

Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary

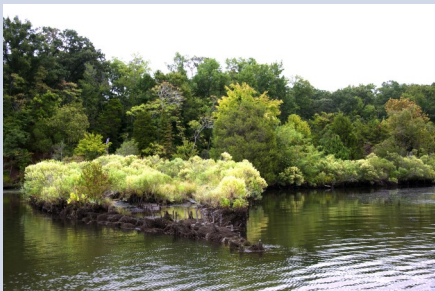


Photo: Marine Robotics and Remote Sensing/Duke University

A vessel's hull emerges from the Potomac River at low tide.



Photo: Matt McIntosh/NOAA

The sanctuary provides a space to learn about local history and ecologically significant species.

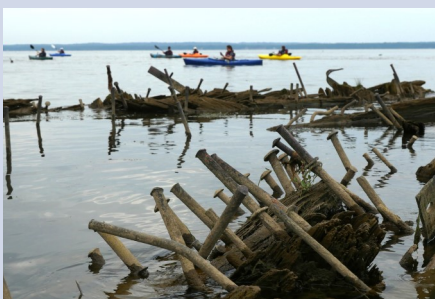


Photo: Stephen Badger/MDNR Office of Communications

Kayakers explore the islands and passageways shaped by the skeletons of historic shipwrecks.

Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary

protects a diverse collection of historically significant shipwrecks and cultural heritage resources dating back nearly 12,000 years. Jointly managed by NOAA, the state of Maryland, and Charles County (Maryland), the sanctuary helps protect these fragile historic assets while promoting recreation and tourism, economic development, and education and research partnerships. In September 2019, it became the first national marine sanctuary designated since 2000.

Maritime heritage

The sanctuary is most renowned for the remnants of more than 100 wooden steamships, known as the "Ghost Fleet." The ships were built for the U.S. Emergency Fleet Corporation between 1917 and 1919 as part of the U.S. engagement in World War I. Their construction at more than 40 shipyards in 17 states reflected a massive national wartime effort that drove expansion and economic development in communities nationwide.

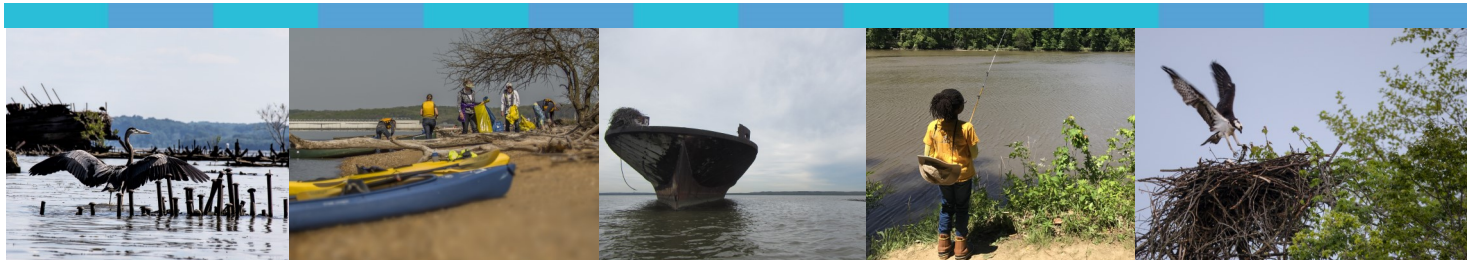
This stretch of the Potomac River also includes traditional lands of Native American tribes, Revolutionary and Civil War battlescapes, remnants of the commercial ferry boat era, and generations of history and culture of local communities. Collectively, the national significance of this area was recognized through its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Ghost Fleet was partially dismantled through three separate shipbreaking and metal salvage periods from the 1920s through the 1940s. Nearly a century of natural processes have gradually transformed these ships into ecologically valuable habitats. The overgrown wrecks now form a series of distinctive islands, intertidal habitat, and underwater structure critical to fish, beaver, and birds such as osprey, blue heron, and bald eagles. Although the sanctuary does not manage or regulate these natural resources, the unique blending of history and ecology attracts and captivates visitors.



Photo: Marine Robotics and Remote Sensing/Duke University

Time and vegetation have transformed the shipwreck fleet into a unique habitat.



Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary

Location

In Maryland, about 40 miles south of Washington, D.C. on the Potomac River

Protected Area

18 square miles

Designation

September, 2019

Habitats

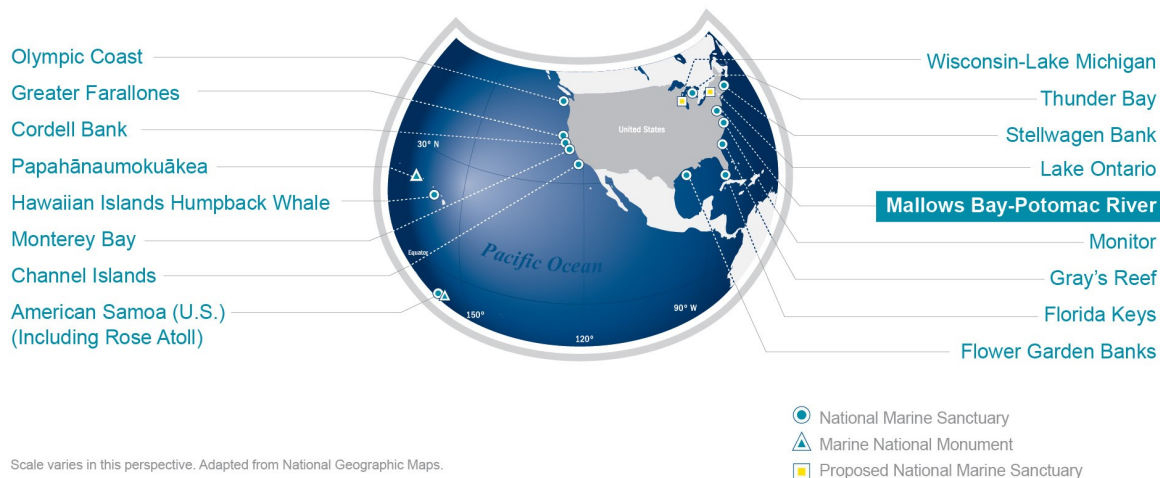
Tidal river

By the Numbers

142 known shipwrecks

118 WWI-era wooden steamship wrecks

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Find Us

1440 Wilson Landing Road
Nanjemoy, Maryland 20662

On the Web

Paul Orlando
Chesapeake Bay Regional Coordinator
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Phone: 240-460-1978
Email: paul.orlando@noaa.gov

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 600,000 square miles
Established October 1972

On the Web

sanctuaries.noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries
Instagram: @noaasanctuaries
Twitter: @sanctuaries
Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries



Photo: National Archives

The SS Congaree is among the shipwrecks at Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Matt McIntosh/NOAA

Fishing and boating are popular activities at Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Matt McIntosh/NOAA

The shipwrecks at Mallows Bay provide shelter for many bird species, including ospreys.

sanctuaries.noaa.gov/mallows-potomac/