

Testimony of Bill Schieman in Support of House Bill 96. Presented to the Ohio House of Representatives, Natural Resources Committee, March 4, 2025.

Chairman Don Jones, Vice Chair Monica Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Elgin Rogers, Jr. and Members of the Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Bill Schieman and I'm the Secretary of the 501(c)(3) Ohio Scenic Rivers Association (OSRA). I'm here today to testify in support of HB 96, the Executive Budget Proposal for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for FY-2026-FY2027. I wish to make brief comments about ODNR in general and OSRA's working relationship with their Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

OSRA was founded 5 years ago by a handful of people passionate about Ohio's Scenic Rivers. We registered as an educational nonprofit and our Mission Statement contained all the expected bullet points like: Protect water quality, Educate Ohioans on the importance of Scenic Rivers, Promote Scenic Rivers stewardship, Advocate and facilitate public-private partnerships and Work to develop non-partisan public and governmental support for effective and sustainable management of Ohio's Scenic Rivers. This is the reason I'm standing here today.

I personally didn't know how well OSRA would be 'accepted' by ODNR and DNAP and was concerned we might be viewed as sticking our noses in places where we didn't belong. I was wrong! From the beginning, ODNR Director Mary Mertz, DNAP Chief Jeff Johnson and Statewide Scenic Rivers Program Manager Bob Gable made us feel welcome and thus began our fruitful partnership. Just a few of the highlights include: Establishment of the bi-annual Ohio Rivers Symposium, Revision of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Scenic Rivers Law and most recently, the designation of our 16<sup>th</sup> Ohio Scenic River, Racoon Creek and we hope at least one, possibly two more are in the pipeline for designation before the current Administration leaves office.

Finally, 2025 marks my twentieth year of volunteer service in various Ohio State Parks. I was there in the 'bad old days' when the physical condition and amenities of our State Parks was a low priority to say the least. This has been completely turned around under the leadership of our Governor, his staff and with the support of the Ohio Legislature. Ohio Parks, Scenic Rivers and Natural Areas and Preserves are once again sources of pride and favored recreational and educational destinations for our Citizens. Let's keep that ball rolling please!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William D. Schieman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William D. Schieman