

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
Interested Party Testimony
House Bill 66

*Bill Stanley, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
April 9, 2019*

Good afternoon Chairman Hoops, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. I am Bill Stanley, the State Director for The Nature Conservancy in Ohio. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 66, the FY2020-21 biennial budget.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization with chapters in all 50 states and projects in over 70 countries. We are a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, government and local communities to develop pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges, including land conservation, water quality, and air pollution. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters and we own and manage over 20,000 acres of nature preserves throughout the state. We invite any of you to visit our open preserves and enjoy the unique places that make Ohio a great place to live, work and play. We also would like to invite you to view our edge-of-field demonstration projects in northwest Ohio and see first-hand how conservation and agriculture are working together to address the problems in the western Lake Erie basin.

House Bill 66 demonstrates strong, ambitious, and fiscally responsible leadership by the Governor and the General Assembly to improve our water quality and enhance and protect our natural resources. The Nature Conservancy supports the budget proposals for critically important agencies such as Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. We are excited to be a partner with the Administration, the General Assembly and other key stakeholders in many of these efforts and offer additional comments on the following key provisions:

- **H2Ohio Fund** – We applaud the Governor for his vision and commitment to investing \$900M over 10 years to ensure safe and clean water for our state. This fund will direct state resources and leverage additional public and private resources to protect our critically important natural resources – Lake Erie, the Ohio River and the inland waterways that feed these treasures. We are especially appreciative of the recognition that significant funding needs to be directed to targeted wetland restoration, which is a long-lasting and effective mechanism for reducing flooding and filtering waters. TNC is very appreciative of the engagement and interaction demonstrated by the Administration and the General Assembly on this fund and we urge your support of the Governor’s proposal. We are working with other stakeholders on language to include in HB 66 that will develop an Advisory Council to ensure that funds are spent wisely. The Council would continue the existing collaborative public private process and allow public input into agency plans to use this funding. While there are still details to iron out, the need for this funding is certain, and the time for this funding is now.
- **Lake Erie Commission** – We support the budget requests for each fiscal year and are very pleased to see the leadership role taken by the new Director toward the previously-defined goal

(in the FY18-19 budget) of coordination of existing monies coming from federal and state sources and to develop the Lake Erie plan for the H2Ohio fund. Lake Erie is a crown jewel in Ohio and the dedication and commitment shown toward making strong, coordinated improvements is promising and long overdue.

- **Ohio Sea Grant** - Ohio Sea Grant is part of a federal-state investment that supports the health and economic resilience of our nation’s coastal communities, including the Great Lakes. The federal investment sends 95 percent of its appropriated funds to coastal states to solve challenges identified locally such as harmful algae blooms. Sea Grant plays a pivotal role as a credible source of research and information on water quality issues in Ohio by applying sound science to educate the public on the complex issues related to the health of Lake Erie and we support the inclusion of continued funding for this very important work.
- **Heidelberg University Water Quality Lab** - Heidelberg has provided reliable and consistent monitoring of phosphorus levels in the Western Lake Erie basin. This data is critical as we strive to find science-based solutions to the problems in the basin. We support the funding level in the Dept. of Agriculture’s budget and we are excited to hear of the additional research and activities envisioned at our other academic institutions to address water quality efforts.
- **Department of Natural Resources:**
 - **AEP ReCreation Lands** – The state has an opportunity now to invest in the future of outdoor recreation by protecting a large and contiguous area in eastern Ohio to provide hunting, fishing, hiking and camping for us, our children and grandchildren. As Director Mertz testified, Ohio ranks very low (between 45 and 50th) nationally on the amount of public land available for this access to enjoy the outdoors. Data consistently shows the value of recreational spaces for the economy and environment. (See the attached Outdoor Industry Association Economy Report). We urge the committee to support the efforts of ODNR to improve access for future generations and raise our national ranking. Ohio’s natural resources can, and should, make us a destination regionally and nationally. This investment will provide long lasting benefits to our economy and our environment.
 - **Division of Natural Areas and Preserves** – We strongly support the proposal to re-establish this Division and move the Scenic Rivers Program back under its auspices. DNAP is the Division most knowledgeable, qualified and experienced at managing our most unique and imperiled species and ecosystems. These significant natural features are like “living museums” or “heirlooms of the state” which help us *recollect, understand and appreciate* our past, *place our present in context* and *plan for the future*. As DNAP manages these unique areas of our state they use the Ohio Natural Heritage database -first created by The Nature Conservancy. This database repository contains the most accurate and current information available on the location, number and status of rare species and unique natural features. Developers, even more than naturalists, depend on this database to inform their decisions about where to build roads, pipelines and other critical infrastructure to avoid unintended negative impacts on our most significant natural features.
 - **Division of Forestry** – We support the 7% (over both fiscal years) recommended increase in this Division’s budget and would like to work with the General Assembly and the Agency to look at ways to expand the revenue available for the important work this Division does. The responsibility of managing our public forests and helping private woodland owners is important for ecology as well as the economy. The threats to Ohio

forests grow every year with the arrival of new pests and pathogens such as Asian long horned beetle and the newly discovered beech leaf disease.

We are a realistic, yet optimistic, organization and these proposals in HB 66 give us more reasons for optimism. We urge your support for these recommendations and offer our help as we work together to make Ohio not just a great place to live and work but a destination for visitors from all over who want to enjoy our natural areas, trails, lakes and rivers. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify as an interested party on HB 66. I would be happy to answer questions.

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58% OF OHIO

RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE
IN OUTDOOR RECREATION
EACH YEAR

Communities across Ohio recognize that outdoor recreation supports, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly—attracts and sustains employers and families. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, ensuring those communities thrive economically and socially.



More jobs in Ohio directly **DEPEND ON OUTDOOR RECREATION** (215,000) than on auto manufacturing (110,000)¹



Ohio residents are more likely to **PARTICIPATE IN CAMPING AND CANOEING** than the average American



IN OHIO OUTDOOR RECREATION GENERATES:

**\$24.3
BILLION**
IN CONSUMER
SPENDING ANNUALLY



215,000
DIRECT
JOBS



**\$7.0
BILLION**
IN WAGES AND
SALARIES



**\$1.5
BILLION**
IN STATE AND LOCAL
TAX REVENUE



¹ Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

OUTDOOR RECREATION IS A POWERFUL ECONOMIC ENGINE

Outdoor recreation is among our nation's largest economic sectors, representing the lifeblood of thousands of American communities and providing livelihoods for millions of American workers.

THE NATION'S OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY GENERATES:

\$887 BILLION

IN CONSUMER SPENDING ANNUALLY



7.6 MILLION

AMERICAN JOBS



\$65.3 BILLION

IN FEDERAL TAX REVENUE



\$59.2 BILLION

IN STATE AND LOCAL TAX REVENUE



GET INVOLVED

- 1 Visit the OIA Advocacy Center at outdoorindustry.org/advocacy to learn more about the issues and actions affecting outdoor recreation.
- 2 Educate your elected officials about the outdoor recreation economy, how it can support healthy economies and healthy communities in your neighborhood and encourage policies that promote it.
- 3 Go outside and enjoy the public lands and waters that are our nation's treasures. They belong to you.

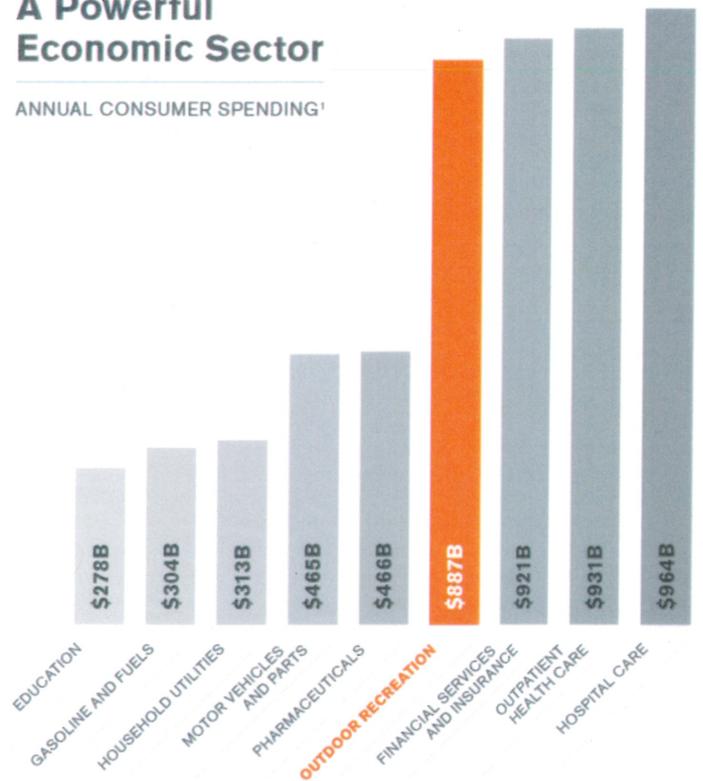
OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
TOGETHER WE ARE A FORCE.

2580 55TH STREET
SUITE 101
BOULDER, CO 80301

OUTDOORINDUSTRY.ORG

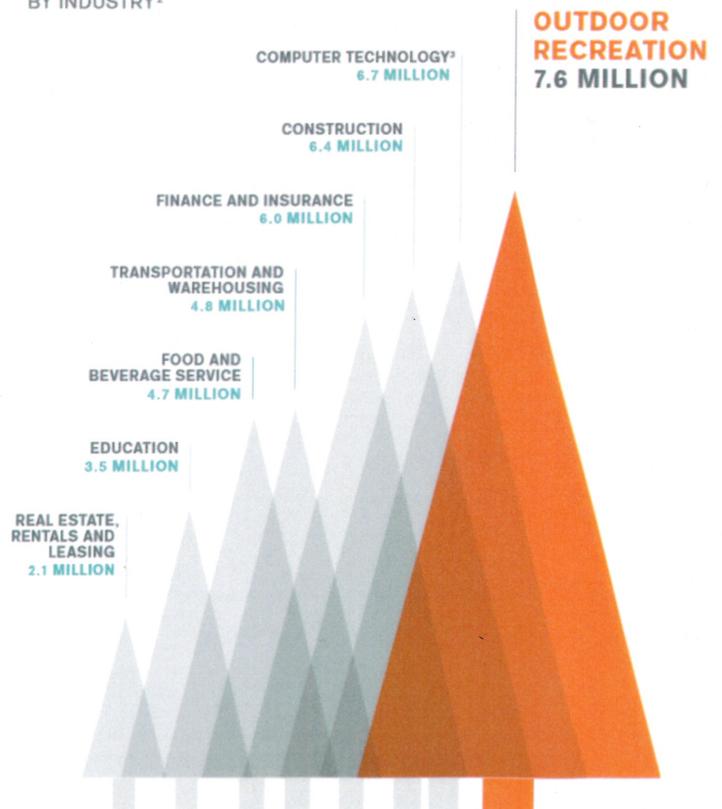
A Powerful Economic Sector

ANNUAL CONSUMER SPENDING¹



Job Comparison

BY INDUSTRY²



¹ Bureau of Economic Analysis

² Bureau of Labor Statistics

³ Computing Technology Industry Association