Ohio Marine Trades Association
and Government Advantage Group

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

OCTOBER 2026



Ohio Gas Tax Temporarily Suspended

The legislature made an unexpected return to the Statehouse the week of September 28th to enact a 90-day gas tax holiday. The measure was passed as part of House Bill 519. This proposal ultimately had bipartisan support and was cheered by both major parties' gubernatorial candidates. Governor DeWine quickly signed the measure. The holiday will start on October 4th and applies to both the state's motor fuel and diesel taxes. Sellers of fuel are required under the law to pass the full benefit of the tax holiday to the customers. The legislation includes a general revenue appropriation of $725 million to hold harmless state agencies that receive gas tax revenue.

Governor DeWine Highlights H2Ohio's Work

Governor Mike DeWine recently highlighted the success of H2Ohio, the state's water quality initiative launched in 2019, during visits to Cincinnati and Cleveland Heights. The tour showcased efforts to improve water quality through lead pipe replacement and road salt runoff reduction, including the H2Ohio Chloride Reduction Program, which has awarded more than $5 million to 101 projects since 2023. In Cleveland Heights, a $64,000 H2Ohio grant funded new brine-making and storage equipment that helps communities use road salt more efficiently and reduce chloride pollution in rivers and streams. State officials emphasized that these investments are providing practical solutions to protect Ohio's waterways and improve environmental quality for communities across the state.

ODNR and ODOT Recognized with National Award for Boating Safety Leadership

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) have been honored with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' (NASBLA) Compass Award, presented during the association's recent national conference. This prestigious award recognizes one state agency each year for setting a national model of safety, innovation, and leadership in the maritime domain.

On October 19th the Ohio Department of Natural Resources will have two items of interest up in Controlling Board

DNR0106413 - The Department of Natural Resources respectfully requests Controlling Board approval to release capital funds in the amount of $733,940.40 from Fund 7035, ALI C725R3 (ST PKS RENOVATIONS/UPGRADE), which includes an agency released competitive opportunity, in FY 2027 to contract with SPGB Architects, LLC for professional services for improvements to the marina and beach facilities at Cowan Lake State Park, located in Wilmington, Ohio in Clinton County.

DNR0106414 - The Department of Natural Resources respectfully requests Controlling Board approval for an agency released competitive opportunity in the amount of $883,378.00 from Fund 7035, ALI C725R3 (ST PKS RENOVATIONS/UPGRADE) in FY 2027, which includes a release of capital funds in the amount of $633,378.00, to contract with KS Associates, Inc. to provide professional services for improvements to boating access facilities at East Harbor State Park and South Bass Island State Park in Ottawa County, Ohio.

Ribbon Cutting on Two Boating Projects

This week the Governor's office celebrated the ribbon cutting on 2 projects funded with support from the Appalachian Community Grant Program's Wonderful Waterfronts Initiative. $9 million went towards a new dock along the Ohio River in Gallipolis, intended to accommodate larger boats. Another $1.2 million went to a new dock in South Point, the southernmost community in Ohio.

Cowan Lake Project Before Controlling Board

A legislative member of Controlling Board questioned ODNR about a Cowan Lake dock issue and project. Despite criticism of the Department's process and dealings with the contracted concessionaire, and 2 votes against the measure, the funding was approved.

Lake Erie Community Grants Available for Local Restoration Efforts

Per a release from the State: The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) is now accepting applications for the Lake Erie Community Grant Program. In this round of funding, OLEC will fund mid-size environmental restoration projects requesting between $150,000 and $350,000.

Projects focus on habitat restoration, invasive species control, or reducing nonpoint source runoff. Environmental education also plays a supporting role when it ties directly to a primary restoration goal. Local governments and nonprofit organizations located in the Ohio Lake Erie Watershed qualify to apply. Applications are due December 16, 2026.

For additional resources and more information on application requirements, visit the Lake Erie Community Grant Program webpage.

ODNR Water Safety Council

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) announced that the Waterways Safety Council will hold a public virtual meeting on December 2 from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. to discuss ongoing projects and issues affecting recreational boating in Ohio. https://rebrand.ly/wscouncil
As you all may know November 3rd is Election Day in Ohio, attached is a link to a sample ballot and where your polling location is. https://www.ohiosos.gov/directories/sample-ballot

News to Peruse

Joyce, Kaptur push to expand NOAA funding to Great Lakes region
Senate passes bill to funnel billions toward Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
Dewine uses Toledo stop to make case for H2Ohios future
Metroparks conservation group buy hisoric Lake Erie island
Editorial: Maintain H2Ohio
Regional Leaders Push Stronger Great Lakes Ties
Outdoor Walley Fishing Keeps Getting Better
Great Lakes Commission Calls for Stepped up Action of Algal Blooms
Lake Erie Churns up 13 Foot Waves
Cleveland cruise season breaks record for second straight year
Fall dredging of Cleveland Harbor has begun, ensuring safe passage of vessels