

C&O Canal Trust Programs

Canal Quarters

Program Purpose and History

- To offer innovative “immersive” interpretive experience to Park visitors.
- To increase visibility of the Trust.
- To operate on a cost-recovery basis.
- To assist NPS in preservation of historic structures.
- First lockhouse opened to public November 2009; 7th lockhouse opened to the public in June 2019.
- 8th lockhouse, likely Lockhouse 29 at Lander Road in Frederick County, expected to be added to the program in the next couple years.

Structure

- 1-3 night paid overnight stays within historic lockhouse.
- Operates in partnership with NPS under a cooperative agreement.
- Light maintenance and regular oversight provided by volunteer Quartermasters.
- Larger maintenance provided by either Trust staff or contractor, or NPS per terms of Cooperative Agreement.
- Revenues cannot be used outside of the program.
- Began contracting a professional cleaning company, to wipe down high-use surfaces between guest stays in mid-2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Provide cleaning and sanitizing supplies in each lockhouse for guest and Quartermaster use as well.

Current Locations

- Lockhouse 6 – Brookmont (Nov 2009)
- Lockhouse 10 – Cabin John (Sep 2011)
- Lockhouse 21 – Swains (June 2019)
- Lockhouse 22 – Pennyfield (Nov 2009)
- Lockhouse 25 – Edwards Ferry (Oct 2011)
- Lockhouse 28 – Point of Rocks (May 2011)
- Lockhouse 49 – Four Locks (Nov 2009)

Possible New Addition

- Lockhouse 29 – Lander Road (TBD)

Canal Community Days

Program Purpose

- To promote volunteerism and stewardship by providing new and returning volunteers with rewarding experiences.
- To increase the visibility and funding reach of the C&O Canal Trust.
- To prepare the park for visitor “high season” by improving visual quality of the park and making long term improvements.
- To create and strengthen partnerships within Park and with outside partners.
- To engage a diverse array of Canal supporters, creating opportunities for all Canal users to interact with the Trust.

History

The first “Canal Pride Days” (renamed Canal Community Days in 2021) were held in the spring of 2008. The initial scope included 5-8 events per spring, including many projects requiring significant park compliance approval. Newer program model includes 3-4 large events in the spring at high-profile locations throughout the park, in addition to corporate projects, Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, Eagle Scout projects, and the individual-focused Personal Canal Cleanup opportunities. The Volunteer Project Leader corps, founded in 2012, significantly increases capacity as trained volunteer leaders direct small-group projects.

Structure

- 3-5 large weekend volunteer projects held each spring.
- Corporate volunteer projects (since FY12).
- Eagle Scout Projects (funded via Charles Stover Eagle Scout Fund since FY12).
- Volunteer Project Leader Corps used for project leadership during events.
- NPS supports with staffing (as available) and vehicle and tool use.

Canal Towns Partnership

History

In 2009, a core group of volunteers dedicated to healthy and attractive communities joined together to offer services and amenities needed by park visitors, particularly recreational users of the C&O Canal and the Potomac River. The Canal Towns Partnership (CTP) is based on a cooperative, collaborative approach that builds closer connections to the C&O Canal as a mutually supportive partnership attracting visitors, business and investment to the park and each of the Canal Towns.

Overview

The ten participating communities meet monthly to discuss visitor attraction strategies and collaborative marketing efforts, and to explore ways to improve visitor services and amenities in their communities. Six communities in Maryland (Poolesville, Point of Rocks, Brunswick, Williamsport, and Hancock) and four in West Virginia (Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, Shepherdstown, and Paw Paw), have each chosen representatives to serve on the Canal Towns Partnership Board. Memberships are renewed annually with dues of \$500 per town, which contributes to marketing and fees, such as printing costs. Other organizations interested in supporting the goals of the CTP, such as the Great Allegheny Passage, will also join CTP meetings and projects. The C&O Canal Trust acts as the fiscal agent of the Canal Towns Partnership.

History

Planning and regular meetings began Fall 2008, and the CTP was formally launched on September 24, 2011. A consultant was hired for the start-up year to lead and coordinate the effort. In addition, Trust Board and Advisory Board members have participated in Canal Towns meetings. The NPS Rails, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program has also provided technical assistance.

Structure

- The CTP produces two printed brochures to help direct park visitors to the canal towns: “Trail to History” and “Towpath to Town.” The “Trail to History” brochure divides the towns into Eastern, Central, and Western regions of the park and focuses on points of interest in each town. “Towpath to Town” directs participants to services and amenities in the towns.
- The CTP maintains active social media accounts as well, highlighting offerings and activities for individual businesses and towns, which has noticeably increased business and visitorship to these places.

Trust’s Goals of Involvement

- To support the vision of a vibrant and welcoming system of gateway towns through providing fiscal agency for an initiative important to the Park’s neighbors and gateway communities.
- To establish relationships with political, business, and community leaders in each gateway Canal Town.
- To utilize the network to enhance the Trust’s advocacy work.
- To support the CTP’s marketing efforts by adding each town’s available services and amenities to the Trust’s digital app (new in 2021).

Canal Stewards

Purpose

- Support the Park's preservation and maintenance needs through regular, ongoing supplemental volunteer work.
- Provide more flexible and accessible options for community members to volunteer at park sites near their homes and on their own schedules, without the need for onsite Trust staff supervision.
- Increase the visibility of the Trust in the park.
- Create a third category of repeat and long-term volunteers, in addition to the Quartermasters and Volunteer Project Leaders, who help stabilize and expand the Trust's overall volunteer corps.

History

The Canal Stewards program originally began as a park volunteer program, and was transferred to the Trust in November 2020, with 17 active Stewards at the time. One year later it had 50 Stewards, and continues to grow.

Structure

- Community volunteers ("Stewards") select a park site, area, or section of towpath they'd like to clean up and maintain on a regular basis, about 2-4 times a month depending on the site's needs and the time of year.
- Stewards sign a site agreement, which outlines the parameters of the tasks to be completed, the specific park site or area, and who is authorized to perform the work. At least one adult Steward must sign the contract and take responsibility for the work being done, but may bring family or friends with them when they volunteer.
- Stewards perform light maintenance tasks such as trash and vegetation removal each time they visit the site. They may also perform less frequent tasks such as lopping, pruning, painting, spreading mulch or stonedust, and replacing Trash-Free Park bags a few times a year. Stewards provide their own tools and safety equipment, and remove all trash when they leave.
- Some sites have more than one Steward or Steward group supporting them.
- Some Stewards, such as the Mid-Atlantic Climbers or the Sierra Club of Washington County, are Steward groups, and hold their own cleanup events in which they recruit volunteers for the day and handle all paperwork and manage the tasks being completed at the site.
- At the end of the contracted period, Stewards have the option to renew, in mutual agreement with the Trust.

Canal For All

Purpose

The Canal For All program develops strong community partnerships necessary to make Park programs inclusive and welcoming to diverse audiences, and to increase the Park visitor population to be more reflective of the changing demographics of our region.

History

The Canal For All initiative was designed to pave the way for sustainable and robust engagement between the C&O Canal Trust and diverse audiences in communities that border the park. Its pilot phase began in 2017 by partnering with Latine, African American and disadvantaged communities in Montgomery County. In 2021, it expanded to include Washington County, and seeks to partner with other marginalized and underrepresented communities such as LGBTQIA+ and differently-abled people as well.

Structure

- **Partnership and Community Building:** Developing long lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships and programming with community organizations for marginalized and underrepresented communities near the C&O Canal.
- **Park Experiences:** Provide opportunities for program partners to play, serve, work and learn in the C&O Canal. Partner organizations will choose whether they'd like to focus more on recreational, educational, or service activities, or any combination of the three, and a day program is assembled from this, with their input and approval.

A sample program for youth ages 6-12 might be:

10:00am	Arrive, unload vehicles, welcome
10:15am	Outdoors 101 – How to be safe in a national park
10:30am	Scavenger Hunt – What lives here?
11:00 am	History Hike – What's this canal all about?
11:30am	Lunch
12:00pm	Trash cleanup and practice Leave No Trace
12:30pm	Some (educational) games
12:45pm	Load vehicles
1:00pm	Depart

A sample teen/adult program might be:

9:00am	Arrive, welcome, introductions
9:15am	Outdoors 101 and Leave No Trace – How to be safe in a national park
9:30am	History walk – what was the C&O Canal?
10:00am	Park Ranger talk – what's it like taking care of these historical structures?
10:30am	Work projects, with lunch break
1:00pm	Cleanup work projects, gather for all-group closing
1:30pm	Hike to a point of interest
3:00pm	Load vehicles and depart

- **Career and Life Experiences:** Montgomery County's TeenWorks and Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) Programs partner with the Canal For All program as a source of career-, college-, and job-focused skill-building experiences. TeenWorks and CJC work projects focus on preservation- and beautification-related tasks in and for the park, as well as enrichment activities such as trip-planning workshops, guided writing exercises, or talks with a ranger about their career.