

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
Regional Policy Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Northpointe – IUP, Armstrong County  
and  
Cisco WebEx Meeting  
2:00 pm -- April 24, 2023

Members present were: Art Cappella, Pat Fabian, Mark Gordon, Sherene Hess, Robert Lesnick, Amy McKinney, Ann Ogoreuc, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Mark Rafail, Aurora Sharrard, Loretta Spielvogel, Byron Stauffer, Jr., Jason Theakston, and Vince Vicites

Others: Col. Adam Czekanski, District Commander, US Army Corps of Engineers; Vincent DiCarlo, Deputy District Engineer, US Army Corps of Engineers; Scott Harshman, Port of Pittsburgh Commission; Mary Ann Bucci, Port of Pittsburgh Commission; Matthew Pavlosky, Port of Pittsburgh Commission; Mark Critz, PA Rural Development Council; Matt Drohan, Freeport Terminals; Vince Mantero, Maritime Administration; and Tretha Chromey, Maritime Administration; Brandon Leach, PennDOT

Staff: Vincent Valdes, Leann Chaney, Faith Collins, Ronda Craig, Dom D'Andrea, Linda Duffy, Margaret Fonner, Chuck Imbrogno, Jenn Lasser, Caitlin O'Connor, DJ Ryan, Ailisa Sobien, Cathy Tully, Sara Walfoort and Andy Waple

1. Welcome and Introductions

Pat Fabian welcomed everyone to Armstrong County.

2. Action on Minutes of the February 27, 2023 Meeting

Art Cappella moved to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2023 meeting and Commissioner Mark Gordon seconded. The motion carried.

3. Freight Rail Update – Sara Walfoort, Freight Planning Manager, SPC

Sara Walfoort reviewed the FRA – Priority Corridor Identification Program, and recent submissions from the MPO's in Columbus, Ohi (MORPC) and Cleveland (NOACA). SPC has provided letters of support for a total of four applications being submitted to the FRA Priority Corridor Identification Program. At the last RPAC meeting you heard from William Murdock, Executive Director of MORPC on their project to create a completely new passenger rail line and service between Columbus, OH and Chicago, IL by way of Fort Wayne, IN. Their plan is to eventually connect this new line east to Pittsburgh. There are three applications from NOACA, in Cleveland, to bring to Commission attention this month. There is an existing Amtrak passenger rail corridor between Chicago and Cleveland used to provide passenger service to the east coast from their Chicago hub. The Lakeshore Limited and the Capital Limited both use that section of rail. Our partners at NOACA in Cleveland are looking to increase service frequency and rehabilitate track to permit higher speed rail operations along this line. Seeking to create a mini-rail hub in Cleveland for Amtrak passengers, they will be submitting two additional applications for service enhancements on the two major passenger lines east from Cleveland: to Boston and New York by way of Buffalo and Albany on the Lakeshore Limited line, and south and east from Cleveland through Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. on the Capital Limited line. Part of the goal in seeking additional passenger rail service is to address that problem that we hear in Pittsburgh so frequently, which is "why the trains have to arrive between midnight and 5 a.m. It's not good for business." The goal of this application from NOACA to the FRA is s to actually get business-friendly connections in of Cleveland, and by extension, potentially, Pittsburgh.

In separate news, the decommissioning of the Homer City Power Plant has been announced, and the plant is set to close in July. This facility was built in 1969 and expanded in about 1977. A rail line was built to that facility while it was being constructed to carry construction materials. But originally, the Power Plant was a mine mouth operation. All the coal used in the power plant was either transported by conveyer or local truck. Over time, that changed. They needed more coal as local supply dwindled. By about 2000, the Buffalo and Pittsburgh railroad was contacted to see about providing coal to the facility via rail. They had

an option that could resuscitate that original construction line, which is what they did. But it had been out of use for so long, that it had trees growing up in between the ties. It was in terrible shape. This line extends north from Homer City to about Punxsutawney where it catches a mainline extending east-west. A two-phase project was implemented, the first to restore the long dormant line from the plant in Homer City up through the Borough of Indiana to Creekside, a distance of about 14 miles, the second to rehabilitate the rail from Creekside north to Cloe, a distance of about 26 miles to accommodate the additional heavy traffic. In total, it was a \$24 million project that received funding assistance from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Rail Freight as well as the SPC CMAQ Program.

I reached out to the railroad and they assured me that they are looking forward to working with the regional representatives on the recommissioning or redevelopment of the power plant site. The loss of a customer like the Homer City Power Plant is not insignificant, but they have a strong customer base along their other lines in the region, and they look forward to continuing to serve any future businesses that may be developed on this site.

Questions:

Unknown Speaker: I know one thing that I'm concerned about relates with the closing of the Homer City Power Plant. I see Sherene Hess here and Byron Stauffer who represent Indiana County. There are also grumblings of Keystone closing down in 2028. My sources are telling me that can be 14 months out on a fast track. Why that's so important? You're talking probably both plants about 130 jobs. And these are good paying jobs for this area, probably six figures, right? But more importantly the school districts. I've run the numbers for Homer City. We just saw a consolidation in Blairsville and Salzburg not too long ago. If you take out the power plant, that tax generating revenue for a small single day school, you're probably talking about another merger potentially. How Keystone impacts Armstrong County is the Apollo Ridge High School, not a very big school district, but big enough that you take out that property tax value, where are they going to make up \$2 million in school revenue? Putting it back on its residents, right? So, it is concerning, what's coming down the line with these two power plants. So close, you know, in Indiana and Armstrong County, thank you for that.

4. Welcome to Col. Adam Czekanski, District Commander, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Introduction of Guest Presentation – DJ Ryan, Director of Strategic Initiative and Policy, SPC

Col. Czekanski presented a brief overview of the Army Corps of Engineers in the Pittsburgh District. The US Army Corps of Engineers is broken out organizationally speaking into nine divisions. Those nine divisions are then broken down to 43 different districts. The district boundaries are delineated by watersheds. They also have the military construction missions. Those are done by state boundaries, but the civil works is by watersheds.

Our higher headquarters in Pittsburgh is the Great Lakes and Ohio River division. So, you have seven districts there. And as per the name, three of those districts Chicago, Detroit, and Buffalo encompass the watershed(s) in which any drop of water that would fall in the United States and ends up in the Great Lakes. The other four districts start at the headwaters of Pittsburgh, then Huntington, Louisville and Nashville. Those four districts comprise the Ohio River Basin. So that's our higher headquarters, Great Lakes and Ohio River division.

Geographically the Pittsburgh District falls primarily in western Pennsylvania. But also, we get that slice of eastern Ohio, northern part of West Virginia, a little chunk of the southern tier of New York State and a little tiny wedge of Maryland. So, we touch five different states. But our watershed is defined by the Three Rivers of Monongahela, Allegheny, and then the upper portion of the Ohio River. Those define the watershed. Then on those three rivers, we have responsibility for 23 locks and dams, more locks and dams than any other district in the Army Corps of Engineers.

Three of those locks and dams are on the Ohio River, eleven are on the Allegheny River and nine of those locks and dams are on the Monongahela River. We also have 16 multipurpose reservoirs built primarily for flood risk management, but also now with a heavy recreation component tied to them as well.

Our district has about 700 employees, give or take. Seasonally, 40 spread out amongst facilities – as mentioned 23 locks and dams, 16 multipurpose or flood risk management reservoirs, and then also we have a facility at Neville Island. And then our headquarters itself is downtown Pittsburgh in the federal building. About 40% of the workforce is downtown, or 60% spread out amongst the 40 facilities. In addition to those 16 flood risk reservoirs, we also have responsibility for more than 80 common local protection projects or local flood protection projects, spread out among communities throughout their operations and taking all different forms, but again constructed for that purpose to mitigate flood risk. And whereas the local communities by and large have responsibility for the operations and maintenance of those facilities, with the exception of mentioned Punxsutawney and last briefings on Punxsutawney and Johnstown and Elkins, West Virginia, where we still maintain operations and maintenance responsibilities on those projects.

So, as we've established, our District is five states and 26,000 square miles. Typically, our program is now about \$2.25 million dollars per year. But that's actually spiked a little bit here in recent years. So, the average is probably higher than that. And, those flood risk management projects, those reservoirs, those dams, were built for the purpose of flood risk management, the USACE built those dams and created these lakes. But the recreation component has really grown around them to the point where now we see over 6 million visitors per year. So that's a pretty impressive number. We do encompass a number of what you classify as economically disadvantaged communities. And a lot of people aren't going to Disney World for their family vacations, they're coming and camping at Shenango, or wherever, and recreating at our projects and we're proud of the fact that we are able to provide that service to local communities.

We don't have military construction missions in Pittsburgh. We have a system with a time limit down near the airfield with some projects that were led by the Baltimore district. But we don't have a very large military construction mission.

International and inter agency – this is work we do for other government agencies, other nations. Our focus has been on our own area. Interagency specifically worked with the VA and we've done work with the National Forest Service of Allegheny and recently Department of Energy as well. The Greater Pittsburgh area – Geospatial that's very specialized. And then also, research and development. The Corps has a very large facility in Vicksburg, Mississippi, the Engineer Research and Development Center. And then they have some other labs throughout the US. That's how the Corps focuses their R&D efforts primarily. But we have ties within Pittsburgh. We're very fortunate that army futures command has a footprint in Pittsburgh with a robotics lab, and also an Artificial Intelligence Integration Center. And we've actually tied in with that team, to see if they can help us with some of our missions, some of our projects to be smarter about how we take on some projects since still developing partnerships. And then moving up contingency operations.

Whenever there's a natural disaster, when FEMA springs into action to respond to hurricanes, let's say, the Army Corps of Engineers may also go, USACE is under FEMA, which has twenty emergency support functions. Emergency Support Function number three is public works. And that's where the Army Corps of Engineers has the lead. Within that there are six different mission sets and one of those is temporary emergency power. The Pittsburgh district specifically has the lead for that mission set. So, when hurricanes come in, we spring into action, we set teams down, and we have a contractor that's on retainer. And we have the responsibility to be responding and putting in generators, where necessary, like at shelters where people are or hospitals as soon as the storm passes. Then as the grid comes back up, we do install. We're proud of the fact that we have a lead role in that mission.

The main one is civil works, that's kind of the bread and butter of the Army Corps of Engineers. And that's what every district takes on is usually a fairly robust civil works mission. Navigation is definitely a big one. As I mentioned before, we are defined by the three rivers, the Monongahela, the Allegheny and the upper portion of the Ohio. 328 navigable river miles responsibility for especially those 23 locks and dams. And you can see some of the numbers associated with that annually as far as commerce that passes through those rivers. So, navigation is huge.

Commodities that pass along our waterways are different types of coal, different aggregates about that. When mapped by commodity type and volume, every color in the pie-chart is tied to a different commodity. But the key takeaway is that the larger the pie, the greater the volume of freight moving down the river.

You can see these are fairly small or almost non-existent on the northern Allegheny River, and they get bigger the closer you to Pittsburgh. You can see that on the Ohio River they're really big.

The Army Corps of Engineers internal processes work to the funding mechanisms, so to speak, which is its tied to commercial traffic, and specifically the commercial lockages that occur at these facilities. We work on system levels of service tier structure, levels 1 through 6, where Level 1 is the highest, most heavily used, and is provided full service. It is fully staffed 24/7. To attain Level of Service 1, you have greater than 1,000 lockages in a year. Service level two is between 500-1,000 lockages. If that's the case, then we're down to an 18-hour work day. So, six hours are kind of dead where you don't have lockages, except if you have like an emergency situation or by appointment only. At Level 3, which is fewer than 300 lockages, USACE provides just 12 hours of service per day. Service levels continue to deteriorate below Level 3. I show you this because you can see the Locks on the Ohio are at one extreme where they're all at Level of Service 1, with 24/7 staffing by the USACE, are relatively well funded, so to speak. Levels of Service along the Monongahela River from Pittsburgh all the way to the State Line above Morgantown, are comparable to those on the Ohio River, with 24/7 service at each Lock and Dam. South of Morgantown, we start to see reduced lockages, and more restricted hours. The uppermost locks provide passage only by appointment.

Now go to the locks on the Allegheny, half of those are already at Level of Service 6, which means locks are operated by appointment only, and are otherwise unstaffed. If you continue moving down the river to Locks 5 and 4, those are at Level of Service 3, so the USACE provides lock operations only 12 hours per day, essentially. And then the two that are closest to Pittsburgh are Level of Service 2, so operate 18 hours per day.

As you're trying to attract industry to use the resource (river navigation), there has to be at least some kind of confidence in the reliability of that resource – that it will be available for use according to the user's needs. Right now, you can see where our hours lie as far as being able to pass vessels through those locks.

Next mission I'll talk about is Flood Risk Management/Group/Recreation, those Lake projects where we have 16 different reservoirs. The 16 reservoirs in the 80 Plus Local protection projects and they get an idea of the benefits there. Over time, there's been nearly \$16 billion of damages prevented. A lot of these structures came about following the famous floods 1936, including the St. Patrick's Day flood in Pittsburgh. The Flood Control Acts that came from that year and subsequently, authorized us to construct those 16 projects. Since inception, we have realized that nearly \$16 billion benefit. And as I've talked about before, we're at a point now recreationally speaking, where we're drawing in more than 6 million visitors. It's not just people visiting our project, that's money going into the local economies, to its people, or going to restaurants or whatever.

The next slide gives a breakdown for all those projects just when they were constructed and the kind of benefit that we saw in fiscal year 22 for each project, and then cumulatively since that project was first constructed. And then a total about the difference. There's a little bit of a difference between this total amount in the previous slide, because the previous slide also rolled in those ad local protection projects, not just the 16 lakes. That's the difference between the two total numbers, but the key takeaway is, most people know the Lake is there, most people don't really appreciate the benefit of it because you're not experiencing the flooding that once occurred, decades ago or more before those projects were in place.

The last thing is hydropower. On those 23 locks and dams, we talked about along our rivers, we do have a hydropower component, not just on the Locks, but also at the lakes. The key takeaway here are those facilities where you have licensed and operating hydropower operations include five locks on the Allegheny River. So that is a good news story that hydro already has been implemented on half of the locks on the Allegheny River, and there is interest in pursuing hydropower development at some of the other locks as well.

Questions:

Johnna Pro commented that we appreciate your team and all the efforts you make to help some of our small communities. She then asked that when you're not staffing some of the locks such as on the upper

Allegheny, does that mean for people who use the river for recreation? Can they only go into one pool? They can't lock through you as a boater?

Col. Czekanski said we lock recreational boaters through all the time. We do have two Contributed Funds Agreements. The Upper Monongahela River Association and the Allegheny River Development Corporation provide funds through these Agreements to extend service hours during the summer months for the uppermost locks on the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. In the case of the Allegheny River, these are the locks and months that are most heavily used for recreational boating. We are able to currently staff those locks on the weekends to allow for passage along, the entire navigable length of river. Without these Contributed Funds from these organizations, no, recreational boaters won't be able to pass through these uppermost locks during evening and weekend hours in summer.

Johnna then asked can you do anything with monitoring events related to drinking water?

Col. Czekanski said that the USACE does monitor water quality in the reservoirs as far as dissolved oxygen and some other monitors, but probably not strictly enough. As far as drinking water components on the rivers, there their concern is mostly the loss of activity in the upper Allegheny. Growing up in this region, we all saw rail and barges as daily continuous activity, but over the years, there has been a loss of industry, that's hurt the river area. They're only opened by the agreement we have with the Allegheny River Development Corporation, which represents mostly recreational builders.

Johnna said the other issue is river mussels. So, what's the difference? You know, we used to have a lot of sand and gravel, aggregates dug out of the river. Now we don't. But they do in Ohio. They have those same environmental issues in Ohio, are they permitted to do sand and gravel on that river system? Or is it just in Pennsylvania that we're not be able to do that because of the river mussels?

Col. Czekanski said the endangered mussels are predominantly on the Allegheny River. And that's where the trouble is now. Those mussels have come back and then some.

Johnna said moving forward, if I had somebody interested in looking into that river bottom aggregate and wants to open up dredging again, what point do you say, hey, we have a healthy ecosystem here. Maybe we'll let some permitting, or will that never come back?

Col. Czekanski said we actually just had a discussion with Representative Thompson staff on this question. We don't have any control of that; that's for Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. A question I often get from people in the community is if we got mussels we can't even eat, what have they done for economic development? So, if we want to dredge up on the upper Allegheny, we have to do a mussel survey. And then if there are mussels present, we will have to do some mitigation measures, usually the most expensive.

5. Presentation on Allegheny River Lock Service – Vincent DeCarlo, Deputy District Engineer, US Army Corps of Engineers – Pittsburgh District

Vince DiCarlo said that reliability and access are the keys to any viable transportation system, whether it's for commercial activity or for recreational activity. We're going to talk about the Allegheny River and check the current challenges it faces and then the future challenges which are even more challenging. The Allegheny River begins in theaters for PA travels north up into New York, and then turns south right around Salamanca, New York. About 72 miles are navigable, from just above East Brady, and then all the way down to the confluence of the Ohio River, with eight locks providing for commercial navigation. Three commercial river terminals are still operating on the Allegheny River. And today we are also highlighting significant recreation activity on the Allegheny River. I've never really had to highlight that before, because we had adequate commercial activities to really just pull along the recreational activity which was a nice benefit for the recreational community. But now that that industry is moving away, we're just left with recreation activities on the Allegheny River. And one of the things that we're looking at is that economic vitality for the de-industrialized area along the Allegheny River is very important to local communities. The locks exist because there is a drop-in elevation from Allegheny Lock Nine to Allegheny Lock Two, a distance of about 112 miles. It's a big drop. That's why we have so many locks within our 72 navigable

river miles. Typically, the locks are spaced much further apart, but because we're in Headwater Districts and we're in the mountains, the elevation drops pretty quickly.

We have four hydropower facilities not operated by the Corps of Engineers or operated by private industry, at large. Our total average operations and maintenance budgets are \$8.32 million, a whole lot of money. We don't get a lot of money on the Allegheny River, because our funding is tied to the commercial traffic there, while our staffing levels are based on the Level of Service (the number of lockages) at each facility. The more commercial lockages we have throughout the day; the more staff is required to operate that Lock. We just recently reduced the Level of Service at Locks 2 and 3. The decline in commercial traffic seen over a rolling three-year average has shown that we had to drop down to two shifts a day, instead of three shifts per day at those locks. Locks 4 and 5 held steady at Level of Service Three, one shift, the day shift, each day. Remaining and Level of Service 3 is very important, because below that level, a death spiral starts. You go below Level of Service 3 but reduced hours of operation means reduced activity, which means a still lower Level of Service, and you find yourself at Level of Service 6 really quick, and there's mostly no coming back from that. They've seen that only rarely, but 10 years ago a lock did come back from a Level of Service 6. So that's important because Allegheny Lock 5 is on the cusp of dropping to Level of Service 4, as both commercial and recreational traffic has dropped off.

Locks 2 and 3 had about 2.25 million tons of commercial traffic about a year ago. We're down to about 500,000 tons now. Commercial navigation is probably about 2700 commercial lockages at each (Locks) two and three together, because the coal passing through two and three was going to Cheswick. So, the tonnage of coal at both of those facilities is actually equal. Overall, if you've run the numbers in that period of time since the turn of this last century in the last 20 plus years, we have seen a decrease in over 80% as far as the commercial tonnage coming down the Allegheny River which is significant.

Starting in the year 2000 the recreational usage on the Allegheny River is one of the most significant recreational rivers in the nation and actually competes when we look at other recreational lockages with those down in Florida. There are 12 marinas along the Allegheny River, 11 of the 12 are upstream of getting locked to their 10 public boat launches in a river that's open to the public usually run by the Pennsylvania Fishing and Boat Commission, sports boating, kayaking, fishing, hunting, birdwatching or tourist cruises, sporting events and concerts, fireworks. You know, there's a lot of recreational activity. And when you're looking at the four- county area, 37,000 boat registrations, that's huge. Allegheny County alone with almost 22,000 boat registrations, that's the most in Pennsylvania. There was one time when Allegheny County had more boat registrations than Miami Dade County, Florida. Obviously, Miami Dade County has grown and had a lot more money moved in there, but Allegheny County still has a significant amount of boat registrations and they all use the rivers. And they're spending money which is vitally important for local communities.

As far as recreational locks, there's still a downward trend on the Allegheny River. And there are probably a number of reasons for that. I don't want to speculate. We haven't done an economic study as to why recreational logins have declined. But while the recreational lockages have declined, it hasn't declined as significantly as commercial traffic. People are still using rivers for recreation. While recreational launches have declined, the importance of recreational lockages to local communities has increased because commercial industry has moved out so that the recreation is really filling the void for commercial activity.

The Waters Resources Development Act of 2014 allowed the Corps of Engineers to accept what's called contributed funds, funds from an outside organization like the Allegheny River Development Corporation. Every year since 2016 they give us a portion of money to operate locks six through nine on the weekends and then increase hours of operation at locks four and five on the weekends. What that does is it allows the recreational users to transit the locks. It's important to highlight that because level service six is commercial working by appointment only. This allows our employees to volunteer to work overtime, to lock boats on the weekend. And they've given us \$115,000 on average every year, and we lock boats from Memorial Day to Labor Day. It's a great opportunity for people to use the rivers and it's also good for the local communities.

There is a significant amount of locking just for recreational usage. And when you think about it on the weekends, a lot of people are using the rivers and when they're young or new utilizing the rivers, they're spending a lot of money in local communities where they're buying gas having their boats operated or

worked on, eating out in restaurants. So, this is putting a lot of money back into the economy along the river.

There was a lot of commercial traffic locking through all the Allegheny River locks based on the sand and gravel industry. And the most recent event to occur is the closure of Cheswick Powerplant. Basically, coal movement on the Allegheny River is falling off. So, you're going to see less and less commercial traffic utilizing the Allegheny River. And commercial traffic is really what determines our level of funding. And that's important because our level of funding means our level to maintain our ability to maintain that system and ensure reliable operation.

Our funding process considers commercial lockages, it doesn't consider recreation lockages. Inland marine transportation system never had to, there's always enough commercial activity on the river system. So now we're running into a situation where industries leaving on the headwaters areas of the river systems, and because of that we're facing a challenge that we're not funded as well to maintain those locks for recreational use. Again, recreational lockages are only minimally considered in our funding. So, the consequences if we're not able to maintain our facilities, you're going to have more and more unscheduled outages, or we're just going to have to close our locks because we don't have the funding to maintain them. Also, as our levels of service drop, our staffing numbers drop. If our staffing numbers drop too low, that means we're not going to be able to support ARDC and lockages on the weekends in the summer. So, the rivers become a resource viewed as unreliable by industry. Not only does that not attract new development, it hurts industry that's already there, and ends up leaving recreationally restricted movement along the river. So basically, you're just operating with a lake that's no longer a river for recreation traffic.

Because commercial activity is dropping on the Allegheny River, we're estimating in fiscal year 2028, we're going to have to drop to a level of service three. What that means is we're going to have one shift a day. We're not going to offer evening services to the community. You can imagine what impact that's going to have to all those marinas upstream in the economic activity associated with ballgames with fireworks with concerts.

Mary Ann Bucci and I have been discussing this for years. We've tried to have many conversations with stakeholders, individually, but we really haven't gotten any traction. We've been trying to paint the picture, the Allegheny River is in trouble, right? It's in trouble for all your businesses out there in your communities. Not necessarily because it's going to go away, but our levels of service are going to drop to the point where they're not going to be viable for the economic activity moving up and down the river. Col. Czekanski and I got together and had a meeting with stakeholders on March 20 on why the Allegheny River's challenges need to be addressed now.

Col. Czekanski – on May 24, we're going to have a follow up meeting. If there's some folks in the room here who want to be part of that, who weren't on the invitation list, first of all, I apologize, but meet with me afterwards if you want to be part of that discussion. What we'd like to develop collectively is a strategic plan. There are efforts underway to try to get after some of these things, but they have not been coordinated. Someone's doing something here, some students from there, you can't make much traction in that manner. But collectively we'll have a roadmap. There are multiple things that need done that can be done in order to turn this thing around. But if we're all on the same page, we have a much better chance of getting some momentum and making some progress to turn this thing in the other direction for the better. And that's what we're trying to do. We are just one player in all of this, too, and we have our piece of the pie, but we do need to make sure people understand what it means to mark perspective. As Vince mentioned, it's the fact that the less commercial traffic we have, the less funding we get to maintain the facilities, and that reliability component is of concern. But also, as we drop the staffing, again, even if ARDC gave us millions of dollars, the problem is the pool of staff that we have to choose from because it's voluntary. The staff that works in the summertime on those weekends, they're just trying to make a few extra bucks. If we have more requirements and more locks than we do now, then we just don't have the ability. The impacts are felt not just by the folks who want to go jump on the boat and enjoy their time, but also everyone along the line whether it's the folks selling the gas or restaurants, there's definitely a domino effect there. So, we want to make everyone aware of these challenges.

## 6. Discussion

Unknown speaker: you mentioned earlier that you had not done a recreational economic impact assessment of the Allegheny River. Does that mean you could, and if so, are you authorized to do that type of economic impact study?

Col. Czekanski said we could, however currently, the Corps of Engineers doesn't capture recreation benefits. The Corps of Engineers calculates the economic benefit recreation for the Allegheny Locks. The Allegheny locks are probably responsible for more than \$200,000 of economic activity. Now we've pushed that up to the upper echelon, but like everything else, we only have so many staff, and of course, engineers, and we have to prioritize what we work on. And so, looking at the economic and recreational economic activity is probably not as high a priority as commercial activity.

Unknown Speaker: We're available certainly to partner with you on that. And to the Colonel's point and to your point. I think this sounds like it would take a legislative change in DC because of your authorities right now. How can you make a compelling argument for that legislative change?

Tretha Chromey, Maritime Administration – without the economic numbers to back it up, well those numbers are necessary to make that appeal in D.C. The tricky part, the caveat is the point about recreation not being captured. If we have a systematic change, though, the way we capture economic benefits, obviously, that goes throughout the entire course. So, the Allegheny benefits, but so does everybody else. Vince mentioned before that there is a lot of recreational activity on the Allegheny. But admittedly, it's a smaller season than you get down like somewhere in the south where they get a longer recreation season. I'm hoping you know about Build Back Better. Maybe their benefits are stronger than we realize. And maybe in the end, we don't win out collectively but it's still worth pursuing. I'd say that we're missing out on a lot of the benefits right now by neglecting to capture recreation to put as much rigor into it because we always have commercial activities, right.

Unknown Speaker: on the loss of industry along the river, the commercial piece, sounds like a lot of sand and gravel. Is there other industry that we're seeing the commercial traffic that's decreased, beside sand and gravel? It sounds like what I'm studying here has to do with a decrease in the natural gas drilling. So what else are we losing commercially along the Allegheny? Those are primary commodities on the Allegheny, everything else is much smaller. But at one point growing up, this was a vibrant river system. You had PPG bringing barge traffic up. You had elder, those two places alone, Floyd, over 1000 people in Kittanning area, then you have full take lands on graphite Sandgren. That's a bleak picture. It's very bleak. I'm glad that you're pulling some of these conversations together. But my experience, these conversations were started in 2015. When I ran for office, I sat in a lot of these meetings. Why did they drop off? Was there a lot of turnover? The Army Corps kind of pulled some of that together, but colonels would change about every eight to 12 months. One of my questions is how long are you going to be in charge? That was part of my frustration, as an elected official, we consistently got these stakeholders together, and we start talking about studies and got an RDC up and running currently, and then we had to start reeducating new.

Col. Czekanski – it's a three- year command. So that's about the rhythm you should see a new Corporal coming on board. Well, I can't speak to what happened then. But I can tell you that there will be a very deliberate transition process at least between myself and my successor, it's going to happen late summer, and this is definitely one of the top priorities.

Vince DiCarlo – The importance of getting all stakeholders together and developing an actual strategic plan is to get that momentum going where it's not going to be derailed because a couple of guys come and go, but everyone's tied to it now. We're all working together, not relying upon one agency or one person in particular. Mary Ann and I have been teaming up and really trying to get the word out. Thankfully when I made the pitch to Col. Czekanski, he jumped on it. So hopefully we've gained some momentum that's really going to propel us forward with our initiative.

DJ Ryan, SPC staff – Sara and I wanted this information to be brought to all of you, because we believe there are things we should be doing about it. And we hope in the future to get this committee's blessing for a larger conversation around this and hopefully find some good courses of action. A lot of this is dependent on transitions that have occurred through no doing of our own, the war on coal, so to speak, came down probably only five years ago. So, we've had a very short time to respond to those challenges.



All of the other rivers that you mentioned in our district that are in the same boat, also depend on West Virginia coal and other things to keep their economies going up. Is there any hope for an extension in these decision-making processes as we develop these poll alternatives we've seen in a lot of other programs? Get an extension for a year or two to figure out what the alternatives are.

Vince Valdes – DJ is organizing this collaborative effort that he wants to see all of us pursue so what he will do is he'll call up with everyone and then we will also get everyone the slides so you can have everything the way the Army Corps sent it over and how it looks like.

7. Next Meeting Date – June 26, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.
8. Adjourn

Art Cappella moved to adjourn the meeting and Mark Gordon seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.