



**SOUTHERN
MARYLAND**
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

MEDIA RELEASE
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Launch of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Hughesville, MD – A Launch is planned for the newly designated Southern Maryland National Heritage Area on May 25, 2023, at the National Park Service Piscataway Park (Colonial Farm) in Accokeek, Maryland. Governor Wes Moore will be the keynote speaker for the event. The event will begin with the re-created 17th-century vessel the Maryland Dove sailing in at 11:30, with the official program starting at 12:00 noon. There will be cultural demonstrations and partners participating throughout the day, and the public is invited to attend. Registration is preferred at [this link](#).

“A Southern Maryland National Heritage Area will boost awareness and federal support of a part of the state whose resources need to be better protected, whose story needs to be comprehensively told, and whose beauty needs to be more widely appreciated,” said Senator Cardin in a press release on March 19, 2021, when the national initiative was introduced in Congress. “This updated legislation will help direct federal seed money to spark the growth of programs and partnerships designed to boost a wide range of tourism and historic and cultural preservation initiatives.”

On December 22, 2022, Congress enacted the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area Act as part of the Heritage Areas Act, recognizing Southern Maryland’s unique significance to the nation’s history. The bipartisan legislation, sponsored by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), authorized \$10 million in federal funding over 10 years.

The designation of a national heritage area includes funding that will help provide for necessary environmental restoration projects to improve Southern Maryland’s landscapes and water. In addition, the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area will continue to establish educational programs that embrace our natural, historic, and cultural heritage.

Southern Maryland is home to many firsts for the nation, including the first time that any form of religious freedom was put into law, the beginning of the separation of church and state; the first time a person of African descent ever served in a legislature in America ([Mathias de Sousa](#), 1641); the first time a woman ever petitioned for the right to vote ([Margaret Brent](#), 1648), the first national marine sanctuary on a river (Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary), and many more firsts. The region is also home to [First People](#), a vital component of the heritage and history of Southern Maryland, Maryland, and the nation as a whole.

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“Southern Maryland is foundational to the nation’s history,” said Lucille Walker, executive director. “This launch is a commemoration of that heritage, but also the beginning of telling the Southern Maryland story on a national level.” The designation as a national heritage area will now combine the state-based heritage area with the national. The launch will take place at Piscataway Park, 3400 Bryan Point Rd, Accokeek, MD 20607, starting at 11:30 am.

Destination Southern Maryland is the public face of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area. This state-based heritage area is one of the 13 Heritage Areas in Maryland. This organization represents Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties. As a newly designated National Heritage Area, the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area will represent Calvert, Charles, St. Mary’s, and southern Prince George’s counties with a mission to enhance the region through innovative heritage tourism experiences, comprehensive cultural and natural resource conservation, and excellence in educational opportunities. To learn more about Destination Southern Maryland, visit [our website](#).

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