



Runner Update:

Canalway Partners is excited to announce that we have recently received permit approval from the Cleveland Metroparks to host a 10k, half & full on the Towpath Trail in the Cleveland Metroparks Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation. The Towpath Marathon is turning 28 years old and will be held on Sunday October 13th, 2019. We plan on opening the race database by the first week in August and will make the official announcement on the Towpath Marathon facebook page and via email through our Constant Contact and Active Works email marketing databases. Internally our staff will need additional time to set up the race database and update our website with parking and packet pick up details that are still being solidified. Please email Kathy Cole at kcole@canalwaypartners.com if you would like to be notified via email when the race database is open.

Thanks for the outpouring of support and tremendous patience from the runner community as we have been navigating the changes. Canalway Partners will continue the mission of completing the Towpath Trail into future Canal Basin Park in Cleveland. Once the Towpath Trail is complete into future Canal Basin park in downtown Cleveland we will determine if it is feasible to coordinate the race in Cleveland on the Towpath Trail. Estimated completion date of the Towpath Trail is 2020.

Please note we needed to move the race out of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) due to several reasons including construction projects involving the Cuyahoga River as well as the opening of the CVNP visitor center.

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.