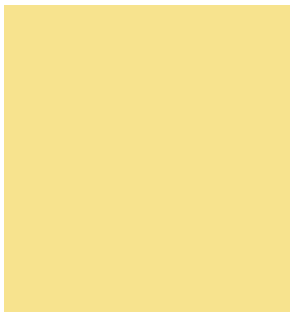




COLUMBIA CROSSING 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



MAKING COLUMBIA STAND OUT



BY THE NUMBERS

20,462

**VISITORS
HELPED**

71

**PUBLIC
ACTIVITIES**

34

**COMMUNITY
MEETINGS**

350

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS**

\$25,183

**FUNDS
GENERATED**

30

**FACILITY
RENTALS**



WHAT'S NEW

In 2018, Susquehanna Heritage made some changes at Columbia Crossing to provide a better visitor experience. Most noticeable was the purchase of eight high-quality rocking chairs on the riverview deck. We have received many compliments about the chairs since September when they were installed. In 2019, the rocking chairs will be available for sponsorship, which will include a custom plaque.



The Borough of Columbia has announced that it will not operate the Columbia Trolley Works on its regular summer schedule in 2019. Staff will instead focus on expanding services and programs at the River Trails Center throughout the summer. Plans for on-water experiences and a summer day-camp for local children are top priorities. In 2019, Susquehanna Heritage will also work with the National Park Service to share information about the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail with displays at Columbia Crossing.

Over the past 3 years, Columbia Crossing staff has been shifting roles and responsibilities. Increasing our Program Coordinator from part-time to full-time has greatly enhanced the educational activities and long-term program planning. It has also made the management of facility rentals more efficient.

We have also shifted volunteer coordination and visitor services from a college intern to a regular part-time staff member. Visitor services staff members designed and operated walking tours of downtown in fall 2018 that will continue next year. We are now fully charged and offering the best quality visitor services and educational programs at Columbia Crossing.



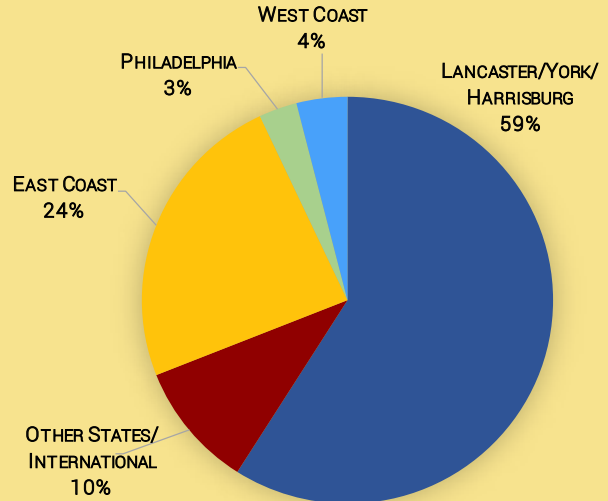
VISITOR SERVICES

In 2018, Columbia Crossing had 20,462 visitors. This number is down from 2017 when our staff assisted 23,642 visitors. Rain and flooding greatly affected visitation to Columbia Crossing and local trails, parks, and overlooks. The effect of the weather is clearly shown by trail use data collected through a trail counter located in East Donegal Riverfront Park. The counter measured traffic for the six months it operated in 2017, showing 102,689 users with a daily average of 458. In 2018, the daily average fell to 330. Traffic for the current year totaled only 96,664. Despite the decrease in use, the trail was once again voted Lancaster's #1 Hiking/Biking/Jogging Trail by readers of Lancaster County Magazine.

We analyzed the reasons why trail use was so low. The trail was closed at a number of locations throughout the year due to mud, fallen trees, and debris. However, the most troublesome issue was flooding that closed the trail at the Shock's Mill Bridge underpass intermittently. In total, it was closed over 100 days. Columbia Crossing received hundreds of phone calls inquiring about trail conditions. We encouraged groups to still visit and use the trail between Columbia and the bridge closure but some long distance cyclists avoided our trail this year because of the frequent closures.



VISITOR INFORMATION



STATISTICS COLLECTED FROM 269 SIGN-INS
COLLECTED THROUGH GUEST LOG

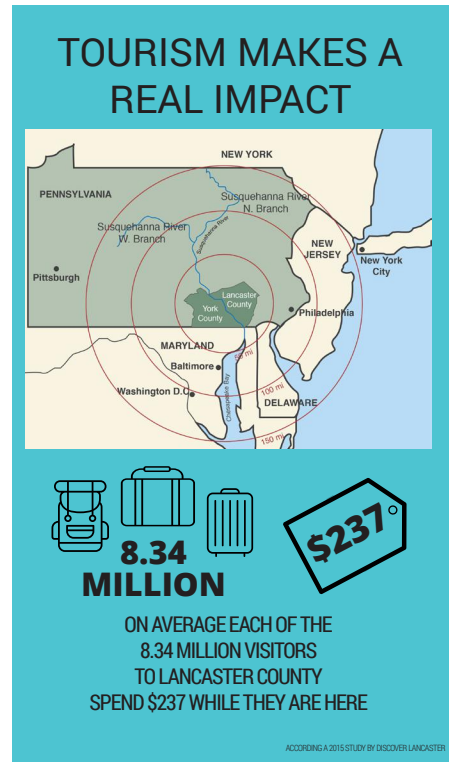
Most Columbia Crossing visitors sought information about the Northwest River Trail and outdoor recreation, but many others asked about local amenities like restaurants, shops, and museums. Exhibits on display inspired dialogue among visitors and questions for staff. Most popular were local history exhibits and photography exhibits. The history of the bridges was popular and has been transitioned into a permanent installation. New exhibits are planned for 2019 that showcase local art and the history of ice harvesting along the Susquehanna, among others.

Our staff also shared their knowledge of local heritage, attractions, and events through the Columbia Trolley Works. A separate report is available that covers this operation in detail.

It was apparent to staff and volunteers that visitors were initially arriving for information on outdoor recreation but ended up asking more specific information once they saw all we had to offer. It was also common that those who sought information about the heritage of the town, river, and region wanted immersive experiences; especially something to do with family and friends on future visits.

In 2019, Susquehanna Heritage plans to offer more experiences, including walking tours, bicycling trips, kayaking excursions, and boat tours. It is also our goal to better track where our visitors are coming from since less people are signing our guest book than anticipated.

Susquehanna Heritage works to solidify Columbia Crossing as a visitor hub for the Susquehanna Riverlands in Lancaster and York Counties. We manage the Susquehanna Riverlands Tourism Development Group that is part of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Conservation Landscape (CL). It is our responsibility to engage the York and Lancaster visitor bureaus and brochure distribution companies to spread materials that will attract new visitors to our region. Nearly 30,000 Susquehanna Riverlands Maps & Guide have been distributed in the last two years.



Susquehanna Heritage continues to have a strong role in two important local committees: the Northwest Lancaster County River Trail Committee and the Columbia River Park Advisory Committee. Staff regularly attends meetings to help with trail projects and river park expansion plans. Staff also attends meetings for Columbia Parks and Recreation monthly, Safe Harbor Citizens Information Advisory Committee (SHCIAC) quarterly, and Rivertownes PA USA occasionally. Attending these meetings improves our ability to serve the community.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Our goal for programs and events is to share the river's historic, scenic, and recreational stories and experiences with residents and visitors, with a special focus on bringing river heritage to life for young people. Columbia Crossing's programs are about sixty percent targeted for youth and families and forty percent targeted for adults. In 2018, Susquehanna Heritage offered a total of 71 programs and events at Columbia Crossing.



In the last two years, field trips have expanded thanks to Susquehanna Heritage's partnership with the National Park Service and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Through the Canoemobile program, Columbia Crossing welcomed fifth graders from four local schools as well as homeschoolers from Lancaster and York counties. Students learned how the Susquehannock constructed and used dugout canoes; how mussels and fresh water eels clean water; and about stormwater runoff. Groups were able to go canoeing with Wilderness Inquiry, a Minnesota non-profit that brings the Canoemobile to our area. Each canoe holds ten students and offers a safe, introductory experience into river recreation. Susquehanna Heritage plans to host the Canoemobile program annually at Columbia Crossing.



In 2018, nine activities were community events that allowed local residents to gather together and enjoy the riverfront. These events included Doc Hinkle's Egg Dying, Pumpkin Painting, and Natural Ornament Workshop, all are geared towards children. Other community events covered topics like composting, building rain barrels, and astronomy. Susquehanna Heritage offered 55 recurring programs. The most popular programs were Tadpole Time, Ranger Hour, and Yoga.

We also hosted twelve partner events at Columbia Crossing that required less management from Susquehanna Heritage staff. Partner events highlighted local interests in waterfowling, art, wildlife, and boating. One such event, included working with the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) to create oyster reefs balls for the Chesapeake Bay.



GENERATING REVENUE

Susquehanna Heritage has increased revenue at Columbia Crossing through facility rentals, programs, and merchandise sales. In the last three years, our staff has worked diligently to implement revenue generating methods that complement our primary mission of engaging people with the Susquehanna River and Columbia. The decision to move our Program Coordinator from part-time to full-time was essential in increasing revenues from programs as well as facility rentals.

	2016	2017	2018 FINAL	2019 BUDGET
PROGRAM/EXHIBIT INCOME	2,000	5,500	6,909	9,000
SALES/MERCHANDISE	0	0	3,482	3,000
FACILITY RENTALS	6,400	12,700	14,792	14,000
TOTALS	8,400	18,200	25,183	26,000

Program and exhibit income encompasses donations given at our visitor services desk as well as program fees. Our fall lecture series is a significant draw and contributes significantly to program income. Our recurring programs like Tadpole Time also help, as the small fee (\$4) covers expenses incurred to create the activity.

Merchandise sales have slowly increased and are largely dependent upon strong summer visitation, since our primary sales items are water, iced tea, and trail mix. Our partnerships with Gorman Distribution and Grumpy Bear Granola have helped feed hungry trail users while supporting local businesses.

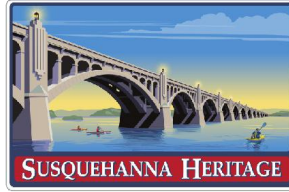
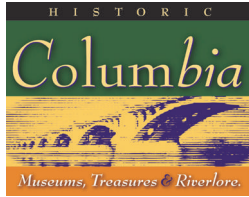
Our experience with facility rentals has showed us that the building is best for parties under seventy attendees. This is especially true for events that want space for a seated dinner as well as cocktail/dancing area. Many compliments have come from rental attendees, including the beautiful architecture. Event types ranged from baby

showers to memorial services and weddings to class reunions.

Susquehanna Heritage continues to seek funding opportunities to support Columbia Crossing expenses through alternative resources. Funding may be available through Susquehanna Heritage's relationship with the National Park Service and PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Staff also routinely applies for small grants that cover program expenses. In 2018, a small grant from the Lancaster Sierra Club covered the cost of a water testing kit that can be used for numerous water-based programs.



OUR STORY



Susquehanna Heritage has proudly managed Columbia Crossing for the Borough of Columbia since 2016. As our third full year of operation comes to an end, we reflect on the great work we have achieved with the Borough. Our community appreciates Columbia Crossing as a place for learning and respite. Our visitors seek information, entertainment, and directions. Our mission is to share the river's historic, scenic, and recreational stories with residents and visitors. We especially focus on bringing river heritage to life for young people.

Over the year we have held seventy-one activities, welcomed over 20,000 visitors, hosted three different exhibits and thirty facility rentals. Columbia Crossing also expanded our reach by operating the Columbia Trolley Works. We continue to enhance our impact on the community through our activities, programs, field trips, and visitor services.

Together we are enhancing quality of life and building a better future for our region. It is with support from our donors, advocates, and municipal leaders that we continue to thrive. Thank you.

MARK PLATTS
PRESIDENT

HOPE BYERS
MANAGER



We think
CREATIVELY



We stand for
COMMUNITY



We love
PARTNERSHIPS

From partnerships to programs, we find exciting ways to tell the river's stories and share its beautiful landscapes.

We strive to improve the community in Columbia by enhancing pride in our region and protecting our natural resources.

We work with partners to push regional efforts that support tourism and economic development in the riverlands.