

Scenic Maryland PRESS RELEASE

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

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Scenic Maryland Names Underground Railroad One of State's "Last Chance Scenic Places"

-- New Designation Spotlights Threatened Areas—

Freedom Route Will Receive Designation at Press Event April 26

(Baltimore, MD) — Scenic Maryland, a nonprofit scenic conservation organization, today named the Potomac-to-Doubs Underground Railroad route one of the state's seven Last Chance Scenic Places, due to threats from nearby power stations, housing developments and a proposed golf course.

The designation identifies the three-mile route through Frederick County, including the only known safe-house in the nation still owned by descendants of the family that operated it, as an area at risk of permanently losing its scenic integrity. The list of designees was announced at back-to-back press conferences in Baltimore, Maryland and along the banks of the Potomac River today. The Potomac-to-Doubs route will officially receive its designation at a local press event at 10am at Cooling Springs Farm located at 2455 Ballenger Creek Pike in Adamstown.

The farms along the route of the Underground Railroad in Frederick County contain buildings dating from the 1700s and 1800s, including at least one safe-house of great historic significance, said Scenic Maryland Executive Director Elizabeth Buxton. Chopping up these farms and turning them into subdivisions and degrading the visual landscape with enormous power plants would permanently scar a rare and historic state treasure. We hope that designating it a Last Chance Scenic Place will strengthen efforts to protect this area for generations to come.

Other sites named by Scenic Maryland today include the C&O Canal and Potomac River corridor; the Potomac-to-Doubs Route of the Underground Railroad in Frederick County; Scenic Route 40 in Allegany County; the Chincoteague Bay; Bucktown Village; and the historic Charles Street corridor in Baltimore.

Scenic Maryland chose the sites based on their natural beauty or distinctive character and the degree to which they risked losing their uniqueness due to neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. The designation mirrors a program sponsored by Scenic America, which recognizes threatened landscapes nationwide.

Nominees were judged by a geographically diverse panel of leaders from around the state with expertise in the identification, protection, preservation or promotion of Maryland's scenic resources. Judges included representatives from local government as well as from leading community and advocacy organizations.

While Scenic Maryland's Last Chance designation offers no legally binding protections to the selected sites, it should help raise awareness and visibility of these places and the threats that they face, Buxton said.

Scenic Maryland was formed to provide a strong voice for Maryland's exceptional beauty, she said. Urban sprawl, out-of-control development and other visual blights on our landscapes make it more challenging than ever today to build and maintain quality communities. Scenic landscapes aren't just pretty to look at. They add to our quality of life and our peace of mind. They provide a value that cannot be measured, and they are far too quickly slipping away. We hope this designation will help stop the visual degradation that robs us of these important and often undervalued natural resources.

Scenic Maryland is a statewide nonprofit scenic conservation organization that works to protect, enhance and celebrate the beauty of Maryland. Founded in 2001, Scenic Maryland seeks to reclaim the visual environment of Maryland's established neighborhoods, provide critical assistance to communities seeking to protect their sense of place, preserve the scenic countryside and historic landscapes of the state, and promote transportation planning and design that preserves scenic resources. Scenic Maryland is an affiliate of Scenic America, and works closely with this organization to further these goals at the national level.

For more information on individual sites, the threats they face and the unique character of their landscapes, or to set up interviews with representatives for individual sites, please call Liz Buxton at 410-377-0644 or Laura Williamson at 703-435-3923.