

# Chesapeake Paddler



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July 2012

## Delaware Bay Crossing

by Rick Wiebush

As part of a two-day Open Water Skills class for Cross Currents Sea Kayaking, seven people paddled from Cape Henlopen, DE, to Cape May, NJ, on July 7. It's approximately a 15 NM trip from the Lewes public beach (our put-in) to the Cape May Ferry Terminal. The crossing itself is about 10 NM. Tom Noffsinger and I were leading the group, all of whom were CPA members (Paula Hubbard, Maywin Liu, Mike Ward, Mike Thomas and John O'Hara).

In addition to the pure satisfaction of doing a crossing of that length, there were several things that stood out:

**Out of Sight**—This was the first time doing this crossing that—for much of the crossing—we couldn't see Cape May at all. That meant we had to rely solely on our compass bearing for about three or four miles. We had set the bearing to account for a flooding 2 knot current, so we were aiming for a point about 3.5 NM east of Cape May Point (which was our initial destination on the NJ side). Not being able to see land was a little unnerving because several of us had the sense that we were heading for France instead of Cape May. But the calculations worked out perfectly. Mike Thomas subsequently looked at our GPS track and it showed a perfectly straight line between Cape Henlopen and Cape May Point.

**Hot, Hot Hot**—The heat index for the day reached about 110. It didn't really feel that bad out on the water, but we nonetheless had to constantly keep ourselves wet either by splashing, dumping water-filled hats onto our heads, or just rolling. And most of us drank more water than we ever have during the course of a day's paddle.

**Lots of Current**—I was really pleased with myself for getting the timings right so that we hit the shoals on the NJ side and the Cape May channel right around slack tide (sound of one hand patting self on back). But I totally forgot—or didn't know in the first place—

how quickly things start to get a little hairy right there at the point almost as soon as the ebb starts. We were less than a half mile from shore and maybe a half hour into the ebb and already the current was strong enough to create standing waves. This was a pretty strong group so the waves didn't create any real problems, but the battle/slog to get around the corner was something we didn't need after already doing 12 NM in 100+ degree heat. It sapped all of us. And it was something I should have been aware of ahead of time (sound of one hand slapping forehead).

**Dolphin**—The dolphin show in the Cape May Channel was neat. There was a group of about 10 dolphin feeding in the channel as we came through. We stopped to watch for about 15 minutes and a couple of them got very interested in us. They came within a few feet of some of the boats for a closer look. One of them took his/her head out of the water and looked Mike Ward right in the face!

**The Ferry**—The ferry ride back to Lewes was a bonus. What a pleasure it is after doing that crossing to just sit back in the shade, letting the breeze cool you off, sipping on a coke (or whatever) and surveying the seascape knowing you had just come across these same waters in a little boat. What a great way to end the day!



Ferry photo by Tom Noffsinger



Dolphin in Cape May Channel photo by Maywin Liu

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Lisa Arrasmith at Jefferson Patterson Park  
photo by Ralph Heimlich

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Chesapeake Paddler is published 10 times a year, with combination issues in November/December and January/February. The deadline for submitting copy is usually the 15th of the preceding month. Have an idea for an article, or is there information you would like to see in the newsletter? Email Ralph at [news\\_editor@cpakayaker.com](mailto:news_editor@cpakayaker.com) or call at 301-498-0722.



Sandy Point Lighthouse photo by Bill Smith

**THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLERS ASSOCIATION**

The mission of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association is to provide a way for people to enjoy sea kayaking within the Chesapeake Bay area and to promote safe sea kayaking practices through educating the local sea kayaking community and the interested public.

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Staging on Turners Creek Wharf photo by Rich Stevens

## Timeless Beauty and a Timeless Place

By Ralph Heimlich

There are places on the Chesapeake Bay that combine the best of natural history with the best of human history, and many of these are best savored from the seat of a kayak. I took a large group of beginning and experienced paddlers (I could say "old" but most of use were "old" regardless of our experience in a kayak) on a tour of such a place on a warm day toward the end of July.

Turners Creek and other creeks tributary to the Sasfras River on Maryland's middle Eastern Shore are native habitat for one of North America's most spectacular wild flowers, the American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*). Every year in late July and early August, these creeks are choked with large aquatic plants, rooted in the muddy bottom, that stretch 6 feet across and float large round lily pads on the surface. Rising from the middle of these are stalks reaching 1 or 2 feet above the water's surface holding large, creamy white or yellow water lilies that are 8" to 10" across with vivid yellow styles in the center. After blooming, these turn

into the classical seed pods containing seeds known as "macoupin" or alligator corn to the Native Americans.

We gathered on an early Sunday morning at the Turners Creek wharf and staged our boats on the parking lot to launch from the ramp at high tide. There is a porta-potty on the wharf, along with the 19<sup>th</sup> century granary building, the last remaining example of the many grain shipping depots along the creeks and rivers of the Eastern Shore that moved the produce of the land to steamboats. There are also restrooms in the Lathim House, another historic structure just up from the wharf. Parking is up the hill about 200 yards. Also up the hill about a half mile is Knock's Folly House, a Federal style three story brick house which is open for tours, and further up the road, the Kent County Museum.

The group numbered 21 paddlers, including a mix of beginners and more experienced paddlers including Sue and Rich Stevens, Mary Lynn Skutley, Steve Bethke, Rosemary Wallace, Megan and Mike Ward, Geoff Ultsch, Bill Harman, Ed Santelmann, Bill McAllister, Michael Naito, Vickie and Bill Smith, James Harris, Mike Cohn, Linda Witkin, Brent Cogswell, Kasenia Lantsky, and Bela Mariassy. After a pre-launch briefing that laid out the course and crossing procedures, we launched this fleet into Turners Creek's quiet waters and paddled into the lotus-choked mouth of the creek, amongst the lotus.

While the lotus flowers are beautiful and exude a subtle perfume that is redolent of tropical climes, the lotus pads are also interesting. The pads are covered with a micro-ribbing that scientists have found to be highly water repellent (superhydrophobic) and result in a self cleaning effect that is important to the health of the plant in silty and stagnant water (see [http://www.stle.org/assets/news/document/TLT\\_02-09\\_cover\\_story.pdf](http://www.stle.org/assets/news/document/TLT_02-09_cover_story.pdf)). The "quicksilver" appearance of water beading on the pads is evidence of this "lotus effect". Materials scientists are using biomimcry to design surfaces that are self cleaning and shed water better.



American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) photo by Rich Stevens

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Midnight shark teeth photo by Stephen Petrie

## Pirates Find Midnight Treasure and Flying Fish

by Stephen Petrie

With daytime temperatures in the 100's the only 'logical' paddling solution was to go for a night paddle...

Mike put out the word Friday that he was going to paddle from one of the beaches at Chesapeake Ranch Estates (CRE) and would head north along the Calvert Cliffs to the Cove Point Lighthouse—after dark. If we were on the water by nine thirty, the moon, which was near full, would illuminate our way. Three other Patuxent Pirates thought Mike might be onto something and agreed to go along for the ride.

I only live a mile or so from the CRE Seahorse beach so I paddled from the house and met Don, Kimberly and Mike from the wet side of the put in. I was on time, they were on time and we were under way slightly ahead of schedule.

The light winds of the day continued into the early night and the glassy surface of the Bay acted as a mirror to several local firework parties left over from the Fourth of July. A great view was had from the water.

As we rounded Little Cove Point, we got our first view of the Cove Point Light. The rotating Fresnel lens sent out a beam of light that circled around, blinded paddlers, continued to sweep its arc and repeat. We had the choice of hugging the shoreline or taking the two mile 'short cut' across the open water bay between the two points. We headed straight for the light.

We four moths came upon our target and Stephen, who has paddled to the beach by the lighthouse a few times before, suggested it was a great place to find fossilized sharks' teeth. Up for a challenge (and the chance to stretch out) we landed, and aided by headlamps, took half an hour to walk the beach and hunt for fossils. Don and Mike came up empty handed but Kimberly proved to be a natural for spotting tooth shaped objects in amongst all the other stones and shells. Stephen with years of dedication to the sport also found a handful of the tens-of-million year old treasures.

As we sat and relaxed on the beach in the dark, all of a sudden the wind picked up. While the water along the cliffs would be in the partial protection of the lee, our crossing would have some reach. Stephen, who had brought his sixteen-inch wide Huki thought it would be smart to start heading back before too much time passed with the stiffening breeze potentially fueling some challenging waves and chop in the dark.

While the water was quite manageable, the stiff breeze and flooding tide made for slow progress. The dark headland of Little Cove Point was easy to pick out against the night sky. Also the lighthouse beam swept through every thirty seconds or so. The cliffs were soon by our side, and all we needed to do was follow them home. There was a pleasant chop that caused the occasional hull slap and the night breeze made 90 degrees feel cool.

On the way out, we had enjoyed the photo luminescence periodically from paddles and rudders. We'd also had the occasional fish jumping. These weren't giant fish but they also weren't minnows. Often they would jump a distance of three to four feet and get a foot or two above the surface. On the way back they seemed a bit more active.

After eight plus miles, the group pulled back into the Seahorse Beach put in. It was about this time that Mike's moon finally found its way above clouds on the Eastern Shore and started to supplement the night light. Very pretty across the water.

After a short stretch on the land Stephen bid good night to the other Patuxent Pirates and headed for the final mile or so home. It was at this point that the fish really started to hop. There were many near misses, fish over the bow and a couple of boat strikes. Fortunately no fish on paddler violence. I don't know what flavor of fish missiles these were, but they were a pound or two in size. The ones that hit the boat sounded like someone had taken a swing with a big stick.

Finally back on the lake, there were some minnows who wanted to join in their big cousins' jumping games. By 'some' I mean hundreds and I could hear the hull getting pelted—very cool. Amazingly not one landed in the foot well or seat bucket.

I got home a little before one AM and had a memorable night paddle. Highly recommended. Thank you Mike for the invite, and Don and Kimberly for the company.

*Turners Creek (Continued from page 3)*

After a half hour of photography, admiration and clowning around, I marshaled the group to paddle out across the mouth of Turners Creek and upriver along the southern shore of the Sassafras River. With such a large group, we spread out a bit, so it was good that there was not much boat traffic this early in the morning. One of our participants on a SOT was having difficulty keeping a straight track, and one of our more experienced paddlers Bela Mariassy in sweep soon realized that this would slow the group down too much. He radioed ahead and hooked the SOT up to a tow to help the paddler maintain her heading. We paddled around Shrewsbury Neck, nearly to the mouth of Freeman Creek before attempting a channel crossing. The channel downstream from Georgetown's many marinas is one of the busiest on the Sassafras, so I wanted us to have a clear view up and down river. I split the group into two for the crossing, with experienced paddlers in both groups leading the maneuver. We carefully scanned for boat traffic, then lined up abreast and paddled deliberately across the channel. Bela passed the tow to Steve Bethke for the crossing, but that was a bit of a challenge keeping the second group together.



The lotus fairy (Sue Stevens) photo by Ralph Heimlich



"Quicksilver" water beading on a lotus pad photo by Ralph Heimlich

Mount Harmon at World's End is a timeless tobacco plantation built in 1730 and restored by Mrs. Harry Clark Boden IV in the 1960s according to descriptions in her ancestor's girlhood diary describing an enchanted childhood at the old manor. Mount Harmon, now administered by Friends of Mount Harmon, Inc., is listed on the National Historic Register, is an official Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network site, and is located along the National Scenic Byway, and encompasses more than 200 acres including a two-mile entry driveway of Osage Orange trees, a formal boxwood garden, outbuildings and a Discovery and Exploration center. Our docents guided us through the rooms of the manor house, a three-story, five-bay, brick double pile structure containing a mixture of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English and American antiques and quaintly opulent 1960's bathrooms and kitchens (Mrs. Boden intended to live in the house, but did only briefly). We also toured the restored separate kitchen building and the formal boxwood garden and serpentine walls. Mount Harmon hosts an annual Lotus Festival on August 4<sup>th</sup> that features a number of activities and an opportunity to view the American Lotus blooming on both Foreman and MacGill creeks bordering the plantation (see <http://www.mountharmon.org/index.html>). Thanks to Debbie Brown for arranging our tour.

We paddled up the shore of Knight Island (which isn't actually an island), the site of the Firestone (tire) family estate and their Trumpy yacht "Tireless" (see <http://www.eastcoastyachtcruises.com/yachts/tireless.php>). Bald eagles and Great Blue Herons cruised over us as we paddled along. Crossing the mouth of Back Creek, we confronted the wooded north shore of the creek, found the "Prize" house (which was named for the tobacco press which "prized" the tobacco leaves into the huge hogsheads for shipping) and looked for Mount Harmon Landing at the beach to the right of a wooden footbridge over the mouth of a small pond. We landed in shallow water and tied up our boats on a gravelly beach that showed signs of damage from the recent *derecho* storm. I hoofed it up to the plantation house in my wet paddling gear along a trail littered with downed tree branches and found our docents and arranged for our tour after we ate and changed clothes.



Our docent explains the colonial kitchen photo by Rich Stevens

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*Delaware Bay Crossing (Continued from page 1)*

That it only cost us \$10 per person (no fee for the kayaks) was an additional bonus.

This is a really great trip for intermediate and above paddlers and I highly recommend it. However, the currents need to be taken carefully into account and you have to know that you are going to have pretty good weather for the crossing. The Bay can get pretty nuts if there are fairly strong winds and/or big swell rolling through. Obviously the potential for t-storms has to be considered as well. There aren't any bailout points. We in fact had originally planned to do the crossing on Sunday, but on Friday night decided to switch it to Saturday due to the increased probability of thunderstorms for Sunday.

There is a short video here: <http://www.facebook.com/crosscurrentskayaking>



No land in sight, Paula and Rick photo by Tom Noffsinger

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Alan Mapes

## CPA Schedules Beginner Paddles For the Year

By Maywin Liu

For those new to kayaking or looking for leisurely trips, CPA is introducing a new Beginner Paddler Series. Note: If you are interested in going on one of these trips, contact the trip leader (contact info on the calendar, link below) at least two weeks before the trip. Several of these have been cancelled due to apparent lack of interest, only to have people call a day or two before the trip to be disappointed.

Participants will be led on trips of 3-8 miles in scenic locations from peaceful lakes and reservoirs to Eastern Neck on the Bay to rivers and estuaries along the Eastern and Western shores of the Bay. The Series will run from May through October. Some of the trips launch from sites that offer rentals if you have not yet purchased a kayak. Many of the trips are combined with special features such as kayak nature photography, a Gear Day lunch stop, historical guides, and lotus blossoms and fall colors viewing. For those who have not done a wet exit or are not comfortable with rescues, most trips will offer the opportunity to practice. Have fun kayaking while improving your skills and confidence with friendly, experienced paddlers who enjoy sharing their love of the sport. For those looking to purchase or upgrade their kayaks, this is a good opportunity to compare the performance of different kayaks and possibly try out a few.

Date	Location	County	Estimated Distance	Trip Leader/Contact	Notes
4-Aug	Tridelphia Lake	Mont. Co	6	John Garon /Sue & Rich Stevens	
11-Aug	Mattawoman Creek lotus viewing	Charles Co		Mike Cohn	* not posted per Mike
12-Aug	Jug Bay to Mt Calvert Historic Manor	PG CO	8	Jenny Plummer-Welker & Greg Welker	
20-Oct	Fountainhead Park & the Occoquan	VA	4	Jeff Walascek / Jim Zawlocki	
21-Oct	Upper Chester River Landing	Kent Co	8	Ralph Heimlich	

Please consult [the CPA calendar](#) for details of this Series and for all the other trips and events scheduled.

### Turners Creek (Continued from page 5)

After our tour, we changed back into (wet) paddling clothes and reembarked at low tide. We paddled back downriver along the north shore to Ordinary Point, site of a colonial inn (or ordinary). We regrouped for another channel crossing, this time with much busier boat traffic to contend with. Paddling back along the shore, we turned into Turners Creek and landed at the now-exposed beach on the east side of the wharf. Our cohesive group quickly carried all the boats up from the beach to a grassy area, retrieved our cars and leisurely loaded up.

A group of 12 of us reconvened in Chestertown at the Fishwhistle Restaurant (<http://www.fishandwhistle.com/>) for a late afternoon repast and libation. I don't think the waitstaff had had such a lively bunch to lunch in quite a while. The knowledgeable beeristas among us (Mike Naito ran breweries in California and Bangkok and Bill Smith and others are home brewers) cross-examined the poor waiters on the draft offerings. Brunch (Linner? Drunch?) over, we drove off to see how bad the Sunday Bay Bridge traffic would be.



Crossing the Sassafras Channel photo by Rich Stevens

Pictures at:

[https://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/MtHarmon2012\\_07\\_29#](https://picasaweb.google.com/CommodoreRich/MtHarmon2012_07_29#)

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## Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan Available Now for Public Review and Comment

### DRAFT Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan

July 2012

Prepared by the National Park Service in collaboration with the Commonwealths of Pennsylvania and Virginia, the States of Maryland, New York, and West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.



The draft [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan](#) is now available for public review and comment. The plan is a product of the *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, developed in response to President Obama's Executive Order 13508, and which aims to increase public access to the Bay and tributaries by adding 300 new public access sites by 2025.

In studies, workshops, and public planning processes, residents of the Chesapeake watershed stated that access to the water is too limited. Citizens asked for more places along the water where they can walk, sit, play, picnic, camp, swim, fish, watch wildlife and launch their canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, sailboats and powerboats. The draft plan was produced by a team of people involved in public access planning and implementation in each of the Chesapeake watershed states and the District of Columbia. The team encouraged citizens to participate in the planning work. In spring 2011, at regional workshops in Washington DC, Harrisburg, PA, Baltimore, MD, and Richmond, VA, residents made more than 130 suggestions for additional public access locations. Two months later, using an online mapping tool, citizens identified another 300 suggested sites for specific access points. Those contributions from citizens were instrumental in developing this draft Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan.

The draft plan [available now for review and comment](#) depicts specific potential access sites ready for development as well as those that require further design and planning, and those in need of further analysis. The planning team recognizes that additional analysis is needed for access in urban areas and for camping associated with access to the rivers. This will be done over the coming year.

Through an extensive process involving review of existing local, state, and federal data, public workshops and an on-line public mapping tool, this plan describes the status of existing public access as follows:

- There are 1,144 documented existing public access sites where people can launch boats, fish, swim, or look out over the Bay and its tributaries. About a third of these sites provide more than one types of access.
- There is just one access site per 15 miles of shoreline, a very low ratio. Just 770 existing access sites along the shorelines of the Bay and tidal portions of its tributaries serve a combined length of 11,684 miles—equivalent to the distance along the United States' west coast from Mexico to Canada.
- Multiple studies and plans, including all state outdoor recreation plans, continue to document high public demand for access to streams, rivers, and bays.
- On average, sites are about 15 miles apart, creating significant stretches of shoreline with no access. In some cases, the gap between sites is dozens of miles. For example, the southern bank of the tidal James River includes a 64-mile stretch with no regularly open access sites. Long, inaccessible stretches make it difficult to plan trips along water trails and reduce the benefits of ecotourism.
- Less than half of access sites provide launches or landings for boats or paddle craft.

To identify potential new public access sites, the planning team reviewed existing planning documents to identify and assess all previously proposed potential sites, and members of the public identified hundreds of additional desired sites at workshops and on-line. The team reviewed and refined the list of these sites for this plan. This revealed that:

- 316 specific potential new public access sites have been identified.
- Over half of these sites are already on publicly owned land.
- Only a small fraction of these sites (5 percent) are "construction-ready."
- Boat launching capacity is most frequently suggested for these sites (47 percent).
- The highest demand for new public access sites is frequently in urban areas.
- A large number of potential sites are along water trails or national historic trails.
- Members of the paddling public frequently expressed a desire for small primitive campsites, picnic areas, and restrooms at appropriate locations along water trails.

The plan recognizes and documents a series of planning and policy considerations that will influence a strategic approach to expanding public access. In addition, the plan sets out a se-



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*Public Access (Continued from page 8)*

ries of actions for moving access development forward. These include:

- Make funding for public access a priority.
- Carry out and support more detailed assessments and project de-sign for potential sites.
- Fill strategic gaps in access along water trails.
- Incorporate identified proposed public access sites and actions in key plans.
- Further examine urban public access issues and needs.
- Work with private sector funders to develop access.
- Engage in hydropower re-licensing processes to expand public access

This plan groups potential access sites by readiness for development:

Category 1 -- Sites that are essentially ready for construction, with planning and permitting generally complete

Category 2 -- Sites that still require some additional planning and review before they could be developed

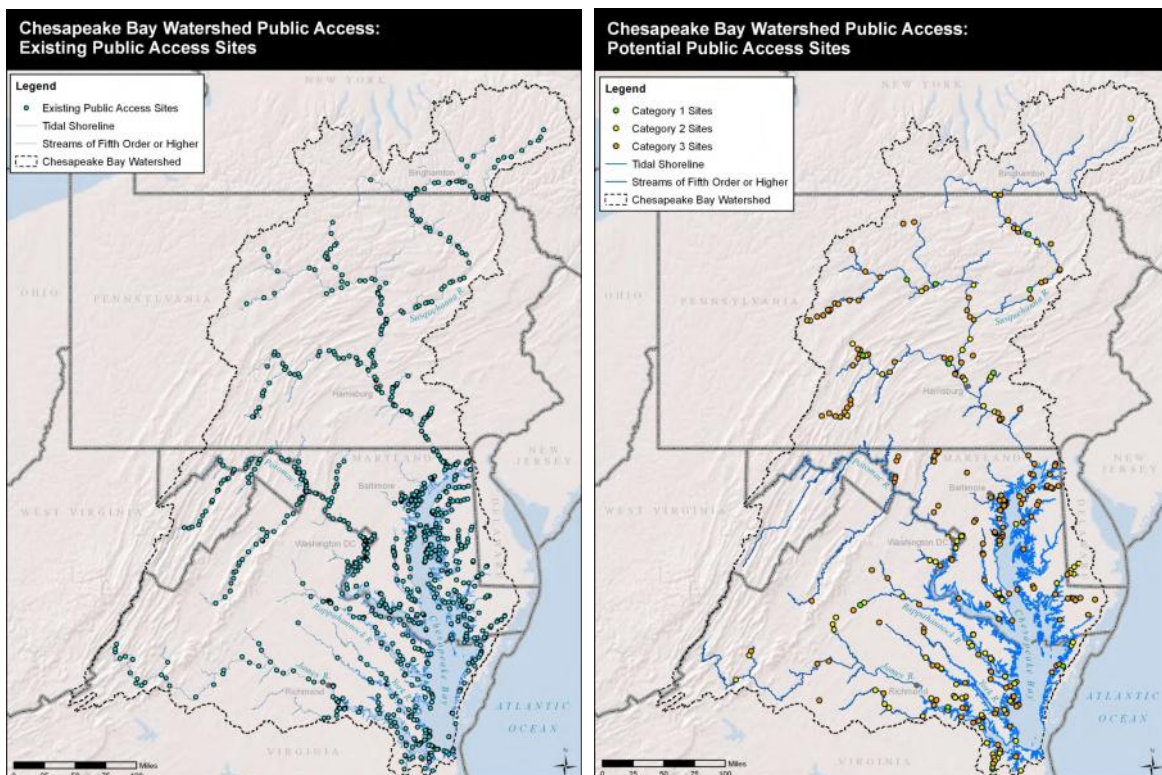
Category 3 -- Sites that need substantial analysis and planning before they could be developed

Review the draft plan here: <http://www.baygateways.net/publicaccess/>. The National Park Service welcomes public comments on this draft Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan through **August 24, 2012**. Comments can be provided in two ways:

Via email: Written comments on the draft plan can be submitted to [ChesapeakeAccess@nps.gov](mailto:ChesapeakeAccess@nps.gov). This is the best option for overall comments on the plan or suggestions regarding the text.

Via on-line mapping tool: To suggest existing access sites that may have been missed in this plan or to recommend potential new access sites not included in appendix B of the plan, please use the on-line mapping tool at <http://www.baygateways.net/AddPA/>. Instructions in the tool will guide you in how to mark and describe a site.

An interactive map of public access sites is available to use for trip planning, general interest or to prepare your comments now at <http://www.baygateways.net/ViewPA/index.html?config=existing.xml>





Jefferson Patterson Park Beginner History Paddle  
*photo by Rich Stevens*

## Inside our July 2012 issue:

- Delaware Bay Crossing
- Timeless Beauty, Timeless Place
- Pirates Find Midnight Treasure and Flying Fish
- Discount Canoe&Kayak subscription
- CPA Beginner Paddles
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan

### **The Chesapeake Paddler**

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