

# CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



## 2003 ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

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### Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

#### Summary

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP staff had a very successful year in 2003 with a myriad of significant accomplishments. The year was filled with challenges that included some of a personal nature, such as the illnesses of the park superintendent and Chief of Interpretation, and family deaths and serious illnesses. Budget constraints, due to growing uncontrollable costs, also posed a challenge as losses in staffing became an unfortunate reality. In addition, Tropical Storm Isabel hit the park in September of 2003 in the midst of fiscal year close out, creating numerous challenges for park staff to overcome.

The creativity, talent, and dedication of the staff at C&O Canal NHP is evidenced by the park's ability to overcome adversity and accomplish so much. Of note is the staff's response to Tropical Storm Isabel. With the onset of the storm, the park implemented a modified Incident Command System. It devoted all of its resources to ensuring the safety of park visitors during and after the storm and to reopening the park to the public. For several days, staff worked diligently in teams in the field assessing storm damage and clearing obvious hazards and trees that they could remove. The entire park was reopened within days with no employee accidents. The only visitor accident reported occurred in a closed area of the park. The work of repairing storm damage continued throughout the year and continues to date. Millions of dollars of damage occurred to park cultural resources such as numerous sections of the canal towpath and multiple culverts.

Staff continued their routine duties of protecting, maintaining, and interpreting the park's rich cultural and natural history. Programs were conducted for roughly 75,000 park visitors and students. Significant cultural resource studies were conducted which will provide valuable information not only to park managers, but to park visitors. Work began on the Monocacy Aqueduct, one of the most significant cultural resources in the park, to repair damage incurred in 1972's Hurricane Agnes.

The park's emphasis on volunteerism and partnerships continued in 2003 with 1,847 volunteers working 44,912 hours at an estimated value to the park of \$687,602. The park continued to establish a structure for fundraising with local community foundations. Funds have been established in Frederick, Montgomery and Washington counties, generating \$90,000 in donations in 2003.

Perhaps the most notable achievement for the park in 2003 was its continued focus on safety. Safety continued to be the most important value of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP. The number of visitor accidents in the park decreased from 63 in 2002 to 41 in 2003. This reduction was achieved in part by the analysis of previous visitor accidents and the emphasis placed on prevention of similar accidents. Likewise, employees worked nearly 250,000 hours with only two lost time cases and a lost time incident rate of .62 – a decline from 1.6 in 2002.

## Administration

The ONPS budget was not received until mid-March, halfway through the fiscal year. Expenditure of funds was monitored closely and purchases were scrutinized to ensure continuity of mission essential needs and visitor safety concerns. A new electronic bill of collection process was implemented and three park personnel were trained in the process. One new administrative assistant was trained in AFSIII and FFS; however, the employee has since left the Service. As administrative positions became vacant in other divisions, their budget tracking, financial obligations, and close out support were taken on by the Administration Division's budget analyst. The budget analyst is currently providing all support for Division of Visitor/Resource Protection, Division of Interpretation, Division of Resources Management, Park Management, and the Division of Administration.

The Administration Division has one IT Specialist, a SCEP student, who attempts to provide computer and telephone services for park headquarters, five maintenance shops, five visitor centers, and two ranger stations, while maintaining 24-hour coverage of the National Capital Region Communication Center (NCRCC). Of paramount concern is the difficulty that one IT person faces trying to maintain services for the NCRCC while attending to the needs of a 184.5-mile-long park. Although no incidents have happened to date, concerns remain about a potential lack of services which could render the NCRCC without communication ability.

The IT Specialist supported the National Capital Region Communication Center with the addition of the fire alarm monitoring system which monitors dozens of NPS facilities around the region.

Two maintenance shops were updated with fast frame relay lines that allow constant internet connection. This has become a necessity with the implementation of more WEB based programs such as FMSS and Travel Manager.

Approximately 95 percent of CHOH Lotus Notes users were upgraded from the R5 to R6 version. In order to meet the new security standards and have Windows 2000 or Windows XP as the operating system, new computers have been purchased. The park has about five computers left with an operating system older than Windows 2000.

The Administrative Officer was an active member of the CORE Team that worked with Bradson Corporation on developing a dictionary for the Activity Based Costing initiative which was implemented at the beginning of FY 04.

One administrative technician is an active member in the Federal Women's Program and represents the park as a member of the GSA Regional Fleet Taskforce. Another administrative technician serves as a Union Steward for IBPAT Local 1997. The purchasing agent obtained training for Level IIB warrant and also worked on IDIQ contracts, cooperative agreements, memorandums of understanding, and 8A contracts, learning the basics of these types of processes.

The purchasing agent was trained as an alternate A/OPC for the SmartPay Program and an audit system was developed and implemented for review of the purchase card statements. A new SOP was developed for the SmartPay Purchase program and training on using GSA Advantage was coordinated and provided to some staff members.

Seventy-two purchase orders were completed and, for the first time, some with option years. This will hopefully streamline the renewal of annual contracts for the next year.

#### Concessions/Cooperating Association

Management of small-scale concessions continued in 2003 providing valuable services to park visitors. Parks and History Association outlets in the park brought in \$128,769 in income during the fiscal year. The park received approximately \$25,000 in personal service donations in the form of part-time and seasonal Parks and History staff for the park's bookstores.

#### Community Relations/Partnerships

The park participated in festivals in Cumberland, Hancock, Williamsport, Sharpsburg and Brunswick, Maryland. At Cumberland the park provided financial support that enabled the Canal Place Authority to hire a Washington, D.C. musical and educational group, Magpie. They performed at the festival and provided educational opportunities for Allegany County school children. The park hosted a living history encampment at the park's facilities near Sharpsburg during the town's festivities. Park staff presented interpretive programs and coordinated activities with state agencies and park partners at festivals in Hancock, Williamsport, and Brunswick.

The park, in partnership with the Potomac Conservancy, received a challenge cost share grant in the amount of \$30,000. These funds will be used for the historical renovation of Lockhouse 8. Because this is a high visibility project, these funds will help the Potomac Conservancy leverage private and in-kind donations totaling several times the federal contribution. In addition, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) is partnering with the park to provide Leave No Trace education to hikers on the Billy Goat Trail with funding received from a \$2,500 REI grant.

Partnerships continued to play a key role in park operations in 2003. New partnerships were formed with Shepherd College and the Maryland Senior Employment Program. The agreement with Shepherd College allowed the Federal Work Study Program to provide 90 percent of the funding for four interns. The agreement with the Maryland Senior Employment Program provided 100 percent of the funding for staffing at the front desk at headquarters and for an administrative assistant in Williamsport. Staff continued to focus on enhancing existing partnerships with such groups as the Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern, C&O Canal Association, Lander Community Association, Potomac Conservancy, Nature Conservancy, PATC, and various volunteer partners such as Greater D.C. Cares and Single Volunteers of D.C.

Volunteers are essential contributors to the C&O Canal's programs and vitality. They perform tasks that the park does not have the capacity or resources to undertake, and they enhance the park's visitor use programs. Volunteers serve the park in many ways, from our highly successful bike patrol program to visitor center information assistants, living history interpreters, docents at lockhouses and other historic buildings, trail maintenance, campground hosts, resource management assistants, maintenance assistants, receptionists at headquarters, reenactors, and level walkers who walk the towpath and update the park on current conditions. In 2003, the park's volunteer program continued its vital role, over 1847 volunteers worked 44,912 hours with an estimated value to the park of \$687,602.

The park continued to establish a structure for fundraising with local community foundations. Funds have been established in Frederick, Montgomery and Washington counties. Over \$90,000 in donations were netted in 2003.

### Cooperative Activities

The summer youth program employed 29 youth working on various projects within the park. In addition, ten college/university students gained experience in the field of interpretation, living history, maintenance, and natural resource management while receiving a stipend or payment through the Federal Work Study program. The park also employed seven college students through the SCEP and STEP programs. These individuals worked in law enforcement, IT, GIS, interpretation, and dispatch.

Through Public Land Corps and NCR Youth Employment grants of \$62,420, the park was able to enlist the aid of several youth groups. Included in this were the Maryland Conservation Corps, two SCA high school work crews, and a 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, painting, and construction of a bridge on the Woodland Trail.

In addition, the park dramatically improved its relationship with the Brunswick Museum, a partner who operates a park visitor center in Brunswick, Maryland. Regular meetings between the museum's leadership and the park's interpretive staff eliminated disagreements and misunderstandings and improved services offered to the visitor at the Brunswick Visitor Center.

A partnership between the park, the Service Amtrak Partnership, and AMTRAK was initiated in 2003. The goal of this program is to present effective interpretive programs aboard AMTRAK's Capitol Limited trains between Cumberland, Maryland, and Washington, DC. These programs are expected to start in 2005. The right-of-way AMTRAK uses between Cumberland and Harpers Ferry is part of the original right-of-way built by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in the 1830s. The B&O Railroad chose this right-of-way because of a dispute with the C&O Canal Company for right-of-way at Point of Rocks, Maryland.

## Development/Planning

Currently the park has 146 unfunded facility projects identified in the Project Management Information System with estimated costs in excess of \$60 million. We have two line-item construction projects, Widewater Towpath and Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center, approved for design with Widewater funded for construction in FY04 and the Tavern deferred until FY05.

As part of mediation for the air quality improvements associated with the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority Dulles Interceptor Project, new visitor restrooms will be constructed, one new one at the Angler area and one replacement at the Fletchers area. Through the 20 percent Fee Program, the Georgetown Visitor Center will receive improvements for accessibility in 2004. The design is complete and at the final review stage.

Staff continued to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Cumberland Canal Place Authority to rewater a portion of the canal and terminus at Cumberland, Maryland. They are also working with the Federal Highway Administration to rehabilitate the vehicle bridge at Point of Rocks and the Bollman Bridge at Williamsport. This year we completed the line-item construction project repairing the stone walls in Georgetown and began the project to stabilize the Monocacy Aqueduct.

Two line-item construction projects have been reviewed at the WASO level, Slackwater Towpath and Restore Seneca Village. We continue to refine these projects and hope for design development funding in fiscal year 2004. Projects are estimated to cost \$16.5 million.

Staff continued to work with the District of Columbia and the Federal Highway Administration on the plans to repair/rehab/replace pedestrian and vehicular bridges that cross the canal in Georgetown. There are 91 facility projects awaiting region review, and these projects are estimated to cost around \$30 million.

Park staff devoted over 450 staff days to the cultural and natural resources compliance needs of the park.

The park's Long Range Interpretive Plan efforts were delayed due to the illness of the Chief of Interpretation and the park's impending General Management Plan.

## Fiscal Year

The park closed FY03 in a deficit due to Hurricane Isabel that occurred in late September. The park's annual budget was approximately \$7.7 million, including an OFS increase of \$674,000 to increase the law enforcement staffing to protect park resources and visitors. Unfortunately, the park also was hit with additional assessments of approximately \$198,000. Due to heavy snowfall and flooding in February 2003, the park received \$30,900 for emergency storm damage costs. In addition, the park also received

\$68,000 for a bioassessment of Outfalls 2,3, and 4 from the Corps of Engineers' owned Washington Aqueduct.

### Interpretation

Park interpreters presented 2,388 interpretive and educational programs for 75,873 visitors and students. There were 137,143 visitors to the park visitor centers, and park interpreters and volunteers contacted 26,531 visitors on park trails.

Bridging the Watershed, a watershed education program targeting high school chemistry, biology and environmental studies students, was expanded into the Washington County, Maryland school system in 2003. This was accomplished through an innovative partnership between the park, Bridging the Watershed, the Washington County schools and one of its schools, the Fairview Outdoor School. Through this partnership, almost all of the curriculum modules of Bridging the Watershed will be presented by Fairview's outdoor educators. Quality control is maintained through training and supervision by park staff, Bridging the Watershed staff, and Fairview Outdoor School's lead instructor. Over 500 additional students each year will learn about watershed preservation and have a positive interaction with the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The initial edition of the park's improved newsletter, The Canaller, was published in September 2003. The newsletter is designed and edited by park interpretive staff. The C&O Canal Association funds the printing costs for the publication.

Two employees were nominated for the National Capital Region Freeman Tilden Award for excellence in interpretation. Jana Friesen was nominated for the design of a group of 16 wayside exhibits. Brianna MacDonald was nominated for her program "The Civil War Comes to Georgetown."

The park's most visible interpretive program suffered a major loss during FY 2003 when one of its canal boats, the Canal Clipper, was found to be irreparably damaged. As a result, over 12,000 visitors were unable to enjoy the canal boat interpretive program and learn about the history of the canal by experiencing a boat operation first hand. Despite operating an expanded schedule, the park's remaining boat was unable to make up for that loss. The loss of the boat has received much attention, and the park is investigating the possibility of acquiring a replacement boat.

### Lands

A Land Protection Plan for C&O Canal National Historical Park was approved and signed by the Regional Director on September 25, 2003. This plan, which took three years to complete, is the first comprehensive land plan for the park since 1983. The plan identifies 12 priority areas that management considers necessary for further protection. These areas are in Allegany and Washington counties, Maryland. Many of the priorities, having important cultural, natural resource, and management values, are adjacent to and outside of the current park legislative boundary.

In 2003, park staff completed database design and started to identify and inventory a variety of complex rights-of-way within C&O Canal National Historical Park. Information is being compiled into the database, which has been designed to identify the type of right-of-way, location, milepost, rights of use, and map location among other important fields. This is a major undertaking since all of the park's rights-of-way have never been inventoried. Rights-of-way documents are found in multiple places and it is anticipated that it will take several years to complete this database.

In 2003, C&O Canal NHP received \$25,000 from regional funds to conduct surveys where resource threats and/or damage may have occurred. Four surveys were contracted for in 2003, with surveys to be completed in 2004. They are: two areas at Potomac Fish and Game Club, Rivers Edge Subdivision, and Hoffmaster Road.

### Law Enforcement

The protection division experienced many challenges during FY 2003. Although some of these challenges were disruptive to routine operations, the protection of park visitors and resources was accomplished.

The protection staff experienced steady staff turnover, as has been the case in years past. Most notable was the vacant Chief Ranger position for the majority of FY03. This and other park ranger position vacancies continue to challenge program continuity and staff availability. Both district ranger positions rotated through the "acting" Chief Ranger details.

The most notable divisional event was the ranger involved shooting (justifiable homicide) which occurred at Edwards Ferry on January 18, 2003. In brief, ranger Derek Anderson was on patrol in the Edwards Ferry area when he observed a man standing next to a taxi cab near the boat launch area. Ranger Anderson contacted the individual, asking for his identification. The subject resisted this request and attacked ranger Anderson. After retreating, fighting off the subject's advances, kicks and punches, ranger Anderson used his pepper spray, baton, and continued to retreat. The subject kept attacking and ranger Anderson was forced to use deadly force with his side arm to stop the conflict. The subject was killed. It was later found that the taxi cab was stolen and the subject was under the influence of drugs (PCP).

This event had a dramatic impact upon those directly involved in the event, as well as other park and regional support staff. Normal routine was disrupted for many months, as various reviews were conducted.

Park rangers continued to provide staffing for Homeland Security details throughout the service. These included details to Boston, Philadelphia, DOI Watch Office, Camp David, and Washington D.C., etc. These details greatly impacted the ability to provide staff for wildland fire callouts, other assignments, and the routine operational functions of the park.

Park rangers conducted numerous hunting / poaching patrols, investigated numerous boundary encroachments, including illegal tree cutting inside scenic easements. Staff participated in a multi-agency fisheries taskforce in Washington D.C., making numerous cases for illegal fishing. In all, the park experienced 579 incidents for the year, 44 natural resource violations, 21 Part 1 offences, including 2 homicides (one justifiable referenced above), 36 medical-related responses, and 7 search and rescues.

Divisional staff directly supported the preparation, readiness, and response to Tropical Storm Isabel and the associated flooding events. This event involved staff conducting condition assessments, closures, and emergency responses.

The division was able to improve the fleet of emergency response vehicles by outfitting several new law enforcement patrol packages.

### Maintenance

Performance by the maintenance division was a great contributor to the park receiving a 97 percent satisfactory rating from the annual visitor survey. This was in spite of a staffing decrease of 23 percent from the 1998 level. In addition to providing quality visitor service the staff devoted over 1,000 staff days to maintaining the park's historic structures. The staff devoted 765 staff days to the Facility Management Condition Assessment Requirement and they expended approximately 50 staff days supporting special events.

Some major projects the maintenance staff completed this year were Spillway Bridge near Chain Bridge, Spillway Bridge near Lock 34, and replacement of a vehicle bridge at Spring Gap.

### Personnel

With the loss of a Human Resources Assistant, the specialist has taken on extra workload such as OWCP cases, training, recruitments, and all personnel actions for the entire park.

In November, coinciding with open season, a Health Benefits Open Season Fair was held at the park headquarters facility and all employees were able to participate. Representatives from the health insurance plans were invited to attend and a nurse from Washington County Hospital was available for free blood pressure screening. This has proven to be a good time for the health fair as it allowed employees to ask questions about changes or concerns with their current plans and talk to other representatives about different plans. The health fair allowed employees to make informed decisions during open season about which plan is best suited for their needs.

Work histories have been completed on all personnel. During the review, numerous corrections on service computation dates and credit for temporary/seasonal time were

found and corrections were made. Staff were worked with individually with employees to obtain additional information.

Personnel recruited 11 vacancies, hired 4 new employees, processed 2 retirements, 11 promotions, and 279 personnel actions.

#### Property

Obtained 100 percent accountability of formal property and disposed of a two year backlog of excess equipment/property through GSA.

#### Public Use

Visitation during 2003 was 2,716,576. This was a 20.9 percent decrease from 2002. This decrease is consistent with the visitation in many of the Washington D.C. area parks over the same period. September 11 and sniper attacks in September 2002 were the most prominent reasons for the reduction in visitation.

Improvements to the fee collection program occurred with revenues increasing to \$395,562 despite the major impacting events, such as the Washington D.C. sniper scare, severe winter season, Hurricane Isabel, and a decrease in overall visitation.

The division management of the complex and active Special Park Use and Incidental Permit program was greatly improved. Oversight for the concession and Carderock/Marsden Tract reservation system continued to run smoothly. Carderock revenues increased by several thousand dollars for the year.

#### Research

There were 20 research and collections permits issued in 2003 on a myriad of topics including work on harperella restoration, wetland inventorying and mapping, and research on dragonflies, bats, and deer populations.

#### Resources Management

The Division of Resources Management had a very active year in both natural and cultural resources management in spite of a significant decline in staffing. In 2003 the park's historical architect retired, the division's administrative assistant left the Service, and one of the park's two natural resources specialists transferred. Due to funding constraints none of those positions will be filled for the foreseeable future.

During the course of the year, staff reviewed 73 compliance documents ensuring that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act were met.

Staff continued to monitor activities of the Corps of Engineers' owned Washington Aqueduct as the facility's Outfalls 2, 3, and 4 lie within C&O Canal NHP. In an effort to learn more about potential resource impact from the discharges, the park awarded funds to conduct a bioassessment of the outfall areas. The park also participated in an inter-agency working group regarding the reissuance of an NPDES permit to the COE and its conditions.

Staff was also actively involved in efforts to monitor and mitigate West Nile Virus (WNV) activity within the park. In coordination with WASO, NCRO, and federal, state, and local agencies, the park developed and wrote a WNV management protocol for Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP. Park staff trapped and identified roughly 4,500 mosquitoes in 2003, sending them to Fort Meade for testing. Of all of the samples that were submitted, only one sample was confirmed as positive for WNV. During the course of the mosquito season, staff also identified potential habitat of the species most likely to transmit WNV to humans and eliminated non-naturally occurring habitat and conducted larval dipping and, in some cases, larval control in naturally occurring habitat areas within developed areas of the park.

Staff also initiated the implementation of the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan in concert with George Washington Memorial Parkway and The Nature Conservancy, hiring a coordinator for plan implementation with previously awarded funding. As part of a national recovery effort, the park also planted federally endangered harperella plants.

Several significant cultural resource studies were also underway in 2003. As part of the larger effort to inventory the archeological resources of the National Park System, the park received funds to conduct a three-year archeological survey from mileposts 0-59. This ongoing survey yielded both prehistoric and historic resources.

A Cultural Landscape Report and Treatment Plan for Ferry Hill was also underway in 2003. Until 2002 park staff occupied Ferry Hill mansion and its grounds. This report and plan will help guide future development of this exciting resource that has great potential for visitor use and landscape restoration.

A Level II Cultural Landscape Inventory was also underway in 2003 and nearing completion on the Pennyfield Lock complex, which offers a unique landscape that incorporates several themes related to the history of the C&O Canal. Operated by at least three generations of the same family, Lock 22's built environment, including ancillary dependencies, road network, and a succession of dwellings tells the story of the family's transition from canal-orientation to agriculture and other retail activities. It provides linkages to the historic African-American community of Tobytown due to patronage of a store near the lock and tradition of labor in the Pennyfield farm fields.

### Safety

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP continued to develop its safety and risk management program, ensuring that a safety-first culture is cultivated and maintained. There was a

reduction in the number of OWCP claims filed during 2003. Employees worked nearly 250,000 hours with only two lost time cases and a lost time incident rate of .62 – a decline from 1.6 in 2002.

The number of visitor accidents in the park also decreased from 63 in 2002 to 41 in 2003. This reduction was achieved in part to due the analysis of previous visitor accidents and the emphasis places on prevention of similar accidents. Staff devoted particular attention to making the Billy Goat Trail, where most visitor accidents in the park occur, a safer experience.

The park continues its safety activities through active committees and sub-committees, by conducting behavioral-based observations, and through a hazard reporting system. In addition, staff participated in numerous training opportunities, and communication efforts such as the risk management newsletter, the “Tiller,” were enhanced.

### Training

Park employees from all divisions participated in numerous training opportunities. Of note is the fact that employees of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal NHP participated in nearly 400 hours of formal safety-related training during the course of the year.