

**To: Chairman Schaffer and Members of The Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**  
**RE: House Bill 33, 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**  
**Testimony of Adam Conway**  
**May 10, 2023**

Good morning, Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. My name is Adam Conway, and I am the President of Superior Hardwoods of Ohio, Inc. I also serve as Vice Chair of the Forestry Advisory Council and am past president of the Ohio Forestry Association. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB33 and provide testimony in support of ODNR's budget, specifically regarding the Division of Forestry.

I am here today to ask that the Senate restore the requested \$2.4 million dollar increase per year in additional GRF to the biennium budget for the Division of Forestry. The primary use of the additional GRF allocation is for **forestry programs**, including service forestry, forest health and wildfire prevention. Ohio now has 24 state forests covering more than 200,000 acres. In addition to being managed for multiple uses including sustainable timber production, wildlife habitat, soil and water protection, and recreation, they provide opportunity for critical research.

The Division of Forestry's GRF allocation steadily saw reductions from \$10.2 million during the Taft administration in 2000 and was ultimately reduced to \$2.5 million in 2018 during Governor Kasich's administration. Governor DeWine, Director Mertz and leadership in the Ohio House and Senate have demonstrated a renewed commitment to Ohio's forests by recognizing the critical role the Division of Forestry plays in the natural and economic success of Ohio. Under Governor DeWine's leadership, the GRF allocation for DOF has been slowly restored to 2009 levels of \$6.9 million (approximately \$4.9 million when adjusted for inflation).

The Division of Forestry is a resource for private landowners, communities, government agencies and legislators to educate and ensure proper conservation and silviculture by providing science-based research and enforcement of Best Management Practices. For more than 100 years, the Division of Forestry has been responsible for helping restore Ohio's timber base. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and within 100 years, Ohio was reduced from an estimated 95% forest coverage to less than 10%. Today, an estimated 35% of Ohio (almost 8 million acres) is restored to productive forestland. This accomplishment is the result of generations of dedicated foresters like my grandfather. The challenge today is that 85% of Ohio's forestland is owned by private citizens. 58% of those own 10 acres or less and another 35% own 10-50 acres. Effectively, 93% of privately held forestland in Ohio is less than 50 acres. Forest fragmentation over generations makes it more difficult to manage for long term sustainability. Educating landowners through Extension and the Division of Forestry is more important than ever.

Timber sales from state forests return financial resources back to local schools, counties, and townships. Southeastern Ohio does not have a large industrial tax base like Intel or Google. What we do have are our renewable natural resources. In 2022, ODNR and the Division of Forestry returned \$1,578,500 to local school districts, counties, and townships through the Trees for Textbooks program. Since the program began in 1999, more than \$34 million dollars have been shared with Ohio school districts and local governments.

As a forest products industry, we need landowners to be knowledgeable about their resources, aware of their opportunities and engaged in actively managing their forests. In Ohio, more than 120,000 people work in the hardwood sector, creating more than \$28 Billion in economic activity each year. Ohio's Division of Forestry plays a critical role in the health and continued success of our forest products industry, our wildlife diversity, our clean water systems, and our clean air.

Thank you for your time and I am available to try and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Adam Conway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "A".

Adam Conway