



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Western Reserve

Heritage Feasibility Study

DRAFT





Submitted by the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service

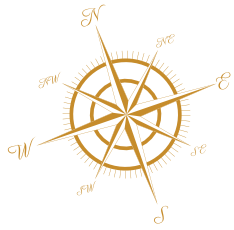


It becomes apparent

that in numbers, commercial importance, geographical extent—in all save mere formal organization—the Connecticut Western Reserve constitutes the equivalent of a State; while in its unity of purpose and power of influence it has unquestionably exercised in the affairs of the nation and in the broad interests of the people a sway such as few States, large or little, have equaled.

“Ohio and Her Western Reserve” by Alfred Edward Mathews, 1902





How to Comment on this Study

The Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study is the culmination of more than a year of discussions, meetings, research, and presentations. It includes input from more than 1,000 Western Reserve residents who contributed their thoughts and ideas throughout the planning process.

Any additional thoughts or comments are welcomed and encouraged. To submit, please visit the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study project page at the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WHRFNHA>. From this site, you can download an electronic version of this study, as well as submit your comments to project planners with the National Park Service.

You may also send comments directly to Rory Robinson, Study Team Leader, at Rory_Robinson@nps.gov or at the mailing address below.

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Executive Summary

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has prepared the *National Heritage Feasibility Study* to determine the feasibility and suitability of designating the Connecticut Western Reserve as a national heritage area. This study meets the requirements of the “Draft National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines” (NPS 2003) and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Legislative History

Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a national heritage area feasibility study in Public Law 109-338 (Oct. 12, 2006) under Subtitle A. The section of the act requesting a study of the Western Reserve is found in Section 301. The purpose of the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study is to determine if the area that encompasses the modern-day Ohio counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa, and Ashland meets the suitability and

feasibility requirements for designation as a National Heritage Area. A copy of the Western Reserve Heritage Area Study Act is found in Appendix A.

The History of the Western Reserve

Marblehead, Norwalk, Avon, Danbury, and Kent. Town squares, village greens, and architecture. A New Englander driving through the Western Reserve in Ohio finds reminders of home around nearly every bend. And rightly so, for this area of the Northwest Territory once belonged to the Colony of Connecticut.

One of the original 13 colonies, Connecticut owned a ribbon of land west of its present-day boundary that included portions of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. When the newly-formed federal government

promised forgiveness of state debt created by the Revolutionary War in exchange for this land, Connecticut relinquished rights to its western land, except for a 120-mile strip in northern Ohio that was “reserved” for other purposes.

Settled by New Englanders, primarily from Connecticut in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Western Reserve has been home



The Western Reserve serves as the nation's town square.

to generation after generation of domestic and international immigrants contributing new ideas and traditions to America. Choices in land use began with the first settlers who employed unique surveying methods, settlement patterns including town squares, and distinct architecture. Examples of this influence are prolific throughout the region.

Western Reserve Heritage Themes

The Western Reserve contributes in substantial ways to our country's national heritage. It contains an assemblage of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that make up a regionally distinctive landscape, and the rich and varied stories about the Western Reserve support a captivating set of themes connecting the people to the heritage resources of the region. The information was analyzed and one major theme and six distinct sub-categories emerged. The heritage area themes are listed below. A complete description can be found in Chapter 3.

The Western Reserve is *the nation's town square* and has been since the region's settlement soon after the Revolutionary War. Town squares are places where fresh ways of thinking are the norm. They are settings where people and institutions come together to discuss happenings, advocate for a better way, run their businesses, and build a sense of community.

The importance of the Western Reserve in shaping America is evident in six sub-themes that reveal how the Western Reserve both influenced national history as well as reflects (serves as a microcosm) the nation.

Migration

Settled by New Englanders, primarily from Connecticut in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Western Reserve has been home to generation after generation of domestic and international immigrants bearing new ideas and traditions. This mixture of cultures and beliefs inspired new ways of thinking that gave rise to social acceptance and reform as those escaping persecution in their home countries sought a new way of life in America.

Transportation

The Western Reserve helped connect the world. Canal boats, steamships, lake freighters, railroads, automobiles, Goodyear Airship, early aviation, and aerospace innovations—the Western Reserve has been at the hub of designing, manufacturing, and using vehicles and systems to transport people and goods; the Western Reserve was not just a site for use of technologies, but a site where innovations in design and manufacture occurred.

Industry

The region's fertile, flat soils, and excellent transportation opportunities made the Western Reserve a natural area for agricultural production. The agricultural industry made the Western Reserve prosperous, and smokestack industries led to a regional, national, and international force. Innovations and prolific production in oil, iron, rubber, and steel steered the region to manufacturing prominence bringing people of the world to the Western Reserve. It was the spirit of the New England "Yankee," regarded by many as sharp, canny, and resourceful that began the industrial advances in the Western Reserve, a momentum that was continued by waves of skillful immigrants. This drive to make systems better, more efficient, and more profitable continues today as the region is an international center for progressive medical care and research, and polymer innovations.

Lake Erie

Part of the largest freshwater system in the world, Lake Erie created the climate for the Western Reserve's dynamic cultural, and industrial history. Its influence on the weather and natural landscape is expressed through flourishing vineyards, nurseries, and orchards, while the natural features dictated where harbors and canals developed. Many settlers from Connecticut and foreign lands

settled first along the waterways, tapping into their resources and energy. These working waterways connected the Western Reserve to the world, providing transportation for people and ideas to and from the region, jobs, and a carrying route for raw materials and manufactured goods.

Land Use and Architecture

Choices in land use began with the first Western Reserve settlers from New England. Their unique surveying methods and settlement patterns included town squares, patterns of land use, radiating roadways, five-mile-square townships, and distinct architecture. The civic buildings of the region, particularly those of heavy industrial periods, were a testament to the wealth generated during that time and—when built with private monies—to the philanthropic bent of the region’s leadership through time. Western Reserve era land use choices and architecture styles are found in almost every community.

Education and Social Reform

Starting with the first settlers from Connecticut who brought with them deep faith, a practice of tithing, and Puritan beliefs, those within the Western Reserve have seldom been afraid to fight for their beliefs. We see evidence of this in widespread abolitionism and involvement in the Underground Railroad, women’s rights

movement, civil rights activity, and environmental action. These efforts were further strengthened by immigrants, many of whom arrived, in part, to escape persecution of their religious beliefs.

Study Findings

The National Park Service concludes that though the Western Reserve meets six of the nine criteria for determining the suitability of an area as a National Heritage Area (and defined in the Western Reserve Heritage Area Study Act), and the Western Reserve contributes to our nation’s heritage, the area is not nationally distinctive and as such is not suitable for national designation.

Management Alternatives

This feasibility study evaluates two alternatives—No Action (alternative 1) and Implementation of the Heritage Area Concept as a Regional Initiative (alternative 2). A third alternative (National Heritage Area Designation) was initially considered, but set aside after the area was not found to meet the criterion for national distinctiveness (Study Criterion A).



At this critical stage in its development, it is recommended that the Western Reserve implement the heritage area concept as a regional initiative, alternative 2. In order to further develop the Western Reserve as a regional effort, steps are recommended in Chapter 6 that will cultivate the community commitment and investment necessary to leverage the resources for the interpretation and development of the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Western Reserve.

Public Involvement

One of the foundations of all successful heritage areas is an informed and engaged community that is committed to the long-term sustainability of the regional project. A study team, working with the National Park Service, developed a transparent community engagement process that addressed the following objectives:

- Promote public understanding of heritage areas and how they are managed.
- Inform the public about the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study and how individuals can become involved in the process.
- Assess public support for the proposed Western Reserve Heritage Area.
- Determine if there is local capacity and commitment to coordinate the proposed Western Reserve Heritage Area.

In order to achieve these objectives, the study team developed a variety of diverse community engagement methods to involve the public in the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study, including the creation of a Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Stakeholder Group, development of civic engagement tools including town hall meetings (public meetings), community and elected official leadership meetings, radio and cable television interviews, newspaper articles, flyers, Western Reserve newsletters, and articles in regional organizations' newsletters. In addition to traditional methods of public involvement, the study team incorporated a variety of social networking tools, including the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study Facebook group, Twitter and an interactive web site at <http://westernreserve.ning.com>. Additional details of the public involvement process can be found in Chapter 2.

Study Team Composition

Coordinating the public involvement portion of the process was a study team led by Rory Robinson and Andrea Irland with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. Members of the study team included Dan Rice with the Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, Melinda Huntley with OSU

Sea Grant Extension and the Lake Erie Coastal Ohio National Scenic Byway, Jackie Barton with the Ohio Historical Society, and Sue Pridemore, Heritage Area Coordinator with the Midwest Regional National Park Service.

Vision of a Western Reserve Heritage Area

The vision was crafted following input from citizens at Town Hall Gatherings, online discussions on a social media website, Stakeholder's group meetings, and leadership discussions.

In the spirit of a town square, which so typifies its landscape, the Western Reserve continues the area's rich legacy of innovation and advocacy by serving as a catalyst, convener, and construct for regional engagement, resource protection, and interpretation of community resources and economic progress within northern Ohio.



The study team developed a variety of diverse community engagement methods to involve the public.

Photo by Jackie Barton

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Study Criterion (G) “...has a potential local coordinating entity to work in partnership with residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and local and State governments to develop a national heritage area consistent with continued local and State economic activity;” (67)

Study Criterion (H) “...has a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public;” (69)

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The Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study was developed by the National Park Service in collaboration with the following organizations.

