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Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Environmental Council
Jack Shaner, Deputy Director, Senior Director of Legislative and Public Affairs

Amended Substitute Ohio House Bill 1
As Passed by the Ohio House of Representatives
Subject: Biennial Ohio Operating Budget for SFY 2010—SFY 2011

Ohio Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee
Ohio Statehouse—Columbus, Ohio
Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Chairman Carey, Vice-Chairman Wagoner, and Ranking Minority Member Miller—

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Amended Substitute Ohio House Bill 1 (As Passed by the Ohio House), the proposed Biennial Ohio Operating Budget for State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2010—SFY 2011.

My name is Jack Shaner, and I am Deputy Director and Senior Director of Legislative and Public Affairs for the Ohio Environmental Council. The OEC is a network of more than 100 local and several statewide environmental-conservation groups. Our mission is to secure healthy air, land, soil, and water for all who call Ohio home.

The OEC offers this Interested Party testimony in support of several provisions of House Bill 1 as passed by the House—in particular the proposed budgets of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Environmental Review Appeals Commission (ERAC). In addition, we appear in support of individual line items of the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Ohio Historical Society.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Governor's Executive Budget proposes appropriations for the environment and natural resources of \$94.0 M (million) for SFY 2010 and \$90.1 M for SFY 2011 for a total of \$184.1 for the biennium. This accounts for 0.3% of total GRF expenditures of \$54.7 for the biennium. NOTE: The Executive Budget includes federal resources deposited into the GRF, including federal "stimulus" funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The OEC appreciates the extremely challenge budget environment in which the State of Ohio finds itself. By and large, we are not here today to seek significant increases in spending for environmental protection and natural resource conservation, even though we believe they are well justified. Nor are we here to ask that the general taxpayers of Ohio be asked to share more of the cost of these important programs through the General Revenue Fund (GRF). In fact, we appear today in support of a mostly "flat-lined," continuation budget—one that proposes to relieve the General Revenue Fund of some budget pressure from important environmental protection and natural resource conservation programs and instead shift more of that burden to industries that profit from extracting natural resources and that pose potential risks to our natural environment and public health as well as to average citizens who enjoy certain outdoor recreational activities.

In short, we are stepping up in support of a budget that asks both regulated industries and individual citizens, alike, to take more responsibility for the impacts that their activities may pose to our air, land, soil, and water resources.

The following details the OEC's top budget priorities for the upcoming biennium.

TOP PRIORITIES

Here are the OEC's top priorities for SFY 2010-SFY 2011:

- 1. Keep our air and drinking water clean and safe – Please SUPPORT the full Waste Disposal Fee increase as proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget.**
- 2. Conserve soil and water resources – Please SUPPORT the full Waste Disposal Fee Increase as well as fees on Coal Extraction, Well Log Filing, Non-Motorized Watercraft, and Off-Road Vehicles as proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget and approved by the Ohio House.**

THE PROPOSAL

The Governor's Executive Budget includes several fee increases, including a fee increase on landfill waste from Mixed Solid Waste (MSW) and Construction and Demolition Debris (CDD). The fee increase would fund important clean air and clean water programs and safe drinking water oversight administered by the Ohio EPA and soil and water conservation programs administered by the Ohio DNR. STATUS: The Ohio House approved the entire proposed fee increase on MSW, but only part of the proposed fee increase on CDD.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

According to the Ohio EPA and ODNR, these agencies are struggling to maintain important programs and personnel while facing continued or increasing program responsibilities. The Ohio EPA has eliminated 32 positions in SFY 2008-09 and has identified 33 additional positions that may have to be eliminated due to declining fee revenues. Ohio DNR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation has undergone similar staff reductions; it lost 23 positions, or 38%, of its staffing level since 2001.

The benefits of clean air and water, safe drinking water, and safe disposal of waste are obvious—especially in Ohio, which is among the nation's perennial leaders for emission of air toxics; where all of our major metro areas are in non-attainment of federal minimum clean air standards for ground-level ozone and for particulate matter; where nearly half of all sampled streams do not meet federal clean water standards for fishable, swim-able waters; and where a statewide fish consumption advisory exists, urging people to eat no more than two meals a week of any fish species taken from any Ohio lake, river, or stream because of the presence of mercury and other toxic contaminants.

Equally obvious are the benefits of soil conservation. Some researchers estimate that the U.S. is losing soil 10 times faster than the natural replenishment rate. One rainstorm can wash away 1 mm (0.04 inches) of dirt. If left to natural processes, it can take years, even decades, to replace that loss. Erosion promotes critical losses of water, nutrients, soil organic matter, and soil biota; reduces soil productivity; and contaminates water with excessive nutrients and pesticides. The good news for Ohio is that the ODNR is a recognized leader in soil and water conservation. It supports efforts by the 88-county soil and water conservation districts to improve water quality and the use of agricultural resources.

Adequate funding is essential to continue to protect our air, land, soil, and water—to make Ohio a healthier place to live and a more attractive place to work.

From OEC’s perspective, the proposed fee increases for the Ohio EPA and ODNR are:

Fair. All of us—residents and businesses, alike—benefit from a clean environment and from soil and water conservation. We all generate waste and we all should be part of the solution to safely containing that waste. We further believe that paying higher fees on waste disposal is fair alternative to a general tax increase.

Just. Waste disposal costs in Ohio are, on average, much lower than many other states. New York and New Jersey, alone, accounted for 62 percent of the “long-haul” waste that came to Ohio in 2007. Raising disposal fees shifts more burden to out-of-state sources of waste to help defray the costs of environmental protection and natural resource conservation in Ohio.

It’s About Protecting our Air, Land, Soil, and Water. With the fee increase, the Ohio EPA and ODNR state that they will be able to maintain existing staff and provide assistance critical to:

- Achieving compliance with federal standards for clean air, safe drinking water, and protected ground and surface water
- Thoroughly and quickly reviewing new air and water permits
- Providing a 1:1 state matching grant to all 88 county soil and water conservation districts
- Providing Ohio’s match to the federal Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which is implemented by the county soil and water conservation districts. This is a 20 percent state/80 percent federal cost-share program, leveraging up to \$167 million in federal investment in Ohio

According to the Ohio EPA and Ohio DNR, without the fee increase:

- public water systems oversight will be reduced substantially
- stream cleanups will slow down considerably
- local governments (primarily counties) will have to fully fund the soil and water conservation districts on their own
- Lake Erie water quality, particularly in the Western Basin, will decline as programming to prevent runoff is ended
- Assistance to communities with flood protection, storm water and drainage needs will be reduced or eliminated

The ODNR Budget also includes:

- A new Waterways Conservation Assessment fee on the registration of non-motorized watercraft to support the Scenic Rivers Program, which the Budget Bill transfers to the ODNR Division of Watercraft from the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. These fees would be assessed in the amounts of \$5 for a three year registration and \$1.50 for a one year registration. Proceeds from these assessments would be deposited into the Waterways Safety Fund, administered by the ODNR Division of Watercraft.
- A new Well Log Filing Fee of \$20 for filing well logs for new public or private drinking water wells. This fee is expected to generate an additional \$198,000 in revenues that otherwise would have come from the GRF.

- An increase in the Off-Road Vehicle fee. Currently, DNR charges a fee of \$5 for the three-year registration of off-road motorcycles, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), and snowmobiles, and \$5 for a 15 day short-term permit for nonresidents to use such vehicles on Ohio's designated off-road vehicle trails. Under the Executive Budget proposal, the three-year registration fee would increase to \$31.25. The nonresident permit fee would increase to \$11.25 and be valid for one year. These changes are expected to increase revenues to the State Recreational Vehicle Fund by an estimated \$676,820 annually for the oversight and maintenance of the state's off-road vehicle trails.

OEC REQUEST

Please SUPPORT the full fee increases, as proposed in the Executive Budget and (mostly) approved by the Ohio House for:

- Mixed Solid Waste to support important Ohio EPA and ODNR programs
- Construction and Demolition Debris to support important Ohio EPA and ODNR programs
- Waterways Conservation Assessment fee to continue the Scenic Rivers program
- Well-Log Filing fee to help oversee the development of water wells
- Off-Road Vehicle fee for the oversight and maintenance of the state's off-road vehicle trails

3. Keep watch on coal mining – SUPPORT the Coal Extraction Fee

BACKGROUND

Today's stricter laws require that coal operators successfully return mined areas to their pre-mining land uses or better land uses. But staffing levels for Ohio DNR regulatory oversight of coal mining have not kept pace with the significant expansion of regulatory responsibilities from recent legislation, including House Bill 443 (126th G.A.).

THE PROPOSAL

Both the Executive Budget and House Bill 1 As Passed by the Ohio House propose a new fee of \$0.08 fee per ton of coal production. According to ODNR, the fee would replace GRF funding and would cover additional staff and other administrative costs for coal enforcement operations that formerly were funded through the GRF. The Office of Budget and Management estimates that the coal extraction fee would generate approximately \$1.2 million in revenue that previously would have been provided through the GRF.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

Consider the following fact: The total value of 22 million tons of coal mined in Ohio in 2007 was \$655 million. The proposed Operating Budget for the next biennium asks the coal industry to pick up an additional \$1.2 million in each of the next two fiscal years for regulatory oversight. This represents less than 2/10ths of one percent (0.0018) of the coal production value for 2007.

The Ohio EPA has moved almost complete off of the GRF. With the exception of E-Check (which, in the current biennium, is funded by the GRF), the Ohio EPA draws no funds from the GRF; it is entirely supported by fees and federal funds. It is appropriate to ask other regulated industries to shoulder more of the financial burden of the cost of regulatory

oversight of their impacts to air, land, and water resources.

The coal industry profits from mining coal in Ohio. The coal industry can and should bear a greater share of the cost of regulatory oversight by the ODNR. The OEC strongly supports the ODNR's call for the mining industry to bear a greater share of these costs.

OEC REQUEST

Relieve taxpayers of more of the cost of regulatory oversight of the coal industry. Approve the Coal Extraction Fee as Proposed by the Governor and approved by the Ohio House.

NOTE: The Administration also has proposed an Energy Extraction Fee on oil and gas production. The Administration agreed to remove that fee proposal from the Operating Budget Bill and is planning to include that fee increase instead in a separate bill it currently is negotiating with the oil and gas industry to modernize Ohio law on oil and gas extraction.

4. Protect nature and promote “one-tank,” “staycation” trips” to Ohio’s great outdoors – SUPPORT Ohio’s State Parks, State Nature Preserves, State Forests, State Wildlife Areas, State Historic Sites—and State Scenic Rivers

THE PROPOSAL

The Operating Budget as proposed by the Governor and approved by the Ohio House includes:

- a proposal to replace GRF funding for the State Scenic River program with watercraft registration fees and other funds
- a 5.9% increase in Division of Parks & Recreation payroll line item
- flat funding for the Divisions of Natural Areas and Preserves, Forestry, and Wildlife

OEC PERSPECTIVE

State Scenic Rivers—one of Ohio’s most successful natural resource conservation efforts—may be at risk of extinction, all for want of half a million dollars in non-GRF funds even though more than adequate revenues exist from non-motorized boaters (canoe and kayak paddlers) to support the program.

In 1968, the General Assembly passed the Scenic Rivers Act—the first in the nation—to protect Ohio’s high-quality streams for future generations. Since then, 800 river miles and 4,000 acres in stream corridors and access sites have been protected. But unless a funding source is approved, 40 years of building Ohio’s successful Scenic Rivers program may all be for naught. And Ohio’s boating community and natural beauty will be the worse because of it. But this need not happen. According to the ODNR Division of Watercraft, more than enough revenue from non-motorized boaters exist to support this program. Please see the information posted at the Division of Watercraft website at <http://ohiodnr.com/watercraft/Current%20Events/tabid/3164/Default.aspx>.

State Parks and Recreation- Ohio’s 74 State Parks are the third most visited park system in the nation. They generate over \$1 billion to their local economies each year. But the State’s investment in our parks has declined precipitously. In 15 years, the parks have lost nearly one of every two (46%) of full-time employees. Law enforcement staffing is stretched thin.

Thirty-two parks have no on-site manager. Infrastructure and facility backlog is \$300 million to \$350 million to upgrade existing facilities and structures, including water treatment. The parks have 154 water treatment systems that were built over 20 years ago. A full 90 percent are in need of renovation due to current EPA standards ensuring quality drinking water. Our state parks need additional revenue streams—now. PROPOSED PARKS & RECREATION BUDGET: \$70.3 M per FY = \$140.6 M for the Biennium

State Nature Preserves - Conkle's Hollow. Johnson Woods. Blackhand Gorge. Kent Bog. These and other State Nature Preserves and are among Ohio's jewels—the finest remnants of our natural heritage. The Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves is responsible for protecting nearly 15,000 acres of unique and endangered sites as well as maintaining the Natural Heritage Database. Ohio's fragile natural treasures need continuous care to protect them from abuse, including from invasive plants. It takes funds to protect Mother Nature. Nature lovers are doing their part: Based on their past generosity, taxpayers are projected to voluntarily designate another \$1.5 each FY to the Natural Areas and Preserves income tax check-off program – a remarkable one of every \$4 appropriated for DNAP. PROPOSED DNAP BUDGET: \$4.1 million per FY = \$8.2 for the Biennium.

State Forests – Purified air. Filtered water. Stored carbon. Wildlife habitat. Backcountry recreation. These are among the priceless public benefits that Ohioans accrue from its 185,000 acres of state forestland, comprised of 20 State Forests in 21 counties. In addition, State Service Foresters work with private landowners to develop forest stewardship plans. State Forests are one of Ohio's bargain investments. PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FORESTRY: \$15.2 M per FY = \$30.4 for Biennium.

State Wildlife Areas — Hunting. Fishing. Trapping. Wildlife watching. These treasured pursuits are all part of Ohio's heritage. They all take public funds to manage, especially considering that the Ohio Division of Wildlife is responsible for managing more land than any other state division: 376,000 acres of land—including 191,000 owned by ODNR. The DOW is the most self sufficient of ODNR's land-holding divisions; 97% of its annual budget is funded by non-GRF revenue sources, including most prominently the State Wildlife Fund (\$54.9 M for FY 2010 and \$54.9 M for FY 2011 from the sale of hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses, which accounts for 85% of ODNR's total Biennial budget. PROPOSED BUDGET FOR WILDLIFE: \$68.4 for FY 2010 and \$64.7 for FY 2011 = \$133.1 for the Biennium.

State Historic Sites — The Ohio Historical Society manages several natural, geologic, and geologic wonders, including Cedar Bog, Davis Memorial, and Wahkeena nature preserves, the Glacial Grooves on Kelleys Island, and the prehistoric earthworks at Serpent Mound, Ft. Ancient, Ft. Hill, and Newark Earthworks. These natural and historic wonders need care and maintenance and deserve the State's continuing support. PROPOSED BUDGET FOR OHS: \$22.6 M for the Biennium (\$11.3 per each FY), all from the GRF.

The struggling economy may induce more Ohioans to take more “one-tank” “stay-cation” trips as they economize and stay closer to home for vacations and recreation. This is good news. In Calendar Year 2007, there were over 53.5 million visits to Ohio's state parks. Increased visits and use will place extra demands on a system of parks, nature preserves, and forests that have suffered a significant decline in state funding over the past several years.

OEC REQUEST

Support the proposed funding levels for Ohio's State Parks, State Nature Preserves, State Forests, State Wildlife Areas, and State Historic Sites as proposed by the Executive Budget and approved by the Ohio House.

5. Help Ohioans get to work – SUPPORT the Public Transportation subsidy

BACKGROUND

The majority of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) biennial funding is contained in the separate Transportation Budget Bill, Ohio House Bill 2. That separate budget—which was debated and passed earlier this year—is funded by federal sources, the state motor fuel tax, and bond revenue. Its expenditures are devoted to the state's system of highways and bridges.

ODOT also has responsibilities in the areas of rail, aviation, and public transportation. These are funded by General Revenue Funds in the Biennial Operating Budget Bill. Funding for these transportation modes account for less than 1% of ODOT's budget. That 1% of funding, however, is important to helping fund infrastructure improvements for rail and aviation and the operation of Ohio's 35 rural and 24 urban public transit systems.

THE PROPOSAL

The Biennial Operating Budget proposes \$30.1 M in GRF for the Biennium, including \$26.6 M for Public Transportation. The Ohio House increased this to \$51.1 M GRF for the Biennium, including \$39.9 M for Public Transportation.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

"To put the executive recommendations in historical perspective, the \$19.6 million recommended each fiscal year is the lowest amount of GRF allocated to the Department's public transit, rail, and aviation grant programs in recent memory." -- Ohio Legislative Service Commission Redbook, March 2009

Each weekday, nearly half a million Ohioans rely on a transit bus or (in Cleveland) transit train to commute to work or school, visit the doctor, or travel to an important destination. Public transit delivers more than just a safe, convenient, and reliable commute. It also saves commuters money; stimulates jobs and local economic growth; offers mobility choices, especially to rural residents and the elderly and handicapped; reduces highway congestion; encourages efficient land use; reduces fuel consumption; lessens America's dependence on foreign oil; and improves air quality.

Sixty-public transit agencies—35 rural and 24 urban—serve Ohio, transporting 126 million riders each year. All across America, the demand for service is growing. National transportation experts predict a doubling of public transportation ridership in 20 years. Long term, Ohio should step up its investment in fuel-saving transportation options, especially mass transit. Ohio should reverse its recent years of disinvestment and instead invest desperately needed state funding into transit.

Despite its many benefits, public transit is seriously under-funded in Ohio. The Buckeye State ranks 12th in transit ridership, but only 28th in per capita funding. Here's how we

compare in per capita state spending on transit to some competitor states: IL, \$63.29; PA, \$61.25; MI, \$20.73; OH, \$1.58. State transit funding in Ohio has fallen drastically in recent years, from \$43 million in 2000-2001 to \$16 million in 2006-2007. It will take years for local transit to recover. Meantime, Ohio can help itself by insisting that state-funded agencies coordinate transportation needs with local transit companies; encourage the “flexing” of federal funds to help local transit agencies replace aging buses and trains; and identifying dedicated funding sources for public transit.

OEC REQUEST

Help Ohioans save on transportation costs. Please support the Ohio House proposal for \$39.9 M in GRF for the Biennium for Public Transportation.

6. Help Ohio shippers move freight using less energy – SUPPORT rail infrastructure improvements

BACKGROUND

In addition to public transportation and aviation, the ODOT Operating Budget also supports improvements to rail infrastructure through the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC). ORDC’s Rail Development Grant and Loan Program (which comprises \$3.8 M of its \$5.8 M biennial budget) provides direct financial assistance in the form of grants and loans to railroads, businesses, and communities for the rehabilitation, acquisition/preservation, or construction of rail and rail-related infrastructure.

PROPOSED BUDGET

The Executive Budget proposes \$2.9 M in each Fiscal Year for \$5.8 M for the Biennium for the ORDC. The Ohio House proposed an increase to \$3.0 M in each Fiscal Year for a total of \$6.0 M for the Biennium.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to rail transportation, Ohio is a gateway to America. Ohio ranks in the top 10 for nearly every freight rail measure, including total track miles, total tons shipped, and total employment and wages. And when it comes to the environment, rail transport is on track. Railroads move more tons of freight per mile than any other mode of transportation in America. And they move it using far less energy (3 X less fuel use than trucks); producing far less pollution (of all transportation modes, rail produces only 9% of NOx, 4% of PM, and 2% of greenhouse gas emissions); and reducing far more highway congestion (a single inter-modal train can take up to 280 trucks—equivalent to 1,100 cars—off the highway).

Moving freight—and passengers—by rail saves energy, reduces air pollution, lessens America’s reliance on foreign oil, takes more trucks off the highway, and gives Americans more transportation options. Bottom line: Rail + Ohio = a win-win for shippers, travelers, and the environment. Help spur rail development in Ohio:

The energy efficiency benefits of rail transportation coupled with the Ohio Rail Development Commission’s proven track record of maximizing public investments in inter- and intra-modal infrastructure makes the ORDC a good investment choice for the economy and the environment.

OEC REQUEST

Support the development of the most energy-efficient way to move freight by land: rail. Please support the Ohio Rail Development Commission's budget at the level approved by the Ohio House, \$6 M for Biennium.

7. Shift the cost of E-Check from general taxpayers to motorists - SUPPORT the Tire Fee

BACKGROUND

E-Check is Ohio EPA's motor vehicle emissions inspection program, which operates in the Cleveland and Akron areas. This program aims to keep emission control equipment on automobiles functioning properly, thereby reducing the release of pollutants that lead to the formation of ground-level ozone. The Cleveland and Akron areas exceed the national ozone standard to such a degree that federal law requires the operation of an emission testing program.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Executive Budget proposed \$29.2 M for the Biennium (\$14.4 M and \$14.8 M, per respective FY) funded by a fee of \$2.30 per tire sold in Ohio to pay for the E-Check contract and Agency oversight. The fee would replace the GRF cash transfers that currently fund the program.

The Ohio House rejected the proposed fee on tire sales and instead appropriated \$29.2 M in GRF for the Biennium (\$14.4 M and \$14.8 M, per respective FY).

OEC PERSPECTIVE

All Ohioans benefit from cleaner air. Arguably, then, all Ohioans should pay for the E-Check program through the general tax dollars. A fairer way would be to shift this cost more directly to the polluters, themselves—in this case, Ohio motorists. While not perfect, the tire fee is a fairer way to fund the E-Check program that is reliance on the GRF. This would free up \$29.2 M in GRF that is desperately needed for other budget priorities.

OEC REQUEST

To help spread the cost to motorists and to pick up much needed GRF revenue, reject the Ohio House proposal to fund E-Check from the GRF. Instead, accept the Executive Budget proposal for the \$2.30 fee on tire sales.

8. Keep our Food Safe and livestock production facilities inspected— SUPPORT ODA's Food Safety programs

BACKGROUND

As the lead regulator of what is touted as Ohio's number one industry, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is responsible to provide food safety and consumer protection through regulatory sampling and testing of food and plant products, and inspecting food processing and storage facilities as well as meat processing facilities to combat disease and dangerous food-borne pathogens. The ODA also is responsible for protecting livestock and poultry

health through regulatory and animal disease surveillance programs and for protecting the public from insect vectors and land and water from excessive nutrients from unsafe or improper storage, handling, and land application of animal waste from livestock feeding facilities.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Executive Budget proposed and the Ohio House approved \$52.5 M for the Biennium (\$26.2 M for FY 2010 and \$26.3 M for FY 2011), including \$27.3 M in GRF for the Biennium (\$13.6 M and \$13.7 M per respective FY) for ODA's Animal and Food Safety programs. Revenue sources include federal funds, the GRF, and a combination of fees, fines, and penalties.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

Food safety—including adequate inspection and oversight of Ohio's livestock feeding facilities—is an essential price of protecting human health from the potential of food-borne disease and from insect vectors and of protecting water quality (from livestock production and associated animal waste storage, handling, and land application). The OEC supports the ODA's work, especially the work of its food safety group.

OEC REQUEST

Please support ODA's Food Safety budget, as proposed by the Executive and approved by the Ohio House.

9. Help assure more timely review of permit appeals – SUPPORT ERAC

BACKGROUND

The Environmental Review Appeals Commission (ERAC) is an appellate review board whose primary statutory duty is to hear and resolve appeals from certain legal actions taken by state and local governmental entities, including the Ohio EPA, the State Fire Marshal, the State Emergency Response Commission, the Department of Agriculture, and county and local boards of health. The majority of cases heard by ERAC relate to final actions of the Ohio EPA. The Commission's office consists of five individuals: three Commission members (appointed by the Governor), one administrative assistant, and one clerical support person. Commission members serve staggered six year terms; their salaries are fixed by the Governor. ERAC reviewed 6,803 appeal filings and issued 6,002 rulings during the last biennium.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Executive Budget proposed a continuation budget of \$974,000 for the Biennium (\$487,000 per FY), all from the GRF. The Ohio House eliminated the \$974,000 over the Biennium in GRF funding for the Commission and instead provided funding of \$1.2 M for the Biennium (\$637,000 per FY) derived from the Ohio EPA Environmental Protection Fee. The House included a directive that ERAC must hire two staff attorneys.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

Appellants of environmental orders can get their day in court. . . if they are patient enough to wait, sometimes a year. The addition of two full-time attorneys is a quite laudable and reasonable goal. On the other hand, the Ohio EPA can ill afford to lose any revenue.

OEC REQUEST

Approve the proposed increase in appropriations for the ERAC as proposed by the Ohio House, but fund the increase instead from another revenue source.

10. Invest in the wise use of Ohio's underground resources – SUPPORT the Ohio Geological Survey

BACKGROUND

The ODNR Division of Geological Survey prepares maps, reports, and analyses of Ohio's geological formations, mineral deposits, and other subsurface features for use by the public, industry, and ODNR's other divisions.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Executive Budget (and Ohio House) proposed \$5.8 M (\$3.0 M in GRF) for the Biennium, \$2.9 M (\$1.5 M in GRF) per each FY.

OEC PERSPECTIVE

This quiet division develops sophisticated geologic mapping to help guide responsible development of geologic resources (including coal, oil and gas, and industrial minerals), protect water supplies, improve the coastal resources of Lake Erie, and monitor seismic activity in Ohio. With improved support, it can play a more crucial role in helping enable Ohio to better control its carbon destiny by storing its greenhouse gas emissions underground while still developing its deep reserves of coal. But, there's a problem: Ohio's Geo Survey has a staff of only 25. Surrounding states have twice or more staff. This compromises Ohio's ability to compete for federal matching funds to responsibly develop its underground resources. Unless Ohio invests more in the Geo Survey, it may fall behind other states competing to be leaders in advanced energy technology. It is time to invest in the future. It's time to invest in the Geo Survey.

OEC REQUEST

Please support Geo Survey's budget.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for considering our perspective. We look forward to working with the Ohio Senate as it continues its deliberation of the Biennial Operating Budget.