



# Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan

## Process and Opportunities for Engagement

May 2026



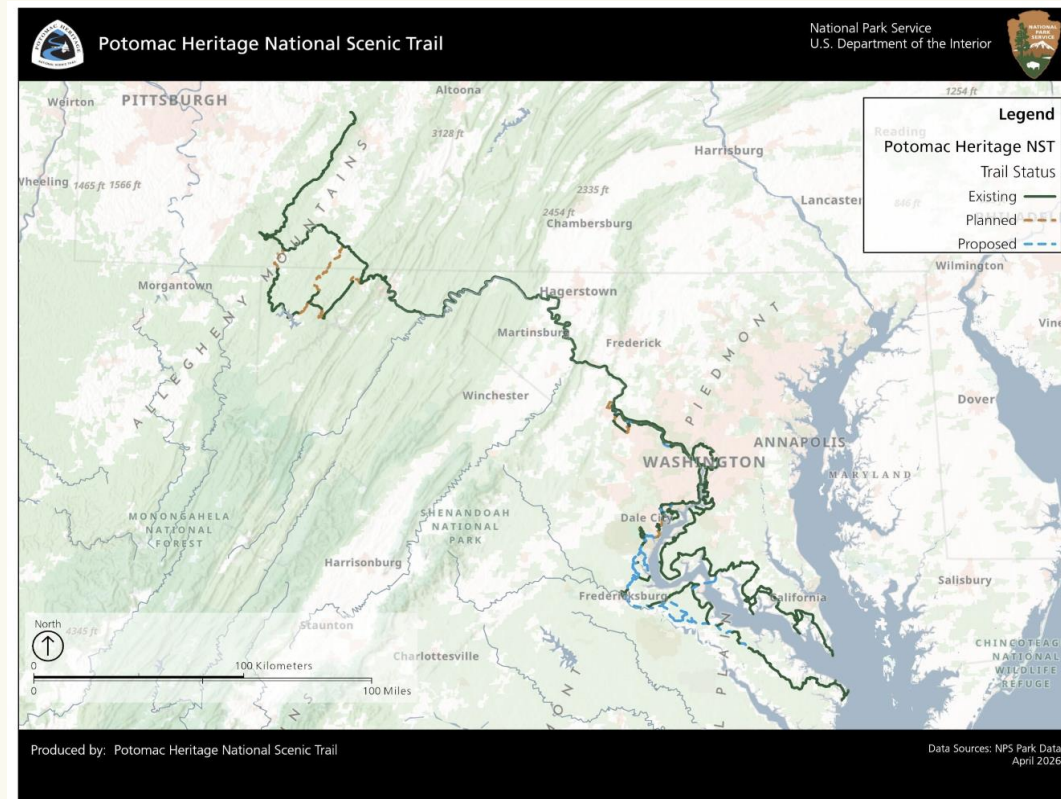
# Welcome to the Potomac Heritage Comprehensive Plan Public Meeting!

- We are beginning the next step in planning the long-term future of Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
- We appreciate your interest and participation as we work together to shape the trail's management vision and direction.



# Introduction to Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

- The trail is a congressionally designated network of trails between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands, connecting natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.



- It includes both on-road and off-road routes, multiuse trails, and water-based segments, managed cooperatively with many agencies and partners.

# What is public scoping?

Scoping is our opportunity to listen. Tonight's purpose is to introduce the comprehensive plan process, share early concepts, and invite your ideas and questions.

Your perspective helps shape the plan's direction before a draft plan is developed.



# Today's Presentation

1. What is a comprehensive plan?
2. Overview of the planning process
  - Process steps
  - Expected timeline
  - Future implementation actions
  - Step-down planning for future trail segments
3. How to participate



# What is a comprehensive plan?

- Provides long-range, trailwide guidance
- Establishes:
  - vision and desired conditions
  - visitor experience + resource protection goals
  - partnership framework
- Provides a consistent framework across jurisdictions



## The comprehensive plan **will**:

- ✓ Define vision + desired conditions
- ✓ Describe partnership frameworks
- ✓ Establish criteria for identifying and certifying trail segments
- ✓ Guide future decisions

## The comprehensive plan **will not**:

- x Propose site-specific construction
- x Make parcel-level decisions
- x Replace local planning

# Why develop a plan now?

- Statutory requirement of the National Trails System Act
- Builds on prior planning efforts + partnerships
- Need for:
  - consistent trail identity
  - coordinated management
  - clear process for future segments
- Supports long-term stewardship and connectivity



# Planning Process Overview

## Process steps:

1. Early engagement + scoping (now)
2. Draft plan development
3. Public review of draft
4. Final plan in 2027



# Planning Process Overview

## Expected Timeline



# Planning Process Overview

## Future implementation actions:

- Trailwide plan → sets overall direction
- Plan is followed by:
  - segment-level planning
  - site-specific actions (as needed)
- Actions reflect diverse conditions + partner capacity
- Are not yet determined!



# Public Engagement

- **Virtual meeting:** May 28, 2026, 6–7 pm EDT
- **Comment period:** May 28 through June 29
- Submit comments via the Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website → Give input on issues + opportunities
- Updates will be posted on the PEPC website:  
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/pohecompplan>



# Issues and Opportunities

- Trail boundary, core route, connectivity, and certification
- Continuity of visitor experience and cohesive trail identity
- Protection and stewardship of natural, cultural, and scenic resources
- Partnership roles, agreements, and coordinated management
- Long-term management direction and policy alignment
- Visitor understanding, orientation, and trailwide communication

# We want to hear from you!

1. What opportunities do you see for partnerships to improve communication, connectivity, stewardship, and programming?
2. Where are the most important gaps or missing connections (on land or water) that limit access today?
3. What natural, cultural, or historic resources along the corridor need heightened protection, and what changes would help?
4. How can we balance high-quality recreation (hiking, biking, paddling, horseback riding) with resource stewardship?
5. What safety concerns (road intersections, water hazards, signage, seasonal conditions) most affect your experience today?
6. What improvements to accessibility (surfaces, grades, amenities, information) would make the trail more welcoming for all users?
7. What stories (history, ecology, culture) should the trail tell more clearly, and where?
8. How can signage, maps, and digital tools better help people understand where the trail goes and what to expect?

# We want to hear from you!

- We invite your thoughts on the comprehensive plan, including the issues and opportunities for Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
- Your input will shape how the plan advances!

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/pohecompplan>



# Thank you



## Any questions?

