



Outline of the Strategic Partnership Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail 2022–2027

VIRGINIA • DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA • MARYLAND • PENNSYLVANIA



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Introduction

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail provides a window into the exceptional natural and cultural heritage of a large region between the mouth of the Potomac River to the Allegheny Highlands and Upper Youghiogheny River basin. This partnership strategy and the vision set forth within it represent the commitment of important partners at the local, regional, state, and federal level. These partners will work collaboratively to complete segments of the Trail, protect existing segments, sustain the Trail's resources, and showcase the Trail's unique offerings. Diversity and access are core themes throughout this strategic partnership plan. The landscapes through which the Trail traverses are as scenic and varied as its communities. The Trail winds through urban, suburban, and rural areas and serves many roles. The Trail offers a safe path of travel for residents, improves community health, preserves natural areas, and plays a role in revitalizing communities. The Trail also provides opportunities for hiking, biking, boating, backpacking, camping, cross-country skiing, and many other activities along its route, which includes sections of rugged hiking trails, rivers and streams, paved and unpaved multiuse trails, and road biking trails.

These diverse opportunities provide both challenges and opportunities for the partners charged with managing sections of the Trail. This plan will provide the framework through which the partners will move forward with addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities over the next five years.

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Strategic Partnership Plan identifies a joint vision statement, shared goals, and key strategies and actions that National Park Service (NPS) staff and partners agree upon to improve Trail collaboration and cooperation through a focus on discrete and time-bound goals and actions that provide a roadmap to success. This strategic partnership plan will inform annual work plans and combined efforts for all organizations involved. The strategic partnership plan was created with the assistance of Trail partners and prepared by an interdisciplinary team and regional NPS staff with assistance from the Denver Service Center.

“A national trail is a gateway into nature’s secret beauties, a portal to the past, a way into solitude and community. It is also an inroad to our national character. Our trails are both irresistible and indispensable.”

Stewart Udall, US Secretary of the Interior (1961–1969)



The National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended, calls for establishing trails in both urban and rural settings for people of all ages, interests, skills, and physical abilities. The National Trails System promotes the enjoyment and appreciation of trails while encouraging greater public access. The system includes national scenic trails, national historic trails, and national recreation trails.

The National Park Service encourages all public and private agencies to develop, maintain, and protect trails. With the cooperation and support of a nationwide trails community, the vision of an interconnected, cross-country trail system will become a reality.

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. This agency cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.



Purpose Statement

Legislation for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail provides a means to establish a trail corridor network between the mouth of the Potomac River to the Allegheny Highlands and Upper Youghiogheny River basin and offer—through partnerships among agencies, nonprofit organizations, and citizen groups—exceptional recreation and education experiences, rich with opportunities to learn about geography, ecology, history, and diversity.

Partnership Mission Statement

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail partners collaborate to protect, manage, promote, and advocate to build and maintain a network of trails and sites that share the diverse stories and places within the historic corridor between the mouth of the Potomac River to the Allegheny Highlands and Upper Youghiogheny River basin. By supporting each other, partners provide safe and equitable access to the Trail, connecting communities and visitors with outstanding outdoor recreation experiences.

Partnership Vision Statement

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail partners promote and amplify a well-maintained and effectively managed trail. The partners support and share the legacy of the corridor and scenic landscapes between the mouth of the Potomac River to the Allegheny Highlands and Upper Youghiogheny River basin, protecting it for all to enjoy.



Emphasis Areas

These areas of focus and supporting goals will help all trail partners address the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

CONNECTIVITY

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is a completed and continuous route of outdoor recreation within a protected corridor that flows through rural and urban settings.

Goal #1: Identify Gaps—Develop a cohesive approach to identifying and mapping gaps in trail connectivity and potential strategies.

Strategy #1: Create a geographic information system (GIS) working group to coordinate trailwide mapping efforts. Identify additional partners and develop an internal partnership map.

Strategy #2: Identify appropriate modes of transit to close gaps (i.e., closing on land or water—accessible by bike, foot, horse, or paddle). Identify stop points and transportation to the next portion of the route.

Strategy #3: Develop agreements with railroads, utilities, and other rights-of-way owners (e.g., highway and river crossings) and work to improve connectivity along the Trail.

Strategy #4: Ensure that all desired routes are in local master plans and local comprehensive plans so that the Trail is evaluated for capital improvement projects.

Goal #2: Create a Network to Close Gaps—Build support among local officials, business leaders, transit providers, and educational institutions for trail connectivity. Develop a cohesive approach to identify gaps in connectivity.

Strategy #1: Collaborate with government agencies (local, regional, state, and federal) and nonprofit organizations to renew and develop trail segment agreements along the Trail.

Strategy #2: Work with land conservancy and other national land trust/green space preservation organizations on land acquisition projects.



BRANDING, MARKETING, WAYFINDING, AND SIGNAGE

Visitors understand how to access, enjoy, and support the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

Goal #1: Make a Plan—
Develop a marketing plan inclusive of identity and communication needs for use with external and philanthropic audiences.

Strategy #1: Create a partner marketing and communication team (government and non-profits) to oversee all branding and marketing efforts across the Trail. Identify opportunities to incorporate the logo.

Strategy #2: Develop a Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail communication and marketing plan.

Goal #2: Break Down Barriers—Reduce barriers to information, awareness, and participation in trail-wide activities and experiences.

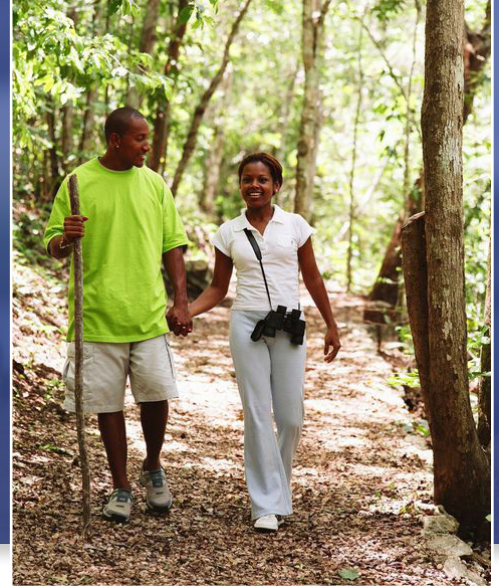
Strategy #1: Conduct targeted listening sessions, roundtables, and public meetings. Serve as a conduit and contact for the community to continue to engage with future projects and initiatives.

Strategy #2: Promote awareness of the Trail and its designated trail segments by developing shared communication tools. Collect this information from listening sessions, roundtables, and public meetings.

Strategy #3: Provide resources for visitors such as maps, itineraries, and trip-planning information to accommodate specific needs/interests for diverse user groups.

Goal #3: Find Your Way—
Develop a unified wayfinding plan.

Strategy #1: Form interagency and partner planning group to collaborate and develop a wayfinding and signage plan.



VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT, VISITOR EXPERIENCE, AND VISITOR IMPACTS

People of all ages, interests, skills, and abilities delight in the Trail's educational, outdoor recreation, and volunteer opportunities.

Goal #1: Welcome All—Create a welcoming and inclusive trail experience for all visitors along the entire corridor.

Strategy #1: Host targeted listening sessions, roundtables, and public meetings. Serve as a conduit and contact for the community to continue to engage with on future projects and initiatives.

Strategy #2: Improve the visitor experience by providing visitor services and improving trail conditions and related infrastructure to support visitor use throughout the Trail.

Goal #2: Make a Difference—Engage volunteers in stewardship activities to support the Trail.

Strategy #1: Develop a unified, regional volunteer outreach strategy and tools to educate visitors and volunteers in stewardship activities.

Strategy #2: Survey local groups for existing stewardship activities and opportunities to collaborate.

Strategy #3: Establish programs for invasive plant management and plant revitalization using volunteers.

Strategy #4: Create opportunities for trainings to advance the sustainability of trails.



PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Partnerships sustain the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The administration and management of the Trail is a collaborative effort with local, regional, state, and federal governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations, businesses, universities, and volunteers.

Goal #1: Leverage Partnerships—Leverage government agencies (local, regional, state, and federal), tribes, friends groups and advocacy organizations, and environmental, outdoor recreation, and community non-profit organizations in a unified partnership.

Strategy #1: Identify additional partners and develop a partnership map to show partners and plan how to work together.

Strategy #2: Create a best practices guidance document for partners to set a trail-wide standard for all projects and a trail-wide toolkit to prioritize trail-wide initiatives.

Strategy #3: Establish a voice within counties where the team has identified gaps.

Strategy #4: Develop partnerships with other trails that cross and align with Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Create a cohesive experience for visitors and improve public information about trail connectivity in the region.

Goal #2: Develop Strong Communication Tools—Create trail-wide initiatives for internal communication among partners, including developing a virtual toolkit and strong communication between partners.

Strategy #1: Define partnership roles and responsibilities to develop legacy of knowledge in support of the Trail.

Strategy #2: Conduct an annual roundtable meeting with the Trail partners.

Strategy #3: Create a SharePoint site or online platform as a virtual toolkit for internal resources, collaboration, and communication.

Strategy #4: Create technical support documents such as an infrastructure guideline and a continuous online map for trail section managers to use as a resource when developing projects.



SAFETY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is viewed as critical infrastructure for community health and resilience. The Trail helps partners advance outdoor recreation, stewardship, and land protection in a manner that reflects community needs and priorities.

Goal #1: Share Knowledge—Develop shared trail-wide standards for trail infrastructure, safety requirements, and sustainability

Strategy #1: Hold regular public safety roundtables and discussions on best practices.

Strategy #2: Create shared standards and guidelines that allow partners to speak a common language around the Trail, visitor use, and infrastructure. Consider the potential impact of trail use and new construction on existing historical resources and potential disturbance of archaeological resources.

Strategy #3: Leverage existing programs for ongoing funding for safety and infrastructure.

Strategy #4: Standardize sustainability and climate resiliency concepts and practices for all trail plans

THANK YOU

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 George Washington's Mount Vernon
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PENNSYLVANIA

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 Somerset County Rails to Trails Association

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

District Department of Transportation

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Bureau of Land Management
 • Douglas Point Special Management Recreation Area
 • Meadowood Special Recreation Area
 • Nanjemoy Natural Resource Management Area

Department of Defense, Fort Belvoir

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- National Park Service:
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
 - Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
 - Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park
 - Chesapeake Bay Office
 - Civil War Defenses of Washington
 - Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park
 - George Washington Memorial Parkway (multiple park locations)
 - George Washington's Birthplace National Monument
 - Harper's Ferry National Historical Park; sections in Virginia and Maryland only
 - National Capital Parks, East (multiple park locations)
 - National Mall and Memorial Parks
 - Prince William Forest Park
 - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
 - Rock Creek Park
 - Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
 - Thomas Stone National Historic Site
 - Underground Railroad Network to Freedom
 - Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail

US Fish and Wildlife Service—Potomac River Complex

US Marine Corps, Quantico

This document is dedicated to the founders, visionaries, partners, and communities who continue to develop, protect, and maintain the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, aspiring to create a completed, continuous, high-quality, scenic trail experience for all.



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