



**Opponent Testimony of (Claus Eckert)**  
**House Bill 175**  
**Presented to the Ohio Agricultural and Conservation Committee**  
**May 19th, 2021**

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent and Members of the Ohio House Agriculture and Conservation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee today on House Bill 175 (HB 175). My name is Claus Eckert, current Chair of the Central Ohio Watershed Council.

It is estimated that there are more than 36,000 miles of ephemeral streams throughout Ohio. These streams do not flow continuously but they are important to aquatic ecosystems: Ephemeral streams help control run-off and erosion, reduce flooding potential and help filter pollutants. These are very important benefits for our central Ohio watersheds.

HB175 would eliminate the needs for permits. This will reduce accountability for avoiding pollution. Pollution on sites that have ephemeral streams will affect drinking water, wildlife, and public health negatively.

Our laws protecting our water and health should be based on established science and the science is clear:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Office of Research and Development in 2015 published a report summarizing the current scientific understanding about the connectivity and mechanisms by which streams and wetlands, singly or in aggregate, affect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of downstream waters.

The report is called Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence.

Reviewing more than 1,200 peer-reviewed publications. this report represents the state-of-the-science on the connectivity and isolation of waters in the United States. Its major conclusions are these:

- Streams, regardless of their size or frequency of flow, are connected to downstream waters and strongly influence their function.
- Wetlands and open waters in riparian areas act as effective buffers to protect downstream waters from pollution and are essential components of river food webs.
- Incremental contributions of individual streams and wetlands are cumulative across entire watersheds, and their effects on downstream waters should be evaluated within the context of other streams and wetlands in that watershed.



If Ohioans were asked if anyone should be able to pollute Ohio waters to save money and benefit financially, the answer is clear: No one should.

These are potential consequences of HB175 for 36,000 miles of ephemeral streams and for our Central Ohio Watersheds:

- Oil and other toxic spills into these streams or wetlands may no longer be considered violations by the Ohio EPA.
- Developers may no longer need to obtain a permit before paving over or damaging an ephemeral stream—leading to a loss of important wildlife habitats and increase in flooding downstream.
- The state of Ohio may no longer be required to clean up polluted ephemeral streams.

Without OEPA permits and a way to hold polluters accountable, central Ohio watersheds will be more polluted, our drinking water will become more toxic, wildlife will further get diminished and recreational activities in Ohio's watersheds will decline.

In conclusion, Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for considering our perspective and our recommendation to not implement HB175 as it would cause harm to the health of many Ohioans and the wildlife. I would be happy to answer any questions if you have them.

Claus Eckert  
2021 Chair  
Central Ohio Watershed Council  
614-284-3481