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C&O Canal National Historical Park News Release

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Conococheague Aqueduct Restoration Groundbreaking Ceremony

Williamsport, MD – The National Park Service (NPS), Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal) and Town of Williamsport, Maryland will host a groundbreaking ceremony rain or shine 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 next phase of the restoration project for the entire Williamsport interpretive complex will return the Conococheague Aqueduct to its 1920's appearance and will be the only functioning transportation canal aqueducts in North America.


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 support the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct, a new crossing of the canal, a rail trail, and restoration of the historic coal yard. The additional projects to the Conococheague Aqueduct are under design and will proceed to construction in the coming months.

The park will also seek additional funding for the restoration of the historic landscape surrounding the Cushwa Warehouse that brings to life the story of the canal and its industrial past. Eventually, the entire section of the C&O Canal in Williamsport will be restored to its 1920's appearance telling significant but often overlooked canal history stories.

"The impossible does not happen as a matter of course. The vision of a re-watered 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. "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."

The Conococheague Aqueduct, the second largest of the eleven aqueducts on the 184.5 miles of the C&O Canal, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Over 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.

Guest speakers for this event include: U.S. Senator Christopher Van Hollen, Acting Director of the National Park Service Michael T. Reynolds, Maryland Secretary of Natural Resources Mark J. Belton, Maryland Secretary of Planning Wendi Wagner Peters, Maryland Senator George C. Edwards, Maryland Delegate Michael W. McKay, Maryland Delegate Neil Parrott, Washington County Board of Commissioners President Terry L. Baker, Williamsport Mayor Bill Green, former Williamsport Mayor Jim McCleaf, and C&O Canal Superintendent, Kevin Brandt.

This event is free and open to the public. Visitors are encouraged to arrive by 10:45 a.m. The ceremony will take place at the C&O Canal National Historical Park Cushwa Basin. Parking for the event will be at Riverbottom Park at the east end of West Salisbury Street, Williamsport, MD. In the event of rain, the ceremony will take place under a large tent in the Cushwa Basin parking area. For more information call 301-582-0813.

For more information about the park, please visit 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.