



# Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

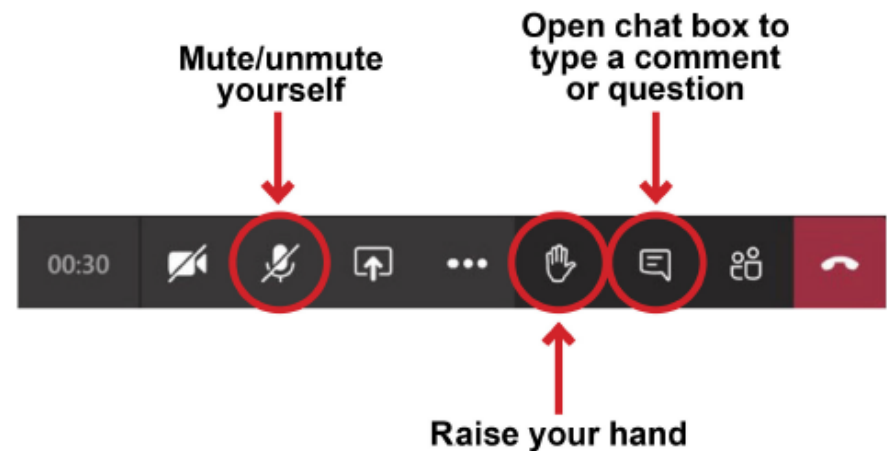
## Proposed closure of Maryland Heights parking areas

Public Meeting  
February 10, 2022



# Meeting housekeeping

- Proposal presentation, then time for questions/comments
- Chat box feature to enter questions and comments
- Live captions and transcript





# Agenda

- Welcome
- Background
- Proposal
- Questions/Comments/Alternative Ideas
- How to Comment



## Meeting purpose

- Provide background on safety issues in the Maryland Heights parking areas
- Present the proposal to permanently close the Maryland Heights parking areas
- Provide the opportunity for questions and public comments on the proposal to identify issues, concerns, and ideas





## Background

- The Maryland Heights parking pull-offs on Harpers Ferry Road have become an increasingly problematic safety hazard for visitors, NPS law enforcement rangers, Washington County (MD) law enforcement, local fire and rescue units, park neighbors, and residents of Sandy Hook and Dargan.
- The two parking areas, which can hold 16 total vehicles maximum, are not large enough to handle the visitation the Maryland Heights trail now receives.
- Vehicles, both legally and illegally parked, often extend into the roadway and block one lane of travel on a narrow, busy road.



## Background (2)

Maryland Heights parking area #1 (closest to Maryland Heights trailhead):

- Upriver side: 11 feet deep measured from road
- Road width: 16 feet on upriver side
- Downriver side: 13 feet deep measured from road
- Road width: 17 feet on downriver lot edge

Maryland Heights parking area #2:

- Total length: 298 feet
  - Break in lot where parking not possible
  - Reduces total length to 162 feet
- Road width: 17 feet
- Lot depth fluctuates



## Background (3)



Maryland Heights parking area #1 – C&O Canal towpath on left, Harpers Ferry Road in center, parking area on right, hillside on extreme right





## Background (4)



Maryland Heights parking area #1 from across Harpers Ferry Road (C&O Canal towpath side)





## Background (5)



Maryland Heights parking area #1





## Background (6)



Maryland Heights parking area #1 – note size of spaces





## Background (7)



Maryland Heights parking area #2 from C&O Canal towpath





## Background (8)



Maryland Heights parking area #2





## Background (9)



Maryland Heights parking area #2





## Background (10)



Maryland Heights parking area #2





## Background (11)



Maryland Heights parking area #2





## Background – Impact on Visitors

- Visitors walking from the parking areas to the trailhead must walk along the road, which has no shoulder for safe pedestrian use.
- Visitors exiting the parking spaces must back into traffic on a narrow, busy road.





## Background – Impact on Emergency Services

- Cars parked in this area have impeded NPS law enforcement rangers, Washington County (MD) law enforcement personnel, and local fire and rescue units as they respond to emergency calls on Maryland Heights and in the local area.
- In one two-month period in 2020, Washington County (MD) and park law enforcement received 30 calls related to parking and safety issues in this location.
  - Washington County (MD) Sheriff's office issued 203 parking citations in 2019-2020
- NPS law enforcement officers can spend twenty minutes to an hour responding to calls about illegally parked vehicles.
  - This pulls them away from addressing other law enforcement and safety needs in the park.







## Background – Impact on Park Resources

- The parking pull-offs were never intended for the visitation the Maryland Heights trail now receives. Due to the influence of social media and increased interest in outdoor recreational opportunities, hundreds of visitors hike or climb Maryland Heights on a daily basis--especially on the weekends in the spring, summer, and fall.







## Background – Impact on Residents

- Park neighbors and residents of the Sandy Hook and Dargan communities, which border the Maryland Heights trailhead, have faced travel delays in their normal commutes due to traffic and illegally parked vehicles in the parking areas.





# Proposal

To eliminate these dangerous conditions and increase the safety of visitors, staff, emergency services personnel, and residents, the park proposes to permanently close the Maryland Heights parking areas.



## Proposal (2)

- The park originally closed the areas on March 30, 2020 as part of its response to COVID-19 safety protocols.
- The park has maintained the closure because of its positive impact: parking safety-related incidents in the area have been virtually eliminated.
- The permanent closure would be enforced with the placement of steel guardrails, with the ability for staff to access for maintenance or emergency/law enforcement situations.







## Proposal (3)

- Access to Maryland Heights trail and climbing areas:
  - Park in main Visitor Center lot at Cavalier Heights (171 Shoreline Drive) and ride the park shuttle to Lower Town.
  - Limited parking available in the Lower Town Train Station and River Access lots.
  - It is a short walk from Lower Town across the pedestrian footbridge to the trailhead and main climbing routes.
  - Explore three national parks in one visit: Harpers Ferry NHP, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.





## Proposal (4)

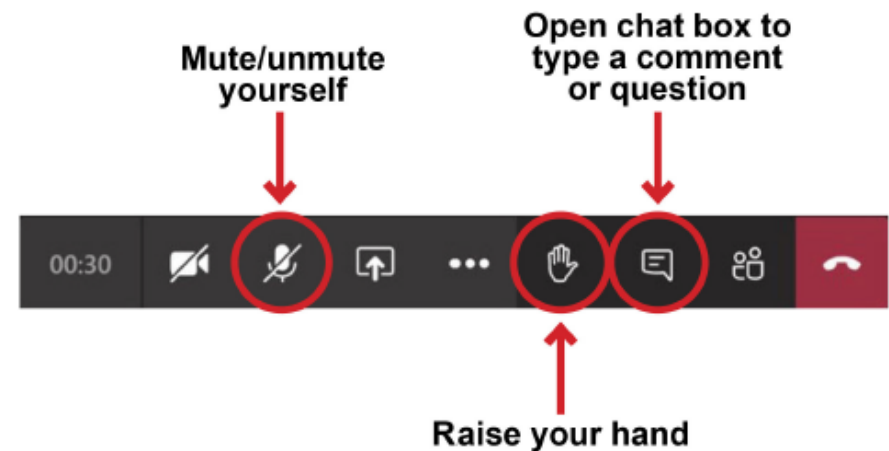
- All park visitors are expected to pay the park entrance fee, which provides access to park trails, parking, facilities, exhibits, and programs. Fees provide vital support for park preservation, education, and maintenance.
- Frequent visitors to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park can consider purchasing the Harpers Ferry Annual Pass (\$35), which covers the park entrance fee for one full year from the month of purchase.





# Questions/Comments

1. Raise your hand.
2. When called on, unmute yourself.
3. 3-minute limit
  - If longer, can submit to [HAFE\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:HAFE_Superintendent@nps.gov).
4. Put yourself back on mute.
  - You can also type a comment or question in the chat box.





# How Can You Submit Comments?

- **Online:** Submit written comments by February 27 to [HAFE\\_Superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:HAFE_Superintendent@nps.gov).
- **Written comments can be mailed to:**  
Superintendent  
Attn: Proposal to close Maryland Heights parking areas  
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park  
P.O. Box 65  
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
- **Mailed comments** must be postmarked by **February 27** to receive consideration.