

To the Sunset Review Committee, on the idea of abolishing the Scenic River Advisory Councils.
Testimony of Jacquelyn Yates, Member of the Little Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River Council.

One reason given for abolishing the individual scenic river councils is that their formal structure and requirements for membership are cumbersome and unnecessary.

Mr. Gary Obermiller of ODNR indicated that our Little Beaver Creek council is considered to be one of the strong and well-functioning councils.

One reason for this is the required formality of its structure, which affects the recruitment of members, the Council's ability to offer prompt and informed advice, its collaborative approach to resolve problems and support beneficial activities for the Creek.

The formal structure requires commitment, and those who join the council can rely on the commitment of the other members. That means the meetings will be serious efforts to promote the welfare of the creek.

Every member is a volunteer and brings something unique to the council, usually a connection to another institution or a demonstrated commitment to the watershed. Vacancies are discussed in the council and filled as quickly as possible.

Members are required to attend and those who walk the stream are required to report. That means that members can depend on full attendance to do the work of the council and a full report on the status of the creek. When they arrive at the meeting, their time will not be wasted.

If the council's advice is required, the full membership is present and brings its knowledge to bear. Action is taken without undue delay.

The members' detailed and close knowledge of the community and the creek helps to address problems and opportunities. This might include identifying possible solutions, highlighting individuals who might cooperate in resolving some difficulty, suggesting likely funding sources, indications of members' willingness to contribute labor and resources, or historical knowledge of a particular situation. Often, the discussion brings together sufficient information and commitments that the situation can be resolved.

Other aspects of the formal structure also contribute to the council's effectiveness. The minutes create a useful record when problems do not yield to initial efforts. The council can be reminded as to when a situation arose and what efforts were made to resolve it, guiding consideration of other means or methods.

The formal attendance of the river manager is very important, too. It incorporates the Ohio Department of Natural Resources into detailed knowledge and management of the creek without exceptional effort by the manager, who has other duties and could not scrutinize the creek as intensely or regularly as do the local council's volunteers. When problems do arise, the river manager is known and can be easily contacted and informed. For example, when an exceptional

flood a few years ago bared a section of gas pipeline and an old oil well, it was the river watcher who reported the situation, allowing the manager to take steps to address both.

In brief, the formal structure brings together members who are well-positioned and willing to aid and assist. The ability to have an ongoing and official dialogue with ODNR about a popular and valued aspect of the community is something that attracts them to the work. And their collaborative efforts aid in preserving and enhancing clean water values, natural assets as a fish hatchery and refuge for rare and endangered species, and public access and enjoyment of its waterway and forested watershed, at a very small cost for the state.