



Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chairman Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony.

My name is Ron Gorley, and I am voicing my support for ODNR Parks and Watercraft. I am a volunteer with the Friends of the Little Miami State Park, a 50-mile-long trail that runs from Cincinnati to Xenia. I'd like to share a few thoughts about the parks system in general and the Little Miami State Park in particular.

We are lucky to have one of the finest natural resource systems in the country. Each has their own unique natural features. The ODNR system supports:

- Boating, swimming and fishing on its many lakes
- Canoeing and kayaking on the scenic rivers
- Hiking and backpacking through its forests and meadows
- Camping from primitive to full hookup RV sites

Specifically, at the Little Miami State Park, we log approximately 1.5 million trail visits annually. During the height of the pandemic, visits were over 2.2 million per year.

Personally, I've seen not only hikers and cyclists on the trail, but also in-line skaters, horse riders and even a team of huskies pulling a man on a sled with wheels.



I've talked with people from as far away as San Diego and the State of Washington. The Little Miami was featured in a Wall Street Journal article as one of three recommended rails-to-trails destinations. Influential YouTube content creators regularly highlight this state park.

It's well documented that trails have a positive economic impact. For example, a 2018 study by the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission showed that this trail network is responsible for an additional \$13.4 million in economic activity annually. The Little Miami State Park has brought economic benefit to the four counties and the many municipalities along the trail. In housing development, Miami Bluffs and Peters Cartridge Factory Apartments were intentionally built with direct access to the trail.

And there are numerous restaurants adjacent to the trail, including establishments in Miamiville, Loveland, Hamilton Township, South Lebanon, Morrow, Oregonia and Corwin.

But to have a destination that the local community loves and that draws people in from around the county, investment has to be made. People need to be on staff and equipment needs to be provided to ensure that it remains a desirable and safe place to spend time.

With all these benefits to the well-being and enjoyment of Ohioans and the positive economic impact on the community, I wholeheartedly ask you to fully support ODN's budget through House Bill 96, including the restoration of the \$40 million in oil and gas lease funding that was cut in the House.

Thank you.