



Making the Trail Visible and Visitor Ready: Progress on the James River Segment

December 2013



Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Making the John Smith Trail Visible and Visitor Ready: the James River Segment

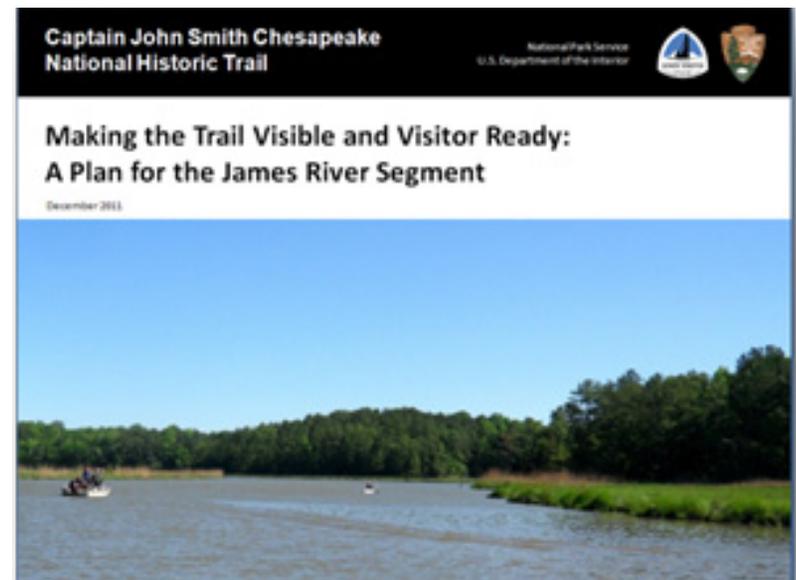
The John Smith Trail's comprehensive management plan determined that the trail can best be developed and managed in smaller segments, given the trail's 2,100-mile scope and diverse resources. The segment planning approach helps NPS effectively understand the local resources, opportunities, and partner capacities in each segment.

The James River segment was the first stretch of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT to undergo segment planning. The National Park Service worked with the James River Association, Chesapeake Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Commonwealth of Virginia in a collaborative planning process to identify resources, specific actions, and partnerships required to develop and manage the trail in the segment between Richmond and the Route 17 Bridge, including the free-flowing tidal portion of the Chickahominy River.

The James River segment planning team held a set of intensive focus group discussions with dozens of stakeholders along the James, as well as an in-depth discussion of a draft plan at a larger stakeholder workshop in July 2011. Focus areas were identified and a set of strategies developed for enhancing visitor experience along the James River segment of the Trail. In January, 2012, the James River Segment Plan was published and partners began to work together on a series of proposed actions in the plan.

This report, "Progress on the James River", shows the many proposed actions which have been completed in the past two years and the key accomplishments in implementing the original plan. These actions have gone a long way in truly making the John Smith Trail "real" along the James River.

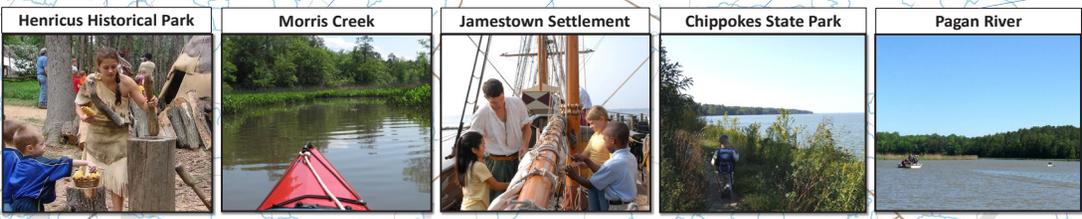
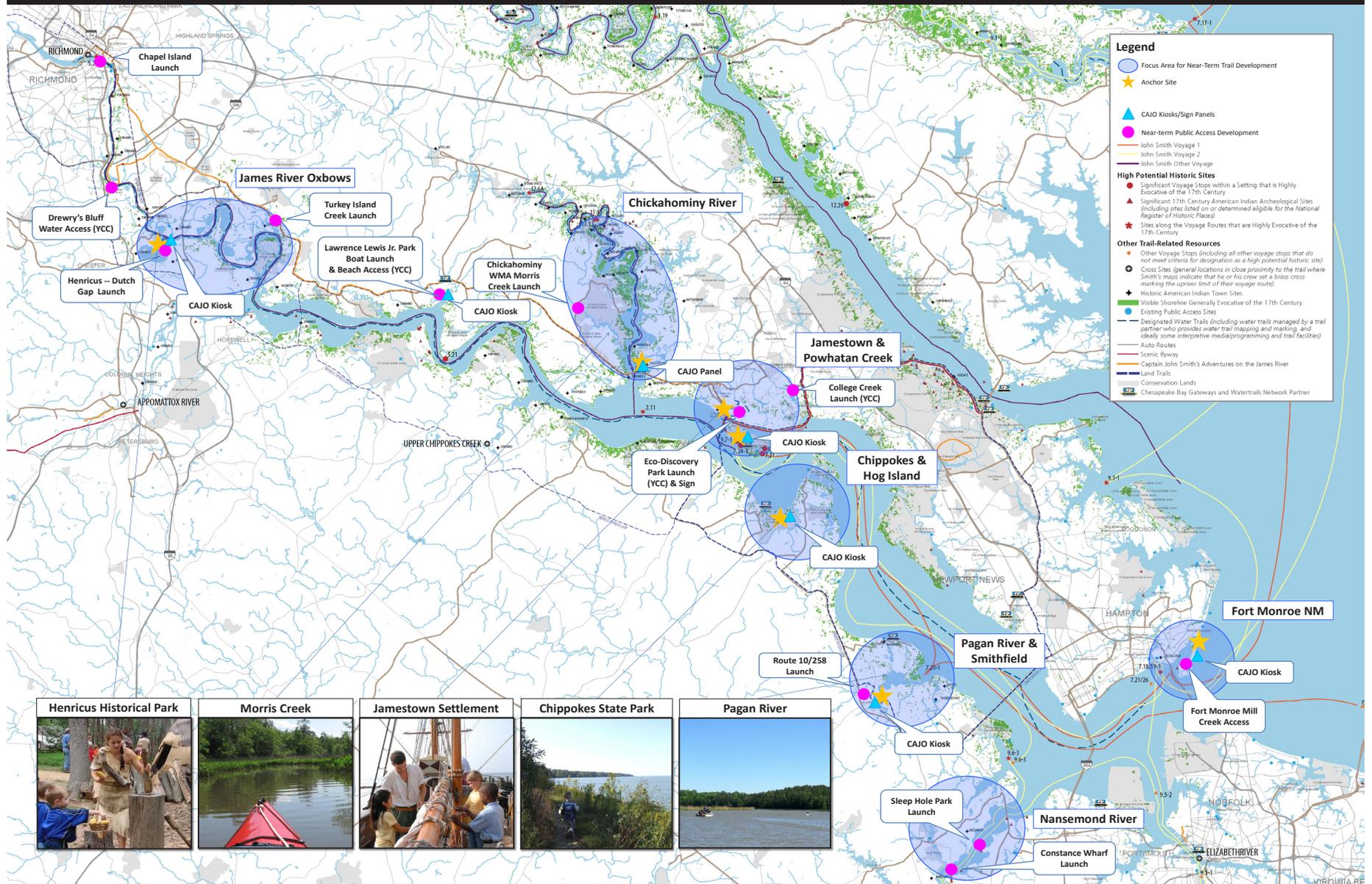
The original report of the James River Segment Plan is available online at <http://www.nps.gov/cajo/parkmgmt/planning.htm>.



James River Segment Focus Areas

James River Segment Focus Areas & Anchors

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
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Henricus Historical Park

Morris Creek

Jamestown Settlement

Chippokes State Park

Pagan River

James River Oxbows Focus Area

This area includes the sites and resources along the oxbows of the upper portion of the James River. Major elements include: Henricus Historical Park, a reconstruction of the second oldest English settlement; the adjacent Dutch Gap Conservation Area; and Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). These sites have a combined annual visitation of over 145,000 people, the bulk of whom visit Henricus. Other contributing sites are Henrico County's Osborne and Deep Bottom parks, which provide major boating and fishing access to the James River. The area is rich in Smith related history, natural landscapes, and American Indian history.

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge

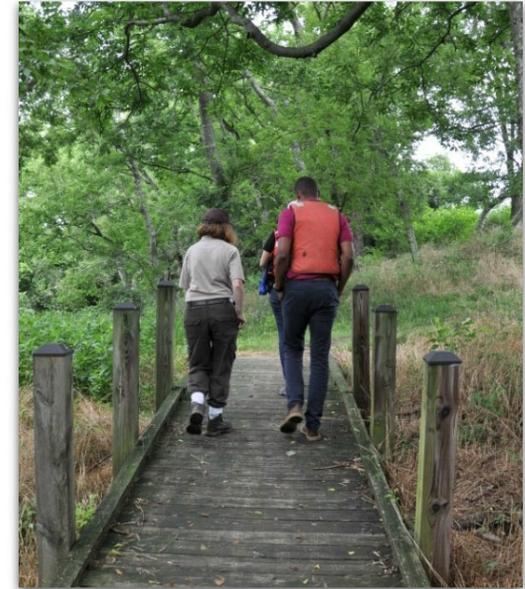
- John Smith Trail became a key component of the Presquile NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan.
- The refuge will provide permitted public access and programs including John Smith Trail interpretive themes.
- Youth Conservation Corps crews cleared fallen trees from a major tidal creek to open paddling access to the James River oxbow surrounding the refuge.

James River National Wildlife Refuge

- Potential for high visibility for the Smith Trail in the refuge's comprehensive conservation plan, now under development, including new trail access on Powell Creek, identified in the James Segment plan as an evocative setting.

Henricus Historical Park

- A new John Smith Trail kiosk was installed on the bluff overlooking the James River.
- A site has been identified and conceptual plans developed for new public access to the old James River Relic Channel and to the James River.



Presquile
National Wildlife Refuge

- Pontoon boat tours by private outfitter *Discover the James* are booking well each summer weekend and include Smith Trail interpretation.

Turkey Island Creek launch

- The James River Association, VDOT, NPS, USFWS, Chesapeake Conservancy and Henrico County are exploring the possibility of providing access to Turkey Island Creek in conjunction with the development of the Capital Trail. This would provide a key access site to the Smith Trail from Turkey Island Creek, with access to the James River, Presquile NWR, and the Capital Trail.

Chapel Island, Richmond city center

- A new canoe/kayak launch, trails and interpretive exhibits were developed by the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission with grant assistance from the VA Department of Environmental Quality's Coastal Zone Management Program.

Jamestown and Powhatan Creek Focus Area

This focus area includes the sites and resources in the immediate vicinity of Jamestown. Primary visitor sites include Historic Jamestowne (on Jamestown Island) managed by the National Park Service in conjunction with Preservation Virginia and nearby Jamestown Settlement managed by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. Combined, 677,000 people visit these sites annually. Other key sites contributing to this focus area include the Colonial Parkway, Jamestown Marina, Scotland Ferry, and the trail head for the Virginia Capital Trail. The primary natural resource sites in this area are Powhatan Creek (focus of the Powhatan Creek Blueway) and the expansive marshes bordering the creek and the inland side of Jamestown Island.



*Eco-Discovery Park
Photo courtesy of Chesapeake Experience*

Jamestown Marina Eco-Discovery Park:

- A new John Smith Trail wayside panel was installed with a view out over Powhatan Creek.
- In summer, 2012, a Youth Conservation Corps crew cleared and developed a site for a new soft launch for canoes and kayaks. In summer, 2013, a CYC crew developed a new access trail along the west shore of Powhatan creek to provide shore fishing opportunities.
- Beginning in summer 2012, park visitors can rent bikes, kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddle boards for a John Smith Trail experience.
- In summer 2013, Chesapeake Experience, in partnership with Historic Jamestowne, is offering week-long teacher professional development sessions about the trail, bay ecology and the archaeology at Jamestown.
- In summer 2013, Chesapeake Experience is offering public tours on Powhatan Creek and including Smith Trail interpretation.

Historic Jamestowne

- A new John Smith Trail three-sided kiosk installed.

Jamestown-Scotland Ferry:

- Potential for Smith Trail signage on the ferry boats and an interpretive audio broadcast.
 - Need to develop a project proposal with associated costs.
 - Need to identify potential funding sources.

Jamestown Beach, James City County:

- Potential for Smith Trail signage
 - The county has finished a beach nourishment and stabilization project and this site is receiving high public use.



Windsor Castle Park



Jamestown-Scotland Ferry

Pagan River & Smithfield Focus Area

This focus area includes the sites and resources along the lower south side of the James River, the Pagan River and the Town of Smithfield, as well as the major creeks off the Pagan River in Isle of Wight County. The primary developed sites are the Town of Smithfield and its Windsor Castle Park. The town has an annual visitation of 55,000 people. The Pagan River and two tributaries - Jones Creek and Cypress Creek – are the primary natural resource areas. Jones Creek has a public boat launch.

Windsor Castle Park, Town of Smithfield

- Smithfield Foods made a generous cash donation for development of a Smith Trail kiosk. Design of the site-specific panel is in progress for installation in fall 2013.
- A private operator is now providing canoe/kayak trips from the park and including Smith Trail information.

Clontz Park, Town of Smithfield

- A potential site for kayak and canoe access has been identified on the Pagan River.



Clontz Park in Smithfield

Linking Oxbows and Chickahominy Focus Areas:

Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park lies on the north bank of the James River, west of the Chickahominy River and east of the Oxbows focus area. The park was identified as a selected site for proposed action to develop access to the John Smith Trail.

Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park

- Youth Conservation Corps crews built a new trail from the parking area to a small beach on the James River providing access for shoreline fishing.
- Dominion Power, VA DCR, the Chesapeake Conservancy and Charles City County partnered to fund, construct, and open a much needed boat ramp for trailerable boats.
- John Smith Trail kiosk will be installed at a park location near the new boat ramp.

Chickahominy River and Riverfront Park Focus Area

This focus area includes the sites and resources along the tidal portion of the Chickahominy River including Gordon's and Nettles Creeks and Morris Creek. The primary developed site here is James City County's Chickahominy Riverfront Park with 145,000 visitors annually. Other significant sites include marinas and campgrounds on the upper part of the river, a trail head for the Virginia Capital Trail and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area (WMA) which offer both public boating access and wildlife viewing areas.

Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area:

- The VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is looking at funding a formal paddle craft launch on the upper end of Morris Creek, including a floating launch platform and a small parking area. Morris Creek, which flows into the Chickahominy River, is a fairly large tidal creek with an evocative setting.



New boat launch at Lawrence Lewis, Jr. Park



Chickahominy Riverfront Park

Mouth of the James River

Fort Monroe

- Draft information provided for the development of Fort Monroe National Monument's foundational planning documents identify the John Smith Trail as an important component of the site.
- NPS staff identified locations for trail kiosks to be installed in 2013.
- A new public access point on Mill Creek was identified and developed through a partnership of NPS and the Fort Monroe Authority.

Huntington Park, Newport News

- City staff may work with NPS on interpretive opportunities, including trail signage, at Huntington Park. The park has excellent views of the James River, a nice public beach area, and boat launch facilities.



Fort Monroe National Monument, new universally accessible paddle launch on Mill Creek

Nansemond River

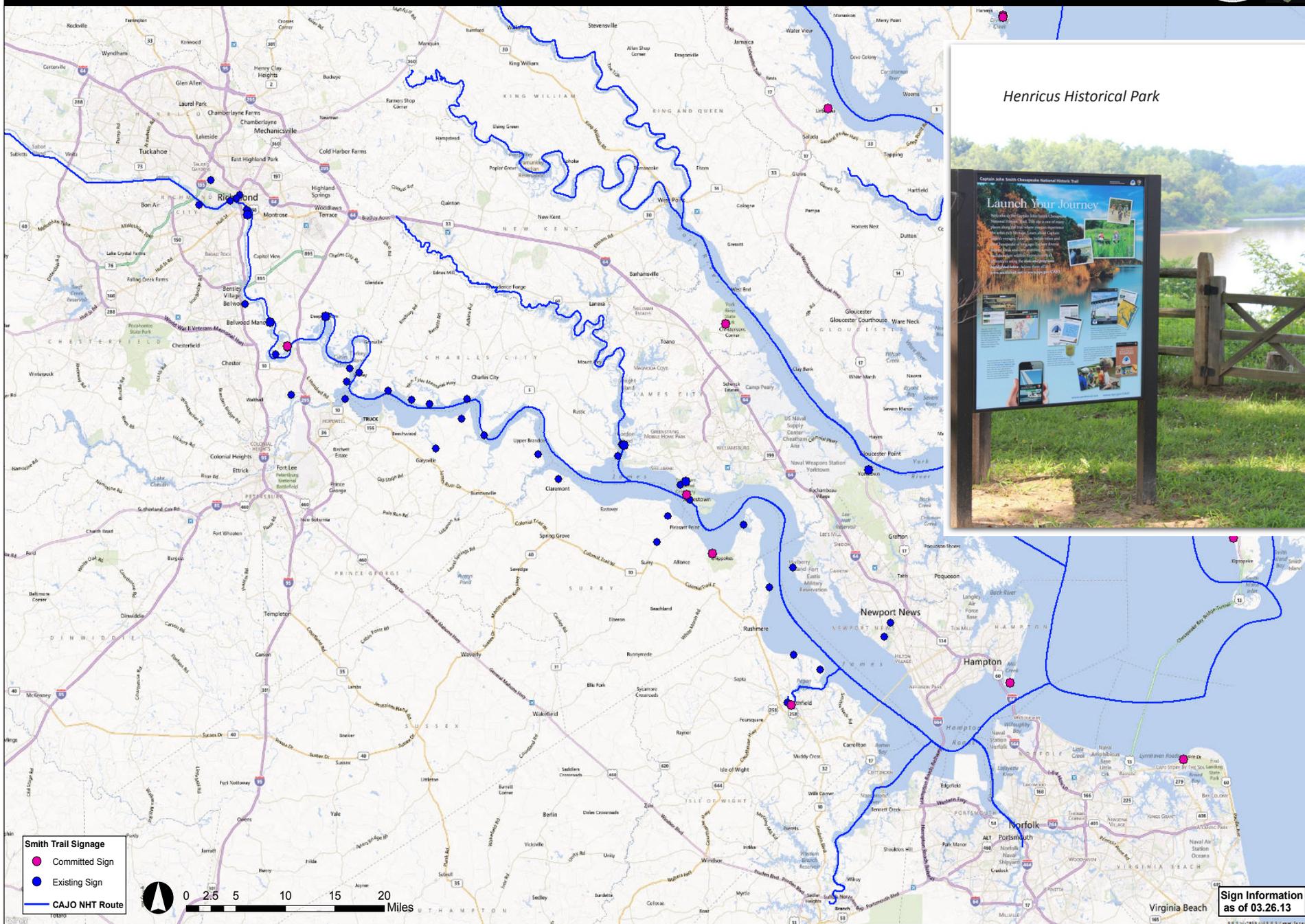
- Nansemond River Preservation Alliance completed a water trail plan for the Nansemond River. The John Smith Trail's James River Segment Plan will be amended to include trail development along the Nansemond River.
- New access at Sleepy Hole Park has been funded and will include an accessible hand carry launch and observation pier. Final plan design elements and permitting are now underway.
- New access at Constance Wharf is in the planning phase and construction should be complete in 2014.
- John Smith Trail kiosks will be installed at Sleepy Hole Park, Constance Wharf, and at the existing access site on Bennetts Creek.



Constant's Wharf in Suffolk, VA

John Smith Trail Signage along the James River

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Henric Historical Park

Sign Information as of 03.26.13