

# NPS Dir. Chuck Sams Visits Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area On Earth Day To Highlight Wetland Restoration

By Kathe Sandt

BUSHKILL, PA – National Park Service (NPS) Director Chuck Sams visited Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in New Jersey and Pennsylvania today as part of a cross country tour during National Park Week. Sams visited the park as the staff is gearing up for a busy summer season, finalizing a significant wetland restoration project and tackling road repairs on the busiest route in the park. Today's Earth Day visit coincides with National Park Week's sPark Action day, when we are highlighting how our actions impact the health of the environment.

Sams began his tour of the 70,000-acre national recreation area with a drive along the historic Old Mine Road while enroute to the Watergate Wetland Restoration Project on the New Jersey side of the park. This \$10 million project will restore 20 acres of wetlands and nearly a half-mile of stream, as well as 60 acres of native plants surrounding the wetlands and stream. The project is scheduled to be completed late this year. By restoring natural conditions, the ecology of the entire area will be improved, including re-establishing native vegetation, improving the coldwater trout fishery and bird habitat, and reducing damage from flooding. While visiting the construction site, Director Sams assisted the crew by planting a native shrub and moving turtles out of a pond in the active work zone to keep them out of harm's way.

During the drive on Old Mine Road, one of the oldest commercial roads in the country, he visited Minisink National Historic Landmark and was briefed by members of the park's resource management and maintenance teams on historic structures, maintenance challenges, natural and cultural resources, and how the park works with Tribal partners to ensure that sensitive cultural and archeological resources are protected. He also met with staff from the park's law enforcement and emergency services team and discussed wildland fire, search and rescue, emergency response, and dive team operations.

Congressman Matt Cartwright (PA-8th) and a representative from Senator Bob Casey's office (PA) joined Director Sams alongside US Route 209 on the Pennsylvania side of the park where they learned about the \$21 million repair project funded by the Great American Outdoors Act's Legacy Restoration Fund that is currently underway. The 14-mile rehabilitation project will make major improvements to the busiest road in the park. Sams and others heard from park staff about why this infrastructure project was needed and why it is so important to the park and local communities. They also learned about measures the park is taking to protect park resources during construction, including a Scenic and Recreational River and a National Historic Landmark.

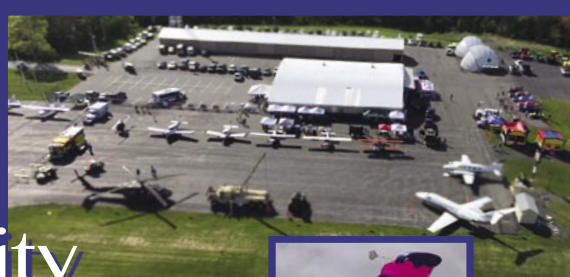


NPS Image/E.Halloran: National Park Service Director Chuck Sams planted a native shrub at the Watergate Wetland Restoration Project site on the New Jersey side of the park on Earth Day. Also pictured, Kristy Boscheinen, Project Manager (left) and Anna Grismer, Biological Technician (right).



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