

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies, Committee on Appropriations,
House of Representatives

September 2006

CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS PROGRAM

National Park Service Needs Better Accountability and Oversight of Grantees and Gateways





Highlights of [GAO-06-1049](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1998, Congress passed the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act to establish a linked network of locations, such as parks, historic seaports, or museums—known as gateways—where the public can access and experience the bay. The National Park Service (Park Service) provides support to the gateways through a related grant program. In 2005, congressional concerns were raised about the Park Service's management of the program.

GAO was asked to determine the extent to which the (1) criteria for selecting gateways are transparent and consistently applied; (2) grants have been awarded to support the program goals of conserving and restoring, interpreting, and accessing bay-related resources; and (3) Park Service has taken action to improve program management and oversight. To conduct this work, GAO, among other things, examined Park Service files and interviewed Park Service officials, as well as other officials involved in the program.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making a number of recommendations aimed at ensuring that accountability and oversight is improved. In commenting on a draft of this report, Interior stated that it concurred with GAO's recommendations and described actions it plans to take to implement them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1049.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robin M. Nazzaro at (202) 512-3841 or nazzaror@gao.gov.

CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS PROGRAM

National Park Service Needs Better Accountability and Oversight of Grantees and Gateways

What GAO Found

The Park Service and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) working group—an advisory body of 17 bay-related agencies and organizations, including the Park Service—use criteria in selecting gateways for the network that are not always transparent and may not be consistently applied. As a result, the Park Service cannot be assured that its process for selecting gateways is always fair and open. Regarding transparency, applicants are not always aware of all the criteria that the Park Service and the CBGN working group use to select gateways because not all the criteria are published. The Park Service and CBGN working group also may not be consistently applying the criteria used to select gateways. For example, some applicants were denied gateway status although they had met all the selection criteria included in the checklist the Park Service uses to review gateway applications, while others were approved although they did not meet all these criteria.

The Park Service awarded almost all of its fiscal years 2000 through 2005 grants, totaling \$6.28 million, to support the grant program goals of interpretation of and access to bay-related resources but does not yet have a process in place to evaluate whether grants are effectively meeting these program goals, as well as the other program goal of conservation and restoration. During this period, the Park Service awarded 189 grants: 117 for interpretation, 68 for access, and 4 for conservation and restoration. Of the 189 grants, 110 went to 39 gateways that received more than 1 grant for either interpretation or access, with several gateways receiving up to 4 grants for interpretation. According to Park Service staff, several grantees, and GAO's analysis, these grants are for distinct projects or phases of larger projects. Although the Park Service records the program goal(s) associated with each grant project, it does not yet have a process in place to determine the effectiveness of its grants in meeting these goals. The Park Service has a strategic plan that describes program priorities and effectiveness measures, but GAO found several weaknesses in the plan.

The Park Service has made progress in outlining and implementing a number of actions to respond to management and oversight concerns first identified in February 2005, but accountability and oversight weaknesses continue. In March 2005, the Park Service developed an action plan that outlined 27 corrective actions and associated time frames to improve program management. The Park Service has implemented 16 of these actions—such as holding a financial management workshop for new grantees and contracting for an external audit of 10 percent of past grants to determine compliance with financial requirements—but 11 actions, mostly to improve oversight, have not been fully implemented. In addition, the following management problems remain: inadequate training, lack of timely grantee reporting, inappropriate grant awards to applicants with incomplete projects or lack of capacity to complete projects on time, a backlog of uncompleted grants, and underperforming gateways.

Contents

Letter

Results in Brief	1
Background	4
Criteria Used to Select Gateways Are Not Always Transparent and May Not Be Consistently Applied	7
The Park Service Awarded Grants Primarily for Interpretation of and Access to Bay-Related Resources, but It Has Not Yet Determined Grants' Effectiveness in Meeting Program Goals	15
The Park Service Has Taken Steps to Manage and Oversee Grants More Effectively but Still Needs to Address Oversight and Accountability Weaknesses	18
Conclusions	28
Recommendations for Executive Action	34
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	35
	36

Appendixes

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	37
Appendix II: Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Working Group Member Organizations	40
Appendix III: Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network	42
Appendix IV: Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Gateway Selection Process	50
Appendix V: Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Grant Application, Review, and Award Process	51
Appendix VI: Comments from the Department of the Interior	52
Appendix VII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	53

Tables

Table 1: Annual Allocations of CBGN Budget Authority and Breakdown between Grants and Other Network Activities, Fiscal Years 2000-2005	8
Table 2: Grant Projects at Seven Selected Gateways That Received More Than One Grant for Either Interpretation or Access, Fiscal Years 2000-2005	22
Table 3: Park Service's 16 Completed Actions to Improve Grant Management, as of July 2006	29

Table 4: Eleven Actions the Park Service Needs to Complete and the Status of These Actions, as of July 2006	30
Table 5: 152 Gateways in the CBGN, Location, Year Designated, Gateway Type, Number of Grants Received from Fiscal Years 2000 through 2005, and Total Grant Funding Awarded	42

Figures

Figure 1: Chesapeake Bay Watershed and Gateways beyond the Fall Line	10
Figure 2: Chesapeake Bay and Gateways Within and Adjacent to the Fall Line	11
Figure 3: Distribution of Gateways among States and the District of Columbia	12
Figure 4: Distribution of CBGN Grants among the Types of Grant Recipients	14
Figure 5: Distribution of CBGN Grants by Primary Program Goal, Fiscal Years 2000-2005	19
Figure 6: Projects Funded by CBGN Grants at Adkins Arboretum	26
Figure 7: Views at the Dogwood Harbor Gateway	34

Abbreviations

CBGN	Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network
OMB	Office of Management and Budget

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. It may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.



United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

September 14, 2006

The Honorable Charles H. Taylor
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary, is a critical economic, historical, and ecological resource for the roughly 16 million people who live in its 64,000 square-mile watershed, which includes parts of six states and the District of Columbia. Over time, the bay area's population has grown dramatically and the land surrounding the bay has become increasingly developed, which has limited public access to the bay and contributed to deteriorating water quality. In 1998, Congress passed the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act to establish a linked network of state parks, federal parks, or refuges; historic seaports; archaeological, cultural, historical, or recreational locations; or other public access and interpretive locations, where the public can access and experience the bay.¹ These locations are known as gateways. The gateways program was reauthorized in December 2002 for 5 years.²

The act directs the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with other federal agencies, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector, to create this network and provide technical assistance. It also directs the Secretary to establish a grant program to provide funds to aid state and local governments, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector in conserving, restoring, and interpreting important historical, cultural, recreational, and natural resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Within the Department of the Interior (Interior), the National Park Service (Park Service) is responsible for implementing and overseeing the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) and its related grant program. Between fiscal years 2000 and 2006, congressional conference reports allocated

¹Pub. L. No. 105-312 §§ 501-502, 112 Stat. 2961-2963.

²North American Wetlands Conservation Reauthorization Act, § 9, Pub. L. No. 107-308, 116 Stat. 2446, 2448.

approximately \$11 million to implement and manage the network and grant program. To help guide the formation and management of the network and grant program, the Park Service assembled the CBGN working group, an advisory body of 17 bay-related agencies and organizations, including the Park Service.³ (See app. II for a list of working group member organizations.)

The Park Service has created a network of 152 Chesapeake Bay gateways, including one hub in St. Michaels, Maryland, that provides an overview of the network; eight regional information centers; 27 connecting routes—21 water trails, five land trails, and one scenic byway; and 116 sites, such as museums and wildlife refuges. (See app. III for a complete list of gateways in the CBGN.) To determine whether a location should become part of this network, the Park Service developed a checklist of eligibility criteria that locations must meet to become a gateway. Starting in 2000, the Park Service solicited gateway applications and began accepting gateways that met these criteria. Once a location is approved as a gateway and has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Park Service, its managing organization is eligible to apply for grant funding through CBGN's grant program.

Between fiscal years 2000 and 2005, the Park Service awarded 189 grants to 119 gateways, for a total of approximately \$6.28 million.⁴ The grant awards ranged from \$5,000 to \$150,000; the average award was \$33,221; and the median award was \$20,000. These grants, which must be matched by an equal amount of nonfederal support, have been awarded for three primary

³The most up-to-date list of CBGN working group member organizations (updated in March 2006) provided by the Park Service lists 17 organizations. However, we found that two of these organizations are not actively involved in the CBGN working group. The Maryland Department of Transportation representative stated that she no longer participates on the working group, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representative no longer worked there. While the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had identified a replacement representative, this individual was not aware of any of the group's meetings or activities and had not yet participated in them.

⁴To implement the grant program, the Park Service enters into cooperative agreements with recipients. A cooperative agreement is a type of federal assistance agreement used when the federal government will be substantially involved in the project. Because such involvement was anticipated in CBGN projects, the Park Service chose to use cooperative agreements instead of grants. For ease of presentation, we refer to the Park Service's cooperative agreements as "grants" in this report and recipients of these agreements as "grant recipients" or "grantees."

program goals, as defined by the Park Service: conservation and restoration, interpretation, and access.⁵

Although the Park Service had established the network and grant program as directed by the act, in 2005, the Surveys and Investigations staff for the House Committee on Appropriations identified problems with the management of the program, including concerns about gateway selection, the types of projects funded, and the Park Service's oversight of the program. In this context, you asked us to determine the extent to which the (1) criteria for selecting gateways are transparent and consistently applied; (2) grants have been awarded to support the program goals of conserving and restoring, interpreting, and accessing important resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and (3) Park Service has taken action to improve its management and oversight of the program.

To address the three objectives, we analyzed Park Service and other documents, including the procedures and practices the Park Service uses to select gateways; the CBGN strategic plan for 2006 through 2008; recent reports issued by Interior's Office of Inspector General; and the Park Service's planned actions to address management and oversight concerns raised by the Surveys and Investigations staff for the House Committee on Appropriations. In addition, we met with Park Service officials and members from most of the 17 organizations in the CBGN working group to obtain their perspectives on network membership and the grant program.⁶ We also observed four CBGN working group meetings, including the gateway and grant selection meetings.

In addition, to respond to the first objective, we reviewed documents from the files for the 63 locations that were denied gateway membership during 2000 through 2006. We also reviewed 102 checklists of eligibility criteria that were either provided by the Park Service or in network application files for the 152 locations that were designated as gateways between 2000 and 2006. For the second objective, we reviewed Park Service data that

⁵The Park Service awarded grants to aid in providing access to bay-related resources because access is identified in the act as a key purpose of the network.

⁶Although we planned to interview a representative or representatives from each member organization in the CBGN working group, we were only able to interview representatives from 14 of the organizations. The Maryland Department of Transportation representative stated that she no longer participates on the working group, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representative no longer worked there, and the Maryland Historical Trust representative was on extended leave.

identified the primary program goal for each grant awarded and determined how many gateways received multiple grants for the same primary goal. For these gateways, we selected a nonprobability sample of 16 gateways covering 49 grant files.⁷ We selected our sample to include gateways that received multiple grants for the same primary program goal and to incorporate a variety of gateway types. Using a data collection instrument, we reviewed these grant files to determine the extent to which projects under each grant to the same gateway differed. We also visited seven gateways that received multiple grants for the same primary goal to discuss differences in their projects. We selected our site visit sample based on the number of grants awarded for the same primary goal, the type of gateway, the state in which the gateway is located, and the total grant dollars received. For the third objective, we used a data collection instrument to review Park Service files for the 27 grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 to determine the extent to which corrective actions have been implemented. In addition, while conducting our audit work, including visiting gateways in our nonprobability sample that received multiple grants and meeting with working group members, we visited nine nearby gateways that had not received any grants to see if the gateways were fulfilling their basic commitments for network membership. A more detailed description of our objectives, scope, and methodology is presented in appendix I. We conducted our work between December 2005 and August 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

The Park Service and the CBGN working group use criteria in selecting gateways for the network that are not always transparent and may not be consistently applied. With respect to transparency, applicants are not always aware of all the criteria that the Park Service and the CBGN working group use to select gateways because not all the criteria are published. For example, the full definition of the access criterion—that the gateway has to be open to the public for a certain number of days per week—is not publicly stated for gateway sites. The Park Service and CBGN working group also may not be consistently applying the criteria used to select gateways. For example, some applicants were approved even though they did not meet all the selection criteria included in the checklist, while others were denied gateway status even though they met all these criteria.

⁷Results from nonprobability samples cannot be used to make inferences about a population because some elements of the population have no chance of being selected.

Since the criteria are not always transparent and may not be consistently applied, the Park Service cannot be assured that its process for selecting gateways is always fair and open.

The Park Service awarded almost all of its fiscal years 2000 through 2005 grants, totaling \$6.28 million, to support the grant program goals of interpretation of and access to bay-related resources, but it does not yet have a process in place to evaluate whether its grants are effectively meeting the program's goals. During the period, the Park Service awarded 189 grants: 117 for interpretation, 68 for access, and 4 for conservation and restoration. Key CBGN program documents state that the interpretation of and access to bay-related resources will help the public understand the need to protect and restore the bay. Of the 189 grants awarded, 110 went to 39 gateways that received more than 1 grant for either interpretation or access, with several gateways receiving up to 4 grants for interpretation. According to Park Service staff, several grantees, and our analysis, these grants are for distinct projects or phases of larger projects. For example, the Adkins Arboretum gateway (in Ridgely, Maryland) received two grants for interpretation, each of which supported distinct projects: (1) the development of an orientation exhibit, an orientation video, and a self-guided audio tour and (2) the creation of a wetlands boardwalk and overlook platform. Alternatively, the two grants for interpretation for the Underground Railroad Scenic Byway (from Dorchester County, Maryland, through Caroline County, Maryland) each supported a separate phase of the development of a trail that highlights the life and contributions of Harriet Tubman⁸ to the Underground Railroad in the Chesapeake Bay region. Although the Park Service records the program goal(s) associated with each grant project, it does not yet have a process in place to determine the effectiveness of its grants in meeting the goals of conserving and restoring, interpreting, and accessing bay-related resources. The Park Service has a strategic plan that describes program priorities and effectiveness measures, but we found several weaknesses in the plan, including a lack of benchmarks to assess progress toward achieving the plan's goals and the use of measures that are difficult to quantify.

The Park Service has made progress in outlining and implementing a number of actions to respond to the management and oversight concerns first identified in February 2005, but several accountability and oversight

⁸Harriet Tubman (1820-1913) was an abolitionist who served as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, helping to lead slaves to freedom.

weaknesses continue. In March 2005, the Park Service developed an action plan that outlined 27 corrective actions and associated time frames to improve program management.⁹ The Park Service has implemented 16 of these actions—such as holding a financial management workshop for new grantees and contracting for an external audit of 10 percent of past grants to determine compliance with financial requirements. However, 11 actions, mostly to improve oversight, have not been fully implemented. Although the Park Service has made progress in implementing the actions in its plan, we identified the following five remaining management problems:

- *Inadequate training.* While the Park Service committed in its action plan to providing additional grant management training for CBGN staff, it provided federal grant and cooperative agreement training only to its CBGN Administrative Officer; and this officer left the program in August 2006. None of the CBGN project coordinators, who are responsible for reviewing grant proposals and monitoring the progress of grant projects, have received such training. According to the CBGN Director, he plans to provide grant management training to his staff in September 2006.
- *Lack of timely grantee reporting.* The Park Service committed in its action plan to stringently enforcing its requirement for grantees to report quarterly on progress and finances. However, we found that, approximately 2 months after the reports were due, only 8 of the 27 files for grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 contained both the quarterly progress and financial reports for the reporting period we reviewed.
- *Inappropriate awards.* The Park Service committed in its action plan to prohibiting the award of a fiscal year 2005 grant to any applicant with an incomplete or delayed grant project or that failed an assessment of whether the capacity existed for completing a new grant on schedule. However, we found that 2 of the 27 grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 were awarded to such applicants.
- *Backlog of uncompleted grants.* According to the Park Service, as of June 30, 2006, 63 of the 162 grants awarded between fiscal years 2000 and 2004 had not been completed or closed out. Completing and closing out existing grants is now the CBGN's highest priority, according to the CBGN Director.

⁹National Park Service. *Action Plan and Timeline: Improving National Park Service Management of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network* (2005).

-
- *Underperforming gateways.* The Park Service does not regularly review gateways to ensure that they are meeting basic requirements for CBGN membership, as laid out in their memorandums of understanding with the Park Service. This lack of oversight may have led, in some instances, to underperforming gateways that reflect poorly upon the network. For example, during a visit to the Dogwood Harbor Gateway (on Tilghman Island, Maryland), we observed that the site lacked the required CBGN logo sign indicating the site's connection to the network, as well as any information or staff to relay this connection.

We are recommending that the Secretary of the Interior take steps to enhance accountability and oversight of the CBGN program by improving the gateway selection process and its grant management. In responding to a draft report, Interior stated that it concurred with the recommendations in the report and described actions it plans to take to implement them.

Background

The Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 directed the Secretary of the Interior to establish (1) a network of state or federal parks or refuges; historic seaports; archaeological, cultural, historical, or recreational locations; or other public access and interpretive locations where the public can access and experience the bay and (2) a grant program to aid state and local governments, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector in accomplishing the act's objectives. The Secretary delegated responsibility of the CBGN and grant program to the Park Service, which administers and oversees the program from the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office located in Annapolis, Maryland.¹⁰ Program staff include a Director, an Administrative Officer, and six full- and part-time project coordinators.¹¹ At the time of our review, the Administrative Officer's duties included maintaining grant files and processing grant payments.¹² The project coordinators, among other things, review gateway and grant applications, work with grantees to ensure that they adhere to the terms of the grant, and

¹⁰One project coordinator is located in the Park Service's Philadelphia Regional Office, and one is located in Moab, Utah.

¹¹The most recent Director was appointed in January 2006.

¹²The Administrative Officer left in August 2006. According to the CBGN Director, some of the Administrative Officer's grant-related duties will be performed by a nonprofit organization through a cooperative agreement.

provide technical assistance to the gateways. As directed by the act, the Park Service provides technical assistance, such as offering workshops and conferences and training opportunities to gateways, working with gateways to determine what interpretive elements could enhance the gateway's offerings, and organizing networking meetings for the gateways.

For fiscal years 2000 through 2005, congressional conference reports allocated approximately \$9.5 million to the program. An additional \$1.5 million was allocated in fiscal year 2006. As table 1 shows, during fiscal years 2000 through 2005, overall, about two-thirds of the program's funds were for the grants, and about one-third for other network costs, including providing a CBGN logo sign for each gateway, the CBGN map identifying the locations of the gateways, technical assistance, and administrative costs.

Table 1: Annual Allocations of CBGN Budget Authority and Breakdown between Grants and Other Network Activities, Fiscal Years 2000-2005

Fiscal year	Allocations of budget authority ^a	CBGN grants ^b	Percentage of total for grants	Dollar amounts for other network activities ^c	Percentage of total for other network activities
2000	\$594,000	\$386,644	65%	\$207,356	35%
2001	798,300 ^d	556,582	70	241,718	30
2002	1,200,000	828,895	69	371,105	31
2003	1,987,000	1,381,206	70	605,794	30
2004	2,469,000	1,516,560	61	952,440	39
2005	2,465,000	1,608,931	65	856,069	35
Total	\$9,513,300	\$6,278,818	66%	\$3,234,482	34%

Source: Park Service.

^aAllocations of budget authority are the amounts presented in the Park Service's budget justification documents.

^bPark Service grant obligation information.

^cDollar amounts for other network activities were calculated by subtracting the grant obligations for each year from the total allocation of budget authority.

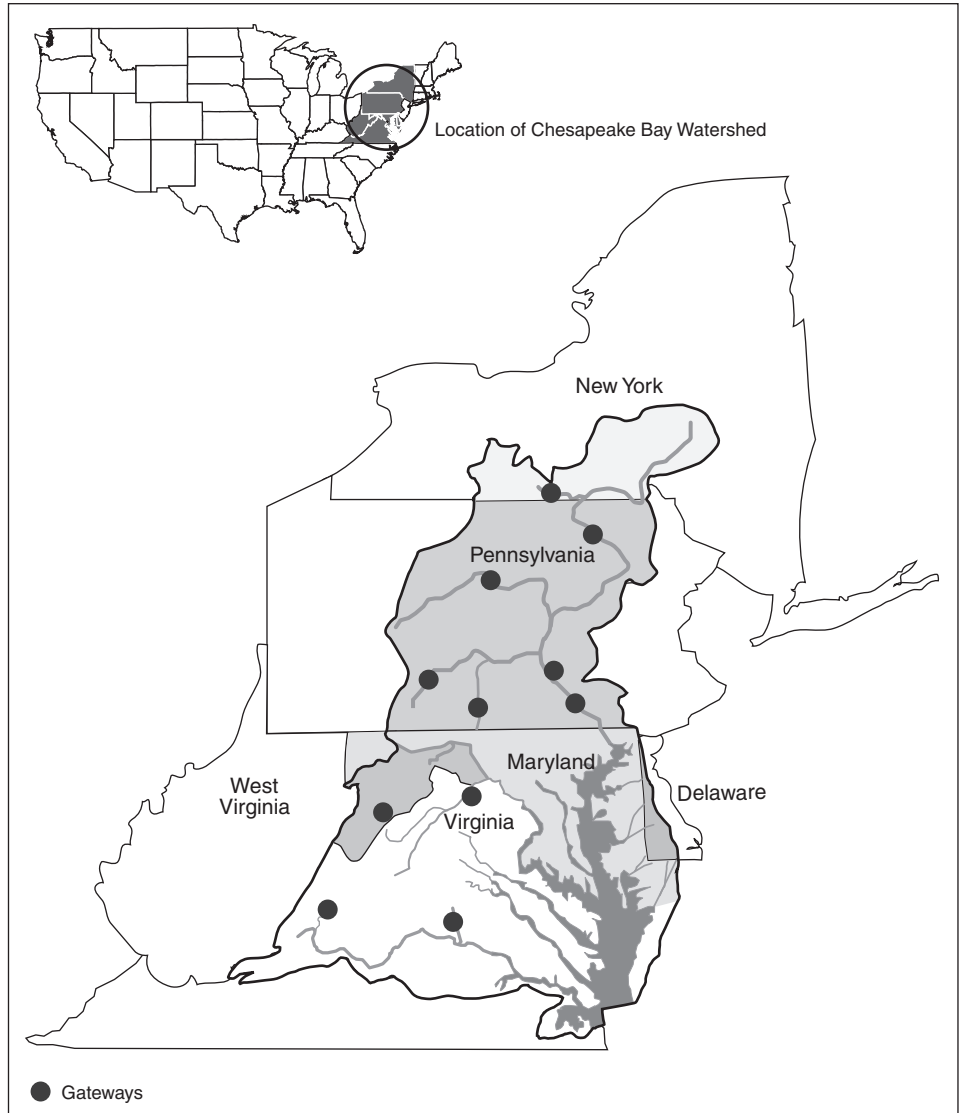
^dThe total allocation of budget authority for the CBGN program in fiscal year 2001 was \$2,295,000. Within this amount, \$798,300 was provided for CBGN grants and technical assistance, and \$1,496,700 was provided for the purchase of the Holly Farm Beach property.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network

As of July 2006, the Park Service designated 152 gateways that included state parks, federal refuges, museums, and water trails.¹³ The majority of these gateways are nonprofit organizations. Figures 1 and 2 show the locations of the gateways. Most of the gateways are located within or adjacent to the “fall line”—the upper limit of the tidal reaches of the bay. Likewise, most of the gateways are in Maryland and Virginia, as figure 3 shows. (App. III provides detailed information on the gateways.)

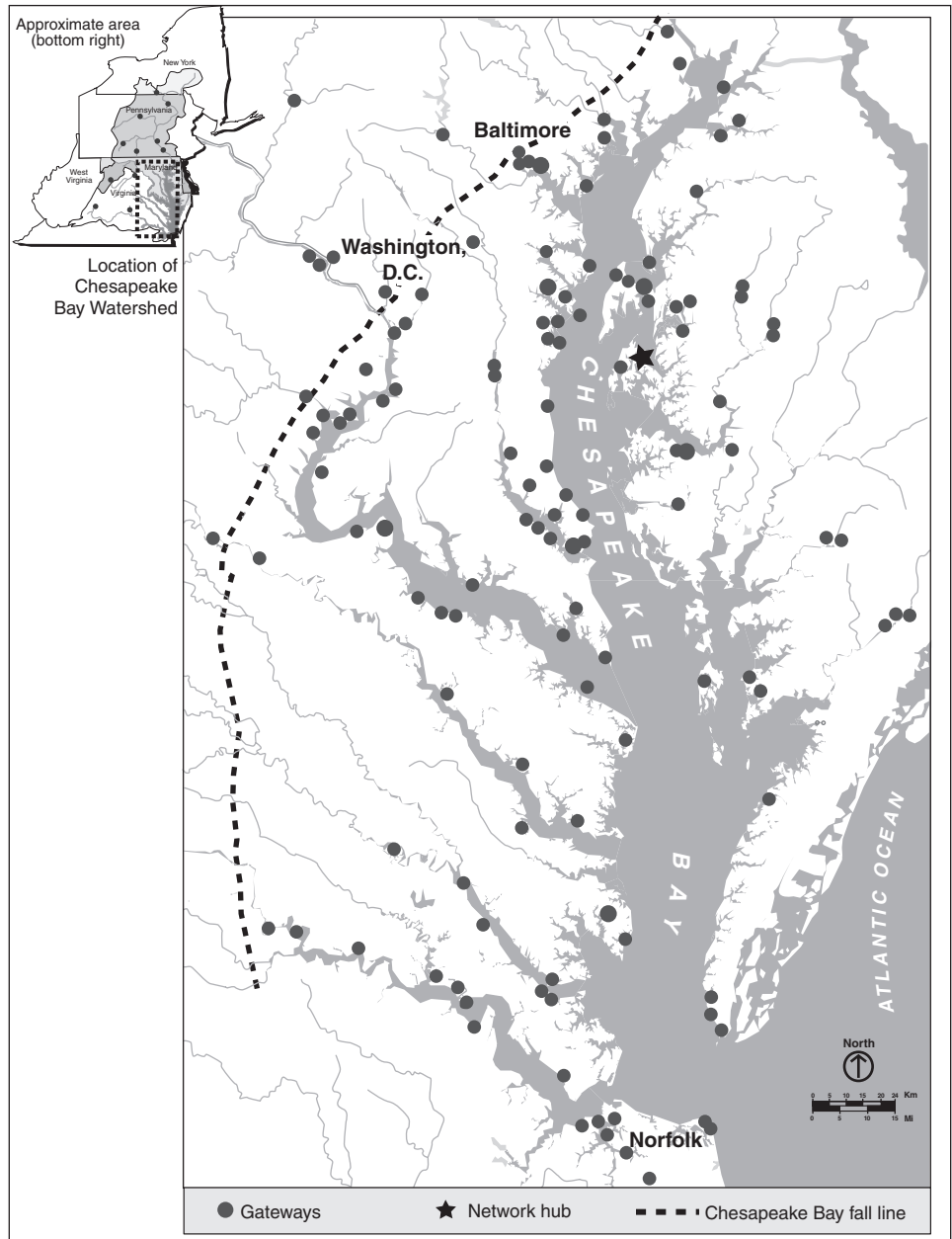
¹³While the act specifies that the Secretary of the Interior shall cooperate with the private sector in creating the network, the Park Service and CBGN working group decided that private, for-profit organizations are not eligible for designation. However, the Park Service engages private, for-profit organizations in the network through other means, such as participation in workshops and conferences. In addition, private, for-profit organizations have indirectly received funding through grants awarded to gateways that have used private, for-profit organizations as subcontractors.

Figure 1: Chesapeake Bay Watershed and Gateways beyond the Fall Line



Sources: Park Service and GAO.

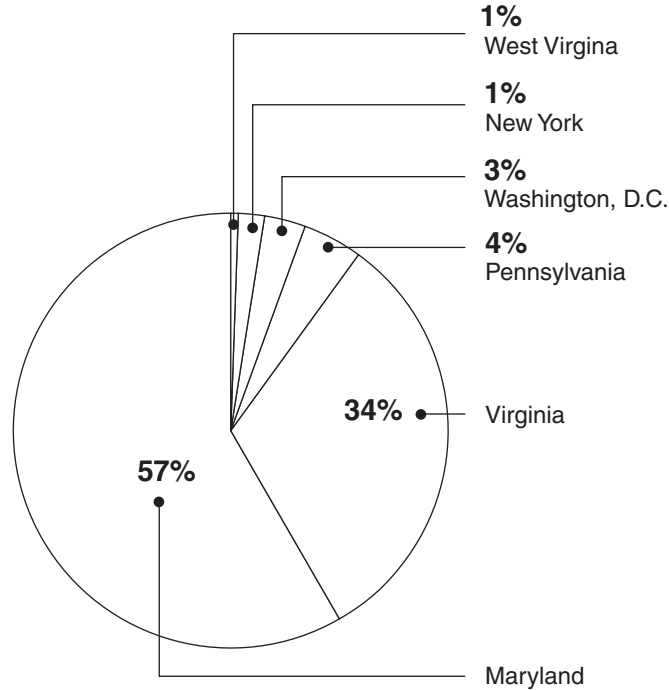
Figure 2: Chesapeake Bay and Gateways Within and Adjacent to the Fall Line



Sources: Park Service and GAO.

Note: Some dots represent more than one gateway. For example, one dot in the City of Baltimore represents eight gateways.

Figure 3: Distribution of Gateways among States and the District of Columbia



Source: GAO analysis of Park Service documents.

Note: For the four gateways that are located in multiple states (or in multiple states and the District of Columbia), we counted the gateway as being in each of the relevant locations.

To join the network, an applicant applies to become one of the following four types of gateways:

- *Hub*. Hubs are centers in locations that receive a large number of visitors. The hubs introduce visitors to baywide themes and provide key orientation information to the entire network.
- *Regional information center*. Regional information centers provide key information to facilitate visitor access to a particular region and other gateways within the vicinity.
- *Connecting route*. Connecting routes are water and land trails and other connections that link gateways through a network of boating, hiking, walking, biking, or driving routes.

-
- *Site.* Sites are the primary places to which visitors are directed in order to experience and learn about a particular bay-related natural, cultural, historical, or recreational resource and its role in the story of the bay.

The Park Service reviews the application using a checklist that lists multiple criteria. Depending on the type of gateway application, the checklist contains 6 to 10 specific criteria. Regardless of the type of gateway, the Park Service considers 7 broad criteria: represents important bay-related resources, themes, and stories; provides public access to these resources; demonstrates community support for gateway status; demonstrates the organizational and operational current and future management capacity for a gateway; advances network goals, as described in the CBGN's framework and strategic plan;¹⁴ interprets bay-related themes;¹⁵ and meets the particular characteristics of one of the four types of network gateways. After the Park Service completes its review, the CBGN working group reviews this checklist and discusses whether the application should be designated for gateway status. Based upon its review and the CBGN working group's discussion, the Park Service notifies the applicant of the agency's final decision. For those applications approved for designation, the Park Service establishes a memorandum of understanding with the gateway's managing organization. For additional details about the selection criteria and process, see appendix IV.

Grant Program

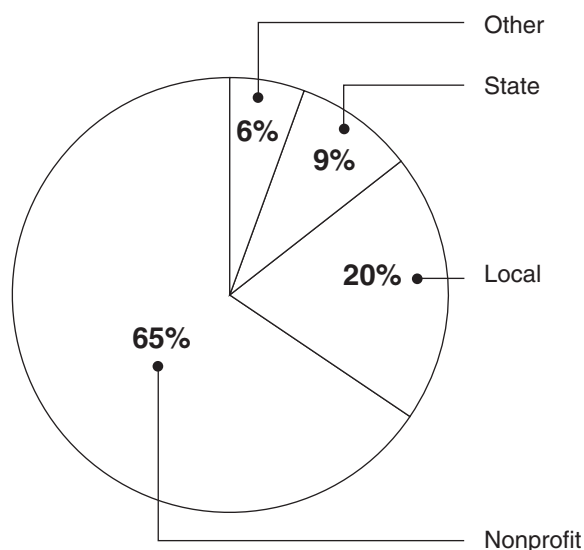
Between fiscal years 2000 and 2005, the Park Service awarded 189 grants, totaling about \$6.28 million, to 119 gateways. To implement the grant program, the Park Service enters into cooperative agreements with recipients—either a gateway's managing organization or a partner organization, such as Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. A cooperative agreement is a type of federal assistance agreement used when the federal government will be substantially involved in the project. Because such involvement was anticipated in CBGN projects, the Park

¹⁴National Park Service. *Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Framework* (Annapolis, Md.: June 2000). National Park Service. *Chesapeake Bay Gateways Strategic Plan 2006-2008* (2005).

¹⁵The program's overarching themes are "interconnectedness, interdependence, and knowledge and mystery."

Service chose to use cooperative agreements instead of grants.¹⁶ These awards, which require an equal nonfederal match and currently allow for an 18-month project period, were made to four types of grant recipients, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Distribution of CBGN Grants among the Types of Grant Recipients



Source: GAO analysis of Park Service information.

Note: For the four grants that were awarded to more than one grant recipient, we counted the grant as going toward each of the grant recipients and their respective types.

The Park Service offers grants for the following three program goals—conservation and restoration, interpretation, and access:

- *Conservation and restoration*: the development of restoration projects for high-priority natural habitat; restoration and conservation of bay-related cultural or historic resources that are central to depicting a gateway’s connection to the bay; and the development of programs that allow volunteers, including visitors, to participate in restoration and conservation work at the site.

¹⁶For ease of presentation, we refer to the Park Service’s cooperative agreements as “grants” in this report and recipients of these agreements as “grant recipients” or “grantees.”

-
- *Interpretation:* wayside exhibits and signs; interior and exterior interpretive exhibits; audiovisual productions; development of guided or live interpretive programs; interpretive brochures, maps, and guides; educational programs for kindergarten through twelfth-grade students; and creation of an interpretive plan for a gateway or group of gateways.
 - *Access:* environmentally-friendly improvements that provide access to bay-related resources, the creation of water access points, and the development of maps or guides that help people use the location.

To receive a grant, a gateway’s managing organization or a partner organization designated to carry out the project must first submit an application package that includes the application form and a proposed budget, among other things. The Park Service and CBGN working group then conduct concurrent reviews using checklists to review the application on a number of criteria, including whether the applicant has long-term management plans for the project and whether the project would significantly and measurably enhance interpretation of bay-related themes. After these reviews, the Park Service and CBGN working group meet to discuss whether the applicant should be awarded a grant. If the CBGN working group and the Park Service determine that modifications, such as changes to the scope of work or budget, are necessary, the Park Service contacts the applicant to discuss these changes. Based upon the discussions with the CBGN working group and the applicant, the Park Service then makes a final decision, notifies the applicant, and signs an agreement. For additional details about the selection process, see appendix V.

Criteria Used to Select Gateways Are Not Always Transparent and May Not Be Consistently Applied

The criteria the Park Service and CBGN working group use to select gateways are not always transparent and may not be consistently applied and, as a result, the Park Service cannot be assured that its gateways selection process is always fair and open. The Park Service established and published selection criteria that applicants are to meet in order to be recognized as a Chesapeake Bay gateway. The checklist the Park Service uses to review gateway applications states that applicants must meet all the criteria on the checklist to be designated as a gateway.

However, we found that the Park Service and CBGN working group use additional criteria, beyond those included in the checklist, in deciding on whether to accept an applicant as a gateway but have not published this

information in their application materials. Specifically, we found the following:

- One of the stated criteria for a gateway site is that it be open to the public “for the maximum number of days per week feasible, allowing for seasonal visitation patterns.” However, the Park Service and CBGN working group decided that in order to meet this criterion, gateway sites must be open at least 4 days a week, including both weekend days, but they have not included this information in the gateway site application materials. In contrast, in the application materials for proposed regional information centers and hubs, the Park Service and CBGN working group lay out the minimum number of days per week the locations need to be publicly accessible.
- The Park Service and CBGN working group decided that an environmental education resource center cannot be designated as a gateway, but the Park Service has not published this exclusion in its gateway application materials. The Park Service and the CBGN working group determined that environmental education centers do not fit into the network concept because they are not historical, cultural, natural, or recreational bay-related resources. Some Park Service officials also stated that because of the large number and similarity of these centers, it would be difficult to choose among them for gateway status. Although the Park Service and the CBGN working group documented their decision to exclude the environmental education center category from gateway eligibility in an applicant’s denial letter, they have not published this exclusionary criterion in their application materials.¹⁷ According to these Park Service officials, although the centers, standing alone, cannot be gateways, they are permitted in the network as part of another gateway (e.g., as part of a state park). However, this possibility is not clearly stated in the application materials.
- The Park Service and CBGN working group consider a location’s degree of development when making selection decisions but have not established development as a criterion. While the Park Service and

¹⁷While the Park Service and CBGN working group decided to exclude environmental education resource centers from joining the network, the program’s current Director questioned this decision because he believes that such centers fit well into the CBGN’s mission. He added that the network includes gateways that he would categorize as environmental education resource centers, and the program may want to reconsider this decision in the future.

CBGN working group have discussed the possibility of modifying selection criteria to either clarify the degree to which a potential location must be sufficiently ready to operate as an effective gateway or to potentially allow for some less-developed sites with high potential to be designated and then developed further, the Park Service and CBGN working group have not decided whether to undertake such a modification.¹⁸

In addition, the CBGN has recently shifted its focus from trying to establish a network to refining the network, but this change is not always clearly stated in the application materials. Furthermore, a 2005 Park Service study recommended that the selection criteria for gateway status need to be revisited to determine if the criteria are aligned with the program's direction and target thematic and location gaps in the network.¹⁹ For example, although part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed is in Delaware, currently, there are no designated gateways in the state. As of July 2006, the Park Service and the CBGN working group had not acted on this recommendation.

Without clearly defined, transparent criteria, the Park Service and the CBGN working group cannot be assured that they are consistently applying all the criteria used in making selection decisions. For example, during our review of documents, including checklists, that the Park Service provided for applications accepted into the network and files for applications that were denied membership, we found instances in which applicants were denied gateway status because a location was not sufficiently developed at the time of application review, and other instances in which applicants were designated as gateways while still being developed, thereby raising questions about the consistent application of this unpublished criterion.²⁰ For example, in 2001, one gateway—a museum in Maryland—was accepted, although the Park Service reviewer indicated that the site should

¹⁸The Park Service developed a checklist for “developed” water trails and another for “developing” water trails to account for the fact that when the network was created, the concept of water trails was a relatively new one. However, such designated gateways, whether developed or developing, are held to the same standards.

¹⁹Reingold Inc., *Gap Analysis Report for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network*, 2005.

²⁰Because we cannot be sure that the accepted checklists provided by the Park Service are the final ones upon which decisions to accept locations were based, we compared these checklists with information received separately from the Park Service regarding dates of gateway designation in an attempt to verify that we reviewed the final checklists.

be designated as a “developmental” site. Conversely, in 2005, the Park Service and CBGN working group denied an application because the proposed site—a 1-acre waterfront park along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.—was not sufficiently developed, although they believed it had potential as a gateway and recommended reconsideration of the nomination once development plans were complete.²¹

In addition, our review raises questions about whether the criteria in the checklist reflect all the factors that are considered when accepting applicants as gateways and whether these factors are consistently applied. Specifically, we found that some applicants were approved even though they did not meet all the selection criteria included in the checklist, and others were denied gateway status even though they met all these criteria. For example, the museum designated as a gateway in 2001, which the Park Service had recommended as a developmental site, also did not meet three of the required minimum criteria in the checklist—stewardship, long-term management capability of the managing organization, and public support. CBGN working group members also explained that some criteria are more important than others during the selection process but provided differing views as to which criteria were the most critical for gateway status or denial.

The Park Service Awarded Grants Primarily for Interpretation of and Access to Bay-Related Resources, but It Has Not Yet Determined Grants’ Effectiveness in Meeting Program Goals

The Park Service awarded the vast majority of its grants to support the program goals for interpretation of and access to bay-related resources, with 39 gateways receiving multiple grants to support interpretation and access. Although the Park Service has a strategic plan for fiscal years 2006 through 2008 and records the primary and, if applicable, the secondary and tertiary program goals, associated with each grant project, it does not yet have a process in place to determine the effectiveness of its awarded grants in meeting the program goals.

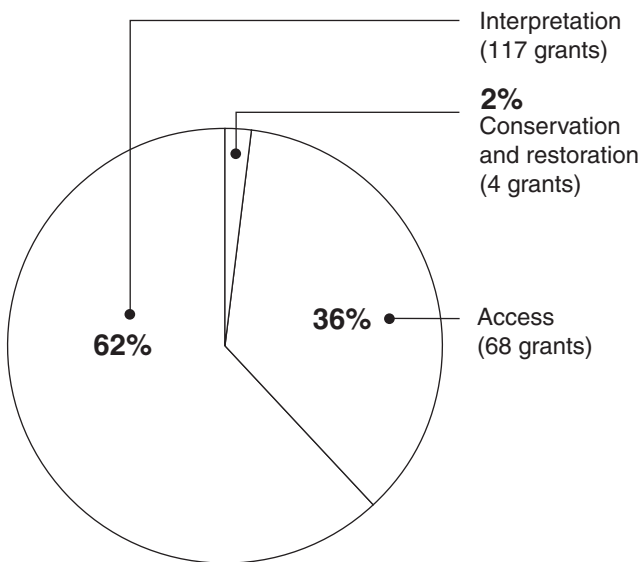
²¹In addition, the Park Service’s 2005 analysis included this site in a list of 147 potential sites for possible gateway status. As of July 2006, the location had not reapplied for gateway status.

The Vast Majority of Grants Reviewed Were Awarded for Interpretation and Access

During fiscal years 2000 through 2005, the Park Service awarded 189 grants to 119 gateways: 117 grants with the primary program goal of interpretation, 68 for access, and 4 for conservation and restoration. Of the approximately \$6.28 million awarded, \$3.68 million was for grants with the primary program goal of interpretation, \$2.35 million for access, and \$240,000 for conservation and restoration. (See fig. 5.)

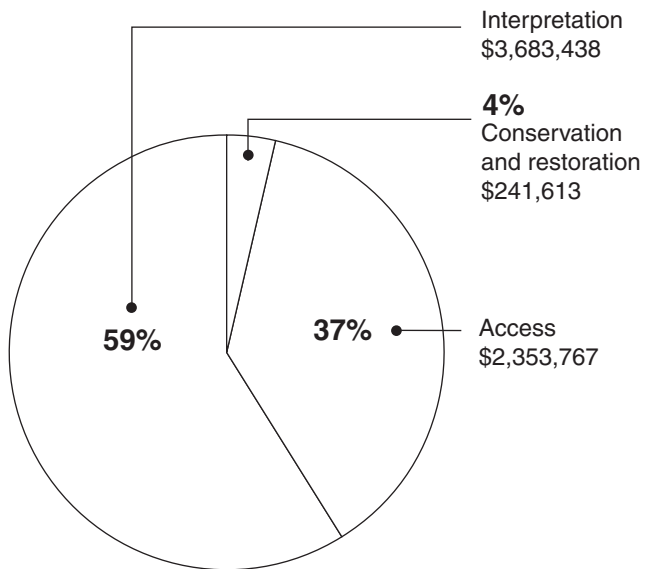
Figure 5: Distribution of CBGN Grants by Primary Program Goal, Fiscal Years 2000-2005

Distribution and number of grants awarded by primary program goal, fiscal years 2000-2005



Total number awarded = 189 grants

Distribution and amount of grant funding by primary program goal, fiscal years 2000-2005



Total amount awarded = \$6.28 million

Source: GAO analysis of Park Service documents.

Most of the grants—152—had one primary program goal; another 36 grants had primary and secondary program goals; and 1 grant had primary, secondary, and tertiary program goals. When the secondary and tertiary program goals for the 189 grants awarded from fiscal years 2000 through 2005 are taken into consideration, 145 grants had interpretive elements, 72 had access elements, and 10 had conservation and restoration elements. For example, the 2005 grant for the Rappahannock River Water Trail (in Fredericksburg, Virginia)—for \$130,825—had a primary program goal of access, secondary goal of conservation and restoration, and tertiary goal of

interpretation. Access activities included extending the water trail to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, creating an overview map, and developing five interpretive, self-guided tours of the lower section of the Rappahannock River. Conservation and restoration activities included developing stewardship programs to involve volunteers in creating low-impact campsites for overnight paddlers. Lastly, interpretive activities included renovating an existing facility to establish an on-site visitor orientation center and expanding the gateway's existing education curriculum.

While most of the grants awarded to date have been for interpretation and access, the Park Service's priorities among the three primary goals are not explicitly stated. Key program documents, such as the CBGN's framework (June 2000) and the most recent strategic plan for 2006 through 2008, state that the interpretation of and access to bay-related resources will help the public understand the need to protect and restore the bay. Park Service staff, CBGN working group members, and grantees cited the following other reasons for focusing on interpretation and access:

- One of the Park Service's primary areas of expertise is interpretation, and most of the CBGN project coordinators have this expertise.
- Interpretation is the logical first step for a site in the CBGN because interpretation of a site's bay-related resources allows visitors to understand the site's larger connection to the Chesapeake Bay.
- Fewer funding sources are available for interpretive projects compared with the funding sources available for conservation and restoration. For example, grant funding is available from federal, state, private, and nonprofit sources for conservation and restoration, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Improvement Fund, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust's stewardship grants.
- According to the Park Service, present estimates are that only 1 to 2 percent of the Chesapeake Bay's shoreline is publicly accessible; therefore, CBGN emphasizes projects that increase public access to the bay.

-
- Fewer gateway sites apply for conservation and restoration grants, in part because conservation and restoration projects take more time and are more expensive.

39 Gateways Received Multiple Grants to Support Interpretation and Access

Of the 189 grants awarded during fiscal years 2000 through 2005 to 119 gateways, 110 grants went to 39 gateways that received more than 1 grant for either interpretation or access, with several gateways receiving up to 4 grants for interpretation. We visited 7 of these 39 gateways to understand the types of projects funded, particularly in cases where a gateway received more than 1 grant for interpretation or access. Collectively, the seven gateways received 21 grants—11 for interpretation, 8 for access, and 2 for conservation and restoration—with a total value of \$1,019,368. (Table 2 lists the seven gateways, the primary program goal, the dollar amount of each of the grants the gateway received, the percentage of nonfederal match contributed, and a description of each project.)

Table 2: Grant Projects at Seven Selected Gateways That Received More Than One Grant for Either Interpretation or Access, Fiscal Years 2000-2005

Gateway	Grant year	Primary program goal	Grant amount	Nonfederal match percentage in ranges (100 percent is even match) ^a	Project description
Adkins Arboretum—Ridgley, Md. A 400-acre preserve on Tuckahoe Creek on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The area includes forested wetlands, maturing forests, and meadows. The gateway focuses on conserving native plants in the Mid-Atlantic coastal plain and has over 600 species of native shrubs, trees, wildflowers, grasses, and ferns.	2001	Access	\$23,100	100-149%	One-page visitor orientation map and guide brochure and six interpretive signs on native plant communities.
	2002	Interpretation	31,000	300-349	Wetlands boardwalk and overlook platform.
	2004	Interpretation	61,569	100-149	Orientation exhibit, orientation video, and self-guided audio tour.
	2005	Conservation and restoration	120,000	300-349%	Development of a low-impact and pervious parking lot and replacement of the paved lot with a native garden with interpretive displays.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$235,669		
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge—Cambridge, Md. A wildlife refuge located in the Blackwater and Nanticoke River watersheds on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It preserves over 26,000 acres as a wintering area for vast numbers of migratory birds. It also serves as a haven for several threatened or endangered species, including one of the largest concentrations of nesting bald eagles along the Atlantic Coast. While primarily a tidal marsh, the refuge also includes a mature pine forest.	2000	Interpretation	\$15,000	100-149%	New interpretive exhibits on refuge wildlife and habitats in Visitor Center.
	2001	Access	20,000	100-149 ^b	Development of two water trails, water trail map and guides, and two wayside signs with safety information.
	2002	Access	33,000	100-149	Development of two nature trails with interpretive kiosks and trail guides.
	2004	Conservation and restoration	27,500	100-149%	Partnership with National Aquarium in Baltimore for a 1.5-acre community, volunteer-based wetlands restoration project.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$95,500		

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Grant year	Primary program goal	Grant amount	Nonfederal match percentage in ranges (100 percent is even match) ^a	Project description
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum—St. Michaels, Md. The hub and one of the few indoor/outdoor museums focusing on the history and traditions of the Chesapeake Bay. The museum is located on 18 acres of land along the Miles River and the complex houses examples of historic bay working boats, numerous exhibits, guns, decoys, ship models, and the 1879 Hooper Strait Lighthouse.	2000	Interpretation	\$40,000	100-149%	Two interpretive kiosks highlighting bay themes, interpretive brochures and maps of thematic routes linking gateway sites, and a revision of the museum's docent manual and training program.
	2001	Interpretation	19,200	150-199	Development of an ongoing, costumed, live interpretive program on watermen's life and culture.
	2003	Interpretation	100,000	400-449	Development of a new, extensive, permanent exhibit, "At Play on the Bay," which highlights the increasing recreational activities of the bay, such as the history of recreation, and the effects of growth on the bay environment.
	2005	Access	150,000	150-199%	CBGN Regional Contact Center to provide information to visitors on how to explore the bay through the CBGN.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$309,200		
Patuxent River Park—Jug Bay Natural Area—Upper Marlboro, Md. A 2,000-acre tract of land comprised of various natural habitats that buffer the Patuxent River. Jug Bay is an important freshwater tidal estuary in the bay region and it is a component of the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, a nationwide network of coastal estuaries that serve as laboratories for scientific research, education, and monitoring. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in the area.	2002	Interpretation	\$5,000	100-149%	Creation of a self-guided driving, hiking, and biking tour brochure.
	2004	Interpretation	17,550	100-149%	10 interpretive wayside signs and a brochure on the archeological and historical resources on the Mt. Calvert site.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$22,550		

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Grant year	Primary program goal	Grant amount	Nonfederal match percentage in ranges (100 percent is even match) ^a	Project description
Rappahannock River Water Trail—Fredericksburg, Va. The Rappahannock River is the longest free-flowing river in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and extends 184 miles from its origin at Chester Gap in the Shenandoah National Park of western Virginia to Stingray Point in the Chesapeake Bay. The water trail includes historic areas from Kelly's Ford to the Fredericksburg City Docks—the middle section of the river. While there are many locations along the Rappahannock that are accessible for paddling and boating, the water trail is still under development.	2004	Access	\$109,674	100-149%	Development of a water trail, creation of an interpretive water trail map and guide and Web-based version, four wayside signs, and six interpretive kiosks on safety and conservation of the water trail.
	2005	Access	130,825	100-149%	Expansion of the water trail to the mouth of the river; creation of a new overview map and five interpretive, self-guided tours of the lower Rappahannock; renovation of an existing facility to establish an on-site visitor orientation center; expansion of existing education curriculum; and development of stewardship programs to involve volunteers in conservation and restoration work, such as developing low-impact campsites for overnight paddlers.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$240,499		
Susquehanna River Water Trail—Lower Section—water trail from Harrisburg, Pa., south to Havre de Grace, Md. The Susquehanna River is the largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The lower section of the water trail spans 65 miles from Harrisburg, Pa. to Havre de Grace, Md. The Lower Susquehanna Water Trail helps users explore the river's diversity of natural and built environments, as well as contrast the wilderness and uses of the river for work.	2000	Access	\$20,000	300-349 ^b %	Development of an interpretive framework and signage plan identifying 21 key sites along the river, design and fabrication of 14 wayside signs, and an interpretive water trail map and guide to the Pennsylvania portion of the trail's lower section.
	2001	Interpretation	10,500	300-349	Addition of seven interpretive wayside signs at key public launches in Pennsylvania.
	2002	Access	18,000	100-149 ^c %	Printing and production of a water trail map and guide focused on the Maryland portion of the river.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$48,500		

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Grant year	Primary program goal	Grant amount	Nonfederal match percentage in ranges (100 percent is even match) ^a	Project description
Underground Railroad Scenic Byway— Dorchester County north through Caroline County, Md. This 64-mile driving route highlights the life of Harriet Tubman, an abolitionist who served as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, and key places connected with her in the Chesapeake Bay region. From Dorchester County, the area she grew up in, the trail can be followed north through Caroline County, where many Maryland free blacks and white abolitionists supported the cause of freedom.	2003	Interpretation	\$30,000	100-149%	“Finding a Way to Freedom” driving route guide, design of three exhibits to be placed at locations along the Byway, and installation of one exhibit in The Museum of Rural Life (in Denton, Md.).
	2005	Interpretation	37,450	100-149%	Fabrication and installation of two exhibits designed with the 2003 grant, creation of three wayside signs, and development of an interpretive plan for the Sailwinds Visitor Center.
Total CBGN grant funding			\$67,450		
Total CBGN grant funding for the seven gateways			\$1,019,368		

Sources: Park Service documents, gateway documents, and information provided by grantees.

^aThese nonfederal match ranges are based on estimates provided by the grantees. For grants that have not been completed, the estimates represent the anticipated match.

^bThe nonfederal match estimate does not include in-kind contributions.

^cThis project is not yet complete due to turnover in the project’s managing organization. The current managing organization provided an estimate of the current match percentage but was not able to estimate the anticipated match for the entire project.

According to Park Service staff, some working group members, several grantees, and our analysis, these grants funded distinct projects or phases of a larger project. For example, the Adkins Arboretum gateway received two grants for interpretation, each of which supported distinct projects: (1) the development of an orientation exhibit, an orientation video, and a self-guided audio tour and (2) the creation of a wetlands boardwalk and overlook platform. (See fig. 6.)

Figure 6: Projects Funded by CBGN Grants at Adkins Arboretum



Source: GAO.

(a) Orientation exhibit that consists of a mural and photo collage used by docents to provide an overview of the site (funded by the 2004 grant). (b) Visitors listen to a lesson about native plant communities and ecology at one of 35 stops on an audio tour (funded by the 2004 grant). (c) A boardwalk through wetlands on the arboretum grounds and an overlook platform that students and visitors use to closely view plants and wildlife (funded by the 2002 grant).

Alternatively, gateways sometimes break up a larger project into manageable phases in order to complete the project in the allowed 18-month time frame and meet the matching requirement. For instance, the Underground Railroad Scenic Byway's two grants for interpretation each supported a separate phase of the development of a trail that highlights the

life and contributions of Harriet Tubman to the Underground Railroad in the Chesapeake Bay region.

The Park Service Has Not Yet Determined Grants' Effectiveness in Meeting Program Goals

Although the Park Service tracks the program goal(s) for each grant, it does not have a process to determine the effectiveness of the grants in meeting its program goals of conservation and restoration, interpretation, and access. In October 2005, the Park Service issued its strategic plan for 2006 through 2008, which describes program priorities and effectiveness measures. However, we have identified the following weaknesses in this plan:

- The plan does not have benchmarks to assess progress toward achieving its goals. For example, one of the goals—to “increase awareness and use of the Gateways Network”—has a target of increasing the number of visitors who participate in grant-funded programming, exhibits, and events, but the CBGN program does not have a baseline from which to measure the attainment of this target.
- The Park Service is not collecting data to establish benchmarks or measure its progress in achieving its goals. For example, one of the goals—to “increase the number of gateways providing opportunities for visitors/volunteers to participate in on-site stewardship activities”—targets an increase in the number of stewardship actions taken by visitors at gateways by 20 percent by 2008. According to the plan, the Park Service will determine the attainment of this goal by measuring the number of volunteers and the amount of time they spend participating in grant-funded activities. However, according to the Park Service, it does not track the number of volunteers or volunteer hours that contribute toward achieving its strategic goals.
- Some of the measures included in the strategic plan are difficult to quantify. For example, to assess its effectiveness in increasing the number of people who understand the Chesapeake Bay story, the Park Service plans to measure the number of visitors who demonstrate understanding of Chesapeake Bay history, culture, and environment and/or stewardship from grant-funded gateway experiences. However, as the Park Service recognizes, measuring such outcomes is difficult. According to a 2005 report by Interior’s Inspector General, 12 Interior grant programs could not demonstrate results because program goals

were not measurable.²² The Inspector General recognized that while establishing measurable goals for grant programs can be difficult, such goals are essential to demonstrate results. We have also reported on the difficulty of measuring outcomes from grants.²³

The CBGN Director expressed similar concerns about the plan's usefulness for assessing the effectiveness of the grant program and the network as a whole. In addition to confirming the problems described above, he stated that he was uncertain as to whether the goals laid out in the strategic plan are achievable and in line with what he sees as the top priorities for the CBGN. He plans, in conjunction with his staff, the CBGN working group, and gateways, to conduct a comprehensive review of the strategic plan during fiscal year 2007 to determine if the plan's goals are measurable and achievable, and represent the CBGN's current priorities.

The Park Service Has Taken Steps to Manage and Oversee Grants More Effectively but Still Needs to Address Oversight and Accountability Weaknesses

The Park Service developed an action plan to address concerns in several areas, including planning, financial management, and grantee oversight. However, as of July 2006, it had only implemented 16 of the 27 actions in its plan. The remaining 11 actions have not been fully implemented. Moreover, several management problems—inadequate training, a lack of timely grantee reporting, inappropriate grant awards, a backlog of incomplete grant projects, and underperforming gateways—still need to be addressed.

²²Department of the Interior, Office of Inspector General, *Audit Report: Framework Needed to Promote Accountability in Interior's Grant Management*, Report No. W-IN-MOA-0052-2004 (Washington, D.C.: August 2005).

²³GAO, *Grants Management: EPA Needs to Strengthen Efforts to Address Persistent Challenges*, [GAO-03-846](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 29, 2003).

The Park Service Has Made Progress in Implementing Actions in Its Plan to Improve Grant Program Management

In March 2005, the Park Service developed an action plan that outlined 27 corrective actions and associated time frames to improve program management in several areas, including planning, financial management, and grantee oversight. The Park Service originally had planned to complete all 27 actions by September 2005. As table 3 shows, as of July 2006, the Park Service had implemented only 16 of these actions.

Table 3: Park Service's 16 Completed Actions to Improve Grant Management, as of July 2006

Concern	Action completed
Lack of Park Service direction, planning, and setting of priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified, strengthened, and documented the distinction between working group recommendations and Park Service decisions. For example, during the grant review process, Park Service staff analyze applications, the working group makes recommendations, and the Park Service makes the final funding decisions. • Developed annual CBGN program management plan to establish annual priorities. • Hired a contractor to analyze geographic and thematic gaps in the CBGN and estimate potential network growth through 2008. A report was issued.^a
Awarding grants without ensuring that required modifications to the grant application have been made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed checklist for certifying that modifications have been made before issuing the grant award. • Began using this checklist for fiscal year 2005 grants.
Ineffective coordination with state and local governments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised grant review instructions to clearly lay out the expectation that state representatives in the working group will share relevant information on applications that are submitted by applicants in their state. • Modified grant guidelines to require state applicants to submit a copy of their application to their state for intergovernmental review at the time they apply to CBGN.
Lack of Park Service grant oversight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed incomplete grants awarded from 2000 through 2005 to establish grant completion deadlines and to determine whether any grants should be terminated. Park Service identified 11 grants for termination and has terminated 1 of these—a fiscal year 2000 grant for \$20,000—due to a lack of grantee progress and expiring funds. • Instituted a formal process for extending the time period of the grant. • Sent e-mail notices reminding grantees that their quarterly reports were due. • Beginning with fiscal year 2005 grants, clearly stated in grant agreements when funds will expire. • Established a grant application review checklist for reviewing programmatic and financial aspects of the grant application. • Beginning with fiscal year 2005 grants, included requirements and instructions in grant agreements for filing quarterly financial status reports. • Held a financial management workshop for new grantees. • Hired a contractor to conduct audits of 17 grants to determine compliance with financial requirements. These audits identified a few problems.^b
Inappropriate awarding of grants to nonfederal applicants for projects benefiting federal entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised grant application guidelines to allow only grant applications from nonfederal applicants for projects taking place on federal lands when the nonfederal entity is fully and directly responsible for implementing and carrying out the ongoing management of the project.

Source: GAO's analysis of Park Service documents.

^aReingold Inc. *Gap Analysis*. 2005.

^bReid Consulting, LLC performed the audits, which identified a few problems including one grantee that submitted a quarterly report containing unallowable costs, two grantees that were not on schedule to

meet their matching fund requirements, two grantees that lacked accounting procedures manuals, and one grantee without a formal accounting system.

Table 4 describes the remaining problems the Park Service needs to address in order to complete the remaining 11 actions in its plan. As the table indicates, most of these actions remaining are for improving oversight.

Table 4: Eleven Actions the Park Service Needs to Complete and the Status of These Actions, as of July 2006

Concern	Planned actions	Remaining problems
The proportion of appropriated funds spent on overhead costs and nongrant activities is too high relative to the funding spent on grants.	<p>Starting in fiscal year 2005, the Park Service established a goal of spending between 65 and 75 percent of its annual allocation of budget authority on grants.</p> <p>Maintain Park Service program administration costs at a level not to exceed 5 percent of annual allocation of CBGN budget authority but not less than \$90,000 annually.</p>	In fiscal year 2005, the Park Service met its goal of spending between 65 and 75 percent of its annual allocation of budget authority on grants. However, in fiscal year 2006 it will not meet this goal. The Park Service plans to spend 58 percent of its fiscal year 2006 allocation of budget authority on grants because it is providing more resources toward the administrative costs of eliminating the backlog of incomplete grants. According to the CBGN Director, the Park Service does not currently track administrative costs for the program.
Lack of Park Service direction, planning, and setting of priorities.	Develop a strategic plan for the CBGN.	A strategic plan was issued in 2005, but the Park Service plans to revise it in 2007 because of concerns about whether the goals laid out in the 2005 plan are achievable and measurable and represent current CBGN priorities.
Lack of measures for program effectiveness.	Establish an outcome measurement process for evaluating the effectiveness of CBGN grants on a programmatic basis and prepare initial report. The process will be linked to the strategic plan outlining CBGN objectives and priorities.	The Park Service contracted out for the development of a process to evaluate program effectiveness, but does not believe the proposed process is usable. The Park Service plans to enter into a cooperative agreement with a university to conduct a qualitative evaluation of network effectiveness and plans to fold in some aspects of the previous contractor's product.
Lack of Park Service grant oversight.	Ensure that all grant agreements are in compliance with the directives in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars on program management and oversight responsibilities.	As a principal action, the Park Service has developed an Operating Procedures Manual specifying procedures that incorporate the guidelines and requirements of OMB circulars to the CBGN's grant program. The Park Service is in the process of completing the other steps to improve oversight, which also address adherence to OMB circulars.
	Organize Park Service grant files on a grant basis, rather than by gateway, for better documentation and tracking of grant projects and expenditures.	The files have been reorganized by grant, but the Park Service has not finished updating them.

(Continued From Previous Page)

Concern	Planned actions	Remaining problems
	Maintain stringent enforcement of quarterly reporting requirements by grantees, including restricting payments unless reporting is current.	The Park Service has not maintained stringent enforcement of quarterly reporting requirements. However, it made some revisions to the quarterly reporting procedure to streamline it. The Park Service has signed a cooperative agreement with a nonprofit organization to facilitate completion of required reports, as well as grantee projects. ^a
	Require fully documented detailed expenditure reports for both matching and grant funds with all invoices.	The Park Service plans to implement this action by comparing invoices with quarterly reports.
	Beginning in fiscal year 2005, require more detailed explanations of the scope of work in new grant agreements, including linking payments to specific project milestones.	While the Park Service incorporated detailed descriptions in the scope of work in new grant agreements, the lack of quarterly reports prevents the Park Service from always linking payments to specific project milestones.
	Provide additional grant management training for Park Service staff.	While the CBGN Administrative Officer completed additional federal grant and cooperative agreement management training, other Park Service staff overseeing the grants have not received such training. According to the CBGN Director, he plans to provide grant management training to his staff in September 2006.
	Prohibit award of a 2005 CBGN grant to any applicant with an incomplete outstanding grant: from 2000-2003, as of July 30, 2005; from 2004 that is not fully on schedule; or that fails a specific assessment of whether the capacity exists for completing a new grant on schedule.	While the Park Service developed and used a checklist to implement this action, it did not fully enforce it for fiscal year 2005 grants. The Park Service said it would enforce this action for fiscal year 2006.

Source: GAO analysis of Park Service documents.

^aThis work will be done by the Association of Partners for Public Lands.

Several Management Problems Remain

Although the Park Service has made progress in implementing the actions in its plan, we identified the following five remaining management problems:

- Inadequate training.* While the Park Service committed in its action plan to providing additional grant management training for CBGN staff, it provided federal grant and cooperative agreement training only to its CBGN Administrative Officer, and this officer left the program in August 2006. None of the CBGN project coordinators, who are responsible for reviewing grant proposals and monitoring the progress of grant projects, have received such training. However, according to the CBGN Director,

project coordinators have had limited training that includes attending a grant recipient workshop on financial management. This lack of training is not unique to the CBGN program. In 2005, Interior's Inspector General reported that over two-thirds of the grant managers and administrators they surveyed departmentwide had not received any grant-related training in the last 4 years.²⁴ The Inspector General concluded that these staff generally lacked sufficient training to effectively award and monitor grants. According to the CBGN Director, he plans to provide grant management training to his staff in September 2006.

- *Lack of timely grantee reporting.* The Park Service committed in its action plan to stringently enforcing its requirement for grantees to report quarterly on progress and finances. However, we found that, approximately 2 months after the reports were due, only 8 of the 27 files for grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 contained both the quarterly progress and financial reports for the reporting period we reviewed. Furthermore, despite the commitment in the CBGN action plan to restrict reimbursements to grantees who had not yet submitted their quarterly reports, one grantee who had not submitted a complete report was reimbursed \$3,615.61. Interior's Inspector General raised similar concerns in its August 2005 report.²⁵ The Inspector General reported that nearly half of the 92 files reviewed across the department did not contain the required performance and financial status reports. According to the CBGN Director, he is going to review the reporting requirement to determine if reporting on a quarterly basis is too stringent.
- *Inappropriate awards.* The Park Service committed in its action plan to prohibiting the award of a fiscal year 2005 CBGN grant to any applicant with an incomplete or delayed grant project or that failed an assessment of whether the capacity existed for completing a new grant on schedule. However, we found that 2 of the 27 grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 were awarded to such applicants: one grant was awarded to an applicant with a 2004 grant not expected to be completed on time and one to an applicant that, according to the Park Service reviewer, "has not shown the capacity to accomplish its previous grant project in a timely manner."

²⁴Department of the Interior, Office of Inspector General, Report No. W-IN-MOA-0052-2004.

²⁵Department of the Interior, Office of Inspector General, Report No. W-IN-MOA-0052-2004.

-
- *Backlog of uncompleted grants.* According to the Park Service, as of June 30, 2006, 63 of the 162 grants awarded between fiscal years 2000 and 2004 had not been completed or closed out. Completing and closing out existing grants is the CBGN's highest priority, according to the CBGN Director. In 2006, the Inspector General reported that 18 of 23 CBGN grants (fiscal year 2001-June 2005) it reviewed had experienced delays ranging from 9 months to 3 years.²⁶ The Inspector General concluded that the Park Service needs to terminate projects when grantees lack valid reasons for delays. In its response to the Inspector General's report, the Park Service committed to eliminating the backlog of incomplete grant projects and placing all grants on a reasonable and documented time frame for completion.
 - *Underperforming gateways.* The Park Service does not regularly review gateways to ensure that they are meeting basic requirements for CBGN membership, as laid out in their memorandums of understanding with the Park Service. This lack of oversight may have led, in some instances, to underperforming gateways that reflect poorly upon the network. For example, during a visit to the Dogwood Harbor gateway (on Tilghman Island, Maryland), we observed that the site lacked the required CBGN logo sign that indicates the site's connection to the network, as well as any information or staff to explain this connection. (See fig. 7.)

²⁶Department of the Interior, Office of Inspector General, *Audit Report: Administration of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and Grant Program, National Park Service*, Report No. W-IN-NPS-0006-2005 (Sacramento, Calif.: July 2006).

Figure 7: Views at the Dogwood Harbor Gateway



Source: GAO.

(a) Paved entrance without a CBGN logo sign.

(b) Skipjacks without any working watermen to observe or interpretive information to read.

Park Service staff and working group members stated that they have concerns about gateways that are not fulfilling their commitments, and they are considering removing some sites from the network. The Park Service and working group members have started discussing the possibility of instituting periodic reviews of gateways to ensure they are continuing to meet the terms of their agreements. Almost all of the working group members that we interviewed agreed that periodic reviews of gateways are needed and that, where appropriate, underperforming gateways should be removed from the network.

Conclusions

The Park Service is struggling to effectively manage and oversee the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and grant program. To its credit, the Park Service has developed an action plan to address congressional concerns and has completed many of the actions cited in the plan. However, the Park Service still has to address several weaknesses in accountability and oversight to be assured that the CBGN is effective. In particular, it cannot currently ensure that its process for selecting gateways is open and fair because it bases its decisions, in part, on criteria that are not published in the application materials. Further, based on our review of

the Park Service documents, the criteria for approving or denying gateway membership may not have been applied consistently. In addition, the Park Service does not have a process for overseeing gateways to determine whether they are meeting the basic requirements for network membership, for remedying identified problems, or for removing underperforming gateways from the network. Underperforming gateways could discourage visitors from going to other gateways, appreciating bay-related resources, and promoting the stewardship of these resources—the ultimate purpose of the program. Finally, the Park Service has neither assessed the extent to which the grants it has awarded are effectively meeting program goals, nor has it fulfilled its commitments to ensure that staff are adequately trained in grant management, grantees are submitting reports on time so that progress and expenditures can be properly monitored, and grants are only awarded to applicants who have completed previous grants and who have the capacity for managing them effectively.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To enhance accountability and oversight, we recommend that the Secretary of the Interior direct the Director of the Park Service to have the Director of the CBGN implement seven actions in the following areas and be held accountable for implementing them:

Gateway selection and network membership:

- Take steps to make all criteria used to select gateways publicly available and then consistently apply them.
- Periodically review gateways to determine whether they are meeting the basic requirements for network membership.
- Develop procedures for resolving identified problems and, where appropriate, removing underperforming gateways from the network.

Grant management:

- Develop and implement a process to determine the extent to which grants are effectively meeting program goals.
- Ensure that CBGN staff responsible for grant management are adequately trained.
- Ensure that grants are awarded only to applicants who completed grants or to applicants who have demonstrated the capacity for completing a new grant on schedule.

-
- Ensure that grantees submit progress and financial reports in a timely manner.

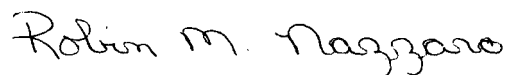
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report for review and comment to the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Environmental Protection Agency did not have comments on the report. Interior stated that it concurred with the recommendations in the report and described actions it plans to take to implement them. Planned actions include (1) reviewing the criteria used to select gateways and posting any revisions or clarifications to the CBGN Web site; (2) completing procedures for periodically reviewing gateways to determine if they are meeting the basic requirements for network membership and for terminating those not in compliance; and (3) having staff attend a grant management workshop offered by the Environmental Protection Agency in September 2006 and additional training, as necessary. The periodic reviews of gateways are to begin in October 2006.

We are sending copies of this report to the congressional committees with jurisdiction over the Department of the Interior and its activities, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. We also will make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3841 or nazzaror@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VII.

Sincerely yours,



Robin M. Nazzaro
Director, Natural Resources and Environment

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This appendix details the methods we used to assess the National Park Service's (Park Service) Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) and its related grant program. For this assessment, we determined the extent to which the (1) criteria for selecting gateways are transparent and consistently applied; (2) grants have been awarded to support the program goals of conserving and restoring, interpreting, and accessing important resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and (3) Park Service has taken action to improve its management and oversight of the program.

To address the three objectives, we analyzed Park Service and other documents, including the procedures and practices used to select gateways; the CBGN strategic plan for 2006 through 2008; recent reports issued by the Department of the Interior's (Interior) Office of Inspector General; and the Park Service's planned actions to address management and oversight concerns raised by the Surveys and Investigations staff for the House Committee on Appropriations. In addition, we met with Park Service officials and members from most of the 17 organizations in the CBGN working group to obtain their perspectives on network membership and the grant program.¹ We also observed four CBGN working group meetings, including the gateway and grant selection meetings.

In addition, we conducted a reliability review of the Park Service's data system for the data we received for each of the three objectives and for presenting background information about the program. Our assessment consisted of interviews with an official about the data system and elements and the method of data input, among other areas. We also compared the electronic data with source documents from the gateway and grant files, when available. We determined that the data we used were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

For the first objective—to determine the extent to which the criteria for selecting network members are transparent and consistently applied—we systematically reviewed checklists and denial letters, when available, for the 63 locations that were denied gateway status during 2000 through 2006.

¹The most up-to-date list of CBGN working group member organizations (updated in March 2006) lists 17 organizations. Although we planned to interview a representative or representatives from each organization, we were only able to interview representatives from 14 of the organizations. The Maryland Department of Transportation representative stated that she no longer participates on the working group, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representative no longer worked there, and the Maryland Historical Trust representative was on extended leave.

We obtained these documents from either the files or from Park Service officials.² In addition, we reviewed the 102 checklists that were either provided by the Park Service or in network application files for the 152 locations that were designated as gateways between 2000 and 2006.³ In reviewing both sets of checklists, there were some items that were unclear. Therefore, we created a set of decision rules reviewed and agreed upon by the team to address these cases. For example, if a checklist had a question mark in the column that indicates the criterion had been met, we did not count this as having met the particular criterion. Because we cannot be sure that the accepted checklists we reviewed are the final ones upon which decisions to designate gateways were based, we compared these checklists with information received separately from the Park Service regarding dates of gateway designation in an attempt to verify that we did, in fact, review the final checklists. In recognition of the multistep review process used in selecting gateways, we also reviewed the CBGN working group's meeting minutes, when available, for both accepted and denied applications to provide additional context for the Park Service's and the working group's decisions. In the case of denied locations, we knew some of the files were incomplete so we specifically reviewed particular documents from the files—the checklists and denial letters—and meeting minutes, when available.⁴ We did not find an explanation in all cases of why an applicant with a checklist that met or did not meet all criteria was denied or accepted.

For the second objective—to determine the extent to which the Park Service awarded grants to support the program goals of conserving and restoring, interpreting, and accessing important resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed—we reviewed Park Service data that identified the primary program goal for each grant awarded and determined the number of gateways that received multiple grants for the same primary

²We could not obtain either a checklist or a letter for 2 of the 63 locations that were denied gateway status.

³Checklists for selecting gateways were developed in late 2000. As a result, not all of the gateways designated in 2000 had checklists. In addition, the Park Service did not provide a checklist for every gateway in subsequent years.

⁴Prior to 2003, the program maintained gateway and grant documents in boxes. Starting in late 2003, a somewhat more systematic approach was implemented at which point files were constructed. According to a Park Service official, the grant files are complete while some of the gateway files for both accepted and denied locations are incomplete.

program goal.⁵ From these 39 gateways, we selected a nonprobability sample of 16 gateways covering 49 grant files.⁶ We selected our sample to include gateways that received multiple grants for the same primary program goal and to incorporate a variety of gateway types. Using a data collection instrument, we systematically reviewed the 49 grant files to determine differences among grants awarded to the same gateway for the same primary program goal. We also conducted interviews with grantees and the Park Service officials responsible for overseeing the grants. In addition, we visited 7 gateways, which we selected from the list of 39 based on the number of grants awarded for the same primary program goal, the type of gateway, the state in which the gateway is located, and the total grant dollars received. In choosing the sample, to avoid duplication, we did not select sites, except for the hub, visited by the Interior's Office of Inspector General during its recent study.⁷ During these visits, we interviewed grantees, observed grant projects, and discussed differences in their projects.

For the final objective—to determine the extent to which the Park Service has taken action to improve its management and oversight of the program—we used a data collection instrument to systematically review Park Service files for the 27 grants awarded in fiscal year 2005 to determine the extent to which corrective actions have been implemented. In addition, while conducting our audit work, including visiting gateways in our nonprobability sample that received multiple grants for the same primary program goal and meeting with working group members, we visited 9 nearby gateways that had not received any grants to see if they were fulfilling their basic commitments for network membership. We also reviewed Park Service data on the number of grants awarded from fiscal years 2000 through 2005 that have yet to be closed out.

We conducted our work between December 2005 and August 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

⁵Some grants are awarded to more than one gateway. In such instances, we included the grant in the total number of grants received for each gateway that was associated with the grant award.

⁶Results from nonprobability samples cannot be used to make inferences about a population, because some elements of the population have no chance of being selected.

⁷Department of the Interior, Office of Inspector General, Report No. W-IN-NPS-0006-2005.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Working Group Member Organizations

This appendix presents information on the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) working group member organizations. The following is the list of member organizations that the National Park Service (Park Service) provided:

- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Chesapeake Bay Commission
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Trust
- Friends of Chesapeake Gateways
- Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, Office of Tourism Development
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Historical Trust
- Maryland Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States National Park Service

Appendix II
Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Working
Group Member Organizations

According to the Park Service, this list was updated in March 2006. However, in our efforts to meet with representatives from each of the CBGN working group organizations, we learned that the Maryland Department of Transportation representative no longer participates in the working group, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's sole representative on the working group no longer works there. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee we spoke with, a replacement has been selected, but that employee had not yet participated in the CBGN working group and was unaware of any upcoming meetings or activities. In addition, at the time of our review, the Maryland Historical Trust representative was on extended leave.

Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network

This appendix provides information on the 152 gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN). It includes the name and location of each gateway, the year each was designated and its gateway type, the number of grants for fiscal years 2000 through 2005 the gateway received, and the total amount of grant funding awarded to the gateway's managing organization or partner organization during this period. This information is presented as it was reported by the National Park Service (Park Service) to us on July 27, 2006. Consequently, the data are of undetermined reliability and are for informational purposes only.

Table 5: 152 Gateways in the CBGN, Location, Year Designated, Gateway Type, Number of Grants Received from Fiscal Years 2000 through 2005, and Total Grant Funding Awarded

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Adkins Arboretum	Ridgely, Md.	2001	Site	4	\$235,669
Anacostia Park	Washington, D.C.	2002	Site	0	0
Anacostia River Community Park	Washington, D.C.	2000	Site	1	18,600
Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Information Center	Annapolis, Md.	2002	Regional information center	1	12,504
Annapolis Maritime Museum	Annapolis, Md.	2000	Site	5	201,585
Baltimore and Annapolis Trail Park	Annapolis to Glen Burnie, Md.	2003	Connecting route—land trail	0	0
Baltimore Visitor Center	Baltimore, Md.	2004	Regional information center	1	111,500
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp	Prince Frederick, Md.	2002	Site	1	11,300
Belle Isle State Park	Lancaster, Va.	2000	Site	1	28,825 ^a
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge	Cambridge, Md.	2000	Site	4	95,500 ^b
Bladensburg Waterfront Park	Bladensburg, Md.	2004	Site	0	0
Caledon Natural Area	King George, Va.	2002	Site	0	0
Calvert Cliffs State Park	Lusby, Md.	2003	Site	0	0
Calvert Marine Museum	Solomons, Md.	2001	Site	3	64,438
Cape Charles Historic District	Cape Charles, Va.	2001	Site	1	15,000
Captain Salem Avery House Museum	Shady Side, Md.	2002	Site	3	53,625

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Chemung Basin Water Trail	Steuben and Chemung Counties, N.Y.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	3	66,190
Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park	Along Potomac River from Cumberland, Md. to Washington, D.C.	2002	Site	1	56,160
Chesapeake Bay Center at First Landing State Park	Virginia Beach, Va.	2001	Regional information center	1	28,825 ^a
Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center	Grasonville, Md.	2000	Site	3	48,750
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum	St. Michaels, Md.	2000	Hub	5	421,187 ^c
Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum	Chesapeake Beach, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science	Solomons, Md.	2001	Site	1	30,058
Chesapeake Exploration Center	Chester, Md.	2002	Regional information center	1	12,360
Chickahominy Riverfront Park	Williamsburg, Va.	2003	Site	1	51,200
Chippokes Plantation State Park	Surry, Va.	2001	Site	2	33,825 ^a
Choptank and Tuckahoe Rivers Water Trail	Caroline and Talbot Counties, Md.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	3	70,700
Concord Point Lighthouse	Havre de Grace, Md.	2002	Site	1	20,000
Cross Island Trail	Kent Island, Md.	2002	Connecting route–land trail	0	0
Dogwood Harbor	Tilghman Island, Md.	2005	Site	0	0
Dutch Gap Conservation Area	Chesterfield, Va.	2000	Site	2	34,650
Eastern Branch Elizabeth River Water Trail	Virginia Beach and Norfolk, Va.	2002	Connecting route–water trail	1	15,000
Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge	Rock Hall, Md.	2002	Site	3	118,974 ^d
Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge	Cape Charles, Va.	2002	Site	1	88,000 ^e

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Elizabeth River Trail	Norfolk, Va.	2000	Connecting route–land trail	1	16,000
Elk Neck State Park	North East, Md.	2001	Site	1	15,300
Fells Point Maritime Museum	Baltimore, Md.	2003	Site	1	16,678
Fells Point National Register Historic District	Baltimore, Md.	2004	Site	1	33,135
First Landing State Park	Virginia Beach, Va.	2001	Site	2	56,325 ^a
Flag Ponds Nature Park	Lusby, Md.	2002	Site	1	32,050 ^f
Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine	Baltimore, Md.	2001	Site	3	78,880
Fort Washington Park	Fort Washington, Md.	2002	Site	1	40,500 ^g
Frederick Douglass–Issac Myers Waterfront Park	Baltimore, Md.	2006	Site	0	0
Galesville Heritage Museum	Galesville, Md.	2004	Site	1	89,137
Geddes-Piper House	Chestertown, Md.	2004	Site	1	6,425
George Washington Birthplace National Monument	Washington Birthplace, Va.	2001	Site	1	14,400
George Washington's Ferry Farm	Fredericksburg, Va.	2005	Site	0	0
Gloucester Point Park	Gloucester Point, Va.	2001	Site	2	68,698
Great Bridge Lock Park	Chesapeake, Va.	2003	Site	2	83,020
Great Falls Park	McLean, Va.	2002	Site	1	20,000 ^h
Greenwell State Park	Hollywood, Md.	2002	Site	1	11,715
Gunpowder Falls State Park	Kingsville, Md.	2001	Site	1	9,600
Gwynns Falls Trail and Greenway	Baltimore, Md.	2002	Connecting route–land trail	2	152,000
Havre de Grace Decoy Museum	Havre de Grace, Md.	2002	Site	2	95,000
Historic Annapolis Gateway–City Dock	Annapolis, Md.	2001	Site	3	31,290
Historic London Town and Garden	Edgewater, Md.	2002	Site	2	159,000
Historic St. Mary's City	St. Mary's City, Md.	2001	Site	3	157,072 ^c
Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve	Portsmouth, Va.	2000	Site	4	51,149
Huntley Meadows Park	Alexandria, Va.	2002	Site	0	0
J. Millard Tawes Historical Museum and Ward Brothers Workshop	Crisfield, Md.	2002	Site	0	0

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
James Mills Scottish Factor Store	Urbanna, Va.	2000	Site	1	14,000
Jamestown Island	Jamestown, Va.	2001	Site	1	13,050
Janes Island State Park	Crisfield, Md.	2000	Site	1	20,000 ⁱ
Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum	St. Leonard, Md.	2000	Site	3	106,150
Jones Falls Trail	Baltimore, Md.	2005	Connecting route—land trail	0	0
Juniata River Water Trail	Central Pa.	2004	Connecting route—water trail	1	74,300
King's Landing Park	Huntingtown, Md.	2002	Site	1	32,050 ^f
Kiptopeke State Park	Cape Charles, Va.	2001	Site	2	116,825 ^{a, e}
Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park	Charles City, Va.	2005	Site	1	10,970
Leesylvania State Park	Woodbridge, Va.	2001	Site	0	0
Lightship Chesapeake and Seven Foot Knoll Lighthouse	Baltimore, Md.	2001	Site	1	107,000
Lower James River Water Trail	From Richmond to Hampton Roads, Va.	2002	Connecting route—water trail	2	103,836
Mariners' Museum	Newport News, Va.	2000	Site	1	8,000
Marshy Point Park (formerly Dundee and Saltpeter Creek Park)	Baltimore, Md.	2004	Site	0	0
Martinak State Park	Denton, Md.	2002	Site	1	16,500
Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge	Lorton, Va.	2002	Site	0	0
Mason Neck State Park	Lorton, Va.	2001	Site	1	28,825 ^a
Mathews Blueways Water Trail	Mathews County, Va.	2002	Connecting route—water trail	2	69,110
Mathews County Visitor and Information Center	Mathews, Va.	2000	Regional information center	1	26,000
Maury River Water Trail	Rockbridge County, Va.	2001	Connecting route—water trail	0	0
Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary	Upper Marlboro, Md.	2001	Site	1	5,000 ⁱ
Monocacy River Water Trail	Frederick and Carroll Counties, Md.	2000	Connecting route—water trail	2	19,605
Mount Harmon Plantation	Earleville, Md.	2006	Site	0	0

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Myrtle Point Park	California, Md.	2006	Site	0	0
Nassawango Creek Preserve–Furnace Town	Snow Hill, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
Nathan of Dorchester	Cambridge, Md.	2002	Site	1	12,850
National Aquarium in Baltimore	Baltimore, Md.	2004	Site	4	261,474 ^{b, d}
Nauticus, The National Marine Maritime Center	Norfolk, Va.	2002	Site	1	100,000
Norfolk Water Trail System	Norfolk, Va.	2001	Connecting route–water trail	1	23,250
North Point State Park	Edgemere, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge	Woodbridge, Va.	2002	Site	1	16,938
Occoquan Water Trail	Fairfax and Prince William Counties, Va.	2004	Connecting route–water trail	1	100,000
Pamunkey Indian Reservation	King William, Va.	2001	Site	1	32,000
Parkers Creek Watershed Nature Preserve	Port Republic, Md.	2003	Site	1	6,596
Patapsco Valley State Park	Ellicott City, Md.	2003	Site	1	26,800
Patuxent Research Refuge–National Wildlife Visitor Center	Laurel, Md.	2002	Site	1	14,457
Patuxent River Park–Jug Bay Natural Area	Upper Marlboro, Md.	2002	Site	2	22,550 ⁱ
Pemberton Historical Park	Salisbury, Md.	2002	Site	2	34,956
Pickering Creek Audubon Center	Easton, Md.	2001	Site	4	152,991
Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Park	Piney Point, Md.	2001	Site	1	100,000
Piscataway Park	Accokeek, Md.	2000	Site	3	69,900 ^g
Pocomoke River State Forest and Park	Snow Hill, Md.	2002	Site	1	45,000
Point Lookout State Park	Scotland, Md.	2001	Site	2	45,820
Potomac Gateway Welcome Center	King George County, Va.	2000	Regional information center	1	10,000
Potomac River Water Trail	Washington, D.C. to the Chesapeake Bay	2000	Connecting route–water trail	1	20,000
Powhatan Creek Blueway	Williamsburg, Va.	2002	Connecting route–water trail	1	26,100

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Pride of Baltimore	Baltimore, Md.	2001	Site	2	24,987
Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Warsaw, Va.	2006	Site	0	0
Rappahannock River Water Trail	Fredericksburg, Va.	2002	Connecting route–water trail	2	240,499
Raystown Branch Juniata River Water Trail	Bedford County, Pa.	2002	Connecting route–water trail	1	7,106
Reedville Fisherman's Museum	Reedville, Va.	2001	Site	2	13,500
Richardson Maritime Museum	Cambridge, Md.	2002	Site	1	12,706
Rivanna River Water Trail	Albemarle and Fluvanna Counties, Va.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	2	24,865
Riverbend Park Visitor Center and Nature Center	Great Falls, Va.	2003	Site	1	20,000^h
Rock Creek Park	Washington, D.C.	2005	Site	1	20,000
Sailwinds Visitor Center	Cambridge, Md.	2002	Regional information center	1	37,450^k
Sandy Point State Park	Near Annapolis, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
Sassafras Natural Resource Management Area	Kennedyville, Md.	2004	Site	0	0
Schooner Sultana	Chestertown, Md.	2002	Site	4	44,502
Shenandoah River State Park	Bentonville, Va.	2005	Site	0	0
Smallwood State Park	Marbury, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
Smith Island Center	Ewell, Md.	2000	Site	4	41,242
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center	Edgewater, Md.	2005	Site	0	0
Solomons Visitor Information Center	Solomons, Md.	2001	Regional information center	1	24,520
Sotterley Plantation	Hollywood, Md.	2002	Site	2	91,330
Spruce Knob–Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area	Seneca Rocks, W.Va.	2002	Site	1	19,200
St. Clement's Island–Potomac River Museum	Colton's Point, Md.	2000	Site	1	20,000
Steamboat Era Museum	Irvington, Va.	2006	Site	0	0
Stratford Hall Plantation	Stratford, Va.	2002	Site	0	0
Sturgis Memorial Gateway	Snow Hill, Md.	2000	Site	1	20,000

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Susquehanna Museum of Havre de Grace	Havre de Grace, Md.	2001	Site	0	0
Susquehanna River Water Trail	N.Y. segment of the Susquehanna River's North Branch, south to Harrisburg, Pa.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	4	165,575
Susquehanna River Water Trail–Lower Section	Harrisburg, Pa., south to Havre de Grace, Md.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	3	48,500
Susquehanna River Water Trail–West Branch	Cherry Tree to Sunbury, Pa.	2000	Connecting route–water trail	3	59,000
Susquehanna State Park	Jarrettsville, Md.	2001	Site	1	13,700
Swatara Creek Water Trail	Lebanon, Pa.	2004	Connecting route–water trail	1	18,150
Terrapin Park	Stevensville, Md.	2001	Site	1	20,000
Tuckahoe State Park	Queen Anne, Md.	2002	Site	1	58,100
Turner's Creek Park	Kennedyville, Md.	2004	Site	1	28,640
Underground Railroad Scenic Byway	From Dorchester County, north through Caroline County, Md.	2003	Connecting route–scenic byway	2	67,450 ^k
USS Constellation Museum	Baltimore, Md.	2002	Site	2	82,501
Virginia Eastern Shore Water Trails	Saxis, Va.	2004	Connecting route–water trail	2	67,015
Virginia Living Museum	Newport News, Va.	2003	Site	3	270,053
Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art	Salisbury, Md.	2000	Site	1	30,000
Watermen's Museum	Yorktown, Va.	2001	Site	2	55,498
Westmoreland State Park	Montross, Va.	2001	Site	1	28,825 ^a
Wharves at Choptank Crossing	Denton, Md.	2002	Site	2	43,100
Wye Grist Mill	Wye Mills, Md.	2003	Site	0	0
Wye Island Natural Resource Management Area	Queenstown, Md.	2002	Site	0	0
York River State Park	Williamsburg, Va.	2001	Site	1	28,825 ^a
York River Water Trail	Walkerton, Va.	2001	Connecting route–water trail	2	95,513

**Appendix III
Gateways in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways
Network**

(Continued From Previous Page)

Gateway	Location	Year designated	Gateway type	Number of grants fiscal years 2000 through 2005	Total grant funding
Yorktown Visitor Center and Battlefield	Yorktown, Va.	2001	Site	1	10,000
Total CBGN grant funding					\$6,278,818ⁱ

Source: GAO summary of Park Service documents.

Note: When a grant is awarded to more than one gateway, it is reflected in both the total number of grants and total grant amount.

^aOne grant for \$28,825 was awarded to eight gateways in Virginia state parks: Belle Isle, Chesapeake Bay Center, Chippokes, First Landing, Kiptopeke, Mason Neck, Westmoreland, and York River.

^bOne grant for \$27,500 was awarded to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

^cOne grant for \$111,987 was awarded to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and Historic St. Mary's City.

^dTwo grants for \$30,562 and \$53,412 were a partnership between Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge and the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

^eOne grant for \$88,000 was awarded to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and Kiptopeke State Park.

^fOne grant for \$32,050 was awarded to Flag Ponds Nature Park and King's Landing Park.

^gOne grant for \$40,500 was awarded to Fort Washington Park and Piscataway Park.

^hOne grant for \$20,000 was awarded to Great Falls Park and Riverbend Park.

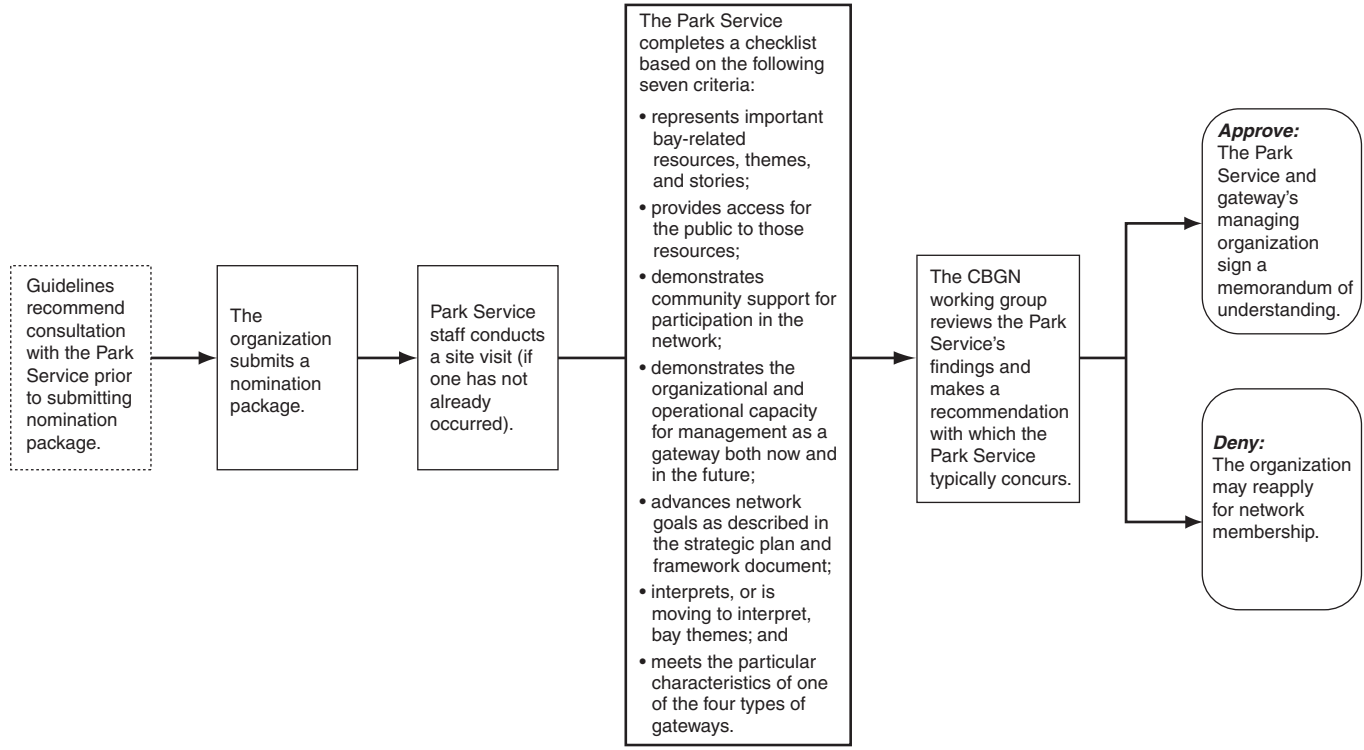
ⁱThis grant was awarded and then terminated after CBGN determined the grantee could not complete the grant project.

^jOne grant for \$5,000 was awarded to Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary and Patuxent River Park–Jug Bay Natural Area.

^kOne grant for \$37,450 was awarded to the Sailwinds Visitor Center and Underground Railroad Scenic Byway.

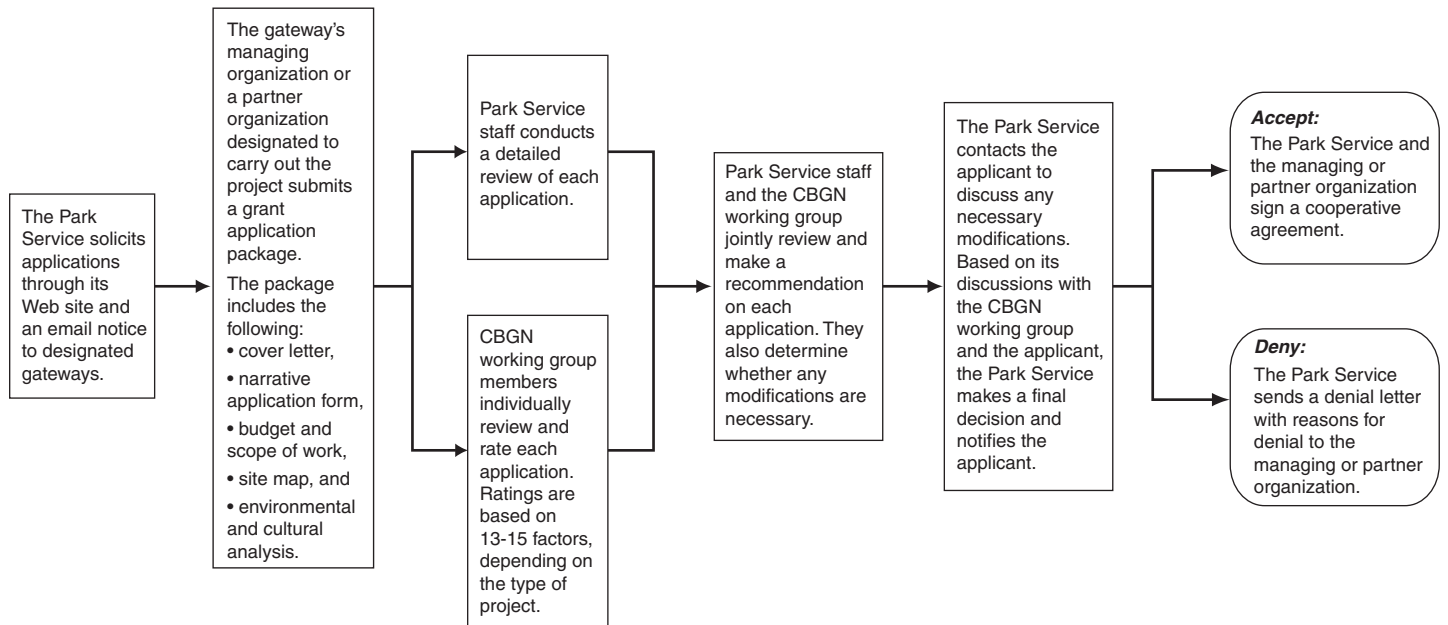
^lThe total amount awarded column will not add up to the total CBGN funding amount because the grants that were awarded to more than one gateway are reflected in the total amount awarded to each of the gateways that received those grants.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Gateway Selection Process



Source: GAO analysis of Park Service information.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Grant Application, Review, and Award Process



Source: GAO analysis of Park Service information.

Comments from the Department of the Interior



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



SEP 06 2006

Ms. Robin M. Nazzaro
Director, Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Nazzaro:

The Department of the Interior has reviewed the U.S. Government Accountability Office draft report, "Chesapeake Bay Gateways Program: National Park Service Needs Better Accountability and Oversight of Grantees and Gateways" (GAO-06-1049). We are pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Authorized by Congress in 1998, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) brings wildlife refuges, parks, historic sites, museums, volunteer groups, and water trails together to provide meaningful experiences of the Chesapeake Bay. The primary goal of CBGN as envisioned by Congress is to foster citizen stewardship of the Bay by providing meaningful experiences of the Bay through interpretation, access, and restoration and conservation activities. This commitment by the National Park Service (NPS) has been further leveraged by the Federal and State partnership that was renewed in 2000 and in the NPS agreement to playing a strategic role in collaborative conservation and environmental education signed in 2005. The NPS remains committed to its role in the conservation and restoration of this great national treasure.

The National Park Service concurs with the recommendations GAO has outlined in the report. The enclosure enumerates the actions already taken to improve the management of the grants program and describes the actions planned by the NPS to implement the GAO recommendations. If you should have any questions, or need additional information, contact John Maounis, Director, Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, at 410-267-5778.

Sincerely,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Robin M. Nazzaro (202) 512-3841

**Staff
Acknowledgments**

In addition to the individual named above, Andrea Wamstad Brown, Assistant Director; Laura Gatz; Catherine Kim; Lisa Vojta; Barbara Patterson; Rebecca Shea; Carol Herrnsstadt Shulman; and Omari Norman made key contributions to this report.

GAO's Mission

The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through GAO's Web site (www.gao.gov). Each weekday, GAO posts newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence on its Web site. To have GAO e-mail you a list of newly posted products every afternoon, go to www.gao.gov and select "Subscribe to Updates."

Order by Mail or Phone

The first copy of each printed report is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. A check or money order should be made out to the Superintendent of Documents. GAO also accepts VISA and Mastercard. Orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent. Orders should be sent to:

U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW, Room LM
Washington, D.C. 20548

To order by Phone: Voice: (202) 512-6000
TDD: (202) 512-2537
Fax: (202) 512-6061

To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact:

Web site: www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm

E-mail: fraudnet@gao.gov

Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470

Congressional Relations

Gloria Jarmon, Managing Director, JarmonG@gao.gov (202) 512-4400
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125
Washington, D.C. 20548

Public Affairs

Paul Anderson, Managing Director, AndersonP1@gao.gov (202) 512-4800
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149
Washington, D.C. 20548