



Dear friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce that the *Draft Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (CMP/EA) for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail* is now available for public review and comment. Since the establishment of the trail in 2006, input from our partners, trail visitors, communities along the trail, and the trail advisory council has been instrumental in the development of this plan.

The purpose of the CMP is to provide a vision, plan of action, and decision-making framework for developing the trail over the next 20 years. Development of the trail will be carried out by the National Park Service and its many partners, including the Chesapeake Conservancy, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, federal and state agencies, communities throughout the region, non-profit organizations, and businesses along the trail. The CMP addresses issues relevant to the future management of the trail, as identified by our partners, in public workshops, and through public comment.

Visitor experiences on the trail will include journeys on land – walking, bicycling, motoring—and journeys on water—paddling, sailing and cruising, in craft large and small. The trail will provide national park quality experiences through NPS partnerships with state and

local governments, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. The trail can serve as an important agent in promoting stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, and for renewal of the human spirit. The CMP proposes four alternatives for managing the trail to achieve these goals and explains the preferred alternative that has been identified through the planning process.

This newsletter provides an overview of topics in the draft CMP, such as trail management and the alternatives considered. The full draft document is available for download and comment at the trail's planning website <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cajo>, from October 6<sup>th</sup> to November 5<sup>th</sup>.

You may comment on the *Draft CMP* or request a copy by contacting the trail office at (410) 260-2495 or emailing [CAJO\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:CAJO_Superintendent@nps.gov). The draft CMP is also available for review at trail headquarters at 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 314, Annapolis, MD 21403.

Thank you for your interest in the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT. We look forward to receiving your comments on the draft CMP, and we welcome your involvement in the trail's future.

Sincerely,

John Maounis  
Superintendent

## OVERVIEW

On December 19, 2006, President George W. Bush signed legislation establishing the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (NHT) as part of the National Trails System. The trail commemorates the explorations of John Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in 1607-1609, tracing approximately 3,000 miles of his voyage routes. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for managing the trail in partnership with Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (CBGN), states, local communities, non-profit partners, and for-profit partners.

The purposes of the trail are to:

- commemorate the exploratory voyages of John Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in 1607-1609
- share knowledge about the American Indian societies and cultures of the seventeenth century
- interpret the natural history of the Bay (both historic and contemporary)
- provide recreational experiences on water and on land along the trail

The promise of the trail is to help the millions of people in the region and elsewhere experience, envision, come to understand, and care to protect what the explorers and the inhabitants of the region saw 400 years ago. The trail will fulfill this promise:

- by expanding access to the Bay and rivers
- by protecting special places reminiscent or evocative of those times
- by educating the public of the importance and exceptional nature of the region, its people, and its resources
- by providing recreational experiences throughout the region
- by creating partnerships amongst the many citizens, groups and jurisdictions to realize the vision
- by instilling awe and reverence for the special places in the Chesapeake region

Many partners will assist the National Park Service with future planning, development, and management of the trail. Its evolution will require a robust trail partnership involving the NPS, the CBGN, federal and state agencies, communities throughout the region, other non-profit organizations, and businesses along the trail. Working collaboratively, the NPS and its partners will develop component water trails, provide access to the trail, tell the trail's stories, offer services for trail users, and protect the important resources related to the trail. Together, the NPS and all of its partners are dedicated to forging a future for the Chesapeake inspired by lessons from the past.

## TRAIL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The trail management framework, which applies to any of the alternatives, is described in depth in chapter 2. The trail will be implemented through ten smaller units, or segments, that can best utilize the resources and partnerships in that particular segment. The NPS proposes the segment approach as the best fit for accomplishing the trail's purpose by focusing efforts at a more manageable scale to most effectively work with trail partners, assess and protect trail-related resources, and develop a coherent trail experience that accommodates a variety of trail users and promotes cultural heritage tourism. Figure 2.1 illustrates the ten trail management segments.

The NPS Chesapeake Bay Office would have overall responsibility for trail planning, management, and development, which would occur in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (CBGN) program. Trail development would occur in accordance with the trail management framework described in the CMP. Segment management plans for the trail's ten management segments would tier off the CMP, providing more detailed analysis and management guidelines for trail management segments. Segment management plans would provide the basis for prioritizing investment in trail development projects, including land acquisitions.

The trail would continue to develop as partnerships are forged or enhanced with traditional and non-traditional partners who would collaborate to generally emphasize programs, media, and trail facilities to tell the stories of the John Smith voyages. Management plans for trail segments would provide a common agenda to guide the collective group of partners.

Federal and state agencies would support trail activities. Trail management would be integrated with management of other NPS units and national trails where they are in close proximity to the trail or overlap with the trail. NPS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would collaborate to implement opportunities for trail visitors at national wildlife refuges that are in the vicinity of voyage stops.

The Chesapeake Conservancy would be the primary trail wide NPS partner providing assistance with trail development through advocacy, fundraising, land protection, working with landowners, awareness building, and

other functions. Additional friends group(s) would support the work of the trail partners by assisting with resource protection, organizational capacity building, and development (fundraising). In addition there are and would continue to be other regional and even trail-wide partners with which the NPS would collaborate, including other federal agencies and state agencies.

### **Visitor Experience**

Providing National Park quality experiences along the trail is critical to meeting the intent of Congress in designating the trail. This will require significant additional public access to the trail, visitor contact facilities, interpretive signage and other media, as well as other trail-related facilities. These experiences will be provided through NPS partnerships with state and local governments, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. The NPS, in conjunction with partners, will help develop strong heritage tourism programs and products to attract visitors and benefit the region.

### **Resource Protection**

Trail-related resources include significant places that Smith visited, landscapes evocative of the 17th century, indigenous cultural landscapes, 17<sup>th</sup>-century American Indian archeological sites, and historic American Indian town sites. The NPS and partners will develop a resource protection strategy for each trail segment that will include promoting awareness of the trail and trail-related resources, land protection strategies, and working with public and private landowners to protect vulnerable resources.

### **High Potential Route Segments**

Trail segments will be designated as high potential if they meet criteria cited in the CMP. Criteria include: a significant aggregation of trail-related resources (e.g., sites where Smith landed, landscapes evocative of the early 17th century, American Indian town sites of the 17th century), availability of public access, capacity to support high quality recreation experiences, presence of protected lands, and proximity to CBGN partners. The designation of a route segment as high potential indicates exceptional opportunities for visitors to vicariously share the experiences of John Smith and his crew. High potential route segments will receive priority for trail development, including segment planning, development of public access, interpretive media and programming, and resource protection.

### **Partnerships**

Collaboration with partners is essential to the management of the trail. The CMP outlines opportunities that partners would have to participate in trail planning, development, and management of the trail. Partners include federal agencies, states, local governments, American Indian tribes and descendent communities, CBGN partners, and the trail friends group. The Chesapeake Conservancy (formerly Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail) is identified as a key partner for the NPS in development of the trail.

### **Connecting and Side Trails**

Connecting or side trails provide additional benefits and connect the national historic trail to other resources or visitor experiences. The criteria for the designation of side or connecting trails specify that the proposed connecting trail exemplifies the natural history of the 17th century, has a connection to John Smith's exploratory voyages, is associated with 17th-century American Indian towns or cultures, and provides significant recreational experiences.

## **THE MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES**

The CMP/EA considers four alternatives for future management of the trail. Each alternative assumes a different emphasis and management approach to addressing the major trail management issues. The alternatives include Continuation of Current Management (Alternative 1) and three distinct action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4). These alternatives are each discussed in depth in chapter 3 of the CMP.

### **Alternative 1 – Continuation of Current Management**

Trail management would continue to focus the visitor experience, resource protection, and partnerships on existing partner sites and existing water trails, with little additional public access to the trail. Visitors would experience the trail through a variety of self-guided trips on the land and on the water, or as part of a general recreation experience in the Chesapeake Region. Interpretive experiences would be focused at some Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (CBGN) partner sites where interpretive media would tell the trail's stories and where there would be occasional opportunities to participate in trail-related interpretive and educational programs. Visitors would learn about the John Smith voyages, the Bay and its related natural and cultural resources, and conservation and stewardship of Bay resources.

Visitors would travel the trail on the land by following the network of existing hiking/biking trails, bike routes, and auto routes along portions of the trail. These would connect some partner sites and access sites that provide opportunities to view the voyage route at overlooks and from public access sites on the water. Some auto routes and trails would tell the stories of the voyages, such as *John Smith's Adventures on the James River Water Trail and Auto Tour* (Virginia DCR). New land-based trails and auto tours would develop over time as partners emerge to develop and manage them.

Water-based experiences along the trail would be largely self-guided. Along most of the trail, access points would be widely spaced and few, if any, visitor facilities and services would be available, except in the vicinity of settled areas and at CBGN sites. Very few overnight camping facilities would be available, greatly limiting opportunities for multi-day boating trips in remote areas of the Bay and its tributaries. Where water trails exist, trail partners would manage them, providing opportunities for visitors to travel portions of the trail with the help of water trail guides and interpretive materials, and—along some water trails—making available visitor facilities and services on the shore at or near access sites.

Trail managers would continue to gain some additional understanding of these resources—where resources occur along the trail, their significance to the trail, the actions needed to protect them, and the opportunity they offer for visitors to experience the trail and to tell its stories. Cultural resource identification would occur through NPS and partner collaboration; partners would undertake studies consistent with their individual missions, with NPS support and technical assistance, as funding permits. There would be no further investigations to identify additional high potential route segments or high potential historic sites.

Land protection would continue to be at the discretion of local and state agencies, consistent with their mission and as funding permits. The potential for federal land acquisition would be minimal although acquisition could occur if there is a willing seller and a site is threatened with destruction or irreparable damage.

#### **Alternative 2 – Exploratory Voyages of Captain John Smith**

Trail management would emphasize interpreting and protecting the most historically significant places directly associated with John Smith's voyages. Visitors would travel the trail on the land and on the water stopping, at the places where John Smith stopped and learning about the experiences he had as he explored the Bay. Interpretive experiences would be focused at voyage stops, connected by NPS-designated water trails, auto and bus routes, and organized water tours. As visitors follow the trail, they would stop at visitor contact stations, parks and refuges, and other CBGN partner sites where they would find a broad array of interpretive materials and would have opportunities to participate in interpretive and educational programs or witness living history exhibits and reenactments of voyage events. Interpretive materials and programs would focus primarily on the stories of the voyages.

In this alternative, visitors would access the trail from an expanded network of public access sites within federal, state, and local parks and national wildlife refuges, as well as on private conservation lands. New access sites would be located at or in the vicinity of voyage stops, enabling visitors to experience as closely as possible the locations where John Smith stopped. Access would include a mix of pull-offs with views of the trail, trails to the water, day-use facilities near the water, and boat access sites. New boat access sites would primarily be “soft” put-ins/take-outs for canoes and kayaks.

Visitors would travel the trail on the land by following an expanded network of hiking/biking trails, bike routes, and auto routes along portions of the trail. These would connect partner sites, voyage stops, and access sites that provide opportunities to view the voyage route and voyage stops at overlooks and from public access sites on the water.

Over time water trails would develop offering recreational experiences along the entire length of the trail. Trail partners would manage the water trails, providing opportunities for visitors to travel the trail with the help of water trail guides and interpretive materials that focus on the voyages and the events that occurred at each voyage stop. Visitors would paddle, sail, or motor from stop to stop, learning about the voyages at each stop. Along most of the trail, water access points would be widely spaced and few, if any, visitor facilities and services would be available, except in the vicinity of settled areas. Very few overnight camping facilities would be available, greatly limiting opportunities for multi-day boating trips in remote areas of the Bay and its tributaries.

Resource identification in this alternative would emphasize voyage stops and 17<sup>th</sup>-century American Indian archeological sites. Secondary emphasis would be on evocative landscapes, historic American Indian town sites,

landscape features and cultural sites of significance to modern American Indian tribes, indigenous cultural landscapes, and Smith's cross sites. Trail managers would continue to gain some additional understanding of these resources—where resources occur along the trail, their significance to the trail, the actions needed to protect them, and the opportunity they offer for visitors to experience the trail and to tell its stories. Additional studies would identify and document the significance and stories associated with voyage stops, particularly those that occur within landscapes that are evocative of the 17th century when John Smith explored the area. Further investigations would focus on evaluating additional significant voyage stops that might qualify for designation as high potential historic sites.

Resource protection in this alternative would focus on all voyage stops, particularly those that qualify as high potential historic sites. Partners would assume primary responsibility for protection, and the NPS would provide technical assistance with education of landowners regarding stewardship, planning, partner acquisition, and identification of potential funding sources. There would be some potential for federal land acquisition, although acquisition could only occur if there is a willing seller and a site is threatened with destruction or irreparable damage.

### **Alternative 3 – Chesapeake Region in the 17th Century (Preferred Alternative)**

Trail management would emphasize interpreting the world of the Chesapeake that Smith encountered during his voyages—its natural abundance and its complex American Indian cultures—and protecting significant sites and landscapes that are evocative of that time. Visitors would travel the trail on the land and on the water enjoying a variety of enhanced recreation experiences while exploring places reminiscent of the Bay in the 17th century and stopping at the places where John Smith stopped. Immersed in an evocative landscape along the water trail, visitors would enjoy multi-day experiences on the Bay and its tributaries. They would also hike or bike between voyage stops, fish, and picnic near the water, while learning about the experiences Smith had as he explored the Bay, the natural world he discovered, and the American Indian cultures he encountered.

Interpretive experiences would be focused at voyage stops, evocative landscapes, significant archeological sites, and at landscape features and cultural sites of significance to modern American Indian tribes. NPS-designated water trails, auto and bus routes, and organized water tours would connect sites. As visitors follow the trail, they would stop at visitor contact stations, interpretive and education centers, national wildlife refuges, and other CBGN partner sites where they would find a broad array of interpretive materials, could participate in interpretive and educational programs, or witness living history exhibits and reenactments of voyage events. They could also participate in environmental stewardship programs and safety/skills programs.

Visitors would orient themselves to the trail by visiting the trail website or by studying the trail brochures. Once on the trail they would obtain more information about the trail by stopping at one of the trail's two interpretation and education centers or by stopping at one of the trail's five visitor contact stations. These facilities would all be located at existing CBGN partner facilities. The centers would be developed to provide multiple interpretive, education, and orientation functions for the Smith trail as well as for the Star-Spangled Banner NHT, the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route NHT, and the CBGN.

Visitors would access the trail from a greatly expanded network of public access sites within federal, state, and local parks and national wildlife refuges, as well as on private conservation lands. Many new access sites would be located at or in the vicinity of voyage stops and evocative landscapes, enabling visitors to experience as closely as possible the locations where John Smith stopped and world of the Chesapeake he explored. Access would include a mix of pull-offs with views of the trail, trails to the water, day-use facilities near the water, and boat access sites. Boat access sites would also be developed where additional access is needed to meet boating demand along the trail. These would be "soft" put-ins/take-outs for canoes and kayaks. Where these sites do not adjoin evocative landscapes, they would also offer other recreation opportunities, such as day-use facilities for picnicking, fishing, hiking, and, at some sites, primitive camping.

Visitors would travel the trail on the land by following an even greater network of hiking/biking trails, bike routes, and auto routes along portions of the trail. These would connect partner sites, voyage stops, access sites, high potential historic sites, recreation sites, visitor interpretation and education centers, and visitor contact stations.

Over time water trails would develop offering recreational experiences along the entire length of the trail. Trail partners would manage the water trails, providing opportunities for visitors to travel the trail with the help of water trail guides and interpretive materials that focus on the natural history of the region and the histories of American Indian communities as well as the voyages and the events that occurred at each voyage stop. Visitors would paddle,

sail, or motor from stop to stop, immersed in evocative landscapes along much of the trail. The significant addition of access points in this alternative would reduce distances between put-ins/take-outs, providing more opportunities for shorter one-way day trips within the physical capabilities of average paddlers. Visitors would also be able to have multi-day experiences on the water, made possible by the addition of primitive camping facilities at new access sites as well as at sites in the “backcountry,” accessible only by water.

In Alternative 3, resource identification would emphasize the natural history of the region and the histories of American Indian communities as well as the voyages and the events that occurred at each voyage stop. Trail managers would continue to gain some additional understanding of these resources—where resources occur along the trail, their significance to the trail, the actions needed to protect them, and the opportunity they offer for visitors to experience the trail and to tell its stories. Additional studies would identify and document these resources. Further investigations would evaluate and seek to designate high potential route segments and high potential historic sites along the length of the trail.

Resource protection in this alternative would focus on 17<sup>th</sup> century American Indian resources, evocative landscapes within the trail’s viewshed, in addition to all voyage stops (particularly those that qualify as high potential historic sites), cross sites, and sites providing access to the trail for recreation. A cooperative resource preservation and land conservation agenda would be developed and implemented in partnership with federal, state, and local government agencies, NGOs, American Indian communities, and private property owners. Partners would assume primary responsibility for resource protection, and the NPS would provide technical assistance through education of landowners regarding stewardship, planning, partner acquisition, and identification of potential funding sources. There would be potential for federal land acquisition, if there is a willing seller and the site is important to implementation of the trail.

In this alternative, partnerships would emphasize expanding public access, American Indian stories, and landscape conservation.

#### **Why is Alternative 3 the Preferred Alternative?**

The National Park Service has identified Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative to guide long-term management of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. In particular, Alternative 3 addresses a public desire for expansion of visitor experience and resource management and protection through direct NPS actions. Selection of Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative is based on public comments received during the planning process and the analysis and findings of the CMP planning team. The CMP planning team has determined that Alternative 3 would fulfill the NPS statutory mission and responsibilities of the trail and would offer a greater overall advantage when compared to the other CMP alternatives considered.

#### **Alternative 4 – Recreation on the Historic Trail**

In this alternative, trail management would emphasize increasing public access and recreation along the trail, with limited resource protection and interpretation. Visitors would travel the trail on the land and on the water enjoying a variety of enhanced recreation experiences and participating in volunteer environmental programs. Visitors would hike and bike between voyage stops, enjoying multi-day experiences on the water, and enjoying a variety of recreation experiences near the water while learning about the natural history of the region and the Captain John Smith voyages..

Interpretive experiences would be focused at voyage stops where recreation opportunities are also present. NPS-designated water trails, auto and bus routes, and organized water tours would connect sites. As visitors follow the trail, they would stop at visitor contact stations, national wildlife refuges, and other CBGN partner sites where they would have opportunities to participate in environmental stewardship programs and safety/skills programs.

Visitors would orient themselves to the trail by visiting the trail website or by studying the trail brochures. Once on the trail they would obtain more information about the trail by stopping at one or more of the trail’s five visitor contact stations located at existing CBGN partner facilities in the vicinity of significant voyage stops.

As with alternative 3, visitors would access the trail from a greatly expanded network of public access sites within federal, state, and local parks and national wildlife refuges, as well as on private conservation lands. Access would include a mix of pull-offs with views of the trail, trails to the water, day-use facilities near the water, and boat access

sites. Boat access sites would be developed where additional access is needed to meet boating demand along the trail. These would be “soft” put-ins/take-outs for canoes and kayaks. In this alternative recreation sites would offer recreation opportunities, such as day-use facilities for picnicking, fishing, hiking, and, at some sites, primitive camping. Some recreation sites would also include developed campground facilities.

Over time water trails would develop offering recreational experiences along the entire length of the trail. Trail partners would manage the water trails, providing opportunities for visitors to travel the trail with the help of water trail guides. Visitors would paddle, sail, or motor from stop to stop, learning about the voyages at each stop. Addition of access points would reduce distances between put-ins/take-outs, providing more opportunities for shorter one-way day trips within the physical capabilities of average paddlers. Visitors would also be able to have multi-day experiences on the water, made possible by the addition of developed campgrounds as well as primitive camping facilities at new access sites and at sites in the “backcountry” accessible only by water.

Resource protection in this alternative would focus on voyage stops (particularly those that qualify as high potential historic sites), and evocative landscapes that provide access to the trail. Partners would assume primary responsibility for resource protection, and the NPS would provide technical assistance through education of landowners regarding stewardship, planning, partner acquisition, and identification of potential funding sources. There would be potential for federal land acquisition, if there is a willing seller and the site is important to implementation of the trail.

In this alternative, partnerships would emphasize expansion of recreational opportunities and public access.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Public Input Sought on Trail Vision and Management

The National Park Service has prepared the *Draft Comprehensive Management Plan / Environmental Assessment for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail*. Your review and comments are encouraged.

You may see and download the draft plan at the trail's planning website <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cajo>.

A limited number of print and CD copies are available. You may request a copy by calling the trail office at 410-260-2495 or emailing [CAJO\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:CAJO_Superintendent@nps.gov). You may also review the plan at the trail office at 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 314, Annapolis, MD 21403.

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The National Park Service helps connect people to the natural and cultural heritage of the Chesapeake region through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.

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### The Next Steps

Following the closing of the 30-day public review and comment period on November 5th, the National Park Service will evaluate comments received from individuals as well as from other federal agencies, organizations, businesses, and others regarding the Draft CMP/EA. If the results of public and agency review do not identify any potential for significant impacts, the CMP planning team will prepare a "finding of no significant impact" (FONSI), which will summarize the comments received on the Draft CMP/EA and document the management alternative selected for implementation. Conversely, if agency and public review reveals potential for significant impacts, the NPS may proceed with a "Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement" (EIS). Upon completion of the EIS, the alternative selected for implementation would be documented in a Record of Decision.

### Implementation of the Plan

The approval of a CMP/EA does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Implementation of the approved trail management plan would depend on future funding from NPS and its partners. Most actions would also depend upon partnership commitment of funds, time, and effort. Full implementation of the plan by the NPS and its partners could be many years in the future.

### How to Comment

The full draft document is available for download and comment at the trail's planning website <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cajo>. You may comment on the *Draft CMP* or request a CD or print copy by contacting the trail office at (410) 260-2495 or emailing [CAJO\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:CAJO_Superintendent@nps.gov). The draft CMP is also available for review at trail headquarters at 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 314, Annapolis, MD 21403.