
C&O Canal National Historical Park News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 27, 2018

Contacts: Jenny Anzelmo-Sarles (NPS), jenny_anzelmo-sarles@nps.gov, 202-619-7177

Angela Berard (State of Maryland), angela.berard@maryland.gov, 410-974-2316

Brittany Higgins (Washington County), bhiggins@washco-md.net, 240-313-2389

C&O Canal plans to relocate headquarters and open new visitor center in Williamsport, Md.

Agreement with Maryland Economic Development Corporation will bring 75+ jobs to Williamsport and park management back to the park's front lines for the first time in 16 years

HAGERSTOWN, Md. – A new headquarters for Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park is expected to bring jobs and an economic boost to Williamsport, Md. Yesterday, the National Park Service (NPS) and Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), with support from Washington County, Md., reached an agreement to identify and rehabilitate property adjacent to the park to serve as a visitor center and the park's new headquarters.

“Moving our headquarters to Williamsport creates a sense of community,” **Superintendent Kevin Brandt said.** “It makes sense to bring park managers back to the front lines, and our agreement with MEDCO and relationship with Washington County are major steps forward. There is still work to be done, but I know that by working together, the town, county, state and the park, will all benefit from having the C&O Canal headquarters in Williamsport.”

The relocation will bring more than 75 jobs to Williamsport, Md., create efficiencies by consolidating park operations in Washington County to one location and bring new investment and economic opportunities to surrounding communities.

“The C&O Canal is an important part of American and Maryland history, and we are proud to keep the canal headquarters here in our state with a newly rehabilitated and renovated location in Williamsport,” **said Governor Larry Hogan.** “Not only will this project help us preserve this site for future generations; the 75 new jobs it will create are a win for Williamsport.”

Approximately 5 million people visit C&O Canal National Historical Park each year. In 2017, more than 420,000 of these visitors came to Williamsport, spending nearly \$6 million in the local community and supporting more than 800 local jobs.

“The National Park Service, the state of Maryland and Washington County forged a historic partnership to locate the C&O Canal Headquarters where it belongs. The headquarters of our regional pride and national treasure will be located where history has intended it to be most enjoyed by visitors and staff alike,” **Washington County Administrator Rob Slocum said.**

Over the past 10 years, NPS and the state of Maryland have invested more than \$12 million in rehabilitating the historic features of the C&O Canal in Williamsport. The relocation of the park’s headquarters ensures that this successful partnership will continue for years to come.

“This is tremendously exciting, as the National Park Service will finally have a headquarters adjacent to the C&O Canal, and the agency will save money by consolidating various functions under one roof. Williamsport will attract more visitors, and visitors to the C&O Canal NHP will no longer get lost trying to find its headquarters,” **said Senator Ben Cardin**, a senior member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works. “This is a true federal, state and local collaboration many, many years in the making, and I am proud to have been a part of the effort throughout its course.”

The more than 75 positions that the new agreement keeps in Washington County amount to an annual payroll of about \$5 million. Additionally, the proposed move will capitalize on the recent investments in the canal, which allow visitors to experience all aspects of a working canal—the only such opportunity in North America.

“Bringing the C&O Canal Headquarters to Williamsport is a win-win for the park and the Williamsport community. This agreement is the product of years of discussions between local, state, and federal partners, and I’m pleased we could work together to make this proposal a reality,” **said Senator Chris Van Hollen**, who advocated for the project through his position on the Senate Appropriations Committee and secured language supporting the cooperative management agreement in the Fiscal Year 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. “I will keep working in the Senate to ensure that the C&O Canal National Historical Park receives the resources it needs to continue serving visitors for generations to come.”

“Moving the park headquarters to Williamsport is good for the park, good for those of us who love the park and good for Washington County. This could not have happened without the work of local leaders and the cooperation between those at the federal, state and local level and that cooperation and diligence should be applauded,” **said Congressman John Delaney.**

Currently, the C&O Canal headquarters is located in Hagerstown, Md., which is a 20-minute drive from the nearest park location in Williamsport. In 2002, the park offices moved to Hagerstown from the Ferry Hill Plantation visitor center near Sharpsburg, Md. The current headquarters lease, through the General Services Administration, expires in 2022.

-NPS-

ABOUT THE C&O Canal: Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park preserves and interprets the historical, natural and recreational resources of the C&O Canal. Over 5,000,000 visitors a year enjoy the opportunities for recreation and understanding that the Park has to offer. For more information, visit the Park’s website at www.nps.gov/choh.