

Chairman Schaffer and Members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

I come to you today with a request by a concerned citizen.

My viewpoint of budgets, both in the private sector and in government, has always had a bit of skepticism to it. It seems there is no shortage of voices clamoring for more money and I was unconvinced of the true need for these funds prior to when I first became acquainted with DNAP about 10 years ago.

I own a private land preservation project just outside of the city of Pickerington here in Central Ohio and have dedicated nearly all of my retired life and a substantial part of my personal wealth to the removal of invasive plants and restoration of my property to what it looked like centuries ago.

A few calls early on brought needed education from DNAP that involved information on how to restore the land, how to deal with invasive plants but most importantly how to have a vision on protecting our 900 acres for the greater good for the citizens of Ohio.

Various DNAP staff took an interest in examining the property much of which was in agricultural production although significant portions remained wooded and it was determined that a portion of the forest was unique and locally significant with regards to the age, species composition and quality of the woods and the intact, high quality vernal pools contained within.

Through a number of meetings with DNAP a deal was struck that allowed 230 acres to be dedicated as the 140<sup>th</sup> State Nature Preserve in 2021. My skepticism on government efficiency was unfounded in that the entire process of dedication was handled professionally by senior DNAP staff on down. Aside from reimbursement for land survey expenses the dedication was

negotiated at no cost to the state. As a result of DNAP's guidance a natural area has been saved in central Ohio that the local mayor calls the "gem of the township."

I wanted you to know about this because all the resources that DNAP applied to Coyote Run (invasive plant advice, management plans, public interaction, and education outreach) are resources that are at risk. The support DNAP provides to Coyote Run and indeed to all the state nature preserves are part of the legacy DNAP provides to all citizens of Ohio.

I submit to you that while our discussion is about a budget the real issue is the legacy that each of the preserves protect. We have only 143 dedicated state nature preserves but there are countless other high quality habitats around the state that deserve the same consideration that has benefitted Coyote Run. These special places deserve protection so that our Ohio natural history legacy continues.

The governor's budget request for additional GRF funding for DNAP is nominal when considering the benefit such funding provides to citizens. The folks in this room, including me, are the stewards entrusted to protect the very best of Ohio's natural history. Please give due consideration to protecting Ohio's natural heritage.

Thank you