

Testimony of
Daniel M. Rice, President and Chief Executive Officer
Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area

before the

Committee on Natural Resources
Ohio House of Representatives

March 4, 2025

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Daniel M. Rice. I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, a regional private non-profit organization working on the development of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, Ohio in northeast Ohio. I am here on behalf of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and our 150 public-private partners along the Ohio & Erie Canalway in Cuyahoga, Summit, Stark, and Tuscarawas counties in northeast. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to offer testimony supporting funding for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office.

Working in partnership with private, local, state and federal partners, the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area promotes the development of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and connector trails, the preservation of historic structures, the conservation of natural resources while stimulating community and economic development along the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, Ohio. The Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area, Towpath Trail and Ohio & Erie Canal are key economic drivers for northeast Ohio. According to our Community and Economic Impact Study, the Ohio & Erie Canalway generates \$408 million in economic impact, supports 4,200 jobs and generates \$34 million in tax revenue. One of our key partners is the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office and they are instrumental in our work along the Ohio & Erie Canalway in northeast Ohio. Some of the areas of essential assistance that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office provide include:

- Managing the water control functions of the Ohio & Erie Canal for safety, resource conservation and recreation.
- Serving as a resource for water quality and resource conservation management technical assistance along the Ohio & Erie Canal.
- Assisting with environmental stewardship partnership strategies with residents, corporations, and local government.

The foundation of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area is our public-private partnerships and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office is one of our key partners and their full and complete engagement is essential to the success of the Ohio & Erie Canalway and Towpath Trail. I strongly support the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office full FY 2026 – 2027 appropriations request. In order to continue stimulating community and economic development and creating jobs, we need full funding for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office in the FY 2026 – 2027 Budget.

Mr. Chairman, now, more than ever, we need to maintain our partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Canal Lands Office and renew our shared commitment to the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area, Towpath Trail and Ohio & Erie Canal. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the Ohio Department of Natural Resources FY 2026 – 2027 Appropriations request before your Committee, and I am happy to answer any questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.