

ANACOSTIA RIVER WATER TRAIL GUIDE

A Voyage Through Time:
From Captain John Smith to the Modern Day

EXPLORE THE ANACOSTIA RIVER BY CAR, BIKE, FOOT, OR WATER.



RIVER SAFETY GUIDELINES

Always, always wear a lifejacket

Check the Tide

Near Bladensburg, MD, the Anacostia has a 3-foot tidal difference, one of the largest tidal differences on the Chesapeake Bay. There are many places on the Anacostia only accessible at high tide. It is always best to explore streams and wetlands on an incoming tide, to ensure enough water for the return trip. Take the tide into consideration when estimating paddle times. For tide tables, go to www.saltwatertides.com.

Be Prepared

Check the weather forecast before setting out and bring the appropriate clothing and amount of water. In the summer, watch out for severe afternoon thunderstorms. In the spring and fall, temperatures and winds can fluctuate dramatically so bring extra layers of clothing.

Water Quality

While the water quality of the Anacostia River has improved dramatically in the last two decades, it is still unsafe to swim in the river. Levels of fecal bacteria are particularly high within 24 hours after a significant storm event (1/2 inch or more of rain).

Fish Consumption Advisories

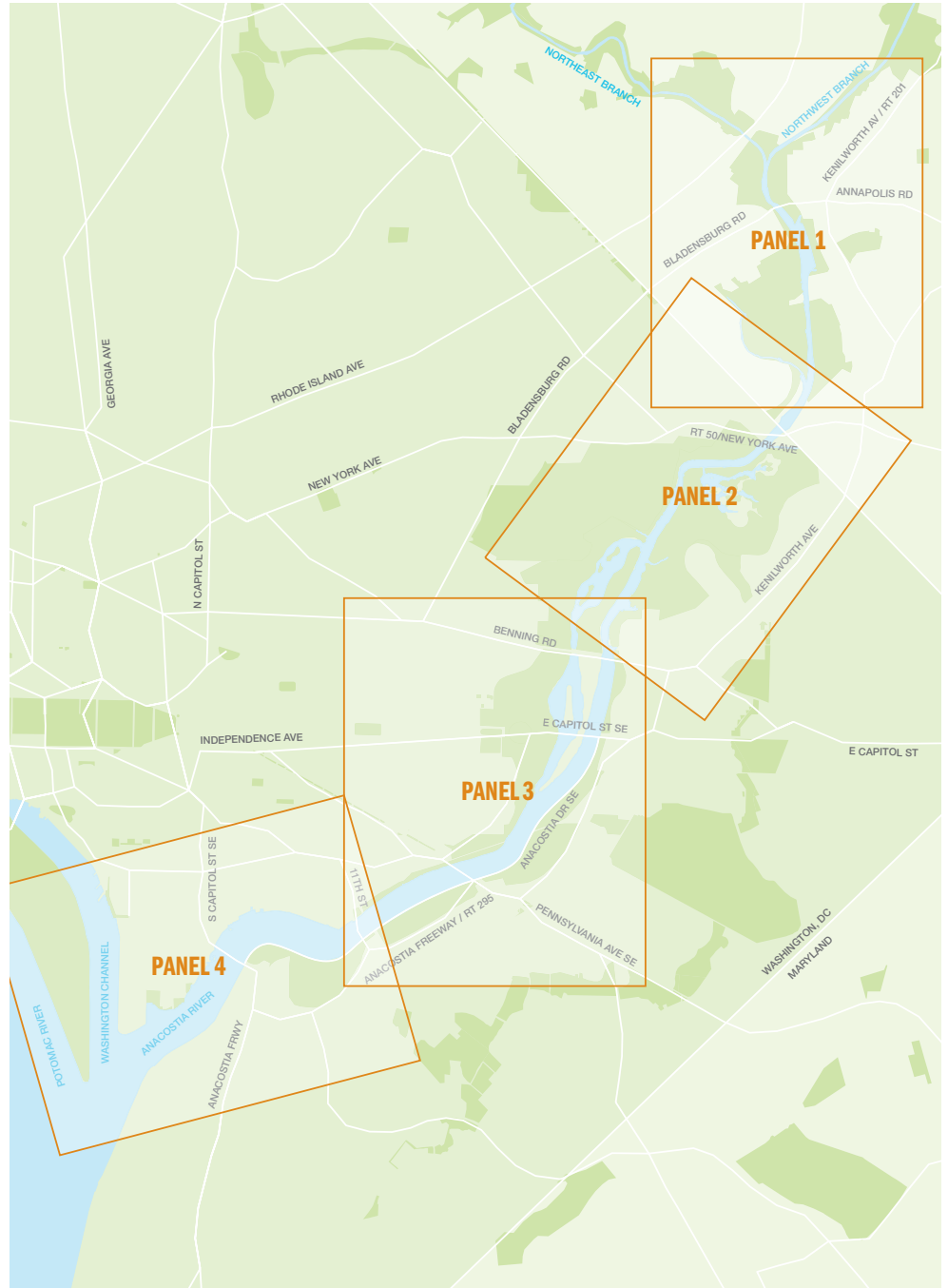
Maryland and the District of Columbia have issued fish consumption advisories for the Anacostia River for:

- American eel
- Brown bullhead catfish
- Carp
- Small and largemouth bass
- Channel catfish
- Sunfish

Most advisories are linked to PCBs, methylmercury and pesticides. The DC Department of Health urges limited consumption of Anacostia River fish and the practice of catch and release is encouraged. Anglers are urged to always skin the fish, trim away fat and cook fish to drain away fat because chemical contaminants concentrate in the fat of the fish.

*Leave no trace: leave only footprints.
Take only memories and photos!*

ANACOSTIA RIVER PANEL REFERENCE MAP



Anacostia River Tide Stations

- + Benning Bridge, DC
- + Anacostia Bridge, DC

Canoe Paddling Times (Approximate)

- With Tide: 3 miles per hour
- Against Tide: 2 miles per hour

www.saltwatertides.com

ANACOSTIA RIVER WATER TRAIL GUIDE



Celebrating America's History

When Captain John Smith, president of Jamestown colony, soldier and explorer sailed up the Anacostia in the summer of 1608, he described an abundant land, well-forested and rich with wetlands. It is estimated that only 25% of the forests he saw on the Anacostia still remain. Smith said the fish were so plentiful that he and his handful of men actually tried to catch them with frying pans!

In 2007, to commemorate Captain John Smith's amazing explorations of the Chesapeake Bay, Congress established America's first national water trail. The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail includes the lower portion of the Anacostia River. Efforts are currently underway to have the upper portion of the Anacostia also recognized by the National Park Service. The Anacostia River played a major role in shaping American Indian culture, the founding of our nation's capital and the military outcomes in the War of 1812.

Restoring Washington's Waterway

The Anacostia River is slowly rebounding after centuries of pollution overload from industrial, residential and agricultural sources. Sewage overflows are being eliminated, stronger stormwater regulations are addressing harmful sediments, and toxics from heavy industrial uses in the 1900s are slowly being trapped under layers of river mud.

Hundreds of acres of wetlands are being restored, miles of forested buffers now line the river, and other natural filters such as aquatic grasses, mussels and clams are starting to re-emerge. The challenges remain daunting, but signs of the river's rebirth are appearing.



**ANACOSTIA
WATERSHED**
SOCIETY

The Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) is a local, 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental organization that is working to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed. AWS seeks to fulfill its mandate of a swimmable and fishable river through its programs of education, action and advocacy.



Safety

This section of the Anacostia has a 3-foot tidal difference, one of the largest tide differences anywhere in the Chesapeake. Watch out when exploring creeks that you don't get stuck! To check the tides go to www.saltwatertides.com.

1. Magruder Park

A 32-acre park located in Hyattsville, MD with boardwalk trails meandering through a native wetland. Bike and car accessible.

2. Anacostia Watershed Society

Headquarters of the local non-profit environmental and community organization whose mission it is to restore the Anacostia to a state of being fishable and swimmable.



3. Bladensburg Waterfront Park

The park features a public boat ramp, floating dock access for paddlers, canoe and kayak rentals, and access to regional bike trails. During colonial days, captains reported 40 feet of water at this once busy seaport. Clear-cutting of forests upstream caused the river to silt in, so now only paddlers and skiffs can navigate this section of the river.



4. ANA 11 Wetlands

A former landfill, this marshy river filter and wildlife habitat area was constructed in 2008 as wetland mitigation by the Maryland State Highway Administration.



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED PANEL 1



Legend

Point Features

- Boat Launch with Gas Station
- Canoe Launch/Paddle Take Out
- Public Motor and Canoe Launch
- Parking Facilities

Line Features

- John Smith Voyage
- Existing Bike Trail
- Scenic Road
- Marsh Boardwalk
- Canoe Trail

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED PANEL 2



1. Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

A secret beauty spot in Washington with a rich wetland habitat, including lotuses, lilies and forest wildflowers. Accessible to paddlers at high tide only.



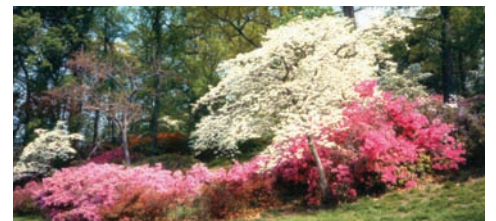
2. Kenilworth Marsh

In 1993, the National Park Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, among others, restored over 30 acres of wetland. Explore this marsh extensively at high tide or walk along the boardwalk between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.



3. National Arboretum

The 440 acres is filled with a wide variety of plants and trees being studied by scientists. A winding path leads to the "Asian Valley," offering dramatic views and a paradise of plants. A floating dock allows access to the arboretum, open 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. daily.



4. Kenilworth Park Athletic Fields

This park sits on a recycled landfill and features public open space and playing fields.

5. Watts Branch

This stream flows through the longest city park in the District, Marvin Gaye Park, named for the famous African American singer who spent his boyhood here.

6. Langston Golf Course

The course opened in 1939 to provide access to golf recreation for African Americans.

Wetlands

Wetlands provide food, filtering, flood control, and habitat. Captain John Smith wrote that a major food staple for the Native Americans were the tubers of Tuckahoe (Arrow Arum), which once again grow along the Anacostia.



Area Features

-  Wetlands
-  Water
-  Public Green Space

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED PANEL 3

1. Heritage and Kingman Islands

The US Army Corps of Engineers created these islands at the turn of the 20th century. Both islands can be circumnavigated at high tide.

2. Kingman Lake

Now an excellent habitat for numerous bird and fish species and other reptiles and mammals, the US Army Corps of Engineers completed a 45-acre restoration project here. There is a low-clearance board walk across the lake that provides foot access to Kingman Island.



3. Osprey Nesting Platform

This nesting site was built by local second graders to help provide habitat for the once endangered osprey, a type of fish hawk that migrates annually to South America.

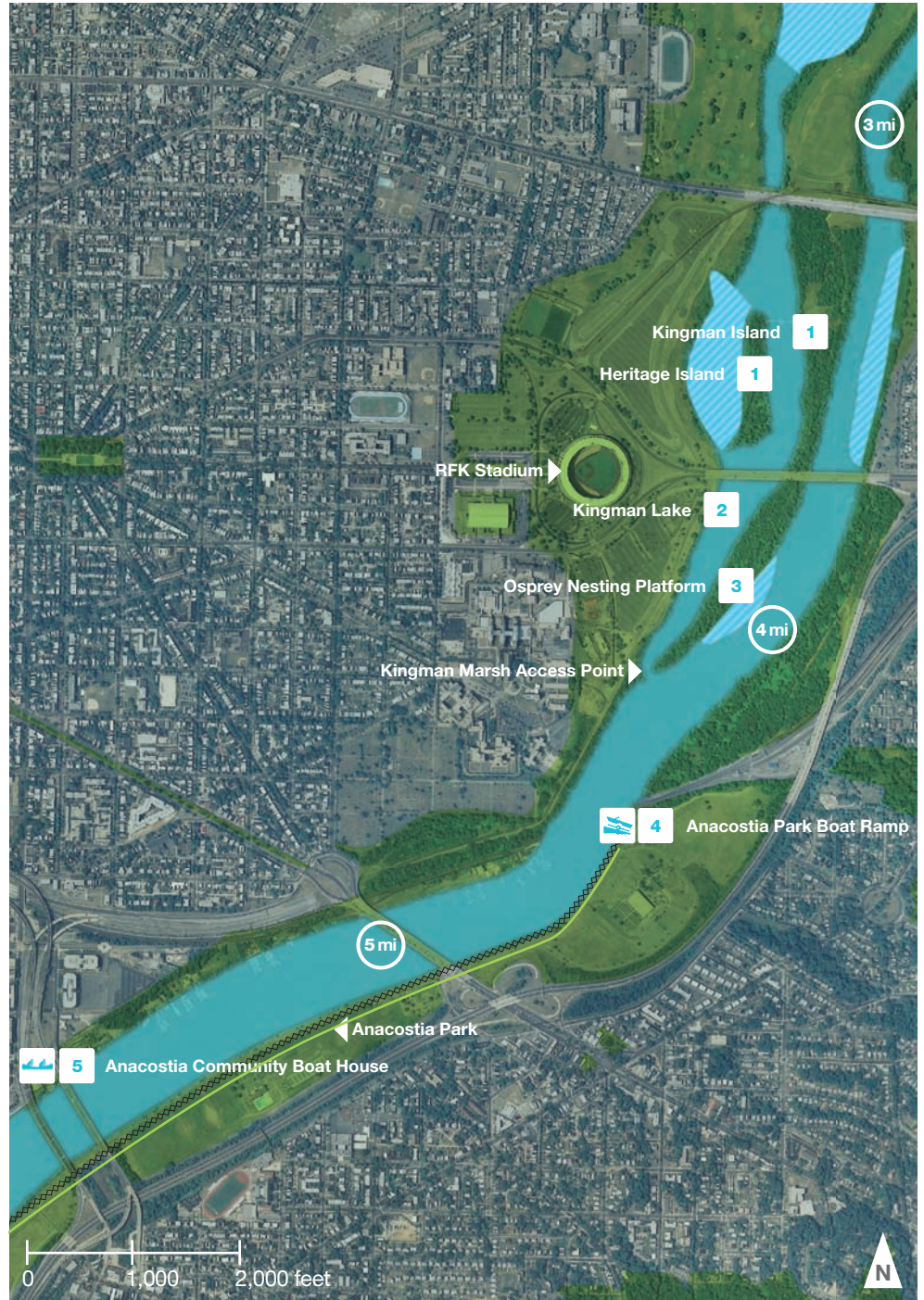


4. Anacostia Park Boat Ramp

This concrete ramp is paddle and powerboat accessible and is located on the northern end of Anacostia Park, a two-mile long park operated by the National Park Service. It is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily.







5. Anacostia Community Boat House








Legend

Point Features

-  Boat Launch with Gas Station
-  Canoe Launch/Paddle Take Out
-  Public Motor and Canoe Launch
-  Parking Facilities

Line Features

-  John Smith Voyage
-  Existing Bike Trail
-  Scenic Road
-  Marsh Boardwalk
-  Canoe Trail

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED PANEL 4



1. Mathew Henson Earth Conservation Center

The environmental non-profit Earth Conservation Corps converted two “brownfield” sites, the PEPCO utility building and the nearby Old Capitol Pump House, into educational facilities. Floating dock access during business hours.



2. The Old Capitol Pump House

Now an educational facility, this converted industrial building once pumped water to create steam heat for the US Capitol Building. Land access is available at the adjacent 300-foot dock.



3. Poplar Point

Poplar Point offers wonderful views of the river and city skyline. Transfer of this land from the National Park Service to the District of Columbia has led to development plans for this large waterfront parcel.

4. Washington Navy Yard

Site of the Nation’s oldest naval facility, President Lincoln was known to visit often to observe weapons testing operations. The destroyer, USS Barry, is docked here and is open to the public. Visitors can learn about military history at the popular Navy Yard Museum. Open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except Sundays.



5. Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

6. Hains Point

This Park was created using dredge material from the river to form a man-made island.

7. Nationals Park

The Washington Nationals baseball stadium symbolizes the large-scale redevelopment efforts underway along the Anacostia waterfront.



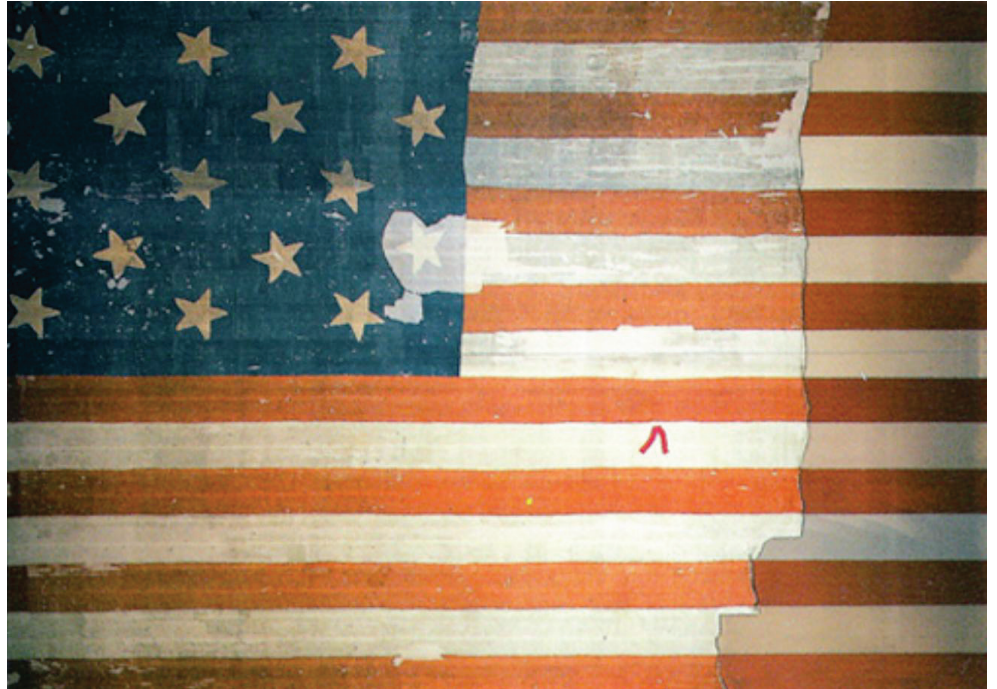
8. James Creek Marina

Fuel is available at this marina for boaters.

Area Features

-  Wetlands
-  Water
-  Public Green Space

ANACOSTIA RIVER: RETRACING HISTORY



George Washington and the Anacostia

In 1790, as a compromise between Northern and Southern interests, Congress authorized the location of the new capital to be sited north of the Potomac River and due west of the Anacostia River.

Congress appointed George Washington to oversee its exact location. After having the area closely surveyed, Washington moved the city to include the Anacostia and portions of Virginia.

Battle of Bladensburg ★ Aug. 24, 1814 “Board’em! Board’em!”

During the War of 1812, the British attacked America’s capital in Washington, DC. In a surprise move, the British struck from the east, after sailing up the Patuxent River and marching overland. The Brits were forced to fight through the American marines defending the bridge over the Anacostia.

With cries of “Board’em! Board’em!”, Commodore Joshua Barney and his seamen made a heroic stand in Bladensburg against overwhelming odds and launched one of the few successful counterattacks against the British infantry.

In the end, the Americans lost the Battle of Bladensburg and the British burned many buildings including the Capitol and the White House. The British also sent ships to Baltimore and bombarded Fort McHenry, inspiring Francis Scott Key to write The Star-Spangled Banner, America’s national anthem.

FUN FACT

President Madison’s wife, Dolley, saved the portrait of George Washington (above, right) while fleeing from the British. President Madison was nearly captured by the British on the Bladensburg battlefield, but he luckily was able to flee by horseback to Washington.

FUN FACT

In 1792, George Washington had Andrew Ellicott and his assistants, including Benjamin Banneker, a free African American surveyor, mathematician, astronomer, and clockmaker, survey the border of the District. Most of the boundary stones still exist.



1. Dueling Grounds

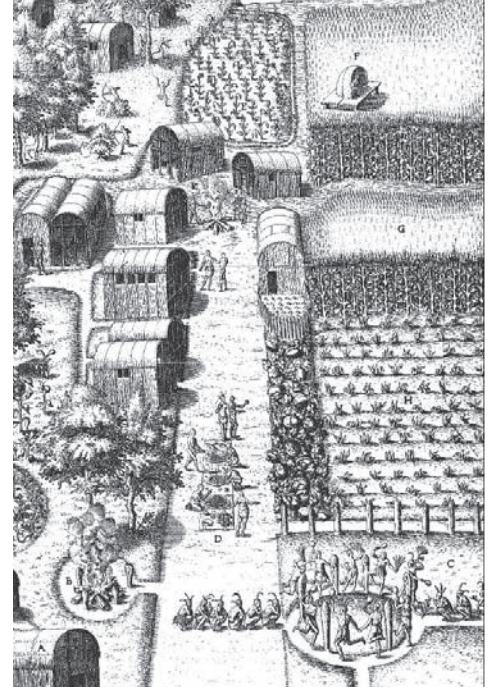
In colonial times, Washingtonians settled disputes of honor here with pistol duels. In a duel in 1820, Commodore James Barron mortally wounded American Naval Hero Commodore Stephen Decatur, who then died two days later.

2. Fort Lincoln

One of the civil war forts quickly built in 1861 that circled the city. Andrew O'Connor, one of America's foremost sculptors, created this bronze statue of President Abraham Lincoln in Fort Lincoln Cemetery.



ANACOSTIA RIVER: RETRACING HISTORY



John Smith and Nacotchtanck Indians

In 1608, Captain John Smith, President of Virginia's Jamestown Colony, explorer, soldier, and the man whose life was saved by the 11-year-old Pocahontas, sailed up the river in a small open boat with 15 men in the middle of summer.

Smith met with members of the Nacotchtanck tribe. He noted that the area was fertile with a variety of planted fields and that there were many mink, martin, bear, and beaver in the area. The fish were so plentiful that his men tried to catch them with frying pans!

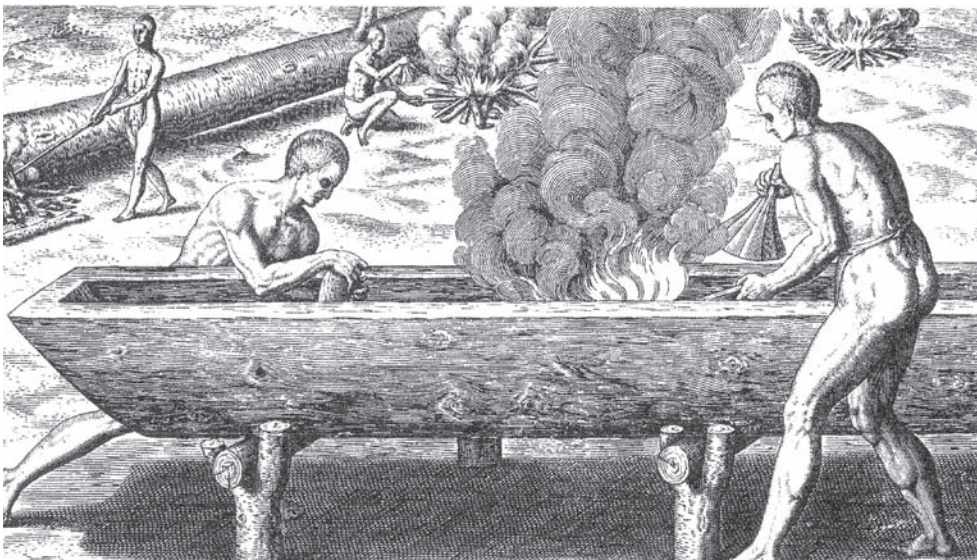
Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Water Trail

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of our nation's founding, Congress established in 2006 America's first all-water National Historic Trail. Managed by the National Park Service, the new trail consists of a 3,000-mile circuit of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries tracing the routes of Smith's historic voyages in 1607-1609.

Nacotchtanck Settlement

Smith noted that the Nacotchtanck Indian Tribe had 80 able warriors and described them as a friendly people who did their "best to content us." Colonial expansion forced the Nacotchtanck tribe out of its territory. Some members of the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe of Maryland are said to be descendents of the Nacotchtanck.

Above: Indian settlement near Roanoke, VA by Theodore De Bry

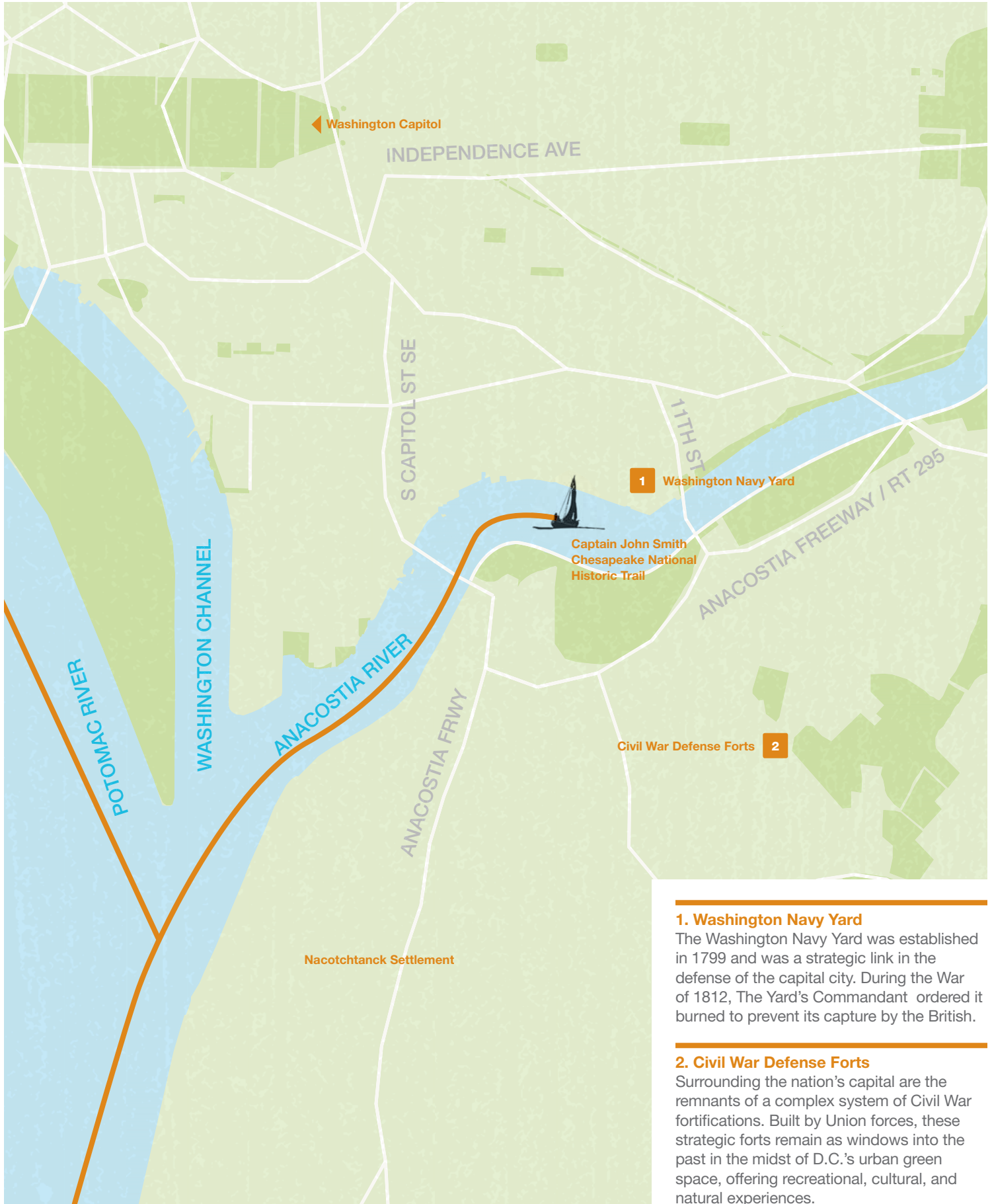


FUN FACT

Anacostia is the anglicized name for anaquash (a)-tan(i)k, meaning a village trading center. Captain John Smith explored the river in a small open boat with only a handful of men.

FUN FACT

Smith wrote that the natives carved canoes from trees that were 50-feet-long and carried 40 warriors!



1. Washington Navy Yard

The Washington Navy Yard was established in 1799 and was a strategic link in the defense of the capital city. During the War of 1812, The Yard's Commandant ordered it burned to prevent its capture by the British.

2. Civil War Defense Forts

Surrounding the nation's capital are the remnants of a complex system of Civil War fortifications. Built by Union forces, these strategic forts remain as windows into the past in the midst of D.C.'s urban green space, offering recreational, cultural, and natural experiences.

Q: HOW CAN YOU HELP



Stormwater run-off continues to be a major threat to the river, carrying harmful pollutants and causing sewage overflows. Stormwater and sewage treatment infrastructure needs to be updated and the capacity increased. Your voice and votes can help promote these changes.

A: Conserve Water!

Each gallon of household water saved in the Anacostia drainage can mean a gallon of raw sewage that doesn't reach the river.

A: Keep it Clean!

Each year volunteers pull over 60 tons of trash out of the river during Anacostia Watershed Society cleanup events.

A: Report Invaders!

Despite plant restoration efforts, invasive species like Kudzu and Japanese Honeysuckle move in and choke out the native species, but provide little habitat or food value. Take part in invasive removal projects.

A: Shop Green!

Your dollar is your vote. Purchase environmentally friendly products that use recycled or organic ingredients and which have minimum packaging.

Above: Sultana Projects Inc. constructed a full-scale replica of the small open boat or "shallop" used by Captain John Smith to make his 1608 exploration of the Chesapeake Bay. Modern day explorers retraced John Smith's 1608 voyages in this shallop in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown.

Trail Map Credits: David Burke, Lee Cain, James Connolly, Lynda Eisenberg, Nancy Merrill

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