

Oberlin Heritage Center E-Gazette – June 12, 2010

Dear Readers:

We thought many of you might well be interested in knowing about this. Liz Schultz, Oberlin Heritage Center Museum Education and Tour Coordinator, is serving on the Study Team for this project. We encourage you to participate in the Town Hall Gatherings.

Western Reserve Heritage Area Study Seeking Additional Public Input

In 1796, surveyors arrived in Ohio and began preparing the wilderness for settlement. Those now living and working in the area known as the Western Reserve have the opportunity to decide if working as a region toward resource conservation and economic development could be the next chapter in this region's history.

A feasibility study for designating the Western Reserve as a National Heritage Area has been requested by Congress and is currently under the coordination of the National Park Service. This study includes an evaluation of the region's unique historical, natural, recreational, and cultural resources to determine their national significance, as well as an examination of local support and ability to coordinate a national heritage area should designation be approved by Congress. A local steering committee of more than 20 regional community planners, economic development specialists, preservation experts, and resource managers is providing study assistance. Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail/Ohio Sea Grant, Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition and the Ohio Historical Society are helping the National Park Service conduct the study.

As originally charted by surveyors hired by the Connecticut Land Company, the study area for the Western Reserve Heritage Area includes all or portions of present-day counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa and Ashland. A second round of Town Hall Gatherings will be held in June that builds upon the information gathered at previous meetings held this past winter. At these meetings participants will be asked to define the nationally significant story of the Western Reserve and the resources that support it.

“We heard a wide range of stories that are preserved in the Western Reserve, now it is time to identify that one story that recognizes Western Reserve's place in America's story,” said Rory Robinson, Study Team Leader with the National Park Service. “This story becomes the focus, a common thread that can be embraced by all within the Western Reserve, and serves as a catalyst for resource preservation, economic development and an enhanced quality of life throughout the region.”

The meeting agenda will also include discussion on alternatives for coordination of the region as a heritage area, identification of a local coordinating entity that would be responsible for organizing projects and programs, administering funds, and ensuring the overall, long-term viability of the heritage area.

Town Hall Gatherings are scheduled throughout the Western Reserve region June 17 - 24. These informal meetings will be held 4 to 6 p.m. National Park Service staff and members of a Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Steering Committee will be on-hand to answer questions. These gatherings will provide opportunities for the public to provide input. Meetings are scheduled as follows:

- June 17 Reed Memorial Library, Jenkins Room, 167 West Main Street, Ravenna, Ohio
- June 21 Jefferson Historical Society, 42 East Jefferson Street, Jefferson, Ohio
- June 22 Sleepy Hollow Golf Course Clubhouse, 9445 Brecksville Road, Brecksville, Ohio
- June 23 Medina County District Library, 210 South Broadway, Medina, Ohio
- June 24 Huron Public Library, 333 Williams Street, Huron, Ohio

There are currently 49 national heritage areas in the United States, including two within the State of Ohio: Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area in northeast Ohio and the National Aviation Heritage Area in southwest Ohio. Each national heritage area has a local organization responsible for working with local communities in setting and implementing activities and goals.

To learn more about the Western Reserve Heritage Area Feasibility Study, visit <http://westernreserve.ning.com>, or call Rory Robinson with the National Park Service at (330) 657-2951.

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