

Written testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 96 submitted by Tom Butch, President of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Association (OSRA), for the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee public hearing of May 14, 2025, at 2:30 PM

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Tom Butch and I am president of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Association. I would like to ask that you retain the funding for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, as it was presented in Governor DeWine's proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 operating budget and was recently passed by the House of Representatives.

In Columbiana County, where I live, we are blessed to have the State Designated Wild and Scenic, and Federally Designated Scenic, Little Beaver Creek. It is the defining natural asset of our beautiful county. We also have one of the most recently designated state nature preserves in the state, the Little Beaver Creek State Nature Preserve. These assets, along with others in the county, are an economic driver for the county as many folks come to our county to enjoy these natural wonders.

It is the hope of OSRA that the funding level for the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves that Governor DeWine has proposed be preserved in HB 96 in the Senate. Ohio's scenic rivers and state nature preserves are some of the rarest and most beautiful natural areas left in Ohio, and we feel very strongly that they deserve the protection provided by a properly funded Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

Thank you.