

A Foundation
for Planning, Administration, Management and Interpretation of
Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Segments
and
for Coordination among Trail Segment Management Partners

Contents

An Overview of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Purpose of This Document

Legislative Authorities

Legislative History & Discussion
Special Mandates

Purpose of the Trail Corridor Designation

Significance of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Fundamental Resources and Values
Interpretive Themes

Desired Trail Experiences and Future Conditions

The Trail Network Addresses Multiple Goals and Serves Many Audiences

Increase Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
Encourage Conservation
Contribute to a Range of Transportation Options
Interpret the Significance of the Trail Corridor
Encourage Historic Preservation
Create a Network of Heritage Tourism Experiences

Administration of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Issues
Communications
Planning and Project Assistance
Partnerships
Creating Continuity of Experience throughout the Trail Network
Trail Route Marking
Interpretation and Public Information
Land Conservation

Next Steps

Appendices:

General Documents

- A. Bibliography
- B. "A Communications Approach to the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail" by David Lillard, American Hiking Society (1998)
- C. *Federal Register*, "Guidelines for Developing Applications Seeking Designation of a Trail as a Segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail" (Notice, September 2002)
- D. *Three Important Themes and Sub-Themes in the History and Ecology of the Potomac River Basin* by Philip W. Ogilvie, Ph.D.
- E. Subjects Contributing to Interpretive Themes
- F. List of National Park System areas and national trails within the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail corridor
- G. POHE Office Organizational Chart 2010
- H. Template MOU for management of a Trail segment on federal lands (i.e., non-NPS jurisdiction)
- I. Template agreement for management of a Trail segment on non-federal lands
- J. *Management of a PHNST Geographic Information System* (June 2011) (David N. Myers, Ph.D., ASLA, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, University of Maryland College Park) (pending)

Management Plans (to be added as available)

- K. excerpts from *Our Commonwealth: Virginia Outdoors Plan*
 - _____, Northern Virginia Planning District
 - _____, George Washington Planning District
 - _____, Northern Neck Planning District
- L. excerpts from *Maryland Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*
 - _____, Southern Maryland
 - _____, Washington, D.C., metropolitan area
 - _____, Western Maryland
 - _____, Potomac River Water Trail
- M. excerpt from District of Columbia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- N. excerpt from Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
 - [management plan sections for] Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail
 - Conservation and Development Plan for the Great Allegheny Passage*

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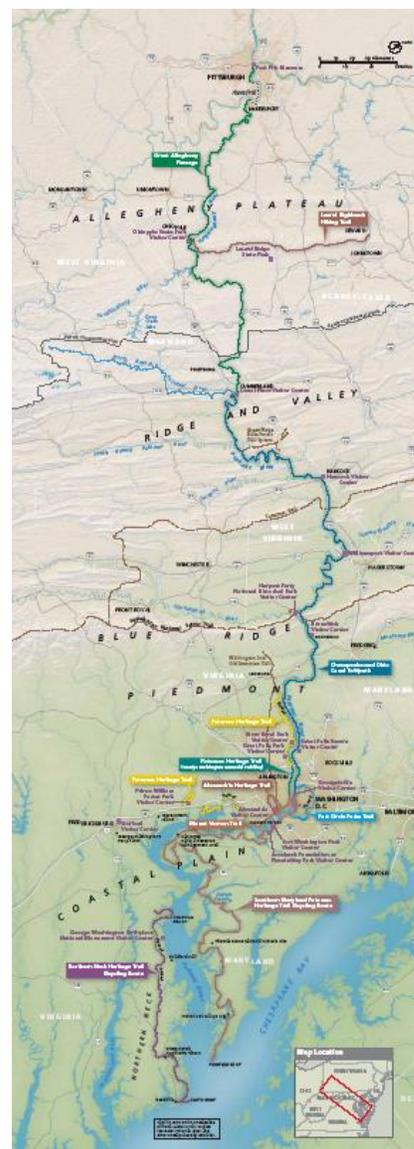
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An Overview of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Communities in the Potomac River valley and upper Ohio River Basin are creating and re-creating trails, reclaiming access to rivers, making connections between existing trails, and seeking opportunities to experience the special places associated with the national significance of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail corridor. Many are drawn to the concept for the Trail, an idea conceived in the 1960s at the same time that the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail were recognized as “national scenic trails” in the National Trails System Act of 1968 (NTSA). In the same legislation, Congress authorized a feasibility study for a “Potomac Heritage Trail,” subsequently completed in 1974 by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.* Amending the NTSA in 1983, Congress passed legislation designating a corridor for and authorizing development of the Trail based on the 1974 feasibility study.†

Authorizing legislation stated that, initially, the Trail will be “within the external boundaries of federal facilities” and that additional segments may be designated by the Secretary of the Interior “upon application by the state and local agencies involved.” The legislation also precluded the Secretary from recognizing Trail segments in West Virginia (see Appendix A).

A map of the Trail network, illustrating the different “segments,” is available through the NPS Web page for the Trail (see www.nps.gov/pohe and click on “view map”). Based on the legislation and investments in the Trail concept by non-profit organizations, individual volunteers and land owners, and government agencies at all levels, the Trail today is becoming a “braided” network of locally- and regionally-managed trail types—hiking paths, bicycling routes, multi-use facilities, and water trails—existing at times in tandem and at times individually. Various Trail segments provide—or will provide—users with a continuous set of outdoor recreational experiences within a corridor rich in national significance and ecological, historical and cultural diversity.



Creating continuity—physically and thematically—between and among the various local and regional Trail segments and resources creates an opportunity, as described in the 1974 feasibility study:

Trails normally are associated with a single type of landscape—mountain, lake shore, or river course. Few traverse more than a single physiographic region. Practically all are connected with a single strong landscape feature such as a mountain range, river valley, or historic pathway. Thus, few trails offer diverse recreation, scenic, and cultural opportunity. Yet such an opportunity exists with the Potomac River as its backbone.‡

Within the umbrella of “Potomac Heritage,” a full experience and understanding of the Trail corridor can be realized through designation of local trails and related resources and promotion of a holistic network.

* The functions of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation were assumed by the National Park Service.

† The feasibility study report was based on an unreleased report, *A proposal, Potomac Heritage Trail: A Trunk Trail in the Nationwide System of Trails* (1965), completed by the National Park Service for the Steering Committee of the Nationwide Trails Study.

Purpose of This Document

Obviously it is tough to develop a set of actions that will help all the components of the National Trails System because some trails are well along and almost "complete," while others were just established.... Some have vibrant partnerships, others not. Some are historic and others scenic. However, there are several overriding principles embedded in the National Trails System Act to which we should try to be faithful: support volunteerism, protect trail corridors, sustain collaborative partnerships, and mark/market the trails so people can experience them.

Steve Elkinton, Program Leader
National Trails System
National Park Service
October 2009

Development and management of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail network requires coordination among many people and many institutions. This document attempts to capture existing practices to administer the federal interest in the Trail, to summarize plans and policies to date, and to serve as a basis for future coordination, site specific planning and Trail corridor-wide decision-making; in particular, the content is intended to serve as a foundation for comprehensive management of the Trail network, and as a reference for NPS staff and Trail management partners, volunteer-based organizations, and others with an interest in the Trail network.

The content of this document includes a description of authorizing legislation for the Trail; the purpose of the Trail corridor designation; statements that describe the significance of the Trail corridor, along with a list of primary interpretive themes; a list of NPS responsibilities as Trail Administrator; and a process for completion of a comprehensive management plan. To expand upon existing coordination among Trail partners, the content of this document is intended for review, revision and endorsement by agencies of state governments, local and regional Trail segment managers, other federal agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Legislative Authorities

The National Trail System was created through enactment of the *National Trail System Act of 1968* (82 Stat. 919, Public Law 90-543) (the Act). The legislation recognized and established a federal interest in the Appalachian and Pacific Crest national scenic trails as initial components of a National Trails System (NTS) to provide additional outdoor recreation opportunities and to promote the preservation of access to the outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation. For both trails, the law authorized:

...acquisition of lands or interests in land within the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas that are within the trail right-of-way, through written cooperative agreements, donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.

The 1968 law also authorized "feasibility studies" for additional components of the NTS, including the Potomac Heritage Trail; such a study was completed in 1974 by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.*

A 1983 amendment to the Act (77 Stat. 43, Public Law 90-543) designated the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail as a component of the NTS, recognized a corridor for the Trail, and assigned administration of the federal interest in the Trail to the Secretary of the Interior:

(11) The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail...following the route as generally depicted on the map identified as "National Trails System, Proposed Potomac Heritage Trail" in "The Potomac Heritage Trail," a report prepared by the Department of the Interior and dated December 1974, except that no designation of the trail shall be made in the State of West Virginia. The trail shall initially consist of only those segments of the corridor located

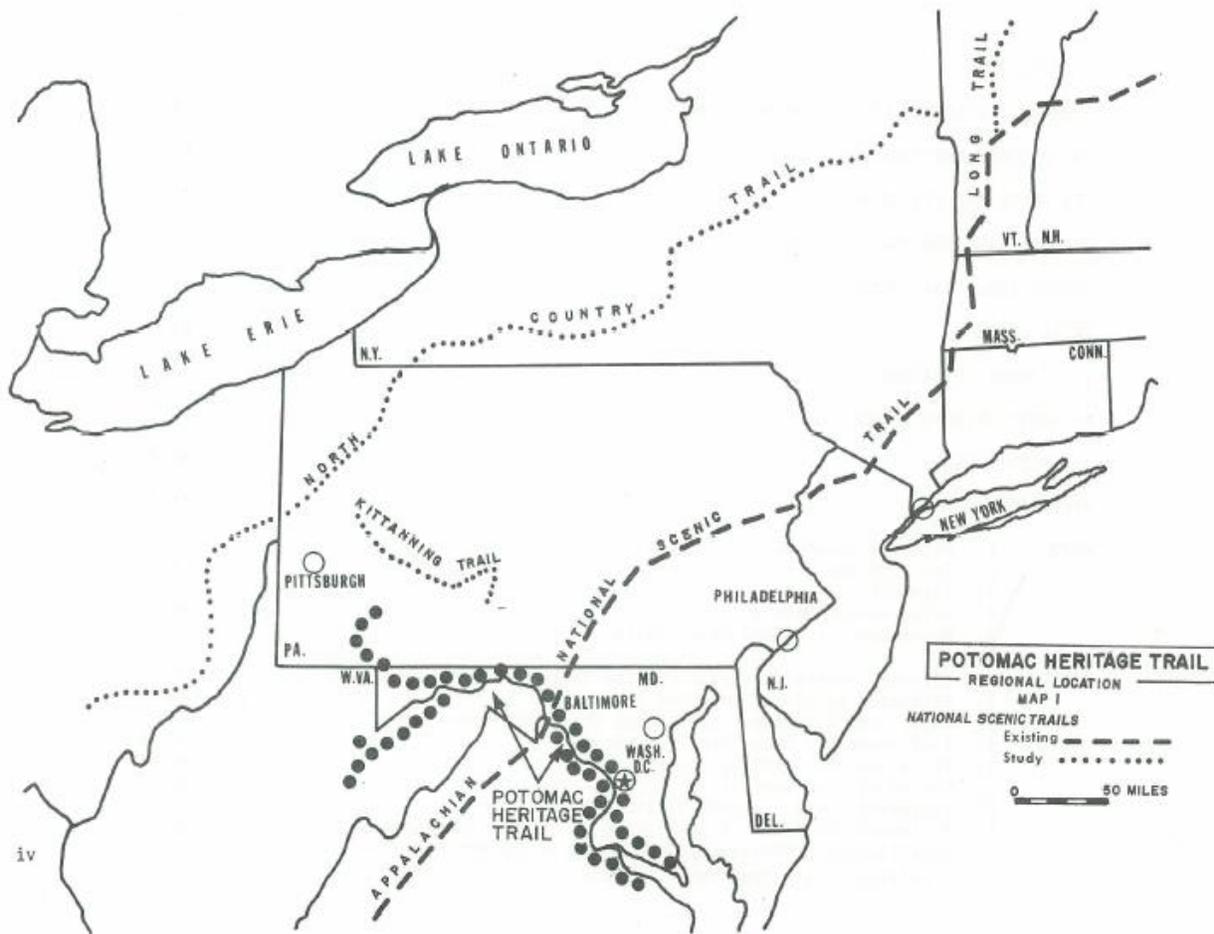
* The Bureau was eliminated and duties assumed by the National Park Service.

within the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas. No lands or interest therein outside the exterior boundaries of any federally administered area may be acquired by the Federal Government for the trail. The Secretary may designate other areas as segments of the trail only upon the application from the states or local governmental agencies involved if such segments meet the criteria established in the Act and are administered by such agencies without expense to the United States. The trail shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 5. (a) *National Trails System Act of 1968* (16 U.S.C. 1244)

In 2009 an amendment to the Act (P.L. 111-11, 123 Stat. 1160) authorized the Secretary to acquire lands outside of federally-administered areas from “willing sellers,” deleting two sentences of SEC.5. and adding one sentence. Authorizing language now reads:

(11) The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail...following the route as generally depicted on the map identified as “National Trails System, Proposed Potomac Heritage Trail” in “The Potomac Heritage Trail,” a report prepared by the Department of the Interior and dated December 1974, except that no designation of the trail shall be made in the State of West Virginia. The trail shall initially consist of only those segments of the corridor located within the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas. No land or interest in land outside the exterior boundaries of any federally-administered area may be acquired by the Federal government for the trail except with the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land. The trail shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior.



For recognition and management of Trail segments outside of federally-administered areas, Section 7 of the Act provides authority for a variety of partnerships with non-federal entities:

(h)(1) When deemed to be in the public interest, such Secretary may enter [into] written cooperative agreements with the States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of such a trail either within or outside a federally administered area. Such agreements may include provisions for limited financial assistance to encourage participation in the acquisition, protection, operation, development, or maintenance of such trails. . . . (16USC1646)

Complementary to Section 7, an Act of August 7, 1946 (60 Stat. 885; 16 U.S.C.17j-2) authorizes the administration, protection, improvement, and maintenance of areas managed by other agencies of the Government to be managed by the National Park Service for recreational purposes pursuant to cooperative agreements. This authority is often referred to simply as “17j.”

Legislation authorizing NPS (and other federal agencies) to enter into cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations and with other levels of government is essential to the development and management of Trail segments as a cohesive network. Such authority is noted in Article II. of each cooperative agreement executed by the NPS, establishing a formal means by which the NPS and others can realize the purpose of the Trail regardless of land ownership.

Legislative History and Discussion

Congress enacted the National Trail System Act in 1968 to provide for increasing outdoor recreation needs and to promote the preservation of outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation by instituting a national system of recreation, scenic and historic trails. The 1983 amendment to the Act also designated the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (entirely within the State of Wisconsin) and the Florida National Scenic Trail as well as the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. As described in the 1974 study, the intent of the Trail legislation was to encourage development of a network that would connect outstanding natural and cultural features, primarily along the Potomac River but also including a patchwork of conservation lands along the ridge of Laurel Mountain in western Pennsylvania.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, new national historic and national scenic trails were seen primarily as commemorative with no need for federal acquisition authority. Some Act supporters did not believe that Federal agencies would need acquisition authority to complete trails and, as a result, amendments to the Act between 1978 and 1983 that “established” nine trails (including Potomac Heritage) banned the use of Federal funds to purchase lands for such trails outside Federally-administered areas.

From 1983 to 2009, in the absence of “willing seller” acquisition authority, agency staff responsible for trail administration were unable to purchase lands or easements for trails; within the corridor of such trails, including the Potomac Heritage Trail, the affect of such legislation can be seen today in a patchwork of public and private lands that often challenges the designation of “scenic.” Legislation to resolve this problem, entitled the “National Trail System Willing Seller Act,” was first introduced in 2001. Eight years later, it was enacted into law, authorizing Federal land acquisition from willing sellers and, in some cases, clarifying that acquisition could only occur from willing sellers. Such change in Trail legislation provides uniformity within the Act among national scenic trails.

Special Mandates

For all trails authorized in the *NTSA*, the legislation directs that “A uniform marker system shall be established, with a distinctive and appropriate marker for each national trail. These markers shall be provided by the appropriate secretary to non-Federal landowners who shall erect and maintain them to set standards.”

Specific to administration of the Federal interest in the Trail, the Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 99-500), enacted in 1986, directed the Secretary of the Interior to recognize the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail as a segment of the Trail network.

Some general authorities and directives are also relevant to Trail administration:

National Park Service Organic Act

16 U.S.C., 1,2,3,4 (1916)

The Organic Act of 1916 established the National Park Service to “*promote and regulate the use of the...national parks...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*” These words are basis of the first part of the National Park Service mission statement: The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. Recently, the agency added the following to the mission statement: *The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.* For further information about the Organic Act, go to www.nps.gov/legacy/.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

42 U.S.C. §4321 et seq. (1969)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all Federal agencies to, among other things:

- Assess the environmental impacts of major Federal projects, decisions such as issuing permits, spending Federal money, or actions on Federal lands.
- Consider the environmental impacts in making decisions.
- Disclose the environmental impacts to the public.

When an agency concludes that a proposed Federal action has the potential for causing significant environmental impacts, it is required to prepare a detailed statement about those potential environmental impacts. This report has come to be known as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). For detailed information about NEPA, go to www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

16 U.S.C 470 et seq. (1966)

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment. Then historic preservation review process mandated by Section 106 is outlined in regulations issued by ACHP. The responsible Federal agency first determines whether it has an undertaking that is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places. If so, it must identify the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer to consult with during the process. It should also plan to involve the public, and identify other potential consulting parties. If it determines that it has no undertaking, or that its undertaking is a type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties, the agency has no further Section 106 obligations. For further information on NHPA, go to www.achp.gov/nhpp.html.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

42 U.S.C. , chap.126

Signed into law in 1990, the ADA is the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities. ADA prohibits discrimination in the following areas: public services, public accommodations, employment, and telecommunications. In October 2009, the U.S. Access Board released draft accessibility guidelines that apply to federally managed outdoor areas – including components of the National Trails System. The draft guidelines can be viewed at www.acesboard.gov/outdoor/.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

16 U.S.C. 1541-1544 (1973)

The ESA provides broad protection for species of fish, wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered in the U.S. or elsewhere. Provisions are made for listing species, as well as for recovery plans and the designation of critical habitat for listed species. The Act outlines procedures for federal agencies to follow when taking actions that may jeopardize listed species. For more information about the ESA, go to www.fws.gov/endangered/.

Purpose of the Trail Corridor Designation

Trails normally are associated with a single type of landscape – mountain, lake shore, or river course. Few traverse more than a single physiographic region. Practically all are connected with a single strong landscape feature such as a mountain range, river valley, or historic pathway. Thus, few trails offer diverse recreation, scenic, and cultural opportunity. Yet such an opportunity exists with the Potomac River as its backbone.

Trails for America: Report on the Nationwide Trails Study (1966)
quoted in *The Potomac Heritage Trail: A Proposed National Scenic Trail*

Based on a feasibility study completed in 1974, legislation enacted in 1983, extensive engagement with stakeholders since 1996, and subsequent administrative practices, the Trail corridor designation serves to:

- provide coordination among citizen groups; local, regional and state agencies; and federal land managers in the development and management of a continuous, inter-connected, 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 Allegheny Highlands in western Pennsylvania;
- connect people with places--provide opportunities for people to explore connections and contrasts between and among landscapes and the history and communities in five physiographic provinces; and
- provide technical and financial assistance to local, regional and state agencies; citizens groups; and federal land managers in support of the above.

The Trail corridor designation provides a framework to establish, manage, promote and interpret, through institutional partnerships, a related set of recreational and educational trail experiences rich in geographic, ecological, historical, and social diversity. Within this institutional framework, the Trail is an evolving physical network of different trail types—hiking paths, on-road bicycling routes, off-road, paved multi-use facilities, and water trails—some within common rights-of-way. As the Trail network has grown—as more segments have been planned and constructed and as more segments have been recognized formally —NPS roles have evolved from a primary focus on planning and development to include interpretation and sustainability.



* *The Potomac Heritage Trail: A Proposed National Scenic Trail* (Wash., D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1974).

Significance of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

There remains now no doubt of the practicability of the Plan, or that, upon the ulterior operations being performed, this will become the great avenue into the Western Country--a country which is now settling in an extraordinarily rapid manner, under uncommonly favorable circumstances, & which promises to afford a capacious asylum for the poor & persecuted of the Earth.

George Washington to Thomas Jefferson

31 August 1788

Local, regional, and state federal government agencies; citizen groups; business interests; and individual volunteers, have reclaimed access to rivers, historic sites, and natural areas to develop a network of routes in the PHT corridor for non-motorized travel on land and water. The evolving trail network and related interpretive facilities sites provide, collectively, opportunities to experience the character of places and communities molded by five physiographic provinces in a corridor of only 425 miles.

With the Potomac River as the primary resource and namesake, the Trail corridor and evolving network are significant in a national context:

- 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."
- Increased environmental awareness in the second half of the 20th century has led to cleaner rivers and streams in the Trail corridor, with the Potomac River recognized nationally as a model of restoration and a continuing challenge to sustain improvements in ecological health.
- 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.

"White papers" written for the National Park Service elaborate on the significance of resources associated with the Trail corridor (see, e.g., Ogilvie 1998 and Kummerow 2004).

Fundamental Resources and Values

The Trail network spans two major watersheds—the Potomac, the second largest tributary to the Chesapeake Bay, and the Upper Ohio river basin, including the Youghiogheny and Allegheny rivers, which meet the Monongahela at the Forks of the Ohio. Major transitions between geographic areas are notable at the Great Falls of the Potomac, the Gap in the Blue Ridge, Big Savage Mountain and the Falls at Ohiopyle. With a human population of approximately 7 million people, the Trail corridor includes portions of five physiographic provinces and four states, the Nation's capital, 20 units of the National Park System, three national wildlife refuges, numerous Civil War battlefields and fortifications, four National Natural Landmarks, over 100 National Historic Landmarks, major military reservations, 12 Congressional Districts, 37 local jurisdictions, and 2.2 shared miles with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail[†]. The Trail corridor also includes significant archeological sites; Superfund sites (e.g., near Sterling, Vir.); the county with the highest per capita income in the Nation (Fairfax, Vir.); and two of the three fastest growing counties in the Nation (Loudoun and Prince William, Vir.).

Resources in the expansive portion of the Potomac within the Atlantic Coastal Plain include numerous tributary streams and wetlands, as well as Historic St. Mary's City, the birthplaces of George Washington and Robert E. Lee, Westmoreland Cliffs, the National Colonial Farm, a network of wildlife management areas, Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens and lands within the viewshed that began the land trust movement in the Nation, and the City of Alexandria Historic District and Heritage Trail system. Upstream from the

* The *Papers of George Washington*, <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/constitution/1788/jefferson2.html>

[†] the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath, Maryland, below Harpers Ferry, W. Vir.

Nation's capital, resources include the historic Pawtomack Canal, the historic 184.5-mile Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and Towpath, a developing linear park system within the Virginia portion of the Piedmont river corridor, and the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers at Harpers Ferry; within the Ridge and Valley province, features include Fort Frederick, Little Orleans, Green Ridge State Forest, and the Paw Paw Bends and Paw Paw Tunnel. Features in the Allegheny Highlands include the Mason-Dixon Line; the Eastern Continental Divide; the Big Savage Tunnel; and the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage, a rail-trail creating a seamless recreational experience between the Town of Cumberland historic district and Point State Park in downtown Pittsburgh. Northeast from Ohiopyle, the network of public and private lands along Laurel Ridge embrace the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail and serve as an outstanding example of continued conservation. Together, these resources tell the story of the founding and continuing evolution of the Nation, as well as the tension in American society between conservation and exploitation.

Interpretive Themes

Crafting a meaningful interpretive theme statement may be the hardest part of developing an effective interpretive product. It takes discipline.

David L. Larsen
Interpretive Themes

The interpretation of resources within the Trail corridor poignantly evokes connections with the interaction among land, people and culture. The result of a facilitated discussion among local and regional historians, the themes below were developed as part of a planning process, conducted between December 2002 and January 2004, to complete an "interpretive concept plan" for use by NPS staff and Trail partners. The primary theme is stated in an active tense to capture the holistic nature of the Trail enterprise among many different stakeholders; the supporting interpretive themes are grounded in the historical significance of the Trail corridor.

Primary Interpretive Theme: Meeting Ground of Ideas

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is a partnership to develop and sustain a system of trails for recreation, transportation, health, and education between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands. The Trail is 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.

Supporting Interpretive Theme: Natural History and Human Ecology

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.

Supporting Topic: Nation-Building / Nurturing A Nation

Routes connecting the Potomac River with the Forks of the Ohio provided an essential context for the development of the United States Republic.

Supporting Interpretive Theme: Boundary, Corridor and Crossroads

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.

The interpretive concept plan provides guidance for use of these themes.[†]

* Eastern National (Fort Washington, Penn.: Eastern National, 2003.

[†] see <http://www.nps.gov/pohe/parkmgmt/planning>

Desired Trail Experiences and Future Conditions

As I think about this theme [connecting communities], it strikes me that it is in many ways...what the whole Trail is about, on many different levels. First, the trail is spanning thousands of geographic barriers of access and ownership that have divided our entire region. But beyond the geographic connections that the Trail is making amongst different lands, waters, and peoples, it is also bringing together communities across different layers of time, connecting us with our many pasts as well as new possibilities for the future of our watershed. Finally, the Trail is spanning every artificial chasm we have made amongst ourselves: different kinds of trail users; leaders from federal, state, county, and local governments, non-profit's, and businesses; different interest groups from environment to history to community development; residents of rural, suburban, and urban areas; people of every race, culture, faith, age, income level, and nationality; and (most importantly) the divide between humans and nature itself.

Connecting communities also has very practical implications for Trail planning, as we work to connect areas of public need and philanthropic relevance to Trail advocacy, investment, realization, stewardship, and programming. Most immediately, the bridges we advance within the Caucus might forge a model of the larger connecting potential of the Trail.

Steve Coleman
Ninth Annual PHT Caucus
2005

An experience of the Trail network will provide opportunities for people to explore the interaction among land, water, culture, livelihood and human communities, providing a window into ways that lands and waters affect human practices and livelihood and ways that people shape lands and waterways. Residents in and near the Trail corridor and visitors to the Trail corridor will be able to:

- seek personal renewal through hiking and other non-motorized, outdoor recreational activities;
- develop intellectual, emotional, and spiritual connections to the places associated with the significance of the Trail corridor; and
- understand continuing challenges to the creation and/or reestablishment of healthy communities, lands, and waters, and ways to participate in the conservation of the ecosystems surrounding the Trail and the preservation of the cultural heritage within the overall Trail network.



Trail segment managers and other stakeholders will seek to:

- conserve of natural, historical, cultural, recreational and scenic qualities,
- ensure financial stability of programs that manage and/or support the trail,
- encourage adherence to accepted trail design standards,
- maintain generally accepted standards of maintenance;
- provide appropriate law enforcement; and
- develop volunteer support and community investment.*†

† from "Appendix E," *A Development and Management Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Virginia* (February 2006)

The Trail Network Is Used to Address Multiple Goals and Serve Many Interests

The critical task today is thinking about trails in the context of whole systems and making land-use decisions that explicitly consider connecting the trails, setting aside land to allow connections, thinking systematically about trails, linear parks and greenways, and acting now because decisions made in this decade will the long-term fate of essential resources.

Trails for All Americans
1990

In the 20 years since publication of *Trails for All Americans*, the Trail network has become an example of the desire for quality outdoor experiences. From the simple to the complex, the Trail corridor designation is being used to address a range of needs—outdoor recreation, resource conservation, educational opportunities, heritage tourism and transportation. Trail audiences can be organized into two groups: institutional Trail partners--government agencies, non-profit organizations and citizen's groups, heritage tourism and other business interests; and Trail users. Relationships with institutional partners are essential to the development of a Trail network grounded in the wealth of outstanding resources; the continuity between and among resources and the availability of high-quality experiences contribute to the utility of the Trail network to Trail segment users. Stakeholders associated with Trail segments range from park managers, heritage tourism and economic development interests, and health professionals to hikers, bicyclists, paddlers and other outdoor enthusiasts. The geographical, ecological and social diversity of the Trail network and Trail corridor is an asset and one of the justifications for national significance, but developing “continuity of experience” throughout the network is challenging at best. Coordination among Trail segment planning and management entities, though, is complicated by diverse perspectives found among such advocates, promoters and critics. Among those involved with development, management and promotion of the Trail network, the cross-cutting topics that follow might be described as “goals” of the Trail network.



photo: Nature Valley

Increase Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

We do not want in the United States a nation of spectators. We want a nation of participants in the vigorous life. This is not a matter which can be settled, of course, from Washington. It is really a matter which starts with each individual family. It is my hope that mothers and fathers, stretching across the United States, will be concerned about this phase of their children's development, that the communities will be concerned to make it possible for young boys and girls to participate actively in the physical life, and that men and women who have reached the age of maturity will concern themselves with maintaining their own participation in this phase of national vigor--national life.

President John F. Kennedy
Remarks to the Delegates to the Youth Fitness Conference
February 21, 1961

Different segments of the Trail network provide for different forms and combinations of outdoor recreation--walking, hiking, running, bicycling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, and use of assistive devices. The demand for these types of recreation continues to grow. In Virginia, a 2006 recreation survey revealed that approximately 50 percent of respondents indicated a high need for walking and hiking facilities. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed revealed that it was their favorite outdoor recreation activity. In addition to those walking, another 16 percent hike and backpack. Walking for pleasure and

* John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8455>.

providing safe places for the public to enjoy being outdoors while walking is anticipated to continue to increase with population growth in Virginia. Within the Trail corridor, foot travel is the most common mode and the most common means to establish continuity throughout the Trail network.

Potential stakeholders: Hiking, walking, and running clubs, historic preservation groups, bicycling organizations, state and county park and recreation departments, water trail groups, kayakers, canoeists, sailors

Encourage Conservation

The Trail concept has been used to support conservation of local and regional natural resource and open space in the rapidly developing areas of metropolitan Washington, D.C. Trail corridors are often rare ribbons of open space and nature, providing connections between ecological islands or hubs; while providing access for human travel, the network also provides avenues for native plant and animal migration and helps to maintain biological diversity. To some advocates, the Trail network is important for conservation of open space and rare species, maintenance of functioning ecosystems, and access to nature in places where such opportunities would be otherwise non-existent.

Potential stakeholders: environmental organizations, natural resource advocates, watershed organizations, state and county environmental agencies, wildlife advocates, national land managing agencies

Contribute to a Transportation Network

While providing outdoor recreational opportunities, many segments of the Trail network also provide a means to travel from one location to another. The Mount Vernon Trail is a prominent example, used simultaneously for transportation and recreation; non-motorized transportation can be both a means and an end. Use of the Trail corridor designation to address transportation needs is was described most notably in a plan for a network of regional greenways titled *Priorities 2000: Metropolitan Washington Greenways* (2001).^{*} More recently, a 2009 study of the potential demand for roll-on bicycle service on the Amtrak Capitol Limited illustrates the significant overlap between transportation alternatives and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Potential stakeholders: all Trail segment users

Interpret the Significance of the Trail Corridor

As the only national scenic trail with the word “heritage” in the name, the experience of Trail segments includes connections to the resources which, collectively, contribute to the national significance of the Trail corridor. Various media are being used to make facilitate connections between users and resources; use of the Trail logo is most prominent, serving as the most fundamental element to create continuity and to connect users with specific places, trails and routes. Other media include Web sites, brochures and exhibits, as well as programs and events provided by a variety of partners.



Potential stakeholders: users seeking authenticity, a sense of place and an understanding of the geography of the Trail corridor and the history and culture of the United States

^{*} Wash., D.C.: National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Encourage Historic Preservation

The desire to walk in the footsteps of our predecessors or stand in the exact place where a significant event occurred is a characteristically American need, indicative of a culture that values authenticity. With so much of America's history tied to natural or man-made corridors, trails often present a uniquely effective way to highlight that history.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Historic Preservation and Community Identity Fact Sheet

The Trail provides a window into the natural, cultural, and economic history of those who have lived in and passed through the lands and waters between the mouth of the Potomac River and the highlands of the Alleghenies. The corridor contains many layers of history, especially those connected directly with the evolution of the Nation. Key events include the establishment of the Algonquin confederation, the explorations of Captain John Smith; the events leading up to and including the French and Indian War (i.e., the "Seven Years War"), the American Revolution and War of 1812; the Civil War; westward European-American migration, and the expansion of transportation routes and commerce along the corridor. Representative Trail segments include the C & O Canal and Towpath, the Alexandria Heritage Trail and Fort Circle Parks Trail, Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, water routes, and the Great Allegheny Passage. Preservation and recognition of individual sites as part of the Trail network likewise contribute significantly to the Trail experience; such places include the Lighthouse within Point Lookout State Park, George Washington's Birthplace, Mount Vernon, Rippon Lodge, Government Island, Fort Washington, the Potowmack Canal, Great Falls Tavern, the Turkeyfoot at Ohiopyle, and the Point in downtown Pittsburgh. The Trail provides physical and interpretive connections between and among other national, regional, and local trails, sites and events and a means to organize and promote Trail experiences based on cultural themes or regional geographic clusters.

Potential stakeholders: travelers seeking authentic experiences, historic preservation organizations, historic site-specific organizations, state and county tourism agencies, historical societies, civil war groups, educators, researchers

Create a Network of Heritage Tourism Experiences

...78% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities while traveling, translating to 118.3 million adults and \$192 billion each year. Combining outdoor experiences with interpretive opportunities is part of the "heritage tourism" movement toward places that are unique for their local historic and cultural interest....The vast majority of these travelers (65%) say that they seek travel experiences where the "destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character."

Historic parks and local heritage events can be big draws. Cultural-heritage travelers are frequent travelers, reporting an average 5 leisure trips in the past 12 months versus non-cultural/heritage travelers who make 4 trips. More than half of cultural/heritage travelers prefer their leisure travel to be educational, and are likely to travel farther for such experiences. About half of recent overnight leisure trips were 500 miles or more from home, and over a third say they traveled between 100 and 300 miles for a day trip.

Mandala Research
for the U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Marketing Council
in conjunction with the Department of Commerce
2009

Individual segments of the Trail network contribute significantly to local and regional travel and tourism experiences, but the Trail network as a whole should be promoted by capitalizing on underused capacity within existing destination marketing organizations and convention and visitor bureaus. Creating "continuity of experience" is essential and requires recognition for individual Trail experiences as part of a larger network: Outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation combined with education, communications

* adapted from *THE CONDUCTOR* Fall 2009 – No. 26, <http://www.ncr.nps.gov/>

between and among Trail promotion and management partners, and a system of graphic identity are essential to effective interpretation and promotion of the Trail network.

Efforts begun in February 2007 to establish a partnership among heritage tourism development and tourism marketing professionals have resulted in an expanding suite of Trail travel itineraries, “tagged” by region and interpretive theme; a regular e-newsletter distributed among Trail marketing stakeholders; and occasional meetings to review direction and communications. Such efforts foster continuity of experience throughout the Trail network while promoting local and regional heritage tourism.

Administration of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

The fortunes of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail rest with its partner agencies and their volunteer supporting organizations... The idea is that the collaborative process will lead to local decisions that provide local needs, but serve all Americans by conserving this nationally significant resource.

David Lillard, President, American Hiking Society
“A Communications Approach for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail”
1997

Similar to the execution of other responsibilities, Section 245 of the Department of the Interior *Departmental Manual* delegates responsibility for administration of the federal interest in the Trail to the National Park Service. Since 2001, when Congress appropriated base funding for trail “operations,” Trail administration has been the responsibility of a full-time Superintendent (Park manager) within the National Capital Region of the National Park Service (NPS).*

Based on the authorizing legislation for the Trail, the NPS has primary responsibilities to:

- enter into cooperative or management agreements for management of Trail segments (by entities other than NPS); and
- manage use of the Trail marker (i.e., “logo”).

As suggested in the 1974 feasibility study, the NPS first recognized, after enactment of the 1983 legislation, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath and the Mount Vernon Trail as segments of the Trail network. Recognition for the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail (LHHT) as a segment of the Trail network has been and continues to be addressed through recognition of the LHHT in the NPS unigrid brochure for the Trail; participation in LHHT regional planning projects; consideration of Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Recreation compliance actions; and some technical assistance and financial assistance (e.g., assistance with design of trailhead interpretive exhibits).

Until March 2009 NPS was responsible for review of applications by local and state agencies for designation of trails as segments of the Trail network and, if appropriate, designation of such trails. The agency published guidelines for local and state agencies seeking such designation as a Notice in the *Federal Register*, Vol. 67, No. 184, September 23, 2002 (see Appendix C). Until spring 2009, all Trail segments outside the external boundaries of federal facilities were designated through such application processes; candidate Trail segments met criteria that included: contribution to a continuous network of non-motorized trails between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands; public access at the termini of each segment (i.e., a trailhead) or connection to an existing segment; and connections to resources associated with the Trail interpretive themes.

* Before 2001 Trail administration was included within the duties of staff in the Lands, Planning and Resources Division, National Capital Region, NPS.

In March 2009 Congress passed legislation removing the application requirement from the authorizing legislation for the Trail through an amendment to the *National Trails System Act*; as a result, the NPS employs formal agreements,



authorized in Section 7 of the *Act*, to recognize additional Trail segments, as well as to reinforce the status of Trail segments designated through the application process. On federal lands NPS has recognized existing and planned segments of the Trail through written correspondence when federal land management agencies include segments of the Trail in some type of management plan.

Since 1997, when NPS assigned staff in the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program to evaluate stakeholder interest in the Trail concept, activities supported through administration of the Trail have included:

- assistance with local, regional, state and interstate trail planning, development and management;
- coordination between and among Trail stakeholders;
- assistance with Trail corridor and network conservation;
- interpretation (including graphic identity, wayside exhibit planning and production, and sign plans, etc.);
- management of the Trail marker (i.e., logo), NPS “unigrid” brochure, the Trail Web site;
- maintenance of a basic geographic information system;
- promotion of the Trail network and Trail segments (i.e., through publications, co-sponsorship of events, etc.); and
- tasks specific to various administrative duties within the National Capital Region, the National Park Service, and the National Trails System (e.g., budget and project requests, reporting, etc.).

Generally, roles have evolved from coordination, communications, segment designation and technical assistance with planning and design to include assistance with interpretation, long-term management and promotion.

Issues

Administration of the federal interest in the Trail has been influenced by a variety of factors:

- The inherent diversity of the Trail corridor—a prominent factor in the national significance of the Trail corridor—dictates the need focus on creating “continuity of experience” throughout the Trail network, developing and maintaining a cohesive identity among the various Trail segments.
- Since authorizing legislation precludes recognition of and agreements for management of trails as segments of the Trail in West Virginia, staff of the Trail Office have not assisted potential institutional partners in West Virginia, resources in West Virginia are not recognized as segments of the Trail network, and users experience a gap in interpretation.
- The Trail is considered both a component of the National Trails System and a “unit” of the National Park System—attention to two legislative authorities can sometimes result in redundant and/or conflicting administrative requirements, lack of clear programmatic guidance, and confusion among institutional Trail partners.

The issues above, however, can be addressed effectively through support for regular communications among and technical assistance to NPS institutional Trail partners; completion of this foundation and subsequent endorsement by NPS institutional Trail partners; and recognition, as appendices to this document, for Trail and related management plans completed by state, regional and local agencies.

Communications

After the specific mandates articulated in legislation, communication is the most essential function of Trail planning and administration, including:

- clarifying and promoting the purpose of the Trail network;
- annual reports and project and activity reports;
- annual and semi-annual meetings among Trail stakeholders;^{*}
- regional and thematic workshops (e.g., interpretive planning, regional trail and greenway planning, marketing, gap analyses);
- submitting and editing articles for publication in NPS and non-NPS publications;
- site visits with Trail stakeholders to Trail segments and related resources;
- providing technical and financial assistance to various organizations seeking to establish and maintain Trail segments; and
- communications and coordination among Trail stakeholders.[†]

Degrees and roles for NPS staff vary depending on the goals, objectives and capacity of Trail stakeholders.

Planning, Project Assistance and Land Conservation

In utilizing and conserving the natural resources of the Nation, the one characteristic more essential than any other is foresight.... The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life.[‡]

President Theodore Roosevelt
address to the National Editorial Association, Jamestown, Virginia, June 10, 1907

Planning assistance by NPS staff and others (e.g., staff of regional and municipal planning organizations and of state agencies) is necessary to determine the ways in which development of and recognition for Trail segments can be used to address local, regional and state needs and opportunities—for outdoor recreation, conservation, education, transportation and/or heritage tourism—to assure logical connections between individual Trail segments, to develop a base level of interpretation, and to establish continuity throughout the network. The primary roles of NPS staff are to:

- promote physical, thematic and management connections between and among individual Trail segments (e.g., through staff assistance, publications and participation in events);
- provide technical and financial resources to complete plans; and
- recognize, through formal agreements, trails as segments of the Trail network (see appendices).

^{*} Beginning with a workshop in 1997 at the former Henry Diamond Laboratories (now Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge) in Prince William County, Virginia, Trail corridor-wide meetings have provided opportunities for Trail stakeholders to review the status of the Trail network discuss issues and agree on common actions. Held annually through November 2008, such “caucuses” have been organized based on requests from and the needs of Trail partners.

[†]Such efforts include those by the American Hiking Society, Potomac Heritage Partnership/Potomac Heritage Trail Coordinating Council, Potomac Trail Council, Potomac Heritage Trail Association, and a collection of heritage tourism marketing interests, as well as by various participants in Potomac Heritage Trail-wide meetings; in 2007, for example, the Institute for Conservation Leadership, as part of a Trail corridor-wide stakeholder analysis and discussion conducted stakeholder interviews, solicited opinions, facilitated a discussion and provided recommendations to participants.

[‡] Internet source: <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/conservation.htm>

Through cooperative agreements, contracts or direct staff assistance, NPS has provided funding and/or planning assistance for projects in southern Maryland, the Northern Neck of Virginia, Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, western Maryland, the Great Allegheny Passage and the Laurel Highlands.

Partnerships

Like other components of the National Trails System, partnerships, both formal and informal, are the essence of the Trail network. Staff of the NPS, primarily through the Trail Office, manages relationships with and among other government agencies, non-profit organizations, and individual volunteers. The Office provides some financial and technical assistance for specific projects, as well as opportunities for coordination among Trail partners. In general, Trail partners seek to:



- encourage resource conservation that contributes to the identity and well-being of communities in the Trail corridor for present and future generations;
- establish a seamless Trail network and experience for Trails users, providing opportunities to learn about the significance of the natural, historical, and cultural resources in the Trail corridor and the relationships among them;
- encourage public involvement and leadership in development and management of Trail segments and in conservation of the Trail corridor;
- recognize Trail segments in local and regional comprehensive plans;
- foster opportunities for local business owners and managers to contribute to the Trail experience and the sustainability of the associated resources; and
- coordinate activities with other Trail partners to realize the purpose of the Trail network.

Staff of the NPS, based on the authority in Section 7 of the *NTSA* (16U.S.C1246), use formal agreements to recognize Trails segments managed by other agencies and organizations that fulfill the following:

- 1) The trail contains significant natural, historical and cultural resources and related educational opportunities associated with the primary themes for which the PHNST corridor is nationally significant:
 - a) the Potomac River and upper Ohio River tributaries as an East-West transportation corridor, especially George Washington's vision of a connection between the Atlantic Ocean and the Forks of the Ohio River;
 - b) migration, establishment and conflict of cultures (in particular the conflicts represented by the French and Indian War, a.k.a., the Seven Years War, and by the Civil War); and
 - c) the evolution, stress on and restoration of river ecosystems.
2. The trail provides opportunities for at least one form of non-motorized travel (e.g., hiking, jogging or running, bicycling, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking and/or sailing).
3. The trail contributes to the quality of life for residents of communities in the trail corridor and to the experience of visitors to the trail corridor.

4. The trail acts as a primary route in and contributes to a developing network of trails for non-motorized travel between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands, providing a logical connection, on land or water, between public resources (e.g., other trails, parks, river access points, etc.) within one or more of the following jurisdictions:
 - the District of Columbia
 - the following counties in the State of Maryland:

St. Mary's	Frederick
Charles	Washington
Prince Georges	Allegheny
Montgomery	
 - the following counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

Somerset
Fayette
Westmoreland
 - the following counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia:

Northumberland	Stafford
Westmoreland	Prince William
Lancaster	Fairfax
Richmond	Arlington
King George	Loudoun
5. The Trail segment manager agrees to maintain some combination of regional informational exhibits (describing, among other points, the trail and its contribution to the PHNST), educational exhibits, and/or staffed visitor centers to serve as “gateways” to the trail corridor, to communities associated with the trail corridor and to the history and ecology of the region.
6. The trail will be administered at no additional cost to the federal government. (Note: Funds provided to states, regional planning organizations and others for transportation projects, historic preservation and comprehensive outdoor recreation plans, e.g., are not considered federal funds and not subject to this criterion.)
7. The trail-managing agency agrees to share geographic information system data related to the trail.
8. The Trail segment manager has completed some type of management plan that recognizes:
 - a) the trail corridor, trail (including location) and the contribution, as a component of the region’s infrastructure, that the trail makes to the quality of life for residents of and visitors to communities associated with the trail corridor;
 - b) permitted public uses and types of experiences provided by the trail;
 - c) policies, objectives, practices and agreements employed to maintain the trail and to conserve the trail corridor (i.e., to maintain the scenic, natural, cultural and/or recreational values for which the trail qualifies as a segment of the Trail network), including planned seasonal closures to maintain the integrity of the resource or to reduce conflicts between and among various user groups (e.g., to protect wildlife breeding or migrating areas or to permit hunting);
 - d) compliance with applicable Federal regulations;
 - e) related conservation and/or development plans (including plans to provide recreational, educational and interpretive opportunities); and
 - f) a marking system used to identify the trail route.

Within such formal agreements, the NPS agrees to:

1. authorize use of the official Trail marker (i.e., “logo”) by the management partner;

2. recognize the trail segment as a segment of the Trail network in official publications (including Web sites);
3. provide opportunities for coordination between the management partner and other Trail network stakeholders; and
4. review annually the status of the Trail segment, trail-related management and interpretive needs, and opportunities for coordination.

Creating Continuity of Experience throughout the Trail Network

The Trail embodies a wide range of resource types, management interests and users. The need to establish and maintain physical, graphic and interpretive continuity between and among Trail segments is essential to experience the Trail as a network with national significance. Without such continuity, the Trail is simply a list of unrelated outdoor recreational opportunities.



Trail Route Marking: Use of the official Trail marker (i.e., logo) is the common element to establish continuity throughout the Trail network and to provide users with a measure of confidence that they have located and/or are following an intended route. Trail managers are encouraged to use the Trail marker at trailheads and at major transitions between trail types and trail corridor attributes. In places where blazes are used to mark routes, Trail segment managers are encouraged to use a color that complements the Trail logo--a dark blue, Pantone Color Management System 299; white; or black--to establish and maintain graphic identity. To assist Trail management partners, the Trail office publishes and distributes copies of *Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail: Graphic Identity Guidelines for Trail Partners* (2004), which includes sections on use of the Trail marker,

graphic identity, trailhead orientation, interpretation and publication design, and includes a compact disk with digital files of the Trail logo in various formats and Trail-related publications.

Interpretation and Public Information: Interpretation is the process by which we connect people with resources—emotionally, intellectually and personally. Building on use of the Trail marker to establish connections with resources throughout the Trail network, administration of the Trail includes:

- revision, publication and distribution of an NPS “unigrd” brochure for the Trail, indicating the national significance of the Trail and associated Trail network;
- management of the NPS Web site for the Trail;
- development and publication of national, regional, and local thematic brochures;
- developing and executing actions identified in an “interpretive concept plan” for use by NPS staff and partners;
- assisting with completion, use and/or production of sign plans and wayside exhibit plans and with research, design and production of exhibits;
- promoting and co-sponsoring events; and
- producing and distributing to Trail partners location-specific Trail “Passport” stamps as part of the “Passport to Your National Parks Program” (see <http://passport.eparks.com/store/>).

Interpretive themes, identified in the interpretive concept plan (ICP), have been and are being used to:

- establish thematic and programmatic connections between local resources and the themes for which the Trail corridor and network is nationally significant;
- develop, publish and distribute *Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail: Graphic Identity Guidelines for Trail Partners* (2006);

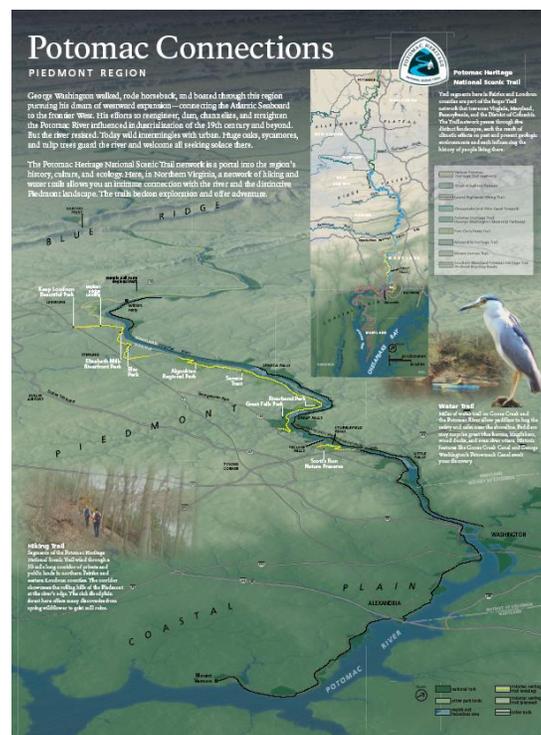
- develop, revise and maintain the content of the National Park Service Trail “unigrd” brochure;
- develop a system for planning and designing wayside exhibits and route marking to complement print and Web publications; and
- evaluate the appropriateness for NPS support to local projects and events.

Examples of projects informed by the ICP include:

- completion of a wayside exhibit proposal, plan, and designs to manufacture and install a suite of exhibits, establishing graphic identity and continuity of experience between and among the network of parks and Trail segments in the Piedmont region of the Trail corridor in Virginia;
- support for and/or participation in the Northern Neck RiverRide, Occoquan River Festival, Trail Towns Program, heritage trails in the City of Alexandria and in Washington, D.C., and various local commemorative events; and
- design and publish publications, in NPS unigrd design format, for Trail segments, including the Great Allegheny Passage, eastern Loudoun County, Prince William County, Prince George’s County, and the Northern Neck of Virginia.

A minimum level of interpretation for Trail segments includes the following:

- distribution of the NPS Trail “unigrd” brochure at each major visitor center, museum and other orientation and educational facility within the Trail network;
- high-quality maps that provide users with the means to find trailheads and trails and to understand the Trail segment in the context of the Trail network;
- a route marking system for each Trail segment that includes use of the Trail marker at major trailheads and at major changes in direction and/or trail routing;
- content within brochures and Web sites, low-profile wayside exhibits, and other interpretive media that establish connections between users and the resources associated with the interpretive themes for which the Trail corridor is nationally significant;
- wayside orientation exhibits at major trailheads to indicate the Trail segment in the context of the Trail network;
- a suite of annual guided tours providing users with the opportunity to travel the length of the Trail corridor within a calendar year;
- a suite of on-line “itineraries” providing users with options for self-guided travel throughout the Trail network;
- Web links among the NPS Trail Web site, related Trail network Web sites, and the Web sites of each Trail management entity and each destination marketing and tourism agency in the Trail network;
- NPS Trail “Passport” stamps at primary visitor centers and Trail-related sites throughout the Trail network;



- a Junior Ranger program designed and managed to connect youth with the ecology, history and culture of each physiographic province;
- regular evaluation of interpretation and necessary revisions to the Trail interpretive concept plan; and
- NPS capacity to provide technical assistance to staff of Trail partner agencies and organizations.

Next Steps

This document will be circulated for review among other NPS and federal stakeholders; institutional Trail partners (i.e., Trail segment management agencies and organizations; planning organizations; and citizen organizations). NPS will seek endorsements for the foundation; engage Trail management partners in cooperative management agreements; and assist regional and state agencies with completion of plans for Trail segments and Trail corridor conservation and development. Thus, the “comprehensive management plan” for the Trail will consist of this document and the sets of appendices, including management plans—organized by state—for various Trail segments.