

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JANUARY 2024



MicroPlastics Study

One of the key issues of importance to the Lake Erie Foundation, which the Ohio Marine Trades Association is actively involved in, is the effect plastics have on the Lake and water quality. Recently, research was released and reported on by local media. According to the report, Lake Erie, was revealed to have “the second-highest amount of plastic particles out of all the Great Lakes, and one of the highest concentrations of microplastics in the world,” according to the [Lake Erie Foundation](#). Microplastics are tiny particles that are nearly impossible to filter out of water and can be ingested unknowingly by both animals and humans.

You can read more about that study [here](#) and [here](#).

Salt in Lake Erie

Another Lake Erie and water quality issue that has recently gotten attention is the concentration of salt in Lake Erie. Much is contributed to the salt used to treat the roads during bad weather and it is running off into the water. You can read more about [here](#).

Scenic Rivers Legislation Passes Ohio Senate

Senators Bill Reineke and Bob Hackett are working on [Senate Bill 156](#) which would transfer the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River Program from under the ODNR’s Division of Parks and Watercraft to the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP). In testimony, the sponsors indicated: This legislation would remove the creation of a “Wild, Scenic or Recreational River Area” which is described as a 1,000-foot corridor along a designated river, due to concerns from riverfront property owners regarding the loss of private property rights.

The bill requires DNAP to perform specified duties regarding publicly owned land along a designated river, including requiring the DNAP Director to do both of the following:

- Adopt rules governing the use, visitation, and protection of scenic river lands and other specified publicly owned lands that are administered by DNAP and that are within the watersheds of wild, scenic, and recreational rivers
- Provide for the establishment of facilities and improvements within the state system of wild, scenic, and recreational rivers, scenic river lands, and other specified publicly owned lands that are necessary for their visitation, use, restoration, and protection and that do not impair their natural character.

SB 156 was passed unanimously by the Ohio Senate on January 24, 2024, and will now be considered by the Ohio House.

“Icebreaker” Put on Ice

The proposed project to install wind turbines in Lake Erie is being shelved by developers because of financial issues. This is welcome news to OMTA, the Lake Erie Foundation, and other Lake enthusiasts who have been raising concerns with this project for years. While they did have success before the Power Siting Board and the Ohio Supreme Court, it was ultimately a funding challenge that led developers to stop moving forward. While LEEDCo has called this a temporary halt, we certainly hope the project is not resurrected. OMTA will continue to watch for any efforts proponents may undertake to secure additional government money for the project.

Cincinnati Marina Supported by OMTA

The Ohio Marine Trades Association is putting our support behind a planned marina in Cincinnati on the Ohio River. Cincinnati dealers are calling this project a “game changer”. OMTA has joined the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, and other industry groups to formally express our support to the US Army Corps of Engineers. We hope to see this project come to fruition for the Southern Ohio region.

Legislation Removing the “Spotter” Requirement Introduced

Representatives Brett Hillyer and Bill Dean have introduced [House Bill 284](#) to remove the requirement that boats have a “spotter” when participating in towing water sports. Under the bill, a boat with a rearview mirror would be an acceptable alternative to a person serving as the spotter. This is a proposal that has come up for many years now, and at one point was vetoed by Governor Kasich as part of a transportation budget. The Ohio Marine Trades Association is opposed to this proposal for safety reasons. The bill also doesn’t consider risk levels on different bodies of water and at different times of the season, nor the skill level of the person being towed.

HB 284 has been assigned to the House Transportation Committee. OMTA representatives are meeting with members of the committee to express our opposition. Should the bill get hearings, OMTA will plan on testifying.

Hunting and Fishing Amendment

Should hunting and fishing be a Constitutional right in Ohio? Some Ohio lawmakers think so. Representatives Ron Ferguson and Nick Santucci have introduced [House Joint Resolution 5](#) to start that process of going to the ballot. Legislators cannot solely change the State Constitution. However, they can pass a resolution to take an issue directly to the ballot for a citizen vote. HJR 5 was considered by the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Many committee members asked for more clarity on the definition of “traditional methods” of hunting and fishing. However, the House Committee reported the measure without making significant changes.

Organ Donation Bill Passes House

Representatives Kevin Miller and Rodney Creech have introduced [House Bill 256](#) which would allow Ohioans to register to become organ donors when completing their hunting and fishing license application. During a hearing before the House Public Health Policy Committee Barry Massa, executive director of the LifeCenter Organ Donor Network, offered support from the state’s three organ procurement organizations. “While driver’s licenses in Ohio are now renewed every four or eight years, hunting and fishing permits are purchased annually, allowing us to reach more Ohioans on a more regular basis,” he said. HB 256 has been unanimously passed by the House of Representatives and will now be considered in the Senate Health Committee.