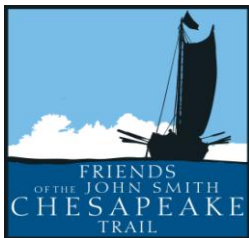


A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH CORPS OF ENGINEERS' RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY



December 4, 2009

A WHITE PAPER REPORT BY THE FRIENDS OF THE JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE TRAIL



The mission of the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail, a 501 (c)(3) organization, is to improve public access to the Trail and the Chesapeake Bay, conserve the Bay's significant landscapes, promote recreation and tourism opportunities along the trail, and help educate the public about Captain Smith's journeys, Native American cultures in the region and the changes that have occurred in the watershed over the past 400 years.

Enhancing public recreation in the Chesapeake Bay associated with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects

The Army Corps of Engineers is the largest federal provider of water-based recreation in the nation. It is responsible for managing 56,000 miles of shoreline, 420 lakes in 43 states, 4,300 recreation areas, 90,000 campsites, and 3,500 boat ramps, among other recreational facilities. Of the 4,300 recreation sites, about half are run by county, city, and state partners and half are managed by the Corps. It is estimated that 25 million individuals visit a Corps project at least once each year. The Corps' stated Natural Resources Management mission is to "manage and conserve those natural resources, consistent with the ecosystem management principles, while **providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences** to serve the needs of present and future generations." Section 208 of WRDA 1996 directed the Secretary to "*provide increased emphasis on, and opportunities for recreation at water resources projects operated, maintained, or constructed by the Corps of Engineers.*" According to economic impact studies undertaken by the Corps, visitors to Corps lakes spend \$18 billion a year on trip-related expenses such as gas, food, lodging, and recreational equipment within and outside of the local communities surrounding Corps lakes, leading to 350,000 jobs.

In the Chesapeake Bay, the Corps plays a vital role in efforts to restore native oyster populations, submerged aquatic vegetation, and critical island habitat, yet surprisingly it manages no public outdoor recreational facilities directly on the mainstem of the Bay in Maryland or Virginia or on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Indeed, in Maryland the only Corps recreational facility is located at Jennings Randolph Lake in Western Maryland where the Corps maintains an overlook, river access trail and built a boat ramp. On the West Virginia side of the Lake, the Corps operates a campground.

During construction of the Poplar Island project, local interests expressed a strong desire to incorporate a recreational component as part of the project, but unfortunately, that did not come to pass. The proposed new Mid-Bay Islands project does include some passive recreational opportunities, but far more could be done, without impacting on the habitat restoration goals of the project. In addition, the Corps' Smith Island Restoration Project and others could include a recreational component.

Opportunities: Sections 202 and 701 of the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order call on Federal agencies to expand public access to waters and open spaces of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from Federal lands and conserve landscapes and ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Congress is expected to take up a Water Resources Development Act in 2010. Language could be added to the Mid Bay Islands Project, expected to be authorized in that bill, directing the Corps to conduct a study of recreational opportunities associated with that project, or authorize separately a Bay-wide study of recreational opportunities in the Chesapeake Bay.

Options: (Ideally a combination of these options):

- 1) **WRDA 2010.** Include language in the authorization of the Mid-Chesapeake Bay Islands Project to incorporate a broader recreational component.

SEC. XXX. MID-CHESAPEAKE BAY ISLAND, MARYLAND. The project for ecosystem restoration through the beneficial use of dredged material, Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island, Maryland: Report of the Chief of Engineers dated no later than 31 December 2009, at a total cost of \$1,565,000,000 for a project implementation period of 52 years, with an estimated Federal cost of \$1,014,300,000, and an estimated non-Federal cost of \$550,700,000. In accordance with Executive Order 13508, Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration, a limited re-evaluation study shall be conducted during the design phase, at one hundred percent Federal cost, to evaluate opportunities for recreation that are compatible with remote island habitat.

- 2) **Study resolution (and associated funding)** authorizing the Corps to undertake a planning study for enhancing water-based recreational access to the Chesapeake Bay.

Resolved by the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the United States Senate, that the Secretary of the Army is requested to review the report of the Chief of Engineers on the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland and Virginia, published as House Document 176, Eighty-eight Congress, First Session, and other pertinent reports that encompass the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland and Virginia, with a view to conducting a comprehensive recreation study consistent with Executive Order 13508, Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration at one hundred percent Federal cost.

If “at one hundred percent Federal cost” is not desired, cost sharing would be 75% Federal, 25% non-Federal. This is consistent with the Corps’ watershed policy for basin-wide assessments and would result in a Chesapeake Bay recreation plan. Further study/authorization would be required for USACE implementation of any parts of this recreation plan.

- 3) **Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Plan.** Existing resolution of the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the United States Senate, adopted September 2002. Only need appropriations to get started at 75% Federal, 25% non-Federal cost share; unless specified for 100% Federal per Executive Order 13508.
- 4) **Funding under the Poplar Island Project.** Funds directing a post-authorization decision document (limited evaluation) to evaluate more extensive recreational opportunities at Poplar Island.
- 5) **Provide funding under the authority of Section 334 of WRDA 1992.** This section authorizes the Secretary to conduct a study on environmentally beneficial ways to expand or supplement existing placement options and sites serving channel dredging operations of the Port of Baltimore. In conducting the study under this section, the Secretary, in coordination with Federal agencies and the Maryland Port Administration, is to demonstrate beneficial uses of dredged materials to enhance

public recreational opportunities, increase living resource habitats, and enhance the environmental quality of the Chesapeake Bay.

- 6) **Funding under Section 510.** Appropriate funds under the authority of Section 510 of WRDA 96 for the Corps to develop and implement a recreational plan for the Chesapeake Bay.

NOTE: As the Section 510 Program is CG-funded, USACE does not recommend funding a stand-alone recreation plan from this authority. A recreation component could be included as part of a larger Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Plan to include restoration, recreation, navigation, flood damage reduction, stormwater management, etc. and funded at 100% Federal (assuming the required funds would be added to the Section 510 Program and not taken from ongoing projects), as has been discussed in the past.

Examples of other Corps of Engineers' recreational facilities:



Raystown Lake, Pennsylvania is a 29,000 acre project with 12 public access areas, a 8,000 acre lake, picnic areas, beaches, boat launches, campgrounds, trails, hunting, fishing, marina concession stands and is operated and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers.



Jennings Randolph Lake, in Maryland and West Virginia offers extensive outdoor recreation opportunities, including boating, fishing, whitewater rafting, wildlife viewing, picnicking, playgrounds, camping, hiking, an amphitheater, canoeing and more. Public bathhouses, restrooms, drinking water and pay telephone are located at the various recreation sites.