

To: Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Rogers,
and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee

From: Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Date: 4 March, 2025



Re: Interested Party Testimony for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and H2Ohio Program in the Biennium FY 26-27 Budget (HB 96)

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the 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 support for fully funding the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and H2Ohio at the levels proposed by Governor DeWine in the 2026-2027 Biennium Budget.**

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the H2Ohio Program are critical to keeping Ohio's economic engine revving. Research by Southwick Associates, Wildlife Management Institute, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources showed that wildlife-based recreation contributed nearly \$12.5 billion to Ohio's economy and employed more than 132K Ohio workers. As part of that, Ohio's hunters, anglers, and trappers contribute more than \$3B in total economic impact across the State of Ohio.

Ohio's sportsmen support robust funding for our state parks and forests, scenic rivers and natural areas, public hunting and fishing access, and healthy water and wildlife.

However, we are concerned about delays in the transfer of oil & gas lease revenue and bonus payments to the Division of Wildlife and are puzzled by the intent behind the amended language in HB 96. Revenue generated from oil & gas development on public lands purchased with federal Pittman-Robertson (PR) dollars must by federal law come back to the agency that owns those lands to stay in legal compliance. Sportsmen depend upon the successful relationship between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Ohio Division of Wildlife to provide matching PR dollars to magnify the impact of our license and permit fees. ***We ask that every effort be made to remove the barriers that delay transfer of land royalties to the Ohio Division of Wildlife.***

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. Ohio's sportsmen encourage 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 and clear the barriers to land royalty transfers.

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

Sincerely yours,

Matt

Matthew A. Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation
Email: mattmisicka@gmail.com
Phone: (614) 581-9283