

COLUMBIA CROSSING

2020 Annual Report

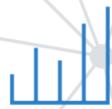


SUSQUEHANNA
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

COVID-19 IMPACT

Columbia Crossing, like all visitor service and event-based businesses, was hit hard by the pandemic. Closing the facility and canceling public and private events was a difficult but necessary decision to protect the public health of our community. Susquehanna NHA sought out recovery funds, focused on regional planning efforts, continued heritage storytelling, and launched new community outreach initiatives.

SHIFT IN FOCUS



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

working to support our river town community by connecting visitors to businesses in our downtown



REGIONAL PLANNING

collaborating with local, state, and national partners to make our whole region a better place to live and visit



HERITAGE STORYTELLING

sharing our river's amazing stories to highlight our area's unique place in national history

DIRECT IMPACTS

- ✓ Staff welcomed 10,972 visitors into the center this year, even though Columbia Crossing was closed 103 visitor days due to COVID-19 mitigation regulations.
- ✓ According to the trail counter in East Donegal Township, there were over 175,000 trips on the NW River Trail this year. The battery on the counter was dead for the months of April, May and June so there was likely many more trips that were not collected.
- ✓ There was an 85% decrease in earned income from rentals and programs. 22 weddings and private events were canceled as a result of the pandemic. All student field trips, as well as summer programming and fall lectures were canceled.
- ✓ When the initial mitigation shut-down orders came, SNHA was in the process of hiring for the Program Coordinator position at Columbia Crossing. First interviews had occurred but the process was put on hold for the rest of the year, which significantly decreased staff expenses.

2020-2021 SUSQUEHANNA NHA COLUMBIA CROSSING BUDGET

	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
REVENUES			
Columbia Crossing Operations & Programs	\$175,863	\$182,588	\$188,263
Columbia Borough	114,863	114,863	114,863
National Park Service	10,000	10,000	19,900
County of Lancaster	15,000	23,193	25,000
Program/Exhibit Income	12,000	7,331	10,000
Sales - Merchandise	4,000	2,957	3,500
Facility Rentals	20,000	7,972	15,000
SBA/M&T PPP Loan Program		16,272	
EXPENSES			
Columbia Crossing Expenses	\$179,738	\$133,122	\$186,660
Salaries & Benefits	136,816	97,553	145,418
Program Interpretative Supplies/Services	11,200	12,421	9,000
Merchandise Purchases	1,700	842	1,500
Travel & Training	1,500	416	1,500
Custodial & Other Facility Services	12,000	10,054	12,000
SHC Admin. Support	16,522	11,836	17,242
Operating Net	(3,875)	49,466	1,603
Prior Year Reserve Carry-Over	82,452	82,454	130,179
Capital Expenses	2,000	1,741	3,000
Operating Reserves	76,578	130,179	128,782

BUDGET NOTES

Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA) took the initiative to seek out funding from the Federal Paycheck Protection Program related to the CARES act. That funding covered eight weeks of staff costs between May and June of 2020.

SNHA applied for Lancaster Recovery Grants awarded by the County Commissioners office. Phase I funding covered costs of retrofitting equipment and the purchase of cleaning supplies. It also paid for an outdoor kiosk to guide trail users while the building was closed. SNHA was able to apply for Lancaster Recovery Grant Phase III funding as well because Columbia Crossing had significant earned income loss compared to 2019. As a result, SNHA was awarded the maximum allowed amount of \$10,000 to offset the loss in facility rental and program income. That check was received in early January 2021.

2021 funding from the National Park Service (NPS) is a grant awarded to SNHA that supports 50% of the Program Coordinator position salary. To fulfill the grant, the Program Coordinator will coordinate and implement an expansion of on-water public paddle experiences, including beginner community paddle sessions and kayak tours aligned with NPS themes and stories.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

How does a recreation and interpretative center support community growth?

Susquehanna NHA takes every opportunity to support local organizations and businesses. Projects that support local youth education, economic development, and visitor readiness are our primary goals. Partnerships with the school district, merchants associations, other non-profit organizations support our Columbia residents and business owners.



Columbia Borough School District Reusable Water Bottles

Five-hundred reusable water bottles were provided to the Columbia Borough School District and distributed to students. Columbia Borough School District started its Back-to-School Supply Drive asking for things they never needed before including reusable water bottles. Columbia Borough School District had retrofitted all the water fountains to be water filling stations. Removing the fountains reduced the chance of spreading COVID-19 and also instilled a healthy and environmentally conscious habit in Columbia's youth.

Columbia Crossing Director, Hope Byers, immediately reached out to SNHA's long-time partner Lancaster County Solid Waste Authority (LCSWMA) about the project – knowing they would find this unique challenge intriguing. LCSWMA has committed to enhancing the recreational opportunities and quality of life in areas where its facilities are located. LCSWMA has made a proactive commitment to the river and its assets for over a decade. Together, they chose a 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Plastic Bottle, which helps support the entire recycling lifecycle. The chosen bottles were also made in the United States and come with a sip n' pour lid and an easy carry handle. The partners desired the messaging to reflect how the Susquehanna River brings a wonderful synergy to our community. The bottle design uses a word-cluster of blue words flowing by green shoreline. All the blue words highlight the river's assets and opportunities including trail, bridge, paddle, preserve, overlook, history, and explore. The green shoreline are ways in which LCSWMA (and all of us) can protect and care for the Susquehanna and its surrounding landscapes, including recycling, conservation, stewardship, reuse, sustainability, and collaboration. Additional bottles are available for purchase from Susquehanna NHA at Columbia Crossing River Trails Center.



Columbia River Park Loop Trail

A crew of four amazing young adults from the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps worked tirelessly in mid-October at Columbia River Park. In 2019, a park master plan project created designs for the 11-acre expansion area. The plan will take long-term planning and heavy construction. Susquehanna NHA and Columbia River Park Advisory Committee sought inexpensive ways to provide more immediate access so they partnered with Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps. At Columbia River Park, the crew worked to clear invasive species, extend the loop trail to the river, repair a split-rail fence, and lay a trail surface.

The cost of this project was entirely funded by private donations. On behalf of Susquehanna NHA and Columbia River Park Advisory Committee we sincerely thank the Columbia Park Rangers, Mountz & Kreiser, Columbia's Foresters of America, and all those that donated online to this project. This would not have been possible without the generosity of each donor.



Columbia Bucket List

Susquehanna NHA in partnership with Borough of Columbia's Parks and Recreation Committee launched a 2020 Columbia Summer Bucket List. In a time when everyone was struggling to keep busy and find new fun during the global pandemic, the Columbia Summer Bucket List encouraged residents and visitors to keep exploring all the great parts of our town. Over 35 activities and nearly 50 Columbia organizations, businesses, and landmarks were featured in the list. Digital and paper copies were made available. The document was downloaded over 600 times and hundreds of paper copies were distributed at Columbia Crossing. We anticipate creating another bucket list in 2021 and partnering with the Merchants Association of Columbia in addition to the Parks and Recreation Committee.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Columbia Crossing Director, Hope Byers, participates in a variety of project-specific and ongoing committees to ensure Columbia is represented and considered in long-term regional projects. Susquehanna NHA believes it is important to build up Columbia Crossing as a regional hub for recreation and storytelling.



- A Veterans Memorial Bridge Rehabilitation Project 2023-2026:** This project is slated to affect Columbia River Park, and the NW River Trail. SNHA has advocated for maintaining the significant architectural features and adding pedestrian and bicycle amenities.
- B Enola Low Grade - NW River Trail Connection:** SNHA participated in a feasibility study to determine the best trail corridor between Columbia and the Turkey Hill Trail access. We will continue to advocate for this connection to be completed.
- C Susquehanna Riverlands Conservation Landscape:** This ongoing partnership seeks to collaborate on land protection and recreation enhancements to the region. Hope Byers participates annually in the grant program providing \$50,000 in local project funding.
- D Discover Lancaster Board Advisory Committee:** Supporting our county's destination marketing organization and advocating for long-term tourism planning that includes river towns, recreation, and heritage tourism initiatives.
- E Northwest River Trail Advisory Committee:** SNHA supports this group of municipal leaders on trail management and development issues. The trail was recently completed in October and is now 14 miles.

STORYTELLING

Susquehanna NHA harnesses the unique stories and opportunities our region provides to attract more visitors and educate the next generation of river stewards.

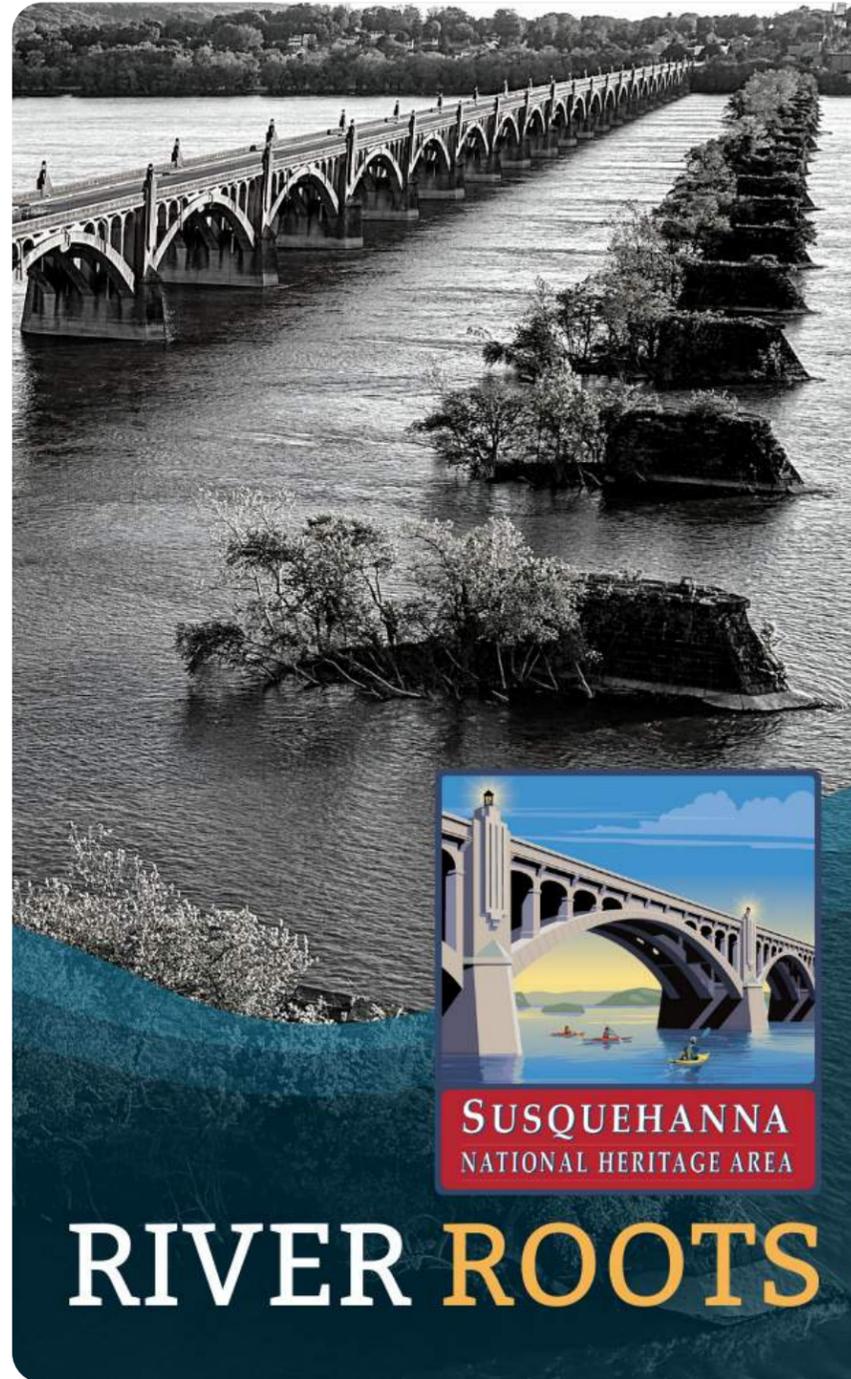
Creating self-guided exhibits at the Columbia Crossing River Trails Center has served as an essential way to tell the river's stories. In 2020, two art exhibits were rescheduled and extended to be accessible to visitors. During mandatory closures, the art was showcased on our social media platforms.



In October, after months of planning and design, a new exhibit was installed. *A Look Back at Hunting Fishing & Trapping on the Susquehanna* was created in partnership with local historian Lynn Smoker. The exhibit provides a glimpse into the techniques and tools for capturing wildlife on the Lower Susquehanna River. Smoker has spent years enjoying the river as an avid hunter and fisherman and is a devoted collector of Susquehanna river artifacts. Visitors to this brand-new exhibit will see original and unique tools and artifacts related to hunting, fishing, and trapping, including a locally built duck boat from 1927, along with an array of mounted waterfowl, fish, and fur-bearing mammals.



A Look Back at Hunting, Fishing & Trapping on the Susquehanna River will be on display at Columbia Crossing River Trails Center through August 2021. A series of outdoor, social-distanced lectures are being planned for the spring/summer 2021 to more deeply explore the history surrounding these traditions.



DIGITAL INITIATIVES

The global pandemic canceled our annual student field trips and heritage lecture series. Susquehanna NHA found unique ways to allow our community to explore heritage on their own through digital initiatives.

Digital Heritage Maps

Mobile-friendly maps were created through the GoogleMaps platform. The NW River Trail Heritage Map features 37 natural and cultural heritage stops along the trail. The map also shares information for the trail access locations and amenities. There have been over 7,500 map views since it was launched. A second interactive map was created in October that features haunted heritage tales, which has been viewed over 2,600 times.

River Roots Heritage Blog

SNHA created an online heritage blog at the beginning of pandemic to share the stories we would normally share via tours, lectures, and exhibits. Since its debut, nine different blogs have showcased topics of our region including the Conejohela Flats, Susanna Wright, Anthracite Iron Furnace history, and unique geological features. These blogs have been viewed over 4,000 times.

Riverlands Recreation Blogs

SNHA manages the Susquehanna Riverlands website as a resource for heritage and ecotourism. Six blogs were created to highlight great places to visit. Our mission was to connect people to new recreation sites in order to decrease use at sites that were overwhelmed.

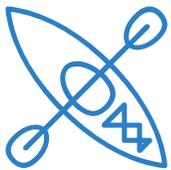
2021 PROJECTS

As we move forward with cautious optimism into the new year, SNHA plans to relaunch many of our projects and plans that were delayed by the global pandemic.



RELAUNCH YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS

From our fourth grade Junior Ranger field trips to our fifth grade field trip with the Canoemobile, SNHA will welcome hundreds of students back to the river. Auxillary education programs like Junior Ranger Days and Tadpole Time will also return!



EXPAND RECREATION CLASSES

Columbia Crossing is preparing to launch a Recreation Partnership Program to collaborate with local businesses to offer more exercise and introductory recreation classes in the park. NPS funding has been dedicated to offering heritage paddles in summer 2021.



SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

Columbia Crossing will focus on wayfinding, visitor services, and events that have a positive impact on our businesses. Through the Merchants Association of Columbia and working with the Borough, SNHA intends to uplift all businesses in our community.



SUSQUEHANNA
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

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