

The Newsletter of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2026 Vol 1 (issue #24)



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Brrr—is it Spring yet? As we keep a close eye on conditions along the waterways, the team at the Port of Pittsburgh Commission has been navigating more than just chilly winds. Winter may have tightened its grip, but things are heating up behind the scenes. A sincere thanks to the Waterways Association Nav Committee, the USCG MSU Pittsburgh, and the USACE for all their efforts during this cold spell.

In this edition, we're recapping our recent WCI DC Fly-In—where inland waterways champions gathered in our nation's capital to advocate for critical priorities—and sharing the latest developments on WRDA. These conversations are vital to keeping our rivers working year-round, no matter the forecast. We're also excited to spotlight Ted Stilgenbauer of Heartland Fabrication in this month's 3 Questions / 3 Rivers feature. He's bringing some exciting news and insights you won't want to miss.

And while we've got our sights set on spring—longer days, warmer breezes, and a city buzzing with anticipation as the NFL Draft approaches, we'll keep you posted on all the latest as the countdown continues. Here's to staying warm, staying informed, and looking ahead to brighter (and warmer!) days on the rivers.

Mary Ann Bucci Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Port of Pittsburgh Commission and Industry Stakeholders Take Part in WCI DC Fly-In

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission joined industry leaders in Washington, D.C., for the Waterways Council, Inc. Hill Fly-In (February 3-5) to advocate for continued investment in the nation's inland waterways system.

Executive Director Mary Ann Bucci and PPC staff Scott Harshman and Matt Pavlosky took part in two regional delegation teams that included Gretchen Chamberlain (ACBL), Kristen Stojakovich (Hines Furlong), and Shane Checkan (Industry Terminals), led by Deb Calhoun of WCI Inc. and a team consisting of Josh Konesni (Nicholas Enterprises), George Petrus (Colona Transfer),



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3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS

with *Ted Stilgenbauer*



Ted Stilgenbauer is the President/Chief Operating Office for Heartland Fabrication.

1. Ted, it's a pleasure to have you in 3 Rivers / 3 Questions. For background, tell our readers a bit about yourself and Heartland Fabrication.

I have served in various roles at Heartland Fabrication's shipyard in Brownsville, PA since 2009, with the privilege of serving as President & COO for the past 10 years. We manufacture new construction inland river hopper barges at MM57 on the Monongahela River in Brownsville, Pennsylvania. Since Heartland's founding in 2005, we've invested more than \$50 million into modernizing the facility, growing the team to over 400 skilled employees, and positioning Heartland as one of America's most capable inland barge manufacturers. We take enormous pride in being a U.S.

continued on page 2 . . .



WCI DC Fly-in (continued)

Robert McCallister (ACNR), which was led by Jennifer Carpenter of the American Waterways Operators. The team met with Pennsylvania and West Virginia Congressional offices to advance key infrastructure priorities.



The delegation urged Congress to fully utilize the diesel fuel tax revenues from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) for priority projects to be identified in the future FY27 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill. Advocates are requesting the need for a FY27 earmark to complete Montgomery Lock. Delegates also reiterated strong opposition to lockage fees or tolls.

For WRDA 2026, the group requested clarification to exclude dam features from the IWTF's 75/25 cost-share requirement for major rehabilitations. For more information on WRDA 2026 priorities, please see our article *Congress Begins Work on Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2026*.

The Commission extends its appreciation to Waterways Council, Inc., especially Deb Calhoun, for organizing the Fly-In, as well as our participating regional industry delegation for continuing to champion the inland waterways system that drives economic growth across the region and nation.



3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Ted Stilgenbauer (continued)

manufacturer that supports the critical transportation infrastructure that keeps America moving.

2. This is an exciting time for the future of Heartland Fabrication! Would you fill us in on some of the plans you have in store for development and expansion at your site?

Absolutely, this is one of the most transformative periods in Heartland's history! We are undertaking a \$65 million, multi-year expansion to modernize operations and increase production capacity from 180 to approximately 300 barges annually. The project impacts the entire facility, including new paint and final weld buildings and upgraded production equipment throughout existing spaces. This expansion will help address a national shortage of inland barges while creating 150 new skilled jobs and strengthening our current workforce of 420 employees. More than an expansion, this is a full modernization to ensure Heartland's long-term competitiveness and operational resilience.

3. In closing, what message would you like to send to our river stakeholders about the importance of this type of development, not only for Heartland Fabrication, but to the community and the river industry?

America's inland waterways are among the nation's most valuable economic assets, moving millions of tons of cargo each year with the lowest environmental impact of any freight mode. This industry is essential to agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and the efficiency of the national supply chain.

Heartland's expansion is about more than building barges, it is an investment in the economic vitality of Fayette County. It is about the creation of stable, high-wage jobs, and the long-term strength of an industry America relies on every day. By modernizing our shipyard and increasing production capacity, we are helping renew and expand the inland fleet right here in Brownsville, supporting regional growth while contributing to the economic and environmental health of the entire river system. We are proud to carry forward this legacy and remain committed to working alongside our partners, customers, and community as we build the next generation of American infrastructure.



Congress Begins Work on Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2026

Both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have begun to hold hearings as they prepare for drafting and passing a Water Resources Development Act bill later this year.

As part of a contingency from western PA, PortPitt’s Executive Director Mary Ann Bucci along with staff were on Capitol Hill on February 4th advocating on the importance of passing a WRDA bill along with the key policy priorities that we would like to see this year including:

- 1.) Clarifying the definition of ‘major rehabilitation’ to exclude dam features from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund requirement;
- 2.) Spending down the balance in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund; and
- 3.) Opposing any potential tolling, lockage fees, or other onerous charges for commercial users of the waterways system.

Congress has passed a biennial WRDA bill for the last six Congresses including in 2024 that contained the following key provisions important to our region and nation:

- Adjustment of the cost-share for capital improvements from 65 percent general revenues and 35 percent Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) to 75 percent general revenues and 25 percent IWTF;
- Authorized Feasibility Study for the Allegheny River; and
- Provided language preserving the current levels of service at locks and dams along the Allegheny River until completion of the Feasibility Study.

Having a WRDA bill every two years helps to safeguard the expedited completion of long overdue projects like the Upper Ohio River Navigation Project (Montgomery, Emsworth and Dashields locks and dams) here in the Port of Pittsburgh District and also helps to ensure sooner realization of the economic benefits of these projects to the region and our country.



Sign up for PortPitt's ImPORTant Notices to receive vital alerts regarding river conditions, USACE notices, Coast Guard notices and other information.
Contact Matt Pavlosky matt@portpitt.com

Steel Valley Visions: An American Legacy The Westmoreland Museum of American Art



Steel Valley Visions: An American Legacy comprises a [traditional exhibition](#) (on view through Jan. 18, 2027) plus an [immersive experience](#) (on view through Nov. 8, 2026)*

Throughout the Big Steel Era in western Pennsylvania, artists captured a compelling visual record of the industry’s rise and fall: the grit and glory, power and peril, beauty and brutality. At the height of the industrial boom, the region’s three rivers burned bright with molten metal, and thick smoke filled the air. This was a place where muscle met machine, and where immigrants and locals alike shaped not only steel, but also a new vision of modern America.
Admission is FREE!



PortPitt will provide updates on the NFL Draft event as we receive information. Stay tuned!



RIVER FRONT PROPERTY FOR SALE

7 DAM ROAD, GEORGETOWN, PA 15043 - BEAVER COUNTY



Lot Size	17.94 acres
Zoning	Industrial
Location	Mile Marker 36.5
Notes	Fleeting for 4 Jumbo Barges Wide
	Dock 200 Feet Long
	3 phase power to site



CONTACT:
AJ PANTONI
ajpantoni@hannacre.com
412-261-2200

HANNA COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE
11 STANWIX ST., SUITE 1024
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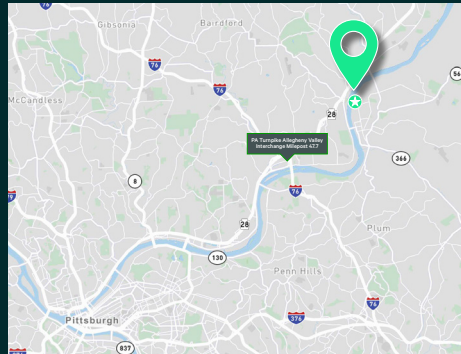


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Contact Us

Robert P. Blackmore, SIOR
First Vice President
+1 412 400 0082
robert.blackmore@cbre.com

T.J. Hobart
Vice President
+1 412 394 9825
tj.hobart@cbre.com

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Port Partners Remain Vigilant Amid Frigid Temps, Icy Conditions on the Rivers

With the recent snowstorm and prolonged sub-freezing temperatures, Pittsburgh's three rivers have seen a near-complete freeze over, causing navigation restrictions, commercial disruptions, and safety concerns. Significant ice buildup on all three rivers led the United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Pittsburgh to issue travel restrictions, including the full closure of Allegheny River, (note, as of Feb 24, 2026, the Allegheny River restriction has been lifted.)

Local waterway advocates, including Shane Checkan of the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh, have helped share information regarding the unusually prolonged freeze and its impact on commercial navigation. "This winter was incredibly intense — the coldest sustained stretch we've seen in decades, created ice conditions that nearly halted river traffic and produced thicknesses like I've never witnessed in my career," said Checkan. "While most hazards have cleared, jammed ice remains upriver, underscoring how severe the season was."

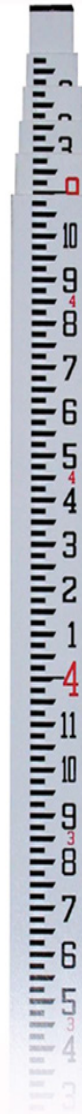
The Coast Guard continues to monitor conditions, issue Broadcast Notices to Mariners, and warn the public about the dangers of unstable ice and moving water beneath the surface. The US Army Corps have also provided information and webinars detailing how to deal with ice jam conditions involving our locks and dams. The National Weather Service has also played a key role in terms of forecasting both weather and the rise of river levels. Checkan added, "The level of communication and teamwork among the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh, National Weather Service, Corps of Engineers, Coast Guard, Port of Pittsburgh, and industry partners, was outstanding and played a major role in keeping people safe and goods moving throughout the event."

As temperatures gradually rise, hopes are that river conditions will steadily improve with a gradual ice melt (see Guide to Flood Stages on right). In the meantime, coordinated efforts between industry leaders and government agencies remain critical to ensure safety during one of the region's most significant river freezes in recent memory.

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission is grateful to our industry, government, and recreational partners for their efforts as the winter weather continues to impact our rivers.

Guide to flood stages in Pittsburgh

- 46.0'** March 1936 flood height. Severe damage with 15 feet of water on Golden Triangle streets.
- 40.0'** PNC Park flooded along Federal Street.
- 38.0'** Water on floor of Brunot's Island power station.
- 37.0'** Water reaches the floor level of Rivers Casino.
- 36.6'** Steam distribution lines in jeopardy. Water reaches the top of the flood wall at PNC Park.
- 36.0'** Serious flood damage occurs to about 500 businesses on North Side and Downtown. Port Authority subway system affected.
- 35.8'** June 1972 (Hurricane Agnes) flood height.
- 35.0'** River level reaches critical stage for Acrisure Stadium and PNC Park.
- 34.6'** In 1996, Point State Park, parking lots and lower levels of Three Rivers Stadium were flooded.
- 32.0'** McKees Rocks affected; Neville Island is flooded.
- 30.0'** 200 manufacturing concerns and companies in Pittsburgh are affected by flooding. Acrisure Stadium playing field is flooded. Point State Park is flooded to the Portal Bridge.
- 29.0'** River Avenue on the North Side begins to flood.
- 28.0'** Pumping operations begin on Neville Island. The Wood Street T Station facilities are impacted. Fort Pitt Boulevard is closed.
- 25.0'** The Parkway "Bathtub" is closed by flooding. North Shore businesses are affected.
- 24.5'** Point Park fountain floods.
- 22.7'** Water reaches top of railroad rails on North Side.
- 22.0'** 10th Street Bypass floods.
- 20.8'** Sewers begin backing up.
- 20.0'** Water is up to one foot deep in the lower areas of the North Shore Riverwalk.
- 19.5'** The Monongahela Parking Wharf is completely flooded.
- 19.0'** Water begins to flow onto the North Shore Riverwalk between the stadiums.
- 18.0'** Water begins to flow onto the Monongahela Parking Wharf.



Source: University of Pittsburgh, National Weather Service Post-Gazette



OUR PORTPITT TEAM

MARY ANN BUCCI
Executive Director



MATT PAVLOSKY
Assistant Executive Director



SCOTT HARSHMAN
Marketing and
Program Manager



MIKE BRINZA
Operations Manager



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