

The Newsletter of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2025 Vol 1 (issue #20)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Hello! Even though the ice and frigid temperatures do not stop the Port of Pittsburgh's waterway operators, we look forward to Spring nevertheless.

On the heels of our recent WCI Capitol Hill Fly-In, we are pleased to feature their President/CEO, Tracy Zea, as our guest for our 3 Rivers, 3 Questions segment. Tracy and his staff have been instrumental in preparing our delegations to meet with legislators and their staffs to keep the inland waterways top of mind in DC to ensure that the funding for navigation upgrades remains on schedule.

Additionally, we are featuring a comprehensive article by the Waterways Journal regarding the removal of the Elizabeth Lock and Dam on the Mon River. Also, we'll report on the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization Summit (Energy Communities IWG), which featured a closing address by Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato, held this past December. And our resident man on all things tech and cybersecurity, Nate Turer, will walk you through the switch from Windows 10 to Windows 11.

On behalf of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, stay safe, stay warm, and Spring is hopefully right around the corner!

Mary Ann Bucci Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

PortPitt Co-hosts Waterways Freight Event

On December 17th the Port of Pittsburgh Commission co-hosted along with the federal government's Energy Communities Interagency Working Group a listening session at the Carnegie Science Center to hear from local stakeholders on how both the PPC and the federal government can help revitalize river communities in the region by promoting economic development and freight diversification.

Former U.S. Senator Bob Casey helped to create this on-going initiative which seeks to leverage our waterways to boost freight transportation, create good-paying jobs and stimulate local economies.



PortPitt's Executive Director May Ann Bucci along with Brian Anderson, the Executive Director for the IWG, welcoming the audience.)



3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS

with *Tracy Zea*



Tracy Zea is the President/CEO of Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI)

1. Tracy, we're grateful to have you kickoff our 2025 newsletter for us! Tell us a little about yourself and your role at the Waterways Council, Inc?

Thank you for including me in the newsletter. I serve as President/CEO of Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI), and am primarily responsible for ensuring that WCI's annual and long-term goals and objectives are being accomplished while we work to promote strong, smart public policy for the Nation's inland waterways transportation system.

Before joining WCI, I served on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) for five years, assisting in legislation related to the Environmental Protection Agency, Tennessee Valley Authority, Corps of Engineers –

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GOOD THINGS FLOW FROM HERE



PortPitt Sponsors WCI Capitol Hill Fly-in

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission is a continuing, proud sponsor of the Waterways Council Inc.'s (WCI) Annual Capitol Hill Fly-In, which occurred on February 5th. PPC staff members Mary Ann Bucci, Scott Harshman and Matt Pavlosky were honored to be joined on the Fly-In by a group of Pittsburgh regional industry stakeholders. In all, two PA delegations made twelve Hill visits and met with congressional offices from Pennsylvania & West Virginia, which included an in-person visit with new US Senator Dave McCormick (PA), to educate and discuss the needs of the inland waterways.



Among WCI's top legislative priorities for the coming year are to secure both FY2025 and FY2026 Energy & Water Development Appropriations for the full amount supportable by annual diesel fuel tax receipts deposited into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF). In addition, the industry opposes any potential tolling, lockage fees, or other onerous charges for commercial users of the waterways system. The teams also had the opportunity to speak to infrastructure needs on each of our three rivers, and provide status updates regarding active projects.

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission wishes to thank the staff of WCI, Inc., specifically, Tracy Zea, Deb Calhoun, Jennifer Armstrong, and Amber McClay for their direction. The PPC also wishes to thank our local companies and individuals who gave their time to join us on Capitol Hill: David Podurgiel, American Consolidated Natural Resources, Gretchen Chamberlain, American Commercial Barge Lines, Rich Kreider, Campbell Transportation Company, Inc., Shane Checkan, Industry Terminal & Salvage, Josh Konesni, Nicholas Enterprises, and Robert McCallister, ACNR and Waterways Association of Pittsburgh's Administrative Director.



3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Tracy Zea (continued)

Civil Works, and I worked on the enactment of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014.

2. Could you give us a brief overview of WCI, and discuss your priorities this year?

WCI is the national trade organization that advocates for a modern, efficient, and reliable inland waterways transportation system. We are the national unifying association of America's numerous inland waterways and port infrastructure interests and stakeholders, and we serve as the definitive spokesperson in Washington, DC, and around the country, for inland waterways lock and dam infrastructure and waterways maintenance. We also work to educate our key audiences (Congress, the White House, federal agencies, the news media) about the critical importance of the inland waterways to shippers, operators, commodities producers, other beneficiaries, job creation and sustainment, the environment and the national economy.

Primarily in 2025, we will work to secure Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and (FY) 2026 Energy and Water Development (E&WD) appropriations for the full amount supportable by annual diesel fuel tax receipts deposited into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF). Also, as a way to increase efficiency and effectiveness for the Corps of Engineers – Civil Works program, we will work in partnership with Congress to ensure that WCI is the lead consulting organization on any changes to the program.

In 2025, and foundationally, we will also work to oppose any potential additional tolling, lockage fees, or other harmful charges for users of the inland waterways system.

3. What message would you like to deliver to stakeholders in the Port of Pittsburgh District regarding your work at WCI and the future of our waterways?

WCI's partnership with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission and all the stakeholders in the Pittsburgh area is key to our work each year. With the lock and infrastructure in Pennsylvania among the oldest in the Nation, we are energized by several Pittsburgh area projects (Lower Mon, Emsworth Deshields, Montgomery) preparing to be completed or to begin construction. We will look forward to celebrating ribbon cuttings for lock openings and to working with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission to fight for additional funding to get the other projects moving forward toward completion in the most timely, efficient way.



Corps Completes Elizabeth Dam Removal On Lower Mon by Shelley Byrne

January 31, 2025

*** This article is reprinted with permission of
The Wateryways Journal. ***

While demolition of a former dam on the Monongahela River is complete, work to remove the locks is ongoing, and upstream low-water issues remain.

A 300-foot navigation channel opened in the former Monongahela Locks and Dam 3 at Elizabeth, Pa., commonly known as Elizabeth Locks and Dam, on December 20, marking a major milestone for the project, said Steve Dine, the Pittsburgh Engineer District's resident engineer for the Lower Mon Project.

"The entire dam is now removed from the bank, the left abutment all the way to the river wall," Dine said.

Machinery and gates will be removed in the next couple of months, with controlled blasting for wall removal beginning in the spring, he said. Contractor Joseph B. Fay Company began work January 13 to mechanically demolish portions of the lock walls to 2 feet above the water level. Excavators and jackhammers are being used before explosives remove the rest.

Explosive blasts are expected to take place once or twice per week in daytime hours only. A complete river closure 1,500 feet upstream and downstream will be instituted from two hours before to two hours after each blast, with notice of blasting broadcast 24 hours beforehand and on the day of the blast, said Steve Fritz, mega project program manager for Pittsburgh Engineer District.

While the middle and river walls of the locks will be removed to below the river bottom, the wall of the lock adjacent to the riverbank, called the land wall, will remain in place, with a stone berm added for stability of the bank, beneficially using concrete rubble from blasting, Dine said. Fritz added that the abutment from the dam on the opposite side of the river will also stay in place.

Removal of the walls is scheduled for completion by the end of the year, although the full project completion date is set for spring 2027.

Project Background

The Lower Monongahela Project included replacing the fixed-crest dam at Locks and Dam 2 at Braddock, Pa., with a gated dam, constructing a new, larger lock at Locks and Dam 4 at Charleroi, Pa., which was renamed the John P. Murtha Locks and Dam, and, finally, removing Locks and Dam 3 at Elizabeth.

These were the three oldest operating navigation facilities in the country, according to the Corps of Engineers, and they experienced the highest volume of commercial traffic on the Monongahela River Navigation System.

The Lower Mon Project was first approved by Congress as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992, with the first construction funding becoming available in 1995.

The Braddock dam was converted into a gated facility in 2004.

A contract that included the middle wall monoliths for the new chamber at Charleroi was awarded in 2015. The chamber is 84 feet wide by 720 feet long and can fit a nine-barge tow of standard barges or six jumbo barges. It was watered in 2023, and officially opened with the facility renamed in 2024.

The contractor breached the dam at Elizabeth, which was built in 1907, the evening of July 10 last year.

Demolishing the dam created one 30.2-mile pool instead of 12.5 and 17.7-mile pools between the locks and dams at Braddock and Charleroi.

Addressing Challenges

Five days after breaching the dam at Elizabeth last summer, on July 15, it was discovered that a miscalculation in lock sill depths presented a potential hazard for commercial vessels. The Corps of Engineers implemented a 7-foot draft restriction through the landside lock, through which traffic was moving, and not the authorized 9-foot draft elsewhere on the river.

When making outflow adjustments to equalize the pools, the Corps discovered a discrepancy in the lock upper sill's clearance height and river levels based on historical data, Alan Nagy, the district's operations project manager for the locks and dams branch, said at the time. He attributed the problem to the Corps' lock system using the North American Vertical Datum of 1929 (NAVD 29) elevation measurements, while the U.S. Geological Survey uses NAVD 88, dating back to 1988 and including different markers for elevation.

As a result, the data shown on the navigation charts and as-built drawings for the 117-year-old lock were 1 foot lower than actual conditions over the upper sill elevation.

While a navigational channel through the breached dam had not been anticipated to open until December, the Pittsburgh Engineer District quickly formulated a plan to open a 100-foot channel to accommodate 9-foot-draft tows more quickly and did so on September 5.

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Corps Completes Elizabeth Dam Removal by Shelley Byrne (continued)

Crews worked a minimum of 14-hour days six days a week to accelerate the channel opening. During critical phases, they worked two shifts, completing 18 to 20 hours of work daily, seven days a week. Dine said challenges included adapting to river conditions and weather conditions. He said close coordination with industry was vital to accomplish breaching the dam and establishing a safe channel, and he added that continues as the Corps of Engineers prepares to remove what remains of the locks.

“Not only do we want to remove it, but we want to remove it safely for all parties involved,” he said.

That work must be done meticulously, he said, especially since most of the structure is underwater.

“You can’t see it with your eyes, so you’re really dependent on divers, and you’re dependent upon surveyors to make sure you’re removing it down to the required elevation.”

Adjusting To Lower Levels Upriver

As a result of river levels that are lower than originally anticipated upstream, the Coast Guard has placed navigational restrictions on tows operating within the pool upstream of the former dam.

While “six packs” of barges in a tow configured two wide by three long are common in this reach of the river, the Coast Guard has restricted those tow configurations to an 8-foot draft, Fritz said. There are no draft restrictions for tows that are only a single barge wide and three barges long.

The reason for the restriction is that, due to the lower water level, the river is narrower in tight bends, especially in upper reaches of the pool, Fritz said. This has created issues where the river was previously wide enough to allow “six pack” tows to navigate around tight bends and pass each other in the straightaways

Fritz said the issues in the river bends were not anticipated either by the Corps of Engineers or the navigation industry prior to breaching the dam.

Mary Ann Bucci, executive director of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, said that immediately after breaching the dam, tows could draft only 7.5 feet, which amounted to a 25 percent cut in cargo size.

In addition to problems in river bends above the former dam, she said there were issues accessing terminals, marinas and

other docks.

Most terminals had permits that only allowed them to dredge 50 feet out from their docks, but the navigation channel was now farther out, Bucci said.

Some of the problem may have resulted from dock owners not realizing the full effects of a drop in the water levels, despite multiple public meetings, Bucci said, but she added that some of the problem was a result of upstream levels settling lower than the Corps had anticipated. An extremely dry summer added to that, she said.

“It’s been that kind of year,” Bucci said. “Everything that could go wrong did.”

Shane Checkan, who serves as general manager of Industry Terminal and Salvage as well as navigation chairman for the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh, said the impacts on industry following the breach had been “severe, not only transiting, but for terminals that were in that pool.”

In places, the water was 1 to 2 feet lower than expected levels in the pool.

“There are a lot of areas on the Mon River where you used to be able to pass where you no longer can,” he said.

Checkan said that while past miscalculations by project developers in the anticipated pool elevations played a role in creating the problems, those mistakes took place years ago, before those overseeing the project were in their current roles.

“The people who are in the positions are doing the best they can,” he said.

Checkan also said Corps officials have been quick to work with the navigation industry.

“I do believe there is a solution, and they’re working as diligently as they possibly can,” he said.

Working Toward Solutions

The Corps has worked with the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh’s navigation committee to determine how best to move forward.

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission was instrumental in obtaining \$4.2 million in grant money from the state of Pennsylvania to help terminals dredge out to the main channel from their

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Corps Completes Elizabeth Dam Removal by Shelley Byrne (continued)

docks, Bucci said.

Now, she added, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission is working to put out a Request for Qualifications for an engineering group to survey the pool to determine how much dredging is needed and what it will cost to restore the channel to its authorized depth and width.

"This is what Port of Pittsburgh is trying to work out for the benefit of industry," she said.

Fritz said that, while shoreside commercial facilities are responsible for the cost of dredging their access channels, the Corps is working to expedite permitting and is providing survey information that will be valuable for facilities preparing for dredging.

"We are doing everything we can within our authorities to help make them whole," he said.

Corps dredging of problem areas within the main channel has helped, too, Checkan said.

"They're really working right now to get rid of some of the high spots," he said.

As the Corps continues with the Lower Mon Project, one more contract is scheduled to be let at John P. Murtha Locks and Dam sometime in 2026. It is not expected to have any effect on navigation, Fritz said.

That contract will replace some of the operating equipment still in place from the 1930s to bring it up to a modern standard, he said. The work will make it possible to continue using the land-side chamber to lock debris out of the upstream lock approach following high-water events, Fritz said. It can also be used to flush ice from the approach during winter weather.

The contract includes placing struts across the land chamber's downstream area and adding a stabilization berm to the downstream guidewall. As expected, the landside chamber at the lock is no longer useable for navigation traffic because of the lower water level, with work to recapitalize the landside chamber deferred until the 2050s. Recapitalization will depend on the economic realities that exist at that time, Fritz said. He noted that traffic on the Mon, which once included 15 to 16 million tons of cargo a year, is now only 8 to 10 million tons a year.

While coal remains the top commodity on the Mon, it has greatly decreased, he said.

Other remaining work includes a five-year monitoring plan of wetlands along the banks of the Mon and real estate actions, including disposing of easements.

Fritz acknowledged that, although industry is saving costs from having lengthy delays locking tows through at Elizabeth, "They're not getting the benefits they were expected to get" with the Lower Mon Project so far because of the water level issues.

However, he added, "Utilizing the rivers is still the number one way to move bulk cargo in terms of economic efficiency, environmental benefits and safety."

Fritz also said it was important to note "huge successes" with the project.

"There's roughly a 30-mile pool between Braddock and J.P. Murtha Lock and Dam without anybody having to lock," he said.

Additionally, he said, because of the new dam constructed at Braddock Locks and Dam, the water surface will not fluctuate as it did before construction.

Fritz said, "All of that provides quite a bit of benefit to the region."



Contractors for the Pittsburgh Engineer District use floating barges to drill, demolish and remove rubble from the former Monongahela River Dam 3 in Elizabeth, Pa., on August 2, 2024, creating a 100-foot channel. (Photo by Michel Sauret/ Pittsburgh Engineer District)

*** We wish to thank The Waterways Journal and Shelley Byrne for their permission to reprint this article. ***

Please also see this story on The Waterways Journal website:
<https://www.waterwaysjournal.net/2025/01/31/corps-completes-elizabeth-dam-removal-on-lower-mon/>



Outgoing Transportation Secretary Buttigieg Makes Final Stop in Pittsburgh



The PPC staff was honored to host US DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg on Thursday, January 9th, for a river infrastructure tour aboard the Gateway Clipper. The PPC staff had a short timeframe to work with the US DOT staff to provide an informational and comprehensive tour for the Secretary.



During the two hour tour, the PPC staff had the opportunity to thank the Secretary for funds received from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which included funding for lock and dam projects in the Pittsburgh Port District, as well as signing off on the M-79 Maritime Highway Designation for the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers spearheaded by the Port of Pittsburgh Commission and the Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization, which will open new avenues to apply for federal funding. In addition, the staff provided updates regarding our CMAQ Marine Diesel program, as well as providing an outlook for the region's future on our rivers.



The Port of Pittsburgh Commission wishes to thank Secretary Buttigieg and his staff, as well as Ted Stilgenbauer and Ryan Snee, of Heartland Fabrication, Josh Konesni of Nicolas Enterprises, who provided an local industry perspective of our rivers, and PPC Board member Dan Alwine. Finally, we wish to thank the Terry Wirginis and Mike Graham of the Gateway Clipper Fleet for their efforts to provide the vessel for the tour.



Windows Goes to 11! by Nate Turer

Nigel from the band Spinal Tap would love the new version of Windows, because “it goes to 11.” Well, a new year is a time of beginnings and ends, so today we’ll talk about those that are happening in the wonderful digital world of computers. The overwhelming majority of companies in the country use Microsoft’s Windows operating system for their workstations, and there are big changes coming. October 14th 2025 marks the end of support for Windows 10, so through the year everyone should be planning to migrate to Windows 11, and I will discuss what this means today.

Windows 7, 10, Vista, XP, DOS? Computers as we normally think of them use an operating system which is the “foundation” everything else we use them for is built upon. The three largest cuts of the OS pie are Windows from Microsoft, Mac OS from Apple, and Linux from Linus Torvald and the Linux Foundation. Most office computers run windows. Cell phones, tablets, servers, and industrial machines will generally use a different operating system than your workstation or laptop. Windows 10, released in 2014, has been the longest running version, and likely is what many of your own and your companies’ computers are running. Microsoft releases service packs and security updates for these periodically, and your computer will typically handle updating itself without much interaction from you. Windows 11 will require a few steps from you for your personal computer, and for your company a few more steps.

On your personal computer, it’s vitally important to back up your data before updating in case there is an issue in the process. To initiate the update, you’ll need to go to your settings, then updates, and then follow the prompts from there. The

update should be available for you if your computer is eligible. ([Click here to download the complete technical discussion](#) of how to determine if a computer is eligible).

For your company’s devices if you are using Microsoft Endpoint Manager you will want to confirm the readiness of your organization by going to the “work from anywhere” reporting tool and check under the Windows tab. This will show you what computers are eligible for the update. If everything looks good you can set an update policy through the “Feature Update to Deploy” menu by selecting windows 11. It is my recommendation to use a gradual rollout option in the update rings settings. Group your users into an A group, B group, and C group or more if needed. Give each group a block of time for gradual rollout, which will help spread out use of bandwidth as well as IT service calls in the event of an issue. Updating your whole office at once runs a risk of a slowdown due to bandwidth usage, or what should have been a minor issuing becoming a critical one. Taking backups of files or even disc or system images of critical workstations can help ensure your recovery options if there is a major issue during update.

The last supported date of Windows 10 will be October 14th 2025. Computers running Windows 10 past this day will still work; they will turn on; and they can still be used. However, they will not receive further patches and security updates. This means that the more time that passes the more at-risk these systems will be. If your organization has a cyber security plan, then it is likely that maintaining an up-to-date OS is part of it. For a business user, a long out-of-date OS could be considered an unacceptable security flaw, so it is important to begin the process of updating as soon as possible to allow yourself plenty of time to prepare and address issues before that day is upon you.

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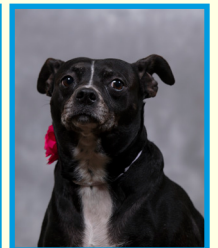
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