



Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission
102 North Third Street, Suite 302
Lafayette, IN 47901
Phone: 765.427.1505
www.in.gov/wrhcc

March 20, 2009

Vermillion County Economic Development Council
Attn: Susie Jones
2250 N. Main St.
Clinton, In. 47842

Re: Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority
~36 A river frontage plus access road easement

My Commission is interested, along with other local and regional groups (including the Vermillion County Parks, NICHES Land Trust, Ouabache Land Trust, Izaak Walton League of America – Indiana Division, Banks of the Wabash, Inc., Pheasants Forever, DNR – Fish & Wildlife, etc.) in the public use of the undeveloped land, including the river access and river riparian buffer area of the Newport Depot. Our interest is in the access road and ~36 acres along the approximately one mile of river frontage (at a variable depth of around 300 feet – possibly narrower at the northern reach of the property as the existing levee approaches the main stem river).

We have partnered with Indiana's Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife, in the past to include Wabash River public access points in our award-winning Wabash River Water Trail program. We view the Newport Depot property as holding great promise as an addition to that mutual program as well as a possible link in our visionary Wabash Heritage Trail program. These programs, and the public's Master Plan for the Wabash River, may be found at our website: www.in.gov/wrhcc/.

We would like to see: 1) a public access point, initially perhaps an undeveloped 'hand-carry' site but ideally for boats and personal craft with handicap accessibility; 2) a minimally developed 'boat camp' area, which may be as little as a 'pack-in/pack-out' flat area where an overnight stop for river travelers would not be discouraged. Ultimately, if the Vermillion Park Department or other agency can be brought on board, this could have further amenities with potable water, shower, and restroom facilities; 3) a conservation easement riparian corridor with an embedded right-of-way easement for ultimate use as a trail/linear route of travel parallel to the river bank (non-motorized); and, 4) in conjunction with the parking for the access point, a 'trail head' kiosk for both the Water Trail and the Heritage Trail.

From our Water Trail Map 6, www.in.gov/wrhcc/pdfs/Map_6.pdf, the location is approximately mid-way between Waterman access and Montezuma access; and mid-way down the river as a whole (Mile 269 in the Hay ascending series; ~Mile 224 in the Stallsmith descending series). It is just downstream of the confluence with the Sugar Creek (already a frequented paddle from Shades State Park to Turkey Run State Park - "one of the most scenic waterways of the state" Hay, 1997) making it an attractive distance for enticing paddlers on from Turkey Run onto the Wabash, either as a good take-out site or layover. A right-of-way easement from SR 63 to the water would not be inconsistent with the agricultural use of the west of levee ~39 acres nor the existing well sites (though all but the well sites could be just as easily adapted



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to longer term uses or wildlife habitat). A trail right-of-way and conservation or wildlife easement on the east side of the levee (up to & on top of the levee) could likewise coexist nicely with only slightly altered existing use & the need for a riparian buffer to the river. Finally, a couple of acres set aside for a 'boat camp' and access point would provide an excellent amenity to the trip from Lafayette to Terre Haute or from Turkey Run State Park to an easy paddle the next morning to lunch in Montezuma!


With nearly one million people living within ten miles of this Corridor, in Indiana alone, and over five million within an easy day trip, adding a central link to the corridor promises more than a brochure-builder for Vermillion County. Indiana's officially designated "State River", the Wabash, is the focus of Indiana's effort to capitalize on its central to U.S. population location and natural resources - from a variety of directions: historical, recreational, and environmental. With the Wabash River Master Plan, the attention of the Corridor Commission, and the rising number of fit, yet retired, people attracted to flat water paddling, this access point could become a magnet for outfitters and fishing enthusiasts (a side note - Vermillion County's reach of the Wabash River produces record-sized fish with regularity, its most recent being the 2008 record for Goldeye at 2.3 pounds!).

The Newport Depot river frontage has the potential to be a wonderful access point and trail head. It would provide Newport, and Vermillion County, with an added presence on the developing, nationally- significant Wabash River Heritage Corridor, both its Water Trail and the multi-use Heritage Trail. The provision of a public outdoor recreation site is one element of nearly every major employer's list when choosing locations for plants or facilities. Indeed, both service and white collar facilities are more likely to be sited where outdoor recreation is available and valued.

Public preservation of the riparian buffer, public conservation of the river-side of the levee, and public access to the river and river frontage, for all of the above reasons, is the highest and best use of this portion of the Depot real estate. Please consider this notice of our interest, and of the interest of Vermillion County, in determining your plan for the 'reuse' of the Newport Depot real estate. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Sincerely,
John Gettinger
President,
Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Approved by motion duly made and unanimously passed at the duly noticed, March 11, 2009 public meeting of the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission, at which a quorum was in attendance.



Ron James, Executive Director