



## Columbiana County Federation of Conservation Clubs



**Proponent Testimony, Am.HB 33**  
**Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**  
**Jeff Herrick, Columbiana County Federation of Conservation Clubs**

Chairman Schaffer, members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Jeff Herrick, and I am representing the Columbiana County Federation of Conservation Clubs. The Federation is an umbrella representing 13 Conservation Clubs and represents over 2,000 sportsmen and women who enjoy recreating in Ohio's wonderful wildlife resources and shooting sports. The Federation is very active within the community, sponsoring 8 annual youth events, the county fair, Beaver Creek Wildlife Education Center and numerous conservation efforts. The Federation supported the Department of Natural Resources general revenue fund amount in the bill's executive version. We strongly support the H2Ohio program and funding for the Division of Wildlife within Am.HB 33.

We are proud of our long-standing relationship with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. We commend your previous investment in park facilities and wildlife conservation that has allowed all Ohioans to enjoy a quality experience at Ohio's wild places and wild spaces. Just last week I noticed many of the improvements at Salt Fork State Park while turkey hunting in the area. This is why we are so confused by the decision to defund the Department and reverse the trend of improvements and services we were so pleased with. The removal of \$29M of GRF will severely impact operations within our public parks and reduce opportunities for hunters and anglers. By removing \$16M for Parks and Watercraft, they will not be able to adequately staff their facilities, which also includes \$9M for law enforcement. Our parks have seen record attendance that requires additional officers to protect visitors. A 2021 survey of Ohioans by the Wildlife Management Institute shows that the number one barrier to outdoor participation, including hiking, hunting, or fishing, is the need to feel safe. Please restore their funding so we can increase outdoor recreation for all Ohioans by meeting the needs of new participants.

The removal of \$9M from the Division of Wildlife will prevent the expansion of Project WILD, a wildlife-based conservation and environmental education for youth. This program is imperative for teaching our children the values of the outdoors. By fully funding, Project WILD the Division of Wildlife, would reach over 2000 educators annually to bring conservation into the classrooms. I assure you as a certified instructor that this is one educational program and outreach worthy of your investment. Money was also allocated in the bill's executive version to

increase wildlife habitat and access to property for hunting, fishing, and the shooting sports. Investing in wildlife habitat is good for Ohio's economy as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states that the overall economic impact of hunting alone in Ohio tops \$1.4 billion annually. This seems to me like a sound business investment.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources committee I thank you for your time. I would be happy to entertain questions from the committee.