



The Ohio River Pool 2

WATERTRAILS



Community Dialogue - Ohio Watertrail

Group 1

Facilitators: Denys Candy and Lareese Hall

Brian Carroll
 Tim Collins – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Charles Cooper – Citizens Advocate
 Zee Fitti – Citizens Advocate
 J.D. Fogarty – Citizens Advocate
 Mike Goncar – Citizens Advocate
 Noel Hefele – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Carlie Hosnedl – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Jim Joyce – Citizens Advocate
 Priya Krishna – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Grace Keller – Citizens Advocate
 Jon Kline – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Ken LaSota – Citizens Advocate
 Isis Lawson – Citizens Advocate
 Sherman Lieberman – Citizens Advocate
 Shirley Lieberman – Citizens Advocate
 James McCarville – Port of Pittsburgh Commission
 Doug McGregor – Fort Pitt Museum
 Stephanie Norsted – Citizens Advocate
 John Oduroo – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Joel Perkovich – Citizens Advocate
 Henry Prellwitz – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Rachel Puda – Citizens Advocate
 Danielle Robinson – Citizens Advocate
 AJ Schwartz – Environmental Planning & Design
 John Stephen – Friends of the Riverfront FRF
 Conner Swaiter – Citizens Advocate
 Dennis Tubbs – PA Fish and Boat Commission
 Dick Wilford – Citizens Advocate
 George Wolfson – Citizen Advocate
 Lil Wolfson – Citizens Advocate
 Lorrie Zanetti – Citizens Advocate

Denys Candy – Community Partners Institute



The Price of Coexistence

At the south eastern tip of Neville Island, driving toward the McKees Rocks Bridge, one is confronted with a surreal slice of the industrial and natural present of Pittsburgh. A passenger in a car, looking out the side window in Springtime, sees the channel of the Ohio River that runs along the southern edge of the island. Lush green foliage

drips over the banks down to the water, allowing sporadic glimpses of the upcoming bridge. The scene invites a little daydreaming. The driver of the same car, on the other hand,

sees a perpetual jet of flame thrust from a high steel tube and smoke that chokes the surrounding sky. They dominate an ugly landscape of meandering pipes covering acres of ground. There can be nothing emanating from these pipes that supports human health. It's a chemical plant, probably, with an oil storage facility right next door. Side by side on the island, people work, live, and recreate. Some use the river for boating or fishing while heavy industry asserts itself with barges, oil tanks, and plumes of putrid smoke. At the same time, nature slowly replenishes itself. There are twenty-one species of fish in these waters, many more than in the heaviest days of Pittsburgh's industrial activity. All of the constraints of industry sit side by side with the opportunities for more people to relate to the river in new ways and support its health and well being along with their own.

The perspective upriver also reflects coexistence. From the middle of the Ohio, one sees green, sloping hills and numerous points of access from the river onto the banks. –Some are soft edges, allowing for wading ankle deep and walking up to the bank. In other places, docks, marinas, and steps have been placed to allow two way traffic of people in and out of the water. Of course, elsewhere, there are steep walls, difficult to traverse. It does not seem overly complicated to get from the water on to the banks of the river, to dry land.

Getting from the land to the water, on the other hand, seems a lot more complicated. Many of the nice steps, ramps, and marinas are on private land. A single canoeist or walker might easily be offered the courtesy of access, but a large group would presumably be a different matter. In the lushness of Spring, it is not immediately evident from the water that Route 65, a major highway, sits above and parallel to the river. Trains appearing through the trees betray the presence of a busy railroad. It quickly becomes apparent that detailed local knowledge or plenty of time to explore are prerequisites for getting from the land to the water's edge.

The exploration of opportunities and constraints, both natural and built, was undertaken by a diverse group of area residents and professionals. 3R2N, through these events, reminds us of the importance of having experiences on the river. For most of us, a boat ride on the Ohio River was a rare or first-time experience. Someone said,

"I find it a shame that a lot of people have never been on the river and they have lived around them there whole lives.... there is so much to see and do out there."

~Group 1

Opportunities and Constraints

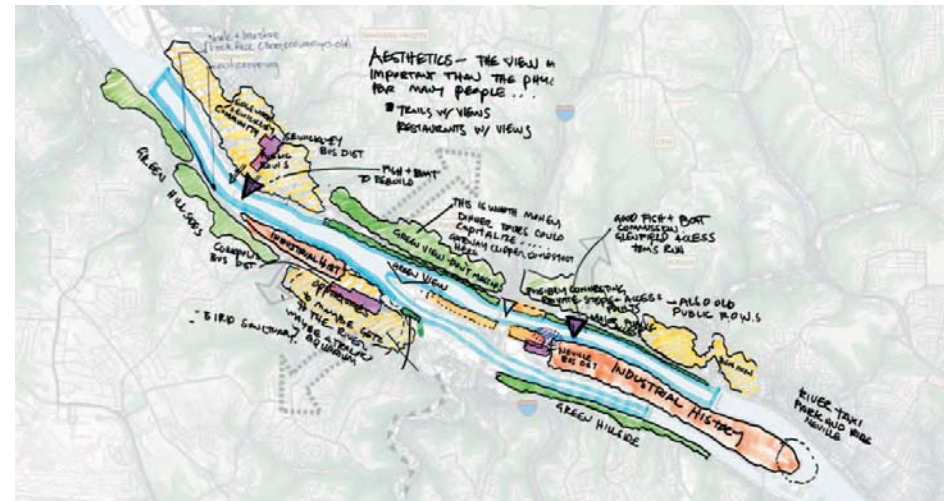
Natural opportunities abound. There were many points of

easy access noted, and in the back channel, south of the island, several beach like areas were spotted, along with men in waders fishing. Swimming is possible but problematic. Several people wanted to know about swimming, including Zac, a bicycle guy who lives in the Hill District. He noted that, *"people told me not to swim."* Tim Collins, from 3R2N, explained that Combined Sewer Overflow pipes (CSO's) discharge raw sewage into the river after rainstorms. Generally the rivers are swim-able three days after a rain storm. *"If the CSO flags are flying you don't want to be in the water,"* someone said, *"check at your nearest local marina or boat launch."* Sewer overflows seem to be happening throughout a large part of recent summers.

Rachel Puda asked whether there was water quality information available about the streams.

"I always thought they were cleaner than the rivers. I wouldn't go to the river everyday but I always go into the creeks."

Fishing is another natural opportunity that is often pursued along the creeks and at their mouths where they empty into the main stem rivers. Some of the creeks are even stocked with fish. However, water quality is not always good on the streams. 3R2N reports provide some initial information about streams that deserve more scrutiny. Hays Run, Kilbuck, and McCabe Run, all draining into this pool—need further study.



Boat Access

"If you don't own a boat and want access to the river, how do you go about establishing that? I didn't see any places where swimming and access occurred except at boat ramps"
 ~Doris Goncar

Dick Wolford sees access as a big challenge.

"The railroad and the highway...you have that trail right on the river but no way to get to the river. Turning old railroads into bike trails is a start."

Joel Perkovich suggested a good goal for this pool might be three or four access points along a six mile stretch of river. John Stephen explained that a lot of older communities have roads that were already laid out to the river before industry took over. These public rights of way still exist. The issue is to figure out where they are. Lori Goncar asked about who would pay for and maintain access to the river through parks, for example. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission will build public ramps, as long as site access is available.

Mickey Bannon raised other issues,

"If you wanted to do something to create access points, where would you go to get help. How would you get groups to cooperate?"

Friends of the Riverfront are the primary public trail and river access advocate in the region with expertise in consensus planning, final design, and construction of both trails and river access points.

Other Access

In addition to being able to be by the water and look at it, opportunities to touch the water and be on it physically were emphasized. Ken LaSota pointed out that the number of people in the region without boats greatly exceeds the number of boat owners.

“We need to promote the aesthetics,” he stated, “people need to be able to get out on the river, to touch it as well as just look at the river to enjoy it. Having many opportunities for all sorts of passive and active enjoyment could get tens of thousands of people involved.”

Estel Goncar concurred by saying, *“We don’t want to change the look of the natural banks so we should put in more access in places that already have existing development.”*

Marking the existing access with signs and guide maps would help too. Lori noted that *“I don’t feel like I could just come down here and approach the river. I’m not from Neville Island. If there was a sign I might feel more comfortable.”*

AJ Schwartz saw some of the key opportunities on the back channel side of the island. He spoke of *“undeveloped green space that looks green and pristine. The slopes are not as steep as in other places. You could walk into town from here.”* Ideal opportunities exist for access to restaurants and businesses close to the river.

Recreation

Estel has traveled to other cities that have capitalized on their water as tourist attractions. She wondered,

“Why not develop areas other than the Point, perhaps at Coraopolis. Why not have natural activities for kids, bird sanctuaries, and the like?”

George Wolfson told us of having lunch at Station Square. *“It was so enjoyable just to watch the boats go by.”*

Zak was directed to a *“pretty awesome little beach; huge for an urban beach. With a little energy you could have a scenic overlook, beach, boat ramp and all.”*

History

History represents another opportunity just as it does along the Allegheny and Monongahela. Doug McGregor’s interest lies in the creation of historical destination points. *“Fans of history are fans of the environment,”* he said, so attracting them would be good for everyone.

“We have a historic section of the river here. We can promote that through signs, brochures, maps and so on. Workshops and education on who we were as a people could further enhance the experience. There are many benefits to accentuating the history.”

Many opportunities seem to exist as the flip side of the constraints.

Conclusions

The area around Neville Island is not currently a recreational destination. There is a lot of industrial activity. Huge barges make their way from dam to dam. Fleet areas give barge owning companies priority along certain banks, irrespective of who owns the adjacent land. Barges have been abandoned in some areas and are being built in others. A slipway at the Dravo Works was once used for building Navy minesweepers during World War II. It has been taken over by nature! Trees once again flourish and have taken the area back. This is a reminder that given a little time left alone, nature will tend toward its own health.

Whereas industry and people do appear to coexist along the Ohio River and around Neville Island, that does not mean that industrial and communal interests have equal power. The question arises: To re-capture the river and its surroundings for the health of both people and nature, what needs to happen? Is industrial pollution effecting the health of people and nature? What does coexistence mean for the coming decades and what is its real price? The people at the 3R2N river dialogues have moved us further along a path that creates opportunities for gains on all sides.

Lareese Hall – Riverlife Task Force



“The trees were my favorite part of being on the boat.”
–Connor (small child)

It is all basic, really, what we like and dislike. Life becomes an exercise in explaining and expanding on these basic things. They become constraints or opportunities when a child, like Connor, just thinks, *“I like the trees.”*

It was a low energy kind of grey day that at first seemed unfortunate – choppy water, rain, and an open pontoon on the Ohio River for 1 and ½ hours with a group of strangers connected by their youth. As we made our way over to the

boats, I knew that my objective was not just to talk but to listen and to give the participants in my group the chance to experience the river however they wanted. “Youth” for many of us is a state of mind. We were all young once, it is not an exclusive event; it happens to all of us. So how do you engage “youth” and pull out nuggets of, not just truth (which they, youth, are famous for) but also instill, revive or tap into a deeper connection with the rivers?

We were a motley bunch. Some of our participants slept through much of the boat ride, one brought his three-legged dog on the journey (she napped next to him). One young woman informed me, just as we pulled away from shore, that she gets violently ill on boats. We focused on what we could see, what we knew, and on anything that struck us as interesting—for whatever reason. To take Isis Lawson’s mind off of her sea sickness, we designated her group photographer. We used our maps to place ourselves on our journey. The photographs provided us with conversation pieces, things to look at in the moments of thinking. I hoped we could use these photographs to build on our observations and pull out the opportunities (and constraints) of recreation along this particular section of the Ohio River.

The curious nature of our group was even more evident as we were folded into another group on shore. I would say that the youth group was enlivened by the “not youth” in the newly formed group; they took opportunities to disagree, concur, and listen. Mostly, the older folks listened.

Isis had a lot to say – with ideas about connections to the river from abandoned train tracks and ideas about how to address steep grade issues along the shore.

“[I have] never been on the river...it was nice, but [there were] too many industrial plants and things along the edges that took away from the beauty of the scenery and the houses.”
And, *“Is there a way we could at least change it so we could put a café or a lookout station [on the Ohio River]?”*

The well rested participants – Zak and Lofco – talked about their experiences the night before when they rode their bikes out to Neville Island and slept on a beach. Zak said,

“I found a place last night – it’s a pretty awesome little beach right behind us. You have to cross the tracks to get there and the beach is huge as far as urban beaches go. With a little energy, you could have a scenic overlook, beach, boat ramp, and all...”

Zak and Lofco reminded me of the pure adventure of riding your bike through an unknown place and telling people about it the next day. There is a certain honesty in that. It would have been interesting, in retrospect, to see what experiences

other people have had with urban beaches and with the rivers at night, in general.

Our group was overpowered by an older gentleman with ideas, a loud voice, and an inability at times to realize there was a group discussion taking place. The “youth” didn’t seem fazed by him. And I found some relief in hearing his anger about the state of the environment; a pure emotion (regardless of its lack of focus at times) he talked a lot about “youth”—his own, his granddaughter’s, and the future he dreamed for her.

The dialogue flowed well. There was a good deal of technical talk about pathogens, water quality, and access issues. People asked about what was being done and what could be done. Estel Goncar talked about the potential for water related amenities along the rivers—aquariums, nature trails. The conversation was general and moved from river to river, occasionally winding its way back to the Ohio River. My group dispersed as quietly and oddly as it came together.



Group 2

Facilitators: Terry Baltimore and Karl Thomas

Lemone Adler – Citizens Advocate
 Mary Bates – Citizen Participant
 Thomas Baxter – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Gal Bhagwanani – Citizens Advocate
 Dru Bhagwanani – Citizens Advocate
 Linda Binstock – Citizens Advocate
 Joan Blaustein – 3 Rivers Wet Weather
 Karen Boyle – Citizens Advocate
 Rose Boyle – Citizens Advocate
 Brian Connelly – Carnegie Mellon University
 Albert Ejzak – Citizens Advocate
 Doris Goncar – Citizens Advocate
 Estel Goncar – Citizens Advocate
 Lori Goncar – Citizens Advocate
 Reiko Goto – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Hannah E. Hardy – PA Environmental Council
 Robin Hewlett – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Elizabeth Jones – Robert Morris University
 Jeffrey Jordan – Pittsburgh Voyager
 Dina Klavon – Klavon Design Associates
 Kathleen Knauer – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Mike Koryak – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Jenny Ladd – Citizens Advocate
 Mary Lou Lewellyn – Citizens Advocate
 MiMi McCormick – Citizens Advocate
 Geri Morgan – Citizens Advocate
 John Murphy – Citizens Advocate
 Kathy Murphy – Citizens Advocate
 Paulte Mursch – Citizens Advocate
 Marge Myers – Carnegie Mellon University
 Mary Protz-Lawson – Citizens Advocate
 Siobhn Rigg – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Dan Sentz – Pittsburgh City Planning
 Helen Short – PA Environmental Protection
 Linda Stafford – 3 Rivers 2nd Nature
 Janet Thorne – Hill House
 Bill Weselman – Citizens Advocate
 Carolyn Yagle – Environmental Planning & Design

Hannah E. Hardy – PA Environmental Council

Group 2 settled on the outdoor patio area of the Neville Island Sports Center after returning from their boat trip. The patio provided great views of the Ohio River and allowed for interaction with passing boats, including a passing barge that was still at first, then quietly moved down the river to points unknown.

The groups covered many topics. We were very fortunate to have several active river community members participating. Among the members of this group were: a local marina owner, the coach of a local rowing team, several local historians, representatives from a local land trust, concerned citizens, several people who currently live right along the river banks, and others who were just interested in getting out on the river. Following are some of the thoughts that came from this group.

Natural Opportunities & Constraints

There is a great opportunity on Montour Run, a beautiful stream, stocked for trout fishing, that leads into the back channel of Neville Island. There is one trail running along the water. Another comes through the Montour Run Valley, but the trail head stops 400-500 feet above the river. The two trails do not connect. Mike Koryak said that it should be a priority to connect the river to the Montour trail, two valuable natural assets. The Montour Trail is part of a much larger trail system that will one day connect to Washington, D.C.

Mary Bates said that Tom's Run has excellent water quality. The old Dixmont Hospital is located right near Tom's Run. There are plans for a Wal-Mart at this location. This development would jeopardize the environmental quality of this site and the stream itself.

"Out on the boat, it seemed to me to be very important... that we need to learn to combine economic development with recreation and nature preservation concerns. None of this can stand alone. It's easy to get angry at development that doesn't support conservation, but the question is how can one support the other?"

~Mary Protz Lawson

Janet Thorne described some environmentally sensitive land that is currently for sale and in need of conservation. This started a group discussion about the need to conserve the sensitive pieces of land that are located along the river.

"I'm in a state of shock because it is so beautiful and I just can't get to it. If the rail lines get in the way, couldn't we have some kind of railroad to get to this area? There's no public access, where can we get down to the river? We're in a sporting facility right now, how do you have a sporting facility right on the river with out access to the river and water sports?"

~Linda Binstock

Geri Morgan, a local marina owner, indicated that some

private marinas are open for public use. There was discussion about other areas that could be developed for river access. These present opportunities can address the constraint of a lack of river access in this pool.

Industrial Artifacts

"The industrial artifacts should be valued—they are part of the fun of looking at what is happening along the river. These artifacts have value as well as the natural landscape. I don't think they should be entirely removed."

~Marge Myers

The industrial artifacts along the river banks present a real opportunity to tell the story of the working river. Users of the river today should know about the industrial history of the Ohio River. The participants listed the following areas of industrial interest for preservation and interpretive consideration:

- Barge skids
- Barges tied along the river
- The factory with the smokestack—the old Dixmont facility
- Shipyard and dry dock
- Paddle wheel boat docked where someone lives
- Pilot's house near the sand and gravel facility (Coraopolis)

Historical Sites

The group broadened its discussion of industrial artifacts to talk more generally about the historical sites along the river. What are the stories of this pool of the Ohio River that need to be told? The group was fortunate to have several people participating who have lived along the river for many years. Dina Klavon from Sewickley talked about the old wooden train station that is in her community. Trains used to run along SR 65, but at some point they were moved down to the river

level and the station was moved as well. Janet Thorne spoke of a railroad station in Coraopolis. There has been some movement to acquire and preserve this particular station.

Someone mentioned a story that she heard about the sunken docks from the Pittsburgh Boat Club. In the 1950s someone tried to float the docks from beneath the Seventh Street Bridge in Pittsburgh. The docks sunk, across from Neville Island where they remain today. Charlie, from Coraopolis, told a story about Fort Vance in Coraopolis. There is nothing remaining of this structure. Carolyn Yagle mentioned that this entire area used to be filled with agriculture—that story needs to be told.

Community Issues

Terry Baltimore asked the group to think about the things that impact community users. There was a lot of discussion about the places where there is private property ownership along the rivers. This impacts public use.

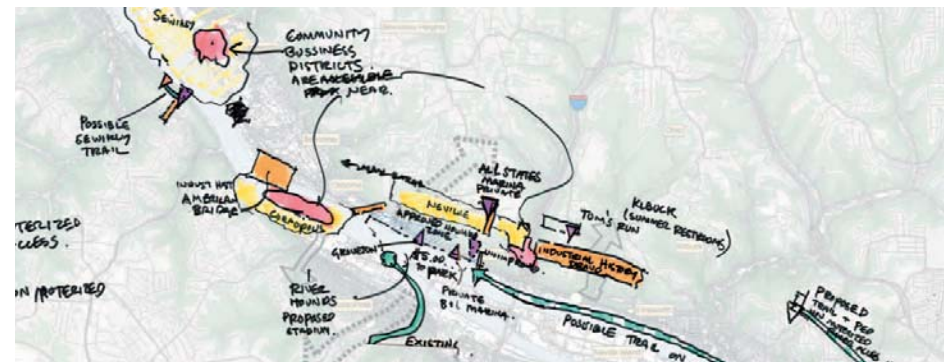
"Eight or nine years ago Sewickley wanted to put a community area (a park) by one of the access points on the bridge. There was a lot of support in Sewickley, but the people along Chadwick Street had a lot of opposition. People had a lot of fear of what would happen based on misinformation. They feared beer drinking, increased parking, and partying."

~Liz Jones

"Education is important; make sure people who will be affected don't get their information through rumors."

~Liz Jones

Some people in the group talked about the private property along the river as an obstacle to increased public use. In the example listed above, the property owners didn't even own the site for the community area, but their fear and misinformation was enough to alter the plans for increased access to the river.



Based on this discussion about public/private property the group talked a lot about the need for adequate education and information about projects. Many times misinformation and fears can be quelled through education. Reiko Goto asked what kind of education is needed. Dina talked about the need for more regional planning in this area. Each individual municipality is doing their own planning separately. This can be a constraint. The group talked about the need for more regional planning. This could be a solution to some of the problems facing river development in this pool.

Gender and the Rivers

The group shifted to a discussion of gender and the rivers. Tim Collins posed the question, *“Rivers are primarily owned and planned by men. Are access and safety issues different for women?”*

The women in the group generally experience this area of the Ohio River as unisex without noting any specific issues that are gender specific. Both Liz (a rowing coach) and Geri (a marina operator) indicated that this pool is pretty family friendly. Geri is seeing an increase in the numbers of women who are on boats and owning boats. She said that many kids are getting more “water wise.” Liz said that sometimes the Pittsburgh Pool is less family friendly, with a lot of partying and larger pleasure boats. She has experienced “cat calling” from male boaters in the Pittsburgh Pool, but not so much in this stretch of the Ohio River.

“I don’t want to be out there alone—I would not want to do it on my own, but with groups, or in an organized way. I don’t know if that’s a gender thing. Could be my background —not having the history or experience with canoeing or something, but lighting, parking, restrooms promote groups activity.”
~Marge Myers

Terri Baltimore – Hill House



The river is a living entity, a complex ecosystem that invites closer inspection. It almost demands interaction. It begs to be touched. It encourages you to remember that it is the source of life. It demands an intimate relationship from the human beings who live near it, use it, ignore it, abuse it, and frolic in it.

Despite the day, the dreary skies, and eventual downpours, a group of curious and knowledgeable folks gathered to take part in the Ohio River Water Trail Dialogue. Our dialogue was with each other, and, at times, with the river itself.

The Neville Island Sports Center was the perfect venue for starting and ending the day. Before the formal overview of the work of 3R2N, participants were wandering around the large meeting room. Looking at the maps and photographs pinned to the wall. Leafing through the publications that highlighted the two previous River Dialogues. Making introductions and sipping hot drinks. Pressing their faces to the large windows. Staring in awe at the Ohio River. The river was mesmerizing. The flow. The rain. The rhythm. The green of the plant life along the banks.

Once we received our charge, the members of our group wandered through the parking lot, past the baseball field, and down a makeshift walk way to St. Corpen Beach.

“I didn’t know there was a beach in Pittsburgh!” exclaimed Grace Kellers. A beach along the Ohio was just one of many revelations of the day. We tramped through the sand, passed by the potted palm trees, and boarded the boat. On the boat, some members of the group gathered around a table and once again made introductions. Others walked around, looking for comfortable seats from which to view the river. When the boat ride ended, we returned to the Neville Island Sports Complex. Once again, the call of the river was too strong to resist. The group reassembled on the balcony of the complex. What follows are their observations.

Access - Opportunities and Challenges

“I’m in a state of shock because it (the river) is so beautiful and I can’t get to it...Couldn’t we have some kind of railroad to get to this area for picnic grounds? There is no public facility where we can get down to the river.”
~Linda Binstock

Linda’s words elegantly conveyed the challenges of the day. Concerns about access were echoed by Grace Keller. She had an arduous journey just getting to the venue from her Pittsburgh neighborhood,

“I biked here from the Hill District. I had to bike down the shoulder of the interstate for part of it and down West Carson (Street.) We had to consider walking along the drainage ditch, along the railroad, because it seemed safer and quicker.”

Based on her experience, Grace suggested, *“[a] light rail or bike trail or ferry service could allow people from the city to come out and could bring recreation money into the communities along the rivers.”*

Carolyn Yagle added, *“The Fish and Boat Commission’s River access at Kilbuck (has) a public launch (that) is a great facility, but no one knows about it. Signage at street level would help. We should think beyond just the water’s edge.”*

Natural Opportunities

During the discussion, many participants shared the variety of natural opportunities available in the Ohio River pool. Mary Lawson reported that, *“Tom’s Run has excellent water quality.”*

Mike Koryak talked about the Montour Trail and the opportunities it presents. *“There is a beautiful trail along Montour Run. The water has improved dramatically...it has improved for trout fishing. The trail head stops 400 – 500 feet above the river... two wonderful assets that could complement each other that currently don’t connect.”*

Mary Lawson remarked that a connection *“could be a really nice trip for (a) weekend, even a day trip... (to) hike or bike and then get boated back around a loop.”*

Liz Jones added that on the *“northwest side of Glenfield, there’s a park.”*

Paula said, *“There is a community park on the end –(at) Hayesville...(but you) can’t get to the river because it is all fenced off.”*

Janet Thorne remarked, *“On Neville Island all the industrial sites, are there any sites along there for sale that we should be looking at? Is there maybe potential access to water? Although (it) might upset people... because this land has always been industrial.”*

Grace Keller was directed to *“a path that goes down by an abandoned gas station where there is a little fire circle.”* A local police officer helped her find it. How many other “local” treasures exist? Will the character of those places change if they become well-known spots?

Natural Challenges

The group saw a number of real and potential opportunities. But, they also listed the various obstacles to utilizing the natural assets. Because of the industrial heritage of the area, brownfields and their legacy pollutants are still a very real and very expensive obstacles.

Karl noted that *“Environmental Planning and Design did a master plan on Neville Island that includes assessment*



of industrial properties and possibilities for residential / recreational opportunities.” Carolyn worked on that plan and she agreed, adding, *“There are clean up needs there, that’s a constraint.”*

Private Ownership was identified as a major problem. How can property owners and the public at large share the same space, especially since the property owners are sometimes in the middle between the river and those who wish to have access to the river. Someone asked,

“Is there any precedent or requirement that private owners provide for public access?”

And Karl clarified the issues, *“What does it mean to have a trail easements and public access along private property?”* He added, *“(Proposed) fifty foot setback...may not address the discomfort of private owners who have great houses, privacy, their own docks they don’t want open(ed) up. How do we deal with the issue of private ownership...It’s an American condition. Privacy is ingrained – that’s a constraint.”*

Linda Stafford added, *“The state of Oregon owns the seashore that’s a model. (In) England—even if it’s your own farm you have to keep a trail open for walkers.”* Perhaps there are other communities that have explored ways to mediate

the issue of public use of private spaces. Currently, each municipality sets the policies regarding access even on private development.

One of the other major barriers is the railroad tracks and the trains that pass through the valley. As Liz shared on the boat, “the trains move through the area at high rates of speed.”

Economic Opportunities and Challenges

The 10 year old Montour Trail offers a unique opportunity. According to Mary Lawson, a connection between the trail and the river

“could really be a nice trip for (a) weekend, even a day trip. (You) could hike or bike and then get boated back around a loop.”

Participants noted that large scale developments, such as the proposed Wal-Mart, may have a negative impact on the area. It is important that such economic developments be viewed holistically. What does it mean to the economic well-being of the area? What does it mean to the ecology of the area? Speculation about development was raised, too. Cooper asked, “On the Corao (polis) side a guy wants to put riverboat gambling under the Coraopolis-Neville Island Bridge. Has anyone heard anything about that?”

Brownfields, property owners, the industrial history, and current industrial businesses are on-going challenges to developing a waterfront that is aesthetically pleasing and available to the broadest range of potential users.

Historical Opportunities

The historic opportunities prompted a slew of ideas. Karl Thomas said,

“Where (Route) 70 goes over Neville Island there’s an opportunity for access. Sewickley, Neville Island and Coraopolis are kind of hubs for (the) built/historical opportunities.” He also suggested historic tours.

Charles Cooper suggested, “Fort Vance (In Coraopolis) there’s no structure...there are old pictures. There was a ferry crossing down from the Sewickley Bridge... There’s a huge amount of old photographs and paintings.”

Dina contributed that, “Washington did cross here. There used to be Walnut and Crystal Beach(es); there was an amusement park too!”

Cooper recommended, “It would be interesting to compile pictures along the river—you could compile enough to have a probable picture of what it looked like at different times. Having the pictures in the actual space, not just on the web is important. In my neighborhood we have screen printed images of the neighborhood from 50 years ago and gave them out.”

“It builds a lot of pride,” concurred Grace Keller, who also mentioned, “This island used to be a bread basket, all agriculture. Telling that story would be great.”

Community Planning

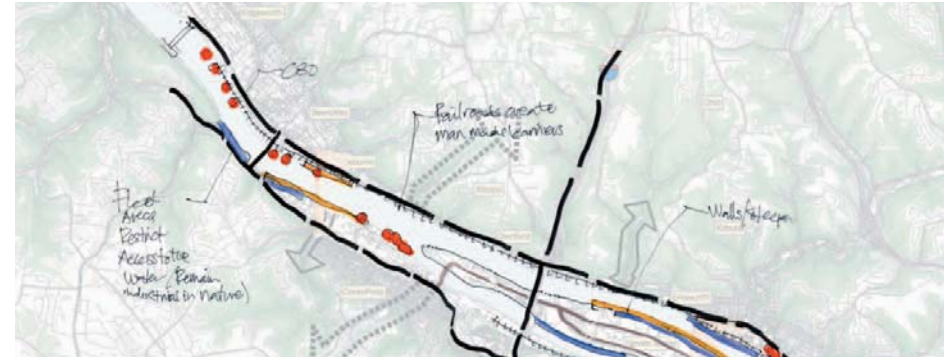
The issue of community impacts on projects was discussed. What happens when a project is proposed and the community opposes it? Our group played out a recent experience.

Liz Jones related that, “Eight or nine years ago, Sewickley wanted to put a community area by one of the access points by the bridge... there was a lot of support in Sewickley. But people along Chadwick Street had a lot of opposition. People had a lot of fear of what would happen based on misinformation. They feared beer drinking. Increased parking. Partying.”

Dina Klavon responded, “I planned that project. They were opposed because they thought it would bring partying and parking issues. But we had a master plan that accounted for parking. They were just nervous. The client pulled out because they didn’t want to be where they weren’t wanted.”

What could have made the outcome different for this project? And what kinds of things should planners and community folks keep in mind as new proposals are being put together? Dina thought, “pro-active education. Introduce who you are before the project starts.” Additionally, time should be spent with groups that may be affected and probably positively affected, but that dialogue should happen at the time the project is still conceptual. Education is important. Ensure that sure people who will be affected don’t get misinformation.

Reiko Goto of 3 Rivers 2nd Nature pointed out that educating children may be a chance to influence the future. “School education has changed a lot—children are learning about place based watersheds, not just how to describe the water cycle. It’s a great opportunity, for instance, to teach about the Montour Run area for school children who are learning about these things...”



Regional Issues

One of the issues highlighted throughout the day was the lack of a cohesive, county-wide river front plan. As was noted by Dina Klavon, “There is no wider planning or regional planning (effort.) Each municipality (and) township is doing their thing separately”

Regional Solutions

What are the possible solutions to the disjointed river front efforts? Karl suggested planning across municipalities. “Storm water and wet weather planning might be something to bring communities together, although this outside of the storm drain planning area”

Jenny Ladd said, “(An) engineer for TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) came to Carnegie Mellon University to speak ...the reason they were showcased as successful (was) because they are one unit. All

owners, all regulations, and enforcement have to go through one authority. By being a unified group all (of the) needs get balanced—recreation vs. power generation all along the entire watershed, not fragment to fragment.”

Carolyn Yagle talked about the “741+ Discussion Group Sewickley Valley Impact Study. Eleven communities get together and address issues of both active and passive connections of parks and systems (in) all 11 communities since 2002.”

“The Communities recognize that they have a type of economic advantage to sharing facilities and services...(They) started to also realize that they have physical connections—that parks are something they could all think about together from a maintenance perspective—then arrived at (the) idea that they could connect the parks so users could get to (the) river.”



"A county-wide concept plan will be the culmination of 3R2N's work. Hopefully action items will be picked out. It doesn't set design guidelines, but it will guide conservation plans."

"Tim Collins shared that the 3R2N has worked on a four year study. The study provides a good baseline on water quality in all three rivers and the streams. We know about the plants at the river's edge. This is the only organization that has actively and monitored the waterways with publicly available data. All of this is leading to the question of "what does nature mean in (a) post-industrial environment?"

I asked the group, "What happens at the end of this process? How do we move forward? How do we keep the data current? How do you make this information accessible and humanize it? All of this large scale research needs to have a way that people can have something to wrap their heads, hearts and hands around on a local level, to feel that they are involved."

Grace answered, "People should be initiating and taking leadership (roles in this process)...Getting input doesn't solve that problem. Local leadership and instigation are critical."

Communities have to understand the information so it may have to be re-written to become accessible to the public at large. Planners and others need to be patient and committed to taking the time and interest in helping citizens understand the data , helping to apply the information to their environments.

Gender Issues

The group was charged with addressing the issues that women faced when using the river. Their responses are listed below:

Geri Morgan noted that over the past few years she has seen "more women are on boats and owning boats." And she observed that "kids are getting water wise."

As Reiko Goto noted, "Having other women, like Geri, a marina owner, around makes it more comfortable" for other women who use the river.

Mary Bates wanted to see more amenities such as a restaurant and places along the river front space for picnics.

Water Level

The water level was another topic of interest for this group. With the rains this past summer, the river was often flooding or receding. Carolyn shared that the Pittsburgh pool is regulated so that it stays level. The results of that are felt in the Ohio. "This area gets the flooding."

Geri Morgan said, "We get the trash" from downstream.

Liz Jones added, "Anything you do up here, you should check on how the water fluctuates ...The water has been too fast for sculls. Some of the areas we saw along the (river) (where there were) green grass and picnic tables—one month ago were well under water."

Jenny Ladd noted that this situation occurred because of the fragmentation of the river management. "The Corps of Engineers does manage everything along the way to maintain navigable depths—maybe this needs refining."

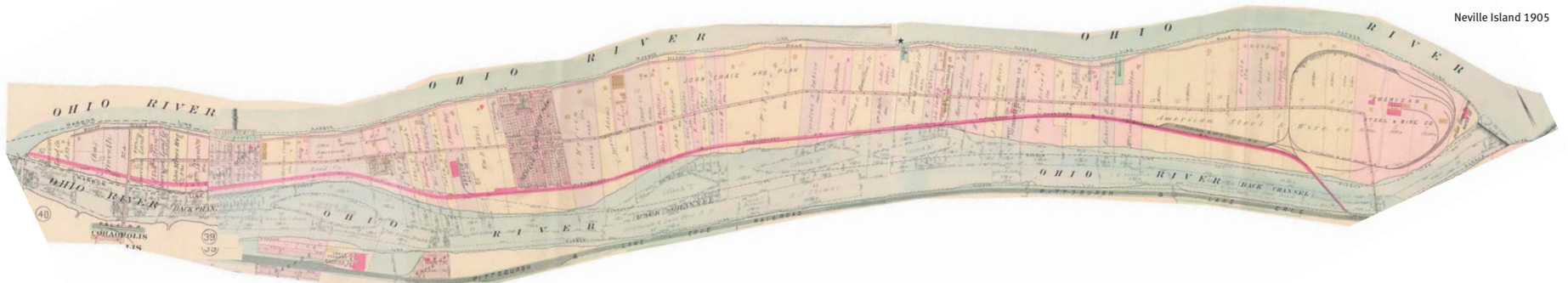
~Karl

Liz noted , "There are several U.S. Army Corps websites that tell you what river levels to expect, but sometimes the water level can change 15 feet fairly quickly."

To recreate safely on this river it is important to have intimate knowledge about how it changes over time!

The day provided a great chance for an exchange of ideas, hopes, and dreams about the Ohio River Water Trail. The day could best be summed up by Jenny Ladd.

"Seeing it from the river is key"



Neville Island 1905