

# Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

Environmental Assessment  
Canal Place Heritage Area Management Plan Update  
Public Scoping Period April 18-May 25, 2012

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Public Scoping Meeting April 25, 2012

## Environmental Assessment Canal Place Heritage Area Management Plan Update Allegany County, Maryland

The Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority, in partnership with the National Park Service and the City of Cumberland, Maryland, proposes to update the management plan for the Canal Place Heritage Area, one of the State of Maryland's 12 certified Heritage Areas.

Because the heritage area encompasses portions of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal NHP), the National Park Service (NPS) is required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to determine whether significant impacts could occur to Federal lands as a result of implementing any of the proposed alternatives considered in the plan. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) will also be conducted.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

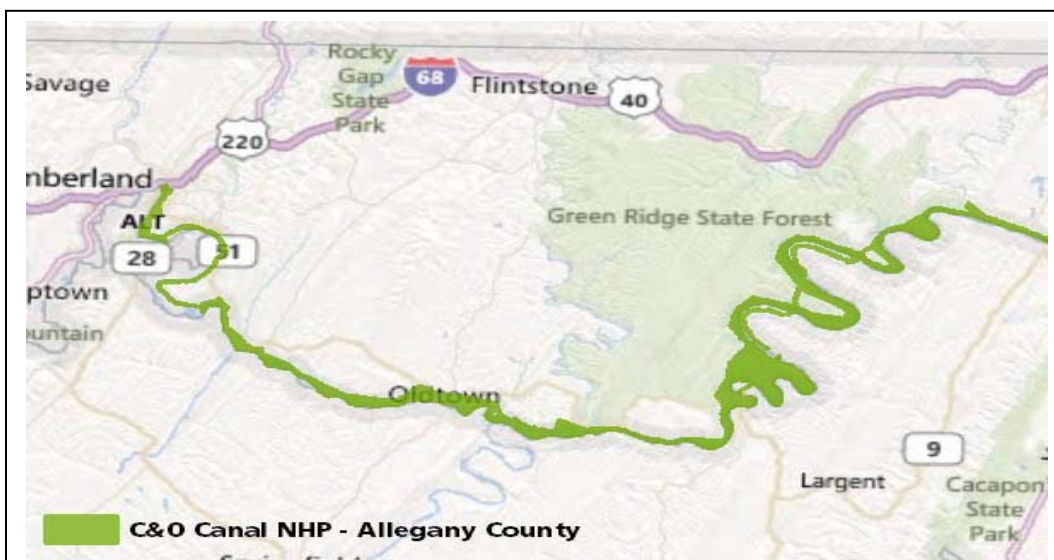
Canal Place Heritage Area is the first Certified Heritage Area in the State of Maryland, and is one of 12 in 23 counties in the State. Certified Heritage Areas are geographic areas that contain high concentrations of unique historical, cultural and natural resources. Each Certified Heritage Area is defined by a distinct focus or theme that makes that place unique from other areas in the State. These distinctive places exhibit tangible evidence of the area's unique heritage in historic buildings and districts, distinctive cultural traditions, singular natural landscapes, as well as other resources such as museums, parks and traditional ways of life.

In October 1996, a management plan was adopted to guide the development of the heritage area over a five-year period and to recommend goals for promoting its resources. In July 2002, the initial management plan was updated to outline a strategy through Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. In 2011, the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority and the City of Cumberland began the process of updating the plan by issuing a Request for Proposals to consultants to help prepare the new update. The update to the plan will recommend goals for promoting the heritage area and preserving its resources through FY 2013.

As a component for the Heritage Area Management Plan update, the NPS will develop an EA that will evaluate the proposed action as it applies to Federal lands only. It will assess reasonable alternatives, including the No Action alternative; describe the existing affected environment; evaluate potential impacts to the environment; and determine whether significant impacts exist. Upon conclusion of the EA process, the NPS will prepare either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The final document will be incorporated into the Heritage Area Plan update.

### PROJECT AREA

The project area for consideration within the EA for the C&O Canal NHP will include all park lands located in Allegany County, Maryland, as shown below. No land acquisition is proposed for this project.



### Project Area

Source: National Park Service, C&O Canal NHP, 2012.

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## PURPOSE AND NEED

The C&O Canal NHP preserves the physical structures of the historic Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, a 184.5-mile canal that extends from Washington, DC to Cumberland, Maryland. The C&O Canal was constructed between 1828 and 1850.

The purpose of the project is to identify potential projects with the C&O Canal NHP that will meet the overall project goals of the Heritage Area Management Plan Update, which are to:

- Define strategies and offer recommendations that reflect the current trends in the region;
- Recommend interpretive and educational activities and planning projects that can be implemented in the next five years;
- Provide an inventory of natural, historic and cultural resources related to the canal and its history;
- Outline strategies for preserving, protecting and promoting the rich history and cultural resources that define Canal Place; and
- Develop a multi-agency partnership to unify efforts to promote and preserve the history of transportation and commerce in Allegany County, Maryland.

The need for the project is to enrich the visitor experience by helping the visitor to understand how important the C&O Canal was to the history of transportation and commerce in Allegany County and how it, along with the railroad and the National

Road, opened the United States to the West. This can be accomplished through the enhancement of park structures and more extensive interpretive and educational programs.

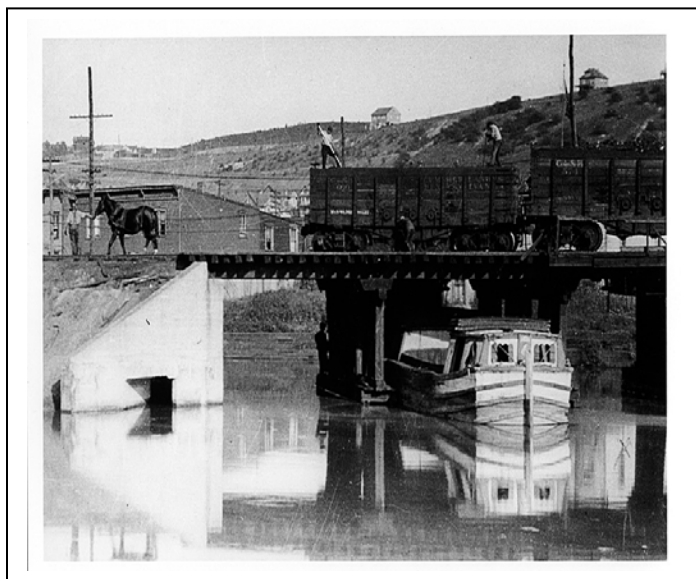
## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

NEPA/NHPA process requires the development of preliminary alternatives for the proposed project. These alternatives are developed as a result of project scoping by the public, affected agencies, and NPS. The alternatives are then evaluated within the EA document for their potential impacts on the natural and human environment.

“No Action” alternative is required by the NEPA/NHPA process and must be included in the EA. This alternative serves as the baseline for the other alternatives used in the evaluation. The No Action alternative, for this proposed project, is the status quo. The canal operations would continue to be maintained in their current condition.

Preliminary action alternatives under consideration include:

- 1) Feasibility of rewatering the canal from the terminus area downstream to Offutt Street in Cumberland.
- 2) Restoring an historic the canal boat yard near the canal terminus.
- 3) Inclusion of park lands within Allegany County, Maryland, as designated heritage area.



**A canal boat passes under railroad bridge in Cumberland, MD. Today, the dry remnants of the canal exist.**

Source of Photos: *On the Waterfront: Cultural Resource Investigations for the Cumberland Flood Mitigation Proposed Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Rewatering Project, C&O Canal National Historic Park, Cumberland, Allegany Co., MD, Joseph F. Balicki, RPA Bryan Corle, Jan. 2007.*

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## IMPACT TOPICS

Mandatory topics to be considered during the development of the EA are—

- Geology, Geologic Hazards, Topography, and Soils
- Hydrology
- Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Vegetation
- Wildlife
- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species
- Scenic Resources (aesthetics and viewsheds)
- Cultural Resources, including:
  - Archeology
  - Museum collections
  - Ethnography
  - Historic Structures and Districts
  - Cultural Landscapes
- American Indian Traditional Cultural Properties
- Visitor Use and Experiences
- Human Health and Safety
- Park Operations and Management
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice

## EA PROCESS OVERVIEW

- ❖ Public Scoping:
  - April 18 through May 25, 2012.
  - Public Scoping Open House scoping April 25, 2012.
- ❖ Analysis of Scoping Comments—May 2012
- ❖ Preparation of the EA Spring/Summer 2012
- ❖ Public Review of the EA—Fall 2012 (30 days)
- ❖ Public Review Meeting—midpoint of public review period
- ❖ Analysis of Public Comments –Fall 2012

- ❖ Preparation of Decision Documents—Fall 2012
- ❖ Announcement of Determination of Effect—Fall 2012

## PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD – HOW TO COMMENT

The Superintendent has announced a 31-day public scoping period, April 18-May 18, 2012, to solicit public comments on this proposal. During this scoping period, the public is invited to identify any issues or concerns they might have with the proposed project so that the National Park Service can appropriately consider them in the EA. **Only written comments can be accepted.**

You may submit comments electronically at the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/choh>) or submit written comments to:

Brandi Rosselli, AICP, Manager of Planning Services  
Mackin Engineering  
RIDC Park West  
117 Industry Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15275  
ATTN: NPS Cumberland Boatyard and Rewatering EA

Mailed comments must be postmarked by **May 18, 2012** to receive consideration. Please feel free to use the attached form to submit your comments.

Please be aware that your entire comment will become a part of the public record. If you wish to remain anonymous, please clearly state that within your correspondence, although we cannot guarantee that personal information, such as email address, phone number, etc. will be withheld.

Once the EA is developed, it will be made available for a 30-day public review period.



**A replica of the canal boats is on display near Canal Place.**  
*Photos by John T. Keene*



**A spur to the CSX Railroad (formerly B&O Railroad) crosses by the former canal boat building site.**



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## NOTES



**Canal Parkway Wall.**

Source: *On the Waterfront: Cultural Resource Investigations for the Cumberland Flood Mitigation Proposed Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Rewatering Project*, C&O Canal National Historical Park, Cumberland, Allegany Co., MD, Joseph F. Balicki, RPA Bryan Corle, Jan. 2007.

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**DO NOT PUBLISH MY NAME AND ADDRESS WITH MY COMMENTS** ☐

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Business (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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Return Address

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Brandi Rosselli, AICP, Manager of Planning Services  
Mackin Engineering  
RIDC Park West  
117 Industry Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15275

**ATTENTION: CUMBERLAND BOATYARD and REWATERING EA**

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