

FAQ and Photos are appended



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U.S. Department of Interior

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C&O Canal National Historical Park News Release

Release Date: June 30, 2017

For Immediate Release

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Conococheague Aqueduct Restoration Construction & Detour

Williamsport, MD – The National Park Service (NPS), Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal) awarded an \$8,997,112 contract for the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct to Corman Construction, Inc. of Annapolis Junction, MD on June 5, 2017. The next phase of the restoration project for the entire Williamsport interpretive complex will return the Conococheague Aqueduct to its 1920s appearance and create the first watered, operational aqueduct along the C&O Canal since 1924. During construction, visitors will be directed to follow a detour route around the Conococheague Aqueduct located near Williamsport, Maryland between milepost 99.75 - 99.60.

Construction is anticipated to begin in late July 2017 and extend approximately 18 months, weather dependent, until December 2018. During this time visitors will be unable to travel over the aqueduct and through the construction area and will be directed onto a 1.1 mile long detour route around the Conococheague Aqueduct. The upstream end of the detour departs from the towpath near milepost 99.75, travels along Fenton Avenue, an alleyway, state Route 68, and U.S. Route 11 until rejoining the towpath near milepost 99.60 (directly adjacent to the Cushwa Basin). Prior to closure of the towpath, signage will be posted to clearly mark the detour route.

The Conococheague Aqueduct is one of eleven aqueducts on the 184.5 miles of the C&O Canal and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Over 97 years ago, in April of 1920, the upstream wall of the Conococheague 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 closed in the spring of 1924.

The project will restore the aqueduct to its appearance in the early 1920s, 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 C&O 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.

For more information about the project and the park, call 301-582-0813.

For more information, 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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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



-NPS-

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.

Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions for Conococheague Aqueduct Restoration Project

The groundbreaking ceremony for the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct occurred on Friday, May 5, 2017, at 11:00 am in Williamsport, MD. This aqueduct is located at mile marker 99.6 on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park.

This 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 the remainder from the National Park Service. The Town of Williamsport has been an active, supportive and essential voice in bringing this project to fruition.

The Conococheague Aqueduct, 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. 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.

The Conococheague Aqueduct Restoration Project will provide a watered section of the canal to allow for canal boat operations and other public uses between Lock 44 and approximately 450 feet upstream of the existing aqueduct. During the project, the towpath across the aqueduct will be fully closed to public use and a temporary bypass established for thru-bikers and hikers.

Please see the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) regarding this project

What is the history of the Conococheague Aqueduct?

C&O Canal aqueducts are "water bridges" that carry canal boats over creeks and rivers that flow into the Potomac River. Built from 1833 to 1835, the Conococheague Aqueduct is the fifth of eleven such "works of art" on the canal. It consists of three equal 60' arch spans extending 196' between abutments. In August 1863 Confederate soldiers damaged the Conococheague Aqueduct in an effort to stop the canal's transportation of coal to Georgetown where it was used by the Union. Repairs took four days and the canal returned to operation. In April 1920 a canal boat broke through the upstream wall of the aqueduct falling into the creek below. This shut down the canal for over four months. Repaired with a timber wall this aqueduct functioned until two 1924 floods closed the canal for good.

What is the need for the project?

The Conococheague Aqueduct is perhaps the most publically accessible aqueduct on the entire C&O Canal. It is in poor condition and will continue to deteriorate without stabilization and additional repairs. Additionally, completing this project will provide visitors with a nationally unique experience of being able to enjoy an interpretive boat tour across a watered aqueduct or to paddle their own boat through the aqueduct.

What does the project include?

The project includes constructing cofferdams within Conococheague Creek and rebuilding the aqueduct piers; rebuilding and lining the aqueduct prism so that it is safe, sustainable and watertight; repairs to the stone work; installation of a period-appropriate guardrail; clearing the canal prism upstream including constructing a berm; and removal of the existing berm on the downstream side so that entire stretch can be re-watered.

Thru-cyclists and hikers will be required to detour around the aqueduct and construction site by following a signed route using Fenton Ave., Route 68, and West Potomac Street (US 11).

To facilitate the work, construction equipment staging will require closing a section of the parking lot and towpath adjacent to the Cushwa Basin and also associated areas within and upstream of the project site. Additionally, temporary delays on the towpath approaching from the west (upstream) should be expected as work crews and equipment move to/from the work site. Work crews will access the work site from both upstream and downstream (from the Cushwa Warehouse side) of the Conococheague Creek Aqueduct.

When will the project begin and end?

Construction staging and work will begin in late-July 2017 and last for approximately 18 months (December 2018 weather dependent). During the work, the aqueduct and towpath immediately west (upstream) will be closed to the public. Visitors will continue to be able to access the towpath at Cushwa Basin and Lock 44 in Williamsport for local and downstream use. For west (upstream) access, the Gift Road Parking (mile 103.25) and Dam 5 (mile 106.8) both provide parking and towpath access. The National Park Service is doing everything possible to minimize closure time and impacts to visitors.

Why is it necessary to close the aqueduct and towpath immediately west of the project during the project?

Heavy equipment and materials will be in use throughout the project and will be actively moving in the aqueduct area and on the towpath immediately upstream of the project. Closing the area to public use provides for visitor safety and allows the work to progress in an efficient and timely manner resulting in a shorter project duration. For through cyclists and hikers, a temporary detour route will be clearly identified.

How will this project benefit park visitors?

Completion of this project will provide park visitors an opportunity to experience a watered transportation canal aqueduct. The project also restores a significant historic resource and provides unique opportunities for visitors.

How will this project impact natural and cultural resources?

The project helps protects a significant cultural resource by restoring and stabilizing the historic aqueduct piers preventing further damage and enhances the historic landscape. The project will

return the aqueduct to working condition with the appearance of the early 1920s. Work in the Conococheague Creek will be timed to minimize impacts to fish and other aquatic species and the stream/river environments.

What is the park doing to protect those resources during the project?

National Park Service resource protection experts will be monitoring the contractor's work in the stream to ensure environmental protection and the contractor's work when working with the historic stone and masonry of the aqueduct. NPS managers will also monitor the contractor's operations and visitor safety during the project with the goal of safely protecting this unique cultural resource and the environment surrounding the project. Every project undertaken by the National Park Service is conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and other regulations.

How do I visit the Cushwa Warehouse Visitor Center and have thru-passage when the aqueduct is closed?

Visitors will continue to have access to the Cushwa Warehouse Visitor Center and the towpath at Williamsport throughout the project. Additionally, visitors will be able to view the aqueduct restoration project from the Cushwa Warehouse and turning basin area. Hikers and bikers will continue to be able to access the towpath and go east/downstream during the project. A signed detour will be marked so that long-distance hikers and bikers will be routed around the aqueduct and construction site by following a signed route using Fenton Ave., Route 68, and West Potomac Street (US 11).

How much does the project cost?

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 a large part of the remaining balance from the National Park Service National Recreation Fee Program.

The funding currently available will support the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct. Additional funding is being sought to design and implement a new crossing of the canal, a rail trail, and restoration of the historic coal yard.

Who can I contact if I have further questions or concerns regarding the project?

For more information contact Matt Graves or Carrie Wittmer 301-582-0813.

FENTON AVENUE/REDLAND BRICK ALLEYWAY DETOUR





— Alleyway - owned by Redland Brick
— Fenton Avenue – Washington County Roads





ACTIONS

1. Maryland State Highway:

- a. Install pedestrian crosswalk at Fenton Avenue and Route 68
 - i. Painted crosswalk on road.
 - ii. Signage at crosswalk
 - iii. Flashing lights or crossing signals (solar powered temporary signals?)
- b. Install advance warning signs:
 - i. Be alert to bicyclists
 - ii. Crosswalk
 - iii. New traffic pattern
- c. Lower speed limit to 20 mph (currently 30 mph)?
- d. Improve transition area from alleyway to sidewalk at Conococheague Bridge
 - i. Remove dirt and vegetation from shoulder
 - ii. Patch asphalt
 - iii. Install lines and/or arrows to clearly mark path

2. Washington County Roads:

- a. Acknowledgement that Fenton Avenue will be used as towpath detour.
- b. Parking restrictions along Fenton Avenue – installation of signs?
- c. Repair of ruts in south end of Fenton Avenue
- d. Assistance in repairing alleyway?
- e. Permission to install detour signs along Fenton Avenue

3. C&O Canal:

- a. Cleanup of alleyway by volunteers
- b. Repair of alleyway potholes – Can it be done by NPS? Material to be donated by Redland Brick – is it suitable to use?
- c. Installation of detour signs along route

4. Town of Williamsport:

- a. Acknowledgement that detour will be routed along Route 68 and then south on West Potomac Street
- b. Can they assist with repairs to Fenton Avenue and/or alleyway?
- c. Can they assist with trash pickup on Fenton Avenue and/or alleyway?
- d. Any other assistance they can provide?