

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024 COLUMBIA CROSSING

## STAFF RESTRUCTURING

In 2024, Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA) restructured its staff to support the growth of our National Heritage Area, strengthening regional partnerships and expanding our impact. Megan Salvatore was promoted to SNHA's Visitor Services Manager at Columbia Crossing in January 2024. She has focused on strengthening partner and community engagement with Columbia Crossing and the Borough of Columbia. Hope Byers now serves as SNHA's Vice President of Visitor Engagement. Her work focuses on creating exceptional visitor experiences while expanding outreach across York and Lancaster counties. This restructuring aligns with the goals of the Susquehanna National Heritage Area Management Plan, which emphasizes strengthening partnerships and engagement across the broader region, extending beyond the immediate river areas.

## TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

In 2024, SNHA continued to build on tourism momentum from 2023, maintaining visitation numbers and a high standard of visitor services. Columbia Crossing welcomed 24,590 visitors and experienced strong visitation during the shoulder seasons. This visitation number is on par with the last three years. Sundays remained the busiest day of the week.

24,590

People served by SNHA  
at Columbia Crossing

Personal connections remain crucial to our visitor engagement strategy. Visitors appreciate receiving physical materials such as rack cards, business cards, and town maps. We focus on personalized recommendations for businesses, meals, and activities. SNHA believes these personalized itineraries encourage repeat visits, longer stays, more sightseeing, and increased local spending. In 2024, our staff distributed about 18,983 paper maps and guides with valuable information on local businesses and outdoor recreation opportunities. SNHA develops and prints visitor maps of Columbia and Wrightsville annually. SNHA also creates and distributes guides for the NW River Trail, Enola Low Grade Trail, and other outdoor recreation sites.

## MISSION & VISION

The Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA) continues to foster a vibrant environment at Columbia Crossing, where the region's heritage and natural beauty are celebrated daily. Our mission is to provide high-quality visitor services that showcase the area's rich history, outdoor recreation, local businesses, and tourism amenities. As part of this mission, we remain committed to being a dynamic hub for community engagement and educational experiences that celebrate the region's historical, scenic, and recreational significance.



# REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In 2024, SNHA worked to make Columbia Crossing a dynamic hub for collaboration and community partnerships. We prioritized welcoming local non-profits, providing space for meetings, public events, and private planning sessions. By hosting 41 partner meetings at no cost, we reinforced our commitment to strengthening community connections and fostering regional collaboration. This initiative has also helped position the Borough of Columbia as a key center for broader regional efforts.

SNHA made Columbia Crossing a hub for partner non-profits to host programs that enriched the Columbia community. Collaborations with the Horn Farm Center for Agricultural Education, Raven Ridge Wildlife Center, Columbia Historic Preservation Society, and Keystone Trails Association connected Columbia to regional events like Wild and Uncommon Weekend and the Keystone Trails Association's Outdoor Weekend. These efforts engaged 1,319 participants across 35 events, strengthening community ties and regional outreach.

Columbia Crossing is a vital asset to the local community and a key driver of regional collaboration, economic growth, and tourism—supporting Columbia Borough's downtown businesses and enhancing its overall vibrancy.



# PUBLIC PROGRAMS

In total, 105 public programs were hosted at Columbia Crossing River Trails Center, drawing 3,737 participants. SNHA offered 25 more programs throughout the Borough of Columbia, reaching an additional 1,535 participants. Support for the Columbia Public Library included hosting 12 programs at Columbia Crossing. From Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail field trips to Tadpole Time, River Ranger, Firepit Fridays, and Artist Talks, SNHA's diverse programs engaged people of all ages, strengthening local connections to the river and regional heritage.

Riverfest 2024 was a major highlight, attracting 1,038 participants and surpassing previous years in sponsorship and community involvement. This event featured partnerships with 47 organizations, including the Bridge Burner Challenge, a multi-sport race, the River Recreation Expo, and over 50 heritage tours and programs.

# 2025 GOALS

In 2024, SNHA strengthened tourism development and community engagement at Columbia Crossing, solidifying the trail center as an authority in heritage promotion and outdoor recreation. In 2025, we will expand our impact by enhancing visitor services and building new regional partnerships. Key initiatives include improving marketing strategies through a communications planning project, developing two new exhibits, and collaborating with the Borough of Columbia and local businesses to strengthen connections between the trail and downtown. Additionally, we will prepare to welcome heritage tourists to the region for America's 250th anniversary in 2026. Through strong partnerships and quality programs, Columbia Crossing will continue to be a valuable asset for the community and visitors alike.

