

United States Department of the Interior



**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Chesapeake Bay Office**

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Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network
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National Park Service News Release

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**National Park Service Announces a
Public Access Plan for the Chesapeake**

Annapolis, MD – Today, the National Park Service and state partners released the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan*. This plan reflects the state of public access to significant streams, rivers, and bays in the entire Chesapeake watershed, including portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Implementing the plan will expand the number of places for people to get to the water by more than 20 percent by 2025.

In May 2009, President Obama issued Executive Order 13508 for the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The Executive order instructed the Department of the Interior to make recommendations for expanding public access. The response strategy issued one year later included a key goal to increase public access to the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries by adding 300 new access sites by 2025 and called for development of a public access plan.

The *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan* includes a comprehensive list of existing public access sites identified by partners and citizens. The appendix also includes new access sites suggested by citizens and stakeholders through a series of public meetings in Washington, D.C., Richmond, VA, Baltimore, MD, and Harrisburg, PA, and through an interactive online mapping tool.

Key findings of the plan include:

- There are 1,150 documented existing public access sites where people can launch boats, fish, swim, or look out over the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries.
- Significant stretches of shoreline have little or no access. For example, there is no public access for nearly 60 miles along the south side of the tidal James River. And there are long stretches of the Rappahannock, Potomac, Susquehanna, Nanticoke and other rivers, as well as the shoreline of the Bay where the public has little or no access to the water.
- Multiple studies and plans, including all state outdoor recreation plans, continue to document high public demand for additional access to streams, rivers, and bays.

- 320 specific potential new sites have been identified by citizens for providing public access to the water. Over half of these sites are on publicly owned land.
- Boat launching capacity is the most frequently suggested access type for these sites. Fewer than half of current access sites provide launches or landings for boats or paddlecraft.
- The highest demand for new public access sites is frequently concentrated in and around urban areas.
- A large number of potential sites are along existing water trails or national historic trails, which can often bring strong community and local support for developing needed sites.

The plan sets out a series of collaborative actions for moving access development forward and serves as a guide for prioritizing and allocating available funding efficiently. As specified in the Executive order, recommendations are coordinated with citizens, state and local partners, non-governmental organizations, and with partner sites in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network and along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.

"Citizens want more places along the water where they can walk, play, swim, fish, and launch their canoes and kayaks, sailboats and powerboats," said John Maounis, superintendent of the NPS Chesapeake Bay office. "It is important to our quality of life."

Download the plan at www.baygateways.net/PublicAccess.

The *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan* was produced with the full engagement of a Public Access Action Team whose members represent each of the Chesapeake watershed states:

Virginia

- Andrea Almond, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Larry Hart, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Danette Poole, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Maryland

- Lisa Gutierrez, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Emily Wilson, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Pennsylvania

- Tom Ford, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Jackie Kramer, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Delaware

- Michael Krumrine, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- Susan Moerschel, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

New York

- Mark Hohengasser, New York State Parks

West Virginia

- Bret Preston, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

District of Columbia

- Tammy Stidham, National Park Service – National Capital Region

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