

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONSERVANCY FOR CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK PRESIDENT AND CEO  
DEB YANDALA TO STEP DOWN IN THE SPRING OF 2025**

**PENINSULA, Ohio – Oct. 22, 2024** – Long-time Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park (Conservancy) President and CEO Deb Yandala announced to the Board of Directors that she will be leaving her role in the first half of 2025. Deb served as CEO since July 2002 and prior to that was the Director of Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center.

“It has been a privilege to lead this growing organization and to work alongside the National Park Service,” stated Deb Yandala.

“Outstanding board and staff members, dedicated donors and volunteers, and strong community support for the park have made this a dream job for me. Together we have made a difference in protecting and enhancing the park that we all love.”

According to Karyn Sullivan, chair of the Board of Directors of the Conservancy, “Deb has been a gifted leader who has grown the organization from a staff of 24 to a staff of 100 and a budget of \$1.2 million to \$8 million. Under Deb’s strategic vision and leadership, the Conservancy has benefited from significant accomplishments, from the development of funds in support of trails to land acquisition and the funding, planning and construction of Boston Mill Visitor Center.”

Under her leadership, the Conservancy has become a national leader in the movement to support national parks. It is one of the largest friends groups in the country and its partnership with Cuyahoga Valley National Park is widely thought of as one of the most effective in the National Park System. Deb served as president of the National Park Friends Alliance, the national network of nonprofit organizations that support parks. Last year they named a scholarship fund in her honor.

Deb informed the board that she will remain as CEO until a new CEO joins the organization. The board will commence the search process immediately with the goal of having a new CEO in place within the next 6 – 8 months. Deb shared that she looks forward to part-time contractual work that will allow her to have more time to spend with family and friends – doing the things that she is always encouraging others to do such as hike, bike, kayak and enjoy the natural treasures of NE Ohio.



(more)

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Conservancy accomplishments under Deb's Leadership:

- Deb was first hired to write curriculum for the new Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center in 1992. She later became its director and remained in that position until asked to become CEO of the Conservancy, which was formed due to the merger of the education center and the former Cuyahoga Valley Association. Under Deb's leadership, the education center was filled with students every day of the school year and was recognized for its creativity in the arts, technology, and in providing leadership experiences for entry level leaders in environmental education.
- The Conservancy's first major project was the \$300,000 renovation of historic buildings in Boston Township that became the park's volunteer center.
- Renovation of the Stanford House, allowing the Conservancy to provide overnight lodging for guests.
- The establishment of three retail outlets, Trail Mix in Peninsula, the Boston Store, and retail store in Boston Mill Visitor Center.
- The development of the Extraordinary Spaces program whereby the Conservancy leases buildings from the National Park Service and provides event planning and hosting services to the public at Happy Days Lodge and the Hines Hill Campus.
- Oversight of the park's cultural arts program, including concerts, educational programs, an art gallery and artist led programs and projects.
- Co-management of the park's volunteer program, which supports thousands of volunteers and hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours each year.
- Acquisition of 215 acres at market value that comprised the former Brandywine Golf Course and subsequent sale of 200 acres to the National Park Service at the appraised value, as well as oversight of concept design planning for the property.
- Establishment of the Trails Forever endowment fund for long-term support of park trails and the establishment of a fund in support of the Towpath Trail.
- Funding for a variety of projects, from equestrian trails to scholarships for students to participate in education programs.
- Funding, design, and renovation of Hines Hill location for Conservancy HQ.
- Funding, design, and building of a \$6.4 million National Park Visitors Center.

### **About Conservancy for CVNP**

The Conservancy for CVNP is the official friends group and philanthropic partner for Cuyahoga Valley National Park. With a mission to enrich people's lives and enhance our region by inspiring use, preservation and support of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the Conservancy offers cultural and educational programming, co-manages the park's volunteer program, provides venues for weddings, meetings and special events, and operates park retail spaces. Learn more at [www.forcvnp.org](http://www.forcvnp.org).

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