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The vision for Chesapeake Gateways created over two decades ago remains forward thinking and our renewed focus on advancing dynamic partnerships, inclusive storytelling, equitable conservation, and resilient communities represents the future of the National Park Service.

**Wendy O'Sullivan**  
Superintendent, NPS Chesapeake Bay Office



## Chesapeake Gateways Strategic Plan 2021-2026



Chesapeake Gateways

### Executive Summary

Chesapeake Gateways is a network of places and their partners, providing opportunities to enjoy, learn about and help conserve the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Included in the network are assorted natural, cultural, historical and recreational sites, trails, museums, parks, refuges and interpretive and orientation facilities. These places, and the network as a whole, serve as entry points and the key guide for experiencing the Chesapeake watershed. Chesapeake Gateways is about treasured resources and important stories, and also about the people of the Chesapeake region, in all their splendid diversity. This plan sets out to more fully engage the vivid variety of people and all that they hold dear about the Chesapeake.

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network was founded in 2000 following the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998. Ever since, the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office has convened the network and provided technical staff support and financial assistance to Chesapeake Gateways and community partners. This strategic plan builds on the success of the first two decades. It updates a Strategic Plan in 2005 and a 2014 Strategy and Operational Review of the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office. A companion document updates a Framework published in 2000.

This strategic plan sets out an ambitious, five-year vision to expand efforts beyond Chesapeake Bay to the larger watershed, and to engage and serve all manner of residents and visitors. It seeks to leverage the potential of a great diversity of people, places and stories through a collaborative model of large landscape conservation, education, recreation, and sustainable economies.

The vision was developed through a highly participatory process, and is organized in four key strategies:

1. Rebuild Core Network Capabilities and Services
2. Advance a Major Inclusive Interpretive Initiative with an Equity Lens
3. Promote Resilient Communities & Landscapes through Tourism, Sustainability, Conservation & Local Economies
4. Develop Gateway Communities as Strategic Focal Points

## Brief History of Chesapeake Gateways

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (Chesapeake Gateways) was authorized in the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998. Congress instructed the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with the EPA Administrator, to provide technical and financial assistance to identify, conserve, restore and interpret natural, recreational, historical and cultural resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; to use and link collective resources as Gateways sites for enhancing public education and access; and to develop water trails. The Act further established a Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance Program.

The National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (NPS Chesapeake) founded the Network in 2000 and grew it rapidly to include over 160 Gateway sites by 2005. Gateway sites came together in regional workshops and annual conferences. A map and guide was distributed broadly and various thematic interpretive products were developed. A comprehensive website was developed by NPS and launched, providing visitor information on all Chesapeake Gateways. This is now presented as FindYourChesapeake.com. For over two decades, the National Park Service has provided Chesapeake Gateways with technical and financial assistance, helping scores of partners carry out hundreds of projects, from interpretive planning to exhibits and signage to water trail development and public access site construction.

The Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act originally authorized funding for Chesapeake Gateways through 2003. The Act has since been amended numerous times to extend the authorization in various one-year, two-year and five-year increments, with the current authorization extending through 2025. Funding has been provided every fiscal year since 1999.

Today, Chesapeake Gateways is a network of over 300 parks, museums, other special places and partners—state, local, nonprofit, and private sector—providing opportunities to enjoy, learn about and help conserve the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

Concurrently, the NPS Chesapeake has long advanced the conservation, restoration, and stewardship goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

This strategic plan builds on the success of the first two decades, and envisions expansion in activity, geography (from the Bay to the watershed) and outreach to underserved communities. It updates a Framework set out in 2000, a Strategic Plan in 2005 and a 2014 Strategy and Operational Review of the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office.



## Vision, Mission and Goals

We envision a broad network of conserved lands and special places -- 30 percent of the Chesapeake watershed by 2030 -- equitably providing everyone with access to recreation, history and nature, sharing the diversity of Chesapeake stories, sustaining ecological and cultural functions benefitting all, and engaging an inclusive and deep stewardship movement.

### Mission

Through the Chesapeake Gateways network –

- We inspire and help people discover, experience, and connect with the natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities of the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers, landscapes, and communities across its watershed.
- We work with people and partners to conserve and steward special places important to communities, visitors and the nation, for this and future generations.

### Goals

1. **Enhance interpretation and education of the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers, landscapes, and diverse communities across its watershed.**

Facilitate an integrated approach to interpreting the themes and stories of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through the many special places participating in the network. Help visitors explore, enjoy and better connect with these places and their diverse themes in the context of the Bay and its watershed.

2. **Facilitate broad, inclusive, equitable access to the Chesapeake Bay watershed's natural, cultural and recreational resources.**

Help people discover and access the special places of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through a system of Gateway communities, Gateway sites, water trails, connecting routes and heritage areas. This system enhances access both through orienting people to the region's special places and through support for improvements to the visitor experience at those places.

3. **Promote conservation, restoration and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed's natural, cultural and recreational resources.**

The Chesapeake Gateways network plays a key role in the broad collaborative effort to conserve, protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Through experiences with the Chesapeake's diverse special places, the Gateways network stimulates public appreciation and involvement in conservation, restoration and stewardship.

4. **Strengthen the Network.**

Facilitate collaboration among Chesapeake Gateways network partners, carry out initiatives and programs that advance network-wide goals and strategies, and assist partners in their efforts to identify, interpret, educate about, provide access to, conserve and restore important natural, cultural and recreational resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

## Role of the National Park Service

The National Park Service serves as the backbone organization for Chesapeake Gateways. Primary responsibility lies with NPS Chesapeake in Annapolis, Maryland.

The NPS role is one of a convenor and coordinator, a facilitator and incubator, not necessarily the direct actor for all the strategies outlined in this plan. The value NPS adds to state, local, nonprofit, and private sector partners is in:

- Branding and holistic marketing: We leverage the internationally recognized NPS brand and core programs to promote all Chesapeake Gateways.
- Convening, facilitating links and networking: We convene Chesapeake Gateways and partners for workshops, training sessions and other gatherings to foster sharing of expertise, and strategic collaboration.
- Watershed-wide scope: We connect and assist places throughout the 64,000-square-mile watershed to hold up a national identity for the Chesapeake and facilitate cross-jurisdictional collaboration.
- Technical assistance: We help Chesapeake Gateways and partners learn—often from each other—and put into practice the best of inclusive interpretation, stewardship and community-building.
- Financial assistance: We provide financial assistance, including through the Chesapeake Gateways Grants Assistance Program, for advancing core network initiatives and for supporting projects that implement Gateways goals.

NPS Chesapeake simultaneously helps advance goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program, a federal/multi-state conservation and restoration partnership for an environmentally and economically sustainable watershed. As a major federal landowner across the watershed, NPS park units and facilities have responsibilities to help meet water quality targets set out in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. NPS serves on the Bay Program's Principals' Staff Committee and Management Board and leads the Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship Goal Implementation Team, which coordinates work toward goals associated with:

- Land Conservation
- Public Access
- Environmental Literacy
- Citizen Stewardship and
- Diversity



**Chesapeake  
Gateways**

Moreover, NPS Chesapeake serves as the co-convenor and a financial supporter of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, a large landscape collaborative of more than eighty federal and state agencies, Tribes, land trusts and other non-profit organizations. The Partnership fosters collaborative action to conserve and restore culturally and ecologically important landscapes to benefit people, economies and nature throughout the watershed.

NPS Chesapeake advances the goals and strategies set out in this plan through our collaboration with the network of Chesapeake Gateways and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. In total, this directly contributes to the success of Chesapeake Bay Program goals.

NPS Chesapeake also coordinates engagement with the 57 units of the National Park System, five National Trails, and the 8 National Heritage Areas that are located wholly or partially within the watershed. Many of these NPS units and partnership areas participate in the Chesapeake Gateways network.

The Chesapeake Gateways Framework (see companion document) provides more detail on NPS Chesapeake roles.

## Structure

The Chesapeake Gateways network is a system of places and their partners providing opportunities to enjoy, learn about and help conserve the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Included in the Network are diverse natural, cultural, historical and recreational sites, trails, museums, parks, refuges and interpretive and orientation facilities. These places, and the Network as a whole, serve as entry points and the key guide for experiencing the Chesapeake watershed.

A companion document to this Strategic Plan, *Refreshing the Chesapeake Gateways Network: An Updated Framework*, describes the structure of the Network—its geography, places and partners—including:

- Gateway Communities
- Gateway Sites
- Water Trails
- Land Trails and Routes
- Heritage Areas and Conservation Landscapes

## Our Strategies

This strategic plan builds on two decades of accomplishments and responds to the challenges and opportunities of the third decade of the 21st century. It emerges from broad partner consultations held in the midst of a global pandemic which has impacted not only individual lives, but virtually all of the institutions managing Chesapeake Gateways. Many sites have been closed. School programs have gone virtual. But park visitation is up, significantly. New means of convening and collaborating have appeared.

This plan also stems from a broad, and long overdue, recognition that the benefits of parks, museums and many other institutions have not been equally shared by all people or all communities. Stories beyond the dominant culture remain untold. Not all people have felt welcome, and too many lack access to nearby parks. But, there is a movement to address these challenges.

With other changes since the founding of Chesapeake Gateways—new technology, evolving visitor expectations, calls for community resiliency in face of the climate crisis, and more—a new generation of strategies is needed; strategies focused on communities, inclusivity, network-building, resiliency, and a recommitment to the core values of the network.

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS strategic plan is structured in 4 strategic themes, and articulated in a wide range of initiatives and actions generated through partner consultation. They represent our collective aspirations for both near-term and longer-term futures. The NPS Chesapeake will have different roles in these activities: sometimes leading, other times supporting, and in some cases showcasing the work of others. The NPS roles and responsibilities in Chesapeake Gateways are complemented by its other responsibilities in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Partnership, Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, and other responsibilities that may yet be assigned.

Through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network:

- We inspire and help people discover, experience, and connect with the natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities of the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers, landscapes, and communities across its watershed.
- We work with people and partners—providing technical and financial assistance—to conserve and steward special places important to communities, visitors and the nation, for this and future generations.

This strategic plan is the result of wide engagement with current and prospective partners. It envisions greater reach across the watershed and renewed effort to achieve the mission through enhanced mutual support. We will concentrate our technical and financial assistance on advancing these initiatives and actions, especially those that demonstrate the greatest potential for success.

Together, we will:

### *Rebuild Core Network*

Capabilities and Services

### *Advance a Major Inclusive Interpretive Initiative*

With an Equity Lens

### *Promote Resilient Communities & Landscapes*

Through Tourism, Sustainability, Conservation & Local Economies

### *Develop Gateway Communities*

As Strategic Focal Points



CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS connects people, places and stories across the vast watershed we call home. It builds on the great work of organizations and individuals working at local, regional, state and watershed levels. Serving as a backbone organization, NPS Chesapeake will amplify their work through core network capabilities and services. Together, we will:

**FRAME** the common vision and clarify the goals

**PROVIDE** and leverage tangible support

**PROVIDE** technical assistance and training

**CONVENE** and **FACILITATE** networking among partners

**GROW** the Gateway Network membership

**PROMOTE** and **ADVOCATE** for Gateways



## Actions and Initiatives

- Update, revise and reestablish the Chesapeake Gateways framework as the basic operational document for Chesapeake Gateways organization, participation and roles.
- Develop and implement an overall communications strategy, including revised branding for Gateways and strategies for engaging underserved communities.
- Implement strategies for enhancing funding for Chesapeake Gateways partners and communities, including establishing a competitive Chesapeake Gateways Grants Assistance Program, growing philanthropy and private sector support and leveraging other funding opportunities which align with strategic priorities.
- Create a pooled insurance group for Chesapeake Gateways to facilitate reduced costs of liability coverage.
- Provide priority training and technical assistance for Chesapeake Gateway partners, including resources and tools on best practices, techniques to enhance equity and inclusivity, a cross-network mentor program and customizable templates of interpretive and communications content.
- Convene Chesapeake Gateways partners regularly through cross-network communications, regional workshops, network exchange programs and annual gatherings to strengthen collaboration, share information, develop strategies and assess priorities.
- Grow the Gateways Network to better include sites and partners associated with underrepresented communities and organizations, and wider representation geographically across the watershed.
- Track and showcase accomplishments as part of a coordinated strategy for communicating the values of Chesapeake Gateways.



There's an untapped potential still...to build the broader brand and awareness of all these collected sites and trails and all these offerings around the Chesapeake, to be able to bring in more people and help more people take advantage of it.

**Bill Street**  
James River Association

**Actions and Initiatives**

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS will bring out more complete narratives of our storied landscape. The Chesapeake Watershed is rich with heritage, from the natural resources to the diverse peoples who have lived here through time—from pre-colonial history to today. Some stories are familiar, some untold or under-appreciated, and some are yet to be uncovered. Together, we will:

**ENGAGE** underrepresented places

**HELP** tell underrepresented and full stories

**FACILITATE** galvanizing conservation and quality-of-life messaging

**STRENGTHEN** the ladder of engagement

- Develop meaningful relationships and engagement with underrepresented places and communities to listen, learn, and understand how the Chesapeake Gateways network can support community interests and needs, and help tell important stories.
- Research and document sites, landscapes, cultures, and stories important to Black, Latino, Native American, Asian-American, and other underrepresented communities across Chesapeake regions.
- Facilitate and support Chesapeake Gateways to assess and more fully understand their diverse communities and audiences and their needs and interests.
- Identify, recruit, and develop Chesapeake Gateways sites and partners that can present underrepresented stories.
- Leverage Chesapeake Gateways technical and financial assistance to provide support for underrepresented communities and capacity building for organizations led by and serving underrepresented communities.
- Provide technical and financial assistance for developing inclusive interpretation, programming, and experiences at Chesapeake Gateways for underrepresented communities
- Develop common interpretive content to advance key themes within the Chesapeake Gateways network, content that can be readily adapted and customized for use at individual sites; and develop thematic interpretive products, including interpretive signage.
- Link culture and nature through interpretation, education, messaging, and initiatives. Clearly combine cultural traditions and history with contemporary resource challenges, ecological sustainability, and resilience initiatives to convey a stewardship ethic.
- Convene a collaborative approach across Chesapeake Gateways for linking ladders of engagement—from youth programs to internships to careers—to transform our collective workforce to reflect our communities’ demographics by 2030.



In terms of the outdoors, for many African Americans you wouldn't go to a place unless you specifically knew that your safety could be assured. You needed to know people where you were going in order to be safe. And so I think it's really incumbent upon us who work in this space to have explicit markers of that welcome, of that invitation.

**Brett Glymph**  
Executive Director, Virginia Outdoors Foundation

**Actions and Initiatives**

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS recognizes the Watershed's heritage is a living history played out over a large landscape. Sustaining livelihoods while conserving resources is a core component of our work. Farming, fishing, heritage tourism, and access to nature are all things that make the Chesapeake special, and we must support them. Together, we will:

**PROMOTE and MARKET the Chesapeake Watershed experience**

**PROMOTE a stewardship ethic**

**FACILITATE collaboration for landscape and community conservation**

**ADVANCE equitable access to the outdoors**

**GROW landscape, heritage-based, sustainable economies**



- Develop and implement a strategic communication plan for promoting and marketing Chesapeake Gateways. Distribute Chesapeake Gateways communications through multiple media, including a universal brochure, digital media, and common signage that promotes public recognition of inter-connectivity among Chesapeake Gateways.
- Package events, festivals, places, and programming together to enable thematic and regional exploration, and encourage new and enhanced opportunities connected to underrepresented communities.
- Develop and implement a collaborative stewardship ethic, including a messaging framework connecting community values and public open space, designed to support conservation and public access campaigns at multiple levels.
- Implement initiatives to make public lands and open space more welcoming and accessible to diverse communities. Share and advance standards for equitable access to parks, green space, water, etc. Expand access to green spaces in communities where they are needed.
- Support watershed-wide land conservation and public access collaboration through continued convening of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and supporting its operations, along with other partners. Leverage strategies among the Partnership, Chesapeake Gateways, and NPS coordination of CBP Stewardship responsibilities.
- Develop strategies for linking Chesapeake Gateways and nature-based and cultural tourism of Gateways with economic initiatives for local resilience and community sustainability, especially tied with sectors closely linked with Chesapeake heritage, such as agriculture and maritime activities.



We market Maryland through physical and intellectual linkages. The physical linkages include scenic byways, driving tours, water trails and land trails. What the Gateway Network can provide and has provided is the intellectual linkage of something that's connected and that you, as a consumer of that information, expect to find a lot, because it's a network. It conveys that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

**Marci Ross**  
Maryland Office of Tourism



CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS aspires to connect people, places and stories across all of our great watershed. While active across the broader geography, Chesapeake Gateways will also concentrate some resources in a whole-community approach, as we do currently in Annapolis. These communities will elevate the profile of the entire Chesapeake Gateways effort, connecting to sites, water and land trails, and thematic initiatives. Together, we will:

- PURSUE** a community orientation to the Chesapeake
- APPROACH** as whole-of-community, all-hands, focused strategy
- FOCUS** goals of others in common cause in Gateway Communities
- ADVANCE** Gateway Communities



**Actions and Initiatives**

- Develop a manageable and consistent approach and process for Gateway community development that fosters equity, inclusivity, access, youth engagement programs, visitation, conservation, and other Chesapeake Gateways objectives.
- Support holistic planning for Chesapeake Gateway communities in inclusive ways, with diverse voices co-creating the vision and plans; use equity and community analyses to inform expanded engagement driving access (physical and programmatic) to water, nature, and green space and building resiliency close to home.
- Assist Gateway communities in becoming places for demonstrating holistic, interconnected, collaborative, and inclusive interpretation and story-telling.
- Evaluate lessons-learned from Chesapeake Gateway communities to share, experience, best practices and tools with the wider network
- Use Gateway communities to connect people to places, experiences and opportunities around the broader watershed.



Partnerships elevate all organizations. Historic Annapolis is proud to partner with the City and NPS Chesapeake to bring alive the full story of our shared heritage. The City Dock Redevelopment Planning Project and the Master Interpretive Plan for Annapolis City Dock advanced our commitment to protect and celebrate our natural and cultural treasures. These are important steps to being the best Chesapeake Gateway community that we can be.

**Robert C. Clark**  
President and CEO, Historic Annapolis

# Indicative Milestones

## *Rebuild Core Network* Capabilities and Services

- Workshop series, regular trainings and annual meeting initiated by 2022
- Active communities of practice and sub-networks of Gateways partners in all 7 network regions by 2025
- Active programs underway to reach out to multiple new communities by 2022
- New underrepresented partners actively engaged in all 7 network regions by 2025
- Gateways Grants aligned with strategy by 2021, first awards issued by 2022
- Chesapeake Gateways Grants are matched upfront from other funding to enable the most equitable access to the funds by 2025

## *Promote Resilient Communities & Landscapes* Through Tourism, Sustainability, Conservation & Local Economies

- Communications plan completed and coordinated messaging & actions underway by 2022
- 100% of Gateway grants foster inclusive, welcoming spaces and programs
- Messaging framework for stewardship ethic developed by 2024
- Strategy developed for advancing equity in access to parks, green space and water by 2022
- Chesapeake collaboration is recognized as national model for 30 x 30 conservation, advancing equity, resilience and sustainable economies
- Expand Storytellers Initiative to further engagement of people working Chesapeake lands and waters in telling Bay stories and promoting watershed stewardship
- Pilot a Chesapeake Gateways community initiative that advances the nexus of nature, Chesapeake industries, equity, and landscape conservation

# Indicative Milestones

## *Advance a Major Inclusive Interpretive Initiative* With an Equity Lens

- Phase I dataset of sites important to underrepresented communities published in 2022
- Capacity building support for organizations and communities by 2025
- Whole-of-Story Watershed interpretation plan by 2023
- Majority of Chesapeake Gateways have inclusive interpretation programs/media in some form by 2025
- Convene the key youth employment providers across the watershed to establish a coordinated approach and career ladder by 2022
- New employees of Chesapeake Gateways partners' reflect our communities by 2025
- Inclusion prioritized for Funding Assistance for interpretation projects in 2022-2025

## *Develop Gateway Communities* As Strategic Focal Points

- Process & rubric (defined characteristics, attributes, etc.) for Chesapeake Gateway Communities developed by 2022
- Five Chesapeake Gateway communities identified and engaged; and other bay/river towns are modeling success by 2025
- Chesapeake Gateway Communities showcase equity, access, stewardship, sustainable economies and surrounding landscapes (shorthand for elements of other strategies)

## Engagement Process and Acknowledgements

This strategic plan has been developed in a highly participatory manner. Strategies and actions are based on input and feedback from a broad range of partners over the course of the engagement process, and further informed by the 20-year experience of NPS Chesapeake Bay Office staff. Individual interviews conducted by the NPS Stewardship Institute with nine Chesapeake Gateways partners framed the questions for a weeklong workshop in December 2020. One hundred people from across the watershed were invited to participate, and generated nearly 100 pages of comments, suggestions, and ideas for how all could realize the potential of Chesapeake Gateways through greater networking and collaboration. That wealth of information, which remains accessible to program staff, was distilled into the four key strategies presented here. The core of this plan was then revised again through further feedback opportunities on four occasions in March 2021, the “Coffee with Wendy” series.

All meetings and events were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to accessing input and feedback, these activities, hosted by the NPS Stewardship Institute, modelled effective use of internet-based facilitation tools. It is likely that Chesapeake Gateways will continue to convene groups of people virtually in addition to face-to-face meetings, once they can resume safely.

We are grateful to the following people for providing input to this plan: Katherine Antos (District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment), Nick Bartolomeo (NPS Rock Creek Park), Hedrick Belin (Potomac Conservancy), Felipe Benitez (Corazón Latino), Carol Benson (Four Rivers Heritage Area), Michael Bowman (Chesapeake Gateways/Chesapeake Conservancy), Nathaniel Brown (Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of State Parks), Robert Clark (Historic Annapolis), Cindy Chance (NPS Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT), Mark Conway (Chesapeake Conservancy), Dorna Cooper (Maryland Park Service), Shauntee Daniels (Baltimore National Heritage Area), Jana Davis (Chesapeake Bay Trust), Justin Doyle (James River Association), Nat Draper (James River Association), Barbara Dunn (ASALH Association for the Study of African American Life and History), Vallie Edenbo (Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), Alice Estrada (Annapolis Maritime Museum), Kelsey Everett (Chesapeake Gateways/Chesapeake Conservancy), Regina Faden (Historic St. Mary’s City), Amanda Fenstermaker (Dorchester County Tourism), Kristen Fidler (Maryland Port Administration), Laura Ford (Accokeek Foundation), Jim Foster (Anacostia Watershed Society), Tania Gale (Calvert County Natural Resources), Bettye Gardner (ASALH), Pamela Goddard (NPCA National Parks Conservation Association), Kym Hall (NPS Colonial National Historical Park / Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail), Kyle Hart (NPCA), April Havens (St. Mary’s County Museum-Piney Point), Lauren Imgrund (Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), Destry Jarvis (Outdoor Recreation & Park Services, LLC), Jackie Kramer (NPS Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail), Katey Legg (Gloucester County), Eric Leshinsky (City of Annapolis), Drew McMullen (Sultana Education Foundation), Chris Miller (The Piedmont Environmental Council), Christen Miller (Virginia State Parks), Shannon Nazzal (Calvert County Parks & Recreation Department), Jonathan Pinkerton (Susquehanna National Heritage Area), Mark Platts (Susquehanna NHA), Andrew Ponti (St. Mary’s County Museum), Jeff Powell (Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc), Nicholas Redding (Preservation Maryland), John Reynolds (Chesapeake Conservancy and Fort Monroe Authority), Gaby Roffe (Chesapeake Gateways/Chesapeake Conservancy), Marci Ross (Maryland Office of Tourism), Mark Scallion (Pickering Creek), Nita Settina (Maryland Park Service), Johnny Shockley (Blue Oyster Environmental), Tim Shrader (Virginia DCR State Parks), Britt Slattery (NPS Chesapeake), Raymond Smith (Outdoor Afro DMV), Tom Smith (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation), Michael Steen (Watermen’s Museum), Ruby Stemmler (EcoLatinos, Inc.), Karen Stone (St. Mary’s County Museum), Bill Street (James River Association), Karen Theimer Brown (Historic Annapolis), Abbi Wicklein-Bayne (NPS Fort McHenry / Hampton NHS / Star-Spangled Banner NHT), Oliva Wisner (Chesapeake Bay Program/NPS Chesapeake), Lori Yeich (Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), and Sammy Zambon (Virginia State Parks).

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Photo credits: Map, [Wikimedia Commons](#); Potomac River canoe smiles, Julia Schweitzer for Wilderness Inquiry; Snow Geese in flight by Curtis A. Gibbens; boy with paddle, pointing, National Park Trust 2017; City Dock reimagined rendering, by Stewart White; Interpretive sign, Annapolis City Dock. (Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program).

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Chesapeake

National Park Service  
**Stewardship**  
INSTITUTE



## The Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998

### CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS AND WATERTRAILS NETWORK

The Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall provide technical and financial assistance, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector—

- (A) to identify, conserve, restore, and interpret natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed;
- (B) to identify and utilize the collective resources as Chesapeake Bay Gateways sites for enhancing public education of and access to the Chesapeake Bay;
- (C) to link the Chesapeake Bay Gateways sites with trails, tour roads, scenic byways, and other connections as determined by the Secretary;
- (D) to develop and establish Chesapeake Bay Watertrails comprising water routes and connections to Chesapeake Bay Gateways sites and other land resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and
- (E) to create a network of Chesapeake Bay Gateways sites and Chesapeake Bay Watertrails.

COMPONENTS. Components of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network may include:

- (A) State or Federal parks or refuges;
- (B) historic seaports;
- (C) archaeological, cultural, historical, or recreational sites; or
- (D) other public access and interpretive sites as selected by the Secretary.

### CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS GRANTS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Secretary, in cooperation with the Administrator, shall establish a Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance Program to aid State and local governments, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector in conserving, restoring, and interpreting important historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

CRITERIA. The Secretary, in cooperation with the Administrator, shall develop appropriate eligibility, prioritization, and review criteria for grants under this section.

MATCHING FUNDS AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES A grant under this section:

- (A) shall not exceed 50 percent of eligible project costs;
- (B) shall be made on the condition that non-Federal sources, including in-kind contributions of services or materials, provide the remainder of eligible project costs; and
- (C) shall be made on the condition that not more than 10 percent of all eligible project costs be used for administrative expenses.

[Link to the Act](#)

## Great American Outdoors Act

This landmark conservation legislation (Public Law 116-152, signed in August 2020) will use revenues from energy development to provide up to \$1.9 billion a year for five years to provide needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and American Indian schools. It will also use royalties from offshore oil and natural gas to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the tune of \$900 million a year to invest in conservation and recreation opportunities across the country.

### Chesapeake Bay Program

Initiated in 1983 to restore, conserve, and steward the Chesapeake watershed, the Chesapeake Bay Program, is a multi-state/Federal collaborative partnership authorized under the Clean Water Act and Executive Order 13508. The 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement—signed by the Federal Government and the seven jurisdictions (MD, VA, PA, DE, WV, NY, and DC)—commits the partners to ten specific goals to reach by 2025. The NPS Chesapeake is responsible for fostering interjurisdictional collaboration in leadership of four of the ten Watershed Agreement goals: Land Conservation, Public Access, Stewardship/Diversity, & Environmental Literacy.

### Executive Orders

#### [Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration - 2009](#)

This directive set two-year water quality milestones, requirements to establish best management practices to improve water quality and annual reporting requirement for all Federal agencies with lands and facilities within the watershed. The executive order also specified that strategies to expand public access, conserve landscapes, and increase citizen stewardship should be coordinated with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, Captain John Smith Chesapeake Trail, and the Star-Spangled Banner Trail. EO 13508

#### [Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad - 2021](#)

Called for a report to the National Climate Task Force on steps to conserve at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. NPS Chesapeake and its land conservation partners from the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP), sent a letter to Secretary Haaland to share our conservation success across the Chesapeake and recommendations for the 30x30 report. The report, Conservation and Restoration of America the Beautiful, was issued on May 6, 2021 and included many of the principles shared by the CCP letter and the Chesapeake even received a call out alongside the Everglades and the Great Lakes. EO 13008

#### [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)

Within days of taking office, President Biden issued an Executive Order on racial equity and supporting underserved communities. “Chesapeake Gateways has incorporated equity into the four strategies and will build equity and support for underserved communities into the Chesapeake Gateways Grants Assistance program. Chesapeake Gateways partners have the opportunity to greatly increase progress in addressing racial equity in the Chesapeake watershed by supporting these and other initiatives focused on engagement with underrepresented communities, and by incorporating diversity, equity, inclusion and justice into programs, projects, and community engagement. EO 13985



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**Chesapeake  
Gateways**