



Sandusky River Watershed Coalition
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November 13, 2023

Dear Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing today to provide testimony for the passage of Senate Bill 156 that will provide several positive changes to the Ohio Scenic River Law, further enhancing the program's ability to serve the citizens of Ohio through educational opportunities and better protect Ohio's rivers and streams.

The first measure of this bill to place the Scenic Rivers Program (SRP) back into the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) within the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) will provide uniformity between the ORC and the current location of the SRP within DNAP. This logical change will make it easier for Ohio's citizens to locate information about the SRP and eliminate confusion about which State Division the SRP program reports to.

The other measures of SB 156 focus on necessary wording changes to clarify the meaning of the Scenic River Law for Ohio's citizens. These clarifications should eliminate confusion about the SRP's ability to inhibit, or control how landowners can use their land and private property within 1,000-foot of a designated scenic river. This clarification is very important as the proposed changes now clearly specify that the designation of a scenic river is just for the watercourse and not the surrounding 1,000-foot corridor along the river. Additionally, by defining "Scenic River Lands" that are owned and maintained by the SRP, passing SB 156 will further clarify to riverfront property owners that their property is not impacted by these rules. Both of these wording changes will greatly lessen tensions between the SRP and private stakeholders concerned about how the Scenic River Law impacts their rights as property owners. These simple clarifications, along with the expanded public comment period for new scenic river designations, will improve the ability of SRP staff to communicate with both landowners along currently designated scenic rivers and landowners within watersheds of future proposed rivers.

The passage of SB 156 is critical to help improve the ability of the SRP to protect Ohio's rivers, not just including the current 16 rivers already designated through the SRP, but future scenic river designations as well. These waterways are a critical part of Ohio's natural history, local economies, and provide endless opportunities for the recreational use of Ohioans throughout the state. Please help support these opportunities by voting for SB 156!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jakob A. Boehler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jakob Boehler
Coordinator, Sandusky River Watershed Coalition