



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### RIVERS OF STEEL TO ACQUIRE RIVERQUEST

January 22, 2016, Homestead, PA – Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation, managers of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area announced today that they have reached a final agreement with the board of RiverQuest for the acquisition of that organization and its assets. The announcement of the agreement marks the end of an 18-month long process during which the two organizations were working on the details of how the merger will occur. During that time, a business plan was developed that recommends a strategy for Rivers of Steel’s integration of RiverQuest into its operations. The business plan also charts a course for the continuance of RiverQuest’s hallmark educational programming, and also provides for other alternate uses for tours and events.

August R. Carlino, President and Chief Executive Officer of Rivers of Steel said, “We are extremely excited to announce that a formal agreement to acquire and merge with RiverQuest has been executed. This announcement comes after many, many months of hard and detailed work between the boards and staff of Rivers of Steel and RiverQuest. “

“With the agreement, the recently completed business plan, and the continued support of the foundation community, this historic merger will finally come to be. This merger/acquisition assures the continuance of RiverQuest’s programming and with the projected expanded operations, and it will dovetail nicely into our tours and other river-based programs and activities,” Carlino added.

James Roddey, the President of RiverQuest, added, “It is with great expectation for the future and proud recognition of the past that we announce the merger of RiverQuest with Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation, parent of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. The RiverQuest educational program has served close to 100,000 students and their teachers. An additional 100,000 people were served in other RiverQuest programs including summer camps, educational charters, scout days, group tours, and community landside events. These programs took place in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area for 20 years and will continue to fulfill the mission of teaching the importance of our rivers and the unique ecology and environment of our waterways. We are extremely grateful to have Rivers of Steel assume responsibility for this very popular and successful program.”

Roddey continued, “Merging two organizations can only be accomplished when there is a shared commitment of cooperation and determination of both parties at every level. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the management teams and boards of Rivers of Steel and of RiverQuest for meeting every challenge and overcoming every obstacle. Our special thanks to the region’s foundation



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community and corporate funders as well as local, state and federal government leaders for their steadfast and unwavering support and encouragement. “

Rivers of Steel is a non-profit organization based in Homestead, Pennsylvania. When the U.S. Congress established the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area in 1996 to commemorate the industrial and cultural heritage of southwestern Pennsylvania, it named Rivers of Steel as the managing entity, in partnership with the National Park Service, overseeing the programming and projects in eight southwestern Pennsylvania counties. A similar designation was made by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for Rivers of Steel to manage a state heritage area in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The federal and state programs have worked together under Rivers of Steel’s management creating one of the nation’s most visited national and state heritage areas. The organization is best known for the preservation of the Carrie Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Swissvale and Rankin, PA. It also operates a very successful tourism business including tours and events at Carrie Furnaces, along with bringing in thousands of visitors each year to Pittsburgh and surrounding counties through its receptive services tourism subsidiary, Rivers of Steel Heritage Tours.

RiverQuest was established in 1995 and has operated a very successful river-based education program in southwestern Pennsylvania. RiverQuest operated programs on board the Explorer, the work boat Environmental Award-winning hybrid-type, electrically propelled vessel that accommodates 90 students per educational day and up to 120 passengers for general operations. This 90-foot, 85-ton motor vessel was designed and built as an environmentally friendly “green” vessel specifically for RiverQuest.

RiverQuest has a unique history of providing experiential education in environmental science to almost 100,000 K-12 students and their teachers, representing 256 schools in 74 school districts and 13 counties. Efforts will continue to incorporate essentials of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) that have emerged as major priorities in contemporary education. RiverQuest’s energy literacy-themed outreach programs continued an important trajectory, with service to more than 14,500 students in PA, WV, and OH since 2012. Underserved minority students accounted for 20% of the youth served by RiverQuest school programs. Additionally, RiverQuest has provided program scholarships to Tickets for Kids, allowing 4,500 children to participate in various environmental education programs.

The next steps include regulatory and governmental approvals of the merger/acquisition, along with raising the funds necessary to complete the transition. The state-of-the-art electric propulsion system is currently being refreshed with some new components that will keep Explorer operating efficiently and reliably. Programming should begin again sometime in the Fall of 2016.

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