

Upper Monongahela River Association

Throughout 2005 UMRA, the **Upper Monongahela River Association**, has been working actively with other organizations toward our goal, *improving our river corridor*. We participate in joint activities with the Corps of Engineers through the CERRUS (Corps of Engineers and River Recreation Users Summit), watershed groups, and as volunteer consultants to both public and private riverfront developers. For this “annual report” we’d like to focus on MRRCC.

Vision 2020 / MRRCC offer new perspective on Mon River development

Vision 2000 was initiated by the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce and community volunteers in 1989 at the behest of then-Governor Gaston Caperton. The initial organization provided the impetus behind the creation of such major community improvement projects as the Caperton and Mon River Trails, the Village at Heritage Point and the Wharf District development. As the program’s initiatives have progressed, the program itself has evolved into Vision 2020, currently managed by Brad Allamong with assistance from Vision 2020 steering committee chair Irv Schuetzner. The Mon River Recreation and Commerce Committee of Vision 2020 (MRRCC), has “taken on a life of its own.”

“With the Chamber’s support, the MRRCC has organized annual Upper Mon River tours” said MRRCC member Don Strimbeck, also secretary of the Upper Mon River Association. “The tours’ purpose is to inform influential and interested community members about the river’s history, to draw attention to recreation and commerce currently happening on the river and to increase awareness of development opportunities along the Upper Mon’s banks.”

Grafton Mayor and UMRA Board member Tom Bartlett and his wife Barbara have volunteered the use of their 52-foot cruiser *The Enchantress* for the outings. The 18-ton craft is moored at the Star City municipal boat dock - the only docking facility along the Upper Mon currently able to accommodate a vessel of *The Enchantress*’ size and configuration.



Ed Michael, Morgantown Mayor Ron Justice, Morgantown City Council member Jim Manilla, Wally Venable, Dr. Rummy Hilloowala, and Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce President Scott Rotruck.

In the best Vision tradition, the tours also serve to bring together representatives of diverse river-oriented organizations - each of whom views the Upper Mon from a slightly different perspective.

“We’ve invited major real estate developers, municipal officials, representatives of environmental groups such as the Friends of Decker’s Creek and recreational entities such as BOPARC and the Mon River Trail Conservancy to take our tour,” Strimbeck said. “Architects and engineers also are on the guest list, as are journalists and representatives of not-for-profit tourism and arts organizations whose activities frequently are anchored at Morgantown’s riverfront. Amazingly, many of these folks have never seen the river *from* the river.”

The Enchantress heads north (downstream) to the Point Marion Lock, then turns south (upstream) and proceeds through the Morgantown Lock to the Hildebrand Lock. The cruise totals approximately 32-miles.

During the cruises, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources district fishery biologist Frank Jernejcic, an MRRCC member, discusses fish populations in the Mon, ongoing issues of river access for boaters and fishermen and possible development sites. MRRCC and UMRA member Wally Venable adds comments on the Upper Mon's history from its pre-lock days through its use as a thoroughfare for passengers and freight, pointing out coal and limestone loading facilities on the way. They also explain such topics as the responsibilities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on navigable inland waterways such as the Mon and the function of the waterway's system of locks and dams.

Organizers also anticipate - and welcome - questions and candid discussion from tour passengers.

"The Upper Mon tours offer a prime example of how diverse special interest groups can work in a cooperative venture toward a common cause," Allamong noted. "The basic question here is 'What role will the river play in the future development of the larger community?' and the tours are an early step toward coming up with an answer."

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Upper Monongahela River Association

We're working to improve our river corridor.

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