

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Urban Waterfront Action Group (UWAG) Meeting

Tuesday, November 6, 2012

1. WetLand (Live Arts/Philly Fringe)

2. Schuylkill River Trail Extension: South St. to Christian St.

3. Venice Island Canoe and Kayak Launch: Schuylkill River at Lock St.

Participants:

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Meeting Summary

1. WetLand. Philadelphia Live Arts/Philly Fringe. Presented by Theresa Rose.

WetLand is a proposal for a floating structure to be located on either the Delaware or Schuylkill Rivers that would be programmed as part of the 2014 Philadelphia Live Arts/Philly Fringe performance festival. This floating structure will be constructed from local and recycled materials and will incorporate rainwater capture, sub-irrigated plants, composting, bicycle-powered generators, water purification, and other sustainable elements. The purpose of the project is to connect with the urgencies surrounding the use of water and the city's relationship to the environment. This utopian model demonstrates a future of water-based ecosystems and systematic techniques for sustainability. The structure is intended to be docked, immobile, and able to be boarded.

Mr. Boyer questioned the need for the structure to be located in the water, and asked if it would be possible to locate the project on land and still accomplish the project goals. The permits that

would be required call for an alternatives assessment, which question the purpose and need for the project to be located on water. The intent of the permitting agencies is to maintain the river in as natural a state as possible.

There will need to be a determination of whether this project would be technically classified as a structure or a vessel. Any structure would be regulated by the Army Corps. The DEP has different permits for structures versus vessels. Based on the size of the structure and other considerations, this may classify as a barge according to the Coast Guard, and if so would need to meet barge regulations.

This project would not be covered by the Army Corps General Permit, and would instead require a Regular Individual Permit. There would need to be a Public Notice process. To apply for the permit, the Army Corps will need specific plans showing exact location and dimensions. The locations of the high tide, federal navigation channel, and other elements will need to be shown on the plans.

The National Marine Fisheries Service will likely be involved as well, since there may be impacts to regulated species like the sturgeon and prey fishes. The Natural Heritage Program will need to conduct a search for possible locations of threatened and endangered species.

A location between piers near Pier 9 may not have too many issues, unless there is identified habitat. A location near Fairmount Waterworks will have different issues if located either above or below the dam. If above the dam, it may qualify for a general permit, which would simplify things at the federal level.

The DRBC is not likely to require a permit for this project.

2. Schuylkill River Trail Extension. Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC). Presented by Joe Musil, Urban Engineers.

SRDC is working with the City of Philadelphia and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to build an extension of the Schuylkill River Trail from South Street south to Christian Street. This 1,300 foot trail segment will be located between the Schuylkill River and the CSX rail corridor. The northern end of the trail segment will connect to the southern end of the Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk, currently under construction, and the existing stair tower to the South Street Bridge.

This section of the waterfront is mostly bulkheaded and is frequently overtopped. There is a washout area south of the South Street Bridge stair tower. The washout area will require either a retaining wall or pile-supported structure. There are still decisions to be made on whether to elevate the trail or keep it at grade in certain areas.

This section of the trail will be in a more natural state than other sections of the trail, and much of the existing vegetation will be maintained. In the proposed alignment, the trail is located primarily at the top of the bank. The trail will be 14' wide and will include a number of overlook locations. In the long-term, the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department will be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of the trail.

A Phase II Environmental Study has been completed, which found heavy metals at the site. The VOC concentrations were within limits. The arsenic level was above residential standards, but below non-residential standards. The site also passed the leachate standard for infill.

The concept of the trail is that it will at some point connect with the trail at Gray's Ferry Crescent. The river crossing is anticipated to occur 1 ½ miles downstream at the abandoned railway crossing.

At this point, it is not anticipated that any of the bulkheads will need to be replaced. For work conducted on the land up to the existing bulkheads, there are no permit requirements from the Army Corps. The Army Corps has jurisdiction on structures located to the mean high water line and fill up the high tide line. They do not anticipate there will be vegetation removal in the area under Army Corps jurisdiction. For the washout area, a pile supported structure could be constructed as an alternative to a

retaining wall. There could be a retaining wall on the land side of the trail and a pile supported structure on the water side.

This area is regulated by the Fish and Wildlife Service due to the presence of the red-bellied turtle, which is a threatened species in the state.

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission has regulations regarding net zero fill, and a no net rise study may be needed. Paula Brumbalow or Sarah Chew at the PCPC may be contacted regarding this study.

Ms. Bailey questioned how close regulated waterfront facilities like Veolia were in relation to this segment. These facilities have security plans filed with the Coast Guard that may need to be revised based on the presence of the trail.

Mr. Brown said that this project could apply for a major amendment to the existing permit for the trail.

The Army Corps may require a permit for the bank stabilization work for the washout area only.

Mr. Walderson stated that this project is likely to need a Federal Consistency Review by the DEP Coastal Resources Management Program. The DEP will coordinate with other federal agencies to review the project for consistency with the enforceable policies of Pennsylvania's federally approved coastal management program.

The DRBC is not likely to require a permit as long as there is net zero fill and no additional encroachments on the water.

3. Venice Island Canoe and Kayak Launch: Schuylkill River at Lock Street. The Schuylkill Project. Presented by Joe Musil, Urban Engineers.

This is a proposal for a path and small boat launch area at the southern downriver tip of Venice Island in Manayunk. The project sponsor, The Schuylkill Project, is a project of the Manayunk Development Corporation. There is currently a dirt trail leading down from Lock Street and a sandy embankment that is currently used as an informal canoe and kayak launch. The proposed boat launch will be an articulated concrete mat approximately 15'X15' in size. The trail will be graded and stabilized and will likely include a porous geo-grid system.

This is the site of an ongoing Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) project involving the construction of a pumping station and CSO storage tank. The PWD project will include bank stabilization, invasive plant removal, and landscaping. This boat launch project will coincide with the PWD work and will provide better access to the Schuylkill River.

Permits will be required for the boat launch/boat ramp. This project will likely be covered by a General Permit.

Due to the relatively small footprint of the project, there are no anticipated impacts to historic resources.

The Army Corps has no records of the adjacent boat dock of the Manayunk Brew Pub. This dock was replaced about 6 years ago and is owned by the Manayunk Development Corporation. The dock should be attached to the General Permit for this project.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will likely be involved in this project due to the presence of the red-bellied turtle.