

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail



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National Park Service • Department of the Interior

Building the Trail Along the James River

The National Park Service, in partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia, James River Association, and Chesapeake Conservancy, is beginning a collaborative planning effort for developing the James River segment of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. This sheet provides brief information on the effort.

The Trail

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (CAJO) joined the National Trails System following Congressional designation in 2006. Managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and partners, this 3000 mile water trail follows the routes of Captain John Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake in 1607-1609. The trail:

- Commemorates the voyages of John Smith on the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries
- Shares knowledge about American Indian societies and cultures of the 17th century
- Interprets the natural history of the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries
- Provides recreational experiences on water and on land along the trail

In short, the trail helps users to envision, understand, and protect what the explorers and inhabitants of the region saw 400 years ago.

Developing the Trail

The NPS will collaborate with key partners to lead trail development. Overall guidance for long-term trail management and development is described in the *CAJO Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)*. The CMP was published in 2010 after an extensive public planning process.

The CMP included a decision to develop and manage the trail in smaller segments, given the trail's 3,000 mile scope, diverse resources, and numerous opportunities. Creating "segment plans" is necessary to effectively understand the local resources, opportunities, and partner capacities that are unique to each segment. Segment plans will tier off the CMP, address a five year timeframe and be approved by NPS.

However, the NPS owns and manages only a few sites along the entire 3,000 mile trail. So developing trail segments will require partnerships with the many citizens, agencies, organizations, jurisdictions, businesses, and groups who have an interest in the trail and its related resources. In addition, the presence and local knowledge of resources and opportunities, including high potential route segments and historic sites, is a key ingredient.

The segment approach focuses efforts at a scale where local partners and NPS can collaborate on:

- Researching and assessing the condition of significant trail-related resources
- Better ensuring that significant trail-related resources are protected
- Developing a coherent trail experience that meets the interests and needs of trail users
- Promoting heritage tourism

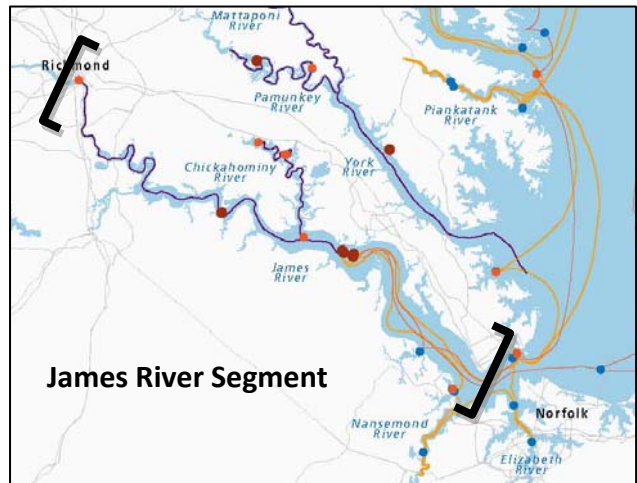
The James River Segment

The tidal James River is the first stretch of the National Historic Trail for which a segment plan is being developed. The James is the logical place to start. Home to Jamestown and the starting point for Smith's explorations, the James is rich in historic and natural resources. It is also a segment for which much work has already occurred, such as the *John Smith's Adventures on the James* tour loops. The segment plan will build on all of this to outline how to further enhance the trail over the next five years.

Geography: The James River segment plan addresses the James from Richmond downstream to Hampton Roads, at the Rt. 17 Bridge, including the free flowing tidal portion of the Chickahominy River below the dam.

Planning Process: The segment planning process includes a more detailed analysis of resources and identification of specific actions and partnerships required to develop and manage the trail. In particular, the James River Segment Plan will:

- Inventory and assess the existing trail related resources (natural, cultural, and physical)
- Outline strategies for conserving significant trail related resources
- Define a set of coherent and exciting trail experiences for a variety of trail users
- Determine what facilities and resources, including educational and interpretive, are needed to enhance visitor experiences
- Enhance visitor information and heritage tourism and ecotourism promotion along the segment
- Prioritize future investment needs with specific actions to be accomplished over next five years
- Engage a variety of partners in trail implementation and management and identify a lead regional partner to coordinate long term management and development.



Timeframe: NPS intends to work with partners to complete the James River Segment Plan by fall 2011. Key milestones to accomplish this task include:

Inventory existing trail related resources	January – March
Hold focus group meetings with major stakeholders	March
Develop trail management prospectus	April – May
Hold stakeholder workshop on prospectus	May/June
Develop preliminary draft management plan	June – August
Plan review process	August – September
Prepare Final Draft Plan	October – November
Plan Adoption	December

The promise of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail is to help the millions of people in the region and elsewhere experience, envision, come to understand, and care to protect what the explorers and the inhabitants of the region saw 400 years ago. Segment by segment, NPS and partners will expand public access to the Bay and rivers, protect special places evocative of those times, educate people to the importance of the exceptional natural and cultural resources of the region, and provide meaningful recreational experiences along the trail. By creating locally-focused and inspired partnerships between government, partner organizations and citizens, together we will instill awe and reverence for the special places in the Chesapeake region.

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