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S.B. 398
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Passed by the Senate

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Blackshear and Wilson

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SUMMARY

- Requires the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Parks and Watercraft to establish and administer the Adopt a Trail Program to allow volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing trails on state-owned land.
- Establishes general parameters for the program.
- Requires the Division Chief to adopt rules for the operation and implementation of the program.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Adopt a Trail Program

Trail activities

The bill requires the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Parks and Watercraft to establish and administer the Adopt a Trail Program to allow volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing trails on state-owned land. Volunteer groups in the program may adopt any available trail or trail segment. The bill allows those groups to engage in any of the following activities:

- Spring cleanup;
- Litter collection;
- Accessibility projects;
- Special events;
- Trail maintenance, enhancement, or realignment;
- Public information and assistance; or

- Training.

The bill prohibits a volunteer group from performing activities that reduce hours or compensation of an ODNR employee or are inconsistent with the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. However, if the Division operates other programs in the vicinity of an adopted trail, the Division must coordinate those programs to allow volunteer groups to participate.[1]

Volunteer groups

To participate in the program, a volunteer group must apply to the Division Chief on a form prescribed by the Chief. The Chief must approve or deny the application. If the Chief approves participation in the program, the Chief must enter into a written agreement with a representative of the volunteer group. The Chief may allow more than one volunteer group to adopt one specific trail or trail segment. The bill prohibits a volunteer group from performing any activity on a trail or trail segment without the Chief's approval.

Volunteer groups must consist of people who are at least 18 years old. Participants that are 17 years old or younger must be accompanied by an adult who is at least 18 years old. The Division may identify adopted trails with a sign at a location along the adopted section after a volunteer group completes 50 service hours. The sign must display the name of the volunteer group and the Adopt a Trail logo, which the Division must create.[2]

Waste disposal

The bill requires the Division to coordinate with the closest solid waste management district to ensure that trash and debris are properly disposed of with proper documentation. Volunteer groups must place collected litter at designated locations approved by the Division. The Division may coordinate with volunteers, local authorities, and state agencies for the removal and disposal of collected litter. The Division may provide the volunteer groups with garbage bags, safety training, and gloves.[3]

Rules

The bill requires the Division Chief to adopt rules for the operation and implementation of the Adopt a Trail Program. The rules must establish requirements governing any agreement entered into with a volunteer group, including that the agreement contain all of the following:

- A provision that requires a volunteer group to participate in the program for a minimum of two years;
- A provision that specifies any required trail assistance or maintenance when applicable; and

[1] R.C. 1546.33(A), (B), (F), and (G).

[2] R.C. 1546.33(C), (E), and (H).

[3] R.C. 1546.33(I), (J), and (K)

- A provision that requires compliance with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.[4]

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	03-23-26
Reported, S. Agriculture and Natural Resources	06-10-26
Passed Senate (33-0)	06-10-26

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[4] R.C. 1546.33(D).