



Ohio Travel
ASSOCIATION

March 11, 2025

Rep. Brian Stewart
Chair, Ohio House Finance Committee
77 South High St., 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Subject: Support for ODNR Budget

Dear Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Ohio Travel Association, I express my strong support for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources budget, particularly the budget for the Division of Parks and Watercraft. Approximately 42% of Ohio's overnight visitors participate in outdoor recreation every year. As overnight travelers spend three times more in Ohio communities than those who don't overnight, the role of the outdoors in driving visitor expenditures is substantial. Research on travel trends continues to emphasize the importance of access to outdoor recreation as a key driver for state attractiveness.

Tourism is a \$56 billion industry in Ohio and supports one out of every 10 jobs in the state. As outdoor recreation is among the most popular activities for travelers, we need to ensure that our state parks, watercraft areas, preserves, and wildlife areas are safe and provide the quality of experiences expected by consumers.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Ohio businesses that work in the travel economy have a long-standing collaborative relationship and shared values on boosting Ohio's economy. To name just a few, here are some recent partnerships between ODNR and the Ohio Travel Association:

- Cross-training ODNR employees and those working in hotels, restaurants, museums, attractions, and convention and visitors bureaus through frequent presentations, webinars, and other communications means.
- Training ODNR park managers and local convention and visitors bureaus on ways to enhance the outdoor experience and increase expenditures in businesses located near parks.
- Ensure that businesses in the travel economy understand the importance of and demand for sustainability measures so that Ohio's assets and outdoor recreation provide an exceptional experience.
- Developing new ways to experience the outdoors in Ohio through the Lake Erie Birding Trail, ensuring ODNR Parks and Watercraft areas are included in America 250-Ohio driving trails (which have garnered more than 19 million impressions to date), and supporting trails and local business amenities and trail services.

The future for Ohio's outdoors is bright. That means more visitor spending resulting in increased local business revenues, increased purchasing of manufactured and other goods and services as demand rises, increased state and local tax revenues, and greater awareness of Ohio as a top place to live, work, and visit.

Thank you for your consideration and support,

Sincerely

Melinda Huntley, Executive Director
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