

June 17, 2009

The Honorable Armond Budish
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Speaker Budish

We write to you today to urge you, as a part of the budget deliberations, to support the transfer of the Scenic Rivers Program to the Division of Watercraft from the Division of Natural Areas. Both divisions are within ODNR. This move saves the state General Revenue Fund \$550,000 and preserves a program that serves "boaters" and "paddlers" while creating travel and tourism jobs across Ohio.

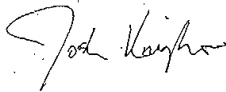
The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. In Ohio, we have protected more than 40,000 acres of the state's natural heritage. We have also transferred thousands of acres to local park districts and opened thousands more for public hunting under agreements with the Division of Wildlife. Last year, the Conservancy chaired Citizens for Clean Ohio which ran the successful statewide Issue 2 campaign. The Conservancy has 25,000 Ohio members.

Since the early 1990s, funding for the General Revenue-funded divisions of ODNR has been shrinking and, with it, their ability to safeguard and make accessible to Ohioans the state's nature preserves, parks and forests. Particularly in these difficult economic times, Ohio families want and need safe and affordable places to exercise and explore right here at home.

We urge you to contact the members of the Conference Committee and ask them to support the transfer of the State Scenic River Program to the Division of Watercraft with the modest \$5/three-year Waterway Conservation fee. Combined with the stipulation that no more than 4% of the Waterway Safety Fund will be spent each year for the Scenic River Program, it is a reasonable compromise to preserve this valuable program that attracts \$200,000 a year in federal grant funding and creates travel and tourism jobs statewide. Transferring the program saves jobs at no cost to the General Revenue Fund.

Please support the transfer of the Scenic River Program to the Division of Watercraft.

Sincerely,



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