

Ohio River Trail Council

Ohio River Trail Council Press Release

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Upper Ohio River Water Trail - Pennsylvania Section Receives Funding

MONACA, PA - Southwestern Pennsylvania is experiencing a rapid growth in interest and use of our scenic rivers. The Travel Industry Association of America reports that 55.1 million Americans are "Geotourists" interested in eco-tourism, including activities like kayaking and canoeing. Paddling is one of the top ten adventure activities for baby boomers, followed by fishing, biking and hiking. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, 17.8-million Americans participated in kayaking, canoeing and rafting in 2008, with 7.8 million paddling kayaks alone. Kayaking is the fastest growing outdoor sport and kayaking and canoeing were among the top five recreational sports that had the most first-time participants in Pennsylvania. Involvement in the sport has nearly doubled in the United States in the last nine years, according to the National Sporting Goods Association.

To address this growing appeal and introduce our citizens to the recreational and environmental renewal of the Ohio River in Allegheny and Beaver Counties, the Ohio River Trail Council (ORTC) proposed the development of the Upper Ohio River Water Trail. The Ohio River Trail Council's goal is to improve access to our waterways by establishing a series of small watercraft launch points along the Ohio River and its tributaries in Pennsylvania. The *Upper Ohio River Water Trail* will enhance the recreational activities on 40+ miles of the Ohio River and connect Pittsburgh to its neighboring communities in Beaver County while offering enormous opportunity for recreation for the 1.4 million residents living along the Ohio River.

A water trail or blue trail is a dedicated safe route for boats that provides a destination for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and other recreation. These routes establish recreational corridors between specific locations and can include boat launches, day-use sites, and in some cases overnight camping. Equally important, the trail and the resulting enhanced river experiences will inspire stewardship for the river and its associated landscape, including its cherished scenery and significant natural and cultural resource. The trail will promote sustainable economic development; provide educational opportunities and connections to our history, ecology, geology, heritage and wildlife.

To accomplish this task, the Ohio River Trail Council is forging partnerships with local and national groups to promote river utilization and community pride. The Ohio River Water Trail Project, which began in 2011, has recently formed a Steering Committee to provide guidance in the development of the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail*. The Steering Committee

includes representatives from the Ohio River Trail Council, National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Beaver County Planning Commission, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Independence Conservancy, Beaver County Historical Research and Landmarks Foundation, Beaver County Rowing Association, Beaver County Recreation & Tourism Department, Beaver County YMCA, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service's Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

The first assembly of the Steering Committee will occur on Monday June 11, 2012. Municipality representatives are welcomed and encouraged to attend. The Ohio River Trail Council will be hosting open houses and public meetings as the project moves forward to promote public awareness and encourage community input.

The investment in the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail* - Pennsylvania section through sponsorship and in-kind services to-date totals to nearly \$50,000 primarily from the Port of Pittsburgh Commission (PPC) and the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share Program Grant (CCSP). The source of the Upper Ohio River Water Trail funding includes a \$20,000 Port of Pittsburgh Commission grant, a \$9900 NPS Challenge Cost Share Program grant, and about \$18,000 of in-kind and volunteer services by the ORTC, local community and organizational partners.

Funding for the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail Project* includes four deliverables: 1) the installation of amenities along various small watercraft launch sites along the Ohio River, such as roadside directional signage, waterway signage, informational kiosks, picnic tables, benches, canoe/kayak racks and bike racks; 2) a water trail map & guide which includes the identification of access and hazard sites, trail amenities, safety information, boating regulations, and information on natural, cultural and historic points of interest; 3) the purchase of canoes and kayaks for use in developing a new Youth Paddling Program with partner organizations; and 4) application for designation of the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail* as part of the *Pennsylvania Water Trail Program*, *National Recreation Trail*, and as part of the *National Water Trail System*. The ORTC goal is to complete the above aspects of the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail Project* by the fall of 2013.

A highlight of the *Upper Ohio River Water Trail Project* is the development of the *ORTC Youth Paddling Club*. Blue trails provide a fun and exciting way for our youth to discover our rivers, connect to the great outdoors, celebrate the beauty of our region, and improve quality of life. A water trail provides many recreational and educational opportunities. Water trails connect museums, historic sites, parks and preserves creating frontiers for exploration, discovery and enrichment. These connections build a sense of place. Water trails link families who grow together through work and play on the trail. The *ORTC Youth Paddling Program* includes teaching Paddlesports Safety and Paddlecraft Vessel Safety to children as well as training community members to be safe boaters, and guiding public paddling trips.

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[Port of Pittsburgh Commission](#)

The mission of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission is to "promote the commercial use and development of the waterway-intermodal transportation system and to integrate that

system into the economic, recreational, environmental and intermodal future of the residents and industries of Southwestern Pennsylvania.” Sustainable, port-related economic development projects are the primary focus of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission grants. Projects may be educational, recreational, environmental or touristic in nature.

[Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program](#)

The U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS – RTCA) works with community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribes or tribal governments, and local, state, and federal government agencies to achieve locally-defined goals for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. RTCA projects include natural area preservation, rivers conservation and the development of recreational trails and greenways. RTCA carries out the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service. A network of planning professionals delivers the RTCA Program nationwide, helping communities to help themselves achieve on-the ground successes. The RTCA assist the local partners to make their rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces a vital, life-enhancing part of their communities leveraging its resources. Each year, on average, the National Park Service and their partners across the country create over 1,400 miles of trails, conserve more than 63,700 acres of open space, and protect more than 700 miles of waterways. Through the America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, competitive funding from the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program has been earmarked for those projects that respond to the AGO Recommended Actions, such as the development of Water Trails.

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The Ohio River Trail Council’s mission is to honor our past and build our future by providing recreation opportunities, heritage development, environmental stewardship, safe transportation networks and economic stimulus. Our goal is to promote and protect a continuous corridor of natural and cultural resources along the Ohio River and its tributaries to ensure these assets and resources remain accessible for future generations.

In Pennsylvania, the Ohio River Trail Council is currently planning & developing a 41-mile bike and water trail, the Ohio River Trail (ORT), along the Ohio River, from Coraopolis, Pa (near Pittsburgh) to Ohioville, Pa. (near East Liverpool, OH). The *Ohio River Trail* is part of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, Lewis & Clark Trail and is a candidate for part of the U.S. Bicycle Route 50, Pittsburgh to Cleveland Trail, and a portion of the Underground Railroad Bicycle Route, Pittsburgh spur. The proposed *Ohio River Trail* will also follow parts of the "Great Path" and the Lincoln Highway. The *Ohio River Trail* will serve as a key segment in the interconnection of existing land trails in the quad-state area (Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia). Specifically, the proposed Ohio River Trail will connect the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway in Columbiana County, Ohio to



the Great Allegheny Passage in Allegheny, County Pennsylvania forming a mega-trail from the great lakes region to our nation's capitol.

[How can you help](#)

The Ohio River Trail Council cordially invites you to become a friend, a volunteer or a partner of our organization. The Ohio River Trail Council membership plays an integral part in promoting the vital role we perform in our region. The Ohio River Trail Council is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization, therefore your cash and property donations to the Ohio River Trail Council are tax deductible. The Ohio River Trail Council is an organization committed to excellence, with a clear vision and a passion for delivering outstanding results. We ask you to form an alliance with us to capitalize on our strengths in order to guarantee a bright future for our rivers, forests, and towns. Please visit www.ohiorivertrail.org for additional information and a [donation form](#).



Membership

To join the Ohio River Trail Council please download a [membership application](#) and mail your contribution to the ORTC office. Feel free to forward this message to a friend.



Correspondence

Please visit our [website](#) and [register](#) to receive ORTC correspondence. Thank you for your support.



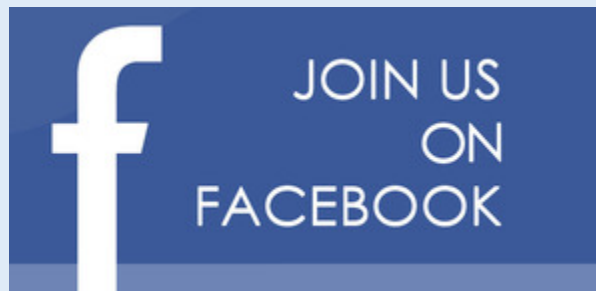
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