



May 4, 2023

Senator Tim Schaffer, Chair
Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor, 137
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: House Bill 33 and Jesse Owens State Park Improvements

Dear Senator Schaffer and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Buckeye Hills Regional Council to express our strong support for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' request for funding to support the recent capital improvements made at Jesse Owens State Park in Morgan County.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council is a council of governments dedicated to improving the lives of residents in Southeast Ohio. By working collaboratively with elected officials across Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington counties, Buckeye Hills connects communities to local, state, and federal resources through its Aging & Health, Home Care, Community Development, and Planning divisions.

ODNR has committed funding for capital improvements at Jesse Owens State Park to construct 10 cabins, 50 full-service campsites, a visitor center, and a retail shop to begin later this year. The capital improvement funding requested by ODNR for Jesse Owens State Park would support the construction of 10 cabins, 50 full-service campsites, and a visitor center and retail shop to begin in late 2023.

To support these improvements and serve visitors to the park, ODNR is seeking additional funding in House Bill 33 for FY 2024-2025 to cover the staffing, maintenance, and operation of these improvements, which include additional law enforcement and a park naturalist.

As Southeast Ohio leans into its natural tourism assets to support economic development in our region, Jesse Owens State Park currently draws more than 5,000 annual visitors who bring millions of dollars of direct and indirect spending to Morgan County and surrounding counties in our region. In addition, many locally-owned businesses benefit from the state park. The improved visitor experience supported by ODNR's request would continue to support the local economy, grow the park's visitorship, and help the surrounding communities continue to flourish.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council fully supports ODNR's request for funding in House Bill 33 for Jesse Owens State Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chasity Schmelzenbach".

Chasity Schmelzenbach
Executive Director

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