

May 12, 2025



RE: State Funding Support

Dear Chairman Shaffer and Senate Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of ODNR from the perspective of the Indian Lake Watershed Project. My name is Dustin Wickersham, and I've had the privilege of working closely with ODNR to protect and support the health and future of Indian Lake and its surrounding communities.

When the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission was established, it was understood that revenues from leasing would be reinvested into the lands and facilities that generated them. ODNR has honored that commitment, including at places like Salt Fork State Park. But currently, \$40 million in available funds remain unused simply because the agency lacks the appropriation authority.

We respectfully urge you to restore that \$40 million—\$20 million each year—in the final budget. These funds would directly support things like public safety staffing, equipment replacement, and the rising costs of operating our parks and natural areas. Importantly, these are not new taxpayer dollars. This is funding already earned through leasing activity and meant to benefit the lands it came from.

Failing to restore this appropriation means ODNR will be forced to divert resources from critical projects across the state—projects that protect water quality, ensure safety, and maintain recreational access. This diversion will hurt Indian Lake.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of Ohio's natural resources and communities like ours.

Sincerely,

Dustin Wickersham, President
Indian Lake Watershed Project