



Minutes
Gateways Network Working Group Meeting
May 14, 2002

Present: David Bancroft, Melanie Teems, Pat Stuntz, Elizabeth Hughes, Marci Ross, Ron Weis, Derral Jones, Lisa Gutierrez, Robert Pickett, Bob Carter, Paige Weiss, Bob Campbell, Marian Huber, Skip Meehan, Claudia Schechter, Jonathan Doherty

The Working Group reviewed the minutes of the March and April meetings, making no changes.

Review of Pending Nominations:

Pemberton Historical Park - Working Group members agreed the park should be designated as a Gateway site.

Stratford Hall Plantation - Working Group members agreed Stratford Hall should be designated as a Gateway site.

Great Bridge Lock Park – Following an overview of the nomination review sheet, the Working Group had a lengthy discussion, eventually deciding to table the nomination pending additional information on the City of Chesapeake's and US Army Corps of Engineers' plans and commitments for enhancing interpretation at the site; members agreed that while the nomination is tabled the park is not yet eligible to submit a grant application.

The Working Group generally agreed that the site's unique location on the entry to the watershed and on the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal was the primary Bay resource, and secondarily the potential for interpreting the working lock in relationship to the Bay's transportation story, as the reasons the site merited consideration. Most of the group's discussion centered on whether the lack of current interpretation and any clear interpretive plans, coupled with constraints on access and interpretation imposed by security fencing around the lock, prevented the site from being an effective Gateway and meeting the interpretive criterion.

The group considered one option of tabling the nomination pending receipt and evaluation of a grant application indicating the degree of commitment to improving interpretation at the site. A similar approach was used with Adkins Arboretum at an earlier point in the Network's development. Several members expressed some concern over this approach as a step back towards simultaneous nomination and grant reviews.

The group also discussed at length concerns over designating a site that could not currently be intuitively perceived as a Bay Gateway by an average visitor due to a lack of interpretation or other messaging conveying the Bay connection.

In the end, the group determined that it really had insufficient information as to the park managers' specific intentions regarding interpretation of the site. As a result, members agreed to table the nomination and communicate the needs to the managers as has been done for other tabled nominations.

Several members noted that the discussion raised the issue of whether designation criteria need to be modified – either to clarify the degree to which a potential site must be fully ready to operate as an effective Gateway or to potentially allow for some lesser developed sites with high potential to be designated and then develop further. Members noted the discussion involves many factors, including: ensuring a high level of quality at Gateways so as not to disappoint visitors, the fact that some geographic regions simply have a smaller number of “developed” sites, and assessing the appropriate future extent of the Network in terms of numbers and types of Gateways. Members felt this was an appropriate topic for discussion at some point in the future.

Friendship Farm Park –The Working Group decided to table the nomination pending additional information on the near and long-term plans for interpretation of the park. Members agreed that while the nomination is tabled the park is not yet eligible to submit a grant application for Gateway site projects. However, members recognized that as a Potomac River Water Trail access site, the park is currently eligible to apply for Gateways Grants for enhancement of aspects related to the water trail.

Members came to the conclusion noted above following a discussion of the nomination and a recognition that the site posed many of the same generic questions and issues as the Great Bridge Lock Park nomination. Members felt they needed to better understand how the site might function as an independent Gateway site – particularly in terms of interpretation and visitor information – prior to being able to fully evaluate the appropriateness of a designation.

Presentation on Needs and Options for Developing a Support Organization:

Claudia Schechter of the Association of Partners for Public Lands presented an overview of findings from Gateway workshop discussions and the Gateways Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment was requested by the Working Group at its October 2001 meeting.

The content of the presentation is included in the attached document. An additional detailed report on the Needs Assessment was provided to Working Group members and will be available soon on the Gateways website.

In addition to the overall findings presented, members also noted:

- the survey findings may be of interest to the Bay Program’s Communications and Education Subcommittee and that there may be areas where the subcommittee’s and Gateways Network’s efforts could be dove-tailed;
- the potential benefit of understanding visitor numbers based on a more detailed definition of what constitutes a visit;
- the depth of information contained within the survey.

The next step in phase II of the exploration for developing a support organization will be to create the business elements and options. A discussion of this is anticipated at the next Working

Group meeting. Claudia Schechter reiterated that no decision on a support organization will be recommended prior to additional consultation with Gateways Network members.

2002 Network-wide Priorities:

Jonathan Doherty provided an overview of proposed funding for Network-wide priorities (see the attached sheet). The activities are based on the goals and objectives set by the Working Group in fall 2001.

Members agreed to the proposed funding strategy. In addition, several members had observations about potential future approaches, including:

- considering the possibility of funding promotional or advertising initiatives for the Network in partnership with state tourism efforts;
- the importance of recruiting additional sites in target areas and deciding whether or not dedicating some amount of funding to that function is necessary (beyond on-going staff commitments);
- considering the possibility of funding state efforts associated with Gateways;
- reconsidering whether a conference made sense (as opposed to single-day workshops) given preferences expressed in the recent survey.

Upcoming Meetings:

June 12

July 11 (changed from July 10)