



Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan



Message from the Superintendent

The National Park Service is launching a comprehensive plan to guide the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail's future with partners, communities, and trail users across Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Since 1983, the trail has connected people to the landscapes, history, and communities of the Potomac River basin. Today, people hike, bike, paddle, ride horses, explore heritage sites, and enjoy local trail networks that are part of this larger corridor.

The comprehensive plan will strengthen those connections. It will guide how the National Park Service and partners protect resources, improve safety and access, and create a more welcoming and consistent experience across land and water routes.

It will also clarify how partners work together and how communities can help add new trail sections and water routes in the future.

Now we want to hear from you. Tell us what works, what needs improvement, and what would make the trail more useful, welcoming, and connected for the people and communities it serves.



Sincerely,
Jeri L. DeYoung
Superintendent

Take action to help shape the trail's future!

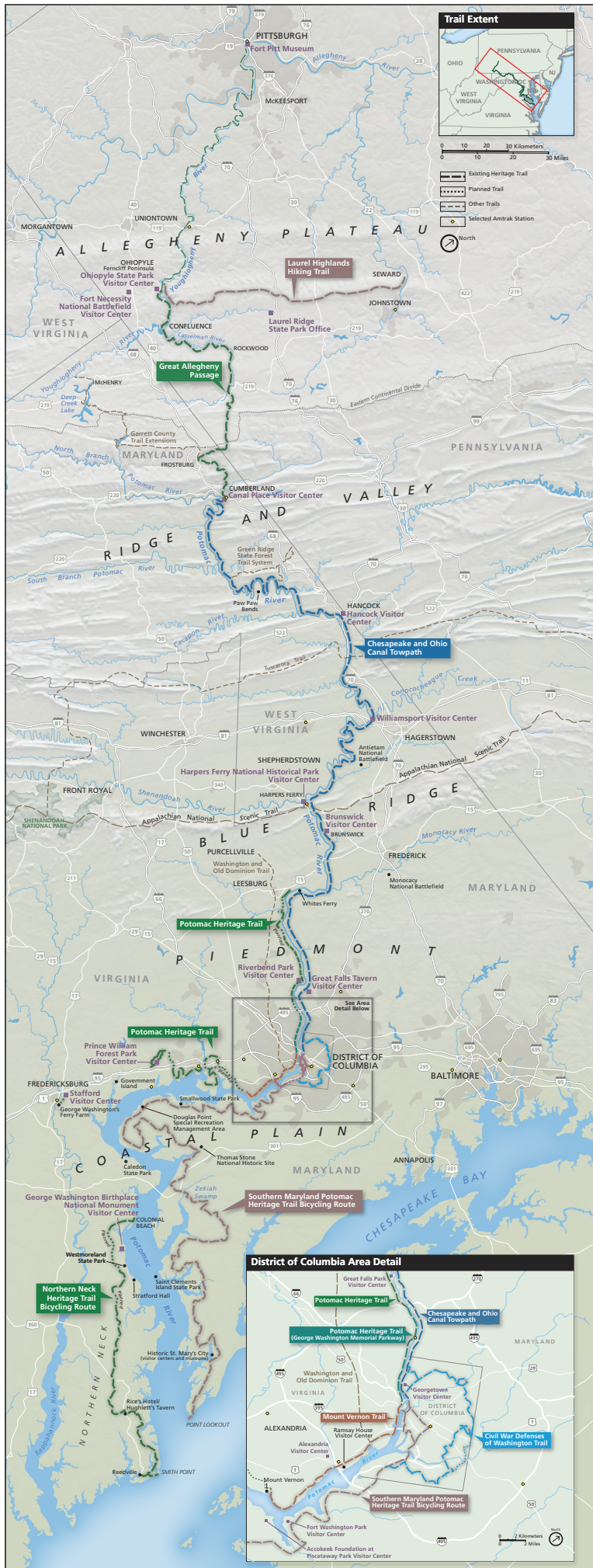
Your comments matter. Share what works, what needs improvement, and what would make the trail safer, clearer, more welcoming, and more connected for the people and communities it serves.

Attend the virtual public meeting on
May 28, 2026, at 6 p.m. EDT

Submit comments from May 28 through June 29, 2026

Visit the project page:

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



What is the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail?

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail was designated in 1983 and is part of the National Trails System. It connects landscapes, communities, and histories across the Potomac River basin through a network of land and water routes.

The trail spans Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. It reflects thousands of years of human history, including Indigenous use of the Potomac River basin, colonial expansion, the founding of the United States, transportation history, and Civil War history.



What Is Happening Now

The National Park Service is developing a comprehensive plan to guide the future of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The plan will help the National Park Service and its partners protect resources, improve safety and access, strengthen coordination, and create a more consistent experience across land and water routes.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-term guide for managing and improving the trail. Once complete, it will help guide decisions about resource protection, visitor access, safety, signs, interpretation, route refinement, operations, and partnerships across the trail corridor.

Why We Are Planning Now

The trail crosses many communities, landscapes, and jurisdictions. No single agency or partner can manage the entire corridor alone. Early input shows a need for stronger coordination, clearer guidance, and better communication. The plan will help the public understand what is happening, why it matters, and how to participate.

Help Build a Stronger Trail Network

This plan will create a shared playbook for protecting resources, improving the trail experience, and helping partners make clearer decisions across the corridor. Use the public meeting and comment period to share local knowledge, safety concerns, and ideas for better access.

What the Plan Will Help Answer

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| What should be protected? | Natural, cultural, and historic resources along land and water routes |
| How can the trail be easier and safer to use? | Maps, signs, directions, river access, trail connections, amenities, and other improvements that help people navigate the trail |
| Who is responsible for what? | Roles for federal, state, local, nonprofit, and community partners that help care for the trail network |
| How will future trail decisions be made? | Clearer criteria and processes for recognizing trail segments, trail towns, and water routes when appropriate |

What the Plan Will Focus On

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| Resource preservation and public access | Protect resources while supporting access along land and water routes |
| Visitor experience and safety | Improve maps, signs, directions, and amenities so the trail feels welcoming and easier to use across jurisdictions |
| Partnerships and collaboration | Clarify how partners work together and build on existing agreements and partnerships |
| Implementation tools | Develop clear criteria and processes, with partner input, to recognize trail segments, trail towns, and water routes when appropriate |



How to Participate

Attend the virtual public meeting

May 28, 2026, at 6 p.m. EDT. Meeting information will be posted in advance on the project page.

Submit a public comment

The public comment period opens May 28, 2026, and runs through June 29, 2026.

Share local knowledge

Tell the National Park Service about trail conditions, river access, safety concerns, signs, exhibits, visitor needs, and local priorities.

Stay informed

Watch for announcements about virtual meetings, project materials, and the PEPC comment portal.

How your feedback will be used

The National Park Service will review and consider public comments alongside technical analysis and partner input. Before the plan is finalized, the National Park Service will share key themes from public comments and explain how feedback helped shape the plan.

Project page and comment portal:
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/pohecompplan>

