

SUSQUEHANNA  
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



2023  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

COLUMBIA CROSSING

# VISITATION REPORT

Visitation to Columbia Crossing increased in 2023 by nearly 3,000 people! It was the first time that we had over 25,000 visitors in one year.

We have worked hard to offer high quality visitor services in-person and online to bounce back from the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020. As Columbia Crossing nears its ten year anniversary, it is clear that the center is much more than a peak-season trailhead. SNHA has adapted to the needs of our visitors and our community, as they changed over the last seven years.



Since 2016, SNHA has offered a variety of programs and activities throughout the year. When we added a full-time program coordinator in 2018, SNHA expanded offerings in the non-peak season of October through March. Both private rentals and public programming in the non-peak season have grown dramatically since 2017. Visitation in January, February, and March increased by over 30% since 2017. Visitation in the last quarter of the year (October through December) has increased by over 40%. It is clear that the expanded programming is an asset that visitors and community members utilize all year round.



»» 9,500+  
**SNHA GUIDES  
DISTRIBUTED**

SNHA designs and prints twelve visitor guides for our river region. The guides cover different outdoor recreation and river town attractions. At Columbia Crossing, SNHA distributed over 9,500 of these guides in 2023. SNHA also provides partner publications for our visitor centers. We stock brochures from river town businesses and attractions as well as Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Lancaster & York County Parks Departments, Engle Publishing, Discover Lancaster, Explore York, and Lancaster Conservancy among others.

## CROSS RIVER COLLABORATION

SNHA worked with the Merchants Association of Columbia to update the Historic Columbia Map for 2023. This guide includes antique stores, boutiques, restaurants, attractions, and recreation sites. Association members were given the opportunity to purchase an advertising spot in the guide. The advertising revenue helped to cover the overall cost of printing and design. In 2023, York County Economic Alliance approached SNHA to create a matching guide for Wrightsville as part of their Trail Towns Program. SNHA worked with them to design and print the guide. Their Trail Towns program has inspired the Columbia Economic Development Corporation to advocate for a similar program in Lancaster County. SNHA continues to work to bring our counties together so that great amenities and programs from each can be shared across the river.

# PROGRAM REPORT

**2,266**  
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

**30**  
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

**99**  
PROGRAMS OFFERED

SNHA welcomed over two thousand people to our programs at Columbia Crossing River Trails Center. In addition to programming on site, SNHA staff coordinated or participated in thirty outreach events at sites in the river towns. These outreach activities engaged 1,155 new people with our heritage area and Columbia Crossing River Trails Center. On-site and off-site programs combined provided over 120 educational experiences for more than 3,000 participants. SNHA also partnered with over twenty different organizations, business associations, and heritage partners on these activities.

We were able to expand our offerings of Tadpole Time into the community through the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County and Our Lady of the Angels Catholic School. Our summer partnership with Lancaster Creative Factory offered seven free STEM workshops at Columbia Crossing. Our River Ranger program, in partnership with Pennsylvania State Parks, welcomed nearly 300 people over 8 sessions. SNHA welcomed local poets, authors, and lecturers for five different educational experiences for adults. One unique event that we hope to facilitate again was a Story Slam in partnership with the York Story Slam and Lancaster Story Slam. It is the diversity of programming offerings that keeps individuals coming back for more events.



This year, SNHA's celebrated the 160th anniversary of the Civil War bridge burning in 1863 with Riverfest, a successful weekend including lectures, trolley tours, walking tours, and the Bridge Burner Challenge. Special programming for 2023 included a special Wrightsville bus tour, Columbia architecture walks, and a Burning of the Bridge coloring book. SNHA and our partners offered 43 unique experiences at Columbia Crossing and in our three river towns. SNHA raised over \$3,000 in revenue for nine local heritage partners including Mount Bethel Cemetery, Columbia Historic Preservation Society, Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster, and Rivertownes PA USA. Riverfest weekend was made possible by seven local event sponsors. The goal is to build this event into the quintessential recreation and heritage event for our river towns.

## COLUMBIA CROSSING MISSION

**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:** Provide high-quality visitor services that showcase heritage and outdoor recreation sites, local businesses, and tourism amenities in the Columbia and throughout the National Heritage Area.

**EDUCATION:** Manage the center as a place 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.

## RIVER PARK COMMUNITY ART



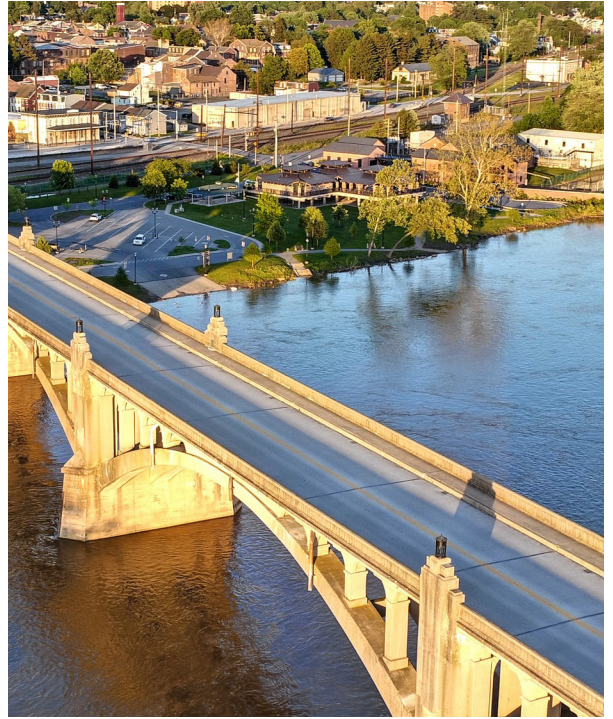
Meet FLOW, the community art project that has added some color to the flower beds at Columbia Crossing. In summer of 2023, our staff decided to invite the community to paint rocks at the Fourth Friday events in downtown and inside the center. The over 250 rocks now twist and turn through the serviceberry bushes.

Columbia River Park is home to a Free Little Library that was originally donated and monitored by the Columbia Borough School District. Girl Scout Troop 70620 of Columbia took over management of it this year. They spent considerable effort rehabilitating the newspaper box to better hold the books and gave it a fresh new look.



# 2024 GOALS

- » Prepare for PennDOT Veterans Memorial Bridge Rehabilitation Project
- » Coordinate Riverfest and raise funding through Bridge Burner Challenge and heritage tours
- » Update and print the Historic Columbia Map
- » Install a new Sculpture exhibit and new African American Heritage Interpretive panel
- » Align our educational programs to our National Heritage Area Management Plan
- » Support the Trail Town initiative for Lancaster County and seek out a trail counter for Columbia Borough
- » Expand our heritage tourism partnerships in York and Lancaster County.

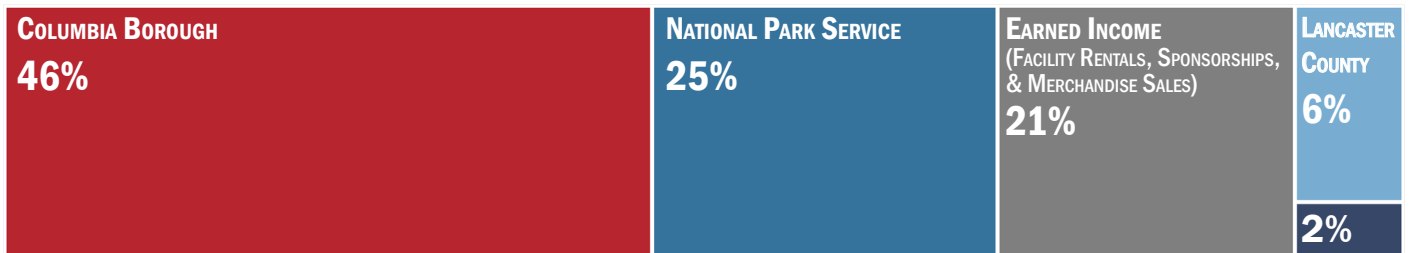


# FINANCIAL UPDATE



SNHA was able to obtain approval for our National Heritage Area Management Plan in 2023. This adjusted our funding stream from the National Park Service and allowed for a larger allocation for Columbia Crossing staff time.

## 2023 REVENUES \$248,147



FOUNDATIONS/OTHER GRANTS

## 2023 EXPENSES \$250,652



Columbia Crossing River Trails Center  
41 Walnut Street  
Columbia, PA 17512  
[www.SusqNHA.org](http://www.SusqNHA.org)



A MEMBER OF THE  
**National Heritage Area System**