

Opposition testimony to HB175  
Hope Taft, Greene County  
VP, Ohio Scenic River Association  
Chair, Little Miami Watershed Network  
May 17,2012

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the committee.

My name is Hope Taft and I live in Greene County on the banks of the Little Miami River where Bob and I were lucky enough to find a home after we left Columbus in 2007. Because we live so close to the river, I watch it carefully, and have started several organizations to help protect it and other scenic rivers in Ohio. Since 2010 the Little Miami Watershed Network and River Kleeners have taken nearly 12 tons of trash and 900 tires from Greene County alone. But beside visible trash we monitor the river using an Ohio developed system that relies on Macroinvertebrates to tell us how clean the water is. Some are very sensitive to pollution of various types that we don't see with an unaided eye. We are mentoring a similar group for the Stillwater, another State Scenic River close by.

The Little Miami River, which starts in Clark County and many of Ohio's other rivers and tributaries, starts as an ephemeral stream and have thousands that empty into them. Ephemeral streams are about 32% of all Ohio primary headwater stream miles and number in the thousands of stream miles. At some point these ephemeral streams become intermittent streams and permanent streams. All drinking water sources that rely on surface water like the Ohio River and Lake Erie start with flow from ephemeral streams.

The Ohio Scenic River Association, a network of citizens and citizen groups concerned about the quality of our water ways has submitted the attached letter and are opposed to this bill because ephemeral streams are the basic building blocks to the health of Ohio's wonderful water systems.

This bill started me thinking about these streams that come and go like ephemeral flowers in spring and I realized that each side of our property has a sometime stream that comes down the hill and empties directly into the Little Miami River. Neither are very long, but they carry a big punch when it rains and bring down sediment and pollutants for lawn care and animals, and constantly carve deeper channels. All their water and whatever it carries winds up in the river. Rivers have hundreds of these small streams that empty into them and should be protected was water of the state, for like capillaries are to our circulatory systems, if enough are damaged our whole body gets sick. Ephemeral streams may seem insignificant since they only convey water at certain times, but they are critical components of the watershed.

Some day in the not-too-distant future, Ohio will become a sought-after location because it is blessed with plenty of water, but if its streams and rivers are polluted and unprotected, this asset will not be worth anything. I hope, as legislators and our elected officials, you will take a

long-term view and think about the unintended consequences of your actions. If these streams lose their protection as water of the state, they could be piped for development and thus not recharge the ground water and aquifer or have a chance to filter out pollutants as natural ephemeral streams with buffers do. They could be filled in, but if they are like the one in a nearby park, they will resurface with every heavy rain. If these streams are degraded, everything below them is degraded until the rivers become unsuitable for aquatic life, recreation, or drinking water. Ohio's quality of life and desirability will be reduced, and the state will not have a bright future based on plenty of clean water.

The algae blooms on Lake Erie are a good example of what can happen when ephemeral streams are ignored. Even the Little Miami River, Ohio's first state and national scenic river, and its tributaries have algae blooms and are already showing a decrease in mussel populations. Mussels are like the canary in the coal mine: The first to signal something is wrong. Please do not downgrade their significance, call them a "feature," deregulate or let their protection lapse. They are the building block for the entire watershed system. If they are allowed to become dumping grounds, filled, piped or totally erased, all our waters will suffer. We must work to keep our waters in great shape. All life depends on it.



May 17, 2021

The Honorable Kyle Koehler  
Agriculture Committee Chair,  
[Rep79@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep79@ohiohouse.gov)

Dear Representative Koehler;


The Ohio Scenic Rivers Association (OSRA) is a 501c3 non-profit corporation with a mission to ensure that our scenic rivers are healthy and continue to provide clean water for people and wildlife and a safe place for families to enjoy nature. A key part of our vision is to protect and improve the natural environments and water quality of Ohio's Scenic Rivers. As such, we strongly oppose House Bill 175 which would eliminate protections for ephemeral water features under various water pollution control laws.

Ephemeral waters are critical resources that play a major role in managing floodwaters, filtering contaminants, and providing habitat for a variety of plant and animal species surrounding Ohio's Scenic Rivers and across the state. There is clear scientific evidence that ephemeral waters play an important role for human and environmental health, and detrimental impacts to them will result in harmful impacts to other bodies of water and eventually to the water we drink. HB 175 will likely result in these detrimental impacts because it will allow for the discharge of sewage and other pollutants. Research indicates that ephemeral streams make up at least one-third of the total stream miles in the state, if not more, and our water quality fundamentally depends on these small streams.

Further, HB 175 will exclude ephemeral waterways from regulations under Ohio Revised Code 903.01, 1503.50, and 3746.07, respectively pertaining to concentrated animal feeding facilities, forest management, and the Voluntary Action Program (VAP). HB 175 may have impacts across several other sections of the ORC as well, leading to less protection from water and sewer district discharges, coal mining, brine disposal, and others. Removing protections for ephemeral features under these sections of the code will further diminish water quality across the state of Ohio.

HB 175 will lead to increased pollution just as the H2Ohio program is working to improve water quality. Ephemeral streams, although small and having relatively short periods of flow, are widespread and important contributors to water quality in the state's wetlands, streams, creeks, rivers, and lakes. In order to protect human health and environmental quality gains made through H2Ohio and a variety of other programs, policies, and projects across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, it is critical that HB 175 not become law.

Sincerely,



Hope Taft, VP

Ohio Scenic River Association

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