

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 156 - Proposed Changes to the Scenic River
Laws

Provided by Sean Logan, Board Member, Ohio Scenic River Association

December 5, 2023

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members O'Brien and Wilkin, I appreciate this opportunity to offer proponent testimony for SB 156. I am representing myself and I am Sean Logan of Lisbon, Ohio.

I grew up paddling Little Beaver Creek National Scenic River and a State Wild and Scenic River in eastern Ohio, Columbiana County. Specifically, for several years stretching across my junior and high school days competing in the Calcutta Lions Club Annual Canoe Race. As a matter of fact, I have on my lapel my 6th Place ribbon that my life-long friend, Frank Cozza and I won in 1984. I am a member of the Little Beaver Creek Scenic River Advisory Council where I serve with some very dedicated individuals devoting many hours each year to protecting and improving our little corner of the world that is, by far, one of the most beautiful watersheds in Ohio.

I am also a proud board member of the Ohio Scenic River Association an important statewide non-profit voice for all the designated streams in Ohio to protect, promote, educate, and advocate for Ohio's scenic rivers current and future.

I remember from my Calcutta Lions Club annual canoe races in the 80s hearing the adults talk about someone building a home near one portion of the designation and often ending with the statement "we didn't think you were allowed to build anything within 1,000 feet!" A prime example of the confusion surrounding the OAC versus ORC language for the Scenic River Program.

Fast forward about 25 years later and I am the ODNR Director for Governor Strickland and we are going thru the process of designating the Vermilion River. We ran into a buzzsaw of opposition squarely based on the language that SB 156 is correcting. In 2010 there was also a very strong anti-government movement afoot which greatly hindered any ability to explain what the legal and practical truth of the matter. I personally attended 2 different public meetings to offer my personal and professional assurance that the Program has no say over private property. It was to no avail, and we made the difficult decision to suspend any further work on the designation.

I want to thank Senators Reineke and Hackett for bringing forth these improvements to the statutory language for the benefit of all future scenic river designation processes.

These changes are simple, but critical to raise the comfort level of adjacent landowners near what we hope to be future scenic rivers. Private landowners are critical partners to the Scenic Rivers Program and building their trust and support is baked into the DNA of the Scenic Rivers Program.

One last suggestion is to re-read Amy Mackey's testimony regarding one of Ohio's great come back stories in the restoration of Racoon Creek in southeast Ohio. What an amazing success all Ohioans can be proud of. And what better way to honor the decades of public and private efforts to restore this body of water than to consider it for future designation.

I respectfully request the Senate Ag & Natural Resources Committee favorably recommend SB 156 for consideration by the full Ohio Senate. Thank you.