Proposal: Litter Boom below Hildebrand Dam on Monongahela River
By Tim Terman

Background:
 For years residents of Morgantown have complained of litter trapped at the Morgantown Lock and
 Dam. Before the mid-1990s the issue was not so obvious, but because of millions of dollars in
 development in the Wharf District of Morgantown, it has become an increasing problem because the
 dam is adjacent properties where visitors and citizens congregate.

Many people blame the Corps of Engineers for not removing the litter, inasmuch as the Corps owns and
maintains the facility. However, litter does not impede operation of the facility and litter control is not
part of the Corps mission. Also, because of obvious safety concerns, the Corps will not allow volunteers
to remove the litter.

Since 2006 the Mon River Revival program has been working on this issue during the summers through
clean ups along the shores above and below the dam at Morgantown. These cleanups, along with the
state-sponsored River Sweep, have helped reduce litter in the area.

In fact, during the 2007 and 2008 programs it was noted that during periods when the river flow is
reduced because of dry conditions, litter actually was blown up river from behind the dam and collected
in areas where the Mon River Revival Program could remove it.

Mon River Revival: This program relies on youth volunteers and others during weekend trips on the
river. With the 28 foot pontoon boat Mon River Monitor, litter is picked up along the banks below the
dam, an area often seen by visitors, and above the dam.

Removing the litter below the dam helps keep the river clean for those who visit Morgantown, either on
the river or on the land.

Above the dam, the litter is removed so that it won't mar the banks and won't return to the area behind
the dam. The Mon County Solid Waste Authority has arranged to dispose of the litter and the state EPA
has paid for disposal fees. The Revival program is supported by a grant from the City of Morgantown
through the Community Vision Foundation.

Why a boom at Hildebrand?

A litter boom at Hildebrand Dam, about five miles above Morgantown would do two things. First, it
would stop litter in a remote area away from Morgantown. The litter problem is an issue mostly because
the litter is being trapped at Morgantown, the principal city in North Central West Virginia and a city
that is trying to entice visitors and tourists. We should mention that Morgantown is home to the state's
flagship university, which brings visitors in from across the United States and the world.

Second, it would stop litter from being distributed along the banks in the Morgantown Pool, one of the
most scenic on the Upper Mon, if not the entire river.

Third, and very importantly, it would make collection of litter easier. The River Sweep and the Mon
River Revival programs deploy cleanup efforts along miles of river bank. Getting into the banks is often

difficult and often risky because of submerged logs and low hanging tree limbs. Volunteers run the risk of stepping on jetsam with nails while they reach for litter, and they must go from bank to bank, one section at a time, slowly covering miles of Mon River bank.

These problems would be minimized by a litter boom at Hildebrand that would stop and hold litter there for periodic removal. The Mon River Revival program could remove most of the litter during the summers easily from the boom, then do quick cleanups along the banks for any litter that had gotten past the boom.

The labor intensive and resource intensive River Sweeps could concentrate on areas above Hildebrand because the Morgantown Pool would be largely dealt with at the Hildebrand Lock.

Obstacles of river force, safety and funding:
The **strength of the river's** flow has been raised as a possible obstacle. During certain months, the Mon river experiences significant water flow, which brings down everything from docks to trees. From

December to June, these periods are common. This past year on the 4th of July the river was high and large tree limbs were observed. This kind of hazard would strain and possibly break a boom below Hildebrand Dam.

One solution to this would be to deactivate the boom during known times of high water by simply disconnecting the boom from its mooring point on the Hildebrand outside lock wall (which would be one option for mooring given Corps approval). This could also be done when heavy rains are predicted, such as the ones around July 4 of 2008.

Estimates are that the boom could be deployed at least six months of the year (late June to November or December). Remember during some of these months, the river's flow is often so mild that litter is actually blown upstream from the dam.

Safety is an important factor, especially when relying on volunteers. Removing litter from a boom at Hildebrand would be safer than cleanups along the river's banks, taking into account the hazards described above. Removing litter from a boom below the dam, placed at a sufficient distance from the dam to be away from the dam's discharge, would be no more dangerous than fishing in the tail waters.

Funding:
Chuck Joseph at the DEP has done some research on a possible boom and he saw one being installed in Texas that cost $90,000. That kind of money would be hard to raise. Another possibility is building one from scratch with steel cables, buoys and anchors.

One aspect of the possible boom is continuation of a program to remove the litter from the boom. For now, I can commit the Mon River Revival to this, but the future of that program depends on whether I can keep it going. But, even without my participation, any program with one or two johnboats should be sufficient to remove the litter. But that would require a steady funding commitment.

Summary: The latest solution being circulated that I know of is that any hydro-electric addition to Hildebrand or other dams on the Mon would be required to deal with disposing of the litter entrapped at the dam. That is a solution at least 10 years away, and if it is 10 years away, it might be 15 years off or never.