

Proposed Mallows Bay–Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary

JAN. 6, 2017



NOAA opens public comment period on the proposed Mallows Bay–Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is invited to submit comments to the agency on the proposed sanctuary.

Comments may be submitted via www.regulations.gov using docket number NOAA-NOS-2016-0149.

**ENDS
3/31**

NEXT STEPS



The public, partners, and other stakeholders review and comment on the sanctuary proposal. The deadline for comments is March 31, 2017.

PUBLIC MEETINGS



NOAA will hold two public meetings in Maryland. See <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/mallows-bay/> for dates and locations.

FINAL DECISION



**1-2 year
process**

NOAA will consider the comments it receives on the sanctuary proposal before making a final decision.

Should NOAA decide to proceed with sanctuary designation, the agency will prepare final documents.

Background

In October 2015, NOAA announced its intent to designate a new national marine sanctuary to help conserve nationally-significant shipwrecks and related maritime heritage resources in Maryland. Following a public comment period last year, NOAA has developed a detailed plan for a proposed national marine sanctuary to protect Mallows Bay–Potomac River, a maritime heritage resource area along the Potomac River, about 40 miles south of Washington, D.C. The public now has an opportunity to review the proposal and provide input.

Mallows Bay boasts a diverse collection of nearly 200 known historic shipwrecks dating back to the Civil War, as well as archaeological artifacts dating back 12,000 years. The area is most renowned for the remains of more than 100 wooden steamships, known as the "Ghost Fleet," which were built for the U.S. Emergency Fleet between 1917–1919 as part of America's engagement in World War I and are listed on the National Register of Historic

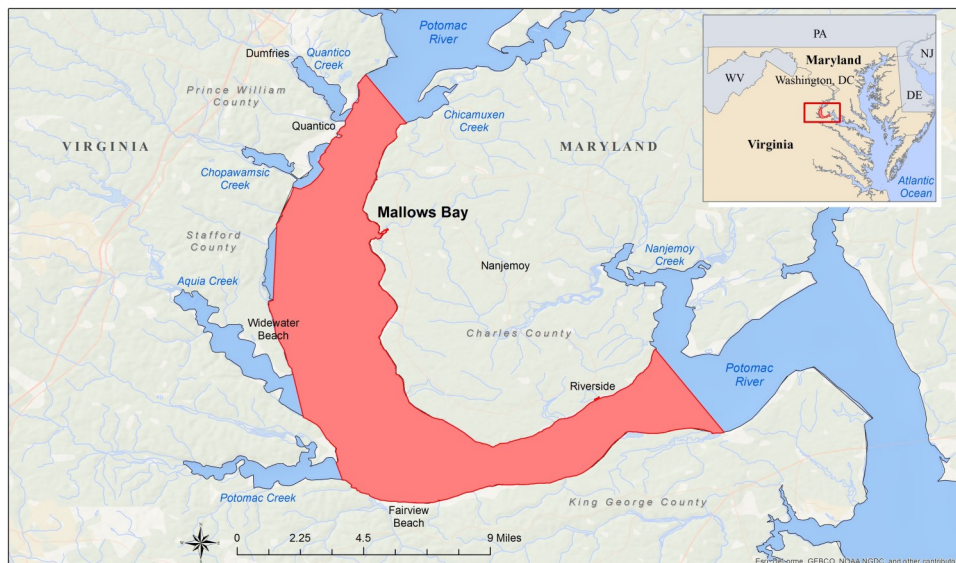
Places. Their construction at more than 40 shipyards in 17 states reflected the massive national wartime effort that drove the expansion and economic development of communities and related maritime service industries.

Mallows Bay is a largely undeveloped landscape and waterscape identified as one of the most ecologically valuable in Maryland. Additionally, the structure provided by the ship remains and related infrastructure serve as habitat to populations of recreational fisheries, bald eagles, and other marine species.

About the Nomination

Mallows Bay–Potomac River was nominated as a national marine sanctuary through the Sanctuary Nomination Process with broad community and bipartisan support.

In September 2014, the state of Maryland submitted a nomination to be added to NOAA's inventory of places to be considered as national marine sanctuaries. The nomination cited goals to protect and



Map: NOAA

The map shows NOAA's preferred boundary option for the sanctuary proposal, which covers 52 square miles of the Potomac River and includes more than 100 known and potential shipwrecks.

Proposed Sanctuary Alternatives	Resources Present	Boundaries	Approx. Total Area (sq. mi.)
Alternative A: No designation			
Alternative B	Includes 118 WWI-era U.S. Emergency Fleet Corporation (USEFC) steamships; MD Indian Tribes heritage sites; remains of historic fisheries operations such as sturgeon and caviar industries, and Revolutionary War and Civil War battlescapes.	Boundaries coincide with the Mallows Bay Widewater Historical and Archeological National Register District.	18
Alternative C: NOAA's preferred alternative	Includes Alternative B shipwrecks plus all known WWI-era USEFC vessels in MD waters and some historically, archaeologically, and recreationally significant shipwrecks and related assets which are not currently included in the Historic District.	The northern boundary extends near Ben Doane Road, MD, to Possum Nose, VA. The southern boundary extends from the end of Owens Drive east of Chotank Creek, VA, to Benny Gray Point, MD.	52
Alternative D	This alternative would add area upstream and downstream from Alternative C that potentially includes maritime assets and that supports the visitor use goals of the sanctuary. For the former, anecdotal records suggest the presence of additional maritime heritage resources and the water escape route to Virginia used by John Wilkes Booth.	The northern boundary extends across the mouth of Pomonkey Creek from just south of Anne Mason Court in Indian Head, MD, to Pomonkey Point, MD, and then from Pomonkey Point, MD, to Hallowing Point, VA. The southern boundary extends from Pope's Creek, MD, to Persimmon Point on Mathias Neck, VA.	100

conserve the fragile remains of the nationally-significant collection of shipwrecks and cultural heritage resources as well as opportunities to foster education and research partnerships, and increased opportunities for public access, tourism, and economic development.

The nomination is endorsed by a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals at local, state, regional, and national levels. This included elected officials, Native Americans, historical societies, businesses, museums, and environmental, recreational, conservation, fishing, tourism, and educational groups.

The Proposal

NOAA is proposing to designate Mallows

Bay–Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary and has developed four alternatives for the designation that include a no-action alternative and three boundary alternatives, ranging in size from 18 to 100 square miles (see table above). NOAA's preferred alternative covers 52 square miles of the Potomac River and includes more than 100 known and potential shipwrecks, as well as sites related to the region's Native American cultures, and maritime battlefield from the Revolutionary and Civil wars.

The proposed sanctuary will focus on the protection, access, and interpretation of the maritime cultural features of the area, including the Ghost Fleet, other vessels of historic significance, and related maritime infrastructure. NOAA's proposed sanctuary

regulations would only focus on the protection of the shipwrecks and associated maritime heritage resources. Authorities related to natural resources and their management remain with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and other state and local jurisdictions.

The proposed sanctuary would be co-managed by NOAA, the State of Maryland, and Charles County, Maryland.

For more information

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Photo: Marine Robotics & Remote Sensing, Duke University

Mallows Bay in the Potomac River is home to an extraordinary collection of shipwrecks.

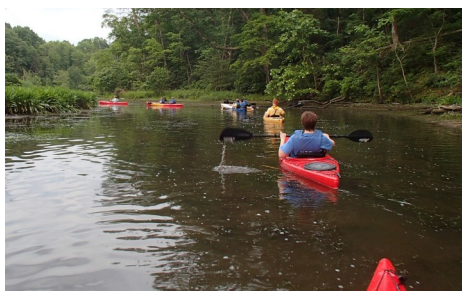


Photo: Kimberly Hernandez, MDNR Chesapeake and Coastal Service

Kayakers explore the nooks and waters of Mallows Bay.



Photo: Daryl Byrd, courtesy of MDNR

An osprey pair nests atop a shipwreck in Mallows Bay.

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/mallows-bay/>