

Green Paper

Testimony to Ohio Sunset Review Committee

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Issue Summary

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has recommended the General Assembly:

- Eliminate the Ohio Natural Areas Council
- Eliminate the Ohio Parks and Recreation Council
- Eliminate the Recreation and Resources Commission
- Eliminate the Water Advisory Council
- Waterways Safety Council
- Eliminate the 14 individual advisory councils for each of the 14 state Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers and, instead, consolidate them into a single statewide Scenic Rivers Advisory Council.

OEC's Perspective

The OEC strongly opposes the elimination of the ODNR advisory councils, especially for the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, the Division of Parks and Recreation, and the individual scenic river councils. Here's why:

1. Less eyes and ears: The provisions will deny the public an important opportunity to make suggestions and to help hold ODNR accountable for its operations. More--not less--citizen involvement is always better. 2. You call us, because we may not call you: With the exception of the single statewide scenic rivers council, ODNR is providing no opportunity for regular input on the administration of our state parks and preserves. 3. Democracy is messy: We do not accept the argument that it is inefficient for ODNR to maintain the councils nor that there is insufficient public interest in filling them. We believe any number of professionals and common citizens from the conservation community would be pleased to serve. 4. Low cost/high reward: By law, the Natural Areas Council serves without compensation or reimbursement. (If they aren't already, the General Assembly should compel all other councils follow suit.) The potential reward for engaging the public can be high value suggestions and advice. 5. The goose and the gander: Curiously, ODNR is not proposing the elimination of all advisory councils, such as the Forestry Advisory Council nor the Ohio Wildlife Council. Just as ODNR finds value in those advisory councils, so too could it find value in the other land and water division councils, if only if was so committed.

Ohio's state nature preserves, parks, and wild, scenic and recreational rivers offer unmatched opportunities for the average Ohioan to enjoy the wild and natural beauty of our great state. The public has a vested interest in their care. The OEC respectfully but vigorously urges the General Assembly to maintain these important avenues for regular citizen engagement and non-regulatory oversight of our priceless public lands and scenic rivers. Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Ratings



This legislation will help resolve a serious problem that threatens Ohio's environment and demonstrates significant leadership for Ohio's future.



This legislation will benefit Ohio's environment or shows foresight in setting future environmental policy.



This legislation will somewhat - or on balance - benefit Ohio's environment.



This legislation will cause substantial harm to Ohio's environment and demonstrates serious disregard for Ohio's future.



This legislation will harm Ohio's environment or sets the state on the wrong path for future environmental policy.



This legislation will somewhat - or on balance - harm Ohio's environment.