



#### Runner Update:

Canalway Partners is pursuing a new course design for the 2019 Towpath Marathon outside of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park after a prolonged and unsuccessful negotiation to hold the event on their portions of the Towpath Trail. We are currently in the process of sending in a permit application with the Cleveland Metroparks and have designed new races courses for a 10k, half and full in the Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation in Cuyahoga Hts and Valley View. The plan is to keep the same race date of Sunday October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and we do not anticipate being able to open the race database until mid-July. Once the Towpath Trail is complete into future Canal Basin park in downtown Cleveland, we look to move the race into Cleveland. Estimated completion date of the Towpath Trail is 2020.

Canalway Partners was informed in November of 2018 that we needed to design a new course for the 2019 Towpath Marathon. We were directed to close our database for the Marathon until our permit was approved. CVNP was building a new Visitor Center near the Boston Store (intersection of Riverview Road/ Boston Mills Road.), scheduled to open in October of 2019. The Park felt that the addition of this Visitor Center and the Towpath Marathon Finish Line Village would bring severe congestion and negatively impact the visitor experience and therefore the Boston Store area could no longer host the Finish Line for the Marathon event. Additional restrictions were later added – runners could not use Riverview Road to start the race.

We were further notified that several maintenance and improvement projects were coming on -line in 2019 – 21 that would close the Towpath Trail between Station Road and Peninsula to all special events. These projects were located along the trail between Station Road Bridge (dam removal and pedestrian bridge repairs) and Peninsula (streambank restoration).

Responding to these new factors, we committed to explore and work with CVNP to find a suitable course design within the “open” segments of the Towpath Trail by designing a course that used the Towpath south of Peninsula. Over the course of five months, we shared ideas and new course maps with CVNP staff– changing course designs based on CVNP feedback.

Our discussions were suspended during the federal government shutdown (December 22, 2018 – January 25, 2019 because CVNP staff was not available.

We met for a meeting on May 20 following the submission of two new racecourse layouts – one using the Towpath Trail within Summit Metroparks, the other using the Towpath Trail in the CVNP between Peninsula and Botzam. From our point of view, we had course options that would work. It was a question of which the best fit for CVNP was. We came prepared to discuss the courses and make changes based on an interactive feedback session.

At this meeting, we did not discuss the courses; instead, we were informed that CVNP would not endorse our permit – citing Code of Federal Regulations Chapter 36, Section 2.50. – offering an assessment that the race would (1) unreasonably interfere with interpretive, visitor services, other program activities or with the administrative activities of the NPS; (2) substantially impair the operations of public use facilities; and (3) result in significant conflict with other existing uses.

It is worth noting that the Marathon had received permits for the past 27 years under the same regulations.

We are disappointed with this current position taken by CVNP. We do understand and support the need to address the backlog of maintenance projects and river-related improvements within our national park. Projects that will temporarily curtail the availability and access to the Towpath.

We share the sense of frustration and appreciate the patience of our runners during this time. Canalway Partners has once again gone back to our drawing board. Our mission: to identify three race courses on the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga County for the 2019 Towpath Marathon. We have done just that and are in process of reaching out to secure needed permits, road closures and Finish Line – post party venues.

It is ironic that we face this dilemma at the same time we are celebrating the construction of the final legs of the Towpath Trail in Cleveland.

We have faced such challenges before – can we say Government Shutdown? With help from our friends and partners, we will overcome yet again.