

April 28, 2009 - Murtha: \$84 million in Stimulus Funds Headed to Charleroi Locks Replacement Project

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, announced today that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has designated \$84 million in the recently passed economic stimulus bill for the continued replacement of the Monongahela River locks at Charleroi.

"Today's funding announcement is much-welcomed news for our region," said Murtha. "Pittsburgh is the second busiest inland port in the United States, and our vast network of locks and dams are absolutely essential for transporting goods, providing recreational opportunities, and attracting future economic growth. These locks and dams support 218,000 direct and indirect jobs, and I have made it my highest priority to ensure that federal funds are made available for their continued overhaul and improvement."

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Congress passed in February with Murtha's support, provided \$2 billion for Army Corps construction projects nationwide. The Lower Monongahela River Project-Charleroi Locks will receive \$17 million to continue construction of the new river wall, \$32 million to construct the upper guard wall, and \$35 million to construct the lower guard wall.

"The purpose of the Economic Stimulus Bill was to put Americans back to work, to jumpstart our economy, and to make critical investments in our nation's infrastructure," added Murtha. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, will receive a total of \$140 million in stimulus funds, creating 1,700 direct and 1,900 indirect jobs."

"We'll quickly put people to work on this critical navigation project, which will increase the reliability of the aging 77-year-old Charleroi Locks and Dam facility and keep river traffic flowing on our vital inland waterways," commented Colonel Michael Crall, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District.

The replacement of the two Charleroi Locks are part of a multi-year project that also includes construction of a new gated dam at Braddock, removal of the Elizabeth locks and dams, as well as channel dredging on the Lower Monongahela River. The existing Charleroi Locks are 70 years old and their replacement involves construction of two 84' wide by 720' long chambers that are an essential component of the overall project, which will lower the downstream operating pool by 3.2' from the removal of the Elizabeth locks and dams and raise the pool between Braddock and Elizabeth 5.0'.

The current Charleroi Locks are each only 56' wide, which creates a bottleneck with commercial water traffic since six of the upstream locks all have 84' wide lock chambers. These larger chambers, when completed, would provide additional capacity to process traffic. Construction of the new Charleroi Locks began in 2002 with a \$7.9 million contract to prepare the site by construction of a new access road, bridge and parking areas as well as operations and service buildings. Another contract for demolition of the river lock chamber was awarded in the fall of 2003 for \$12.9 million. The current contract for construction of the new river wall was also awarded in the fall of 2004 for \$96.6 million. Construction began in the spring of 2005 and is scheduled to be completed in late 2010.

"I'd like to thank Colonel Crall and the staff of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, as well as community leaders and activists for their continued commitment to this project," said Murtha. "Making sure that our locks and dams received funding from the stimulus bill was a team effort."

To date, Murtha has been instrumental in securing \$504 million for the Lower Monongahela Project. Over the past 30 years, Murtha has secured nearly \$635 million for Army Corps construction and maintenance projects throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. In addition, he has secured over \$550 million in sewage and water upgrades.

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