

## 2022-2023 Annual Report

[OilRegion.org](http://OilRegion.org)

814.677.3152

# OIL REGION NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

## *A Message from our Leadership*

The ORA promotes the region's historic, tourism, community, and economic development interests. It has established recognition of the region as both state and national heritage areas, developed industrial parks, assisted the growth of local businesses, built recreational trails and amenities, preserved and interpreted the region's heritage, produced educational materials for adults and students, been a champion for the arts, and provided leadership in historic preservation, tourism marketing, recreational development, and economic development.

Under the keen and watchful eye of Alliance President John R. Phillips, II, the dedicated and engaged individuals who comprise the extremely competent staff and the commitment of our Board of Directors, we remain true to our mission statement:

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.



Maureen M. James  
Oil Region Alliance Board Chair



Thank you to our loyal members who support the mission of this organization and help us make great strides every year toward completing our strategic plan. This would also not be possible without our esteemed grantors and partner organizations with similar missions. We are blessed to gain more partners year after year, and that is because everyone is working together toward a better, stronger, and more vibrant Oil Region.

Many are working with us on the challenging issues we face, but it is much easier when we have a collective desire and collaborative mindset. I am privileged to lead an exceptional staff who work every day for a better Oil Region and are extremely knowledgeable in their respective fields.

I think we can all agree that our region is a wonderful place to live, work, learn, and play. We are seeing that people from all over are discovering this and making a life in the Oil Region. So it is imperative that we all remain cooperative and support one another in our efforts to capitalize on our current momentum and strive for success.



John R. Phillips, II  
Oil Region Alliance President/  
CEO





## Oil Region Alliance Accomplishments from September 2022-September 2023

### Preservation Properties

- **William H. Scheide House** — new fire and security systems installed; sprinkler system throughout the house installed; began Phase V – basement rehab; participated in Crawford Gives fundraising opportunity.
- **Coal Oil Johnny House** — Open Wednesdays in July and August while the OC&T train was in station at Rynd Farm (580 people visited the house during these times.)
- **Tarbell House** — Held student-led teas in fall 2022 and spring 2023. Open hours in July and August for guided tours in coordination with the OC&T train trips on Wednesdays. Hosted several private tours throughout the year. Public Open House in August for Titusville Oil Fest.
- A Tarbell Structural Conditions Assessment was conducted Summer 2023. This assessment mapped out a path forward for shoring up structural components in the basement, while making recommendations to acquire a long-term plan via an analysis and design phase, which will lay out future stabilization work to be conducted on the house.
- **Downs Building** Renovations to the Center Street storefront entrance, exterior façade, and first floor are underway, readying the building for a street-level commercial occupant. Work should be completed by the end of 2023.

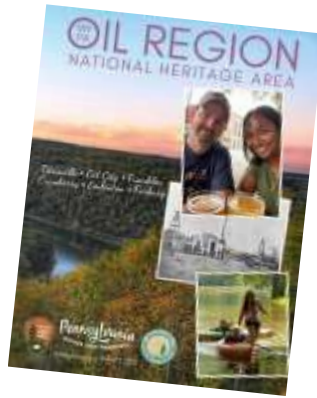
### ORNHA / Heritage

- The National Heritage Area Program Bill passed in Congress in December 2022, meaning the ORNHA is reauthorized to receive federal funding until 2037.
- Worked 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.
- Released an updated and modernized Driving Tour of the Oil Region National Heritage Area booklet in January, featuring more images, maps, and historical photos.
- Hosted a historic preservation workshop on restoring three-coat plaster at the historic Judge McKee House in Clintonville May 6. This hands-on workshop was led by ORA Project Manager Abbe Watson-Popescu.
- Awarded eight Oil Region Historic Preservation Awards to organizations and individuals during the first in-person ceremony since 2019 at Christ Episcopal Church in Oil City May 18.
- ORA staff attended Alliance of National Heritage Areas annual meeting in Washington, DC in February 2023.
- Began Diversity Study of the ORNHA project.
- Awarded Heritage Mini-Grants via PA DCNR funding to eight entities in the ORNHA for various history/heritage projects.
- New interpretive panels for the Borough of Emlenton are currently being produced. This project will see a replacement of all 22 panels, with updated content and images.
- **Presented "PA Heritage Areas and Main Streets Programs: A Winning Collaboration" at Heritage PA conference.**



## Tourism

- Advertising included print and digital campaigns through Visit PA, the state tourism office, PA Independent Oil & Gas Association, Trib Total Media, **Wall Street Journal**, **Woman's Day**, Adamo Nest, a Canadian publication, and a Google Ad Words campaign funded through a grant to PA Great Lakes Region.
- Developed and distributed an Oil Region Guide for 2023 & 2024 combined.
- Sponsored numerous tourism-related non-profits and events in the area.
- Supported the marketing and hospitality needs of special events including the Roughneck Gravel Roubaix, Oil Creek 5 & 13 Stacked Trail Race, International **Bowhunting Organization's second leg of the Triple Crown**, Ten Miles 4 Two Mile Jeep Run, and the Creative Entrepreneur Conference.
- Held third annual Oil Region Tourism Awards. The public provided more than 80 nominations for the eight categories, which received votes by more than 700 participants.
- Began work on two new digital marketing tools. The first is an interactive map that will allow users to virtually skim the heritage, cultural, and outdoor rec offerings of the region then save and share to social media. The second is a new website that will focus on events and amenities, which can easily be updated to highlight the most current events and features.



## Outdoor Recreation

- Working with a property owner to construct a new access on the Allegheny River, and another property owner to control and maintain a highly used existing access in need of upgrades and enhancements.
- Developed more than 2.5 miles of the East Branch Trail in Crawford County on the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

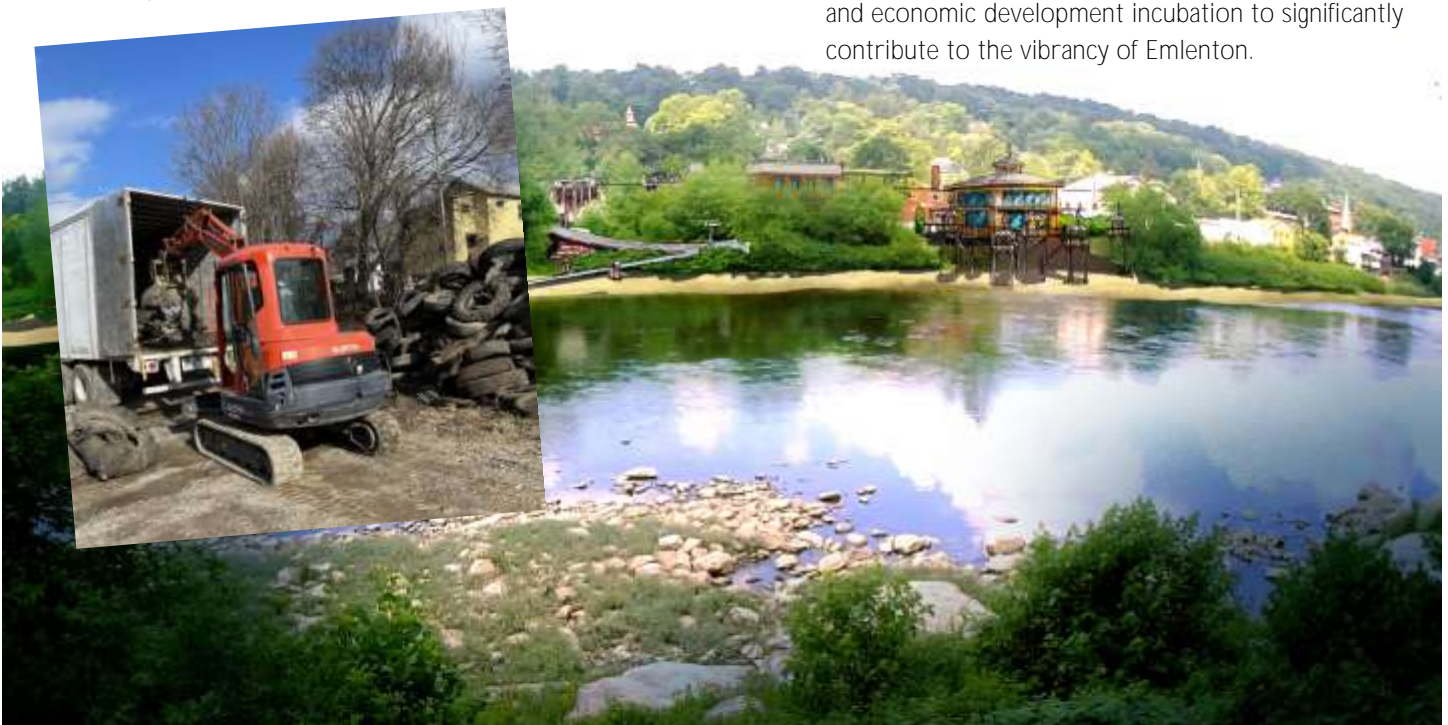


- Continued managing a DCNR Community Partnership Grant for the EPTA to contract with a consultant to focus on trail gaps.
- Partnered with Friends of the Riverfront to organize and **host the EPT Supporter Event with the first "Jim Holden Leadership Award" presented to the Allegheny County Executive.**
- Partnered with the Allegheny Valley Trails Association to complete engineering for doors on the Rockland Tunnel; added parking, including an ADA area, at the tunnel's northern portal.
- Continued managing the Rehabilitation of the Ritchie Run Bridge in Emlenton on the Allegheny River Trail corridor and designing the connector trail from River Avenue in Emlenton to Ritchey Run Bridge.
- Held the Outdoor Recreation Business Plan Contest, awarding a \$10,000 prize to Oil Valley Gravel, LLC, and a \$5,000 prize to Woods and River Coffee.
- Launched ORA Outdoor Recreation Committee with a **focus on the region's outdoor recreation venues, events, and opportunities.**
- Reprinted the Oil Region Trails map and guide and the Allegheny Wild and Scenic River Guide
- Completed Phase I of the ATV Study. The study offers several recommendations for ORA to provide for this recreational activity in the Oil Region.



## Economic Development

- Closed out work and the grant for FY20 EPA Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grant, and began assessment work and Phase I Environmental Assessments under FY22 EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant on future targeted brownfields in Reno, Oil City, and Franklin areas.
- Continued assessment data gathering and development of a remediation plan for the Kraft/Dahlstrom property in Oil City and the former Fuch's Lubricant facility in Emlenton.
- Attended the 2023 National Brownfields Training Conference in Detroit.
- Continuing the support of infrastructure expansion for senior assisted living in Barkeyville Borough.
- Was successful in assisting and obtaining DCED Local Shares Account grant for \$200,000 for the Colonel Drake Cultural Alliance, Inc., for the completion of the Lyric Theatre in Oil City. ORA will be working with the other funding entities to help support the completion of the project.
- Continuing to work with Clear Lake Authority, Allegheny Valley Trails Association, and Friends of the Riverfront Pittsburgh for strategic recreational and economic development initiatives.
- Continuing to market Alliance-owned industrial parks in Sandycreek, Seneca, Sugarcreek, and Barkeyville for new projects.
- Was successful in obtaining \$500,000 for fixed wireless Broadband under ARC Area Development Program for unserved and underserved residents of Cranberry Township. Additional sources continually identified for future pursuit of public funds.
- Organized and hosted separate visits for various agency representatives from DCED, USDA, DEP, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and legislators and their representatives to tour the Oil Region and present and focus on potential projects and needs for the Oil Region as the Rural Development Hub Organization for the area.
- Convening partners through a study to reimagine Oil City through redevelopment of the riverfront.
- Continuing to support the long-term sustainability of the PennWest Venango Campus with community partners to ensure the future of the campus as an educational resource well into the future.
- Partnering with the City of Oil City to acquire the former Day Inn Hotel in Oil City as a key project for redevelopment to address tourism in the region.
- Working with partners to address the absentee ownership of various buildings and properties in the Oil Region to put pressure on divestiture or improvement and utilization.
- Ongoing management and renewed focus on the Crawford Center in Emlenton for facility improvement and economic development incubation to significantly contribute to the vibrancy of Emlenton.





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 2022 include:

- Six mini grants to launch and relocate artists to the Oil City area were awarded through the Oil City Creative Ventures Project, which is funded through a \$40,000 grant from Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and has been extended through June 2024.
- Hosted a visit from Bill Arrowood, Field Services Specialist from Pennsylvania Downtown Center, for an Economic Vitality Work Session to envision energizing our Main Street district.



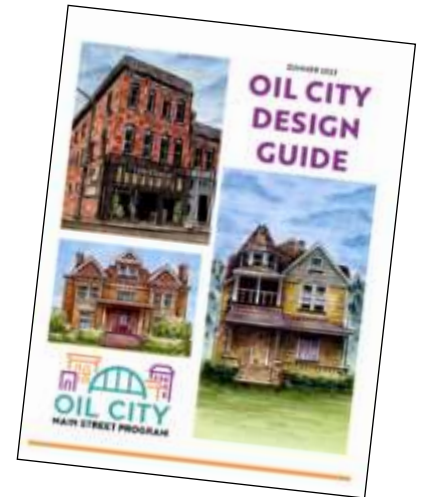
ARTS Oil City is an economic development initiative focused on marketing Oil City as prospective home for relocating artists throughout the country. ARTS Oil City also provides a supportive network for native and relocated performing and visual artists and helps to promote and facilitate ongoing arts-related engagement with the community such as performances, exhibitions, artist residencies, and arts education opportunities.

Recent arts revitalization accomplishments include:

- Significantly supported grant-writing efforts with the ORA to obtain \$200,000 Local Shares Award for the Colonel Drake Cultural Alliance for the renovation of the Lyric Theatre.
- Led efforts to support an Artist Studio Community on the second floor of the Oil City Civic Center.
- Collaborated with the City of Oil City on its submission of a \$50,000 Keystone Communities Implementation Grant to unify and beautify the Main Street District by procurement of Lighted Christmas Decorations and Trash Receptacles/Benches to create continuity in appearance.
- OCMS underwent its 3-year assessment late 2022 with results shared in 2023 and received very positive feedback.
- Collaborated with two talented interns, Raven Nespor and Hannah Plowman, on several special events including the Oil Heritage Festival Art Show, Oil City Curb Market, Bridgefest, and Oil City Uncorked.
- Completed development of the Oil City Design Guide, a thorough

- Participation in the first regional Creative Entrepreneur Conference.
- Hosted Erie Arts & Culture for a regional artist grant session, resulting in an increase in individual Venango County artist grant applications. Venango county artists received nine individual grants; six of these to Oil City artists/projects.
- The development of a strategic partnership between ARTS Oil City, ORA, and the Oil City Civic Center, who owns and operates the National Transit Building, which houses art studios. ORA and AOC assumed management of the arts floor with the goal of maintaining

resource providing voluntary guidance for the maintenance and preservation of Oil City structures to promote the integrity of the historic districts of Oil City.



*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.*

affordable studio space and a downtown artist hub.

- ARTS Oil City was one of only three communities in PA, and the only rural one, awarded funding of \$40,000 through the PA Council on the Arts "Creative Sector Advancement Project". Through this project, we provided mini grants to assist with artist relocation, and for five local projects representing the visual, performing, and literary arts.
- Procured grant funding for the start-up of a community arts library to be housed in the National Transit Building.

# 2023 Major Members



County of Venango



City of Franklin



City of Oil City



Barr's Insurance

Central Electric Cooperative

City of Titusville

Dale, Woodard, Gent, McFate Law Firm

Heath Oil

Great Eastern Cutlery

Kapp Alloy

Komatsu

Matric Group

Moody & Associates

Rossbacher Insurance

Sandycreek Township

Struxures

Voyten Electric

Webco Industries

*Details on membership including a form to join the Oil Region Alliance can be found at [OilRegion.org/the-alliance/membership/](http://OilRegion.org/the-alliance/membership/) or by contacting [ealtomare@oilregion.org](mailto:ealtomare@oilregion.org).*



## Oil Region Alliance Members

AA Nagy Excavating and Construction, Inc.  
 Jim & Janet Aaron  
 Allegheny Valley Trails Association  
 Barr's Insurance  
 Barrow-Civic Theatre  
 John Bartlett  
 Beith Associates  
 Belles Lettres Club  
 Darl & Marilyn Black  
 William Brice  
 Caboose Motel  
 Career Concepts  
 Central Electric Cooperative  
 Christ Episcopal Church of Oil City  
 City of Franklin  
 City of Oil City  
 City of Titusville  
 Coolspring Power Museum  
 County of Venango  
 Barry Cressman  
 Dale, Woodard, Gent, McFate Law Firm  
 DeBence Antique Music World  
 Sharon & George Dorogy  
 The EADS Group  
 Edward Jones –Christopher Rakow Office  
 ERA Richmond Real Estate Services  
 Jennifer Feehan  
 Franklin Fine Arts Council  
 Forest Glen Alpacas  
 French Creek Valley Conservancy  
 Friedhaber's  
 Friends of Drake Well  
 Grandview Lookout, LLC.  
 Great Eastern Cutlery  
 Gustafson General Contracting  
 Clark & Carole Hall

Heath Oil Inc.  
 Hepler General Contracting  
 Heritage Society of Oil City  
 Hydetown Borough  
 Jacob A Weaver Company, LLC  
 Maureen James  
 Kapp Alloy & Wire, Inc.  
 Betsy Kellner  
 Keystone Community Education  
 Council  
 KJ Consulting & Environmental  
 Services, LLC.  
 Komatsu  
 Deb Lutz  
 Matric Group  
 Matteson Heavy Equipment, LLC  
 Moody and Associates  
 Oil City Area YMCA  
 Oil Creek Railway  
 Historical Society, Inc.  
 Oil Valley Endurance  
 Patrick Pelletier & the Honorable  
 Marie T. Veon  
 Petroleum History Institute  
 Mark Reinhold  
 Cinda Richards  
 RL Murray, LLC.  
 Rossbacher Insurance  
 Sandycreek Township  
 Senator Scott Hutchinson  
 Specialty Fabrication &  
 Powder Coating  
 State Representative R. Lee James  
 Struxures  
 Cecile Stelter  
 Stifel  
 Svetz Consulting Services, LLC

George Thompson  
 Titusville Community Development  
 Agencies  
 Titusville Council of the Arts  
 Titusville Historical Society  
 Titusville Renaissance, Inc.  
 Trails to Ales Brewery, Inc.  
 United Way of the Titusville Region  
 UPMC Northwest  
 Venango Area Chamber of Commerce  
 Venango County Fairgrounds  
 Venango Museum of Art, Science  
 & Industry  
 Voyten Electric  
 Wanango Country Club  
 Webco Industries  
 Wildcat Mansion  
 Vince Witherup

## ORNHA Members

Jim & Janet Aaron  
 John Bartlett  
 Benson Memorial Library  
 Central Electric Cooperative  
 KJ Consulting & Environmental Services, LLC  
 Matric Group  
 Oil Creek Railway Historical Society, Inc.  
 Patrick Pelletier &  
 the Honorable Marie T. Veon  
 RL Murray, LLC  
 Moody and Associates  
 Struxures  
 Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry  
 Vince Witherup





## 2022 - 2023 ORA Board of Directors

Maureen James, Chair - Artist/Oil City Main Street Program  
 Chad Ellis, Vice Chair - Rossbacher Insurance  
 Betsy Kellner, Secretary - Cranberry Township  
 Jennifer Feehan, Treasurer - Northwest Commission  
 Vincent Witherup, Executive Committee - Retired Venango County Commissioner  
 Jon Bernstein - Wildcat Mansion  
 Samuel Breene - Venango County Commissioner  
 Leah Carter - Titusville Renaissance, Inc.  
 Jon Crouch - City of Titusville  
 Stacy Ginkel - KJ Consulting & Environmental Services  
 Rod C. Griffin - Specialty Fabrication and Powder Coating  
 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  
 Cinda Richards - Anderson Greenhouse  
 Greg Wilson - Komatsu  
 Amy Whitehill—Amy's & Sassy's, Emlenton Borough

## Our Staff

John R. Phillips, II - President and Chief Executive Officer  
 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 Manager/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  
 Barbara Pierce, ARTS Oil City Coordinator  
 Dan Twombly, Fiscal Support  
 Raven Nespor, Intern  
 Hannah Plowman, Intern

## 2022 - 2023 ORA Councils & Committees

Economic Development/Energy Advisory Council — William P. Moon, Jr., Chair  
 Executive Committee — Maureen James, Chair  
 Heritage Advisory — Betsy Kellner, Chair  
 Outdoor Recreation — Chad Ellis, Chair  
 Tourism Advisory — Maureen James, Chair

## Financial Summary

Based on unaudited internal Financial Reports. Year ending December 31, 2022. Audited financials for 2022 will be available after October 31, 2023 at [OilRegion.org/the-alliance/public-reports/](http://OilRegion.org/the-alliance/public-reports/)



Revenue	
Grants	\$636,376
Hotel Occupancy Tax	138,558
Membership Dues	73,225
Fees	19,233
Rentals	86,740
Advertising, Events	32,869
Contributions, OCMS	166,935
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,153,936</b>

Expenses	
Program	\$1,020,279
Management	220,183
Gen & Admin	99,123
Properties	282,980
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,622,565</b>

Assets	
Cash and Equivalents	\$480,202
Accounts, Rents & Grant Rec	729,246
Building & Improvements	404,597
Office Equipment	94,959
Buildings Held for Investment	2,005,863
Development Projects	1,182,662
Other	21,318
Depreciation & Amortization	(241,382)
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$4,677,465</b>

Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$63,411
Payroll Liabilities	(938)
Unearned Revenue Other	887,740
Long-term Liabilities	230,426
Other (Custodial, etc.)	29,616
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,210,255</b>

<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>3,467,210</b>
<b>Total L &amp; NA</b>	<b>\$4,677,465</b>

