



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2008

CONTACT:

Emily Harding
eharding@riverquest.org
412-231-2712 x25
412-965-7485 cell

Shayna Pitt
shaynapitt@riverquest.org
412-231-2712 x22
412-656-7798 cell

RiverQuest Delivers Eco-Friendly Flagship Vessel from the Gulf Coast to Pittsburgh for Educational Mission

PITTSBURGH, PA - August 13, 2008

RiverQuest's new hybrid education vessel ***Explorer*** arrived in Pittsburgh this morning as it passed through the Emsworth Lock and Dam at 10:00am. RiverQuest's *Explorer* is first-of-its-kind model for river environmental education and green marine technologies.

"She operates like a dream," said RiverQuest's head captain, Kimberly Porr, one of the few commercially licensed female river captains on the 1,000+ miles of navigable waterways in the Ohio River Watershed. "It has been a long journey, but she sure is an efficient boat."

Explorer, a newly-constructed 90-foot, 150-passenger hybrid boat left Bayou La Batre, Alabama on Sunday, August 3rd and arrived into the Pittsburgh Pool of the Ohio River after a 1,600 mile journey through nine states. *Explorer* is a state-of-the-art education and research vessel designed to serve students and the public in the Pittsburgh region and beyond with transformative onboard programs.

RiverQuest docked *Explorer* at their homeport next to Carnegie Science Center by early afternoon. Ann Metzger, Interim Co-Director of the Science Center, joined in the welcome. "We all have been eagerly awaiting the arrival of *Explorer* and her important contributions to environmental education in the region. RiverQuest has been a good neighbor and is a great partner to Carnegie Science Center in delivering education

programming to Pittsburgh youth and families."

Today's arrival marks the beginning of a month of intensive preparation for RiverQuest crew and staff to take their first passengers on board in the coming months after official inspections are completed. RiverQuest hopes to be able to deliver its first school program on board *Explorer* on September 19th with Shadyside Academy middle school students on board. Local U.S. Coast Guard certification approval is first required and cannot be rushed, as safety and proper crew training are of the utmost importance.

RiverQuest's staff, Board of Directors, staff family members and special friends welcomed *Explorer* and her crew of seven from the decks of RiverQuest's retired US Navy vessel *Discovery* and a small fleet of private boats as they Emerged from the Emsworth Lock into the Pittsburgh Pool. Concluding the voyage at Emsworth Lock and Dam was a tribute and a fitting end to a trip that included passing through 49 locks that are built, maintained and operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers to lift the boat and crew, through a series of steps, to the river level of 710' above sea level in downtown Pittsburgh - not an easy thing to do with a boat that weighs over 80 tons.

"It is one of the proudest moments of my career," said Karl Thomas, RiverQuest Executive Director. "This has been a very challenging and rewarding project, but I know my family is happy have me home after I have been living on *Explorer* for the past ten days. 1,600 miles at 8 mph is a wonderful way to see America's inland waterways."

RiverQuest is proud to deliver *Explorer* to the Pittsburgh, a city known internationally for its own environmental transformation, for her special mission. *Explorer* was designed and built by RiverQuest to serve the Pittsburgh community for decades to come. The project was and funded, sponsored and financed by local partners, most notably The Heinz Endowments, the PA Department of Natural Resources and a large number of local foundations, corporations, other PA government agencies and individuals.

For more details about *Explorer* and RiverQuest, including a list of all development partners, technologies and boat facts, visit www.riverquest.org.

About RiverQuest

RiverQuest, formerly Pittsburgh Voyager, is an award-winning not-for-profit education organization offering river-based educational programs for students, teachers, and the community. RiverQuest also provides a range of public programs, including interpretive cruises and private charters for businesses, organizations and the public.

RiverQuest's mission is to connect people to their environment through river education adventures programs. Since launching programs in 1995 as Pittsburgh Voyager, RiverQuest has served nearly 80,000 individuals through on-board education programming. More than 64,000 elementary, middle and high school students representing 239 schools from 66 school districts in 11 western Pennsylvania counties have participated in standards-based learning programs, with themes ranging from environmental science and regional history to physical science and mathematics. Along with students, more than 2,500 teachers and college students and 17,000 members of the general public have participated in RiverQuest programs.

For more information call 412-231-2712 or visit RiverQuest's website at www.riverquest.org.

###