



To: Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Date: May 18, 2023

RE: Proponent Testimony for Ohio Department of Natural Resources Budget Provisions

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of over 18,000 members of Ducks Unlimited (DU) across Ohio, I wish to express support for a robust budget for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). DU was founded in 1937 by a group of concerned waterfowl hunters who recognized the importance of habitat conservation and of professional state fish and wildlife management. We have grown to be the world leader in wetland and waterfowl conservation and have long had a strong presence in Ohio working in close partnership with the ODNR Division of Wildlife to carry out wetland conservation on both public and private lands. We are grateful for the past support members of this committee and general assembly at-large have shown towards Ohio's natural resources in recent years. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and our close partners at the Division of Wildlife are unequivocally staunch allies of Ohio's waterfowl hunters and of Ohio's broader conservation community and so we are proud to be here today to express our support for a strong ODNR budget.

To-date, DU has invested \$47 million to conserve over 102,000 acres across Ohio, benefitting both people and wildlife. The tremendous conservation accomplishments would not have been possible without a properly resourced ODNR and one that understands the value of leveraging partnerships with non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and the business community to conduct conservation work at scale and make the taxpayer dollar go even further. Of particular interest to DU is the proposed investment into the H2Ohio Program, which has developed to be the nation's gold standard program for intentional and strategic state investment into improving water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat. We therefore encourage the committee to strongly support robust funding levels for this incredibly important program.

Additionally, DU supports restoring funding to the various ODNR divisions that the House of Representatives cut in their budget proposal. An adequately resourced Department of Natural Resources leads to a higher quality product made accessible to the consumer. In this case the products are our state parks, our managed forests and wetlands, and our wildlife that we all cherish to just name a few. As result of the collaborative conservation model, a taxpayer dollar invested in a state wildlife agency more often than not turns into three or four dollars based on our system of conservation funding that folds together state and federal investments with license fees and excise taxes collected on firearms and other hunting equipment, and then multiplied again by private investments by nongovernmental organizations and corporations.

All these investments into our natural resources help support Ohio's \$8 billion outdoor recreation economy as well as support a broad array of ecosystem services such as flood mitigation, soil health, water filtration, groundwater recharge, and biodiversity enhancement that are all created by the great conservation done by ODNR and its partners like DU.

Thank you all for your service to the people of Ohio and for your past support for conservation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if DU can be a resource.

Sincerely,

Reece Nickol
Ohio State Policy Chair
Ducks Unlimited