

I am a private business owner and have been an Ohio State Park Concessionaire for the past 16 years. With the help of my family, we currently operate 4 boat rental and beach concessions at 4 state park lakes in SE Ohio.

Today, I'd like to briefly address state parks funding and the need for additional resources.

For my business, a silver lining of the pandemic has been all-time high visitation at state parks throughout Ohio. Do to travel restrictions, many Ohioans were forced to vacation close to home and many of those "staycations" took place within or in close proximity to Ohio State Parks. In short, many in state residents have just recently "discovered" these recreational gems close to home,

In addition to being important tourist destinations and economic drivers, state parks are also vital to many local and mostly rural communities.

To date, the legislature has been supportive of infrastructure investments and improvements at parks throughout the state. However, additional funding is needed to help tackle the ever-increasing demands created by a growing number of visitors. This includes the need for more natural resources officers and associated equipment. Examples of associated equipment would be updating existing vehicles and providing specialized training. A personal example of how thin the current officers are spread...

Additional Funding is needed to staff and operate the newly acquired Jesse Owens State Park in Morgan and neighboring counties in SE Ohio. Some of the plans to improve this park and wildlife area include adding a campground with rental cabins as well as other amenities. Increasing overnight tourist stays resulting from the creation of clean and safe facilities will greatly help stimulate the surrounding communities. Again, this can't happen without additional funding.

I'll conclude with this...film maker Ken Burns once produced a famous documentary titled "The National Parks: Americas Best Idea." If we hold this assertion to be true, our State Parks are undoubtedly a treasure worthy of your continued support.

Thank You!

