

## **2 rivers-related trails gain national recreation designation**

By Rick Wills  
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The Department of the Interior on Tuesday designated the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and the Three Rivers Water Trail as national recreation trails, lending prestige that could make it easier to get grant money.

Developed over four decades, the trails built on old industrial sites and brownfields are a centerpiece of the area's recreational life and used by cyclists, walkers, fishers and boaters.

"This trail system has really allowed people to reconnect with the rivers -- to not see them as an industrial wasteland," said Sarah Carr, program manager for Friends of the Riverfront, a nonprofit group formed in 1991 that oversees the trails.

The group applied for national recognition. No federal money comes with the status.

"We as a region are fortunate to have such an expansive trail system linking our riverfront communities within the Pittsburgh region," said Thomas Baxter, executive director of Friends of the Riverfront.

The national recreation trail program is administered by the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, along with other government and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails.

From the Schuylkill Trail in Philadelphia to the Youghiogheny River Trail in Fayette County, Pennsylvania has 61 national recreation trails. The 31 newly designated trails across the nation join a network of more than 1,000 trails covering more than 12,500 miles.

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail runs 22 miles along the banks of the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers.

The Three Rivers Water Trail is a series of public boat-access points within the 90 riverfront municipalities of Allegheny County. The trail extends to Sewickley on the Ohio River, Harrison on the Allegheny River, and Elizabeth on the Monongahela River.

River enthusiasts such as Dave Malehorn, a molecular biologist and researcher at Magee-Womens Research Institute in Oakland, say the designation is important.

"The rivers are beautiful and peaceful. Being on them is like meditation," said

Malehorn, 47, of Morningside, who often commutes to work in a kayak.

"I start in Lawrenceville, go to The Point and then back up the Mon to South Side Riverfront Park and walk to Oakland from there," Malehorn said.

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