

Finance Sub Agriculture Development & Natural
Resources Committee
Rm 18, Ohio House of Representatives



Ohio Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
4167 N. Section Line Rd.
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Good Afternoon Chairman Hoops, Ranking member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee.

We are here today to offer support for the Conservation Reinvestment Initiative in the Governor's budget proposal. We are also supportive of the other proposals that will provide funding for programs such as H₂OOhio and other language that will ultimately improve water quality throughout the state.

Ohio Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever (PF/QF), has been a proud partner with several of the state agencies over the last 30 years and especially with the Ohio Division of Wildlife, who we have partnered with the most. However, we have also been successful in completing many other projects with several of the other state and Federal agencies and many of the organizations that are here today.

Our first Pheasants Forever chapters started 32 years ago, and we now have 30 local chapters with 6,000 members in Ohio (nationally we have over 700 chapters and 145,000 members). We partner on wildlife habitat projects on both public and private lands, enhancing habitat while providing hunting and access opportunities. In addition, we are actively engaged in getting the next generation of sportsmen and women introduced to the joys of being outdoors. It really began in 1995 with the Wood-Lucas PF chapter as they were the first chapter in the country to conduct a mentored youth learn to pheasant hunt event. This became a model for now hundreds of such events around the country, with 10's of thousands of kids getting their 1st opportunity to chase pheasants behind good bird dogs. Just about every chapter in Ohio has an outdoor youth event, whether it would be hunting, fishing or learning outdoor skills and really learning what the outdoor lifestyle has to offer, which we hope becomes a lifetime of enjoyment. It is not just about hunting, we also host pollinator workshops geared for kids, or host events around the shooting sports where we have had over 1 million participants (717,000 youth and 289,000 adults) since 2012. These types of events are common and Ohio helps set the bar. We had the 1st youth pheasant learn to hunt event, in addition the Southeast Ohio PF chapter has an event this weekend in Johnstown and will achieve over 10,000 kids attending over the last 18 years. This is the largest one-day youth event in the country.

All of these things wouldn't be possible without the assistance of DNR- Division of Wildlife. From the 1st habitat projects we worked on 30 years ago, buying specialized planting equipment (i.e. no-till

grass drill that plants native prairie grasses and wildflowers) or cost sharing on the conservation seed and trees. Good wildlife habitat not only provides for numerous fish and wildlife species, it also reduces soil erosion and improves water and air quality. We have seen these benefits in the Lake Erie and Scioto watersheds and throughout our great state. We are also supportive of water quality practices that are being proposed as part of the Governor's budget. Well implemented conservation practices that improve water quality will also create habitat for pheasants, quail, or even Monarch butterflies that as you know are in some serious trouble.

Not only have we worked with DNR, but also Ohio EPA and Dept of Ag on farmland conservation practices throughout the state. We are actively involved in delivering conservation practices with 10 employees that work with DNR and USDA to implement Farm Bill programs. As you may be aware, the 2018 Farm Bill was just passed last December, and we partner by taking local dollars that chapters raise, matching those state funds, and matching with the federal funding. There are many examples, but one of the more recent projects is working with Ohio EPA and Wright State University looking at how to reduce sediment and nutrients in the Lake Erie watershed (attached brochure).

For our state agency partners to remain effective we need to make sure they have the funding they need to manage our fish, wildlife and abundant natural resources that we are blessed with in Ohio. We need agencies that can provide both financial and technical assistance. We are very concerned and fairly certain, that if we don't take significant action now, the issues and problems we face today, will only get worse, and of course more expensive to reverse in the future.

So as you can tell from our testimony here today, and the documents we've provided, we are not just about pheasants and quail, we are about creating wildlife habitat and opportunities for future generations of Ohio outdoor enthusiasts. We encourage you to support the Conservation Reinvestment Initiative and the conservation provisions in the Governor's budget.

We thank you for your time today and would be happy to take any questions.

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