



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal  
National Historical Park

1850 Dual Highway  
Suite 100  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
301.739.4200 phone  
301.739.5275 fax

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## C&O Canal National Historical Park News Release

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**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Matt Graves, [matt\\_graves@nps.gov](mailto:matt_graves@nps.gov), 301-582-0813

### Conococheague Aqueduct Restoration Groundbreaking Ceremony

Williamsport, MD – The National Park Service (NPS), Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park (C&O Canal) and Town of Williamsport, Maryland will host a groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, May 5, 2017, 11:00 a.m. at the Cushwa Basin in Williamsport to celebrate the start of the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct in Williamsport, MD.

The first phase of the restoration project for the entire Williamsport interpretive complex will return the Conococheague Aqueduct to its 1920's appearance and create the first watered, operational aqueduct along the C&O Canal since 1924.

The restoration project for the entire complex is a true federal-state-local partnership, with \$6.24 million coming from a State of Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program Grant, \$722,904 from a State of Maryland Bikeways Grant, and \$1.33 million from the National Park Service Centennial Challenge fund. The Town of Williamsport has been an active, supportive and essential voice in bringing this project to fruition.


The funding currently available will not only support the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct, but it will also fund a new crossing of the canal, a rail trail, and restoration of the historic coal yard. These projects are under design and will proceed to construction in the coming months as well.

Additional funding will be sought to create a new interpretive landscape surrounding the Cushwa Warehouse to bring the story of the industrial revolution along the canal to life for visitors of all ages. Eventually, the entire section of the C&O Canal in Williamsport will be restored to its 1920's appearance, so it can tell the stories of this important, yet often overlooked, portion of canal history.

“The impossible does not happen as a matter of course. The vision of a rewatered aqueduct was embraced by the entire community. The restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct represents the best in community partnerships,” Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Superintendent Kevin Brandt stated. “Rehabilitation of the Conococheague Aqueduct will be the centerpiece of the restored historic landscape in this area of the park, while also creating a premier visitor attraction in Williamsport, Maryland. I can think of no better way to celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service and prepare us for a second century of stewardship than a project that brings together partners on the federal, state and local level.”

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The Conococheague Aqueduct, one of eleven aqueducts on the 184.5 miles of the C&O Canal, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly 97 years ago, in April of 1920, the upstream wall of the Conococheague Creek Aqueduct gave way, crumbling into the creek below. The C&O Canal Company temporarily repaired the aqueduct with a wooden wall, but the canal only operated for three more seasons before being abandoned in the spring of 1924.

The project will restore the aqueduct to its appearance in the early 1920's, with a new upstream wall designed to appear as the wooden temporary replacement wall. More importantly, the aqueduct will be restored to the condition where it can once again hold water, the first canal aqueduct to be restored to full operation. When complete, Williamsport, Maryland will be the only place in North America where visitors can ride boats across an aqueduct and through a working canal lock.

Invited guest speakers for this event include Maryland Governor, Lawrence J. Hogan, U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S. Senator Christopher Van Hollen, Jr., Representative John K. Delaney, Maryland Senator George C. Edwards, Maryland Delegate Michael W. McKay, Williamsport Mayor Bill Green, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, and C&O Canal Superintendent, Kevin Brandt.

This event is free to all park visitors. The ceremony will take place at the C&O Canal National Historical Park Cushwa Basin, 205 West Potomac Street, Williamsport, MD. Parking for this event can be found at the Riverbottom Park. For more information about the event and the park, call 301-582-0813.

For more information, please visit [www.nps.gov/choh](http://www.nps.gov/choh). Follow us on Facebook at [chesapeakeandohiocanal](https://www.facebook.com/chesapeakeandohiocanal) and on Twitter [@COcanalNPS](https://twitter.com/COcanalNPS)

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**ABOUT THE C&O Canal:** The 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](http://www.nps.gov/choh).