C&O CANAL FACES COVID-19 CHALLENGES

Daily life has changed in drastic ways over the past month, but what has rapidly become apparent is how much the local community loves the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Stay-at-home orders are keeping us cloistered, but allowances for exercise have sent thousands of people to the towpath for hiking, biking, stress relief, and an escape from the tedium of quarantine.

Unfortunately, this influx of visitation is placing unanticipated stress on the Park’s infrastructure at a time when only mission-critical National Park Service staff is currently working in the Park. Additional dangers loom as visitors are not always practicing social distancing, wearing their masks, or removing their trash from the Park at the end of their stays.

Our Canal Pride events, which in a typical year would be happening now, have been postponed. Aimed at preparing the Park to welcome springtime visitors, Canal Pride volunteers paint buildings, pull invasive plants, spread mulch, and pick up the trash that accumulated over the winter months. We look forward to working with volunteers to address some of these issues in smaller teams throughout the Park when it again becomes safe to gather. At that time, our park lands will need the tender love and care that our corps of volunteers bring to each Canal Pride event. You can learn more about our COVID-19 response as it relates to Canal Pride on page 3 and Park operations on page 4.

We have also shuttered our Canal Quarters lockhouse program during the quarantine, and our volunteer Quartermasters, who...

“COVID-19” continues on page 5
A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

My first draft of this letter was pre-COVID-19 and was about the hopefulness signified by our transition into spring. The transition we ended up with is one we could not have anticipated and certainly did not plan for. Nonetheless, we find ourselves first and foremost concerned about the health of our loved ones and all those around us. My most fervent wish is that you and yours are well.

So, transition it is, just not the one we hoped for. We have spent the last month or so working from home and getting creative about post-COVID-19 programming. While we will not welcome our usual large numbers of volunteers this spring to care for the Park as it experiences unanticipated crowds, we will refine our Canal Pride program and do our very best to engage smaller teams of volunteers to spruce things up once we are able. We look forward to re-opening our Canal Quarters lockhouses to guests yearning to enjoy nature while social distancing.

Earlier in the year we had some very positive transitions. We welcomed the new C&O Canal National Historical Park Superintendent Tina Cappetta.

Have you sought peace and solace along the C&O Canal during this difficult time? Or are you longing to resume your regular visits once restrictions are eased?

Please show your gratitude today by investing in the preservation of the Park with a gift to the C&O Canal Trust. The Trust remains focused on our core mission of preserving and protecting the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Under the new CARES Act, you can take the standard deduction on your 2020 tax return AND claim a brand new “above-the-line” deduction of up to $300 for a donation to the C&O Canal Trust.

Give today online at www.CanalTrust.org/GIVE or donate by check by returning the enclosed envelope.
SWAINS LOCKHOUSE PROJECT WINS AWARD

The C&O Canal Trust was awarded the Maryland Historical Trust’s Award for Project Excellence in Preservation Partnerships at January’s Maryland Preservation Awards for our rehabilitation of Swains Lockhouse. These awards recognize outstanding efforts in historic preservation, including education, restoration and revitalization projects, and organizational and individual leadership. The C&O Canal Trust shared the award with the C&O Canal National Historical Park, the C&O Canal Association, and the Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern, who all played an integral part in the rehabilitation project.

Now that Swains Lockhouse has been rehabilitated, it is one of seven lockhouses in the Canal Quarters program, which allows guests to spend the night and experience life along the canal. The lockhouse is furnished to depict the year 1916.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 CANAL PRIDE SPONSORS

**CANAL PATRON**

![REI Co-op Logo]

**CANAL EXPLORER**

![FirstEnergy Logo]

![BGE Logo]

**CANAL TRAVELER**

![Deloitte Logo]

![M&T Bank Logo]

**CANAL PRESERVER**

Community Foundation of Frederick County • FedEx • Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern • Minkoff • Younger Toyota

**2019 CANAL PRIDE**

- 19 sites
- 26 events
- 464 volunteers
- 1,392 volunteer hours

**CANAL PRIDE DAYS POSTPONED, NEED REMAINS**

Spring would normally find us gearing up for our public Canal Pride Day events, when hundreds of volunteers join C&O Canal Trust and National Historical Park staff in readying the Park for the seasonal influx of visitors. Last year’s public events at Great Falls, Williamsport, and the Paw Paw Tunnel saw volunteers beautifying campsites, painting picnic tables and fire rings, spreading 40 cubic yards of mulch, picking up trash, pulling invasive species, and planting native plants.

Along with our public clean-up events, we also host a variety of corporate and community groups for private Canal Pride clean-up events throughout the year. In 2019, 464 volunteers contributed 1,392 hours to cleaning up the C&O Canal during 26 events at 19 different sites, marked on the map to the right.

This spring, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the C&O Canal will not benefit from our volunteers’ hard work. We have postponed our Canal Pride Days events in Great Falls, Brunswick, Williamsport, and Allegany County, although we hope to reschedule them for later in the year, once authorities declare it safe. We have also cancelled all private group clean-up events.

The Park, however, remains open and is being heavily used by visitors. We are concerned about littering and damage to Park resources that could be occurring while staff members work from home. When stay-at-home restrictions lift, we will be ready to hit the ground running with our Canal Pride activities, working to beautify the Park and return it to its pre-COVID levels of maintenance. Since we won’t be able to gather in large groups, we will pivot to small group maintenance and preservation activities.

The need will be great, and we hope you will be able to join us! Watch our website and our social media, and be sure sign up for our email newsletter to stay informed of our plans.
Construction on the new headquarters building for the C&O Canal National Historical Park in Williamsport got underway in March 2020 when several buildings were cleared from the lot at the former Miller Lumber Plant along West Potomac Street. The new building will stand on the site of the old planing mill, while several of the historic homes fronting West Potomac Street will remain, allowing the quaint town to maintain its roadside charm. Located across the road from the Cushwa Basin Visitor Center, the new headquarters will place staff near the Park; they currently occupy a building on Dual Highway in Hagerstown. The C&O Canal Trust will also move their offices to the new building when it opens in the spring of 2021.

NEW WILLIAMSPORT HEADQUARTERS UNDERWAY

PARK VISITATION TOPS 5 MILLION

The C&O Canal National Historical Park’s visitation reached 5,116,787 in 2019, making it the 11th most visited National Park in the nation. This places it ahead of major parks like Zion, Yosemite, and the Statue of Liberty!

2019 NATIONAL PARK VISITATION: TOP 20

Golden Gate | 5,116,787
Blue Ridge Parkway | 4,831,327
Great Smoky Mountains | 4,670,053
Gateway | 4,532,459
Lincoln Memorial | 4,488,268
Lake Mead | 4,422,861
GW Memorial Parkway | 4,361,034
Natchez Trace | 4,330,563
Grand Canyon | 4,240,461
Gulf Islands | 4,229,568
C&O Canal | 4,198,747
World War ll Memorial | 4,092,013
Rocky Mountain | 4,080,240
Vietnam Veterans Memorial | 3,884,347
Independence | 3,522,987
Zion | 3,509,290
Yosemite | 3,427,054
Castle Clinton | 3,329,602
Glen Canyon | 3,297,048
Statue of Liberty | 3,240,461

2,000,000 4,000,000 6,000,000 8,000,000 10,000,000 12,000,000 14,000,000 16,000,000

TRUST WELCOMES NEW STAFF

The C&O Canal Trust has welcomed two new staff members in 2020.

Heather Barnes is our new Director of Programs and Partnerships, overseeing the implementation and function of programs, volunteer service projects, and events in the Park. Originally from Michigan, she has a background in outdoor education and facilitating programs with youth, nonprofit, and corporate groups. She also spent nearly two years teaching English in Taiwan.

Tymber Compher has joined the Trust as our new Communications and Development Associate. She is a writer and editor specializing in nonprofit communications, having worked with the Tecumseh Land Trust in Ohio and the Moonstone Arts Center in Philadelphia, creating social media content and organizing community events.

COVID-19 NEWS & NOTES

Changes in Park Operations
As of April 28, 2020. Subject to change.
- All Visitor Centers are closed.
- Restrooms, vault toilets, and portable toilets are closed.
- Water fountains and wells are off.
- Parking lots at Great Falls, Fletchers Cove, Carderock, and Anglers are closed.
- All campgrounds and campsites are closed.
- All park lands remain open. Visitors must practice social distancing and Leave No Trace guidelines.
- Check www.nps.gov/choh for updates.

How You Can Help
- Stay in touch with us for the latest news. We are on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. You can also sign up for our email newsletter by visiting our website at www.canaltrust.org.
- Plan to volunteer at our Canal Pride events — watch our communications for dates and details.
- Book a stay for a future date at a Canal Quarters lockhouse or buy a gift certificate.
- Support the local businesses in our 10 Canal Towns.
- Make a gift to the C&O Canal Trust. As a relatively small nonprofit with no endowment or cash reserves, the Trust is dependent on your generosity for close to 90 percent of its annual revenue.
- www.canaltrust.org/give

An architect’s rendering of the new headquarters building, which is being built by the Maryland Economic Development Corporation in Williamsport, MD.
Thanks to the funding support of private donors to the C&O Canal Trust, along with funds from the National Park Service and the State of Maryland, resurfacing crews continue their march up the towpath. As of this spring, 42 miles of the C&O Canal’s towpath have been improved between Edwards Ferry and Shepherdstown.

The work is part of the “Towpath Rehabilitation: A Safe Towpath” project aimed at improving more than 80 miles of the 184.5 mile-long towpath by removing the rocks, roots, and ruts in the towpath surface that can be dangerous to cyclists and hikers. “Over 5 million visitors recreate along the C&O Canal each year and nearly all of them used the towpath for a variety of activities,” Superintendent Tina Cappetta said. “We want to ensure that our visitors have a safe, durable towpath for years to come.”

The C&O Canal Trust has raised funds to support this work and engage an engineering consultant to provide technical expertise to the National Park Service for this project. We have also assisted with advocacy work to secure $2.25 million from Maryland’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

By the end of 2020, the Park plans to complete a further 14 miles from Swains Lock to Edwards Ferry and is seeking $1.14 million in FY21 TAP funding to resurface 12 miles from the Shepherdstown Bridge to the Big Slackwater boat ramp.

FOUR YEARS OF CANAL FOR ALL

Four years ago, the Canal for All program was launched, thanks to a grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) and the Kendeda Fund. A two-year pilot program focused on connecting African-American and Latinx communities in Montgomery County with the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) through the themes of work, play, learn, and serve.

The program has seen the C&O Canal Trust form new partnerships with organizations who work with youth of diverse backgrounds. A group from Identity experienced the Park through a variety of activities during Latino Conservation Week, and two groups of girls from Community Bridges were given a free overnight stay in Lockhouse 6 accompanied by a mini-lesson from a Canal Classrooms teacher.

Thanks to funding from the Montgomery County Council, a Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) program was added in the spring of 2019 in partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation’s TeenWorks program and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. This program allows teens to work alongside National Park Service staff to preserve the C&O Canal’s assets and learn job skills.

Youth crews worked along the canal through the spring and summer on a variety of projects and provided invaluable labor in helping the Park recover from the July 2019 flash flood at Great Falls.

The Trust anticipates expanding the Canal for All initiative into other communities along the canal in the coming year.
PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to Keith Carter, MJ Clingan, Preston P. Piper, Jr., Tim Walters, and Jon Wolz for their winning photographs. Visit http://www.canaltrust.org/photocontest for details on how you can enter your canal photography in our monthly contest, and visit our Facebook page at the beginning of every month to vote for your favorites!

POOLESVILLE JOINS CANAL TOWNS PARTNERSHIP

The Montgomery County, Maryland, town of Poolesville recently joined the Canal Towns Partnership, a community and economic development organization made up of 10 towns along the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP). “We are excited to welcome our first town from Montgomery County to the Partnership,” said Abbie Ricketts, the chair of the Partnership.

Through tourism marketing and advocacy, the Canal Towns Partnership aims to amplify the voices of its small canal town members so they can fully reap the economic benefits of trail tourism. The C&O Canal NHP hosts over 5 million visitors a year, many of whom visit the canal towns in search of food, drink, shopping, and lodging.
REI AND THE TRUST: EIGHT YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

REI is well known as a retailer that sells quality gear to outdoor enthusiasts. What is less well known is that the Seattle-based co-op is also an industry leader in supporting organizations that provide stewardship for parks and public lands around the nation. Since 2012, as our premier Canal Pride sponsor, REI has contributed close to $90,000 to fund the work our Canal Pride volunteers do to improve access to the C&O Canal National Historical Park’s recreational assets. This generous support is driven by REI’s philosophy that a life outdoors is a life well-lived. For folks to enjoy that experience, they need places in nature that are welcoming and accessible, be they residents of city, suburbs, or country.

The C&O Canal Trust is the recipient of an REI “Place Grant” that funds projects to improve access to the Park’s great recreational assets. With REI’s support, the Trust’s Canal Pride volunteers work each year to repair the towpath, provide paddlers with access to the Potomac River, improve popular trails like the Billy Goat Trail, and spruce up campgrounds and picnic areas.

With the 2019 visitation to the Park at a 30-year high of 5.1 million, this work is increasingly important,” said Trust President Robin Zanotti. “REI’s support helps ensure that today’s visitors have a great experience and choose to come back again and again.”

The co-op’s engagement in the Park extends beyond grant-making. Employees from REI’s local stores volunteer for Canal Pride and run a variety of programs in the Park such as climbing classes at Carderock and sunset hikes along the towpath. As the effects of climate change become more apparent, REI believes that getting people outdoors is an important part of the solution.

Since 2014, the co-op has closed its stores nationwide on Black Friday to encourage Americans to use that day to enjoy nature rather than hit the shopping mall. “On average, people spend 95 percent of their time indoors,” said Naz Ahmed, Experiences and Philanthropy Manager for REI Mid-Atlantic. “They are facing a nature deficit and that impacts our ability to combat climate change. As the naturalist David Attenborough once said, ‘No one will protect what they don’t care about, and no one will care about what they haven’t experienced.’” In partnership with REI, the Trust is working to overcome that deficit.

“New Superintendent” continued from page 1

Trust: What changes have you seen in the Park since you served as Chief of Resources here at the canal (from 2002 to 2004)?

Cappetta: A lot of wonderful big preservation projects have taken place over the past 16 years—restoration of three aqueducts, the rehabbing of seven lockhouses and the creation of the Canal Quarters program, the restoration of the towpath at Big Slackwater, the Georgetown project, and the Locks 5 through 22 project, to name a few. We have lost some ground, however, in some of the daily stuff. The Park has far fewer staff now than it did in the early 2000s, which has really impacted both day-to-day maintenance and interpretation programming. When I was here before, there were boat programs at both Georgetown and Great Falls, although there were no boats at Williamsport. Fortunately, we will see boats back in both Georgetown and Great Falls in the near future.

Trust: What are your priorities in the Park?

Cappetta: I look forward to working with Park staff to complete a number of big projects already underway: the move of the Park headquarters to Williamsport and the proposed reinterpretation of Cushwa Basin, the Park improvements and new boat program in Georgetown, towpath resurfacing, and the renewal of the boat program in Great Falls. I also look forward to focusing on getting back to the basics of the Park’s essential mission by making sure that we have the resources and staff to safely serve the public and preserve the Park.

Trust: What can the C&O Canal Trust do to help you meet these priorities?

Cappetta: The Trust can bring new resources to the table and build awareness of the need for public stewardship of our Park. It already does this through Canal Quarters and its other programs, but in the coming years, we are going to need more human and financial resources to supplement and complement what NPS is able to do. The Trust has the capacity to be more nimble and flexible than NPS in both accessing funds and spending them, and it can more easily develop creative synergies to bring donors and stakeholders together to support the Park’s mission. As our primary ambassador out there in the world, the Trust provides the means by which those who love the Park can contribute directly to its preservation.
SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, September 12, 2020

Park After Dark ...online?

Mark your calendars for this year’s Park After Dark: Saturday, September 12. We hope to welcome you to Great Falls Tavern for our annual celebration of the C&O Canal, but, given the current uncertainty, we are also working on Plan B — a virtual event!

No matter what this fall brings, we will come together to celebrate the canal and raise money for its continued preservation for future generations to enjoy. Stay tuned for details!