

I am Edward Arango, President of the Lake Milton Association which works in partnership with the Lake Milton State Park management. Our Ohio State Parks are a precious natural resource that must be supported and maintained. Since the State of Ohio has taken over Lake Milton from the City of Youngstown, not only has the dam been rebuilt but many other capital improvements have been made which include walking paths, mountain bike trails, archery range, disc golf course and a story book trail. These capital improvements have been made with grants, state funding, donations by local community groups and volunteers. This has led to Lake Milton being a recreational destination. The lake attracts boaters for fishing, water skiing, wakeboarding, wake surfing, sailing, personal watercraft, and pleasure boating to enjoy the scenic beauty of the lake. But not only is Lake Milton a boating destination, it is also enjoyed by thousands each year for swimming on the beach, walking and jogging on the walking path, riding on the mountain bike trail, playing disc golf, shooting arrows at the archery range and children enjoying the Story Book Trail. Not only do the local residents of Lake Milton enjoy the lake and the recreational opportunities, but visitors from neighboring cities and towns along with residents from all over the state of Ohio. Lake Milton also attracts visitors from neighboring states and several other countries around the world to enjoy the lake and the many recreational opportunities of Lake Milton. The Lake Milton State Park staff work hard to maintain the resources of the state park. The maintenance crew may be small but they are efficient and hard working. They keep the park looking great with mowing grass, picking up litter, cleaning the swimming beach area, cleaning bathrooms around the lake, maintaining buoys in the lake and the maintenance list goes on.

Other improvements at the Lake Milton include shoreline protection from erosion, updating state park boat docks, lighting along the walking path for security and safety, and beautification of park property such as the planting of flowering trees along the Story Book Trail near the amphitheater. All these improvements make Lake Milton State Park attractive and inviting. And we are seeing the increased traffic and visitors at Lake Milton throughout the year but especially during the summer months.

Financial support for the State Park staff is critical along with funding the law enforcement division which patrols the waters and shores of Lake Milton and other state parks. Law enforcement is extremely important to keep people safe. Law enforcement provides boat safety checks to help the boat owners ensure the proper safety equipment is onboard and also patrolling the waters to stop and prevent reckless operation. The state park offers boater education classes which certifies attendees so they can get their boat operator's license.

The relationship between the Lake Milton Association and the Lake Milton State Park management is a partnership. We work closely together and the Lake Milton Association is proud to support projects at Lake Milton. The Lake Milton State Park management are good stewards with the money provided to them. The park staff work hard and efficiently. They spend money wisely and are not wasteful. Lake Milton State Park does have a 5-year plan that the Lake Milton Association supports which will continue to improve the park with beautification and provide additional recreational opportunities.

I urge state legislators to properly fund the Ohio State Parks and not cut any financial support but rather increase financial support. The Ohio

State Parks are a precious resource and provide great recreational opportunities. These recreational opportunities provide healthy exercise, relaxation, and improve mental health. Studies show that being outdoors and exercising help improve mental health and relieve stress. I thank you for the chance to speak today and hope you will continue to properly fund the Ohio State Parks.