

Honorable Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge the committee to consider a \$500,000 increase each year from FY2025's budget for Mosquito Lake State Park in Trumbull County in Northeast Ohio.

Mosquito Creek Lake, managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), is a crucial economic driver for our local, regional, and state economies.

This request is not merely about numbers; it is about preserving a vital community resource, safeguarding Ohio's water quality, and ensuring the continued enjoyment of Ohio's second-largest inland lake for generations to come.

The Hydrilla Invasion: A Fragment as Small as an Inch Can Grow an Entire Plant

Hydrilla is so easily spread **that just one fragment clinging to a bathing suit** can introduce this highly invasive plant into Lake Erie and other regional waterways. Ohio currently has 19 counties and 24 waterways infected with Hydrilla.

Mosquito Lake has faced a significant threat from this invasive species in recent years. This aggressive aquatic plant has sparked a community-wide conversation about its importance. Hydrilla is known for its rapid growth and dense mats and has already affected approximately 100 acres of the lake.

The community's response to this invasion has been nothing short of inspiring. Residents, local businesses, and community groups have come together to address the issue, recognizing that Mosquito Lake's health is intrinsically linked to our community's quality of life as we continue to attract new economic development projects. This collective effort underscores the lake's importance and the urgent need for increased funding to combat hydrilla effectively.

Lessons from Pymatuning Lake

We need only look at Pymatuning Lake in Ashtabula County to understand the urgency of addressing hydrilla. Hydrilla was first discovered in Pymatuning Lake in the early 2010s. Despite early detection, it took nearly a decade and significant financial resources to bring the infestation under control

2. The cost of inaction was high in terms of the damage to water quality and the economic impact on local tourism and recreation.

If we do not take decisive action now, Mosquito Lake could face a similar fate. The cost of controlling hydrilla will only increase over time, making it more challenging and expensive to manage. By investing in mitigation efforts now, we can prevent the spread of hydrilla and protect other Ohio waterways that remain clear of the dreaded species.

Protecting H2Ohio Investments

The H2Ohio initiative, launched by Governor Mike DeWine, aims to improve water quality across Ohio through comprehensive, data-driven approaches

3. Mosquito Lake has already benefited from H2Ohio funding, which supports efforts to reduce harmful algal blooms and improve water infrastructure. However, the unchecked spread of hydrilla threatens to undermine these investments.

Increasing the Mosquito Lake State Park budget will ensure that the progress made through H2Ohio is not lost. This funding will allow us to implement effective hydrilla control measures, safeguarding the lake's water quality and the broader goals of the H2Ohio initiative.

Funding Request

We request that an additional \$500,000 per fiscal year be appropriated directly to Mosquito Creek Lake State Park above FY2025 budget allocations. This funding is essential to combat the spread of harmful aquatic invasive species, which severely threaten the lake's ecological health and other regional bodies of water, including Pymatuning Lake, Lake Erie, and the Mahoning River.

Mosquito Lake is a critical natural and recreational asset, attracting approximately 1.3 million visitors annually and contributing significantly to Northeast Ohio's economy. However, without sustained mitigation efforts, the continued spread of invasive species could have devastating consequences for the lake's ecosystem, fisheries, and surrounding communities.

The requested appropriation would be utilized to implement scientifically backed treatment methods to control and reduce invasive species populations within Mosquito Lake. Additionally, a portion of the funding would support a public education campaign & educational materials to raise awareness and prevent the unintentional spread of these species to other vital waterways across the state. Similar funding has been successfully implemented at Indian Lake through House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly, setting a precedent for targeted legislative support in protecting Ohio's water resources.

Conclusion

Mosquito Creek Lake is a natural asset and a vital economic engine for Ohio residents' quality of life through recreation, including fishing, and regional water supply. It also supports our visitor industry. Investing in its management and protection is essential for sustaining and growing our local, regional, and state economies.

In conclusion, a \$500,000 increase in the budget for Mosquito Lake State Park is a necessary investment in our State's and region's future. By addressing the hydrilla invasion now, we can prevent costly long-term damage, protect the investments made through H2Ohio, and enhance the park's infrastructure and recreational access. I urge you to support this budget increase and help us preserve Mosquito Lake. **Again, we are only ONE bathing suit away from infecting Lake Erie and other Ohio Waterways.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.