

Boat Ohio Foundation aka
Boating Associations of Ohio
1269 Bassett Road – Westlake, OH 44145
440-899-5009

**What all Ohio boaters
& all concerned with river preservation should know:**

(Ref. H.B. #1) The proposed transfer by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources of the Scenic Rivers program from the Division of Natural Areas & Preserves to the Division of Watercraft should **NOT** be approved by the General Assembly:

1. This proposal assumes that, because the Scenic Rivers program deals with rivers and streams, it is a natural fit for the Division of Watercraft. It is not! This assumption is wrong for the following reasons:
 - **The Division of Watercraft** was created to administer and enforce laws regarding the identification, numbering, titling, use and operations of all watercraft **ON** Ohio's waters and inform citizens about navigation, boating safety and conservation practices **ON** the waterways.
The Scenic Rivers program is an excellent preservation program focused on the acquisition, administration and maintenance of land areas and reforestation, along with studies of stream biota, flora and fauna education.
 - **The Division of Watercraft** is a model user-pay, user-benefit program funded solely through the Waterways Safety Fund by boat registrations, boat gas tax revenue and federal boating safety grants. It receives no General Revenue Funds (GRF).
The Scenic Rivers program is currently and correctly funded by the GRF because stream and adjacent land preservation is a general benefit to all Ohioans. Transferring Scenic Rivers to the Division of Watercraft will, in effect, single out Ohio's boating families to pay for an unrelated program just to reduce the GRF budget.
 - **The Division of Watercraft** has told boating organizations that, if transferred, the Scenic Rivers program will be reconfigured into a "boating program." This will include more access sites and the development of picnic areas and more landings which boaters are expected to demand since they'll be paying for the program.
The Scenic Rivers program is not about boating and never has been. It is about preserving and restoring. In many respects these are opposites – one wanting more access and activity while the other supporting limited use to preserve natural quality.
 - **The Division of Watercraft** does not own, control or have maintenance responsibilities for any land areas, natural preserves or conservation easements. Its charge is law enforcement and safety **on** Ohio's navigable waterways.
The Scenic Rivers program currently has responsibilities for nearly 5000 acres of forested property, land buffer real estate and conservation easements. While all lands

are owned by ODNR, the administrative responsibilities for these lands are placed in its various divisions. Accordingly, the administration, acquisition and maintenance responsibilities for large Scenic Rivers land areas has never been, nor should it be, in the scope of the Division of Watercraft's administration, its officers or its operations.

- **The Division of Watercraft** is an advocate for and responsible for increasing waterways access and has an active facilities grant program from the Waterways Safety Fund to achieve an increase in access. Access is among the highest priorities in Watercraft's Strategic Plan.
The Scenic Rivers program is a successful preservation program that historically advocates restricted uses, limited access and deals with land-use conflicts on adjacent real estate to maintain or improve natural qualities in the area.

The Scenic Rivers program is a valuable program. It should properly continue to be funded by the GRF in the **Division of Natural Areas & Preserves**. If an alternative is necessary, Scenic Rivers is far more attuned to other ODNR Divisions including: **The Division of Soil & Water Conservation** which already provides conservation assistance on more than 20 million acres and 40 watershed action plans; **The Division of Forestry** which already manages 199,000 acres in 20 state forests; or **The Division of Wildlife** which already manages over three-quarters of a million acres of lands throughout the state, and is also concerned with stream biota and fish populations.

The Division of Watercraft is not a suitable or appropriate agency in which to place the administration and funding of the Scenic Rivers program.