



Project & Program Summary

2026



Oil Region National Heritage Area



217 Elm Street
Oil City, PA 16301-1412
814-677-3152
OilRegion.org



*The Alliance is a Rural Development Hub organization whose pillars are **Heritage Interpretation and Preservation, Outdoor Recreation Development, Tourism Promotion, and Economic Revitalization.***

The ORA has experienced an explosion of growth with the acquisition of multiple properties resulting in game changing historic preservation, downtown adaptive reuse, and education program development projects. This expansive growth has resulted in a major increase in our budget and added support of our members and grantors. The ORA is very clearly responding to the urgent need of community revitalization in multiple arenas with undeniable momentum and impact.

— John R. Phillips, II
ORA President & CEO



A MEMBER OF THE
National Heritage Area System



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



THE GREAT AMERICAN GETAWAY

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WELCOME!



The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism began in 1956 when a group of Venango County business people decided to address vacant commercial and industrial buildings. The ad-hoc group became the Venango County Industrial Development Corporation, later renamed the Venango Economic Development Corporation. In 2005, the VEDC merged with Oil Heritage Region, Inc., Oil City Community Development Corporation, and Oil Heritage Region Tourist Promotion Agency to form the current Oil Region Alliance.

Over its lifetime, the Alliance and its predecessors have filled many empty buildings and brought millions of dollars of federal and state funds into the Oil Region leveraged with hundreds of thousands of dollars in local foundation funds. With those funds, they established recognition of the region as both a State and National Heritage Area, developed industrial parks, assisted the growth of local businesses, built recreational trails and amenities, brought thousands of guests to the region through tourism promotion, preserved and interpreted the region’s heritage, produced educational materials for students and adults, and provided leadership and advocacy in these arenas.

The Alliance is proud of its past—both as a steward of “the Valley that Changed the World” and as an organization providing regional leadership—and looks forward to building upon more than a half-century of service and success. As laid out in the 2021 Oil Region National Heritage Area Strategic Plan, the Alliance continues its transition into that future by emphasizing the value of the region’s National Heritage Area (NHA) designation via an asset-based approach.

Authorized by President George W. Bush in 2004, the Oil Region National Heritage Area is one of 62 National Heritage Areas in the United States, with the Oil Region Alliance as its federally designated manager. At the dedication of the first NHA in 1984, President Ronald Reagan talked about a new kind of national park—a place that married heritage conservation, recreation, and economic development. Though the National Park Service does not own or manage property in National Heritage Areas, NHAs receive invaluable technical assistance, funding, and oversight from the NPS. The National Heritage Area Act (S. 1942) was signed into law in January 2023 by President Joe Biden. This reauthorized most NHAs, including the ORNHA, until 2037.

Congress designates a National Heritage Area because of its unique, nationally significant qualities and resources—a place where a combination of natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources have shaped a cohesive, distinctive story and landscape. The Oil Region is a place of natural beauty with pristine waterways, abundant recreational trails, and historic relics and architecture. Many such places exist in the nation with which the Oil Region must compete for attention. What sets the Oil Region apart is its unique legacy as the birthplace of the modern petroleum industry. The Oil Region National Heritage Area designation is perhaps the region’s most valuable competitive advantage.

This 2026 Project & Program Summary highlights the Alliance’s plans for the Oil Region National Heritage Area through the next year of heritage preservation, tourism marketing, recreational development, and economic revitalization.



PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Partnerships and Municipal Assistance

A strength of the Alliance is its close relationships with multiple partner and grantor organizations, often serving on the Boards of Directors or official advisory bodies for those entities. At the national level, these include the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the Washington's Trail 1753. At the Commonwealth and regional level, Alliance staff are in frequent communications with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (including their Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee), PA Department of Community and Economic Development, PA Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Environmental Council (including their Water Trails Executive Partners Committee and Statewide Water Trail Managers Committee), PA Historical and Museum Commission, Heritage PA, PA Restaurant and Lodging Association, the PA Tourism Office, PA Office of Outdoor Recreation (including an appointed seat on the PA State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP]), Northwest Commission's CEDS Action Teams for Tourism and Economic Development and their steering committee for the NWPA Outdoor Economy Study and Toolkit, PA Great Lakes Region, Clear Lake Authority, and the Venango County Conservation District. Alliance staff also serve as officers for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, Friends of Drake Well, and as members of the Northwest PA Transportation Advisory Council and Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee.

Furthermore, Alliance staff serve on boards and attend meetings to maintain vital relationships that provide funding and joint programming opportunities for these and other local organizations: Allegheny Valley Trail Association, American Red Cross Western Central PA Chapter, Council on Greenways and Trails, Family Services and Children's Aid Society, Greater Titusville Development Foundation, Hannah Project, Heritage Society of Oil City, Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition, Keystone Community Education Council, Oil City Arts Revitalization, Oil City Arts Council, Oil City Civic Center, Oil City Elks, Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad, Oil Region ATV Association, PA State Water Trail, PennDOT Transportation Advisory Committee, Titusville Area Hospital Foundation, Titusville Historical Society, Titusville Planning Commission, Titusville Renaissance, Inc., Venango Area Chamber of Commerce, and Venango County Historical Society.

Alliance staff advise and assist municipalities including Venango and Crawford counties without charge on a variety of issues including nature-based placemaking, Trail Town activities, transportation planning, recreational development, the hospitality industry, and historic preservation and planning. The Alliance will continue to host guests at the state, federal, and international levels to promote our region and identify ways to collaborate and make improvements.

PRESERVATION PROPERTIES

Coal Oil Johnny House

The Alliance owns and operates the McClintock-Steele-Waitz House, also known as the Coal Oil Johnny House, which was the boyhood home of colorful oil-era personality John Washington Steele. Thanks to sizable income from oil wells on his property, John embarked upon a lavish spending spree in Philadelphia that earned him the nickname “Coal Oil Johnny.”

In 2002, the house was relocated to its current location adjacent to the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad’s Rynd Farm Station, north of Rouseville. The Alliance rehabilitated and furnished the house with period-appropriate materials.

Visitation to the Coal Oil Johnny House was nearly 2,000 guests in 2025.

Programs

Public open houses, sometimes including re-enactors or other interactive activities, and custom tours are part of the Coal Oil Johnny House program. The raingarden and native pollinator implementation project and ADA sidewalk project is complete.

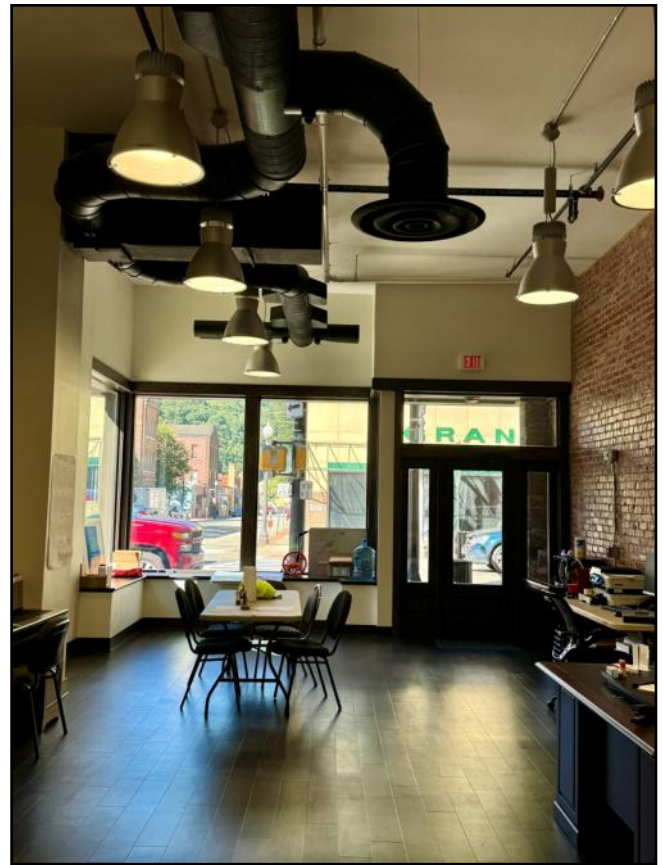
Project

A new interpretive panel describing the function of the rain gardens and native pollinators planted therein will be installed in 2026.

Downs Building

Built in 1894 following the devastating flood and fire of 1892 that destroyed much of Oil City’s downtown, the Downs Building is a contributing resource in the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Alliance is rehabilitating the three-story building at 201 Center Street, which began as Patrick Downs’ saloon and housed several businesses throughout the years.

When completed, the project will not only preserve a building of historical importance to Oil City, but is planned to provide first-story retail space directly adjacent to Oil City’s segment of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and lodging units on the upper floors with wonderful views of downtown Oil City. Previous work included second- and third-story window replacement including the two distinct bay windows on the building’s second story, roof replacement, electrical service, basement demolition and reconstruction, rehabilitation of the now ADA accessible



Center Street storefront space and façade, and new plumbing, electrical, fire suppression system, and HVAC on the ground floor.

Projects

This year will see the completion of the first floor Sycamore Street façade and stockroom space, as well as the completion of four apartments on the second and third floors (two on each floor). In 2025, ORA received an \$800,000 Community Revitalization Fund Program Grant (CRFP) from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to complete this work. ORA has also obtained \$50,000 from PNC Charitable Trusts towards this final stage in the rehabilitation of the Downs Building.

Tarbell House

Ida M. Tarbell (1857-1944) is possibly the most famous female investigative journalist in U.S. history. Her 1902-1904 serialized articles in McClure’s Magazine, published in book form as *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, led to the breakup of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Trust and the implementation of America’s first antitrust laws. Her work changed the oil industry as well as the field of journalism.

Ida spent her teenage years at her family’s home, 324 East Main Street in Titusville, built by her father with materials he salvaged from the Bonta House hotel in the neighboring

oil boomtown of Pithole. Today, the Alliance owns Ida's childhood home, restored to its approximate 1870-1895 appearance. Ongoing programs interpret Ida's life and preservation of historic properties. The Alliance has won several awards for this rehabilitation including a 2017 Preservation PA Historic Preservation Award.

Visitation to the Tarbell House for open houses and events exceeded 500 guests in 2025.

Programs

Public and private events, open houses, custom tours, workshops, and educational programs are part of the Tarbell House program. The *Political Cartoons of the Oil Region* exhibit will continue to be on display. The Titusville Area School District hosts public teas with students as historical re-enactors in the first floor of the home, which is furnished with period-appropriate furniture and accessories. The second floor is a private apartment providing rental income. In 2026, the Alliance will undergo an engineering plan to further stabilize the house. ORA plans to install interactive exhibits to further interpret the space later this year.

William H. Scheide House

As a gift from the Titusville Area School District via the Titusville Historical Society, the Oil Region Alliance was

honored in 2018 to receive the historic William H. Scheide House at 221 North Washington Street in Titusville. Using the 2019 Preservation Plan prepared by regional preservation specialists, the Alliance is gradually restoring this 1866 house.

The goal is to bring this building into compliance with modern safety and construction code through best practices in historic rehabilitation, while adapting the house to serve as the Oil Region Heritage Center hosting cultural heritage nonprofit organizations. Work completed thus far includes installation of an exterior lift to provide ADA access to the first floor, stabilization of the building, restoration of the 1920s library wing, reconstruction of the first floor kitchen, rehabilitation of the two restrooms and study on the first floor, installation of security and fire alarm systems, and rehabilitation of the basement into useable office space. A new black metal sign heralding the "Oil Region Heritage Center and Scheide Library" was installed in 2025. The finishing touches on interior renovations are complete.

Projects

A new boiler system will be installed in early 2026 thanks to a grant from the Harold Heist Charitable Trust administered by PNC Bank. The ORA is actively marketing the Scheide House basement and first floor for rental to cultural heritage non-profits. ORA plans to install interactive exhibits to interpret the space later this year.



HERITAGE PROGRAM

Heritage Committee

This committee oversees matters pertaining to history, heritage, and historic preservation within the Oil Region National Heritage area. Members include representatives from area historical societies, preservation groups, and museums.

Historic Markers and House Plaques

The region is rich in blue and gold state historical markers. This state program preserves the memory of special individuals, sites, and events across PA, including several dozen in the ORNHA. The Alliance is not planning to apply to install new markers in 2026; however, we are willing to assist individuals or groups interested in applying to this program. Additionally, the Alliance oversees the Historic House Plaque program within the ORNHA to raise awareness of the region's history and architecture. The Alliance has updated the brochure explaining the program details and will work with property owners who are interested in having a regional Historic House Plaque installed on their properties.

Drake Energy Security Forum

The Alliance has participated in and supported the development of the first four annual Drake Energy Security Forums, which includes presentations on community transition and revitalization projects, heritage and recreational tours, and discussions by global and local experts on the future of energy security and climate.

Programs

The ORA will again take an active roll in the 2026 forum scheduled for October.

New Publications

In 2026, the Alliance will produce and distribute a new, free brochure, "What is the ORA/ORNHA" to concisely explain the significance and influence of the Oil Region National Heritage Area.

Heritage and Recreation Mini-Grants

In 2026, the ORA plans to offer a new round of mini-grants to create or enhance projects and programs related to history, heritage, and recreation of the ORNHA. Mini-grant funding is provided by a PA DCNR Partnership grant; applicants are required to provide a cash and/or in-kind match.



Historic Preservation Awards

The annual Oil Heritage Region Historic Preservation Awards will take place in May 2026. This annual event celebrates historic preservation in the Oil Region National Heritage Area and recognizes property owners who have actively preserved historic properties in the region.

Interpretive Panels

The Alliance and our partners have installed several dozen interpretive wayside panels throughout the ORNHA. These educational panels provide visitors with information about the region's historical, cultural, and natural sites. Many of these panels need to be replaced due to constant weather exposure. In 2026, the ORA will replace panels in Emlenton and along the Allegheny River Trail.

Historic Resource Documentation

The Alliance has assisted in the completion of guiding documents for various historically and culturally significant resources in the ORNHA throughout the years. These reports provide owners of these resources with a comprehensive understanding of their properties, their current conditions, priorities of needed repairs, annual maintenance plans, and general cost estimates to help preserve the buildings for continued and future uses.

Cultural Resource Survey

In 2020, the Alliance hosted a public town hall meeting with the non-profit Partners for Sacred Places to discuss the state of the region's numerous large and historic houses of worship. Participants agreed that many of these congregations could offer excess space for short- or long-term rental to help raise needed funds for building repairs. In 2025, the ORA completed a survey of these buildings to



better understand which buildings and spaces are available. In 2026, the ORA will link the robust database of the information collected to its website, OilRegion.org, and will then market this information to encourage expanded uses of these spaces.

Interpretive Plan for the ORNHA

In late 2024, the ORA hired a consultant to complete an Interpretive Plan for the ORNHA that fully developed themes, stories, and interpretation methods for the ORA and its partners to use in future projects and programming. The Plan was created with input from historical societies, museums, and other regional places of interest. The consultant also completed three interpretive strategies for the Tarbell House, Crawford Center, and Oil Region Heritage Center & Scheide Library. The ORA will begin to implement these strategies to better interpret these spaces to the public in 2026.

Wayfinding Signage and Gateways

The ORNHA includes various points of interests that are not always easily found by visitors to the region. In 2024 the Alliance hired a consultant to create a wayfinding signage plan that made recommendations for the types of signs needed to guide visitors to these places. The Plan was completed in 2025. In 2026, the ORA will bring communities of the ORNHA together to begin the process of implementing wayfinding signage.

A new gateway sculpture was commissioned, created, and installed on Route 8 near Titusville in the summer of 2025. The ORA hopes this piece will serve as a model for additional gateway artwork in the future.

Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program

In September 2025 the Oil Region Alliance received a \$750,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant through the National Park Service, named in honor of the late preservation leader from Vermont. The goal of this grant program is to foster economic development in rural

communities through the rehabilitation of historic buildings. As the prime grantee, the ORA is charged with sub-granting out the \$750,000 through a competitive grant process to appropriate historic revitalization projects within the boundary of the Oil Region National Heritage Area.

Project

Funds will be distributed through a competitive application process, which will be determined by a review committee comprised of a representative panel of local experts in the field of building preservation. Criteria will include historic status and matching funds. Grant applications will open in late 2026.

Emlenton Visitors Center and Pumping Jack Museum

The ORA will hire a designer to redesign both amenities, modernizing and adding additional security measures to allow the Pumping Jack Museum to be open to the public at all times the building is open.

Merchandise Sales

The Alliance offers non-fiction books and documentaries about oil and gas history, especially the roots of these energy twins in the Oil Creek Valley and the greater Oil Region in Pennsylvania at its office, the Tarbell House, online (OilRegion.org) and at special events. Related products and commemorative items are also available.

Projects

Plans to expand the inventory of the Alliance include branded apparel and new souvenir items, specifically ones featuring the ORNHA logo and Ida Tarbell.

ANHA Interaction

The Oil Region Alliance is an active member in the advocacy organization the Alliance of National Heritage Areas. Its member NHAs join in collective educational publications, professional development training, mutual support and information sharing, and field experiences hosted by various NHAs.

Projects

In 2025, ORA will participate in meetings and trainings. ANHA's top legislative priority is the full funding of National Heritage Areas within the federal budget.

Historic McClintock Well #1 Site and Trailhead

The historic McClintock Well #1 in Cornplanter Township, Venango County is the oldest continuously producing oil

well in the United States. The site is freely open to the public and includes the pumping jack, which is operated by the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) to supply souvenir bottles of oil at Drake Well Museum, storage tanks and other equipment, and interpretive signs explaining the site's history. The site also serves as a trailhead for the McClintock Trail with a parking lot, seating areas, and bike rack. The site is owned by the PHMC and the adjoining paved McClintock Trail is managed by the ORA. The site is close to PA State Route 8 but is not easily recognized as an accessible point of interest because it is not visible from the road; therefore, many people do not visit this historically significant and quaint trailhead site.

Project

The ORA will hire a landscape architect to design new site infrastructure, including walkways, signs, fences, etc. to make the area safely accessible and appealing to visitors. The ORA will also hire an interpretive specialist to create an interpretive strategy, including themes, storylines, and other program recommendations. These efforts will allow ORA and PHMC to make informed decisions on improving the site that will encourage more people to learn about this important part of the ORNHA's history and utilize the trailhead, giving visitors another free historic place to visit, and outdoor enthusiasts clearer access to another trailhead.



Barbara Morgan Harvey Center

An assessment of the cataloguing and archiving of the Barbara Morgan Harvey Collection, housed in Suhr Library, began in 2025. A graduate intern from Penn West Clarion's Masters of Library and Information Science program assessed the collection and embarked on re-archiving it. The collection will be housed in a redesigned secure space within the library and will eventually be searchable the public.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor Recreation Committee

The Outdoor Recreation Committee meets bi-monthly and will continue to collaborate and share information that will assist in lifting the Oil Region up as the place to be for outdoor recreation.

Pollinator Project

As we look to grow the region’s outdoor recreation offerings, the Alliance realizes that we also need to be sensitive to nature’s well-being. Pesticide use and development throughout the country and the world is causing some species of bees and butterflies to dwindle in numbers. It is important that these species are helped for numerous reasons including our food supply’s reliance on pollination. A Pollinator Pledge and Pollinator Resolution were added to OilRegion.org. These documents provide suggestions for individuals, businesses, and organizations to support pollinators by pledging to protect, preserve, create, or restore pollinator habitat on lands they manage and/or to donate money or plants for the development of additional pollinator spaces.

Projects

The Oil Region Alliance’s commitment to ecologically friendly approaches including reviving native pollinators has been the focus of its recent landscaping projects. In 2025, Oil Creek Memorial Landing will see the mitigation of invasive Japanese knotweed, as well as the planting of native plants and pollinators to alleviate erosion and enhance the ecological diversity of the property.

Additionally, the Alliance will expand the cultivation of native pollinator plants along the multiuse trails in the Oil Region, incorporate an educational component for both children and adults, and promote the Pollinator Resolution and Pollinator Pledge.

Allegheny Wild & Scenic River Water Trail Management

The Alliance manages and promotes the Allegheny Wild & Scenic River, which is an officially designated state Water Trail. The Alliance collaborates with numerous partners in marketing the Allegheny for water-based tourism, sport, and recreation opportunities, as well as project development forecast to highlight river clean-ups, sojourns, races, and waterway-centered festivals.

In 2026:

- The Alliance, in celebration of America250, has proposed, and is seeking funding toward, an Allegheny River Sojourn from Warren to Pittsburgh—titled “Epic Allegheny Odyssey: Paddling Through 250 Years of American History— Where History Flows...” The event will showcase the historical and cultural significance of the Allegheny River, highlighting its vital role in our national and state history, from its significance across Indigenous peoples/cultures, the French and Indian War, American through Industrial Revolution(s), and its economic/recreational relevance of today. The sojourn will feature historical reenactments, educational presentations, and guided discussions showcasing the Allegheny River’s rich history as well as environmental legacy and stewardship.
- will undertake formal development of a Wild and Scenic Allegheny River Management Plan through a DCNR Rivers Conservation Plan.
- will begin formal engineering/groundbreaking to the long-sought primitive boating access on the Allegheny River in President Township through grant awards from both the PFBC and DCNR, as well as Picus Silva & WPC easement support.
- will continue amenity development efforts on the Fisherman’s Cove Boating Access (Victory Township) through EADS Engineering and Quemahoning LLC, who will undertake the PHMC required Phase I archaeological investigation, aimed at identifying and defining the boundaries of archaeological sites within the project area.



- will look to secure funding and development opportunities for primitive boating access areas along the state recognized Oil Creek Water Trail in partnership with Drake Well Museum and Friends of Drake Well.
- will partner with Keystone Fly Fishers, a local Chapter of Fly Fishers International, in utilizing Oil Region Venango Campus gymnasium space toward the organization’s fly-casting/fly-tying skills development and educational opportunities.
- undertaking efforts to redesign and reprint all local ORNHA state-recognized Water Trail maps.
- undertaking updates, redesign, and reprinting of “The Allegheny River: Its Islands, Eddies, Riffles, and Winding Distances of Scenic Beauty”
- will offer technical assistance, shared resources, and coordinated outreach to Venango County personnel toward needed amenity improvements across the northern end of Justus Lake.

Additionally, the Alliance will continue to focus efforts on:

- Closing public access gaps, as well as improvements to existing accesses, across local water trails
- Designing comprehensive standardized ‘blue trail’ signage
- Increasing public outreach across media/interpretive platforms
- Partnering with local educational agencies in developing/promoting outdoor recreation as well as conservation-based programming
- Providing regional groups, organizations, and municipalities with technical assistance regarding waterway/water-based evaluation, planning, and development

Allegheny Valley Trails Association Partnership

The Alliance partners with the Allegheny Valley Trails Association to market, fundraise, plan, and develop trail improvements.

Projects

Continue relationship with AVTA by assisting with securing funds for several projects are needed for long-term use of the trails.



Trail Tales

Trail Tales bring stories to the sidewalks, encouraging children to read and exercise with page-by-page displays of books and accompanying activities. The availability of this asset for use at no cost will be marketed throughout the region.

East Branch Trail Partnership

The Alliance works to fundraise, plan, and develop trail improvements for the East Branch Trail.

Projects

The Alliance supports Clear Lake Authority. An additional mile of trail is anticipated to be constructed in 2026.

Erie to Pittsburgh Trail

The Alliance will continue to support the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance through administrative tasks such as serving as the communications hub for the organization and assisting the completion of the long-distance trail through advocacy and contracted services.

Projects

The Alliance will act as the primary liaison for contracted professional services administered through EPTA, coordinating with communities and other partners to advance gap-closure projects along the EPA corridor.



Queen City Trail

The Alliance will continue to work with municipalities and the Oil Creek Railway Historical Society to develop approximately .5 miles of trail linking Titusville and Oil Creek Township. This linkage will provide an alternative route for pedestrians and cyclists to the Walmart area.

Additionally, the Alliance will continue to work with Titusville leadership to develop an appropriate route through the City from S. Martin Street to where the new linkage will be developed.

ATV Trails

The Alliance will continue to provide technical assistance to the newly formed Oil Region All-Terrain Vehicle Association (ORATV), which was formed as a result of the ATV Feasibility Study's recommended actions. As part of the technical assistance in 2025, it will focus on municipalities in the Oil Region designing roads for ATV use. This will provide a route that will link ATV users to destinations such as businesses and sites throughout the region.

Additional Trail Activities

As an advocate for trails throughout the region, the Alliance supports many trails and trail organizations in a variety of ways.

Projects

The Alliance will continue partnerships with Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) and municipalities looking to enhance their natural outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Alliance will continue to assist Oil Creek State Park with securing funds to develop the 3-mile trail gap within the park.

The ORA seeks to negotiate an agreement with the railroad owner to give ORA control of the property from the railroad's usage stop around 5 Elm Street to near 1600 W. First Street in Oil City. Development of this approximately 4-mile corridor would be for recreational purposes and safe passage from the Siverly neighborhood to the Oil City southside.

Outdoor Recreation Business Contest

The contest provides assistance to the top trail-related business plans submitted in each contest cycle. The contest encourages entrepreneurs to contact partners such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to help make solid business dreams a reality. Additional details are available on OilRegion.org and the ORA’s Facebook page.

Projects

The Alliance will host the twelfth contest in 2026. Emphasis will continue to be on all outdoor, nature-based recreation businesses in Venango County. The Alliance will award amounts of \$10,000 for first place and \$5,000 for second place to attract high quality applicants and to make the contest more desirable. This project is funded by Venango County.

Oil Region Venango Campus — Rhoades Center Outdoor Recreation Hub

The Alliance envisions the Rhoades Center at the Oil Region Venango Campus as a hub for outdoor recreation, with new recreational opportunities developed on the hillside behind the Oil Region Venango Campus buildings.

Projects

The Alliance will partner with mountain biking advocates to pursue funding for planning and designing mountain bike trails on Alliance-owned property located behind the campus.

EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) Planning Assistance Program

The Alliance seeks to strengthen connections between the region’s Main Streets and its outdoor recreation assets in order to increase economic impact through outdoor recreation.

Projects

Through the EPA RERC program, the Alliance will work with consultants to engage the communities of Titusville, Oil City, Franklin, and Emlenton. This effort will explore strategies to better connect Main Streets to outdoor recreation assets, expand Main Street programs, ensure equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities, and rebrand the region to enhance its appeal to visitors. The results of this work is a written plan with implementable project for the region and each municipality.

Building Relationships and Advocating for the Oil Region

The Alliance desires to build and maintain relationships with funders and other partners through serving on boards, work groups and committees. The Alliance has accepted a seat on the PA Community & Economic Development Work Group consist of participants state wide working to advance the work outlined in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The goal is to generate a collaborative effort advancing Community & Economic Development in outdoor recreation spaces across the Commonwealth. This work group will meet several times per year for five years.

2026 Western PA Greenways and Trail Summit

Educating others about outdoor recreation—its importance and how to develop and advocate for it—is a core priority of the Alliance. Hosting a Greenways and Trails Summit closer to home makes this opportunity more accessible to small municipalities, volunteer groups, businesses, and other partners, allowing them to learn, connect, and network with peers and representatives from state and local funding agencies. The Alliance will serve on the planning committee to advocate for sessions that reflect the needs of Oil Region communities and to encourage strong local participation.

Industrial Heartland Trail Coalition

Connecting long-distance trails supports economic growth by expanding tourism and strengthening local businesses. The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition is a collaborative partnership working to connect a multi-state trail network across the historic industrial heartland of Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and New York.

The Alliance will continue to actively participate through regular communication, meetings, committee service, and information sharing to ensure the region’s interests are represented.



OIL REGION VENANGO CAMPUS

Acquisition and Assets

The Oil Region Venango Campus continues to grow since the ORA assumed stewardship of the former Clarion University/PennWest University branch campus in July 2025. The ORA purchased the student housing from the Clarion University Foundation in October 2024. These five townhouse buildings with 24 four-bedroom, two bath apartments are now known as West End Village. The Alliance acquired the former Venango Catholic High School, now referred to as VCAT, which adjoins the former college campus, in February 2025. Collectively, these properties form the Oil Region Venango Campus.

VCAT is 56,000 square feet and includes classroom and office space, a gymnasium, and baseball field.

The former university is comprised of an administrative building, an academic building, a library, and student union building complete with auditorium, gymnasium, commercial kitchen and café.

Programming

Staff continue to develop a vibrant and sustainable model for the future of the campus while encompassing all pillars of the ORA including heritage, recreation, tourism, arts, and workforce development.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania's year-long Paramedic Training Program began synchronous remote instruction in January 2026 at the ORVC's Charles L. Suhr Library; this is the first Middle States Commission on Higher Education accredited institution to partner with ORVC.

The ORA is hopeful additional accredited institutions will partner in the future to expand educational opportunities for the region. In addition to formal higher education partnerships, the campus plans to kick off in-house training programs including 5G readiness, broadband technician, and entry-level healthcare career programs. In addition to the educational program, the Alliance intends to continue to shape the Oil Region Venango Campus into a destination for personal and professional development by bringing opportunities closer to home for the Oil Region.



TOURISM PROGRAM

Tourism Promotion and Advisory Council

The ORA is the designated destination marketing organization (DMO) for Venango County. The ORA's Tourism Promotion and Advisory Council is comprised of representatives of area Chambers of Commerce, arts councils, tourist attractions, local amenities, event organizers, and municipalities. They meet every other month to discuss and advise on matters of the hospitality industry in the Oil Region and contribute to projects including the Oil Region Guide and Tourism Awards.

Tourism Promotion

As the region's DMO, the Alliance works directly with members of the hospitality industries of the Oil Region National Heritage Area, the Pennsylvania Great Lakes Region, the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association (PRLA), the Venango Regional Airport, the state tourism office, and others to promote the Oil Region as a tourist destination.

Activities for 2026 include:

- Advertising in the Visit PA Guide and other publications offering print and digital exposure locally, regionally, and beyond in addition to paid social media placements
- Sponsoring local tourism non-profits and events including festivals and competitions to help them advertise, bring in talent or entertainment, and expand their reach
- Furthering brand recognition of the ORNHA
- Hosting educational events on subjects including Homeshares, the Restaurant Industry, and the local Real Estate Market
- Supporting PRLA's advocacy for an increased PA State Tourism Budget in order to be competitive with neighboring states and boost tourism-related revenue
- Partnering with PA Great Lakes Region on continued web presence at PAGreatLakes.com and Google Ad Words digital advertising campaign and expansion of social media advertising
- Producing a weekly e-newsletter highlighting entertainment and educational events taking place in the region
- Developing a Hotel Incentive Program to help local lodging facilities enhance their offerings

Oil Region Guide

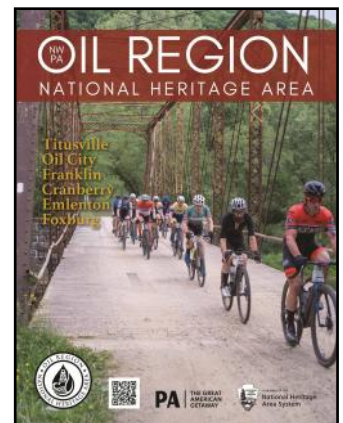
The Guide is the region's premiere marketing piece. It is developed completely in-house, and 85,000 hard copies are printed locally. In addition, a virtual edition is available at OilRegion.org that contains live links to advertisers and event websites. A PDF version can be downloaded from the site and hard copies can be requested.

The Guide is distributed locally and in response to direct requests and leads generated through advertising, as well as at stops on the Pennsylvania turnpike, Welcome Centers, select AAA offices across the state, and at three spots on I-95 in Delaware and Maryland.

Article themes include heritage, arts and culture, and outdoor recreation, in addition to listings for lodging, dining, shopping, and festivals and special events.

Projects

The ORA will develop the 2027-2028 Oil Region Guide in the summer and fall. This includes soliciting advertisers, updating photos, listings, and articles, and finalizing the document for print in November to have hard copies ready to distribute in early 2027.



Literature Distribution

Scores of brochures from regional attractions and the Oil Region Guide are distributed to local venues and mailed around the world by Alliance staff members upon request. Contracts with larger service providers place literature at strategic locations throughout the state. Visitor Centers at Perry Street Station, Venango Museum, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, Crawford Center, Cranberry Mall, and hotels and shops throughout the region offer Oil Region literature as well.

Tourism Event Support Grants

The Alliance will offer grants to support events produced by non-profits that will promote overnight stays in Venango County. Grant awards of up to \$1,000 will be available for eligible single-day events and \$2,000 for multi-day events. No match is required. The application period will open in Q1 with a subcommittee meeting to select awardees in April. Awardees will have up to one year to spend the grant money and 90 days after the event to provide a wrap up

report detailing how funds were used and the effectiveness of the event. Funds for these Tourism Event Support Grants come from Venango County Hotel Tax.

Mini Grants

The Alliance will offer Tourism Marketing Mini Matching Grants in 2026. Oil Region tourism destinations (both for- and non-profits) can apply for half the cost of printing brochures or rack cards up to \$500. Grants require a one-to-one cash match by the grantee. Applications are available early in the year with awards in the form of refunds distributed beginning in April. The intention is to have new publications to distribute at local reference locations in time for the busy summer travel season.

Websites and Social Media

OilRegion.org remains the official site for both the Alliance and the Oil Region National Heritage Area and serves as a more in-depth reference resource on the region’s heritage, outdoor recreation, and the Alliance.

ExperienceTheOilRegion.com, which focuses on events and tourism amenities including museums, competitions, performances, restaurants, and lodging went live in 2024. This site spotlights upcoming events with content changing frequently. The site also features a locally produced video about outdoor recreation in Venango County.

The Alliance maintains Facebook pages and Instagram accounts for the ORA and Tarbell House.

Projects

An interactive map on ExperienceTheOilRegion.com, designed to show the multitude of offerings in the small geographic footprint of the ORNHA, will be updated and promoted. Entries on the map can be sorted by Outdoor Recreation, Arts & Culture, Heritage Sites, and “Eat, Shop & Sleep” to represent dining, retail, and lodging amenities. Users can text, e-mail, and share entries on social media to help plan trips and share experiences once they’ve visited.

The Alliance will promote this tool in 2026 through online webinars and social media posts to get the word out and help users make the most of it. We will strive to build our network of likes, shares, and user contributions.



Tourism Awards

The ORA hosts the Oil Region Tourism Awards annually. The public nominates ORNHA businesses and organizations and votes online for their favorite in categories including Best Dish and Best Scenic Selfie Spot. An entity cannot win in the same category in back to back years. Winners receive a sign and certificate at a small reception as well as special promotion throughout the year, especially through social media.

PA Great Lakes Region

As the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Venango County, the ORA cooperates with Erie, Mercer, and Crawford County DMOs to form the PA Great Lakes Region. This organization meets monthly and markets NW PA through a website, paid social media advertising, and a Google Ad Words campaign run by a local firm with input from each county.

PA Restaurant and Lodging Association (PRLA)

The Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association champions all facets of the Commonwealth’s hospitality and tourism industries. Its mission is to promote, protect, educate, and improve these industries. PRLA has grown into one of the largest state hospitality and tourism associations in the nation. PRLA works closely with national partners to ensure representation of its members across all segments and understands hospitality and tourism are significant drivers of Pennsylvania’s economy.

The ORA is a member of PRLA and meets virtually with its representatives and other PA DMOs monthly. PRLA continues to be a resource for the ORA, participating in educational events hosted by the ORA and providing support to ORNHA hospitality businesses and organizations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

New Property Acquisitions

During 2026 the ORA will continue to work with Norfolk Southern to lease/purchase the rail line starting at the Oil City McDonald's and extending to the community of Siverly. This segment includes the Wye Bridge, a historic, 1930-built railroad bridge crossing the Allegheny River. It is one of only three bridges remaining in the country designed with a "wye" shape, meaning it splits into an upstream and downstream rail route. The goal is to restore the Wye Bridge for bicycles, rail bikes, and pedestrian travel in a safe manner as well as to create a unique tourism experience.

Venango Regional Airport Marketing

The Alliance assists the airport with local and national marketing, tying the Venango Regional Airport to the region's economic development and tourism assets.

The airport is also home to a restaurant and Vintage Wings, a 1940s era hangar museum meant to mimic life on an Air Transport Command base during WWII complete with the "Beach City Baby," a 1942 Douglas C-53-DO Skytrooper, which shuttled troops and wounded in and out of the North African campaign.

Projects

Continue to advocate at the Federal level for the Venango Regional Airport to be accepted back into the Essential Air Service Program. The ORA will also help market the hangar space available for rent at the airport.

Local Industry Assistance

Through a partnership with the Northwest Commission and the PA Department of Economic Development (DCED) and its Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) program, the Alliance provides resources and expertise to local and regional individuals who have an idea and need help with the basics of starting a new venture and existing companies that seek assistance in all aspects of successful business development and growth. The Alliance meets regularly with regional businesses to determine investment and workforce needs, offering information about state programs and other resources.



PEDA Certification

The Pennsylvania Economic Development Association provides training and certification for economic development agencies in PA. The Alliance attends required training classes and events to maintain its certification for the region's benefit, which includes the ability to offer Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority financing as well as other funding options for economic development programs for local businesses.

Sandycreek Industrial Park

The Sandycreek Industrial Park offers 65 acres of prime industrial real estate in Sandycreek Township, easily accessible from I-80 by way of the Route 8 Expressway and less than two miles from the Venango Regional Airport. The park has roadway and utilities available to building sites. Approved in December 2022 for ten years, Venango County's only Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ), the park offers companies a major incentive to have their business' taxes reduced to near zero through credits, waivers, and abatements through December 2032.

Projects

The Alliance will continue to market the park to those industries that will most benefit by moving to or expanding in Venango County, those who need to be closer to established vendors and/or customers, those who need to be located near regional resources, and those who value the quality of life available in the Oil Region. The Alliance will also work closely with Sandycreek Township to develop plans and to secure funding for ongoing improvements to access and amenities for the park. The ORA and Sandycreek partnered with DCED to repave all of DeBence Drive at the end of 2025, and a property sale for 22 acres is imminent in

early 2026. There will be clearing work performed during 2026 that should spur additional land sales for projects.

In addition to Sandycreek, the Alliance will also continue to market its industrial parks at Barkeyville and Cranberry.

Brownfield Development

Reclaiming and redeveloping local brownfield assets — former industrial and commercial locations with potential or known environmental hazards — is critical to the revitalization of the Oil Region. The Alliance, as a non-profit corporation and certified Economic Development Agency, is in a unique position to assist with the reclamation of brownfield sites due to redevelopment grants, exemptions from liability, and expert technical assistance not available to other entities.

Projects

ORA properties transitioning from assessment to remediation in 2026 include the Kraft-Dahlstrom site in Oil City and the Fuch's Lubricants site in Emlenton. ORA will use an EPA Clean-Up Grant to address contaminated soils at the former Dahlstrom salvage yard, clearing the way for multi-purpose development. At the Fuch's site, DCED Industrial Site Reuse Program funding will be used to raze the contaminated structure and to remediate soils, with the result being a development-ready riverfront site which is also strategically situated on the Allegheny River trailhead. The ORA's testing and assessment of brownfield sites will continue in 2026 with the acquisition of the JM Eagle property located in the Third Ward of Franklin. This

long-standing, heavily contaminated industrial site will be acquired and assessed with a vision to creating a comprehensive community asset.

The ORA will also be focusing its next assessment grant on three target properties located in Franklin and two in Sugarcreek if successful in the next grant round.

With all the brownfield properties, the Alliance will work to address contaminated soils, potential vapor pathways, and impacts to nearby pristine waterways, and will proactively seek, with community input, to turn these sites back into viable, contributing properties.

Former Days Inn Hotel Property

In fall 2023, the City of Oil City, the Oil City Redevelopment Authority, and the Alliance collaborated to acquire the former Days Inn property at 1 Seneca Street, Oil City. With Keystone Communities Program funding, the Alliance managed the full demolition of the structure in 2024. In 2025 the hotel sign and base along with curbs, trees, and light poles were removed to provide a more development-ready site. A developer plans to build a 500-seat event space with rooftop restaurant/bar overlooking the Allegheny River and in a subsequent phase construct a 60+ room hotel beside the event center. The Oil Region Alliance will support these developments and the amenities they will bring to the region.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



The Oil Region Alliance houses and works closely with the Oil City Main Street (OCMS) Program to advance community and economic development within the designated Main Street district. Revitalization efforts are guided by the Steering Committee and supported through the Organizational, Economic Vitality, Design, Promotions, Public Art, and Safe, Clean & Green subcommittees.

Target projects and initiatives for 2026 include:

Pennsylvania Downtown Center Designation: OCMS is applying for re-designation through the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC), a significant milestone that strengthens the program’s credibility and competitiveness when pursuing funding opportunities.

OCMS received a \$100,000 Façade Grant through Governor Josh Shapiro’s Main Street Matters Program. To date, OCMS has committed \$49,999 toward the revitalization of local businesses. This marks the fourth successful façade grant round for Oil City.

Upon re-designation by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, OCMS will benefit from \$225,000 in funding awarded over the next five years to support Main Street programming.

Once designated, OCMS will be eligible to apply for a new implementation grant to advance a much-needed city-wide wayfinding project.

OCMS has applied for a T-Mobile grant to install outdoor string lighting on the North Side, an area that has become a hub for evening events and activities. The project will enhance the streetscape while providing a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for residents and visitors.

The independent video series “Meet Me on Main Street” highlighting local businesses, organizations, and events has driven substantial growth on the Main Street social media page—increasing measurably from 2,000 followers in January 2024 to 6,700 followers as of February 2026.

OCMS aspires to grow its Thursday Curb Markets by closing a lane of traffic on Central Avenue to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and encourage increased vendor participation.

The “Third Thursdays: Night Market Under the Lights” initiative will boost evening foot traffic in the South Side shopping and dining district. The market will feature artisans and makers exclusively, along with live music.

OCMS will continue to host and expand successful events including Spring and Fall Oil City Uncorked, BridgeFest, The Bunny Hop (with the OC YMCA), Christmas Past, Jingle Bell 5K, Small Business Saturday, Music on the Square, First Fridays with Downtown Merchants and ARTS Oil City. Growth is planned for the 2nd Annual Allegheny River Music, Art & Outdoor Festival, with additions such as the Friedhaber Family-Friendly Poker Run on the trails and the city’s first half marathon.

OCMS will pursue funding to introduce a mural festival and expand public art initiatives, enhancing the existing mural tour and walking guide.

Scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, this community-wide effort drew 250 volunteers last year. In 2026, OCMS aims to increase volunteer participation, remove more litter, and beautify even more areas throughout the city.

OCMS will be planting spring flowers city-wide and expand its fall Weed & Clean-Up initiative to mirror the success of the Spring Clean-Up, further enhancing the appearance and pride of Oil City year-round.

The Oil City Main Street Program was designated a Keystone Main Street in 2010 and has been nationally accredited by Main Street America since 2012. We look forward to being Designated as one of the Main Street Matters Program by Spring of 2026.

For more information, visit OilCityMainStreet.org.





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 strives to provide a supportive network for native and relocated visual, literary and performing artists, and helps to promote and facilitate ongoing arts-related engagement with the community.

In 2026, arts revitalization efforts will continue with an increase in national promotion of the artists relocation program, with emphasis on attracting established early and mid-career visual, performing and literary artists to explore moving to Oil City. In tandem with the new marketing efforts, we are working to develop new processes for welcoming and engaging prospective artists and those who relocate.

ARTS Oil City facilitates the rental of affordable art studio space in the historic National Transit Building, owned by the Oil City Civic Center. In 2026, the Oil Region Alliance and ARTS Oil City will revisit the strategic partnership with the OC Civic Center, with the aim to strengthen the program we offer to the arts community.

Since 2022, ARTS Oil City has partnered with the national movement, Artists Sunday, and has been growing the annual fall event. In 2026, there are plans to further expand the program and continue to make it an important boost to the local creative economy.

Since the fall of 2024, ARTS Oil City has had a partnership agreement with Erie Arts & Culture to be a regional hub for the EAC Working Artist Education Programs Series. In 2026, EAC and ARTS Oil City are working to improve and expand on this program with lectures and workshops held at the Oil Region Venango Campus. As arts funding sources are being cut and arts priorities realigned at the state and federal level, we will work to increase the impact we have with partners like EAC.

ARTS Oil City and the Oil Region Alliance were selected as partners for the 2025 Bridgeway Capital ACRE Program (Alliance for Creative Rural Economies). Bridgeway's mission to empower creative entrepreneurs in rural communities through financial resilience, creative fulfillment, and social impact aligns perfectly with ORA and ARTS Oil City's work for artists and is a partnership that will evolve in 2026, with the newly launched Bridgeway Client Success Network. 15 creative professionals graduated from the intensive ACRE program working closely with business coaches, regional industry experts, and peers to develop business plans, explore new revenue streams, and build connections within the local creative economy. These people will participate in the new Bridgeway program with support from ARTS Oil City and ORA.

For more information, visit ArtsOilCity.com.



MEMBERSHIPS

ORA Members As of January 31, 2026

AA Nagy Excavating & Construction, Inc.
 Allegheny Valley Trails Association
 Amy's Closet
 Barr's Insurance
 John Bartlett
 Borough of Emlenton
 Bill Brice
 Bridge Builders Community Foundation
 Caboose Motel
 Career Concepts
 Leah Carter
 Central Electric Cooperative, Inc.
 Christ Episcopal Church
 City of Oil City
 City of Titusville
 County of Venango
 Cranberry Township
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 DeBence Antique Music World
 Sharon & George Dorogy
 The EADS Group, Inc.
 Edward Jones
 Jennifer Feehan
 First United National Bank

Franklin Industrial & Commercial
 Development Authority
 French Creek Valley Conservancy
 Friends of Drake Well
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 Jacob A Weaver LLC
 Joy Global Underground Mining /
 Komatsu
 Maureen James
 Allan Montgomery
 National Fuel
 Northern PA Regional College
 Oil City YMCA
 Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad
 Piovan Group
 Richmond Real Estate Service Inc.
 Rossbacher Insurance
 Sandycreek Township
 Sassy's Clothing & Gift Boutique
 Senator Scott Hutchinson

Specialty Fabrication & Powder Coating
 State Representative R. Lee James
 Cecile Stelter
 Stifel Nicolaus
 Svetz Consulting Services, LLC.
 Titusville Community Development
 Agencies
 Titusville Historical Society
 Titusville Renaissance, Inc.
 Trails to Ales Brewery
 Venango County Fair, Inc.
 Venango County Historical Society
 Voyten Electric & Electronics, Inc.
 Wildcat Mansion
 Wilson, Thompson & Cisek, LLC.

ORNHA Members

As of January 31, 2026

John Bartlett
 Kellner's Fireworks
 Allan Montgomery
 Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad
 Trails to Ales Brewery



**SUPPORT THE ALLIANCE.
 BECOME A MEMBER.**





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Emily Altomare

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Jessica Gorman

Executive Assistant/IT Support

Todd Ifft

Fiscal Support

Mark Kerr

Outdoor Recreation Project Manager

Raven Nespor

Project Coordinator

Abigail Watson-Popescu

Heritage Program Manager

Stevette Rosen

Oil City Main Street Manager

Barbara Pierce

ARTS Oil City Coordinator

Kody Ealy

Crawford Center Custodian

2026 BUDGET

(Approved by the Board of Directors on December 18, 2025)

| Revenue | | | Expense | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------|
| Grants | \$ 6,650,000 | 84% | Program | \$ 3,474,985 | 59% |
| Destination Marketing | 266,000 | 3% | Gen & Admin | 1,080,875 | 18% |
| Memberships | 75,000 | 1% | Property Management | 1,356,500 | 23% |
| Property Management | 700,000 | 9% | Fundraising | 10,000 | 0.2% |
| Contributions | 40,000 | 0.5% | Total Expense | \$ 5,922,360 | |
| Sale of Assets/Use of Invest. | 150,000 | 2% | Grant Deferral to 2027 | \$2,000,000 | |
| Events, Sales, Admin. Fees | 45,000 | 0.5% | Net Income | \$ 3,640 | |
| Total Revenue | \$ 7,926,000 | | | | |

The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism is a non-profit corporation formed in Pennsylvania and registered with the PA Bureau of Charitable Organizations. It is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Contributions to the Alliance may be tax-deductible. BCO #21782.



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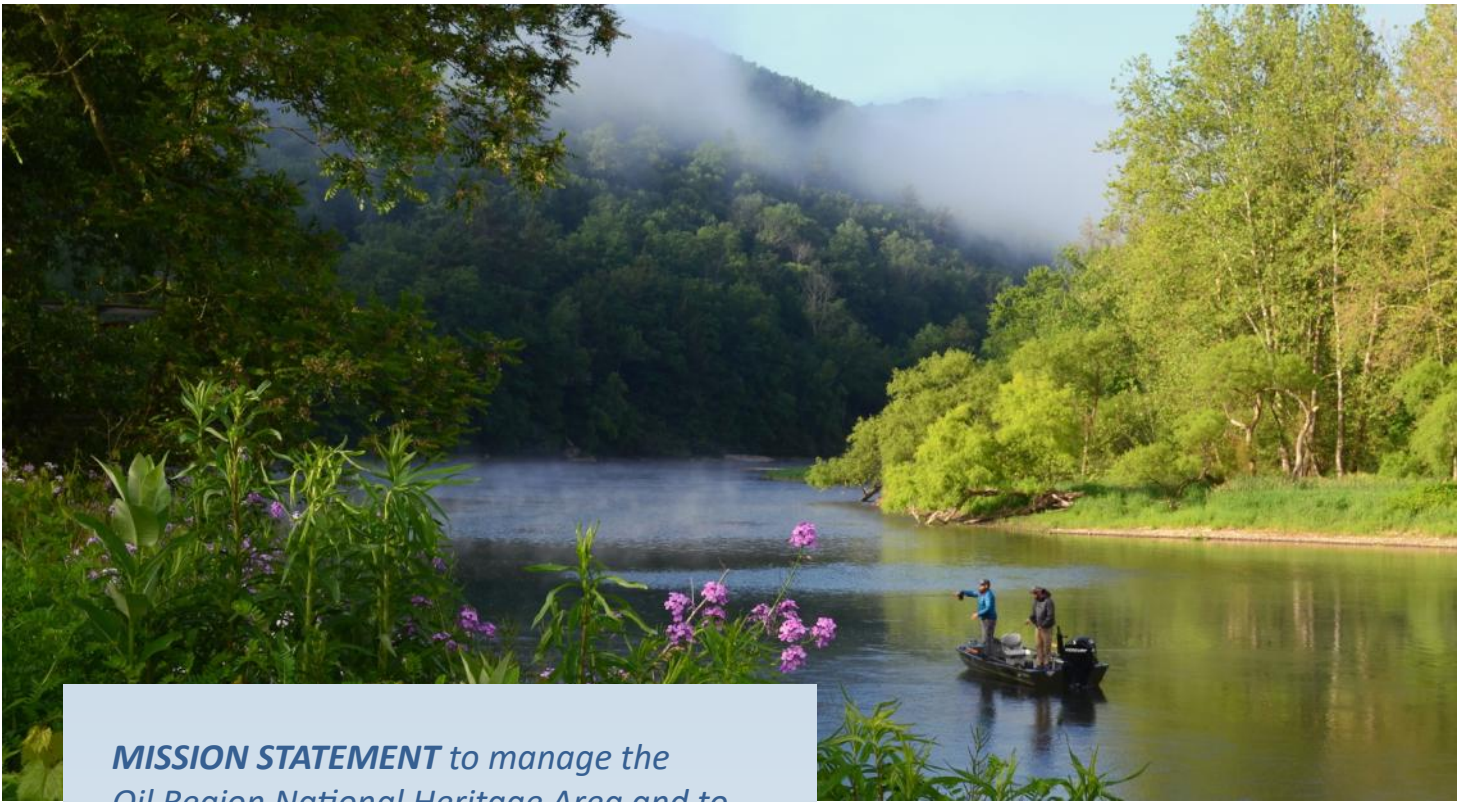
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Heritage Advisory — Betsy Kellner, Chair

Outdoor Recreation — Chad Ellis, Chair

Tourism Advisory — Maureen James, Chair

Campus Advisory — Matt Craig and Stacy Ginkel, Co-Chairs



***MISSION STATEMENT** 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.*

