

# CHERYL HARNER

1651 N. Horning Rd Crestline, Ohio 44827 · 419-545-2869

[cheryl.harner@flora-quest.com](mailto:cheryl.harner@flora-quest.com)

Chairman Hoops, Committee members,

It is a pleasure to be here today, and I would like to tell you why you should spend Ohioans' hard-earned tax dollars on the Department of Natural Resources.

As active community volunteer and Richland County Park Board Commissioner, you might ask why is it important to me to drive down to the Capital and stand here before your budget committee?

Much of what I do for conservation throughout Ohio has been mentored and influenced by good people I have met at the ODNR. Wildlife has supported many of the educational programs on birds and habitats where I gained knowledge. Field trips hosted by our Ohio State botanist offered opportunities to learn more about plants. Ohio's forests, streams, wetlands, prairies, fen, bogs, and special geological features are Ohio's rarest outdoor laboratories. Where better to learn about Ohio's history and heritage? These lessons are equally as important as the history of our nation's progress and people. How can we know who we are if we do not know first- where we are from?

Life is a participatory sport. We must get connected to our natural heritage by seeing it up close and personal. We might find a wild orchid in bloom or see a box turtle- eye to eye. Maybe we'll find a mating ball of harmless snakes. These are the real National Geographic moments in life. And our children are not going to have them at home sitting on the couch.

Our watersheds and natural areas need to be tended. We cannot continue abusing the land and blindly hope it will serve us forever. The Sandusky River watershed rises not far from my home in Crestline. And that watershed, which is just one of the Ohio Scenic Rivers - is impacted – and impacts- everyone on its winding way to Lake Erie. If we raise Ohioans who do not know or understand our natural history, how can we hope they will vote to conserve the land and very resources we depend upon for life??

My success as an advocate of nature is a byproduct of some very effective ODNR mentors. Unfortunately, in the last 10 years we have seen the dwindling those once nationally recognized educational forces, within the Division of Parks and the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. I am happy to say, with this new administration- I finally see light on the horizon. It is worth my time to come here to ask you: Please reinvest in the rebuilding of ODNR, the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, and the H2Ohio initiative.

It is good not only for the health of Ohioans, but also the health – of Ohio.

Respectfully Yours,  
Cheryl Harner