

MONONGALIA COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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THE MONONGALIA COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY A RESOLUTION TO KEEP UPPER MON WV LOCKS OPEN

Whereas, locks on the Upper Monongahela River in West Virginia are essential to support river commerce, recreation, and economic development of the Monongahela River watershed in West Virginia; and,

Whereas, the leadership of the federal government, through actions by the administration and congress, is essential for funding and enabling the maintenance and operation of the nation's navigable river systems as well as for permitting the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to work innovatively with States, citizens, local governments, business organizations, river recreational entities, and others to accomplish this need through innovative solutions; and

Whereas, the headwaters of many of our nation's navigable rivers have suffered a decline in river industrial commerce, resulting in severe cutbacks in federal funding for maintenance and operation of locks and dams on these rivers by the COE, including the hours the locks are open for transit by river traffic; and

Whereas, this problem is especially severe within the Pittsburgh District of COE, for the Monongahela River in West Virginia, and, for the upper reaches of the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania, thus causing great harm to commercial and recreational users of these two rivers and to the communities and businesses that rely on unhindered navigation of these rivers; and

Whereas, the US Army Corps of Engineers, via their Inland Marine Transportation System LEVELS OF SERVICE GUIDE, March 2012, has determined that inadequate funding of our nation's navigable river facilities (e.g., locks and dams) has created grave financial problems for maintaining this system on the Mon River, thus requiring that low-use locks be shut down to free up funds for high-use locks, and that the low level of commercial lockages at the locks on the upper Mon in WV, requires that as of 1 November 2012: (1) Morgantown lock will operate one shift per day, weekends and holidays only; (2) Hildebrand and Opekiska locks will be commercial lockages by appointment only-no recreational lockages; and

Whereas, local citizens working as an Upper Mon River Association (UMRA) advocate for the federal resources to protect, maintain, and operate safe locks and dams to support local commerce, recreation and economic development:

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, the Monongalia County Development Authority (MCDA) calls upon Congressional Representatives to support 1) authorization and funding for studies of how the federal government might partner with states and local communities on innovative ways to fund and operate river navigation facilities and services, and 2) the long-standing recommendation of UMRA in coordination with the Pittsburgh District COE, to add support of recreational boating, fishing and other river based recreational and similar economic development activities to the mission and duties of the US Army Corps of Engineers for their operation of navigable rivers.

Be It Further Resolved, the MCDA supports additional, specific actions presented by UMRA (and co-sponsored by the Mon River Recreation & Commerce Committee of the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce) to the Pittsburgh District COE being undertaken as interim solutions in lieu of the planned closing of upper Mon locks on 1 November 2012 until our federal government keeps locks open not only for river commerce but also to enhance river watershed economic development including river recreation.

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(1) Open the upper Mon locks for 45 days during the 1 April through 31 October recreational boating season. It is recommended that three day weekend operations be scheduled for Friday through Sunday, and on holidays. (This would facilitate fishing tournaments which are of great economic benefit to the upper Mon region and would also allow recreational boaters to full access to the upper Mon. This mode of operation also would exercise the locks to ensure they remain operable.)

(2) Authorize the use of contractual, temporary part-time or seasonal employees or even auxiliary volunteer methods to provide lock operators other than using primarily of permanent Pittsburgh District COE employees.

(Evaluate the possibility of a Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District Auxiliary, to provide, train, and certify volunteer lock operators. This auxiliary, perhaps modeled after the successful Coast Guard Auxiliary system, perhaps could undertake other assistance to Pittsburgh District missions.)

(3) Investigate innovative ways to fund operation of the locks. (Consider creating an Upper Mon Port Authority that governments and businesses, others could join and contribute funds for running the locks. This approach would possibly require Congressional action.)

(4) Fully maintain by the Pittsburgh District COE the upper Mon locks and dams upon closure in order to provide public safety as well as protection of the facilities so that in the future these facilities can be quickly returned to service, when political, recreational and/or business factors require that the locks be reopened.

(5) Maintain the nine foot channel depth on the upper Mon so that dams and boat ramps will not be allowed to be silted in.

(6) Provide a public boat ramp access to the Hildebrand pool.

(7) Provide an alternate public boat ramp access to the Morgantown pool which is less susceptible to silting than the Uffington boat ramp or dredge the Uffington boat ramp.

(8) Dredging or relocate the Prickett's Fort boat public launch ramp. (All boat ramps are important to bass tournaments.)

(9) Provide a means at the upper Mon locks for portage of canoes, kayaks, and other small boats, around the locks.

(10) Establish fishing platform access at the Morgantown lock and dam on the south approach wall to the dam.

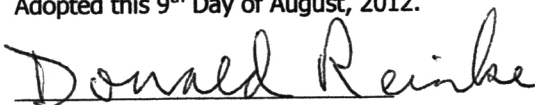
(11) Provide a walk path access to the river bank from the rail trail on the Morgantown side of the river from the Morgantown lock and dam down to Decker's Creek.

(12) Classify WV Division of Natural Resources lockages as commercial lockages.

(13) Exercise the operation of locks and dams sufficiently to limit closure impact on fish mobility on the river and to permit survival of mussels.

(14) Explore the possibility of remote control of lockages at three upper Mon locks from the Point Marion lock and dam.

Adopted this 9th Day of August, 2012.



Donald Reinke, Director and Secretary
Monongalia County Development Authority