

Mon boat landing another link in water trail

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By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Robin Rombach/Post-Gazette

Dave Malehorn, with Friends of the Riverfront, paddles his kayak down the Monongahela River after a press conference opening the Fourth Street Three Rivers Water Trail Landing on the Side Side.

As six kayakers in yellow and red boats bobbed on the choppy Monongahela River at Fourth Street on the South Side yesterday afternoon, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl looked to the water and praised the role of the region's rivers in helping reinvent the city.

"The revitalization and rebirth of the city in many ways has been accomplished by our ability to capitalize on our riverfronts," said Mr. Ravenstahl, who was there to dedicate the newest of 18 landings on the Three Rivers Water Trail.

Located 1.25 miles from the Point according to an orange, paddle-shaped sign hanging from a green pole, the kayak and canoe landing occupies what once was a barge unloading dock and later home to the Pittsburgh River Rescue unit.

The landing uses an existing "amphitheater" of stone and concrete walls. Invasive plants have been pulled and replaced with native plants. New concrete steps and a nautically artistic rebar railing by Red Star Ironworks of Millvale have been installed from the Three Rivers Heritage Trail bike path along the river to the wide, slanted dock on the river 15 feet below. The project cost \$150,000.

Although the steps look like a tough climb for someone carrying a boat, Scott Van de Mark, director of special projects for the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, said they're not.

"I've used the landing a bunch of times this summer and it's fine," said Mr. Van de Mark, who works in the adjacent River Walk Corporate Centre, formerly the Terminal Building. "It's great to come down after work at 5 p.m. I can be out on the water until after 8 p.m."

The Three Rivers Water Trail is one of 21 water trails in the state totaling more than 2,000 water miles that have been mapped or are under development. The routes, suitable for kayaks or canoes, establish recreational corridors between specific locations and can include boat launches, day-use sites and in some cases overnight camping.

On Tuesday, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources signed an agreement with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the state Fish and Boat Commission and the National Park Service to continue development and promotion of a water trail network.

Thomas Baxter IV, executive director of Friends of the Riverfront, a local river recreation and advocacy group, said the landing dedication coincides with the release of a new Three Rivers Water Trail map. The map shows the locations of eight landings on the Allegheny River, three on the Ohio, one on the Youghiogheny and six on the Monongahela.

"River kayaking is the fastest growing recreation sector in the region, doubling and tripling in recent years," Mr. Baxter said. "This site is another access for that activity."

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