

Chapter 5

Assessment of Criteria in the Western Reserve Heritage Area Study Act

Study Criterion (A) “...has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed through partnerships among public and private entities and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities;”

The Western Reserve encompasses a wealth of resources that supports its significance as the nation’s town square and the associated themes of migration, transportation, industry, Lake Erie, land use and architecture, and education and social reform. These resources range across natural, historic, and cultural treasures, and they include historic buildings, towns, and cities; museums, historic sites, and heritage and cultural organizations; and waterways, natural environments, flora, and fauna. The examples shown here are illustrative only and not a comprehensive listing of what exists in the area.

Natural Resources

Lake Erie is the region’s most visible and impressive natural resource, spanning 116 cubic miles in volume and stretching 241 by 57 miles across the land. It is the eleventh largest freshwater lake in the world and the fourth largest of the Great Lakes. It is also the shallowest and most southern, thereby making it the warmest and most biologically productive of the Great Lakes.

The Lake Erie region includes an array of landscapes:

- **Glacial islands** – Glacial Grooves Memorial on Kelleys Island is the world’s largest known example of glacial grooves, evidenced in limestone bedrock.
- **Bays, ports, and harbors** – Ashtabula Harbor was the first harbor to be officially surveyed on Lake Erie—by Moses Cleaveland. The port continues to be active today, handling coal, iron ore, sand, gravel, stone, and limestone, to name a few.

- **Rivers and streams** – The Mahoning River is 113 miles long and was a driver for industrial development in Youngstown and the surrounding areas. Today, efforts to return the river to environmental balance and add recreational and scenic uses are led by the Mahoning River Consortium. In contrast, but economically important as well, the 98-mile Grand River is designated a Wild and Scenic River and is the most biologically diverse and cleanest river of its size flowing into Lake Erie.

- **Forests and farmlands** – The Cuyahoga Valley National Park encompasses 33,000 acres along the banks of the Cuyahoga River. The natural landscape of the park is heavily forested, and the cultural landscape of the park includes significant agricultural lands.



Cuyahoga Valley
National Park

- **Lakes and beaches** – Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve is 465 acres of barrier beach, diverse plant life, and other coastal wetland habitat. It is some of the last remaining undeveloped shoreline in Sandusky Bay.
- **Wetlands** – The Old Woman Creek Estuarine Research Reserve in Huron is a natural estuary containing various habitats: marshes and swamps, upland forests, open water, tributary streams, barrier beach, and near-shore habitat of Lake Erie.

There are numerous **Ohio Department of Natural Resources** lands within the Western Reserve. These include coastal properties like Geneva, Headlands Beach, Cleveland Lakefront, East Harbor, and Kelleys Island. They also include inland parks, such as Punderson, Findlay, Pymatuning, and Mosquito Lake. These parks are generally protected from development, open to the public, and include some educational component or programs.

Historic Resources

The National Register of Historic Places “is the official list of the nation’s historic places worthy of preservation” (<http://www.nps.gov/nr/about.htm>). Properties must be old enough (generally 50 years or older) and of national significance for their

related stories, architecture, engineering, industry, or archaeology. In addition, enough historic fabric must remain to evidence that nationally significant element(s). The Western Reserve contains 1,005 listings on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Ohio Historic Inventory is a listing of surveyed and reviewed structures, buildings, or objects that have some historic, architectural, or engineering interest. The inventory program was developed to serve as an accurate and continuing record of the architectural and historic properties currently existing in the state. They have not yet been determined to have national, state, or local significance, but are resources with merit. To be placed on the Ohio Historic Inventory, a property must be surveyed and described in an application submitted for review and acceptance by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Criteria include category or theme, year built, architect or



style, and condition of property. There are 20,839 listings on the Ohio Historic Inventory within the Western Reserve.

Cultural Resources

Spanning urban, suburban, and rural areas, the Western Reserve is home to many history and cultural institutions. There are about 300 local history organizations in the 14 counties that make up the region. Many of these touch or focus primarily upon one of the themes identified for the heritage area: Town Square, Migration, Transportation, Industry, Lake Erie, Land Use and Architecture, or Education and Social Reform.

- **Town Square: Western Reserve Historical Society** is a not-for-profit educational institution that preserves and uses its collections, historic sites, and museums to inspire people to explore the history and culture of Northeastern Ohio and place that regional experience within the larger context of state, national, and global history.
- **Migration: The National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame & Museum** in Euclid highlights artifacts and memorabilia from polka stars like Frank Yankovic and Johnny Vadnal. It also includes a library and video collection. The American-Slovenian Polka Foundation operates the museum.

- **Transportation: The Mad River and NKP Railroad Museum** in Bellevue is the largest railroad museum in the state. Named for the 1839 Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad, the facility and collection is focused on the region's railroad history.



- **Industry: The Youngstown Museum of Labor and Industry**, “The Steel Museum” tells the story of the iron and steel industry in the Mahoning Valley. Exhibits explore labor, immigration, and urban history. A library and archives is also housed in the 1986 Michael Graves building.
- **Lake Erie: The Keeper’s House** in Marblehead Peninsula was the home of Benajah Wolcott. Wolcott was one of the first settlers on the peninsula and served as keeper of the Marblehead lighthouse from 1822 until his death in 1832.

- **Land Use and Architecture: Stan Hywet Hall** is a 1915 country estate built by F.A. Sieberling (Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company founder). The house is one of the nation’s best examples of Tudor Revival architecture, and 3,000 separate blueprints and architectural drawings went into its design.
- **Education and Social Reform: The Oberlin Heritage Center** originated in 1903 as a community improvement group called the Village Improvement Society. Village Improvement Societies were common in New England and the Western Reserve in the early 20th century. Connectivity to this movement demonstrates the assertion that the Western Reserve served as a microcosm and impetus of movements. The Center celebrates and shares the stories of Oberlin, a small town in Ohio with a history centered on the local college and the community’s role in the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, women’s rights, and scientific research.

Regional Partnerships for Resource Management

The Western Reserve is an area rich in regional thinking and partnership approaches. Resource preservation is no exception: many resource management, interpretation, and conservation groups represent partnership approaches to the

area’s heritage and culture. Regionalism and the rationale for working together are accepted values of the region.

Scenic byways operate much like heritage areas—as regional partnerships, marketing, product development, interpretation, and other activities covering a geographic area, in this case a linear region. **The Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail** is a 293-mile byway that includes more than 300 “discovery sites” along its length.

The Ohio and Erie Canalway Association, in partnership with the Cleveland-based Ohio Canal Corridor and the Akron-based Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, oversees the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway within the Western Reserve. It was designated in 1996 and operates under an advisory coalition and nonprofit formed for that purpose. The organization fosters partnerships, builds trails, provides grants within its boundaries, and more. The organization also partners in development of the Canalway Ohio national scenic byway.

Several regional efforts have focused on virtually linking coastal experiences, including the **Lake Erie Shipwrecks and Maritime Tales along the Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail** (emphasizing shipwreck stories and diving experiences), **Lake**

Erie Lighthouses and Maritime Tales (focusing on the stories and visitor opportunities at the region's lighthouses, ship museums, and maritime heritage museums). A new effort will be launched September 2010 that links more than 70 birding hot spots through an interactive website and publication. This effort is being done collaboratively with the Ohio Sea Grant College Program and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Fairport Harbor

Like many Western Reserve ports, Fairport Harbor's character and charm was a direct result of those who settled there from foreign lands. Arriving in the mid- to late-1800s, Finns brought with them their customs, work ethics, religions, talents, and moral beliefs.

Finnish customs and traditions are shared at the Finnish Heritage Museum. Artifacts, artwork, and other exhibits tell the story of how the Finnish people came to the Western Reserve, as well as their influence on the region today. The museum also provides an experience where a fully-costumed tour guide greets visitors and serves authentic foods.

Fairport Harbor was the first federally sponsored port facility on Lake Erie, and its lighthouse and museum provide fascinating tales of this port's past and present. The lighthouse served as a final stop on the Underground Railroad when slaves were hidden at the lighthouse and smuggled aboard ships bound for Canada.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve has a story of great significance to the region and State of Ohio that had impact on the nation, but is not nationally distinctive or significant and has not met this criteria.

Study Criterion (B) "... reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life that are a valuable part of the national story;"

Cultural traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life in the Western Reserve in many ways reflect the traditions and customs that are a valuable part of the national experience. This is the case because the Western Reserve is fully reflective of the demographic trends that affected the United States more broadly as a result of migration and immigration trends regionally and nationally for more than 200 years. Perhaps more so than any other Midwest region, the people of the Western Reserve are a microcosm of the national experience. Consequently, the cultural traditions, religious and political beliefs, folk life, foods, and other customs brought to the Western Reserve with migrants and immigrants for the last two centuries shaped the character of this region and in many ways reflect the broader experience.

Initially, the Western Reserve was settled by and defined primarily by migrants from New England—western Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut. When the first settlers colonized the Reserve, they brought with them their traditions, ideals, psychology and inherited intellectual habits. They transplanted preferences for evangelical religion, family farming, and in many cases the New England tradition of reform and self-improvement. As the first migrants settled here, they began to establish their own local institutions that were based on and reflect their New England heritage. Religious leaders saw the Western Reserve as fertile ground for the expansion of New England religious culture.

Logically, the Western Reserve even today "looks east" to New England for many of its traditions because of this foundation, and the region's experience is akin in many ways to Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. However, given the vastness of the region and influences of subsequent migrant and immigrant groups, there are sections within the Reserve that are definitively more Midwest in nature than "eastern."

New Englanders, Irish, and Germans dominated the Western Reserve for the most part until after the Civil War and into the early 20th century when increasing numbers of European immigrants came to the area, drawn by the area's



developing industrial base. The influx of south-eastern European immigrants, among them Poles, Italians, Slovenes, Slovaks, Jews, and Russians, to the Western Reserve mirrored immigration to other major eastern and Midwestern regions and cities, including New York City, Boston, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. The region's Jewish population, although not as large as that of New York City or Chicago, is one of the most influential in the United States, and the Cleveland Jewish Federation has been a leader amongst federations nationally.

Additionally, the Western Reserve's New England heritage shaped the region's strong tradition of charity and philanthropy with the Cleveland Foundation a sterling example—the first community foundation of its kind in the United States. That tradition of stewardship has been passed on to succeeding ethnic groups in the region, such as the Cleveland Jewish Federation, Catholic Charities, the United Black Fund, as well

as the charitable donations of individuals from newer communities, including Indian and Asian groups that are giving increasingly to support medical research and health care.

The regional combination of industry and agriculture and the evolution of its transit web, lake transport and commerce, canal, railroads, highways, and airline industries in both Cleveland and Akron parallel the larger American model. The canal, given its eastern origins, is particularly important, making the Western Reserve, as a Midwest region, exemplary particularly when compared with other Midwest regions/states like Illinois and Iowa.

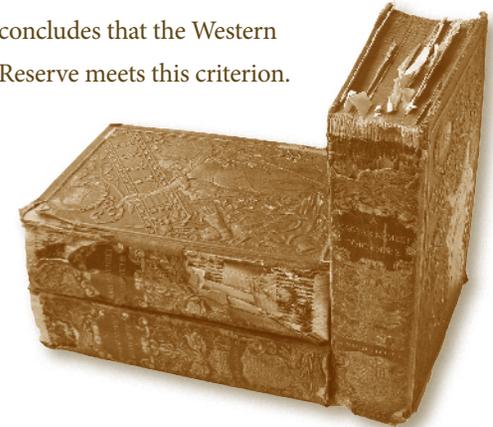
Lastly, one can look at higher education and the manner in which Case Western University and Oberlin College continue to support eastern concepts of higher education. Cuyahoga Community College was a major player contributing to the rise of two-year schools.

There are aspects of migration into the Western Reserve that are particularly important to the evolving cultural landscape here and that reflect national trends. For example, the movement of African-Americans to the area first was a result of the legacy of New England antipathy to slavery during the 19th century, and then as part of the

Great Migration beginning with World War I given the abundance of work in the Western Reserve, an emerging industrial powerhouse during both World Wars.

Recent (20th and 21st Century) migrant and immigrant groups and their influences on the Western Reserve include Latino/Latina, Asian, Arabian, and Indian. Each group has its own cultural traditions, beliefs, folk life, and foods that blend with the existing mix of ethnicities and cultures to create a region rich in diversity. Immigration continues, not only on its own accord. Regional leaders, recognizing the contributions of diversity past, present, and future, are working to establish a center focusing on outreach and service provision to assist future migrants to the Western Reserve.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve meets this criterion.



Study Criterion (C) “... provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features;”

One purpose of a heritage area is to encourage the preservation, conservation, and appropriate development and promotion of the resources in the region. The Western Reserve has many existing organizations, programs, and partnerships working toward the goals of preservation and conservation within its boundaries already, and these organizations could take advantage of the additional tools of a heritage area. Likewise, opportunities for greater conservation and preservation efforts exist, either through increased resources or greater partnership.

Historic Preservation

The National Register of Historic Places is an honorary listing, conveying the significance of a history property; a protective measure, requiring review before federal funds can be expended to alter the property; and an economic opportunity, providing eligibility for federal and state historic tax credit programs to owners of historic commercial properties. An inventory of the Western Reserve revealed 1,005 properties designated on the National Register of Historic Places or as a National Historic Landmark. Of these, many have utilized the historic tax credits

available at the state and federal level, with Ohio having garnered more than \$2 billion in private investment as a result of federal tax credits since their inception in 2005. Examples of recent tax credit recipients include the following:

- The **Andrew Jackson Residence** on Main Street in Akron is an 1870 Second Empire mansion built by an Akron business leader. The project, which cost nearly \$3.4 million and converted the building to office space, received both the 20 percent Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit and the 25 percent Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit.
- The **Sunshine Cloak Company Building** in Cleveland’s Superior Avenue Historic District is a 1911 industrial building that housed garment production. Its \$7 million rehabilitation project received the 20 percent Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit and the 25 percent Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit.
- The **Realty Building** in downtown Youngstown is a 1924, 12-story office building that houses residential units after nearly \$8.2 million in rehabilitation. The project received the 20 percent Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit and the 25 percent Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit.



The Certified Local Government Program is a local, state, and national government program promoting local historic preservation efforts. In Ohio, the program is run by the National Park Service and the Ohio Historic Preservation Offices. Communities apply and are certified, after which they are eligible for assistance and grants for historic preservation. To be certified, Ohio Certified Local Governments operate local historic preservation ordinances and preservation review boards, protecting local historic resources from inappropriate development or demolition.

The Ohio Main Street Program (Heritage Ohio) focuses on revitalization of historic or traditional commercial areas and is based on the principles of historic preservation. The program aims to improve downtown business districts through four core areas: organization, design, promotion,

and economic restructuring. There are 15 designated Main Streets in the Western Reserve, including the following:

- Amherst
- Cleveland- Historic Gateway Neighborhood
- Cleveland-Historic Warehouse District
- Elyria
- Lakewood
- Kent
- Medina
- Millersburg
- Norwalk
- Oberlin
- Painesville
- Port Clinton
- Sandusky
- Warren
- Wellington

The Cleveland Restoration Society has been working to preserve the historic built environment of Cleveland since the mid-1970s. It is the largest nonprofit local historic preservation organization in the state, a National Trust for Historic Preservation partner, and well-regarded nationally, particularly for its low-interest loans and technical assistance programs. The Cleveland Restoration Society is an excellent example of the types of organizations that advocate and work for historic preservation within their communities in the Western Reserve.

Many small communities throughout the Western Reserve, such as Medina, also have community design committees that uphold historic integrity in both public and private structures. Local historic preservation organizations are also prevalent throughout the region.

Natural Resource and Land Conservation

Metroparks in Ohio are powerhouse conservation, recreation, and education programs that provide valuable open space and not only acquire and preserve natural areas and historic sites, but also provide programming, education, and community services.

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy was created through the voluntary merger of eight land trusts, creating an organization that covers the region from Sandusky Bay to the Pennsylvania border and from Lake Erie to Wayne County. Partner organizations include the following:

- Chagrin River Land Conservancy
- Bratenahl Land Conservancy
- Headwaters Landtrust
- Hudson Land Conservancy
- Medina Summit Land Conservancy
- Tinkers Creek Land Conservancy
- Firelands Land Conservancy
- Grand River Partners

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy has preserved 24,000 acres through conservation easements, which are permanent legal covenants prohibiting certain changes to properties.

The Killbuck Watershed Land Trust preserves more than 4,500 acres of farm land, forests, wetlands, and open spaces in Ashland, Coshocton, Holmes, Richland, Tuscarawas, and Wayne counties.

The Gates Mills Land Conservancy preserves the natural, recreational, and scenic resources of the Village of Gates Mills and the Chagrin River Valley by acquiring land and conservation easements. About 469 acres have been protected thus far.

The Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation preserves and protects the Little Beaver Creek watershed through land acquisition and conservation easements, citizen education, historic preservation, and other environmental management activities. To date, it has protected 4,343 acres.

The Mahoning River Consortium works to restore the environmental health of the Mahoning River and its surrounding landscapes. It also supports efforts to improve the social, recreational and economic development occurring in the communities located along the river.

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History runs the Natural Areas Program, which is an effort to create a collection of nature preserves with a focus on northern Ohio's biodiversity. There are 35 natural areas in the program today, and the museum has used its conservation programs to protect more than 5,000 acres. Three of the natural areas are open to the public: Mentor Marsh, Scheele Preserve, and North Kingsville Sand Barrens.

The Nature Conservancy in Ohio has worked since 1958 to protect more than 56,000 acres of natural lands in partnership with other organizations. Two of the six Nature Conservancy



preserves that are open to the public are in the Western Reserve: Herrick Fen and Morgan Swamp. The Ohio Department of Agriculture administers the **Agricultural Easement Purchase Program** (AEPP) to preserve Ohio farmland through the purchase of agricultural easements. AEPP provides up to 75 percent matching grants to farmland owners who sell their development rights.

The Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership for Biodiversity is a collaboration of organizations focused on biodiversity. Its primary region includes lands through the glaciated region of northeastern Ohio, northwestern Pennsylvania, and western New York. They are developing a regional conservation plan to guide prioritization of land protection and restoration projects.

The **Ohio Department of Natural Resources** through its State Parks and Division of Wildlife also prioritizes natural area preservation and is an active initiator and partner in preserving natural areas throughout the Western Reserve.

Although not established for resource preservation goals, the **NE Adventures in Ohio** organization is an example of regional partnership around a common goal. This volunteer organization focuses on tourism promotion within a sub-segment of the Western Reserve.

Based on the supporting information described here, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve meets this criterion.

Study Criterion (D) "... provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities;"

Recreational Assessment

Recreational Importance

The Western Reserve provides a wide range of outstanding recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to explore and experience the region's natural, historic, and cultural features of the land and its people.

Outdoor recreational opportunities include both passive and active opportunities, including birdwatching, hiking, cycling, walking tours, driving tours, geocaching, kayaking, railroad tours, sportfishing, skiing, scuba diving, and many more. These experiences are provided through a network of protected areas including sandy beaches, wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams, forests, plains, islands, and other habitats and ecosystems unique to the glaciated portion of northern Ohio. Local agencies, organizations, and private businesses enhance these experiences through providing interpretive and educational

components, such as private kayaking tour companies that sponsor trips throughout the region or narrated river cruises provided by metropark agencies.

Availability of Public Lands

Identification of available public lands for recreation is provided in Figure 9. As demonstrated, there is a wide variety depending on geographic location and urbanization. A strong network of county park districts and prominence of state parks and preserved lands within the study area is supplemented by conservation efforts of local and regional land conservancies, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, state agencies, regional biodiversity and land-use planning consortiums, and others to provide future lands for public use on a voluntary basis with landowners.

Obstacles for Outdoor Recreation Providers

Lack of funds and lack of communications were identified by outdoor recreation providers in the northeast area of the state within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources SCORP report. Data is not accessible by county; however, as designated by the SCORP focus group districts, this region encompasses nearly two-thirds of the Western Reserve. Poor communications and cooperation among governing entities and

Outdoor Recreation Acreage by County

COUNTY	County Acreage	Outdoor Recreation Areas Acreage	% of Total Acres for Outdoor Recreation	2006 Population	Outdoor Recreation per 1000 Residents
Ashland	273,242	11,949	.9	54,727	218
Ashtabula	454,826	12,518	.9	102,703	122
Cuyahoga	294,307	27,361	2.0	1,314,241	21
Erie	163,355	10,796	.8	78,116	138
Geauga	261,738	10,015	.7	95,676	105
Huron	317,761	4,173	.3	60,313	69
Lake	148,095	12,213	.9	232,892	52
Lorain	316,566	16,038	1.2	301,993	53
Mahoning	272,300	15,018	1.1	251,026	60
Medina	270,905	11,876	.2	169,353	70
Ottawa	167,341	8,207	.6	41,331	199
Portage	322,904	21,796	1.6	155,012	141
Summit	269,000	31,763	2.3	545,931	58
Trumbull	407,413	32,162	2.3	217,3362	148
Totals and/or Averages					

Figure 6 Outdoor Recreation Acreage by County [SOURCE: 2008 SCORP Outdoor Recreation Acreage by County]

recreation providers, as well as among multiple groups trying to use the same resources were identified as obstacles—all of which could be enhanced through regional designation of a Western Reserve Heritage Area.

Participants also expressed concern about the lack of open space in trust for future generations, as well as for more specific needs for passive nature-based recreation opportunities, trails, and hunting land. There was specific mention of the need to balance active and passive recreation opportunities throughout the region.

Tourism Importance

Throughout most of the study area, tourism is important to the economic health of Western Reserve communities and reflects both the quality and diversity of recreational offerings within the study area. The region’s tourism industry vitality is also important to the state. Thirty-three percent of lodging tax revenues collected in the state is attributed to tax collections within the 14 counties encompassed within the study area which makes up 16 percent of the state’s counties. This revenue is collected by local government entities; however, the comparison to state collections demonstrates the region’s statewide significance and size within the Ohio tourism market.

Education Assessment

Higher Education Network

In addition to place-based, informal educational settings at natural areas and museums, the Western Reserve region is home to many universities and colleges, several of which have turned in recent years to supporting the area's rich cultural and historical diversity through research and special programming. This creates a unique opportunity for the region to access academia and researchers for project implementation, information and supportive research. Higher education presence includes Case Western Reserve University, Kent State University, University of Akron, Youngstown State University, Cleveland State University, Bowling Green State University (regional campus), Ohio State University (research laboratory and extension presence), Oberlin College, Lake Erie College, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Institute of Music, Baldwin-Wallace College, Hiram College, John Carroll University, Notre Dame College, and Ursuline College.

Research Facilities

In addition to primary and regional campuses, research facilities are also available. Stone Laboratory is the Ohio State University research laboratory for Lake Erie science and is located on Gibraltar Island in Ottawa County. In addition to providing educational opportunities for graduate

Stone Laboratory on Gibraltar Island

Stone Laboratory is the oldest freshwater biological field station in the United States. Located on the 6.5-acre Gibraltar Island in Lake Erie's island-dotted Western Basin, Stone Laboratory is the center of Ohio State University's Lake Erie teaching and researching. More than 65 researchers from academic institutions around the country work year-round at the laboratory to solve some of the Great Lakes' most pressing problems. It is managed by the Ohio State University Sea Grant College Program.

Research at this laboratory has advanced not only Lake Erie science and stewardship, but environmental science on many fronts. The laboratory served as the research base for Lake Erie water quality recovery during the 1970s, and science conducted from this base led to the identification and reduction of phosphorus as a culprit of the lake's degradation. Publicity and grassroots movements surrounding the lake's environmental issues in the 1970s launched the Clean Water Act and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The island trains future scientists and land use planners by serving as the island campus for undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, and middle school and high school students. Visitors can explore the campus and learn about environmental science during tours throughout the summer, as well as by attending special programming. The nearby Aquatic Visitors Center and South Bass Island Lighthouse are also managed by the OSU Ohio Sea Grant College Program and provide interpretation on water quality, the importance of a healthy freshwater ecosystem, and current research issues and advancements.



students, undergraduate students, high school students, middle school students, and educators, the laboratory is the site for important Lake Erie ecological and environmental research.

Cleveland State University operates a Communication Research Center offering best practices in methods and tools.

Opportunities for Enhancing Educational Linkage

Throughout the public meetings, residents expressed concern that future generations are not being taught the history and contributions of the local region. Residents identified designation as a way to provide for enhancing both formal and informal education inclusion of the Western Reserve story.

There is also a new effort related to the Lake Erie theme that could serve as both a model and a method for moving forward. A set of Lake Erie Literacy Principles has been developed for use in both formal and informal education settings. These have been adopted and altered at the Great Lakes level as well. A team of state agencies, educators, and academic advisors developed these Lake Erie Literacy Principles to unify the messages, ensure accuracy of information being delivered, and to provide a framework for future education. A similar effort could better link the story of the Western Reserve to regional museums, historic sites, and natural areas that provide interpretation.

In addition to providing opportunities for enhancing student and place-based visitor education, designation could also enhance professional education efforts. As identified at public and special interest meetings, regional designation could create an impetus for delivering training and education to resource managers, land-use planners, community development officials, and others to enhance story delivery, resource integrity, and customer service.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve meets this criterion.

Study Criterion (E) “. . . contains resources important to the identified theme or themes of the Study Area that retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.”

The Western Reserve’s compelling national story as the nation’s town square has been discussed in great detail within this feasibility study. The themes that support this statement have also been presented. The concept of a town square as a meeting point for progress and reform is typified throughout the study area, both in the abundance of village greens and town squares of all magnitudes, as well as in the contributions those within this region have made to society. Early surveyors of the Western Reserve identified physical boundaries, yet probably did not recognize that the definition of these boundaries would one day translate into a culture unique upon the American landscape. Early settlers from New England began to influence the identity of this region as a crucible of cultures and ideas. Access to Lake Erie and the rich resources of the region further added to the allure, creating a diversity of ethnicities and values as immigrants arrived bearing their traditions, ideas, and beliefs.

Resources supporting the overarching theme and its subthemes are plentiful. Chapter 4 of this

feasibility study identifies these resources and their prominence throughout the entire Western Reserve.

Integrity of the Historic Resources

Assessing the integrity of these resources is expressed here in two ways: integrity of the physical resources and integrity of the story. Integrity of the physical historic and cultural resources throughout the region is high, evidenced by more than 1,005 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and 17 National Historic Landmarks. Preservation societies focused on maintaining that authenticity include hundreds of local historical societies, as well as state efforts through the Ohio Preservation Office. The landscape, itself, is supportive of the story. Throughout the region, reminders of the area’s early New England roots are present. These include names of cities and towns (Marblehead, Kent, Norwalk, etc.) adopted from New England cities, as well as in the preservation of town squares and village greens in communities of all sizes.

Integrity of the Natural Resources

Natural resources played an important part of the Western Reserve story by shaping the opportunities and challenges presented to early

settlers, as well as by forming the foundation for growth. Natural resources throughout the area are protected by an impressive network of county metropark systems and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, as well as active and passionate conservation conservancies and land trusts. These entities often work across political and geographic borders, recognizing the power of uniting efforts. The region's philanthropic base supports resource conservation as well. The region is varied, from urban to rural landscapes. Recent years have seen an increase in efforts to enhance public access, acquire public lands from willing sellers, and assist private landowners with conservation efforts.

Integrity of the Western Reserve Story

Integrity of the story of the Western Reserve is more difficult to gauge, as this story is presently not coordinated on a region-wide basis. The Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland preserves artifacts and stories of this important region, but extension of the story beyond its walls and local region is limited by resources. Public meetings with historic interest groups and tourism professionals throughout the region revealed a strong interest and need in regional assistance of preservation, as well as in interpretation of the Western Reserve story to local place-based sites.

Many of the place-based venues, such as natural areas and historic sites identified within the resource inventory, currently interpret key pieces of the Western Reserve story. These interpretive efforts include a variety of methods, such as exhibit signage and first-person historical reenactment. Connecting existing interpretation into a broader framework telling the Western Reserve story would support current efforts, while creating a richer story to share with residents and visitors.

Some examples of how current interpretive efforts tell elements of the Western Reserve story are provided in Figure 10.

Recognition of the region as the “Western Reserve” is widespread, reflected in hundreds of businesses and associations bearing “Western Reserve” and “Firelands” in their names. The historical meaning behind the names; however, are lesser known. Also, as no regional effort currently links the region together, recognition of this common bond between counties and communities is absent. This is an opportunity that was identified through the public meetings as one that should be pursued by designation.

How Designation Could Enhance Integrity

Specific opportunities for enhancing the integrity of the Western Reserve story were discussed at public meetings. These were identified as benefits and feasible activities for a coordinating entity to coordinate should designation occur. Should designation occur, a management plan will be developed with broad public participation. These recommendations do not supplant this plan, but demonstrate the public's awareness of how a regional effort can enhance resource integrity.

Recognizing and Rewarding Quality

As a heritage area, the ability to both publicly recognize and reward the integrity of the resources and interpretation would provide not only recognition to those resource managers who have prioritized integrity, but would create incentives for future efforts. Many visitors bureau cannot prioritize integrity, but must promote all attractions within their political boundary. A need was expressed for a regional, objective peer-review rating system of recognition, which would increase awareness of those sites with strongest integrity who have met high standards, while at the same time providing goals and assistance for sites in achieving these standards.

Western Reserve Sample Sites and Contributions to Theme

LOCATION	WESTERN RESERVE THEME	STORY CONTRIBUTION	INTERPRETIVE METHODS
Hale Farm and Village, Bath	Migration	Early settlement, Civil War	Historical re-enactment, first-person characterization, music, and song
Sandusky Maritime Museum	Transportation	Shipping and sailing on the Great Lakes; movement of goods, people, and ideas	Exhibits, hand-on boat-building workshops, special programming, and lectures
Museum of Labor and Industry, Youngstown	Industry	Iron and steel industry, labor relations	Exhibits, videos, workshops, and lectures
Stan Hywet Hall	Land Use and Architecture	Country estate and gardens	Guided tours, speakers bureau, events
Canalway Center, Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation, Cuyahoga Heights	Lake Erie	Human impact on water quality, role of tributaries	Exhibits, music and songs through Cleveland Metroparks, first-person characterization, workshops guided tours
Oberlin Heritage Center	Social Reform and Education	Role in Underground Railroad, abolitionism women's activism, civil rights	Guided tours, publications, special programming and lectures, history walks

Figure 7 Western Reserve Sample Sites and Contributions to Theme

Technical Assistance

Providing the assistance for interpretation, conservation, preservation, and promotion on a regional basis would enhance long-term integrity of the region, its stories, and its places. As a regional coordinating entity, the Western Reserve would be in a better position to leverage assistance because of its network of sites. Coordination of such activities is likely to occur through existing organizations, but a coordinating entity would serve as the incubator for ideas, encourager of innovation, and provider of support for these organizations and their efforts.

Education and Training on Revealing and Interpreting Regional Story

As identified earlier, interpretation of the story of the Western Reserve is fragmented. A Western Reserve Heritage Area would provide the story, supported with facts and resources, and share interpretive resources, education, tools, and training to place-based venues throughout the region. Individuals at several public meetings also expressed a desire to ensure that future generations are taught about the Western Reserve in formal education. The Western Reserve Heritage Area could form an educational taskforce to incorporate local heritage into state educational curriculum requirements.

Embracing Technology to Tell a Regional Story

A Western Reserve Heritage Area could leverage the region's purchasing power by contracting with vendors to incorporate technology to tell regional stories. These could include podcasts, GPS systems, video feeds, etc., that could virtually connect the region. Also identified was the ability of a Western Reserve Heritage Area to continue its role as a "town square" and meeting place by providing a means for virtual dialogue about local issues and opportunities using technology as a means for connecting communities.

Establishing a Framework for Ensuring Authenticity and Inclusion

Authenticity of the story is paramount, so a Western Reserve Heritage Area would be in the position to coordinate research and expert forums to ensure accuracy. Because the proposed Western Reserve Heritage Area boundary is all-inclusive of those counties originally platted by surveyors, the Heritage Area would ensure inclusiveness across political and geographical boundaries.

Based on the information provided above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve meets this criterion.

Study Criterion (F) "... whether the study area includes residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and local and State governments that are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants, including the Federal Government, and have demonstrated support for the concept of a national heritage area."

The Western Reserve community engagement process obtained public input and support from a wide variety of individuals, elected officials, and organizations across the 14-county region of the Western Reserve. Overall, the public input was positive, and there is a genuine interest among the respondents that the Western Reserve Heritage Area is an interesting idea and it is worth pursuing on a regional level. Many of the respondents recognize the authentic natural, historical, and cultural resources of the heritage of the Western Reserve and they are interested in working in partnership and collaboration for the future interpretation and celebration of the Western Reserve heritage.

Several of the regional organizations represented on the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study Stakeholder Committee, including the Western

Reserve Historical Society, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition and the Fund for Our Economic Future, have long standing relationships and partnerships within the 14-county region that can be leveraged for the development of the Western Reserve Heritage Area. While all of these organizations are active in some of the 14 counties of the Western Reserve, few of the organizations are actively working in all 14 counties. One of the organizations, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, has extensive heritage area experience with the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and has worked with more than 20 Heritage Area projects across the country.

The Fund for Our Economic Future unites philanthropy to strengthen the economic competitiveness of northeast Ohio. The Fund supports six regional economic development organizations that collaborate to grow jobs and investments in 16 counties in northern Ohio. Representatives of the Fund for Our Economic Future have been very involved with the Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study and there is the possibility that the Fund could play a larger role with the development of the Western Reserve Heritage Area as a regional community and economic development project.

There are several resources at the state level that have already assisted with various components within the Western Reserve. These resources include the Ohio Historical Society, Department of Natural Resource Natureworks, Clean Ohio, and Recreational Trail Fund grant programs for the development of trail and green space projects, and the Department of Transportation Scenic Byway and Enhancement Grant program for scenic roadway improvements and trail development.

While there continues to be much public interest for the development of the Western Reserve Heritage Area among members of the stakeholder committee and the general public, more work and partnership cultivation are necessary to transition from public interest to commitment of resources and investment for the long-term sustainability of the Western Reserve Heritage Area.



A conceptual financial plan has not been developed. The potential for financial support, technical assistance, and new partnerships to move the heritage area concept forward in the Western Reserve is great, but commitments have not been articulated. There are many organizations and agencies within the study area that have offered support, either verbally or in a writing (see Appendices), but these offer only broad support for the concept and/or anticipation of working with others to implement the heritage corridor vision and goals.

Many recognize the opportunity to come together as a region and pool resources in support of the significant, shared story. As this opportunity is realized by more, the level of support for the heritage area concept as well as direct financial commitments may grow, but the lack of a pre-existing or identifiable coordinating entity (see Study Criterion G) will make it difficult to coordinate potential partners and garner future financial commitments.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve does not on the whole meet this criterion.

Study Criterion (G) “... whether the Study area 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.”

Heritage areas are overseen by a coordinating entity that is identified in the authorizing legislation. The coordinating entity may be a state or local agency, a federal commission, or a private nonprofit corporation. The legislation gives the coordinating entity certain authorities and responsibilities; its primary responsibility being to develop a financially self-sustaining program that helps a region maintain its identity and heritage.

The coordinating entity is empowered to develop a management plan for the heritage area in collaboration with local governments and other stakeholders and is authorized to receive federal funds on the area's behalf. Any federal funds appropriated for the National Heritage Area are to be used as seed money to help the coordinating entity develop this self-sustaining National Heritage Area. The authority to implement the management plan is local—it rests in the hands of willing local officials and the actions of local organizations and individuals. Designation

legislation does not provide the management entity or any federal agency with the authority to regulate land uses, nor does it have any impact on private property.

There are many regional and local organizations within the Western Reserve with regional partnerships and collaboration experience. Some relevant examples include efforts to preserve natural resources through the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, efforts to preserve the story and resources through the Western Reserve Historical Society, and efforts to enhance regional economic development through the Fund for our Economic Future. At the time of this report, there is not currently a single entity that has emerged with either the willingness or the capacity and geographic-wide acceptance to be recognized as the coordinating entity if the area were to be designated a National Heritage Area.

Instead, it is suggested that a forum similar to the stakeholder committee brought together to assist with this study be looked at as a model for creation of a coordinating entity in the future. This committee had a decent geographic representation as well as the mix of skills necessary for success, but composition of a new entity would need more regional representation as well as organizations that either have or could

bring in additional resources to match federal dollars and implement a regional vision.

The Western Reserve Feasibility Study Stakeholder Committee included individuals from the following:

- Ashtabula County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Canfield Heritage Foundation
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
- Eastgate Regional Council of Government
- Floyd Browne Group
- Fund for Our Economic Future
- Geauga County Historical Society
- Geauga County Parks
- Hale Farm and Village
- Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail
- Lake Metroparks
- Lake County Historical Society and History Ctr.
- Mahoning Valley Historical Society
- Medina County Commissioners
- Medina County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- National Park Service
- Oberlin Heritage Center
- Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition
- Ohio Historical Society
- Ohio Sea Grant College Program
- Ottawa County Commissioners
- Portage County Regional Planning Commission
- Congressman Tim Ryan

- Sandusky Main Street Association
- Trumbull County Tourism Bureau
- Vienna Historical Society
- Village of Richfield
- Western Reserve Historical Society
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- Youngstown State University

The stakeholder committee as described above is not ready to assume the responsibilities of coordinating entity. Although participation by some of those listed was strong during the study process, the responsibilities and resources needed for the individual mission and tasks of these organizations and agencies would prevent the needed focus of time and materials to the heritage area. With time and commitment, this forum could be established as an effective convener and coordinator, but it would require a greater level of commitment than exhibited during the study process.

Heritage areas enhance local economies. Many communities within the Western Reserve recognize the natural relationship among resource conservation, enhanced recreational opportunities, community identity and image, and community economic development efforts. Resources define communities' characters and are often valued by those seeking to relocate. Heritage designation would enhance the current dialogue of balancing

development and conservation priorities resulting in more sustainable communities.

A national heritage area designation based on the natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources of the region would complement the existing tourist attractions and resources in the Western Reserve. The national heritage area coordinating entity would work with local businesses and organizations to build their capacity and develop a regional marketing approach. Overall, economic activity in the tourism sector would experience a positive impact.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve does not meet this criterion. Although heritage area designation would be consistent with economic activity in the area, the lack of an established coordinating entity combined with the lead time and resources necessary to get it up and running would impact the ability to develop and implement a management plan.



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

The Western Reserve’s national significance lies in its establishment as the nation’s town square after the Revolutionary War, which took place in concurrence with the settlement of the historic Connecticut Western Reserve in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The small town squares, migration patterns, transportation developments, industry innovations, land use patterns, architecture, social reform activities, and education all resulted from and evolved in connection to this establishment as a settlement under Connecticut. Thus, the proposed boundaries for a heritage area mirror this important historic boundary. The boundaries were not revised as a result of the planning process, so the map included below has been viewed and approved at each Stakeholder committee and public meeting for the project.

The study area as defined by Congress in the Western Reserve Heritage Areas Study Act (et120 STAT. 1846 PUBLIC LAW 109–338—OCT. 12, 2006) also reflects the original boundaries of the Western Reserve as surveyed beginning in 1796.

Western Reserve Heritage Areas Study Act . . . (c) BOUNDARIES OF THE STUDY AREA.—The Study Area shall be comprised of the counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa, and Ashland in Ohio.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve meets this criterion.

Study Criterion (I) “. . . whether the study area has potential or actual impact on private property located within or abutting the Study Area.”

Concern over private property rights was identified at one public meeting. Designation of a national heritage area, however, does not provide the coordinating entity or any federal agency authority to regulate land or land uses. Participation in projects and programs is always voluntary, with zoning and land-use decisions remaining under the jurisdiction of local governments. In addition, the coordinating entity is also prohibited from using the federal funds it receives through enabling legislation to acquire real property (NPS 2003).

The coordinating entity is empowered to create a management plan for the heritage area, and it is authorized to receive federal funds on the area’s behalf. The authority to be a part of development and implementation of this plan is voluntary and local—resting in the hands of willing local officials and the actions of local organizations and individuals.

After a heritage area is designated by Congress, National Park Service partners with local community members to help plan and implement heritage area activities. The National Park Service also provides administrative oversight of federal funding that the heritage area receives. National Park Service involvement is always advisory in nature; it neither makes nor carries out management decisions.

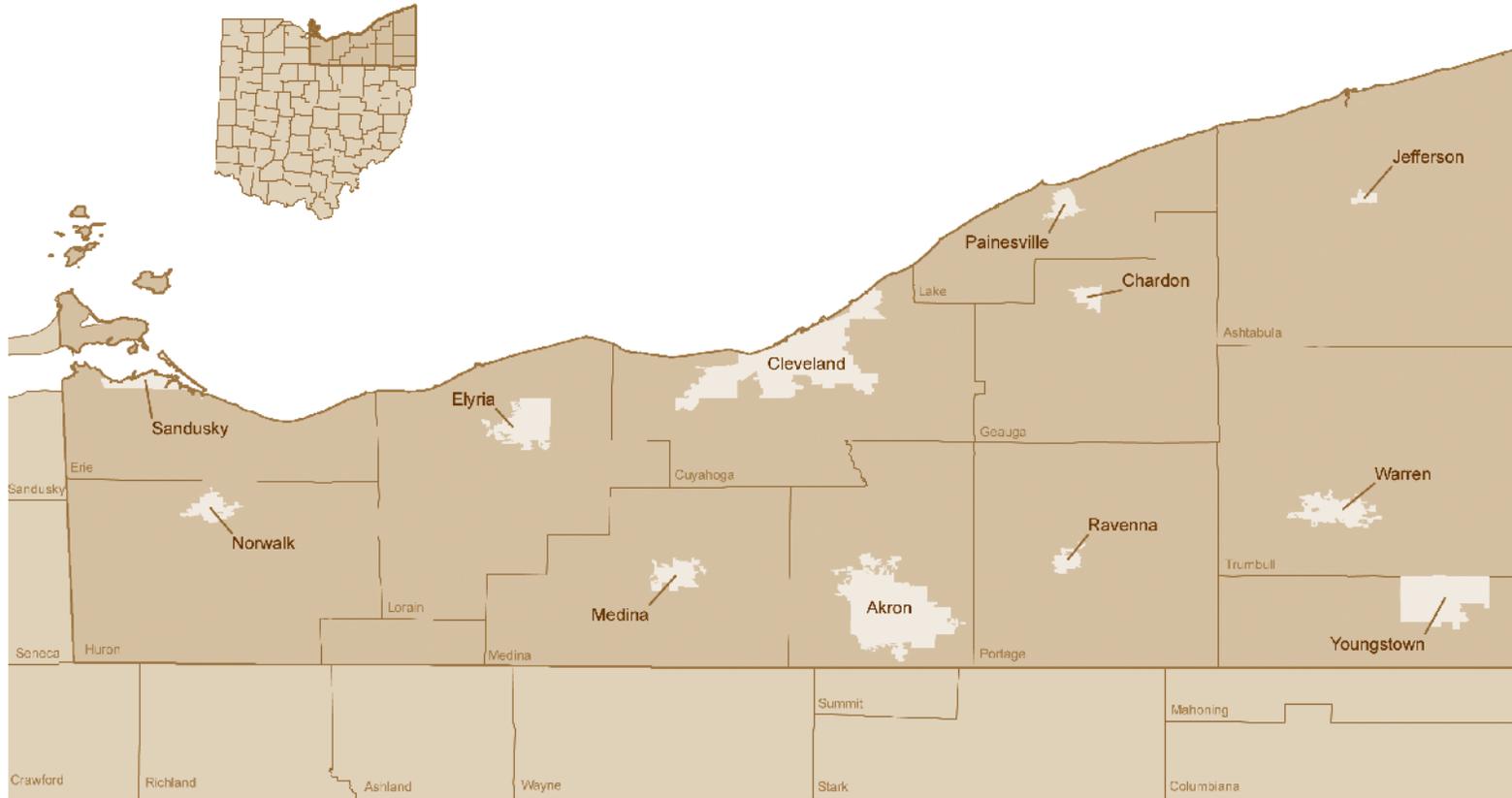
Heritage conservation efforts are grounded in a community’s pride in its history and traditions, and in residents’ interest and involvement in retaining and interpreting the landscape for future generations.

Based on the supporting information described above, the National Park Service concludes that the Western Reserve does not have potential or actual impact on private property located within or abutting the study area.



OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Western Reserve Heritage Feasibility Study Area



-  Western Reserve
-  County Seats
-  County Boundaries

Map produced by:
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Figure 8 Conceptual Boundary of the Western Reserve Heritage Area