

POINTS OF INTEREST

1. LAUNCH POINT



A boat ramp is located within Mallows Bay Park for small craft (shallow water) access to the Potomac River. It is open from 5:30 AM to dusk year-round.

2. ACCOMAC



The only steel-hulled vessel in the Mallows Bay-Widewater area. She serviced the ferry route between Cape Charles and Norfolk, Virginia until she suffered a fire and was permanently taken out of commission. About 1973, the ship was hauled to the southern perimeter of Mallows Bay and abandoned.

3. BENZONIA



Launched into the Columbia River in Washington in 1919 and named after town in Michigan. For a short period Benzonia was engaged in the war effort, but was sold to Western Marine and Salvage Company in 1922. In 2003, she was moved by Hurricane Isabel and in 2013, a mysterious fire took hold in her stern section.

4. MONO

Mono was among the 94 U. S. Shipping Board steamships in the celebrated "Tidal Wave" of national ship launching on July 4, 1918. She was put to work on the San Francisco-Hawaiian Islands "Pineapple Run." Mono was among the last of Matson's wooden ship fleet to be prematurely retired, until she was sold for scrapping. She appears to have been among the last vessels to be permanently ensconced in Mallows Bay since at least 1929.

5. YAWAH



Yawah is documented as making at least one European voyage, to Genoa, Italy, in late 1919. Laid up in the James River during the Great Ship Tie-up of 1920, she was eventually purchased at auction by the Western Marine and Salvage Company for scrapping, and moved to the Potomac River soon afterwards. Yawah is entirely submerged except at low tide.

6. CASMALIA

Named after a locale in California, Casmalia's career, like those of her sister ships was short. Today, she lies at the extreme northern end of Mallows Bay beside an unidentified wooden steamship, both sitting on their keels in sand usually awash and submerged.

7. GRADY'S SPIT

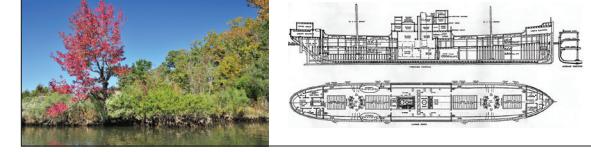
At the northern extremity of the Mallows embayment, several ship remains have created a landmass known as Grady's Spit, which provides a welcomed landing destination for the weary paddler to get out and stretch legs on a small beach. Use caution, as the beach is usually covered with driftwood at the high tide mark as well as iron and wood projections from the wrecks lying beneath it. Swimming from the spit is not recommended due to the submerged debris in and around the beach areas.

8. BAYOU TECHE



On July 4, 1918, she was one of 94 ships to take to the waters in the greatest single day's ship launch in world history. Bayou Teche made several voyages to Havana, Cuba, Galveston, TX, and Bordeaux, France.

9. THE THREE SISTERS

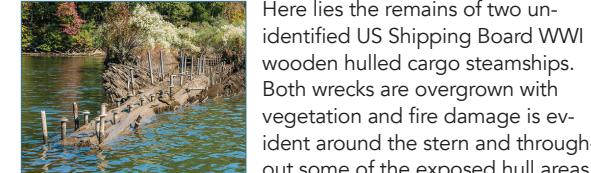


The Three Sisters is a group of three wrecks: Dertona, the "Heron Wreck", and the Moosabee. Dertona was briefly in the coasting trade. The "Heron Wreck" is named for the frequent sightings of Great Blue Herons on and about the site. The Moosabee carried timber logs to Europe from 1919 until 1922.

10. NORTH BEND

Note: only minimally visible even at low tide.
Named after a town in Oregon, this earliest US Shipping Board wooden steamer completed and certified during the Emergency Fleet program. She was placed in the trade between the Pacific Coast and the Hawaiian Islands, carrying general merchandise and sugar.

11. THE FLOWER POT WRECKS



Her lies the remains of two unidentified US Shipping Board WWI wooden hulled cargo steamships. Both wrecks are overgrown with vegetation and fire damage is evident around the stern and throughout some of the exposed hull areas.

12. SS AFRANIA



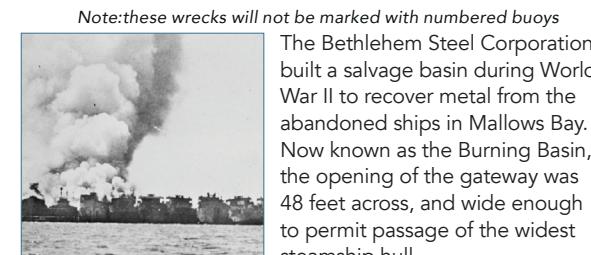
Engaged to make at least one known trans-Atlantic voyage to Rouen, France, from which she sailed on her return voyage for Norfolk, VA, in 1919. Afrania lies resting on her keel and is partially submerged.

13. SS BOONE



Named by the wife of President Woodrow Wilson, Boone was launched in 1918 in the presence of 3,000 spectators. Her career, like many other vessels built hastily for WWI was brief, and she was sold for scrap in 1922.

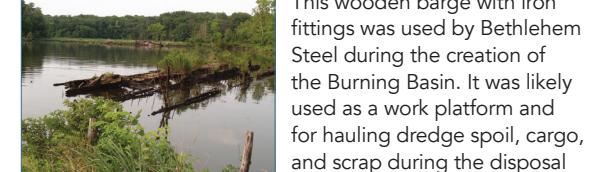
14. BURNING BASIN



Note: these wrecks will not be marked with numbered buoys

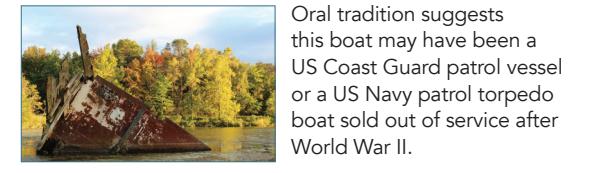
The Bethlehem Steel Corporation built a salvage basin during World War II to recover metal from the abandoned ships in Mallows Bay. Now known as the Burning Basin, the opening of the gateway was 48 feet across, and wide enough to permit passage of the widest steamship hull.

15. THE BARGE WRECK



This wooden barge with iron fittings was used by Bethlehem Steel during the creation of the Burning Basin. It was likely used as a work platform and for hauling dredge spoil, cargo, and scrap during the disposal operation.

16. THE SEA SCOUT WRECK



Oral tradition suggests this boat may have been a US Coast Guard patrol vessel or a US Navy patrol torpedo boat sold out of service after World War II.

MAP OF MALLOWS BAY

The self-guided tour of the Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay consists of 16 points traveling around the bay and into the Burning Basin. To reach the Accomac from the launch point is a 7-10 minute paddle, and the complete route requires 1.5-2 hours and covers 2.5 miles.

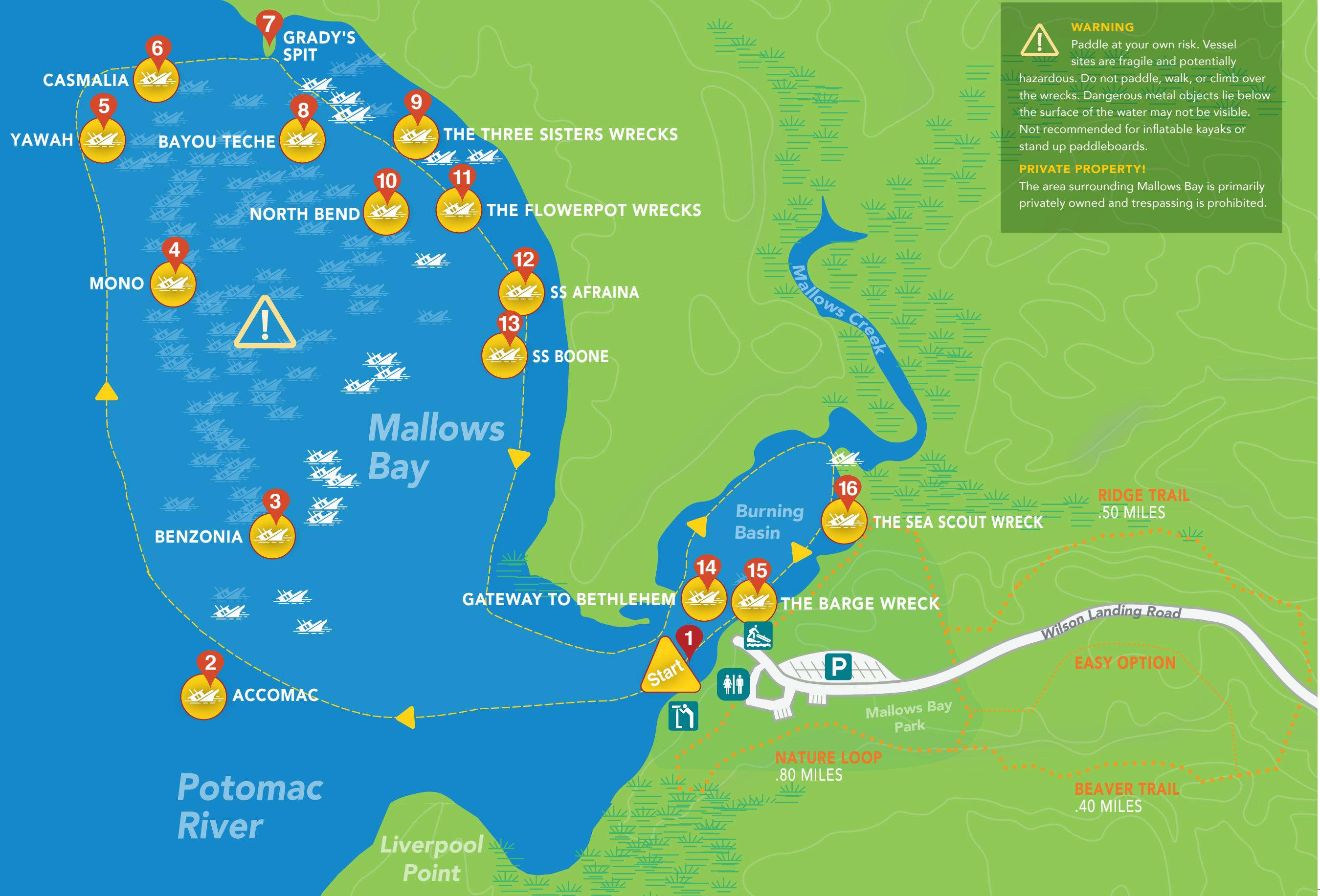


POINTS OF INTEREST ARE MARKED WITH A SMALL NUMBERED BUOY.



WARNING
Paddle at your own risk. Vessel sites are fragile and potentially hazardous. Do not paddle, walk, or climb over the wrecks. Dangerous metal objects lie below the surface of the water may not be visible. Not recommended for inflatable kayaks or stand up paddleboards.

PRIVATE PROPERTY!
The area surrounding Mallows Bay is primarily privately owned and trespassing is prohibited.



WELCOME TO MALLOWS BAY!

Just a short drive from Washington D.C., the Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay is home to the largest number of visible historic shipwrecks in the Western Hemisphere, and offers a truly unique paddling experience.

Over one hundred wooden and steel-hulled ships dating from the 18th century through the mid-20th century are located here, with nearly ninety belonging to the United States Shipping Board's World War I Emergency Fleet of wooden steamships. These unique sites are evolving into veritable islands: artificial habitats for birds, animals and fish of all kinds.

As the historic hub of the Mallows Bay-Widewater National Register Historic and Archaeological District, Mallows Bay offers visitors the most unique maritime landscape in the Chesapeake Tidewater, where history is in the process of becoming nature itself.



A BRIEF HISTORY

Mallows Bay boasts a diverse collection of historic shipwrecks dating back to the Revolutionary War, but is most renowned for the remains of more than 100 wooden steamships, known as the "Ghost Fleet." These ships were built for the US Emergency Fleet between 1917-1919 as part of America's engagement in World War I. 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.

At the end of WWI, the now obsolete ships were brought to Mallows Bay to be burned. Bethlehem Steel later built a salvage basin during World War II to recover metal to support the war effort.



WWI ERA POSTERS FOR THE US SHIPPING BOARD EMERGENCY FLEET CORPORATION
SOURCE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In addition to the rich WWI history in Mallows Bay proper, the surrounding area is home to historic vessels dating back to the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War the shores were fortified and defended by thousands of Union troops to prevent a Confederate invasion of Southern Maryland, with batteries extending from Sandy Point southward to Liverpool Point. The nationally significant history of this site earned it designation as the Mallows Bay-Widewater Historic and Archaeological District on the National Register of Historic Places. It has also been named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Potomac River is home to three national trails: The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE TRAILS AT WWW.NPS.GOV/NTS

WILDLIFE

Mallows Bay has tremendous opportunities for wildlife viewing, both on shore and on the water. The bay and surrounding area is inhabited by osprey, bald eagles, heron, and an array of fish, plants and animals. The list below describes some of the species you are likely to observe during your visit.

BIRDS



BALD EAGLE
Bird of prey with white head and tail that can be found nesting in the trees along the shoreline.



DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT
A prehistoric looking, black fishing bird with yellow-orange facial markings.



GREAT BLUE HERON
Subtle blue-gray plumage and often stands motionless as it scans for prey.



OSPREY
The shipwrecks are frequent nest sites for these fish-eating birds.



HERRING GULL
Quintessential gray-and-white, pink-legged "seagulls" can be found across much of coastal North America in winter.



RING-BILLED GULL
Medium-sized gull with yellow legs and a yellow bill with a black band around it.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS



NORTHERN WATER SNAKE
A non-venomous aquatic snake that grows between 2-4 feet long.



EASTERN BOX TURTLE
Found mostly in woodlands, its tall upper shell is brown with orange and yellow markings.



RED BELLIED COOTER
Aquatic turtle with a dark shell and a distinctive red belly that can be found basking on the edge of streams and ponds.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM,
CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY, SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

INSECTS



DRAGONFLY
Live near still bodies of water and have an appetite for mosquitoes and other small insects. Many species feature brilliant iridescent or metallic colors.



DAMSELFLY
Dragonflies and damselflies are often mistaken for each other, but damselflies have slender bodies and hold their wings above their body while at rest, while dragonflies cannot do this.



BUTTERFLY (ZEBRA SWALLOWTAIL)
Lives in moist, low woodlands where its host plant, the paw paw tree, grows.

FISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS
Considered one of the most popular sport fishes in the US, with an elongated yellowish green body and dark side stripe.



BLUE CATFISH
Large, invasive fish with a slate blue body and whisker-like barbels around its mouth.



NORTHERN SNAKEHEAD
Large, invasive fish with a snake-like pattern, large mouth, protruding lower jaw, and many teeth.

PLANTS



HYDRILLA
An invasive bay grass made up of long, freely branching stems with tiny, straight or lance-shaped leaves that usually have visible teeth along the edges.



COONTAIL
A bushy-looking bay grass with whorls of stiff, forked leaves along densely branched stems.



ARROW ARUM
A native perennial plant that has long, thick, arrowhead-shaped leaves with prominent veins down the middle and along the edge.



WILD RICE
A native annual grass that has a round, hollow, upright stem. Its long, flat leaves have rough, toothed edges and can grow up to 16 inches in length and 2 inches wide.

PADDLING INFORMATION & SAFETY!

BEFORE YOU GO

- For optimum viewing of the wrecks, schedule your visit to correspond with low tide.
- Check the National Weather Service report before departing.
- Fishing is permitted within the Potomac River and Mallows Bay (fishing license is required.)
- Real-time water quality conditions are available at EYESONTHEBAY.NET.

GETTING THERE

MALLOWS BAY PARK:
1440 Wilson Landing Road
Nanjemoy, MD 20662
(301) 932-3470

- AMENITIES** include a boat ramp, soft launch, portable toilets, parking, walking trail, interpretive signs, and picnic area.
- The park is open daily from 5:30 am to sunset.



Charles County
Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

PADDLING SAFETY TIPS

- ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET.**
- PADDLE WITH OTHERS IF POSSIBLE.**
- COLD WATER TEMPERATURES ARE HAZARDOUS TO PADDLERS.**
Paddling is recommended between May and September.
- WHEN PADDLING IN WIND, STAY CLOSE TO SHORE.**
- RESPECT WILDLIFE.** Animals and birds should be viewed from a distance.
- BEWARE OF HIDDEN WRECKS.** It is dangerous to travel through the central shipwreck cluster, especially during high tide when ship remains lie just below the waterline and are invisible to the paddler.

of the Potomac River
of the Ghost Fleet
A Self Guided Tour



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
CHARLESCOUNTYMD.GOV/GHOSTFLEETOFMALLOWSBAY



FUNDING GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY:



THANK YOU TO HISTORIAN/AUTHOR DONALD SHOMETTE
AND THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS GUIDE:



THIS MAP IS PRINTED ON 100% TREE FREE YUPO PAPER, WHICH IS 100% RECYCLABLE.