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The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I am writing to express the State of Maryland's strong support for the recently released Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), which will guide the long-term development and administration of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (NHT).

As you know, Maryland has been very supportive of the John Smith NHT from its inception. We believe it will serve as a powerful tool to enhance local economies, increase recreation, conserve landscapes and improve awareness about the Bay and Maryland's rich history and cultures, including our Native Americans.

Maryland supported the legislation to establish the Trail, hosted the John Smith Shallop in our capitol and numerous venues throughout our State, and devoted considerable resources and time to assist the National Park Service in the development of the feasibility study, the gap analysis and the CMP. Through our existing Boating and Waterway Improvement Programs, Maryland is well positioned in supporting boating access opportunities along the Trail. These Programs have already completed over a hundred boating access sites along the Trail and are planning numerous others in support of this project. Our commitment is also underscored by our acquisition last year of three parcels of waterfront property comprising nearly 4,500 acres and 20 miles of shoreline along the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. These lands provide access to the John Smith Trail and preserve a landscape evocative of a time when Smith plied the Chesapeake and its rivers. Maryland's Program Open Space has also conserved over 280 acres in Vienna on the Nanticoke River, including a structure known as the Nanticoke Inn that the Town of Vienna plans to develop into the John Smith Discovery Center. These acquisitions, combined with water access opportunities and scenic natural resource protection on the Nanticoke and Marshyhope rivers, demonstrate our commitment to fully participate as a lead partner in the development of the John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

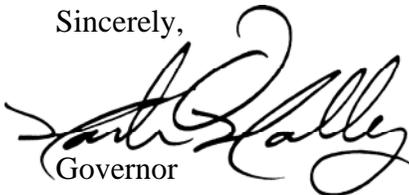
To realize the full potential of the Trail, as described in the preferred management alternative, and to ensure its effective integration with Maryland's extensive system of watertrails, parks, access sites, and land conservation initiatives, we believe that the National Park Service should focus on three (3) areas:

- 1) Provide its state partners with funding and other resources equivalent to other significant national trails, such as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. This support would enable joint development and management of the Trail, enhance public access, conserve land along the Trail, and create new opportunities for recreation, education and interpretation.
- 2) Undertake meaningful “collaborative conservation” with our state natural resource and tourism agencies and their local government and non-profit partners to develop the Trail – just as we have been working together to develop the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, the Star Spangled Banner Trail and Assateague Island Seashore. This should include a funding allocation to the state to complement existing state land conservation, public and boating access, and outreach and education programs already in place.
- 3) Support the designation of connecting trails, including the Anacostia, Chester and Choptank Rivers as recommended by the Chesapeake Conservancy.

In our view, successful implementation of the Trail will require a strong federal commitment by the National Park Service to make the Trail a high priority. Maryland State Government stands ready to work with the National Park Service and all of the other partners to make this Trail a true economic, ecological, cultural and historic asset for all Marylanders. Mr. Secretary, as a former state official, I know you understand the importance of working with states as your “primary partners” in the implementation of this exciting comprehensive management plan for the Trail

In closing, I also wanted to take this opportunity to commend you for your outstanding leadership in leading the country through the Gulf oil spill crises. A sincere congratulations to you and your team!

Sincerely,



Governor

cc: Jon Jarvis, Director, U.S. National Park Service
Dennis Reidenbach, Northeast Regional Director, U.S. National Park Service
John Maounis, Superintendent, Captain John Smith NHT, U.S. National Park Service
John Griffin, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Ted Dallas, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor O’Malley’s Office
Dana Thompson, Director Federal Relations, Governor O’Malley’s Washington Office
Members, Maryland Congressional Delegation