



RIVERS OF STEEL NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Next Ten Years, 2016-2026



RIVERS OF STEEL: THE NEXT TEN YEARS, 2016-2026

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APPENDICES The following reports and documents can be accessed at <https://www.riversofsteel.com/preservation/museum-and-archives/research/docs-and-reports/>. Stakeholder interviews available upon request to Rivers of Steel staff.

Supporting Regional Economies, National Heritage Areas and Their Impact, Alliance of National Heritage Areas, Tripp Umbach, 2012

The Economic Impact of National Heritage Areas, 2013

Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area Evaluation Findings, Westat, 2012

Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas, A Report by the National Park System Advisory Board, 2004

Acquisition Analysis & Investigation Phase One & Two Reports, the Hill Group, 2015

Carrie Furnaces Site Redevelopment, Phase II, Wilbur Smith Associates, 2009

Wood Street Communications Social Media Plan, 2015

Rivers of Steel Strategic Assessment Final Report, December 2010

Organizational Self-Assessment Checklist, Standards of Excellence (Pennsylvania Nonprofit Organization), 2009

Rivers of Steel Branding Statement, December 2015

Rivers of Steel Board Memorandum regarding RiverQuest Acquisition, 2014



HERITAGE AREAS

"Heritage areas tell stories that are too big, too gritty, too alive, and just plain too expensive to be confined to the boundaries of traditional national park unit. And heritage areas harness grassroots energy to power all this good work."

The Living Landscape Observer

"... the longer I look at landscapes and seek to understand them, the more convinced I am that their beauty is not simply an aspect but their very essence and that that beauty derives from the human presence ... The beauty that we see in the vernacular landscape is the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance striving to be loved."

John Brickeroff Jackson, "Discovering the Vernacular Landscape", Yale University Press, 1984

Heritage areas bring the dynamic story of landscape and the beauty derived from a region's human presence alive for a public audience. They convey the cultural and historical significance of a region and the people who once lived and toiled there. The National Park Service defines National Heritage Areas as follows:

“National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape.

Through their resources, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation's diverse heritage. NHAs are lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs. NHAs are a grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development. Through public-private partnerships, NHA entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Leveraging funds and long-term support for projects, NHA partnerships foster pride of place and an enduring stewardship ethic.”

Of the 49 National Heritage Areas designated by Congress since 1984, there are six, including the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, in Pennsylvania. The National Park Service (NPS) administers Congressional funding, offers technical assistance and oversees the nationally designated heritage areas.

In addition to National Heritage Areas, many states throughout the country also have designated heritage areas in order to achieve a more regional experience

and to tell a more focused regional story. Twelve heritage areas, including Rivers of Steel, have been established in Pennsylvania at the state level through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) since 1989.

Heritage areas provide hands-on education in history and cultural traditions through community venues, imparting the unique identity of a people and a place. As Edward Muller queried in his April 17, 2004 Lecture “Industrial

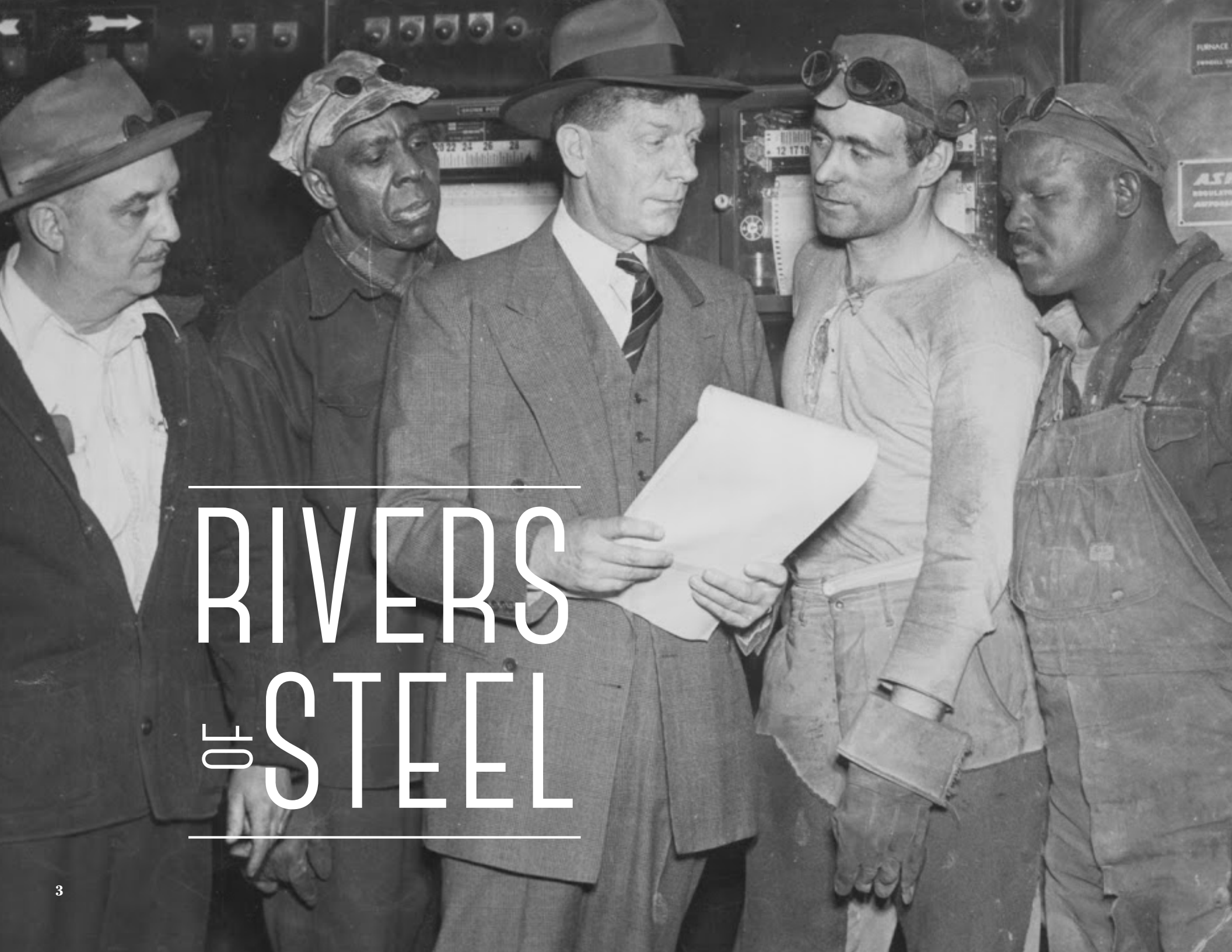
Preservation: Connecting People, Place, and History: “After all, what is the story of the Homestead Works of Carnegie and later U.S. Steel without Homestead the community, without the Hole-in-the-Wall where workers were paid and their spouses came to capture the pay envelope, without the taverns intercepting the thirsty workers and their pay envelopes, without the churches nurturing the needs of the families ...“

Heritage areas also help enhance communities in the regions they serve by creating jobs, attracting new businesses, and supporting existing ones. Importantly, heritage areas play a key role in the development and enhancement of tourism, one of Pennsylvania's leading industries.

According to “The Economic Impact of Pennsylvania Heritage Areas, June 2015”, The Center for Rural Development, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, in 2014 heritage visitor spending's impact on the state economy was 25,708 jobs and \$708 million in labor income. Overnight visitors spent an estimated 7.5 million nights in the 12 Pennsylvania heritage areas. The 2015 study also concluded that 70 percent of the visitor spending in the 12 regions would be lost if the “heritage anchor attractions” were lost.

Heritage landscapes are associated with recognized patterns of activity in place and time. They are manifestations of human activity in space...the essence of what gives character to and defines place.”

*Richard Francaviglia, “Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America.”
The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.*



RIVERS OF STEEL

Rivers of Steel, designated as both a National and State Heritage Area in 1996, is managed by the non-profit organization, Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation (formerly Steel Industry Heritage Corporation). The National Park Service (NPS) describes the value and import of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area as follows:

“The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area reveals how one region, in a sustained and thunderous blast of innovation, ambition and fire, forever changed America and its place in the world. It is the story of the industrialists and the workers who pushed an infant industry to its ultimate limits and in doing so pushed the world into the Age of Steel”.

Pennsylvania’s Lt. Governor Schweiker once described Rivers of Steel as leading the region in celebrating and promoting the industrial and cultural heritage of the Pittsburgh region. “The people and industry of this area helped build our great nation and now, through tremendous partnerships, this region is blending the old with the new to protect that heritage and enhance the quality of life. Through comprehensive planning and vision, Rivers of Steel is helping to revitalize the economy of communities up and down these magnificent rivers.”

Rivers of Steel carries out its call to action by protecting, conserving, enhancing, and imparting the story of steel and related industries through the southwestern Pennsylvania region’s cultural, historic and recreational resources. Rivers of Steel tells the dramatic story of southwestern Pennsylvania, “yesterday, today and tomorrow.” It demonstrates, through innovative and engaging programming, how Pittsburgh and its surrounding region “built the world” when it was the center of iron, steel, coal and coke production. In doing so, it also tells the story of Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania today, while serving to empower the communities through revitalization.

FORMATION OF RIVERS OF STEEL

Steelmaking reached its height during the 1940s when America’s involvement in World War II demanded steel for the protection of democracy and freedom. The Pittsburgh region then led the world in steel production. By the 1970s, American steelmaking began a steady and steep decline and by the late 1980s, the physical sites in southwestern Pennsylvania which were the only evidence of a once mighty industrial center were being demolished. In 1991, Congress authorized the creation of the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force to develop a way to preserve this vital part of the nation’s heritage.

In 1993, the Steel Industry Heritage Concept Plan was published. It proposed establishing the Rivers of Steel heritage area and immediately implementing

it as part of a regional development strategy designed to make southwestern Pennsylvania a leading destination for visitors and tourists. Creation of this major heritage area was also designed to improve the quality of life for the region’s population through the attendant economic development.

In 1995, Rivers of Steel’s original Management Action Plan (MAP) was developed. The MAP set forth a vision for the organization’s first 20 years of operation. Many of the most vital goals set forth in MAP have been met, and some surpassed. Importantly, Rivers of Steel has been able to acquire and preserve key heritage sites in the region which otherwise would have been lost forever, taking their stories with them.

Initial federal designation of Rivers of Steel included the counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland. The initial state designation originally did not include Armstrong County, but it was extended to that county almost immediately after formation. In 2008, both state and federal designations were expanded to include Butler County. Rivers of Steel encompasses the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio river valleys and their tributaries. The three rivers, which meet in Pittsburgh, provide a spectacular visual metaphor of steel's impact on the region.

DEVELOPMENT OF RIVERS OF STEEL

The five "Journeys" through that region which were originally contemplated in Rivers of Steel's 1995 MAP remain the centerpiece of its philosophy and approach to interpretation and community organizing. The Journeys are executed via various interactive programming, tours, art installations, and events, as well as by way of quality publications such as "Routes to Roots." That publication, available both in print and online, offers visitors engaging self-guided Journey itineraries which expose them to traditions, folk life, industrial heritage, foodways, culture, art, architecture, and landscapes unique to southwestern Pennsylvania.

Many of the major challenges facing the organization in 1995 have been successfully addressed, such as the primary goal of acquisition, stabilization, and preservation of the Carrie Furnaces site and the preservation and transformation of the Bost Building in Homestead. Other challenges remain, and new opportunities have surfaced.

In its two decades of operation, Rivers of Steel has become a catalyst among both state and national heritage areas, and has gained a reputation for providing quality educational and interactive experiences which impart the cultural and historical legacy of the region. Innovative and flexible in operation, Rivers of Steel has responded quickly to both opportunities and challenges. This entrepreneurial quality has led it to expand into non-traditional programming including art installations, receptive tourism services, and a thoroughly modern

concentration on environmental conservation. Festivals held at Rivers of Steel's key historical sites, such as the Pump House and Water Tower and Carrie Furnaces properties, bring in wide audiences and raise public awareness.

This flexibility, coupled with excellent management practices, has enabled Rivers of Steel to acquire and fund technical assistance and strategic grants for hundreds of projects throughout the region. Rivers of Steel has established productive relationships with multiple private foundations, thereby receiving funding for appropriate projects, augmenting state and federal funding. These grants helped to establish a strong receptive services component, increasing attendance at events and on tours. Grants have been used to build trails, supplement educational programs, launch historic preservation projects, and enable multiple heritage studies and plans.

The ability to see opportunities as they arise has resulted in unique partnerships. These partnerships, such as those with the urban arts organizations, sustainable energy system providers, industrial landscapers and the acquisition of the river-based educational service, RiverQuest (Pittsburgh Voyager, Inc.) help keep Rivers of Steel's programs relevant to its audiences.

Rivers of Steel has aggressively faced and addressed challenges as they have arisen. In particular, it successfully managed the period following the 2008 economic recession when both state and national heritage area funding programs were in jeopardy and sustainable programming and operational funding was doubtful. The staff remained stable and strong during that fiscal crisis, demonstrating their commitment to the mission. As has been true throughout its history, Rivers of Steel addressed the continued uncertainty in traditional funding sources by launching a concerted effort to diversify and build sustainable funding sources, including an increased focus on social enterprise, expanding business opportunities and fees for service.

Having successfully navigated its first twenty years of existence, Rivers of Steel is in a strong position as it enters its next decade of operation, ready to face the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities which that decade holds.



PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Pennsylvania heritage areas are required by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to develop a Management Action Plan (MAP) prior to designation. Accordingly, Rivers of Steel promulgated its MAP in 1995 to serve as a guide for the successful implementation of its vision and mission. Developed from the Steel Industry Heritage Concept Plan, the MAP describes a vision using cultural and historical resources to bring the industrial heritage of southwestern Pennsylvania to life, engaging and accessible for the purpose of economic development and tourism promotion.

Recognizing changing landscapes and priorities over the last 20 to 30 years, DCNR has encouraged heritage areas to update their original MAPs and has supported the cost of those updates through grants. DCNR and the 12 heritage areas in Pennsylvania also recently collaborated on a five-year strategic plan to direct the heritage area program through 2020. One key recommendation from this plan is the drafting of a MAP update with work plans for each heritage area against which to allocate resources. The National Park Service (NPS), for its part, encourages Heritage Areas to demonstrate their sustainability as noted in the National Heritage Areas Organizational Sustainability Survey Report (2014): “National Heritage Area coordinating entities should include the ability to plan, staff and govern an organization as well as leverage and secure resources.”

Many of the original, most vital goals set forth in Rivers of Steel’s original 1995 MAP have been accomplished. The original MAP still serves as a foundation for the work of Rivers of Steel, but augmentation is due.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Rivers of Steel region has transformed dramatically in the 20 years since the drafting of the original MAP, and Rivers of Steel has adapted its operations and focus in response. It is imperative that the MAP be revisited to keep organizational objectives relevant.

Environmental Changes

When Rivers of Steel was considered for designation, the loss of the steel industry was painfully fresh in the public’s mind, and the wisdom of preserving its memory was questioned. As the Pittsburgh region’s economy recovered and it gradually became a center for technology and world class health care, interest in Pittsburgh’s steel powerhouse past grew among those who remembered its significance. It became even more important to convey this heritage to those who do not remember it, because it is their heritage as well.

Downtown Pittsburgh residential living is exploding, primarily among retirees and young professionals. As contemplated and predicted in the original MAP, interest in outdoor recreation and tourism in the area has grown dramatically. Outdoor amenities, attractions, and businesses related to those industries have increased. *The Great Allegheny Passage* bike trail connecting Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. has been completed, bringing more national and international visitors and outdoor enthusiasts to the region. Venture Outdoors, a non-profit organization, was founded in June 2001 as the Western Pennsylvania Field Institute, and is dedicated to promoting outdoor recreation in the region. *Riverlife Pittsburgh*, (formerly *Riverlife Task Force*), a public-private partnership established in 1999, has followed Rivers of Steel’s lead and focuses on the development of riverfront parks and riverfront economic development in Pittsburgh. The River Town Program, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, offers

community development assistance in a similar vein throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Interest in conservation and “green” technology innovation has increased, fitting with Rivers of Steel’s mission and goals.

Pittsburgh has developed into a center for technological innovation, attracting companies such as Google which now occupies a modern office complex in the city’s east end. These technology companies are attracting young workers and new residents to the Pittsburgh region.

Health Systems such as UPMC and Highmark have become behemoths, and have a strong public outreach with a focus on preventive care and healthful lifestyles. People generally recognize the health benefits of outdoor recreation for young and old alike.

These developments and others continue to offer new transformative opportunities for partnerships and the cross-marketing of recreational, healthful, and heritage resources to bring a whole new and vital audience to Rivers of Steel’s attractions.

Project and Operational Changes

Rivers of Steel itself has changed significantly since 1995. At the time the MAP was drafted, Rivers of Steel was hoping to acquire with non-federal funds, the Carrie Furnaces site in Swissvale and Rankin, PA. That became a reality in 2010 when Rivers of Steel entered into a renewable lease for the site with Allegheny County. The site has since been preserved, and stabilized and has become the “jewel in the crown” as contemplated in the original MAP.

Establishing the site as an affiliated unit of the NPS continues to be explored. Additionally, Allegheny County has announced plans for a mixed use development in the brownfield area around Carrie Furnaces. The County intends to continue to work closely with Rivers of Steel throughout the process.



Public programs at Rivers of Steel’s sites have become diversified and far reaching. Festivals, art installations, receptive visitor services, community markets and retail have become both innovative ways to tell the story of steel and a means to fund the programs. With the acquisition of RiverQuest, additional educational programming and expanded tourism offerings will be implemented.

Sources of funding have also been diversified. While Congress has reauthorized funding for Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area through 2021, the future of governmental funding still remains uncertain. Recognizing that budget impasses and other challenges to government-based funding are a new reality, Rivers of Steel has developed and continues to develop alternate sources of funding to support operations as well as individual projects. Sources include both public and private foundations, events, venue rentals and fees for services and earned income. A focus on key strategic partnerships offers cost-sharing and revenue generating opportunities for programs and projects.

In addition to changes in Rivers of Steel’s operations, the role played by its board with regard to governance has changed, matured, and developed over the years. Board members were initially involved in operations and programming, but have transitioned into more sophisticated roles including business planning, legal advice, and marketing.

This MAP update serves to provide a framework for building upon the strengths of Rivers of Steel in the new, very different reality in which it now exists. It provides a guide for continuation and reinforcement of the growth and success Rivers of Steel has achieved to date. The updated MAP modifies the objectives of the 1995 Management Action Plan to focus Rivers of Steel in ways which will lead to achieving sustainable revenue while maintaining the authenticity and relevance of its vision and mission for the present into the future.

In 2010, the board and staff of Rivers of Steel took part in a strategic assessment to guide their near-term action agenda and lay the foundation for an update of the management action plan for long term realization of its vision. Likewise, in 2012, Rivers of Steel's organizational structure was extensively evaluated and a financial analysis was conducted of the organization by the National Park Service (NPS) as mandated by Congress. In 2013, NPS commissioned an economic impact study of six National Heritage Areas, including Rivers of Steel, which demonstrated its value and sustainability.



In addition to the information gleaned from these evaluations, input was solicited through interviews and surveys of past and present board members, staff, and stakeholders (funders, public officials, and other partners). A full-day retreat was convened so board and staff could focus on developing a strategic plan. A comprehensive report – *"Rivers of Steel Strategic Assessment: Fall 2010"* - grew out of those endeavors. Two major issues raised at the retreat were the need to diversify funding sources so as not to be overly dependent on government funding and the need for a dedicated development staff person.

The issues raised in that Assessment were further refined by the management team of Rivers of Steel. These issues were synthesized along with a catalog of the accomplishments of Rivers of Steel over the last 20 years. Organizational successes and course changes were analyzed to sharpen the mission and vision statements of Rivers of Steel to better reflect its current and future direction. To formulate an updated MAP, a consultant was hired to review the collected information and draft a statement of board and staff determinations. Note was

taken of all that has changed in 20 years - the addition of Butler County to the footprint of Rivers of Steel, the addition of a meaningful and vital public art component to Rivers of Steel's installations and offerings, as well as the acquisition of the educational entity of RiverQuest. Receptive tourism services, as contemplated by the original MAP, have been implemented and expanded outreach, regularly bringing in large tour groups. Key heritage sites have been acquired, protected, stabilized and developed into revenue generating venues through tours and event rentals.

Numerous key people were interviewed for input on changing conditions and historical perspective. Data was collected from many sources, including past and present board members, staff, representatives of foundations, representatives of DCNR and NPS, and other stakeholders. Program history, organizational assets, educational materials, and existing work products were analyzed. The current communications, marketing, and public relations materials, and outreach plans were evaluated for effectiveness. Attention was focused on setting attainable goals for Rivers of Steel with an eye on sustainability, both financial and organizational.

From these efforts, a framework was constructed to support the MAP for Rivers of Steel's third decade of operations. The findings, recommendations, and outcomes of the above noted evaluations and strategic planning sessions as well as the input gleaned from interviews and surveys of key players were used to formulate the updated MAP for "Rivers of Steel: the Next Ten Years - 2016 to 2025." The previous reports and findings are included in this report as appendices.



THE MISSION & VISION OF RIVERS OF STEEL

Rivers of Steel conserves, interprets and develops historical, cultural and recreational resources throughout western Pennsylvania, including the eight counties that comprise the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. The dynamic and powerful story of the region's evolution from colonial settlement to "Big Steel" to the modern era is evident in its many artifacts, buildings, vibrant communities and industrial sites. Among other destinations, core landmarks such as the Carrie Blast Furnaces Nos. 6 and 7, the Battle of Homestead Site, consisting of the Pump House and Water Tower at the site of the former United States Steel Homestead Works, and the W.A. Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop at Rices Landing, Pennsylvania on the Monongahela River, illustrate the magnitude of this story.

Rivers of Steel links the colonial and industrial heritage of the region to its present and future economic and cultural life. Rivers of Steel is a nationally recognized brand that not only celebrates the past but also embraces the future, by connecting people to their environs. It fosters and promotes resource conservation and development, heritage tourism, cultural and educational programs and economic revitalization in partnership with hundreds of local communities in the greater Pittsburgh area, and along the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio River valleys, the very places that gave birth to the most powerful industrial heartland the world has ever seen.



GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA

Rivers of Steel comprises eight counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, which encompasses the greater Pittsburgh area, the Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio River valleys and their tributaries. This area was once known as the “Steel Making Capital of the World.” Rivers of Steel works with communities throughout its vast region to identify, conserve, promote and interpret the cultural, historic, recreational, natural, and other resources associated with steel and steel-related industries, and the areas in which those industries flourished.

Rivers of Steel’s geographic area is vast. The region possesses unique natural and industrial resources that speak to the history of the steel industry, as well as other industries on which the steel industry depended. Those resources are utilized by Rivers of Steel to demonstrate how the steel industry affected the lives of the people of the region and, ultimately, shaped the world.

The steel industry reached out from Pittsburgh into the surrounding counties of southwestern Pennsylvania. Industrial facilities were the heart of many small towns. Remnants of the once strong industry, such as abandoned mills, coke ovens, railways, and the towns which grew up around the industry, remain in the region and provide many authentic sites appropriate for interpretation and education. The Rivers of Steel web site offers a visualization of the impact through the sites noted related to the industry Rivers of Steel Footprints: A Virtual Tour of the Pittsburgh Industrial District, 1750 to Present. www.riversofsteel.com/map/category/499/.

Rivers of Steel shares some of its geography with other heritage areas, such as the Lincoln Highway and the National Road Heritage Corridor. These heritage areas focus on the transportation story interrelated and central to the industrial heritage theme of Rivers of Steel. The Path of Progress National Heritage Area, although currently without an organizational structure, intersects the Rivers of Steel footprint, and celebrates the industrial past of western Pennsylvania. There has been interest expressed by the National Park Service, legislative leadership and local government in the Path of Progress geography to integrate the two federal designated heritage areas under Rivers of Steel.

Rivers of Steel covers large tracts of rural landscapes as well as encompassing small cities such as Brownsville and Connellsville, historic centers of steel and coke-related industries. It stretches from Pittsburgh, the urban, industrial center of the steel industry, and extends to the rural village of Rices Landing in Greene County— and is connected across these vast and varied tracts by the now completed Great Allegheny Passage, the biking trail built on the bed of the industrial railway which once served these industries. Other trails, both land-based and water-based, connect the communities of the region.

The region is also rich in natural resources which, in addition to being a counterpoint to the heritage sites, are a draw for recreational and outdoor enthusiasts. State parks, such as Ohiopyle in the Laurel Highlands, provide camping, hunting, fishing, boating and hiking. Rivers of Steel is committed to these outdoor recreational uses and to the continued conservation of the natural areas of the river valleys which the region encompasses, a mission it shares with the National Park Service and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). These natural resources provide a dramatic backdrop for illustrating the story of steel as well as a strong visitor draw. The same visitors which are drawn to the outdoor recreation provided by the natural resources of the region are interested in the area’s history and heritage and are an audience for Rivers of Steel’s programming.

The Laurel Highlands, a portion of which lies in the geographic footprint of Rivers of Steel, is experiencing new growth in outdoor recreational visitors, most notably due to the completion of the Great Allegheny Passage, the 150-mile rail trail which traverses the area and ultimately connects Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh. With the continuing anticipated growth of outdoor recreational tourism, rural small towns and villages have discovered new economic engines through connections to river and trail users. These initiatives, taking place throughout the Rivers of Steel geography, offer additional opportunities for strategic partnerships as well as an opportunity for Rivers of Steel to engage with DCNR, combining a conservation function with its heritage message.

When Rivers of Steel first came into being, many in the Pittsburgh region did not see the value of conserving the story of steel. The steel industry had only recently collapsed, the region was viewed as being in decline, and many were focused on the idea of “re-inventing” the region, rather than preserving the heritage of steel.

Those who established Rivers of Steel understood that preservation of the region’s history—its industry, culture, traditions and heritage—was important and that Rivers of Steel could “look to the past while also looking towards the future.” They recognized that the same industriousness and innovation that built the steel industry would once again revitalize the region. Preserving the story of its past would enhance the region’s future and allow new development while preserving the region’s unique character and identity.

The National Park Service (NPS), a strong ally of Rivers of Steel as well as its conduit for federal funding, shares a common focus with the heritage area on industrial heritage, promotion and conservation through its “Heritage Initiatives” and “Stories of America” programs. NPS partners with Rivers of Steel, and other national heritage areas, to reach into gateway communities, key to the preservation of the natural resources NPS maintains and protects. Rivers of Steel, and other heritage areas, enable NPS to further its mission by fostering community stewardship of the nation’s heritage.

For 20 years, Rivers of Steel has built a distinguished record of achievement celebrating, enhancing and marketing the industrial history and cultural landscape of southwestern Pennsylvania. It is viewed as a leader among Pennsylvania’s heritage areas. With a strong and dedicated staff and board, Rivers of Steel also has garnered the support of key partners and elected officials who understand and support its mission. Rivers of Steel enjoys a reputation for doing good work and has established itself as an innovative and forward thinking organization. A top Pittsburgh foundation official speaks highly of Rivers of Steel’s diversified use of funding granted for receptive services, saying, “the programs offered have a great response and engage a large number of people in the other counties.”

IMPLEMENTATION OF 1995 MAP

The substantial implementation of the original 1995 Management Action Plan demonstrates the dedication and commitment of Rivers of Steel’s board leadership and staff. The ability to adapt, change and execute over the years demonstrate the innovative, entrepreneurial and flexible approach taken to achieve the overarching goals of Rivers of Steel.

From its inception, Rivers of Steel began to collect materials related to the steel industry, resulting in an extensive library and archival materials available to researchers. These materials include audio and video histories and interviews of those personally involved in the steel industry along with company records, blueprints, etc. Were it not for this immediate action, most of these materials, now available to schools, universities, and researchers to peruse on-line or in person, would have been destroyed or lost.

Initially, Rivers of Steel sent community organizers into towns, neighborhoods, and communities in the region to uncover individual’s stories and objects for archiving. In addition to building Rivers of Steel’s impressive catalog of artifacts, this process forged a valuable beneficial partnership with community members and gained their involvement in and commitment to the heritage conservation process.


Former steelworkers currently lead tours of the Carrie Furnaces site where some of them may have once worked, lending a unique level of authenticity to the visitor experience. This initiative’s original intent was to create jobs in the distressed communities around Homestead, Pennsylvania. Originally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Department, the project also helped fund the historic restoration of the Bost Building to be used as the job training facility for these retired steelworkers. This historic building now houses Rivers of Steel’s offices, museum and gift shop.



As originally planned, Rivers of Steel acquired historically significant key heritage sites. Primary among these is the Carrie Furnaces site which was in danger of being dismantled by a salvage company which owned the land. Rivers of Steel was instrumental in Allegheny County's negotiations for the site, leveraging its ownership of the Rankin Hot Metal Bridge, which the County wanted to acquire. Rivers of Steel conveyed the bridge to the County and entered into a renewable lease with it for Carrie Furnaces, giving it the opportunity to preserve, stabilize and use the site to advance its mission. Without Rivers of Steel's intervention, it is very likely this vital heritage site would have been lost forever.

The 1995 Rivers of Steel MAP contemplated five themed "Journeys" which tell the story of steel in five geographic areas – Big Steel, Mountains of Fire, Fueling a Revolution, Mosaic of Industry, and Thunder of Protest. The Journeys concept provides an immersive, authentic experience of the region's people and industries. Visitors learn by doing and experiencing, not merely by viewing artifacts through a glass case. Visitors are immersed in and take part in the folk traditions and culture of the workers whose industrial heritage Rivers of Steel and its partnering communities have preserved. As a result, that heritage comes alive and can be seen in context with the present and the future of the region.

Further, the Journey concept of the 1995 MAP has been adopted and used as a guide by other tourism and community development initiatives, such as the Trail Town Program®, the River Town Program, and Gateway Communities. These programs strive to better connect communities to recreational and nature-based assets. These assets, along with heritage tourism can help spur economic development.

The background of the page is a photograph of the interior of the W.A. Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop. The image shows a large, dark industrial space filled with various pieces of heavy machinery, including lathes, mills, and other metalworking equipment. The lighting is dramatic, with bright spots from overhead lights illuminating parts of the machinery and creating deep shadows elsewhere. The overall atmosphere is one of a well-used, historic industrial facility.

Rivers of Steel has been able to offer strategic mini-grants and technical advice to many communities through which it journeys, assisting them in offering complete and authentic heritage experiences to visitors. As but one example, in Rices Landing, Rivers of Steel acquired with non-federal funds, a key historic asset, the W.A. Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop, and provided Rices Landing with funds to stabilize the building and install wayfinding signage. Rivers of Steel also supported the rails-to-trails development that resulted in the Great Allegheny Passage and provided funds for signage along The Three Rivers Heritage Trail, all of which has been an economic generator for the region.

Rivers of Steel has advanced its educational mission through its tours and programming at its sites, and by offering “The Rivers of Steel Curriculum” designed to assist teachers and educators in preservation of the region’s heritage. These materials include “Our Rivers: Yesterday and Today”; “Coal and Coke”; “Folk Life”; and “Steel Heritage.” They are available for download on the Rivers of Steel website, are adaptable for classroom use, and can be modified for age and ability.

With the acquisition of RiverQuest, Rivers of Steel is on the threshold of being able to implement many aspects of its educational mission in an exciting new way, more directly using the region’s rivers and providing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) as well as Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) education and programming along with the history of the region.

Lastly, along with preserving the industrial past, Rivers of Steel, like DCNR, is charged with conservation of the natural resources of its region and implements all of its programs with that conservation mandate in mind. Conservation is considered in all projects and Rivers of Steel actively pursues low environmental impact whenever possible, such as using goats to naturally clear invasive species from the Carrie Furnaces site, installing “living” landscaping, use of solar power, and endeavoring to obtain LEED certification for its buildings.

According to the NPS's 2013 report "The Economic Impact of National Heritage Areas," Rivers of Steel has had a tremendous impact on the communities it serves, resulting in tax revenues of over \$6 million annually, through operations and grant making. Over 400,000 individuals visited Rivers of Steel's sites, as calculated by its regional partners, over the three year period 2009-2011. Rivers of Steel is credited with being responsible for the creation of over 900 jobs over that same period. The report is attached as Appendix B.

KEY REAL ESTATE, ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

Rivers of Steel has acquired, preserved, and creatively utilized a number of key significant heritage sites which offer opportunities for authentic, interactive and innovative programs, designed to reach large audiences. Programs and installations at these sites combine the site's history with the culture and folk traditions of the people who toiled there, while at the same time being relevant to new and varied audiences of all ages.

To cover the on-going costs of using and developing these sites while still preserving and conserving them, Rivers of Steel has made them revenue generating. Festivals, art installations and exhibits, and performances generate revenue through entry fees, retail sales of merchandise, tours and participation fees from commercial food, beverage, and craft vendors.

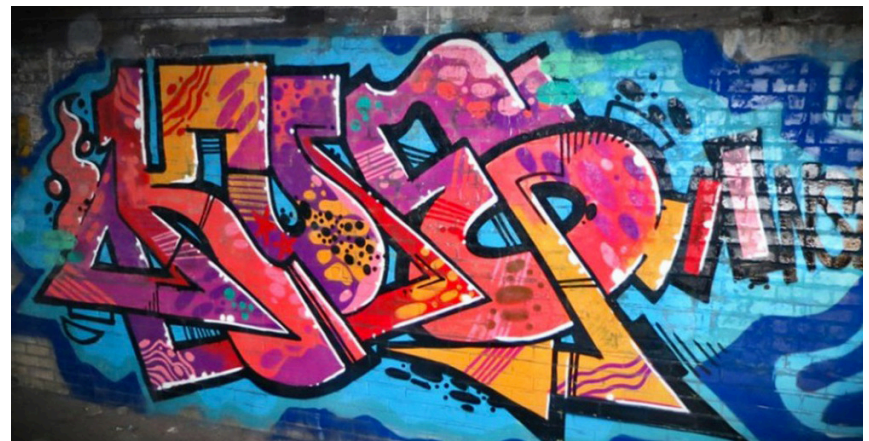
CARRIE FURNACES

Carrie Furnaces Today

In June of 2010, Rivers of Steel acquired the rights to the 21-acre site of Carrie Furnaces No. 6 & 7 of the former U.S. Steel Homestead Works, through a renewable lease with Allegheny County. The furnaces operated from 1907 to 1978 and are the only blast furnaces which remain standing since the decline of the steel industry. Through the efforts of Rivers of Steel, the site received National Historic Landmark designation in 2006.

The Carrie Furnaces acquisition has become the focal point of the story told by Rivers of Steel which has consistently kept the Carrie Furnaces tours and installations relevant to its ever-changing audience. The audience of today is often made up of people with no firsthand knowledge of the steel industry. Their grandparents, and soon their parents who remember the glory days of steel, will be gone and, without the preservation of sites such as this one, the stories of the time of steel would be gone as well.

The New York Times touted the Carrie Furnaces site as a "must see" in its July 15, 2015 "36 Hours in Pittsburgh" piece. In September of 2015, Carrie's "Festival of Combustion", which invites visitors of all ages to participate in a variety of "hot art" happenings while getting a behind-the-scenes look at these icons of industry and their sprawling grounds, was listed by a regional online magazine, NextPittsburgh, as the first of its top twelve events to attend in Pittsburgh.



Graffiti art at Carrie Furnaces

Carrie Furnaces tours run May through October including monthly "Happy Hour with Carrie", several different types of photo safaris, and Urban Art events led by graffiti artists. The "Festival of Combustion" demonstrates an iron pour and offers interactive events telling the story of steel. The stories themselves are compelling, but Rivers of Steel recognized that a "hook" was needed to draw audiences to the venue, and so offers a combination of food, art, and music as that draw.

In a unique use, Carrie Furnaces has become well known for its innovative art installations. The Sprout Fund has supported art projects and installations that create new opportunities for the production of site-specific art. The well-known 40-foot Carrie Deer Head sculpture was completed in 1997 by a group of young urban Pittsburgh artists using on-site materials and is now maintained by Rivers of Steel. Their now-famous sculpture visually embodies Pittsburgh's metamorphosis of industrial sites' return to nature and is the subject of a documentary film about its creation.

Rivers of Steel partners with and sponsors RoSArts a unique and on-going visual and performing arts project which offers innovative exhibitions with several art installations remaining on site. RoSArts began in 2013 and is a laboratory where artists investigate and communicate the history and ecology of Carrie Furnaces through site specific artworks.

The Carrie Furnaces site also offers the opportunity to tell an environmental impact story and a story of sustainability as well as the story of industry, fitting with Rivers of Steel's conservation mandate. The site, previously denuded, is now a place where nature is coming back and Rivers of Steel is using that nature in its art installations and exhibits as well as its landscaping. At the Carrie Furnaces site, Rivers of Steel partners with a landscaping expert specializing in industrial locations and brownfields in public projects. *The Addition by Reduction* project employs editing techniques to organize and enhance the site's beauty and biodiversity. The result is the ever-evolving "Iron Garden" which consists of native and non-native vegetation that regenerates spontaneously in the industrial rubble and compacted soils, resulting in a more authentic and maintainable landscape than would introduction of planned and purchased landscaping to this urban brownfield.

The Iron Garden Walk is a dynamic educational project made up of interpretive iron plaques, actually poured at Carrie Furnaces, which lead visitors through an industrial meadow on the Carrie Furnaces' grounds created in partnership with Penn State Master Gardeners. The Iron Garden Walk is described on the Sprout Fund website as presenting "the historical Carrie Furnaces as more than just a defunct industrial site, but rather as a living entity, changing with the seasons,

where visitors can be engaged in both the site's history and its ecology."

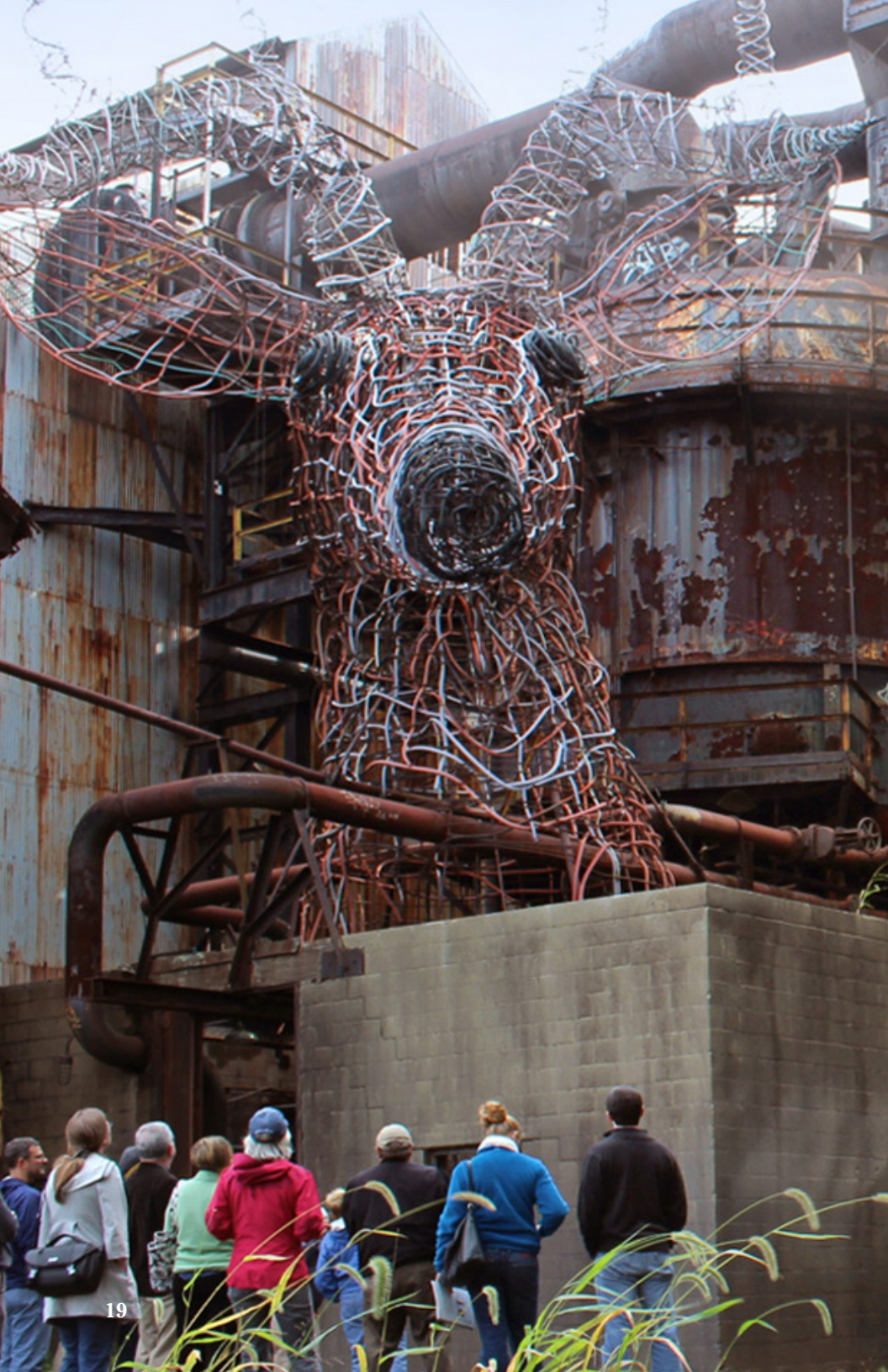
To allow visitors to have an immersive experience of history, physically traversing the site and walking in the footsteps of former steel workers, maintenance is essential. Accordingly, in addition to being stabilized and preserved, the site is also being enhanced. A solar energy system was installed in 2013 prior to the filming of "Out of the Furnace" and was thus able to provide basic site lighting, emergency lighting, a video monitoring system and internet connection to enable the filming. The site continues to be enhanced through a \$60,000 grant, along with funding from a major railroad company, private foundation and a DCNR grant, to improve lighting of the site's industrial architecture to allow for more dramatic evening programs and special events.

A Pittsburgh-based company dedicated to the development and implementation of sustainable practices is working on the site, installing solar panels resulting in excess power. Ultimately, the intention is that this excess power may be sold to generate revenue.

The Future of Carrie Furnaces

Rivers of Steel is working with its Congressional delegation and local governments to attain designation of the site as an "affiliated unit" of the NPS. Securing National Park designation for Carrie Furnaces was previously contemplated but is currently not feasible. Being designated an affiliated unit would likely attract additional federal funding and physical support, but would allow Rivers of Steel to maintain management control and flexibility regarding use of the venue for events. Deciding how best to pursue this designation is an important short term goal and the best method of proceeding must be determined by the board. Once determined, advocating for the designation is vital.

Allegheny County is endeavoring to attract development to the area surrounding the site – including residential, commercial and light industrial development. Staff will work closely with the County throughout the development process to ensure the integrity of the site is protected and the story is interwoven into new structures. As commercial development moves forward, Rivers of Steel



*clockwise from top left: Carrie Furnace Deer;
Interior of Pump House;
Iron Garden Walk, photo by Rick Darke*

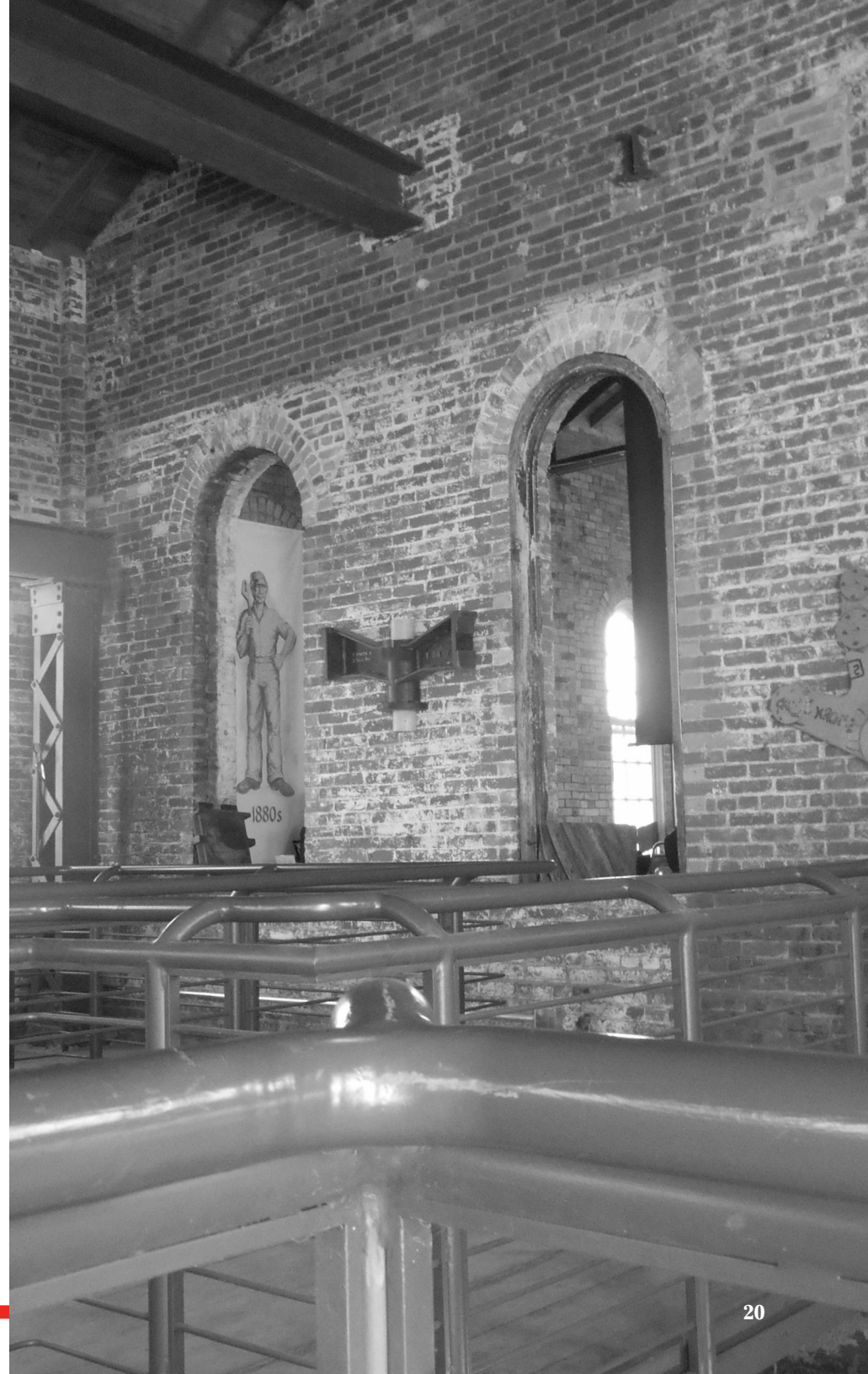
should remain involved in the decision-making process of location and type of development and, from the start, explore revenue generating opportunities. One consideration would be to position Rivers of Steel as site manager with potential “lessees and tenants” contributing to “common area” maintenance fees.

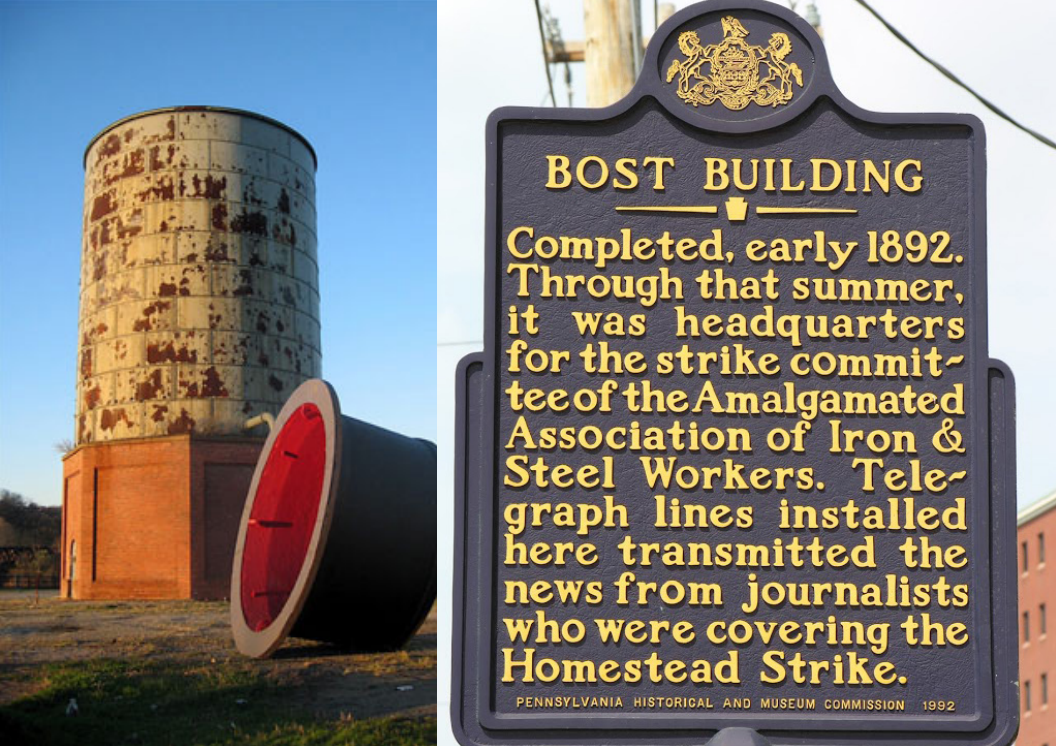
THE BATTLE OF HOMESTEAD SITE

The Battle of Homestead Site, also known as “The Pump House”, is the site of one of American Labor’s most significant battles, the 1892 Homestead Strike and Lockout. Guided group tours are offered of this historic Homestead location but, again, Rivers of Steel’s approach to engaging the public is to offer more than just historical tour experiences at historic sites. The Pump House and Water Tower are the two historic structures on a riverfront site which lends itself to events including festivals and open-air marketplaces.

Rivers of Steel welcomes cyclists to the property from The Steel Vally Trail, part of the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP), for which it serves as a trailhead, to enjoy amenities such as restrooms in the Water Tower, bike racks, benches and picnic tables. Overnight and daytime parking is available in return for a small daily donation or an annual membership as a “Trail Head Friend” and generates revenue for the maintenance of the trailhead. Rivers of Steel recognized the opportunity posed by cyclists on the GAP early on and developed a “Saturday Farmers Market” to capitalize on it, raise awareness and generate revenue through vendor fees. Formerly held weekly, the Market is now a twice yearly festival event, complete with entertainment, food and beverage service, and draws hundreds of visitors.

Located across the river from the Carrie Furnaces, the site is visually stunning and offers a unique opportunity to contrast the current uses of the river with those uses made of it in the height of the steel industry. A permanent art installation dedicated to the steelworkers of the past, fashioned of steel itself, reminds those visiting the site that people once toiled to make a living in the spot they now use for leisure.





BOST BUILDING

Completed, early 1892. Through that summer, it was headquarters for the strike committee of the Amalgamated Association of Iron & Steel Workers. Telegraph lines installed here transmitted the news from journalists who were covering the Homestead Strike.

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION 1992

A much needed project, partially funded by Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, completed in April, 2016 to improve and expand the entrance and parking area and renovate the restroom facilities of the Pump House to allow for larger crowds and more diverse programs at the site. This site improvement became necessary when traffic at the site increased upon completion of the Homestead portion of the Great Allegheny Passage. The added amenities to this site, and trailhead for the Great Allegheny Passage, offers additional opportunities for revenues, such as leased retail space, vending and snack machines, storage facilities and overnight parking.

BOST BUILDING

Rivers of Steel is headquartered at the restored Bost Building, located on Homestead's main commercial corridor. Built in 1892 as a hotel for the rapidly growing worker's ward of Homestead, the Bost Building was at the center of the Homestead Lockout and Strike, when it served as the temporary headquarters for the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers and the national press corps covering the emerging story.

This National Historic Landmark underwent a \$4.5 million renovation and, in 2002, opened its doors as the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area's visitor center. The Bost Building includes an exhibit space dedicated to steel and labor history, authentically restored rooms, as well as offices for Rivers of Steel. Today the Bost Building stands as an anchor historic structure on Homestead's historic main street and National Register District.



W. A. YOUNG & SONS FOUNDRY AND MACHINE SHOP, RICES LANDING, PA

The W.A. Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop is located in Greene County along the banks of the Monongahela River in Rices Landing. It is a prime example of America's industrial heritage. All of the equipment in the shop dates from 1870 to 1920 and is remarkably preserved. The foundry's huge coke-fired furnace, which once produced almost anything that can be cast in molten metal, still stands with an unburned pile of coke beside it.

The shop closed in 1966 and sat abandoned until it was purchased by the Greene County Historical Society in 1985. The site underwent thorough documentation by a team of the National Park Service's Historic American Engineering Record and Rivers of Steel, and was placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1998. The site has undergone extensive stabilization with monies in part from public grants and private donations. The roof was replaced in 2010 through a federal "Save America's Treasures" grant of \$148,000. Recently, a \$50,000 grant was awarded for additional restoration under the Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grant program through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and matched by a private foundation. Rivers of Steel offers tours of the site in the summer months; however, when and how often the building is open to the public is dependent on volunteers staffing the site. The site is open most Sundays and by appointment.

To deliver the immersive experience Rivers of Steel aspires to provide, a key volunteer, once a machinist, fires up the machinery for visitors. The entire shop, from floor to ceiling, moves as gears, pulleys, and belts spring to life. Rivers of Steel opens the foundry and machine shop and provides demonstrations for visitors during large events in Rices Landing such as its early summer Riverfest and the Hammer-In Festival every April.



RIVERQUEST

With the 2016 acquisition of RiverQuest (Pittsburgh Voyager, Inc.), a non-profit educational organization that operates a river learning center, Rivers of Steel is taking a substantial step to enhance its educational mission.

RiverQuest provides exceptional river-based educational adventure programs for students, teachers and the community. It utilizes hands-on approaches and technology to further the development of critical thinking skills, technological literacy and environmental awareness. The educational philosophy of RiverQuest, “Tell me, I’ll forget; Show me, I might remember; Involve me, I’ll understand,” complements that of Rivers of Steel, which actively engages its audience in the story of western Pennsylvania’s steel industry.

The acquisition of a boat (the Explorer) to use to tell the story of Rivers of Steel on the very rivers that supported the steel industry is meaningful, both literally and metaphorically, to the mission of Rivers of Steel. RiverQuest provides another avenue through which to draw a wider audience and to advance the educational aspect of Rivers of Steel by providing a greater reach into regional schools and general public.

The Rivers of Steel developed a business plan, exploring revenue generating uses for Explorer, as well as examining alternatives for staffing and capital investment to fully integrate RiverQuest into Rivers of Steel programming. Obtaining RiverQuest’s unique vessel and its river-based educational function strengthens Rivers of Steel, but also raises issues regarding cost of operation and maintenance and a need for additional staff to carry out its mission. (The Acquisition Analysis and Investigation Report by The Hill Group, 2015, are included as Appendix E.)

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Receptive Tourism Services Rivers of Steel has successfully developed a receptive services component which generates increasing revenue and increases visitation at heritage sites by providing a smooth, comprehensive approach to large group touring packages. An all-inclusive package is offered including tour guide management, facility bookings and travel arrangements.

The receptive services staff members create unique experiential itineraries including site visits, and they ensure visitors enjoy a high-quality experience by evaluating accommodations, attractions, and meal venues. The Rivers of Steel staff initiates, develops, and nurtures relationships with potential customers and vendors to develop business and generate revenue. Rivers of Steel’s tours weave in a variety of partner sites to tell the heritage story and, as a consequence, these partners also benefit from increased visitor revenues.

Rivers of Steel was able to expand its receptive services component with the assistance of two substantial grants from a Pittsburgh-based private foundation. The first grant for the years 2013-2014 was used to fund the deployment of initial program personnel in outlying counties, such as Washington and Greene. The program not only paid for itself in that time, but successfully engaged the outlying rural counties in

promoting the heritage area. The second grant was to assist with developing receptive services along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, east toward Johnstown and Altoona, and west into West Virginia and Ohio in order to enable Rivers of Steel to use that asset to draw in a larger audience.

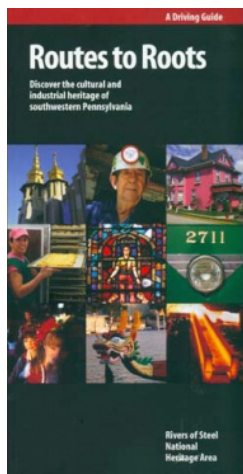
This receptive services work brings value to communities not being served within the geographic footprint of Path of Progress, a National Heritage Area presently without a working management entity.

As W. Franklin Reed, Chairman of Rivers of Steel, added in the press release announcing the acquisition of RiverQuest: “The three rivers are central to our understanding of our region’s cultural and industrial heritage, and the combination of these two great organizations will not only enable Rivers of Steel to expand its historic and cultural tourism programs, but also preserve RiverQuest’s acclaimed ‘floating classroom’ educational offerings.”

This diversification in funding is important, perhaps essential, to Rivers of Steel's continued growth and future sustainability. With the annual challenge and uncertainty of state and federal funding sources, securing other means of reliable and renewable support is required to allow for successful planning and implementation of programming and meets the NPS goal of sustainability for National Heritage Areas. Accordingly, the receptive services component will be further explored and developed to meet the need for alternative sources of revenue.

Publications The publication *Routes to Roots*, provides a comprehensive driving guide to discover the cultural, ethnic, and industrial traditions of Rivers of Steel's vast region, offering five self-guided Journeys. The guide offers a look at the diversity of this region's art, architecture, culture, and industrial history and is available in print as well as on line. The guide's Journey itineraries provide immersive experiences in historical communities and sites located along the five routes described online at www.r-to-r.com.

Rivers of Steel's website is informative and easy to navigate. Visitors to the site can plan their visits, learn of upcoming special events, purchase branded merchandise and numerous publications, make arrangements to view archival



material (some of which can be directly viewed online), and identify authentic ethnic storytellers or performers. Rivers of Steel's educational curriculum is available to teachers and others for download.

The website however should be enhanced to appeal to a broader and increasingly mobile audience. The Rivers of Steel website and its accompanying social media channels, newsletters, and collateral are a first step and virtual headquarters for Rivers of Steel's storytelling, engagement, and promotions. While the current website is well-stocked and well-maintained with content and orienting information, the user-

experience and content marketing strategies must catch up to changing users

expectations, specifically mobile-responsive web environments and easy-to-share features. These enhancements will re-shape and re-energize all facets of Rivers of Steel's communication vehicles.

Partnerships Rivers of Steel has developed successful and beneficial partnerships with artists, museums, businesses, educational institutions, labor groups, local governments and with the communities it serves. It links with local historical and tourism agencies and organizations with which it has many overlaps in mission, such as the Department of Community and Economic Development's Pennsylvania Tourism Office, the Senator John Heinz History Center, the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, the Carnegie Science Center and regional tourism promotion agencies. The archival material which Rivers of Steel's historians had the foresight to preserve has led to natural partnerships with regional libraries and universities.

Rivers of Steel has provided expertise and advice to other non-profits such as the leadership of the River Town Program during its start up in the Monongahela Valley. Continuing to work closely with the River Town Program in linking the Mon River Valley communities is a timely opportunity. Rivers of Steel has also provided much needed mini-grants to other non-profits and communities in its geographical area for specific projects, such as funds for directional signage on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.

In Rivers of Steel's outlying counties, there is geographic overlap with other Pennsylvania heritage areas. A connection in mission exists between these heritage areas, because they all tell the story of the people who built western Pennsylvania. The preservation of the folk traditions and ethnic heritage of the industrial workers of Pittsburgh, the pioneers who traveled the National Road, and the miners who toiled in the Laurel Highlands are natural inroads for partnership with these heritage areas. The Path of Progress National Heritage Area is a 500-mile route through the Allegheny Mountains, crossing nine counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. The geography covered by this nationally designated, but now mothballed heritage area, includes trails, parks and heritage sites that commemorate the steel and contributing industries

in the region. Given the operational stability of Rivers of Steel, theme and geographic proximity, discussion has begun around programmatic expansion and operational oversight of the Path of Progress Heritage Area.

Additionally, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) advocates a collaborative “large landscape” approach to drive strategic investment and actions around sustainability, conservation, community revitalization, and recreational projects in Pennsylvania. Heritage areas work in large geographic landscapes and have comfortably adopted environmental conservation, greenways and nature-based place-making initiatives in recent years. One region where such an approach is underway is the Laurel Highlands, which Rivers of Steel encompasses. As one of the goals of DCNR’s program is the revitalization of core communities within the landscape, this raises the possibility of new partnerships and collaborative projects and programs.

As Pittsburgh continues to garner national attention, landing on many “Top Ten” lists, it is gaining recognition as a national and international tourism destination. Pittsburgh’s rivers are becoming increasingly attractive to recreational boaters. Hiking and biking trails, such as the Great Allegheny Passage, have been completed; others, such as the Erie to Pittsburgh and Sheepskin Trails, are being constructed or contemplated. Interest in these outdoor activities is growing, resulting in additional opportunities for heritage tourism growth and partnership opportunities for Rivers of Steel. Other non-profits such as the River Town Program, the Trail Town Program® and the Allegheny Trail Alliance, already partners of Rivers of Steel, are all promoters of outdoor recreation and economic development in the towns and areas where Rivers of Steel operates. These partnerships could be strengthened in possible joint regional projects.





CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The regional environment has changed in many ways which have already benefited Rivers of Steel or which will benefit it in the future if new opportunities are recognized and seized. Development of recreational areas along Pittsburgh's riverfronts such as bike trails and greenspaces is attracting outdoor recreational enthusiasts, who often have an overlapping interest in heritage tourism. This offers a significant opportunity for Rivers of Steel to gain new partners and reach new markets. But there remain familiar challenges to address.

Over-dependence on public funding for operational costs can lead to financial insecurity, and could limit Rivers of Steel's ability to expand programming and increase outreach and marketing efforts. This instability also prevents the organization from adding or modifying key staff positions to assist with expanded programming or add new projects. Establishment of an experienced development function within the staff is necessary to ensure the future sustainability of Rivers of Steel.

Events such as the "Festival of Combustion", and the RoSArts program, among others, continue to bring in revenue, augmenting traditional funding sources. Expansion of the services and amenities offered at these events is crucial to keeping them new and interesting to the public so revenue continues to be generated. Equally important, however, is communicating to the public that the events they attend and enjoy are developed by Rivers of Steel. Recognition of Rivers of Steel's National and State Heritage Area designation is important for public awareness – not just to bring the public in for special events, but because that public is the source of support for Rivers of Steel.

Increasing public awareness - both regionally and nationally - of what has heretofore been Rivers of Steel's "behind the scenes" manner of operating and raising visibility of the programs offered by Rivers of Steel is key – both to the end-user audience and to funders and legislators. The addition of a marketing staff person could focus appropriate attention on this essential function as well as expand the receptive services program to increase revenue.

Both of these key challenges – funding and communications – are interconnected and addressing them both is necessary to achieve sustainability. The ability of Rivers of Steel to leverage funding is dependent on its ability to communicate its value and benefits to both public and private funders. In addition, new partners for educational endeavors and visitor attraction opportunities must be cultivated through marketing and outreach, such as those which will be associated with the RiverQuest operations and vessel.





A VISION FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Rivers of Steel is in a prime position to build on its past successes and ready to accept the challenges it faces going forward. Rivers of Steel consistently challenges itself to remain relevant to the public, most notably to younger generations who lack an existing understanding of the importance of the steel industry to the region. Rivers of Steel meets this challenge by offering innovative ways to bring the audience to the story – through art installations and shows, graffiti classes, concerts, markets, and interactive hands-on tours.

Accordingly, the following steps of the updated MAP address how to continue to carry out the MAP's original mission while meeting the overarching goal of continued growth and sustainability by concentrating efforts primarily in five distinct areas: 1) increased diversified funding, 2) increased and more effective communications, 3) changing needs in governance, 4) management of physical and cultural assets and 5) programming.

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

FUNDING, COMMUNICATIONS, GOVERNANCE, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING

In order to continue to be successful and relevant, and to expand in ways that fulfill its mission while generating needed revenues, Rivers of Steel plans to focus on five key strategic areas:

1) Funding: Rivers of Steel has diversified its funding and will continue to do so in order to build sustainability and to avoid the insecurity of over-dependence on one source. Other varied and dependable sources must be developed to continue to sustain and grow operations and expand effective programs.

2) Communications: In order to remain relevant, increase attendance and awareness, and relay its importance and value to funders, Rivers of Steel must concentrate on communication - to the public, to private funders, to legislators, to partners and potential partners, as well as to its managing entities, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the National Park Service. In the coming months and years, there are significant opportunities for Rivers of Steel to re-energize its marketing and communications platform – reaching and engaging new audiences, while continuing to inspire and delight stakeholders and

current enthusiasts. The following are the key areas in which the Rivers of Steel marketing and communications will focus on over the next ten years:

- a) Defining and expressing the contemporary “brand story” for Rivers of Steel as a place and organization in order to re-engage current visitor segments and usher in the next generation of Rivers of Steel enthusiasts.
- b) Enhancing communication vehicles to reach and engage new, or untapped, audiences of visitors and potential ambassadors, especially among the Millennials audience.
- c) Increasing public awareness of and connection to Rivers of Steel as a community-oriented organization among western Pennsylvania residents, visitors, and key influencers.

3) Governance: Rivers of Steel must evaluate its already improved board practices to bring them into accord with the increased scrutiny placed on non-

profit boards. With the acquisition of RiverQuest, and the greatly expanded uses of the Carrie Furnaces site, additional board members and ones with expanded expertise will likely be added to address changing program needs. There is also the challenge of several key staff positions presently filled by personnel nearing retirement age. At present almost half of the staff could reach retirement status within the next five years.

Standards of excellence in board governance are readily available through the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) and samples of specific recommendations are included as Appendix 1 to this document. While many high standard practices are already in place, Rivers of Steel should pursue official certification.

4) Asset Management: Management of its physical assets is challenging, as Rivers of Steel's region is vast and it operates with a minimal staff. Rivers of Steel must examine the best course of action to take with staffing, especially with the acquisition of an additional asset, RiverQuest, on-going maintenance needs of its historic sites and public amenities, and infrastructure improvements.

One of the primary goals of all heritage areas is the conservation of a region's distinctive cultural resources, not only through the preservation of the built environment but also the protection of artifacts, historic records and documents.

The organization's web site serves as a portal to archival historic material, specialized curriculum, itineraries and student programs that are available to educators and public as well as virtual exhibits tracking the growth and demise of the steel industry. Rivers of Steel also operates a museum with archives of documents, photographs and audio-visual materials. The organization conserves a virtual treasure trove of historic cultural resources and with more active promotion and targeted social media outreach Rivers of Steel can attract increased users.

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission grants are available for the conservation and retention of archival historical material and Rivers of Steel has

made good use of those grants in the past. This funding source will be pursued in the future as well as more historical industrial archives are accepted by Rivers of Steel.

5) Programming: An essential aspect of addressing the mission of Rivers of Steel is the delivery of programs that tell the story of the industrial legacy of the region, the people and the places which make up its heritage and history. To remain relevant to changing audiences and to capture their interest, engage their support and ensure the protection of this heritage, Rivers of Steel must continue to offer programming which appeals to a variety of audiences. The realities of funding however, dictate that programs must not only deliver on the core aspects of Rivers of Steel's mission but also succeed in a cost-benefits analysis. All programs should be consistently evaluated for adherence to mission goals, costs, benefits, staff time, and the ability to attract growing audiences.



Children aboard RiverQuest's Voyager

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rivers of Steel must seek creative ways to maintain financial stability for its programs, set a standard of excellence in organizational management, and find ways to relay its significant value and relevance to its key constituencies. It must continue to expand and attract new audiences through enhancement of communications and programming. It must define and implement the most effective ways to manage its considerable physical assets. It must also consistently analyze costs and benefits of its programs and projects. It needs to continue to employ the innovative problem solving methods it has used in the past as well as develop new means to accomplish success without unduly overburdening its small staff.

These concerns and challenges have been synthesized into five strategic focus areas with timelines for recommended completion which follow. “Short-term” assumes an immediate launch of the suggested tactics upon approval of the plan, with completion within the first one-to-three (1-3) years. “Mid-term” assumes completion within the next four-to-six (4-6) years, and the “Long-term” timeline is either an on-going project or one with a start and finish within seven-to-ten (7-10) years. There are of course certain actions that are “on-going”. They have been noted as such and listed first in the applicable focus area.

The acquisition of RiverQuest will have an immediate and significant impact on funding decisions particularly in the short-term related to the need for increased staffing.

Due diligence by the Rivers of Steel board and staff has included a two-phase review of RiverQuest current financial and operational issues, current staffing and condition of the most significant asset, the vessel. Phase 1 of The Hill Group study offered varying scenarios for the likely return on investment of RiverQuest. Phase 2 of the Merger and Business Plan includes the development of staffing and finances as well as a plan for integration of organizational infrastructure. The complete Hill Group report is included as Appendix E to this document.

Late in 2015, the board agreed to the acquisition of RiverQuest operations and assets. The final contingencies and legal agreements will be addressed and consummated in 2016.

RIVERS OF STEEL NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

OUR STORY CONTINUES

Among these steep hills and deep valleys and along these winding rivers and legendary corridors, there is a great story unfolding. It's our story. It's a long, twisting, and ever-connected plot of rising and falling, of self-discovery and re-invention. Many chapters are already written and there are many more still to be told. Here in our corner of America, western Pennsylvania, our story continues.



SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 1-3 YEARS

Continue consistent, timely reporting as required from NPS and DCNR. (on-going)

Annually review all programs for costs-benefit analysis including allocation of staff time as costs. Determine importance and relevance to mission, and consider possible partners or other organizations to adopt programs/projects that have low or negative return on investment. (on-going)

Implement the Hill Group's Business Plan detailing staffing needs and resource development as it relates to RiverQuest, to ensure the continued financial health of Rivers of Steel.

Finalize projections for funding required for the restoration of the vessel, marketing and immediate staffing needs specific to RiverQuest.

Determine sources for funding to enhance current staff, including development, sales, receptive services (administration), educational and marketing personnel.

Develop job description and funding source for resource development staff position.

Develop job description and funding source for sales and marketing position.

Develop job description and funding source for educational director.

Develop job description and funding source for receptive services program assistant/administration.

Explore Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program and initiate programs as needed for competitive applications.

Explore RiverQuest operations focused on education offering the opportunity for Rivers of Steel to include STEM and STEAM programming for potential new revenue sources.

Consider RiverQuest vessel for the expansion of existing and expanded tour products for public charters, as well as private revenue-generating events.

Continue to explore the geographic footprint of the receptive services program.

Explore revenue generating opportunities; including, parking fees, and seasonal tenants, and sales at Rivers of Steel locations.

Develop a private donor, corporate giving and planned giving program.

Continue to explore funding sources for conservation and archiving of existing and incoming cultural and historic artifacts, documents, and records.

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 4-6 YEARS

Actively and consistently engage in exploring new funding opportunities through RiverQuest, Receptive Services, RoSArts and heritage sites programming.

Active planned giving program and donor program underway.

Establish funding goals for board participation and reach 100% board participation.

Determine the value of possible program development in outdoor recreation and/or health systems. Existing programs such as Get Outdoors, Nature Prescriptions, DiscoverE are held in Rivers of Steel's geographic footprint and could offer new partnership opportunities and access to resources.

Review foundation grants over the preceding three years and determine if likely to continue or can support be redirected.

LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 7-10 YEARS

Cultivate and regularly nurture relationships with all regional potential funding sources in a systematic and documented way.

Offer dashboard reports on return on investment of significant program areas: RiverQuest, Receptive Services, RoSArts, heritage site events and activities.

Regular reviews of potential applicable state and federal grants are to be included in annual work plans and specifically assigned to staff.



SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 1-3 YEARS

Integrate new brand messaging into all facets of communications, tailoring specific messaging to audience and intended outcomes.

Distribute a Rivers of Steel branding statement and related talking points to board and stakeholders and encourage broad use.

Add brand management and communications topics to regular board agendas through 2017 to assure that board is equipped to answer public questions regarding River of Steel's direction and continuing mission.

Revisit, refine, and re-distribute Rivers of Steel public messaging and branding statement at least every two years.

Design, launch and test a “Rivers of Steel- Our Story Continues” micro-site and corresponding social media effort (#OurStoryPA) that inspires discovery of Rivers of Steel's storyline and destinations, while encouraging online sharing/story-telling from users (narrative, photography, video and/or art). Carrie Furnaces site and RiverQuest are newsworthy and short-term opportunities to engage visitors on this micro-site.

Establish and expand editorial partnerships with regional niche publications and tourism and economic development marketing organizations to generate content and pass-along the “Our Story” micro-site and social media campaign. e.g. Next Pittsburgh, HeritagePA (Heritage is Now), DCNR, VisitPittsburgh, Mon River Towns and Allegheny Conference.

Simultaneously, complete a content and technology audit of RiversOfSteel.com to identify opportunities for streamlining and improving user-experience. Then price a full re-design and re-launch to integrate all content and facets of the “Story” micro-site.

Complete an audit of all program-based logos and promotions and evaluate each for feature and usage on the new website. Then, create an archive of each program indicating specific use/audience. Simultaneously, assure that all program logos carry Rivers of Steel name or brand identification in some capacity to create connection to larger landscape and sponsoring organization.

Re-launch RiversOfSteel.com on a mobile-responsive system and design working on all platforms and devices.

Adopt and implement structural and best practices for social media communications as provided by Wood Street Communications in December 2015 (Appendix G) with special emphasis on linking strategies, photography, graphics, video, and call-to-action.

Re-design and re-launch Rivers of Steel newsletters, social media graphics, and collateral to complement new website treatment and narrative.

Design, distribute, and review a targeted and segmented eSurvey gauging awareness and perceptions of Rivers of Steel as a place and organization. This eSurvey will distribute to audiences aged 25-55 residing in Rivers of Steel counties in western Pennsylvania and in surrounding counties in Ohio and West Virginia via targeted Facebook distribution, email and partner and potential donor organizations.

Integrate learning from eSurvey into communications efforts, namely website, social media and email vehicles.

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 4-6 YEARS

Gather feedback, re-visit, and refine brand messaging as necessary on an annual basis.

Establish and/or re-focus a website subcommittee to monitor web activity and report regularly on quantity and quality of visitation and engagement.

Update content and website experience utilizing monthly reports on a quarterly basis.

Sustain annual eSurveys and visitor intercepts to test awareness of, perception of, and engagement with Rivers of Steel.

Establish and/or re-focus a consumer perception sub-committee to design and continually distribute, monitor, and report on eSurvey and visitor intercept data.

Design and plan visitor intercepts at key locations. (GAP trailhead is one good example) to measure awareness of Rivers of Steel, visitor experiences and to capture demographic information for on-going marketing.

LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 7-10 YEARS

Undertake eSurveys and visitor intercepts every two years to test awareness of, perception of, and engagement with Rivers of Steel.

Establish and/or re-focus a consumer perception sub-committee to design and distribute, monitor and report on eSurvey and visitor intercept data every two years.

Evaluate current website, social media, and digital communication vehicles for re-design and user experience improvements based on consumer feedback and trends/changes in media consumption on the web.



GOVERNANCE

SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 1-3 YEARS

Conduct staff and board self-assessment from the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO)

Apply PANO Standards to the board and determine the best and most appropriate method to do so.

Determine suitable board makeup based on acquisition of RiverQuest and associated expanded programming.

Review Board membership to determine level of expertise in arts, educational programming, and other fields and disciplines.

Determine governance structure most appropriate for Rivers of Steel Arts based on recommendation of staff and RoSArts Advisory group.

Provide regular RoSArts program updates to the Board and staff through the Rivers of Steel Arts Advisory Group.

Provide regular Carrie Furnaces site updates to the Board and staff through the Carrie Furnaces Advisory Committee.

Regularly update operational preparedness document, accounting policies and other management practices.

Develop format for annual work plan reporting that addresses both DCNR new requirements and NPS existing requirements.

Develop a staff recognition and professional development program to ensure active acknowledgement of staff performance.

Actively work toward diversity at board level.



Interior of the Pump House

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 4-6 YEARS

Regularly conduct self-assessment of staff and board operations using PANO guidelines.

Develop staff professional training program.

Develop a program for board training in effective governance; selective webinars, and other training opportunities.

Attendance by a majority of Board members at the annual retreat.

Institute dashboard tracking of key issues for annual Board review.

Inclusion of Board development as a regular Board agenda item.

Completion of individual service plans, updated annually by Board members.

Apply PANO standards to all board operations utilizing Standards for Excellence checklist.

Obtain Standard of Excellence 2.0 accreditation for non-profit organization.

Consider seeking acknowledgement of the highest governance standards through Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award application.

Expand board to include expertise in STEM/STEAM educational programming.

Board membership is diverse in race, gender and geographic representation.

Establish diversity in race, gender and geographic representation in Board.

Solicit Board representation from strategic program partners.

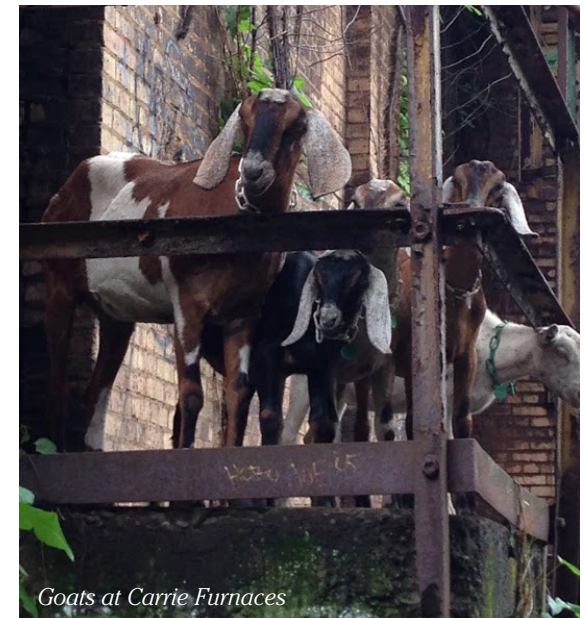
LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 7-10 YEARS

Develop a mentorship program to augment succession plan.

Annually achieve PANO Standards of Excellence 2.0 in board governance.

Engage board in active fund-raising with set goals.

Achieve diversity on board in race, gender and geography.



Goats at Carrie Furnaces

SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 1-3 YEARS

The acquisition and operation of a vessel requires licensed staff, docking and maintenance. This is a new area of asset management for Rivers of Steel and an outlined plan needs to be developed in year one.

Finalize business and operational plan for RiverQuest to bring it on-line and use it effectively in STEAM and STEM educational endeavors.

Consider the value of pursuit of the National Park Service's affiliated unit status for Carrie Furnaces.

Consider the value and probability of success for a capital campaign to create a site improvement and development fund for Carrie Furnaces site.

Consider the launch of a Friends of Carrie Furnaces group; for on-going volunteer needs, supplementing staff, marketing and ambassadors of good will.

Develop a detailed business plan for Carrie Furnaces site outlining prospective uses, costs and potential benefits of site improvements.

Develop specific event niches for Rivers of Steel's historic structures as well as RiverQuest, such as weddings and reunions and increase public tours and public ticketed events.

Develop and institute a maintenance program including part-time maintenance staff for Carrie Furnaces and other Rivers of Steel's historic structures and sites.

Improve parking and signage at Carrie Furnaces and The Battle of Homestead locations.

Aggressively pursue sustainable practices on Rivers of Steel controlled sites, including "off the grid" and excess power generation; living landscape techniques and suitable partnerships focusing on cost savings, revenue neutral or revenue generating opportunities.

Launch a social media and marketing campaign to increase knowledge of and access to archival historic collections on the web site and at the Bost Building visitor's center.

Determine most effective plan for accepting cultural documents, historic records, their display and public access and archiving.

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 4-6 YEARS

Re-examine the return on investment of RiverQuest acquisition, and if determined to be of value, develop a five year business plan for expansion of product, programming and geography.

Execute on-going maintenance planning for RiverQuest vessel.

Continue expansion of partnership with arts organizations such as Alloy PGH to attract broader and younger audiences and communicate the value of the region's industrial heritage in new ways.

Develop a plan for the physical improvement of infrastructure at all Rivers of Steel's heritage sites as needed: parking lots, bathrooms, and sidewalks at Rices Landing's W. A Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop and additional amenities as needed at the Battle of Homestead site. The plan will include sources of possible funding, prioritization of projects and cost-benefit analysis of each improvement.



Parking lot construction at the Battle of Homestead Site

LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 7-10 YEARS

Modify RiverQuest plan as needed to produce either revenue neutral but mission-related outcomes or revenue positive results.

Establish financially beneficial relationship with Allegheny County and new tenants throughout the commercial development of Carrie Furnaces site, exploring fee for service as site manager.

Establish historic sites stabilization/maintenance fund sustained by "friends of" or facsimile. High performing "friends" groups supplement event planning and implementation.

Active use of the Battle of Homestead site (a Great Allegheny Passage trailhead) for events hosted by outdoor recreational users.

Establishing the sustainable landscaping initiatives underway at all Rivers of Steel sites as a model for heritage areas across the Commonwealth.

Operate the Carrie Furnaces site in an energy-sustaining manner with any excess power generating revenue to support the on-going maintenance needs of the site.

Maintain, conserve and market archival and library material, including oral histories, audio interviews, historic material and artifacts through a formalized arrangement with key strategic partners.

PROGRAMMING

SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 1-3 YEARS

Analyze the potential of a partnership with the River Town Program to link Mon River Valley communities more effectively with recreational river opportunities. The acquisition of RiverQuest vessel offers new means of linking riverfront communities.

Develop a process to measure the value of potential partnerships. Potential partners should offer mission compatibility, the opportunity to lower existing program costs through shared resources, and/or offer an introduction to new funding sources.

Develop a list of potential strategic partners within manageable geographic footprints. Rivers of Steel has assisted many organizations throughout the region with technical advice, services and grants and should build on this by forging more formalized alliances in program dissemination and in new projects.

Analyze costs and benefits for River Towns and Trail Towns Program® partnership in projects related to waterways and trails.

Explore possible partnerships with health-related industries in the region; possibly in association with trails and other recreational-based projects, as encouraged by the DCNR through its “Pennsylvania Wellness Program”.

Develop operational and programming for RiverQuest, including educational tours, public events, traveling exhibits, public tours.

Develop a business plan for Carrie Furnaces site that includes operational and programming needs, resources, and timeline for site and structural repairs and improvements.

Work closely with DCNR Regional liaison to ensure DCNR goals of conservation, nature based education, are met through RiverQuest and other programming.

Determine impact of absorption of Path of Progress National Heritage Area into Rivers of Steel.

MID TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 4-6 YEARS

Evaluate (with metrics developed by staff) RiverQuest programming to date and institute changes as needed to maximize impact.

Regularly analyze cost/benefit of existing and new programs.

Collaborate with strategic partners on new programming at all heritage sites when possible, developing formalized agreements as needed.

Continue to develop programs forming local partnerships whenever possible to leverage staffing and resources.

Evaluate Rivers of Steel Arts (RoSArts) and institute changes as needed including expansion or contraction of programming as warranted by cost/benefits analysis.

Finalize a decision regarding possible integration of Path of Progress National Heritage Area geography.



LONG TERM IMPLEMENTATION: 7-10 YEARS

Consistent and regular programming evaluation continues with systemic changes made as needed in programming areas.

Ensure active use of The Resource Directory for Folklife through collaborative marketing with strategic partners.

Actively market Roots to Routes through electronic means and monitor and track its use by strategic partners.

Actively market and sell Rivers of Steel merchandise through tourism promotion agencies and at visitor centers.

Regularly open the W. A Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop in Rices Landing and market it as a key Greene County attraction through a formalized agreement with the municipality and Greene County Tourism Promotion Agency.

Link the Mon River Valley communities through a RiverQuest/Rivers of Steel program.



CRITICAL PRIORITIES FOR MEETING IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

Rivers of Steel faces certain critical priorities which must be addressed in the short term. Primary among these are implementing the business plan, confirming adequate funding, and outlining the final steps for the smooth acquisition of RiverQuest and its integration into existing Rivers of Steel operations.

Board and staff are committed to meeting the goals set for both of these discrete areas of operation.

Also necessary to effectuate immediate development is investment in a concerted marketing and communications effort to raise awareness of Rivers of Steel as outlined in the Communication Recommendations. Rivers of Steel has brought tremendous value to the region it represents but it has, as a rule, done so behind the scenes and so remains a largely unknown entity to the general public. A public branding campaign to raise awareness is needed. Hiring or contracting with a dedicated marketing professional in some capacity is required to effectively accomplish this goal.

Additionally, certain key historical and interpretive sites need stabilization, enhancement, and/or physical improvements. There is also the question of regular and on-going maintenance needs. Now undertaken by staff, already stretched thin by the success and opportunities of the Carrie Furnaces site, on-going maintenance must be addressed in a more focused manner and the resources developed to maintain this and the other River of Steel owned sites. Delayed or inadequate maintenance could result in loss of revenue for events and higher costs for repairs in the future. The immediate addition of maintenance staff should be considered a critical priority.

Lastly, but importantly, impact on the lean staff must always be considered as new initiatives are implemented. Additional capacity at the staff level is definitely needed to undertake any new initiative at this point and resources or partners must be found to address that need. The acquisition of RiverQuest operations adds urgency as well as the opportunity to increase staff immediately.



Flatiron Building in Brownsville

STAFFING

An immediate priority for staff is to develop a viable plan to increase staff in order to address the new challenges and opportunities presented by the RiverQuest acquisition and enhanced use of the Carrie Furnaces site. Rivers of Steel has been blessed with a dedicated and loyal staff. While beneficial to Rivers of Steel, this also creates potential problems. When the same individuals hold leadership positions or direct particular programs for long periods of time, other staff members often do not get to know program details, including relationships forged with outside individuals, necessary contacts and internal procedures. There is also the reality of several key staff approaching retirement age.

It is vital to assure that loss of a particular individual does not threaten attainment of the organization's goals or cause a break in effective operations. The board and management have recently addressed this challenge by developing a succession process to prepare for leadership and/or staffing changes. An operational preparedness document has been developed outlining key functions and processes, detailing record-keeping methods and offering clear written direction on operations and administrations. This document should be regularly updated.

Standard methods for detailing staff roles, job descriptions, directions for leadership, and plans for operations have already been implemented. These must be periodically reviewed, refined, and updated to ensure they reflect the up to date realities of the position and to ensure a replacement staff person can get quickly up to speed.

Retaining the organization's experienced staff is important and a program of adequate benefits and compensation should be regularly reviewed. Attention should be given to ways to offer staff continuing avenues for professional improvement as well as mentorship and other advancement opportunities.

Additionally, attention must be focused on attracting and retaining volunteers who play a vital role by supplementing staff capacities. Greater capacity for

programs can be accomplished with a greater corps of volunteers, resulting in increased revenue, deeper community investment, and enhanced visibility. There are new opportunities for volunteer expansion programs based on the "friends" model often used in state and national parks. The Carrie Furnaces site offers a unique opportunity to explore an industrial heritage "friends" group. The addition of a Great Allegheny Passage trailhead at the Battle of Homestead site also offers opportunities for engaged volunteers to improve, maintain and enhance that site. The exceptional popularity of the bike trail is attracting thousands of users every year and in many cases the demographics of that user group is conducive to active volunteerism and financial support.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

Rivers of Steel's board has been instrumental in creating the reputation which Rivers of Steel enjoys. Rivers of Steel has benefitted from a strong and engaged board with a clear understanding of mission and focus and several board members have effectively served for many years representing the broad geographic footprint of the organization.

Board and staff recognize the economic environment for non-profit organizations has shifted and competition for funding continues to increase. This places non-profit boards under even greater scrutiny by funders, both public and private.

To address this scrutiny, The Pennsylvania Association of Non-Profit Organizations (PANO) has developed a "Standards for Excellence" for non-profit boards. PANO describes its role as follows:

"PANO is the statewide membership organization serving and advancing the non-profit sector through advocacy, collaboration, education and other services in order to improve the overall quality of life in Pennsylvania. PANO exists to support the incredible work of the non-profit sector and highlight the critical role non-profits serve. By coming together and recognizing our collective value, Pennsylvania communities and the power to do good will thrive."

The PANO “Standards for Excellence” includes an ethics and accountability code consisting of Six Guiding Principles covering 27 topic areas outlining best practices and legal components of non-profit operations. It also offers educational resources and a voluntary accreditation program.

Rivers of Steel’s board and management will need to determine how to best apply these standards to the board as it exists today and in the future. There is no question however, that the Standards for Excellence as promulgated by PANO should be applied to board governance and operations as it has become a standard measurement of board performance. The PANO checklist for the “Standards for Excellence” is attached as Appendix I of this document.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

For continued success, Rivers of Steel must continue to diversify funding sources. While recognizing that state and federal funding will always be a component of the organization’s budget, a constantly changing political and economic stage, make it imperative that a focus of both board and staff should remain on attracting other funding sources. Diversified programs and products make this a more reasonable goal and the foundational public funding leverage and attract private and philanthropic funding.

Rivers of Steel will continue to diversify funding sources by increasing revenue generated by its receptive services program, RiverQuest operations, and increasing capacity at its revenue generating sites. This is particularly important for Carrie Furnaces, a site which regularly attracts thousands to events. Rivers of Steel will also continue to develop and nurture deeper relationships with local, state, and private foundations, corporations and private donors as prospective funders for operations, programs and projects. Private sponsorships will also be further developed to defray event and program costs.

Traditional and non-traditional sources of funding are, in many ways, interrelated and so must be approached in an integrated way. Well-attended events clearly

bring in revenue but they also demonstrate to funders that the programs offered by Rivers of Steel are valuable to and valued by the community. Well-attended events also demonstrate to partners – both other non-profit organizations as well as vendors - that participating in Rivers of Steel’s events has value. The key element necessary to increase funding is communication – communicating to the public, communicating to partners, and communicating to funders that Rivers of Steel is a great value to the communities it serves.

Serving adequate funding will continue to be a challenge in the next decade. One of the major avenues to increase development through the methodology set forth above is by retaining a dedicated staff person to focus on this key element for success. A dedicated development staff person or contractor can further explore non-public funding sources such as cultivating individual donors, expanding earned revenues, and developing a planned giving program.

Present staff has been commendably creative in finding additional sources of funding but that creativity comes at a price as that same staff must also plan events, manage assets and facilities, as well as carry out other management tasks.

PARTNERSHIPS

Interrelated with funding are the creation of new partnerships and the enhancement of existing ones. Staff must always be aware of potential partnerships when the opportunities arise. Consistent attention is needed to keep existing partnerships viable, valuable, and relevant to River of Steel’s audience. Partnerships provide opportunities for Rivers of Steel to reach greater audiences and to share in the cost of programming and events, including what can often be significant promotion costs.

Increasing partnership opportunities with museums, regional public and private schools, non-profit agencies, other heritage areas and universities is a key to success for Rivers of Steel’s educational component. This is especially important as RiverQuest operations are integrated into Rivers of Steel. RiverQuest will be a



THE
Mon River
Valley Coalition

LAUREL HIGHLANDS
p e n n s y l v a n i a



pennsylvania environmental council



HERITAGE is NOW

valuable vehicle for heritage tourism and educational programming, but will be costly to operate. The acquisition comes with three years of operational funding, but the return on investment will be greater for Rivers of Steel if it has partners to share in the cost.

Outdoor recreation companies, and other tourism agencies which operate in the outdoor recreation field, offer complementary opportunities for marketing and should be more deeply engaged by Rivers of Steel. Non-profits such as local and regional tourism associations, chambers of commerce and business associations, trail groups and clubs, outfitters, regional and national bike touring groups, and other such organizations and companies are all potential partners

for either general or individual projects. Of particular interest is the opportunity to further link communities along the Monongahela River. Offering technical assistance and key grants, Rivers of Steel has supported the efforts of the Mon River Town Program, a coalition of riverfront communities working together to attract visitors and outdoor recreational businesses. With the addition of RiverQuest's vessel there is additional support now available to further link these communities with river tours and direct river access.

Additionally, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has been actively encouraging heritage areas to form partnerships with Health Systems, fitting with Pennsylvania's "Greenways Goals and Strategies Initiative." That program seeks to actively involve the health community in greenways to promote physical activity and mental wellness in the Commonwealth. DCNR developed an Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2014-2019 outlining healthy initiatives and programs which can be adapted and implemented for Rivers of Steel, which already has an outdoor recreation component. These initiatives can provide a natural progression of that component.

Rivers of Steel must also be open to opportunities to pursue and participate in projects which are of interest to other agencies. Preservation projects or economic development projects which do not necessarily relate specifically to the Rivers of Steel message may nonetheless enhance the geographic area generally, making it more attractive to tourists, and indirectly add to Rivers of Steel attendance numbers.



CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS FOR BOARD AND STAFF

Rivers of Steel must aggressively raise public awareness of its value as well as demonstrate that value to funders. The audience for Rivers of Steel's programs – both end-users and funders – should know the extent to which Rivers of Steel's conservation efforts, programming and events are providing value to the region. Raising public awareness will ultimately result in higher revenues from a number of sources as the brand becomes better known. Marketing must be made a priority to make this happen.

Diversification of funding is successfully underway and constantly being explored but it must be made a key focus of staff and board. It is difficult, when operating with a small staff covering a large geographic area, to find a key staff member who can be utilized to focus on development rather than operations. With the immediate expansion of Rivers of Steel operations due to the acquisition of RiverQuest, staff roles must expand rather quickly.

Funding realities may limit River of Steel's ability to hire all of the additional staff needed in the short term, but retaining a staff member or contractor to focus on development, as well as one to focus on marketing, must be considered priorities. Avenues must be found to shore up and diversify funding sources so that capacity to successfully manage programs exists, both from a physical and personnel aspect. A concentrated marketing effort, in addition to a focus on development, is necessary to reach this goal.

Additionally, infrastructure becomes more of an issue with success. Areas such as the W.A. Young & Sons Foundry and Machine Shop in Rices Landing have

great potential but the lack of infrastructure and amenities; such as adequate bathrooms and walkable sidewalks, impact present viability. Carrie Furnaces and the Battle of Homestead site must be maintained, enhanced, and not permitted to deteriorate.

Parking areas, walkways and sidewalks, docks and landings, and accessibility are significant issues at all Rivers of Steel sites. The RiverQuest vessel, once acquired, must be staffed and maintained. These basic, practical and pragmatic challenges must be met for Rivers of Steel to meet its more lofty goals, yet these maintenance tasks are expensive and difficult to fund.

Staff and board must be open to critically review projects and events offered to determine their revenue producing potential and whether that potential is being effectively realized. Revenue neutral and non-revenue generating events must be re-examined to see if they need to be discontinued or temporarily shelved, which in turn would allow staff to concentrate on those events and projects adding resources, while not sacrificing the mission of the organization. Other events and projects may need to be continued only with a partnership organization to share costs.

ESTIMATED COSTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Costs for the Action Steps recommended above have been estimated and extrapolated from previous budgets. These figures are set forth in the chart below to provide the baseline for planning level budgets. It is expected that specific items or plans will change along with their costs.

PERSONNEL	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX	SEVEN	EIGHT	NINE	TEN	
Development personnel	91,000	93,730	96,542	99,438	102,421	105,494	108,659	111,919	115,276	118,734	1,043,213
Sales & Marketing personnel	78,000	80,340	82,750	85,233	87,790	90,423	93,136	95,930	98,808	101,772	894,183
Education personnel	71,500	73,645	75,854	78,130	80,474	82,888	85,375	87,936	90,574	93,291	819,667
Receptive Services (Administrative) personnel	45,000	46,350	47,741	49,173	50,648	52,167	53,732	55,344	57,005	58,715	515,875
SUB-TOTAL	285,500	294,065	302,887	311,974	321,333	330,973	340,902	351,129	361,663	372,513	3,272,938

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

PANO membership	630	630	630	730	730	730	830	830	630	830	7,200
Training staff/board	2,500	2,500	2,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	36,000
SUB-TOTAL	3,130	3,130	3,130	4,230	4,230	4,230	5,330	5,330	5,130	5,330	43,200

COMMUNICATIONS

"Our Story" Micro-site	3,500	1,000	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000
Website Enhancements/ Development	35,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	15,000	3,500	3,500	4,000	4,000	40,000	114,000
eSurveying and visitor intercepts	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	26,000
Graphics and production	5,000	15,000	5,000	5,500	5,500	8,000	8,000	8,500	8,500	9,000	78,000
Strategy & creative services	4,000	4,000	4,400	4,400	4,900	5,300	5,300	5,900	5,900	6,300	50,400
Sub-Total	49,000	24,500	14,400	15,400	27,900	19,300	20,300	21,900	21,900	58,800	273,400

CARRIE FURNACES

Carrie Furnace - Maint. Program	60,000	60,000	60,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	75,000	85,000	85,000	95,000	730,000
Carrie Furnace –Events	15,000	15,000	15,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	35,000	230,000
Carrie Furnace -Arts	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	280,000
Carrie Furnaces-Infrastructure	20,000	20,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	50,000	50,000	60,000	60,000	80,000	460,000
Sub-Total	105,000	115,000	135,000	155,000	165,000	175,000	180,000	210,000	210,000	250,000	1,700,000

OTHER RIVERS OF STEEL SITES

Heritage Sites - Events (*1)	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	35,000	210,000
Heritage Sites- Amenities (*2)	35,000			50,000			50,000			60,000	195,000
Heritage Sites - Infrastructure Improvements & Maintenance	15,000	25,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	45,000	45,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	400,000
Sub-Total	65,000	40,000	50,000	100,000	50,000	70,000	120,000	80,000	80,000	150,000	805,000

TOTALS	\$507,630	\$476,695	\$505,417	\$586,604	\$568,463	\$599,503	\$666,532	\$668,359	\$678,693	\$836,643	6,094,538
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APPENDICES

The following represent reports and planning documents referred to within the body of the Management Action Plan Update. These documents can be found at <https://www.riversofsteel.com/preservation/museum-and-archives/research/docs-and-reports/>.

- A. Supporting Regional Economies, National Heritage Areas and Their Impact, Alliance of National Heritage Areas, Tripp Umbach, 2012
- B. The Economic Impact of National Heritage Areas, 2013
- C. Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area Evaluation Findings, Westat, 2012
- D. Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas, A Report by the National Park System Advisory Board, 2004
- E. Acquisition Analysis & Investigation Phase One & Two Reports, the Hill Group, 2015
- F. Carrie Furnaces Site Redevelopment, Phase II, Wilbur Smith Associates, 2009
- G. Wood Street Communications Social Media Plan, 2015
- H. Rivers of Steel Strategic Assessment Final Report, December 2010
- I. Organizational Self-Assessment Checklist, Standards of Excellence (Pennsylvania Nonprofit Organization), 2009
- J. Rivers of Steel Branding Statement, December 2015
- K. Rivers of Steel Board Memorandum regarding RiverQuest Acquisition, 2014
- L. Stakeholder Interviews (These interviews are available for review upon request to Rivers of Steel staff.)

** 1: The event totals reflect approximate annual expenses incurred directly by Rivers of Steel. It is anticipated that these relatively minor expenses, as well as all staff time, will be covered by rental and admission revenues for all events with excess revenues anticipated.*

** 2: Amenities can include items such as landscaping, benches, signage, bike racks, and storage lockers.*

** 3: Infrastructure improvements will be determined and prioritized through master plan but include an improved access road, electricity distribution, parking, restrooms, water fountains, storage lockers.*

*The National Park Service (NPS) describes the value and import
of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area as follows:*

***“The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area reveals
how one region, in a sustained and thunderous blast
of innovation, ambition and fire, forever changed
America and its place in the world. It is the story of
the industrialists and the workers who pushed an
infant industry to its ultimate limits and in doing so
pushed the world into the Age of Steel”.***

