



The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) devotes significant time and resources to the preservation of the state's waterways – including our 15 state-designated wild, scenic, and recreational rivers.

A guest column recently published in the Columbus Dispatch highlighted the economic value of these river corridors and called for increased funding to protect and improve them. We welcome and encourage the active engagement from Ohioans on these important issues, which is why it's important for the public to have accurate information on the state's current efforts.

Unfortunately, the guest column by Ohio State University Professor Brent Sohngen misrepresented the state's funding for river conservation. While it is true that the state legislature appropriated \$100,000 from the Scenic Rivers License Plate Fund in the last budget, there are several other budget line items that contributed to ODNR's scenic rivers spending in the last two years totaling more than \$3.4 million. These dollars came from the Waterway Safety Fund, General Revenue Funds allocated to the program through the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, and funding from the state tax checkoff program.

ODNR is working to improve protection of the state's scenic rivers, acquiring five new properties at a cost of nearly \$1.5 million along the Little Beaver Creek, Little Darby Creek, and Olentangy River in the last two years. Streamside property acquisition allows for recreation and protects critical riparian habitats, which helps keep water clean, slows erosion, and helps with flood control for surrounding properties. Thanks to these recent acquisitions, Ohio's scenic rivers program now protects more than 6,500 acres of property on scenic rivers statewide.

ODNR also spent more than \$150,000 in the last two years on scenic rivers projects that enhanced access, improved the flow of the waterways, and restored habitat. Additionally, much of ODNR's work on Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative, which has restored more than 11,000 acres of wetland habitat, has taken place in scenic river watersheds.

With more public land to manage, ODNR has also added staff to help monitor stream quality, perform educational outreach, and advise communities and landowners on conservation techniques along river corridors. These staff also work with local communities to designate and protect additional scenic rivers. In the last year alone, scenic river staffing increased by 20%.

ODNR appreciates passionate advocates for Ohio's waterways, and we are committed to ensuring that future generations can enjoy these scenic rivers and their unique ecosystems.

