

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



A Message from our Leadership

September, 2021

Dear Friends of the Oil Region Alliance,

Despite our hopes, vaccines, and public policies, the pandemic continues. We grieve for those who have lost loved ones. Our hearts go out to those who have lost in other ways, be it health, finances, or simply a sense of security; and we sympathize and empathize with those who continue to struggle.

But in spite of the heartache and challenges of the pandemic, in this region we have seen relationships strengthen, our rural location better connected to the rest of the world through increased virtual activity, and evidence that necessity is often the mother of invention.

During the last two years, while the world was turned upside down, we have continued to move forward with our mission.

The Alliance is currently managing fifty-seven grants (federal, state, local, foundation/trust and corporate) worth \$3.8 million supporting sixty-six programs ranging from brownfield reclamation to trail development. Using our asset-based approach to economic development, we bring these funds to the region and leverage them to accomplish projects that make our communities stronger for our residents and more inviting for guests. Sometimes it is as simple as a couple park benches and trash cans to create an overlook perfect for selfies and enjoying an ice cream cone. Other projects require complicated paperwork, regulations, and testing in order to turn a potentially hazardous property into useable real estate ready to return to the tax rolls.

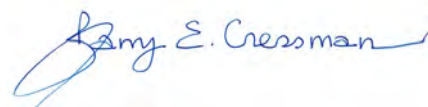
We market our unique story and the attractions provided to us by nature, such as our rivers and woodlands, but also those amenities crafted by our area's entrepreneurs, manufacturers, artists, professionals, educators, and curators.

We continue to promote new ways to interpret our region's history and heritage in order to create pride of place for locals while luring visitors to explore and learn more about what this region offers.


These are daily tasks and goals met because of the support of our members, our donors, our partners, and our volunteers, including the more than seventy individuals who make up our Board of Directors, committees, and councils. We thank each of you for your contribution. Through your help we are not only able to work toward the advancement of our mission, but to turn our vision for the region into a reality.

Thank you for helping us "to increase the prosperity and population of the Oil Region by enticing all people to live, work, learn, and play in 'the Valley that Changed the World!'"

Sincerely,


Barry E. Cressman, Chair

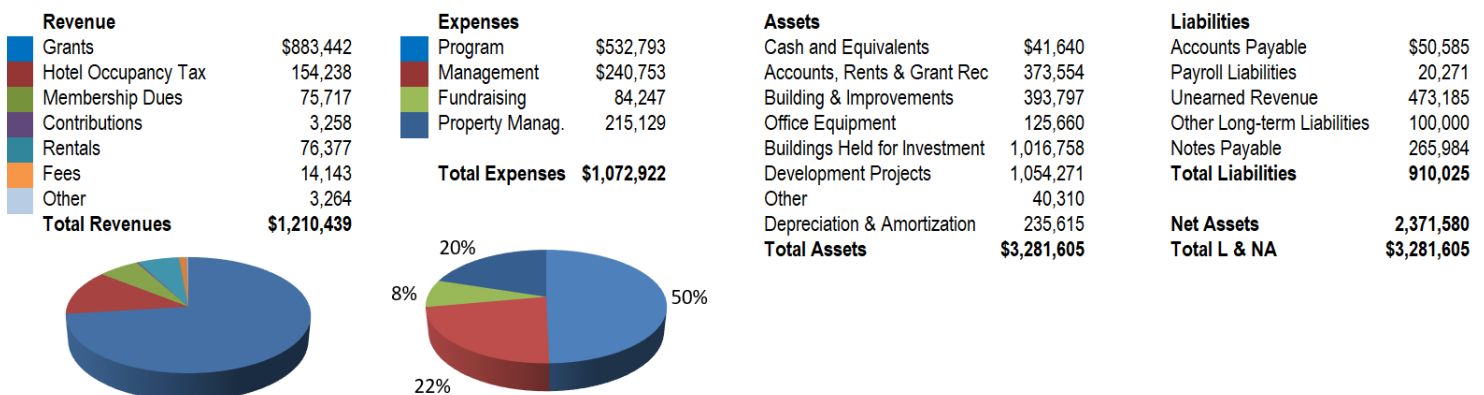



John R. Phillips, II, President/CEO



Financial Summary

Based on unaudited internal Financial Reports. Year ending Dec. 31, 2020. Audited financials for 2020 will be available after October 31, 2021 at OilRegion.org/the-alliance/public-reports/



On the Cover: Waterways continue to make a splash in the Oil Region as the Alliance formally joined Venango and Crawford counties to manage the Oil Creek Water Trail. Four new interpretive panels changed the landscape at the Coal Oil Johnny House. An architect's rendering paints a picture of what the Fuchs Brownfield site in Emlenton could be. Envision the possibilities in the Oil Region.

Accomplishments of the Oil Region Alliance ~ September 2020 through September 2021 ~

William H. Scheide House rehabilitation of the first-floor kitchen completed, accessibility and building stabilization projects completed; rehabilitation of study and small first floor restroom started; safety and security projects started. Participated in Crawford Gives fundraising opportunity.

Coal Oil Johnny House opened while the OC&T train was in station at Rynd Farm on Wednesdays in July and August, 520 visited the house during these times. Installed four new interpretative panels and re-landscaped the parcel.

Tarbell House was open for free self-guided tours in July and August in coordination with the OC&T train Wednesday runs as well as the Saturday afternoon of Oil Fest 94 people visited the house during these times. Hosted a few of private events and tours. Hosted private tour that led to an article in *Currents* magazine in spring 2020. Repaired sidewalk and driveway.

229 Elm entered into a contract to repair the historic brick façade. Participated in Week of Giving fundraising opportunity for the project. Building remains fully occupied.

Downs Building Began first floor HVAC work. Once complete, along with plumbing and electrical in Q1 2022, only general construction will be left before the first floor is rentable. Center Street entrance received temporary rehab and décor to meet city requirements and improve appearance.

Tourism Advertising included Global Heroes magazine (inserted into The Wall Street Journal) with additional content online, native ad campaigns through Trib Total Media, summer and fall digital campaigns and a half page in *Happy Traveler* through PA tourism department, and Google Ad Words campaign funded through a grant to PA Great Lakes Region.

Due to the pandemic, a 2021 Guide was not produced, but development of the 2022 Guide began in June. Deliverables expected in January.

Held the first Oil Region Tourism Awards. Public made nominations and voted online. Received votes from more than 1,000 people.

Began the #adoptableoilregion campaign in partnership with Precious Paws Animal Rescue and Venango County Humane Society to feature pets up for adoption while highlighting sites of interest in the region on social media.

Contracted with Steel City Design to fabricate and install the new Oil Region Visitor Center inside the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce.

ORNHA / Heritage Continue to work with elected officials toward reauthorization and funding for long-term sustainability of the ORNHA and the National Heritage Area program overall. Working with Heritage PA to bolster the Heritage Area program and funding.

Completed Preservation Plans for the historic Algrunx Building and former Faith Temple Church in Titusville with Struxures.

Updated and reprinted Titusville Walking Tour Brochure. Updated Emlenton Walking Tour Brochure and contracted with designer to create brochure layout. Updated signage on ORA literature cabinets. Distributing free Victorian Architecture Sketchbooks to school districts and others.

Completed the updated ORNHA Strategic Plan with The Walker Collaborative as consultant.

Contracted with Titusville Area School District teacher Sara Jones to create six new lesson plans focused on Ida Tarbell and Coal Oil Johnny.

Working with Washington's Trail to create new organization website.

Working with Oil City Main Street Program on the creation of voluntary design guidelines for Oil City's Historic Districts.

Staffing Abigail Watson-Popescu was hired in July as Assistant Project Manager. She will focus on heritage and outdoor recreation projects. Grace St. Claire worked for a third consecutive summer as an intern.

Economic Development Began work under FY20 EPA Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grant, completing a regional market study and Phase I Environmental Assessments on brownfields in Emlenton and Oil City. Formed a regional coalition to further refine and implement a long-term brownfield redevelopment strategy. Created redevelopment concepts for both properties.

Successfully partnered with the DEP to win the FY21 EPA Small Community Technical Assistance Grant for the state for a comprehensive Brownfield Inventory of the Oil City area, scheduled to start October.

Working on infrastructure expansion for senior assisted living in Barkeyville Borough.

Acquired Kraft Concrete property in Oil City for Brownfield assessment and redevelopment.

Seneca Industrial Park property sale and development slated for completion Fall 2021.

Sold Allegheny Overlook Apartments into private sectors for continued improvements and development.

Partnering with Clear Lake Authority, Allegheny Valley Trails Association, & Friends of the Riverfront Pittsburgh for strategic recreational and economic development initiatives.

Assisted NW Commission with local business' loan applications for Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA) COVID relief funding. Grant writing and support for Broadband Development for Venango County 2021 and for the future.

Published weekly redevelopment-focused column in The Progress News, Oil City Derrick, Clarion News, Venango Extra and Clarion Extra to share project updates, celebrate adaptation and redevelopment efforts, and amplify local action.

Outdoor Recreation Continued to assist in development of Erie to Pittsburgh Trail (EPT), providing administrative capacity, and focusing on the development of the East Branch Trail through partnerships secured more than \$600,000 for design and development.

Assisted the Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA) to complete the southernmost segment of the Allegheny River Trail in Venango County by securing nearly \$190,000 for development and construction. Partnering on engineering and fabrication of doors for Rockland Tunnel.

Lead partner in developing the EPT northern terminus point, including a medallion marking "Mile 0."

Continue to manage the "Allegheny Wild and Scenic River" PA Water Trail, advocating and partnering for access upgrades and education.

Partnered in developing the programming of the Statewide Greenways and Trails Summit held in Erie.

ATV Trail Feasibility Study Phase One continued with a public survey that received overwhelming response, showing a desire for an ATV venue.

Entered into a formal agreement with Venango and Crawford Counties to manage Oil Creek Water Trail, a PA designated water trail.



Oil City Main Street Program

The Oil Region Alliance serves as the fiscal agent and provides office space and staff for the Oil City Main Street Program (OCMS). OCMS is a community-driven initiative dedicated to the revitalization of the Oil City central business district. Highlights since September 2019 include:

Designated as a Keystone Main Street Program by Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

Secured \$50,000 in façade grant funding from Pennsylvania DCED

Named 2019 Partner in Business of the Year by the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce

Continued facilitation of ARTS Oil City’s artist relocation and revitalization initiative

Co-organized (with Oil City Arts Council) the annual Oil Heritage Festival Art Show

Provided focused assistance to downtown business in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, including loan & grant programs and re-opening guidance

Engaged in a renewed and re-energized campaign to promote locally owned downtown businesses, including creating detailed guides of hours and policies for restaurants and retail operations during periods of altered regulations

Events included OtoberFest, Oil City Christmas Past, and Music on the Square outdoor concerts throughout the summer season.

The Oil City Main Street Program (OCMS) follows the Main Street Four Point Approach® and is nationally accredited by Main Street America. OCMS is supported by the City of Oil City, the Oil Region Alliance, Pennsylvania Downtown Center, Pennsylvania DCED, and numerous businesses, organizations, and individuals. Its momentum continues to build in 2020 and beyond.



Allegheny—Clarion River Valley Blueprint Community Initiative

Broke ground on the Community Farm, installing nearly 400 sq. ft. of planting space, a woodland trail, and the first section of orchard. Coordinated with the school district, local organizations, and private volunteers to plant, maintain, and successfully harvest the first season of crops, sharing the produce with local shops and residents.

Led a redevelopment tour of the AC Valley for Congressman Glenn “GT” Thompson.

Printed and installed the first of four 2020-2024 youth-designed seasonal Blueprint banners in Emlenton, Foxburg, and Parker, laying the groundwork for future regional wayfinding initiatives.

Coordinated the collaboration of local business owners and organizations to plan a Valley-wide Halloween event, scheduled for Oct. 30. The event will include a month-long scarecrow display and competition as well as a street fair on Oct. 30 for all ages.

2021 Major Members



County of Venango



SPECIALTY FABRICATION AND POWDER COATING



City of Franklin



National Fuel



VENANGO



City of Oil City



Webco Industries

Matric

Central Electric Cooperative

Sandycreek Township

Heath Oil

Komatsu

Our Staff

John R. Phillips, II - President and Chief Executive Officer

Dan Twombly, Executive Vice President

Emily Altomare, Communications & Tourism Manager

Stewart Armstrong, OCMS Artist Liaison/
Marketing Coordinator

Kathy Bailey, Oil City Main Street Manager

Jenn Burden, Heritage Program Manager

Chris Clifton, Office Administrator/Finance Assistant

Jessica Gorman, Administrative Assistant

Kim Harris, Project Manager, Outdoor Recreation Specialist

Selina Pedi, Redevelopment Manager/
ACRVR Blueprint Community Coordinator

Abbe Watson-Popescu, Assistant Project Manager

2020 - 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Barry Cressman, Chair - Retired Clergy

Maureen James, Vice Chair - Artist/Oil City Main Street Program

Neil McElwee, Secretary - Oil Creek Press/McElwee Associates

Debra Sobina, Treasurer - Clarion University

Betsy Kellner, Assistant Secretary/Assistant Treasurer - Venango Museum

Rodney C. Griffin, Immediate Past Chair -
Specialty Fabrication & Powder Coating

Emily Aubele—Peddlers and Paddlers Inn

Samuel Breene - Venango County Commissioner

Leah Carter - Titusville Renaissance, Inc.

Jennifer Feehan—Northwest Commission

Lance Hummer - Keystone Community Education Council

James O. “Jimmy” Johnson - City of Franklin

Matt McSparren - Cranberry Township

William P. Moon, Jr. - City of Oil City

Greg Wilson - Komatsu

Vincent Witherup - Retired Venango County Commissioner



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OilRegion.org