



Contact: Eleanor Mahoney
410.260.2484
eleanor@friendsofchesapeakegateways.org

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Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail Set to Launch February 27, 2010

More than 30 sites in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. to Take Part in First-of-its-Kind Adventure

Annapolis – Set to launch on **February 27, 2010**, the new Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail is a unique journey through American history and across the landscapes of the Chesapeake Bay. Participants will have the chance to explore more than 30 forts, museums, battlefields, ships, parks and preserves, each with its own unique story about the War of 1812. Intended to complement and promote the Congressionally designated Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, the Geotrail commemorates the dramatic chain of events, people and places that led to the birth of our National Anthem during the War of 1812. This first-of-its-kind, multi-state initiative is supported by Friends of Chesapeake Gateways, the Maryland Geocaching Society, and the National Park Service.

Geocaching, pronounced “geo-caching,” is a worldwide phenomenon in which participants use a hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) to locate a hidden “cache.” Searching for a cache is akin to going on a treasure hunt and can involve clues, riddles and visits to multiple locations. A “geotrail” is a series of caches tied together by a common topic or theme. The Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail includes more than thirty diverse sites that are all part of the landscape of the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region. Some hold national prominence, others reflect the all-encompassing nature of the struggle, during which the British raided and burned communities in Maryland, Virginia and even our nation's capital. In addition, the majority of participating locations are also designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails, special places that share the story of the Bay and its Rivers.

“The geotrail is a wonderful way to build interest in the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake and in the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail,” said Suzanne Copping, National Park Service Project Manager. “The Geotrail crosses state lines, just as the British and Americans did, and also connects sites along the National Historic Trail to other locations in the larger Chesapeake region. This is a great way for families to discover local connections to a War that had international implications. The geotrail will also draw attention to a variety of themes as we approach the 1812 Bicentennial.”

In order to participate in the adventure, a geocacher must access the official geocache website at www.Geocaching.com. A basic membership is free. Once an account is established, the geocacher can use the advance search function to locate the Star-Spangled Banner account and retrieve the map coordinates for each Star-Spangled Banner Geocache. The next step is to head outside with a GPS to find geocaches along the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail. A collectible, highly coveted trackable geocoin will be given to the first 400 geocachers who locate a minimum of 20 geocaches along the trail. Full details on how to earn the coin are available at www.friendsofchesapeakegateways.org

“Whether you are hiking through a park, paddling along a river or discovering a historic downtown, Chesapeake Gateways offer rich, revealing ways to enjoy the unique Chesapeake region, including its history as a major theatre of conflict during the War of 1812” said Eleanor Mahoney, Program Director for the Friends of Chesapeake Gateways. “Friends is excited to co-sponsor the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail and expose a whole new group of visitors to the Gateways Network and its member sites. We are so grateful for all the assistance from the Maryland Geocaching Society and its members who made the trail a reality!”

The Star-Spangled Geotrail launches February 27, 2010. For more information visit on the geotrail and its supporters, visit:

www.friendsofchesapeakegateways.org

www.mdgps.org

www.nps.gov/stsp

About Friends of Chesapeake Gateways

Established in 2006, Friends of Chesapeake Gateways is a nonprofit organization that supports the mission and goals of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network. Friends works closely with the National Park Service and over 165 individual sites across the Chesapeake Bay region to promote conservation, interpretation and stewardship of the Bay’s natural and cultural resources. To learn more about Friends of Chesapeake Gateways, visit www.friendsofchesapeakegateways.org

About the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail

The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail commemorates the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region. Over 290 miles of land and water routes in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia follow movements of British and American troops during a period of political and social turmoil. The National Park Service, in cooperation with state government, local jurisdictions and hundreds of nonprofit organizations, is working to preserve and develop sites and places along the Trail to provide interpretation of the causes, events, and outcomes of the War and improve water access and recreation opportunities for visitors and residents. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/stsp

About the Maryland Geocaching Society

Founded in the fall of 2002, the Maryland Geocaching Society (MGS) was among the first groups to organize around the adventure and passion of geocaching. Over the past eight years, the Society has welcomed nearly 3,000 members to its website and sponsored multiple state-wide activities, including “Cache in Trash Out” programs to assist in the maintenance of parks and trail systems. The MGS promotes geocaching as exciting, earth-friendly and adventurous outdoor recreation for the whole family. For more information about the MGS, visit www.mdgps.org

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