



# Application Form for NPS RTCA Assistance

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## **Steps for applicant:**

- ✓ Contact RTCA staff at least two weeks before applying for assistance;
- ✓ Send Applicant Information and Project Description to [RTCA\\_Application@nps.gov](mailto:RTCA_Application@nps.gov) by August 1 or by U.S. Mail to appropriate Program Manager postmarked by August 1;
- ✓ We recommend sending maps, large background documents and support letters by U.S. Mail to appropriate Program Manager postmarked by August 1.

**Project Name:** Ohio River Trail

**Date:** July 27, 2010

**Project Location:** Ohio River, from Coraopolis, Pa to Point of Beginning (PA-WV-OH line)

**City, County and State:** Multiple communities in Allegheny & Beaver County, PA; Columbiana County, OH.

**Congressional District(s):** US Congressional District # 4, 14, and 18.

**Applicant organization:** Ohio River Trail Council

**Primary Contact:** Dr. Vincent Troia, Chief Executive Officer

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**State:** Pennsylvania

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**Web:** [www.ohiorivertrail.org](http://www.ohiorivertrail.org)

## **Project Description:**

- 1. Describe the goals of your project and any tangible conservation or outdoor recreation results expected. Quantify the expected results in terms of miles of trail or protected river, acres of open space, parkland, habitat, etc. Briefly describe any prior activity or history, if any, on the project and its current status: What aspects of projects are going well, aspects you think need the most help. Include expected completion date if known.**

The Ohio River Trail Council (ORTC) is a non-profit volunteer-led corporation that works to bring individuals, communities, businesses, recreational users and all levels of government together to promote and protect a continuous corridor of natural and cultural resources along the Ohio River and its tributaries. The ORTC's goal is to honor our past and build our future by providing recreation opportunities, heritage development, environmental stewardship, safe transportation networks and economic stimulus to our community.

The Ohio River Trail Council (ORTC) proposes a broad vision of a multi-use land trail, land & water trail system the Ohio River Trail (ORT), along the "La Belle Riviere" or the Ohio River and its tributaries in West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania. An alliance is proposed with organizations from these three states to develop and implement this vision. Our network will allow for the construction of a "Centennial Trail" (100 mile loop) in this tri-state region, using the Ohio River Trail beginning at the Point of Beginning, Montour Trail, Panhandle Trail, and the proposed trails along the Ohio River in West Virginia and Ohio from Weirton, WV to Chester WV via Tomlinson State Park, and/or East Liverpool, OH and returning to the Point of Beginning.

For our distinct part of the project, we are focusing on the Forty-one (41) miles of trail project in PA, from Coraopolis west (downstream) to Point of Beginning (the PA-WV-OH state line).

**Prior activity, current status:**

Since the ORTC formation in 2009, we have developed a strong Board of Directors, developed an informative website, met with local community leaders and elected officials, obtained Resolutions of Support from seventeen (17) of the twenty-seven (27) communities along the route. The remaining resolutions are under development and reflect the extension and feeder trails. The ORTC has obtained over \$ 66,000 in funding. We have sixteen (16) board members, fifty (50) active members and over three hundred (300) individuals on the ORTC mailing list.

The ORTC is presently requesting RTCA staff support for assistance in completion of two land trail feasibility studies, the Ohio River Trail North Shore (ORTNS) and the Ohio River Trail South Shore (ORTSS). Additional assistance is needed with our efforts in public outreach and marketing, engaging youth and the wellness community, organizational development of a Three-State Alliance of trail interest groups, and concept planning for a broad vision of the larger trail system.

The Ohio River Trail Project is highly visible with a projected completion date of 2015.

**Project status:**

- South Shore Trail Feasibility Study to be completed fall 2010.
- North Shore Trail Feasibility Study: DCNR Grant application pending. Notification fall 2010.
- State Water Trail development proceeding with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.
- Canoe and Kayak launch sites to be constructed fall 2010.
- EPA \$175,000 Grant pending.

**2. Describe how your project will protect or improve important natural resources and/or enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.**

**History, recreation, protection and improvement of the Ohio River Corridor:**

French explorer Rene Robert Cavellier Sieur de La Salle was so taken with the Ohio River when he first laid eyes on it in 1669 that he christened it La Belle Riviere: The Beautiful River. Ohio is an Iroquois Indian name, Oheo, which traditionally is interpreted to mean "beautiful river", agreeing with the opinion of the French. The Ohio River winds some twenty-four miles through Beaver County, Pa and forms the boundaries of twenty-five different communities just in Beaver County. In the early days, the Ohio River was the primary way west for early settlers of the frontier. Later, with the coming of the steamboat, the Ohio River became the center of transportation and the Industrial Revolution.

During the Industrial Revolution, coal, transported via the Ohio River from West Virginia mines, powered the transformation of the United States from an agrarian society into one of largest industrial powers in the world. Beaver County grew rapidly after 1900 with the establishment of steel mills along the Ohio River, and much of the working force was engaged in steel production until the contraction of the steel industry in the late 1970s and early 1980's. Although some structural steel is still produced, most of the steel making operations have been dismantled. Today, the Ohio River continues to transport the region's coal to a series of coal-fired generating plants located throughout the Ohio Valley.

The railroads played an important role in the development of our young nation. They crossed rivers, like the Ohio, and penetrated mountain ranges, facilitating increased trade and westward expansion. Beaver County was home to the Pennsylvania Railroad, the "Standard Railroad of the World". Conway Yard that stretched almost four miles along the Ohio River was completed in 1957. This was the world's largest and most up to date automatic freight classification yard.

Nevertheless, the railroad economy declined in 1960's forcing the consolidation of the rail industry. The economic decline led to the closure of a number of uneconomical branch lines and many of these were simply abandoned. The unused industrial relics were turned into ecological areas functioning as linear parks or community space, but mainly as recreation corridors. This was the birth of the Rail Trails.

In addition, over the past 150 years Ohio River could have been more aptly defined as La Belle Coureuse: The Beautiful Sewer. However, clean stream laws over the past 50 years have helped the river make a comeback with reduced water pollution. Since the quality the water has improved in recent years, aquatic life such as Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Walleye, Shad, Channel Catfish, Bullheads, Carp, Stripers, and Trout have returned to the Ohio River with anglers crowding the banks.

The Ohio River Trail Council was formed in 2009 to build on this history and continue the important work of protecting our most important natural resource, the Ohio River. The Ohio River Trail (ORT) when completed will enhance and further develop recreational opportunities for the communities along the ORT corridors as well as the region, by linking existing and proposed pedestrian, bicycle, recreation, open space, and transportation facilities. The ORT will serve as an important alternative transportation corridor between communities as well as reducing congestion and pollution. The greenway will protect or restore important environmental assets like forests, wetlands, and stream banks, and the plants and animals that live there. The ORTC will initially provide stewardship over approximately fifty miles of rivers and approximately 32,000 acres of open space and habitat.

The ORT is part of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area and is being considered for part of the U.S Bicycle Route 50 and part of the Underground Railroad, Pittsburgh spur. The ORT will serve as a key segment in the interconnection of existing land trails in the tri-state area such as the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway, North Coast Inland Trail, North Bend Trail, American Discovery Trail, Brooke Pioneer Trail, Wheeling Heritage Trail, Beaver River Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, Montour Trail, Chartiers Creek Greenway, Panhandle Trail, Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Great Allegheny Passage, Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, and Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway (Millennium Legacy Trail) thereby creating an interlinked mega-trail system. In addition, the ORT will link to the RTCA assisted "Tri-State Trail Initiative" routes in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Whether you bicycle, walk, hike, jog, run, roller blade, fish, bird or butterfly watch cross-country ski, horseback ride, canoe, and kayak or enjoy boating, the Ohio River Trail will improve quality of life by providing fitness and recreation. The ORTC will partner with the YMCA and the Boy and Girl Scouts to provide our children to learn about becoming and staying active and developing healthy habits they'll carry with them throughout their lives. The kids will have the opportunity to explore nature, find new talents, expand and express themselves, try new activities, gain independence, and make lasting friendships and memories through the ORTC Kids & Trails program. Kids will find it easy to learn new skills, enjoy the great outdoors and, of course, run, leap, laugh, and play. The ORTC will ensure access to all, including persons of disability.

The ORTC through the development of the ORT will also protect environmental and cultural resources and improve public access to the river's edge. One of the major outcomes of the project will be to foster further recreation and cultural-based economic development within the local communities and the region, capitalizing on the synergy of ecotourism and the potential development of a larger recreation and parks system as a way to reposition all the evolved communities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century business and lifestyle needs. The ORT can become the new "town commons" where neighbors greet neighbors and new friendships can be forged along the scenic banks of the Ohio River. To say the proposed ORT would be significant resource in the region would be an understatement. The ORT would be a tremendous boost to the quality of life in Beaver and Allegheny Counties and the communities it would pass through.

- 2. List the partners involved and describe how they are actively and substantively involved in the project. Identify those partners that embrace any of the current strategic themes for RTCA. Briefly summarize the existing or anticipated role and contribution of each. (Three support letters from partners required)**

### Partners

<http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/content-layouts>

- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PADCNR) - Grant
- First Energy Foundation (FEF) - Grant
- Port of Pittsburgh Commission (PPC) - Grant
- Beaver County, Pa – Financial support.
- Allegheny County, Pa – Planning support.
- Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates, Inc. – Feasibility study; grant writing.
- Greenways Inc. – Feasibility study
- Toole Recreational Planning – Feasibility study;
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) - Water trails assistance
- Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)- Planning support
- Beaver County Transit Authority (BCTA) - Adding racks to buses.
- Beaver County YMCA – Youth programs along the trail
- Allegheny County Department of Public Works - Planning support
- Beaver County Conservation District – Funding and planning support
- Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development – Planning support
- Beaver County Planning Commission – Planning support
- Beaver River Rails-to-Trails Association - Alliance
- Columbiana County Park District - Alliance
- Community Development of Beaver County – Planning support
- Friends of the Riverfront - Alliance
- Montour Trail Council- Alliance
- Town Center Associates - Community support
- Chartiers Nature Conservancy – Alliance

Many of the above supporters have provided technical, financial and volunteer assistance. The YMCA and local schools have requested connections in order to provide outdoor recreation and recreational activities. The YMCA located in Rochester Township, Pa will serve as a trailhead for the ORTNST. This trailhead will provide access to both the Ohio River Trail and the Beaver River Trail. The ORT will also serve the following schools and centers: Beaver, Midland, Lincoln Performing Arts, PA Cyber, Saint Joseph, Saint Johns, and feeder trails to Beaver, Aliquippa, Rochester, New Brighton, Beaver Falls, Penn State Beaver, Geneva College, Beaver Medical Center and the New Brighton Senior Center. Also the Allegheny Valley School Zapp Center Campus is served which provides community residential environments and therapeutic programs for children and adults with mental retardation.

## Letters of Support and Community Resolutions:

<http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/resolutions-letters>

The Ohio River Trail, located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, is presently composed of twenty-seven (27) Western Pennsylvania Communities: There are eleven North Shore communities: Glasgow, Ohioville, Midland, Industry, Vanport, Beaver, Bridgewater, Fallston, New Brighton, Rochester, Rochester Township and there are ten South Shore communities: Monaca, Center Township, Aliquippa, Hopewell Township, South Heights, Crescent Township, Moon Township, Coraopolis and Montour Junction/Groveton, Pa. Neville Island is the tenth community with the extension over the Neville Island Bridge. In addition, the North Shore Extension Communities include the boroughs of Ambridge, Leetsdale, Edgeworth and Sewickley. The Bradys Run Park Extension adds Patterson and Brighton Townships.

- 3. Provide other examples of support for the project including: supporting language in local, regional and state plans, endorsements from elected officials and boards, supportive votes or public survey results, other grants or awards received, or examples of media coverage. Letters of support are welcome. Describe public participation, if any, in the project so far, and any future public participation plans.***

The Ohio River Trail Project is a priority for Beaver County as is identified in the 2010 Beaver County Comprehensive Plan and the 2007 Greenways and Trail Plan. Other language support is found in the Friends of the Riverfront long-term plan, the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission Plan, the Riverfront Communities Riverfront Strategies, Bridgewater Crossing Plan, Rochester Riverfront Plan, Confluence Connector Study and the City of Aliquippa's Revitalization Plan. Allegheny County has references in the Coraopolis Sports Complex and the Moon Township Waterfront Park.

## Beaver County Greenways Plan & Maps:

[http://www.beavercountypa.gov/PublicServices/PlanningCommission/PDFs/Greenway\\_trail\\_plan.pdf](http://www.beavercountypa.gov/PublicServices/PlanningCommission/PDFs/Greenway_trail_plan.pdf)

## Awarded Grants:

- PA DCNR Grant: \$20,000
- First Energy Foundation Grant: \$15,000
- Port of Pittsburgh Commission Grant: \$10,000
- Beaver County Commissioners Award: \$7,000
- ORTC Communities: \$14,000 + in kinds

## Public Participation:

Initially private meetings occurred to introduce the Ohio River Trail Project to the twenty-seven (27) involved municipalities. To date the ORTC meetings have been well attended and the membership is growing at a steady pace. Many public and steering committee meetings have occurred with respect to the south shore feasibility study. Additional public meetings are scheduled to occur with the north shore study, south shore study and the proposed tri-state alliance.

## Media Coverage:

- <http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/press-room>
  - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohio\\_River\\_Trail\\_Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohio_River_Trail_Council)
1. [^](#) Pound, Michael (18 October 2009). "[Biking, busing and buddying-up: Fewer commuters go it alone](#)". *Beaver County Times*.
  2. [^](#) David, Brian (6 May 2010). *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10126/1055757-57.stm>.
  3. [^](#) "[Welcome to the Ohio River Trail Council](#)". Ohio River Trail Council.
  4. [^](#) Pound, Michael (22 September 2009). "[Plans coming together for Ohio River Trail](#)". *Beaver County Times*.
  5. [^](#) Giambroni, Tom (21 June 2009). "[County supports bike trail extension](#)". *The Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio).
  6. [^](#) Pound, Michael (4 May 2010). "[Trail-building effort picks up steam](#)". *Beaver County Times*.
  7. [^](#) David, Brian (15 July 2010). "[Ohio River Trail study nears end](#)". *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*.
  8. [^](#) Walsh, Larry (17 July 2010). "[A lot of good news for bicyclists to cheer about](#)". *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*.
  9. [^](#) "[Plant a Wish](#)". *The Review*. 10 June 2010.
  10. [^](#) Schwendeman, Katie (13 June 2010). "[Tri-state united for Plant a Wish](#)". *The Review*.
  11. [^](#) David, Brian (15 July 2010). "[Point of Beginning may get bike trail](#)". *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*.

**5. Describe the kind of assistance you are seeking from RTCA staff. For examples of the kinds of assistance RTCA staff can provide, go to "What we do" on our website, [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca).**

- a. Assist and guide the ORTC in general trail development and the navigation of the planning process.
- b. Provide technical assistance in conceptual planning, organizational development, and capacity building.
- c. Attend the upcoming steering committee meetings to advise on design items as they pertain to the overall park system.
- d. Assist in the development of maps and marketing brochures.
- e. Assist with developing a partnership with health organizations like UPMC and Highmark.
- f. Since this trail will eventually encompass three states the council requests assistance in developing an alliance that has initially commenced between Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.
- g. Identify potential sources of funding for conservation and trail related recreation projects.
- h. Engage and expand public participation.
- i. Assist in the conservation of the Ohio River, Beaver River, Raccoon Creek, Little Beaver Creek (National Scenic River) and adjacent open space.
- j. Assistance with classifying the Beaver River as a National Wild & Scenic or Recreational River.
- k. Bring a valuable outside perspective to the project.
- l. Help identify and assess resources.
- m. Assist in the development of concept plans.

**Maps:**

- <http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/land-trail-proposal>
- <http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/land-trail-proposal/north-shore-feasibility>
- <http://www.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/land-trail-proposal/south-shore-feasibility>
- [http://www.beavercountypa.gov/PublicServices/PlanningCommission/PDFs/Greenway\\_trail\\_plan.pdf](http://www.beavercountypa.gov/PublicServices/PlanningCommission/PDFs/Greenway_trail_plan.pdf)

**Current strategic themes: (check boxes that apply)**

Project provides physical connection among resources;

Project includes both outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation goals;

Project partners with an NPS area and/or connects communities to NPS areas parks; *NPS areas include: National Parks and Monuments, National Heritage Areas, National Trails and Wild & Scenic Rivers.*

Project partners with a health organization (active and substantial);  
Health Organization partnership is under development with Highmark and UPMC.

Project engages youth partners.