

To: Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Date: 18 May, 2023



Re: Interested Party Testimony for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and H2Ohio Program in the Biennium FY24-25 Budget (Sub. HB 33)

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Conservation Federation and the thousands of Ohio sportsmen and women we represent, ***I am writing today to voice the strongest possible level of support for fully funding the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and H2Ohio at the “as introduced” levels proposed by Governor DeWine in the 2024-2025 Biennium Budget.***

Research by numerous sources, including Southwick Associates, Sportsmen’s Alliance Foundation, American Sportfishing Association, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Ohio State University, and others, suggests Ohio’s outdoor economy accounts for more than \$8.1B in overall economic activity and employs more than 132K Ohio workers. As part of that, Ohio’s hunters and anglers contribute nearly \$3B in total economic impact across the State of Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the H2Ohio Program are critical to keeping Ohio’s economic engine revving. Maintaining the economic engine that is Ohio’s outdoor heritage with the requested funding provides a substantial return on investment and positively impacts rural communities throughout the state.

Ohio’s sportsmen and women support the Division of Wildlife’s funding request for conservation and habitat protection (GRF 725461), fulfilling a \$5M pledge to sportsmen and women by Governor DeWine, that increases access and opportunities for hunting, fishing, and trapping; as well as full funding for Project Wild (GRF 725520) and hope this commitment to conservation education can be expanded across the state and across all grade levels, including high school conservation science curriculum; and

We support our State Parks (GRF 730321) and rely upon them to provide affordable accommodations, camping, and access throughout the year as our friends and families pursue fish and game species across the state; and

We support the Division of Forestry’s proposed Buckeye State Tree Nursery (GRF 725459), critical for forest regeneration; as well as the additional staffing needed to adequately address the health and productivity of our public and private forests, and funding for training, equipment, and grant support for rural volunteer fire departments engaged in wildfire suppression (GRF 727321); and

We support the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves scenic rivers and nature preserves; and recognize their need to fill programmatic vacancies that serve as educators, ecologists, and technicians needed fight invasive species, enrich recreational activities, and engage underserved communities; and

We support the wide-ranging interagency impacts delivered by the legislature's ongoing commitment to the H2Ohio Program. As hunters, anglers, and trappers we see direct benefits from the wetland restoration work orchestrated by the Division of Wildlife and look forward to similar results as the program expands more fully into the Ohio River Basin.

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony. Ohio's sportsmen and women urge you to take the recommendations of the hunting, angling, and trapping community into consideration during budget deliberations and **fully fund the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and H2Ohio at the 'as introduced' levels in the Governor's budget.**

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

Sincerely yours,

Matt

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