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To: File
From: Jonathan Lane
Subj: **Public Meeting on Oil Region National Heritage Area Management Plan
Held at Parish Hall, Christ Episcopal Church, Oil City**
Date: December 14, 2005

Purpose of the presentation was to introduce the Management Action Plan Augmentation for the Oil Region NHA and to receive comments on environmental impacts of concern for the Environmental Assessment and to review scope of the update and solicit comments on that topic.

Attendees

Marilyn Black, ORA
Barbara Zolli, Drake Well Museum
Peter Samuel, National Park Service
Larry Puleo, Allegheny Valley Trails
Association
Sonja Hawkins, Oil City Council
Margo Mong, Oil City
Clarence Pelaghi, Oil City

Lois McElwee, Oil City and ORA
Neil McElwee, Oil City
Bill Bowen, Oil City
David Strickland, Architect
Kim Harris, ORA
Jonathan Lane, ICON
Rita Walsh, VHB

Notes

- 1.** Marilyn Black introduced the Management Plan Augmentation and highlighted reasons why this is being done.
- 2.** Peter Samuels of NPS explained NPS role, general process concerns, and the current situation where NPS resources to support the 14 NHA's in the Northeast region are highly competitive. These areas are not owned nor managed by the U.S. Government. This includes the second NHA established and the majority of the 27 that have been designated nationally. Once designation occurs, appropriations come with cooperative agreements through the NPS. The legislation requires several beginning steps, including approval of the Management Plan by the Secretary of the Interior.
- 3.** Jonathan Lane and Rita Walsh presented an overview, with a recap of elements of the 2004 Plan Update, topics of concern for the NHA Plan augmentation, and request for scoping comments of topics of environmental impacts of concern about the plan. Lane emphasized that this amendment would be a "tune-up" of the 2004 Update, not "trading it in for a new model." Augmentation needs to consider changes since the 2004 Update and elements required by NHA legislation, particularly preservation.
- 4.** Comments on environmental impacts of concern:
 - a.** Will riparian zones on rivers and creeks be considered? EA should mention that any waterside projects should include proper erosion control, protection from run-off, and comply with any state permit requirements.
 - b.** Will plan recommend preservation of landscapes, especially those along rivers? Plan should include sensitivity to protection of ridge lines. Do cell phone towers have to be so visible? Why not make them look like derricks, or hide them inside steeples?

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This is somewhat a general planning topic for communities, although suggestions could be made to county or planning agencies to review zoning provisions. Criteria could also be incorporated into requirements of partners receiving NPS \$. An example is the mouth of Oil Creek. Municipalities may want to protect viewsapes.

- c.** Need to be aware that property rights movement people are fearful of any NHA doing land management policies. ORNHA is prohibited from interfering with or preempting local zoning.
 - d.** Include concern for public access.
- 5.** Comments on preservation:
- a.** Upgrade technical assistance by ORA staff and subcontractors.
 - b.** Include access to groups such as the National Trust and others.
 - c.** Some NHA's do rehabilitation guidelines; others encourage historic district overlays and provide assistance with specific or model ordinances. Some NHA's have staff who advise on rehabilitation and have architects either on staff or under contract to advise in these matters.
 - d.** NPS Cultural Resources program can help with training sessions; thus strengthening local capacity.
 - e.** Property owners need guidance in accessing help, applying for tax credits, etc.
 - f.** Provide assistance to owners, investors, and architects thinking about new infill construction within historic districts.
 - g.** Oil-related occupations and cultural groups should be encouraged to tell their stories.
 - h.** Consider rehabilitation of the Annex of National Transit – Oil City Civic Center is opening a small museum in this space to deal with history of National Transit Company.
 - i.** Lane commented that most NHAs set the vision of desired quality and then structure incentives to encourage economic development that meets preservation goals and vision.
- 6.** Comments on Partnerships in the plan:
- a.** Share a grantwriter as an example of technical assistance.
 - b.** More actively encourage entities outside the boundaries to participate in ORNHA (e.g. – for non property based programs or activities)
 - c.** Mention explicitly that in 2008 ORA will conduct a feasibility study of enlarging boundaries of ORNHA.
 - d.** Explicitly indicate that education and other events and publications can and will involve settings outside ORNHA.
 - e.** What is lacking is active Heritage Development – plan is heavily weighted towards recreation. The “still living” towns in the region are, in actuality, oil boomtowns – Pleasantville, Plummer, etc. – and maybe ORA should identify and promote them as such. Perhaps something broader based, using whole communities. Consider

tiny Volant Village and its retail as a tourist mecca for quaintness of specialty gift shops, etc. This would combine preservation, development, promotional, and entrepreneurial potentials. Tell oil history not just in the museums. Perhaps combine with OHR “training house.” This would relate to the designated driving tour. Ex – Dempseytown teacher did a local history booklet. Community visioning has been done in Oil City and Franklin, but not in the smaller communities.

- f.** Recreation – in Oil City please revise routing of bike trail so it does not share West Front Street.