.Visitor Services Project C&O Canal National Historical Park Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) during July 6-12, 2003. A total of 977 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 662 questionnaires for a 67.8% response rate.
- This report profiles C&O Canal NHP visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Thirty-eight percent of visitor groups were groups of two; 20% were alone. Forty-six percent of the visitor groups were family groups. Fifty-three percent of visitors were aged 31-60 years and 18% were aged 15 or younger.
- United States visitors were from Maryland (45%), Virginia (17%), Washington D.C. (11%), and 35 other states and Puerto Rico. International visitors, comprising 5% of the total visitors, were from Germany (1%), France (1%), Denmark (1%) and sixteen other countries.
- Three percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (93%). America Indian/Alaskan Native, African American, and Asian races made 11% of the population.
- Twenty-nine percent of visitors reported that this was the first visit to C&O Canal NHP in their lifetime; 71% had visited two or more times. Most visitor groups (75%) spent one to three hours at the park.
- For 64% of groups, C&O Canal NHP was their primary destination. When asked their primary reason for visiting the area, 55% of groups came for recreation and 37% came to visit C&O Canal NHP. On this visit, the most common activities were jogging/walking/hiking (64%), viewing Great Falls (28%), bicycling (22%) and visiting visitor centers (21%).
- Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about C&O Canal NHP through previous visits (73%), friends/relatives (54%), and maps/brochures (38%). Twenty-nine percent of the groups received no information before their visit. Most visitors (73%) were aware prior to visiting that C&O Canal NHP is a unit of the National Park Service.
- In regard to the use, importance, and quality of visitor services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The most used services by the 593 respondents included trails (62%), parking (60%) and restrooms (59%). The visitor services receiving the highest importance ratings were trails (94%, N=347) and canal boat tour (93%, N=56). The services receiving the highest ratings of quality were the canal boat tour (96%, N=54).
- The average <u>visitor group</u> expenditure during the visit was \$157. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$20. The average <u>per capita</u> expenditure was \$61.
- Many visitor groups (54%) would be willing to pay a fee to use the park in the future if the fee was used to improve park facilities/services. Twenty-two percent of groups said that they were unlikely to pay such a fee and 24% were "not sure."
- Most visitor groups (88%) rated the overall quality of visitor services at C&O Canal NHP as "very good" or "good." Two percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services as "poor" or "very poor."

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7863 or visit the following website: http://www.psu.uidaho.edu