



# Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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Before the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

Senator Schaffer Chair

S.J.R. 3 Proponent Testimony of Steven N. Berk  
Director of Public Policy  
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, my name is Steven Berk, Director of Public Policy for Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Joint Resolution 3.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy's mission is to strategically conserve natural resources by partnering with farmers, landowners, and local governments. Through these partnerships, we have successfully conserved over 65,000 acres of working farms and wildlife habitat. Our efforts span across multiple sectors of land management; from creating wetlands to reduce nutrient runoff into Lake Erie to preserving prime agricultural soils.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy appreciates the work of this committee on Senate Joint Resolution 3, which has a timely and impactful response to protecting our outdoor heritage and ensuring it for future generations of Ohioans. Additionally, this proposed constitutional amendment will bolster conservation efforts by protecting scientifically-based wildlife management practices that encourage hunting and fishing as the preferred approach to maintaining healthy and balanced ecosystems.

Creating access for hunters and anglers is a guiding principle of how we engage the public. This year we partnered with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to enroll over 2,500 acres into the Ohio Landowner/Hunter Access Partnership (OLHAP) (Please see attached map). This program encourages private landowners to enroll their property which is then opened to the general public for hunting. We are excited for this partnership as it aligns with our goals, and applaud ODNR for their leadership in utilizing federal Farm Bill dollars to create this new hunting program.

It is beneficial for the state to have conservation practices fulfill more than one public need. As members of this committee know, more than 90% of Ohio's wetlands are gone. Because of their ability to sequester nutrients and act as phosphorus sinks, wetlands are key components to improving water quality. They also provide excellent hunting opportunities. Protecting Ohioans' right to hunt and fish will serve as a catalyst to conserve natural infrastructure, well suited for improving our drinking water and quality of life. Hunting, fishing, and conservation are inseparable elements of natural resource management. Harvesting game species on conserved land fulfills multiple public needs; clean water, clean air, and healthy wildlife populations.

Senate Joint Resolution 3 will safeguard the public's hunting and fishing interest while simultaneously support the work of conservation organizations. Thank you Chairman Schaffer and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee for allowing me to voice our support for Senate Joint Resolution 3. We encourage its favorable passage. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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