

December 6, 2011

Monaca - The National Park Service has approved the Ohio River Trail Council's application for a second year of technical assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS – RTCA) works with community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribes or tribal governments, and local, state, and federal government agencies to achieve locally-defined goals for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. RTCA projects include natural area preservation, rivers conservation and the development of recreational trails and greenways. RTCA carries out the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service. A network of planning professionals delivers the RTCA Program nationwide, helping communities to help themselves achieve on-the-ground successes. The RTCA assist the local partners to make their rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces a vital, life-enhancing part of their communities leveraging its resources, and with well under one percent of the National Park Service budget. Each year, on average, the National Park Service and their partners across the country create over 1,400 miles of trails, conserve more than 63,700 acres of open space, and protect more than 700 miles of waterways.

In the first year of assistance, RTCA assisted the Ohio River Trail Council (ORTC) with the development of the Ohio River Water Trail and the Ohio River Land Trail Feasibility Studies. In addition, the RTCA helped coordinate the March 29, 2011 Tri-state Trail Alliance meeting of about 80 trail advocates, and the October 13, 2011 regional trails meeting hosted by the Power of 32, to support the vision of linking a system of trails in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In 2012, the NPS Rivers & Trails staff will focus on identifying an on-the-ground section of the Ohio River Land/Water Trail to develop, and continue the oversight for the Tri-State Trail Initiative, a multi-state effort which includes eighteen counties in three states. The Pennsylvania counties include Beaver, Crawford, Erie, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer and Washington.

"The Ohio River Trail Council is an active group of people, diligently working on making trail connections and raising community awareness about trails and the variety of opportunities that they provide," said Peggy Pings, Outdoor Recreation Planner with NPS-Rivers & Trails Program. "I am especially looking forward to using the information laid out in the Feasibility Studies and working with the group to identify an on-the-ground implementation project. Any additional community input is appreciated and needed."

"The Ohio River Trail project will provide extensive fitness and recreation opportunities, highlight the historical significance of the area and connect people with the great outdoors," said Senator Casey. "I was pleased to support the Ohio River Trail Council's application for technical assistance through the U.S. Department of Interior."

"For the second year in a row, the National Park Service has acknowledged just how important the Ohio River Trail is to our area by making this award available to the Ohio River Trail Council (ORTC)," said Congressman Altmire (PA-4). "With the help of this technical assistance, the ORTC can continue planning and developing this important trail system, and I congratulate them on receiving this award."

"Having grown up in western Pennsylvania, I am well aware of the important role that recreational trails play in the way we experience and celebrate the beauty of our region," said Congressman Mark S. Critz (PA-12). "By leveraging the expertise of the National Park Service, the Ohio River Trail Council and its partners will further our recreational opportunities and promote our natural and cultural resources."

"I'm very pleased that the National Park Service has announced that it will provide the Ohio River Trail Council with another year of technical assistance," Congressman Doyle (PA-14) said. "As someone who's worked hard over the years to help build a network of trails, parks, and green spaces throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, I welcome the Park Service's continued commitment to the important work that the Ohio River Trail Council is doing."

"The Ohio River Trail is a critical component in the system of recreational trails developed in southwestern Pennsylvania, and in the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area said August R. Carlino, President & CEO of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. When completed, the Ohio River Trail will connect Pittsburgh to its neighboring communities in Beaver County and help bring recreational tourism and economic development opportunities to these towns along the Ohio River."

"I am delighted that the ORTC - NPS relationship will continue for a second year. The collaboration is facilitating Ohio River Trail Council's vision for the Ohio River Trail partner communities and the tri-state region. I am looking forward to working with the NPS staff, especially Peggy Pings, to initiate on-the-ground multi-use trail development, improve river

access for canoeing and kayaking and enhance public awareness stated Dr. Vincent Troia, Executive Chairman & CEO of the ORTC. "The Ohio River Trail Project will ultimately foster further recreation and cultural-based economic development through the expansion of the recreation and parks system in the Ohio River Valley."