

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1997, the co-directors of the non-profit Waterfront Center, Ann Breen and Dick Rigby, were hired by the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, the coordinating body of the voluntary Rivershore Enhancement Council (TREC), to make recommendations about the council's future course of action. They undertook a reconnaissance of the area, conducted numerous interviews, held a town hall brainstorming session and presented some preliminary findings.

In April of that year, the Center issued a report to TREC and the community consisting of a summary of the public brainstorming session and the findings of the Center's directors. These consisted of positive and negative findings, about equal in size, and then a series of specific recommendations for action.

What is remarkable is how many of the suggestions put forward, including some that would have to be termed extremely difficult to achieve (like getting levees lowered), have been accomplished in whole or in part in the ensuing 11 years. This record of accomplishment is as great as any volunteer organization that we know about. It is little short of amazing that TREC has met on a nearly monthly basis over this time.

These accomplishments include lowering of levees in certain segments of the rivershore, the construction of a 23-mile continuous rivershore trail, with extensions both up river and down river, the lighting of Cable Bridge, revamping and new installations in parts of Columbia Island including plans for a carousel, design and initial fund-raising of an interpretive center/museum on South Columbia Point - The Reach, establishment of a Year of the River campaign,

formation of a Friends Of Our Trail group of volunteers (FOOT), cleanup of Bateman Island and Sacajawea State Park and establishment of Howard Amon Park, among many successful actions.

One of the keys it seems was negotiating long-term leases of the rivershore with the Army Corps of Engineers in 1994, allowing the three cities, the counties and the port districts to move ahead with various projects. Acquiring the lands outright remains a goal and one that the Center endorses.

This year's visit, on September 29 through October 2, again included a reconnaissance both by car and foot and by boat, the latter courtesy of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Next were interviews with community leaders, and then TREC Strategic Partners, both one-on-one and with small groups, all conducted off the record to encourage candor. There was also a visit with the publisher of the Tri-City Herald as well as an interview and a session with TREC itself. In all there were 18 separate interviews and each Center director came away with 30 pages of notes. There was also a luncheon presentation at which 10 of TREC's accomplishments were outlined by Chairman Gary Crutchfield. And finally there was a very preliminary presentation to TREC by the Center directors after a quick review of their notes.

Subsequently there has been review of numerous documents acquired before and during the interviews. We append questions that we suggest be put before the Army Corps. On reflection we think these better come from TREC than from ourselves.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Several things stand out in our minds post our visit and having had time to reflect on the major amount of information and data obtained.

- TREC's accomplishments to date by are numerous and powerful. We have several suggestions for the group to consider, but basically it wants to continue its work, charge ahead and not lose momentum.
- Use of the Sacagawea Trail (we note different spellings on different maps) is going to grow. It will make trail management a high priority. This may involve separation of wheels from runners/walkers in some places at some point. We list in the Resources some publications and organizations that may be able to help.
- In our interviews there was a steady drumbeat of people wanting a more beautiful rivershore. Terms like "not enjoyable" "off-putting" or "not friendly" were among the comments we heard regarding sections of the shore.
- Another theme in the interviews was the perception that there are too few facilities for boaters in the core area.
- We are as impressed with the Tapteal volunteer group as we are with TREC. Its 30-mile greenway plan is a natural counterpart to the more urban and hard surface river trail and its adjoining developed areas. Together they make an enormous, complimentary resource in the heart of the Tri-Cities.
- We sense the Hanford Reach and associated areas will grow in time to be a principal feature of eastern Washington State.

What follows are more specific findings both positive and negative and then our recommendations for actions in the coming years.

FINDINGS NEGATIVE

- **Boating Issues.** It is stated by boaters that there are not enough facilities along the central Columbia River area. By this they mean docks, fueling stations, repair facilities and places to pick up food, beverages or ice. Another related point is that there are not enough destinations for boaters who basically like to have somewhere to go. And, boating conflicts were reported, pointing to a need for educating the boating public, or certainly that portion that continues to speed near kayaks or canoes.

- **Access.** The trail makes getting *near* the river very easy. But few areas exist where there is easy or very much direct contact with the river itself. Several were critical of the riprap along Columbia Island and elsewhere in this regard.

- **Corps of Engineers.** We understand the seriousness with which the Army Corps of Engineers takes its stewardship over possible Native American resources near the river and that the Walla Walla office may be short staffed. But we had several descriptions of the hugely cumbersome and time-consuming process needed to install something as simple as a signpost, for instance. We will talk with others who deal with the Corps in their riverfront work and pass along any suggestions they may have. We have a recommendation in this area.

- **Visual Access.** There is rightful concern that visual access to the river may be blocked as new development takes place. Maintaining views to the river will be critical.

- **Aesthetics.** Not to belabor the point, but much of the rivershore edge itself is unattractive. Many cited Howard Amon Park as an example of what they would like to see elsewhere.

- **Columbia Park.** The western portion of Columbia Park needs enhancement. We learned that it has been deliberately “let go” and will be the subject of a master plan sponsored jointly by the cities of Kennewick and Richland. Overall much has been improved over the last 11 years and more could still be done, as with any public facility.

- **Linkages to Downtowns.** There is now a lack of attractive, well-signed connections from downtowns to the river. Active planning to overcome this is under way. This will be a definite challenge given the roads.

- **Multi-Jurisdictions.** The governmental apparatus is complicated to say the least, making a coordinating body like TREC invaluable and the amount this group has achieved all the more remarkable. We count nine local jurisdictions in the immediate core area of the Columbia.

- **Understaffing.** Given the scope of the area being worked on and the amount of things to be accomplished, absence of a staff member focused on and working fulltime on rivershore initiatives is a handicap.

- **Rental Facilities.** Interviewees pointed out the general lack of facilities along the rivers where a bike, canoe or kayak may be rented.

- **Rivershore Maps.** We sense an absence of a brochure/map detailing where all the water recreation facilities exist. While we learned that many events are taking place along the rivershore there does not seem to be a single brochure listing all of the river-related events.

- **Commerce.** Generally the rivershore lacks commercial bustle. There are limited restaurants/cafes or informal eating places for instance. While

some vending has been added in Columbia Park for instance (we like the snow cone stand!), there generally is a lack of same along the rivershore.

- **Under-appreciation of Birding Potential.** There seemed to be a general lack of appreciation for the richness of the birding opportunity along and near the river. Although we noted the Audubon organization was sponsoring a birding hike on Bateman on the Saturday of our departure, but we sense much more could be made of this.

- **Sprawl.** While new development along the river is occurring, several mentioned the centrifugal force of development still is away from the central core and into the countryside – sprawl in short.

- **Lack of Promotion.** Missed opportunities to celebrate all of TREC and rivershore related accomplishments that have occurred. This relates to lack of full-time staff no doubt.

- **Hidden Arts Community.** The arts community can be a great resource, One account described it as present but hidden.

FINDINGS POSITIVE

- **The River Resource.** The beauty and magnitude of the natural river resources is a huge asset. The Columbia is the storied river but the Yakima River is also a fantastic resource. The major park areas, including the enormous resource of Columbia Park, are tremendous pluses.

- **TREC Track Record.** We can't help but repeat how impressive the accomplishments of the volunteer TREC group are, from the rivershore lease negotiations to the bridge lighting to the continuous loop trail to

lowering levees and so forth. We continue to be impressed that TREC has been meeting nearly monthly for 12 years.

- **Volunteer Spirit.** There is a CAN DO attitude evident in the Tri-Cities. There are the accomplishments of the Friends Of Our Trail (FOOT) and the Adventure Challenge race celebrating the completion of the Sacagawea Trail. We're also struck by the amount of volunteer time that the Tapteal Greenway Association has organized since 1995. Its Web site is impressive.

- **Infill Development.** Some new development has occurred along the river and more is in the offing, helping to fill in the blanks. (See our caution about maintaining visual access).

- **Clover Island Enhancement.** The Port of Kennewick has an impressive master plan for the upgrading of Clover Island, one of the commercial mixed-use bright spots on the river. This includes replacing concrete rubble on with shore with native plantings and construction of a signature lighthouse.

- **National Monument Designation.** Designation of the Hanford Reach as a National Monument is a major achievement and will no doubt grow in importance in the coming years. Likewise the opening of the B reactor to visitors. It makes early success of the interpretive center/museum all the more vital to the area. The Reach should be a huge attraction for the Tri-Cities.

- **Noted Artist.** The area is fortunate to have artist Maya Lin working on a project for Sacajawea Park, one of seven sites along the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

- **River Events.** A large number of events are taking place along the river, taking advantage of the outstanding weather of the Tri-Cities. The initial Adventure Challenge held in 2008 was very popular and we hope becomes an annual event.

- **Redevelopment Potential.** Downtown revitalization is on the agendas of Kennewick and Richland. Pasco possesses the two major development sites on the river. The potential of these sites is enormous. See Recommendations section.

- **Park Additions.** Major additions to Columbia Park including the fishing pond, skateboard park, Regional Veterans Memorial and Playground of Dreams represent significant improvements in the last decade. The carousel with handsomely carved horses will be a big plus.

- **Bike Map.** The “Cycling Tri-Cities” bike map and accompanying text is well done.

- **WSU Asset.** The new presence of Washington State University in the area should have a number of positive impacts in the coming years.

- **Birding Potential.** There is potential to add birding to the list of attractions in the area (golf, wineries, fishing etc.). Birders are generally affluent and care for the natural environment.

- **History of Planning.** There is a history of sound master planning, such as Franklin County’s Shoreline Park Master Plan of 1997, the Richland Rivershore Master Plan and the “Bridge to Bridge, River to Railroad” plan in Kennewick of 2003 by an Urban Design Assistance Team. Which plan is to be revisited soon. Pasco had a Shoreline Committee as early as 1986.

- **Educational Addition.** Lewis and Clark interpretive markers installed on the trail, adding an educational component to a recreational asset.

- **Trail Network.** The Tri-Cities is now blessed with an extensive trail system as the trail connects up river, down river (through the Port of Pasco land) and to the Tapteal Greenway that is to run for 30 miles.

- **Port Plans.** The buying out of properties adjacent to the river by the Port of Kennewick will make mixed-use redevelopment possible in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Beautification.** We suggest a beautification program of the entire rivershore be made TREC’s number one priority for a minimum of three years. Engage a landscape architect teamed with someone familiar with public art installations to prepare a beautification master plan. While there should be a degree of continuity along the trail, we would encourage each community add it’s special flavor to some of the detailing/art/furniture.



Interpretive feature and seating along San Pedro waterfront walkway.



Interpretive block found along beachfront in Boston.



Interpretive blocks that can double as seating on San Pedro waterfront.



Chairs by public artist Scott Burton on Lake Washington, Seattle.



Bringing the water closer to the people along Lake Washington.



Artistic renderings of historic Leith waterfront along walkway in Edinburgh, Scotland.

- **Replace Riprap.** Hand in hand with the first recommendation: begin work on removing or concealing the riprap at the river's edge. Replace with either native plants and appropriate trees where allowed (as called for in the master plan above) or step-like installation enabling people to touch the water where safely possible. Bioengineering techniques for shoreline protection and enhancement are becoming more and more common. You can't have a beautiful shoreline with unattractive rocks dominating the river's edge. Ask a group of volunteers to conduct a survey of the riverbanks and establish a priority list.



Top: Natural vegetation along Chicago River . Middle: Wildflowers and stones on Hamilton, Ontario's waterfront. Bottom: Natural vegetation along Willamette River in downtown Portland, Oregon

- **Extend Trails.** Trail extensions are a natural next step. A linkup with the Tapteal Greenway, made clear by signs, maps, directional arrows, greatly expands the territory available to hikers, bikers and strollers. There are plans for linkups into downtown Richland, which wants to become a more walkable place. Likewise, there will be a renewed planning effort in Kennewick to address how to link its historic district to a rejuvenated and expanded Clover Island mixed-use riverfront attraction. Pasco has the opportunity to create major riverfront attractions which could draw people to it.



Signage in Chattanooga showing the whole riverfront park system; a detailed map of where you are and the distinctive logo bottom left.



Wayfinding along the Ohio river in Cincinnati includes the bollard and tube discs partially visible in lower right corner.

- **Recreation Study Needed.** We think TREC should sponsor a water recreation study which could probably initially be done in house with the assistance of a marine engineer or someone with marina/boating expertise. Get two or three active boaters and have them survey the entire rivershore, marking on maps where every water recreation facility exists: docks, rental shops, boat launches, fishing spots etc. Walk the entire trail and also survey the whole rivershore by boat. Likewise the area should be surveyed for fishing opportunities and the possibility for installing piers or other structures. There may a need for fish cleaning stations and/or small bait and tackle shops. See *Fishing Piers: What Cities Can Do*.



Sheltered restaurant-quality fish cleaning station and rest room facility in Racine, Wisconsin.



Bait and Tackle/Snack Bar at the foot of a fishing pier in Tacoma, Washington.

- **Trail Enhancement.** To enhance the trails, add a limited number of temporary vending kiosks in the pleasant weather, as well as interpretive plaques about historic and natural features. Temporary or movable vending carts might be an interim, seasonal measure. Too many, however, and you have clutter. Investigate creative lighting for the trail. Also, can mile markers be installed in the paving material (thus avoiding the present difficulty of placing sign posts in the ground). Movable wayfinding signs as those shown from Detroit or concrete blocks might be a way around drilling holes in the levies.



Small, portable vending cart along river trail in Pueblo, Colorado.



Innovative lighting along Buffalo Bayou in Houston changes color according to moon phases.



Subdued lighting and tiles on Imperial Beach, California's waterfront.



Small, portable café along River Liffey board walk in Dublin



Popular café/restaurant on Granville Island, Vancouver, B.C.



Movable signs used along the Detroit Riverfront.

- **Increase Rental Opportunities.** Increase number of boat/bike/surrey/Segway rental facilities. Explore possibility of using mobile trailers to store bikes and surreys in Columbia Park such as the one shown from New York's South Street Seaport (mobile) or in Detroit.



Bike rental facility at New York's South Street Seaport is very portable.



Bike and blade rental facility on Detroit's Riverfront.

- **Between Bridges Focus.** Focus TREC planning on the between the bridges territory on either side of the river. The Port of Kennewick has acquired half of the land on its side. Can the Port/City of Pasco do the same?

- **Corps Cautions.** We heard a good deal about the restraints the Army Corps of Engineers applies to the Tri-Cities. The agency is said to be very cautious and conservative. Our suggestion is that a summit meeting be called by one (or both) of your U.S. Senator(s) and your Member of Congress with the Walla Walla officials and their higher-ups in the Corps to meet with TREC representatives. With the Senators/Congressman present, attempt to work out a streamlining of the permit process. Seek clarification on what types of plants are allowable on the shore. Have tribal representation present if appropriate. There is a need to address such issues as what is the definition of “shading” and “recreation.”

- **Pasco Potential.** There are two major development sites in Pasco. One is Port-owned and the other, a marina, we understood might be acquired by the Port. In any case there is the opportunity here to have a major boating center with repair facilities, docks, fuel, supplies, at least one restaurant – a full service boating hub. Such a facility was said by many to be a major need of the area.

- **Mixed-Use Suggested.** Next door is a development site which seems to be headed in the direction of a business park. We suggest instead a mixed-use type of development, including a high rise if there is market demand for either office space or riverside residential. It would be a signature building for Pasco’s rivershore much as Kennewick will have a lighthouse and Richland an interpretive center. Single use office parks probably don’t maximize or enliven a river location.

- **Water Taxi Experiment.** While instituting a water taxi service may be premature at this time as detailed in the recent study, we think the suggestion that such a service be tried when there are big river-focused events is worth exploring. Getting a cooperative operator on a one-time adventure might be challenging, but if people could see how easy it is to get from Pasco to Richland by water, for instance, it could help the concept take hold.



Water taxi ticket booth and stop along the Clyde River in Glasgow.

- **Staff Person.** We recommend hiring a fulltime staff person who would be focused exclusively on rivershore projects and programming. Suggest outside funding, perhaps a foundation with an environmental agenda. What's wanted is a person who every day comes to work with the sole mission of moving TREC's rivershore agenda.

- **Keep Structure.** Further about TREC, we recommend keeping the present informal structure. It's worked! We suggest adding a representative from West Richland to help fully integrate the Yakima greenway with the river trail. One interviewee spoke of having a good relationship with a tribal representative. Would such a person be a possible addition to TREC?

- **Repeat Challenge.** We'd like to see the Adventure Challenge repeated, scheduled for one of the 300 sunny days said to occur in the Tri-Cities!

- **Year of River Repeat?** With its record of accomplishment behind would 2009 or 2010 be appropriate for another Year of the River? A brochure that lists all river events would be part of such a happening – and should be undertaken even without a Year of the River. This will reinforce TREC's other initiatives and drive home just how important the three river resources are to the community.

- **Bridge Lighting II.** While a challenge in today's economy, we think TREC should put lighting the Blue Bridge on its agenda. With blue lights. If part of a repair project, this could be eligible for the pending Federal infrastructure spending.

- **Trail Maintenance.** Is the Visitor Bureau's FOOT organization the one to adopt sections of the trails for maintenance, cleanups, patrols and the like? Or, can FOOT organize this among existing civic groups, each taking a section?

- **Added Events.** Consider additional events focused on the trail, such as one for people with special needs.- A number of communities have free outdoor movies in the good weather. See Resources (Brooklyn, Halifax). Or a golf cart event (see Hartford in Resources).

- **Boating Safety.** Mount a boating education campaign.

Coupled with stepped up enforcement of no-wake zones. The river wants to be hospitable where the current is not too strong to kayaks, canoes, rubber rafts and the like. It shouldn't be just for powerboats.

- **Visual Access Emphasis.** TREC should take the lead in urging each community's zoning to contain language guarding visual access to the river. Get sample language (Portland and Seattle probably have same, or the American Planning Association Washington chapter). Perfect job for the staff person.

- **Boost Birding.** Working with the local Audubon Society and the Tapteal group, add birding to the mix of attractions the Tri-Cities has to offer, to its own residents as well as for visitors. We were told the area has been designated an "Important Bird Area," one of 50 in Washington. A brochure listing the best birding locations and descriptions of the birds would assist if such is not now available.



Looking for eagles in the Quad Cities amidst Native American story circle.

- **Involve Schools.** Work with the local schools on a rivershore project, be it artwork, essays (have a contest) or making exhibits. Publicize. We list in Resources places that have taken children’s artwork and reproduced it along rivers.



Children’s art work incorporated into wall along riverwalk on the Chicago river. Native vegetation planted to absorb more rainfall.

- **Wine Center.** While Tri-Cities has been emphasizing the extensive wine-growing in the region, it might be interesting to do more with tasting rooms and /or a wine center of some sort. The suggested mixed-use development in Pasco might be a natural location for such a facility given the area’s agricultural heritage. Would constitute a needed destination for the development.

Addendum. Suggested questions for the Army Corps of

Engineers:

- What is the Corps' position relative to replacing rip-rap at the river's edge in the Tri-Cities with either native plantings or concrete steps?
- Did the Corps approve the plans of the Port of Kennewick to replace concrete rubble along the shore of Clover Island with plantings?
- Is part of the basic Corps mission the furtherance of commerce (i.e., encouraging private investment)?
- Is dredging Two Rivers Park a possibility (to increase boating opportunities)?
- Has the Levee Enhancement Report of 1992 been updated?