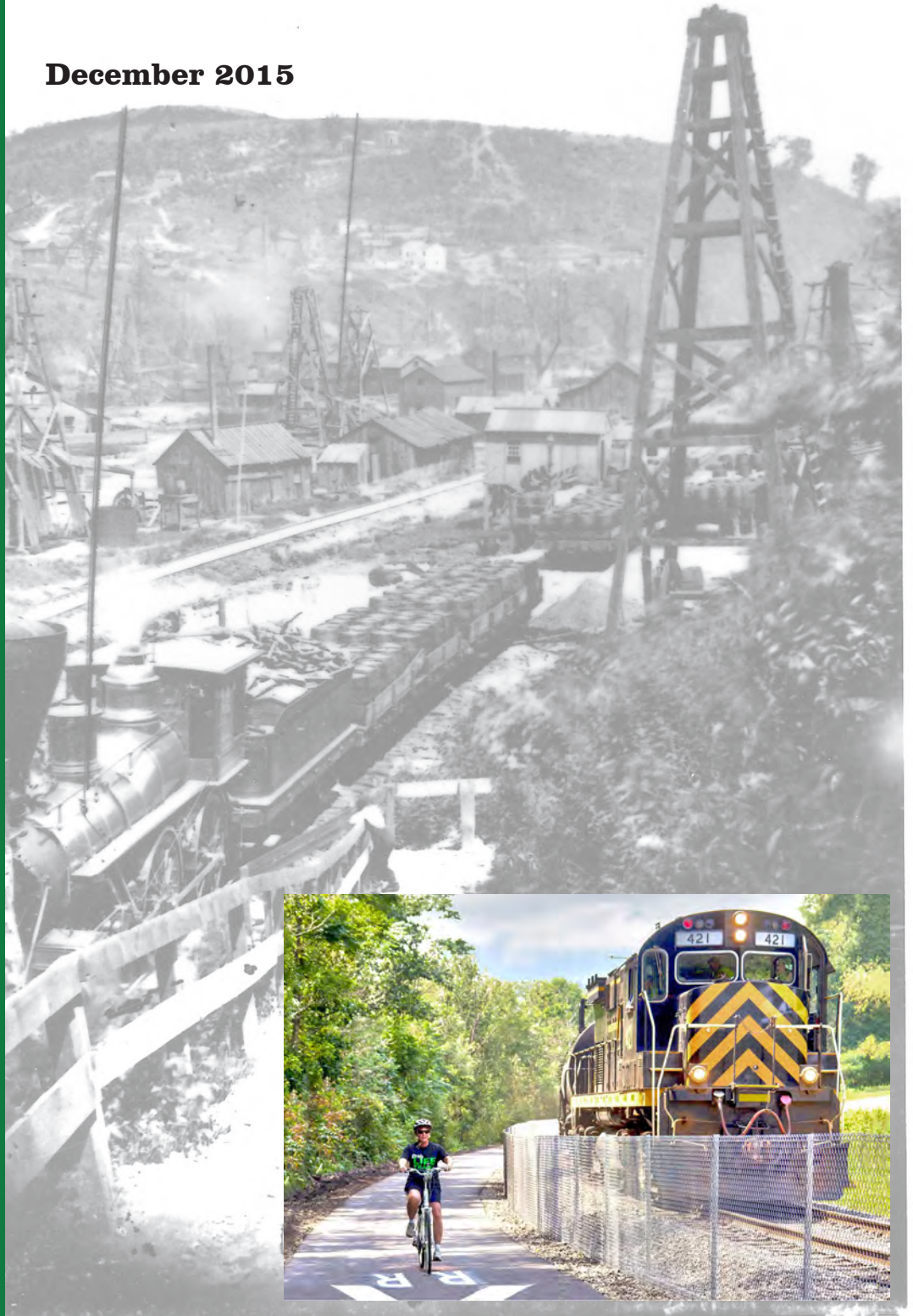


Oil Region National Heritage Area

Sustainability Plan

December 2015



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*Cover color photograph: Kimberly Copley-Harris, ORA
Historic photograph: DWM 414; photo by John Mather, 1868-1869 courtesy of Drake Well Museum*

Oil Region National Heritage Area



Sustainability Plan

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December 2015

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- Crawford Center in Emlenton
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1. INTRODUCTION

This Sustainability Plan is intended as a guide to future decisions about investments in the Oil Heritage Region to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Oil Heritage Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism (ORA) in meeting its stated mission and purpose. This chapter introduces the concept of Sustainability Planning for National Heritage Areas and the planning process and approach for applying that concept to the Oil Heritage Region National Heritage Area (ORNHA).

The Oil Heritage Region was designated as a National Heritage Area (NHA) in December of 2004 when President George W. Bush signed HR 4818 designating all of Venango County and the eastern portion of Crawford County as the Oil Region National Heritage Area (see Figure 2). Prior to its NHA designation, the area was known as Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Park, a designation it received in 1994 as one of twelve Pennsylvania Heritage Areas. The original management entity of the Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Park was the Oil Heritage Region, Inc. ORA, as the current management entity, was formed in 2005 from the merger of the Venango Economic Development Corporation, Oil City Community Development Corporation, Oil Heritage Region, Inc. and Oil Heritage Region Tourism Promotion Agency.

The ORNHA covers an area of approximately 708 acres in Venango and eastern Crawford Counties with a population of 56,470 in 2013¹. The median income for the region was just under \$41,977 in 2013.² The region is known as “the valley that changed the world,” in recognition of being the birthplace of the world’s petroleum industry—which is the basis for its recognition as a National Heritage Area.

The story of the “valley that changed the world” is told through three primary interpretive themes: The Land, The Oil Industry, and The Prize: The Global Impact of Oil. The story is told at the Drake Well Museum/Park outside Titusville, Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry in Oil City, and the Pumping Jack Museum and Historical Association in Emlenton, among other museums and attractions. Over eighty interpretive exhibits are found throughout the region at parks, waysides, and along the extensive Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system.

1.1. WHAT IS A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA?

The National Park Service defines a National Heritage Area (NHA) as “a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in them. Continued use of National Heritage Areas

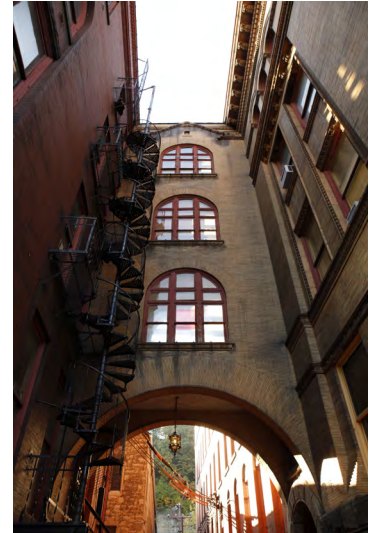


Figure 1. ORA is nominating the National Transit Building and Annex for National Historic Landmark status on the National Register of Historic Places (photograph by Heather Mull)

1 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

2 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

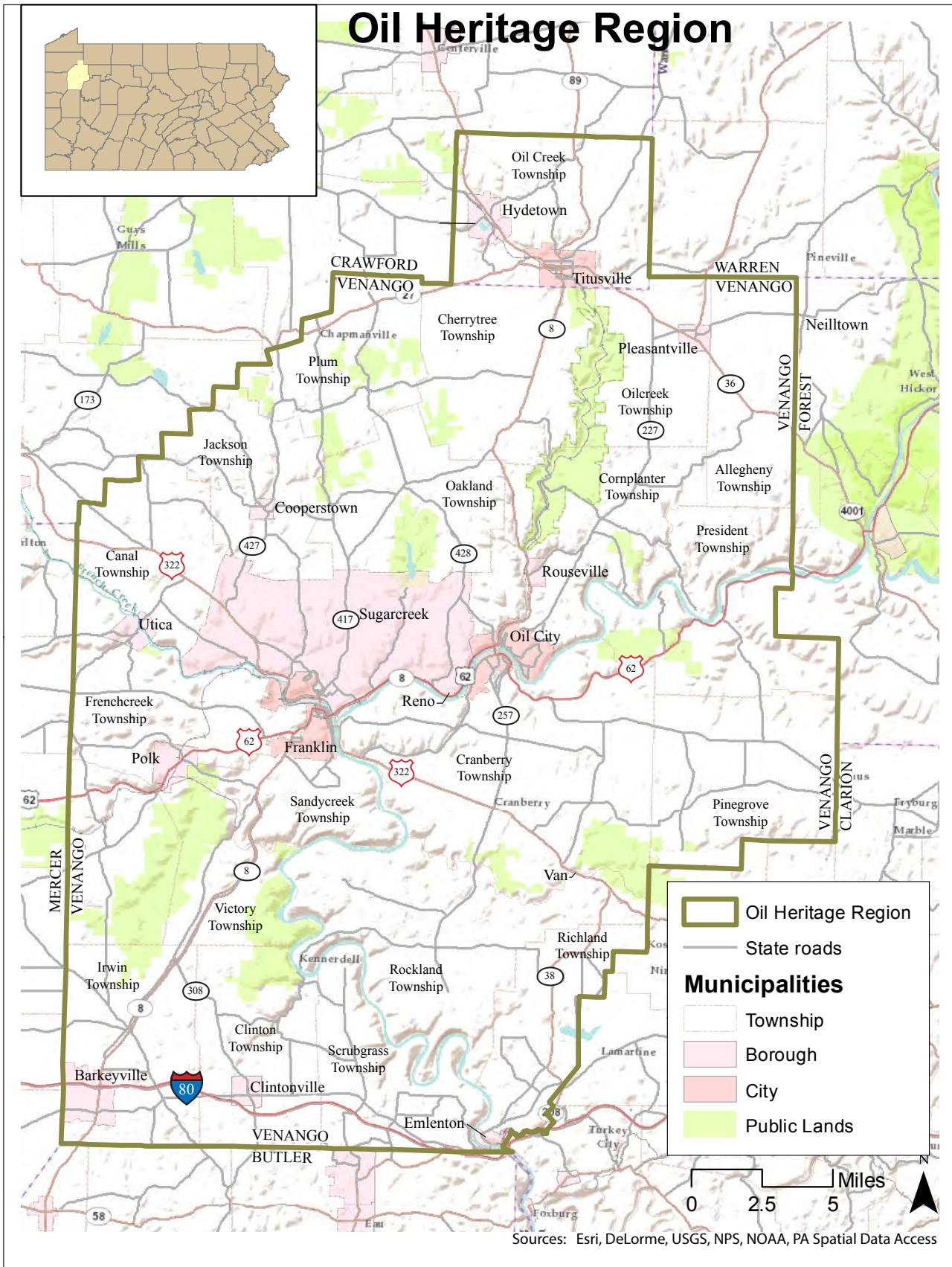


Figure 2. Oil Region Heritage Area Location Map

by people whose traditions shape the landscapes enhances their significance.”³

1.2. WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS?

The National Park Service defines organizational sustainability as the NHA administrative entity’s (in this case the ORA’s) “continuing ability to work with partners through changing circumstances to meet its authorized mission, including: (a) Honor the legislative mandate; (b) Govern, adaptively manage staff, and operate; (c) Leverage and secure resources (time, talent, treasure, volunteers, expertise, funds); (d) Support partners in communication, collaboration and capacity building; (e) Steward programs and projects to improve economic value and quality of life; and (f) Reach diverse audiences.”⁴

1.3. PLANNING PROCESS

The ORNHA Sustainability Plan was conducted over a five-month time frame including the following basic steps:

- Collect and review background information about the Oil Heritage Region National Heritage Area and ORA program activities, priorities, and/or administrative practices
- Meet with Alliance board members, key staff and stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities and set overall goals for sustainability
- Develop a draft plan outlining scenarios to help achieve the sustainability goals
- Select a preferred scenario and conduct a public meeting to review recommendations and receive feedback from residents, elected officials, project partners, NPS, DCNR, ORA and others
- Develop the plan with implementation schedules, budgets and recommended changes to ORNHA program activities

Two sets of public meetings were included as part of the process. The first round of meetings conducted on September 1, 2015 was organized geographically to reach out to stakeholders in the communities where they live. The purpose of the meetings—held in Titusville, Franklin and Emlenton—was to gather ideas and suggestions from residents, elected officials, businesses and other organizations to help identify and develop additional partnerships needed to sustain and advance the Oil Heritage Region National Heritage Area. The purpose of the second public meeting—held in Oil City on November 10, 2015— was to confirm the recommended direction and priorities of the sustainability plan.

3 National Park Service, National Heritage Areas, <http://www.nps.gov/heritageareas/FAQ/> accessed on 2 November 2015.

4 Alliance for National Heritage Areas, Organizational Sustainability Planning Project, <http://www.nationalheritageareas.us/sustainability/> accessed on 2 November 2015.

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the established significance of the Oil Heritage Region, its management and financial history, existing organizational structure for the management entity, and the role of the many partners that are contributing to its ongoing success as a well-managed heritage region. ORA needs to diversify its funding sources and move towards a financially sustainable mission-driven enterprise that is not solely reliant on donations and federal and state grants. Such an enterprise has the ability to focus less on fundraising and grantsmanship, and more on building sustainable business-oriented models to help achieve its mission. ORA needs to find multi-faceted solutions that build upon past successes and that create the kinds of lasting and positive change that the Oil Region's communities so desperately need.

2.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OIL HERITAGE REGION

The ORA identifies the significance of the 708-square mile area of Venango and eastern Crawford County in rural northwestern Pennsylvania as "the valley that changed the world," in recognition of being the birthplace of the world's petroleum industry. According to the ORA:

"Drake Well Museum and Park, Oil Creek State Park, and other area museums and historic sites—augmented by the area's extensive Victorian Architecture, excellent outdoor recreational facilities, well-rounded hospitality services, and small town charm—are set amidst a landscape full of place names and visual reminders of the dominant role which oil history has played here for more than 150 years.

"From the 1859 successful production of crude oil through a shallow well drilled by Edwin L. Drake and William Smith just south of Titusville, PA along Oil Creek, the extensive demographic, environmental, transportation, economic, and cultural changes triggered by this event and the resulting first oil boom spread along Oil Creek and the Allegheny River. It was here that numerous effective innovations as well as unsuccessful attempts blended to shape many of the basic practices and policies that continue in use today in the twin energy industries of oil and natural gas."⁵

The concept of capitalizing on the area's distinctive history as a central theme for attracting tourists, businesses, residents, and investments was first examined in a Feasibility Study for the Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Park, prepared in 1988. The Feasibility Study and subsequently more refined plans led to the 1994 configuration of the Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Park, one of twelve Pennsylvania Heritage Areas. The Pennsylvania Heritage Areas program, established in 1989, is a comprehensive, multi-faceted regional strategic initiative to conserve and enhance key resources and promote a region's heritage for tourism development. The initial Management Action Plan was updated in 2004 as part of its 2004 federal legislative designation as a National Heritage Area.

⁵ Black, Marilyn, *Oil Region Alliance*, 2015

The Oil Region National Heritage Area includes the communities most affected by the initial oil boom—a total of 34 municipalities including all of Venango County plus the City of Titusville, Oil Creek Township, and Hydetown Borough in Crawford County. The communities included within the National Heritage Area boundary are committed to the necessary collaborative revitalization, recreation, promotional, educational, and interpretive efforts needed to successfully manage the area for heritage- and recreation-based tourism, and to providing the necessary matching funds and support for a heritage area endeavor lasting at least decades.

2.2. MANAGEMENT MILESTONES

The ORA was formed from the merger of the Venango Economic Development Corporation, Oil City Community Development Corporation, Oil Heritage Region, Inc. and Oil Heritage Region Tourism Promotion Agency. ORA is also designated as the lead economic development agency and lead tourism promotion agency for the County of Venango.

Over the ensuing eleven plus years, ORA has achieved many milestones that have advanced the management of the Oil Region National Heritage Area toward a more sustainable model for heritage-based tourism. ORA has worked with its partners, funders and volunteers to assist local companies and provide opportunities for job creation and retention while expanding the region's recreational opportunities, augmenting educational/interpretive opportunities and maintaining a robust quality of life.

The 2006 Oil Heritage Region Management Action Plan Update, referring to the newly formed management entity, stated that ORA:

“has broad capacity in tourism, community development, and heritage preservation, a targeted action area, financing and operation capabilities, experience in property development and management, and the ability to demonstrate leadership that will engender confidence from public and private sector partners.”⁶

During the ensuing years, ORA, as evidenced by the list of management milestone accomplishments listed in Figure 3, has demonstrated this broad capacity and has produced confidence from some and skepticism from others in both the public and private sectors. ORA's forward thinking agenda outlined in that 2006 plan update identified the following key elements:

- Build a consolidated identity—using the common logo and related initiatives to build the brand recognition of the region.
- Develop products to support ORA and provide ongoing revenue
- Pursue unique projects that span boundaries across agency responsibilities and jurisdictions

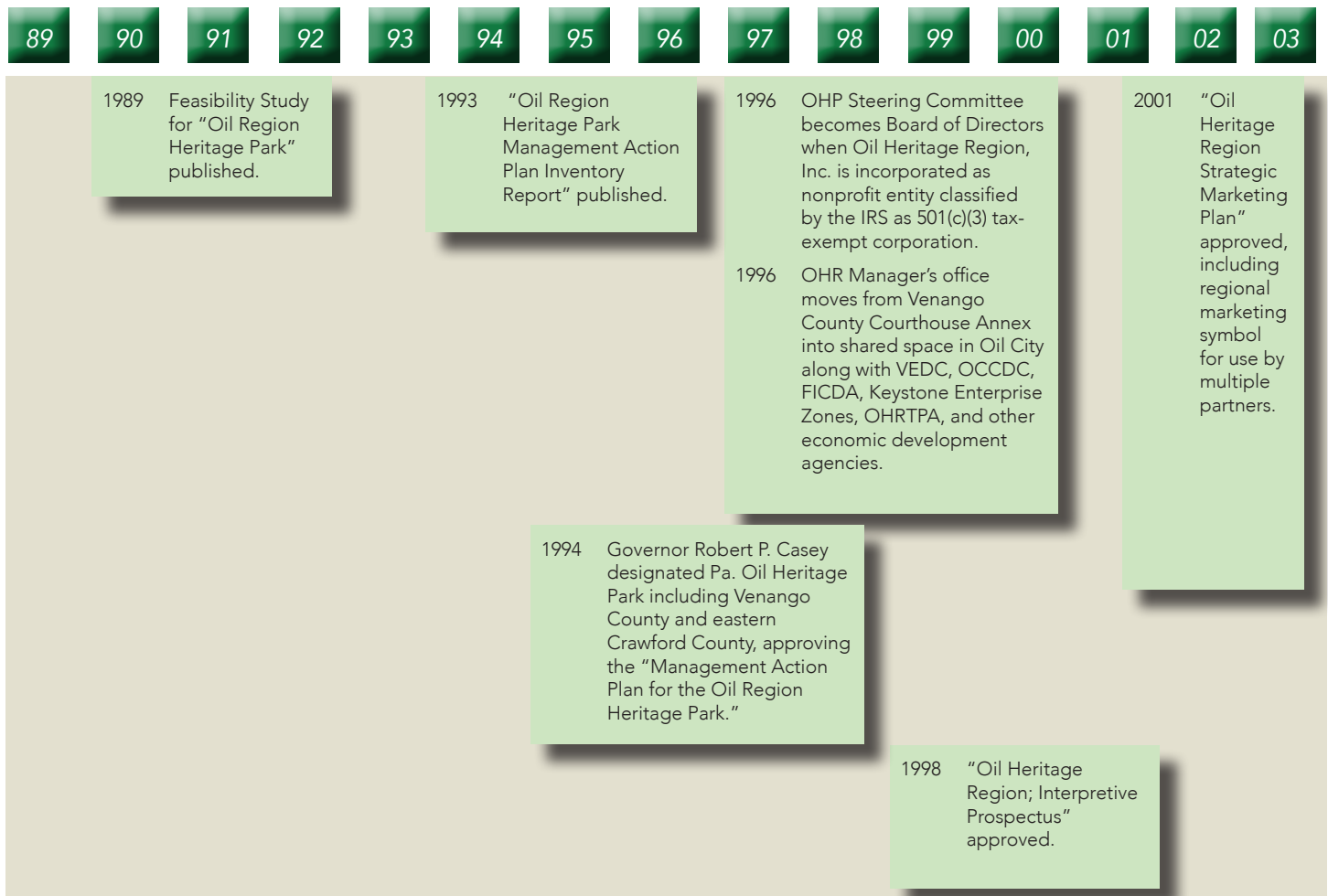
⁶ ICON architecture, inc.; *Oil Heritage Region Management Action Plan Update, 2006*, p. 16

- Undertake longer-term technical assistance programs that are multi-purpose
- Develop new revenue sources to support ORA and its heritage efforts
- Undertake event sponsorships and participate in events inside and outside the region
- Expand partnerships with other collaborating entities to take advantage of the larger capabilities of ORA

While ORA moved forward towards achieving some of the elements in the 2006 plan’s agenda, much of this agenda remains to be realized. Certainly, ORA has built a strong regional identity and has successfully pursued and implemented unique projects that are of interest to more than one agency. To a lesser extent ORA has undertaken longer-term technical assistance programs that are multi-purpose. However, ORA has yet to achieve major new revenue sources that support its heritage efforts or developed products that have provided significant ongoing revenue—which is a primary focus of this sustainability planning effort.

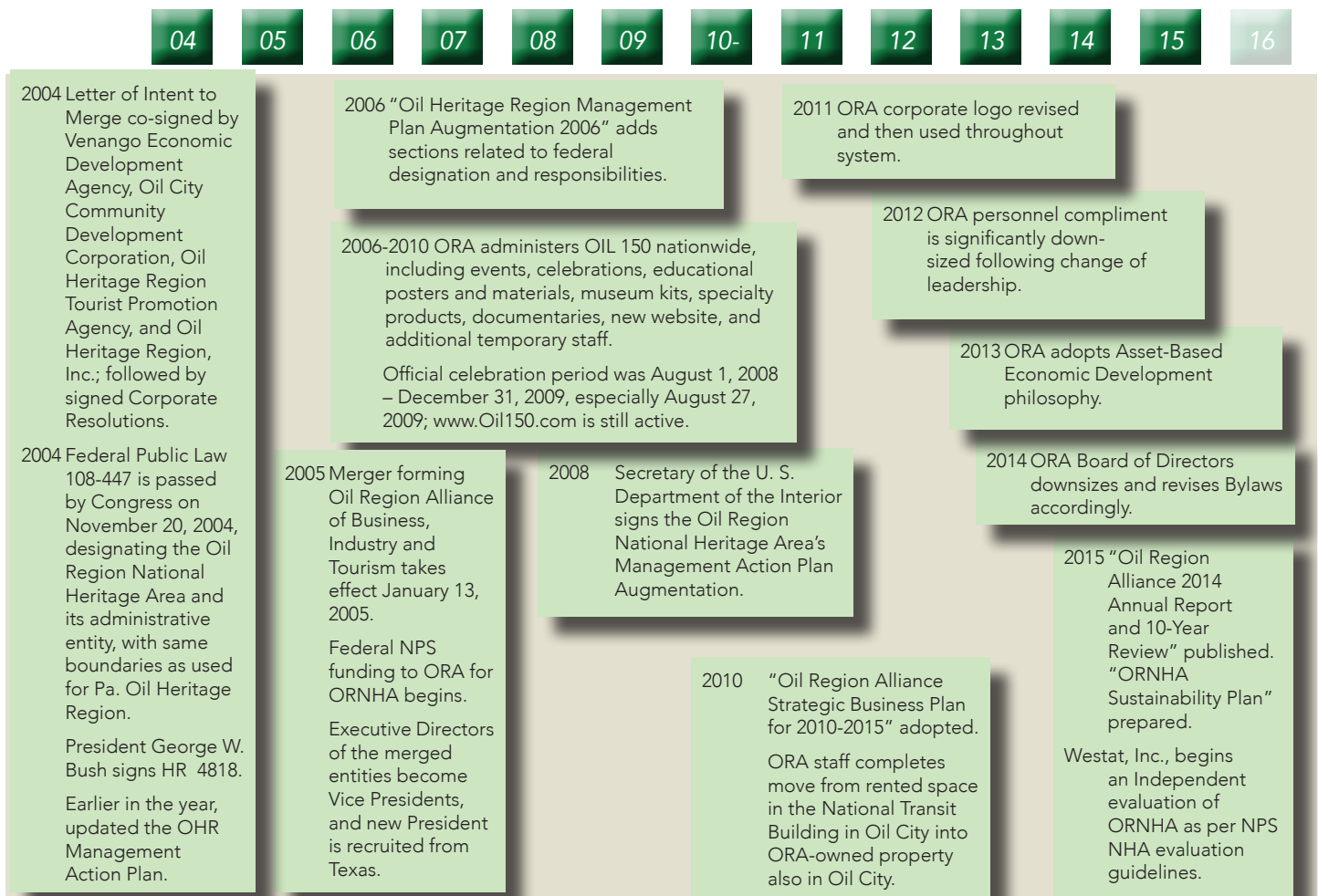
Figure 3. Management Milestones (to be developed as a graphic across facing pages)

In addition to the heritage development and tourism goals, ORA has supported the region’s efforts to create and retain jobs using more traditional economic development tools including the following examples:



- Facilitating the development of new and expanded businesses at the Barkeyville Industrial Park
- Securing Foreign Trade Zone designation for property adjacent to the Venango Regional Airport
- Building the Allegheny Overlook Apartments with the financial support of First National Bank to address Oil City housing needs
- Facilitating and securing grants from DCED for expansion of businesses in the Oil City Industrial Park
- Facilitating business retention and expansion at the Sandycreek Industrial Park
- Providing assistance and support for additional job creation and business expansion throughout the region

In addition to the traditional economic development tools noted above and as more fully described in the 2014 Annual Report and Ten-Year review (Appendix 4), ORA has supported heritage- and nature-based tourism, outdoor recreation and visitor infrastructure for the National Heritage Area including these activities:



- Installing more than 80 interpretive panels throughout the region
- Publishing maps, books, guides, documentaries and educational materials about the region's oil history and heritage
- Helping found and support the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance and facilitating the necessary partnerships needed to enhance visitor infrastructure to increase access to the Allegheny River
- Organizing and promoting river, art and music festivals, fishing tournaments and birding festivals
- Hosting a new website, www.grabtrails.com, to showcase the variety of trails in the region
- Administering the Oil Region Historic House Plaque Program
- Facilitating "Blueprint Communities" projects for Emlenton, Foxburg and Parker
- Working with local and regional partners to implement the Trail Town Program® to help trail communities to capitalize on the trail-based tourism and recreation opportunities associated with the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail

Looking at the phasing of the management plan helps to illustrate this point. The following table lists the phasing and implementation status of each of the major elements of the 2006 plan. For the full 2006 Management Action Plan see www.oilheritage.org.

Table 1 – 2006 Management Action Plan Update and 2015 Status

2006 MAP: Short-term (2004-2007)	2015 Status (selected accomplishments)
<p>a) Build Regional and Operational Identity. A new logo and identity was adopted by the ORA and is used for all ORA projects and publications, ORA has organized into divisions, the website has been redesigned and updated, and NHA designation was received at the end of 2004.</p>	<p>ORA corporate logo adopted in 2005</p> <p>Current ORA corporate logo adopted in 2011</p> <p>Website developed and expanded; also maintain several topical websites</p> <p>Leadership transition achieved</p>
<p>b) Strengthen Program Management Capacity. Actions should include launching the OHR Hospitality Initiative, providing technical and financial assistance to new niche accommodation initiatives, and implementing the economic impact assessment system.</p>	<p>Assisted with establishment of County-Wide Revolving Loan Program (first loan made in 2009) and Route 8/62 Revolving Loan Program (first loan made in 2007)</p> <p>Awarded cash prizes to top three business plans for entities along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail; 2013, 2014 and 2015</p> <p>OHR Hospitality Initiative presently inactive</p>

<p>c) Extend and Amplify Recreational Assets. The Oil Region Alliance should continue to collaborate and support AVTA and its partners. Key priorities should include interpretive installations along trail systems and new scenic overlooks, completion of the trail link between Petroleum Centre and Oil City, development of programs and infrastructure improvements along the Allegheny River, and links between the trail system and core community and recreational areas. Engineering is underway on the trail from Oil City to Rynd Farm; federal transportation funds of \$1.3 million have been appropriated for its subsequent construction.</p>	<p>Advocates for DCNR to design and construct remaining 3-mile EPT gap in Oil Creek State Park</p> <p>Completed the McClintock Trail along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail; this section closed an integral gap in the EPT</p> <p>Added 14 historical markers throughout the Oil Region</p> <p>Kennerdell Overlook upgraded in 2006</p> <p>Allegheny Overlook constructed in 2009</p> <p>Murray's Scenic View dedicated in 2011</p> <p>Have installed 70+ EPT logo signs along the Queen City Trail, McClintock Trail, Oil Creek State Park Road, and the EPT segments in Oil City</p> <p>Have installed 80+ outdoor interpretive panels; ongoing program of researching, writing, designing, producing, and installing such standardized panels</p>
<p>d) Reinforce the Region's Heritage Venues. The immediate emphasis should be to assist in implementing cost-effective enhancements to DWM, OCSP, and OC&TRR, including support from ORA for pilot audio interpretation projects. The Sesquicentennial of Oil celebration in 2009 (referred to as "OIL150") will be here before we know it, and the region can use this event to increase awareness of the area's heritage and to increase outreach to potential oil industry sponsors. ORA should apply market knowledge to improve exhibit/education programs in other interpretive venues and should define appropriate assistance for other proposed heritage venues, including the Mather Museum in Titusville, and the potential natural gas exhibit or museum. Funds have been identified for the improvements to the Caboose Motel and the OC&TRR special events car, Drake Well Museum has secured most of the required funding, and a staff coordinator has been appointed for the Sesquicentennial.</p>	<p>McClintock-Steele-Waitz house purchased, moved, and restored</p> <p>Historic Neilltown Church building saved from demolition; interior renovated; cultural events held there for 10+ years</p> <p>Tarbell home purchased, rehabilitated, and lower floor converted to museum and special events setting; apartment rented</p> <p>WQED produced an hour-long documentary, "The Valley That Changed the World" broadcast on 50 PBS stations in the USA</p> <p>Provided OIL 150 museum kits to 150 museums in the USA</p> <p>Constructed and placed 3 full-scale oil derricks at highly visible locations (Titusville gateways, I-80)</p> <p>"Stories of a Third Generation Independent Oil Producer - as told by Bill Huber" documentary produced by Legion Media in 2009</p> <p>Administers the Oil Region Historic House Plaque Program; 20 plaques awarded and installed since 2010</p> <p>Oil Region Visitor Center installed inside Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry (2013) in Oil City</p> <p>Oil Region Visitor Center installed inside historic Perry Street Station in Titusville (2009)</p> <p>Visitor information kiosks installed in mall, hotel lobbies, chamber offices, museum lobbies</p> <p>OC&TRR's Wabash rail car in popular use</p> <p>Traveling exhibit about natural gas, "Walking the Line" in process</p> <p>Drake Well Museum main building and indoor exhibits were all upgraded and reopened to the public</p> <p>Coordinated OIL 150 nationwide; temporarily hired 3 employees; gained new fiscal partners; established and maintain www.OIL150.com; speaker's bureau; designed and still sell multiple products</p> <p>Mather Studio significantly damaged during 2015 fire at Town Square in Titusville</p>

<p>e) Continue to lay the groundwork for New Venues and Ventures. These include the short- and long-term use of the former Pennzoil refinery site at Rouseville, with its potential for a future interpretive use, OC&TRR extension to Oil City and Franklin, and a Mobile Boomtown Exhibit. The Weaver Building has been dropped from the plan.</p>	<p>New Venues and Ventures identified in the 2006 MAP Update have not been realized</p>
<p>2006 MAP: Mid-Term (2008-2011)</p>	<p>2015 Status (selected accomplishments)</p>
<p>a) Expand the recognition, brand identity, and management capacity of ORA. The Oil Region Alliance should continue activities started in the previous phase and adapt its operations to adjust to new opportunities. HR 5883, the Drake Well Sesquicentennial Commemorative Act, as introduced in Congress in 2006 indicates that this celebration will be administered by a new Federal Commission linked to ORA</p>	<p>The Oil Region Visitor Guides annual publication provides visitor information and is distributed locally and at rest areas across Pennsylvania</p> <p>Conducted the annual Oil Heritage Region Historic Preservation Awards with other partners since 2001</p> <p>US Secretary of the Interior signed the Oil Region National Heritage Area Management Plan in 2008</p> <p>HB 5883 did not pass</p>
<p>b) Continue to Reinforce Core Community Centers. Actions should include enhancement of community riverfronts, including castways and park improvements, coordination of spur trail improvement, and support for rehabilitation of key buildings and areas.</p>	<p>Downs Bldg. purchased 2013; rehab began 2015</p> <p>Engineered Queen City Trail Extension through Titusville in 2011</p> <p>Assisted in the Oil City Waterways Plan, master site plan for Oil City Marina, Oil Creek Water Trail Feasibility Study, Venango County Comprehensive Plan</p>
<p>c) Expand Regional Trail System Connections and Amenities and New Recreational Facilities. During this phase, ORA should assist in development of trails to region's edges and beyond, assist in expanding trailheads and associated services, provide assistance in expanding existing recreation venues, and work with appropriate entities to assist with development and marketing of mountain bike/All Terrain Vehicle areas and water related facilities.</p>	<p>Grand National Cross Country Series (GNCC) held an ATV/ motorcycle race at the RiverStone Estate in 2013 in Foxburg, bringing 3,000 visitors to the region</p> <p>Constructed in 2015 new trailhead and water access at "Oil Creek Memorial Landing" in Oil City</p> <p>Helped found and administratively support the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance</p> <p>Provided 10 bike racks for placement throughout Oil Region (via grant from PA DCNR)</p>
<p>d) Focus on packaging recreation and heritage experiences. Activities should include developing and marketing sojourn type excursions, creation of new products such as Elderhostel and other educational programs in the region, and work with niche and other accommodation facilities in packaging coordinated experiences to attract visitors.</p>	<p>Created the Allegheny GeoTrail (AGT) geocaching hunt, consisting of 10 counties in NW Pennsylvania</p> <p>Worked with PaGLR to create a biking map, a fishing brochure, road tour book, motor coach book, and fishing reports</p> <p>Created new website (www.grabtrails.com) to showcase trails themed around Biking & Hiking, Fishing, Games, Arts & Culture, and History.</p> <p>Hosted conferences in Franklin, Oil City and Titusville on the Victorian Architecture of the region</p> <p>Printed brochures "Victorian Architecture in the Oil Region National Heritage Area," "Artlovers Guide to Libraries in the Oil Region National Heritage Area" and updated "Titusville Walking Tour"</p>

<p>e) Update and improve interpretation in the region. This activity should encompass appropriate update of the region's interpretive plan to reflect the market, support of improvements at key interpretive venues, and completion of development, as feasible, of new interpretive venues, such as the Mobile Boomtown, other boomtown alternatives to the extent feasible, and the Rouseville and Emlenton refinery sites.</p>	<p>80+ interpretive panels have been produced and installed throughout the Oil Region</p> <p>Traveling oil history photo exhibit produced in 2005 continues in use</p> <p>Honeywell has been notified of ORA's willingness to receive former Emlenton refinery land</p>
<p>f) Develop additional revenue sources for the Oil Region Alliance. This could include expansion of new merchandise and publication offerings as well as partnership income producing ventures.</p>	<p>50+ books available at www.oilregion.org and www.OIL150.com websites</p> <p>Participated in multi-day visits with tour operators and bus companies in NY, WV, KY, and OH to market the Oil Region</p> <p>Distributed the Oil Region Visitor Guide to travel and trade shows in Erie, NY, OH, and Washington, DC</p> <p>Hosted PA Outdoor Writers Association Conferences in 2009 and 2013</p> <p>Introduced and conducted a number of festivals, including the River Romp, Kennerdell Art & Music Festival, Mr. Whiskers Catfish & Carp Fishing Derby, and the Allegheny River Bass Tournament; spun off each to other partners for ongoing operation following 2005 merger</p> <p>Hosted Petroleum History Institute Symposia in 2009, 2013, 2014</p>
<p>2006 MAP: Long Term (2012 and beyond)</p>	<p>2015 Status (selected accomplishments)</p>
<p>a) Expand Activities for Broader Community Benefit. The Oil Region Alliance should continue to develop new educational and recreational improvements and programs by working with educational, interpretive and recreational venues in region to strengthen and add programs and activities.</p>	<p>Oil History Workshops held between 2001-2011</p> <p>Awarded educational/preservation oil and natural gas history mini-grants for projects involving all age groups</p> <p>Co-sponsored the NW PA Fishing Report since 2010 to provide anglers with info on where fish are biting</p> <p>Hosted the inaugural Natural Gas History Symposium at the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville</p> <p>Administered the PA Industrial Development Authority loan program to eligible businesses</p> <p>Conducted Victorian Architecture Conference at Franklin in 2015</p> <p>Assisted Venango College of Clarion University with program expansions</p> <p>Numerous workforce development activities with schools, colleges, CareerLink, and other partners</p>
<p>b) Develop long-term use/operation for new ORA ventures. As proposed ventures mature, including the Rouseville site, and Mobile Boomtown or other boomtown alternatives, define new directions that have the potential for revenue and positive community impact.</p>	<p>Developed Barkeyville Industrial Park and expanded Sandycreek Industrial Park</p> <p>Partnerships established with multiple companies to help retain and create local jobs; develop and expand local facilities through the use of grants and loans</p> <p>Purchased property in Cranberry Township for development of independent/assisted living project</p>

<p>c) Seek ORA Sustainability. During this phase, ORA should evolve into a sustainable organization that has direct sources of revenue. The Oil Region Alliance should continue to provide ongoing coordination and assistance for programs to support its mission goals—working towards supplementing grant and philanthropic contributions with sources of earned income.</p>	<p>Sales revenues on merchandise and books are channeled to subsequent publications</p> <p>Rent for apartment in Tarbell House supports building’s operational expenses</p> <p>Registration fees at conferences/workshops provide startup funds for subsequent events</p> <p>Revolving loan repayments are awarded as new loans to eligible applicants</p> <p>Yet grants remain source of largest percentage of ORA revenues</p>
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2.3. OIL REGION ALLIANCE

The ORA, with its multiple designations as the lead economic development agency, official tourist promotion agency and as administrator for the ORNHA, continues to be well positioned to serve many of the region’s economic development and promotion needs. ORA owns and manages four historic properties, one scenic overlook in Oil City, the McClintock Trail in Cornplanter Township and Oil City, and one trailhead in Oil City. ORA manages other properties (such as the Crawford Center owned by Emlenton Borough). ORA owns its headquarters building in Oil City and owns and manages Barkeyville Industrial Park, Sandycreek Industrial Park, Seneca Industrial Park, Sugarcreek Industrial Park and a development land parcel in Cranberry Township. The historic properties are as follows: McClintock-Steele-Waitz House (aka Coal Oil Johnny House) within Oil Creek State Park; Neilltown Church Building in the adjacent Forest County (not within ORNHA territory); Tarbell House in Titusville; and the Downs Building in Oil City.

2.3.1. Mission Statement

The Mission of the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is “to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, learn and play in the valley that changed the world through the preservation, promotion, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial destinations.”⁷

2.3.2. Management Structure

ORA is organized as a non-profit corporation. The Bylaws of the Corporation provide for unlimited membership with up to 19 members on the Board of Directors. While the Bylaws do not spell out specific representations among the board of directors, the current 2015 board includes representation from industry, banking, business, local museum and educational institutions, authors, chambers of commerce, utilities and local government.

According to the Bylaws, the purpose of the Corporation “shall be the

⁷ The Oil Region Alliance, <http://www.oilheritage.org/alliance/alliance.htm> accessed on 2 November 2015

preservation, promotion, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial assets in Venango County, Pennsylvania and the surrounding area (the 'Oil Region')."⁸

ORA is supported as of December, 2015 by a staff of 9 people, organized to facilitate the accomplishment of its mission and purpose: a President/Chief Executive Officer, an Executive Vice President, two Vice Presidents (heritage development and economic development), three Project Managers, an Office Manager, and the Oil City Main Street Manager.

2.3.3. How Does the ORNHA Management Fit Within the ORA Structure?

ORA—formed in 2005 from the merger of the Venango Economic Development Corporation, Oil City Community Development Corporation, Oil Heritage Region, Inc. and Oil Heritage Region Tourism Promotion Agency—has refocused since 2013 its approach to achieving its mission and purpose towards implementing “asset-based” economic development strategies. Assets of the region include the natural resources, demographics, infrastructure, outdoor facilities, cultural amenities, and other elements of the high quality of life found here.

ORA is building opportunities to link more traditional aspects of economic development—business and job creation and retention—with quality of life benefits that heritage- and outdoor recreation-based tourism provide.

The shift in focus is most apparent when comparing traditional economic development projects and programs associated with ORA owned and managed industrial parks, with their innovative approach for the Downs Building—a multi-partner community revitalization effort. The adaptive re-use of the Downs Building coupled with the construction by other entities of a new adjacent Town Square seeks to build on the heritage of downtown Oil City while creating value for adjoining buildings that remain. While projects such as industrial parks continue to play a role in business and job creation and retention, the future is clearly pointed towards finding ways to build upon the assets of the Oil Heritage Region—its historic downtowns, main streets, the Allegheny River (and its tributaries) and adaptive reuse of the brownfields associated its industrial heritage.

2.3.4. ORNHA Funding and Finance

Over the past ten years, the Oil Region National Heritage Area has been funded through grants, rent, donations, memberships, fees and sales of property/equipment/books/merchandise.

2.3.4.1. Sources of Revenue

Between 2005 and 2014, the average annual revenue was over \$2

⁸ *Bylaws Oil Region Alliance Of Business, Industry & Tourism, as amended, July 24, 2014.*

million. Annual revenue and expenditures both peaked in 2008-2010 due to the OIL150 influx. Grants were the largest source of revenue for ORA over this time period averaging approximately \$1.1 million per year, or 53%, followed by rentals (13%) and Venango hotel occupancy tax revenues (8%) during this same time span. On average over the ten-year period, membership dues contributed approximately 5% of ORA's revenue. Losses and gains from property sales were inconsistent from year to year, but show a small net gain over the ten-year period.

The National Park Service funding for heritage area management has provided a sound financial footing to manage the National Heritage Area. Figure 4 shows the National Park Service funding history and utilization of related matching funds for the past ten years. Without this baseline funding support, ORA would face additional challenges for supporting the necessary staff that have successfully leveraged this funding to gain outside support. For each dollar of federal support over the past ten years, ORA has brought in three dollars in matching and in addition to significant in-kind donated goods and services. Figure 5 shows PA-DCNR funding for the same time period

2.3.4.2. Annual Expenditures (dollars and percent of ORA total)

Figure 6 shows the ORA's composite revenues, expenses and net assets.

Figure 4. National Park Service Federal Funding History And Utilization Of Matching Funds: FFY 2005-2015

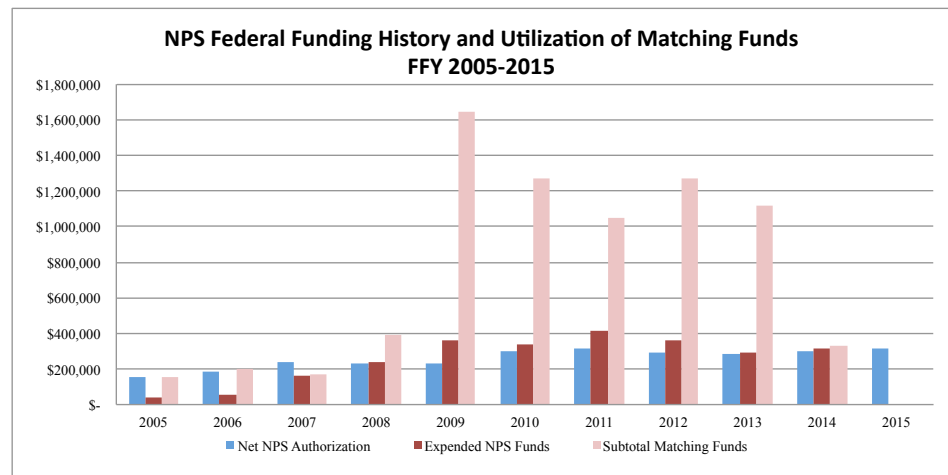
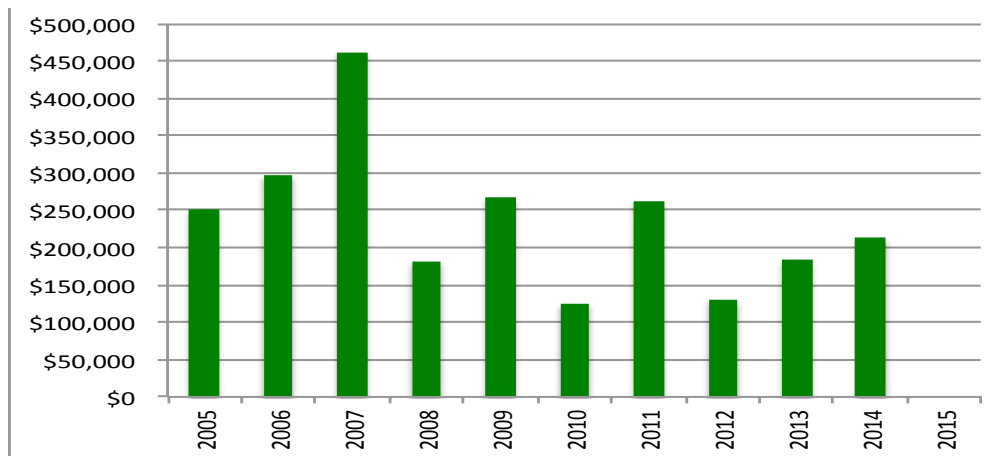
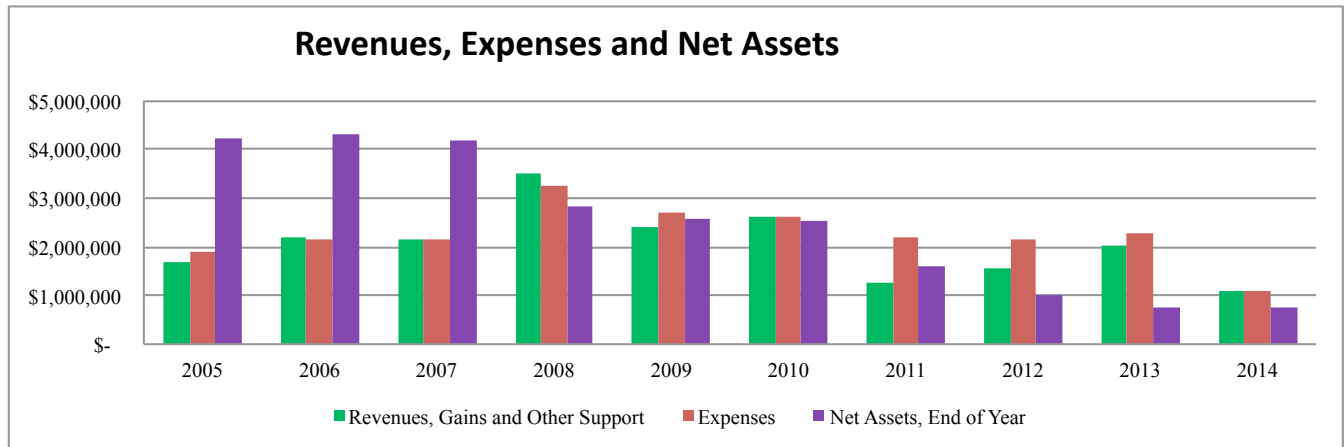


Figure 5. PA DCNR grant funding to ORA between 2005-2015





NOTES: At end of 2007, ORA changed its basis of accounting to accrual. In 2008, the net assets were adjusted to reflect prior periods.

Figure 6. ORA-wide Revenues, Expenses and Net Assets 2005-2014

Average annual expenditures totaled \$2.25 million between 2005 and 2014. Program expenses were the largest share of annual expenditures over this time period, averaging \$1.5 million per year, or 66%. Property management (16%) and management/general (13%) were the next largest expenditures, while fundraising expenditures averaged 4% during this time period. Net assets have declined throughout this period due to sales of excess property and revenue shortfalls.

More detailed information about annual 2004-2015 revenues, expenses and net assets is included in Appendix 3.

2.3.5. Current Projects and Programs

The document "2015 Project/Program Summary" lists all current and ongoing ORA projects and programs (<http://www.oilregion.org/files/2015-project-summary.pdf>). The 2015 Alliance Project/Program summary identifies four broad categories activities: heritage, industry, recreation and entrepreneurship.

Current heritage and recreation projects that represent the asset-based economic development approach include

- Sustainability Plan for the Oil Region National Heritage Area
- Get on the Trail Entrepreneurial Business Plan Contest
- Allegheny-Clarion River Valley Blueprint Communities Project
- Tarbell House
- Downs Building
- National Transit Building Historic Designation
- Brownfields Development Projects
- Oil Creek Memorial Landing



Figure 7. The Tarbell House interior renovations were completed in 2015. A second floor apartment provides rental income and the first floor is available for event space rental and educational/fund-raising activities by ORA and the Friends of the Tarbell House.



Figure 8. Oil Creek Memorial Landing under construction in September, 2015



Figure 9. Dulcimer Concert at Neilltown Church, 2015 (photo by Marilyn Black)

- Oil Region Visitor Guide
- New Alliance and Destination Marketing Websites
- Natural Gas Industry History Traveling Exhibit
- Victorian Architecture Conference

Ongoing projects and programs that reflect the asset-based approach emphasizing heritage development and recreation include

- History and Cultural Education for Students and Adults
- Educational/Preservation Oil/Gas History Mini-Grant Program
- www.oil150.com
- Historic Marker Program
- Historic House Plaque Program
- E-books Project
- Historic Preservation Awards Program
- Neilltown Concert Series
- Partner Interaction
- Recreational Development
- Neilltown Exterior Rehabilitation
- Interpretive Panels
- Geocaching

Current projects that represent more traditional forms of economic development include

- Parkland Woods Adult Living Community
- Sandycreek Industrial Park

Ongoing Alliance programs—many of which build upon the traditional economic development approach of business and job creation and retention include

- Oil & Gas Industry Development
- Local Business Expansion and Retention Program
- PEDA Certification Program
- Workforce Development Program
- New Industry Recruitment Program
- IP Development Program

- Municipal Assistance Program

ORA continues to serve as the destination marketing and tourism promotion agency for the region that builds upon heritage and recreational assets, but also includes traditional tourism promotion activities

- Destination Marketing Promotional Programs
- Literature Distribution
- Oil Region Visitors Guide (annual publication)



Figure 10. 2015 Oil Region Visitor Guide

2.4. EXISTING PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

ORA has reshaped the region's future by working together with many public and private agencies, organizations, supporting business, and individuals and community leaders on shared goals to enhance the region's economic conditions and quality of life. By working together, ORA and its many partners have established a strong track record to build upon for long-term organizational and regional sustainability. The following summarizes ongoing partner roles and selected contributions.

2.4.1. Municipal Government Partners

Municipal government partners continue to be critically important, especially with regard to project implementation, reinforcing the region's heritage venues and supporting ORA's economic development efforts. For example, cities and townships partnered with ORA to celebrate OIL 150, which included the construction of oil derricks at the northern and southern entrances to the region. More recently, municipal governments have become involved with economic development efforts such as the Trail Town Program®, the Blueprint Communities Project and the Marcellus Shale Showcase event. Local governments and chambers of commerce have also provided financial support for the expansion of local industrial facilities and the upgrading of Sandycreek Industrial Park, among others. Very importantly, in recent years several Commonwealth agencies have limited eligibility of fiscal agents such that municipalities (not non-profit organizations) must be the grant recipients. Therefore major construction and transportation projects now involve municipalities as the lead administrator with ORA providing active project management although project funds (both revenues and expenses) do not go through the ORA fiscal system.

2.4.2. State Agency Partners

Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) established and promoted the system of state heritage areas that is a national leader in heritage-based tourism. The ORA's continued involvement in the advancement of Pennsylvania's Heritage Areas Program as a whole, are mutually beneficial. Neighboring heritage areas—both state and national—provide opportunities to expand audience and market capture area through coordinated programming.



Figure 11. OIL 150 left a legacy of public and private investments in visitor infrastructure for the Oil Region, as well as a still very active educational resource website

The success of each heritage area is dependent upon the success of the entire system—both state and national. Figure 5 on page 14 illustrates the grant amounts awarded by DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation to ORA since 2005. DCNR has provided grants supporting construction of visitor centers, rehabilitation of historic sites, installation of interpretive panels, mini-grants to other organizations for educational projects related to the region's oil and natural gas history, technical assistance and much more, averaging \$234,000 annually for the past ten years. DCNR's support also covered planning efforts for OIL 150. DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, Bureau of State Parks, and Bureau of Topographical and Geological Survey also provide valuable ongoing technical assistance and support on mutual projects of the ORA.

Other state agencies have provided grant support related to their specific mission. For example, the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provided major grants aimed at local business facility creation and expansion in industrial parks and along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail (EPT). The PA Historical & Museum Commission has provided funding for a range of heritage-related projects, including placement of historic markers, rehabilitation of the Neilltown Church interior, and educational mini-grants. The PA Council on the Arts has provided grants to support musical and cultural events at the Neilltown Church and Venango Museum. PennDOT has contributed funding to enhance the region's recreational facilities, including completion of EPT segments and construction of the Oil Creek Memorial Landing.



Figure 12. *The Allegheny GeoTrail encompasses ten counties throughout north-western and north-central Pennsylvania. Geocaching combines location-based gaming, social networking, treasure hunting, GPS navigation, and outdoor recreation into a sophisticated treasure hunt. The adventure sport has millions of users worldwide (photo by Kimberly Copley-Harris).*

2.4.3. Federal Partners

The US Department of Interior's (DOI), National Park Service (NPS) has provided perhaps the most significant financial support to ORA through the Heritage Partnerships Program, averaging \$300,000 annually since 2010. NPS funding has supported many ORA programs in addition to operations and management. Other federal partners include the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). USDOT grants supported ORA's efforts to construct critical trail linkages for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. USDA grants supported the creation of the Allegheny GeoTrail and the Venango County Revolving Loan Fund. The US Forest Service Allegheny National Forest, within USDA, manages the Allegheny Islands Wilderness, which contains seven islands between Buckaloons and Tionesta along the Allegheny Wild and Scenic River, which flows through the ORNHA (also managed by the Allegheny National Forest). The Erie National Wildlife Refuge, located in central Crawford County, is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), also within the Department of Interior.

2.4.4. Institutional Partners

ORA's institutional partners have played a key role with economic development efforts. Financial institutions, including PNC Bank and the First National Bank of Pennsylvania, have provided loans that have financed infrastructure improvements for facility improvements and infrastructure upgrades to Sandycreek Industrial Park. Several educational institutions

have worked with ORA to provide advice to small businesses through free consulting, seminars and job fairs.

2.4.5. Non-governmental Organization Partners

Non-governmental organizations have also played key roles in both funding and implementation of ORA efforts. For example, Preservation Pennsylvania has provided funding to support efforts to finance the purchase and rehabilitation of historical properties. Many other organizations, including historical societies, PA Great Lakes Region, Penn Soil Resource & Conservation Development Council and others, have provided funding and produced maps, brochures, and other products to increase the awareness of the Oil Region's recreation- and heritage-based activities. Local and regional charitable trusts and foundations have been fiscal partners in numerous types of ORA projects, often providing funding for multiple phases of the more complex projects.

2.4.6. Business and Corporate Partners

Major for-profit sponsorships of ORA have consistently supported ORA since 2005 by these firms: Joy Global/Joy Mining; Kapp Alloy & Wire Company; National Fuel Gas Corporation; PNC Bank; and Specialty Fabrication and Powder Coating. In addition, other oil/gas industry firms awarded corporate support to ORA for specific OIL 150 projects. For a composite list of donors, grantors, partners and volunteers since 2005, please see the 10-Year Report enclosed as Appendix 4.

2.4.7. Members, Volunteers and Supporters

Members, volunteers and supporters have been important partners through membership fees and time/materials donated to projects and events. Several private donors have contributed significant funding on more than one occasion for key initiatives, including the production of documentaries and rehabilitation of historic buildings and properties.

2.4.8. HeritagePA and Other Pa. Heritage Areas

HeritagePA is the professional association comprised of the managers of Pennsylvania's twelve heritage areas, plus representatives of key advocacy organizations and agencies. It is through HeritagePA that the state's heritage areas and corridors share best practices and leverage resources. HeritagePA prepared a strategic plan in September, 2015 whose purpose is to state the case for why the Heritage Areas Program requires "an immediate, consistent, and stable funding source by outlining the purpose, history, value, and benefits the program provides in supporting heritage tourism, regional collaboration, and sustainable communities."⁹ The ORA's sustainability planning effort links directly with and supports the recommendations of the strategic plan including the implementation of the "Heritage is Now" brand.



Figure 13. ORA Staff and volunteers paint the exterior of the Coal Oil Johnny House in September 2015 (photo by Darl Black)

⁹ HeritagePA, <http://www.heritagepa.com/content/uploads/2015/07/Heritage-Areas-Program-Master-1.pdf> accessed 2 November 2015,

2.4.9. Alliance of National Heritage Areas and Other Heritage Areas

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) is “a membership organization of the Congressionally designated National Heritage Areas committed to raising awareness among the Administration, Congress, its partners, and the public of the benefits of National Heritage Areas to the public sector and private citizens and fostering educational opportunities and partnerships among organizations in the heritage development field.”¹⁰ ORA Vice-President for Heritage Development, Marilyn Black, serves on the Board of Directors of ANHA and is currently its Secretary. ORA’s participation in the activities of the ANHA contribute to the advancement of heritage areas and heritage development. In return, through ANHA’s educational activities, leadership and the sharing of best practices, ORA benefits through better management practices and the leveraging of shared resources across the entire system of NHAs. National Heritage Areas within the near Midwest include the Rivers of Steel NHA (near Pittsburgh), the Wheeling NHA (in West Virginia), the Ohio and Erie Canal NHA (near Akron), and in New York, both the Niagara Falls NHA and Erie Canalway NHA.

2.4.10. Other Partners

Other partners are agencies and organizations that span multiple government levels such as the Appalachian Regional Commission (a partnership across federal, state and local government levels) and the Northwest Pa. Regional Planning and Development Commission (headquartered in Oil City) serving an 8-county area. Partners in the Arts is a similar partnership among the Pa. Council on the Arts, regional and local entities, Erie Arts & Culture and Elk County Council on the Arts (each administering PPA grants in multiple counties). Such partners provided grants for economic development efforts, including upgrades to the Sandycreek Industrial Park, and PPA funding for cultural events, musical performances and cultural publications.



Figure 14. Excerpt from National Park Service map of all the heritage areas in the United States (Source: <http://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=01a03739-ab0c-40eb-bc3d-6791d3bb67fa>)

¹⁰ What is the Alliance of National Heritage Areas? http://www.nationalheritageareas.us/what_is_the_alliance.html accessed on 2 November 2015

3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS

3.1. THREE-LEGGED STOOL (OIL REGION ALLIANCE)

Formation of the ORA in 2005 brought together many voices of business, industry and tourism (including both heritage-based and outdoor recreation-based tourism) into a single voice for enhancing the economy and quality of life in the Oil Region. This single regional voice, speaking on behalf of the communities and places it represents, is one its most important organizational strengths.

ORA is designated by the Pa. DCED and Venango County Commissioners as the Lead Economic Development Agency for Venango County. Similarly, the Venango County Commissioners and Pa. DCED designated ORA as the official Tourist Promotion Agency (aka Destination Marketing Organization) for Venango County. The Governor and Pa. DCNR designated ORA as the administrator of the Pa. Oil Heritage Region. Congress and the National Park Service designated ORA to administer the ORNHA.

3.1.1. Asset-based Economic Development

Asset-based economic development is a community-based strategy that builds on existing local resources as the basis for strengthening the local and regional economies. Asset-based economic development is different than traditional needs-based economic development. Rather than trying to fill gaps and deficiencies in the local economy by attracting outside investment and new industries to generate economic activity, asset-based economic development builds from within to create jobs and focuses on a community's natural environmental, socio-cultural, and economic advantages and how these can be leveraged into sustained economic growth and productivity.¹¹

The decision to move forward with an asset-based economic development approach and to link economic development strategies with the Oil Region's natural and cultural heritage, builds upon the strengths that the region has to offer. The approach builds on the unique assets of the Oil Region, strengthens existing businesses, fosters entrepreneurship and small business growth, and gives people—both residents and visitors—more reasons to visit.

By focusing on building capacity in communities and strengthening connections within regions, ORA provides opportunities to grow from within rather than always being dependent upon outside factors which have little or no local control or influence.

Today, with jobs no longer tied to a specific location, more people can

¹¹ See "Asset-Based Economic Development: Building Sustainable Small and Rural Communities; Part 1: Industry and Industry Clusters." Anna Read, ICMA, 2012. Accessed 10/15/15 at http://icma.org/en/results/sustainable_communities/resources/blogpost/901/assetbased_economic_development_and_building_sustainable_rural_communities

choose where they want to live and work. Many people want to live in walkable, vibrant small towns. Small towns that have unique strengths—such as a strong main street coupled with easy access to nearby nature—have a competitive advantage over other small towns. With easy access to nearby nature, Oil Region communities can leverage that access by attracting new and expanding businesses that desire a high quality, low cost environment within which to conduct their business.

The two feed on each other. Making a place where residents want to be will also attract tourists. But, making a place where only tourists want to be is not a formula for attracting new residents and new employers.

3.1.2. Recreational (outdoor/trail) and traditional tourism promotion

The Allegheny River and its tributaries are significant assets for the Oil Region—both from a natural resource and cultural resource perspective. The Allegheny River, Oil Creek and French Creek waterways offer many fishing, boating, kayaking, and skiing opportunities—in an un-crowded setting. The river system is supported with extensive public access opportunities, and a parallel trail system.

But this is more than just a water or land trail; opportunities exist to tell an interesting story—that of the founding of the oil and gas industry and roles that geology and the river played in the development of the industry. While some may consider it ironic—communities that thrived and then suffered through the ups and downs of a carbon-based industry now being revived by human-powered outdoor recreation—the fact is that the overall river and trail heritage-based experience is not found in many other places.

As noted above, the ORA serves as the state-designated Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) for Venango County. In this role, ORA produces marketing materials, visitor guides, and serves to promote the unique tourism assets of Venango County. The ORA, with its “three-legged stool” model of linking heritage tourism with outdoor recreation and economic development, provides a strong foundation for promoting the unique assets of the heritage area. ORA’s asset-based approach to economic development uses the unique tourism assets as more than just attracting visitors – but to attract future residents, businesses and employers as well.

3.1.3. Heritage Development

National Heritage Areas in general (and the ORNHA in particular) are recognized for their roles in serving as catalysts in their communities and for taking on projects that offer high rewards, but otherwise may be considered too difficult to tackle. ORA advances heritage development in the region by encouraging collaboration and working with partners to see projects through. The result is an overall increase in quality of life for individuals living in the region and an increase in drawing power as a travel destination. In recent years, approximately half of the heritage development expenditures have been for design, construction, and augmentation of outdoor recreational facilities (especially bicycle trails



and trailheads) and half for educational, interpretive, historic preservation, and cultural event development.

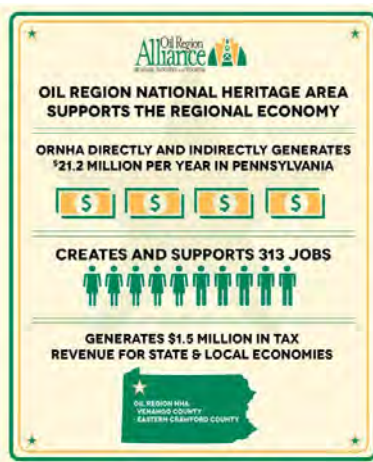
A 2014 study of National Heritage Areas indicated that the Oil Region National Heritage Area generates \$21.2 million in annual economic impact broken down into three categories: tourism at \$19.4 million, operations at \$1.3 million, and grantmaking/capital activities at \$511,474¹². The study noted that the ORNHA supports 314 jobs, and generates \$1.5 million in tax revenue on an annual basis.

For a rural heritage area, with a three-year average total of visitors and tourists to the region of approximately 170,000 annually; this level of economic impact is significant. The annual economic output of the ORNHA, for example is greater than the Venango County Regional Airport (\$17.1 million) as reported in a 2010 study of Pennsylvania's airports by Wilbur Smith Associates¹³.

Beyond economic impact, the ORNHA and its management entity, the ORA, serves as a capacity building organization to leverage relationships with many different organizations. ORA establishes networks of volunteers to get things done. ORA provides a conduit for establishing agency partnerships—linking together business development and job creation with heritage tourism and outdoor recreation.

The story of the role that this whole region played as the birthplace of the world's commercial petroleum industry is the foundation for ORA's heritage development strategies to attract new businesses, new residents, new visitors, and as a result new jobs to the region.

Along the same lines, historic fabric (towns, streets, buildings, former industrial properties, river and rail heritage) is still a vital part of the Oil Region and its communities. Preserving, and where appropriate, adaptively reusing historic fabric is a strength of this region. People around the country are trying to recapture at least the feel of small town character that the Oil Region's communities already have. ORA has been finding ways to utilize the historic qualities as an important asset for attracting new employers and new residents as well as new visitors.



3.2. ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL SYSTEM

The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and the Trail Town Program® communities of Emlenton, Franklin, Oil City, and Titusville are working with the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance to increase trail connectivity and increase economic activity among the planned 265-mile trail through six Pennsylvania counties (and Chautauqua County, New York).

According to the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail (EPT) web site¹⁴, about 66%

Figure 16. Excerpt from *Economic and Community Impact of National Heritage Areas, 2014* summarizing how the ORNHA supports the economy

¹² Tripp Umbach; *Economic and Community Impact of National Heritage Area Sites: Essex National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area*; National Park Service, 2014.

¹³ See <http://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/bureaus/aviation/directory/venango.pdf> accessed 10/22/15

¹⁴ See <http://eriepittsburghtrail.org/mainline-trails/> accessed 10/20/15

of this trail system is open between the two end points of the network with the most contiguous portion of the multi-purpose recreational trail being located between Titusville and Foxburg – nearly all of which (except Foxburg) is in the Oil Region National Heritage Area. There are three-mile gaps between Emlenton and Foxburg and from Petroleum Centre to Rynd Farm within Oil Creek State Park.

The Trail Town Program® is the mechanism that brings out the asset potential when the following approaches are put in place:

- Establishing a regional approach to hospitality, marketing, and economic development
- Drawing each community into a process that establishes an outdoor recreational economy that builds upon the draw of the regional trail system
- Increasing visitor infrastructure and support as a means of increasing revenues for existing businesses
- Using the quality of life benefits and expanding audiences to attract sustainable, new businesses

The ORA has played a critical role in stitching the trail together through the Oil Region and building new visitor infrastructure to support it – including route marking signs, new trailheads, and maps and guides to support trail users.

A 2006 economic impact study of the Oil Region's trail system found \$4.3 million in economic impact. Since that time greater connectivity, especially the opening of the central 3.5-mile McClintock Trail section at Oil City provides stronger opportunities to increase economic activity with the trail. The study was based upon user counts with 138,281 annual users of Multi-Use Trails and 22,510 users of related hiking and water trails.

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy conducted a follow-up study in 2013 for six trails along the EPT that comprise the central portion of the route:

- Queen City Trail (1.4 mi)
- Oil Creek State Park Trail (9.7 mi)
- McClintock Trail (3.7 mi)
- Samuel Justus Recreation Trail (5.8 mi)
- Allegheny River Trail (34.2 mi)
- Sandy Creek Trail (12 mi)

The study found that economic impact had increased to nearly \$7.5 million, including hard goods (bikes, racks, helmets, etc.) bought locally or prior to a trip, resulting in \$6.9 million flowing directly into the local economy.¹⁵ Multi-use trail usage increased approximately 15% to



Figure 17. The PA Trail Town Program® is a national model for capturing the economic potential of communities along major regional trails.

¹⁵ *Rails to Trails Conservancy, Erie to Pittsburgh Trail (Between Titusville and Oil Region Alliance*

Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact

Over \$50 million in direct spending was attributed to GAP trail user spending in 2010, up from \$41 million in 2008 and \$7 million in 2001. The \$41 million in economic impact in the 2008 season—April to November (Campos Market Research study) was coupled with another \$7.26 million in wages in trail-related businesses in the same period and 55 new or expanded businesses; and 200 plus new jobs¹. The Great Allegheny Passage achieved full connectivity in 2013. This 150-mile GAP rail trail connects with the 184.5 mile C & O Canal Towpath at Cumberland, MD to create a 334.5 mile route between Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, free from traffic and motorized vehicles. For more information see <http://www.atatrail.org>.

¹ Personal communication, Bill Atkinson, Maryland Department of Planning, February 2, 2015

158,507 annual users (hiking and water trail users were not included in the 2013 study). Economic impact accelerated at a greater rate (75%) than users.

For comparison purposes, the 2013 study only included the bike/multi-use trail segments of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail stretching from Titusville south to Parker, extending beyond the ORNHA to include a short segment from Foxburg to Parker (both downstream of Emlenton, but not yet physically connected to Emlenton). Linking the system into the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) trail system is also important.

3.3. RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

3.3.1. National Heritage Area Designation

Congress has designated forty-nine National Heritage Areas (NHAs) since 1984. The areas are affiliated with the National Park Service (NPS), and managed by independent management entities primarily at the local, regional or state level. The ORA is the official management entity of the Oil Region National Heritage Area. The management of National Heritage Areas is guided by a Management Action Plan that must be approved by the National Park Service.

National Heritage Areas are not national park units. NPS does not assume ownership of land inside a heritage area boundary. There are no regulations promulgated as a result of national heritage area designation. NPS's role is to be a willing partner with each locally managed heritage area and to oversee the distribution and accountability of federal funds from Congress to authorized management entities.

Heritage areas rely upon local and regional partnerships to carry out their mission and implement their management plans. Management plans spell out the goals and strategies that will be used to protect and promote the cultural, historical, and natural resources that are the basis for its national designation. The community-based strategies outlined in each management plan lead towards enhancing the quality of life in the heritage region and contribute towards the establishment of sustainable economies that are based on the region's assets.

National Heritage Area designation helps to preserve and promote the region, encourages collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations, enhances funding opportunities through public-private partnerships, increases tourism through branding campaigns, and provides a mechanism for heritage tourism development across jurisdictional boundaries.

With an approved management plan, designation as a National Heritage area provides access to funds in support of the heritage area's management. The designation links the Oil Region to the National Park Service and National Heritage Area's brand and identity as a nationally significant place. Some refer to this as the "Good Housekeeping Seal"

Parker, Pa.) 2013 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis.

of national historic significance, which helps the public feel confident that the landscapes and places within that heritage area have value and are worthy of protection and promotion.

3.3.2. Annual Funding Pool

NPS passes funds to ORA through annual Congressional appropriations. Public Law 108-447 Division J Title VI 118 Stat. 2809, Section 612 which designated the ORNHA authorizes a maximum of \$1,000,000 in federal NPS funds in any fiscal year and not more than a total of \$10,000,000 of federal NPS dollars from 2005 through 2020. Financial assistance requires a 50 percent match to carry out any activity using these funds. In practical terms, funding is limited by the NPS budget with funds distributed to 49 heritage areas based upon annual congressional authorization. Figure 4 on page 14 shows the annual congressional authorization amounts to ORA, with more recent years averaging \$300,000, annually. In addition to annual allocations, NPS periodically makes supplemental project-specific funding awards to ORA and other NHAs.

ORA secures financial assistance from NPS through legal cooperative agreements and task agreements. These agreements spell out accountability measures and performance requirements for the ORA relative to the use of federal funds as well as specific supported projects.

3.3.3. Leverage Gained with Designation

National Heritage Area designation facilitates and builds collaboration amongst communities in the region. Leverage is gained both through the national designation and through the funding stream that jump starts projects and programs that would not be able to be implemented without that support.

The credibility of the NHA designation provides reassurance to those who want to contribute time and money that their efforts will be rewarded. NHA designation provides reassurance to those who visit the region that their trip will be worthwhile. Finally the annual appropriation of funds to ORNHA typically generates three dollars of matching funds for every federal dollar received.

Some other federal and Commonwealth agencies give special favorable consideration to NHAs when awarding project contracts; i.e. – National Endowment for the Arts. Having a designated management entity with a strong track record of success implementing federal- and state-funded projects and programs also helps potential grant giving agencies and organizations to look more favorably on an ORA application.

3.4. RELATIONSHIP WITH PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Similar to its relationship with NPS, the Oil Region's partnerships with PA-DCNR continue to be an organizational strength. As noted in "2.4.2.

State Agency Partners” on page 17, and in Table A3-2 of Appendix 3, PA-DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation has provided support and funding averaging over \$200,000 per year for the past decade. This support has been critical for the design and construction of trails, visitor facilities, interpretive installations, educational programs, building preservation studies and construction and general technical assistance for the management of the ORNHA and implementation of its priority projects and programs. The support has served as matching funds for other grants, including NPS funds.

More importantly, PA-DCNR’s support for the Pennsylvania Heritage Area program, initially helped to establish the Oil Region Heritage Park in the years 1989-1994 when it was officially designated by Governor Robert P. Casey; and then for the subsequent decade it supported the Oil Region in its successful pursuit of National Heritage Area designation.

In addition, these six Bureaus within PA-DCNR have without charge provided vital technical assistance to ORA for ORNHA projects, activities, and publications: Bureau of State Parks; Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey; Bureau of Forestry; Bureau of Recreation and Conservation; Bureau of Administrative Services; and Bureau of Facility Design and Construction. DCNR staff periodically request ORA’s assistance and advice/insights about other projects located within the ORNHA.

4. NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.1. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF EXISTING COMMUNITIES

The Oil Region National Heritage Area's congressionally authorized boundary consists of 708 square miles of land. The boundary includes all of Venango County (twenty townships along with the Boroughs of Barkeyville, Clintonville, Cooperstown, Emlenton, Pleasantville, Polk, Rouseville, Sugarcreek, Utica, and the Cities of Franklin and Oil City) and the eastern tip of Crawford County (Oil Creek Township plus the City of Titusville and Borough of Hydetown).

The ORNHA is located about halfway between Pittsburgh and Erie. Access to the region is provided by Interstate 80 to the south and US Routes 6, 62 and 322—all part of the National Highway System routes.

Venango and Crawford Counties both lost population between the 2000 and 2010 (a ten year drop of 4.5%). Between 2010 and 2013, Venango County continued to lose population at a rate of 2% and Crawford County at a rate of 1.6% (ranked 8th and 10th respectively in population losses)¹⁶

Year	Venango County Population	Crawford County Population
2000	57,565	90,366
2010	54,984	88,765
2013 ¹	54,590	87,411

Over the past four years, the median household income in Venango County has grown from \$39,812 in 2010 to \$41,977 in 2013, a 5.4 percent increase over the four-year period—steadily increasing at a rate of 1.36% percent per year during that period.¹⁷ Over the past five years, the median household income in Crawford County has grown from \$38,924 in 2012 to \$42,504 in 2013 a 9.2 percent increase over the four-year period—steadily increasing at a rate of 2.3% percent per year during that period¹⁸. The median household income in Pennsylvania was \$52,548 during the same period.

The preliminary June 2015 - seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Venango County was 5.6% and for Crawford County was 5.3% compared with 5.4% for all of Pennsylvania.

Major Employers in Venango County include

- Joy Underground Mining (Manufacturing)

16 <http://www.lswib.org/fast-facts/pa-fast-facts/408-pa-fast-facts-08-1-2014pdf/file.html> accessed 10-22-15

17 *ibid*

18 *ibid*

- UPMC Northwest (Health and Social Assistance)
- Venango County (Public Administration)
- Oil City School District (Educational Services)

Major employers in Crawford County (all outside the ORNHA) include:

- Meadville Medical Center
- Crawford Central School District
- Allegheny College
- Wal-Mart Associates Inc.
- Penncrest School District
- Crawford County
- Wesbury United Methodist Community
- Channellock Inc.
- Acutec Precision Machining Inc.
- Greenleaf Services Corporation

The value of all sales, shipments, receipts, revenues or business transacted in Venango County (excluding categories of utilities, wholesale trade, information, finance and insurance, some educational services) was more than 2.8 billion dollars in 2012.¹⁹ A similar value is available for all of Crawford County, but would not be representative of just the municipalities within the ORNHA (Oil Creek Township, Hydetown and Titusville) factoring in the larger population areas to the west.

4.2. CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES REGARDING FUNDING POOLS

One of the biggest challenges for the ORA in their efforts to manage the Heritage Area are the changing conditions of outside funding and investment sources needed to keep the ORNHA moving forward. Although the return on initial investments in the heritage area have been outstanding (\$21 million annual economic impact measured in 2014, returned against a ten year investment of just over 10 million dollars)²⁰, continuing to increase the economic benefits will require new investments in preservation, community enhancements and heritage tourism development.

4.2.1. Increasing competitiveness

The National Park Service budget for its Heritage Partnership Program (the fund for National Heritage Areas) has maintained steady funding levels for the past ten years. However, the FY 2016 Department of

¹⁹ See <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> accessed 10/22/15

²⁰ See Tripp Umbach; *Economic and Community Impact of National Heritage Area Sites: Essex National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area; National Park Service, 2014 for economic impact and Appendix 3*

Interior budget, as proposed, would result in a greater than 50% reduction in that fund.²¹ If FY 2016 funding were through a series of Continuing Resolutions, FY 2016 nationwide levels for NHAs would equal those of FY 2015.

The traditional sources of federal and state funding which have been relied upon for the past ten years are facing the twin challenges of less total money available and more competition. Transportation program funding for eligible bicycle and pedestrian projects has remained steady, while funding for the original Transportation Enhancement Program (now Transportation Alternatives Program) has been consolidated—reducing the number of eligible activities (for example eliminating the funding category for rehabilitation of historic train stations and for scenic easements, among others). In addition, funding allocations for enhancement projects for rural areas such as the Oil Region, are now broken out separately from urban areas (200,000 population or greater), effectively reducing the allocation that can be applied for.

All federal funding subject to sequestration in recent years has seen either a consolidation in the number of programs, or a reduction in the amount of available funds. Funding programs at the federal level continue to be available, but are increasingly targeted towards urban areas.

At the state level, Pennsylvania's funding programs through DCNR are susceptible to similar budget pressures. The state is without a FY 2015-2016 budget as of the writing of this report. The DCNR programs managed by the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation described below have proven popular over the years and have served the ORNHA and ORA well, especially in its efforts for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and related water access along the Allegheny River. DCNR manages the following funding and technical assistance programs²²:

- Land Acquisition and Conservation for purchase and/or donation of land for park and recreation areas, greenways, critical habitat areas and/or open space.
- Park Rehabilitation and Development for the rehabilitation and development of public parks, recreation facilities, greenways and river conservation projects.
- Community Recreation and Conservation Planning to “lay the groundwork” for future land acquisition, development and/or management of parks, recreational facilities, critical habitat, open space, natural areas, greenways, and river/watershed corridors.
- State and Regional Partnerships for collaborative statewide or regional initiatives that help build local, county, regional and statewide capacity to better develop and manage recreation and park facilities and to promote the conservation of natural and



Figure 18. PA DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2) provided support for the construction of the McClintock Trail

21 See https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/migrated/budget/appropriations/2016/upload/FY2016_NPS_Greenbook.pdf accessed 10/22/15

22 See <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/index.aspx> accessed on 10/22/15

heritage resources through plan implementation, education and training.

- Trails including the acquisition, planning, development, rehabilitation, or maintenance of designated routes on land or water for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities. This includes the purchase of equipment for trail construction or maintenance.
- Peer and Circuit Rider to fund projects that help municipalities, counties, multi-municipal partnerships, and council of governments to increase local capacity for recreation, parks and conservation.

4.2.2. Reduction in number of grant making organizations that support historic preservation and heritage-based tourism

Another challenge is the changing priorities of grantmaking organizations in the private sector. Many non-governmental grantmaking organizations have refocused their efforts on specific geographic areas, on meeting the needs of under-served populations, or in helping communities to become more resilient to the effects of climate change. Some preservation organizations and agencies have found ways to position themselves for this new shift in funding strategy (Maryland Historic Trust has been working with historic properties that are vulnerable to sea level rise, for example).

4.2.3. Lack of funding for administrative functions (but very necessary to support organization)

For a regionally scaled partnership-based organization such as the ORA, funding to support baseline administrative functions has also become more difficult to find. It takes money to get money. As funding is cut for administrative costs, the ability to compete for outside funding decreases proportionally. Writing a successfully competitive grant proposal requires a set of skills and experiences that are not easily found or replaced. Administrative funds associated with managing grants are also being curtailed, yet the paperwork associated with monitoring and auditing the process has increased.

The ORA has been fortunate to be able to use the National Park Service Heritage Partnership Program funding to support the implementation of their Management Plan and for the active management of their heritage area. However, the economic development functions of the ORA do not have a similar set of baseline funding.

Memberships are often used to generate administrative support for regional organizations. Another approach may be to seek to fund positions with smaller contributions from each of the major partners that stand to benefit the most from the specific or topical cooperative activities.

4.3. GENERATIONAL SHIFT IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

The nature of the travel and tourism industry is also undergoing a generational shift. The traditional itinerary-driven tourism marketing approach does not meet the needs of the next generation of travelers. Millennial Generation travelers seek different types of travel experiences and use many different modes of travel to get to the destinations or corridors that provide those experiences. They plan their travel differently – typically “planning” for the moment rather than spelling out a step-by-step travel experience.

4.3.1. **Active, experience-based travel versus passive and observational**

Millennial Generation travelers seek out destinations with a multitude of possible experiences providing the most choices. Millennial Generation travelers seek to experience a place through multiple activities and to do so in a more active mode. ORA, as the tourism destination marketing organization, has positioned the Oil Region well to meet these demands by using the rapidly evolving regional trail system to increase access to outdoor recreation and nature.

What differentiates the Oil Region from others with developing trail systems is that it links closely with remarkable stories associated with the founding of the petroleum industry. This provides a different kind of outdoor experience. Future opportunities related to Brownfield Redevelopment of some of the former industrial sites would provide additional opportunities to see, feel, and experience the region’s oil and natural gas heritage as well as participate directly in energy’s next evolution.

4.3.2. **Multi-modal travel to destinations**

Traveling to a destination or corridor is also rapidly changing. Millennial Generation travelers are using many different modes of travel to reach the destination. Car-sharing, house sharing, bike-sharing, and even boat sharing have reduced the capital costs that have often limited younger travelers and families to seek out more active types of travel experiences. Where in the past, families would save for a new boat or a second home and then invest their time and money in using that boat or home in a single location, travelers are looking for ways to participate through the sharing economy. Although bike sharing services have primarily been developed in urban places, such functions are finding their way to more rural travel destinations.

4.4. CHANGING EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUMS HAVE ALTERED THE WAY THAT YOUNG PEOPLE INTERACT WITH HISTORIC SITES AND MUSEUMS

Emphasis on standardized curriculum and testing, as well elimination of budgets for most school field trips, have had a tremendous effect on the way in which young children visit historic sites and museums. Although some pushback is beginning to reduce the emphasis on testing; Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum continues



Bike Pottstown/Bike Schuylkill

Bike Pottstown/Bike Schuylkill is managed by the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area. Anyone aged 16 or over can grab a bike and go. All that is needed is a driver's license or other valid state ID.

The purpose of the program is to “promote bicycling as a safe, healthy form of physical fitness, exercise and recreation and also to encourage an alternate form of transportation around town.

“Use Bike Pottstown/Bike Schuylkill bikes to visit a historic site, ride on the Schuylkill River Trail, run an errand, spend time with family and friends, or get out of the office.”

Unlike other programs of this nature, the program is free for users.

Source: <http://bikeschuylkill.org/about/> accessed on 11/4/15

Of the Student, By the Student, For the Student”

Extending from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, through Maryland and West Virginia, and ending at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Virginia, The Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JTHG) Partnership is a non-profit, four-state partnership dedicated to raising awareness of the unparalleled American heritage in the region running from Gettysburg, PA., through Maryland and Harpers Ferry, W.VA., to Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Charlottesville, VA. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground was recognized by Congress as a National Heritage Area in 2008.

JTHG has two primary education initiatives: its service learning program oriented towards primary school age children during the school years, and “Extreme Journey” a summer camp experience for middle school children.

The programs combine on-site experiential learning through creative education curricula with digital media technology to fully immerse students in historic events and situations - putting the students in the same positions as Civil War generals and soldiers.

Over three thousand students have participated in the service learning project. Thirteen Year-Long Programs have been completed.

to be emphasized which does not leave the time or space for children to experience historic places and natural areas first hand.

ORA needs to help its locally based sites and attractions to position themselves for the future trends that are likely to return as testing and classroom learning begin to shift back to more active and experiential learning. While STEM is not likely to go away soon, the effort of many to change STEM to STEAM (adding Art to the acronym) and incorporate the arts and culture into science curriculums is an important trend for ORA to track and help nurture.

The movement to get kids outdoors – connecting children with nature is perhaps the best example of how agencies and other funding organizations have shifted towards experienced-based activities for learning and recreation. Opportunities exist to use the river and trail system coupled with the Oil Region’s heritage to link education and outdoor recreation for the next generation of educational experiences.

4.5. MOBILE AND WEB-BASED TECHNOLOGIES HAVE CHANGED THE WAY THAT PEOPLE VISIT AN AREA (BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE)

All of the trends towards more active travel also change the way in which people plan and conduct their travel experiences. Advances in technology provide ways in which the travel information can be spread across all platforms – mobile, web and print—and kept up to date through more interactive relationships with that travel information. Real time travel conditions are more easily communicated through social media. Hospitality businesses can provide real time information about events, operating hours, menus, targeted marketing to nearby visitors, and other techniques that just a few years ago were just not possible.

Access to technology remains a problem for rural areas but one of shifting paradigm in funding for rural economic development favors expansion of rural broadband access to underserved populations.

4.6. INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER FEDERALLY DESIGNATED ENTITIES IN/NEAR OIL REGION NHA

An important opportunity for the ORNHA is to look beyond its boundaries to find ways to link together related sets of experiences. The following trails, landmarks, wildlife refuges and management areas are designated through related federal programs for their national and regional significance and present strong cross-marketing opportunities for Northwestern Pennsylvania and beyond.

4.6.1. North Country National Scenic Trail

In 1980, Congress authorized the North Country National Scenic Trail. The North Country Trail (NCT) traverses 4600 miles across seven states from New York to North Dakota. The supporting entity is the North Country Trail Association, a volunteer organization working with

the National Park Service to build the trail and tell its stories. (<https://northcountrytrail.org/trail/>). The trail route crosses into the ORNHA at Emlenton, following the Allegheny River Trail to the Sandy Creek Trail and then heads east towards the Allegheny National Forest.

4.6.2. Allegheny River Trail

The Allegheny River Trail (ART), designated a National Recreation Trail from Franklin to Emlenton, is thirty miles of rail-trail bordering the Allegheny River along a section of the river included in the national Wild and Scenic Rivers system. Allegheny Valley Trails Association is the support organization for this section of trail (<http://www.avta-trails.org>).

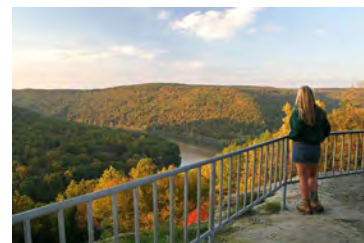


Figure 19. Kennerdell Overlook
(Photo by Michael Henderson)

4.6.3. Oil Creek State Park Bike Trail

The 9.7-mile paved bicycle trail is built on a historic railroad grade within the State Park through the scenic Oil Creek Gorge between Petroleum Centre in the south and Drake Well Museum in the north (<http://dncr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/oilcreek/index.htm>).

4.6.4. National Historic Landmarks – Drake Well

Currently, Drake Well is the only National Historic Landmark in the Oil Region, listed as such in 1966 (<http://focus.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/66000695>).

4.6.5. Washington’s Trail—1753

A Reconnaissance Survey has been authorized determine if this driving tour and its associated resources “merit further consideration as a potential unit of the National Trails System.” The study will be conducted by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Team (authorized in April 2015 with completion estimated December 2016) <http://www.washingtonstrail.org/>

4.6.6. Erie Wildlife Refuge – USFWS

Established in 1959, the Erie National Wildlife Refuge is located in Crawford County, 35 miles south of the city of Erie in northwestern Pennsylvania. The refuge was established to protect the endangered northern riffleshell and clubshell mussels. The refuge attracts more than 230 species of birds. It is designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. (<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/erie/>)

4.6.7. Wild and Scenic Allegheny River

Portions of the Allegheny River were designated as a Wild and Scenic River by Congress on April 20, 1992 including the river segments from Kinzua Dam downstream to the U.S. Route 62 Bridge, from Buckaloons Recreation Area at Irvine downstream to the southern end of Alcorn

The Challenge of Building Toward the Future

Written comments submitted as part of the planning process questioned the nature of celebrating the history of the Oil Region and suggested the need to move on towards new technologies and more “sustainable” energy sources.

While there is a need to move forward, just throwing away the rich history of the Oil Region is not an option. The major museums in the area (Drake Well Museum and Park, Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry) have each in the past 10 years updated their exhibits to include the oil industry’s past, present, and future directions; they are the main interpretive partners, to a much greater extent than ORA itself. ORA in its educational materials and programming addresses all three time horizons, with various brochures, events, conferences, focusing on specific segments or topics.

The challenge of moving forward in the future, rather than dwelling on the past, needs to be addressed both as part of the entire “Rust Belt” region and as part of the redevelopment of brownfields in the Oil Region itself. Both represent strong opportunities to move forward by building on the region’s heritage, especially on the entrepreneurial spirit that established the oil and natural gas industries in the valley to begin with.

Island at Oil City, and from the sewage treatment plant at Franklin to the former refinery at Emlenton. (<http://www.rivers.gov/rivers/alleggheny.php>); also see the Middle Allegheny Water Trail (<https://www.fish.state.pa.us/watertrails/alleg/trailmap.htm>). The Wild and Scenic River is managed by the US Forest Service, Allegheny National Forest (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/attmain/alleggheny/specialplaces>)

4.6.8. Allegheny National Forest and River Islands Wilderness

The Allegheny Islands Wilderness is comprised of seven islands between Buckaloons and Tionesta along the Allegheny Wild and Scenic River. The islands are undeveloped but are utilized for dispersed camping, exploration, and viewing scenery and wildlife observation (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/attmain/alleggheny/specialplaces>).

4.7. INTERACTION WITH OTHER PA. / NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

In addition to the federally designated areas and trails noted in Section 4.6, further opportunities exist for ORNHA to link together sets of experiences that are associated with its adjoining Pennsylvania and National Heritage Areas. The three adjoining state and national heritage areas present additional strong cross-marketing opportunities for Northwestern Pennsylvania and beyond.

4.7.1. Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area

Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation conserves, interprets, and develops historical, cultural, and recreational resources throughout the eight counties that comprise this NHA. Rivers of Steel NHA tells the story of the region’s evolution, from colonial settlement to “Big Steel” to the modern era through artifacts, buildings, vibrant communities, and industrial sites. As part of the Near Midwest’s Industrial Heritage, the Rivers of Steel NHA is an important connecting link to the broader industrial heritage story (<http://heritagepa.com/map/rivers-of-steel-national-heritage-area>)

4.7.2. PA Route 6 Heritage Corridor

Route 6 was established as a western connection through the Moosic Mountains in 1807. The route tells the story of transporting people, products and natural resources like lumber, oil, coal, and natural gas as well as America’s love for travel. It is recognized by Harley-Davidson and National Geographic Traveler for its high quality travel experiences and scenic values (<http://heritagepa.com/map/pa-route-6-heritage-corridor>).

4.7.3. Lumber Heritage Region

The Lumber Heritage Region is known for its rural character and opportunities for outdoor recreation and wildlife observation (<http://heritagepa.com/map/lumber-heritage-region>).

5. THE NEXT TEN YEARS: VISION AND GOALS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Oil Region Alliance and its many partners have re-envisioned the future of the Oil Region National Heritage Area—"the Valley that Changed the World"—as one in which its economic vitality is recaptured with the same spirit of entrepreneurship that led to the birthplace of the petroleum industry in the first place.

Over the next ten years, the Oil Region Alliance will work with its partners to:

- Enhance the livability of the Oil Region and make it a better place to live, work, and play
- Establish a more welcoming environment for visitors and potential residents as well as a favorable climate for existing and new business and industry
- Take advantage of new technologies to tell the story of the Oil Region's history and culture in compelling and inspiring ways
- Serve as a catalyst for reinvestment in existing communities and revitalize those communities by building upon the rich oil region history and heritage
- Use the expanding system of trails to enhance the quality of life, improve the health of its residents, help to tell the story of the Oil Region, and expand the range of things to see and do in the region.

The Oil Region Alliance can achieve this overall vision and related goals by continuing the current pace of projects and programs as spelled out in the 2004 and 2006 Management Action Plan Update or by accelerating that pace with a more strategic realignment of economic development initiatives that leverage the National Heritage Area designation and the regional system of trails as the primary assets around which future investments are made.

5.1. ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES/POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS

The 2004 and 2006 Management Action Plan Updates identified recommendations for seven program areas. Within each of these areas, much has been accomplished and some, particularly the larger projects remain. While most of the unfinished business should remain on the long-term agenda, priorities need to be established to reflect the changing circumstances noted in Chapter 4.

The ORA, as the management entity, has available resources to take on a limited number of new projects as current projects are completed or wind down. However, funding for the administration and management of new projects beyond the current organizational capacity is a significant challenge. Administrative support for managing the ORNHA is never assured including both federal and state funding pools. Funding for ORA's more traditional economic development initiatives is dependent



Figure 20. Nose of colorful kayak on Allegheny River with the Route 322 bridge (in Franklin) in the background (Photo by Heather Mull).

upon contributions from Venango County's general fund, when available, and from the development and management of ORA's income-producing properties.

The ongoing development and management of the trail system as an important asset for attracting new employers, residents and visitors also is dependent on project-based funding to support the completion of the trail system from Pittsburgh to Erie – as well as the additional linkages necessary to connect people to the trail system from where they live, work or play.

With the twin challenges of increasing competitiveness for fewer available funding pools, ORA has wisely shifted their emphasis towards an asset-based economic development strategy. The significant shift in ORA's overall economic development strategy has gradually taken shape over the past several years. ORA has determined that the best way to achieve the goals of retaining existing jobs, creating new jobs, increasing per capita income, and increasing the local tax base is to enhance the community's quality of life or sense of place through the protection, enhancement and promotion of its heritage and access to nearby nature using the well-developed trail system. The asset-based approach strengthens community pride by building on local traditions or creating new ones.

The asset-based economic development approach, in turn, builds stronger regional networks and through those networks increases the capacity of the communities within that region to implement the necessary projects and programs to achieve the desired results.

ORA's organizational strengths and track record of being able to help build and support the necessary partnerships and collaborative enterprises to attract outside funding is also a very strong asset for the Oil Region. Three specific asset areas have been identified through the sustainability planning process:



Figure 21. Downs Building now reclaiming the street facing the new Town Square in Oil City

- Heritage Development: to continue advancing the economic potential of the Oil Heritage Region through protecting, enhancing and promoting its nationally significant resources
- Outdoor Recreation: to continue advancing the economic potential of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system through the Trail Town Program® and by using the trail system to increase access to nearby nature and culture
- Adaptive Re-use and Reclamation of Industrial Heritage Properties: to refocus economic development activities on brownfield sites that have the greatest opportunity to link together heritage development, outdoor recreation, and quality of life.

Two possible scenarios or approaches have emerged from the sustainability planning process to help the ORA to more fully implement the asset-based approach to economic development:

- Scenario #1: maintain the existing pace of implementation and organizational capacity through ongoing grantsmanship, community and corporate support
- Scenario #2: increase the pace of implementation and grow the capacity of the organization through the formation of new partnerships that help realign programs to reinforce the links between heritage- and outdoor

recreation-based tourism and development with available tools for regional economic development

5.2. RESOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Under Scenario #1 – emphasis would be placed upon refining and implementing the unfinished business of the 2006 Management Action Plan Update. These include:

- Interpretation and Identity – continue to build upon core attractions, reinforce regional identity, and link region attractions
- Recreation – complete the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system including the development of community linkages to the trail and support for trail maintenance through volunteer coordination
- Preservation – continue to implement resource documentation, preservation planning, feasibility studies and targeted rehabilitation projects within existing Oil Region communities
- New Facilities – additional archival storage space was identified as a need in 2006 and no new space has been constructed since that time (emphasis should be placed on working with existing museums and historical societies to provide additional storage capacity and enhanced electronic access to collections)
- Oil Boomtown – there is still interest in the concept of a new attraction, but conditions noted in the 2006 and 2004 updates have not changed: (1) market conditions significantly declined during the recession that followed the 2006 update and recovery has not materialized; (2) Public entities such as PHMC and/or DCNR have even less financial capacity to develop or maintain a permanent, independent attraction as part of their facility enhancement; (3) Other funding sources, public or private, are even more difficult to obtain; (4) ORA's capacity is insufficient to acquire/develop/operate such a new major attraction on its own
- Accommodations – continued efforts to provide increased and more diverse specialty lodging remains a critical need
- Economic Impact System – the 2014 economic impact study of the Oil Region, coupled with the 2006 and 2013 update of the economic impact of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail provides an outstanding model for continuing to monitor economic impact (see page 24)

Resources under Scenario #1 would continue to be dependent upon the National Park Service Heritage Partnership Program, PA DCNR funding programs, USDA Rural Economic Development programs, Hotel Occupancy Taxes, DCED's Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP), Act 13 Legacy funding, partner and volunteer contributions.

Under Scenario #2 – in order to expand the capacity of ORA and region, emphasis would need to be placed on a strategic realignment of economic development programs to focus on using the heritage- and outdoor recreation assets as the building blocks for a more comprehensive economic development program. Examples of how this scenario would be implemented include:



Figure 22. Samuel Justus Trail, Franklin



Figure 23. New Town Square in Oil City



Figure 24. Emlenton section of the Allegheny River Trail (Photo by Diana Schoff)

- Using the Oil City Town Square and Downs Building project as a model, target economic development resources for in-town adaptive reuse of historic properties and related redevelopment projects within Oil Region cities and boroughs
- Pursue brownfield program resources to rehabilitate former industrial sites that capitalize on river and trail frontage/access and Oil Region Heritage (former location of Honeywell International, Inc. Emlenton Wax plant and former Emlenton Refinery site, for example)
- Target business development funding programs for hospitality and recreation-related businesses that help to increase visitor infrastructure for the region using the Trail Town Program®
- Use ORNHA to increase access to arts and culture for underserved areas and reinforce these efforts by integrating arts and culture into planning, placemaking and economic development efforts.
- Target rural economic development funds for educational tourism ventures and educational/cultural programming to produce income including programs integrating history and outdoor recreation

Oil Region National Heritage Area - Overall Economic Impact (Annual)

Annual, in Thousands of Dollars	Tourism	Operations	Capital/ Grants
Direct	14,144	781	342
Indirect	2,645	187	94
Induced	2,601	367	75
Total	19,390	1,335	511

Source: Tripp Umbach; Economic and Community Impact of National Heritage Area Sites: Essex National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area; National Park Service, 2014.

Resources under Scenario #2, in addition to continuing existing funding relationships, would seek to expand resources through Pennsylvania and USEPA programs for Brownfields Development; Arts and Culture funding through ArtPlace America to integrate arts and culture in placemaking; Pennsylvania’s Growing Greener, First Industries Loan Program, and Rural Broadband programs; and by increasing income from development and redevelopment of properties.

Under both scenarios, each project and program will need to be evaluated in relation to its affect on the sustainability of the organization:

1. *Some projects result in a positive return on investment and put money back into the organization to help achieve the mission and goals. Most non-historic property management fits into this category, as well as sales designed to bring in income. Income producing projects and programs on the heritage development side are one of the shortfalls over the past ten years from the 2006 plan. Certain types of educational initiatives could be designed to produce income such as fee for service programs, step-on guide services, and educational learning programs like youth camps and Road Scholars programs. There are limitations on what can be returned into which pot. A firewall needs to be clearly delineated so that NPS funds and funds from other grantors are clearly accounted for, and vice versa.*
2. *Some projects will be self-sustaining over time. They require investments of time and money to implement (grants, program expenses, etc.) in support of achieving the organization’s mission and goals. However, income that comes in would cover any ongoing management/maintenance costs. The Tarbell House is the example, having achieved the balancing of operational revenues and operational costs.*
3. *A third group of projects and programs are purely mission-driven. They are undertaken specifically to help achieve the organization’s mission and goals. They are supported by outside funding dedicated specifically to that project or program. They are intended to achieve non-monetary or indirect returns on investment such as “brand” awareness, educational awareness of the region’s heritage, investments in quality of life designed to attract new businesses and residents, investments to improve public health (e.g. trails and walkability), investments in infrastructure to enhance job creation or retention, or to attract more visitors to the region—all of which are longer term benefits that are more difficult to measure over time.*

6. STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The following strategies can be utilized to guide ORA and the ORNHA towards a path to long-term sustainability. Strategies are organized according to (and adapted from) the elements of sustainability as informally defined by the National Park Service in their guidance to National Heritage Areas (see page 3). Recommended strategies were distilled from interviews with board members, long-time volunteers and staff, and through the public outreach meetings in September 2015.

6.1. INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE OIL HERITAGE REGION (HONOR THE LEGACY)

Rationale:

The ORNHA currently attracts approximately 160,000 visitors to the region every year. Overnight visitors to the region (estimated at approximately 31% of the total) spend on average \$262 per day. Day-trip visitors from beyond the Oil Region spend close to \$70 per day, while day-trip visitors from the local area spend approximately \$40 per day²³.

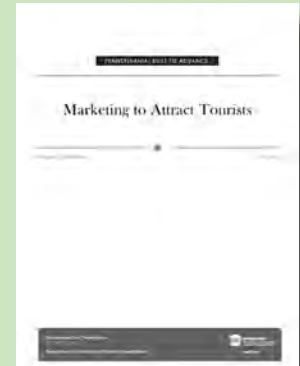
Increasing the visitors and their length of stay will increase the overall economic benefits that accrue within the region. Increasing awareness of the qualities of the Oil Heritage Region will increase the number of visitors and their length of stay. The economic impact of visitors is one of three sources of economic benefit to heritage areas, along with operational impacts (of ORA, the management entity) and grant funding for capital projects and ongoing programs. Visitors spend money at various business establishments, which in turn, are used to pay wages, salaries, and taxes. Those increases in wages, salaries and taxes get spent again, further amplifying the economic impact.

As one of 49 National Heritage Areas, the Oil Region National Heritage Area has a distinct marketing advantage that helps to separate this region from others, which are not so designated. Increasing awareness of the national significance of the region's heritage and its outdoor recreational opportunities increases visitation and, in turn, economic impact. Increasing ORA's management activities in the heritage area, its contributions to managing the development of the trail system, its role as the tourism promotion agency for the region, and its contributions to the enhancing business opportunities to help capture the economic benefits of increasing visitation are what sustain (and grow) the economic benefits to the region.

The following actions are recommended to increase awareness and in turn attract more visitors and supporters for the preservation of the Oil Region's heritage.

²³ Tripp Umbach; *Economic and Community Impact of National Heritage Area Sites: Essex National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area*; National Park Service, 2014.

Marketing to Attract Tourists



The Five-Year Strategic Tourism Plan of 2010 highlighted Pennsylvania's ability to attract a consistent flow of visitors year round, but also recognized a need to develop assets to help increase visitor length of stays. A primary goal of the program is to promote overnight stays. The program provides funding to support and develop heritage assets, enhance outdoor recreation and support the growth or development of various events. It also provides funding to support and develop heritage assets, enhance outdoor recreation and sports travel, promote educational tourism initiatives, increase domestic and international tourism and support the growth or development of various programs and events that are aligned with the State Tourism Office marketing plan (<http://community.newpa.com/programs/marketing-to-attract-tourists/>).

Garrett County, MD Gran Fondo Weekend



The Garrett County Gran Fondo offers a range of rides catered to everyone from recreational cyclists to seasoned professionals. There are five supported ride options:

- 125 mile "Diabolical Double Metric"
- 102 mile "Savage Century"
- 62 mile "Masochistic Metric"
- 44 mile "Fabulous 44"
- The "Garrett's Greatest 25" (includes hills but is appropriate for the recreational cyclist)

In 2015 three events merged under the direction of Garrett Trails:

- Taste of Garrett
- Race up the Face
- Gran Fondo.

The result is the "Best of Garrett" Weekend. Garrett Trails partnered with Garrett Lakes Arts Festival and the Garrett County Historical Society to co-advertise and promote their events as one weekend long event. Participants have

- household income of more than \$125,000
- Live about 2-5 hours away
- Prefer to have details all worked out
- Do not mind spending the extra money to provide a great experience
- Bike an average of 30-45 miles per day
- Want to be picked up and dropped off

(Source: Mike Driesbach, communication, <http://garretttrails.org>)

6.1.1. Build relationships with oil and natural gas industry partners

ORA should continue its efforts to work with existing partners and supporters to expand involvement of the oil and natural gas industry in protection and promotion of the Oil Region's history and heritage. Using a more regional approach that links related industries together in an industrial heartland network may broaden the range of partners that may have interests in other industrial heartland cities and communities. Such a multi-state industrial heritage network may be more attractive to corporate leaders and their shareholders with a broader exposure.

6.1.2. Link thematically to related national and Pennsylvania heritage areas (lumber, coal, agriculture, steel, automobile)

In Pennsylvania, logical linkages with the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, Route 6 Heritage Area, and the Lumber Heritage Region should be supported through itinerary development and cooperative marketing as a means of attracting more visitors.

6.1.3. Develop heritage-based itineraries as educational opportunities for all ages

Educational opportunities need to expand from school-based field trip itineraries to educational tours for all ages. The ORA staff, volunteers, and partner museums and organizations have a tremendous amount of knowledge that is a strong asset for the region. Much of that knowledge is found in existing publications and itineraries. Translating that knowledge into education-based travel experiences for all ages will increase awareness of the region's heritage for its residents, while increasing the attractiveness of the region for education-based tour operators and for other heritage travelers. Mission-driven educational tourism may also provide income-generating opportunities (see Extreme Journey Through Hallowed Ground Summer Camps, section 4.5).

6.1.4. Use events to help increase exposure (scale and approach)

Oil Region communities host a variety of events that bring visitors to the region. These existing events include the following, among others:

- Oil Heritage Festival
- Cranberry Festival
- First Night Oil City
- Oil Country Bluegrass Festival
- Emlenton Summer Festival
- Venango County 4-H Fair
- Applefest®
- Titusville Oil Festival
- Victorian Architecture Conference
- Franklin on Ice

While the Applefest® may not have much room for expansion, stakeholders participating in the planning process believed that efforts could be made to increase activities on the days around these events that would encourage visitors to come from further away and stay overnight (in tandem with programs to increase available specialty lodging).

6.1.5. Increase utilization of Erie to Pittsburgh Trail assets to tell Oil Heritage Region story (e.g. Saltbox House)

Stakeholders participating in the planning process also recommended that existing resources along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail could tell more of the Oil Region story by expanding interpretive techniques, especially at existing facilities. Use of “then” and “now” photographs at key locations is one way to do this—especially where broadband access is available to link directly to a web site (using a Quick Response code or similar technology) that displays the before and after images from specific locations. Freestanding outdoor interpretive panels provide year-round information. Trailheads are being gradually augmented with kiosks and enhanced visitor center buildings like the Saltbox House at the Franklin Trailhead.

6.1.6. Bring story to where people are spending time

Along the same lines, the Oil Region story needs to be told where the people are. The 2006 Plan Update noted two projects along these lines:

- “Pipeline Alley” a knockdown exhibit that is assembled in Oil City during summer events
- Boomtown in a Box – an idea for a pop-up exhibit in a truck

Refreshing the idea of pop up exhibits should continue to be a priority as a way to increase awareness of the Oil Region story. However, the exhibits need to be more portable and functional to make them easier to use, perhaps using technology to reduce the footprint and to attract younger audiences. Combining the idea with pop up culinary or craft beer events or to serve recreational events such as fun runs or triathlons would help to draw people to the exhibit (see 6.5.5).

Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association

An on line web-based exhibit providing “then” and “now” photographic exhibits is one way to capture the heyday of lost history. Quick Response codes (QR) can be mounted on a post at the location where the photographs were taken for a low cost, high impact way to communicate landscape history. (Source: <http://mdhcaexhibits.blogspot.com>)

Figure 25. Screen shot of “Desert Waysides: Burton Frasher’s California Route 66” web-based exhibit by Chris Ervin for the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association (<http://www.historypin.com/attach/uid45548/tours/take/id/1977/title/Desert%20Waysides%20Burton%20Frasher%27s%20California%20Route%2066/#11>)

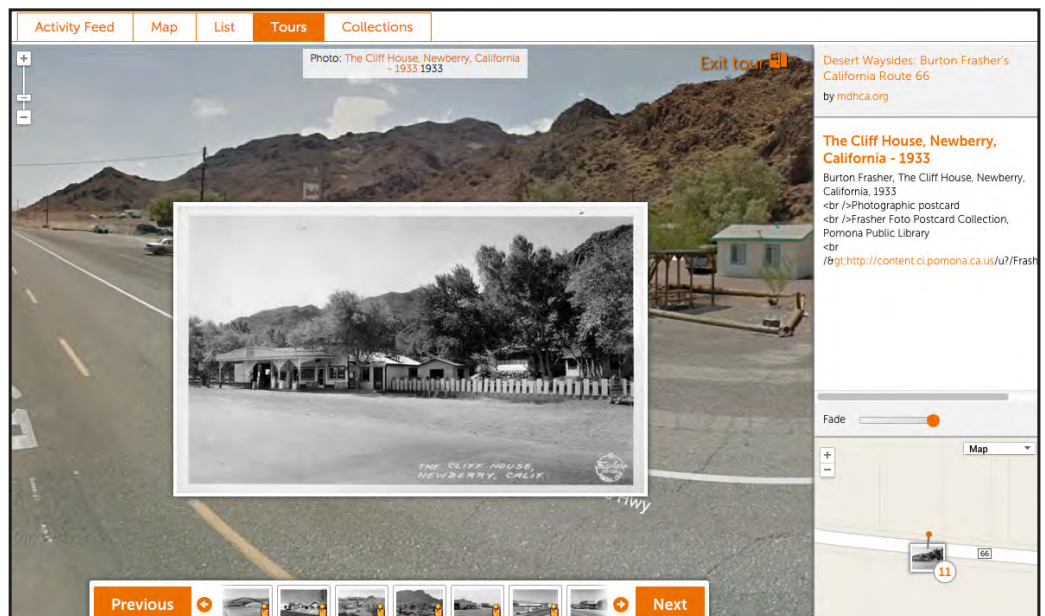
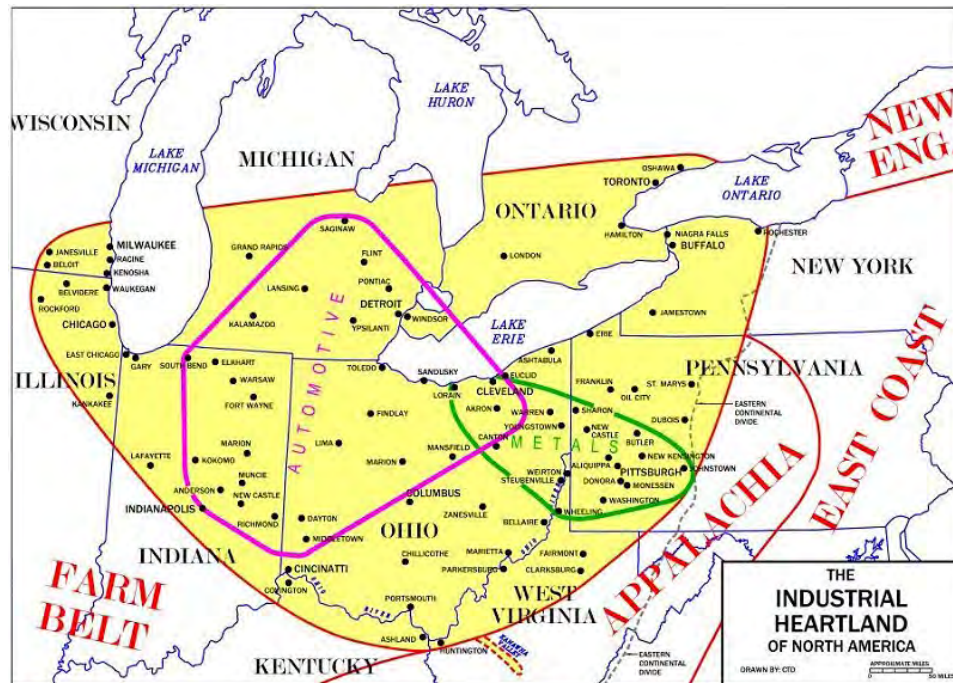




Figure 26. Linking the heritage of the Rust Belt together can be accomplished with events like the “Tour de Rust Belt” coupled with joint marketing efforts among Rust Belt regions.



6.1.7. Targeted Marketing – within a day’s drive capture area including US and Canada

The market region for the ORNHA includes the “Near Midwest”, the so-called Rust Belt cities and regions of Detroit, Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, Huntington, Wheeling, Rochester, Buffalo, Erie and Pittsburgh— as well as the vast expanse of smaller communities and rural areas in between that depend upon the economy of those cities to survive. The birthplace of the petroleum industry has recognizable relationships to each of these legacy cities—Lumber, Coal, Steel, Rubber, Automobiles and Chemicals—all tell a story that is thematically related to the Oil Region story. Some of these regions have established National Heritage Areas (Motor Cities, Ohio and Erie Canalway, and Rivers of Steel, for example).

While the “Rust Belt” or “Industrial Heartland”, may not have the cache of the “Grand Circle” in travel and tourism circles, the Oil Region is surrounded by these “Near Midwestern” industrial cities whose efforts to reclaim themselves as legacy cities is well documented²⁴. By linking the Oil Region to a network of multi-state/multi-city region — highlighting the heritage of making things with the raw materials that produced them—audiences are broadened and awareness of the inter-relationships between urban and rural in the Industrial heartland are tapped to increase visitation for all.

In tandem with fitting the Oil Region into a broader “Near Midwest” context, the Oil Region needs a more visual and graphic identity that can help to establish the Oil Region as an identifiable brand. The 2006 Management Plan Update called for additional gateway signage, kiosks, and route marking signage to help convey the Oil Region brand. Within communities, that brand can be integrated with streetscapes

24 See <http://beltmag.com/about-us/> or <http://www.legacycitydesign.org>



Figure 27. Visual and graphic identity system established for the Cane River National Heritage Area in Louisiana using the graphic style guide (top) and applied to wayfinding signs (above and far right); visitor center exhibits (center) and web page (below). Color, type, and graphic design help to provide a consistent look and feel for print and web media (courtesy of Dawson Associates and Cane River National Heritage Area)

using banners, community gateways and pedestrian scaled wayfinding. Various sites and attractions throughout the region that help to tell the Oil Region stories should incorporate the brand into site identification signs and interpretive information used to convey the stories.

6.2. GUIDE HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT – HOW BEST TO USE LIMITED TIME OF ORA STAFF

Rationale: The baseline funding from the National Park Service is a significant and important asset for the region. NPS funding supports heritage area management, which in turn leverages 3 dollars of additional funding for every dollar of NPS funding. ORA operations also make economic contributions to the region. Staff support in turn leverages local heritage development projects by helping localities to help plan, implement and manage those projects for the benefit of the region.

6.2.1. Find ways to increase staff levels within ORA / capacity of ORA

Finding a source of funding to increase staff levels is a challenge in today's grantmaking environment. One approach would be to look for ways to share new staff positions among like-minded organizations for specific program areas such as trail system management, IT development, historic preservation and hospitality training.

Municipal Assistance Fund

Pennsylvania's Department of Community & Economic Development Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) is created to help local governments efficiently and effectively plan and implement a variety of services, improvements, and soundly managed development. The program provides funding for three groups of activities –

- Shared service*
- Community planning*
- Floodplain management*

(<http://community.newpa.com/programs/municipal-assistance-program-map/>)

- **Trail system management** - Now that much of the trail system in Venango County has been opened, it is time to make sure that a management system is put in place to keep it open. Pennsylvania DCNR's Peer Grant funds "projects that help municipalities improve their park, recreation and conservation services through a collaborative process. Projects are accomplished through contracts with experienced park, recreation and conservation professionals from nearby communities who will work closely with local leaders." The entire Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system might consider pursuing Pennsylvania's Circuit Rider funds for county(s), multi-municipal entities and/or Council of Governments to hire a professional, full-time staff person to develop and establish a trail management program.
- **IT development** is clearly a need within the Oil Region and beyond especially in the area of using technology to attract visitors and help them find things to see and do and places to shop, eat, and stay overnight. Partnering with the Local Development District (Northwest Commission) may be the best way to access funds for such things as the Municipal Technology Assistance Program (MTAP) to gain direct assistance and training for local and county governments with Information Technology (IT) needs, as well as broadband deployment. Sharing these services across a broader multi-county region may be one way to extend the reach of ORA in a way that does not tax current staff capacity, or train existing staff with new skills that may also extend the reach of ORA.
- **Historic preservation** is another area where the reach of ORA staff could be extended. Franklin is the only municipality that is designated as a "Certified Local Government (CLG)" by the National Park Service. Venango and Crawford counties are not currently designated and therefore are not eligible for the funding pool that is dedicated to CLGs. Applying for CLG status will extend the range of programs and actions available to jurisdictions to preserve historic resources important to the ORNHA. Designated CLGs may apply for funding to support a circuit rider that could provide technical assistance for preservation planning and implementation projects.
- **Hospitality industry training and services** were identified in the 2006 Management Plan Update as an important priority in order to grow visitation in the region and provide a supportive environment for business growth related to hospitality. Realigning strategic priorities in workforce training to focus on the hospitality industry would help to increase the competitiveness for this type of funding. Partnering with regional colleges/universities and the Northwest Commission may provide enough critical mass to attract funding for a Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) training program or equivalent.

6.2.2. Help communities to spearhead projects and nurse them along

Stakeholders participating in the planning process recognized the role that ORA has played in helping communities, most with no planning or economic development staff, to initiate, find funding for, and manage

community-based preservation, enhancement and marketing projects.

6.2.3. Build/rebuild relationships with nearby colleges for internships and training

Volunteer hours invested as part of service days (such as at University of Pittsburgh-Titusville) are often used by community organizations to fulfill specific needs. Area and nearby colleges provide opportunities for public service and research that could directly and indirectly benefit ORA through programs in business development, rural economic development and research (see “Business Assistance Programs” on page 49).

6.2.4. Build/rebuild relationships with local employers

Increasing local employer awareness of the benefits that the heritage area and its related trail system have on the quality of life in Oil Region communities will help them attract new employees and attract new residents (future customers). Once awareness has been achieved, then employers see the value of giving back to the heritage area and trail system through volunteer and potentially monetary contributions.

6.2.5. Promote a regional identity beyond what individual towns can do

Very few people travel to a “County” or a “Municipality” as a destination unless they are trying to do business with that County or Municipality. Instead, they travel to a place with a recognizable identity—the Oil Region. ORA’s tourism promotion efforts have helped to position the Oil Region as a destination. The 2004 and 2006 plan updates identified the need for establishing a more distinctive visual and graphic identity with a physical presence in the region – beyond just the logo. Adopting a visual and graphic identity for the region and applying that identity, as a way to brand the region should focus on the following areas:

- Consistent identity established for web based travel planning
- Consistent application of a common visual and graphic identity for maps and guides (for use on web, print media, or wayside/kiosk exhibits)
- Development of a common gateway treatment (completing the Oil Derrick iconography at other gateways)
- Consistent application for route marking used to develop travel routes through the region in support of developed itineraries
- Coordinate projects with similar goals to avoid duplication
- The ORA, as the management entity, provides the necessary platform and access to resources so that local communities can work together in a cooperative manner to succeed. Cooperative buying, contracting services, technology sharing and developing common graphic design for interpretive development are some common examples of the types of services that can be coordinated to save money and avoid duplication.

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS)

NFWS was established in 2007 to represent the Casey, Ford, Hitachi and Weinberg Foundations, with support from the U.S. Department of Labor. The goal of the fund is to strengthen and expand high-impact workforce partnership initiatives across the country in order to advance the careers of low-wage workers. NFWS supports regional funding collaboratives whose purpose is to organize industry partnerships to develop a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the needs of employers and promote improvement to business practices and public policies that lead to better career opportunities.

The NFWS has funded two collaborations in Pennsylvania. The unique position of ORA combining heritage development, outdoor recreation and economic development may be attractive to the Fund for a new partnership in NW PA.

(<http://nfwsolutions.org/about-us/what-national-fund>)

6.3.4. Tap potential for mission driven, revenue-generating programs (educational tourism, conferences and symposia, events, retail sales, guide services, etc.)

A mission-driven organization (MDO) is one that is created to achieve a societal benefit, in addition to generating revenue for stakeholders. For each of the mission driven revenue generation programs that are proposed, the following questions should be answered and evaluated:²⁵

- 1) Is the project a priority in relation to the ORA mission? Would it still be a priority if revenue generation were not an issue?
- 2) What resources are needed to support the project so that it can generate revenue? Would the allocation of those resources take away from other necessary work?
- 3) Would implementing the project take away from the ORA mission or the missions and benefits received by partners and stakeholders?
- 4) What's the worst-case scenario and how would failure affect ongoing budgets and priorities?
- 5) Will the project be able to cover or exceed its expenses? How long will it take to break even? Are all costs accounted for including the share of indirect costs that are proportional to the resources assigned?
- 6) What additional amount of external funding would be needed to fully finance the project?
- 7) Based on the full cost-benefit analysis of the project, what is the true cost of using the project to achieve mission-related benefits?
- 8) Is there a more effective way to achieve the mission driven objective than the proposed revenue-generating project?

6.3.5. Tap potential for mission driven, revenue neutral programs and projects that facilitate and encourage historic preservation/adaptive re-use, brownfield redevelopment, startup/incubator business development, etc.

In the analysis discussed above, certain mission driven projects will break even after a certain period of time. The Tarbell House is an example where after eight years of investments in the preservation and rehabilitation of the building, the revenues generated by events and tenants exceed and begin to recover costs. The Tarbell House also returns mission driven benefits: demonstration of preservation best practices for Victorian structures; provides a venue for attracting small group events; contributes to the sense of place that is important to Titusville's community revitalization goals; and depicts home and stories of a family

²⁵ This section is adapted from the article: *Should Nonprofits Seek Profits?* By William Foster and Jeffrey L. Bradach, *Harvard Business Review*, 2005 at <https://hbr.org/2005/02/should-nonprofits-seek-profits/ar/1>

Business Assistance Programs

On the entrepreneurship side, Pennsylvania programs such as the Small Business Development Centers (<http://www.pasbdc.org>) and Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP) provide assistance to businesses (<http://penntap.psu.edu>). The programs are generally targeted to small- and medium-sized businesses and cover a wide range of topics ranging from financing and regulatory compliance to energy efficiency and product development, among many others.

Road Scholar

Road Scholar, formerly ElderHostel, is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to inspire adults to learn, discover and travel. Road Scholar's learning adventures "engage expert instructors, provide extraordinary access, and stimulate discourse and friendship among people for whom learning is the journey of a lifetime"¹.

Establishing a partnership with Road Scholar to bring educational tourism to the Oil Region would involve establishing a well-supported itinerary and making a proposal. Road Scholars works with many National Park friends groups to promote educational tourism.

¹ <http://www.road scholar.org/about/our-mission.asp>

Keystone Communities

According to its website, this program “supports physical improvements to both designated and other communities that are undertaking revitalization to restore deteriorated downtowns, residential neighborhoods, and industrial/manufacturing sites.”

Within Keystone Communities there are four sub programs:

- **Development Grants:** This program provides grants for community improvements, such as housing, infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and business improvement in distressed areas.
- **Elm Street Designation:** This program designates communities as “Elm Streets” if they have a sustainable local organization that seeks to improve residential areas that are adjacent to or gateways into central business districts or commercial corridors in urban areas.
- **Enterprise Zone Designation:** This program designates communities as “Enterprise Zones” if they have a sustainable local organization that seeks to improve job creation opportunities in manufacturing and industrial areas, as well as other properties zoned for business use.
- **Keystone Community:** There are four designations in the Keystone Communities program:

(continued on next page)

which shaped oil history and U.S. economic history, etc.

The Downs Building, similarly, at some point will break even and yield mission driven benefits to meet the community revitalization goals of Oil City.

ORA should continue to pursue mission-driven projects that may require initial investments in time and money to achieve, yet deliver benefits at less cost than they could be provided otherwise. Cost effective provision of mission-driven benefits is a sustainability best practice.

6.4. SUPPORT PARTNERS

Rationale: Partnership building is a two-way street. Over the past ten years, ORA recognized and reinforced the value of their partners in helping to implement the management priorities for the ORNHA. ORA staff need to continue to reinforce the partnership approach and continue to document benefits that all partners, including ORA bring to the table. As ORA continues to move forward towards sustainability, they must continue to clearly state what their objectives are in forming a strategic partnership to ensure that there is a good match between each agency, organization or individual’s goals and how the partnership can help each to achieve those goals.

6.4.1. Broaden partners through board development/advisory committees/ involvement in other organizations’ boards, etc.

Multiple strategies recommended for increasing the sustainability of the ORA and the ORNHA involve reaching out to broaden the audience and to diversify funding pools. The ORA would benefit from identifying individuals, organizations and other entities, not currently involved, that can help with this objective (oil and gas industry, health and regional arts organizations, for example). ORA should reach out to existing members and friends to find ways to connect with the right individuals in these underserved organizations, and then persuade that individual to join the organization in some way. Increasing opportunities for smaller scale involvement – such as a project advisory committee or a board subcommittee is one way to build the necessary supporting environment for their ongoing and future involvement.

6.4.2. Expand partners by broadening themes through supporting stories (e.g. Washington Trail 1753)

The 1998 Interpretive Prospectus for the Oil Heritage Region developed the original themes for telling the story of “the valley that changed the world.” As noted in the 2006 Oil Region National Heritage Area Plan Augmentation, the themes developed as part of that prospectus (the land, oil industry and global impact of oil) are still valid and were continuing to be used for new exhibits at the time at many venues.

The challenge facing the ORA in 2015 is how to link those themes to the themes of neighboring heritage areas and other heritage trails in

such a way as to capture travelers with multiple interests as a means of broadening the audience and potential partners.

One opportunity to do just that would be to relate the efforts to expand and promote Washington's Trail in western PA based upon the 1753 travels of a 21 year-old George Washington being called upon by Virginia's Governor to warn the French that they were encroaching on British territory. This kind of story, at first glance, does not appear to be directly related to the ORNHA themes. The current WT-1753 website is maintained by Butler County Tourism. An expanded Steering Committee has been formed and the website will be updated and a new brochure will be produced for Washington's itinerary in Pennsylvania. NPS is presently doing a Reconnaissance Study as to feasibility as a future National Historic Trail.

ORA can support this effort through its destination marketing organization responsibilities and help to co-market the multi-jurisdiction trail following Washington's path along the French Creek prior to the French and Indian War. Visitor information kiosks at gateways to the heritage area or at visitor centers represent the best opportunity to develop a panel and accompanying printed and web-based material that link the regional stories together.

6.4.3. Consider "Main Street" organizational approach

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "the Main Street Four Point Approach® is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets—from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride." The four points²⁶ include

1. Organization
2. Promotion
3. Design
4. Economic Restructuring

ORA has been (and still is) involved with multiple Pennsylvania Blueprint Communities projects (a program of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, fiscal agent and office location of the Pennsylvania Main Street program). ORA contains the office for the Oil City Main Street Program.

Much of the economic impact of heritage development in the region comes from increasing economic activities within the communities themselves. The advancement of the Trail Town Program® has provided some of the promotion and economic restructuring elements of the Main Street program. Keeping focused on the Trail Town Program® effort may be more beneficial in the short term for the communities within the Oil Region to build capacity and work towards expanding the pool of funding opportunities.

²⁶ See <http://www.padowntown.org/programs-services/main-street/the-main-street-four-point-approach>

(continued from previous page)

"Keystone Communities" must have a sustainable local organization that seeks to improve the central business districts (commercial corridors),

residential areas adjacent to downtown, manufacturing/ industrial areas, or any combination of these.

The "Main Street Designation" designates communities as "Main Streets" if they have a sustainable local organization that seeks to improve the central business districts or commercial corridors in urban areas.

Source: <http://community.newpa.com/programs/keystone-communities-program-kcp>

The Trail Volunteer Fund

Established by The Pittsburgh Foundation in 2007, the TVF provides grants to “purchase tools, materials, and supplies to be used by volunteer trail projects that create, maintain, or enhance the network of trails suitable for bicycle touring in western Pennsylvania and interconnected trails in nearby areas.”

The fund is designed for projects of a few hundred to perhaps a few thousand dollars, thus complementing the major grants available from other sources. Proposals received by the first day of March, June, September, and December are reviewed in those months. The application process is simple, requiring just a short explanation of the project and how the Fund’s support will help.<http://they-working.org/grants.htm>

Funding sources (see “Keystone Communities” on page 50) all require a “sustainable local organization” which the ORA provides. The sustainability plan, will further demonstrate the long-term commitment of ORA to continue serving in that role for communities within the Oil Region. Having one regional organization as the lead, if desired by the local community, helps to increase economic efficiency, reduce administrative costs, and increases coordination among related entities.

6.4.4. Continue “Business Plan Contest”

The engagement of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the Clarion Small Business Development Center (SBDC) as natural partners in the TrailTown® program and its business plan contest provides the impetus for small business to make the connection between business growth and the regional trail initiative. SCORE and the Clarion SBDC provide assistance in the development of the business plan, marketing, and financial advice—something that the many small businesses that support trails need to succeed. The business plan contest has been emulated along the Mon River regional trail and is a logical investment of the necessary staff time to coordinate the business plan effort. Private sector contributions and sponsorships (such as the eligibility for low interest loans sponsored by the Progress Fund) are an important way to leverage resources to make the program more robust.

See <http://getonthetrail.org/more-information/rules-of-participation>

6.4.5. Volunteer programs – adopt a mile of trail, for example

As the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail becomes more of an integral component of a regional tourism and recreation strategy—its maintenance and management will become even more critical. Building a network of volunteer groups that support the trail system will be important in both raising funds for trail maintenance and management and in engaging more neighbors, employers and businesses in the lifeblood of the trail system. A good example of this type of effort is NW PA Commission’s staff who have adopted the McClintock Trail and thus have begun voluntarily providing periodic trail cleaning and basic maintenance.

A sustainable organization depends on leveraging its volunteer resources and they deserve a specific landing page from which opportunities are listed and a schedule maintained. While there are plenty of examples of volunteer contributions supporting both ORA and the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system, a perspective volunteer would have a hard time finding opportunities related to either the trail or the ORA. A one-stop shop for all things “Volunteer” is needed. An example can be found at “Bike Pittsburgh” (http://bikepgh.org/get_involved/volunteer/).

A regional volunteer page would need to be a collaborative effort of existing trail groups. The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance would be a likely home for such a venture, as it would cover more geography and groups than the three counties for the Council on Greenways and Trails.

6.4.6. Preservation partnerships – realtors, community welcome wagons, preservation friendly buyers program, etc.

There is an ongoing need to build upon existing community education offerings to reinforce community awareness of the significance of historic resources in the Oil Region, as well as the benefits of preserving and adaptively reusing those historic resources. Increasing awareness of the historic resources and oil heritage builds the support base required for sustainability (See 6.1).

6.5. STEWARD PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC VALUE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Rationale: A third area of economic benefits of heritage area management comes from grantsmanship and bringing in new resources from outside sources for community benefit. The ORNHA plays an important role in the livability and quality of life of its communities and places. There is a strong connection between the aspirations of these communities and places and the successful management and sustainability of the ORNHA. The ORA, as the management entity, serves as a catalyst for assisting local governments, non-governmental organizations and supporting hospitality businesses to implement heritage development projects and programs, which, in turn, help to build a more sustainable and livable community. For heritage areas, this includes hospitality training, visitor infrastructure, preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage resources, and business development/entrepreneurship.

6.5.1. Re-introduce hospitality training (train the front line personnel and their supervisors) as tourism ambassador program

Awareness of heritage area resources and travel destinations among the frontline workers in the hospitality industry is low. Previous efforts to implement hospitality training have had mixed results, in some cases due to the cost and continuity of staff. Support is needed to develop a new hospitality-training program that includes both interpretive and functional information about visiting the Oil Region (and neighboring regions) and to tie that training into career development activities. Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) is a resume building training that enhances opportunities for employees to advance to managerial positions (see sidebar page 54). Funding partners will be needed in order to introduce and operate the CTA program, possibly including Partners for Performance (the WIB) and area colleges/universities among others.

6.5.2. Go beyond traditional training to include media, human resource professionals of major employers (e.g. medical, technology, plastics)

This type of training falls within the purview of the economic development agencies and should be coordinated on a regional basis through the Northwest Commission and integrated with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Heritage- and recreation-based employee development should be incorporated into the regional CEDS effort.

USDA's Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG)

With a maximum award of \$100,000, the RBOG program promotes "economic growth in rural communities by supporting training and technical assistance for business development and to assist with regional economic development planning. A specific emphasis within RBOG is support for collaborative economic planning and development through regional food systems."

Local governments, economic development organizations, non-profit organizations, Indian tribes, and cooperatives are eligible to apply. For the purposes of this program the communities with ORA are considered a "rural community" —an area where the population does not exceed 50,000, or is next to a city or town with more than 50,000 people.

According to the RBOG web site, the types of projects that may be funded include:

- Regional economic planning focused on food system development;
- Market development and feasibility studies;
- Business training, including leadership development and technical assistance for entrepreneurs;
- Establishing business incubators, including commercial kitchens.

Note: this program is now referred to as Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG)

6.5.3. Increase visitor infrastructure in trail town communities (better signage, restrooms, visitor center hours and staffing, business development for hospitality services, etc.)

The Trail Town Program® is the best vehicle to use to enhance visitor infrastructure (see Section 3.2). Physical improvements would likely have to come from state funding programs (DCNR and PennDOT). However, business development and hospitality services could be coupled with partners at SCORE, University of Pittsburgh-Titusville, Venango College of Clarion University, PennTAP and other similar educational programs.

6.5.4. Preservation/Re-development – use ORA strength as economic development organization to redevelop and clean up brownfield and other underutilized sites as real estate opportunity

The Pennsylvania DEP Brownfield Development Guide identifies state resources for each of five phases of brownfield development (<http://www.elibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-98042/Brownfield%20Development%20Guide.pdf>)

Redevelopment of Brownfield properties could be implemented as a mission-driven for-profit venture by examining the projects using the questions in Section 6.3.7.

6.5.5. Use 'Pop Up' business model to meet peak seasonal demand and introduce businesses to area's market and assets (food trucks, interpretive installations, etc.)

Combining food trucks and trail towns is a logical partnership that would increase economic impacts and potentially lead to permanent business development.

6.6. REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Rationale: As society changes, so too does the nature of travel and heritage tourism. In order for the ORNHA to achieve its sustainability goals, it must adapt its programming to reach ever more diverse audiences. In order to reach more diverse audiences, ORA needs to consider the range of characteristics of individuals including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs or other ideologies, and relationship to place (e.g. rural/urban). Reaching these diverse audiences increases the sustainability of the organization by expanding the audience—making all visitors and potential residents and employers more comfortable and welcome—thereby expanding economic opportunity for everyone.

6.6.1. Incorporate community history –people stories such as John Heisman's connection to Titusville

Consider using existing tools such as StoryCorp to capture stories inexpensively and use the resulting interviews in interpretive exhibits

<http://www.npr.org/2015/03/18/393748277/a-new-smartphone-app-expands-the-reach-of-storycorps>).

6.6.2. Reach out to younger audiences through professional groups

The ORA has established a Young Professionals Advisory Council. This would be a worthwhile investment of time and support to incorporate outdoor recreation and heritage-based events and itineraries that target young professionals including volunteer opportunities. The name “Young Professionals Advisory Council” should be changed to simply “Professional Advisory Council” with one of their charges to reach out to recent high school and college graduates for their advice and council about attracting younger audiences.

6.6.3. Connect with communities to link newer and more diverse audiences by broadening the story

Implemented as a recreation strategy, a serious effort is needed (and now underway) to reposition resources such as visitor services, program funding, operational knowledge and skills, and brand identity in support of optimizing public access to both nature (the Allegheny River) and culture (the Oil Region heritage).

6.6.4. Link adventure sports/river trail with heritage development and experiences

By logical extension that effort can be done through educational tourism – guided travel, camping and other outdoor experiences provided as a service to families and groups without the skills or experience but with the interest. Summer camp experiences can also be developed on a mission-driven profit-making basis (see section 4.4).

**The Draper Richards
Kaplan Foundation
(DRK)**

The DRK Foundation seeks to “dramatically improve the lives of people and the world around us through innovative strategies, systems changing approaches, and disrupting technologies.”

DRK is looking for “social entrepreneurs with dynamic ideas and nurture them at the early stages with maximum leverage and total commitment.”

DRK concentrates their selection on the capabilities of the candidate organizations founder, the scalability of the model, and the potential impact of the organization on the world.

See <http://www.drkfoundation.org/our-grants.html>

7. INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

Two scenarios were identified in Chapter 5:

- Scenario #1: maintain the existing pace of implementation and organizational capacity through ongoing grantsmanship, community and corporate support
- Scenario #2: increase the pace of implementation and grow the capacity of the organization through the formation of new partnerships that help realign programs to reinforce the links between heritage- and outdoor recreation-based tourism and development with available tools for regional economic development

Chapter 6 outlined strategies organized according to the six elements of sustainability as provided by the National Park Service in their guidance to National Heritage Areas. The recommended strategies described in Chapter 6 will help the ORA and ORHNA in their efforts to move forward towards sustainability. The next step in ORA’s efforts is to translate the potential strategies into specific program initiatives supported by the necessary resources to achieve the desired goals.

Sustainably managed heritage areas are the result of the bridging of a range of disciplines (preservation and resource protection, tourism, transportation, interpretation and education, community development and organizational management) and the linking together of communities that share an asset but may or may not share common goals. The Oil Region’s designation as a National Heritage Area and the Oil Region Alliance’s designation as the management entity provide the necessary platform and access to resources so that its communities can work together in a cooperative manner to succeed.

However, most of those resources come from federal and state programs that are not guaranteed to remain available. ORA needs to diversify its funding sources to avoid the pitfalls when those governmental programs reallocate or cut resources. One way to do that is to move towards a financially sustainable mission-driven enterprise that is not solely reliant on donations and federal and state grants. Such an enterprise has the ability to focus less on fundraising and grantsmanship, and more on building sustainable business-oriented models to help achieve its mission. ORA needs to continue to pursue funding opportunities from federal and state partners, but it also needs to find solutions that build upon the twenty years of investments of time and money that have made the ORNHA what it is today. The challenge lies in finding new, revenue neutral or revenue generating ways to create the kinds of lasting and positive change that Oil Region’s communities so desperately need.

In reviewing the many different strategies that can be utilized to move ORA towards a more sustainable path, the recommended approach is a ‘hybrid’ between scenarios one and two. The recommended approach is to diversify the range of federal, state and non-governmental/corporate

funding in support of the ORNHA's sustainability, while at the same time evaluating the feasibility of four mission-driven revenue-generating initiatives. Each initiative represents a recommended priority that can be funded from diversified sources and can be supported by a related mission-driven, revenue generating activity.

The following four programmatic initiatives and priorities are recommended to help ORA to move forward towards sustainability:

- Rust Belt Educational Travel and VolunTourism
- Recreational Travel and Tourism (Trail Town Program®)
- Entrepreneurial Initiative
- Brownfield Redevelopment Initiative

7.1. EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL AND VOLUNTOURISM

Linking the Oil Region to other related and nearby heritage regions offers the best opportunity to increase awareness of the region and develop mutually supportive entrepreneurial-based travel and tourism opportunities. While some sentiments have been expressed that the Oil Region needs to move on beyond the stories associated with industrial artifacts that are no longer economically viable and into a new generation of entrepreneurship, the fact remains that the Oil Region story is an important, distinctive and very relevant asset that should not be ignored and thrown away as if it never happened.

The related stories are interwoven throughout the industrial "Near Midwest" and new entrepreneurs are seeking to change the perception about what this multi-state region has to offer. It is a region of opportunity whose efforts are becoming new destinations for cultural tourism. The Oil Region needs to position itself as part of this reawakening by working to connect like-minded destinations of industrial heritage in the near Midwest into a more compelling educational and travel experience. The region's three primary assets (Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, Drake Well Museum and Park system and the Oil Region National Heritage Area) represent outstanding opportunities to combine educational travel with volunteer-based travel.

The following related strategies should be implemented as a high priority under this initiative:

- 6.1. Increase Awareness of the Oil Heritage Region (Honor the Legacy) – all seven strategies starting on page 41
- 6.2.6. Support use of volunteer resources (coordination, organization, etc.) – see page 48
- 6.3.7. Tap potential for mission driven, revenue-generating programs (educational tourism, conferences and symposia, events, retail sales, guide services, etc.)

Drake Well Museum Strategic Plan

The Drake Well Museum (DWM) recently completed a strategic plan (August 2015). "Key aspects of the Strategic Plan must focus on building attendance, increasing staff, seeking new sources of revenue, and creating region-wide awareness and partnerships to market the assets of the region more effectively,"¹ which is consistent with the objectives of the ORA Sustainability Plan.

Of particular interest to the Oil Region is "Goal Two: Financial Stability, Fundraising and Earned Income" including:

- *Expand overall membership in Friends of Drake Well, Inc.*
 - *Enhance and expand formal fundraising effort*
 - *Develop formal structure and marketing initiatives for site's rental programs.*
 - *Develop comprehensive plan for capturing recreational revenue.*
 - *Increase revenue through Museum Shop.*
 - *Explore entrepreneurial opportunities.*
 - *Continue and grow publication program.*
- DWM also identified the goal of increasing the site's name recognition, programmatic information, general branding and regional tourism through traditional and non-traditional marketing opportunities, community outreach and strategic partnerships.*

¹ *Drake Well Museum and Park Strategic Plan, Final - August 30, 2015.*

The outreach initiative would be supported by realigning existing resources associated with tourism promotion efforts and by seeking funding from Pennsylvania's tourism funding program via DCED Marketing to Attract Tourists (see page 41). Of particular importance would be to develop a market study to determine the potential for this market capture area—specifically for expanding educational travel opportunities as a regional draw, and volunteer travel opportunities as a more local draw.

This initiative would also support the business development strategies described in Section 7.3, below, by expanding markets for hospitality related business.

Finally, ORA could study the feasibility of leveraging the knowledge they have gained (such as with the Victorian Architecture conferences) into educational travel and VolunTourism experiences as a revenue generating enterprise. Originally a global tourism strategy for non-governmental organizations working in developing countries, the concept has grown to combine educational travel with volunteer opportunities in the United States. The market for this type of initiative should be tested for the "Near Midwest" capture area in general and for northwestern Pennsylvania in particular. Educational curriculum could be combined with the recreational assets of the region and organized around geology, the natural history of oil and natural gas, the culture of boom and bust, and contemporary issues of brownfields and post-oil recovery. Educational travel opportunities could be supported by nearby colleges as partners (intersession, summer, etc.) and could include additional coursework in photography, fine arts, archeology, architectural woodworking, preservation, among others. Potential markets could also include youth summer programs (similar to Extreme Journey on page 34).

7.2. OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM

This is a mission driven initiative whose investments would be designed for the longer-term economic benefits that they would engender. The initiative could also spawn revenue-generating opportunities for the ORA.

The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail is the backbone of a full range of outdoor recreational travel and tourism opportunities. The EPT and the Allegheny River are primary assets from which future economic initiatives can be based. This corridor also contains the majority of key oil/gas industry history sites, public art settings, and cultural resources/venues among those located in the ORNHA. The Trail Town Program® is the platform from which this asset-based economic development effort can be implemented and grown. ORA has been a prime mover in implementing the system of multi-use trails with the help of many partners who share the vision of an interconnected system of trails supported by gateway communities as a means of increasing economic activity and the quality of life. The following related strategies should be implemented as a high priority under this initiative:

- 6.1.5. Increase utilization of Erie to Pittsburgh Trail assets to tell Oil Heritage Region story (e.g. Saltbox House) – see page 43
- 6.3.2. Link healthcare partners with recreational component - see page 48
- 6.5.3. Increase visitor infrastructure in trail town communities (better signage, restrooms, visitor center hours and staffing, business development for hospitality services, etc.) – see page 54
- 6.6.4. Link adventure sports/river trail with heritage development and experiences – see page 55

These efforts should be the top priority for pursuing outside funding through the following governmental and non-governmental programs:

- For a complete description of USDOT programs and the eligible bicycle and pedestrian activities under a particular funding program see http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.cfm.
- Many of these federal programs are administered through PennDOT, and PA DCNR including Transportation Alternatives Program, and Recreational Trails Program.

In addition to the VolunTourism, ORA may serve as an incubator for trail and recreational services including step-on guides, transportation services, concierge services, bicycle and boat sharing services, etc. Once established, ORA, or a for-profit partner, could sell the businesses or a portion of that business to a new partner. ORA would carry the startup costs and get the business established, thereby reducing the risk for a new startup. Care would need to be taken that ORA does not compete with new business startups, but in fact stimulates those startups through its incubator program.

Related projects and programs will benefit the region both directly and indirectly through the expansion of the trail network, by serving as an attraction to bring more visitors to the region, and by supporting small business development and expansion.

7.3. ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVES

Building the foundation for business development in the region is a critical part of the ORA mission. In rural areas such as and including the Oil Region, with well-managed heritage-based, nature-based and outdoor recreational assets, approximately 8-10% of the region's economy is based upon these types of assets (see page 24).

ORA needs to continue and place a high priority on strategic initiatives that support the expansion of existing businesses and the creation of new business opportunities related to its heritage, nature and outdoor recreational assets. The following related strategies should be implemented as a high priority under this initiative:

- 6.4.5. Consider “Main Street” organizational approach and Support Trail Town Program® efforts by existing communities
- 6.4.6. Continue “Business Plan Contest”
- 6.5.1. Re-introduce hospitality training (train the front line personnel and their supervisors) as tourism ambassador program
- 6.5.5. Use ‘Pop Up’ business model to meet peak seasonal demand and introduce businesses to area’s market and assets (food trucks, interpretive installations, etc.)

Of the four recommended initiatives, the entrepreneurial initiative offers the least revenue generating opportunities for ORA (since the goal is to create revenue generating businesses owned by others). Care must also be taken to avoid introducing new competition with existing museum bookstores and the market share that those museum stores depend upon for survival.

Initial funding should be pursued from the USDA’s Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG). In Pennsylvania, this program is referred to as Rural Business Development Grants. Of particular interest are the eligible activities under this program for the following activities as described on the website and excerpted below.

“Enterprise type grant funds that benefit small and emerging businesses in rural areas including:

- Training and technical assistance, such as project planning, business counseling/training, market research, feasibility studies, professional/technical reports, or product/service improvements
- Acquisition or development of land, easements, or rights of way; construction, conversion, renovation, of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities
- Pollution control and abatement
- Capitalization of revolving loan funds including funds that will make loans for start-ups and working capital
- Distance adult learning for job training and advancement
- Rural transportation improvement
- Community economic development
- Technology-based economic development
- Feasibility studies and business plans
- Leadership and entrepreneur training
- Rural business incubators
- Long-term business strategic planning

“Opportunity type grant funding must be used for projects in rural areas and they can be used for:

- Community economic development
- Technology-based economic development
- Feasibility studies and business plans
- Leadership and entrepreneur training
- Rural business incubators
- Long-term business strategic planning”

For more information see <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>.

7.4. BROWNFIELD AND COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The greatest potential among the four initiatives, as well as the greatest risk, for revenue generating projects and programs would come from the strategic redevelopment of brownfields (such as at Emlenton) coupled with the reinvestment in and adaptive re-use of downtown properties (such as the Downs Building project). The following related strategies should be implemented as a high priority under this initiative:

- 6.3.8. Potential for mission driven, revenue neutral programs and projects that facilitate and encourage historic preservation/ adaptive re-use, brownfield redevelopment, startup/incubator business development, etc.
- 6.5.4. Preservation/Re-development – use ORA strength as economic development organization to redevelop and clean up brownfield and other underutilized sites as real estate opportunity

These efforts should be the top priority for pursuing outside funding through the following governmental and non-governmental programs:

- PA brownfield program funding: Industrial Sites Re-use Program - provides grants and low-interest loans for environmental assessments (up to \$200,000) and remediation (up to \$1 million). The program is designed to foster the cleanup of environmental contamination at industrial sites, thereby bringing blighted land into productive reuse (<http://community.newpa.com/programs/industrial-sites-reuse-program-isrp/>)
- EPA brownfield program funding FY 2016 Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grant Guidelines: to address sites contaminated by petroleum and hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants (including hazardous substances co-mingled with petroleum). Opportunities for funding are as follows: Brownfields Assessment

Grants (each funded up to \$200,000 over three years; Assessment Coalitions are funded up to \$600,000 over three years), Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Grants (each funded up to \$1,000,000 over five years), and Brownfields Cleanup Grants (each funded up to \$200,000 over three years). The proposal submission deadline is December 18, 2015.

Of the four, the brownfield and community redevelopment initiative represent the greatest potential for mission-driven revenue generating projects. Brownfields and related community redevelopment also address the ongoing issue of the need to move forward towards the next generations of technology, research, and economic recovery—while building upon the legacy of this history-rich valley.

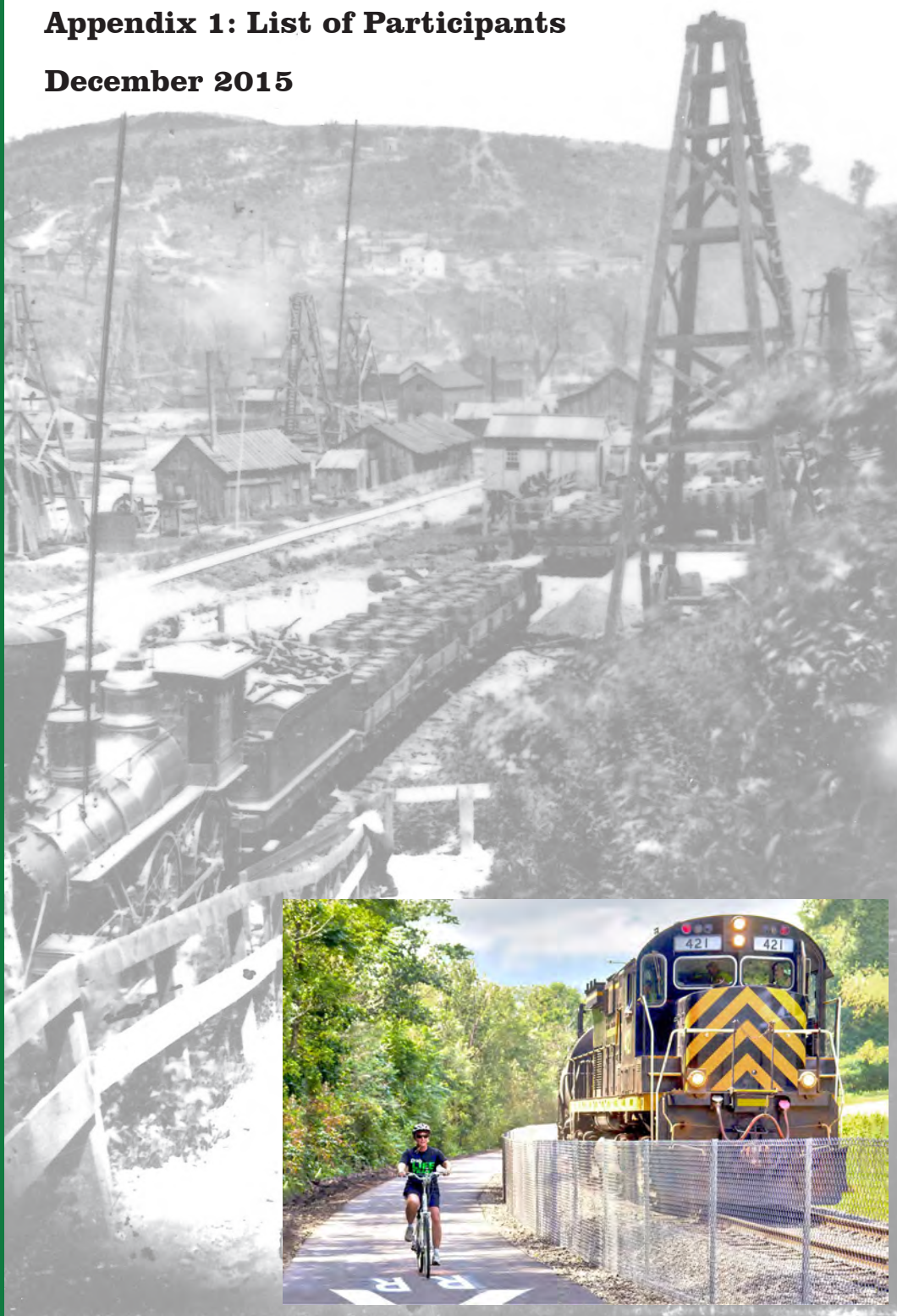
Each of the four initiatives, however, requires that the capacity of the ORA staff be expanded through partnerships, grant funding or realignment of existing resources. Funding sources for each program are identified for initial support.

Oil Region National Heritage Area

Sustainability Plan

Appendix 1: List of Participants

December 2015



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List of Participants (as of 11-30-2015)

Public Meeting – September 1, 2015 – Morning – Held at Drake Well Museum in Titusville

Janet McClintock Aaron; resident of Franklin
 Emily Altomare; Titusville Area Chamber of Commerce
 Kathy Bailey; Oil City Main Street Program
 Susan Beates; Drake Well Museum and Park; PHMC
 Jim Becker; Titusville Community Development
 Marilyn Black; resident of Cochranton; employee of ORA
 Leah Carter; Titusville Renaissance, Inc.
 Mary Cochran; resident of Oil City; employee of ORA
 Peter Collins; resident
 Kimberly Copley-Harris; resident of Cooperstown; employee of ORA
 Lynn Cressman; Friends of the Tarbell House
 Barbara Crudo; City of Oil City
 Joseph Fadden; Congressman Glenn Thompson's Titusville office
 Mary Hill; Titusville Herald
 Jim Klein; Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects
 Tom Kopper; resident of Titusville
 Melissa Mann; Drake Well Museum and Park; Pa. Historical and Museum Commission
 Larry Manross; City of Titusville
 Neil McElwee; resident of Oil City
 Ed Myer; resident of Hydetown
 Gail Myer; resident of Hydetown
 David Weber; resident of Pleasantville; Titusville Historical Society
 Ronald E. Wig; Titusville Alumni Association

Public Meeting – September 1, 2015 – Afternoon – Held at Venango County Courthouse Annex in Franklin

Janet McClintock Aaron; resident of Franklin
 Marilyn Black; resident of Cochranton; employee of ORA
 Kimberly Copley-Harris; resident of Cooperstown; employee of ORA

Saxon Daugherty; The Derrick
 Mike Dulaney; Franklin Chamber of Commerce
 Debra M. Frawley; Council on Greenways and Trails
 Jim Klein; Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects
 Toni Kresinski; resident of Cornplanter Township; employee of ORA
 Debra Lutz; resident of Cranberry Township; employee of ORA
 Melissa Mann; Drake Well Museum and Park
 Heather Mohnkern; resident of Venango County; local business
 John R. Phillips, II; resident of Franklin; employee of ORA
 Richard Sayer; The Derrick
 Daniel Weiland; resident of Franklin; Franklin Historic Preservation Association
 Erin Wiley Moyers; Bureau of Conservation and Recreation, Pa. DCNR
 Vince Witherup; County of Venango
 Mike Wolozyn; resident

Public Meeting – September 1, 2015 – Evening – Held at Crawford Center in Emlenton

Janet McClintock Aaron; resident of Franklin
 Marilyn Black; resident of Cochranton; employee of ORA
 Kimberly Copley-Harris; resident of Cooperstown; employee of ORA
 Cathy Kentzel; Fishermen's Cove Preservation Foundation; The Barnard House Bed & Breakfast
 Paul Kentzel; Fishermen's Cove Preservation Foundation; The Barnard House Bed & Breakfast
 Jim Klein; Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects
 Toni Kresinski; resident of Cornplanter Township; employee of ORA
 Nancy Marano; Borough of Emlenton

Interviewees during August - October, 2015

Edward J. Bergin; resident of Franklin
 Glenn Cochran; resident of Oil City
 Barry Cressman; resident of Titusville
 Lynn Cressman; resident of Titusville; Friends of the Tarbell House
 Terry Danko; Marquette Savings Bank
 Betsy Kellner; Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
 Melissa Mann; Drake Well Museum and Park
 Marcia Miller; resident of Oil City

Public Comments Received in September - October, 2015

Renee Rottman; resident of Petrolia, PA in Butler County; Pa. Independent Petroleum Producers

Public Meeting - November 10, 2015 - Held in City Hall, Oil City

Janet McClintock Aaron; resident of Franklin
 Marilyn Black; resident of Cochran; employee of ORA
 Jerry Brosius; Cranberry Township
 Mary Cochran; resident of Oil City; employee of ORA
 Kimberly Copley-Harris; resident of Cooperstown; employee of ORA
 Barb Crudo; City of Oil City
 Terry Danko; Marquette Savings Bank
 Saxon Daugherty; The Derrick
 Deb Eckelberger; Titusville Redevelopment Authority
 Debra M. Frawley; Council on Greenways and Trails
 Rich Jackson; The Derrick
 Betsy Kellner; Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
 Jim Klein; Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects
 Debra Lutz; resident of Cranberry Township; employee of ORA
 Neil McElwee; resident of Oil City
 Charles E. Myers; resident of Kennerdell

John R. Phillips, II; resident of Franklin; employee of ORA

Richard Sayer; The Derrick

Mark Schroyer; City of Oil City

Cecile Stelter; Bureau of Forestry, Pa. DCNR

Dan Twombly; resident of Oil City; employee of ORA

ORA Heritage Advisory Council Meeting - November 13, 2015 - Held at Venango Museum In Oil City

Janet McClintock Aaron; resident of Franklin
 Jim Ashbaugh; Franklin Historical Architectural Review Board
 Rachel Ashbaugh; Franklin Historic Preservation Association
 Marilyn Black; resident of Cochran; employee of ORA
 Leah Carter; Titusville Renaissance, Inc.
 Kimberly Copley-Harris; resident of Cooperstown; employee of ORA
 Emily Donaldson; Venango County Regional Planning Commission
 Betsy Kellner; Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
 Lois McElwee; resident of Oil City
 Neil McElwee; Oil Creek Press
 Rich Mihalic; Two Mile Run County Park
 Carolee Michener; Venango County Historical Society
 Marcia Miller; resident of Oil City
 Cecile Stelter; Bureau of Forestry, Pa. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

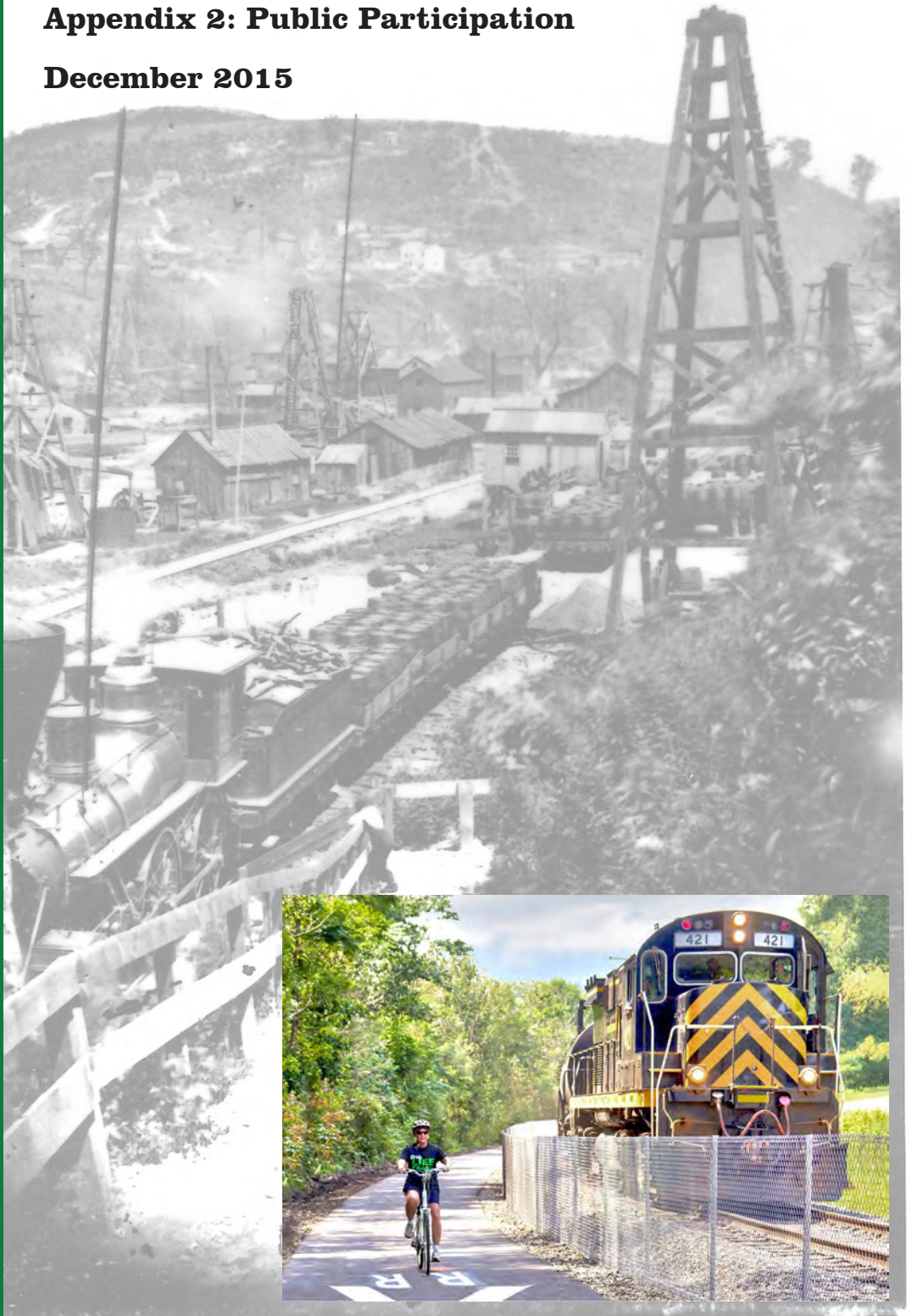
Public Comments Received in November, 2015
 Emily Altomare; Titusville Area Chamber of Commerce
 James Ru; resident of Oil City
 Victoria Smith; resident of Franklin; DeBence Antique Music World
 Diane Standish; resident of Venango County; Facebook respondent

Oil Region National Heritage Area

Sustainability Plan

Appendix 2: Public Participation

December 2015



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Summary of Legal Notices Published Regarding ORNHA Sustainability Plan

Three sets of legal notices were published in connection with the Oil Region National Heritage Area Sustainability Plan.

The following notice appeared in these newspapers:

Erie Times-News	June 26, 2015
The Meadville Tribune	June 27, 2015
The News-Herald	June 27, 2015
The Derrick	June 27, 2015
The Titusville Herald	July 2, 2015

LEGAL NOTICE

The Oil Region Alliance will accept sealed proposals until 2:00 pm Monday, July 13, 2015 for Sustainability Planning Consulting Services. A Letter of Interest from potential proposers is required to reach ORA by no later than 2:00 p.m. on July 6, 2015. For information and full instructions, contact Marilyn Black, VP for Heritage Development, 217 Elm Street, Oil City, PA 16301; (814) 677-3152; Fax (814) 677-5206; e-mail: mblack@oilregion.org.

The following notice appeared in these newspapers:

The News-Herald	August 21, 2015
The Derrick	August 21, 2015
The Titusville Herald	August 22, 2015
The Progress News	August 25, 2015

LEGAL NOTICE

Please join us on Tuesday, September 1, 2015 for public meetings to gather ideas for helping the Oil Region National Heritage Area and for the Oil Region Alliance (its administrative entity) develop additional partnerships to sustain and advance its mission at the following locations and times:

- 10:00 a.m. Drake Well Museum, 202 Museum Lane, Titusville, PA
- 2:30 p.m. Venango County Courthouse Annex, 1174 Elk Street, Franklin, PA
- 7:00 p.m. Crawford Center, 511 Hill Street, Emlenton, PA

For more information, contact Marilyn Black, mblack@oilregion.org, (814) 677-3152, Ext. 105 at the Oil Region Alliance.

The following notice appeared in these newspapers:

The Titusville Herald	October 29, 2015
The News-Herald	October 29, 2015
The Derrick	October 29, 2015
The Progress News	November 3, 2015

LEGAL NOTICE

Please join us on Tuesday, November 10, 2015 for a public meeting to hear and react to the findings and draft recommendations for the Oil Region National Heritage Area's Sustainability Plan. It will be held at City Hall, 21 Seneca Street, Oil City, PA starting at 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact Marilyn Black, mblack@oilregion.org, (814) 677-3152, Ext. 105 at the Oil Region Alliance.

Notes from Public Meetings – September 1, 2015

10:00 a.m. Drake Well Museum in Titusville
2:30 p.m. Room 100 of the Venango County Courthouse Annex in Franklin
7:00 p.m. Auditorium of the Crawford Center in Emlenton

Agenda (all three meetings)

1. Introduction and Purpose of Planning Project
2. Overview of Oil Region National Heritage Area
3. Guided Discussion on Sustainability (Questions)

Desired Outcome of Today's Meeting

Generate ideas and suggestions about how to sustain and advance the mission of the Oil Region National Heritage Area

Oil Region National Heritage Area

What is Sustainability Planning for National Heritage Areas?

"Continuing ability to work with partners through changing circumstances to meet its authorized mission"

Mission of the Oil Region Alliance

"... to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, learn and play in the valley that changed the world through the preservation, promotion, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial destinations"

Sustainability Topics

- Honor the Legacy
- Guide the Heritage Area Management
- Leverage and Secure Resources
- Support Partners
- Steward Programs and Projects
- Reach Diverse Audiences

TITUSVILLE MEETING NOTES**A. Honor the Legacy - How can the ORA increase awareness of the Oil Region and its significance?**

- School Alumni Associations to speak out on our behalf about Oil Region especially in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, DC, etc.
- Ways increase national marketing? Human interest (National Public Radio), community history
- Cross marketing among other national heritage areas around the country
- PA Welcome Centers – Great Lakes Region is hidden; features of PA map images rarely reach here – a good lobby topic!
- Are there opportunities for more attractions – history emphasis? Related to communities nearby and larger region
- School district history departments to commit and discuss legacy and incorporate into curriculum (competition for time) – more opportunity for local involvement (young men); field trips to Pittsburgh; but not locally; families can do this, too
- Emphasis on industry relationships – valley that changed the world – not well known (even known at all) in other places; emphasize relationships between other industries such as lumber region leading to oil production to lumber manufacturing, etc.
- More online and fresher

B. Guide: How can the ORA staff be of the most help to community-based efforts to protect and promote the Oil Region NHA?

- Partnership with local volunteer organization – ORA staff helps coordinate beyond the scope of organization
- Tourism in the region would not happen without ORA support/coordination
- Getting the word out to other web sites – what are they searching for
- ORA staff consumed with responsibilities – hard to add to current workload; funding can be a challenge
- Compartmentalism – econ. devt, heritage tourism, recreation – now more interrelated but more work to do; more economic benefit demonstrated

C. Resources: How can the ORA help communities and ORA itself be more competitive for and better utilize scarce resources (time and money)?

- Individual communities more challenged – collaboration among others increases competitiveness – ORA does this and it is exemplary
- Other communities may not know that this is what ORA can do
- Outside boundary communities recognize this, for example; but stretches resources; expands knowledge of value beyond boundary; still need government support and advocates
- Museum exhibits, for example expand outward; Bradford sought information from Drake Well, this is a good example of reaching out; leads to cross marketing and then more awareness
- One tank trips an example of reaching out (Cleveland example)
- Hosting grantsmanship workshops in communities more frequently and deliberately – outside expertise
- Hosting statewide trail summit, Victorian Arch. Conf. etc. bringing whole state and beyond

- University linkages (PSU, WVU) – have resources, connections
- Landowners Association – interest in oil/lumber and significance
- Concern about local point of view versus other objectives (bring in outsiders, for example)
- Connections between oil and steel could expand support; Oil and Agriculture linkage as well (animal husbandry of oil men were exemplary) – River Ridge, Carters farm, a golf course; cutlery plants
- Tapping into “firsts” – oil and gas industry e.g. Hula Hoops; ...
- Health Care – recreational linkages – use competitive businesses to your advantage.

D. Partnerships: What existing partnerships are working well that can be expanded, and what new partnerships can help to increase the benefits of the National Heritage Area designation?

- Railroad – OCTRR – historical connections are significant
- Heritage Advisory Committee – good avenue for communications
- Neighboring communities/regions – Foxburg, Clarion, Meadville
- Neighboring heritage areas, e.g. Rivers of Steel; coordinate story and collaborate
- Washington Trail – create lines of communication among partners – and among stories
- 16 miles from Tionesta – gateway to PA Wilds and Lumber Heritage – cross marketing; story of dam and relationships
- Neilltown Church
- PA Downtown Center – Oil City Main Street Center; regional collaboration betw. EDAs
- Canadohta Lake – Pittsburgh cottage community drives through; shops in Titusville; other lakes may be targeted area

E. Community: How can the National Heritage Area designation be better utilized to increase the livability and quality of life in our communities while increasing economic benefits?

- Restaurants in Titusville, Oil City, Emlenton with group facilities
- Trail users want and need public restrooms
- Park/trail users (equipment, guides, transportation)
- Hospitality training goes beyond service industry – look to radio trivia questions and local prizes
- John Heisman childhood story; coaching at Penn and lines of football story (Bert Bell, Eagles; other links)

F. Reach Diverse Audiences: In what new ways can the ORA better reach out to more diverse audiences?

- Social media working well now – keep it up
- Young professionals reaching out (Franklin/Oil City making an effort, could spread out to other communities)
- Opportunity Park – education for reclaiming as eco-ed center
- Nature playgrounds as bridge to getting outdoors
- Oil producers role in land conservation (Allegheny National Forest)

- Ducks Unlimited – human interest for magazine
- PA Farm show – exhibits could tell linkage story; PA Recreation show - economic development opportunity
- Road rally – like geo caching
- Outreach to business leaders and employers/business owners should be tapped
- Opportunity to use oil theme for younger ages to capture interest (water park?)
- Winter activities – multi-season use of trails
- Oil producers who started here went on to Sun Oil in Philadelphia
- Re-creation of an oil field concert saloon show

FRANKLIN MEETING

A. Honor the Legacy - How can the ORA increase awareness of the Oil Region and its significance?

- What caused “you” to come here? Promote the region – Sell the story; Colonel Drake story – how about events such as a NASCAR race or others that increase exposure; bicycle race on trail
- Focus on major event for exposure to other great things to do
- DMO’s guide people to places – 160k per year on trail system; market at the place they are at
- What comes to mind when you say “let’s go for a bike ride” – need welcoming trailheads; interaction with neighbors – a welcoming experience on and beyond the trail (continue amenity development along the trail system) – Salt Box House for example
- Franklin AppleFest – piggybacking on larger festivals with potential for multi-community event extending regionwide for things to do
- Involve local employers as advisors

B. Guide: How can the ORA staff be of the most help to community-based efforts to protect and promote the Oil Region NHA?

- Interact with heritage development; sit on advisory committees (helps to solidify partnership) – trails, signage, guides
- People come from all over the world that want to see Drake Well, but local families don’t seem to get the chance – start at lower grades
- We don’t want to visit our own backyard – educate about local places and offerings
- Free admissions to local residents
- ORA’s three legs of stool each involve economic development – how to get more employers involved
- Employer involvement in local activities has declined
- Limited time – need a focused message
- Advocate for region; teaching others how to advocate for area or institution – friends group of the region

C. Resources: How can the ORA help communities and ORA itself be more competitive for and better utilize scarce resources (time and money)?

- 160k users of trail has economic impact but need to do a better job of selling positive benefits to those that benefit monetarily
- Struggle to communicate values
- Partner with other organizations but may need to expand more broadly – act as a clearinghouse to help coordinate and seek out partnership potential
- Rural area thinks regionally but may water down effort – work on one thing really well
- Avoid duplicating efforts
- Partner groups strategic plans provide potential for collaboration
- Get long term projects on the table early – takes time to instill into agency programs (e.g. trailhead can involve multi-agencies) – get all on board early
- Project specific dollars – have trouble with administrative costs qualifying – need to be cognizant of capacity of organization – how far spread out is also an issue
- National Heritage Area brings leverage
- But do public / sites recognize that value

D. Partnerships: What existing partnerships are working well that can be expanded, and what new partnerships can help to increase the benefits of the National Heritage Area designation?

- Can you adopt a mile of trail?
- Schools and educational institutions – provide meaningful volunteer opportunities (e.g. adopt a trail)
- PA History in 6th grade in a limited way (field trips still) – local school districts out to 1-hour
- Business plan contest for five trail towns is good example
- Faith community
- Volunteer capacity benefit from partnerships with organizations having trained staff

E. Community: How can the National Heritage Area designation be better utilized to increase the livability and quality of life in our communities while increasing economic benefits?

- Meeting space!
- Recreation access – trails/waterways/parks could be more utilized/visible
- Live here but work anywhere; telecommute
- Quality of life is high and attractive compared to more urban/suburban places
- Package heritage area as part of new hire/employer package – e.g. land trust did package for region as an example given out with new real estate transaction
- “I’muphere” – but could live here
- Hospitality training - e.g. Titusville McDonalds employees don’t know how to give driving directions to Drake Well – train managers; give corporate membership as incentive: special tour packages
- Business development – need help but don’t recognize or have time
- Seek out for succession help
- How to help businesses to talk with each other – vertical not horizontal
- Example of Great Allegheny Passage – bike rider lost wallet; finding business owner drove wallet to next town as a courtesy

- Example of local products in welcome baskets

F. Reach Diverse Audiences: In what new ways can the ORA better reach out to more diverse audiences?

- Young professionals group – how to communicate as they grow into community
- Families with younger children – how to compete with “Saturday morning” – meet them where they are
- International? Once brought by large employers – attracted by quality of life; Other companies still do international business (10% international at Drake); GEOfest – Allegheny GeoTrail to get passports, coins already here, etc.
- Leads from visitor guide (e.g. publish visitor guides in foreign language)
- E.g Stone skipping competition – unique event with 300-400: captive audience- use popup kiosk to show other options
- How to make it known that international visitors are already here
- Professional organizations to tap such as Society of Professional Archeologists
- Large oil has not shown interest in Drake history recently (although started by industry); workforce development such as STEM education; smaller independents are very supportive
- Also more heritage than oil heritage – Washington Trail; diversify story beyond oil to capture more diverse audience
- Oil money is still here – in foundations, etc.
- ORA is education/economic development – see how heritage/rec impact tourism – is that enough?
- Interwoven (asset based economic development) – physical, labor, etc. – build from what you have
- Entrepreneurs need a workforce, etc. more than just quality of life (Gamma Fishing – strong international revenues; Bassmaster Pros to come here)? How to bring good employees
- Example of reaching out to employers in high cost area that may be interested in filling needs locally
- Why are existing companies leaving? [Ownership leaving area, then little left to support birthplace]; business moves closer to their customers and suppliers
- What would keep you here? – Attract good people to area - are there business packages (mostly one on one)
- Help us “grow Venango” for industrial park
- This generation is looking for something different – are we ready for it (looking for young professionals group to help out – but all can contribute)
- Getting history professionals to understand business needs

EMLENTON MEETING

A. Honor the Legacy - How can the ORA increase awareness of the Oil Region and its significance?

- Education: gap in knowledge with big gap in preservation needs (e.g. museum preservation of artifacts)
- Resources for property owners/organizations – match up technical training
- Hosted “The Legacy” – dramatic presentations on historical people/events (local interest coupled

with dinner

- 90% out of state business – give tour at check in to B&B to welcome and provide overview –but they serve as orientation
- Visitor center was passed by or not open (need docents)
- Emlenton is a M-F 8-5 town; signage is poor or non-existent
- Marketing - capture 5 hour drive – what markets are out there and how to share with related cities and towns (includes Michigan)
- Marketing app would help to track source of visitors – need focus on towns with similar demographics to transition toward trail-town
- Alliance has contract with GuestQuest as insert (Spring, Summer Fall/Winter) plus internet is good source for leads

B. Guide: How can the ORA staff be of the most help to community-based efforts to protect and promote the Oil Region NHA?

- Understaffed and overworked – great to have more personnel
- College student interns are a potential source
- Emlenton not as many human resources as other towns; some guidance would help on how to do things
- Look to oil legacy companies to contribute – especially matching needs with interests
- ORA spearheaded a lot of positive projects/programs in Emlenton with a strong relationship – trails, preservation, marketing, etc.
- 501c3 partnership

C. Resources: How can the ORA help communities and ORA itself be more competitive for and better utilize scarce resources (time and money)?

- 501c3 partnership with community
- Allegheny Clarion River Valley Region – regional collaboration vehicle
- (Education culture arts also) – Allegheny Riverstone Center for the Arts

D. Partnerships: What existing partnerships are working well that can be expanded, and what new partnerships can help to increase the benefits of the National Heritage Area designation?

- Bike trail businesses putting an app together – what's near here for them, track their activities for businesses
- Municipal forest (Crawford) in Emlenton – how do you manage this for compatible goals?
- Preservation of historic homes - information for new owners: what is the story, why is it significant, how to preserve
- Is there a preservation friendly realtor to work with?
- Brownfield below trail - needs an inventory – possible birding value
- Capistrano swallows

E. Community: How can the National Heritage Area designation be better utilized to increase the livability and quality of life in our communities while increasing economic benefits?

- Hospitality – kiosk going up for trail riders
- Plaza needs visitor information (developing area – infrastructure coming)
- Business development needs marketing information/failure results from lack of information
- M-F 9-5 issue constraints business development – hard to stimulate lingering
- Pop up outlets for events – with calendar that allows for vendors to commit to smaller amounts of time on their schedule
- Franklin has an indoor flea market with vendors
- Auctioneer set up in Crawford Bldg. – “Hidden Treasures”

F. Reach Diverse Audiences: In what new ways can the ORA better reach out to more diverse audiences?

- Extreme sports for young audience; e.g. triathlon – river circuit is conducive Emlenton, Franklin, Oil City, Titusville
- Music for young generation
- Zip line e.g. Hocking Hills using interns (canopy tour) – limited time for interest wanes if not fresh
- Trail, concerts boomers and retirees use trail on weekdays; avoid crowds on GAP Trail
- Corporate retreats for region (more beds needed than may be available); “glamping” not currently available
- Hostel no longer available
- More signage on the river about heritage/history/culture
- Kayak usage up – water trail signage/map might help draw into community – peoples go past but missed camp spots on islands available
- Need infrastructure for water trail – visitor management - when a place gets “known” it is over used and becomes a sanitation mess
-

Meeting Summary: DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC MEETING

NOVEMBER 10, 2015

Oil City, PA 4 – 6 p.m.

Attendees: 21 persons

Agenda

1. Introduction and Purpose of Planning Project
2. Potential Strategies for Consideration
3. Recommended Priorities

Presentation by Jim Klein, Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects

Purpose of Today's Meeting

- *Discuss Draft Sustainability Plan Recommendations*
- *Gather input on priorities for ORA to diversify funding sources*
- *Discuss ideas for moving towards a financially sustainable, mission-driven enterprise that is not solely reliant on donations and federal and state grants.*

What is Sustainability Planning for National Heritage Areas

Continuing ability to work with partners through changing circumstances to meet its authorized mission

Mission of the Oil Region Alliance

... to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, learn and play in the valley that changed the world through the preservation, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial destinations

The Next Ten Years: Vision and Goals for Sustainability

The Oil Region Alliance and its many partners have re-envisioned the future of the Oil Region National Heritage Area—"the Valley that Changed the World"—as one in which its economic vitality is recaptured with the same spirit of entrepreneurship that led to the birthplace of the petroleum industry in the first place.

Strategies for Sustainability:

- *Honor the Legacy*
- *Guide the Heritage Area Management*
- *Leverage and Secure Resources*
- *Support Partners*
- *Stewardship Programs and Projects*
- *Reach Diverse Audiences*

1. Increase Awareness of the Oil Heritage Region

- 1.1 *Build relationships with oil and natural gas industry partners*
- 1.2 *Link thematically to related national and Pennsylvania heritage areas (lumber, coal, agriculture, steel, automobile)*
- 1.3 *Develop heritage-based itineraries as educational opportunities for all ages*
- 1.4 *Use events to help increase exposure (appropriately scaled using the region's assets)*
- 1.5 *Increase utilization of Erie to Pittsburgh Trail assets to tell Oil Heritage Region story (e.g. Saltbox House)*

- 1.6 *Bring story to where people are spending time*
- 1.7 *Targeted Marketing – within a day's drive capture area including US and Canada*

2. Guide Heritage Area Management

- 2.1. *Find ways to increase staff levels within ORA / capacity of ORA*
- 2.2. *Help communities to spearhead projects and nurse them along*
- 2.3. *Build/rebuild relationships with nearby colleges for internships and training*
- 2.4. *Build/rebuild relationships with local employers*
- 2.5. *Promote a regional identity beyond what individual towns can do*
- 2.6. *Support use of volunteer resources (coordination, organization, etc.)*

3. Leverage and Secure Resources

- 3.1. *Increase grantsmanship through training*
- 3.2. *Link healthcare partners with recreational component*
- 3.3. *Get long term projects on the table early*
- 3.4. *Tap potential for mission driven, revenue-generating programs (educational tourism, conferences and symposia, events, retail sales, guide services, etc.)*
 - 1) *Is the project a priority? if revenue generation were not an issue?*
 - 2) *What resources are needed to generate revenue? Ongoing work impacted?*
 - 3) *Does project take away from the ORA or partner mission?*
 - 4) *What's the worst-case scenario?*
 - 5) *Will the project be able to cover or exceed its expenses? How long?*
 - 6) *What additional external funding is needed?*
 - 7) *What is the true cost of using the project to achieve mission-related benefits?*
 - 8) *Is there a more effective way to achieve the mission driven objective than the proposed revenue-generating project?*
- 3.5. *Tap potential for mission driven, revenue neutral programs and projects that facilitate and encourage historic preservation/adaptive re-use, brownfield redevelopment, startup/incubator business development, etc.*

4. Support Partners

- 4.1. *Broaden partners through board development/advisory committees/involvement in other organizations' boards, etc.*
- 4.2. *Expand partners by broadening themes through supporting stories (e.g. Washington's Trail—1753)*
- 4.3. *Consider "Main Street"/"Trail Town" organizational approach*
- 4.4. *Continue "Business Plan Contest"*
- 4.5. *Volunteer programs – adopt a mile of trail, for example*
- 4.6. *Preservation partnerships – realtors, community welcome wagons, preservation friendly buyers program, etc.*

5. Stewardship Programs and Projects/Community Livability

- 5.1. *Re-introduce hospitality training (for front line personnel and their supervisors)*
- 5.2. *Go beyond traditional training*
- 5.3. *Increase visitor infrastructure in trail town communities*
- 5.4. *Preservation/Re-development – use ORA to redevelop and clean up brownfields*
- 5.5. *Use 'Pop Up' business model to meet peak seasonal demand and introduce businesses*

6. Reach Diverse Audiences

- 6.1. *Incorporate community history—people stories such as John Heisman's connection to Titusville*
- 6.2. *Reach out to younger audiences through young professionals*
- 6.3. *Connect with communities to link newer and more diverse audiences by broadening the story*
- 6.4. *Link adventure sports/river trail with heritage development and experiences*

[The draft plan was posted made available at]:

<http://www.lardnerklein.com/public/ORNHA/ORAdraft111015x.pdf>

Questions or Comments?

Please forward suggestions, comments, corrections, etc. to mblack@oilregion.org by November 24, 2015. Thank you.

NOTES

- Suggestion of Road Scholars program which are multiple night group trips to learn (two examples in PA already, but not this region). Suggest developing itineraries (Janet Aaron provided copy of info from company for followup)
- Support stated for expanding horizons to rust belt tour (Jim cited example of Grand Circle Tour Association in 4 corners region of UT, CO, NM and AZ)
- Industrial Heartlands Trails Coalition already exists – ORA is a member
- Suggestion for going beyond a resource directory for hospitality businesses – so frontline workers can have information at hand to provide customers with options and linking sites together in a positive way (help people find what they are looking for and keeping them in the region, if that business does not have what they are looking for)
- National Transit Co. – historic map of pipeline systems – used a hundred years ago movement of goods might be a story to capture the regional interests throughout industrial heartland.
- Expectations of growth are sometimes a risk. Skepticism about attracting more visitors needs to be overcome (e.g. not as many people came in person for Oil 150 as projected). Other residents do not want more tourism – just like quiet life.
- Bring business owners from other areas (e.g. Great Allegheny Passage) to talk with Oil Region businesses about how they successfully overcome similar challenges – need some way to bring someone in that business owners will listen to. – Jim suggested events like at Mt. St. Helens that combined craft beers with talks on local geology, or short video clips with business owners and their success stories
- Early action: Hospitality training needed (business owners and employees need to see how it would benefit them) – employers pay for time or cover cost of training (keep cost low) – Jim noted that Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail charged \$10/person – they got a notebook with information, but also made sure that people took it seriously.
- Erie to Pittsburgh Trail might present an opportunity – how to get people to stay in Oil Region, rather than jump to another area

Question about priorities – Rural Business Development Grants and ArtPlace America Grants are coming up early next year – what would you see as a priority?

- Signage should be a priority: Things need to be more visible – overall look has to be more coherent (gateways, wayfinding site identification, web and print media)
- Multiple aspects – integrate art into graphic identity system – but make sure that there are guidelines that retain the Oil Region theme, identity as part of system – then subareas can have their own identity that works with that overall system. For ArtPlace grants, need to be sure that you are using the funds to integrate arts and culture into planning and placemaking.
- How to use “eyesores” as an asset – perhaps purchase and stabilize, then make available for low cost/no rent – how to see things with new eyes
- Hospitality training should be a priority

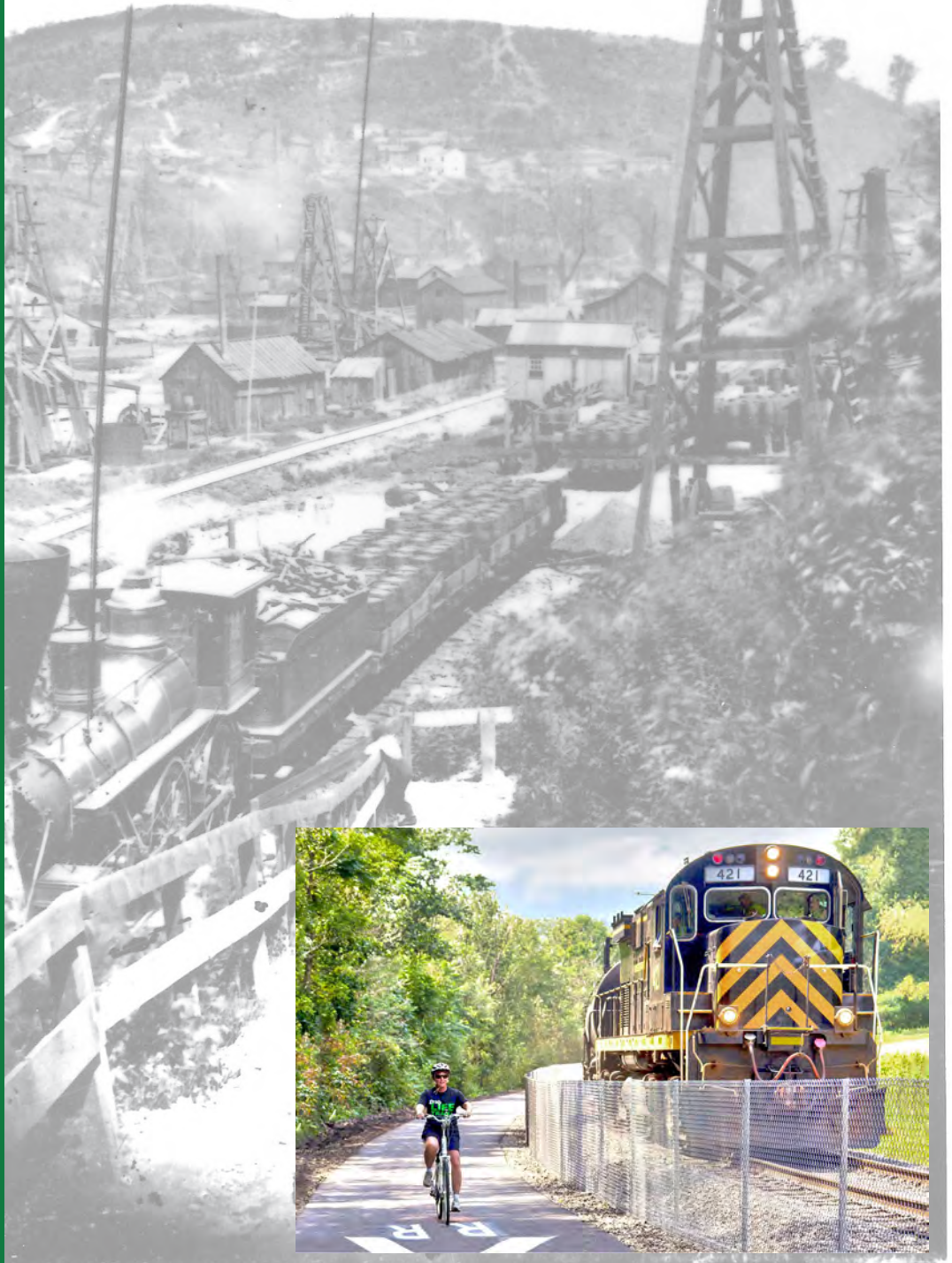
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Oil Region National Heritage Area

Sustainability Plan

Appendix 3: Longitudinal Fiscal Comparison

December 2015



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Appendix 3: Longitudinal Fiscal Comparison

The following tables and bar graphs present a snapshot of how the Oil Region National Heritage Area has been funded between the years 2005-2014 and how those funds have been expended, for the purpose of discovering trends over time that may influence sustainability.

Table A3-1 shows the National Park Service funding history and utilization of related matching funds for the past ten years; 2005 was the first year Oil Region Alliance received NPS funding. This table was created by analyzing and aggregating data contained in the NPS Annual Report forms. Figure A3-1 illustrates the patterns over the ten year period.

Table A3-2 shows PA-DCNR funding for the same time period. This table was created by analyzing and aggregating data contained in the annual audits provided by ORA, and comparison with grant award list from Pa. Department of Natural Resources. Figure A3-2 illustrates the patterns over the ten year period. Table A3-3 provides a complete listing of PA-DCNR grants received.

Table A3-4 shows the ORA's composite revenues, expenses and net assets for the period 2005-2014. This table was created by analyzing and aggregating data contained in the annual audits conducted by independent CPA and provided by ORA. Figure A3-3 illustrates the composite revenues, expenses and net asset patterns over the ten year period.

Table A3-5 shows ORA's composite revenues, expenses and net assets for 2014, the most recent year for which independently audited data is available for the entire year.

Figures A3-4 and A3-5 illustrate the patterns of ORA's composite revenues and expenses, respectively for the year 2014.

Table A3-1 shows the National Park Service funding for the period 2005-2015 to the Oil Region Alliance

Federal Fiscal Year	MATCHING											Total Expended Funds
	NPS Base Authorization	NPS NER Adjustment	Net NPS Authorization	Expended NPS Funds	Subtotal Matching Funds	Federal: Transportation	Federal: Other	State	Local	Private/Other	Total Expended Funds	
2005	\$164,000	(\$10,000)	\$154,000	\$43,215	\$155,000	\$0	\$0	\$155,000	\$0	\$0	\$198,215	
2006	\$197,058	(\$12,000)	\$185,058	\$55,211	\$201,000	\$0	\$0	\$196,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$256,211	
2007	\$236,470	\$0	\$236,470	\$158,369	\$171,000	\$0	\$0	\$166,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$329,369	
2008	\$232,318	\$0	\$232,318	\$239,497	\$390,717	\$0	\$0	\$226,070	\$0	\$164,647	\$630,214	
2009	\$232,318	\$0	\$232,318	\$362,712	\$1,645,569	\$0	\$141,811	\$614,045	\$211,128	\$678,585	\$2,008,281	
2010	\$303,000	\$0	\$303,000	\$336,417	\$1,268,966	\$0	\$214,828	\$446,234	\$271,397	\$336,507	\$1,605,383	
2011	\$296,000	\$16,500	\$312,500	\$417,798	\$1,049,628	\$35,823	\$96,748	\$324,916	\$219,655	\$372,486	\$1,467,426	
2012	\$295,000	\$0	\$295,000	\$360,054	\$1,272,715	\$20,765	\$95,439	\$316,174	\$150,356	\$689,981	\$1,632,769	
2013	\$288,000	\$0	\$288,000	\$293,249	\$1,116,117	\$809,252	\$0	\$170,973	\$21,163	\$114,729	\$1,409,366	
2014	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000	\$315,364	\$331,233	\$0	\$0	\$175,508	\$54,725	\$101,000	\$646,597	
2015	\$300,000	\$15,000	\$315,000	Pending	Pending	\$0	Pending	Pending	Pending	Pending	Pending	
Totals \$	2,544,164	\$ 9,500	2,853,664	\$ 2,581,886	\$ 7,601,945	\$ 865,840	\$ 548,826	\$ 2,790,920	\$ 933,424	\$ 2,462,935	\$ 10,183,831	

NOTES: Federal FY runs October 1 to September 30. A Base Authorization to a NHA typically is allowed to be expended over a 48-month period, with extra time to use the special NER Adjustment funds.

Figure A3-1 compares ORA's annual NPS Federal funding history and utilization of matching funds for the period 2005-2015

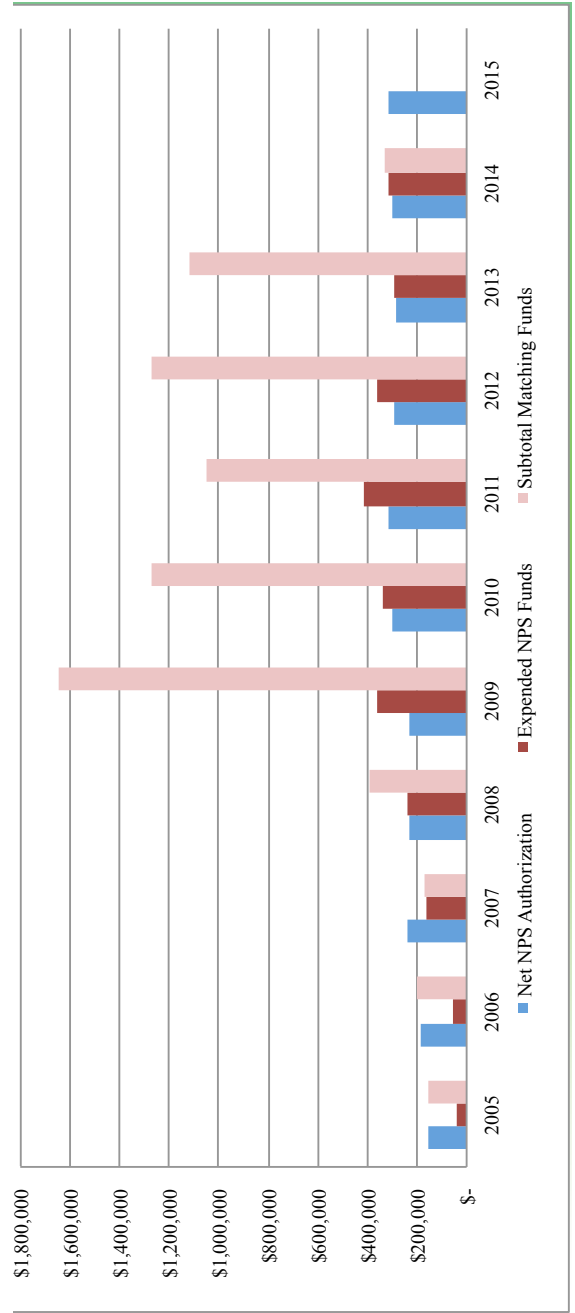


Table A3-2 PA-DCNR funding for the period 2005-2014 to the Oil Region Alliance

YEAR AWARDED	SUBTOTAL
2005	\$250,000
2006	\$297,500
2007	\$462,000
2008	\$182,500
2009	\$267,500
2010	\$125,000
2011	\$263,000
2012	\$130,000
2013	\$183,500
2014	\$213,000
2015	Pending
TOTAL: 2005-2014	\$2,374,000

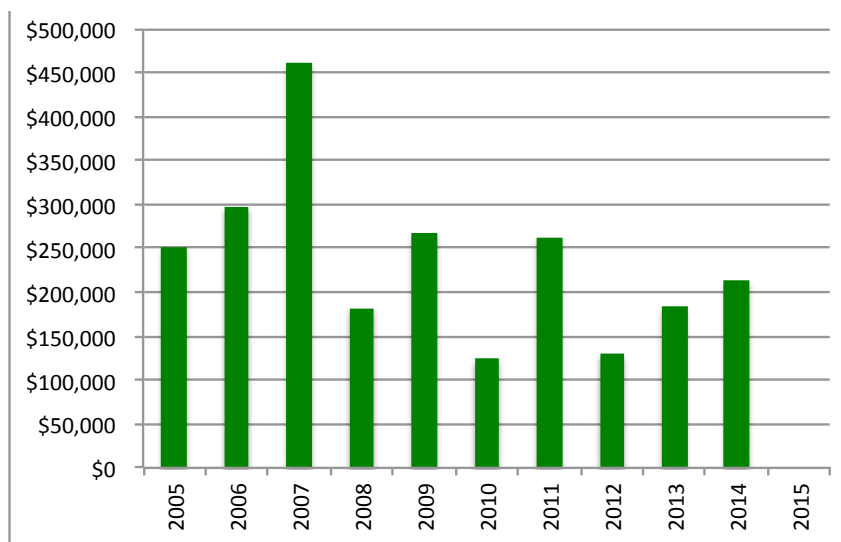
Figure A3-2 PA--DCNR funding for the period of 2005-2014 to the Oil Region Alliance

Table A3-3 PA-DCNR Grants Awarded to the Oil Region National Heritage Area 2005-2015

PA. DCNR GRANTS AWARDED TO OIL REGION NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA: 2005 - 2015						
By DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC)					Information as of November 24, 2015	
GRANT #	AMOUNT	START DATE	END DATE	GRANT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	YEAR AWARDED
BRC-HP-05-09	\$100,000	7/1/05	6/30/08	Management	Management of ORNHA	2005
BRC-HP-05-26	\$125,000	7/1/05	6/30/09	7 Projects	Continue Regional Marketing; 8/62 Revolving Loan Program; Emergency Exit at Lyric Theater; Mini-Grants for Oil History Education; Expand Oil Paacket Boat Operations on Allegheny River; Galena Building Façade Work; Phase 2 of Titusville Walking Tour	2005
BRC-HP-05-27	\$25,000	7/1/05	6/30/08	1 Study	Fund-Raising Strategy for OIL 150	2005
BRC-PRD-12-180	\$38,000	1/1/06	12/31/11	1 Project	Construct Allegheny Scenic Overlook	2006
BRC-HP-06-11	\$100,000	7/1/06	6/30/09	Management	Management of ORNHA	2006
BRC-HP-06-26	\$89,500	7/1/06	12/31/10	6 Projects	McClintock Well #1 Interpretation; Window Glass Work on National Transit Building; OIL 150 Documentary; Fishing Tournaments on the Allegheny River; Marketing Kennerdell Tract; and Bike Racks	2006
BRC-HP-06-27	\$70,000	7/1/06	6/30/10	3 Studies	Architectural/Engineering for Route 8/62 Rehab.; Feasibility Study for Natural Gas Museum; and Outdoor Recreation Openspace Trails Peer Study	2006
BRC-HP-07-09	\$100,000	7/1/07	6/30/10	Management	Management of ORNHA	2007
BRC-HP-07-24	\$95,000	7/1/07	6/30/11	2 Projects	Construct Visitor Center in Perry Street Station; and rehabilitation phase of Tarbell House	2007
BRC-HP-07-25	\$45,000	7/1/07	6/30/12	2 Studies	Design Oil City Visitor Center; and Venango County Historical Site Inventory Update	2007
BRC-PRD-13-161	\$200,000	1/1/07	12/31/12	1 Project	Design and Construct McClintock Trail North	2007
BRC-PRD-13-162	\$22,000	1/1/07	12/31/10	1 Project	Construct Murray's Scenic View	2007
BRC-HP-08-09	\$137,500	7/1/08	6/30/11	Management	Management of ORNHA	2008
BRC-HP-08-25	\$20,000	7/1/08	6/30/11	1 Project	OIL 150 Museum Kits	2008
BRC-HP-08-26	\$25,000	7/1/08	6/30/12	1 Study	Engineering Queen City Trail Extension	2008
BRC-PRD-14-369	\$205,000	1/1/09	6/30/12	1 Project	Construct McClintock Trail South	2009
BRC-HP-09-09	\$62,500	7/1/09	6/30/12	Management	Management of ORNHA	2009
BRC-SR-16-100	\$125,000	7/1/10	6/30/13	TA & 1 Project	Technical Assistance; Rehabilitation of Tarbell House	2010
BRC-RCD-17-169	\$83,000	1/1/12	12/31/2015*	1 Project	Construction of Oil Creek Memorial Landing	2011
BRC-SR-17-186	\$180,000	7/1/11	12/31/15	TA & 4 Projects	Technical Assistance; Energy Savings at Tarbell House; Educational/Preservation Mini-Grants; Sustainability Plan; E-Book Conversions	2011
BRC-SR-18-119	\$130,000	1/1/13	12/31/16	TA & 4 Projects	Technical Assistance; Greenways Coordination; Prototype Traveling Exhibit about Natural Gas History; Interpretive Panels and Trail Amenities on Erie to Pittsburgh Trail; Tarbell First Floor Interior Rehabilitation	2012
BRC-SR-19-179	\$183,500	1/1/14	12/31/17	TA & 4 Projects	Technical Assistance; Greenways Coordination; Rehab Downs Building; Interpretive Panels; Engineering/Construct EPT Trailheads in Titusville and Emlenton	2013
BRC-SR-20-128	\$213,000	1/1/15	12/31/18	TA & 6 Projects	Technical Assistance; Greenways Coordination; Cupola at Tarbell House; Victorian Architecture Initiative/Tarbell Symposium; Educational/Preservation Mini-Grants about Oil/Gas History; Interpretive Panels; Outdoor Murals	2014

* Contract extension pending BRC-RCD-17-169; to 12/31/2016

Table A3-4 shows the ORA's composite revenues, expenses and net assets.

COMPOSITE ORA FINANCIAL REPORT: 2005-2014

Fiscal Year	Revenues, Gains and Other Support	Expenses	Investment Activity	Net Assets, End of Year
2005	\$ 1,687,348	\$ 1,885,482	\$ 11,919	\$ 4,234,442
2006	\$ 2,172,247	\$ 2,146,485	\$ 31,476	\$ 4,291,680
2007	\$ 2,128,872	\$ 2,168,694	\$ 40,194	\$ 4,171,402
2008	\$ 3,485,414	\$ 3,248,488	\$ 25,511	\$ 2,834,788
2009	\$ 2,412,035	\$ 2,710,299	\$ 17,671	\$ 2,554,195
2010	\$ 2,609,520	\$ 2,628,130	\$ 4,945	\$ 2,540,530
2011	\$ 1,240,720	\$ 2,202,822	\$ 1,105	\$ 1,579,533
2012	\$ 1,573,701	\$ 2,153,236	\$ -	\$ 999,998
2013	\$ 2,011,543	\$ 2,277,402	\$ -	\$ 734,139
2014	\$ 1,071,252	\$ 1,072,016	\$ -	\$ 733,375
Totals	\$ 20,392,652	\$ 22,493,054	\$ 132,821	

NOTES: At end of 2007, ORA changed its basis of accounting to accrual. In 2008, the net assets were adjusted to reflect prior periods.

Figure A3-3 Oil Region Alliance Revenues, Expenses and Net Assets for the period 2005-2014

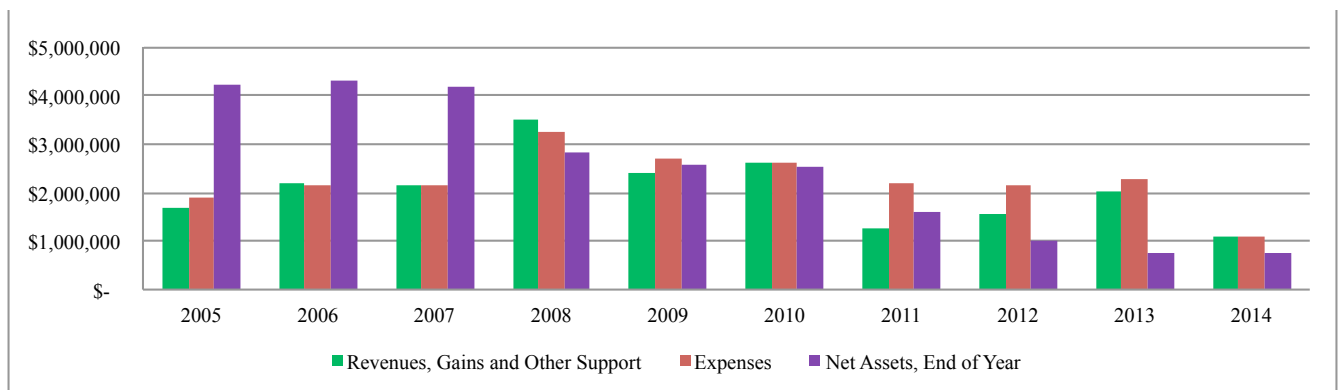


Table A3-5 shows the ORA's composite revenues, expenses and net assets for 2014

2014 REVENUE BY TYPE	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Grants	\$ -	\$ 682,065	\$ -	\$ 682,065
Venango County Hotel Occupancy Tax	\$ -	\$ 154,933	\$ -	\$ 154,933
VIDA contributions	\$ 5	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5
Other contributions	\$ 38,908	\$ 38,231	\$ -	\$ 77,139
Membership dues	\$ 19,850	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 19,850
Cooperative advertising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sale of merchandise	\$ 6,309	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,309
Rentals	\$ 34,386	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 34,386
Fees	\$ 74,575	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 74,575
Special events	\$ 10,333	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,333
Loss on sale of property	\$ (2,844)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (2,844)
Interest income	\$ 3,662	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,662
Miscellaneous	\$ 10,839	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,839
Net assets released from restriction	\$ 875,229	\$ (875,229)	\$ -	\$ -
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	\$ 1,071,252	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,071,252

EXPENSES	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Management and general	\$ 188,414			\$ 188,414
Program services	\$ 691,578			\$ 691,578
Property management	\$ 119,678			\$ 119,678
Fundraising	\$ 72,346			\$ 72,346
Total Expenses	\$ 1,072,016	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,072,016

INVESTMENT ACTIVITY	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Interests and dividends	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Realized loss on sale of investments	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Agency account fees	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Investment Activity	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

<i>Change in Net Assets</i>	\$ (764)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (764)
<i>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</i>	\$ 696,413	\$ -	\$ 37,726	\$ 734,139
<i>Net Assets, End of Year</i>	\$ 695,649	\$ -	\$ 37,726	\$ 733,375

STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES	Management & General	Program Services	Property Management	Fundraising	Total
Salaries and wages	\$ 96,308	\$ 308,515	\$ 16,053	\$ 60,199	\$ 481,075
Personnel benefits	\$ 9,240	\$ 37,944	\$ 2,380	\$ 4,381	\$ 53,945
Payroll taxes	\$ 9,044	\$ 27,984	\$ 1,685	\$ 5,745	\$ 44,458
Staff development	\$ 375	\$ 79	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 454
Contract services	\$ 1,703	\$ 107,373	\$ 6,122	\$ 175	\$ 115,373
Marketing	\$ 605	\$ 56,483	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 57,088
Professional fees	\$ 10,001	\$ 5,559	\$ 172	\$ 364	\$ 16,096
Occupancy	\$ 13,461	\$ 22,871	\$ 79,587	\$ -	\$ 115,919
Communications	\$ 4,992	\$ 2,843	\$ 163	\$ -	\$ 7,998
Office expense	\$ 8,753	\$ 22,828	\$ 73	\$ 683	\$ 32,337
Technology expenses	\$ 4,306	\$ 1,116	\$ 73	\$ 105	\$ 5,600
Travel, meetings, and conferences	\$ 600	\$ 23,256	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 23,856
Insurance	\$ 8,349	\$ 8,068	\$ 3,966	\$ 476	\$ 20,859
Dues and subscriptions	\$ 548	\$ 10,082	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,630
Interest	\$ -	\$ 1,275	\$ 4,681	\$ -	\$ 5,956
Bank charges	\$ 946	\$ 5	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 951
Payments to or on behalf of other organizations	\$ 1,029	\$ 38,511	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 39,540
Depreciation and amortization	\$ 2,404	\$ 7,429	\$ 874	\$ 218	\$ 10,925
Real estate taxes	\$ 2,230	\$ 2,415	\$ 3,849	\$ -	\$ 8,494
Miscellaneous	\$ 7,520	\$ 6,942	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,462
Uncollectible revenue	\$ 6,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000
Total	\$ 188,414	\$ 691,578	\$ 119,678	\$ 72,346	\$ 1,072,016

Figure A3-4 Oil Region Alliance Revenues for 2014

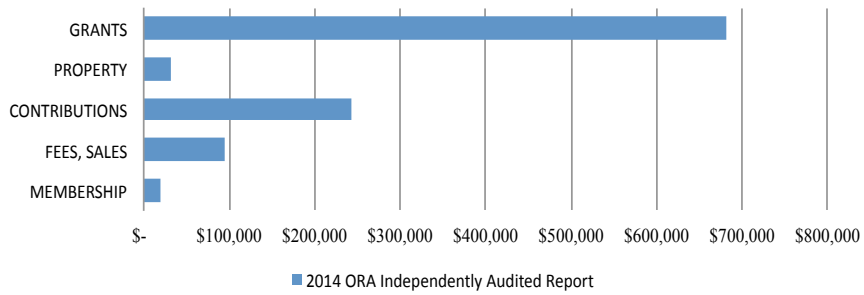
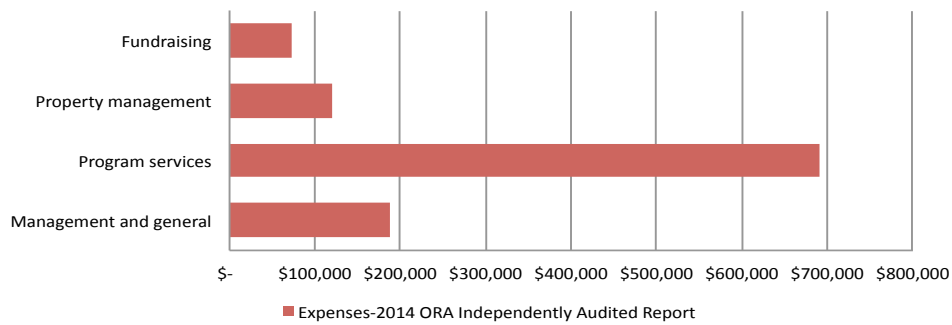


Figure A3-5 Oil Region Alliance Expenses for 2014



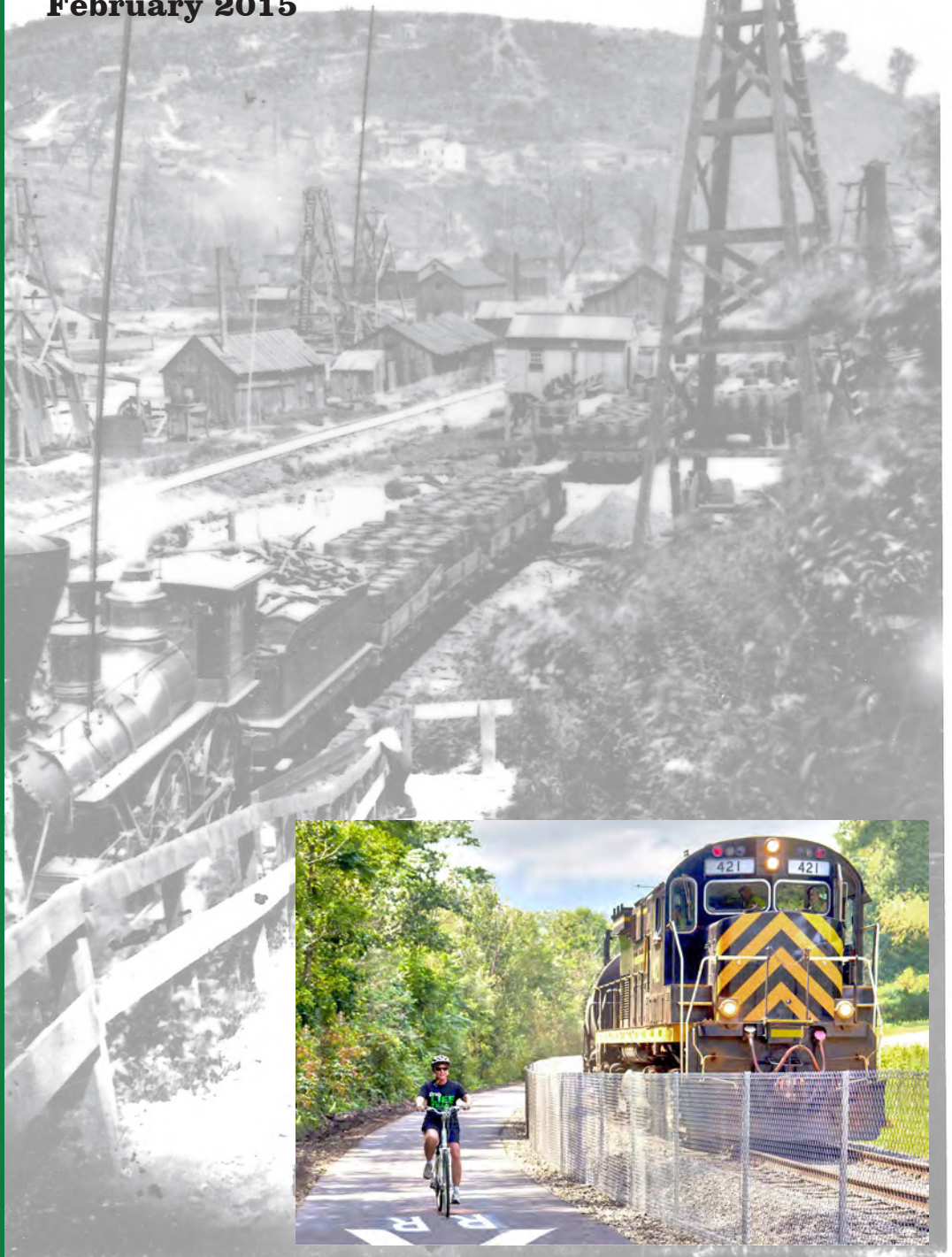
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Oil Region National Heritage Area

Sustainability Plan

Appendix 4:
2014 Annual Report and Ten Year Review

February 2015



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Oil Region Alliance 2014 Annual Report & 10-Year Review



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www.grabtrails.com



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February 26, 2015

Dear Friends of the Oil Region Alliance:

The Board of Directors and staff of the Oil Region Alliance (Alliance) thank you for your continued support. Your memberships and project specific donations for current and future projects involving economic development, heritage development, tourism promotion, and recreational development are imperative. Working on an asset-based approach to economic development is the overarching umbrella of every initiative and endeavor the Alliance undertakes.

As we reflect on 2014, we are proud of the projects that have been completed, and the many partnerships that have been strengthened and new ones that have been developed. New leaders, municipalities, and businesses of the region who had not previously worked with the Alliance came forth to roll up their sleeves and work toward a better stronger Oil Region.

One of the many major projects completed was the infrastructure expansion of the Sandycreek Industrial Park. This milestone was the compilation of seven-years of work that included acquiring one of the last Keystone Opportunity Zone designations by the Commonwealth. We are now able to offer companies an Industrial Park with full infrastructure available to them. The Alliance dedicates this project to our friend and partner Susan Coulter, Sandycreek Township Secretary, whom we lost this past year. Susie was dedicated to Sandycreek and the region, and worked so hard to bring this project to fruition.

As the Alliance celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2015, it is amazing the changes which evolved both within the organization and the entire Oil Region. The Alliance has established our niche and have worked hard to foster strong relationships with other non-profits, municipalities, neighboring counties, the commonwealth, individuals, and private businesses to all work on projects that make this region a better place to live, work, and play. It is imperative that we provide a welcoming environment for our visitors and potential residents as well as a favorable business climate for existing and new industries.

At the Alliance our principles embody honesty and respect in our operating culture as we strive to enhance the quality of life through our economic development, heritage and tourism programs. Recognized at the state and national levels for the quality and execution of our projects, it is clear to us that having standards of excellence are the only way to do business and that our success would not be possible without our partners and members' support.

We welcome your assistance to help us achieve our mission to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, and play in "The Valley That Changed The World!"

Sincerely,

Rodney C. Griffin, Chair



John R. Phillips, II, President



Our Story ~

On January 13, 2005, the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (the Alliance) was formed when the Venango Economic Development Corporation, Oil City Community Development Corporation, Oil Heritage Region, Inc. and Oil Heritage Region Tourism Promotion Agency merged. These four agencies had been sharing office space in the historic National Transit Building in downtown Oil City, PA. They had similar missions. The idea was to combine assets and consolidate costs and have one new organization that would be responsible for the economic development, tourism promotion, and heritage preservation of the Oil Region.

Meanwhile, just one month earlier, President George W. Bush had signed HR 4818 which designated all of Venango County and the eastern portion of Crawford County as the Oil Region National Heritage Area. The legislation established the Oil Region as the 25th National Heritage Area in the country. It was and is important to have an organization that would be responsible for preserving our rich cultural heritage as the birthplace of the petroleum industry.

The Oil Region Alliance was soon designated by the Venango County Commissioners as the lead economic development agency and the lead tourism promotion agency for the County of Venango.

Since the merger that created the Alliance, with the help of our Partners, Funders and Volunteers we have worked hard to assist local companies and to provide opportunities for job creation and retention while expanding the region's recreational opportunities and maintaining a robust quality of life including:



Team Hardinger Groundbreaking at BIP.

- Team Hardinger broke ground at the Barkeyville Industrial Park (BIP) in the southern end of the county, joining the first company there - RenovEx, Inc.
- Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc. constructed a 70,000 square foot asphalt manufacturing plant at the BIP. They began operations in 2007 and initially employed 80 seasonal positions. In early 2009 they increased their investment in Venango County by constructing a 15,000 square foot office building.
- The Alliance secured the Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designation for the Venango Regional airport property, creating opportunities for local manufacturers and those looking to locate in the area to save on import fees.
- First National Bank provided financial support which made it possible to build the Allegheny Overlook Apartments to address a housing need in the City of Oil City. The apartments were fully occupied in less than 90 days.



Fed Ex new construction in the SIP.

- The City of Oil City secured a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) so that SMS Millcraft could construct a 12,000 square foot addition to their existing building located in the city's industrial park.
- The Alliance secured another \$500,000 grant through DCED for the expansion of a manufacturing building in the Oil City Industrial Park, allowing two more businesses to expand.
- With the help of the Governor's Action Team, Latrobe Steel received a package of incentives from the state that enabled them to enlarge their facility in the Sandycreek Industrial Park (SIP).



Latrobe Steel facility in the SIP.

- FedEx purchased a 5-acre parcel inside the SIP and built a 27,000 square foot expandable facility.
- The Alliance purchased the West Unit in Franklin from UPMC and rehabilitated it for lease to the County of Venango for consolidation of its human services offices. The County later purchased the facility.
- The Conair/IPEG facility in Franklin expanded their operations with financial support from the Franklin Industrial & Commercial Development Authority, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Northwest PA Regional Planning & Development Commission and the Alliance. IPEG was provided a \$200,000 grant to ensure the retention of 150 jobs and the creation of 10 new positions at the Franklin site.



Conair/IPEG facility in Franklin.



WS Packaging in the SIP.

- Vantage Holding Company purchased the former county Exchange Building in Franklin and rehabbed it into sleep labs, executive offices and a home base for its Health Group Telecommunications Fiber Service Center. We assisted with a job fair to attract employees.
- We assisted WS Packaging with a \$2,500,000 project for a 25,000 square foot expansion that retained 115 jobs and created 30 new ones when they closed an Ohio facility relocating that site's operations and equipment to the Sandycreek Industrial Park. (SIP)
- The Alliance assisted Voyten Electric with their investment of \$500,000 to purchase a building and create an e-store that retained 10 jobs and created



Worker on a local assembly line.

- two new ones. Voyten has since expanded their operation in the region.
- We partnered with the City of Oil City to renovate the third floor of the Business Innovation Center.
- The Alliance provided help with working capital loans and Revolving Loan Funds for equipment purchases by Allegheny Tool Supply and Lake Tool Company.
- In 2009 we received certification through the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association and DCED, enabling the Alliance to administer the PA Industrial Development Authority loan program to eligible businesses.
- The County-Wide Revolving Loan Program became a reality with the first loan being made in 2009.
- We partnered with the City of Oil City and organized a dedicated group of Oil City citizens to complete the requirements to become a designated Main Street Community in 2010.



Seminar at Marcellus Shale Showcase.

- We assisted with local expansions of Specialty Fabrication & Powder Coating, SMS Millcraft, Liberty Electronics, Matric Limited, Venango Steel and Latrobe Specialty Steel, with our partners including PA DCED and the Governor's Action Team.

- In 2010, with our partners the Keystone Community Education Council, local chambers of commerce and others, the NW PA Oil & Gas Hub hosted the Marcellus Shale Showcase – a regional educational/business event. It drew over 1,000 attendees and nearly 100 exhibitors to the Oil Region over the course of the two-day event.

- We sponsored or co-sponsored several seminars and job fairs to assist local workforce development efforts. The Keystone Community Education Council, the NW PA Gas & Oil Hub, NW Commission, local Chambers of Commerce and

Venango College were instrumental in the planning and implementation of many of these forums. Topics were varied, but included: Business2Business Forum, Business Prep for the Oil & Gas Industry Certificate Program; Regional Oil & Gas Information Center as part of the Oil Region Career Fair; “Fueling Our Economic Growth with Natural Gas Conference”, “Supply Chain Basics-Business Development Opportunities within the Natural Gas Industry”; and “Market Entry for the Shale Gas Industry.”

- With the help of SCORE-Erie, we established the Venango County branch of SCORE in 2011. The office is located within the Oil Region Alliance's offices. Mentors assist



entrepreneurs and business owners with free, confidential consulting services.

- In 2011 we coordinated the financing of \$750,000 that was used to construct the new Child Development Center in Oil City, creating 15 new positions. First National Bank and the Venango Industrial Development Authority provided the funds for this major project. In 2014, an additional \$700,000 was provided by the same two sources for an expansion of the Child Development Center in Cranberry Township.



Celebrating completion of infrastructure improvements at SIP.

- We received grants of \$700,000 for infrastructure development in the SIP from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RCAP) and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The finished project was dedicated on October 31, 2014. Sandycreek Township and the County of Venango both helped greatly in making this project possible.

- The Sandycreek Industrial Park was named a Keystone Opportunity Zone, one of only four designations awarded in 2013. The designation will end on December 31, 2022.
- In 2013, with the cooperation of Cranberry Township, the Alliance purchased an 85-acre parcel of land in Cranberry Township for development of an independent/assisted living project.
- Forta Corporation opened a secondary location in the Sandycreek Industrial Park.



Crawford Family marker is unveiled in Emlenton.

- With assistance from a D2PA grant secured through DCED, in 2013 the “Get on the Trail” Entrepreneurial Business Plan Contest” for entities along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail was launched. Designed to create new businesses or assist in the expansion of existing businesses along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail from Hydetown to Foxburg, contestants received mentoring from SCORE and business plan writing assistance from the Clarion Small Business Development Center. Cash prizes were awarded to the top three business plans submitted.
- Since 1996 we have received approval from the PA Historical & Museum Commission for fourteen historical markers in the Oil Heritage Region. Subjects range from “Oil Well Supply Company” to “Densmore Tank Cars” to “P.C. Boyle” to “The Crawford Family.” The blue and gold markers are located throughout the Oil Region.
- In 1999, the Oil Heritage Region, Inc. purchased the McClintock-Steele-Waitz house for \$1, a bathtub and a kitchen stove. The home, built circa 1850, was where “Coal Oil Johnny” – the Oil Region’s prodigal son, had lived. The badly



The Coal Oil Johnny House

deteriorated house was stabilized and then deconstructed; each piece was labeled and numbered. The home was then moved a half mile to its current site next to the Rynd Farm Train Station inside Oil Creek State Park and reconstructed. Interior restoration began in 2005 and was completed in 2006. The Titusville Historical Society assists with the public Open House held there each year in July.

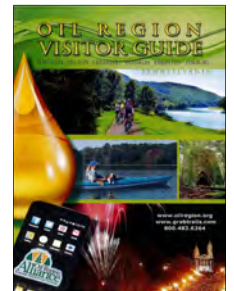
- The Oil Heritage Region Historic Preservation Awards have been conducted annually since 2001. The Crawford County Historical Society, Titusville Historical Society, Titusville Renaissance, Inc. and the Venango County Historical Society have been our partners for this project since 2005. More recently, Friends of Drake Well, Inc., the Oil City Heritage Society and the Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry have joined in this project which has recognized more than 150 individuals and projects since 2005.



Concert at Neilltown Church building.

- The historic Neilltown Church building was purchased from the Neilltown Cemetery Association in 2004, saving it from an already-scheduled demolition. The building was named to Pennsylvania’s Most Endangered Historic Properties list in 2006. Grants from the PA Partners in the Arts, the PA Council on the Arts, and PA Humanities Council have enabled us to hold musical concerts and cultural events in the church building for the past 10 years. Additional funding from the County of Forest, PHMC and private families allowed us to rehabilitate the interior of the building in 2013. Exterior rehabilitation is planned in 2015.

- Since 2005, we have hosted conferences in Franklin, Oil City and Titusville on the Victorian Architecture of the region, attracting hundreds of people to the educational workshops, tours of homes and churches, and dinners celebrating the Victorian Region. “Preserving Timeless Treasures” is the theme of the 2015 Victorian Architecture Conference that will be held in Franklin, PA, on September 18 & 19.
- “Coal Oil Johnny – his book”, “The Derrick Handbook of Petroleum”, “Oil City Victorian Houses”, “The Oil Well Driller” and “Pithole – The Vanished City” are just a few of the more than a dozen titles of books that we reprinted over the years and continue to offer for sale on our website www.oilregion.org and in our office. Several titles have also been converted in 2014 into e-books.
- The Oil Region Visitor Guide is the Alliance’s premier annual publication. It provides visitor information about the



2015 Visitor Guide.



The Kennerdell Overlook.

- Oil Region, including places to see, things to do, lists of restaurants, lodging facilities, parks and recreation. The publication is sent free of charge to anyone requesting tourist information and is distributed locally, as well as being placed at the Grove City Outlet Mall, the Chautauqua Lake Rest Area, ten rest stops on the interstate and three turnpike plazas in the Commonwealth.
- Amenities including benches, new railing and interpretive panels were installed at the Kennerdell Overlook in 2006. This site is a favorite for photographers.
- Designed in 2006, the “Allegheny Overlook” offers a unique view of the confluence of Oil Creek and the Allegheny River in Oil City. Constructed in 2009, this pedestrian plaza includes a seating area and interpretive panels.

- Formerly known as Stewart’s Lookout, “Murray’s Scenic View” provides a majestic view of the historic Oil Creek Valley from one of the highest points in the county. Designed in 2006, enhancements were added in 2010; a dedication ceremony was held in 2011.
- We installed Visitor Information Kiosks inside the Cranberry Mall, at the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Crawford Center in Emlenton.

- In 2006 the Alliance secured a grant from the US Department of Agriculture and additional funding from the Penn Soil Resource & Conservation Development Council and others to create the Allegheny GeoTrail (AGT) which consists of ten counties in northwest Pennsylvania. Geocaching has been described as a high-tech treasure hunt for nature lovers and only requires a handheld GPS unit and an AGT passport. This free, family fun activity has brought thousands of visitors to the Oil Region.



AGT coins



Derrick on Rte 8 south of Titusville.

- From 2001 to 2011, the Alliance hosted a series of Oil History Workshops in Oil City, Franklin and Emlenton. The informal talks were typically hosted by local historian and author Neil McElwee with topics that focused primarily on local oil history or architecture.
- More than 80 interpretive panels have been produced and installed throughout the Oil Region, in downtown Titusville, the Borough of Emlenton, along the recreational trails, and other sites.
- The Oil Region is known as the birthplace of the modern petroleum industry. To heighten awareness of this fact, in conjunction with the OIL 150 celebration in 2007 - 2009 the Alliance partnered with the City of Titusville, Titusville Renaissance, and others to construct two 32' full-scale oil derricks that were then placed at the southern and eastern entrances to the City of Titusville. A third 32' derrick was installed along I-80 inside the Barkeyville Industrial Park.
- Beginning in 2007, thanks to grants from DCNR and PHMC, we have been able to award multiple educational oil and natural gas history mini-grants for a wide variety of projects to all age groups, including tours to area museums, a preservation workshop, lantern tours at Pithole, Barbara Harvey

Morgan Community History Days, and teas at the Tarbell House which were hosted by students from Titusville High School.

- The Alliance purchased the family home of Ida Tarbell in 2007. After receiving grants from the National Park Service and DCNR as well as multiple local trusts, the exterior rehabilitation began in 2009 and continued into 2010. Interior rehabilitation was completed early in 2015. The upstairs is now an upscale apartment and the ground floor is a house museum. The Tarbell House is open by appointment and scheduled public Open Houses and other special events.
- In 2008 the US Secretary of the Interior signed the Oil Region National Heritage Area Management Plan, the final step in the permanent designation of the Oil Region as a National Heritage Area.
 - The Oil Region Alliance administered the celebration marking the 150th anniversary of the world's first successful commercial drilling for oil in Titusville, PA. Public television station WQED produced an hour-long documentary, "The Valley That Changed the World" which was then broadcast on 50 PBS stations in the U.S. The Alliance provided "OIL 150" museum kits to 150 museums across the country.
 - Titusville Renaissance, Inc., and Titusville Chamber of Commerce assisted with an update to the Titusville Walking Tour brochure in 2008. Ten new interpretive panels were installed in



The Tarbell House in Titusville.

- Titusville at that time bringing the total number of interpretive signage within the community to 21. The brochure was updated and reprinted in 2014.
- In 2009, with the help of multiple partners, we installed the new Oil Region Visitor Center inside the historic Perry Street Station in Titusville. It is owned by the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad.
- A grant from PA DCNR enabled the Alliance to provide 10 bike racks for placement at a variety of sites in communities throughout the Oil Region.
- The 30-minute documentary, "Stories of a Third Generation Independent Oil Producer - as told by Bill Huber" was produced by Legion Media in 2009.
- In 2009 and again in 2013 we hosted the PA Outdoor Writers Association Conference. Each time, more than 100 outdoor writers visited the region to experience our fishing, hunting and photographic opportunities.
- In prior years we conducted River Romp, the Kennerdell Art & Music Festival, the Mr. Whiskers Catfish & Carp Fishing Derby, and the Allegheny River Bass Tournament. We also coordinated the Oil Country Cruise and Oil Region Birding Festival for two years each.
- In previous years we participated in multi-day visits with tour operators and bus companies in New York, West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio, marketing the region as a tourist destination. We also had display booths and distributed the Oil Region Visitor Guide to travel and trade shows in Erie, New York, Ohio, and Washington, DC.



Ribbon-cutting at Visitor Center at Perry Street Station in Titusville.

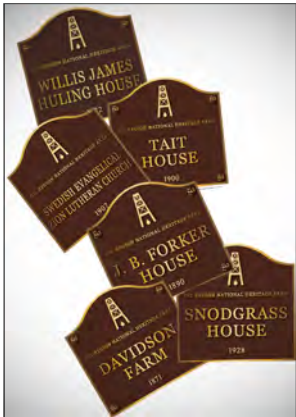


Inaugural ride on the McClintock Trail.



- The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail (EPT) traverses through the region with the Oil Heritage Region being the central hub of this long-distance trail. The Oil Region Alliance, with the assistance of numerous federal, state and local partners recently completed the 3.5-mile McClintock Trail by closing this integral gap on the EPT with a 1.8-mile share-the-road segment on Waitz Road from Rynd Farm (located north of Rouseville) to the historic McClintock Well (at the southern end of Rouseville), and continuing with a 1.5-mile paved segment of dedicated trail adjacent to a class three active railroad into Oil City. The trail was completed in 2013. The celebration included an inaugural ride consisting of bicyclists and walkers, and a special inspection train ride for project partners on board the Western New York & PA Railroad.

- Since 2010 we have co-sponsored the NW PA Fishing Report with our partners at the PA Great Lakes Region (PaGLR) which consists of the Crawford County Convention & Visitor Bureau, Visit Erie, and Mercer County Convention & Visitor Bureau. Written by professional angler and photographer Darl Black, the publication provides anglers with timely information such as where the fish are biting and what attracts them.



Historic house plaques.

- The Alliance administers the Oil Region Historic House Plaque Program which recognizes historic homes or buildings in the Oil Region which are at least 50 years old and have maintained the original foot print of the building. A unique plaque is awarded to the property owner of those who complete the application process. Twenty plaques have been awarded and installed since the program began in 2010.

- With our partners at PaGLR, in recent years we have created a biking map, a fishing brochure, road tour book and motor coach book. In addition, each year PaGLR places a large ad in the PA Vacation Guide, a state publication.
- In 2011 we hosted the inaugural Natural Gas History Symposium at the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville.

- In 2012 we assisted the DCED with a Tourism Video that featured many area businesses.
- With a grant from PA Council on the Arts and the assistance of Neil and Lois McElwee, in 2013 the Alliance printed a publication "Victorian Architecture in the Oil Region National Heritage Area."

- Also in 2013 we purchased the Downs Building in

downtown Oil City. Built in 1894, it is located at the corner of Center and Elm Streets, along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. The building has been stabilized and its exterior cleaned and a Preservation Plan is in place. Grants have been received from PNC Bank and the Justus Trust. Rehabilitation of the building will begin in 2015.

- The Alliance created a new website, www.grabtrails.com to showcase our many trails: Biking & Hiking Trails, Fishing Trails, Games Trails, Arts & Culture Trails and History Trails.

- In 2013 and 2014 we installed more than 70 Erie to Pittsburgh Trail logo signs along the Queen City Trail, McClintock Trail, Oil Creek State Park Road, and the EPT segments in Oil City.



The Downs Building in Oil City.

- With the blessing of Dr. and Mrs. Steffee and assistance from the merchants in Foxburg, in 2013 we arranged for the Grand National Cross Country Series (GNCC) to hold one of their ATV and motorcycle races, "The Gusher", at the RiverStone Estate in Foxburg, bringing nearly 3,000 visitors to the region for the two-day event. The race was televised and aired on NBC Sports Network. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett presented trophies to the winners of the races on Saturday.



Gov. Corbett presents a trophy at the GNCC race in Foxburg.

- With funding from the Northwest Commission, First Energy, and DCNR, in 2014 PaGLR published a Hiking-Biking-Water Trails map of the region.

- A new Oil Region Visitor Center was installed inside the Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry in Oil City with funding from DCNR, the National Park Service, and others. This multi-year project was officially dedicated in 2014.

- The Alliance facilitated a Blueprint Communities project with the communities of Emlenton, Foxburg and Parker; developing a five-year strategic plan and a 2015 action plan.

- The Trail Town Program® is now expanding along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. Alliance staff works with local and regional partners toward the vision of a corridor of revitalized trail-side communities that reap the economic benefits of trail-based tourism and recreation.

- "Oil Creek Memorial Landing" is a new trailhead and water access for canoes and kayaks that will soon be constructed in Oil City. The site is located along Oil Creek on Route 8 north, adjacent to the Family Dollar store. Land was acquired and engineering is complete; construction is scheduled for 2015.

The Alliance is only able to perform its many functions with the gracious assistance of donors, grantors, partners and volunteers. We sincerely appreciate their help, and support. Here is a list of those to whom we are indebted.

Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau
Allegheny Valley Trails Association
Borough of Emlenton
Borough of Pleasantville
Catalyst Connection
City of Franklin
City of Oil City
City of Titusville
Clarion Small Business Development Center
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Congressman Glenn "GT" Thompson
Congressman John Peterson
Constellation Energy – Handsome Lake Energy
Cornplanter Township
Council on Greenways & Trails
County of Crawford
County of Forest
County of Venango
Cranberry Mall
Cranberry Township
Crawford County Historical Society
Crawford Heritage Community Foundation
Cubbon Lumber
DeBence Antique Music World
DCED - Department of Community & Economic Development
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources - Bureau of Forestry
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources - Bureau of Geology
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources - Bureau of Parks
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources - Bureau of Recreation & Conservation
Department of Environmental Protection
Dr. and Mrs. Arthur William Phillips Charitable Trust
Drake Well Museum & Park
Duquesne University Small Business Development Center
Edith C. Justus Charitable Trust of PNC Charitable Trust
Elizabeth Black Charitable Trust
Elk County Council on the Arts
Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance
First Energy
First National Bank
Fishing With Darl Black
Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce
Franklin Area School District, Central Elementary School
Franklin Industrial & Commercial Development Authority
Friends of Benson Memorial Library
Friends of Drake Well
Gannon Small Business Development Center
Governor's Action Team
Growing Greener Program under the administration of the Department of Environmental Protection through the
Northwest Greenways Block Grant Program administered by the Northwest Commission
Harold Heist Charitable Trust
Henry A. Jordan, MD Preservation Excellence Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
Historic Franklin Preservation Association
Honeywell
J. Bowman Proper Charitable Trust
John Nesbit Rees & Sarah Henne Rees Charitable Trust
Keystone Community Education Council
Marcellus Shale Coalition
Misty Ridge
National Fuel Gas
National Park Service
Neilltown Cemetery Association
Northwest Industrial Resource Center
Northwest PA Oil & Gas Hub

More donors, grantors, partners and volunteers ~

Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission
Northwest Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau
Northwest Pennsylvania Incubator Association
Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center
Oil City Area School District
Oil City Boat Club
Oil City Civic Center
Oil City Heritage Society
Oil City Main Street Program
Oil City Public Library
Oil Creek Railway Historical Society
Oil Creek State Park
Oil Region Career Link
OMG Americas
PA Council on the Arts
PA Downtown Center
PA Partners in the Arts
Pa Great Lakes Region – Crawford County CVB, Visit Erie and Mercer County CVB
Penn Soil Resource Conservation & Development Council
PennDOT, District 1-0
Petroleum History Institute
PHMC – PA Historical & Museum Commission
Pleasantville Volunteer Fire Department
PNC Bank
Potter County Visitors Association
Preservation Pennsylvania
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Regional Center for Workforce Excellence
Representative R. Lee James
Sandycreek Township
SCORE-Venango County
Senator Mary Jo White
Senator Scott Hutchinson
Shell Oil
Sisters of Mercy
St. Paul's
The Old Emlenton Mill
Titusville Area Alumni Association
Titusville Area Chamber of Commerce
Titusville Area School District
Titusville Historical Society
Titusville Redevelopment Authority
Titusville Renaissance, Inc.
Titusville Rotary
Titusville YMCA
Trail Town Program®/The Progress Fund
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USDA)
University of Pittsburgh, Titusville Campus
Valley Grove School District, Rocky Grove High School
Vantage Health Care
Venango Area Chamber of Commerce
Venango Center for Creative Development
Venango College of Clarion University
Venango County Agency on Aging
Venango County Historical Society
Venango County Master Gardeners
Venango County Regional Planning Commission
Venango Industrial Development Authority
Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
Venango Regional Airport
Warren County Visitors Bureau
Weber Murphy Fox
Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad
Western PA Conservancy - Canoe Access Fund
And many private individuals and families.

2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Peter Winkler - Congressman John Peterson's Office
Lynn Zillmer - DeBence Antique Music World
Barbara Zolli - Drake Well Museum

* Deceased

The Oil Region Alliance serves as the Fiscal Agent for both the Oil City Main Street Program and the Council on Greenways & Trails. Both have offices within the office of the Oil Region Alliance in Oil City. Here is their story.

Oil City Main Street Program

The Oil City Main Street Program is a volunteer-driven initiative dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Oil City. Collaboration between the City of Oil City, the Oil Region Alliance and a small army of local champions began in 2008: after nearly three years of planning, fundraising, and developing a 5-year revitalization strategy, the City of Oil City was awarded official Main Street designation



View of Center Street Bridge in Oil City.

from Pennsylvania DCED in March 2011. The search for a manager soon followed, and the program was fully operational in fall 2011.



A key initiative of the Oil City Main Street Program is its Façade Improvement Grant Program, which awards up to \$5,000 per grant and has facilitated over \$173,000 in exterior improvements to downtown Oil City storefronts since January 2012. Other projects include the “Best Dressed Windows” contests, “Get Down to Business” workshops, an Adopt-A-Block Program, the Jingle Bell Run 5K and Oil City’s Christmas Past, Cash Mobs and Small Business Saturday, Sidewalk Planters & Hanging Baskets, and a comprehensive website, www.oilcitymainstreet.org.

The Oil City Main Street Program has also collaborated with local partners to begin a Downtown Mural Program, refurbish downtown Christmas décor, create a Town Square, establish Oil City as a Trail Town, and more.

The Oil City Main Street Program follows the Main Street Four Point Approach[®] and is accredited by the National Main Street Center. In 2013, downtown Oil City was featured on an episode of the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) series, “Discover Main Street Pennsylvania.” The Oil City Main Street Program is supported by Pennsylvania DCED, the Elizabeth S. Black and Edith C. Justus Charitable Trusts, the City of Oil City, the Oil Region Alliance, and numerous businesses, organizations and individuals.

Council on Greenways & Trails

Communities said to have a strong "sense of place" have a strong identity and character that is felt by local inhabitants and visitors. The projects undertaken by the Council on Greenways & Trails (CGT) build and showcase the region’s trails and natural greenways.

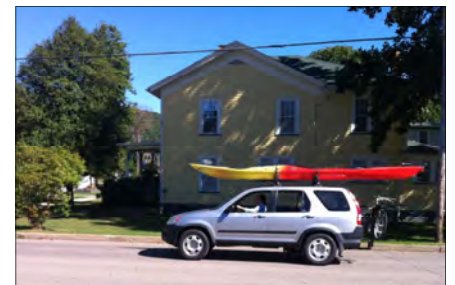


From the founding in 2008, the Council has combined various pieces to form the regional picture. The CGT members and the Greenways Coordinator, for example, have assisted the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance (EPTA) with its identity in the creation of a website and logo. The CGT provided speakers to the Western PA Trails Symposium which brought together the leaders in land and water trail development from all of Western Pennsylvania. Regional events, such as the 2013 PA Greenways & Trails Summit, the GeoTrain and the EPT James Holden Memorial Ride have drawn visitors

from across the state and beyond that say they will return to the region.

Member projects have completed 8.3 new miles of multi-use trail adding to the system resulting in over 80 miles in the Council’s territory. Another 17 miles have been planned or engineered. Some of these new segments extend the trail system and some make connections to our towns and businesses. Access to the waterways has also been improved with a new ADA accessible fishing pier on Justus Lake and a new canoe/kayak access to the Allegheny River. Trailhead enhancements including lighting, landscaping and informational kiosks have improved visitor access. Two new scenic overlooks along the trails enhance the visitor experience.

On the conservation side of the green infrastructure, over 176 acres of land along French Creek and the Allegheny River are now protected through ownership or easement. This benefits the region by protecting wildlife habitat, water quality, against flooding and by providing scenic access to the public permanently. One parcel has become a new camping spot for trail and river users and another will provide a bridge over active railroad tracks for a new segment of trail.



Kayak & bike on same car - from the Greenways Summit in Franklin, 2013.

CGT members have become Bicycle Friendly Communities and Trails Towns and have reached out to their businesses to make sure that the outdoor recreation assets being built are also economic drivers for the region. The 2013 EPT Trail User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis found that over 150,000 people use our bike trails alone and spend more than \$6 million per year when they do. In 2014, our region became part of a state-wide pilot project called Nature-Based Placemaking (NBPM) where a natural asset - a park, a trail, a river, a lake, etc. - is recognized as an economic opportunity.

2014 MAJOR MEMBERS

JOYGLOBAL



Cranberry Township



Based on 2014 unaudited financial statements

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

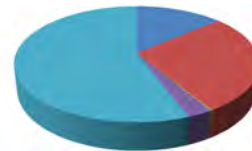
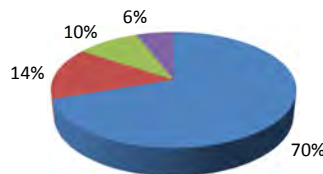
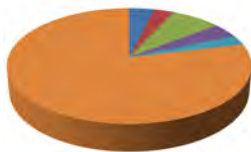
Year ending December 31, 2014

Revenue	
Membership	\$49,021
Municipal Contributions	39,303
Fees, Sales and Other	97,923
Contributions	52,413
Property	34,386
Grants	1,011,482
Total Revenues	\$1,284,528

Expenses	
Program	\$851,022
Management	179,005
Property Manag.	119,517
Fundraising	71,307
Total Expenses	\$1,220,851

Assets	
Cash	\$328,706
Accounts Receivable	664,870
Other Short-Term Assets	4,947
Loan Funds	68,434
Land, Buildings & Equip.	1,347,550
Total Assets	\$2,414,507

Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$92,072
Other Short-Term Liabilities	7,804
Long-Term Notes Payable	340,730
Other Long-term Liabilities	345,500
Total Liabilities	786,106
Net Assets	1,628,401
Total of Both	\$2,414,507



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF

Kathy Bailey
 Marilyn A.W. Black
 Debra Frawley
 Kimberly Copley-Harris
 Friends of the Oil Region Alliance

Our Mission

“The Mission of the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing people to live, work, learn and play in “The Valley That Changed The World” through the preservation, promotion, development and support of historical, educational, natural, recreational, residential, commercial and industrial destinations.”