



May 18, 2021

RE: HB175, concerning deregulation of ephemeral features

Chairman Koehler and members of the Committee,

My name is Reece Nickol and I am a passionate waterfowl hunter and wetland conservationist. I live in Piqua, Ohio with my wife and enjoy spending time outdoors hunting and fishing with my four children and nine grandchildren who live nearby. I also own and manage my own wetland and currently serve as the volunteer state policy chair for Ducks Unlimited here in Ohio. DU was founded by concerned waterfowl hunters in 1937 in direct response to the rapid wetland habitat losses occurring across North America. Today we are over 600,000 strong, with over 18,000 right here in Ohio. To-date we have invested \$39 million to conserve over 101,000 acres across the state and our commitment to putting wetlands back on the landscape for wildlife, water quality, and outdoor recreationists has never been stronger.

We are concerned that HB 175 could reverse the wetland conservation gains we have worked so hard for over the last several decades. Adequate wetland protection and mitigation is essential for ensuring that our watersheds maintain their ecological and hydrological integrity. Many wetlands by their very nature are ephemeral and undergo natural flooding and drought cycles as result of seasonal precipitation. These seasonally flooded systems provide essential food resources for migratory birds as they make their long journey's to and from the breeding and wintering areas of North America. Ohio is blessed with abundant natural resources, however, one thing we are short on are wetlands. It's estimated that we have lost 90% of our state's historic wetland acreages and due to our unique geographical positioning along the shores of western Lake Erie, this has led to water quality challenges as well as increased habitat needs.

Ohio is currently nation-leading in its commitment to addressing water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat improvement via the H2Ohio Initiative. This investment as result of the leadership of Governor Mike DeWine and members of this General Assembly is truly setting the pace for the other states throughout the Midwest and we should all be extremely proud of that. Through state programs like H2Ohio in conjunction with important federal programs like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the multitude of Farm Bill programs, we are making tremendous progress stewarding our natural resources back to health.

While these tremendous investments of taxpayer dollars are occurring, it would be a shame to simultaneously pass legislation that could lead to further impairment of our state's waters. We are hopeful that a solution can be found outside of the legislative arena that can provide both regulatory relief and adequate natural resource protection.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your support for wetlands conservation.

Reece Nickol
Ohio State Policy Chair
Ducks Unlimited