

## Executive Summary for the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area Management Plan

The purpose of this plan is to assist the three counties and many communities of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore to identify, interpret, and preserve our heritage and find ways to help visitors to enjoy our rich cultural traditions, our scenic beauty and natural resources, and our wealth of history. The Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Committee (the LESHC) led the development of this plan, working with local public officials, businesses, nonprofit organizations, civic groups, and individuals. Support for this plan has been provided by Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties, the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, the Rural Development Center of the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore, and private donors.

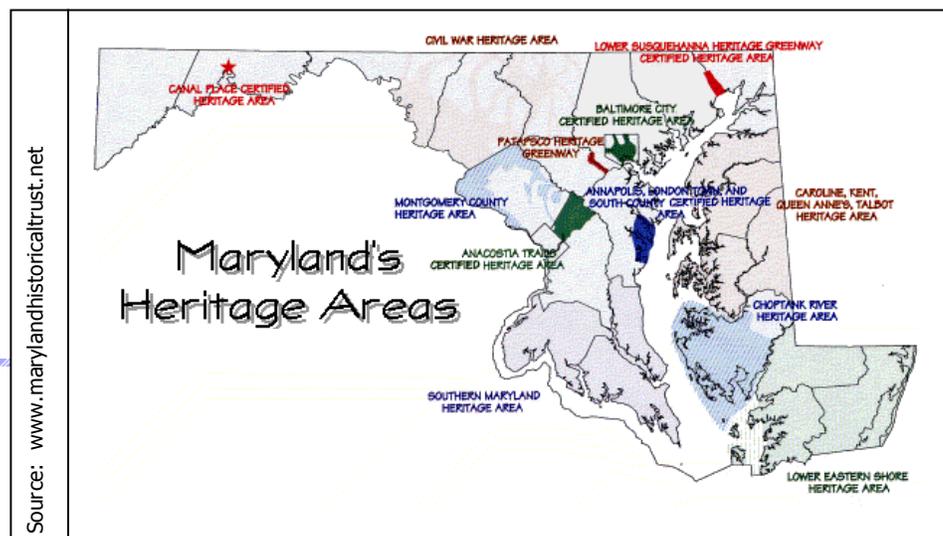
This plan focuses on the development of heritage tourism in the region. The strategies here offer ways to improve interpretation, visitor services, and the connections among the museums, historic sites, natural areas, and communities in the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area. Discussions of economic development, urban revitalization, and other land-use planning are also featured.

### Action Elements of the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Plan

- ◆ Orientation & linkages
- ◆ Interpretation & education
- ◆ Heritage tourism
- ◆ Economic development & targeted investment
- ◆ Stewardship of heritage resources
- ◆ Management

### Heritage Development in Maryland

The underlying concept of heritage development is to enrich communities by enhancing and promoting the enjoyment of unique cultural and natural resources. Heritage tourism is a key element. Across the nation, civic leaders have adopted heritage development as a tool for preserving their communities' distinctive qualities. The Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Committee is one of the nation's pioneers in this approach. In Maryland, these regional development initiatives are known as "heritage areas." Under Maryland's program, the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area achieved the first step of a two-step program when it became a Recognized Heritage Area in 1997. To achieve the status of a Certified Heritage Area, the Lower Eastern Shore was required to undertake this plan, which is being submitted to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority for a final decision about certification at its meeting in April of 2002.



## **A Vision for the Lower Eastern Shore**

The Lower Eastern Shore is a land between the Atlantic and the Chesapeake, with a wealth of history, small towns, natural areas, and beautiful landscapes threaded by country roads, trails, and waterways. By the year 2012, this region has become a destination where visitors feel especially welcome. We have found a match between our visitors and ourselves and we all enjoy the region’s natural and cultural heritage, which gives us much to explore. Across all three counties, we freely share and support events, the arts, and community life with visitors and new residents. In the midst of all this activity, we can still put our feet up and enjoy the peace and quiet.

Today, we feel a deep connection to our past, and we continue to recognize our varied cultures and our dependence on one another. All of us – watermen and farmers, merchants and workers, innkeepers and artists, guides and foresters, hunters and anglers, civic leaders and educators – work wholeheartedly to create economic opportunities and regional wealth that sustains our communities, environment, and traditions.

## **The Lower Eastern Shore**

The strong natural influences of ocean, bay, wetlands, rivers, and the lands in between have created a distinctive cultural landscape here. The region’s location between the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay has meant that it has played an important role in the nation’s development.

The interplay between land and water is a distinguishing characteristic of the Lower Eastern Shore, with its complicated pattern of ocean, bays, sounds, rivers, marshes, and swamps. Small towns and numerous unincorporated communities, many bound by close contact with one another across the water, also contribute greatly to the region’s profoundly rural identity. The total population of the region is 155,934. As visitors move throughout the region, they experience a landscape influenced by different eras. Eighteenth-century river and bay communities give way to nineteenth-century railroad towns and twentieth-century neighborhoods.



The early nineteenth-century Teackle Mansion in Princess Anne is a focal point for one of four areas identified for targeted state investment in the first phase of this plan.

## Strategy for Orientation and Linkages

The landscape is central to the presentation of the Lower Eastern Shore. Within this landscape, roads and waterways are not only characteristic features of the landscape, but are also the means of experiencing the unique offerings of the region. This plan proposes the creation of an integrated network for the orientation of visitors and the linkage of sites, attractions, communities, and resources.

### Key Actions for the Linkage Strategy

- ✓ Create one and possibly two **new welcome centers** in addition to the three existing ones.
- ✓ Create **three regional interpretive centers** to be developed in phases:
  - ◆ Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury
  - ◆ Ocean City Boardwalk, Ocean City
  - ◆ Pocomoke River Discovery Center, Pocomoke City
- ✓ Establish **local visitor centers** in historic towns and villages, using existing interpretive sites, businesses, or specially developed sites.
- ✓ Design a **comprehensive wayfinding system** comprising a regional signage system, brochures, visitor guides, guidebooks, and one or more websites. Establish **standards for graphic identity**.
- ✓ Combine previously designated scenic roads with additional scenic secondary roads to create the **Lower Eastern Shore Primary Scenic Road Network**, to link communities and attractions. Add interpretation so they can be enjoyed in their own right.
- ✓ Support planning for National Scenic Byway designation of the proposed **Lower Eastern Shore Scenic Byway Loop**.

## Strategy for Interpretation and Education

Interpretation is the means of bringing the heritage of this region alive for residents and visitors. At its best, interpretation that provides learning opportunities that are entertaining as well as educational. Overall, the foundation that exists for a regional interpretive system here is well-developed. Difficulty in maintaining public accessibility to existing sites and creating more interpretive opportunities is a matter of resources, not a lack of community support. The number of events such as fairs, parades, festivals, and celebrations that are offered by communities in this region is also commendably high. Though well-recognized, only modestly tapped for interpretation are the rich living traditions here: the dialects, stories, trades, arts and crafts, music, foods, and other aspects of unique lifestyles in this region.

## Strategy for Heritage Tourism

Increasing visitation will help Lower Eastern Shore towns and interpretive sites to attract more investment. Such investment is critical to maintaining the economic vitality and thus the preservation of these historic places. In order for heritage tourism to succeed, regions must vigorously protect their cultural and natural resources, create a critical mass of quality attractions, provide business owners with technical support, and selectively target public investment where it will have the greatest impact. Heritage areas must also provide visitor information in the form of signs, maps, and brochures, link sites in an appealing way, and continue to improve the quality of regional amenities, such as accommodations, restaurants, and stores.

### Key Actions for the Interpretive Strategy

- ✓ Create an interpretive advisory committee
- ✓ Develop an interpretive plan
- ✓ Set regional interpretive standards
- ✓ Focus on critical early actions at four sites situated close to one another near the center of the region and within easy reach of ocean city, which effectively cover all thematic topics and historical periods. These four sites are: the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art; Pemberton Historical Park; Teackle Mansion; and Furnace Town
- ✓ Undertake more regional interpretation
- ✓ Establish a regional network of interpretive sites
- ✓ Promote community interpretation and outreach
- ✓ Develop new sites or initiatives to support interpretive themes
- ✓ Reach out to schools, colleges, and universities in the region

### High Priority Existing Interpretive Sites for Phase 1

- **Assateague Island** visitor facilities (state and federal)
- **Calvin B. Taylor House Museum**, Berlin
- **Chipman Center**, Salisbury
- **Crisfield Historical Museum**, Crisfield
- **Furnace Town and Nassawango Creek Preserve**, Snow Hill vicinity
- **Julia A. Purnell Museum**, Snow Hill
- **Life Saving Station Museum**, Ocean City
- **Mariners' Country Down** and Store, Berlin
- **Nabb Research Center**, Salisbury
- **Pemberton Historical Park**, Salisbury
- **Poplar Hill Mansion**, Salisbury
- **Salisbury Zoo**, Salisbury
- **Smith Island Cultural Center**, Smith Island
- **Teackle Mansion**, Princess Anne
- **Ward Brothers Workshop**, Crisfield
- **Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art**, Salisbury
- **West Side Heritage Museum**, Mardela Springs

### New Sites Identified as Priorities for Phase 1

- **Bending Water Park**, near Marion, Somerset County, a large cultural center and museum focusing on the heritage of the Accohannock Tribe.
- **Deal Island Skipjack Museum**, Deal Island Harbor and Wenona, Somerset County, celebrating the largest fleet of skipjacks on the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Tangier Sound Natural History Initiative**, Crisfield and region, Somerset County, a combined approach to existing and proposed sites and programs: the 4,400-acre Martin National Wildlife Refuge and Mullins Education Center, a Chesapeake Bay Foundation facility, both on Smith Island; the 3,426-acre Monie Bay unit of the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (CBNERR) near Deal Island; and the Jenkins Creek Environmental Center proposed for a location near Crisfield.

### Topics for Interpretation

- A Watery World: The Living, Natural Bays and Rivers of the Chesapeake and the Atlantic
- The Land of Plenty: Peoples and Settlement on the Lower Eastern Shore
- Lifelines and Livelihoods: Commerce, Productivity, and Transportation
- Military and Naval Heritage on the Lower Eastern Shore
- Great Escapes: Recreation and Renewal
- Land, Water, and Action: Stewardship and Sustainability

The nature and impact of tourism varies across the three counties. Ocean City is one of the major tourism destinations on the East Coast, attracting millions of visitors each year. Its ample supply of overnight accommodations, dining opportunities, and shopping is an advantage in building regional tourism. Beyond Ocean City, unique tourism resources offer visitors a chance to experience a splendid, fragile landscape via trails and preserves for boating, biking, hiking, and birding. The region is rich with these opportunities. The experiences of American Indians, African Americans, and European settlers in the region hold interesting stories for many visitors.

### **Why Pursue Heritage Tourism?**

- Travel is one of the world's largest industries
- Travel is worth billions of dollars to the United States economy
- Tourism is the #1 industry in 17 states – in all others, it ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>d</sup>
- Maryland, 2000: Visitors spent \$8.3 billion
- Lower Eastern Shore, 2000: 15,000 jobs – \$311million payroll – \$62 million local taxes

### **Strategy for Heritage Tourism**

#### **Goals for the Visitor Experience**

- All communications with visitors will reflect the special character and hospitality of the region
- Visitors will know when they enter the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area
- Interpretation of the region's major themes will be found at every historic, natural, and cultural site
- Every visitor will experience access to the water
- Every visitor will encounter our arts and cultural traditions
- Every visitor will experience at least one great meal with local foods

#### **Target Markets**

- Ocean City visitors – families & convention visitors
- Regional weekend visitors
- Nature tourists
- Group tours

#### **Target Promotions**

- For all, promote nature experiences, outdoor recreation, and heritage experiences
- For "convention companions" and group tours, promote the arts, unique shopping, locally made crafts and products, and museums

#### **Actions for Marketing and Communications**

- ✓ Create a brand name and unique tag line
- ✓ Achieve consistent positioning among all three counties
- ✓ Emphasize the region as a single whole
- ✓ Develop a cooperative marketing program
- ✓ Use many more packages
- ✓ Develop a media strategy for each target market
- ✓ Create a unified regional calendar
- ✓ Upgrade the regional web site
- ✓ Measure visitation and results consistently across the region

**Focused Investing: Criteria for Target Investment Areas**

- ✓ High potential for private investment
- ✓ In need of the MHAA program incentives
- ✓ Measurable preservation and economic development in five years
- ✓ Linked to management plan strategies
- ✓ Already designated for revitalization
- ✓ Committed local government and private interests
- ✓ Ready to go and competitive statewide

<http://www.oceean.com>



**Benefits of a Certified Heritage Area**

- 50% matching grants for programs – up to \$50,000 per grant
- 50% matching grants for LESHCH operations – up to \$200,000 over five years
- Grants for marketing of new tourism products – up to \$50,000 per county
- Rehab tax credits for non-historic structures
- Local property tax reductions for rehab (local government option)

**Benefits of Target Investment Areas**

- All Certified Heritage Area benefits, plus:
- 50% matching grants for capital improvements – up to \$100,000 per grant
- Tax credits for non-listed/non-designated structures
- Loans for preservation, attractions & visitor services
- Loans for income-producing economic development projects

**185,000 new visitors could stimulate:**

New hotel/inn rooms:	261
New restaurant space:	9,000 square feet
Retail space:	8,000 square feet
Private investment in new or rehabbed buildings:	\$13.8 million
New permanent jobs:	209
More local tax revenues:	\$568,900
More state tax revenues:	\$384,100

**Economic Benefits**

Increased visitation to the Lower Eastern Shore through the heritage area program is expected to result in as many as 185,000 new visitors per year after five years. Their spending should add \$11.4 million to existing tourism spending. While some of the new visitors to heritage area attractions will be Maryland residents, 60 percent are expected to come to the heritage area from outside the state, bringing new dollars to state and local economies.

Each of the heritage area counties will receive increased tax revenues from existing property, income, room, and food and beverage taxes. Somerset County is predicted to receive \$13,500 in annual new taxes in Somerset County, Wicomico County is predicted to receive \$80,200, and Worcester County is predicted to receive \$475,200. The disparity in these figures reflects the disparity in the tourism base in the three counties.

**Return on State Investment –** Although the State of Maryland will incur costs as a result of its investment in heritage tourism here, it will also see rewards. Capital improvements to visitor attractions, increased marketing, and programmatic linkages among attractions can generate a measurable increase in annual state tax receipts. Annual tax revenues to the state could potentially cover the state’s contribution toward annual programming costs and still provide an annual rate of return on investment (capital and one-time programming costs) ranging between 1.6 and 3.6 percent.



## Strategy for Stewardship

The Lower Eastern Shore’s scenic roads, historic communities, agricultural landscape, and rich variety of natural resources create the setting that visitors come to experience. The quality of the Lower Eastern Shore landscape is also central to local residents’ quality of life. Stewardship of the resources that give the Lower Eastern Shore its character is in the region’s long-term interest.

Stewardship is a responsibility shared by governments, non-profits, private property owners, and residents. The Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Council (LEHSC) can support preservation and conservation in the region by structuring its partnerships, programs, and projects to actively support and promote existing and potential stewardship initiatives. Many programs and tools are available to assist communities in the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area in protecting natural, historic, cultural, and landscape resources.

All three counties of the Lower Eastern Shore face significant challenges from growth and development. Over the past fifty years, development around the region’s cities, towns, and principal roadways has undermined the economic viability of the downtown cores, reduced the amount of farmland, and compromised the visual character of the region. Strong county initiatives are required to address the growth management issues of the region.

Salisbury and Ocean City have experienced the most significant growth in recent years. Princess Anne, Pocomoke City, Crisfield, and other towns have grown as well. Although this growth is a sign of economic vitality, it has frequently occurred at the expense of the visual character of the communities that the heritage area has been created to help preserve and promote. The primary roads that visitors use to enter and travel through the region are the very locations where the distinctive character of the Lower Eastern Shore has been most compromised.

### Target Investment Areas and Their Special Projects

#### The Salisbury Crescent

Ward Museum – Regional Interpretive Center  
 Chipman Cultural Center improvements  
 Pemberton Historical Park improvements

#### Princess Anne

Teackle Mansion improvements  
 Business development for downtown  
 Streetscaping on Prince William Street  
 Burgess Early Americana Museum  
 Local Visitor Center & Archive at Old Library

#### Downtown Ocean City

Regional Interpretive Center Kiosk for Somerset Street  
 Façade improvement program (expansion)  
 Streetscaping on Talbot and Dorchester Streets

#### Pocomoke City

Pocomoke River Discovery Center – Regional Interpretive Center

### Potential Target Investment Areas

Bending Water Park  
 Town of Berlin  
 Town of Crisfield  
 Town of Mardela Springs  
 Mariners’ Country Down  
 Town of Snow Hill  
 A “Watermen’s Culture TIA,” linking waterside communities that might benefit from tourism, including Smith Island, Deal Island, Wenona, Nanticoke, Rumbley, and Frenchtown

Agricultural land is fundamental to the character of the Lower Eastern Shore. Approximately 30 percent of the region's land is agricultural, totaling an estimated 250,000 acres. Up to 95 percent of the agricultural land on the Lower Eastern Shore is cropland, primarily growing corn and soybeans for use as poultry feed. The Maryland Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program in Somerset County encompasses 76,000 acres, or 35 percent of its total area, and 75,000 acres in Wicomico County.

### **A Strategy for Stewardship**

#### **LESHC will support stewardship by others:**

- Projects contributing to a high-quality landscape and visitor experience
- Groups seeking to preserve resources, to improve their leadership, and to raise funds
- Technical assistance
- Monitoring, publicizing, and rewarding stewardship

#### **Recommended Actions for Partners – Land & Landscape**

- Regional planning for greenways
- A region-wide action strategy shared by land trusts
- A public education program to inform landowners about conservation easements and the donation of lands
- An agricultural development plan for each county (or a region-wide plan)
- Design guidelines for new commercial development, including landscaping
- Signage design guidelines

#### **Recommended Actions for Partners – Historic Resources**

- A research program focused on local history
- Updates of historic resource inventories in all counties
- Historic preservation plans in counties and municipalities
- More local historic districts and the use of protections under Maryland law
- A public education program to inform property owners and communities about using the federal and state rehabilitation tax credit programs

### **A Strategy for Managing the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area**

The LESHC expects to benefit the entire region by:

- Fulfilling the role needed to obtain state support for local heritage initiatives;
- Building capacity for civic enterprises, thereby adding value to existing efforts, through grants, technical assistance, and other recognition and support; and
- Organizing a way for the grassroots supporters in the community to express their talents and interests in heritage, traditional culture, and the environment, to the benefit of all.

Critical partners in the certified heritage area include local governments, tourism agencies and businesses, and interpretive sites. Foremost among LESHC partners is the Tri-County Council, a regional consortium of all local governments in the region. This new agency will undertake regional economic planning that will reinforce the heritage area.

**Public Outreach** – The LESHC will seek a high level of public recognition. It will focus on producing a newsletter, upgrading the LESHC website, deploying directors to make many public presentations, and recognizing those working to conserve resources in the community with awards, technical assistance, or funding for special projects. An annual report will detail progress in implementing this plan.

**Funding and Sustainability** – Support for the LESHHC will continue to be a combination of government and foundation grants, individual and corporate contributions, and in-kind services. With the potential of substantial support for operations and initiatives from the MHAA, the LESHHC has within its reach the possibility of substantial growth, starting with a full-time director position to augment the current part-time assistant position. The purpose of the heritage area is not to grow a large staff but to assure that as much funding as possible is devoted to creating a regional system of linkages and interpretation, including support for partners' programs. The roles of the staff remain to be defined as the heritage area and its demands evolve, but by the end of five years, four full-time positions are forecast – a director, an assistant, and two specialists in subject areas most needed by partners.

### **A Strategy for Managing the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area**

#### **Role of the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Council**

- Designated management entity
- Change name to "Council" from "Committee" to signify permanence
- Add six representatives of local government to Board of Directors
- Work closely with the Tri-County Council on economic development
- Work closely with County tourism offices on regional product development and marketing

#### **First priorities for LESHHC action:**

- Branding
- Interpretive plan
- Wayfinding plan
- Regional brochures
- Public outreach
- Strategic organizational planning and board development

#### **First priorities for partner actions:**

- Regional Interpretive Centers
- Assistance to Target Investment Areas
- Lower Eastern Shore National Scenic Byway Loop
- Existing & new interpretive resources
- Interpretation along linkages
- Planning for more linkages

### **National Heritage Area Designation for Maryland's Eastern Shore**

The LESHHC adds its voice to that of the Caroline-Kent-Queen Anne's-Talbot Recognized Heritage Area and the Choptank River Recognized Heritage Area, its two sister heritage areas located completely on Maryland's Eastern Shore, in calling for Congressional recognition of an Eastern Shore National Heritage Area. Such a program would:

- Provide Congressional recognition and special federal funding;
- Lead to more support from the National Park Service;
- Lead to support from the Alliance of National Heritage Areas;
- Add Maryland's Eastern Shore to the special map of National Heritage Areas for national and international promotion; and
- Position Maryland's Eastern Shore for special regional initiatives.