

MALLOWS BAY- POTOMAC RIVER

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



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Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary protects a diverse collection of historically significant shipwrecks and Indigenous heritage dating back nearly 12,000 years. Nature has transformed these wrecks into a unique ecosystem that supports a variety of plants and animals and captivates visitors. Jointly managed by NOAA, the state of Maryland, and Charles County (Maryland), the sanctuary helps protect these fragile historic assets while promoting recreation and tourism, economic development, and education and research partnerships.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

History and ecology are intertwined among the remnants of the sanctuary's World War I-era shipwrecks, known as the "Ghost Fleet." Trees and wetland plants emerge from the wrecks, turning them into islands of life that provide habitat for bald eagles, great blue herons, beavers, fish, and other wildlife. An iconic species in the sanctuary, ospreys build their nests on the shipwrecks and feast on an abundance of striped bass and other fish.



◀ **OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*)
Ospreys often make their nests on the ships in the sanctuary. Their diet is 99% fish, making the Potomac River an excellent food source.



▶ **AMERICAN BEAVER** (*Castor canadensis*)
Beavers are important to the sanctuary because they help develop healthy and diverse wetland ecosystems through dam construction.



◀ **KAYAKING**
Paddling amongst the Ghost Fleet is one of the best ways to experience the sanctuary's history, ecology, and culture up close.



▶ **VIRTUAL TRAIL**
Take an immersive tour of historical and ecological hotspots through online water and hiking trails, featuring videos, photogrammetry, and 3D models.



◀ **COMMUNITY SCIENCE**
The local community participates in water quality monitoring, species surveys, and other efforts, helping collect important scientific data and connecting visitors to the sanctuary.



▶ **RECREATIONAL FISHING**
Ship hulls provide excellent habitat for multiple species of fish. The tidal Potomac River is one of the premier bass fisheries in the country.

BELOW

Below the water, the shipwrecks of Mallows Bay support a variety of life. Dense patches of underwater grasses provide food and habitat for fish, blue crabs, and other aquatic animals, including critically endangered species like the Atlantic sturgeon. Recreational and commercially important fish species, such as largemouth bass and blue catfish, are also abundant, providing plenty of opportunity for anglers to hook a catch.



AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater areas encompassing more than 629,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: sanctuaries.noaa.gov

LOCATION

QUICK FACTS

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

PROTECTED AREA
18 square miles

DESIGNATION
September 2019

HABITAT
Tidal-freshwater river

KEY SPECIES

- American beaver
- American shad
- Atlantic sturgeon
- Bald eagle
- Catfish (blue catfish, channel catfish)
- Cattails
- Double-crested cormorant
- Great blue heron
- Largemouth bass
- Osprey
- Paw paw tree
- Submerged aquatic vegetation
- Wild rice

(Front) Illustration: (primary artist) Kathryn Robertson; (secondary artist) Matt McIntosh/NOAA. (Back) Photos: (shipwrecks) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (osprey) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (beaver) Angela Gentile/MD DNR; (kayak in shipwrecks) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (photogrammetry model) Ian Dunsheer/NOAA; (children at tank) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (fishing) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (below illustration) Kathryn Robertson



● National Marine Sanctuary
Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.