

5630 State Rd.
Kingsville, OH 44048
May 6, 2016

Senator Kris Jordan
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Ref: Senate Bill 293 Section 1547.84

Dear Senator Jordan:

As you are aware, Senate Bill 293 Section 1547.84 regarding the consolidation of the Scenic River Advisory Councils has been returned to the Sunset Review Committee for re-evaluation and possible amendments. I would like to express my strong reservations regarding the language that was in the proposed legislation, ie, the intent to inactivate the 14 separate Advisory Councils and to consolidate said Councils into a single entity with membership appointed by the Director of the ODNR. I am asking that the Sunset Review Committee keep the Scenic River format in its current form, for the following reasons:

- The Scenic River Advisory committees will better serve the ODNR in their current configuration; local input from citizenry will be much more effective in providing feedback on the various Scenic rivers to assist ODNR in making decisions that are best for each river
- The legislation should be codified to formalize the communication between ODNR and the local Advisory committees; codification ensures long term, stable, and positive relationships between ODNR and each Advisory committee. Relying on Scenic River Advisory Councils on an informal basis diminishes the effectiveness of the governmental entity-advisory council relationship.
- Currently, of the 14 scenic rivers found in Ohio, there are 8 Advisory Councils having active membership. There is some question as to the efforts being made by ODNR to activate those dormant Advisory Councils. It is suggested that ODNR administration reach out to the successful Advisory committees to solicit information on potential factors of success that might be applied to the dormant committees. Rather than eliminating said committees, the potential of adding an additional 60 volunteers to the ODNR scenic river system should not be overlooked.
- Individual Advisory committees will better serve the environmental and ecological uniqueness of each river; this is much more efficient than attempting to solicit information from a single committee. Local Scenic Advisory Councils have an intimate and personal relationship with the river in their community; this information is invaluable to ODNR and other conservation management entities; this valuable input would be lost with a central committee.
- Local landowners feel much more comfortable and more likely to “buy in” to land acquisition and conservation easement efforts by ODNR and other agencies when they are assured of a communication venue through local community members; the current Scenic Advisory Councils

serve this effort much more effectively than a single committee. In fact, much of the progress being made by the state of Ohio, through outright land purchases, or through the use of conservation easements, has been done by promises made to those land owners that local Advisory Councils would continue to have input to ODNR regarding the management of those lands. Section 1547.81 of the original Senate Bill 293 provides allowance for the Director of ODNR to acquire lands adjacent to scenic rivers. The acquisition of lands has been highly successful in several watersheds in Ohio due to the influence of local Scenic River Advisory Councils.

- Consolidation certainly serves the purposes of a governmental entity when there are obvious advantages in terms of economics or increases in efficiency of function. Neither of these reasons makes sense with the Scenic River Advisory Councils. As noted above, the Councils were designed specifically to garner input from local stakeholders. Consolidation will actually effectively eliminate local input; a single individual from each of 14 different rivers attempting to make decisions is paramount to asking an individual from Alaska or Florida to make advisory input on a local river in our state. Economics likewise does not factor into this attempt to consolidate, as expenditures from the state to operate the Councils is minimal.

I strongly encourage your Committee to reject the legislation in the original proposal of Ohio Senate Bill 293. The Scenic River Advisory Councils will continue to best serve the state of Ohio and ODNR in their current configuration. Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of the Scenic River Advisory Councils.

Best regards,

Allen Fazenbaker
Conneaut Creek Scenic River Advisory Council
440-969-0273

Cc: Members of the Ohio Senate Sunset Review Committee, Conneaut Creek Scenic Advisory Council