

Chairman Koehler, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 175. My name is Tom Butch and I am President of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Association (OSRA).

OSRA urges you to vote "No" on House Bill 175. Even with the amendments that have been offered HB 175 still remains at the heart of it a piece of legislation that deregulates ephemeral streams and will allow activities within ephemeral streams that will cause water pollution and loss of overall water quality within a stream without any mitigation. Ephemeral streams are the lifeblood of our scenic rivers and all rivers in Ohio. They are the headwaters of our streams and everything that happens in the headwaters will affect overall water quality downstream. They do not have a connection to groundwater and only flow during precipitation events, so too often there is the misconception that they don't really matter when it comes to the overall health of a stream. But, they do matter. The effect of any pollution in these streams will cause a decline of the overall water quality to a measurable degree. These streams make up about a third of the total river miles in Ohio so it should be apparent how much of a cumulative effect they can have.

HB 175 makes no sense at all with the State of Ohio currently spending millions of dollars on the H2Ohio program and other programs to improve water quality in Ohio. The Department of Agriculture is currently in the process of hiring seven Watershed Planning and Management Coordinator positions across the state to implement the Statewide Watershed Planning and Management Program. This program was created by House Bill 7 when it was passed by the 133rd General Assembly in 2019, and it just became effective on April 12, 2021. A main focus of House Bill 7 is to create partnerships between the Department of Agriculture, all 88 county Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others to improve overall water quality in Ohio's streams and other water bodies. HB 175 seems to fly in the face of the work, effort, time and money spent on HB 7 to improve overall water quality in Ohio.

OSRA urges a "NO" vote on HB 175.

Thank you.