



Susquehanna Greenway photo exhibit reveals life along the river: M. Diane McCormick

Craig_Douglas_Gephart_2011Winner (2).jpg

Craig Douglas Gephart's photo of fireworks over Harrisburg captured grand prize in Susquehanna Greenway Partnership's 2011 photo contest. (*Craig Douglas Gephart, submitted by Susquehanna Greenway Partnership*)

M. Diane McCormick | Special to PennLive By **M. Diane McCormick | Special to PennLive**

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It was the photo of the West Pittston woman taking a sledgehammer to her waterlogged kitchen cabinets that got me thinking.

This was a reception introducing the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership's "Images of the Susquehanna" exhibit in the Capitol East Wing's rotunda.

The annual contest explores life along the Susquehanna in all its glory — and its trials. Winners from previous years are **on display at the Capitol through February**.

The images give us the many moods of the river — serene, tranquil, angry, majestic. The Susquehanna winding through mountain gaps. Kids tubing with their parents. Weighty but graceful bridges. Main Street, Muncy, Pa., in an image that could be Main Street USA — a leafy summertime scene of a 13-star American flag hanging over a picket fence.

Oh, and the river when it floods. In 2012, after the devastation of Tropical Storm Lee, Susquehanna Greenway added a new contest category, floods. After all, this is our Susquehanna, lulling us with its beauty until it gets cranky and comes storming into our homes and businesses.

Looking at the West Pittston photo, I realized that the exhibit is about cohabitation of humans and river. I examined the configuration of window and walls in this soggy kitchen. Nope, not the home of my late grandparents, the riverside home my mom grew up in, the home where I spent so many childhood days. Hurricane Agnes left the home largely untouched, while my grandparents were still there. Tropical Storm Lee, I heard, gave the next owner a real wallop. Just nature's way of reminding us not to get too comfortable.

Of course, life anywhere has its hazards. Good with the bad, and all that. The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, created by Gov. Tom Ridge, educates and advocates about the promise of the river for

communities along its banks. One major initiative is linking communities and trail systems, like Harrisburg's Riverfront Park, along the river's 500-mile journey through Pennsylvania.

"To build a greenway is to build a community," said executive director Trish Carothers.

I joined Kerry and Kathy Woods as they examined the photos, including my favorite, the colorful quilts hanging on the porch of a white Victorian house during Tunkhannock's annual "Airing of the Quilts."

Kerry Woods sits on the Susquehanna Township Planning Commission and is retired from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, with 18 years that included serving as flood-insurance program coordinator. Yes, he said, we can apply "good old Yankee ingenuity" to flood-proofing the river — if we absolutely must.

"The best thing is to let the river have its space," he said.

I also met Marci Mowery, of Camp Hill, who grew up as a self-described river rat in Columbia, Lancaster County. Today, she's president of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundations, and she volunteers to maintain camping grounds on river islands in Weiser State Forest (yes, you can camp on the river).

Mowery "sees the river in a lot of different ways," she told me. The river tells the history of Pennsylvania and its industries. It inspires her "in all of its moods and all of its seasons." For her, the vista of the bridges from Riverfront Park's river walk recalls a similar scene — one in Paris, along the Seine.

"We travel great distances," she said, "but we have this same beauty right here in our backyard, and it's the river."

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