

Currents

The newsletter of the Four Rivers Heritage Area

ANNAPOLIS
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Boundary Amendment Approved by MHAA

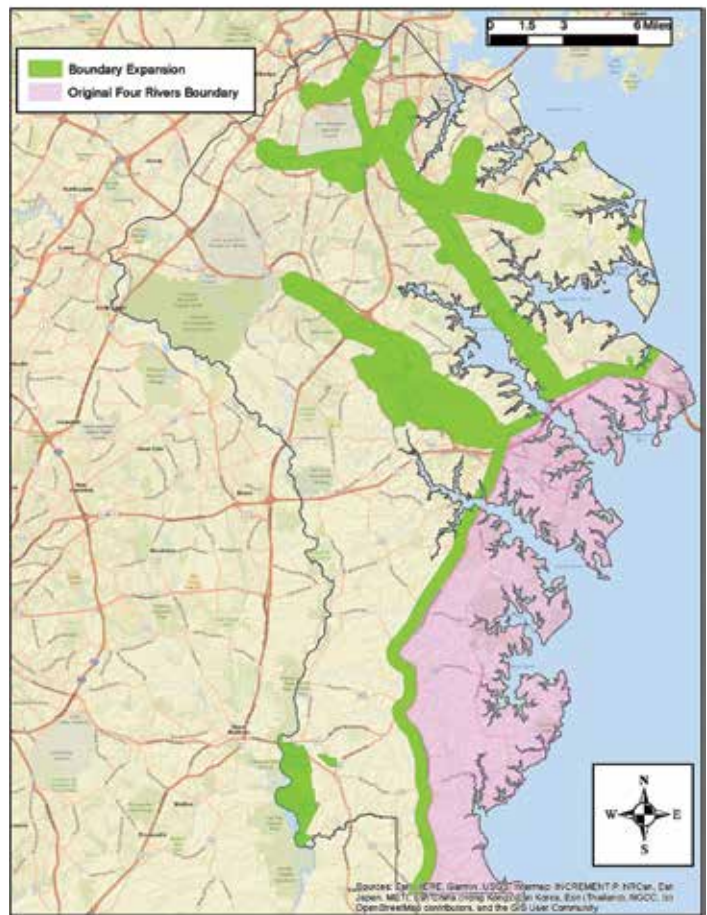
On April 8, members of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) approved ALTSCHA’s proposal to expand the official boundaries of the Four Rivers Heritage Area to include new geographic areas and heritage attractions in Anne Arundel County, roughly doubling the size of the organization’s reach. Additions include a North County African American Trail, portions of three recreational “rail trails,” three additional County regional parks, the Bacon Ridge Natural Area and Annapolis Waterworks Park, nature sanctuaries and preserved lands in the Jug Bay area, and a dozen non-contiguous heritage attractions. These sites include:

- Chesapeake Arts Center
- Fort Smallwood Park
- Hancock’s Resolution
- National Electronics Museum
- National Cryptological Museum
- Anne Arundel Community College
- Annearrundell County Free School Museum, or the Free School
- Kinder Farm Park
- Downs Park
- Goshen Farm
- Linthicum Walks
- Whites Hall

New areas were also captured via the addition of half-mile buffers along key trails and routes, including North County African American communities; a portion of Generals Highway that includes the Rising Sun Inn; the Odenton Historic District; and a half-mile buffer area along the full length of the original boundary.

A detailed description of the proposal and the years-long process that led up to this decision is available on our website. Heritage Areas are defined by geographic boundaries. If an organization or project is located within these boundaries, and is a nonprofit or a municipality, and it has a heritage tourism project or activity, then that organization and project

Four Rivers Heritage Area Boundary Expansion



are eligible for MHAA grants, or a Mini-Grant from the local heritage area. The expansion of the official boundary has therefore greatly increased the number of partners and projects our heritage area can serve.

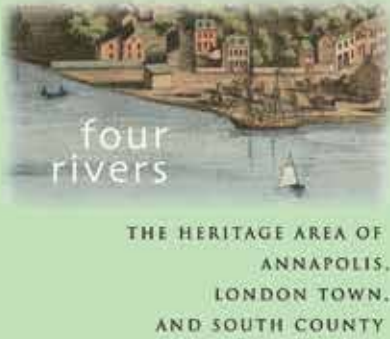
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Winter/Spring Highlights

The year started out with many COVID restrictions still in place. Some sites opened to the public as weather conditions allowed, primarily those that have outside grounds and gardens to explore, while many more remained closed. Parks, trails, and outdoor experiences remained in high demand. Heritage-related events were held virtually, until Maryland Day Weekend (March 19-21), when in-person events at sites slowly began to resume.

On March 1, fourteen applications to the MHAA Grant Program for FY2022 were received from partner organizations in the heritage area, totaling

\$576,000 in requested funds for projects totaling \$1.26 million. The grant decision date is July 8, 2021.

On March 30, Executive Director Carol Benson was honored as a recipient of the Third Annual Women's History Month Michelle Obama Awards, organized by a partnership between the Caucus of African American Leaders and the Office of Anne Arundel County Executive Stewart Pittman.

In March/April, Four Rivers was a co-sponsor of the Carr's Beach Mural and related programming at the Maryland Cultural and Conference Center in Annapolis (MC3).

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The heritage area plans a year-long Rebranding process to develop a new name, logo, and brand that will represent the organization going forward. Stay tuned for details on how you can become involved!

"With the approval of this Heritage Area boundary amendment, we have truly become a county-wide organization," explained Carol Benson, Executive Director. "We worked closely with the Cultural Resources team at Anne Arundel County's Department of Planning and Zoning, with the result that sites throughout the County were

reviewed as part of the process. The inclusion of the additional areas helps round out existing visitor experiences and offer new ones that greatly enhance the heritage tourism appeal of our area. We also expect it will encourage longer stays and more spending by visitors. We are excited that this transformation of our heritage area opens up new funding and networking opportunities for more nonprofit organizations that preserve and promote Anne Arundel County's historic, cultural and natural experiences."

Four Rivers Heritage Area Celebrates its Twentieth Year

This is the twentieth year of our heritage area's operations, and in November, the Board of Directors plans a celebration of our 20-Year Anniversary, to take place in conjunction with our Annual Heritage Awards Ceremony. Upon reaching this important milestone, the organization would like to express appreciation to these major funders: the State of Maryland via the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority; Anne Arundel County; and the City of Annapolis.

Without the steady support of these valued partners, we would not have been operational or sustainable. There are also many important partners, volunteers, and donors whose contributions have made a significant difference to the organization, and we hope to see you all, in person, at this landmark event. The date has tentatively been set for Thursday, November 4, and the location has not yet been determined; please check back on our website for more information to come.

Four Rivers Economic Impact Studied

In January, the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), the governing body of the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, released the results of a study that estimates the contribution of the Four Rivers Heritage Area to the statewide economy to be more than \$244.8 million, and 3,469 jobs. "At Four Rivers Heritage Area, our top priority is the development of heritage tourism, but it is important to note that the Heritage Area also plays a vital role in both the state and the regional economies. The economic activity generated by our operations, grantmaking, collaborative programs and heritage-tourism activities touch virtually every corner of our regional economy including outdoor recreation," said Tim Leahy, Chair of the Four Rivers Board of Directors.

"Every day the residents of Annapolis, South County, and Maryland as a whole benefit from efforts made by the Four Rivers Heritage Area. As we can see from this report this is not just for environmental, cultural, and historic reasons - but also for the millions of dollars in economic activity generated by the Heritage Area. This program is essential to preserving what makes our communities so special," said Senator Sarah Elfreth of Maryland's District 30.

"We all know that Anne Arundel County is a special place - largely due to our rich history, our connection to the Chesapeake Bay, and our strong communities," said County Executive Steuart Pittman. "Now, this economic impact study reminds us how important those things are to our economy. The Four Rivers Heritage Area has a measurable annual impact on our county - to the tune of nearly \$250 million and nearly 3,500 jobs. I want to thank the Four Rivers Heritage Area and the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority for the tremendous support and resources they bring to Anne Arundel County."

The study was commissioned by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and was conducted by Parker Philips, Inc. a consulting firm specializing in economic impact analysis. The co-founder of the firm, Nichole Parker, said, "An economic contribution analysis is an objective way to measure the significance of an organization in the regional economy; it is a tool that policy makers can use to inform their decisions about how to allocate funding and make smart investment decisions. Clearly, Four Rivers Heritage Area is a major contributor to the regional economy and raises the profile and value of heritage tourism." In the analysis, the study considered the direct spending on operations, pay, benefits, grants and heritage tourists by Four Rivers Heritage Area, and the estimated increase in demand for goods and services in industry sectors that supply or support the heritage tourism in the heritage area.

The study also calculated tax revenues generated by this level of economic activity, including sales, property, personal income and corporate income taxes. It concluded that Four Rivers Heritage Area generates about \$32,802,447 in tax revenues for state and local government.



The study also states that a key result is that Four Rivers Heritage Area supports and sustains 3,469 jobs, including indirect and induced jobs created by supply and equipment vendors, jobs created in the community at hotels, restaurants, and retail stores in support of the Four Rivers Heritage Area's operations, grantmaking and heritage tourists. The study also calculated tax revenues generated by this level of economic activity, including sales, property, personal income and corporate income taxes. It concluded that Four Rivers Heritage Area generates about \$32,802,447 in tax revenues for state and local government. Statewide, the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, including all 13 certified Heritage Areas, heritage tourists, grantmaking and program spending had a total statewide economic contribution of \$2.4 billion. This activity generated an estimated 33,815 jobs in the state. It is estimated that nearly 20.7 million tourists in the state are heritage tourists.

Maryland Day 2021 Succeeds in Hybrid Form



The 2021 Maryland Day Event logo

Four Rivers Heritage Area’s signature collaborative event, the annual Maryland Day Celebration, continued in 2021 in hybrid form. Partner sites participated by offering in-person events, virtual events or programs, or a combination of the two. The theme of this year’s event was “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” and the result was new programming addressing a broad variety of topics and experiences. Thirty-four events and experiences were part of the three-day event, including a popular repeat visit of the tall ship, *Pride of Baltimore II*, to Annapolis City Dock. Many of the virtual offerings are still able to be experienced via links to YouTube or Facebook Live virtual events. Please see the event website, www.marylandday.org, and click on the Events tab to see available links.



Maryland Hall, with its indoor-outdoor ArtFest

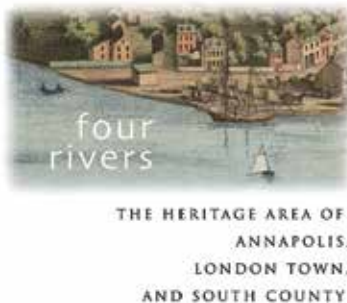


Living History interpreter, Nannetta Hall, part of a Facebook Live presentation by Historic Annapolis entitled, “The Fabric of Our Diverse History”



A screenshot of Banneker-Douglass Museum’s virtual event called “Honoring Black Women of Courage”

Please remember the **Four Rivers Heritage Area** (legal name ALTSCHA, Inc.) in your charitable donations. Visit our website, www.fourriversheritage.org/support for details on how you can support the organization.



Four Rivers: The Heritage Area of Annapolis, London Town & South County
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Four Rivers is a 501 (c) 3, charitable non-profit organization. Your contribution supports the heritage sites and organizations that make a difference to our region’s quality of life.

