

**Planning the Role of the Park
with the Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council
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The word “partnerships” is one of the buzzwords of the 1990s. Many organizations including non-profits, government at all levels, and businesses are looking at partnerships as ways of sharing and economizing on resources, building new productive relationships, and extending their influences. The word partnership for Cuyhoga Valley National Recreation Area, since its inception in the mid 1970’s, has fundamentally been part and parcel of the development of the area as a unit of the National Park System. The development of the park as a regional resource was accelerated and enhanced by the acceptance of partnerships and the acknowledgement of the role communities play in creating and sustaining the area.

From the beginning, the character of CVNRA was in part determined by the communities that are included within the 33,000 acres of the authorized boundary. Unlike many other National Park units, CVNRA was created by acquiring a land base from already established communities. The effects of this were in some ways anticipated and resulted in the legislated establishment of the Cuyahoga Valley Communities Council. This organization includes representatives of all the communities touched by the park, a board of trustees, and an executive director. The purpose of the organization was and is to provide a forum for all communities to present issues and concerns about the national park area and its effects on their communities. At the outset, it provided a watchdog function since there were many fears about land acquisition, park development, etc. It has since evolved into an organization which looks at issues of mutual concern to the valley such as the exploding deer population and the effects of storm water runoff. Grant funding has been acquired to study these issues and present a range of remedies to the communities at large. This organization, as well as many others, has served and continues to serve valuable regional purposes by enhancing cooperation and interdependence to meet the challenges of a rapidly developing area attempting to preserve the character of its communities and their well being.