

CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



2001 ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

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SUMMARY

C&O Canal National Historical Park staff had a very successful year in 2001 filled with a broad range of important accomplishments. The year was filled with challenges for the superintendent, some staff, and spouses due to health problems and illnesses. Several important management positions were vacant for several months complicating the ability of headquarters staff to complete priority strategic plan goals and work plans.

The park staff and contractors completed many important flood recovery projects resulting from the two floods of 1996, and successfully obligated all funds provided by Congress for flood recovery. Projects like repairing culvert 217 at Oldtown and the rehabilitation of the Polly Pond area were completed very successfully with sustainable fixes. Many of the lockhouses were repaired and painted, and a new sign plan was begun to replace many of the damaged signs throughout the park.

Partnerships, volunteerism, and fundraising continued to be top priority efforts for the superintendent and the partnership office. The park hired a fundraising consultant, with the help of the National Park Foundation, to begin a new program focusing on community-based foundations in the various counties along the park. A grant provided the park with the opportunity to hire a volunteer coordinator and to enhance the park's volunteer program. Over 1,600 volunteers provided more than 33,300 hours of service to the park. The park's volunteer bike patrol expanded and is a crucial part of the park's ability to service visitors on the towpath.

Visitation continued to increase in 2001 along the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Despite the national tragedy that occurred September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington, D.C., visitation increased to approximately 3,870,000, about 23 percent over the previous year.

Park staff continued to focus on the goals of the park's risk management plan with outstanding results. In 2001, park staff reduced the loss time injury rate to 0 exceeding its three-year goal in the risk management plan. As a result, the park received the 2001 National Capital Region Safety Excellence Award from Regional Director Terry Carlstrom at the October 2001 Superintendents Conference in Nemaquin, Pennsylvania.

SAFETY

The C&O Canal National Historical Park exercised leadership in developing a positive program for risk management. Park staff achieved the goals of the park's Risk Management Plan of reducing loss time injury rates by 50 percent each year for a period of three years. In 1999, our injury rate was 6.8. In the year 2000, we reduced our injury rate to 3.45, and by the year 2001, we accomplished our goal of reducing our injury rate to 0. Park staff accomplished the goals of the Risk Management Plan, and park managers continue to develop a state-of-the-art Risk Management Program to ensure that employee and visitor safety is our most important value.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The park received a challenge cost share grant in the amount of \$3,547. This allowed the park to rehabilitate two heavily eroded trails within the Palisades community. With full support and input from the community, National Park Service staff, and one SCA high school crew were able to build a set of steps to provide a safer trail for park users.

The volunteer program continued to be a great value-added aspect of the park's programs and included managing 1,590 volunteers working 33,341 hours on a broad range of maintenance projects, in visitor centers, leading interpretive programs, and hosting campgrounds.

The park received a grant of \$25,000 from the Cafritz Foundation to expand our community outreach program. This enabled us to hire a Volunteer Outreach Coordinator through the National Park Foundation. The coordinator, serving a ten-month position, has successfully worked with neighboring community organizations to improve trails and park resources while improving communication relations. In addition, he has supervised the summer youth group programs helping to provide them with an appreciation for our natural resources.

An experienced consultant has been hired through the National Park Foundation to launch a new fundraising program for the park. It consists of working with local community foundations that border the park. A fund has been set up in Montgomery and Frederick counties, with the District of Columbia and Washington County in the beginning stages. To date, a \$25,000 donation has been accepted in the Montgomery Community Foundation and \$10,000 is pending with Frederick County.

Park staff continued to focus on enhancing existing partnerships with such groups as the Friends of the Great Falls Tavern, The Potomac Conservancy, the Lander Community Association, and the C&O Canal Association. The Lander Community Association completely restored lockhouse 29 through the use of donations and volunteer service. It has been refurbished to look as a lockhouse did in the early 1900s. Currently it is open on the weekends to the public with volunteer docents from the Lander community.

ADMINISTRATION

Administrative details were planned, documented and put into full swing with the award of a GSA contract for the relocation of park headquarters. Plans included space allocations, design drawings for remodeling the office complex, financial plans, budget concerns, and contracting

requirements. The contract was awarded in June, and work immediately commenced on the remodeling of the space. Park personnel, the contractor, and the sub-contractors held weekly meetings on the progress of the work. The move will allow for a work environment suited for today's technology. Headquarters personnel will be located together, improving communication between park employees. The location chosen will allow easy access to interstate corridors for both park visitors and for the staff when traveling to other areas. Anticipated final move-in date is March 2002.

In July, we received authority to process all personnel actions on our own. Training for the personnel staff was provided, and upon implementation of this process, numerous mistakes from past years were identified and corrected. If these mistakes had not been found and corrected, some of them could have adversely affected employees' retirement status, service computation dates, and possibly insurance benefits. Since receiving this authority, approximately 320 personnel actions have been processed at the park. This authority to process personnel actions in a timely manner greatly enhances the support that the administrative division provides to all park employees.

Personnel recruited 28 vacancies, classified 14 positions and prepared KSA crediting plans for those positions. The goal for advertising within two weeks of an approved request was met at least 90 percent of the time.

In December a Health Fair for Open Season was held at the Williamsport maintenance facility and all employees were able to participate. Representatives of each health Insurance plan were invited to attend and speak to employees who were considering a change in their insurance plans. This Health Fair allowed employees to make informed decisions on which plan was best suited for them. Booklets and information packets were made available for employees to take home and compare at their leisure.

The computer support staff installed Lotus Notes in about 50 percent of the park's computers. A brief training session was also provided the staff. Formal training sessions for Lotus Works are in the planning process. The transition has not caused any major frustrations with employees, and down time was not evident.

An administrative technician was detailed to the Housing Program Office in WASO as a Housing Management Specialist to assist on projects during a peak workload period. This detail enabled the administrative technician to gain a better understanding of the duties and responsibilities to manage the housing program within the park. The administrative technician assisted with the review of Director's Order 35 and several rehabilitation projects.

In June, the park's budget analyst and civil engineer met with personnel from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to review the Boat Ramp Program. They visited all boat ramp sites and were able to review the work that the park had performed to maintain and improve these ramps. Reimbursements amounting to \$115,900 were identified and requested from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Future work projects were identified for additional reimbursements. These visits enrich the working relationship between the Maryland Department

of Natural Resources and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and ensure continued support for future projects.

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

The summer youth group program employed 28 youth working on various projects within the park. In addition, eight college/university students gained experience in the field of interpretation, living history, and natural resource management while receiving a stipend. The park also employed three college/university students through the STEP program. The individuals worked as GS-5's in the field of historic preservation, GIS, and natural resource management.

Through Public Land Corps grants of \$92,361, the park was able to enlist the aide of several youth groups. Included in this were the Maryland Conservation Corps, two SCA high school work crews, and an SCA Resource Assistant to lead the YCC crew. Projects included removing trees, clearing debris and woody vegetation out of culverts and lock structures to prevent further damage to the resources, building new trails, rehabilitating existing trails, and construction of a footbridge along the Billy Goat Trail.

DEVELOPMENT

Staff members of the C&O Canal National Historical Park are monitoring the proposals to construct three electric generating plants within five miles of the park boundary in southern Frederick County, Maryland, between the Monocacy Aqueduct and the town of Point of Rocks, Maryland. One proposed site is literally within yards of the park's boundary. We have received a request for a water line right-of-way from Duke Energy.

Staff members have been heavily involved with concerned citizens, state and local officials, as well as members of Congress.

INTERPRETATION

The new Cumberland Visitor Center was opened on October 14, 2001. The grand opening was part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

The park operated visitor centers in Cumberland and at Great Falls seven days per week all year. Georgetown, Williamsport, and Hancock visitor centers operated five days per week; however, the Georgetown visitor center operated only two days per week from November to March. The visitor center in Brunswick, Maryland operates only on weekends year round.

A new educational program was being developed for Cumberland. Funding was available to develop the curriculum using local teachers. An education professor at Frostburg State University evaluated the curriculum guide. Funding is also available for the printing of the guide, a teacher's workshop, and to assist local school districts with funding for bus expenses.

This program is in addition to the park's two other curriculum-based programs: Bridging the Watershed and Partners.

The park was again an active participant in community festivals at Cumberland, Williamsport, Hancock, and Brunswick. In addition, the park participated in the Heritage Festival in Sharpsburg. The interpretive staff also had special Halloween programs at Great Falls and Williamsport. The interpretive rangers in Georgetown also played a major role in the 250th anniversary celebration in Georgetown

The two canal boats operated five days per week again this year, except for late summer when a flash flood damaged and drained the canal in Georgetown. During the period when the canal was being repaired, the "Canal Clipper" at Great Falls operated seven days per week.

A number of projects were begun or are progressing this year. Phase 1 of the park wayside exhibit plan is in the process of being completed. The completed waysides have been shipped to the maintenance districts and will be installed in spring 2002. Other wayside exhibits are in the process of being designed. Park staff is designing an exhibit that will portray the crew's cabin for the stern of the Georgetown. This exhibit should be installed by spring 2002 as well. Work has begun on exhibits that will be placed in the Ferry Hill mansion when the park's headquarters moves to Hagerstown. These should be completed by summer 2002.

LANDS

All rights of use and occupancy have expired within Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. The last retention property expired June 9, 2001, and salvage rights within the park expired on May 26, excepting a deferred salvage right period being allowed the Whites Ferry Sportsman's Club former retention improvements until a proposed offer to exchange is studied and decided upon. Whites Ferry Sportsman's Club has offered to exchange approximately 16 acres of land owned by them, (Tract 17-100), within the current boundary of C&O Canal NHP for additional years for 22 former retention improvements located on federal land formerly owned by the club (Tract 17-101). An appraisal has been ordered and is in the process of being completed. Several issues including title, valuation, and proposed additional years of retention use will be studied and need to be acceptable to park management's long-term goals before any exchange is considered.

All of the retention improvements at Schetrompf and Galloway Bluffs and most of the Potomac Shores retention improvements have been removed and lands restored. Two long-time park friends and retention holders, Mr. Richard Hale and Mrs. Lettie Shores, passed away in July and August respectively. Since their passing, park staff have removed their retention improvements and restored their sites at Lander and Point of Rocks. The former Wiles retention on Canal Road has been restored. The former Keller retention on Canal Road is being studied for historic significance.

Park management is continuing to work with the Potomac Shores membership concerning Potomac River access over park-owned lands and the evaluation of acquisition of Potomac Shores' interest in islands and submerged lands from the Washington County/Frederick County

line to the railroad bridge at Harpers Ferry. C&O Canal National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources are involved in these efforts.

The draft Land Protection Plan has been completed and reviewed by the National Capital Regional Office. Corrections are being completed and the park will then contact private owners and prepare for public meetings.

A review of resources and future management directions of the 34.59-mile Western Maryland Railway Corridor has been initiated in partnership with the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA).

VISITOR AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

The park had a large turnover in its protection staff during the year with seven of its 12 ranger positions vacant for at least part of the year. Additionally one of the district ranger positions was vacant for a portion of the year. The park had 662 reported incidents for the year, 27 Part One and 512 Part Two offences. In addition, 814 written warnings or citations were issued. There were 93 reported Emergency Medical Incidents with nine-advanced first aid and one drowning fatality on the Virginia side of the river. Rangers conducted 13 rescues and 29 land and water searches. Rangers conducted four ARPA investigations during the year. Most offence areas showed a slight increase over the totals from previous year. Two of the park's ranger stations were relocated during the year.

Rangers worked cooperatively with the United States Park Police, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and District of Columbia personnel in the second annual Chain Bridge Striped Bass Fisheries Task Force in April and May. Hundreds of resource violations were handled during the operation. Additionally, rangers assisted state fish and game, local and state police agencies, and other federal agencies on numerous incidents during the year. The park's protection staff provided a variety of assistance following the events of September 11th. This included security details at Camp David, Boston National Historical Park, Washington Mall, and the Pentagon. Two rangers assisted on western fire details.

Park protection staff provided safety training including motorboat operation, defensive tactics, bike training, and firearm safety. Rangers gave presentations at a local school and DARE program for children.

A regional review of the park's law enforcement operation and program was conducted. As a result of their recommendations, the park implemented the following: a take-home vehicle policy for law enforcement rangers, funding of gym memberships in lieu of providing physical fitness equipment, obtained rifles and cages for ranger vehicles, and made the commitment to fill vacant law enforcement positions as soon as possible. The National Capital Region Communication Center, located at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, continued to operate 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

The park's campground fee program concluded its first full year of operation with revenues of \$26,034 being collected at self-registration sites. The Great Falls Entrance Station had revenues of \$391,000. Additional fees included Carderock pavilion rental of \$17,000 and the interpretive canal boat cost recovery operation of \$195,980.

MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

The Maintenance Division removed structures and restored 17 retention sites.

Preservation maintenance was performed on more than 50 of the park's historic structures. Projects ranged from vegetation removal to stabilization of entire lock systems. A few of the more involved projects included the completion of flood repairs to lockhouses 25, 27, 28, and 49; tree removal at Antietam and Licking Creeks; debris removal from four aqueducts; and masonry stabilization of the Conococheague Aqueduct.

The Maintenance Division's mowing along the towpath was equivalent to traveling 600 miles; the mowing of obstructed areas equaled nearly 1,900 acres. The division collected and disposed of more than 5,375 bags of trash from 91 sites. Vegetation control along the towpath encompassed nearly 3 million square feet. Additionally, 3,300 hours were spent performing grounds maintenance and maintenance of the campgrounds, picnic areas, and boat ramps. Approximately 26 miles of watered canal were controlled, maintained, and monitored daily.

The division also completed a project that provided new boat launching and parking facilities at Lander and built and installed footbridges at lock 44.

To keep our visitors safe, the division repaired many miles of towpath, tested drinking water systems 700 times, spent approximately 2,700 hours controlling ice and snow, inspected dams 4 and 5 weekly, performed maintenance on 14 boat ramps, and removed or pruned over 1,000 trees posing hazards to the visitors or resources.

To improve employee safety, safety shoes were purchased for every maintenance employee. Project safety plans were prepared for 70 maintenance projects. The division was active in the B.O.A.T. process and participated in observer training. The division funded specialized training sessions in fall protection, chainsaw operation, fire extinguisher operation, and defensive driving. Hearing tests were conducted to gather baseline data. Over 3,000 hours were used to inspect and maintain vehicles and equipment. Each maintenance district held and documented at least one safety meeting per month. The division devoted 9,200 hours to improving visitor safety.

The division spent approximately 1,300 hours supporting VIP and youth projects throughout the park.

PLANNING

The park began development of the construction documents for two Line Item Construction projects: repair of an historic stone wall in Georgetown and stabilization of the Monocacy Aqueduct.

Design has been completed for the stabilization of the Great Falls Tayern under the Fee Demonstration Program. This project will correct some of the immediate threats to this significant historical structure.

The superintendent and maintenance employees have been heavily involved with the plans to re-establish the canal and turning basin at the canal terminus in Cumberland, Maryland. This project is being designed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Staff members have been heavily committed to working with the Washington Area Sewer Authority to improve air quality along the first 20 miles of the canal. New and retrofitted air vents from the Dulles Interceptor Sewer Line are being designed. This project receives much public oversight.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Compliance and permitting was processed for the United States Park Police horse stable at Carderock, with construction scheduled for FY02. A MOU between the park and the Naval Research Lab was signed for completion of a geophysical survey for buried munitions and chemical weapons on parkland near Chain Bridge in Washington D.C., including that within the boundary of the Spring Gap, former location of an Army munitions and chemical weapons facility. The park suppressed approximately 80 acres of Johnson grass (an exotic grass classified as "noxious" in Maryland) located on park agricultural lease fields. The park hosted National Capital Region's West Nile Virus coordinators, Shepherd College students, who conducted monitoring for the virus in four parks (HAFE, ANTI, CATO, and CHOH).

The resource management program implemented parkwide biological inventories through coordination with National Capital Region's Inventory & Monitoring Team. Funding was acquired and a 4-year species survey and restoration was begun for the federally endangered plant, harperella. With George Washington Memorial Parkway and The Nature Conservancy, the park coordinated the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan. Resource management personnel coordinated the park's involvement in the FERC hydropower re-licensing of Dams 4 and 5. Natural resources environmental compliance for more than 50 projects and plans was completed.

The park's Geographical Information System provided support for the FERC hydro relicensing of Dams 4 & 5, Land Protection Plan, Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan, Great Falls Cultural Landscape Inventory, Western Maryland Railway Management Study, Ferry Hill Cultural Landscape Report, and external cell tower requests. The following data was acquired or developed: geology (USGS), soils (NRCS), Little Pool bathymetry, National Land Cover Data, Washington County data, and climbing data in Great Falls. The park in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, and the NPS-RTCA is producing the "Potomac River Strip Maps" in spring 2002. The Bear Island Billy Goat Trail safety task force is producing a Great Falls Area Hiking Trail map. The park is working on completion of a GIS Arcview GUI with ESRI, which will provide a method to view many park databases with GIS.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The new park historian began his tour of duty in the park in mid-November. He is a participant in the agency's Mid-Level Management Intake Program and will spend approximately 60 percent of his time in the next two years as a member of the park's cultural resource team, with the remainder of his work devoted to developmental assignments. His professional services will be concentrated in museum collections and research library management, and compliance and review activities. He has been actively involved in consulting on compliance issues, as well as projects such as the Ferry Hill Cultural Landscape Report, and providing assistance to outside researchers on a regular basis.

Although the park did not sign any new historic leases in 2001, it initiated the process with four historic properties that will be leased in 2002 by documenting the history and preparing drawings for these properties and obtaining appraisals. The cultural resource staff continued to manage the six historic property leases that were previously signed.