



Minutes
Gateways Network Working Group Meeting
Via Conference Call
December 11, 2002

Present: Elizabeth Hughes, Pat Stuntz, Melanie Teems, Ron Weiss, Bob Carter, Maria Vonderheid, Marci Ross, David Bancroft, Lee Epstein, Lisa Gutierrez, John Davy, Bob Campbell, Skip Meehan, Marian Huber, Jonathan Doherty, Catherine Mueller

The meeting convened by conference call at 10:00 AM.

Working Group members reviewed and approved minutes of the October 9 meeting.

Review of Pending Nominations:

Nauticus: The National Maritime Center: Members reviewed the findings and recommendations and then approved designation of Nauticus as a Gateway Site. They felt it presented outstanding opportunities for addressing multiple Bay themes. Several commented on the opportunity for interpreting the impacts of ballast water and exotic species, a topic that few other places can address.

Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge: Members reviewed the findings and recommendations. Members discussed whether the site's public accessibility had advanced sufficiently since the prior nomination. Most felt the refuge to be a site that is still developing, but that the increase in hours and addition of a visitor contact station had brought it to a level where it can begin to function as a Gateway. They recognized the refuge will offer even more in the future. Marci Ross noted the significance and uniqueness of the story of transformation from an army base to a natural area. The Working Group approved designation as a Gateway Site.

Virginia Living Museum: Members reviewed the findings and recommendation. Working Group members expressed some concerns about whether visitors would recognize the museum as a Gateway; in other words, does Bay-ness come through? Several felt it did not appear to at the current time, including one member who had visited the site. Members felt it appeared that the additions due in 2004 might resolve that matter and that a resubmission at the time would be appropriate. However, several suggested that further conversation with the museum's leadership might be appropriate first; they thought it possible for the conversation to result in a fuller understanding of whether the museum would or would not be able to function as a site at the current time. Accordingly, the group decided to table the nomination deferring a final decision until after NPS staff reports back regarding the conversation with site managers.

Marshyhope Creek Greenway Trail: Members reviewed the findings and recommendation. The question was raised about whether the place meets the criteria for connecting routes. Lisa Gutierrez noted DNR's long involvement in the project and surrounding area and the number of possibilities for connection projects that might extend the scope of the trail, including a water

trail. But, she also said those are in preliminary stages. Lee Epstein noted the value of having lots of two mile trails around the Bay, but that that didn't make a network. In sum, several members stated that the Marshyhope did not meet the criteria for connecting routes, because of its size and lack of connections to other gateways. Overall, the whole group agreed and felt they could not designate Marshyhope as a connecting route. Members did suggest an exploration of whether there are other appropriate Gateway designations in the area.

USS Constellation Museum: Jonathan Doherty reported on the conversation held with Constellation staff and shared a follow-up letter received yesterday. As a result, members felt the contingency provision of last month's nomination review was met (see October 9, 2002 minutes). Accordingly, the Working Group approved designation of the USS Constellation Museum as a Gateway site.

Fells Point Maritime Museum: (no nomination is currently pending) Jonathan Doherty raised the question of whether the Working Group would be willing to review a nomination for the museum a few months in advance of the museum's actual opening in May. Skip Meehan noted he is arranging a meeting with the director to explore possible Gateways Network connections. Bob Carter said he would be open to looking at a nomination, but felt no commitment beyond that should be expressed. The group agreed. Marci Ross also noted that this might fit into the category of affirmative action towards searching out potential hubs.

FY03 Budget and Reauthorization Update:

Jonathan Doherty noted the FY03 budget was still the subject of a continuing resolution and that no final budget decision is expected before mid-January at the earliest. For the current time, the budget sits at FY02 levels.

Jonathan also noted the President signed Public Law 107-308 on December 2, 2002 extending the Gateways Network authorization through fiscal year 2008. Several members said the news should be communicated broadly.

Grant Policy Changes:

Working Group members reviewed the proposed strategies and grant policy changes. Members approved all changes. Discussion topics included the following:

- Later application deadline: Members agreed this made sense, noting the increased time available for working with Gateways to develop good projects and the decreased competition with other grant deadlines. They did note the potential for conflict with gearing up for spring operations. They recognized a continuing need to get enough good projects by the application deadline, and a clear reluctance to fund inadequate or inappropriate projects. They suggested the possibility of allowing some projects that met a minimum standard, but had issues or concerns that made them not fundable in current form, to provide added information to redress those concerns and then receive a grant (as opposed to rejecting the grant outright).
- Planning grants: Members agreed to the concept of planning grants for Gateways for interpretive planning and water trail management planning, as proposed. In addition, several members suggested the possibility of awarding planning grants to some non-gateways in order to get them to the point where they could be nominated and designated. The possibility of planning grants for land trails and restoration planning was suggested as well. Jonathan Doherty said NPS was not prepared for a decision on this these later ideas at today's meeting and preferred to assess the options and report back to the

Working Group at the next meeting. Members agreed to this approach for these newer ideas.

Marci Ross also reiterated that it may well be time to add in more actions to advance the strategic goal of “broadening recognition of the Gateways Network” among the Network-wide priorities.

Bob Campbell noted that NPS agreed with this priority and expected to look at Network-wide priorities for FY03 in the new year.

Chesapeake Bay SRS Update:

This topic was postponed to the next Working Group meeting.

Next Meetings:

January 8

February 12

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.