

Indigenous Cultural Landscapes Study for the  
Captain John Smith National Historic Trail:  
the Lower Susquehanna Area

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## **Executive Summary**

The area of the Lower Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, PA to the head of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland contains more than 50 identified sites of significance for Native American history and culture. These sites are part of a larger landscape of river, hills, plains, and waterways that are meaningful to the history and present-day lives of people who claim American Indian descent, especially from the Susquehannock Indians. This study, based on scholarly and oral traditions, argues that remnant peoples of Susquehannock descent were absorbed into the various nations of the Haudenosaunee and continue to have a vital interest in the interpretation and preservation of this stretch of the Susquehanna River.

This report provides background and evidence for the inclusion of many of these locations within a high-probability indigenous cultural landscape boundary—a focus area provided to the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Advisory Council for the purposes of future conservation and interpretation as an indigenous cultural landscape.

In this study we define indigenous cultural landscapes as areas that reflect “the contexts of the American Indian peoples in the Lower Susquehanna area and their interaction with the landscape.” The identification of indigenous cultural landscapes “includes both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife therein associated with historic lifestyle and settlement patterns and exhibiting the cultural or esthetic values of American Indian peoples,” which fall under the purview of the National Park Service and its partner organizations for the purposes of conservation and development of recreation and interpretation (National Park Service 2010:4.22).

Using this definition, we identify two indigenous cultural landscapes that meet the criteria we provide based on a thorough mapping of the areas and also a full survey of the scholarly sources and we describe the methodology used to obtain this information and represent the resulting landscapes.