

Welcome to the Eastern Neck Island Water Trail

Stretching approximately 10 miles, the trail encircles the entire island comprising Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge and offers qualified paddlers a rich outdoor experience. The route may appear simple, but it includes long stretches of open, tidal water. Along the way, you will see abundant wildlife, natural and restored marshes, and breakwaters installed to combat erosion of the island. Your trip will begin in the Chester River and continue into the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay. Be aware that this trail is subject to high winds and strong currents at times. For orientation, the trail and map are marked with 20 corresponding numbered signs [11]. Approximate distances between the signs are noted on the map.



Marshes are critical habitats that serve as nurseries for aquatic life and important feeding grounds for migrating birds.



Refuge hiking trails



Diamondback terrapin

To Visit

Directions to Bogles Wharf Boat Launch: From the west (Baltimore or Washington), take U.S. Rt. 50/301 east across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge (toll). Continue on Rt. 301 north after Rts. 50 and 301 split. Exit Rt. 301 onto Rt. 213 north towards Chestertown. In Chestertown, turn left from Rt. 213 onto Rt. 291. At the end of this short bypass, turn right onto Rt. 20. Follow Rt. 20 south for 12 miles to Rock Hall. At the blinking caution light, turn left onto Rt. 445. Follow Rt. 445 approximately 7 miles to the Refuge entrance bridge. Cross the bridge onto Eastern Neck Island. Turn left onto Bogles Wharf Rd. and follow it to the end.

Guides and Outfitters

Several companies in the Rock Hall and Chestertown areas provide complete equipment rental and/or guide services. Contact the Refuge Visitor Center or visit rockhallmd.com. Information may also be obtained from the Kent County Department of Tourism at 410-778-0416 or kentcounty.com.

Disclaimer

Safety is everyone's responsibility. There is risk involved in paddling, as weather and water conditions can change quickly. It is up to each paddler to obtain adequate skills and use prudent judgment. It is important to learn the appropriate techniques needed to properly use kayaks or canoes, and to review the safety guidelines in this brochure before paddling.



To learn more about the Refuge, please visit the Refuge Visitor Center. For more information about other water trails in the area visit kentcounty.com/paddling or dnr.state.md.us/greenways/watertrails.html.

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Bird watching helps to connect us to our natural environment.



A Paddlers' Map and Guide Eastern Neck Island Water Trail



Safety Tips

- Read important safety information and Refuge rules prior to paddling the trail.
- Avoid canoeing or kayaking alone.
- Paddle in water appropriate to your skills. If you are unfamiliar with this area, consider hiring a local guide for your first trip.
- Kayaks and canoes are not easily seen by other boaters. Try to stay out of the shipping channels, and be as predictable and visible as possible.
- Never paddle farther from shore than you are prepared to swim.

Planning Tips

- Review the water trail map.
- Know the route, the various pull-outs, and the emergency outlets in case of mishap.
- This is a full day trip, so plan your day accordingly and allow enough time to complete your trip during daylight.
- Knowing the risks of paddling against tidal flow can be difficult.

Weather Tips

- Check weather conditions and marine forecasts before launching your canoe/kayak.
- Stay alert to changing weather conditions while paddling.
- Get off the water during electrical storms.
- Paddle close to shore to lessen the chance of being caught by sudden changes in weather.
- Winds can affect canoes/kayaks – especially on wide or coastal rivers. Check the wind direction compared to tidal flow. If the tide and the wind are traveling in the same direction, the water will often be calm. When the wind travels against the tidal current, waves form.



Leave No Trace

When paddling within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, one person's carelessness may not seem significant, but when combined with the actions of thousands of users, the impacts are magnified and can cause great harm to the environment. Remember, you are a guest while using this water trail. Tread and paddle lightly to minimize the impact of your visit. Practice the following "Leave No Trace" stewardship principles:

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave behind what you find.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of others.

Gear Tips

- Always wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- Dress for a full day. Wear shoes and be prepared to get wet. Pack rain gear. Wear a sun hat on bright days.
- Bring a spare paddle or pole.
- Carry at least one signaling device. Bring a flashlight or strobe, three flares, a horn/whistle, a cell phone, a VHF radio, and a bright flag or mirror. (Place items in a watertight container.)
- Carry repellent – biting insects are prevalent in warm weather.
- Other essentials: a first-aid kit, plenty of drinking water, sunscreen and lip balm, waterproof matches, toilet paper, a multi-tool, a hand pump and a sponge.

Bugles Wharf – The original Bugles Wharf, built in 1887, extended 1,000 feet into the Chester River. The wharf was named after Newton Bugle, a waterman, store owner/operator and postmaster at Overton, the community adjacent to the wharf. Steamboats stopped at the wharf to load passengers, freight and farm produce bound for Baltimore. Although steamboat traffic diminished after 1910, the waterman community existed at Overton until the island was purchased by the U.S. Department of the Interior in the 1960s.

Hail Point – It is said that Hail Point was so named because it was a place where all ships coming and going on the Chester River before the American Revolution could be seen and hailed by agents enforcing shipping regulations.

Peregrine Tower – Originally built as a platform for peregrine falcons, the tower is frequently used as a nesting site by osprey.

	Road		Hiking Trail		Fishing
	Water Trail		Restroom		Interpretive Signage
	Hiking Trail		Kayak Launch		Visitor Information
	Breakwater		Parking		Picnic area



Route

Follow the numbered route; always keep the island's shore on your left. Depart from Bugles Wharf (to the left) and paddle north along the marshy shoreline up the Chester River. Visit the Duck Inn Trail (marker 4) and Boxes Point (marker 5). Continue northwest through Eastern Neck Narrows (marker 6) and under the wooden bridge that connects the island to the peninsula and, from there, out into the Bay. During the summer, strong winds from the southwest can expose paddlers to considerable wave action. Over the years, erosion of the island has created extensive shallows that produce short, choppy waves. Follow the shallows south and visit Ingleside Recreation Area (marker 9; open April 1 through September 30). Continue south along the western shore of the island to marsh restoration sites (markers 10 and 11). Continue along to the southern tip of the island, passing the Peregrine Tower (marker 14) and rounding Cedar Point (marker 16) and Hail Point (marker 18). Head north again along the eastern shore of the island, and return to Bugles Wharf (marker 1). Locations marked with **I** provide easy pull-out areas and informational signs. All other numbered locations are reference points and should only be used as landing sites in case of emergency, to minimize wildlife disturbance. Remember, it is your responsibility to have the necessary skills, knowledge and equipment for a safe and environmentally sensitive visit.

Refuge Habitat and Wildlife

Located at the mouth of the Chester River, Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge covers 2,285 acres including 1,000 acres of brackish marsh, 550 acres of cropland, 550 acres of forest, 100 acres of grassland and 40 acres of open-water impoundments. Mammals at the Refuge include white-tailed deer, beaver, red fox, raccoons, muskrat, opossum, woodchuck, eastern gray squirrel and the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel. The Refuge is an important feeding and resting area for migratory and wintering waterfowl and home to the threatened bald eagle. This diverse area offers an unsurpassed opportunity for bird watching.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Refuge and provides numerous recreational opportunities, including paddling the water trail, fishing and crabbing, bird watching, hiking the trails or picnicking among the trees. However you choose to enjoy the Refuge, please be respectful of wildlife, always put safety first, and be aware of Refuge hunting seasons in the fall.

Wildlife Viewing Ethics

- View wild animals from an appropriate distance.
- Stay clear of nests, dens and rookeries.
- Do not touch or feed wild animals.
- Do not use calls or whistles or try to rouse animals in any way.
- Limit your stay to minimize stress on the animals.
- Do not allow pets to interact with wild animals.
- Do not surround a wild animal with a group of people.

Refuge Regulations

- Camping, off-road vehicles and fires are prohibited.
- Firearms are prohibited (except via permit during Refuge hunting seasons).
- Pets must be on a hand-held leash at all times.
- Artifact hunting is prohibited. If you find any artifacts, leave the objects in place and report their location(s) to Refuge staff.



muskrat maintains its lodge.



Red-winged blackbird

