

For Immediate Release: May 27, 2005
Contact: Jack Shaner, Ohio Environmental Council
Phone: 614-487-7506; Cell-614-446-1693; Jack@theOEC.org

Senate proposes conflicting budget priorities:

New funding for diesel clean-up, alternative fuels...but wetlands drained, recycling trashed

(Columbus, Ohio)— The Ohio Senate is poised to vote next week on a new two-year state operating budget that includes conflicting priorities for the air, land and water.

On the positive side, the Ohio Senate's budget plan maintains several pro-environmental conservation initiatives approved by the House, plus adds some new ones of its own:

- Adds \$1.5 million for clean up of local diesel school bus fleets
- Adds strengthened background checks for "factory farm" permit applicants
- Adds \$300,000 earmark for alternative fuels, including bio-diesel
- Adds \$750,000 to statewide trail fund
- Adds \$2 million for wildlife central support
- Keeps proposed Surface Water Protection Fee collected on homebuilders
- Maintains funding restoration for soil and water conservation

On the negative side, the Ohio Senate failed to strip reckless "stealth amendments" the Ohio House had added. The Ohio Senate even added a few of its own bad proposals:

- Slashes funding nearly in half for local recycling and litter prevention
- Raids \$750,000 from the Energy Efficiency Loan and Grant Fund
- Weakens environmental protections for hazardous refinery materials
- Goes along with crippled protections for wetlands, rivers and lakes
- Keeps revocation of local control of fertilizer and seed labeling and use
- Maintains prohibition on the state Consumers' Counsel establishing a telephone "hot line" for utility customer inquiries and complaints

"How can the same Senate that is standing so tall for environmental conservation, take a dive and gut scenic river protections, trash local recycling, and stomp all over consumers?" asked Jack Shaner, public affairs director for Ohio Environmental Council.

The Ohio Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to vote on the budget bill on Tuesday. The full Ohio Senate is expected to take it up on Wednesday.

--30--

NOTE: Half of Ohio's 88 counties likely will stop or cut all local recycling and litter prevention efforts under the Senate's budget proposal. For information on individual county recycling programs, see "Ohio Senate Budget Proposal" at www.theOEC.org.