

Indigenous Cultural Landscapes

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
National Park Service | Chesapeake Bay Office



The concept of the Indigenous Cultural Landscape (ICL), first introduced as part of the *Comprehensive Management Plan* for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, is intended to represent large landscapes from the perspective of American Indian nations at the time of their first contact with Europeans. These landscapes comprise the cultural and natural resources that would have supported the historic lifestyles and settlement patterns of an Indian group in their totality. The concept attempts to demonstrate that American Indian places were not confined to the sites of houses, towns, or settlements, and that the concept of the American Indian view of one's homeland is holistic rather than compartmentalized into the discrete site elements typically used in our language today such as "hunting grounds", "villages", or "sacred sites".

Indigenous Cultural Landscapes are a recognized trail-related resource along the John Smith Trail. Visitor experiences of the trail's major themes – John Smith's voyages, American Indian cultures of the 17th century and the Chesapeake environment of the time – depend on the continued presence of key resources along the trail, including landscapes evocative of the early 17th century.

To further define Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, a team of American Indian tribal members, state historic preservation and natural resource officials, archaeologists, trail partners, and NPS staff was convened to outline criteria, identify landscapes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and conduct outreach to conservation and interpretive education practitioners regionally and nationally. This national team has continued outreach and expanded ideas about the ICL and similar concepts of places important to indigenous peoples.

Status of Activities

Past, ongoing, and future work on ICLs and similar concepts includes the following:

- Presentations and panel discussions on ICLs have been and will continue to be held at national and state conferences.
- Preliminary identification of example ICLs in Virginia was undertaken in 2011.
- A land protection plan for the John Smith Trail addressing conservation of trail-related resources, including ICLs, was completed in 2011.
- An annotated bibliography on ICLs was completed in 2012 and is updated as new research is added.
- A prototype ICL mapping & criteria methodology project was carried out in the Nanticoke River watershed in 2013 with the help of a research team from the University of Maryland Anthropology Department. Draft reports have been reviewed by the ICL team in 2014 and should be available for widespread distribution soon.
- Identification and mapping of areas with high probabilities of ICLs in the Lower Susquehanna River watershed has been completed as part of the implementation of the John Smith Trail on that river. Further reports supporting the background ICL research of the area are expected by 2015.

- The first phase of an ICL survey of the Nanjemoy peninsula on the Potomac River is expected to begin in 2014 and be completed by 2016.
- Indigenous Cultural Landscapes have been identified in National Wildlife Refuges as part of their Comprehensive Conservation Plans for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- A cultural landscape approach to indigenous places in National Marine Protected Areas is now in use by the National Oceanic and Aeronautic Association.
- Other federal agencies are working with expanded ideas of cultural landscapes that better fit the concerns of indigenous communities.
- NPS has undertaken a National Register Landscape Initiative to study the intersection of cultural landscapes with the National Register. You can follow its progress at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/guidance/NRLI/index.htm>.

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