

## A Bold Endeavor

| BY PATRICK F. NOONAN |

**IN THE SUMMER OF 1608**, Captain John Smith left Jamestown in a small open boat to explore the Chesapeake, a world yet unknown to English settlers. This was a bold endeavor and a vital chapter of American history. Smith and company, through their combined efforts, gained a comprehensive view of the region and its people. This information was essential to Jamestown's survival and to European settlement in the region. **SMITH AND HIS CREW EMBODIED MANY OF THE VALUES** we think of as quintessentially American, especially the ability to pull together in the face of hardship. Perhaps Chief Justice John Marshall said it best: "When we consider that he sailed over 3,000 miles in an open boat; when we contemplate the dangers, and the hardships he encountered, and the fortitude, courage and patience with which he met them; when we reflect on the useful and important additions which he made to the stock of knowledge respecting America, then possessed by his countrymen; we shall not hesitate to say that few voyages of discovery, undertaken at any time, reflect more honor on those engaged in them, than this does on Captain Smith." **A SIMILAR SPIRIT OF COOPERATION PREVAILED** last year in the creation of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, America's first all-water national historic trail. As the concept gained momentum, more and more people saw how the trail couples the region's deep history and natural beauty to forge a lasting legacy in commemorating Jamestown's 400th anniversary. The Chesapeake community recognized tremendous opportunities for education, recreation, and small businesses. Some saw the trail's potential to brand the Chesapeake as an international destination for sustainable tourism. It captured the public's passion by putting people face-to-face with the bay's intricate ecosystem—and ongoing efforts to protect and restore it. **THERE WAS A NATURAL CONVERGENCE OF ENTHUSIASM** in this exciting new initiative. The region's local, state, and federal legislators, its business groups and nonprofit organizations, and its citizens from all around the bay found common ground with the trail. The National Park Service and the Department of the Interior, led by Director Mary Bomar and Secretary Kempthorne, provided outstanding leadership vital to the trail's creation. **THE TRAIL OPENS THE WAY FOR MODERN-DAY EXPLORERS** to follow Smith's 3,000-mile odyssey through the Chesapeake Bay and its

tributaries in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. Trail partners have contributed an impressive array of maps, guides, exhibits, interactive games, and digital media. In addition, an innovative system of "smart buoys" developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Verizon Wireless, and other partners will serve as interpretive guideposts offering information on the area's cultural and natural history. The buoys will also transmit real-time data about environmental conditions, which will be used to gauge the bay's health. **THE TRAIL'S FORMAL PURPOSE** as identified by the National Park Service is to commemorate Smith's exploratory voyages on the bay and its tributaries in association with the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent British colony in North America. It also recognizes the Indian towns and culture of the

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17th century and—in calling attention to the bay's natural history (both historic and contemporary)—complements the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrail Network. **MOST WHO FOLLOW IN SMITH'S WAKE WILL SAMPLE** only a part of the route. But as is often the case with the Appalachian Trail, some modern-day explorers will traverse the entire length. Indeed, 12 adventurers begin a reenactment of Smith's 1608 voyages this May. Embarking from Jamestown in a replica of Smith's shallop, produced by Sultana Projects, Inc., the men and women of the crew will journey for 121 days as they inaugurate the trail. Their reenactment, which will come to over 20 communities, is a great opportunity for people to join the adventure. **TOGETHER, THE CHESAPEAKE COMMUNITY AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** have charted a bright future. For the first time, the story of Jamestown will echo all along the shores of the Chesapeake, and in homes and classrooms across the nation.

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