The Billy Goat Trail Section A

- Difficult 1.7 mile long trail in Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

- Trailhead is located ½ mile downstream of Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center on towpath

- Roundtrip hike takes approximately 3-4 hours (3.7 mile loop)
Other Hiking Options

- Olmsted Island Bridges- A 1/4 mile boardwalk allows hikers access to spectacular views of Great Falls MD overlook

- River Trail- Easy trail lasting 1 mile. Hike is a gentle stroll along river’s edge and through a rich floodplain forest

- Gold Mine Loop – 3.2 Mile Loop of moderate difficulty. Hikers have opportunity to view remains of mining operations
The Billy Goat Trail runs through Bear Island, a 96 acre nature preserve co-owned by The Nature Conservancy and National Park Service.

Bear Island is one of the most biologically rich areas of the Potomac Gorge.

Bear Island is one of few exposed bedrock terrace habitats in the Mid-Atlantic.

It is home to more than 50 state-listed threatened and endangered species.
Know Before You Go

• The Billy Goat Trail is an enjoyable hike with beautiful views

• However, the trail is both physically and mentally challenging

• No pets allowed

• No swimming in Canal or Potomac River
Please follow “Leave No Trace” sensitive recreational use principles as you hike:

• Do not walk off the trail to avoid a puddle

• Shoes dry overnight. Plants take years to regenerate

• Hikers should wear clothes they are willing to get dirty
Be Aware if the Trail’s Challenges

The Traverse:

• Hikers must find way up/down this 40 ft. cliff.

• There is not an alternative trail around

• The Billy Goat Trail is not recommended for people afraid of heights
Pothole Alley

- Pothole Alley is a ¼ mile long section of trail
- Hikers must navigate over large boulders and jagged rocks
- Extremely difficult and strenuous
- Good balance is required
Slippery When Wet (Or Dry)

- Rocks between Trail Marker 2 and Purple Horse Beach (pictured) are extremely smooth

- Sand collected on shoes causes hikers to slip on these rocks

- Potential injuries include ankle sprains/breaks, cuts and scrapes
High Water

- The Billy Goat Trail is prone to flooding
- Check river level and trail status at Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center before hike
- Trail may be closed during high water on the Potomac River
Be Prepared

- Check local weather forecast and dress appropriately
- Bring adequate amounts of water
- Pick up hiking trail map
- Wear proper shoes
  - ✓ Hiking boots
  - ✓ Tennis shoes
  - ✗ No Flip flops
  - ✗ No High heels
• Failure to prepare properly may result in costly rescue efforts
• Such efforts can increase stress on the fragile ecosystem of Bear Island
It’s a Cold Winter Day, Is She Prepared?
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- Sturdy Hiking Shoes
- Water
- Warm Clothing
- Backpack with food and first aid kit
- Rain Jacket
Be Safe and Considerate

• The Billy Goat Trail is entertaining and exhilarating

• Only through respect for its difficulty can you ensure a safe, enjoyable hike

• By being safe and sticking to the trail, you can help preserve Bear Island for future generations