



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, and also facilitates the ARTS Oil City artist relocation initiative. Highlights since September 2021 include:

Completed a new mural “The Hub of Oildom” by artist Michael Allison – November 2021

Secured a \$40,000 grant award from Pennsylvania Council on the Arts to develop an Oil City Creative Ventures Project

Facilitating a holiday décor update for Seneca and Elm Streets

Finalized and launched new OCMS logo – March 2022

Continued work on a voluntary design guide for Oil City’s historic structures

Developed and launched a Public Art Community Input Survey – Summer 2022

Revised staff roles for ARTS Oil City with appointment of new coordinator, Barbara Pierce

Collaborated with Oil City Arts Council to hold the annual Oil Heritage Festival Art Show and BridgeFest

Organized various events including Oil City’s Christmas Past, Music on the Square, Oil City Farmers Market, and the Oil City Uncorked Wine Walk

Provided resources to various downtown businesses, property owners, and potential investors

Explored and addressed multiple grant opportunities for various purposes

The Oil City Main Street Program (OCMS) is one of Pennsylvania’s Keystone Main Streets 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.

2022 Major Members



County of Venango



City of Franklin



City of Oil City



Central Electric Cooperative

Matric Limited

Webco Industries

City of Titusville

Heath Oil

Kapp Alloy

Komatsu

Sandycreek Township

Our Staff

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

Dan Twombly, Executive Vice President

Debra Sobina, Executive Vice President

Emily Altomare, Communications & Tourism Manager

Kathy Bailey, Oil City Main Street Manager

Jenn Burden, Heritage Program Manager

Chris Clifton, Office Administrator/Finance Assistant

Jessica Gorman, Executive Assistant/IT Support

Kim Harris, Project Manager, Outdoor Recreation Specialist

Grace St. Clair, Project Coordinator

Abigail Watson-Popescu, Project Manager

Jeremy Layburn, Project Coordinator

Barbara Pierce, ARTS Oil City Coordinator

2021 - 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Barry Cressman, Chair - Investor/Philanthropist

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

Betsy Kellner, Secretary - Cranberry Township Tax Collector

Jennifer Feehan, Treasurer - Northwest Commission

Samuel Breene - Venango County Commissioner

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Lance Hummer - Keystone Community Education Council

James O. “Jimmy” Johnson - City of Franklin

Sam Logsdon - City of Titusville

Matt McSparren - Cranberry Township

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

Greg Wilson - Komatsu

Vincent Witherup - Retired Venango County Commissioner

On the Cover (clockwise from upper left): Franklin Visitor Center Dedication, Oil Region Guide Cover, USDA State Director Bob Morgan Visits the Oil Region, New “Hub of Oildom” Mural Installation, Bridgeway Capital Presentation, Tarbell Tea Student Re-enactors.



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OilRegion.org 814-677-3152

ANNUAL REPORT 2021- 2022



A Message from our Leadership

September 2022

Dear Friends of the Oil Region Alliance,

With the panic of the pandemic hopefully behind us, this is a good time to reflect upon what we have together learned, accomplished, and initiated during that challenging time...and how all that impacts the present moment as well as our future.

Internally at the ORA, as a staff, Board, and Councils, we learned to work collaboratively while remote over Teams chats and Zoom meetings. Virtual meetings allowed for strengthened connections with colleagues across the state and across the country, and around the world.

Our partnerships with major grantors also strengthened. We continue to work closely with the National Park Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture at the federal level, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Community and Economic Development, Department of Environmental Protection, and PennDOT at the state level, and also our many regional and local grantors and partners as together we further the ORA's mission and complete major projects to benefit NW PA.

Over the last two years we've seen both travelers and locals seek out our outdoor recreational amenities in droves. Vehicles with out-of-state license plates loaded down with bicycles, kayaks, and camping equipment have always been a common sight in the Oil Region, but we have seen a dramatic increase in local and visitor use. We continue to market the healing properties of our waterways and trails and expound on their contributions to a high quality of life and good mental health. The return of special events has boosted, and even surpassed, pre-pandemic tourism traffic throughout the region.

As things continue to move more toward normal than the lockdown of the last two years, on another front we have also seen an increase in our opportunities for brownfield reclamation and redevelopment.

Efforts continue in the area of infrastructure improvements with special focus on broadband throughout Venango County. The ORA is actively seeking funding on behalf of Venango County to improve internet access and connectivity so that everyone living anywhere in the county can work and learn remotely.

While we work to improve the opportunities for those throughout the Oil Region, we are fortunate to have added to the staff of the Oil Region Alliance. Enhancing our staff by adding Abigail Watson-Popescu and Grace St. Clair on full-time increases our capacity for heritage programming and outdoor recreation development.

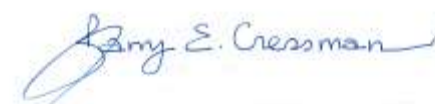
We are sorry to lose the expertise and camaraderie of Executive Vice President Dan Twombly, who retires at the end of September; but we wish him all the best in this next phase of his life and thank him for his 17 years of dedicated service to the ORA.

We are confident that the transition to Debra Sobina as Executive Vice President will be successful. Debra was a founding member of the ORA Board and has served multiple terms, including roles as Treasurer and Secretary, concurrent with her administrative and academic positions at Clarion University.

As we close 2022, we also prepare to transition from Dr. Barry Cressman to Maureen James as Chair of the ORA Board. We are grateful to Barry for his 6 years of service and leadership, and pledge our support to Maureen as she competently takes the helm.

With so many opportunities available to the ORA, we are grateful for the support and investment of our members and partners. All of us working collaboratively and supportively together we can pursue the projects that help us fulfill our mission 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."

Sincerely,



Barry E. Cressman, Chair




John R. Phillips, II, President/CEO



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

William H. Scheide House — rehabilitation of the first floor Study and two restrooms completed; safety and security projects begun. Participated in Crawford Gives fundraising opportunity.

Coal Oil Johnny House — exterior of the house repaired and repainted. Open on Wednesdays in July and August while the OC&T train was in station at Rynd Farm (581 people visited during these times).

Tarbell House — front and side porches repainted. Chocolate Making Workshop in February. Earth Day event in April. Three student-led teas in spring 2022 for first time since spring 2020. Volunteer cleaning day in March. Open hours in July and August for guided tours in coordination with the OC&T train trips on Wednesdays. Public Open House in August for Titusville Oil Fest. Developed the Political Cartoons of the Oil Region Exhibit. Held an invitation-only Opening Reception.

229 Elm — façade masonry was repaired in spring 2022, reusing all historic bricks. Received Oil City Main Street Program Façade Grant.

Downs Building First floor HVAC, plumbing and electrical infrastructure projects were completed this year leaving storefront construction and interior finishes remaining to ready spaces for marketing to retail tenants on the first floor. A RACP application was submitted for this phase. Storefront and interior work should begin in 2023.

Tourism Advertising included print and native ad campaigns through Trib Total Media, summer and fall digital campaigns and a full page in *Happy Traveler* through PA tourism department, and Google Ad Words campaign funded through a grant to PA Great Lakes Region.

Developed and distributed 2022 Oil Region Guide. Next Guide will cover 2023 & 2024 and is in development. Delivery expected January 2023.

Convened the first Oil Region Realtor Roundtable with local realtors who shared insights on property needs, tax and assessment questions, and concerns about homeshares.

Supported the marketing and hospitality needs of a new gravel bike race in May. Saw a \$10,000 increase in hotel tax income for that month over 2021.

Held second annual Oil Region Tourism Awards. The public provided more than fifty nominations for the eight categories.

ORNHA / Heritage New Oil Region Visitor Center installed in the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce. Dedication held in November.

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 increase funding for PA Heritage Areas. Member of the Heritage PA Strategic Plan committee to lead the organization for the next five years.

Printed and distributed revised Emlenton Walking and Driving Tour brochure. Hired designer to lay out revised ORNHA Driving Tour booklet.

Completed six new lesson plans focused on Ida Tarbell and Coal Oil Johnny, which are available for free on OilRegion.org.

Hosted two, one-day, hands-on Cemetery Preservation Workshops at the Pioneer Cemetery in Franklin and Woodlawn Cemetery in Titusville with Jason Church, Chief of Technical Services at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training and 45 participants.

Awarded seven Oil Region Historic Preservation Awards to organizations and individuals.

ORA staff members attended Alliance of National Heritage Areas Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 meetings in West Virginia and Mississippi.

Received Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grant to complete a historic resources survey in the ORNHA. Work will occur in 2023.

Staffing Grace St. Clair was hired in June as a full-time Project Coordinator. Her focus will be heritage, especially Tarbell House programming, and outdoor recreation. Abigail Watson-Popescu joined the staff full-time as a Project Manager in September. She will focus on heritage and outdoor recreation projects.

Economic Development Continued 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.

Continued to actively engage the regional coalition to further refine and implement a long-term brownfield redevelopment strategy. Secured FY22 EPA Community Wide Assessment Grant for \$500,000 to continue assessment efforts targeting a 20-mile stretch of the Allegheny River.

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 completed by June 2022.

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

Acquired Dahlstrom Property adjacent to Kraft Concrete property in Oil City for Brownfield assessment and redevelopment.

Assisted the Colonel Drake Cultural Alliance, Inc., by submitting a DCED Local Shares Account application for the completion of the Lyric Theatre in Oil City.

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

Assisted by Northwest Commission, undertook efforts to renew the Keystone Opportunity Zone designation for the parcels at Sandycreek Industrial Park for a new 10-year period. Application to be submitted September 2022.

Continue grant writing and support for Broadband Development for Venango County, including development of design solution and submission to the ARC POWER grant program. Additional sources continually identified for future pursuit of public funds.

Organized separate visits for USDA and Bridgeway Capital representatives to tour the Oil Region and present funding opportunities to the public.

Outdoor Recreation Managed the Outdoor Recreation Business Plan Contest. Winners to be announced in December 2022.

Continue to provide administrative capacity to Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, focusing on gaps and development of East Branch Trail. About two miles of new trail will be finished by 2023. Five more miles are under design. Lead partner in developing northern terminus point, including a medallion marking "Mile 0" dedicated September 2021. Assisting with 2022 EPT Regional Trail Summit.

Partner with Allegheny Valley Trails Association engineering of doors for the Rockland tunnel and fabrication of the southern portal door.

Partnering to securing funding for required repairs to the visitor center at the Justus and Allegheny River Trail trailhead.

ATV Trail Feasibility Study Phase Two is underway, looking for routes and development of management scenarios.

Fabrication of area trail kiosks, research for educational environmental signage, and updates for recreational trail brochures.

Financial Summary

Based on unaudited internal Financial Reports. Year ending December 31, 2021. Audited financials for 2021 will be available after October 31, 2022 at OilRegion.org/the-alliance/public-reports/

