



## On May 10, 'Ya Gotta Regatta'

*LHVA, LRCA: Similar acronyms, similar river focus*

By **Natalie Gelb Solfanelli**

People often confuse LHVA and LRCA. It is not unusual for someone to say, "I've heard of it, but what is it?"

Each month I write something about the Lackawanna Heritage Authority (LHVA), which is a State and National Heritage Area. LHVA is one of 37 national heritage areas, regions designated by the U.S. Congress as a geographic area that is significant in the history of the nation. As the commonwealth's first of 12 state heritage areas, it has been a catalyst for diverse groups within the region to develop a unified strategy for protecting, preserving, developing and promoting the region's heritage. LHVA has established a partnership of government, business, civic organizations, educational institutions, educational institutions and individuals who are dedicated to conserve and educate the public about our historic, cultural, economic, and natural resources. As the result of its many programs, projects and partnerships, LHVA is an important engine for economic and community development.

LRCA is the "Lackawanna River Corridor Association." It is an organization that was founded "to involve citizens of our watershed with conservation and stewardship of the rivers, its tributaries and water resources." Included in its goals is "to aid in the development of the 40-mile Lackawanna River Heritage Trail."

Not only are the names similar, but also the missions of LHVA and LRCA, overlap in important ways. Within LHVA's broader mission, LRCA is a key environmental partner. The two organizations do not compete; rather they are strong partners in the efforts to restore the river, and to promote conservation, recreation, and environmental education. Along with Scranton Tomorrow, they also are collaborating to plan a Riverfront District that will encompass an area connecting LHVA's Downtown Riverwalk with the proposed Commonwealth Medical College and the major mixed-use development planned at the Scranton Laceworks. This is an example of the great partnerships that are working to improve the quality of life in northeastern Pennsylvania!

This month the Lackawanna River Corridor Association is hosting its annual RiverFest on Saturday, May 10. It will be a full day of fun and excitement along the Lackawanna River with the traditional paddle and white water Canoe-A-Thon, the Fabulous River Regatta, the ever popular Duck-A-Thon, and an afternoon of special music. All events finish or begin at the Olive Street Bridge by the Ice Box Complex.

Launch sites for the Canoe-A-Thon will be the usual Archbald and Blakely locations, which are familiar to past participants. Canoes and kayaks are available for rent at the

Blakely location or competitors are welcome to bring their own. Registration forms (go to [www.lrca.org](http://www.lrca.org)) must be complete and received by the LRCA no later than Wednesday, May 7.

One of the highlights of this great day on the banks of the Lackawanna River is the Regatta. This year, LRCA is encouraging increased participation for this afternoon event. Entrants are invited to use imagination and a sense of humor to compete under the new title, "Ya Gotta Regatta." The winners will receive \$100. Again, go to the Web site for special rules and other information on the competition.

Following the Regatta, stay for the famous Duck Race that will be launched near the Middle Street Pumping station next to the Farmers Markey and will finish at the Olive Street Bridge. These fiercely competitive racers will vie for cash prizes of \$500, \$200, and \$50 to be awarded to the sponsors of the first, second, and third place ducks, respectively, that cross the finish line.

To sponsor a fuck or a flock, stop by the LRCA office at the Silkman House, 2006 N. Main Avenue, Scranton, or mail in you check to LRCA, P.O. Box 358, Scranton, 18501.

The RiverFest is a great day for helping to support the efforts of LRCA as well as LHVA's goal of reconnection communities to the river. This even gets bigger and better each year. There is food, music, competition that is fun for everyone, and it is a wonderful family day. You can view the Canoe-A-Thon by stopping at one of the many bridges over the Lackawanna River or walking along sections of the river bank to cheer on the competitors or await the many dedicated paddlers to arrive at the finish line.

Bernie McGurl, executive director of the Lackawanna River Corridor Association as well as the Lackawanna Conservancy, has observed, "The people of the Lackawanna Valley really care about our river and its watershed. They know how important clean water is to a healthy community. RiverFest is a great way to enjoy this marvelous gift of nature right in the heart of our valley and to get together with friends and neighbors to learn about ways you can help to create a more sustainable lifestyle here in northeast Pennsylvania."

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