



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

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

From: Tony Ruffing, Policy and Outreach Co-Chair
Ohio Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Date: 18 may, 2023

Re: Opponent Testimony re:Changes to Division of Wildlife Budget and Authority (HSB 33)

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and its members of nearly 600 very active outdoorsmen and women across the state, I am writing to you all today to voice opposition to the substitute budget bill in regards to funding of the Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

I'd like to start today off by noting that outside of the capital building is the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Oak. Theodore Roosevelt, being one of the greatest conservationists in our countries history, I feel as though its presence is relevant for todays testimony.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers **opposes the elimination of \$2.5M in Conservation and Habitat Protection.** As the population of our state grows, along with the projected growth trends in the coming years, this funding cut hurts the users of our outdoor spaces by eliminating opportunities for recreation. Ohio has an extremely strong outdoor economy. By completely reducing this funding request, you in turn reduce the chances for building on that economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Ohio's outdoor economy accounts for nearly 138,000 jobs(increase of 12% since 2020), attributing \$6.5 Billion in compensation, and has a value of \$12.8 Billion(increase of 23.3% since 2020). Eliminating this funding not only hurts the traditional user(ie hunters, anglers, and trappers), but it hurts good business and economics within our state.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers **opposes the reduction of \$2M for Project Wild-based education to an insulting \$125k.** Project Wild is a proven education platform, that not only supports fulfillment of State Science standards, but its also a proven avenue to connect youth with our outdoor spaces. We live in an ever closing world of screen time and being indoors, it begs the question as why on earth we would want to cut funding that reconnects kids with the outdoors. This funding reduction not only hurts our Division of Wildlife's education mechanism, but it hurts our kid's futures.

Ohio has a proud tradition of outdoor recreation. We rank 5th in the nation for RVing, 7th for hiking/camping/and climbing, and 15th for hunting/shooting/and trapping. We're fortunate to offer a multitude of state parks to our residents, and visitors from across the country, free of charge. The funding that the original bill would provide not only improves the experience for our users, but continues the tradition of outdoor recreation for years to come. The bottom line is that, in a world that continually seems to disconnect from our natural world, it's our responsibility that our actions here today does everything we can to ensure our public can still enjoy wild places.



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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Ohio chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers encourages you to take our recommendations and concerns into consideration during your. At this time id be happy to field any questions that you may have.

Regards

Tony Ruffing
Policy and Outreach Co-Chair
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers-Ohio Chapter

