Three Rivers Water Trail Management Plan Synopsis

Project Overview

The Three Rivers Water Trail Management Plan focuses on 4 main areas and 6 goals:

Accessibility: Improve ADA-compliant water access points.
Conditions & Maintenance: Standardize and streamline site maintenance practices.
Expansion: Add new water access points to increase community access.
Promotion: Promote the water trail as a recreational and economic asset.

1. Expand the number of water access points in strategic areas and redefine access points to reduce resource redundancies.
2. Establish a clear hierarchy of water access points and the amenities/improvements found in each classification/typology.
3. Increase water trail users and visitors by offering more opportunities for shoreline experiences.
4. Improve the everyday appearance of the water access points through uniform and regular maintenance standards and efforts.
5. Reduce or mitigate barriers related to access and enjoyment of the Water Trail and its rivers.
6. Shift public perception of safety and health concerns of the rivers and on-the-water experiences.

Data Gathering & Outreach

The [Water Trail Webmap](#) provides a map-based catalog of existing access points and their relation to other systems, such as public transportation, and dams.

31 individualized site profiles catalog current site conditions. Starts on **Pg.13**

A detailed report on the public engagement process and feedback begins on **Pg. 77**

Key Observations and Findings

Three Rivers Water Trail Strengths

Diverse Experiences: The trail spans 96 miles, traversing 67 municipalities and offering a mix of urban and natural settings. Users can explore downtown Pittsburgh's vibrant waterfront and quieter, more natural areas.

Cultural and Historical Significance: The region's industrial heritage is reflected in both active and repurposed facilities along the rivers, making the trail an intersection of history and nature.

Multiple Access Points: There are over 30 established access points throughout the county, enabling access from urban and rural areas alike.

Three Rivers Water Trail Challenges

Public Perception and Safety: There is a persistent fear of the rivers due to concerns about water quality and safety. Pollution, combined sewer overflows (CSOs), and a lack of swimming knowledge contribute to negative perceptions.

Maintenance: The upkeep of water access points varies widely. More than 20 organizations maintain sites, leading to inconsistent standards. Seasonal fluctuations and unexpected events like flooding also complicate maintenance efforts.

Lack of Infrastructure for Extended Use: The lack of overnight camping sites and limited places for dining or resting makes long-distance paddling trips challenging.

<u>**Recommendations**</u>

Short term goals

- **Accessibility Improvements:** Prioritize ADA-compliant routes, ramps, and parking areas. Grants are available to support these improvements.
- **Maintenance Standardization:** Develop a maintenance manual and standardized checklists for all partners, ensuring consistency across access points.
- **Promotion:** Leverage social media and partner networks to better promote the water trail and engage with communities, many of whom are unaware of the water trail's existence.
- **Expansion:** Two new access points should be added over the next two years. Plans could include adding more based on community needs.

Site-specific recommendations start on **Pg. 106**

Proposed Access Points are on **Pg. 108**

Access Point Typologies, **Pg. 113** - Access points along the Three Rivers Water Trail vary in terms of **accessibility**, **features**, and **proximity to local amenities**, and serve different purposes for diverse user groups. These access points can be categorized into four **typologies** based on their location and potential improvements:

- ○ **Type 1 - River Destination**: Located near dining, lodging, and entertainment, these points offer ample parking, transit access, restrooms, and boat storage, making them ideal for visitors from outside the region.
- ○ **Type 2 - Neighborhood Access**: Close to residential areas and businesses, these access points are more suited for local users.
- ○ **Type 3 - Primitive Experience**: Found in remote or island locations, these points focus on providing quiet retreats and wildlife viewing with minimal infrastructure.
- ○ **Type 4 - Float In**: Only accessible by boat, these points offer a unique, on-the-water experience with limited facilities.

General access point design guidelines, **Pg. 123**