

LOWER DELAWARE CANOEMOBILE



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RIVERS, TRAILS, & CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE (RTCA)



RTCA staff help communities plan parks and trails, conserve and improve access to rivers and natural areas, and create recreation opportunities through locally led partnerships.



Wilderness Inquiry

Established in 1978, Wilderness Inquiry is a non-profit organization that connects people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to the natural world through shared outdoor experiences



CANOEMOBILE

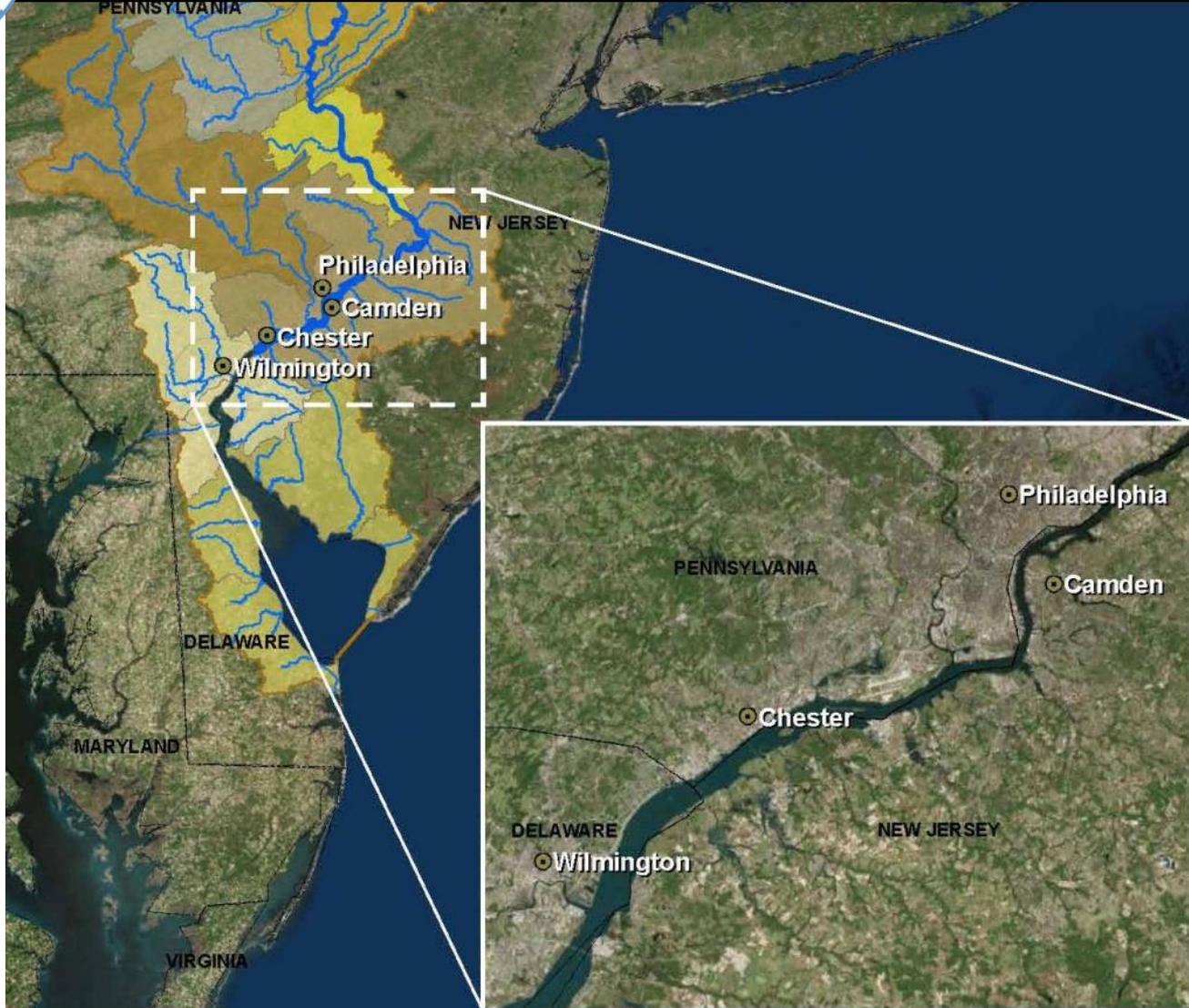
The Wilderness Inquiry Canoemobile is a fleet of vans, each with six 10-passenger Voyageur canoes & seven boat captains, that delivers place-based education on urban waterways across the nation



- Partners with local organizations to provide integrated on-water & land-based education experiences
- **2014 Canoemobile traveled to 25 cities and engaged 9,000 youth**



DELAWARE RIVER UWFP IN ACTION



CANOEMOBILE PARTNERS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



NON-PROFITS/ FOR-PROFIT



LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT



SCHOOLS & YOUTH



CHALLENGES OF CANOEMOBILE

Challenges of engaging youth in urban on-water experiences:

1. CHALLENGE: Physical Barriers: Poor River Access

- May not have existing infrastructure (boat launches/docks) to access rivers
- Rivers may have commercial traffic & tidal changes
- May not have gear or equipment

2. CHALLENGE: Cultural Barriers: Stigmatized Rivers & Fear of Water

- Lack of experience with swimming and boating
- Urban rivers are where our “doogie” goes

3. CHALLENGE: Stressed School Systems

- Lack of resources
- Focus on standardized testing & curriculum standards
- Focus on safety & liability



PHYSICAL BARRIERS

1. CHALLENGE: Poor River Access & Lack of Gear

SOLUTION:

- Program can be modified for almost any location using equipment (step stools, ladders, mud mats), regardless of whether the infrastructure exists
- WI provides all gear/equipment: students can wear their normal clothes & WI provides participants with PFDs, paddles, & ponchos
- As much as possible we try to work with Coast Guard or local marine police units to provide safety buffer



ADAPTING TO THE TIDE



SAFETY BUFFER 1



SAFETY BUFFER 2



CULTURAL BARRIERS

2. CHALLENGE: Stigmatized Rivers & Fear of Water

- Lack of experience with swimming or boating
- Urban rivers are where our “doogie” goes

SOLUTION:

- Anyone can participate regardless of age, experience, or ability
- No swimming experience necessary
- Boat captains are trained in hard & soft skills—work w/ youth to calm fears
- Engage land-based programming partners that explore water quality with the students and help them understand the history & ecology of the river



SAFETY TALK



PADDLE LESSON



TEAM-BUILDING



LAST MINUTE PEP-TALKS



STRESSED SCHOOL SYSTEMS

3. CHALLENGE: Stressed School Systems

- Limited field trips allowed & few resources to fund trips
- Focus on standardized testing & core curriculum—everything must align with core standards
- Focus on safety & liability: (Example: Camden School Board had not allowed on-water field trip for 20 years before Canoemobile 2014)

SOLUTION:

- Program is free, including transportation
- Work with partner organizations to implement land-based environmental lessons; work with teachers to align with core standards
- Work with school board on liability –Wilderness Inquiry holds insurance
- Wilderness Inquiry has 30+ years of experience and has never had a boat tip
- Boat captains are all highly experienced paddlers and are steering the boats

WATER QUALITY TESTING



WATERSHED MODELING



CULTURAL HISTORY



RIVER SPORTS



RESULTS

2014 LOWER DELAWARE CANOEMOBILE BY THE NUMBERS

3 States

3 Safety Boats

4 Waterbodies

5 Cities

6 Canoes

8 Host Organizations

13 Days

24 Programming Partners

32 Schools/Youth-Serving
Organizations

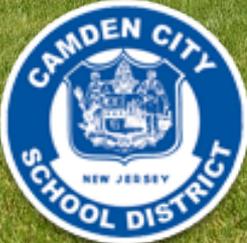


2,055 PARTICIPANTS SERVED

BUILT UNEXPECTED PARTNERSHIPS



SET NEW PRECEDENTS



CONQUERED FEARS



BEFORE



AFTER

RECONNECTED WITH OUR BACKYARDS



(THIS IS THEIR BACKYARD)





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