

Testimony to the Ohio Sunset Review Committee May 17, 2016

In support of the Ohio Natural Areas Council

I am here to voice support for the continuation of the Ohio Natural Areas Council.

My name is Robert Glotzhober, and I am Curator Emeritus of Natural History, Ohio History Connection. I retired three years ago as Senior Curator of Natural History after 33 years with the Ohio Historical Society, now known as the Ohio History Connection. While working there, I had a wide diversity of responsibilities and involvement with many aspects of natural history. That work involved public programming, collections management, exhibits and most importantly management responsibilities for the organizations half-dozen plus natural areas. Four of those areas are National Natural Landmarks, and three of them are Dedicated State Nature Preserves. One of those areas is Ohio's premier natural area, Cedar Bog in Champaign County. Because of that involvement, I was appointed to the Ohio Natural Areas Council in 1989, and served on Council until 2005. I spent seven of those 15 years as chair, and therefore also served on the Recreation and Resources Commission. Currently, in retirement, I serve on the Board of Directors of the Ohio Biological Survey and the Cedar Bog Association. I maintain an active involvement in many aspects of Ohio's natural history and am a current member of the Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association (ONAPA), a citizens' group that values and supports Ohio's natural areas.

As you know, the Ohio Revised Code, section 1517.03 established the Natural Areas council to be composed of seven members appointed by the Governor. Those members are to represent (one each) colleges and universities, natural history museums, metropolitan park districts, outdoor education programs, and nature centers, plus two representatives from the public at large. They are to serve voluntarily without compensation. The Natural Areas Council therefore costs the State nothing beyond the time taken to solicit and review their input. The experience of these seasoned scientists, naturalists, educators and citizens provides the ODNR with valuable advice and consultation. Key activities of the Council include:

- Advise and review of acquisition or dedication of new natural areas.
- Serving as an ad hoc focus group for discussion of things like long-term goals
- Review and advise on management plans for natural area. This may include issues such as control of over-populations of deer and of invasive plant species.

Nothing strengthens a plan like having to defend it in front an outside group such as the Council. While the staff expertise at the ODNR and DNAP is excellent, further advice and review by a non-regulatory, citizen-based Natural Areas Council can be invaluable. The complex ecological interactions that exist at State Nature Preserves can greatly benefit from more “eyes” of a citizen group such as the Natural Areas Council.

While the majority of State Nature Preserves are owned and managed by the State, some preserves are leased to local park districts for management. Other preserves are owned by non-governmental agencies such as Metro Parks, and of course, the Ohio History Connection. This diversity of ownership further signifies the importance of citizen-based advisory council.

Ohio’s citizens can be proud of the 136 State Nature Preserves and natural areas that have been dedicated in Ohio. These diverse areas contain remnants of Ohio’s pre-settlement past, rare and endangered species, and wondrous geologic features. They are quite frankly, the best of the best of Ohio’s natural heritage. The legislature had the foresight to establish the Division of Natural Areas and Preserve to protect these high quality areas and to make them available to the public far into the future. I highly urge this Committee to further that foresight by recognizing the value of a citizen advisory group for that Division, and to maintain the Natural Areas Council.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of these thoughts.

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