

# Refreshing the Chesapeake Gateways Network

An Updated Framework



Chesapeake Gateways

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## Framework Chesapeake Gateways



Chesapeake  
Gateways

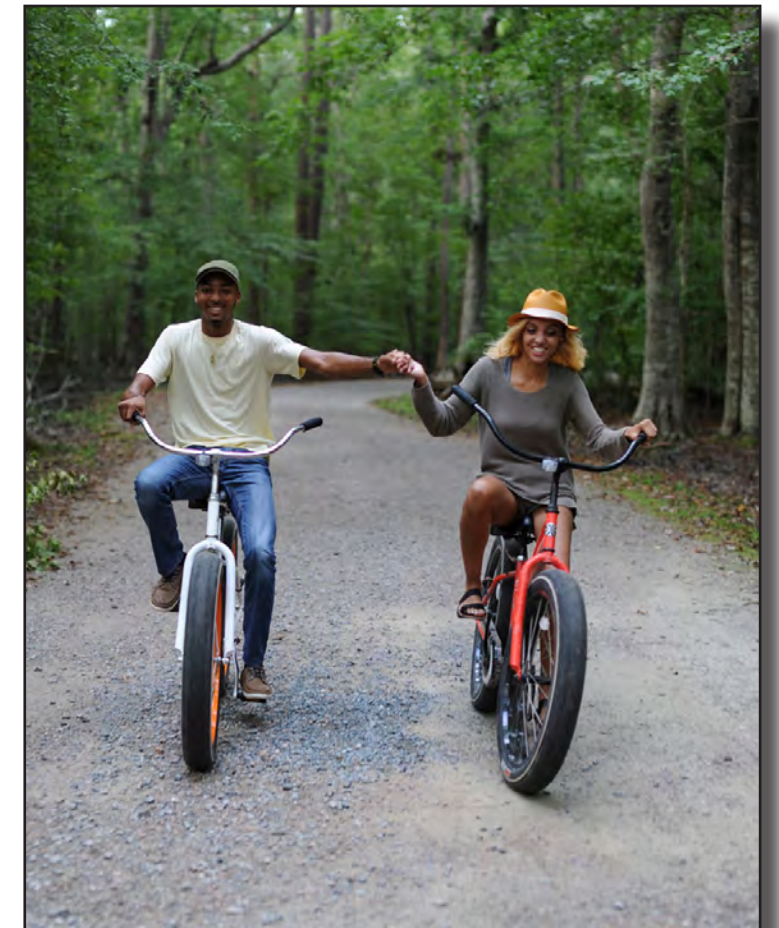
*Purpose* - This Framework guides basic operation of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network created by the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998.

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS is a system of places 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, interpretive and orientation facilities and associated programs. These places and the Network as a whole, serve as entry points and the key guide for experiencing the Chesapeake watershed.

Chesapeake Gateways is coordinated by the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (NPS Chesapeake). Its premise is a broad partnership among many individual sites and organizations in the Chesapeake watershed.

This Framework updates, refreshes and supersedes the original *Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Framework* published in 2000. It provides a foundation for planning and management decisions over the coming 10-15 years.

Based on this Framework, separate strategic plans and annual work plans set out specific strategies and objectives for implementation over increments of 3-5 years and 1 year, respectively. In addition, other supplemental documents may set out more detailed procedures, guidelines or criteria for various programs.





## A Concise History of Chesapeake Gateways

### Origins of the Network

The work to conserve, interpret and provide access to the Chesapeake spans decades and involves hundreds of individuals, organizations and agencies. Contemporary initiatives to protect the Bay have their roots in the late 1970s when U.S. Senator Charles “Mac” Mathias sponsored a Congressionally funded, five-year study to analyze the Bay’s rapid loss of wildlife and aquatic life. The study, published in the early 1980s, identified excess nutrient pollution as the main source of the Bay’s degradation. These initial research findings led to the formation of the Chesapeake Bay Program administered by the Environmental Protection Agency as the primary means to coordinate restoration.

In the early 1990s U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland asked the National Park Service to study ways to recognize and link natural, cultural and recreational sites around the Chesapeake into a “necklace of pearls.” At that time the National Park Service recognized that no single site could adequately represent the complex and diverse resources of the bay. Instead, direct participation in the Chesapeake Bay Program and a program of financial and technical assistance were proposed as ways for the National Park Service to assist in enhancing public access and understanding of the Chesapeake.

### Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act

In 1998, Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act authorizing the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network. The Act directed the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, to provide technical and financial assistance, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit organizations and the private sector to:

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

The Act provided that 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.

The Act also provided for 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.

#### TITLE V—CHESAPEAKE BAY INITIATIVE

##### SEC. 501. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998”.

##### SEC. 502. CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS AND WATERTRAILS.

(a) CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS AND WATERTRAILS NETWORK.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”), in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (referred to in this section as the “Administrator”), 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;

### Founding the Network

Implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act began in 1999. The original Gateways Framework was published in June 2000, outlining the goals, geography and structure of the Network, setting out Chesapeake interpretive themes and identifying early initiatives. The first Chesapeake Gateways were recognized that same month.

Over the next several years, the Network grew rapidly to include over 160 recognized Gateways by 2005.

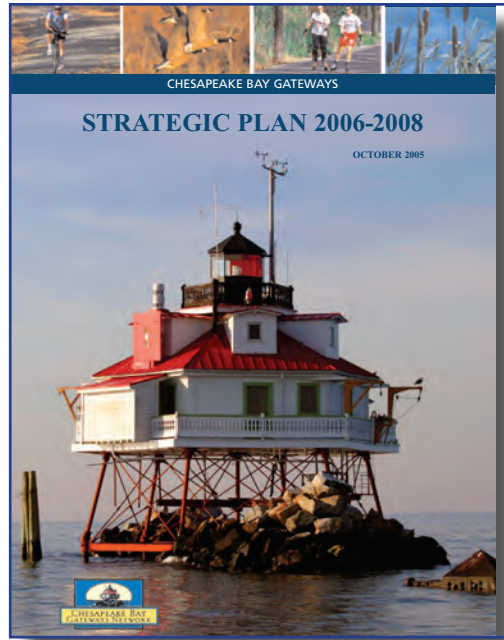
Gateways came together in regional workshops and annual conferences. A comprehensive website launched, providing visitor information on all Gateways. A map and guide was widely distributed and various thematic interpretive products were developed. The NPS Chesapeake provided Gateways with technical and financial assistance, helping support a wide range of partner work from interpretive planning to exhibits and signage to water trail development and public access site construction.

### A Call for Gateways Network Permanence and New NPS Designations

The Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act originally authorized funding for 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.

That said, the need to frequently re-authorize funding has long been a concern for program supporters and a permanent authorization for Chesapeake Gateways has remained a consistent goal. This, coupled with the lack of a National Park Service unit focused on the Chesapeake, has also encouraged supporters to pursue additional legislation.

Responding to another congressional request, in 2004 the National Park Service completed a study evaluating the suitability and feasibility of authorizing a new unit of the National Park System to protect and interpret the Chesapeake. In addition to evaluating the Gateways Network, the 2004 “special resource study” considered several alternative park unit concepts. Extensive consultation with a wide range of interested individuals, organizations and agencies took place during the study, generating more than 3,000 comments.



The study determined that:

- 1) the Chesapeake is a nationally significant resource;
- 2) a permanent watershed-wide system of special places for experiencing the Chesapeake, accomplished by enhancing and building upon the existing Gateways Network, would be the most efficient and effective approach to advancing public understanding and enjoyment of Chesapeake resources and stimulating resource conservation; and
- 3) a unit of the National Park System encompassing one or more of several alternatives could make a significant contribution to protection and public enjoyment of the Chesapeake Bay.

Since completion of the study, several new NPS units and national trails have been added in the Chesapeake region. Two national trails, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, were administered from 2007 to 2018 and 2009 to 2014, respectively, by NPS Chesapeake in coordination with the Gateways Network. These trails are now managed by other NPS units and the focus of NPS Chesapeake has returned to the Gateways Network.

Interest in creating a new unit of the National Park System focused on the Bay remains strong as concepts for a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area are being advanced by Bay congressional leaders and several organizations. This could include a permanent authorization for the Gateways Network as a central and essential component of the National Recreation Area.

## Evolving Relationship to Chesapeake Watershed Protection and Restoration

From its founding, the Gateways Network has been linked with goals and commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Chesapeake 2000 Agreement listed multiple outcomes specifically related to the Network. For a decade, a Gateways Network Working Group, established by the Chesapeake Bay Program, helped advise the National Park Service on Gateways Network development.

In 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order on Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration, tasking various federal agencies to outline a strategy for increasing collective efforts. The NPS Chesapeake convened stakeholders and coordinated development of reports, goals and actions for increasing public access, land protection and citizen stewardship. The goals and actions, set out in the 2010 Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and later adopted in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, drove and reoriented aspects of NPS Chesapeake and the Chesapeake Gateways Network for the next decade.



In particular, NPS Chesapeake continued convening land conservation and public access partners initiated in 2009 in response to the Chesapeake Executive Order. This network of conservation partners, meeting annually and taking on shared initiatives, evolved into the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. The Partnership is 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. The NPS Chesapeake is co-convenor and a financial sponsor of the Partnership.

The Chesapeake Gateways Network is the public manifestation of 150 years of land conservation, still continuing today through the members of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. The Chesapeake Gateways Network is the visitor face of this broad partnership system of protected lands and heritage sites in the watershed. There are no better places than the hundreds of publicly accessible Chesapeake Gateways to connect people with the benefits of land conservation and stewardship.



One of the most important notions tied to goals for watershed restoration is the need to educate residents and visitors of the region about the Chesapeake landscape and the impact of their actions on it. With more than 18 million people now living in the watershed, it is ever more apparent that human actions influence every aspect of the Bay, its rivers, climate, the landscape and our communities. Ecological health, human health, economic vigor, equity and justice and quality of life are interdependent.

Gateways are venues for building a broader environmental stewardship ethic. The Gateways Network builds on the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words to suggest that an experience is worth a thousand pictures. The vision for the Gateways Network is a system that welcomes people to the Chesapeake watershed's outstanding values and provides inclusive experiences that inspire a stewardship ethic. A focus on equitable public access, education and enjoyment is a critical part of the work to restore and protect the nation's largest and most productive estuary.

That said, the Gateways Network is just one contributor to advancing the enormous Chesapeake conservation and restoration agenda, an effort for which collective agencies invest more than \$1.6 billion annually.



## Updating the Gateways Framework

The Gateways Framework adopted in 2000 outlined a vision for the Network, goals, a geographic and thematic focus, a physical organization, the means of participating in the Network and strategies for supporting the Network and assisting its participating partners. These organizing principles generally remain useful and effective in guiding the program. However, during the 20 years since initial adoption, a variety of changes in the social, economic and administrative environment have implications for the Network's future and merit consideration in updating the Framework.

**New and Overlapping Designations:** Several parks, heritage areas, historic trails and other new "units" have been designated in the past 20 years. The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail is one example where many sites are recognized as part of the Gateways Network as well as part of the historic trail. Similar overlaps are found with the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and multiple national heritage areas. These pose questions about how to best coordinate common efforts.

**Expanded Gateways Network Geography:** Gateway sites were initially identified only in the coastal plain (below the "fall line" of Bay tributaries), with the upper watershed limited to water trail development through the program. A 2006 Gateways Network strategic plan called for Gateways beyond the fall line. There are now scores of Gateways recognized throughout much of the upper watershed. The Framework requires updating for this alone, but the broader geography also poses questions about how best to support networking, differences in messaging and other topics.

The launch by NPS Chesapeake of FindYourChesapeake.com in 2013, replacing and updating the visitor trip planning functions of the prior Chesapeake Gateways website, fueled a significant portion of the Network's later growth. Sites added to the Network after 2013 did not go through the same involved and labor-intensive nomination, designation and agreement process applied previously.

**Urgency to Expand Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice:** Heightened urgency and focus on issues of diversity, inclusion, equity and justice highlight the need to expand the stories being presented at current Gateways, as well as to add more sites related to under-represented themes and communities. These goals also indicate a need to actively seek out opportunities to expand engagement with underserved communities and address obstacles to better access for gateway experiences.

**Evolving Technology:** Some of the in-person or print-based information, trip-planning and orientation functions anticipated in 2000 are now ubiquitous online and through mobile devices. Moreover, easy access to interactive imagery and video content is changing the way people consume information and story-telling. This suggests the role of visitor facilities and media of all kinds may be changing, especially for orienting people to the network and delivering interpretive messages.

In addition, technology has dramatically changed the way that partner organizations can network and share information, especially since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020.

**Pandemic Shifts:** The coronavirus pandemic has required many facilities to close, reduce hours of operation, or substantially restrict the number of visitors allowed. At the same time, visitation to many local, state and national parks has been recorded at all-time highs while staffing has been reduced. It is unclear how some of these emergency measures and trends will evolve in the future or over what time period. However, it is unlikely all operations will return to a pre-pandemic normal as so many use and operational patterns have shifted in one way or another.

**Capacity Constraints:** The pandemic and other factors have influenced capacity at many organizations and agencies. Further, many under-represented and underserved communities have long had significant capacity-building needs. While evolving overall patterns in funding support are unclear, it is evident that matching requirements for public sector financial assistance can be a substantial barrier for some organizations and agencies.

All the factors described above provide reasons for a refreshed look at the Gateways Framework as well as a new separate, but complementary strategic plan.

### Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

In 2006 Congress authorized the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, the nation's first water-based national historic trail. The Trail follows the routes of Captain John Smith as he explored the Chesapeake Bay between 1607 and 1609 and includes many of the Bay's major rivers as well as the Bay itself.

The trail authorization was primarily inspired by momentum to observe the 400th anniversary of Jamestown as the first permanent English settlement in what became the United States. But, the trail also was envisioned as an opportunity for the National Park Service to protect Chesapeake sites and enhance public access to the shoreline along Smith's routes of discovery. Attention to the trail was especially intensive around the 400th anniversary celebrations and recognition of trail sites became a high priority for the Gateways program.

The trail is distinguished from other conservation initiatives by its focus on protecting landscapes evocative of the 17th century and its recognition of the indigenous peoples here prior to Smith's arrival and their descendants today. Although the trail encompasses a broad range of sites and routes, it has a more narrow thematic focus than the broader stories and themes communicated through the Gateways Network.

## 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.

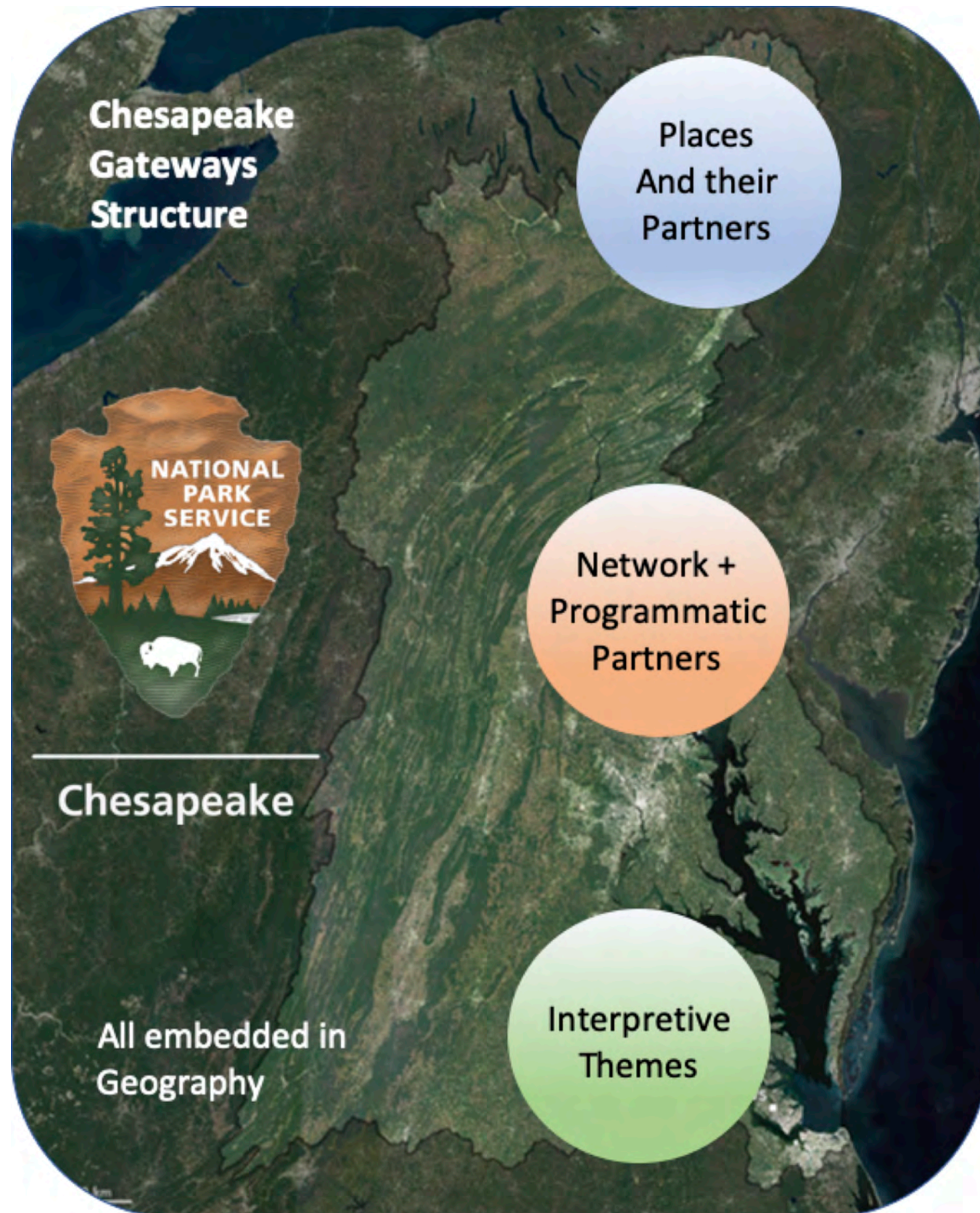
3. **Promote conservation, restoration and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed's natural, cultural and recreational resources.**

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.

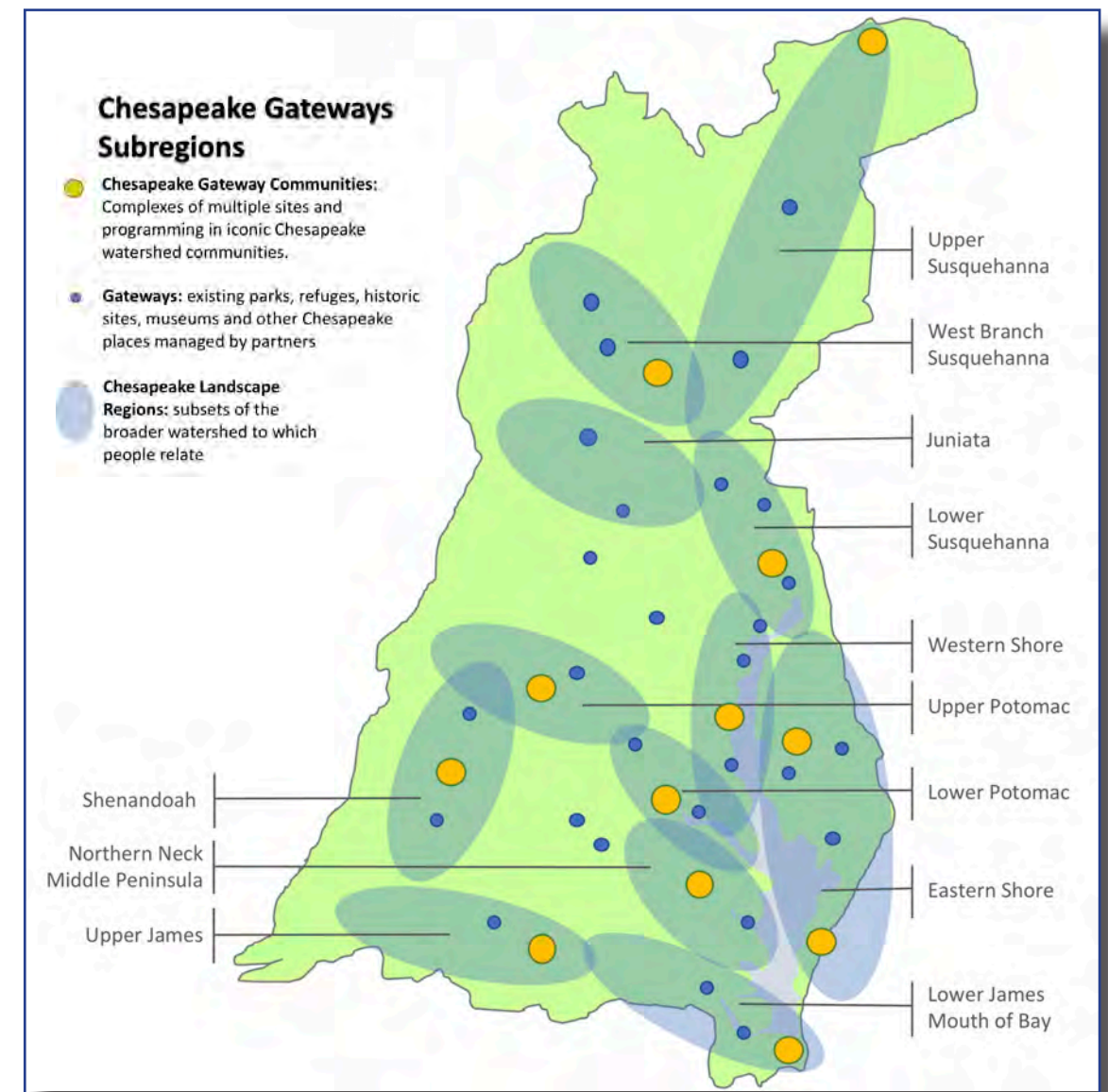




**Geography**

Since 2006, the scope of the Network and the distribution of its participating places are watershed-wide, yet most prominent in association with a series of landscape regions anchored by bodies of water.

People connect with individual places and experiences linked with these diverse landscape regions. The regions also provide a means for understanding organization of the Network.



Within each regional landscape, several different types of places are found.



## Places

Described here are the five major types of places associated with Chesapeake Gateways.

### CHESAPEAKE GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

...provide a host of inclusive opportunities for people to experience multi-faceted Chesapeake resources and stories and they encourage further exploration.

### GATEWAY SITES

...primary individual destinations to which people are directed to access, experience, enjoy, learn about and contribute to a particular natural, cultural, historical, or recreational resource illustrative of the Chesapeake watershed.

### CONNECTING ROUTES: WATER TRAILS

...provide water-based recreational experiences for boaters and, in the case of longer trails, may serve as physical and programmatic connections between multiple Gateway communities and sites.

### LAND-BASED CONNECTING ROUTES AND TRAILS

...link multiple communities and sites providing thematic or geographic approaches to exploring the network. Land trails serve as walking, hiking and biking routes.

### HERITAGE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES

...include dozens of the types of places described above and, in effect, are regional networks that also participate in the Gateways Network.

### PUBLIC WATER ACCESS SITES

...usually focus on opportunities for personal experiences with minimal interpretive information on site.

All of these places have one or more Gateways Network partners associated with them. And alongside place-specific partners relate to the entire network and/or programs. See page 12..

The following pages discuss these five types of places in more detail.

## CHESAPEAKE GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

These communities are where a combination of geography, location, transportation systems, economic uses and services concentrate people at the Bay or along a major tributary. They provide a host of inclusive opportunities for people to experience multi-faceted Chesapeake resources and stories and they encourage further exploration.

Defining Characteristics:

- Located at a major entry point to the Chesapeake or major tributary within a particular region.
- One, or in some cases two, per landscape region.
- Include multiple cultural, natural and recreational resource sites and interpretive facilities within the community that are associated with authentic and iconic Chesapeake watershed themes.
- Provide public access to the Bay or a major tributary.
- Demonstrate community commitment and organizational capacity to: develop and provide an outstanding welcoming orientation for visitors and orient them to the Network; carry out inclusive interpretive programming to introduce people to local and Chesapeake-wide themes.
- Embrace a commitment to linking nature-based and cultural tourism of Gateways with economic initiatives for local resiliency and community sustainability, especially tied with sectors closely linked with Chesapeake heritage.
- Form an enduring relationship with the NPS, documented through longer-term partnership agreements.

Residents and visitors encounter a wide range of cultural, natural and recreational experiences at multiple locations throughout Gateway communities.

### Annapolis, MD



As our nation's first peacetime capital, Annapolis was a political, cultural and commercial mover and shaker of its day. Today, the historic roots of our colonial port city turned world-renowned recreational boating capital are visible at every turn.



Anchor sites orient visitors to the possibilities and introduce overarching interpretive themes. Interpretive materials, exhibits, activities or programs at other individual sites explore principle and sub-themes relevant to those places. Gateway communities make it easy for people to navigate and tour from place to place. They provide information, programmatic links and physical connections, such as walking routes, water links and more. Gateway communities embrace resiliency, conservation, and sustainability through initiatives, programming and communications to enhance overall Chesapeake stewardship.

Based on the new strategic plan, NPS Chesapeake is developing this new program of Gateway Communities, which will grow over the coming several years. The process for recognizing these communities will take shape in 2022.

## GATEWAY SITES

These are the primary individual destinations to which people are directed to access, experience, enjoy, learn about and contribute to a particular natural, cultural, historical, or recreational resource illustrative of the Chesapeake watershed. Gateway sites always provide access for people to have authentic experiences with the resource itself.

Typical examples include: national and state parks, state and national wildlife refuges and management areas, museums, historic sites or districts, historic seaports, natural areas and interpretive facilities related to Chesapeake themes.

Defining Characteristics:

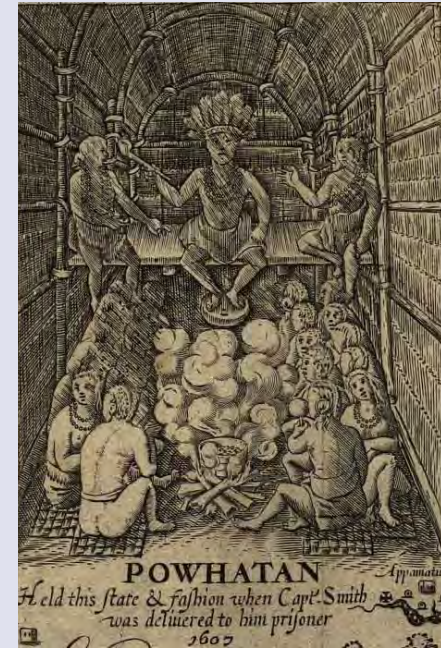
- Located throughout regions surrounding the Bay and its tributaries
- Many within each region. Many also within Gateway communities.
- Have a dedicated focus on places to which people are directed to access, experience, enjoy, learn about and contribute to a particular Chesapeake-related natural, cultural, historical or recreational resource and its role in the overall Chesapeake story.

### Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Site and State Park



The site, located in Dorchester County, MD, near Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, commemorates the life of Harriet Tubman, a true American hero and historical icon.

### Werowocomoco: A Powhatan Place of Power



More than 400 years before English settlers established Jamestown, Werowocomoco had been an important Powhatan Indian town. Werowocomoco, translated from the Virginia Algonquian language, means "place of leadership". As an archaeological site, Werowocomoco was confirmed in 2002. In 2016, the site was sold to the National Park Service, which is working to steward the land and its resources in cooperation and consultation with Virginia Indian tribes.

- Owned or managed by a public agency (unit of local, state or federal government), state or federally recognized tribe or nation, non-profit organization, or private sector entity.
- Primary purpose of site management is conservation, interpretation, education, and/or recreation.
- Open to public visitation for regularly scheduled daily or weekly hours throughout the visitor season.
- Have sufficient visitor information to support a FindYourChesapeake.com listing - including an overview, hours, fees, activities, facilities, location and more.

At Gateway sites, visitors encounter Chesapeake resources and the chance to learn specific stories and information pertaining to the Chesapeake themes to which the site relates. They find interpretive materials, exhibits or programs telling these stories and placing them in broader context, including noting other related sites. Sites provide direct, physical public access to their resources and welcoming orientation materials to facilitate that use. Many sites have on-going conservation and restoration missions and programs and at times provide opportunities for people to engage in stewardship activities.

## CONNECTING ROUTES: WATER TRAILS

Water trails provide water-based recreational experiences for boaters and, in the case of longer trails, may serve as physical and programmatic connections between multiple Gateway communities and sites.

Defining Characteristics:

- Publicly accessible paddling and/or boating routes, generally along rivers and smaller bays.
- Many in each region.
- Provide access to appropriate facilities and resources on land.
- Provide adequate information to orient users to the route and the environment.
- Emphasize low-impact use and foster stewardship along the route and support for conservation of the Chesapeake and local watershed resources.
- Have a designated organization responsible for coordinating management and information.
- Within states having state-wide water trail programs or associations, water trails must be designated or recognized by those programs (Maryland; Pennsylvania; Virginia); a number of water trails are also part of the federally designated Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.
- Have sufficient visitor information to support a FindYourChesapeake .com listing—including an overview, hours, fees, activities, facilities, location and more.

Boating or paddling along a water trail provides people the chance to directly experience the rivers and bays of the Chesapeake watershed. Visitors may find orientation information, resources and interpretive information at various land sites along water trails.

### Upper James River Water Trail



Students from James River Expedition are on the iconic cable bridge crossing the River at Buchanan, Virginia. The bridge is part of the Upper James River Water Trail, which offers unique experiences in five different segments.

## LAND-BASED CONNECTING ROUTES AND TRAILS

Land-based connecting routes (e.g. tour routes, scenic byways) link multiple communities and sites providing thematic or geographic approaches to exploring the network. Land trails serve as walking, hiking and biking routes.

Defining Characteristics:

Connecting Routes (Driving):

- link Gateway communities and sites Bay-wide or within a particular region or sub-region or based on a particular theme
- serve to give people a primary land route for connecting with and accessing components of the Gateways Network

Land Trails:

- For Gateways Network purposes, land trails are longer walking, hiking and biking routes not within the confines of a particular Gateway site, such as a state park.

Both:

- Connecting routes and/or land trails must be recognized by state and national designations—such as state and national scenic byways and state or nationally designated scenic, historic or recreational trails.

Land-based connecting routes introduce visitors to a range of places and interpretive themes, depending on the focus of the route. Some routes follow one theme; others link people with diverse sites in an area. Interpretive themes are conveyed in the context of overarching and principal themes through route maps and guides and signage, again, depending on the nature of the route. Visitors find information for using connecting routes through Gateways network orientation and trip planning materials, such as FindYourChesapeake.com.

### Chesapeake Country Byway



The Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway and All-American Road is a 419-mile land-based connecting route that extends from Chesapeake City to Crisfield, MD. It weaves together waterfront towns and landscapes where guests can experience the authentic Chesapeake. The route features working waterfronts, water and land-based recreational opportunities, trails, museums, cultural attractions and historic sites.



## HERITAGE AREAS AND LANDSCAPES

Over the past two decades, a series of landscape-scale designations have occurred at the state or federal level. These embrace varying sizes of regions from smaller within the confines of a large city, to quite expansive – 2.3 million acres in one example. But in all cases, each of these recognized landscapes includes dozens of the types of places described above (communities, sites, etc.). In effect, these landscapes are regional networks that also participate in the Gateways Network. These designations include:

- Maryland's Heritage Areas
- Pennsylvania's Heritage Areas
- Pennsylvania's Conservation Landscapes
- Several national heritage areas, including Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, Baltimore National Heritage Area, Susquehanna National Heritage Area and Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District.

In some cases, these designations overlap. Regardless, the programs often share mutual objectives with the Gateways Network and both leverage support from each other for accomplishing them.

### Susquehanna National Heritage Area



This NHA supports regional initiatives to save and enhance important and iconic river landscapes for public use and benefit: The Zimmerman Center for Heritage is the headquarters of Susquehanna Heritage and serves as Pennsylvania's Official Visitor Contact and Passport Station for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic trail.

## PUBLIC WATER ACCESS SITES

NPS Chesapeake also maintains and promotes information related to public water access sites throughout the watershed, many of which are located at or along the types of Chesapeake Gateways above.

Water access sites usually focus on opportunities for personal experiences with minimal interpretive information on site. Some sites provide limited navigational information through on-site signage.



### Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway

Located at the head of the Bay in Maryland, this heritage area highlights the history of the Susquehanna River region and includes the Star-Spangled Banner and Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trails.



## OTHER NETWORK PARTNERS

The many organizations and agencies that manage places participating in Chesapeake Gateways have partner relationships of their own, with other organizations who help advance mutual goals associated with that place. Just one example might be a friends group for a particular park. We welcome those partners in the Network.

Similarly, the Chesapeake Gateways has two major types of systemic partners, described below.

### Network-wide Partners

Network-wide partners provide foundational support for coordinating and sustaining the entire network, in direct collaboration with NPS Chesapeake. These partners provide governmental, private and non-profit sector expertise, funding and flexibility to support the work of the NPS to maintain and enhance effectiveness of the network. They buttress, match and leverage the NPS role. They execute projects and programs, typically in collaboration with the NPS.

#### *Network-wide partners:*

- conduct activities that are not confined to an individual site or community, but rather benefit the entire watershed-wide network,
- provide systemic philanthropic and other financial support targeted at network-wide priorities,
- support or carry out foundational network functions, such as communications, network-wide engagement through workshops, training sessions and other gatherings,
- are fundamentally committed to advancing the network's long-term and strategic goals in a systemic fashion, and
- have enduring relationships with the NPS.

#### *Established Network-wide Partners:*

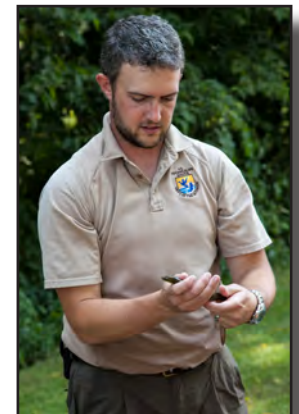
- Chesapeake Bay Program: One network-wide partner is legislatively defined—the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. The NPS Chesapeake administers the Gateways Network in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Program to advance shared goals.
- Chesapeake Conservancy: For over 10 years, the Chesapeake Conservancy has served as the NPS Chesapeake's primary non-governmental watershed-wide partner for Chesapeake Gateways and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. As we reinvigorate the Network and continue to grow the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, we are evolving and expanding our core relationship with the Conservancy into a philanthropic partnership to help support shared goals for Chesapeake Gateways and Chesapeake conservation.

## Programmatic Partners

Programmatic partners support or carry out individual initiatives, programs, or projects that advance network goals benefitting multiple network places or the network as a whole. These may include work to conserve, restore, provide access to and interpret natural, recreational, historical and cultural resources and advance engagement, equity and support for underrepresented communities. The nature of these partnerships is mutually beneficial to the network and to the mission of the partner organizations.

#### *Types of Programmatic Partners:*

- Key state agencies: such as state parks, tourism, conservation and historic preservation, each of which might play key programmatic roles related to multiple Gateways in their own systems and the network in their respective states.
- Key federal agencies: similar to state agencies, certain federal agencies administer multiple Gateways (e.g. US Fish & Wildlife Service) or broad programs that may benefit Gateways and the Network.
- Regional heritage tourism entities: such as destination marketing organizations and state or national heritage areas. These coalitions of places and partners in specific regions overlap with portions of the network, presenting thematic and geographic visitor experiences in a particular areas.
- Specific initiative partners: NPS Chesapeake partners with various entities around specific initiatives designed to achieve broad programmatic goals and strategies of the network. For example, NPS Chesapeake is collaborating with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and three states to document sites and landscapes important to African Americans, an initiative that advances both broad Chesapeake Gateways Network and Chesapeake Conservation Partnership goals.
- And NPS Chesapeake, in partnership with Corazón Latino, is helping Chesapeake Gateways to make their sites and programming more welcoming and engaging for Latino communities. This work will ensure sites offer culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate initiatives, thus fostering natural connections and stewardship with our nation's public lands.





## Roles of NPS Chesapeake

NPS CHESAPEAKE serves as the backbone organization for Chesapeake Gateways. In collaboration with partners, NPS Chesapeake provides a variety of core “network-wide” functions that are foundational to sustaining a collaborative system.

**Planning:** The NPS undertakes collaborative planning for the Network, such as multi-year strategic plans, or specific plans and strategies for certain Network initiatives.

**Convening and Networking:** The NPS Chesapeake convenes Gateways and partners for workshops, training sessions and other gatherings to foster sharing of expertise, strategy development and the goals of the Network. This cross-organizational learning and collaboration is at the core of any successful network. The office also pays particular attention to facilitating participation of Chesapeake watershed units of the National Park System within the Network.

**Branding, Communications and Marketing:** The Network seeks to spotlight the Chesapeake watershed, its natural, cultural and recreational experiences and the places that support them as national and international icons. To support that NPS Chesapeake supports unifying branding, imagery, media and communications that promote Chesapeake Gateways. NPS works with partners to maintain digital and other media for helping visitors to easily locate places, stories and experiences through digital platforms, a standard NPS unigrid brochure and other media. NPS collaborates with state tourism agencies to promote Network places and experiences. The NPS and its partners coordinate implementation of a branding identity for Chesapeake Gateways that supports visitor recognition of the Network and its places and supports individual partner brands.

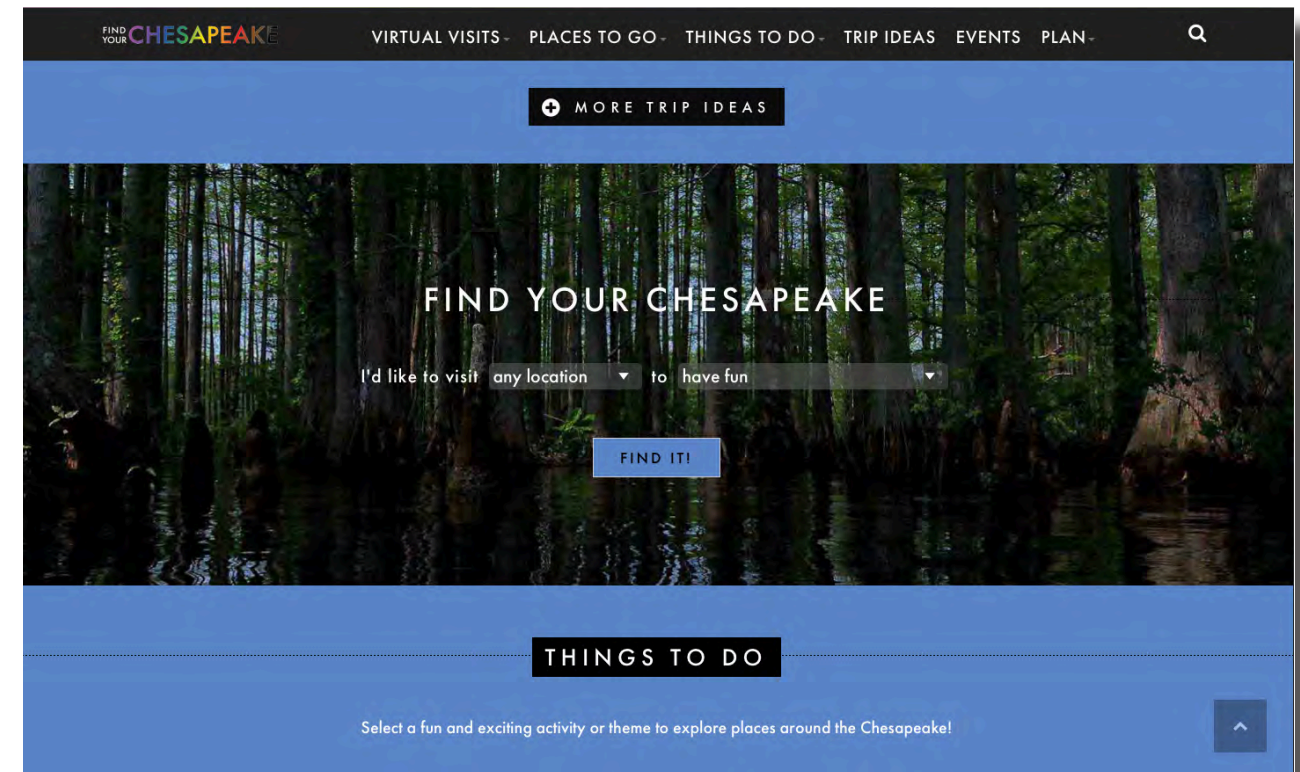
**Inclusive Interpretation and Visitor Experiences:** The vast majority of visitor programming is carried out at individual places by the managers and partners at those sites. However, the NPS collaborates with partners to develop interpretive programs or media for conveying broad overarching and principal themes relevant to many places throughout the network. The programs and media may be deployed through multiple channels. In addition, the NPS and Chesapeake Conservancy maintain and operate a mobile Chesapeake visitor center, the Roving Ranger, which visits Chesapeake places and event locations throughout the region. Moreover, NPS Chesapeake assists Chesapeake Gateways in developing and enhancing inclusive interpretation and welcoming visitor experiences.



### Chesapeake

**Conservation, Access and Stewardship:** A core Network goal is to foster equitable conservation and restoration of the Chesapeake watershed. Achieving this requires a focus on community and landscape resiliency, linking tourism, sustainability, conservation and local economies, including in association with traditional Chesapeake working culture. NPS Chesapeake strives to support this through the Network and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. We collaborate with partners to develop and employ strategies and programs for interpreting, messaging and stimulating engagement in Chesapeake stewardship. NPS Chesapeake also provides recurring support for the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership to achieve land conservation, public access and stewardship goals.

**Assistance to Chesapeake Places and Partners:** The NPS Chesapeake provides technical assistance through staff expertise to aid the managers and partners of Chesapeake places and other partners in conserving, restoring, interpreting and providing access to cultural, natural and recreational resources within the watershed. In addition, NPS Chesapeake also provides financial assistance, including through the Chesapeake Bay Grants Assistance Program, for these same purposes. Over two decades, NPS has provided \$22 million in financial assistance to over 360 projects in scores of communities. The specific focus of and criteria for, financial assistance are provided in supplemental documents.



**OVERARCHING THEMES**

*Interconnectedness*   *Interdependence*   *Knowledge and Mystery*

**PRINCIPAL THEMES**

*The Living, Natural Chesapeake*

*Peoples of the Chesapeake*

*Settlement of the Chesapeake*

*An Economic Resource: Commerce, Productivity & Transportation*

*Military and Naval Presence on the Chesapeake*

*Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability*

*The Chesapeake as a Source of Recreation & Renewal*

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS uses a thematic structure for organizing Chesapeake stories. The structure is based on current research as well as ongoing interpretive programs. It was informed by regional workshops and developed through a diverse group of interpreters, planners, educators and researchers and originally published in the 2000 Framework. The themes have been updated slightly here.

An interpretive theme is a tool that helps interpreters affect their audience. Its purpose is to provide focus for the audiences’ personal connections. An interpretive theme articulates a reason or reasons for caring about and caring for a resource. Using a theme, an interpreter hopes to provoke an audience to know the resource is meaningful and feel that its preservation matters.

As a Network, we employ interpretive themes at multiple scales, communicating from the local level at a particular site, to community-wide programing, to sharing regional and watershed-wide stories.

The thematic structure here does not prescribe specific themes for particular sites. Rather, it fosters our collective ability to create cohesive interpretation by placing specific stories in broader Chesapeake watershed-wide context.

The themes are organized in a hierarchical manner:

- **Overarching themes** are the main interpretive messages of the Network. They are broad, but integrating themes, essential to conveying and understanding the essence of the Chesapeake today. Overarching themes provide a context in which principle and sub-themes and all places in the Network can be understood.
- **Principal themes** focus on core aspects of the Chesapeake story that give this region its unique and significant character. Unlike overarching themes which can be addressed in some way at all locations, principal themes do not apply to every site or interpretive location. Principal themes represent major storylines, each tying a large number of Chesapeake places and sub-themes or topics together.
- **Sub-themes or topics** are more discrete. They represent a range of Chesapeake-related topics that might be addressed within the context of a single principal theme. Often a particular Chesapeake place might directly interpret one, or at most a couple, of topics. In practice, sites would more fully develop these topics into full theme statements as appropriate. In general, specific sub-themes have a fewer number of places where they can be adequately interpreted than do principal themes.



## Overarching themes

**Interconnectedness:** The essence of the Chesapeake story is found in the dynamic interconnectedness of water, place, nature and people over time. To fully appreciate and understand the Chesapeake, each of these fundamental ingredients must be taken into account and viewed in relationship to the others.

Long and continuing interaction of place, nature and people has molded a complex Chesapeake story characterized by change and continuity, diversity and unity. This story has unfolded from the time of geological formation, with the emergence of rivers and streams, through the appearance and disappearance of diverse species of plant and animal life and centuries of encounters by humans with the environment and one another.

**Interdependence:** For centuries, human well-being has depended on the Chesapeake's abundance; today the Chesapeake system's wellbeing is dependent on human decisions and actions.

Over a period of 13,000 years, the Chesapeake has been a vital source of food, place of habitat and means of transportation, communication, economic development and recreation. Tiny settlements have grown into large port cities, rivers and streams have been navigated and dammed, forests cleared and marine life intensively harvested. People have depended on the watershed's resources. Now, as we continue to rely upon the Chesapeake, its future sustainability is intimately tied to our day-to-day decisions and our actions towards restoration and conservation.



**Knowledge and Mystery:** Although one of the most studied bodies of water in the world, the Chesapeake retains a spirit of mystery and unpredictability.

Human beings have observed, surveyed, mapped, examined and investigated the Chesapeake Bay. The bay, its rivers and surrounding landscapes have inspired art, literature, poetry and song. In some instances, our explorations have been part of an effort to profit from the Chesapeake's vast natural resources. In other cases, our inquiries were undertaken because of deep seated appreciation for the Bay and concern for its well-being. Despite the huge stores of information gathered, the Chesapeake continues to surprise, awe, inspire and mystify. Although well known, it remains an enigma, constantly attracting us to its waters, inspiring art, literature, poetry, science and song.

## Principal themes & Sub-themes/Topics:

**The Living, Natural Chesapeake:** A complex interaction of water, land, climate, geological formations and topographical features creates a unique ecosystem that supports the Chesapeake's remarkable diversity and abundance.

Long before humans came to the Chesapeake region, natural forces were shaping the Bay and its watershed. With a surface area of 2,500 square miles, the Bay is one of the largest estuaries in the world, serving as home for a wide variety of plant and animal life. Today, both natural and human forces continue to impact and change the Chesapeake watershed.

- Geology and Formation of the Bay
- Biological Diversity
- Bay Geography and Topography
- Native Plant Communities
- Area Mineral Deposits
- Finfish and Shellfish
- The Bay's Waters
- Wildlife and Waterfowl
- Estuarine Ecology
- Migratory Patterns in the Bay and the Atlantic
- Tidal Wetlands
- Natural Disasters
- Natural Productivity and Abundance of the Bay
- The Changing Climate



**Peoples of the Chesapeake:** From early settlement to today, the natural environment of the Chesapeake and the diverse population it attracted gave shape to distinctive cultural traditions.

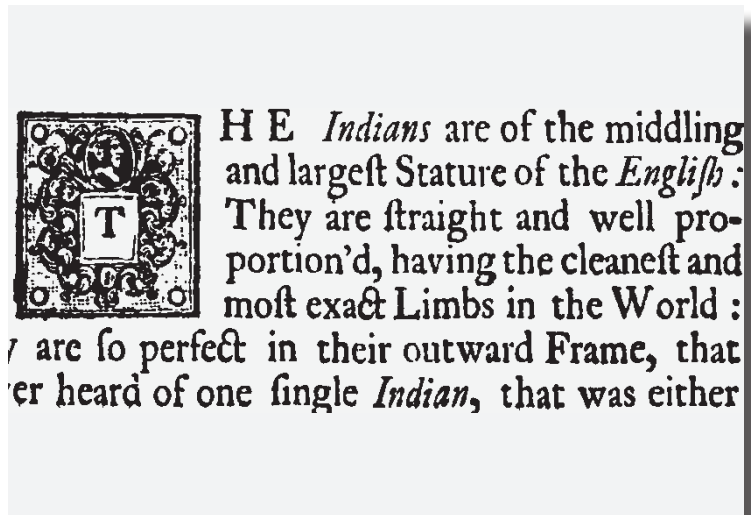
People from all over the world settled side-by-side along the Bay, with both cooperation and conflict marking their communities. Racial, religious, ethnic, political and economic divisions have been counterbalanced by united efforts, common concerns and shared values. Throughout the history of its peoples, the water and land of the Bay influenced and transformed the cultures taking root. This heritage has given the region a distinctive style and identifiable sense of place.

- Peoples of the Bay: 13,000 Years of Immigration and Diversity
- Religious Groups, Activities and Influences on Culture and Society

- Changing Societies and Cultures Throughout History
- Racial and Ethnic Heritage
- Occupations of Bay Inhabitants
- Sources of Conflict and Cooperation
- Political Issues, Events and Developments in the Region
- Values and Social and Multi-cultural Endeavors of the Peoples of the Chesapeake

**Settlement of the Chesapeake:** The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries have attracted settlement by humans throughout time, resulting in patterns that shape the region's landscape and reflect the nation's history.

First, indigenous peoples, much later Europeans and soon after, Africans established footholds in the Chesapeake region. With each wave of settlement, those arriving dispersed along shorelines creating patterns of settlement dramatically influencing the United States and reflected to this day. Later arrivals fueled the growth of the region's metropolitan centers. Throughout, the Bay has served as magnet and crucible, attracting, defining, shaping and reconfiguring the patterns of settlement.



- Impact of Geography and Topography on Settlement
- Settlement Patterns in the Chesapeake Region
- Indigenous Communities
- European Exploration and Settlement
- Africans and African Americans
- Later Immigration to the Bay
- The Built Environment of the Bay
- Growth: Communities, Colonies, Towns, Cities

**An Economic Resource: Commerce, Productivity & Transportation:** The rich, natural abundance of the Chesapeake has been a powerful incentive for commercial development, influencing the region's economy, transportation and productivity.

The watershed's resources and geography shaped the economic development of the region. Terrestrial and marine creatures, as well as the land and waterways, led to development of specific industries, harvesting methods, modes of transportation and even boat designs. It is this resource-based economy and its connections to other parts of the nation and the world that are responsible for producing much of the image of the Chesapeake area. Despite modern transformations, natural resources remain a fundamental component of the Chesapeake economy.

- Marine Resources, their Harvesting and Harvesters
- Shipbuilding
- Land and Mineral Resources: Their Harvesting and Harvesters
- The Evolution of Transportation Throughout the Region and to and from the Nation
- Agriculture in the Chesapeake
- Recreation and Tourism in the Bay
- Trade Relationships and the Chesapeake
- Area Manufacturing and Industrialization
- The Bay and Its Tributaries as Highways
- The Chesapeake Economy in the 21st Century

**Military and Naval Presence on the Chesapeake:**

Because of its vast waters and strategic location, the Chesapeake Bay has long played a critical role in the military and naval history of the United States.

As the site of the nation's capital, historic battles and significant military installations, the Bay has long been intricately involved in a complex and dramatic web of national and international affairs. Today the Chesapeake region continues to be home to a sizable military and naval presence.

- Conflicts between Indigenous Peoples & Colonists
- United States Naval Academy
- The Battles and Impact of the Revolutionary War





- Naval Ports and Military Installations
- The Chesapeake in The War of 1812
- Naval Shipbuilding, Design and Weaponry
- The Civil War in a Divided Region
- The Bay's Role in Developing Modern Weaponry
- Bay Installations in Twentieth Century Wars

**The Chesapeake as a Source of Recreation and Renewal:** Abundant opportunities for a broad range of leisure-time activities, involving sport, education, culture and stewardship, spring from the vast resources and exquisite landscapes of the Chesapeake watershed.

The traditional uses of the Chesapeake's waters by area residents—boating, fishing, hunting—have long attracted visitors for recreation and renewal. Especially in recent decades, Chesapeake related recreation has become an economic force in the region. Today, the Chesapeake watershed represents a source of inspiration and personal renewal through its diverse recreational opportunities and the natural and cultural heritage on which they are based.

- Water Sports in the Bay
- Birding and Wildlife Viewing
- Fishing
- Emergence of Bay Heritage Tourism and Ecotourism
- Exploring the Bay's Terrain: Hiking, Camping, Hunting, Sightseeing
- The Bay in Art: Photography, Painting, Literature and Poetry
- Decoy Carving
- Regional Music and Folklore

**Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability:** The Chesapeake and its living resources are suffering from the cumulative effects of human use and exploitation. But, new environmental attitudes, policies and behaviors offer hope for the Chesapeake's renewal and sustainability.

Realizing that an ecological crisis exists has impelled residents, visitors, governments and organizations to reassess the ways in which humans interact with the Chesapeake watershed and use its resources. The changes resulting from this attention are helping to restore the watershed and creating a world-wide model for environmental programs. Restoration

and conservation are crucial to sustaining the Bay and its tributary rivers and streams which make such fundamental contributions to our well-being, our heritage and our spirit.

- Changing Perspectives on the Chesapeake
- Conservation and Sound Land Use
- Changing Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors
- Sustainable Regional Economic Development
- Resiliency and Responding to a Changing Climate
- Wildlife, Fish and Plant Protection and Restoration
- Individual Responsibility for the Bay
- Vital Habitat Protection and Restoration
- Community Engagement with Stewardship
- Water Quality Restoration and Protection





## Gateways Refreshed

CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS has, from the start, been envisioned as a new form of “park”—a 21st century national park. One that stitches together a broad set of varied places and experiences as a tapestry, representative of the Chesapeake watershed. Based on partnerships, diversity, and inclusivity, it serves up the Chesapeake story through hundreds of venues, seeking to connect all people with the remarkable culture, history, nature, and recreation of this magnificent landscape and foster its stewardship.

This vision is enduring. For over two decades, we have posed and answered the question “how else would you represent and serve up the variety and scope of 64,000 square miles and millennia of history?”

But the approach cannot be static. In this third decade of the century, and of the Chesapeake Gateways Network, we are also aware of newer perspectives and older challenges left unaddressed.

There is now 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.

This decade began with 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.

A changing climate, not unheard of twenty years ago, but not acted upon, is now a climate crisis, calling for concerted action by all. It already impacts the health and safety of Chesapeake towns and cities, archeological and historic sites and the ecological communities upon which many Chesapeake Gateways are based.

Coupled with climate change, is extensive new research documenting dire threats to biodiversity around the globe. This has stimulated serious discussion of—and action toward—protecting half the planet’s lands and waters by 2050. It is resonating nationally and locally,



with protecting 30 percent by 2030 both a national and Chesapeake watershed goal, and some Chesapeake regions like the Delmarva Oasis committing to more.

This all comes together in strategy and work that is simultaneously large landscape scale and intensely community based. The common thread is sustaining and enhancing the quality of life of Chesapeake residents, communities and watersheds. Scientists and doctors have clearly documented how public health and ecological health are directly linked to accessible and plentiful conserved natural areas, parks, green spaces, forests and gardens.

This is where the missions of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and the Chesapeake Gateways Network combine. The Partnership works to conserve and restore Chesapeake places vital to ecological, public, and community health. The Chesapeake Gateways Network strives to make them welcoming and inclusive, tell their full and diverse stories, engage residents and visitors, and support the building of resilient communities and landscapes.

Chesapeake Gateways is a 21st century national park. It is one based on 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 a broad and deep stewardship movement.



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Chesapeake

National Park Service

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**Chesapeake  
Gateways**