

# THREE RIVERS ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER

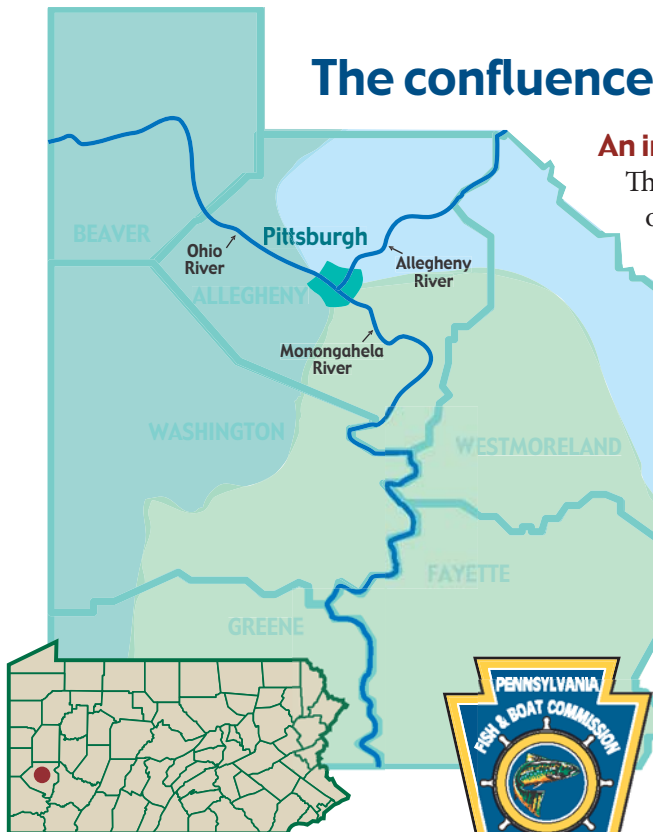


Three Rivers photos provided by: ©Tim Rucci

## The confluence of research, ecology and education

### An invitation to the future

The momentum for improvement continues. But improvement relies on planning and research with a consistent vision. The Three Rivers Ecological Research Center will stand to continue today's progress into the future. We invite you and your organization to be a part of this Center. Whether it is to build a research program, to support monitoring, or to plan restoration, your participation is invited. Please contact us to discuss how we can work together for the future of these three majestic rivers.



### Contact us

For more information, or to become involved in this coordinated approach to research, habitat protection and river ecology through the Three Rivers Ecological Research Center, contact:

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## Three Rivers Ecological Research Center **mission:**

To provide a research collective of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers and their watersheds to benefit habitat, species and public resources.

research • ecology • education

# confluence

a flowing together of two or more waters,  
a point at which waters merge or a new water is formed.

## Three Rivers Ecological Research Center

The proposed Three Rivers Ecological Research Center will be established to develop a more complete understanding of the ecology and biology of the Three Rivers, their watersheds, and recreational opportunities. Similar to how the word “confluence” is defined, the center will stand as a merging point for research, habitat restoration and education. It will be the cooperative representation and output of many partners, all dedicated to the following mission:

**To provide a research collective of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers and their watersheds to benefit habitat, species and public resources.**

**Research:** To fulfill this mission, the Center will develop a sound scientific foundation for the creation of effective strategies to manage, conserve and protect the rivers. Research-backed river management is critical to this service so that the results are mutually beneficial for both habitat protection and public use.

**River ecology:** Our understanding of the ecology of these rivers is limited, and this will be a focal point of the Center. Fish and mussel population surveys, habitat evaluation and quantification, ecological relationships, and human impacts on the rivers will be fundamental areas of work. The Three Rivers Ecological Center will provide the research leading to improved management, increased habitat restoration, and a better way for humans and the river to interact.

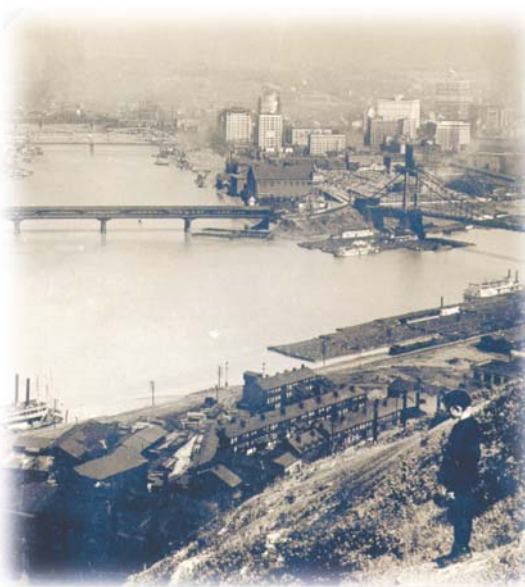
**Education:** Knowledge of the river compiled and developed at the Three Rivers Ecological Center will be made available through many partnerships to educate the public and others about the Allegheny, Ohio and Monongahela rivers and their watersheds. River ecologists will provide expertise and partner with educators at institutions throughout the Three Rivers area. The Center will provide a laboratory in which university scientists can work and where graduate students can complete their research.

## The Rivers: History, Pollution and Rebirth

### Past: Use and abuse

Throughout the 1700s, 1800s and 1900s, as an inland transportation system, the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers provided use to its industries and as a result took the abuse from industry. Little regard was given to what the environmental impact would be, and commerce ruled the day. Timber, coal, oil, iron and steel were among the resources obtained, mined or manufactured and

transported through this region. Navigation dams were built and the river was channelized to allow barge transport of raw materials and finished products. The consequences were reflected in the water. In 1968 there were only 10 fish species recorded in the Monongahela River.



### Present: A renaissance of recognition and action

Towards the latter half of the 20th century, with the enactment of state and federal pollution laws, a major change has taken place. Water quality has improved and the fish community has responded with 55 species found in the 2003 sampling of the Monongahela. We now also realize that the rivers are a major contributor to the quality of life in the area. Tourism to metropolitan areas such as Pittsburgh, establishment of parks, greenways, water trails and interest in riparian corridors have sparked and maintained public demand. Better understanding of the rivers and their ecology will help us to continue this restoration.