



**LACKAWANNA COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA  
PRESS OFFICE**

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**Smithsonian Curator Bill Withuhn to Chair the LHVA's New Industrial Heritage  
Task Force**

**SCRANTON, PA** --Bill Withuhn has been a regular visitor to the Valley since 1993, when he began volunteering, on his own time, at the Steamtown National Historic Site. Since 1993, Bill has put in more than 4,100 hours at Steamtown, as a volunteer locomotive engineer and fireman. When he isn't up in Scranton, he is a senior curator at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, specializing in the history of technology and transportation.

The mission of the new Task Force is to better coordinate the public programs and public interpretation at all the wonderful historic sites and attractions in the Lackawanna Valley region that focus on industrial heritage. These sites, such as Steamtown, the Anthracite Heritage Museum, the Coal Mine Tour in McDade Park, the Iron Furnaces, the Trolley Museum, and others are in different jurisdictions – federal, state, and county – and so effective coordination to better attract more tourist dollars to the region has always been a challenge.

The Task Force has been meeting since last fall, and has already made substantial progress, evidenced by the high degree of mutual cooperation among the members, who represent almost all the industrial heritage sites in the Valley, as well as northeast Pennsylvania tourism authorities, educators, and the Lackawanna Historical Society.

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During Steamtown's formative years, Bill worked closely with former Congressman Joe McDade and with Superintendent John Latschar to help bring Steamtown to its successful Grand Opening in 1995. Consulting for the National Park Service has been frequent for Bill, and he has worked at Lowell National Historical Park (Lowell, Mass.), Glacier National Park in Montana, the Presidio in San Francisco, and the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site in Cresson, Pa., among others. He recently consulted in India for UNESCO, concerning management of a World Heritage Site in West Bengal.

For the National Academy of Sciences' Transportation Research Board, Bill is an appointee to its Committee on Transportation Needs of the National Parks & Public Lands. This committee studies ways in which the national parks can adopt alternative transportation concepts and systems within the parks, to improve visitor mobility while better protecting resources for current and future generations.

Bill also serves on the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council, which advises the National Park Service Northeast Regional Director in Philadelphia on critical issues affecting parks throughout the mid-Atlantic area. On the NPMAC, Bill represents the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site, the Johnstown Flood National Memorial, Steamtown National Historic Site, and the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area.

His expertise in historic locomotives has been of particular usefulness to Steamtown. From 1996-2000, Bill served as co-chair of a Federal Railroad Administration rule-making task force that entirely revised and re-wrote the federal safety and inspection regulations governing historic steam locomotives, to bring these safety rules into the 21st century. These new regulations were made effective in January 2000. Bill has chaired the Engineering Standards Committee for Steam Locomotives since 1991.

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Bill is also a member of the distinguished National Council of the National Parks

Conservation Association. NPCA, founded in 1919, is the leading citizens' advocacy organization for the national parks, with 300,000 members nationwide. NPCA works closely with National Park Service leadership on budget and public issues in Washington, DC, and across the nation.

A love of the national parks came early to Bill, from years of trekking in the high backcountry of Yosemite, the Emigrant Basin Wilderness Area, and Olympic National Park. For the Smithsonian Associates, he has led extended tours to many of the great parks and national historic sites in the western United States and Canada.

In past lives, Bill was an officer in US Air Force Special Operations, a staff assistant to a US Congressman from New York State, a regional railroad executive – managing rail operations in Virginia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey – and a consultant in transportation operations and economics. He has been a licensed steam and diesel locomotive engineer since 1966 and holds full membership in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

He and his wife, Gail, live in Lanham, Md.

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