marshalled funding to support construction. Funding from Dominion Foundation, the Chesapeake Conservancy and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) added to county monies to fill this major gap in access on the north side of the James. In addition, YCC crews constructed a new beach access trail which now provides an additional opportunity for launching paddle craft and a beach fishing area.
- **Mill Creek Canoe/Kayak Launch at Fort Monroe:** NPS financial and technical assistance helped open a new universally accessible canoe/kayak launch in 2013 along Mill Creek at Fort Monroe National Monument.
- **Nansemond River sites:** The City of Suffolk, with funding support from Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, is in the process of developing two new public access sites on the Nansemond River. These will be the first two public access sites on the river, one at Sleepy Hole Park and the other at Constance Wharf, both with universally accessible kayak/canoe launches. They will be key sites supporting the trail.
- **Turkey Island Creek:** Trail partners are working with VDOT and Henrico County to develop a new public access site for the James River at the Rt. 5 crossing of Turkey Island Creek. This site was identified in the James Segment Plan and would provide paddle craft access to the James River and Presquile National Wildlife Refuge and support the Capital Bike Trail running from Jamestown to Richmond. The James River Association, with support from the Chesapeake Conservancy, is coordinating planning with the partners and VDOT. The project may be feasible for development in late 2014.
- **Eco-Discovery Park:** Two new public access options have been opened at this site in the past year, including a new paddle craft launch and a trail with bank fishing opportunities on Powhatan Creek. The site is owned by James City County.
- **Presquile National Wildlife Refuge:** JRA developed a new board walk with a soft



People get ready for a paddling excursion with Chesapeake Experience at Eco-Discovery Park.



A new boat launch was opened in summer 2013 at Lawrence Lewis, Jr. Park.



The universally accessible paddle launch received media attention when it opened at Fort Monroe National Monument in summer, 2013.

## Improving Access to the Trail

launch for paddle craft at the refuge. The soft landing allows for access to and from the refuge via the James River and a tidal creek by permit from the USFWS.

- *Upper Chickahominy River (major tributary to James):* Two new hand carry access projects are proposed for development by JRA with support funding from NPS. These will enhance access to a large section of the upper portion of the river.
- *Elizabeth River site:* NPS financial assistance is supporting the addition of an ADA compliant kayak/canoe launch at a popular public motor boat launch area in Great Bridge Lock Park. The launch site will allow paddlers safe and direct access to the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River and beyond.



*Presquile National Wildlife Refuge*

### **Access along the Rappahannock River**

- *Old Mill Park:* NPS financial assistance helped the Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) develop a canoe/kayak launch at Old Mill Park on the Rappahannock River in Fredericksburg, VA. Other contributing partners include the City of Fredericksburg, Chesapeake Conservancy, Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, and the American Canoe Association.
- *Port Royal:* This project will provide for a small launch ramp and a fishing pier near the Rt 301 bridge in Port Royal. This project being developed by the Town of Port Royal is receiving funding assistance from both NPS and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- *Menokin:* NPS financial assistance supports planning and design of a public access site on Cat Point Creek within the Menokin Foundation property in Richmond County, Virginia. Extensive site reconnaissance will balance proposed development with conservation of this important indigenous cultural landscape.
- *Town of Tappahannock:* The town of Tappahannock is developing a small water access park adjacent to the Route 3 bridge. The site will have a soft landing for paddle craft, a small boat ramp, and a fishing pier once completed. A YCC crew this year cleared a section of a small beach area as a potential hand carry launch site for paddle craft.
- *Put-In Creek—East River Water Trail:* NPS financial assistance supports new public access to Put-In Creek from Mathews County-owned property. Improvements include a 2,600 square foot accessible boardwalk trail and canoe/kayak launch.



*New accessible kayak launch on Anacostia River at Bladensburg Waterfront Park. Project funded in part through NPS Chesapeake Bay financial assistance.*

### **Access along the Potomac & Anacostia Rivers**

- *Piscataway Park:* Partially funded by NPS, a new boat dock, fishing pier, and floating dock for paddling access was opened in June, 2013. This new access allows boaters to arrive at the park for touring, gives paddlers a new launch point, and the park plans to offer boat tours in the future.
- *Anacostia:* In August 2013, partners opened a universally accessible canoe/kayak dock and launch at Bladensburg Waterfront Park, managed by the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Bladensburg Waterfront Park is a key interpretive location along both the Star-Spangled Banner and John Smith Trails. A second access point is under development by the M-NCPPC at the Bladensburg Wetlands.
- *St. Mary's City:* Significant funding from NPS supports enhancement of public amenities at Chancellor's Point. The project includes a kayak/canoe launch, picnicking and camping facilities, and interpretive and directional signage. Chancellor's Point is one of the few publicly owned and accessible properties in the area and offers beautiful views of undeveloped lands along the banks of the St. Mary's River and a vista across the Potomac to Virginia.

## Improving Access to the Trail

- *Crow's Nest*: NPS is providing financial assistance to help develop a universally accessible kayak/canoe launch at the Virginia DCR's Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve in Stafford County. This new site is scheduled to open in 2014 and will provide paddle craft access to the Potomac River via a large tidal creek. Its development will support the Potomac Segment Plan for the John Smith, Star-Spangled Banner, and Potomac Heritage trails.
- *George Washington Birthplace NM*: The NPS announced in July that launching canoes and kayaks from the Potomac River beach at the west end of the park is now permitted, after decades of not being allowed. In addition, the park is seeking permits for a new canoe/kayak launch on Pope's Creek near the visitor center.
- *Caledon State Park*: A YCC crew this summer developed primitive boat-in campsites on the Potomac River at the park. These sites, which must be reserved by permit, are already receiving much use. They support paddle craft use of the trail.
- *Occoquan Water Trail*: NPS financial assistance supports a project to enhance access and visitor experiences on the Occoquan Water Trail led by the Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation. A central feature of the project is the installation of a universally accessible canoe/kayak floating dock and launch at the Lake Ridge Park Marina. Other project components include bank stabilization using a tiered system of bio-socks, a beach/soft launch area, an accessible pathway, and mile markers and other orientation signage along the water trail.
- *Inventorying Boat-in Camping*: A pilot project between NPS and the Chesapeake Conservancy has developed the first inventory of existing and potential boat-in camping sites along the Potomac River from Washington down to the Chesapeake Bay. The early analysis of this initial effort indicates that there are 8 public sites which offer boat-in camping on the Potomac although the camping areas for three of them are a good distance from the water. There are nine private sites that offer the opportunity for boat-in camping and seven others that have some potential for camping. In addition, there were nineteen public sites identified which have some potential to offer boat-in camping.



Padding on the Chickahominy River.



Trail marker at the access point in Seaford, Delaware on the Nanticoke River.

### Along the Nanticoke River

- *Nanticoke River Water Trail*: NPS financial assistance supports master planning, design, and engineering for a new public access facility on the Nanticoke River Water Trail in Maryland. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance and their partners will also create a comprehensive online map and guide to provide access and safety information as well as natural and cultural resource interpretation.

### Along the Susquehanna River

- *Havre de Grace*: NPS financial assistance supports this project to create a waterfront heritage park on the Susquehanna River in Havre de Grace, MD, linking land and water trails from Havre de Grace, Susquehanna State Park, Port Deposit, and Perryville. Design and construction documents include public access facilities for viewing, launching canoes and kayaks, and other waterfront recreational activities.

## Improving Access to the Trail

- *Jersey Shore Borough:* NPS financial assistance supports new public river access/boat launch along Front Street for access to the Susquehanna River Water Trail – West Branch. The proposed design scope includes an access road and parking, bank stabilization, directional, safety and interpretive signage, a viewing area overlooking the river, and a boat launch.
- *Chemung Basin River Trail and Headwaters River Trail:* NPS financial assistance supports several inter-related water trail development initiatives. They are: 1) Construction of a new 170 foot portage trail and access point on the south side of the Chemung River in Elmira, NY, 2) A new 15-mile water trail will be established on Oaks Creek by linking one existing site with three new fishing and paddling access sites, and 3) Visitor outreach initiatives will link the developing Oaks Creek Blueway Trail with established trail segments.
- *Fort Hunter Park on the Susquehanna River Water Trail - Middle Branch:* NPS financial assistance supports this project to provide two additional access points at Fort Hunter Park near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Dauphin County, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, will construct two non-motorized, universally accessible boat launches. These launch sites will include parking areas and pathways and will be safely separated from and augment an existing launch for motorized boats.
- *Haldeman Island Boat Launch and Water Access Project* – NPS financial assistance supports enhancing an existing informal soft landing site along the Susquehanna River in Dauphin County, PA. Facilities will be upgraded to include an ADA accessible observation/fishing area, a parking area with ADA accessible parking, and a hard surface boat launch ramp.
- *Zimmerman Center for Heritage:* NPS financial assistance supports construction of a floating dock, canoe/kayak access, and interpretive signage linking land and water visitors to the river, water trail, parks and hiking trails. These new facilities provide critical access and interpretive services for the Susquehanna River Water Trail.



*Paddling on the Potomac River.*



*Paddling at Jug Bay on the Patuxent River.*

### **Along the Sassafras River**

- *Mount Harman Plantation:* NPS financial assistance supports construction of a new public access dock, canoe and kayak soft-landing, picnic area, updated public restroom facilities, and interpretive and directional signage.

### **Gaps to Fill**

Expanding access to the trail to support visitor use is a major, multi-year undertaking. Key gaps to address in the coming two years could include:

- Using segment plans to strategically identify priority near-term access projects.
- Implementing a strategy for expanding boat-in camping locations along priority trail segments

# Conserving Landscapes that support Visitors' Experiences

Advocates for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, partners and NPS have consistently recognized the importance of land conservation along the trail to maintaining the visitor experience and contributing to broader large landscape conservation goals in the region. While the great majority of land protection along the over 2,000 mile trail will be accomplished by other land conservation partners (local, state, federal, NGO), the NPS can play an important role.

Extensive NPS planning and partnership efforts over the past several years identify conservation values along the trail and support collaborative large landscape conservation in the Chesapeake watershed.

The 2011 trail *Comprehensive Management Plan* sets out conservation parameters and calls for a strategy that “would identify lands of conservation interest and would include specific techniques to be used to protect them. Priority would be placed on protecting evocative landscapes, voyage stops, and sites that provide public access to evocative landscapes and voyage stops, particularly those that are along high potential route segments and that are designated as high potential historic sites. Priority would also be placed on protecting sites that provide access to the trail for recreation, including: (1) pull-offs that provide visual access to the trail, (2) trailheads which provide access to the trail, (3) day-use facilities, (4) boat launches, and (5) primitive campsites.”

Throughout 2012, NPS, in collaboration with the Chesapeake Conservancy, consulted closely and regularly with the trail Advisory Council in developing a *Conservation Strategy for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail*. Finalized in early 2013, the strategy sets out a long-term approach for protecting lands important to the visitor experience of the trail. This includes: a methodology for identifying and prioritizing land protection, a partnership action model for protection, implementation steps and criteria for direct NPS acquisition.

The *Conservation Strategy* sets out four near term (2-3 years) programmatic emphases. Two of these are addressed elsewhere in this State of the Trail Report; “Promote the Trail by Making it Real” includes the suite of activities described in the Connect and Access sections above; “Use Segment Planning to Engage Local Partners” is described under Trail Planning in the Partner section below.) Ongoing activities to advance the remaining two emphases are briefly described here:

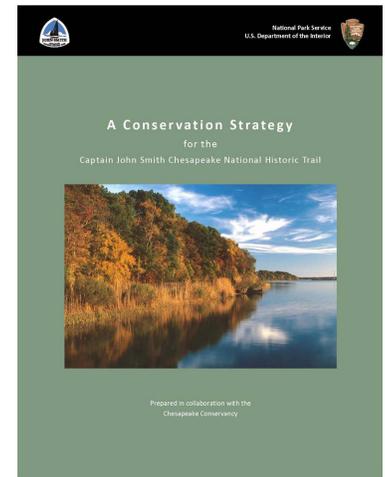
## **Identify Landscape Values**

The *Conservation Strategy* calls for further identification of landscape values and resources contributing to the trail experience, and sharing information on those values. Current activities include:

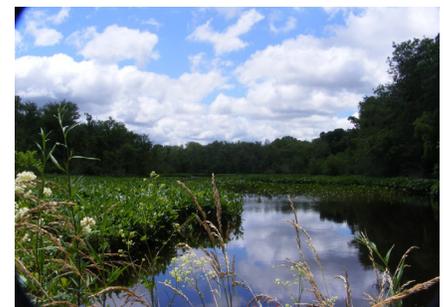
- **Indigenous Cultural Landscape Mapping:** NPS is working with tribes, state partners, archaeologists and academics to map Indigenous Cultural Landscapes along the Lower Susquehanna and Nanticoke Rivers and refine and improve methodologies for subsequent mapping efforts.
- **LandScope Chesapeake:** NPS is working with many partners to incorporate extensive conservation priority information in this web-based system for fostering collaborative strategic protection efforts along the trail and throughout the watershed. LandScope already shows trail conservation values; these will be continually updated as new data is assessed.

## **Collaborate with Land Conservation Partners**

The strategy calls for promoting communication and collaboration on trail conservation



*Conservation Strategy for John Smith Trail*



*Chicone Creek, Dorchester County, MD*



*A team of cultural and natural resource management experts begin mapping work on indigenous cultural landscapes along the Nanticoke River.*



*Petroglyph, Susquehanna River*

## Conserving Landscapes that support Visitors' Experiences

objectives among local, state and federal agencies and land trusts, as well as concentrating conservation initiatives on sites, segments and focal areas identified in the CMP and segment plans. Current activities include:

- *Chesapeake Large Landscape Conservation Partners (LLC Partners):* The LLC Partners is a collection of federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profit organizations, and private sector organizations focused on advancing large landscape conservation efforts in the Chesapeake watershed in a strategic and collaborative way. This includes efforts along the trail, but other efforts as well. The partnership has met in person annually since 2009 and has increasingly held web meetings in between annual sessions. Priorities and collaborative work of the LLC Partners are outlined annually in the joint sessions. The NPS Chesapeake Bay Office, in partnership with the Chesapeake Conservancy, is the principal convener of the LLC Partners Group. During the course of summer 2013, two NPS Business Planning Initiative consultants worked with NPS staff and a group of advisers from the LLC Partners to survey best practices in large landscape conservation and serve up options for the partners to consider to further efforts in the Chesapeake. A draft report is set for completion prior to the next LLC Partners meeting.
- *Rivers of the Chesapeake Collaborative:* NPS, US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service are collaborating with the Chesapeake Conservancy and many partners to advance the "Rivers of the Chesapeake Collaborative," a proposal for targeting Land & Water Conservation Fund monies to the watershed. It addresses over 20,000 acres of conservation opportunities in five focus areas along CAJO: the tidal James, Chickahominy, York and Mouth of the Bay; the tidal Rappahannock; the middle Potomac; the Nanticoke; and the Lower Susquehanna. While most of the funding request supports FWS, BLM and NCR acquisitions, some supports NPS protection efforts.
- *FY13 LWCF Funding for the trail:* For the first time, the NPS has been allocated \$1 million in LWCF funding for land protection along the trail. This comes from a small portion of funds set aside for conservation along national trails.
- *Werowocomoco:* An important conservation priority along the trail is Werowocomoco, site of Powhatan's residence and headquarters at the time of English arrival at Jamestown and location where Captain John Smith was taken after his capture. The 252 acre property is a "high potential historic site" (HPHS) identified in the CAJO CMP. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources recently announced acquisition of a conservation easement on the archaeological core of the property. NPS is working with DHR and the landowners on long term interpretation and conservation of the site.

In addition to proactive conservation efforts, trail partners must evaluate whether development proposals have the potential to adversely affect trail resources and visitors' experiences along the trail route. There is no authority provided in the National Trails System Act for controlling development proposals. However, existing local, state and federal permitting processes can take trail resources into account. One current development proposal along the trail has received significant public attention:

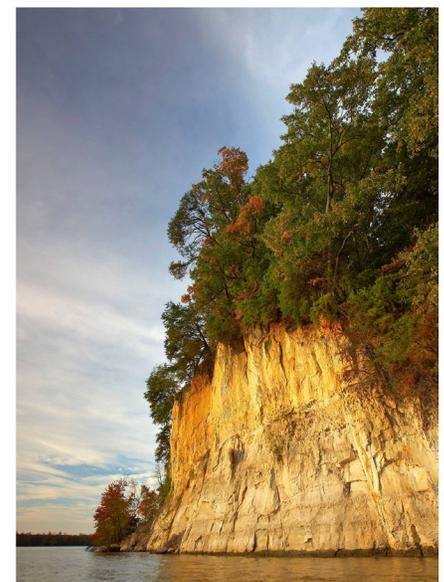
- *Proposed Surry-Skiffes Creek 500kv Transmission Line:* This line, and its 17 proposed towers, would cross the James River and the water route of the John Smith Trail near the "Historic Triangle" of Jamestown, Yorktown and Williamsburg. The southern end of the proposed crossing is within a focus area for CAJO centered on Chippokes Plantation State Park and Hog Island Wildlife Management Area. The proposed crossing is also approximately 6 miles from Jamestown Island, the center of another CAJO focus area. It is also approximately 3 miles from Carter's Grove Plantation, a national historic landmark not associated with CAJO. The



*Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge*



*A bend in the lower Susquehanna River*



*Fones Cliffs on the Rappahannock River (photo by Ian Plant)*

## Conserving Landscapes that support Visitors' Experiences

project would have significant adverse effects on trail resources and the visitor experience of CAJO. Colonial Williamsburg, James City County, the James River Association, Scenic Virginia and other organizations are all vocally opposing the line. The USACE has initiated a public comment period for permitting under Section 404 and 401 (CWA) and Section 10 (RHA), including NEPA and Section 106 (NHPA) review. The NPS is submitting a consolidated letter to USACE raising issues and concerns related to CAJO, the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route NHT, Colonial National Historical Park, and Carter's Grove NHL.

### ***A Glance at the "State-of-the-Trail" in Terms of Its Permanent Protection***

The trail's current state of permanent protection can be only approximated at this time. A more accurate characterization will require future analysis of the trail corridor.

Despite these constraints, an impression of the state of permanent protection—and in fee simple ownership for conservation purposes or land under conservation easement—can be provided. A useful interim indicator is the current extent of protected shorelines along the trail that are either forested or in wetlands—the two defining land cover types for evocative landscapes.

This has been assessed for the trail's six high-potential route segments using GIS data layers. The percentage of shoreline in forest or wetland is relatively consistent across all high potential route segments – ranging from a low of 65.9% on the Patuxent to a high of 81.6% on the Nanticoke. The average for all segments is 71% of shoreline in forest or wetlands.

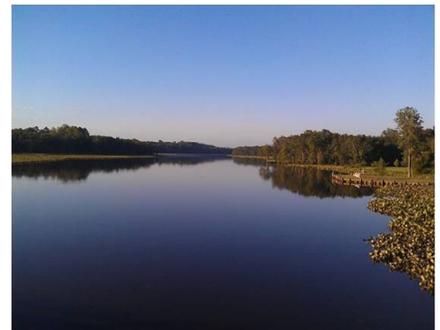
The amount of permanently protected shoreline in forest or wetlands is, on average, 21.5 percent. However, considerable variation exists among route segments, ranging from a low of 5.1% on the Lower Susquehanna (MD) to a high of 38% along the middle Potomac.



*Werowocomoco*



*LandScope Chesapeake: a watershed-wide land conservation priority system*



*Nanticoke River, Delaware*



*Marsh grasses at Jug Bay on the Patuxent River.*

### Gaps to Fill:

There are a number of next steps to continue on-going efforts to conserve important landscapes that sustain the trail's visitor experience:

- Continue and expand mapping of indigenous cultural landscapes
- Expand data and capabilities within LandScope Chesapeake to facilitate collaborative conservation
- Evaluate landscapes along additional portions of trail following methodology set out in Conservation Strategy; so far, only a small portion of the trail has been assessed
- Share trail conservation priorities with local, state, federal and NGO conservation partners
- Advance Rivers of the Chesapeake Collaborative and related specific conservation projects

# Partners on the Trail

Making the trail real for visitors--and managing it over the long term--relies on broad and deep partnerships. All of the achievements described above are due to collaborative efforts among multiple trail partners. All of the steps to enhance the trail in the future will similarly be accomplished through combined efforts.

## ***Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT Advisory Council***

The John Smith Trail Advisory Council has provided invaluable advice and leadership in advancing the trail since the first set of council members was appointed in 2008. The Council has provided guidance on developing the trail's comprehensive management plan, creating the first trail segment plans, and thinking out the conservation strategy for the trail. Council members have also worked to align resources from the organizations they represent to help advance the trail, and in some cases help seek other resources as well.

The 2013-2015 members of the John Smith Trail Advisory Council were appointed by Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell in July 2013. Members include representatives of: key partner agencies of the states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia; federal agencies; American Indian tribes; non-governmental organizations involved in education, recreation and conservation; and citizens.

## ***Formal Trail Partners***

The National Park Service has memoranda of understanding (MOUs) related to various aspects of trail development and management with scores of public and non-governmental organizations. These MOUs are generally at three scales:

- ***Individual Site Partners:*** Most MOUs are with partners managing the many individual sites that provide visitor experiences along the trail; these MOUs outline ways the site partner and NPS will help advance the trail through site marking, promotion, signage, etc.
- ***Trail Segment Partners:*** NPS also has agreements with a smaller number of regional non-governmental organizations that play key roles in implementing the trail along entire river segments. These include agreements with the James River Association, Friends of the Rappahannock, Potomac Conservancy, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, and Susquehanna Heritage Gateway, to date. In addition, NPS has pre-existing MOUs with water trail managers on additional river segments made part of the John Smith Trail in 2012.
- ***State and Trail-wide Partners:*** NPS and state and federal partners have also entered into MOUs that recognize ongoing collaboration and encourage joint development and management; agreements are in effect with the Commonwealth of Virginia, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The NPS and the Chesapeake Conservancy collaborate on a range of trail implementation efforts and have trail-wide agreements in place as well.

## ***Trail Planning***

Solid plans set out an agenda for propelling the John Smith Trail well into the future. The trail's *Comprehensive Management Plan*, completed in 2011, outlines broad direction for development and management over a twenty year period. The *Conservation Strategy* for the trail, completed in 2013, details the methodology for setting priorities and the approach for conserving trail resources.



*A focus group informs trail development during James River segment planning.*



*Over fifty partners gathered in Shepherdstown for the 2012 Large Landscape Conservation partners' workshop.*

## Partners on the Trail

Because of the trail's extensive scope, breaking it down into segments allows planning to grow local and regional trail partnerships and detail short-term action agendas. Segment planning engages partners along a river corridor in identifying: important focal areas for trail development and conservation, actions that should be taken over a two to three year period for making the trail more real, and what different partners can do to move things forward. The following river corridors have segment plans that are complete or in progress:

- *Tidal James River (and Chickahominy):* The segment plan for the James River was completed in January 2012 by a team including NPS, the James River Association, Chesapeake Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Informed by a series of focus group meetings of local partners and a public workshop, the plan identified five initial focal areas and two anticipated areas for trail development, along with many actions to implement. Much progress has been made since then on major actions called for in the plan; these are described elsewhere in this report.
- *Nansemond River:* With assistance from NPS, the Nansemond River Preservation Association prepared a water trail plan for the river that identifies focal areas, access sites and kiosk locations related to the John Smith Trail. Work on many of the projects is already underway.
- *Potomac River:* Segment planning for the Potomac was initiated in spring 2013 with a final plan anticipated by early 2014. The team includes: NPS, Potomac Conservancy, Chesapeake Conservancy, Virginia DCR and Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This effort addresses all three national trails following the tidal Potomac: the John Smith Trail, Star-Spangled Banner NHT, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Focus group meetings have been held on the Northern Neck, in southern Maryland and in the Washington DC metro area.
- *Anacostia River:* The Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS), in collaboration with NPS and local partners, is developing an Anacostia Water Trail Master Plan to serve as a segment plan and aid in advancing development of CAJO and STSP. The Master Plan is being coordinated with a Anacostia Park Development Plan and Environmental Assessment led by NPS National Capital Region and National Capital Parks-East. The Development Plan will integrate proposed water trail actions and serve as the compliance document for analyzing impacts from the trail. Work on access and visitor experience development recommendations is ongoing; a final plan is anticipated by late fall 2014.
- *Lower Susquehanna River:* Segment planning along the lower Susquehanna from Harrisburg to Havre de Grace will start in fall 2013. A planning team is being formed now, including: NPS, Susquehanna Heritage Gateway, Chesapeake Conservancy, Maryland DNR, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.



*Chesapeake Conservancy led efforts by many partners to extend the trail on the Chester, Susquehanna, Upper James, and Upper Nanticoke rivers.*



*Many partners build and maintain the Captain John Smith Geotrail and participate in events for geocachers.*

## Partners on the Trail

### *Gaps to Fill*

Building and sustaining trail partnerships and collaboration is a continuous priority for implementing and managing the trail. Key gaps to address in the coming two years could include:

- Increasing collaboration with American Indian tribes on many aspects of trail implementation and management, especially interpretation, indigenous cultural landscapes, and conservation.
- Completing the Potomac and Lower Susquehanna segment planning efforts and supporting their implementation.
- Engaging partners in specific initiatives, such as creating a strategy for stimulating development of high quality trail interpretation, education and recreation programming by partners and the private sector
- Attracting new resources to support trail implementation.