



Helping Communities Leverage Their Outdoor Recreation Assets

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia Updates Bylaws, Adjusts Membership Fee Structure, and Welcomes County Commissioner Chris Chmiel to the Board

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ORCA is excited to welcome Athens County Commissioner Chris Chmiel to the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia board. Commissioner Chmiel was appointed to the board following Commissioner Charlie Adkins' resignation on October 1, 2024. Chmiel enjoys mountain biking at the Baileys Trail System and has been a long time supporter of the project.

ORCA passed a September 27, 2024 bylaw amendment which added ORCA Board member service expectations, including adding language around upholding ORCA's mission, vision, and values. In addition, the amendment changed ORCA membership dues amounts and added withdrawal clauses for nonpayment of membership dues and noncompliance with ORCA's mission, vision, and values. Full details can be found [here](#).

As a council of governments (cog), ORCA works with multiple jurisdictions to utilize outdoor recreation to deliver economic, social, health, and environmental benefits to the region. As members, the ORCA Board, in service to their respective jurisdictions, find solutions to fulfill ORCA's mission and vision. Current ORCA members are the County of Athens, the Cities of Athens and Nelsonville, the Villages of Chauncey and Buchtel, and York Township. The County of Athens and City of Athens are paying members, while the other original member jurisdictions offer in-kind contributions to the cog, [pursuant to the 2021 update to bylaws](#).

ORCA's new dues structure reduces City of Athens and Athens County annual membership dues from \$90,000, to \$23,824, and \$30,796, respectively. This is roughly one-third of the original rate, and amounts to approximately \$1 for each citizen. The county will pay the remainder after member jurisdictions within the county's boundaries are deducted. While Athens County has a population of 62,431, more than 30,000 individuals live within other ORCA member jurisdictions; thus Athens County's \$30,796 2024 dues.

This essential change is designed to be affordable and sustainable for members in the long-term, as well as demonstrate local support for ORCA's efforts in building and maintaining the more than \$9MM asset that is the Baileys Trail System.

Though the membership dues help offset ORCA operating costs, they do not fully cover the human capacity essential to securing and administering grant funds— more than \$10.8MM— to build the Baileys and grow the region's outdoor recreation economy. ORCA's team— 4

full-time staff and two AmeriCorps members– maintain the trails in partnership with Wayne National Forest, the Athens Bicycle Club, and many other volunteers and groups. ORCA staff also activate the Baileys through various programs, permitted events, and hosting the annual Baileys Dirt Fondo. In collaboration with 17 additional counties and stakeholder partners, ORCA is also advancing development of a regional brand and region-wide recreation asset assessment and development plan.

As of September 30, 2024, a notice was sent to ORCA members regarding nonpayment of 2024 membership fees and other amendment details. Each jurisdiction is to provide payment or an official resolved statement of intent to pay and timeline for payment from the jurisdiction’s governing, legislative, or financial authority within 30 days.

The ORCA Board looks forward to updates from the City of Athens and Athens County at the next ORCA Board Meeting, October 18th, 10:30am at 294 S. Harper Street in Nelsonville, Ohio. ORCA staff and AmeriCorps members are eager to learn more about the level of ongoing commitment from both the City of Athens and Athens County.



ORCA Executive Director, Jessie Powers, welcomes Athens County Commissioner, Chris Chmiel to the ORCA board.

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