

The Newsletter of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2023 Vol 4 (issue #15)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As 2023 comes to a close, we look back on a year of great accomplishments, as well as the goals that remain ahead. The past year brought much-needed attention to our region's infrastructure, specifically with the initial funding of the Upper Ohio River Navigation Project and the groundbreaking at the Montgomery Lock and Dam this past August. Additionally, the Waterways Council Inc. brought their National Media tour to the Port of Pittsburgh placing us in the national spotlight, and we congratulate them as they celebrate their 20th Anniversary serving our waterways. We are also excited that Representative Ryan Warner has been reappointed to our PPC board, and he is featured in our 3 Rivers / 3 Questions section of our newsletter.

Moving into 2024, our work continues. The USACE's updated projections for the Upper Ohio River Navigation Project demand additional funding, totaling \$1.7 billion, doubling the \$857 originally committed to the project. Additionally, the Charleroi Locks and Dam project will be coming to completion in Spring 2024, and we will be working to mitigate the impacts of the changes to the that river system. The PPC, along with the Southwestern PA Commission, is co-leading the newly created Save The Allegheny River (STAR) coalition, which will strive to keep the Army Corps from reducing any further the Levels of Service on the Allegheny River. All three rivers face critical issues in the coming year, and the Port of Pittsburgh Commission will remain diligent in its mission to support our waterways and our stakeholders.

On behalf of everyone here at the PPC, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season, and we look forward to serving you in the coming year!



Mary Ann Buccini Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Work Begins on WRDA 2024

Even with the FY24 congressional appropriation bills still in-complete, the committees in both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate with jurisdiction on the biennial Water Resources Development Act have already started to work on the next WRDA bill that is slated for activity and hopefully final passage in the summer of 2024.

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission has expressed to our congressional leaders and their staff our priorities for WRDA 2024 which include:

- Navigation projects, like the Montgomery L/D project, identified as "funded to completion" with Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding, should continue to be 100% funded from the General Treasury -- not cost-shared -- which is consistent with Congressional intent.
- No further reduction in the Allegheny River's existing Levels of Service classification by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

These are and will be the top issues that we'll be continuing to advocate for in the coming year.



3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS

with Rep. Ryan Warner



Ryan Warner is a member of the PA House of Representatives serving District 52. He serves on the Appropriations; Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities; Transportation; and Environmental Resources and Energy committees.

1. Representative Warner, the PPC is pleased to see you return to our Board! Tell us about some things you've been working on, and what's happening in the 52nd District (Fayette)?

I'm happy and very excited to be back! With redistricting, the 52nd district is now home to a large portion of the Monongahela River, from Brownsville to Belle Vernon. We also opened our new district office in Connellsville, located right next to the beautiful Youghiogheny River, where we have a lot of exciting recreational projects on the way!

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Federal Government Funding Shutdown? Not yet

In mid-November, Congress passed and the President signed yet another Continuing Resolution to keep the federal government funded into early next year. Even though the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 began on October 1, 2023, Congress has not passed the necessary appropriation bills to fund the government in FY24 and consequently must pass “CRs” to keep parts of the federal government operating or face a government shutdown.

Of particular importance to the inland waterways, the Energy and Water appropriations bill which funds the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Civil Works Programs, along with agriculture, housing, transportation, and veterans’ programs continue to operate under the previous year’s funding level until January 19th. All other agencies are extended through February 2nd.

To keep current lock and dam infrastructure projects as well as those scheduled for future work on track, including both the Lower Mon and Upper Ohio Projects, it is extremely important that the FY24 appropriations for the Corps’ Civil Works Programs gets final approval in early 2024. Any further delay, or if Congress decides to pass a long-term CR, would be detrimental to these infrastructure modernization efforts.



Waterways Council Celebrates its 20th Anniversary in New Orleans

The Waterways Council Inc. (WCI) and maritime industry stakeholders met at the Four Seasons in New Orleans November 13-15 for WCI’s annual Waterways Symposium. This year’s symposium, while maintaining its focus on issues related to the nation’s waterway industry and infrastructure, also celebrated WCI’s 20th anniversary. The PPC and the former DINAMO organization (The Association For The Development Of Inland Navigation In America’s Ohio Valley) were instrumental in the creation of the new national trade group, WCI.

Four former chairmen were also present for the symposium, including Campbell Transportation’s President and CEO, Peter Stephaich, along with the current chair Cherrie Felder, vice president of Channel Shipyard. The Port of Pittsburgh Commission was also in attendance. Staff members Scott Harshman and Matt Pavlosky represented the PPC and our region, serving as a proud sponsor of WCI.

The Waterways Symposium began by featuring a pair of economists. Peter Ricchiuti, a professor at Tulane University’s Freeman School of Business, offered a broad economic outlook. Also presenting was Kenneth Simonson, chief

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3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Rep. Ryan Warner (continued)

As far as legislation, a bill that I’ve worked on for a few years with Rep. Kate Klunk, that would expand the right-to-know law to include Pitt, Penn State, Temple and Lincoln was just signed into law by Governor Shapiro.

2. Your current committee assignments in the State Legislature include: Appropriations (subcommittee on Government & Financial Oversight), Environmental Resources and Energy, and of course, Transportation. Can you tell us a bit about those roles and your responsibilities, and your priorities for those committees?

The Appropriations committee is a catch all committee. Every bill that is voted on in the House is also voted on in the Appropriations committee for its fiscal note. The committee is also responsible for developing the state budget, which as you can imagine is no easy task. My goal on that committee is to pass a fiscally responsible budget that respects the taxpayers of Pennsylvania, each year. Environmental Resources and Energy and Transportation are also very important committees. The ERE committee is tasked with balancing our state’s environmental resources while acknowledging the needs and importance of domestic energy. I would consider rejoining the Port of Pittsburgh while also serving on the Transportation committee as a bonus, as the two go hand in hand. I’m an advocate for transportation infrastructure and my goal on the committee is to support and implement responsible infrastructure projects in our region.

3. With your return to the Commission Board, what are some of your thoughts regarding the future of the Port of Pittsburgh, and what are some things we can do to support you in your efforts to develop a strong river and transportation network?

The Port of Pittsburgh is an extremely important commission for our region. Let’s not forget, that at one point in our nation’s history, Pittsburgh was the gateway to the west. The importance of our river system for both transportation and recreation should not be understated. As a legislator we often have to wear many hats, so having the expertise and knowledge of those on the commission not only helps as my role as a commissioner, but also as a Representative is invaluable. I look forward to working with everyone as we continue to promote and expand the use of our waterway system.



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Waterways Council 20th Anniversary (continued)

economist for the Associated General Contractors of America. Ricchiuti was optimistic about the future U.S. economy, while Simonson offered a broad-based construction outlook in the United States.

The keynote speaker was Michael Connor, assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works. Connor presented his top priorities for the program, which include upgrading the nation's waterways and ports to strengthen supply chains and economic growth; building innovative and climate-resistant infrastructure through research and development; and strengthening communications and relationships for stakeholders as well as disadvantaged communities.

The National Rivers Hall of Fame's National Achievement Award was given to Steve Golding, chair of Golding Barge Line, of Vicksburg, MS.

Afternoon sessions included a report by Sean Duffy, executive director of the Big River Coalition, followed by Col. Cullen Jones, commander of the New Orleans Engineer District. The sessions closed with Michael Hecht, president and CEO of Greater New Orleans Inc. The symposium concluded with a 20th Anniversary celebration dinner for WCI.

"WCI's 20th anniversary celebration – and our membership overall – was enhanced by the participation and support of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. PortPitt has been with WCI from the very beginning, and we hope to be together advocating for a modern inland waterways system for a long time into the future as well," said Tracy Zea, Waterways Council, Inc. President/CEO.

It was an honor for the staff of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission to take part in this year's event. As WCI continues its critical role of advocacy, education, and raising awareness for our nation's waterways, the PPC will remain a proud partner and continue to support their ongoing efforts.



PortPitt was well represented at WCI's 20th Annual Waterways Symposium. Pictured here is past WCI Chairman and current PortPitt Vice-Chair Peter Stephaich engaged in dialogue with the WCI Board. Scott Harshman and Matt Pavlosky from PortPitt are in background.

Phishing to Phish Harder by Nate Turer

For some of you who have been avid readers, or whose organizations have done comprehensive training this may be old news. But everyone needs a refresher sometimes. So what is phishing? Phishing has grown to be a catchall term for social engineering-based attacks that rely on tricking a victim into divulging confidential information or welcoming malware onto their system. This can be a precursor to identity theft, ransomware, financial fraud, or even blackmail. They have progressed far beyond "Nigerian Prince" scams, with many of these attacks making comprehensive use of intelligence gathering, technology, and social engineering. It's important to know there is no shame in being a victim of a phishing scam, as well as no shame in asking for help. When in doubt about a message verify it through known channels. Speak to your organizations IT or security staff about any messages that concern you, or in your personal life, a friend or relative.

So, what is new in the world of phishing? And what should we all be on the lookout for going into 2024, and how do we protect ourselves? A trend to be on the lookout for is phishing related to political messaging, organizations contacting you to ask you to sign a petition or donate to a campaign. These will often rely on a sense of urgency, asking you to "pledge your support before it's too late", or stating that a great and terrible thing may occur if enough support is not gathered soon. Very often phishing and social engineering-based attacks will create a false sense of urgency or emergency. This is done by design to make victims rush and not consider the total situation. Many attackers are now specifically targeting their attacks, often directly impersonating a person within an organization, an example of this may be receiving an email that appears to be from a supervisor asking an employee to purchase gift cards, or "confirm" financial or other sensitive information. As with other attacks very often these will attempt to create a sense of urgency or fear, stating these tasks need to be done immediately or ASAP. Steps should be taken to confirm any such requests, and if possible, communicate this information face to face.

When it comes to scams what's old is new, with phone-based scams becoming a growing issue. The most common of these scams often involve the caller claiming to be a representative of Amazon and will request a person's account information claiming to be helping to resolve a billing or shipping issue.

The second most common will be calls with the caller claiming to represent an insurance agency or Medicare, attempting to get a victim to divulge financial information. These sorts

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Phishing to Phish Harder (continued)

of scams are not new but have grown in competency. You should always be doubtful of anyone calling you and asking for information unsolicited, as well as Amazon, Medicare, the Government or any of its agents, will not contact you via the phone to ask for your account or personal information.

The new threat when it comes to phone calls is the use of AI voice impersonation, or regular impersonation techniques, to masquerade as a loved one of the victim. Often these calls will be short, and state they are in some form of trouble. Such as “Grandpa I’m in trouble and need money for bail”. They will state some form of distress, most often arrest, car accident, or medical emergency. Next, they will solicit payment or access to payment. Asking for a wire transfer, transfer of cryptocurrency, or gift cards. Access to payment may come from asking for account information or PINs. Some of these calls may have a person playing the role of a false authority figure, such as a police officer, doctor, or lawyer with the goal of intimidation. Most of these calls will have the following in common:

- A sense of urgency. They need the money immediately or a terrible thing will happen.
- A request for secrecy. They will ask the victim not to speak to others about it to minimize risk of detection, such as a caller impersonating a grandchild asking “Don’t tell Mom and Dad I got in a car crash”
- The scammer will use manipulation to reach their goals.

They will milk fake familial connection to the victim, they may cry, they may say they are scared, and how they are counting on the victim and the victim alone to save them. If you receive a call such as this do not trust it or the voice. Immediately contact the person in question via a known phone number, do not call back the one that called you. If they cannot be contacted try and get in contact with those close to them such as a spouse, children, or friends.

The most essential thing to do is to take a deep breath and resist the urge to act immediately. Do not send any money or divulge any information without verification. If you are concerned about being unable to verify in a true emergency, establish passwords or phrases with family members to verify their identity on the phone if needed. It may be difficult, but it is imperative to not let a scammer get under your skin, or emotionally manipulate you.

What to do if you or someone you know has fallen victim:

These things happen, and again there is no shame to be had in falling victim to a scam. These are attacks purpose-designed and tested for effectiveness. They prey on human psychology, as well as flaws in technology. Most steps that may allow partial mitigation are extremely time sensitive and may require immediate action.

If the scammers were given money through credit card or bank: Contact your financial institution immediately to report it and ask for a transaction reversal.

If they were given money through a gift card: Contact the company that issued the card immediately and keep the card itself as well as the receipt from purchase.

If they were given money through a wire transfer: Contact the issuing wire service organization, it may be able to be reversed if the money has not been deposited or picked up yet.

If they were given money through a cash transfer application: Contact the money transfer app for a payment reversal, if the connected account is a credit or debit card, report the fraud to them as well.

If they were paid via cash sent through the postal service: Contact the US postal inspection service at 877-876-2455. They may be able to have the parcel intercepted before delivery. This will require a package tracking number or other information.

If they were paid via cryptocurrency: This is more than likely irreversible.

If they were given a social security number: Go to Identity-theft.gov and follow the instructions there.

Any questions should be directed to your organization’s security or IT staff, and I will be eager to answer any questions regarding scams. From the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, we wish you a happy and cyber-safe holiday season!



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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Pittsburgh District
is hosting a

Lower Monongahela River Project Public Information Session

To provide information to the community as we near the completion of the Lower Monongahela River Navigation Construction Project for Braddock, Elizabeth and Charleroi locks and dams

**Tuesday, Dec. 12
7 to 9 p.m.**

Elizabeth Borough Firehall
107 Market St.
Elizabeth, PA 15037

For more information contact USACE,
Public Affairs Office at (412) 395-7500
or email CELRP-PA@USACE.Army.mil



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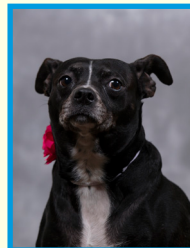
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