



The Current

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National Park Employees Mobilize for Hurricane Katrina Relief



Some of the employees deployed to the Gulf Coast region in response to the disaster pose with NPS national and regional leadership at a recognition event.

Beginning in late August and continuing through the end of 2005, 91 employees from the Greater Washington National Parks (GWNP) were mobilized in support of Hurricane Katrina and other storm recovery efforts in the Gulf Region. The deployment was supported and coordinated by nine dispatchers and rangers at the NPS National Capital Region (NCR) Communications Center and NCR Ranger Services. The deployment involved employees from a variety of backgrounds including wildland firefighters, protection and interpretive rangers, curatorial specialists, maintenance workers, administrative technicians, critical incident support personnel, graphic information specialists, emergency medical technicians, incident management personnel, emergency management planners, and dispatchers.

GWNP personnel served in a number of locations including multiple locations in southern Louisiana, national parks in the New Orleans area, Gulf Islands National Seashore in Mississippi, Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks in Florida, Southern Area Coordination Center in Atlanta and the Department of Interior Watch Office in Washington D.C. Assignments related to parks included providing incident management of recovery efforts, assisting in locating National Park Service (NPS) employees and providing for their welfare, debris removal, protecting park cultural and natural resources, transporting employees, equipment, and supplies, and securing key park areas.

Outside of the parks, GWNP personnel assisted FEMA by transporting personnel and equipment, setting up and operating food distribution centers and providing security services. Several rangers and others participated in coordinating the movement of personnel in and out of the Gulf Region at the Southern Area Coordination Center and other locations. Finally, various employees supported DOI by preparing daily status reports and assisting them in emergency planning efforts.

During their 16-day deployments, those deployed to the field faced many challenges also experienced by residents of the affected areas, including poor sleeping accommodations, poor quality food, no sanitation, exposure to chemicals, oil, sewage, insects, snakes, alligators, and guns. Communications were also a constant challenge. In its response to this incident, the NCR was able to showcase the valuable skills of employees in many fields while serving others in the hard hit Gulf Region.

by Einar Olsen, Assistant Regional Director
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Regional Director's Corner



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Current*, the newsletter of the Greater Washington National Parks. Through *The Current*, we hope to keep you informed about our programs, our parks, our people, and our partners.

The Greater Washington National Parks are comprised of hundreds of National Park Service sites throughout our region, including the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. These parks are special places and contain wonderful natural retreats as well as icons of our democracy, wonderfully preserved civil war battlefields, historic sites, and world class venues for the performing arts. As you can see, there is something for everyone in our Greater Washington National Parks and it is our privilege to be the stewards of these significant public treasures.

These are your parks, your trails, your memorials and parkways – enjoy them often, and thank you for your support and your assistance in the preservation of our collective heritage.

Joseph M. Lawler
Regional Director
National Capital Region



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- Woodson Home named National Park Service unit.
- 94th annual National Cherry Blossom Festival kicks-off.
- Join the Healthy Parks, Healthy Living Initiative.



Potomac Gorge Interpretive Trail Dedicated by Partners



The formal opening of “The Potomac River Gorge Interpretive Trail” was celebrated on December 10, 2005. This marked the culmination of over two years of collaborative efforts between Great Falls Park, a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; Riverbend Park, of the Fairfax County, Virginia, Park Authority; and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Dignitaries from Fairfax County and the NPS National Capital Region of the National Park Service were on hand for the unveiling and ribbon-cutting ceremony that formally opened the trail linking the two parks with 14 interpretive wayside panels, along 2.5 miles of river shoreline.

The panels were designed by the staffs at each park and are devoted to the global significance and the natural/cultural history of the Potomac River Gorge. Several hundred visitors visit portions of the new trail each week.

by Jesse Reynolds, Park Ranger,
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Carter G. Woodson Home Becomes NPS’ 389th Official Site

NPS Will Restore Home to Honor the Legacy of the Father of Black History Month



In late February, National Park Service (NPS) Director Fran P. Mainella announced the acquisition of the Carter G. Woodson home which will showcase the late historian’s contributions to the study of African American history. The site is a partnership between the NPS and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

Speaking in front of the historic site, Mainella, NCR Regional Director Joe Lawler, National Capital Parks-East Superintendent Gayle Hazelwood, U. S. Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) and representatives from ASALH announced the NPS’ purchase and acquisition.

Woodson created and helped found ASALH in 1915 in the house at 1538 Ninth Street, N.W., a location where Woodson lived, worked and published research on the importance of studying and understanding the culture and contributions of black Americans.

In 1976, the Woodson house was designated a National Historic Landmark. In 2001, Rep. Norton introduced the legislation, which included the NPS purchasing the property for nearly \$500,000.

by Bill Line, Communications Officer,
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NPS Director Fran P. Mainella joins NPS and staff and partners to announce the Carter G. Woodson Home as an NPS unit.

An Occasion for Festivity and Collaboration

The 94th Annual National Cherry Blossom Festival



Louis J. Halle, naturalist, political scientist, and author of Spring in Washington, wrote, “For inhabitants of Washington, D.C., the blooming of the Cherry trees is the first unmistakable day of spring, and occasion for festivity.” Residents of and visitors to the Greater Washington, D.C. area look forward each year to the arrival of spring and the annual National Cherry Blossom Festival (NCBF). As winter warms to spring, people from near and far intently monitor the development of Cherry tree buds in anticipation of the arrival of the world famous Cherry blossoms. More than any other sign, the 14-day NCBF symbolizes spring’s magical arrival in the Nation’s Capital.

The NCBF is the largest single, annually recurring National Park event in America. The festival marks the original gift of 3,020 cherry trees from the city of Tokyo to the people of Washington, D.C. in 1912. The Festival also symbolizes partnership between the public and private sectors. Planning for the Festival involves a collaboration, lead by the National Cherry Blossom Festival organization, the District of Columbia government, D.C. Chamber of Commerce, corporate sponsors, National Park Service (NPS) and others.



Cherry trees frame the Jefferson Memorial.

This year a new partnership between NPS, the National Cherry Blossom Festival, Inc., the National Park Foundation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Solid Waste and Unilever/Lipton Tea, will provide additional visitor services and resource protection for the Festival and the parkland it is celebrated on. The partners have made improvements to the Festival Information Trailer including adding new exhibits, improved accessibility and providing resources for more interpreters. These partners are sponsoring a float which features the “Healthy Parks-Healthy Living” in the Festival parade, and they have worked with individuals, businesses and the Washington Rotary to increase support for the Cherry Tree Replacement Fund. Festival partners have expanded volunteer opportunities during the Festival, increased NPS’ waste recycling program for the Festival and have created a self-guided Cherry Tree Walking Guide.

by Glenn Eugster, Assistant Regional Director
for Partnerships, Glenn_Eugster@nps.gov

“Bio Blitz” to Survey Potomac River Gorge



The Potomac River Gorge is a natural wonder with one of the highest concentrations of globally-rare, natural communities in the nation. Yet, little is known about some groups of organisms. To expand knowledge of these obscure organisms, scientists will conduct a “BioBlitz” from 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 24, 2006, and to 3:00 p.m. Sunday, June 25. This will be an intensive, 30-hour field survey along the Potomac Gorge, with the goals of collecting, preparing, identifying and cataloguing species and raising awareness of biodiversity.

The “BioBlitz” is a joint venture between the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy. Scientists from the Washington Biologists’ Field Club, Smithsonian Institution and other organizations will participate. 28 volunteer scientists are grouped into survey teams to look for flatworms, dragonflies, damselflies, moths, bees, wasps, flies, beetles, crustaceans, mollusks, fungi, lichens, reptiles and amphibians.

The Potomac Gorge extends along a 15-mile river corridor from Great Falls to Georgetown. Survey sites include both sides of the river in the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park. Survey teams will set up to sort through specimens, identify and record species at the base camp in Glen Echo Park.

Enthusiasts are invited to join at Glen Echo Park on June 24-25, 2006 to learn about the many species that live in the Gorge, observe scientists at work and participate in the many activities presented by the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Discovery Creek and the National Zoo.

“BioBlitz” is an excellent opportunity for biologists, students, and the public to work together in the field. To volunteer, please contact: Dr. Arthur Evans, “BioBlitz” Coordinator, at arthurevans@verizon.net. Learn more or sign up at <http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/vnhs/bioblitz.htm>.

by Diane S. Pavek, Ph.D., Botanist,
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Exploring the C&O Canal Towpath by bike is a perfect way to enjoy the park.

Greater Washington Trails Forever

The Greater Washington National Parks Fund (GWNPF) has created its “Trails Forever” effort to support and promote the trails systems in your local national parks. “Trails Forever” provides funding to parks to assist volunteer projects, create trail guides, and work with partners to ensure that our trails are in top notch condition and ready for use. GWNPF has teamed up with the National Park Foundation and its Healthy Parks-Healthy Living program, supported by Unilever, a Proud Partner of America’s National Parks. For more information on the Greater Washington National Parks Fund and Trails Forever, please contact Glenn Eugster, NPS NCR Assistant Regional Director for Partnerships at 202-619-7492, and join us Friday June 2nd for a Trails Forever event at Fletcher’s Cove on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Widewater Made Whole after 82 Years

Visitor use enhanced with rehabilitation of C&O Canal historic towpath.



New boardwalks, restored stonewalls now complete Widewater project.



Since 1830, floods have challenged the existence of the C&O Canal towpath in the Widewater area just downstream from Great Falls. Reconstruction in this area is not new. However, not since 1924 has the towpath at Widewater been whole.

Though initiated by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and attempted again in the 1970s, repairs of the towpath at Widewater remained incomplete since the flood of 1924 which ended canal operations. In 2002, John Kimbrough, area resident and park volunteer, joined with the C&O Canal

Association to jumpstart the latest effort to restore the continuity of the towpath through a challenge grant. Congressional appropriations enabled the project to move forward in 2005 in the National Park Service budget.

Over the past year, contractors built two new boardwalks, restored stone walls and brought in new fill and surface material for the towpath. Recently, park maintenance staff pitched in to complete the long-awaited rehabilitation of Widewater. The combination of boardwalks, stone walls and reconstructed towpath has restored the historic appearance to this scenic area

in a way sensitive to the area’s special natural resources. This new construction was also designed to be more sustainable through future floods. As an added benefit, this beautiful section will now be accessible to people using wheelchairs.

C&O Canal National Historical Park invites you to celebrate this achievement near mile 13.5 of the canal at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 29. Call the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center at 301-767-3714 for more information.

By Rod Sauter, Supervisory
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Upcoming Events

For GWNPs event information, call 202-619-7222

National Cherry Blossom Festival

March 25 - April 9, 2006

Events throughout Washington, D.C.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival® is an annual two-week, city-wide event featuring more than 150 international cultural performances and over 90 other special events including: sporting events, arts & crafts demonstrations and much more! For more information, visit www.nps.gov/nacc/cherry.

Festival highlights include:

- Tidal Basin Stage Cultural Performances, March 25-April 9, Noon, Steps of the Jefferson Memorial
- Japanese Stone Lantern Lighting Ceremony, April 2, 2:30 p.m., 17th Street & Independence Avenue
- Cherry Blossom Parade, April 8, 10:00 a.m., 7th - 17th Streets, N.W., on Constitution Avenue.



Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

Saturday, April 8, 2006

9:00 a.m. - 12 noon

Join thousands of watershed neighbors to remove unwanted trash from our communities and show your support for a trash-free Potomac Watershed. Over 250 clean-up sites have been designated throughout DC, MD, VA, WV and PA. Visit www.potomaccleanup.org to find a location near you. You can also call the Alice Ferguson Foundation at 301-292-6665.

Maryland State Soldiers Monument Re-dedication

Saturday, June 3, 2006, 1:00 p.m.

Antietam National Battlefield, MD
301-432-5124

Memorial Day Concert

Sunday, May 28, 2006, 8:00 p.m.

West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol
202-619-7222

Healthy Parks, Healthy Living "Trails Forever"

Friday, June 2, 2006, 10:00 a.m.
C&O Canal National Historic Park
at Fletcher's Cove, 202-619-7492.



Greater Washington National Parks

Where you are never far from history and nature

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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