

**To:** Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members O'Brien and Wilkin of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

**From:** Liz Stocker, Director  
Ohio Sportsman & Sporting Dog Association

**Date:** 10 May, 2023



**Re: Interested Party Testimony for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources FY24-25 Budget (HB 33)**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members O'Brien and Wilkin, on behalf of the Ohio Sportsman and Sporting Dog Association and its members, I am writing today to voice the strongest possible level of support for fully funding the Ohio Department of Natural Resources at the levels proposed by Governor DeWine in the 2024-2025 Biennium Budget.

Ohio's time-honored tradition of using hounds to pursue game has a rich heritage that continues into today's sporting field events. One of the few outdoor activities that Ohio sportsmen and women can pursue all year round. Much like the movie *Where the Red Fern Grows*, hound hunting is a family tradition of enjoying the outdoors with man's best friend.

Ohio provides some of the finest hunting lands where numerous hound competitions are held here yearly. From local to major events for youth and adults, participants are coming into Ohio from all over the country. When these events are held the local communities and surrounding areas benefit from thousands of dollars generated for hotels, restaurants and travel expenses for small town communities they are held in such as Hillsboro, Mt. Gilead and Millersburg. The use of public wildlife areas and state parks are crucial to be able to hold events of this magnitude with hundreds of dogs and owners competing over many days of events. These public lands provide excellent areas for the trials, with properly maintained timber, abundant game, great walking areas for all ages and plenty of parking. All these factors are included when deciding where these major events will be held each year. **Funding Wildlife areas and State Parks is necessary to keep these properties as such prestigious competition trial grounds.**

Keeping Ohio's hound families and their dog's safe is another major consideration when choosing a hunting location. These areas provide not only a safe place for families to enjoy the sounds of their hounds, but state grounds also are large tracts of land which are necessary to keep dogs safe that may run miles.

**Funding is necessary to maintain safe areas for families and their canine companions.**

Many sporting dog owners spend most, if not all, the hours a field on these lands each year so as not to conflict with private landowners who are using land themselves or have leased hunting rights to others. I personally have spent many hours, and hiked numerous miles following hounds in the state's public areas. I cannot imagine our future without them.

**Funding is of great importance for more lands to be acquired and maintained for the future generations.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. The Ohio Sportsman and Sporting Dog Association encourages you to take the recommendations of sportsmen and women into consideration during budget deliberations. ***We ask that the Senate restore the full \$55M that was cut from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Budget.***

If I can be of any further assistance or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Liz

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