

— DESTINATION —
Southern Maryland

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA CONSULTANT SERVICES
APRIL 30, 2020

The Southern Maryland Heritage Area (public facing name: Destination Southern Maryland) is requesting proposals for consultant services to produce a National Heritage Area Feasibility Study as a key step towards achieving National Heritage Area Status.

Maryland Heritage Area Program

Maryland's Heritage Areas are places to experience – to see, hear and even taste – the authentic heritage of Maryland in ways that you cannot experience anywhere else. Heritage Areas exist where the stories of the people, the land, and the waters of Maryland, which have been intertwined for thousands of years, are told. In Heritage Areas individuals, businesses, non-profits and governments form partnerships to preserve the best of Maryland's historic sites and towns, unspoiled natural landscapes and enduring traditions. These tangible links to both place and the past encourage residents to recognize they have a special piece of the American story to treasure and share with others, and that in doing so they create more livable and economically sustainable communities.

The Maryland Heritage Areas Program is governed by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) and administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. MHAA provides targeted financial and technical assistance within thirteen locally designated Heritage Areas, each of which has a distinct focus or theme that represents a unique aspect of Maryland's character. Together, MHAA, the Heritage Areas and local partners support the economic well-being of Maryland's communities by promoting, sustaining and creating place-based experiences for visitors and residents alike.¹

Southern Maryland Heritage Area History

The Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium (SMHAC) was formed as a Certified State Heritage Area under the Maryland Heritage Area Program in 2003. This heritage area serves Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties. The mission of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium (SMHAC) is to enhance Southern Maryland through innovative heritage tourism experiences, comprehensive cultural and natural resource conservation, and excellence in educational opportunities. SMHAC is an economic engine, providing product development and increased economic activity throughout the region through grants, partnership building, and sustaining regional identity.

Southern Maryland is a region of national importance. It is in Southern Maryland, for the first time in the Western world, that religious freedom was codified into law, and this provided the foundation for religious freedom in the Constitution of the United States of America. Southern Maryland is where this founding principle, this basic human right, became law for the first time.

In addition to this primary “first,” Southern Maryland is where the first person of African descent ever served in a legislature in America (Mathias de Sousa, 1642), where the first woman ever petitioned for the right to vote

1 <https://mht.maryland.gov/heritageareas.shtml>

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(Margaret Brent, 1648), where vital African American history has occurred and the region is part of the National Park Service Network To Freedom. Southern Maryland has first peoples who have survived and are creating a new legacy (the Piscataway Conoy Tribe). This region is the location of the National Religious Freedom Byway, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, sites involved with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, WWI and WWII, and the first Apollo Space Missions. And, now, Southern Maryland has the National Marine Sanctuary of Mallow's Bay.

National Heritage Area Program

National Heritage Areas are places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes. National Heritage Areas are large lived-in landscapes. Consequently, National Heritage Areas entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs.

In 1984, the first National Heritage Area, Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Area, was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. In his dedication speech, Reagan referred to National Heritage Areas “a new kind of national park” that married heritage conservation, recreation, and economic development. Today, the program includes 55 National Heritage Areas across the country.

Prior to introducing authorizing legislation for a new National Heritage Area, a feasibility study is undertaken to determine if the region meets the 10 National Park Service (NPS) National Heritage Area criteria. Feasibility Studies are reviewed National Park Service subject matter experts, and the review findings inform NPS Congressional testimony on National Heritage Area authorizing legislation.²

National Heritage Area Program Feasibility Study Criteria

1. An area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities;
2. Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story;
3. Provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and /or scenic features;
4. Provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities;
5. The resources important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;
6. Residents, business interests, non-profit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area;
7. The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area;

² <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/toolkit-and-howtos.htm>



8. The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area;
9. A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public; and
10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.

Scope of Work

SMHAC is seeking an established consultant firm to produce a National Heritage Area Feasibility Study within a six-month project objective. The selected firm must have a proven track record for excellence and for working collaboratively.

Overall Study Objective: To conduct a comprehensive and inclusionary feasibility study that determines the viability of a National Heritage Area Designation for the Southern Maryland Heritage Area.

Component 1: Designating a National Heritage Area Program Committee to Guide the Feasibility Study and Process (Month 1)

Deliverable/Outcome: Core project committee identification, regular meeting schedule, calendar of events, and internal project communications strategy.

Component 2: Project Kick-Off and Public Involvement Strategy Campaign (Months 1-5)

Throughout the process, the consultant, in partnership with the Southern Maryland Heritage Area team, will seek to actively engage with the public about the themes of the heritage area to give them a voice in the region's future.

Deliverable/Outcome: Clear plan and research methodology for effective community engagement and public commentary. Verifiable research methods and clear strategy for public engagement throughout the duration of the project.

Component 3: Defining the Study Area

"The objective is to identify natural, cultural and/or political limits that best encompass important resources related to the history of the region and potential themes that may be identified."

Deliverable/Outcome: Utilizing secondary data and input from area experts, Consultant will define, map, and explain the proposed Southern Maryland National Heritage Area.

Component 4: Determination of the Region's Contribution to the National Heritage and Development of Potential Themes

NHAs, by definition, are places representative of the national experience. Often, the authorizing legislation for the study will include findings about these contributions. The consultant will assemble and synthesize all relevant historical information about the region and understand the contributions of the study area and its people and events relative to the national story. The consultant will describe the historical, natural, and cultural resources of the Southern Maryland Heritage area in the context of the national story. While this work is largely completed, the consultant will want to convene a round table of regional experts to evaluate the work and match them with the eight themes contained in the 1996 NPS Thematic Framework as a starting point in theme development.



Consultant analysis will further explore, define, and refine the common culture of Southern Maryland Heritage Area as it dovetails into the national narrative.

Component 5: Natural and Cultural Resources Inventories, Integrity Determinations, and Affected Environment Data

The purpose of the inventory will be to assess whether the region is a nationally distinctive landscape, to assess whether there are resources important to the identified themes and if they retain integrity for interpretive purposes; and to determine if there are outstanding opportunities for conservation, recreation, and education; and to ensure there is sufficient information about natural and cultural resources to describe the “Affected Environment” for the purposes of the Environmental Assessment.

Consultant will focus on identifying and documenting a strategic assemblage of natural and cultural resources that relates to the identified themes. The feasibility study will also identify that there is a sufficient assemblage with integrity to provide a viable interpretive experience. Consultant will work with the Southern Maryland Heritage Area to gather all existing data and information about how the heritage area defined its geographic and cultural boundaries. Consultant will also reach out to NPS and State Historic Preservation Offices, as well as state and local agencies and organizations to further build the documentation/inventories of cultural and natural resources that may assist greatly in the region. In addition to natural and cultural resources, information necessary to assess outstanding opportunities for conservation, recreation, and education, Consultant will also include an analysis of existing public and publicly accessible private open space, recreation, and heritage education resources and whether there are potential opportunities to increase the level and quality of such resources through heritage area designation.

Component 6: Environmental Assessment/Affected Environment

Consultant will collect additional information about the “Affected Environment.” Consultant will work collaboratively with the NPS and the project team to ensure that this section meets documented requirements

Component 7: Management Alternatives and Preliminary Assessment of Impacts

Per study requirements, Consultants will include a comprehensive analysis of two management alternatives for the Southern Maryland National Heritage area – status quo and NHA designation. Given that the Southern Maryland Heritage Area has state designation, the “status quo” option will evaluate this option. Consultant will also meet with the core team assembled to help implement this study to evaluate other options per the NPS directives and instructions.

Component 8: Boundary Delineations

Consultant will map and document heritage area boundaries including all documented assets and resources that have important relationships to the Southern Maryland defined themes for recognition as a national heritage area. All resources related to the themes in the study area need not be included within a proposed boundary. Consultant will create a strategic or representative assemblage that enables residents and visitors to fully understand how the region has contributed to the national story and that offers opportunities for additional resource protection as a desirable result.



Component 9: Heritage Area Administration and Financial Planning

Consultant will create a report documenting the financial and management plan outlining administrative roles, responsibilities, and federal matching requirements of the organization as a National Heritage Area. Consultant will evaluate and assess if the best place to house the local management entity is within its current management entity or if a new organization should be formed.

Evaluation of Public Support and Commitments

As identified above, Consultant will collect and report information on the public's perception of the development of an NHA in Southern Maryland. Consultant will report and provide details on support and opposition from comments at public meetings, letters from individuals and organizations, resolutions from governing bodies, and actual evidence of formal commitments by local governments and others to participate in heritage area planning and programming.

Consultant will document partnership commitments including agreements for working relationships, financial contributions, or pledges of other types of assistance. Consultant will specifically look for indications of commitments to assist and work in partnership with the management entity by state and local governments and other organizations as well as actual dollar or other specific contributions. Consultant will document tangible comments and partnerships in an easy to understand matrix.

Final Report Presentation and Format

Consultant will synthesize all the information into a final report that is accessible for the readers to understand the findings and the process to achieve these findings. A draft report will be prepared and presented for feedback at a final public meeting presenting all findings and giving the public and key stakeholders time to comment. The report format will utilize the recommended format put forth by the NPS. Public comment and feedback on the draft report will be included in the final document.

- **Key to NHA Designation will be the Statement of National Significance and this is considered the most important element for the National Park Service/NHA Program.**

The document should serve as a roadmap and pathway for the Southern Maryland Heritage Area as it pursues the designation. This document must have a clear and concise Statement of National Significance per NPS guidelines for NHA inclusion. The goal for the Consultant will be to produce a deliverable that exceeds requirements and serves as a marketing piece for the heritage area.

Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals must include the following information:

1. Cover Letter
2. Name of Firm
3. Employer Identification Number or Social Security Number
4. Point of Contact (name, title, phone number, mailing address, and email address)
5. Business must be in good standing with the State of Maryland
6. Demonstrated understanding of the work



7. Qualifications of consultant, including prior experience in similar services
8. Sample or samples of bidder's work
9. Pricing (include how fee is calculated)
10. Three (3) references within the past 3 years who can attest to the provider's knowledge

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals shall be evaluated for suitability, utilizing a point system according to following scale:

1. Expertise and Experience: Bidder has successfully provided similar or comparative services and has the qualifications to undertake this RFP (0-25 Points)
2. Aesthetic Capabilities: Prior work demonstrates a proven track record for excellence (0-25 Points)
3. Provider's business philosophy and approach compatible to services for SMHAC (0-25 Points)
4. Pricing (0-25 Points)
5. SMHAC reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to clarify information submitted in the proposal. The scoring may result in the selected proposal not necessarily being the lowest cost. SMHAC reserves the right to award a contract by individual items, in the aggregate, or in any combination.

Contract Period

Upon acceptance of proposal SMHAC will prepare an agreement to be executed by both parties. The agreement shall be for six months, June 1, 2020 – December 1, 2020. The agreement may be extended if circumstances require.

Proposal Due Date and Time

Proposals must be submitted electronically by 4:00 p.m. EST on May 15, 2020 to the Executive Director, Southern Maryland Heritage Area: Lucille W. Walker at lwalker@tccsmd.org. Samples may be submitted electronically or mailed to the Southern Maryland Heritage Area, P.O. Box 745, Hughesville, MD 20637. Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, samples cannot be dropped off at our physical location. Please contact Lucille Walker for any questions concerning this RFP.

Timeline

2020

- April 30th RFP Issued
- May 15th Proposals DUE
- May 22nd Vendor Selected
- June 1 Agreement Start Date