



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Delaware Water Gap NRA News Release

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Historic Apple Trees Pruned and Reinvigorated

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Superintendent, John Donahue, affirmed the recent completion of a project to prune historic apple trees at three sites, all in Sussex County, New Jersey. A team of arborists and trainees, assembled from throughout the National Park Service, spent a week at the park in early February carefully pruning the trees. Pruning fruit trees promotes vigor, helps to balance the tree as it grows, and stimulates new growth. Coordination and funding for the project came from the National Park Service's Frederick Law Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation in Brookline, Massachusetts.

The first site was the historic Roberts Farm orchard in Montague, New Jersey, believed to be the oldest orchard in the National Park System. According to a 1992 study by Dr. William Coli from the University of Massachusetts Amherst Cooperative Extension, some of the surviving trees were estimated to be over 200 years old. However, since that time, most of the original trees have blown over and died.

Fortunately, during the past ten years, scions (shoots from one-year's growth) from the surviving trees were grafted on to rootstock and the resulting saplings were planted in the original orchard. Only one apple variety has been identified so far, a Newtown Pippin - a variety dating back to 1661.

All other varieties will eventually be identified when the saplings bear fruit. The two additional sites include trees at the Dodd House and one massive apple tree of unknown variety near the Dingmans Bridge.

In a recent National Park Service publication, *Fruitful Legacy*, author Susan Dolan writes, "The history of orchard fruit growing in the United States is as rich and complex as the country's history of human settlement and development."

Reestablishing and maintaining historic fruit trees throughout the National Park System represents an historic milestone in the preservation of the cultural heritage of both the United States and the State of New Jersey.

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