

To: Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

From: Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Date: 13 May, 2025



Re: Interested Party Testimony for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Executive Budget (HB 96)

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee, I am testifying as the Executive Director of the Ohio Conservation Federation, which educates and advocates for the wise use and stewardship of Ohio's natural resources on behalf of Ohio's hunters, anglers and trappers. Ohio's sportsmen and women support robust funding for our state parks and forests, scenic rivers and natural areas, public hunting and fishing opportunities, and healthy water and wildlife.

While we are grateful for the commitments the Ohio House has made to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in their passage of HB 96, including providing Division of Wildlife access to its \$3M in oil and gas bonus payments and permitting an equilibrating increase in non-resident hunting and fishing license fees, as well as continued support for the Division of Forestry's new Buckeye State Tree Farm, there are several areas of improvement for which we ask the Senate's assistance, most notably:

- **Restore H2Ohio funding** to the levels proposed by Governor DeWine. Considered the nation's premier water conservation program, H2Ohio's delivery of clean water, abundant wetlands and thriving riparian areas provides critical habitat for wildlife and nurseries for fish and in turn bolsters our rural economies and small businesses to the benefit of all Ohioans.
- **Remove the prohibition** against using H2Ohio funds for the acquisition of public lands and easements. These incentives, paid to willing sellers, help protect the state's long-term investment in conservation for future generations. H2Ohio's public-private partnerships leverage state, federal, and corporate dollars, magnifying the benefit to Ohioans.
- **Release the oil and gas bonus payments** to Ohio's State Parks as directed by state law. Ohio's hunters and anglers rely upon our state parks' boat ramps and marinas, campgrounds and cabins to pursue our uniquely American outdoor heritage. Every year, in every season, our parks are enjoyed by Ohio's bird watchers and backpackers, hikers and horseback riders, bikers and boaters, shooters and swimmers, disc golfers and dog walkers. *Which one(s) are you?*

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 continue your legacy of investment in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Ohio's \$12.5 billion-dollar outdoor economy. If I can be of any further assistance or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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