



Calumet Heritage Partnership, Inc.

1100 North Mineral Springs Road | Chesterton, IN 46304

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Calumet Heritage Partnership?

- The Calumet Heritage Partnership (CHP) was formed in 1998 by community activists in southeast Chicago and Northwest Indiana as an Indiana 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with a focus on environmental issues.
- Today, the mission of CHP is to **enrich lives by utilizing heritage assets to foster economic and community development.**
- Answering a charge by then-Congressman Pete Visclosky to “think big” for the region, CHP coalesced its work around the Calumet Heritage Area “brand” and began the pursuit of designation as a National Heritage Area in cooperation with the Field Museum.
- CHP today continues to operate the Calumet Heritage Area, while **pursuing National designation as the 63rd National Heritage Area and first in Indiana.**

How do heritage assets support economic and community development?

- Heritage assets, **building blocks of place-making, pride, and prosperity**, are natural, cultural, or recreational resources that contribute to the enjoyment and understanding of the region for both residents and visitors.
- In addition to the built environment and nature, stories of the place and its people are valuable heritage assets.
- Well-preserved and interpreted heritage assets attract tourists as well as residents, generating revenue for local businesses, accommodation providers, and transportation. This creates jobs and diversifies the local economy.
 - Certec Inc. and Indiana Dunes Tourism found National Park visitation generates \$155 million in tax revenue while supporting 6,588 jobs in Porter County
- Engaging with heritage assets allows residents to **understand and celebrate their cultural heritage**, strengthening their sense of place and community.
- Heritage assets can serve educational programs, museums, and cultural events, fostering a sense of shared history and connection across generations.
- Studies have shown a **correlation between strong community pride and lower crime rates, better educational outcomes, and improved public health.**

What is a National Heritage Area?

- National Heritage Areas are **places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes.** Grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development
- Administered by the National Park Service while locally managed with no Federal employees

What are the nationally significant themes of the Calumet?

- **Nature Reworked:** The Calumet’s Diverse Landscape (Ecology is an important heritage asset of the region)
- **Innovation and Change for Industries and Workers**
- **Crucible for Working Class and Ethnic Cultures**

Where is the Calumet Heritage Area?

- A bi-state area bounded by approximately the northern boundary of the former USS South Works in Chicago, south to include portions of suburban Chicagoland, and the Indiana counties of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte.

- From Lake Michigan to the Indiana Dunes to the Grand Calumet River to the Kankakee River, the Calumet is a landscape reworked for economic development that now is undergoing vigorous restoration for recreational and educational uses to enrich the lives of residents and visitors.
- The Pullman National Historical Park and the Indiana Dunes National Park are key National Park Service assets in the region and would be connected to each other and supported by the National Heritage Area.

What are examples of recent CHA activities:

- Cooperation with the Field Museum and 15 regional organizations to create **Calumet Voices/National Stories**. Starting in 2020 this exhibit was shown at the Pullman National Historical Park, Gary Public Library, and the Porter County Museum, before returning to the Field Museum for nearly 1 year.
 - In cooperation with the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority this exhibit to the Indiana Visitors Center, opening on April 18.
 - The Porter County Museum, Westchester Historical Museum, and Valparaiso University have been key partners on the exhibit.
- Working with the **Museum of Science and Industry to create a steel exhibit** scheduled to open in Q1 2025.
- **Rescued artifacts from Acme Steel**, brought them to Purdue Northwest, and set in motion a process of use and interpretation with grant from Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation
- **Supporting Underground Railroad work** to extend it into Northwest Indiana and on to Detroit to create a Chicago to Detroit Heritage Corridor
- **Created brochure for the South Shore Line** highlighting heritage assets with grant from Indiana Dunes Tourism
- Annual heritage conferences since 2001. The next one is at the Indiana Visitors Center October 5, 2024.

Why are we seeking designation as the 63rd National Heritage Area (and first in Indiana)?

- **National recognition provides increased stature.**
- Designation would **attract additional resources** to increase the impact of the CHA. Effects like the benefits seen by the elevation of the National Lake Shore to a National Park.
- **Greater prestige and sense of pride** for the Calumet region
- Strengthens bi-state cooperation and **supports integration of Northwest Indiana into the metropolitan economy.**

How is national designation achieved?

- Create a **Feasibility Study meeting the criteria of the National Park Service. (completed in 2018)**
- **Requires an act of Congress**
- The CHA touches 6 Congressional districts with 4 Senators. All are in support of national designation.
- About 80% of the area and 50% of the population are in Frank Mrvan's district. Most of the Illinois population and area are in Robin Kelly's district.
- **We understand Mrvan and Kelly are working together to introduce a bill, originally drafted by Senator Young.**

What is our request?

- With the many priorities before Congress, and especially in this election year, **we are seeking support to ensure that the momentum towards introduction and passage of enabling legislation is maintained.**
- Pete Visclosky brought the first National Park to the region and state. Frank Mrvan can bring the first National Heritage Area to the region and state.
- Specifically, **indicating support for prompt action by Congressman Mrvan's office would be most helpful.**

How can I learn more?

- Rivers of Steel in Pittsburgh is a good example of a long-established, successful heritage area sharing many characteristics with the Calumet region: <https://riversofsteel.com/>
- The CHP web site: <https://calumetheritage.org/>
- The Calumet Heritage Area web site: <https://calumetheritagearea.org/>
- A virtual tour of Calumet Voices/National stories: <https://www.calumetvoices.fieldmuseum.org/exhibits>
- Contact Gary R. Johnson, Board Chair, Calumet Heritage Partnership grjohnson49@gmail.com | 216-533-8302