

Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Scott Oelslager, Chairman
FY 2018-19 Budget Testimony – HB 49
Testimony from Randel Rogers, Cedar Bog Association
June 1, 2017

Chairman Oelslager and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Randel Rogers and I am the president of the Cedar Bog Association board of trustees.

Champaign County's "Great Cedar Swamp" once covered over 7,000 acres. By 1910 agricultural and other development had shrunk it to only 600 acres, and by 1942 only 450 acres remained. That is when the State of Ohio and the Ohio History Connection decided to invest in preserving our natural heritage and purchased the remaining wetland. For that investment, Ohio protected the largest and best remaining boreal fen in Ohio that is home to 40% of Ohio's rare species, including showy lady slippers orchids, spotted turtles, American brook lamprey, and the massasauga rattlesnake.

I was raised three corn fields south of Cedar Bog, and I remember as a seven or eight year old boy my parents would drive me down Woodburn Road through the center of the cedar swamp and tell me about the quicksand, the rattlesnakes, the sundew plants that ate bugs – inspiring dreams of adventures of discovery and even a potential life as an outlaw hidden deep in the swamp ala Jean Lafayette!

I remember each of the investments Ohio and the Ohio History Connection has made at Cedar Bog over the years. During my school-boy days, the first boardwalk opened the bog to exploration and it was one of several OHC sites we took school trips to. In college, I returned to help tear up that original boardwalk and build the current path. After college I took my wife to see the then new nature and education center. Now as board president, this fall I will assist breaking ground for the third iteration of the boardwalk – and for the first time Cedar Bog will be fully ADA accessible! During my tenure I hope to start the process of restoring the bog house – one of the oldest remaining homes in Champaign County – for use by researchers or an on-site manager.

The Ohio History Connection is asking to be funded with \$11.9 million, with which they will manage nearly 60 sites across the state representing a wide variety of topics from our past – a virtual "best of the best" of Ohio's heritage sites. This funding is a value investment, and one that pays dividends in education, in opportunities for photographers, bird watchers, researchers, historians, and many others. These dividends rewarded over 6,000 visitors at Cedar Bog alone last year. Perhaps the biggest return on this investment is paid in inspiration in the imagination of 7 year old children, countless numbers of whom live within a few corn fields of an Ohio History Connection site.

I urge you to please support funding for the Ohio History Connection!