

## The Newsletter of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2025 Vol 4 (issue #23)

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Hello! As fall quickly turns to winter and the holidays approach, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission has had a busy and productive few months.

In this issue, we're pleased to feature our newest PortPitt Board member, Representative Eric Davanzo, in our 3 Rivers, 3 Questions spotlight. We also welcomed Waterways Council Inc. (WCI) to Pittsburgh for their 2025 media tour, including a visit to the Montgomery Locks and Dam construction site and a tour of our rivers. S&B USA has provided an update on progress at the Elizabeth L&D project on the Lower Mon.

This fall, PortPitt hosted the PA House and Senate Transportation Committees for a river tour, participated in the Working Forests Conference, and earlier this summer represented the region at the Energy & Innovation Summit at Carnegie Mellon University.

It's been a great year, and we wish you a Happy Holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

*Mary Ann Bucci* Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

### WCI Hosts 2025 Media Tour in Pittsburgh

Waterways Council Inc. (WCI) hosted their annual media tour August 19–21, showcasing ongoing work to modernize the nation's inland waterway infrastructure. Reporters and industry leaders from across the country visited the Montgomery Locks and Dam in Monaca, Pennsylvania where construction is underway on a new, larger lock chamber. The new 600-by-110-foot chamber will replace the smaller auxiliary lock while keeping the main chamber open to ensure navigation continues on the upper Ohio River.



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### 3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS

with *Rep. Eric Davanzo*



*Eric Davanzo is a PA state representative serving the 58th legislative district and is a commissioner on the board of the PPC.*

**1. Rep. Davanzo, it's a pleasure to have you on the PPC Board and participate in our 3 Questions/3 Rivers! Tell our readers a little about yourself, and how you got into public service?**

It's my honor to serve on the Pittsburgh Port Commission. I represent the 58th Legislative District, which includes the south and central portions of Westmoreland County. I've always liked to build things, so after high school I entered the building trades and started off as a laborer. I've always looked for opportunities to advance my career, and whenever a door opened, I worked my way up. In 2010, I became a carpenter and ultimately earned the position of Carpenter Superintendent.

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### WCI Media Tour (continued)

The media tour highlighted how the Montgomery, Dashields, and Emsworth locks and dams — collectively known as the Upper Ohio Navigation Project — are critical to revitalizing some of the oldest infrastructure on the Ohio River. Attendees also toured Pittsburgh’s rivers via the Gateway Clipper, viewing the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers at Point State Park, and seeing firsthand the aging Emsworth Locks and Dam.



The Port of Pittsburgh Commission sponsored the tour, underscoring our role in promoting efficient, modern waterways throughout the region. At a dinner with local stakeholders, Peter Stephaich of Campbell Transportation Company emphasized Pittsburgh’s importance as a central link in the national river network, and maintaining this system reduces highway congestion, limits emissions, and supports safe,



cost-effective freight movement. “We always welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the progress and economic viability of our region’s waterways”, said Mary Ann Bucci, PortPitt Executive Director.

The PPC wishes to thank WCI staff members: Deb Calhoun, Jennifer Armstrong, and Miranda Lang for arranging and attending this very special event. 🍷



### 3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Eric Davanzo (continued)

I’ve also always had an interest in politics, and when the seat became open in 2019, I put my name in. From day one, I’ve said that one of our biggest concerns should be Pennsylvania’s population decline. We are losing far too many of our younger folks to neighboring states for better-paying jobs and broader opportunities. As a father of two, that issue hits home for me. My oldest daughter, Brianna, is a civil engineer, and my youngest, Brielle, is an avid softball player who dreams of attending the University of Oklahoma one day. My wife, Rachele, and I were married in 2012, and like any parents, we want our kids to have every opportunity to build a successful life right here in western Pennsylvania.

That belief—and that responsibility—is what motivated me to step into public service. My goal is to help reverse the population decline, reignite our local economy, and make our region a place where families can thrive and future generations choose to stay.

### 2. Among your many pursuits, Transportation and Infrastructure has been a focus of yours. Tell us some of your goals for infrastructure and connectivity for freight movement in our region?

Transportation and infrastructure are at the heart of economic development. When a region has reliable roads, rail connections, and a strong inland waterway system, it becomes far more attractive for businesses looking to expand or relocate. Strengthening freight movement in southwestern Pennsylvania starts with understanding the needs of the companies already operating here.

My goal is to work directly with industry partners to identify where upgrades or efficiencies are needed—whether that involves our locks and dams, access to multimodal freight routes, or improving the overall flow of goods throughout the region. By improving connectivity and ensuring our infrastructure keeps pace with modern demands, we can support existing employers, attract new investment, and make the Port of Pittsburgh an even stronger economic engine for our region.

### 3. In closing, what message would you like to send to our river stakeholders about the importance of the rivers to our region?

Our rivers are one of the greatest economic assets we have. They support commerce, connect industries, and move the raw materials that keep our region competitive. But to fully unlock their potential, we need strong partnerships with the people who work on and rely on these waterways every day.

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## PA House and Senate Transportation Committees Participate in Waterways Tour with PortPitt

Members of the Pennsylvania House and Senate Transportation Committees, along with industry stakeholders, traveled to Pittsburgh on September 22-24, for a series of events highlighting Western Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure. The visit provided committee members with a firsthand look at key operations and the challenges facing the region's transportation network.



The committees took an informative river tour sponsored by the Port of Pittsburgh Commission to learn more about river-based commercial freight operations, an overview of river infrastructure

needs, as well as the Port's ongoing efforts to retain and attract new business along the region's inland waterways. Port representatives highlighted the importance of maritime commerce to Western Pennsylvania's economy and the role of infrastructure investment in sustaining long-term growth.

The Pittsburgh visits which included a visit and tour with Pittsburgh Regional Transit's (PRT), were part of a broader Western Pennsylvania trip that offered the committee a "behind-the-scenes look" at how the region's transportation systems work together to connect communities and support economic development.



The PPC wishes to thank the PA Senate Transportation chair Judy Ward, PA House Transportation chair Ed Nielson, the House and Senate Transportation Committee members and their staff, and Senate Transportation Committee Executive Director Nolan Ritchie for their time and support of the region's transportation needs.



## 3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Eric Davanzo (continued)

My message to river stakeholders is simple: stay engaged with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. Your insight—on what's working, what isn't, and where improvements are needed—is essential. The more we communicate and collaborate, the better we can advocate for investment, strengthen our infrastructure, and ensure that our rivers continue to drive economic growth for western Pennsylvania well into the future.



## Progress on the Elizabeth Locks and Dam

by Ryan Tautkus-Berry, Project Manager for Fay S&B USA Construction

A second and final round of controlled underwater explosions is wrapping up at the Elizabeth lock and dam in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project to demolish this river infrastructure after more than 100 years of operation. Last year, Pittsburgh-based contractor Fay, S&B USA Construction (Fay) removed the dam, opening a channel between the Charleroi and Braddock locks and dams to form a 30-mile stretch of navigable waterway. This year's target was the river and middle walls of the remaining lock chamber.

The lock is being removed through a combination of mechanical and explosive methods, starting with the gates. After removing all of the railings and access paths, Fay's project team worked with subcontractor Ohio River Salvage to float in a derrick crane and lift the ten miter gate leaves, depositing them on barges for disposal.

Then came the lock walls. First, the team used hydraulic hammers to demolish the walls down to about two feet above water level. Then, drilling and controlled blasting broke up the rest, since the remaining infrastructure runs deep, around 18 ft under water.

To set up for a controlled blasting event, a series of 40 – 70 holes were drilled, then filled with tubes and explosives. Fay then ensured their security perimeter—500 ft from the location of the blasting on land, and 1,500 ft up and down the river—had been established before performing the explosion. "We averaged between two to three blasting events per week, depending on the weather," said Derek Vargo, a Fay Senior Project Engineer.

After the blast, the concrete rubble was then excavated from the water and sent to shore to be processed for reuse in the stability berms that will support the esplanade and remaining land wall. Around 80% of the debris, or around 14,000 cy of material, has been removed from the bottom of the Monongahela. Crews aim to have the remaining debris cleared by the end of the year. "We're also getting ready to do some concrete

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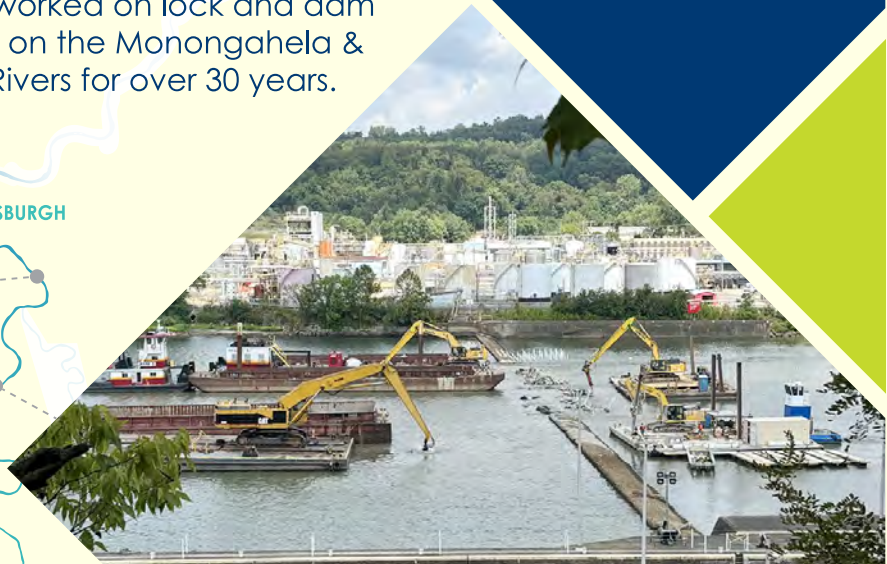
**FAY**  
S&B USA CONSTRUCTION

Fay has worked on lock and dam projects on the Monongahela & Ohio Rivers for over 30 years.



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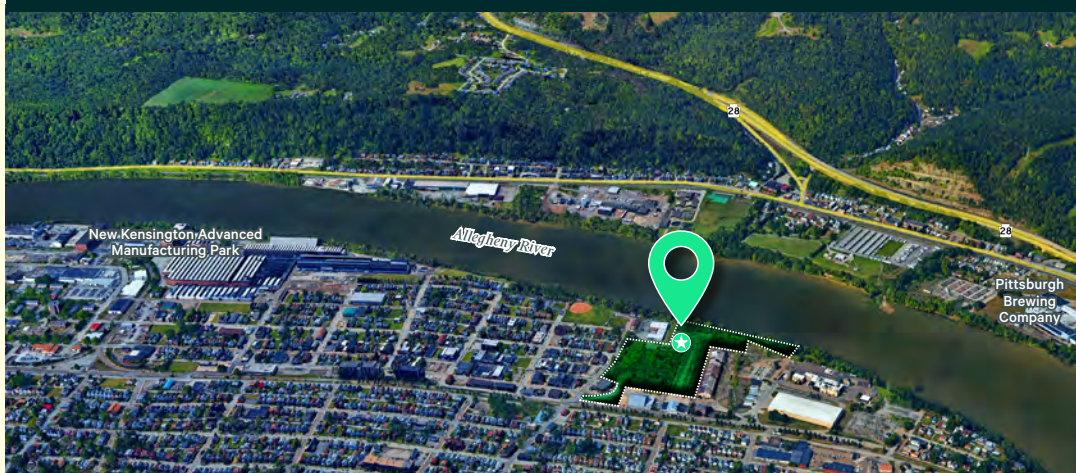
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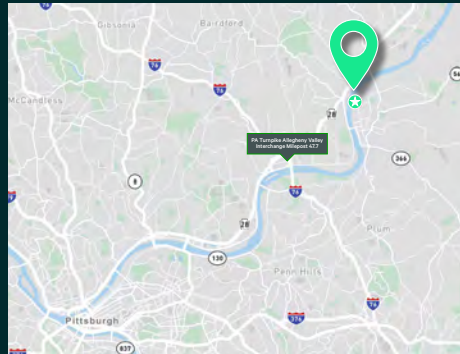


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GOOD THINGS FLOW FROM HERE



### Elizabeth Progress (continued)

work to fill in the existing ports and flume chambers, as well as place a new concrete cap on the esplanade” said Vargo.

This project is made possible due to the hard work and dedication of several local organizations. Fay works closely with the Pittsburgh District of the USACE, which owns all the locks and dams along Pittsburgh’s three rivers, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, which helped close off the river during the blasting events. Additionally, this project employed several union workers, including operators from the Local 66, laborers from the Local 1058, and carpenters from the Local 441.



### Pittsburgh Hosts Working Forests Conference

Representatives from the PPC attended the first National Leadership Forum for Economic Development through Working Forests on October 15th which was held in Pittsburgh and hosted by the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. Over 150 leaders from 22 states and representing more than 80 organizations from across all forest product and allied sectors attended this event with a focus on strengthening the connections between forests, communities, and markets.

From cabinetry and flooring, to baseball bats and snow boards, Pennsylvania leads the nation in the production and export of hardwood lumber. With over 16 million acres of forestland, Pennsylvania has the most abundant hardwood forest in the U.S. and accounts for \$21.8 billion in direct and \$36 billion in indirect impacts on the state’s economy. Faced with the declining domestic market for coal, the PPC is dedicated to increasing the volume of river commerce and has started to initiate a strategic process to help develop plans and strategies to attract new cargoes, including from the hardwoods industry, on our three rivers.



### PPC Executive Director Participates in Energy & Innovation Summit

On July 25, 2025, Port of Pittsburgh Commission Executive Director Mary Ann Bucci participated in the first-ever Pennsylvania Energy & Innovation Summit, held at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

The event brought together more than 90 CEOs, industry leaders, and government officials to discuss and announce major initiatives shaping the future of Pennsylvania’s energy and technology sectors. The day-long summit culminated in the announcement of over \$90 billion in planned energy and technology projects across the Commonwealth.

Hosted by U.S. Senator Dave McCormick, the event also featured remarks from Governor Josh Shapiro and President Donald Trump, underscoring the importance of collaboration between government and industry in advancing Pennsylvania’s economic and technological future.

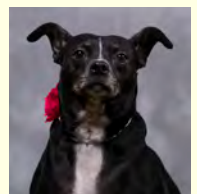
Investment commitments ranged from \$100 million to \$25 billion, encompassing AI infrastructure, data center development, and next-generation energy generation projects throughout the state, with interest in the rivers in the Port of Pittsburgh district.

Bucci’s participation at the Summit highlighted the Port of Pittsburgh Commission’s ongoing role in supporting regional innovation, infrastructure development, and sustainable economic growth across southwestern Pennsylvania.



### In Memoriam . . .

The Port is saddened by the recent passing of our beloved mascot, Micha. A friendly and loyal pup, Micha joined staff at Safe Boating events, helping demonstrate pet safety on the water. A shelter rescue and cherished companion of Executive Director Mary Ann Bucci, Micha brought warmth and joy to everyone she met. She will be deeply missed by Mary Ann and the entire Port staff.



## OUR PORTPITT TEAM

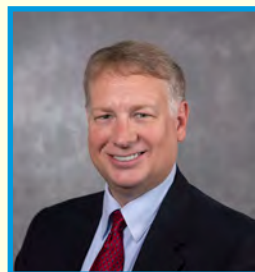
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