

## **NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System First Landing Buoy: History**

Capt. John Smith passed the site of NOAA's First Landing CBIBS buoy four times during stay in Virginia. On April 26, 1607, he was aboard one of the Virginia Company's ships as they entered the Chesapeake at dawn and made their first landing at what they named Cape Henry, the land at the south side of the Bay's mouth. This was the territory of the Chesapeake Indians.

The second trip was more than a year later, on the evening of June 2, 1608, when Smith and his hand-picked crew dropped a towline from the ship *Phoenix*, which was outward bound for England. They turned their 30-foot, open *Discovery Barge* north past the shoal upon which this CBIBS buoy is anchored for a short exploratory cruise up the sea side of Virginia's Eastern Shore to find out if the Chesapeake had another mouth there.

They spent the night inside the Eastern Shore's southeastern-most barrier island, which the crew named *Smith Island* for their captain. The next morning, they rowed as far up the inside passage behind the chain of barrier islands as the present-day site of Oyster, Virginia. The same afternoon, they returned. Historians believe that after passing Smith Island, they sailed between today's Fisherman's Island and Cape Charles and then turned north to explore along the Eastern Shore's bay side, the territory of the Accomack and Accohannock Indians. Thus began Smith's first exploratory voyage to the head of the Chesapeake.

The Captain's last trip between the Virginia Capes took place on October 4 or 5, 1609, as he left Virginia forever aboard a ship bound for England. He had been badly injured from a suspicious explosion of the gunpowder bag that he had been carrying on his hip. It was a hard way for him to leave.

The amazingly accurate map of the Chesapeake and its rivers that he published three years later, based on his explorations and what he had learned from the Indians he met, played a crucial role in the history of English settlement of both the Virginia and the Maryland colonies. It was a remarkable legacy from an extraordinary man.