



CBGN Working Group Minutes – February 8, 2006

CBPO Fish Shack Conference Room, Annapolis, MD

Participants: John Maounis, Lee Epstein, Melanie Teems, Elizabeth Hughes, Marci Ross, Lisa Gutierrez, Terry Hough, Dan Martin, John Davy, Scott Beatty, Janit Llewellyn, Robert Pickett, Camille Bowman, Rod Torrez, Paula Degen, Bob Campbell, Cheryl Branagan, Mike Land, Catherine Mueller. **Guests:** Bill Sharp and Sherry Peck representing the John Smith Water Trail Project Team; Andrea Brown, Laura Gatz, Barbara Patterson, and Lisa Vojta representing the Government Accountability Office.

Opening: John Maounis convened his first meeting as director of the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Program Office at 10:05 a.m. The Minutes of the January 11, 2006, meeting were accepted as stated.

Nominations for Gateways Designation: CBGN staff presented eight nominations for designation as Network members. A summary of the nomination, discussion, and decision follows:

- Mount Harmon Plantation:** Reviewed by Bob Campbell. The 230-acre colonial plantation site on the upper eastern shore of Maryland addresses a geographic gap for the Network. The site features an impressive view of the Sassafas River, a restored and furnished manor house dating to 1730, a detached colonial kitchen furnished to the period, a rare tobacco “prize” house and “prizer,” many miles of nature trails, and designation as a nature preserve and wildlife refuge. The site meets all criteria for Gateway designation. Noting the interpretive potential of this site and the opportunity to help guide its development, the Working Group recommended that Mount Harmon Plantation be designated as a Gateway.
- Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge:** Reviewed by Cheryl Branagan. The Refuge includes 7,712 acres, spanning both sides of the Rappahannock River in Virginia’s Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula--a targeted gap in the Network. Filled with diverse Bay-related natural, cultural, and historic resources, the Refuge offers ample interpretation and stewardship opportunities. It is part of the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System. Resource stewardship is an integral part of the work of



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- the staff and the Friends group. There was consensus to designate the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge as a Gateway.
- **Myrtle Point Park:** Reviewed by Cheryl Branagan. Located across the bridge from Solomons, Myrtle Point Park is in southern Maryland on the western shore of the Patuxent River, about five miles from its confluence with the Chesapeake Bay. Operated by the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Services, the 192-acre park features nearly two miles of undeveloped shoreline and an array of natural, cultural, and historic features suited to the interpretation of Bay-related themes and sub-themes. A master plan adopted by the County in 2005 outlines a program to enhance access to and interpretation of the resources. Myrtle Point Park meets all the criteria for membership in the Network, and the Working Group recommended that it be designated it as a new Gateway.
- **Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Waterfront Park:** Reviewed by Rod Torrez. This Baltimore site is the historical location of the first African-American owned marine railway in the nation. Its significance is tied to both maritime history and African-American history of the Chesapeake Bay and, specifically, to Frederick Douglass and Isaac Myers, who both worked there. The African-American/Chesapeake Bay connections fill a thematic gap identified for the Network. In addition, the site will feature a working marine railway for the maintenance and restoration of historic ships. Its location on the Patapsco River where Fells Point and the Inner Harbor join, offers many opportunities for interpreting Bay trade, transportation, industry, and ecological change. This is a new facility to be managed by Living Classrooms Foundation. Opening is scheduled for April 15. The Working Group recommended the park be designated as a Gateway upon opening.
- **Steamboat Era Museum:** Reviewed by Rod Torrez. This new museum located in Irvington, Virginia, opened about a year ago and is dedicated to the history of steamboats on the Chesapeake Bay. The museum features historically accurate, high quality models of historic steamboats, a soon-to-be-restored steamboat pilot house, oral histories, and an exhibit on the role of steamboats during the Civil War. Bay connections are central to the themes and mission of the museum. The site also fits a geographic gap in the Network. However, the new museum is currently open to the public only three days a week. The Working Group indicated a willingness to recommended Gateway designation contingent on the site being open at least four days a week, including

- Saturdays and Sundays. The nomination was put on hold pending more information about public access.
- **Town of Vienna:** Reviewed by Bob Campbell. This is a repeat nomination for the Town of Vienna, located on the Nanticoke River in Dorchester County. The previous nomination was rejected because the site was deemed not yet “visitor-ready.” To evaluate the current readiness for Gateway designation, the reviewer went to the town as an unannounced visitor. The site has a beautiful location on the bank of the Nanticoke, which is a geographic gap in the Network. However, the site still lacks the visitor amenities, access, and interpretive connections for a viable Chesapeake Bay experience. For example: the waterfront park includes a small boat launch, but no visitor facilities (restroom, interpretation, visitor-contact staff, or parking) at the site. There is a municipal park within site of the river, but no apparent river access or interpretation. Of 26 buildings described for a walking tour, 23 are private residences, and the 3 others have no apparent public access. The Vienna Heritage Museum claims “regular” hours, but it was not open and no hours or contact information were posted. The Working Group raised concerns about the capacity of the site to handle visitation and whether there was community support for a Gateway designation. Members who knew the site agreed that it did not merit designation at this time. However, there was sufficient interest in the potential for this site to table the nomination for now and to ask staff to offer to assist town leaders in developing a water trail or other future Network presence.
- **Delmarva Discovery Center:** Reviewed by Rod Torrez. The nomination is not eligible for consideration at this time because the visitor center and public visitation will not begin this year.
- **Baltimore County Waterfront Welcome Center:** Reviewed by Paula Degen. This is a nomination for a Regional Information Center to be operated by the nonprofit Chesapeake Bay Memories Charities, Inc. It is located on a tributary of Middle River, surrounded by a new 17-acre Baltimore County park to be called Wilson Point Waterfront Park. Development of the park for water access and interpretive trails is scheduled for later this year. The Chesapeake Bay Memories Charities already offers a wide range of educational programs centered on Bay themes and stewardship. Its assets include a 1911 skipjack, a floating classroom aboard a 60-ft. motor yacht, and a computer lab for educational use. The strong education program of this all-volunteer organization and the in-water experiences it offers to the local community are commendable. However, the nomination

as an RIC was not strong, and there were eligibility concerns because the facility is privately owned as a residence. The Working Group concurred with the recommendation to encourage a future nomination from the Baltimore County parks department for Wilson Point Waterfront Park as a Gateway if the site develops the interpretation and water-based recreation now envisioned.

Gateway Marketing: Marci Ross described the CBGN marketing initiatives being launched through a cooperative agreement among CBGN and Maryland and Virginia tourism departments. *Coastal Living Magazine* has been selected as the vendor to develop the Gateways collateral marketing booklet; the collateral piece will be developed as a special supplement in the September 2006 issue of *Coastal Living Magazine*. The nationally circulated magazine has more than 300,000 subscribers within 400 miles of the Bay. The Bay-related issue will also be available on newsstands, and a 50,000-copy overrun of the Bay insert will be available for CBGN distribution. The launch of the *Coastal Living* supplement will coordinate with a print and web advertising campaign targeted for the fall travel season and spring 2007. Fulfillment services will be provided through the Maryland Office of Tourism on behalf of the CBGN and partnering states.

2006 Gateways Network Grant Guidelines: The guidelines for three new Network-wide focused grant categories—Chesapeake Code Development, Captain John Smith Chesapeake Voyages Living History Program, and Interpreting Chesapeake Native American Culture and History—were presented for discussion. There were suggestions for revisions before the guidelines are distributed. In particular, consider how the Code would develop so that it does not appear to be a “top-down” requirement; describe the specific themes to be addressed in the John Smith proposal(s); and require consultation with recognized tribal representatives in development of the Native American project. For the latter two, include consultation with the committee that developed the Captain John Smith book for the Network; and, in general, consider cultural diversity and multi-language audiences when developing Gateways projects. Gateways staff will incorporate these revisions and further develop these Network-wide project ideas for further Working Group review and discussion.

Captain John Smith Chesapeake Bay National Historic Water Trail Study: Bill Sharp and Sherry Peck of the John Smith Water Trail Project Team described the study process and the tight timetable for the feasibility report due in November. Because of the tight schedule, work to date has primarily been through an internal National Park Service team, and consultation meetings are

just getting underway. State representatives on the Working Group asked for more direct involvement of states in the planning process. The team will be invited to return for the March 8 Working Group meeting to address concerns and the role of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network in the study process.

Next Meeting: The next Working Group meeting will be on **March 8, 2006**, and will continue the discussion of the John Smith National Historic Water Trail, the Network-wide projects, and a protocol for “de-designation” of Gateways when warranted.

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.