



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

To: Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Tony Ruffing, Policy and Outreach Co-Chair
Ohio Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Date: 20 April, 2023

Re: Opponent Testimony re:Changes to Division of Wildlife Budget and Authority (HSB 33)

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and its members of nearly 600 outdoorsmen and women across the state, I am writing to you all today to voice *STRONG levels of opposition* to the substitute budget bill in regards to funding AND authority of the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers ***opposes the elimination of \$2.5M in Conservation and Habitat Protection.*** As the population of our state grows, along with the projected growth trends in the coming years, this funding cut hurts the users of our outdoor spaces by eliminating opportunities for recreation. Ohio has an extremely strong outdoor economy. By completely reducing this funding request, you in turn reduce the chances for building on that economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Ohio's outdoor economy accounts for nearly 138,000 jobs(increase of 12% since 2020), attributing \$6.5 Billion in compensation, and has a value of \$12.8 Billion(increase of 23.3% since 2020). Eliminating this funding not only hurts the traditional user(ie hunters, anglers, and trappers), but it hurts good business and economics within our state.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers ***opposes the reduction of \$2M for Project Wild-based education to an insulting \$125k.*** Project Wild is a proven education platform, that not only supports fulfillment of State Science standards, but its also a proven avenue to connect youth with our outdoor spaces. We live in an ever closing world of screen time and being indoors, it begs the question as why on earth we would want to cut funding that reconnects kids with the outdoors. This funding reduction not only hurts our Division of Wildlife's education mechanism, but it hurts our kid's futures.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers ***opposes the reduction to the authority currently provided the Division of Wildlife and its Officers that negatively impacts their ability to protect our game species and our sporting heritage.*** The proposed changes within this bill would directly, and negatively, impede our Wildlife Officers from effectively being able to perform their duties. Wildlife is held in the public trust and our Officers need the ability to protect the resource, without being burdened by the restrictions of a warrant.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers ***opposes changing the opening day of deer firearm season to the Friday after Thanksgiving, from the traditional Monday after Thanksgiving.*** A 2020 Ohio hunting survey finds shows strong support for the traditional date, as the new date would likely interfere with holiday gatherings and family events. Outside of that Backcountry Hunters and Anglers are strong supporters of sound science based wildlife management. Season dates and bag limits are modeled to



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

reflect changes in species ecology and yearly cycle. We support the current date of proposed season and bag limits presented by the Division of Wildlife, and approved by the wildlife council. We *oppose* seasons set based on legislation. Suggestions to think that this change in season dates would increase revenue are unlikely, and would serve no foundation for these changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Ohio chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers encourages you to take our recommendations and concerns into consideration during your deliberations. If any of you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me so that I may be of assistance.

Regards

Tony Ruffing
Policy and Outreach Co-Chair
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers-Ohio Chapter

