

# Three Rivers Water Trail



## Paddling the rivers

With the creation of the Three Rivers Water Trail, residents and visitors can get a new perspective on our region from the rural countryside to downtown Pittsburgh.

With the help of this guide you can witness history in the making and embark on a river adventure that gives you a glimpse of our past, present and future. Take a moment to consider the following as you prepare for your journey. It's important to know the waters on which you plan to boat, and users must know their own capabilities. The water levels are controlled through a



photo-courtesy of Friends of the Riverfront, Inc.

*Allegheny River at Washington's Crossing.*

series of locks and dams, but always be cognizant of your surroundings as well as other private and commercial boat traffic. Float speed on the Three Rivers is about 2-3 miles per hour with leisurely paddling. Remember that heavy rains and seasonal ice can significantly affect the flow conditions. For your safety and enjoyment, please boat only when water levels are appropriate for your skill level. The latest condition information can be found at [www.erh.noaa.gov/ohrfc](http://www.erh.noaa.gov/ohrfc).

## Accesses and Amenities

### Allegheny River

*A1, 6th Street, Clemente.* Spectacular urban access beneath the 6th Street (Clemente) Bridge, located adjacent to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. Also the home of Kayak Pittsburgh.

*A2, Three Rivers Rowing.* Home turf to a world-class rowing facility, this site offers users access to the adjacent trails and Millvale Riverfront Park just off of Route 28 and Grant Avenue.

*A3, Lawrenceville.* Excellent access under the protection of the 40th Street Bridge. Ample land/water trailhead parking adjacent to the landing.

*A4, Millvale Riverfront Park.* Great access can be found just off the sunken barge. Refreshments, bike rentals and

fishing equipment available in the adjacent trailhead parking just off of Grant Avenue in the park.

*A5, Sharpsburg Riverfront Park.* Prime example of small

municipal planning with big impacts. Follow Main Street, turn onto 13th for parking, picnic facilities and restrooms.

*A6, O'Hara Chapel Harbor.* Soft landing on the shores of the Allegheny River. A turf grass ramp allows access to Chapel Harbor residents and nearby marina.

*A7, Verona.* Spacious docks of Steel City Row-

ing offer put-in and take-out. Follow the paddle sign from Allegheny River Boulevard to the Arch Street trailhead facility.

*A8, Sycamore Island.* Owned by the Allegheny Land Trust, this undeveloped 14-acre island hosts a unique floodplain hardwood forest, among the most rare plant community types globally.

*A9, Oakmont Washington Avenue.* Adjacent to the bustling central business district, this site offers access for both motorized and non-motorized craft.

### Monongahela River

*M1, Station Square.* In the heart of the Golden Triangle, this access offers users their choice of entertainment, dining and unique shops. Stow your craft and take a ride on the Monongahela Incline for a bird's eye view.

*M2, 4th Street.* Former home of River Rescue, this landing has ample room for a put-in and take-out as well as nearby parking and access to the Community Bike Program just off of 4th Street in the South Side.

*M3, South Side Park 1.* Serene setting in the middle of the city, this access is designated for both motorized and non-motorized craft. The South Side Riverfront Park, located at the end of 18th Street off East Carson, offers ample parking and access to nearby amenities and entertainment.

*M4, South Side Park 2.* Small, protected cove allows for calm-water entry and exiting. Park facilities include restrooms, picnic tables and access to trails and the historic South Side. Stow your craft and discover the South Side.

*M5, Nine Mile Run.* Rustic access at the mouth of Nine Mile Run. This access offers excellent fishing, trails and

### For your safety and enjoyment:

- Always wear a life jacket.
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills.
- Know fishing and boating regulations.
- Carry proper equipment.

views of the waterfront across the river from the spacious trailhead facility.

*M6, Braddock at 11th Street.* Large access for both motorized and non-motorized craft. Parking is available along 11th Street.

### **Youghiogheny River**

*Y1, McKeesport.* Located at the mouth of the Youghiogheny River, this is an excellent access for people wishing to explore the Steel Valley Trail, part of the Great Allegheny Passage, or take a walk to the nearby amenities of McKeesport.

### **Ohio River**

*O1, Heinz Quay.* Beat the traffic and paddle to the game. Hang around and catch home runs at the ballpark. This popular access offers a wide array of amenities including food and entertainment.

*O2, Westhall Street.* Trailhead parking is available off of River Avenue with access along the riverfront just across the trail.

*O3, Sewickley.* The Sewickley Riverfront Park offers easy access to the Ohio River and nearby shopping and dining.

## **Get involved**

Friends of the Riverfront is a 15-year-old membership-based organization charged with increasing awareness and engagement with the Pittsburgh Region's rivers and riverfronts through activities, stewardship and expansion of water and land trails. To learn more about our organization and for membership information, please call us at 412.488.0212 or visit us online at [www.friendsoftheriverfront.org](http://www.friendsoftheriverfront.org).

## **Respect the privacy of others**

Plan and make stops at Three Rivers Water Trail designated landings and shorelines open to the public. Respect the privacy and rights of landowners by obtaining permission before entering privately owned land.

## **Fishing opportunities**

The Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers near Pittsburgh offer a tremendous variety of quality fishing opportunities throughout the year. Remember, though, that fishing success varies by water conditions and year class strength of the various species you're after.

Late fall, winter and early spring (November to March) is a prime time to pursue walleye and sauger. These two species are more active when the water is colder. Concentrate your fishing within a mile of the downstream side of the dams and at the mouths of tributaries. This is also a time of the year for a chance at a trophy-sized musky, particularly in the lower Allegheny River.

April to June is a period to target smallmouth bass, white bass and freshwater drum when the water is cooler. There will also be opportunities to catch a 2- to 5-pound hybrid striped bass. The summer months and early fall bring the best action for channel catfish, flathead catfish, carp and smallmouth buffalo when the water is warm.

Muskies and hybrid striped bass are managed by stocking to provide the fishery. The fishery for all other species mentioned are maintained by natural reproduction in the rivers.



*Monongahela River near Nine Mile Run, Allegheny County.*

## **Pennsylvania boating regulations**

- One wearable, Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in your boat. If your boat is 16 feet or longer, one throwable device (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.
- Life jackets must be worn by all children 12 years old and younger on all boats 20 feet or less in length while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a PFD at all times on the water.
- All boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise. Boats can use a lantern or clip-on battery-powered unit to meet this requirement.
- All powered boats must show running lights between sunset and sunrise. Between sunset and sunrise, unpowered boats must carry a white light (visible 360 degrees), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.
- All motorboats are required to carry a sound-producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.
- All motorboats must be registered, regardless of where they launch.

- Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased on the web at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).
- Operating watercraft, including canoes, kayaks and rafts, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. The law is strongly enforced for user safety. For further information on boating regulations, contact the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).

## Paddling safety tips

- Wear your life jacket. Some 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.
- Expect to get wet. Even the best paddlers sometimes capsize or swamp their boats. Bring extra clothing in a waterproof bag.
- Be prepared to swim. If the water looks too hazardous to swim in, don't go paddling.
- If you capsize, hold on to your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating in current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.
- Scout ahead. Know the river. Avoid surprises.
- Be prepared for the weather. Get a forecast before you go. Sudden winds and rain are common and can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant venture.
- Wear wading shoes or tennis shoes with wool, polypropylene, pile or neoprene socks.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Portage (carry) your boat around any section of water about which you feel uncertain.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Keep painter lines (ropes tied to the bow) and any other ropes coiled and secured.
- Never tie a rope to yourself or to another paddler, especially a child.
- Kneel to increase your stability before entering rougher water, like a rapid.
- If you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it. This will usually prevent your capsizing or flooding the boat.
- File a float plan with a reliable person, indicating where you are going and when you will return. Remember to contact the person when you have returned safely.

## Locking through

- On the downriver approach, the dam is difficult to see. Stay alert and keep track of your location (be visible and cognizant of others). Cross over to the correct side of the river where the lock is located well before you arrive, and hug the shoreline. Keep an eye out for the "DANGER DAM" signs and the white and orange pillar buoys (they may be taken out of the river depending on time of year and river flow).

- Let the lock master know you are there by ringing the bell located at the end of the storm wall, calling them on the phone or VHF radio channel 13 or by sounding one long blast from a boat whistle followed by one short blast.

## Additional Resources

### Emergency Contacts

All areas dial 911  
 Pittsburgh River Rescue 412.323.7260  
 U.S. Coast Guard 412.644.5808

### Three Rivers Water Trail Manager

Friends of the Riverfront  
 33 Terminal Way  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
 412.488.0212  
[www.friendsoftheriverfront.org](http://www.friendsoftheriverfront.org)

### Tourist Promotion Agencies

Visit Pittsburgh 412.281.7711  
[www.visitpittsburgh.com](http://www.visitpittsburgh.com)

### River Gauge & River Flow Resources

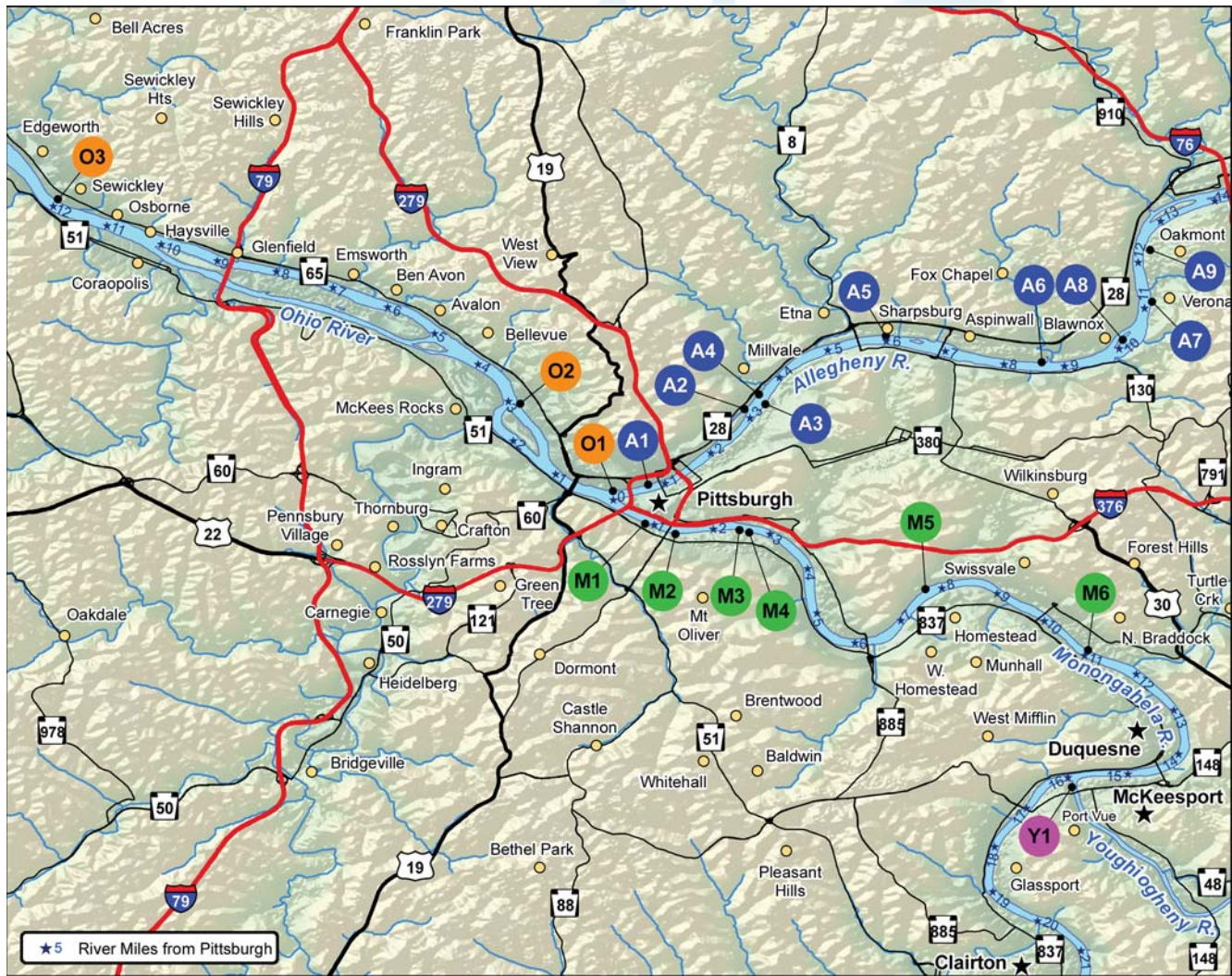
National Weather Service-river forecasts 412.262.5290  
[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
[www.erh.noaa.gov/ohrfc/](http://www.erh.noaa.gov/ohrfc/)

### Locks and Dams

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 412.395.7500  
[www.lrp.usace.army.mil](http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil)  
*Monongahela River*  
 Braddock Lock and Dam #2  
 Phone 412.271.1272  
 11.2 miles from the Point  
*Allegheny River*  
 Highland Park Lock and Dam #2  
 Phone 412.661.2217  
 6.2 miles from the Point  
*Ohio River*  
 Emsworth Locks and Dam  
 Phone 412.766.6213  
 6.2 miles from the Point

### Outfitters & Canoe Liveries

Kayak Pittsburgh 412.969.9090  
[www.kayakpittsburgh.com](http://www.kayakpittsburgh.com)  
 REI 412.488.9410  
[www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)  
 Exkursion Outfitters 412.821.0206  
[www.exkursion.com](http://www.exkursion.com)  
 Three Rivers Rowing 412.231.8772  
[www.threeriversrowing.org](http://www.threeriversrowing.org)  
 Steel City Rowing 412.828.5565  
[www.steelcityrowing.org](http://www.steelcityrowing.org)



map: Mike Bialous

- Approach the lock aware of the following signals: Red means stand clear and do not enter, yellow means approach lock under full control and green means proceed to enter lock directly. The lock master may also signal via air horn: One long blast means enter landward lock, two long blasts mean enter riverward lock, one short blast means leave landward lock, and two short blasts mean leave riverward lock.
- Carry aboard at least 75 feet of mooring line to secure your small craft safely to the lock wall. The lock master reserves the right to deny permission to pass through due to inadequate line. To proceed, give one end of the line to the lock master. He will place it around the mooring hook above. Feed the rope through your hand going up/down with the water level while holding the other end securely.
- After being let up/down, wait for the lock master to give you an OK before proceeding. Leave at a slow and consistent speed staying close yet visible beside the storm wall. Do not stop until you are well away from the pull of the dam's current and other boat traffic. ☐



photo: courtesy of Friends of the Riverfront, Inc.

### Three Rivers Water Trail Accesses

Each Three Rivers Water Trail landing contains directional red paddle signs that orient paddlers from both land and water. Amenities such as ramps, interpretive signs and canoe/kayak racks are also a part of each location. Remember to stow your craft properly before setting out on foot to explore nearby historic sites, parks, restaurants and cultural attractions.