HIKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR HARC HIKE 2019

The Hiking Trail. The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal towpath meanders along the Potomac River between Georgetown and Cumberland, MD. We will be hiking in three different groups along this historic trail between Williamsport and Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Retreat Center (near Sharpsburg, MD). It is a well-maintained dirt and gravel surface with very little elevation change. It is part of a national historic park, maintained by the National Park Service. For about 100 years (mostly in the Nineteenth Century) the canal was a major artery of transportation for shipping goods to market in the Mid-Atlantic states. The building of the canal was an engineering feat in its time. Hiking the towpath, one experiences an important history lesson and gains appreciation for life in an earlier, slower time. The last half-mile of the hike will follow the trails of Shepherd's Spring to the celebration pavilion.

Check-in and Destination. All hikers will meet and check-in at Shepherd's Spring, 16869 Taylor's Landing Road, Sharpsburg, MD. Look for the big tent when you arrive. After last minute instructions are given, vans will transport hikers to the start on the canal. After the hike a picnic lunch awaits you in the pavilion of Shepherd's Spring. A warm welcome with live music will greet you.

Three distances are offered, all up-stream along the Potomac River on the Canal towpath:

1. **Half Marathon Hike** (13.1 miles) starting at entrance to Potomac Fish and Game
2. **Ten Kilometer Hike** (6.2 miles) starting at McMahan's Mill
3. **Four Kilometer Hike** (2.5 miles) starting at Dam #4

There will be at least one hike sweeper for each of the three groups to ensure a safe return for everyone. In the case of an emergency, the Antietam Radio Association will be available at hospitality stops with communication equipment.

Logistics.

- **Group 1** (13.1 milers) will check in at 7:00 am and leave at 7:30 am from Shepherd's Spring. The group will be bussed to the entrance of Potomac Fish and Game for the start.
- **Group 2** (6.2 milers) will check in at 9:00 am and leave at 9:30 am from Shepherd's Spring. The group will be bussed to McMahan's Mill for the start.
- **Group 3** (2.5 milers) will check in at 10:30 am and leave at 11:00 am from Shepherd's Spring. The group will be bussed to Dam #4 for the start.

Parking. There is adequate parking at Shepherd's Spring. The drive into the camp is ¾ mile long. When arriving at the camp, follow the signs which say "HARC Hike."

Physical Conditioning. Participants are expected to be in good physical health and conditioning for a day of hiking. Good sturdy footwear is a must. (No flip-flops or sandals.) The hike will be almost entirely on the C&O Canal with a half mile hike through the woods at Shepherd's Spring on a gradual upgrade to get to the celebration pavilion. Be prepared for a brief uphill climb at the very end of the hike.

Travel Light & Stay Hydrated. It is important for all hikers to carry water and stay hydrated. Water and Gatorade will be available at each rest stop. Besides water, hikers should carry their own personal items. The hike will take place rain or shine. If rain is forecast, bring a sturdy but light-weight rain jacket or poncho. What you carry in, you will have to cary out. The Canal is a trash-free park.

Hospitality Stops. Stationary hospitality stops will be at McMahan's Mill, Dam #4, and the turn-in from the C&O Canal tow path to the camp ground (by the water pump). Water, sports drinks and snacks will be available.

First-Aid. The group sweepers will be carrying first-aid kits in case of scratches, minor abrasions, and sprains. If you have an allergic reaction to insect bites, poison ivy, etc., please inform them before the start of the hike. We want the hike to be a safe and enjoyable day. There is limited access to the canal in the case of an emergency.

Restrooms. Porta-potties are located every four to five miles along the canal at Hiker-Biker primitive campsites. Fresh water is available at hand-pumps.

Picnic at the End of the Trail. We have coordinated the morning so that all three groups will complete their hikes at approximately the same time. Then you can enjoy a celebrative picnic lunch at the pavilion at Shepherd's Spring. Stay and enjoy the good food, fellowship, and music with other hikers after a long and successful day on the trail. If you have a food allergy or other dietary concerns, let us know at least three days before the hike.

Suggested Check List. Here's a list of things to consider bringing along. Try to keep your pack light.

- Sturdy hiking shoes or good running shoes
- Comfortable hiking clothes
- Light jacket
- Hat
- Fanny pack or small back pack
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle/canteen
- Cell phone
- High energy snack
- Walking pole or stick
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Small tissue packet
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer

We look forward to a safe, enjoyable, and rich experience in the great outdoors. Remember, your participation supports important ministries in Washington County. For this we thank you!

Ed Poling, Hike Director
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