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ORCA SUBMITS \$17.9 MILLION APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY GRANT PROPOSAL: SOUTHEAST OHIO NATURE, HERITAGE, AND ART TO THE STATE OF OHIO

Proposal with 13 component projects Projected to Inject over \$17.7 million annually to Ohio Economy

ATHENS, OHIO, February, 2023- ORCA, along with eight anchor component project managers, submitted a \$17.9 million proposal to the state of Ohio. The project proposes to strategically build tourism infrastructure, enhance the region's workforce, and increase healthcare access to the region.

Leveraging natural and cultural assets, ORCA's proposal builds important community infrastructure and supports visible economic development through the development and improvement of top-tier tourism assets such as the [Baileys Trail System](#), [The Southeast Ohio History Center](#), Downtown Nelsonville, [The OHIO Museum Complex](#), [Meigs County Pioneer Historical Museum](#), and [Stuart's Opera House](#). The proposal also includes essential corresponding workforce sectors, including inclusive hospitality and emergency response training.

The Baileys project components along with the Snow Fork Event Center partnership with Stuart's Opera House, three of the proposed thirteen component projects, project an annual return of \$17.7 million annually in two of Ohio's persistent poverty counties, according to third party analyses. The \$17.9 million project proposal brings \$8.9 million of match funds from ORCA and project partners.

According to ORCA Executive Director, Jessie Powers, "Governor DeWine's once-in-a-life-time investment of \$500 million in Appalachian Ohio is exactly the sort of strategic investment opportunity champions of Ohio's rural areas have dreamed of; it's increasingly clear investment in tourism assets catalyzes development of new businesses and jobs. Our experience with the Baileys Trail System and our partners' experiences prove these investments elevate quality of life, and better equip Ohio to compete nationally. I truly believe the natural beauty, history, arts, and culture of the region make Southeast Ohio one of the best places in America to live, work, and play!"

Indeed, [Forbes magazine](#) just named Hocking Hills, in adjacent Hocking County, one of the top 50 places to travel in 2023. The ORCA proposal meets the vast opportunity associated with increased visitation to the region, and proactively protects Ohio's growing tourism industry by enhancing the region's workforce and dispersing visitors.

The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia, a council of governments, was created in 2019 to utilize Appalachian Ohio's plentiful outdoor recreation assets to sustainably diversify rural economies. ORCA staff operate a dedicated nonprofit partner, [Athens-Wayne Outdoor Asset Development Corporation \(AWOADC\)](#), and partner with a [multi-sector skilled advisory board](#) and the [Wayne National Forest](#) to plan and implement the Baileys Trail System project. The Baileys Trail System is a planned 88-mile mountain bike optimized trail system (open to all forms of human powered use) on over 9,000 acres of Ohio's only national forest. Upon completion, The Baileys will be one of the longest trail systems of its kind in the East.

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