



Ohio Travel
ASSOCIATION

Restore Ohio Department of Natural Resources Funding

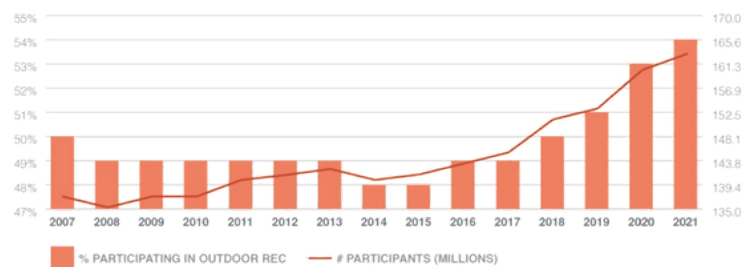
Outdoor Recreation is Important to Ohioans, Attracts Visitors to Our State and is a Key Quality of Life Factor when Relocating

- Outdoor recreation is important to Ohioans, as well as to visitors experiencing our state. It's also repeatedly identified as a top quality of life factor for relocation. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) provides access to outdoor recreation for all Ohioans and visitors.
- Outdoor recreation remains one of the top drivers for visitation. In fact, 43% of overnight visitors to Ohio in 2021 participated in outdoor activities.
- Availability of outdoor recreation opportunities ranked seventh in importance among those who moved to a new home 100 miles or more away in the past year, higher than job opportunities for partners, proximity to family, public transportation and access to education.

Outdoor Recreation Demand has Never Been Higher

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the number of new and returning outdoor participants has increased 26%.
- The growth in new participants and returning participants in 2021 was the highest ever recorded.

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS
2007 TO 2021



ODNR Operating Budget Reduced in House Bill 33

- Of the 15 ODNR operational line items, 13 were reduced or eliminated.
- Total GRF funding was reduced \$27,536,130 in FY24 and \$27,536,129 in FY25.
- The greatest reduction was in Ohio State Parks and Watercraft which was reduced \$16 million each year.

Safety and the Ability to Serve Ohioans and Visitors are at Risk

- As proposed, the budget will result in fewer law enforcement officers, fewer staff positions in all corners of the state and reduced ability of Ohio State Parks and other divisions to operate effectively and efficiently.
- Reduced law enforcement will be a result of decreased funding. In 2001 there were 271 commissioned officers. Now there are 145. This budget would result in further reduction of officers and jeopardize future hiring.
- Fewer safety and maintenance personnel will impact Ohio State Parks, nature preserves and other public spaces, as well as boating safety, including Lake Erie and inland lakes.
- New parks, including the Great Council and Jesse Owens, may not have adequate staff to open.
- Ten positions with the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves will be left unfilled, including those who work with local communities and school districts to provide science-based educational opportunities.
- Remaining reductions will impact the ability to cover contractual pay raises and the ability to adapt to the increased cost of supplies (from cleaning supplies to life jackets to maintenance supplies).

CONTACT US

Melinda Huntley | Ohio Travel Association | mhuntley@ohiotravel.org | 419.366.4391 (c)

SOURCES: Outdoor Foundation (2022) Outdoor Participation Trends Report; TourismOhio (2022) Visitation Data; ODNR (2023) ODNR Operating Budget House Bill 33 – House Sub-Bill Budgetary Concerns; DCI (2022) *Talent Wars: What People Look for in Jobs and Locations*