

Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

MAY 2024



Bill Would Establish River Commission

Representatives Monica Robb Blasdel and Don Jones have introduced House Bill 469 to create an Ohio Rivers Commission of Ohio. The Commission would among other things: develop a master plan for Ohio river infrastructure and transportation projects. And the Commission would be required to: Coordinate with port authorities, private port operators, metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation planning organizations, local development districts, Ohio river service entities, utility service providers, and agricultural, tourism, and recreational interests, regarding Ohio river infrastructure and transportation.

This legislation is being considered by the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee.

Great Lake Restoration Initiative – OMTA Weighs In

Representatives Tom Patton and Michael Skindell have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 14 that urges Congress to enact the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Resolutions are more symbolic, and Congress isn't beholden to act based on Ohio passing this, however they can demonstrate support for urgency to act at the federal level. HCR 14 is being considered before the House Government Oversight Committee. OMTA official lent support to the measure, as did the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and other groups at the proponent hearing on April 23, 2014. OMTA testimony said in part: We encourage all members of our Ohio state and federal delegation in supporting Ohio most valuable natural resources, Lake Erie, through of reauthorizing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024. Fishing, boating, swimming, lakefront and harbor towns all depend upon a healthy Lake Erie. The importance of restoration of our Great Lakes water cannot be underestimated. This legislation will improve our state's economy and provide for better quality of life for all Ohioans.

Ohio Tourism Day at the Statehouse

Tourism will be highlighted at the Ohio Statehouse on May 21, 2024. Vendors will take over the Statehouse lawn for a free event promoting Ohio tourism and recreation. You can learn more about the day here.

Scenic Rivers Legislation Amended

Senators Bill Reineke and Bob Hackett are working on Senate Bill 156 that 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 river front property owners regarding the loss of private property rights.

SB 156 was unanimously passed by the Ohio Senate and is supported by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

OMTA requested an amendment to SB 156 that incorporates the provision of Senate Bill 7 into SB 156. SB 7 increases Boater Safety Education Grant maximum awards from \$30K to \$60K and designates April as Powerboat Safety Month, with a focus on carbon monoxide. OMTA submitted proponent testimony on the amendment to the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the May 1, 2024 hearing. The amendment was incorporated without objection.

ODNR Rules Filed

The Department of Natural Resources has filed a large package of administrative rules. Most revisions are not substantive and being made to comply with previously passed legislation requiring agencies to reduce certain restrictive words like "shall". OMTA members are encouraged to review the following rules to see if there are

suggestions we would like to make. Limiting the horsepower of watercraft can make sense on certain lakes, but we also want to ensure maximum access to the water. A public hearing is scheduled for May 14, 2024 at 2pm. The hearing notice can be found [here](#).

1501:47-3-20 – Lake permitting more than ten horsepower – ODNR is not proposing any changes. Are there Lakes that should be added?

1501:47-5-03 – Use of outboard motors and power boats on wildlife areas – No substantive changes are being proposed. But are there changes we want to suggest?

TechCred Program Applications Open

The Office of Workforce Development announced their most recent opportunity for employers to apply for grants to cover the cost of upskilling employees with industry recognized credentials. The application period is May 1 - 31, 2024. You can apply at TechCred.Ohio.Gov.

Marine Diagnostics is one of the recognized credentials if you are interested in taking advantage of this program to help cover the cost of training.

Legislation Removing the “Spotter” Requirement Has Second Hearing

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. The Ohio Marine Trades Association is opposed to this proposal for safety reasons. The bill also doesn't take into account risk levels on different bodies of water and at different times of the season, nor skill level of the person being towed.

HB 284 has been assigned to the House Transportation Committee and a sponsoring hearing was held on February 15, 2024. A proponent hearing was held on April 23, 2024 and the lone proponent was Doug Wills a constituent of Rep. Hillyer's. If an opponent hearing is scheduled, OMTA will formally weigh in with our safety concerns.