



C & O Canal Association

# ALONG THE TOWPATH

concerned with the conservation of the natural and historical environment of the C&O Canal and the Potomac River Basin

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## THE GREAT FLOOD OF '96

The flooding of the Potomac River on January 20 and 21, following an almost record-setting blizzard, rain, and melting snow, wrecked havoc on 70 to 80 percent of the Canal according to Park Superintendent Doug Faris. This statement was made following the opening remarks of Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt at the kick-off *Rally to Restore The C & O Canal* held February 10, 1996 at the Great Falls Tavern. Hundreds of representatives, including the C & O Canal Association, joined Secretary Babbitt, Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena, Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski; Congresswoman Connie Morella; Maryland Secretary of Natural Resources, John Griffin; Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan; National Park Service Director Robert Kennedy; Director of the Student Conservation Corps, Flip Hagwood; and Superintendent Faris at the rally. Said Sec. Babbitt, "The real purpose of the rally was to call attention to the need for community involvement, and to ignite a new spirit and process in public/private partnerships to save those public resources we love from damage and destruction." Secretary Babbitt announced major donations received from the Fannie Mae Foundation (\$100,000), Marriot International, Inc. (\$100,000), the Mobil Foundation (\$100,000), and the Mars Foundation (\$50,000). Allegheny Power System, Lever Brothers, NBC-4, Potomac Electric and Power Company, and the Walt Disney Company have all pledged in-kind contributions to assist the restoration. Five hundred individual donors have contributed nearly \$50,000 to the C & O Canal Restoration Fund in the past week. The C & O Canal Association Board of Directors, in the February 4, 1996 meeting, unanimously approved a motion that all contributions received during 1996 designated to the C & O Canal Fund will be designated for restoration and repair of flood damage to the Canal.

*"To Nature None More  
Abound"* - Shakespeare

These words of Shakespeare, quoted by Congresswoman Connie Morella, speak of the spirit and unity of purpose of Justice Douglas and many others whose efforts to the establishment of the C & O



The Monster of the Monocacy. Ice, water, logs, and debris test the structure of the Monocacy Aqueduct. NPS Photograph.

## THE GREAT FLOOD OF '96, continued

Canal as a National Historic Park, the only National Park established by the people. Now, it is our turn. The Flood of '96 was disastrous, but from disaster, comes opportunity. What will we, the inheritors of this treasure, do to ensure it is there for those who come after?

- We will do our part. The C & O Canal Association will organize our volunteers and coordinate our repair and restoration efforts with Ranger Nancy Brown, NPS Volunteer Coordinator.
- We will support restoration of the Canal through our contributions of time, labor, money, equipment, and/or materials.

One of the most positive notes resulting from the flood is the outpouring of support that has occurred. People have discovered the Canal. In order to save the C & O, support must be marshaled. The relationship of the C & O Canal Association and the NPS, provides a unique opportunity within which we will answer the call and press on to restoration. Even as the rally was in progress, John Lindt and COCA VIPs were painting inside the tavern. Many Association members have already answered the call to volunteer and have been present at organizational meetings and other gatherings. Our thanks to each of you. Of special mention is the time and effort of our own Carl Linden, Superintendent Doug Faris, and the NPS staff:

- President Carl Linden is to be commended for the leadership role which he has taken--attending meetings, conferring with Superintendent Faris, civic organizations, and political representatives to ensure the Canal's and Association's best interest.
- Superintendent Faris and the NPS Staff should also be commended. Doug for his effective management and leadership, and for getting the word out to the media so that the millions that love the Canal can respond. Kudos and thanks, thanks, and ever thanks to the NPS staff for their tireless dedication to duty, for long hours worked to save historic structures and documents, to limit, as much as possible, the extent of damage, and to access and begin the restoration process.

- - R.C. Perry



Lock 44 and Lockhouse sustained damage as a result of high water, ice, and debris. NPS photograph.

The following synopsis of NPS information was compiled by Dave Johnson.

### FLOOD EMERGENCY INFORMATION

The following information has been issued by the Park Service:

On January 19-20, 1996, the C & O Canal National Historical Park was severely damaged by a major winter flood, which covered 80-90 percent of the canal and towpath with flood waters and ice flees. In many areas the flood waters were very deep with high volumes due to the very fast run-off conditions. Severe erosion resulted to the towpath, locks, lockhouses, and many other park features. Flooding approximated the 1972 Hurricane Agnes levels along the lower segments of the park. Fortunately, park staff were able to

remove interpretive media and materials from structures, or prevent flood damage by sand-bagging buildings like the Great Falls Tavern visitor center.

### PARK CLOSURE

The entire park was closed to public entry and normal visitor use. Park staff, support groups, and friends are fully occupied with damage assessments and providing information to the media and others. Most park facilities will remain closed until the comprehensive assessment of damage is completed and safety needs ensured. Severely damaged segments of the canal will be barricaded and indefinitely closed to visitor use.

After the initial assessments were completed, several sections of the towpath were opened to foot traffic only on Saturday, January 27. Those areas are from Georgetown to Fletchers Boat House; lock 10 to Widewater at mile 12.2 (Anglers Inn); the Monocacy River to Nolands Ferry; Mountain Lock (lock 37) to Snyders Landing; Four Locks to Hancock (no access at McCoys Ferry or Little Pool, Hancock access at the old Rte 522 bridge); Oldtown, mile 165 to 168; Lock 72 to Mexico Farms; and Wiley Ford Bridge to Cumberland Terminus. Visitors to these areas should wear sturdy footgear, because the towpath is rough due to being covered by flood waters. No bicycles or horses are allowed, all campgrounds remain closed and the park closes at dark.

## **COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF FLOOD DAMAGE**

Fifteen three-person teams were established to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the damage to park resources resulting from the flood of January 19-20. These teams began evaluating the extensive damage on January 24, and took approximately five working days to complete.

A comprehensive estimate of repair cost will be provided to the Field Director. A priority system will be prepared to direct staff and others as repairs are begun. Currently, the park is incurring major unplanned expenditures to investigate damage and safety conditions. Current preliminary assessments reveal a probable repair cost far exceeding the \$6,000,000 repairs resulting from the 1985 flood.

Immediate support needs include:

- (1) Removal of flood material upstream of the Conococheague Creek Aqueduct in Williamsport. One arch is filled with flood debris and ice, and recent damage to the structure is clearly visible.
- (2) Removal of flood debris and inspection of the Monocacy River Aqueduct.
- (3) An inspection team including civil and structural engineers to inspect all aqueducts and major bridges.
- (4) Activation of the dam inspection team to conduct underwater inspections of footings of aqueducts and dams #4 and #5.

## **RETENTION PROPERTY DAMAGE**

Currently 102 retention holders remain within the park. Many of the structures on these properties were extensively damaged. Some areas are barricaded to prevent looting, and damage to park resources from retention holders attempting to enter the park with current adverse conditions. The park proposes to offer retention holders a "buyout" of remaining retention rights, all of which expire in 2001. State of Maryland flood requirements may prohibit many from rebuilding.

## **ASSISTANCE FROM NON-GOVERNMENT SOURCES**

Friends and support groups are being requested to provide assistance and support to park staff as the park proceeds with the tough task of assessing damage, and preparing action plans for addressing damaged resources. A flood fund has been established for donations, and park staff are organizing to coordinate offers for volunteer assistance. Friends groups are

pursuing potential corporate involvement to help with repairs. Other sources of assistance, including FEMA and the National Guard, will be explored.

## **VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE WILL BE REQUIRED**

After the extent of damage is known the park will be organizing a clean up effort with volunteers. The C & O Canal Association's Volunteer Program Committee will be working with the park staff to organize volunteer efforts by members of the Association. You may sign up for these projects by calling the Association's new telephone mailbox at 301-985-0825 and leaving your name and telephone number. Or, if you prefer, you may call the park at 800-434-9330.

## **DONATIONS FOR FLOOD REPAIRS ARE WELCOME**

The Board of Directors has announced that all contributions to the Association's C & O CANAL FUND in 1996 will be used for flood repairs. (This fund is separate from the Monocacy Aqueduct Fund.) You may send donations to the Association, P. O. Box 366, Glen Echo MD 20812. Please make your check payable to the "C & O Canal Association," and indicate "FLOOD REPAIR" or "C & O Canal Fund" in the lower left corner.

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 1996, you may include a donation for flood repair with your dues payment, using the renewal form enclosed with your December 1995 **ALONG THE TOWPATH**. There is space on the form to indicate contributions. If you have already paid your 1996 dues and wish to make an additional donation, your check will also be welcomed.

The C & O Canal Association is a non-profit organization as defined by section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and all contributions are tax deductible.

## **NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME**

Membership in the Association is open to all persons with an interest in the C & O Canal, the C & O Canal National Historical Park, and the Potomac River Basin. Annual membership dues are \$15 individual, \$20 family, and \$25 patron, assessed on a calendar-year basis. New members are welcome; membership application and dues may be mailed to the Association at P. O. Box 366, Glen Echo MD 20812-0366.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The 1996 Annual General Membership Meeting of the C & O Canal Association will be held on Saturday, March 2, 1996, at the Williamsport Volunteer Fire Department hall, 2 Brandy Drive, Williamsport, Maryland (across S. Conococheague Street from the American Legion.) The day's events will include an interpretive walk led by John Frye, starting at the Cushwa Basin at 10 A.M., coffee hour at the fire hall at 1:00 P.M., followed by the annual meeting at 2:00 P.M., happy hour at 5:00, and dinner at 6:00. Dinner reservations (\$15 per person) must be received by February 24th. Please use the reservation form enclosed with the December issue of *Along the Towpath*. (Advance reservations are not required to attend the morning program or the afternoon membership meeting.)



Great Falls Tavern about the time the flood crested at Great Falls. Ranger Clyde Bell and staff worked around the clock filling and positioning sandbags to save the tavern from damage. NPS photo.



Breach in the Towpath near Angler's Inn.