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Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Expands With Four Connectors

Submitted by [NPT Staff \(/users/npt-staff\)](#) on May 18, 2012 - 1:20am

Four rivers that pour their flows into the Chesapeake Bay have been linked to the [Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail](#) (<http://www.nps.gov/cajo/>), tying the significance of the nation's first water trail to Virginia, New York, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania.

The connections were cemented earlier this week when Interior Secretary Ken Salazar joined Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley and other officials to designate the connectors, which add nearly 1,000 more miles to the historic trail. The four rivers are the Susquehanna, Chester, Upper Nanticoke and Upper James Rivers, which lend to the history, cultural heritage, and natural resources of the 3,000-mile-long national historic trail in the Chesapeake Bay.

"These river trails, totaling 841 miles in length, are closely associated with John Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the American Indian towns and cultures of the 17th-century Chesapeake that he encountered," said Secretary Salazar. "Incorporating these river segments into the national historic trail will increase public access, provide important recreation and tourism opportunities, and enrich exploration of the water routes in the entire Chesapeake watershed."

The designations allow the National Park Service, which administers the Captain Smith national trail, to work closely with state and local agencies and other partners--notably conservation and tribal organizations--to provide technical and financial assistance, resource management, facility enhancement, interpretive trail route marking and promotion along the connecting trails.

Congress authorized the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail in 2006 as "a series of water routes extending approximately 3,000 miles along the Chesapeake Bay and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay."

Secretary Salazar used his authority under the National Trails System Act to designate the connecting rivers as part of the national trail with the support of the five states.

"Today, thanks to the leadership of President Obama and Secretary Salazar, we are blazing a new trail for America's great outdoors," said Governor O'Malley. "By linking our extraordinary landscapes and waterways to our country's history, the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail will support jobs and local economies across the region while providing unique opportunities for visitors to explore our cultural heritage while enjoying our natural resources."

Also attending the ceremony were Park Service Director Jon Jarvis; Patrick Noonan, chairman emeritus of The Conservation Fund; and Joel Dunn, executive director of The Chesapeake Conservancy. American Indian leaders joining the ceremony included: Tadodaho Sid Hill, spiritual leader of the Haudenosaunee nations (Six Nation/Iroquois Confederacy); Sid Jamieson, chief of the Mohawk Nation; Stephen Adkins, chief of the Chickahominy Tribe; Dennis Coker, chief of the Lenape Tribe; Rico Newman, Piscataway member and chairman of the Maryland Indian Tourism Association; Deanna Beacham of the Virginia Council of Indians and member of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Advisory Council; and Virginia Busby of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs.

The Chesapeake Conservancy funded and managed a professional evaluation of Chesapeake Bay tributaries to determine their potential for designation as historic connecting components to the Captain John Smith trail. Research teams included historians, tribal representatives and regional universities.

Based on the study's findings, the Chesapeake Conservancy worked with local watershed, tribal and water trail groups and state agencies to develop applications to the National Park Service to nominate the four rivers as connecting trail components.

Each of the nominations was supported by the governors of the five states through which the connecting trails pass, and by local groups, including American Indian tribes and descendant communities.

"The Chesapeake Conservancy greatly appreciates the Secretary's designations today, which are the culmination of years of research and planning by private and public partners in the Chesapeake Bay region," said executive director Joel Dunn. "The four historic connecting river components of the national historic trail extend the framework for collaborative conservation of our region's history, wildlife and special places on a large landscape scale."

"These designations do far more than create water trails and treasured lands that are a part of our history," The Conservation Fund's Noonan added. "They create opportunities for our children's children to enjoy the

