

# Calumet Heritage Area Feasibility Update – No. 1



Welcome to what is to be a frequent – hopefully monthly – update on the status of the feasibility study for the creation of a Calumet National Heritage Area. This update is intended to keep you informed as to the progress of the study and to identify ways in which you can participate in the study process. For further information about both the Feasibility Study and the Calumet Heritage Partnership you can visit the CHP website [www.calumetheritage.org](http://www.calumetheritage.org)

## Fifteenth Annual Calumet Heritage Conference: Art and Heritage

The Calumet Heritage Partnership's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was held in Munster, Indiana on October 25<sup>th</sup> at South Shore Arts. CHP president Mark Bouman provided the following reflections on the conference.

*"Artist Barb Labus put her finger on what defines the Calumet region at the 15th Annual Calumet Heritage Conference: "As an artist, and as a resident, the thing that seems to define the Calumet region is contrast -- between the exquisite examples of biodiversity and the obvious presence of technology." As Labus talked, her familiar poster work -- so attentive to keynote species, distinctive habitat, and*

*to the spirit of a place -- scrolled across the screen.*

*This year's conference, co-sponsored by the Science Action Center of The Field Museum and the Calumet Heritage Partnership, explored the theme of "Art and Heritage". Speakers, panelists, and a tour demonstrated repeatedly that art plays an integrative role in bringing together conversations around natural and cultural landscapes. Keynote speaker Judith O'Toole, Director and CEO of the Westmoreland Museum of American Art near Pittsburgh, drew out the links between paintings depicting the heyday of steelmaking in the Pittsburgh region and their collective commentary on the social and environmental impact of that industry. South Chicago artist Roman Villareal,*

whose sculpture will adorn the new Steelworkers' Park at 87th and Lake Michigan where he once worked, declared -- "art is the new steel." Legacy Foundation Executive Director Carolyn Saxton sounded the need to find a "big idea" for what comes next in cities like

Gary. And documentary film producer Pat Wisniewski played a few clips from the forthcoming film *Shifting Sands*, where a local expert, echoing Labus, says that the story of the region is "sand and steel and people."



*Barb Labus speaks at the 15<sup>th</sup> Calumet Heritage Conference*

### **Introducing the Calumet Heritage Area Feasibility Study**

Speaking near the end of the morning sessions at the Heritage Conference, Mark Bouman made an important announcement; the launch of a process that could lead to the designation of the region as a National Heritage Area. Mark noted that the Calumet region contains more people than metropolitan Indianapolis, but is distributed across more than sixty municipalities, five counties, and two states. It has a greater diversity of plants and animals than most natural parks. The Calumet is studded with real

landscape gems, not only in showcase spaces like the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, but also in the seventy-four active ecological restoration sites recovering under careful stewardship. "A Calumet National Heritage Area offers a perfect opportunity to connect the proposed National Park at Pullman in Illinois with the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in Indiana," Mark said.

### **What is a National Heritage Area and a Feasibility Study?**

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by Congress where natural,

cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape. National Heritage Areas are locally inspired, led, and managed efforts to bring national attention to an area. They are not National Parks and the Park Service does not own land or impose land use controls within them. But they can coordinate with existing parks.

The first step in creating a National Heritage Area is usually the preparation of a National Park Service Feasibility Study, which catalogs the historical, cultural, natural, and recreational assets of the region, outlines the process by which the NHA will be managed, and demonstrates local participation in the development the study. The Feasibility Study is used to support legislation introduced to Congress. If approved, Congress designates the Heritage Area for 15 years and allocates some funding, and a management plan is drafted by the Heritage Area.

### **What is The Calumet Heritage Partnership? What is Its Role in the Feasibility Study?**

The Calumet Heritage Partnership is a diverse, bi-state partnership of environmental, cultural and historical organizations and individuals, libraries, educational institutions, municipalities, and governmental agencies. Each partner is committed to celebrating, preserving and protecting the unique heritage of the Calumet region. The mission of CHP is to identify, preserve, protect and reclaim the natural,

historical, cultural and recreational heritage of the Calumet region of Illinois and Indiana for the purposes of educating and inspiring the public, restoring regional pride, and revitalizing our communities and their interconnectedness. CHP has long advocated the creation of a NHA for the Calumet region and is a leader in the feasibility study process.

In the next feasibility study update we will provide a more complete outline of the feasibility study process and a "roadmap" for the study.

### **Coming Events**

The board of the Calumet Heritage Partnership will meet on Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. While this is a formal board meeting, all CHP members are welcome to attend. The board meeting is from 7-9pm and this month's meeting will be at the offices of the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), 13300 South Baltimore Avenue, Chicago.

### **How Can You Get Involved with the Feasibility Study?**

If you are not already a CHP member, you can become one. Information on membership and on many aspects of the work of CHP and other groups in the Calumet region can be found by visiting the CHP website at [www.calumetheritage.org](http://www.calumetheritage.org). Subsequent "updates" will inform you about meetings, hearings, and other events that will occur during the 18 month feasibility study process.