Independence Seaport Museum Receives Grant from William Penn Foundation
The $2.6 Million Grant Will Fund 75 Percent of the River Alive! Project

PHILADELPHIA, PA (December 5, 2017) – Independence Seaport Museum has been awarded a $2.6 million grant from the William Penn Foundation to open River Alive! – a landmark exhibition focusing on the Delaware River and its watershed as a living, ever-changing system whose health and sustainability is vital to our lives.

“The River Alive! exhibit has been years in the making and is a real game changer for the Seaport Museum,” said John Brady, President and CEO of Independence Seaport Museum. “It will continue to connect us with the area’s waterways by showcasing the importance of the Delaware River Watershed. Environmental changes do not happen overnight, and we could not be more grateful to the William Penn Foundation for their support and belief in this project.”

The River Alive! exhibition will position the Seaport Museum at the forefront of citizen science and watershed education in the region. It will have multiple interactive and hands-on exhibition elements including a watershed map, Citizen Science Lab and Fisharium, all helping audiences to understand the real threats to the Delaware and its watershed. As well as being an economic driver through its port facilities, the River provides drinking water, food, and recreation to millions of people living across 13,500 square miles in the region.

“The Board of Port Wardens is delighted to see John’s vision for the Museum coming to fruition. The River Alive! project allows us to exemplify the commitment we have for our local waterways and environment,” said Peter Havens, Chair of Independence Seaport Museum’s Board of Port Wardens. “We hope support like this will inform others about the projects transforming the area and inspire them to come forward and get involved.”

Programmatically, River Alive! creates opportunities to physically and intellectually connect the exhibition to the Seaport Museum’s soon-to-be expanded dock and to the tens of thousands of passersby along Penn’s Landing. The exhibit will beg questions such as, “What’s alive in the river?,” and “Why should we care about the river?,” and “How do we use the river every day?,” and encourage visitors to act on the answers by seeking education via River Alive! and its associated programming. Construction on the exhibit will begin in early 2018 with an anticipated opening in November 2018.

As a bold and innovative exhibition, River Alive! aligns with the William Penn Foundation’s work to empower those living in the area to protect our shared watershed, a strategic vision accomplished through grants toward research, advocacy, communications, conservation, and strong environmental education. With this investment in River Alive!, the Seaport Museum will foster educational experiences along the water and for the watershed across the area.
“We are excited for this exhibit to transform the way residents and visitors to Philadelphia experience the Delaware River and learn about its critical role in our well-being,” said Shawn McCaney, Executive Director of the William Penn Foundation. “For too long, there has been a divide – both literal and figurative – between people and the river. After decades of effort to restore water quality, people are once again returning to the water now that it is clean. The Foundation has made a concerted effort to help foster this re-connection, through our past support for the Central Delaware Master Plan and now through this exhibit, which will provide direct access for people to explore and learn about the water, and inspire them to help protect it.”

About Independence Seaport Museum
Independence Seaport Museum deepens the understanding, appreciation, and experience of the Philadelphia region’s waterways through history, art, science, and connecting with communities. With National Historic Landmark ships Cruiser Olympia and Submarine Becuna, a boatbuilding workshop, small boat rentals, hands-on exhibits, a Citizen Science Lab, one of the largest maritime art and artifact collections in North America and more, the Museum is the premier, year-round destination on the Penn’s Landing waterfront. Visit daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and see our full schedule of programs and events at phillyseaport.org.

About William Penn Foundation
The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, foster creativity that enhances civic life, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. In partnership with others, the Foundation works to advance opportunity, ensure sustainability, and enable effective solutions. Since inception, the Foundation has made nearly 10,000 grants totaling over $1.6 billion. The Foundation’s assets exceed $2.3 billion as of March 31, 2017.

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