

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

C&O CANAL TRUST

Protecting Today,
Preserving for the Future.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Dear Friend of the C&O Canal Trust,

Another year has visited us, and with each passing season, the park continues to gift us with vibrant and idyllic scenes – of wildlife, stunning landscapes and colors, and more. As I reflect on 2025, I am proud of all we accomplished together. It is because of the support of our dedicated donors, volunteers, and partners that we continue to reach such incredible milestones in our mission to preserve and protect the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Together, our shared passion for the C&O Canal continues to have a lasting impact on the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the park.

2025 was a monumental year of expansion and change for the C&O Canal Trust. We opened the year with the implementation of a new strategic plan focused on four guiding principles: Robust Partnership, Focused Stewardship, Community Inclusion, and Operational Excellence. This plan was developed in partnership with our community, and is designed to guide our work through 2028. Already, we have made significant progress toward our goals.

Last year, together with the National Park Service and our canal community, we:

- Welcomed over 5,000 individuals to the park for stewardship, learning, and exploration from Georgetown, in the District of Columbia, to Cumberland in western Maryland.
- Grew program services with expanded efforts for invasive plant management.
- Expanded engagement with community partners and welcomed youth and adults for educational hikes, crafts, and stewardship across the park, increasing youth participation by over 50%.
- Contributed repairs, maintenance, and amenity upgrades at each of the seven lockhouses in our Canal Quarters Interpretive Program, including replacing over 50 mattresses.
- Launched a refreshed and more navigable website and mobile app to improve visitor resources.
- Provided direct funding totaling over $200,000 to the park to support beautification, education programs, natural resource conservation, towpath continuity, and visitor amenities.

2025 was also a challenging year for the C&O Canal, as we experienced notable flood events in the early spring and the longest-ever federal lapse in appropriations. Still, the park celebrated remarkable achievements, including the completion of the Log Wall Stabilization project, made possible through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Fund. Additionally, the National Park Service initiated a comprehensive restoration project to encourage native forest regeneration along the Gold Mine Tract, supported by the Trust.

As an official philanthropic nonprofit partner to a national park, the Trust is dedicated to fostering meaningful partnerships with our entire community. From projects in Georgetown, Fletchers Cove, and Great Falls, to Point of Rocks and Weverton, to Williamsport and Four Locks, all the way to Paw Paw and Cumberland, we are proud of the significant impact your support helped us achieve this past year. Whether it is through a generous gift, dedicated volunteer stewardship, or time well-spent at an interpretive program, I am grateful for your support!

With gratitude,

Lauren Riviello

President & CEO

2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through **direct funding**, as well as through **in-kind volunteer support** and operations of our **Canal Quarters Interpretive Program**, the Trust contributed over **$700,000** of support to the C&O Canal National Historical Park. This is our 2025 impact at a glance:

PHOTO BY CRAIG LITTLE

Volunteer Service

700 volunteers, including **7 corporate partner groups**, contributed **7,500+ hours of service** and roughly **$300,000 of in-kind support** to the park.



PHOTO BY TRUST STAFF



PHOTO BY FRANCIS GRANT-SUTTIE



PHOTO BY FRANCIS GRANT-SUTTIE

Historic Preservation

To date, the Trust has rehabilitated **7 historic lockhouses** that continue to be preserved under the Canal Quarters Interpretive Program. These lockhouses received significant upgrades with support from a team of **43 volunteer Quartermasters**, who provided **in-kind service totaling $71,000.**

The Trust provided roughly **$15,000 in materials** to repair a washout that disrupted towpath continuity in Allegany County.

Trust volunteers refurbished over **300 structures** in the park.

1,000+ DONORS

FUNDED OUR WORK IN SUPPORT OF THE PARK

Community Engagement

The Trust expanded community partner engagement, welcoming **over 1,400 youth and adults** for educational programming. The Trust collaborated with **11 Canal Towns** and partnered with the GAP Conservancy.

With support from the Trust, **over 3,000 students** were welcomed into the park through 38 Canal Classrooms-led field trips.



PHOTO BY FRANCIS GRANT-SUTTIE

Natural Resource Conservation

Throughout the year, the Trust and volunteers collectively removed **11,000 pounds of trash and invasive or overgrown vegetation.**



"At the Trust, we believe in the power of connection — connecting people to nature, to history, and to one another. We actively support towpath continuity and rehabilitation by investing in projects that repair trail conditions, address erosion and storm damage, and improve the visitor experience at some of the most beloved and well-traveled sections of the park. Through donor contributions and volunteer engagement, we help ensure that this treasured resource remains beautiful, safe, and welcoming to all."

Lauren Riviello, Trust President & CEO

PHOTO BY PAUL GRAUNKE

PRESERVING THE PARK TODAY AND FOR THE FUTURE

The towpath is the spine of the 184.5-mile length of the linear C&O Canal National Historical Park. As the park's partner, the Trust has worked with the National Park Service to understand priorities and scale philanthropic support for towpath continuity, accessibility, and visitor safety. To date, 115 miles of the towpath have been rehabilitated, with funding support from donors to the Trust's Towpath Forever campaign, along with investment from the NPS and the State of Maryland's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).


PHOTO BY LEIGH SCOTT

In spring 2025, significant weather impacted the Mid-Atlantic region of the eastern United States. In some areas along the C&O Canal, the Potomac River crested over 20 feet, causing major damage to park structures. The flooding caused a breach in towpath continuity at Oldtown, where a substantial washout destroyed a section of the trail. This flood event is one of many examples of the threats facing the park.


PHOTO BY NPS

With many structures and infrastructure nearing 200 years old, the C&O Canal faces growing challenges. As a historical park, the NPS endeavors to maintain and preserve the historic integrity of the canal and related features. The NPS interprets our country's rich history, ensuring that our public lands are protected and live on to share stories of our past. This means when a washout occurs, the work to repair this loss in towpath continuity is not as simple as filling a hole with dirt. This work involves a careful and thoughtful approach to rehabilitation, accounting for historic integrity, environmental factors, safety, and sustainability.



PHOTO BY NPS

Some major projects can take several years to complete due to meticulous planning, compliance review, and necessary approvals. When a project is completed, there is much cause for celebration. This past summer, the Trust and the NPS celebrated the completion of the Log Wall stabilization near the Carderock Recreation Area. This major $11.4M infrastructure project, which first began in 2023, was made possible through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Fund. The stabilization focused on an approximately 1,015 linear foot long historic drylaid stone wall, which varies in height up to 35 feet tall.



PHOTO BY TAD ACHEY



PHOTO BY NPS

The catalyst for this project was the formation of sinkholes that began in 2015 and 2016 above the wall, putting a vital section of the towpath at risk of failure. The completion of the Log Wall Stabilization ensures towpath stability, visitor and resource safety, and marks a significant step towards rewatering the canal.

Another initiative focused on safety and towpath continuity was launched in 2025 to support historic culvert restoration. Through this initiative, the Trust strives to build awareness and essential funding for these critical supporting structures in the park.

“Culverts are the gatekeepers for water to flow safely under [and] through the park,” explains Joe Reed, Chief of Professional Services Division and Supervisory Civil Engineer. “They are ‘silent sentries’ that help to guard the water from damaging the canal infrastructure.”

Losing a culvert means losing a huge section of the towpath, and there are over 200 in the park – all of which are in need of repair. Thanks to the generosity of our canal community, the Trust provided an initial $30,000 to fund the repair and maintenance of these essential supporting structures.

In addition to towpath continuity, the Trust works in close partnership with the NPS to maintain, interpret, and preserve historic lockhouses. You can experience the C&O Canal National Historical Park like never before through the Trust's Canal Quarters Interpretive Program. Stay the night in a historic canal-era lockhouse, book a day trip, or join us for a program for a unique opportunity to explore history and nature in one of our nation's most visited national parks. To date, seven lockhouses have been rehabilitated, welcoming an average of 3,000 visitors each year.

Through this award-winning program, lockhouses across the park have been furnished and decorated to reflect a unique period of the canal’s history, and they all tell a different story about the daily life of the lock keepers, who played an integral role in the canal’s operation. Win, win – reservation fees directly support the continued preservation of these historic structures.

Thank you for your support in preserving this national park. Together, we are creating a lasting legacy of care for the C&O Canal and ensuring it endures — today and for the next 250 years.



PHOTO BY FRANCIS GRANT-SUTTIE

MESSAGE FROM THE PARK SUPERINTENDENT


PHOTO BY TBFOTOGRAPHY

Dear Friends,

Thank you to the C&O Canal Trust's staff, board, and all supporters for your unwavering collaboration as not only our official philanthropic partner, but also a key operational team addressing park priorities.

I would like to acknowledge a few efforts of the Trust during 2025. The Trust co-hosted an event to celebrate the completion of the Log Wall Great American Outdoors Act project, supported flood recovery efforts by securing a donation to help repair a breach in the towpath near Oldtown, assisted with native plantings, removed invasive vegetation, removed 5 tons of trash in several key locations, and continued to support educational programs. Two terrific initiatives were launched this year, including the historic Culvert Preservation and Restoration Initiative and the Great Falls Tavern Initiative. Both efforts focus on our important priorities for towpath continuity and historic structure preservation on the canal landscape, and we look forward to their success.

For the National Park Service, 2025 was a time of transition for the park with staff retirements and new federal priorities. Through it all, the Trust has been there to support us and will continue to be there as we welcome 2026. We will further strengthen our commitment to ongoing park mission-related goals as well as new priorities such as America 250, Gateway Community relationships, and keeping the park safe, clean, and open for our visitors. January 2026 marks 65 years since the C&O Canal was designated a National Monument and 55 years since establishment as a national historical park — presently the 16th most visited unit in the National Park System. We appreciate the Trust's ongoing efforts to help us greet millions of visitors and protect the cultural, natural, and recreational resources of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park.

SUPPORT TO THE C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The C&O Canal Trust is committed to our stakeholders through transparency and accountability, using every dollar you donate to make a lasting impact in the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

During our last fiscal year, the Trust used 85% of our resources for our program work and direct support to the National Park Service. The Better Business Bureau's standards for charity accountability state that an organization should spend a minimum of 65% of its total expenses on program activities. Our donors can be confident that any investment in the Trust is spent in accordance with our mission and donor expectations.

The Trust directly contributed over $200,000 in funding to the park in 2025, in addition to in-kind and programmatic support. We are grateful for the generosity of our committed individual donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors for their ongoing support.

In 2025, the C&O Canal Trust provided funding in support of the park for:

15 Benches

$80,000+
Park Beautification

$60,000+
Towpath Forever

$50,000+
Canal Classrooms

$50,000+
Natural Resource Conservation

PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND CELEBRATING BIODIVERSITY

The C&O Canal is beloved by millions for its natural beauty, unparalleled recreational opportunities, and accessibility for millions of visitors. Through philanthropic support, volunteer engagement, and educational programs, the Trust is committed to advancing conservation of the unique natural resources in the park. Your support has helped protect our region's incredible mosaic of natural habitats, ensuring the natural beauty of the C&O Canal, one of the nation's most biologically diverse national parks, endures for generations to come.

The Trust's Natural Resource Conservation Initiative helps advance native plants and the propagation of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species. The Trust also works with the National Park Service to remove non-native, invasive vegetation through growing volunteer service projects focused on priority areas and key invasive plant species.

In 2025, the Trust was awarded the Perennial Garden Club's 75th Anniversary Grant for Native Plants, which supported a critical initiative to encourage forest regeneration for the 600-acre Gold Mine Tract. NPS staff began the project by planting over 100 native trees and shrubs to combat threats to this native Piedmont region.



PHOTO BY JIM BLAIR

This grant nearly tripled the park's efforts and enabled the restoration of additional acres in the Gold Mine Tract. These plantings lay the groundwork for a new population of mature native trees, increasing canopy resilience and ensuring connected habitats remain.

Throughout the year, the Trust also hosts various events to engage the public in supporting natural resource conservation. In 2025, the Trust hosted a Native Plant Walk and invasive species removal volunteer projects – including girdling non-native Japanese honeysuckle vines and winter creeper from over 400 trees, and invited our canal community to support a Native Plant Sale in partnership with the Washington County Master Gardeners.


PHOTO BY TRUST STAFF


PHOTO BY PAUL GRAUNKE

HONORING MEMORIES THROUGH THE BENCH DONATION PROGRAM

In 2025, the Trust celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Bench Donation Program, made possible through a partnership with the C&O Canal Association. The Association is instrumental in the physical installation of benches, led by Jim Heins, Volunteer in Parks (VIP) Team Coordinator. Jim has served the Association, a volunteer organization, for over 25 years. The installation work is not easy. Jim and his dedicated team haul 60-pound bags of concrete and move 10 to 15 200-pound benches to various areas of the park each year.

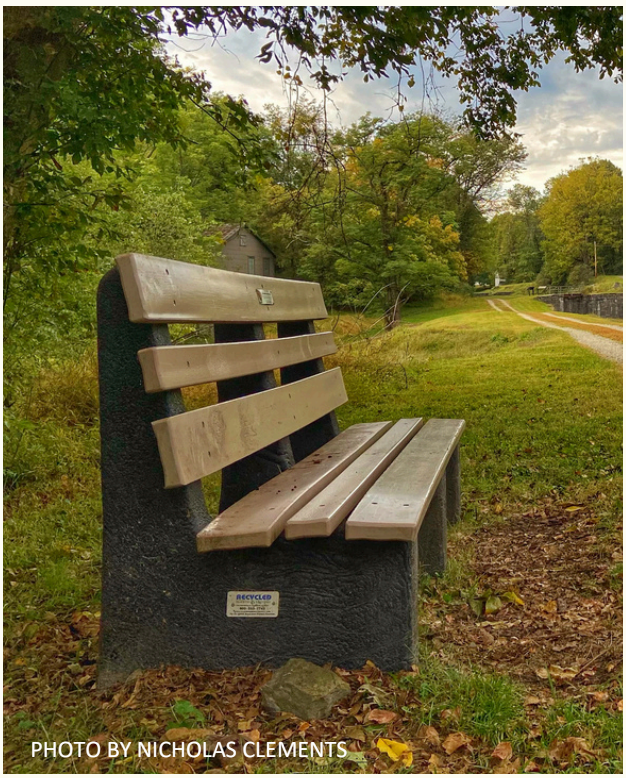


PHOTO BY NICHOLAS CLEMENTS

Throughout the entire length of the C&O Canal, families, friends, foundations, and more have honored their love of the C&O Canal and their loved ones through the Trust's Bench Donation Program. Since 2015, 108 benches have been donated to the C&O Canal National Historical Park through the Trust's program, offering park visitors a place to sit, rest, and take in the scenery.

Thanks to bench donors through the Trust, the program has contributed nearly $700,000 to support a range of beautification projects that help protect and preserve the park.

Carrying Forward the Legacy of the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern


PHOTO BY NICHOLAS CLEMENTS

For more than 51 years, the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern supported the park, raising funds and welcoming visitors. Their contributions have left an indelible mark on the Great Falls area and on the history of this park.

Last year, the Friends' Board of Directors made the decision to dissolve as an independent nonprofit organization. Their mission and legacy, however, will live on through a new initiative of the Trust.

As this transition takes shape, the Trust invites former members of the Friends, along with the entire park community, to join in this renewed effort. By contributing time, resources, and passion, supporters can continue the proud tradition started by the Friends and help write the next chapter in the story of Great Falls and build a future of strong stewardship.

CARING FOR 200 HUNDRED YEAR OLD LOCKHOUSES





PHOTOS BY TRUST STAFF



Reserve your stay back in time! Through a close partnership between the Trust and the National Park Service, historic, 200-year-old lockhouses along the C&O Canal have been rehabilitated and furnished for overnight accommodation and interpretive programming.

Maintaining the seven structures in the Canal Quarters Interpretive Program is not an easy feat. It is a labor of love, guided by the invaluable partnership between the NPS, the Trust, and a team of essential long-term volunteers we call Quartermasters. Canal Quartermasters are volunteers who help to maintain the lockhouses and assist visitors. Some Quartermaster duties include tending to small repairs, mowing and beautifying the lawn, communicating with the Trust and NPS, checking on guests, and more. Throughout the year, the Trust also hosts Quartermaster work days at each of the houses in the program. Volunteers join together for a day of service, improving the houses and enhancing the experience for guests.

Jennifer Hearn has been a Quartermaster for Lockhouse 6 since the program began nearly 20 years ago. She has approached each volunteer task with a steadfast commitment to the visitor experience and the history of the house. Jennifer has assisted with public programs, supported guest needs, inventoried and stocked supplies, and performed ongoing care and maintenance.

For all 40+ active Quartermasters, this unique opportunity to care for a 200-year-old house is cherished. Charles and Barbara Clopper were the first Quartermasters at Lockhouse 49 and continue to check in with the Trust about the house. Charles himself remembers meeting Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas during his historic canal walk over 70 years ago.

In 2025, our dedicated team of Quartermasters provided 1,400 in-kind service hours in support of the Trust and park. On average, we welcome roughly 3,000 visitors each year for overnight lockhouse stays and programs. Without Quartermasters, the Canal Quarters Interpretive Program would not be possible. This volunteer initiative builds community by bringing neighbors together as stewards of our shared historic spaces. Through hands-on care, they take pride in their service and help create meaningful places to welcome visitors, foster connection, and build a lasting legacy for the C&O Canal.

FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT AND BUILDING A LEGACY

Protecting and preserving our public lands starts with you. Each year, the Trust celebrates our impact in deepening our efforts to maintain and protect the C&O Canal. To ensure its legacy, the Trust works alongside the NPS to welcome and educate future park stewards by engaging hundreds of youth and families through hands-on, experiential programs. In 2025, the Trust welcomed 15 community organizations across the entire 184.5 miles of the park for service projects, scout workshops, recreational activities, and more. This past year, we expanded our canal community and held events with new partners, including We Be Walkin' in the District of Columbia, Boys & Girls Club and City Youth Matrix in Frederick County, and Fort Ritchie Community Center in Washington County.

The Trust also assists the NPS with community engagement and education by providing funding for the park's Canal Classrooms program. Taught by the Canal Classrooms Corps (CCC), 38 field trips welcomed a total of over 3,000 students to the park in the spring of 2025. In addition to supporting stipends for the CCC, the Trust provided funding for student transportation.


PHOTO BY TRUST STAFF


PHOTO BY NPS


PHOTO BY TRUST STAFF


PHOTO BY NPS

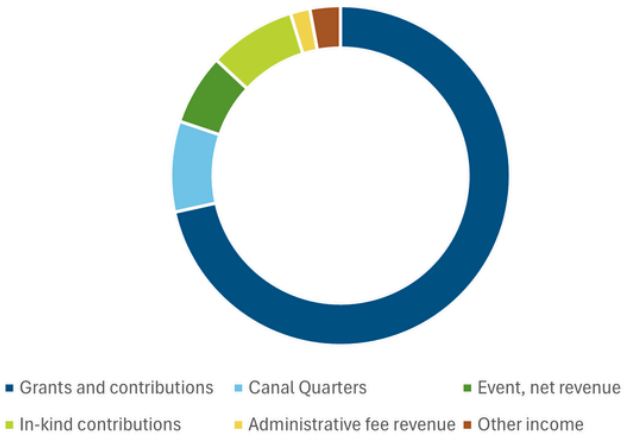
Audited Financials Fiscal Year 2025

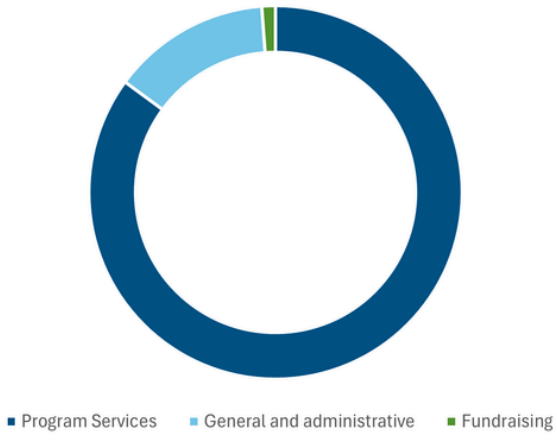
Support and Revenue

Grants and contributions	$1,404,677
Canal Quarters	$169,534
Event, net revenue	$132,342
In-kind contributions	$163,048
Administrative fee revenue	$36,527
Other income	$57,030
Total Revenue	**$1,963,158**

Expenses

Program services	$1,230,577
General and Administrative	$198,795
Fundraising	$17,098
Total Expenses	**$1,446,470**





2024-2025 HONOR ROLL OF DONORS



The following Honor Roll of Donors reflects donations of $500 or more given between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025. Our full Honor Roll can be found on our website at www.CanalTrust.org/HonorRoll. If we have excluded you in error, please contact us at development@canaltrust.org.

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$50,000 and up

National Park Foundation
Robert and Dana Reisse*

CANAL PATRON
$25,000-$49,999

Tony and Gay Barclay*
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Montgomery County Government
Perennial Garden Club
Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern

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$2,500-$4,999

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*Indicates William O. Douglas Society Member
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$1,000-$2,499

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John A. and Margery A. Ziegler*
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BOAT CAPTAIN
$500-$999

Anonymous Donor
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Peter and Ellen Berty
Susan Board
The Brian Bucks and Karen Pence Fund
Bright Funds
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Community Foundation of Frederick County
Cumberland Valley Athletic Club
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Edythe and William Wingate

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In memory of Annie
Susan Davis
In memory of Dr. Ronald Lee Ballard
Harry D. Davis
Ruth M. Lamdan
In memory of Bailey, our canal-walking dog
Lindsay McAuliffe
In memory of Charles M. Berman
Alan S. Kerxton
Cookie Kerxton
In memory of Ursula Mears-Binggeli
Thomas Mears Jr.
In memory of Deacon Brew
Shawn Maher
In memory of Josepha Cohen
Sandra Cohen
In memory of Linda Jane Collyer
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