

My name is Keith Daniels and I am the current president of the Ohio State Trappers Association, an organization that has been in existence for over 75 years now with a little under 2000 members.

My involvement with the Ohio Division of Wildlife began in the fall of 1978 as part of the inaugural group of volunteer trapper education instructors that were certified to train trappers using the newly created curriculum.

The fall of 1980 was the beginning of my time as a board member and later officer of the OSTA, eventually leading to assuming the role of Education Coordinator in September of 1997. In this role I was part of the expansion and continued development of the program, working closely with ODOW for the next 15 years. A fairly extensive hands on education program was developed with the aid of subsidy money from ODOW. During this time I saw first-hand what a funding shortage can do when license fees were not raised when needed and requested. Available subsidy was not only frozen it was actually cut from previous levels to a fixed amount. The program was too well established and respected to diminish it, so any overages since then have been absorbed by the OSTA.

After being elected Vice President of the OSTA in September of 2006 I served a dual role until elected President in September of 2012, at which time we did get another individual to step into the Education coordinator role.

In my professional life I run a business that is 100% dependent on the consumptive use of wildlife, supporting six other people with weekly paychecks. Add to that, my wife has her own business, again 100% dependent on consumptive use of wildlife and you can see I have a very vested interest in our wildlife and the future need for quality management.

Over the years of holding these positions I have worked closely with everybody from Wildlife Officers, wildlife area managers, wildlife management, Education and Administration. I saw the hardship created when wildlife funds were raided in the 80's and officers were put on mileage restrictions. I saw it again a few years ago when our previous governor eliminated overtime for officers and added burdensome reporting requirements.

The county wildlife officers are the face of the ODOW, they are what hunters, trappers and fishermen think of when they hear Division of Wildlife. They are what the general public, the schools, parks, 4-H clubs etc. think of when they hear Division of wildlife. I know quite a few of them personally and they are rightfully proud of the job they do, and undue restrictions because of budget issues should not be part of that job. The current officers need to be able to do their jobs for the best interest of the natural resources of our state, and for the best interest of the people of the state that benefit from and enjoy these natural resources and entrust them with it. This cannot happen without an officer in each of Ohio's 88 counties and the Lake Erie districts, and it cannot happen without funding.

When we buy a hunting, trapping or fishing license we are volunteering to pay for the creation of habitat and the management of all wildlife, a benefit to all Ohioan's, not just us, and we do it gladly. I have had the pleasure of enjoying our natural resources my entire life; I don't want the future to miss out on that opportunity.