



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

H32(2257)

FEB 11 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the *Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway Evaluation* (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the consultant group Westat as the evaluator to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the National Heritage Area. Based on the findings of the Ohio and Erie Evaluation, as required by Section 462(c) of Public Law 110-229, the NPS recommends a future role with the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway. NPS will work with the Ohio and Erie National Heritage Canalway (OENHC) to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource development plans, and form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further long-term sustainability of OENHC operations.

The 110-mile long Ohio & Erie Canal, located between Cleveland and New Philadelphia, Ohio, spurred economic and population growth, although use decreased as railroads emerged in the late 1800s. Congress created the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in 1974. The Ohio Canal Corridor (OCC) and the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (OECC) began working to develop and promote the Canal, prior to designation of the National Heritage Canalway in 1996.

The OENHC assists local entities in protecting and using historic, cultural, and recreational resources to benefit communities and raise awareness of the canal's history. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Association (OECA) was created in 1997 to serve as the coordinating entity and receive NPS funds. The OECA is administered by a Board in partnership with the OECC and the OCC which coordinates planning, programs, and work through grants from the OECA. The Director of the OCC and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the OECC are Co-Directors of the OECA.

The Evaluation determined that the OECA fulfilled its legislated purposes and management plan goals through the Federal resources provided. Successful outcomes were documented in five areas: planning for development and investment; resource conservation; interpretation and education; visitor experience; and community and economic development. Planning accounted for nine percent of NPS funds, including the Management Plan, which was approved in 2000 and adopted by 58 local jurisdictions, as well as nonprofit and civic organizations.

The evaluation concludes that the OECA has expended Federal and matching funds to address legislative and management goals. The OECA received \$10.3 million in NPS funds, which were matched by \$36.5 million from the State of Ohio, corporate sponsors, foundations, private donations and nonprofit organizations such as the Knight Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, and the Gar Foundation. Other Federal funds include \$756,000 in Scenic Byway Grants. Federal funds received by partners leveraged investments including \$19.6 million in HOPE VI funds received by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority and \$3 million received by Cleveland from NOAA for the Canalway Center. OECA NPS funding is below the authorized limit of \$15 million.

The plurality of funds, 42 percent, supported improvements to the Canal, trails, and historic sites such as the Howe House and the Limbach Block National Historic District. Restorations have had a significant impact. \$2.3 million was raised to restore the Howe House, which is a visitor center, office for the OECC, and trail head in Akron. Education and interpretation accounted for use of 28 percent of the OECA NPS funds. Funding supported development of trail heads, visitor centers, and historic sites for educational, interpretation, and recreation events.

Revitalization of the Canal, construction of the Towpath Trail, and related activities spurred economic development, utilizing 21 percent of the OECA NPS investment. OECA grants leveraged financial resources from local and State government and private sources including \$10.5 million from the City of Cleveland, plus funds from the Clean Ohio and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for the Cuyahoga County Towpath Trail. Leaders indicated that projects contributed to the economic revitalization of Akron and Cleveland, which were otherwise impacted by the decline of the steel industry and the resulting population loss.

The OECA has strong partnerships with the NPS Midwest Regional Office and Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), which manages the cooperative agreement and assists with signage, programs, and compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. CVNP staff provided assistance with projects such as the redevelopment of the Mustill House and the Store at Cascade Locks Park in Akron, which is a visitor center and museum. The project utilized \$200,000 of NPS funds, which leveraged \$1 million dollars in non-Federal funds.

OECA has the governance, business, and administrative structures to support sustainability. While the OECA does not raise funds, the OECC and the OCC have strong fundraising capacities. If NPS funding is reduced, projects may be slowed, however the structure and activities of the organization would remain the same assuming other sources of funding continue at their current levels.

The Ohio and Erie National Heritage Canalway is fulfilling its legislative mandate. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exist for NPS involvement in supporting the heritage area including providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance and guidance on long-term sustainability planning, partnering with National Parks for events and programming, consulting on preservation and conservation, and consulting on area plans and projects.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Bean". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "B".

Michael Bean
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
The Honorable Marcia Fudge
The Honorable Bob Gibbs
The Honorable David Joyce
The Honorable James Renacci
The Honorable Tim Ryan
The Honorable Tom Udall
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The Honorable Betty McCollum



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The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

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The Evaluation determined that the OECA fulfilled its legislated purposes and management plan goals through the Federal resources provided. Successful outcomes were documented in five areas: planning for development and investment; resource conservation; interpretation and education; visitor experience; and community and economic development. Planning accounted for nine percent of NPS funds, including the Management Plan, which was approved in 2000 and adopted by 58 local jurisdictions, as well as nonprofit and civic organizations.

The evaluation concludes that the OECA has expended Federal and matching funds to address legislative and management goals. The OECA received \$10.3 million in NPS funds, which were matched by \$36.5 million from the State of Ohio, corporate sponsors, foundations, private donations and nonprofit organizations such as the Knight Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, and the Gar Foundation. Other Federal funds include \$756,000 in Scenic Byway Grants. Federal funds received by partners leveraged investments including \$19.6 million in HOPE VI funds received by the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority and \$3 million received by Cleveland from NOAA for the Canalway Center. OECA NPS funding is below the authorized limit of \$15 million.

The plurality of funds, 42 percent, supported improvements to the Canal, trails, and historic sites such as the Howe House and the Limbach Block National Historic District. Restorations have had a significant impact. \$2.3 million was raised to restore the Howe House, which is a visitor center, office for the OECC, and trail head in Akron. Education and interpretation accounted for use of 28 percent of the OECA NPS funds. Funding supported development of trail heads, visitor centers, and historic sites for educational, interpretation, and recreation events.

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The OECA has strong partnerships with the NPS Midwest Regional Office and Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), which manages the cooperative agreement and assists with signage, programs, and compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. CVNP staff provided assistance with projects such as the redevelopment of the Mustill House and the Store at Cascade Locks Park in Akron, which is a visitor center and museum. The project utilized \$200,000 of NPS funds, which leveraged \$1 million dollars in non-Federal funds.

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The Ohio and Erie National Heritage Canalway is fulfilling its legislative mandate. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exist for NPS involvement in supporting the heritage area including providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance and guidance on long-term sustainability planning, partnering with National Parks for events and programming, consulting on preservation and conservation, and consulting on area plans and projects.

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for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

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