

The Transition from Public to Private

The Challenge

The American Heritage River (AHR) Initiative was put into effect by Executive Order No. 13061 on September 11, 1997, to support community led efforts that stimulate economic revitalization, protect natural resources, and preserve historic and cultural heritage along and proximate to the designated river. The Cuyahoga River in northeastern Ohio was one of 14 designated AHRs supported by various partners. In accordance with the AHR guidelines, the partners and the USDA agreed that the Forest Service, State and Private Forestry Northeastern Area, would serve as the sponsoring Federal agency to coordinate Federal resources and provide a River Navigator, or coordinator, to act as a liaison between the partners and Federal agencies. In 1999, an MOU developed between the Northeastern Area and partners, set the stage for implementation of the AHR Initiative. In the fall of 2002, the USDA Forest Service turned over responsibility for the River Navigator to the partners who have become self-supporting.

The Solution

Working with the Morgantown Field Office, the Cuyahoga AHR partners identified the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization (CRCPO), a nonprofit 501(c) 3 group, as the lead organization for the AHR partners. James White, Director of the Cuyahoga Remedial Action Plan (RAP), was designated the River Navigator. He chairs the AHR Partners Committee and assists in the preparation of an annual work plan and projects, for which the partners provide suggestions and approval. The Cuyahoga RAP provides staff to support the initiative and serve as the local point of contact.

Resulting Benefits

The Cuyahoga AHR Initiative has active involvement from over 100 local communities and townships. Projects are designed and driven by the partners and local communities.

Current partners include the Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan Coordinating Committee, Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization, the Ohio and Erie Canal Association, the Upper Cuyahoga River Watershed Taskforce, the Northeast Ohio Area-Wide Coordinating Agency, and the North East Four County Planning and Development Organization.



The Flats, where the river winds through Cleveland.

The AHR partners work toward the accomplishment of identified goals in the following areas:

- Planning and implementation to promote the preservation and restoration of the beneficial uses of the Cuyahoga River.
- Development of a historical and cultural heritage program.
- Development of a comprehensive water quality plan for the entire watershed.
- Implementation of land and water quality protection initiatives.
- Continued public and private investment in river-based economic and restoration enterprises.
- Expansion of recreational and public access opportunities.
- Expansion of programs in preserving and interpreting natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources.
- Expansion of public involvement and education programs.

Sharing Success

The River Navigator provides an annual progress report to the Forest Service and the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ). He also participates in an annual River Navigator meeting with the navigators of the other 13 designated rivers, where they share successes. The RAP Web site offers various publications and brochures that are developed by the partners and used within the Cuyahoga Watershed.



USDA Forest Service
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