

Eugene Braig, 3405 Olentangy River Rd., Delaware, OH 43015

Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for providing this opportunity to address members of the committee:

My name is Eugene Braig. I'm a fisheries biologist and applied aquatic scientist with more than a quarter century of professional experience. I am active with my professional community, a member of and serve or have served in leadership roles with several relevant professional organizations and advisories, including as a past chair of the Mississippi River Basin Panel, the largest regional advisory to the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force; a trustee of the Ohio Biological Survey; and as past president of the Water Management Association of Ohio, the Ohio Lake Management Society, and the Ohio chapters of the American Fisheries Society and Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals. Most relevant to the present hearing, I have been a member of the Olentangy Scenic River Advisory Council since 2017. And I'm addressing you today as a private citizen, an avid angler, a canoe paddler, and an Olentangy River property owner since 2012 and resident since 2013 (my lot extends into the scenic stretch south of the city of Delaware from the west bank of the river up to the US-23 right-of-way along the east bank).

Ohio was pioneering in recognizing the value of wild and scenic rivers, creating the first scenic river law more than 50 years ago, in 1968, and predating the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by several months. The resultant program has benefited Ohioans (and me personally) by protecting some of the state's highest quality river resources ensuring clean water and natural stream corridors for fishing, outdoor recreation, and the enjoyment of nature.

The changes to Ohio Scenic River Law that the passage of Senate Bill 156 will implement will also enhance the program's ability to serve the citizens of Ohio.

1. In 2009, the Scenic Rivers Program was moved to the Division of Watercraft (later merged into the Division of Parks and Watercraft). Governor DeWine initiated moving the scenic rivers program back to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, which is simply a better fit for the program's mission. Senate Bill 156 will not alter the program's administration or authorities but will simply statutorily recognize the move to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.
2. At present, ORC includes language stating that the Director can designate any watercourse with adjacent lands out to 1,000 feet from the normal waterlines of the watercourse as a "wild, scenic, or recreational river area." This statute has never manifested as an imposition that infringed upon my own property rights, but the language was potentially confusing and may have been off-putting to some property owners. Senate Bill 156 eliminates the confusing "1,000-foot" language in favor of simply naming designated watercourses, potentially making the program more broadly appealing.
3. Senate Bill 156 extends the public comment period for any proposed wild, scenic, or recreational river designation from 30 to 60 days after the Director issues the Department's Intent to

Designate. Increasing opportunity for the public to engage in programs of the state simply benefits those programs via enhanced public buy-in.

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to address the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and represent my interests as both a citizen and riverfront homeowner regarding these changes to the Ohio Scenic River Law. Thank you.