

HIKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR HARC HIKE 2026

The Hiking Trail. The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal towpath meanders along the Potomac River between Georgetown and Cumberland, MD. We will be hiking in two different groups along this historic trail in and near Williamsport. It is a well-maintained dirt and gravel surface with a slight elevation change and one somewhat steep set of stairs crossing the canal. 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.



Check-in and Destination. All hikers will meet and check-in at Zion Lutheran Church, 35 W Potomac St, Williamsport, MD 21795. The church has several adjoining parking lots with three different entrances for you to choose when you arrive.

Logistics.

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

- **10K Group** (6.2 miles) will **check in at 8:00 am** and **leave at 8:30 am** from Zion Lutheran Church. The group will be bussed to Dam #5 Road for the start. There will be hospitality at two stops and one set of stairs to climb to cross the canal into Williamsport.
- **5K Groups** (3 miles) **The early group will check in at 9:00 am and leave by 9:30 am** from Zion Lutheran. The next group will **check in at 9:30 am and leave by 10:00 am**. Both groups will be led to the towpath by a guide for an out-and-back walk. There will be one hospitality stop. Please note there will also be stairs to climb both to and from the towpath to cross the canal.

The hike will be almost entirely on the C&O Canal Towpath with one block of walking on a side walk and crossing the Visitor's Center parking lot to/from the church to the towpath.

There will be "sweeper" on bicycle at the very end of the 10K and 5K 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.

After the hike a good lunch awaits you in the church's comfortable fellowship room. A warm welcome with music and "I finished the HARC Hike" selfie photo opportunity will greet you.

Hospitality Stops. Stationary hospitality stops will be at Gift Rd (10K only) and Jordan Junction hiker/biker rest stop (all hikers), which is the turnaround point for 5K participants. Water, Gatorade and snacks will be available at each hospitality stop.

Travel Light & Stay Hydrated. It is important for all hikers to carry water and stay hydrated. Besides water, hikers should carry their own personal items. The event 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 carry out. The Canal is a trash-free park.

First-Aid. First-aid kits are available at hospitality stops in case of scratches, minor abrasions, and sprains, and our bicycle sweeper will also carry a first aid kit. If you have an allergic reaction to insect bites, poison ivy, etc., please inform us before the start of the hike. We want the hike to be a safe and enjoyable day. There is limited access to the towpath in the case of an emergency.

Restrooms. Port-a-potties are located at Jordan Junction hiker/biker rest stop. Restrooms are available before and after the hike at Zion Lutheran Church.

Picnic at the End of the Trail. At the end of your hike, you can enjoy a celebrative lunch at Zion Lutheran Church. Stay and enjoy the good food, fellowship, and music with other hikers after a fun day on the trail. If you have a food allergy or other dietary concerns, let us know when you register so we can be prepared.

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

- Sturdy hiking or running shoes
- Comfortable hiking clothes
- Light jacket
- Hat
- Fanny pack or small back pack
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle/canteen
- Cell phone (cell service is spotty)
- High energy snack (snacks will be available at hospitality stops)
- 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!

Kathy Powderly, HARC Executive Director
301-842-4272 / director@harccoalition.org