

My name is Ryan Rex and I'm a resident of Athens County.

I grew up on property that's borders Strouds Run State Park, one of 76 state parks in Ohio. During this time, I have witnessed a dramatic decrease in state park staffing. When I was younger, Strouds Run had a fulltime park manager living on site, a maintenance manager with 3 fulltime and 2 seasonal maintenance staff members as well as a park ranger on duty 24/7. Today, the park is managed remotely from the Burr Oak State Park Office, a half hour away. And includes only 1 full-time maintenance worker and 2 seasonal staff. A single park ranger is now responsible for 4 separate parks including Burr Oak, Strouds Run, Forked Run and Jesse Owens, which are spread out over 4 counties. The ranger drives a 100 mile loop to make his rounds and there is currently no ranger on duty after 2am nightly.

To the credit of ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft, this "skeleton" crew remarkably continues to maintain these grounds for all Ohioans to enjoy!

Ohio State Parks had a record 1.1 million overnight stays last year and visitors provided \$392 million in direct spending in park facilities while contributing over \$39 million in state and local taxes! That being said, **I am deeply concerned** about further budget cuts to the Division of Parks and Watercraft!

When the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission was created by the General Assembly, it was agreed that the Division that owned the land under which oil and gas leases were executed would be able to utilize the funds from the bonus payments and royalties. Unfortunately, **the House cut \$40 million of the oil and gas funding** from the Division's budget. The Division of Parks and Watercraft has several necessary uses for these funds, including, but not limited to, bolster law enforcement as well as replacing aging equipment.

## **H2OHIO**

Governor DeWine created H2Ohio with support from the General Assembly. Since then, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has worked tirelessly to improve wetlands and river health across the state. One example of this would be the Cuyahoga River. Many years ago, the river caught on fire due to heavy pollutants and poor water quality. Today, steelhead trout are targeted by anglers running through downtown Cleveland! To date, 203 wetland projects have been initiated, and thousands of acres of wetlands have been restored. The House-passed version of this bill **cuts the H2Ohio program by roughly 44%!**

State Parks, Preserves and Natural areas are the crown jewel of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. I cannot overstate the importance of your continued support for these treasures!

Thank you for your time!