

The Ohio Scenic Rivers Association (OSRA) is still very much opposed to HB 175, even with the addition of the proposed amendment. The crux of this proposed legislation is removal of ephemeral streams from inclusion in the definition of “waters of the state” so that they are not subject to regulation.

Ephemeral streams are streams, and not water features, that contribute greatly to the overall health of all streams in Ohio, including our 15 Scenic Rivers. Ephemeral streams makeup about one third of all river miles in Ohio. It only makes sense that what happens in the headwaters (ephemeral streams) of a river has a large impact downstream.

My home river, Little Beaver Creek, has one of the state’s largest remaining populations of the endangered Hellbender salamander. Much effort and money has rightfully gone into preserving and restoring the Hellbender population. Other such efforts have been ongoing in many streams and rivers across the state for other endangered species, such as mussels. Ohio is currently investing large sums of money into the H2Ohio program to combat toxic algal blooms in Lake Erie and other places across the state. There is a large amount of money being invested across the state to improve overall water quality.

In recent years there have been some historic milestones for Ohio’s Scenic Rivers program within ODNR. In 2016 we were able to save the local, volunteer advisory councils for the scenic rivers. In 2018 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Scenic Rivers Act, which created the Scenic Rivers program, the first such program in the country. Ohio’s program even preceded the Federal Scenic Rivers program. Our Scenic Rivers program is growing and attracting more public interest all of the time.

With all of this interest and investment into improving and maintaining the overall quality of Ohio’s waters for all citizens of Ohio, it does not make any sense to remove protection of ephemeral streams for the benefit of a few.

Thank you.