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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA DEPLOYS FIRST "SMART BUOY" TO SUPPORT CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office has deployed its first "smart buoy" as part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail — the nation's first water-based National Historic Trail.

The buoy, positioned off Jamestown, Va., in time for the America's 400th anniversary weekend, May 11-13, is the first observation platform to be launched as part of the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System.

"These buoys do much more than mark locations along the trail," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The concept for these 'smart buoys' grew out of NOAA's advancements in Earth observing systems. NOAA is the lead agency for the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System — a cornerstone of the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan — and these buoys will be part of the larger Chesapeake Bay Observing System."

The buoys collect chemical, optical, and physical observations, among others, and transmit them wirelessly in near-real time. These measurements, as well as historical and cultural information about the Bay, can be accessed over the internet at http://www.buoybay.org and by phone at (877) BUOY-BAY (286-9229).

Lautenbacher will participate in a special ceremony inaugurating the John Smith Water Trail on May 12 as part of the Jamestown 400th anniversary celebration. The Vice Admiral will note in his remarks that when John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay in 1608 he was making observations then about the Bay's ecosystem, and that the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System continues that tradition of observation and exploration into the 21st century.

To interpret the data available from the buoys, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is developing educational and interpretive components including a web-based classroom curriculum that uses data to teach students about the Bay and its resources. Working with partners, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is creating multidisciplinary lessons that weave science and math together with history and culture.

"The Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System provides a great opportunity for students and teachers to explore topics that weave together science and history," said Peyton Robertson, acting director of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office. "Comparing the historical and present day ecological conditions of the Bay can motivate students to be stewards of the Chesapeake and to undertake restoration and conservation efforts."

This year, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office will launch and activate two additional buoys. The first is located where the Potomac River meets the Bay, and the second on the Patapsco River at the Bay near Baltimore. The data from these buoys, displayed with information from other observation platforms around the Bay including the Chesapeake Bay Observing System, also will be available at http://www.buoybay.org.

NOAA partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Norfolk District, who used their derrick boat Elizabeth to position the buoy off Jamestown on April 26. NOAA then extensively tested the buoy to ensure the data flows smoothly from the sensors on the buoy via wireless technology to the internet.

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail includes a network of water routes that covers 3,000 miles that extend along parts of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C., along routes taken by Captain John Smith in 1607 and 1608 to chart the land and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay. In addition to tracking the routes Captain Smith explored by boat, the trail will highlight the natural history of the Bay and provide new opportunities for recreation, education, and tourism in the Chesapeake Bay region, and will encourage stewardship of this national treasure.

Since 1984, NOAA has provided science, service, and stewardship to advance NOAA's mission in the mid-Atlantic region, and to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay through its programs in fisheries management, habitat restoration, coastal observations and education and collaboration with the Chesapeake Bay Program. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office was established in 1992 to provide a focus for NOAA's multiple capabilities and activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:
NOAA: http://www.noaa.gov
NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office: http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov
Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System: http://www.buoybay.org
Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail: http://www.nps.gov/cajo