



## Executive Summary

Tourism Management Plan  
2002

## *The Framework for the Tourism Management Plan for the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area (2002)*

*The Tourism Management Plan for the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area* is designed to capitalize on the rich historic, cultural and natural resources of Dorchester County to promote economic development and preservation through heritage tourism. Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and heritage tourism, one of its principle markets.

The Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area, which includes most of Dorchester County, reflects the traditions, culture, occupations, and landscapes of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Its strategic location, access to the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries, abundant fisheries and fertile farmland, have been determining factors in its economy since its settlement by Native Americans more than 13,000 years ago. These resources and the legacies of its past can serve now to support an economy enhanced by tourism.

The plan is final step in the certification process required by the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program. When the plan is approved by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, property owners, businesses, non-profits and local governments in the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area will become eligible for matching grants, loans and extended historic rehabilitation tax credits to develop tourism services, invest in heritage buildings and museums and increase access to natural resources.

### *Vision and Goals*

The development of the plan has been underway since 1996 and has included extensive participation by community stakeholders. The vision for the project formed by participants is:

*The Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area will preserve local characteristics while broadening and deepening the local economy by strengthening existing ways to make a living with new opportunities through increased tourism.*

The goals for the management plan are:

- To preserve our Dorchester County heritage,
- To market our heritage to visitors and residents,
- To improve the economic health of the area.

### *The Boundaries and Participants*

The heritage area includes most of Dorchester County. The boundary circles the county by water from Secretary along the Choptank River to the Bay, around the Bay and up the Nanticoke River to Vienna. From there, the boundary follows Route 50 west to the railroad paralleling Linkwood Road, heading north to East New Market and west to Secretary. The town of Hurlock is included as a non-contiguous town.

## Participating Local Governments

Dorchester County  
City of Cambridge  
Hurlock

Church Creek  
Secretary

East New Market  
Vienna

Each of the jurisdictions must adopt the plan and incorporate it into their comprehensive plans.

## *The Heritage Resources and Themes*

The area has a vast array of heritage resources - compelling stories, significant buildings, museums, historic figures, unique traditions and industries and unparalleled natural resources. These have been grouped for interpretation into the following seven themes.

- ***Harriet Tubman and Eastern Shore African American History:***



Harriet Tubman  
reenactor

Dorchester County is the birthplace of Harriet Tubman, the eminent conductor on the Underground Railroad. She is credited with making at least 19 trips to Maryland's Eastern Shore and helping more than 300 person to reach freedom. Many others also helped to break the boundary of slavery before the civil war, while others continued the struggle to freedom by helping to establish schools, churches and communities for African American in Dorchester County. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle continued as African Americans began to hold political offices and participate in the civil rights movement of the 1960's.

- ***Chesapeake Landscapes and Outdoor Adventure:***

The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are Maryland's most distinguishing characteristics. The Heart of Chesapeake Country has incredible natural resources - water, wetlands, wildlife habitats, and rural lands. These have dictated much of the economy and provide unique opportunities for recreation and adventure, like bird watching, biking and canoeing.

The area is home to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a 26,000-acre preserve that is one of the top ten birding sites in the U.S., and major state wildlife areas, greenways and water trails. The heritage area includes extensive areas of natural scenery and provides visitors with a unique opportunity to view the historic and natural Eastern Shore landscapes which has disappeared to development in other jurisdictions.



- ***Working Waterfront Villages:***

The waterways, fisheries and waterfronts convey a past of trade, commerce and boat building and a present of boating and continued fishing. The villages reflect the relationship between the water and the buildings, which support the maritime industry. The active waterfronts of Dorchester County provide a rare opportunity to observe

watermen bringing in their catches and an easy chance to share the taste of the bounty of the Chesapeake.

- ***Agricultural Life:***  
Agriculture has served as the historic backbone of the county's economy, significantly impacting the culture, traditions and livelihoods of the people. The trade that developed and brought wealth and development in the area came, in large part, from the farms. Much of the county is still an active farming community with grain, vegetables and poultry being its major crops.
- ***Dorchester Families and Traditions:***  
The area has thousands of years of history, many prominent historical figures, including seven Maryland Governors, and a wealth of small museums, collections, genealogy and architecture representing these families, their contributions and culture.
- ***American Indian Heritage:***  
The first Native Americans arrived in Dorchester County more than 13,000 years ago. These early settlers left rich archeological records, which can be seen at several local museums. When the Europeans arrived, late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they forced the native peoples onto two reservations in Dorchester. The Choptank Indian Reservation was the last to survive in Maryland. Members of the local tribes continue to live in Dorchester County and work to share their heritage with the community.
- ***Dorchester History, Architecture and Artifacts:***



This theme focuses on the physical reminders of the county's heritage. Resources range from Indian artifacts to the historic architecture of the region. Also included are duck decoys, quilts, furniture, boats, hunting and fishing gear and our traditions of good food.

### Selected Heritage Resources

#### Museums

Brannock Maritime Museum  
Dorchester County Historical Society  
Dorchester Heritage Museum  
Harriet Tubman Museum  
Richardson Maritime Museum  
Spocott Windmill Complex  
Stanley Institute  
Taylor's Island Museum  
Vienna Heritage Museum  
Dorchester Arts Center  
South Dorchester Folk Museum

#### Historic Towns

Church Creek  
East New Market  
Hurlock  
Secretary  
Vienna  
Woolford

#### Other Attractions

Becky Phipps Cannon  
Bucktown Village Store  
Harriet Tubman Memorial Garden  
Brooks Barrel Company  
Old Trinity Church  
Taylor's Island General Store  
Sailwinds Park  
Hurlock Train Station

#### Historic Districts

Town of East New Market  
City of Cambridge

#### Working Waterfronts

Cambridge  
Elliott Island  
Hooper Island  
Taylor's Island

| Natural Resources                        |
|--|
| Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge      |
| Choptank Fishing Pier                    |
| Fishing Bay Wildlife Management Area     |
| LeCompte Wildlife Management Area        |
| Linkwood Wildlife Management Area        |
| Taylor's Island Wildlife Management Area |
| Marshyhope Natural Heritage Area         |
| Chicone Creek Heritage Area              |
| Rivers, Creeks, Bays                     |

| Tourism Services       |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Lodging                | 242 rooms     |
| Hyatt Resort           | 400 rooms     |
| Campgrounds (3)        | 255 sites     |
| Vacation Homes         | 650 houses    |
| Marinas (recreational) | 700-800 slips |
| Boat Tours             | 5             |
| Public Boat Ramps      | 22            |
| Canoe, Kayak Launches  | 7             |
| Fishing Charters       | 8             |
| Hunting Guides         | 6             |
| Tour Guides            | 2             |

### *The Heritage Tourism Opportunity*

Dorchester County was one of the earliest settlements in Maryland. At one time, it was a port to rival Baltimore. Cambridge remains as the only other deep-water port in Maryland. In Dorchester County, population and employment growth has been somewhat moderate. The maritime industry and fishing continue to provide significant economic opportunities. Dorchester is Maryland's leading fishing area. Agriculture and related food processing are still important but tourism has been a growing industry on the Eastern Shore and Dorchester stands in a strong position to benefit from its continued development.

Heritage tourism represents one important opportunity for the community to market its heritage and to provide additional ways to grow the county's economy. In the U.S., after shopping, visiting a museum, historic site or cultural event is the next most popular tourism activity. In 2000, there were 212.0 million person trips which included a museum, historic site or cultural event. Eco and adventure tourism, representing the use of natural resources engaged 50 percent of all Americans at some point within a five-year period.

At this time, Dorchester County has modest levels of tourism, as reflected in data from the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, which reported about \$16 million in tourism expenditures for the county in 1999. This will change. The opportunity of heritage tourism, supported by the state program for heritage areas, presents the area with a significant opportunity to use its rich resources for tourism development.

Another major development that reinforces this opportunity is the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina opening in September 2002 on the Choptank River in Cambridge. The resort will have 400 rooms, a 170-slip marina, 18-hole golf course, 18,000 sq. ft. European spa and 40,000 sq. ft. of conference space. This is unique facility to Maryland will soon provide the state with a major resort destination, and the Heart of Chesapeake Country will have a substantial increase in visitors traveling to enjoy its impressive natural and historic resources.

### *Strategies for the Heritage Area*

The purpose of the management plan is to design a program that will use the county's heritage resources to promote tourism, economic development and preservation. In addition,

it establishes a managing structure to implement the plan, identifies target areas for investment, defines an action agenda and measures the economic impacts of the outlined activities.

### *Enhancing Heritage Resources*

Strategies for enhancing or increasing the resources available to tourists:

- #1. *Creating Scenic Overlooks:* *In order to appreciate the landscape, flora and fauna, the heritage program should create a series of strategically places scenic overlooks or pull-offs, some in the marshes, some on the waterfronts. so sightseers can stop and view the area. The sites can include interpretive exhibits and guides.*
- #2. *Strengthening Museums:* *The individual museums should be encouraged to undertake an assessment of their operations and develop a plan for their future.*
- #3. *Providing On-site Interpretation:* *The heritage program should develop small public spaces and interpretive exhibits at selected historic sites to provide information to visitors.*
- #4. *Supporting Proposals:* *The program should support projects that will add to the attractions in the area. These include the proposed new visitor center at Blackwater and the new maritime project with the Richardson Museum and Nathan of Dorchester.*
- #5. *Pursue an Underground Railroad Venue:* *Working in partnership with the National Park Service and the Harriet Tubman Organization, the heritage program should pursue building an interpretive center to tell the story of Harriet Tubman.*
- #6. *Native Americans:* *These native peoples arrived in Dorchester more than 13,000 years ago. They used the land for hunting, fishing, trapping and for crops. Over time, they established several large villages. With the arrival of Europeans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Indians moved on to several reservation established by colonial government. The last of these, the Choptank Indian Reservation survived into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century before the last of its kind were sold and the native peoples consolidated their lives in south Dorchester. They have continued to pass their traditions and culture on to succeeding generations while becoming active leaders of the community.*
- #7. *Telling the Stories:* *The heritage program, working with partners, should produce one or more videos about significant stories of the area. The first might be about the Underground Railroad, which could have more visibility in the area.*
- #8. *Unique Events:* *The program should include developing support for and/or promoting two or three unique events that draw outsiders to experience the heritage of the area. One should celebrate Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.*

## *Achieving Maximum Visitation*

Strategies for marketing, promoting and improving access to attractions.

- #1. *Developing Visitor Services:* *The heritage program should encourage and provide support for development of services like tours, guiding and outfitting on a continuing basis.*
- #2. *Creating a Marketing Coalition:* *The program, in partnership with the Department of Tourism, should explore establishing a shared marketing program with stakeholders.*
- #3. *Consider Concessions at Blackwater:* *The program, in partnership with Friends of Blackwater and the Fish and Wildlife Service, should investigate and consider allowing concessions at Blackwater that provide guided tours, boat rentals and other services.*
- #4. *Outdoor School:* *The program should pursue the establishment of an outdoor school that would offer camps, programs and training in eco and adventure tourism.*
- #5. *Expand Services at Sailwinds Visitor Center:* *The heritage program should promote and support creating additional services at the visitor center, to include reservation and booking assistance.*

## *Linkages*

These are the strategies for creating relationships between attractions, either physically or conceptually, by linking resources together and helping people find them.

- #1. *Improve Signage and Wayfinding:* *The heritage program, in partnership with State Highways and others, should create a signage and wayfinding system that improves the existing system and identifies significant heritage sites.*
- #2. *Create a Picture Map:* *The heritage area and county should combine to design a map, which graphically illustrates the several venues, trails and scenic opportunities in the area.*
- #3. *Working with the Hyatt:* *The heritage program, in partnership with others, should encourage preparation of nature and heritage tourism packages to serve the Hyatt.*
- #4. *Exhibits at Sailwinds:* *The visitor center at Sailwinds should add permanent exhibits, seating and a viewing area for showing videos about the area.*
- #5. *Strengthen Ties to Other Tourism Programs:* *The heritage program should reinforce its ties to other, related tourism programs, assuring maximum communication, cooperation and benefits. These include other Eastern Shore heritage areas, the National Park Service Underground Railroad and Chesapeake Bay Gateways and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Nature Tourism Program.*



### *Compatible Economic Development*

Compatible economic development is that which serves more than tourism but can be supported by visitors and residents alike.

- #1. Support General Stores: *The general stores in small communities should be encouraged to rehabilitate, expand or refurbish to serve a tourist clientele.*
- #2. Prepare a Coordinated Redevelopment Plan for Cambridge: *Cambridge is the community best able to provide the shopping, dining and entertainment for visitors. A priority for the city and heritage area should be an inclusive renewal and design plan for the heart of the city, including Sailwinds, Cambridge Creek and Downtown.*
- #3. Public Spaces: *The heritage program should support the acquisition, landscaping and creation of public places throughout the community for on-site interpretation and scenic overlooks.*
- #4. Rehab Loan Program: *The heritage program could encourage establishing a modest loan program, which could make limited loans, up to \$5,000 or \$10,000, for rehabilitation of qualified properties.*
- #5. Complete Sailwinds: *The several separate owners and stakeholders in Sailwinds should form a coalition and sponsor a unified plan for the total Sailwinds site.*

## ***Stewardship***

Stewardship strategies are designed to protect and sustain the heritage resources.

*#1. Support County Preservation Plan: Dorchester County will complete its preservation plan, historic resource survey and evaluation plan before certification of the heritage area. The heritage area management should support the plan and its implementation.*



*#2. Land Inventory: The heritage area should promote taking an inventory of developed land to identify any threatened areas.*

*#3. Cultural Preservation: The heritage program should sponsor a program of oral history to record the stories of commercial fishermen, boat builders, farmers, African Americans and others who remember earlier times and circumstances.*

*#4. Preservation Primer: The heritage program should develop a guide that explains the state historic rehabilitation tax credit and the process for using it.*

## ***Management Structure***

The implementation of the plan requires a management entity that can represent all of the jurisdictions, set priorities coordinate actions, approve applications to the MHAA, and allocate monies. The management entity, the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Areas Authority (HCCHAA), will be created by resolution of the Dorchester County Commissioners and staffed by the County Tourism Department.

The HCCHAA will be comprised of eleven members.

### **County**

Two commissioners elected by the Dorchester County Commission.

### **Municipalities**

One representative shall serve from each of the six municipalities. Each council or commission located within the heritage area shall elect one of its members, its mayor or a designated representative. No member can serve more than one municipality at one time.

City of Cambridge  
Secretary

Church Creek  
Hurlock

East New Market  
Vienna

### **Community representatives**

Three elected at large by the other eight members.

Representatives of local government shall serve for the duration of their elected term. Community representatives shall serve staggered three-year terms.

### *Target Investment Zones*

Target Investment Zones are designated areas within a Certified Heritage Area, which are identified for development and investment. They will qualify for matching capital grants from the state authority for property acquisition, development and restoration. Other areas qualify for planning, design, marketing and programming. TIZ's can receive capital grants for up to five years after designation.

There are five initial TIZ's designated for capital investment at this time:

- City Center, Cambridge: The core of downtown, between Court Lane, Muir Street, Race, Poplar and High Streets and Academy.
- Long Wharf, Cambridge: The public areas bordering the Choptank River and Water Street, including the marina.
- The Town of Vienna: Water and Race Streets facing the Nanticoke River.
- Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge: Assisting the refuge to develop more tourism attractions and an improved visitor center.
- Bucktown Village: The store and churches that comprise the heart of Harriet Tubman property.

Potential Future TIZ's are:

- Cambridge Creek/ Trenton Street, Cambridge
- Pine Street Cultural Center (Liberty Village), Cambridge
- Cedar Street Corridor, Cambridge
- Stanley Institute/Christ Rock Area, Cambridge
- Dorchester Historical Society/Neild Museum, Cambridge
- Sailwinds Park/Governors Hall Area, Cambridge
- Taylor's Island

### *Action Plan*

The action plan requires the management entity to set priorities among the strategies. Within each category, the strategies have been listed in accordance with the priorities of the Steering Committee for the project. The management board will be responsible for coordinating with the many partners involved in the process. It should keep the community apprised of available funds, opportunities and changes. Although the MHAA has monies available for implementation, there are also many other funding sources from other private and public programs. These additional federal, state and private resources will all be sought to assist in the implementation of the plan and its many elements.

Board recommended actions:

- Creating a clearinghouse of information about funding and application processes
- Developing a manual of assistance programs and keeping it current
- Publishing a periodic newsletter for stakeholders in the heritage area
- Maintaining regular contacts with local governments
- Preparing an annual report of activities and accomplishments

### *Return on Investment*

As the Tourism industry is expected to continue to grow in economic importance, Dorchester County's location on the Eastern Shore emerges as an asset. The abundant natural resources throughout the area, unique cultural and historical heritage, proximity of the successful destinations such as Ocean City and St. Michaels, distances from major metropolitan areas and, the opening of the world-class resort, Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay, provide many incentives for the visitor to stay here.

The initial opportunity for the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area is the immediate market of visitors that the Hyatt Regency will be providing, an estimated 70,000 - 80,000 new visitors to the area. These are overnight visitors who in addition to enjoying the amenities of the resort will be spending money for dining, entertainment, shopping, attractions, and other recreational opportunities off premise.

The Hyatt guests are anticipated to expend an estimated \$42 - 57 million beyond lodging fees.

Although the State of Maryland invests considerably in the Preservation and Tourism Areas Program, it will also reap economic rewards. The capital improvements to visitor services, attractions, linkages among attractions, preservation of historical structures and enhanced marketing can generate a significant increase in annual state tax receipts.

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Dorchester County

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