Presentation Outline

Project Background

Concept Plan:
- Vision, Mission & Focus Areas
- Interpretation
- Resource Preservation & Enhancement
- Tourism & Economic Development
- Organization & Management
- Other Issues

Discussion

Next Steps
Project Background

Geography of the ORNHA

Overall Area
• 708 square miles

All of Venango County
• 31 municipalities
• Key communities: Oil City, Franklin, and Emlenton

Southeast Part of Crawford County
• 3 municipalities
• City of Titusville, Oil Creek Township, and Hydetown Borough

Parks/Forest (and several trails)
• Oil Creek State Park
• Two Mile Run County Park
• Clear Creek State Forest
  - Kennerdell Tract
Project Background

Summary of Project Approach

1.0 Project Start-Up & Research (Trip: Sept. 1-2)

2.0 Workshop & Concept Plan (Trip: Oct. 27th-29th)

3.0 Draft Strategic Plan Preparation

4.0 Strategic Plan Presentation & Revisions

Preliminary Outline for the Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

Part A: Background
- Strategic Plan Intent & Methodology
- Summary of State & Federal Designation Legislation
- ORNHA’s History of Operations
- Evolution of ORNHA’s Vision, Mission & Areas of Focus
- Implementation Status: MAP Projects & Other Projects
- Current Issues & Opportunities

Part B: Strategy
- Vision, Mission, Focus Areas & Priorities
- Heritage Area Boundaries
- Additions to Theme-Based Resources Inventory
- Interpretation Updates: Themes, Stories & Methods
- Conservation & Development Strategies (including environmental assessment/impact considerations)
- Programmatic Strategies (including partnerships, management, balance of priorities)
- Organizational Revisions & Sustainability (per NPS definitions, and including funding)
- Evaluation Methods (management, projects, impacts)
- Implementation: Priorities, Budget & Schedule
Project Background

Public Kick-Off Meeting Videoconference (Sept. 2, 2020)

Public Opinion Survey (Sept. 24th - Oct. 21st, 2020)

- 132 respondents
- Took respondents approximately 10 minutes to take
- Anonymous for respondents
- Questions 1-11: solicited the respondents’ habits and opinions
- Questions 12-15: demographic questions
- Question 16: allowed for open-ended comments
Sample Survey Questions

Q2 If you answered “yes” to the question above, what level of knowledge do you have about the ORNHA?

Answered: 118  Skipped: 14

- A high level
- A moderate level
- A low level
Q6 The ORA currently utilizes a variety of methods to interpret the history of the region. Which of the following methods of interpretation should be utilized more frequently or more effectively? Check all that apply.

Answered: 130    Skipped: 2
Project Background

Public Workshop (Oct. 27th, 2020)
Three groups organized by topics for Zoom break-out groups.

A. Organization & Management – leadership, staffing, management, funding, etc. (Augie Carlino)

B. Interpretation & Preservation – interpretive themes and methods, natural and cultural resource preservation and enhancement, etc. (Phil Walker)

C. Tourism Development – outdoor recreation, historic attractions, tourism infrastructure (dining, shopping, lodging), marketing, etc. (Randy Gross)
Project Background

Public Workshop (Oct. 27th, 2020)
Interpretation & Preservation break-out group.
CONCEPT
PLAN
Vision – proposed new statement
“The ORNHA is a scenic and environmentally rich landscape boasting varied outdoor recreation opportunities, preserved historic resources tied to oil and gas history and interpreted in a compelling way, all resulting in a strong, diverse economy rooted in a robust heritage tourism program.”

Mission – no changes are proposed
“The mission of the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is to manage the Oil Region National Heritage Area and to increase the prosperity of the Oil Region by enticing all 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.”

Focus Areas – no changes are proposed
• Heritage Development
• Tourism
• Economic Development
ORNHA Boundaries

Retain the Current Boundaries

• The current boundaries include all of Venango County and the southeast part of Crawford County.

• The potential for boundary revisions has been discussed by the consultant team, ORA staff, and in the Oct. 27th Workshop.

• After examining the pros and cons of boundary changes, no revisions are proposed.

• However, it is acknowledged that ORA can operate outside of the ORNHA boundaries when it is in its interests (trail projects, etc.).
Themes, Stories & Sites

- We are working with William Brice, PhD on this topic.

- A limited amount of work has been done on this topic (within the context of planning) up until now.

- The 1994 plan addressed the topic chronologically, but in an overly complex manner (right).

- The following slides feature a more straightforward set of themes, stories and sites (still building on past efforts).

Excerpt from 1994 Plan
Interpretation

Themes, Stories & Sites

*Interpretive Theme #1: The United States’ oil and gas industry traces its roots to the Oil Region of Pennsylvania.*

Story (partial)
Some of the country’s first commercially recovered oil was discovered in the Oil Creek Valley of northwestern Pennsylvania. The tools, terminology, extraction methods, transportation, and financial norms for the oil industry, eventually used throughout the world, were developed here….

Associated Sites
- Drake Well Museum & Park
- McClintock Well No. 1
- Pumping Jack Museum
- Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
- National Transit Building & Annex
- Oil Creek State Park
- Oil Creek & Titusville Rail Road
- Pithole City

Themes, Stories & Sites

Interpretive Theme #2: The various booms and busts associated with the oil and gas industry had a significant impact upon the social, cultural and economic facets of the region.

Story (partial)
The oil and gas industry brought substantial economic prosperity to the region, which was most evident in Titusville, Oil City, Franklin and Emlenton. Each of these urban areas feature landmarks and distinctive architecture reflecting the wealth tied to the industry….

Associated Sites
• Coal Oil Johnny’s House
• Downs Building
• 217 Elm Street
• 229 Elm Street
• Ida Tarbell House
• DeBence Antique Music World Museum
• Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry
•Neilltown Church

The plan will also address churches, theaters, commercial buildings, etc. as a group.

• Petroleum Center
• Pithole City
• Polish Hill – Oil City
• William H. Scheide House
• Drake Well Museum & Park
Themes, Stories & Sites

Interpretive Theme #3: Many people associated with the region had a significant impact upon the area, state and country.

Story (partial)
In addition to Ida Tarbell, John Washington “Coal Oil Johnny” Steele, and the Scheide family, who are part of other interpretive themes, additional well-known people having an association with the area because of the oil and gas industry include John Wilkes Booth, President Ulysses S. Grant, John D. Rockefeller, John Heisman, Joseph Sibley, Charles Miller, David McKelvey, Byron Benson, J.J. Vandergrift, Charles Lockhart ....

Associated Sites
• Coal Oil Johnny’s House
• Ida Tarbell House
• Dramatic Oil Company Site (not currently accessible)
• National Transit Building & Annex
• William H. Scheide House
• Galena Building
Interpretive Theme #4: The natural landscape that served as the setting for the region’s oil and gas industry has largely recovered from the industry’s negative impacts to now offer a region rich with scenic beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities.

Story (partial)
The remnants of the oil and gas industry are still evident throughout the region in the form of abandoned boomtown settlements, oil farms, and inactive oil fields. Many of the state’s thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells exist in Venango and Crawford Counties …

Associated Sites
• Overall environment
• Parks/Forest throughout the ORNHA (including 2 State and 1 County)
• Various trails and blueways
Themes, Stories & Sites

Additional Themes & Stories to Explore per Workshop

- **Native Americans’ use of oil:** As conveyed by exhibits at the Venango Museum, Native Americans used oil in various ways, including for medicinal purposes.*

- **John Wilkes Booth story and site:** His Dramatic Oil Company purchased a lease in Franklin in 1864, but when his attempt to “shoot the well” failed, he left the area disgruntled about the oil business. The specific location of his well is unknown (private property).

- **Natural Gas:** The story of natural gas has been overshadowed by the story of oil. Interpretation of natural gas may warrant greater development.

- **Black Gold or Black Magic:** Another theme at the Venango Museum, it points out both the positive and negative facets of the oil and gas industries.

Methods

Web-Based Info. & Videos
• This is where society is headed, so it should be maximized (confirmed by opinion survey).
• The ORA website already provides extensive digital information.
• Need to create more videos and GPS-based tours, but recognize the region’s cell-service limitations.
• Add 2009 WQED 20-minute documentary to ORA website and show at Venango Museum (shown at Drake Well Museum).

Printed Materials
• Because large numbers must be printed at a time due to costs, revised materials cannot be distributed in a timely manner.
• However, people continue to take brochures from card racks.

Of those surveyed, 84% believe that web-based information (videos, tours using GPS, etc.) should be utilized more frequently or more effectively.
Methods

Interpretive Centers

• Some heritage areas develop their own interpretive centers.
• That approach is not recommended given the following museums’ focus on oil and gas heritage (although museum-specific recs. might be made): Drake Well Museum, the Venango Museum, various historic house museums.

Interpretive Wayside Exhibits

• *Priority #1:* Conduct inventory of exhibits.
• *Priority #2:* Repair/replace existing weathered exhibits and create GPS link.
• *Priority #3:* Replace and/or supplement the dated metal plaques.

Programming

• Continue current programs, and prioritize special events and experiential activities.
Natural Resources

• *Natural resource preservation is a key objective* because of the importance of outdoor recreation and natural scenic beauty to the ORNHA’s brand.

• *Incentives and voluntary programs are recommended* rather than regulatory tools.

Tax Incentives
Existing federal and state level tax incentives for land conservation should be promoted by the ORA.

Conservation Easements
ORA should promote the conservation easement programs of area land trusts, including:
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Allegheny Valley Conservancy
- French Creek Valley Conservancy
Cultural Resources

Primary Objectives

• Retain resources tied directly to oil and gas heritage to better tell the story.
• Improve the appearance of key corridors.

Strategies: Districts & Guidelines

1) Educate on the pros and cons of designating local historic districts aimed at communities such as Oil City and Titusville (Franklin already has):
   • ORA can provide technical assistance without being heavy-handed about it.
   • Emphasize that a substantial majority of property owners should support designation before pursuing designation (requires a public education effort).
   • Avoid regulating issues such as paint colors (too subjective and restrictive).

2) Educate on the pros and cons of design guidelines even where local historic districts are not proposed, as in Titusville. They can still serve as a resource for property owners and/or can be tied to incentives for rehab. projects.

IMPORTANT:
ORA is not in the regulatory business!
Cultural Resources

Strategies: Zoning & Codes Enforcement

1) Educate key cities on customizing zoning for historic corridors so they might:
   - Permit compatible uses and prohibit incompatible uses.
   - Adjust bulk standards (lot widths, heights, setbacks, etc.) so new development and building additions match historic development patterns.

2) Educate about the pros and cons of code enforcement along corridors:
   - Building codes enforcement can avoid the deterioration of buildings, demolition by neglect, and fire hazards.
   - Enforcement of regulations related to behavior can avoid problems such as parking in front yards, trash in yards, etc.
Cultural Resources

Strategies: Incentives

1) **Aggressively promote existing incentives for historic building rehabilitation:**
   - Federal 20% investment tax credit for qualified projects – NR listing, income-producing, minimum investment, federal design standards, etc.
   - State 25% investment tax credit mirrors the federal program in most respects, but it is competitive due to a limited pool of funding.

2) **Educate communities on the pros and cons of adopting a property tax abatement program for building rehabilitations:**
   - Pennsylvania allows 10-year abatements
Cultural Resources

Strategies: Pro-Active ORA Measures

1) *Continue to acquire and rehab buildings with oil and gas heritage connections:*
   - To retain resources to better tell the story.
   - To provide income to ORA.

2) *Continue to be strategic in targeting buildings,* including those with one or more of the following characteristics:
   - Ties to oil and gas history
   - Threats to survival (deterioration, demolition, etc.)
   - Availability
   - Income potential

*This plan’s Economic & Tourism Development section expands on this topic from an asset management perspective.*

*Downs Building – Oil City*
Opportunities

Recreation

*Blueways*

- Complete a Comprehensive Trail/Blueway Plan
- Facilitate access, integrate with trails
- ORA has a Management Role
- Additional Funding Sources: US Recreational Trails Program, Appalachian Regional Commission, Community Change (America Walks)
- Facilitate guided tour operations

“More needs to be developed around our river. Restaurants, places to stay, rentals, kayak rentals, etc. The Allegheny is beautiful and there are a lot of people that come and get away and access the river.” - Opinion Survey Respondent
Opportunities

Recreation

Trail System

• Complete Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail System Gaps
  o Oil Creek State Park (3 mi): new funding coming
  o Sunny Slopes (.5 mi): challenge = private ownership
  o Emlenton-River Ave (.2 mi): partner with AVTA

• ORA has a Partner Support Role: grants, improvements, administrative support

• Additional Funding: NEH America’s Historic Places Grants, US Transportation Enhancement Program, Recreational Trails Program, etc.

• Facilitate guided tour operations

• Continue to facilitate trailheads and interpretation

• Further incorporate environmental themes: e.g. Pollination Trail
Tourism & Economic Development

Opportunities

“Experiences”

**Existing Sites**
- Ensure exhibits are interactive and incorporate new technologies
- Ongoing activities: Oil Gush
- Create more special exhibitions
- Relate story to environment/energy
- Facilitate guided architectural tours

**New Concepts**
- Use more living history experiences
- Oil-themed play areas (private funds)
- Oil Barge/Riverboat restaurant and bar

**Under-Developed Sites**
- Freedom Falls and iron furnaces
- Historic forts, George Washington
- Petroglyphs
- Housing and neighborhoods
- Gas stations and commercial buildings
Tourism & Economic Development

Services & Amenities

Lodging
• Identify entrepreneurs and sites for historic B&Bs and boutique hotels that appeal to heritage tourism markets.
• Facilitate the upgrading of existing hotels through grants, technical support, and partnerships.

Retail Businesses
• Create opportunities for and recruit outfitters and sporting goods stores at trailheads and nodes.

Eating & Drinking
• Same for restaurants, brewpubs, coffee shops

“We need more small businesses in closer proximity to the areas of interest to both locals and tourists… Oil City needs a good hotel again.” - Opinion Survey Respondent
Tourism & Economic Development

Services & Amenities

Professional Services
• Help facilitate entrepreneurial development of tour operators and transportation companies.
• Strengthen availability and marketing of angling, hunting lessons/experiences.

Amenities
• Recruit vehicle rental franchise.
• Advertise free WiFi hubs to tourists.
• Encourage indoor recreation/YMCA partnerships with hotels and recreation organizations.
• Examine opportunities for development of meeting venue (e.g. Oil City National Bank Building).

Overlook Event Center, Pikeville, KY
Marketing & Promotion

Wayfinding
- Implement strong directional signage program to better brand and integrate ORNHA sites.
- Incorporate ORNHA and NPS branding into signage program.
- Incorporate community and/or theme color codes or symbols.
- Funding: National Park Service, corporate sponsors

Branding & Promotions
- Corporate brands partnership
- Ensure signage is consistent
- Enhance use of user-generated content and applications

“We should work on better marketing of the heritage area to people who already live here - people in general have no idea what heritage areas are, that we are one, what the boundaries are, what that means, etc.” - Opinion Survey Respondent

ORA uses Facebook and Instagram, but needs to still expand social media use.
Tourism & Economic Development

Marketing & Promotion

“Corporate Brands Partnership”
• Facilitate corporate sponsorships, including global brands, as well as local franchises and independent businesses.
• Leverage meetings oriented to oil and energy industries, environmental restoration, and community heritage.
• Examine opportunities for corporate sponsorship of environmental and other education programs.

Additional Concepts
• Form a Tourism Ambassador Program, in partnership with local businesses and franchises, focused on heritage and tourism training for first-line workers in the hospitality and retail sectors.
Tourism & Economic Development

Asset Acquisition, Preservation & Management

Criteria for Asset Acquisition

• Historic significance and relevance
• Preservation Plan
• Potential use and user base
• Sustainability (“profitability”)
  o Funding sources
  o Earned income
• “No one else” (capacity, insurance)
• Opportunities for cross-subsidy
• Brownfield redevelopment
• Job creation and recovery
• Leverages private investment
• Environmental restoration
Alternative to Acquisition: Rehabilitation Grant Program

Examples

• **Sangre de Cristo NHA Heritage Grants:** ($25,000) for preservation, conservation, wayfinding, interpretation, and recreation

• **Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance:** Partnership Grants ($15,000), Preservation Grants ($10,000), Interpretation/Program Grants ($10,000), Others. Funded thru NPS.

• **National Coal Heritage Area:** Partnership Grant Program ($30,000): Interpretation, Preservation, Archives, Greenways, Education

Example of historic home that could benefit from rehabilitation and other grants to leverage private investment.
Tourism & Economic Development

Other Alternatives to Acquisition

Asset-Related Uses of Grant Funds
• Rehabilitation of historic houses to address physical conditions.
• Rehabilitation and upgrading of lodging and tourism service facilities.
• Acquisition for sustainable use.
• Joint use agreements, easements.
• Technical support.
• Furnishing and fitting, equipment, etc.

Grant Program Funding Sources
• Lodging tax
• Special assessments
• National Endowment for Humanities, National Park Service (Historic Preservation Fund)
• Corporate sponsorships
• Environmental Protection Agency, other Brownfield grants
Leadership

- *Ensure board representation* is reflective of ORA's and ORNHA's business and partner constituency and geographic region.

- *Provide for transitions of board members* so as not to lose "institutional knowledge."

- *Establish succession plans* for executive staff positions and heritage management staff.

- *Re-visit the relationship of ORA board, councils, and committees* (since the mergers) to improve efficiencies of staff relationships and approvals/implementation of projects.

- *Restructure committee meetings* to improve staff and partner involvement in the direction of the ORNHA and its projects.

- *Recognize that the most effective committees provide direction, advice, and counsel*, while staff is responsible implementation of projects and programs.
Staffing

- Consider hiring support staff to assist the heritage area manager with "back-of-the-house" administrative duties.

- Consider hiring a fund development staffer to oversee all ORA and ORNHA fund development, grant writing, donor solicitations, corporate sponsorships, etc.

- Build out arts staffing to develop more programming that attracts younger audiences.
Partnerships

- *Establish a partnership database* for ORA and ORNHA to share with partners identifying contact information, partner’s capabilities, and interest categories.

- *Continue to work with partners* to strengthen and build relationships for the benefit of the ORA communities and ORNHA.

- *Create programs and projects that highlight the National Heritage Area* so that partners become more aware of the NHA designation and its benefits to the region.

“*I would like to see ORNHA continue to enhance their relationships with other local organized groups (i.e., Franklin Preservation, Venango Historical Society, etc.)... we have so much to share...*”

- Opinion Survey Respondent
Leveraging Volunteers

• **Work to build a more age-diverse group of volunteers** to help with events and projects.

• **Create a "volunteer bank" database** to share names of volunteers with other partner non-profits.

-- Photo courtesy of Albert “Chip” Abramovic – Venango County Commissioner

In August 2019, volunteers were organized by the Allegheny River Rats, County Commissioner Abramovic, and ORA for a river clean-up project.

“I am available to volunteer. I would love to be a part of the education and preservation of our beautiful lands and neighborhoods.”

- Opinion Survey Respondent
Funding

- Continue to work to diversify funding so as not to be overly-dependent on a singular source of funding.

- Continue to advocate for a greater amount of NPS federal funding and PA DCNR funding so ORNHA’s allocation can grow to meet the organization's programming, projects, and administrative needs.

- Continue to work with state and federal legislators to identify other funding opportunities within governmental budgets.

- Establish more revenue-generating programs and re-examine those programs and projects for "return-on-investment" benefits.

- Establish an ORNHA membership program.

- Target "Day-of-Giving" dates on the calendar for solicitation of donations.
Discussion

Concept Plan Topics

- Vision, Mission & Focus Areas
- Interpretation
- Resource Preservation & Enhancement
- Tourism & Economic Development
- Organization & Management
- Other Issues
Next Steps

Project Tasks

1.0 Project Start-Up & Research  ✔️
   (Trip: Sept. 1-2)

2.0 Workshop & Concept Plan  ✔️
   (Trip: Oct. 27th-29th)

3.0 Draft Strategic Plan Preparation

4.0 Strategic Plan Presentation & Revisions

Concept Plan Presentation: Oil Region National Heritage Area Strategic Plan