

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.