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Delaware Water Gap NRA News Release

Release date: Monday, December 13, 2010

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Childs Park Rehabilitation Project Begins in Delaware Water Gap NRA

Superintendent John J. Donahue announced today that beginning early in January 2011, the National Park Service (NPS) will begin major rehabilitation work at George W. Childs Recreation Site (Childs Park). Located in Dingmans Ferry, PA, it is a popular site for waterfall viewing, hiking, and picnicking within Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. This long-awaited restoration work will require closure of the area to protect the safety of visitors and to allow the contractors to complete their work efficiently.

“Childs Park is a tremendous asset to Delaware Water Gap and to the National Park System. It represents how natural beauty in the form of impressive waterfalls and hemlock ravines can be enhanced and enjoyed by visitors through well-placed hiking trails and picnicking facilities,” said Superintendent Donahue, “We have a real opportunity to provide better facilities and to rejuvenate the original landscape that George W. Childs wanted the people of Pennsylvania to enjoy. I look forward to rededicating the site soon.”

Visitors to Childs Park are usually captivated with the natural beauty of the forest and waterfalls. It is an extremely popular spot for recreating. However, the natural and cultural resources that make Childs Park so unique are also showing many signs of damage from age and overuse.

Some of the problems at Childs Park include:

- Cultural resources (Civilian Conservation Corps-era structures, woolen mill ruins) in need of repair;
- Severe erosion on trails and through the hemlock ravines;
- Ambiguous trails compounding soil compaction;
- Bridges needing major repairs;
- Undefined parking;
- Dispersed picnicking;
- Dying hemlock trees and deer-browse; and a
- Trampled understory.

During the closure, the National Park Service will be making much needed repairs to trails, bridges, parking, historic structures, and will be implementing measures to help maintain and preserve the forest

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and streamside vegetation. The project has been in the planning stage for several years; public meetings were held in June 2006 and an Environmental Assessment was released for public review in May 2008.

The project began in October with treatments for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid through stem injections and soil treatments to keep the hemlocks healthy. Over the winter months, hazardous, dead trees that could fall on trails, structures, or in parking lots will be removed. Most of the timber will be re-used on site for erosion control measures and to provide nursery logs for new hemlocks.

Major facility reconstruction work will begin in spring 2011 and will take about a year. The site repairs and reconstruction include:

- Removal of dead and dying trees that pose a hazard to park visitors and infrastructure;
- Repair of trails and bridges and erosion mitigation to maintain the character of the original trail infrastructure;
- Relocation of picnic area closer to parking area and to be accessible to all visitors;
- Treatment of hemlock trees for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (an invasive insect that is destroying the native hemlock forests);
- Installation of fencing to allow regeneration of hemlock and other understory vegetation. This also protects the water quality of Dingmans Creek and the cold water habitat for trout and other aquatic species;
- Preservation work on cultural resources, including the woolen mill ruins and the Civilian Conservation Corps structures, detailing the long history of the site, including the story of George William Childs and his vision of creating trails for the public in 1892. The goal of this rehabilitation is to restore the site largely to Mr. Childs' original vision for the park; and
- Addition of appropriate signage and information.

We thank you for your patience and cooperation while the repairs and rehabilitation to this beautiful site are accomplished.

- For your safety and continued work progress, please respect all site closures; workers will be utilizing construction equipment and the site will not be safe for visitors.
- When the site re-opens, please stay on the designated trails and obey site regulations; they are for your safety and the protection of the resources that make this place special.
- Volunteer! We can use your help in the future with additional tree plantings, invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, litter clean-up, education ...and the list goes on. Call Park Headquarters at 570-426-2452, for more information.
- Continue to enjoy and support your national park!

Keep up-to-date on this project at: www.nps.gov/dewa.

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