

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

Trails Stewardship Committee

Spotlight on Allegany County: C&O Canal Towpath *by Katherine O. Rizzo*

Allegany County is in the Appalachian Mountain ridge-and-valley country, bordered on the north by the Mason-Dixon line and on the south by the Potomac River. The C&O Canal runs along the river and cuts through the Appalachians. The C&O Canal National Historical Park & Towpath is our readers' most popular trail system in the county.

The park runs from Georgetown in Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, the Allegany County seat. The original plan called for the canal to extend all the way to Pittsburgh, but the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad got there first and eventually made the canal obsolete. The portion of the park in Allegany County is 48 miles long.

Allegany County's rich history dates back to the early 1800s when it was a coal hub as well as the staging and outfitting point for those headed west. It is in Allegany that the C&O Canal, the western end of the Potomac River, and major roads and railroads all converged. It was also in Allegany that the first portions of the National Road, the first federally funded highway, were constructed in 1811. The National Road eventually became known as the "Road that Built a Nation."

The C&O Canal's 12-foot wide, nearly level towpath was built specifically for the mules that pulled the canal boats from Cumberland to Georgetown and back. Today, the towpath is open for hiking, biking and horseback riding and is maintained by the National Park Service.

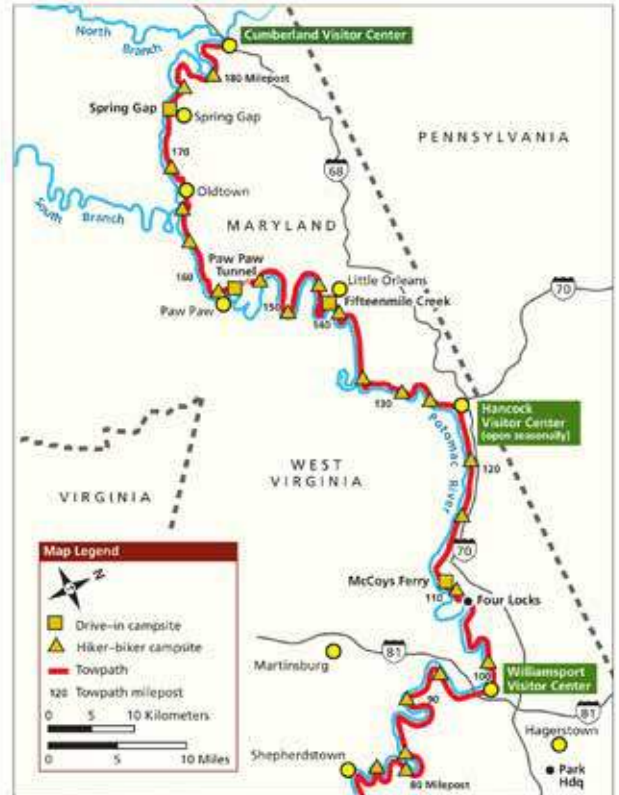
Along the towpath, visitors to Allegany County can explore the Allegany Museum, Paw Paw Tunnel, and Canal Place Heritage Park, as well as other cultural sites. There are several access points for those wishing to kayak or canoe in the Potomac River, and campgrounds for overnight stays, with or without horses.

As always, please remember to check the National Park Service website for trail closures and updates before heading to the park.

Other horseback riding rules can be found at <https://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/horsebackriding.htm> with a brief summary below.

1. Horseback riding is not allowed between Georgetown (mile 0) and Swains Lock (mile 16.6) and also not allowed from Offutt Street (mile 181.8) to where the canal ends at mile 184.5.
2. Horses are not allowed in the Paw Paw Tunnel but there is a tunnel hill trail that goes over the tunnel instead (note – NPS website posted on August 25, 2023 that the tunnel hill trail is closed "for a few weeks for restoration").
3. Riders must not exceed the speed of a slow trot.
4. Riders must dismount and walk their horses across aqueducts.
5. Riders may not cross wooden footbridges.
6. Riders are responsible for hauling manure away.
7. No grazing within the park is allowed
8. Riders may camp at the hiker-biker campgrounds and must tether horses at least 50 feet from the area's boundaries.

Park officials also remind visitors that hikers and bikers must yield the right of way to horses on the towpath.



The **Carroll County Equestrian Council** held the last trail work day of the season on November 12 at Morgan Run NEA. The trails were mowed, downed trees that blocked the trail were removed, encroaching vegetation was removed and trash was picked up from the parking area. Volunteers enjoyed lunch after their hard work. Pictured below left to right: Dave Radcliffe, Patty Stone, Randy Hulse, Joe Dragan, Frank Durilla, Karen Durilla, Stephanie Brennan and Mike Macella.

