

## Calumet Heritage Area Management Plan

### Public Comment Period

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Those who live, work, and recreate in the Calumet region and those who are invested in protecting its cultural and natural assets are invited to review and provide comment on the *Calumet Heritage Area Management Plan*. The *Management Plan* is available for public review and comment through 11:59 am on March 22, 2021 and be accessed at [calumetheritagearea.org/plan-public-comment.html](http://calumetheritagearea.org/plan-public-comment.html).

Today's release of the *Calumet Heritage Area Management Plan* for public comment marks a milestone in the grassroots effort to federally designate the Calumet Region as a National Heritage Area. The *Management Plan* shares the background and future vision and goals of the Calumet Heritage Area (CHA), an effort led by the Calumet Heritage Partnership, the Calumet Collaborative, and the Field Museum with input from numerous local partners. This *Management Plan* is one part of the CHA's work to bring people together across state lines to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the Calumet region.

The CHA *Management Plan* sets the course for projects that are strategic, coordinated, and impactful, and clarifies roles, responsibilities, systems, and resources needed to make the Heritage Area a success. The *Plan* not only calls attention to the cultural and environmental assets of the Calumet region but lays out actions to activate, highlight, and protect these assets. Some examples include developing exhibits to tell the story of the Calumet and its history as part of the environmental justice movement, creating a network of the public arts and artists in the region, and working with educators in the region to ensure environmental stewardship is included in curricula.

The Calumet region contains globally rare natural areas, the nation's premier heavy industrial district, and distinctive communities that continue to shape the natural and built landscape. Its two urban National Parks—Pullman National Monument and Indiana Dunes National Park—bookend and highlight these contrasting features. Today's Calumet landscape—taken as an industrial, environmental, and community whole—shows how American life changed during the boom years of industrialization that followed the Civil War and how changes continued through booms and busts in the economy to the present day.

While the partners in the region carry forth the Calumet Heritage Area effort, the CHA is seeking designation as a *National* Heritage Area. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress to recognize nationally important lived-in places where natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources intersect. NHAs collaborate with area residents and organizations by using local, grassroots, community-driven approaches to heritage conservation, community revitalization, and economic development.

Benefits of NHAs include sustainable economic development; healthy environment and people; improved quality of life; increased educational and stewardship activities; and community engagement and pride.

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When Congress designates an NHA, the legislation usually carries a mandate to create a *Management Plan*. Rather than wait for the Congress-mandated *Management Plan*, CHA partners have moved forward with creating one for the now functioning Calumet Heritage Area. Management plans turn a national heritage area feasibility study into the “who, what, when, where, and how” that will guide operations for 5-10, sometimes 15 years. National heritage area management plans generally include long-range policies, goals, strategies, and actions; an implementation plan with short, mid- and long-range actions and performance goals; a business plan for the heritage area coordinating entity; and an interpretive plan. The *CHA Management Plan* has particular focus on regional impact, heritage development, and better connectivity within and outside of the region. At the time of national designation, this *Plan* can be updated to account for new circumstances and mandates.

The Field Museum has studied the exceptional biological and cultural diversity of the Calumet region, since the Field's founding 125 years ago. Today the Museum holds nearly 20,000 objects and specimens from the Calumet in its collections and continues to bring its expertise in cultural diversity, ecology, and education to strengthen the bonds between people and nature in the region. By uncovering and nurturing the social assets of the region the Field helps communities realize a more sustainable future. In addition to supporting the Calumet Heritage Area effort, Museum staff work with partners to enhance, expand, and restore natural areas and work with communities and schools to improve nature-based education, resilience, and quality of life across the region.