



ANNUAL REPORT

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2025
FISCAL YEAR

RACCOON CREEK STATE SCENIC RIVER

A MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR MARY MERTZ

As we stepped into Fiscal Year 2025, we carried with us the momentum of our 75th anniversary—a celebration not just of our past, but of the promise of what’s ahead. That milestone reminded us of the deep roots we’ve planted across Ohio and the responsibility we carry to protect and enhance the natural resources that define our state. FY25 was a year of action, innovation, and impact, and I’m proud to share how we’ve continued to grow and evolve.

We created new ways for Ohioans to experience the outdoors, like the breathtaking Falls Edge Glass Walkway at Nelson-Kennedy Ledges, while preserving the lands and waters that make those experiences possible, such as the designation of Raccoon Creek as Ohio’s 16th State Scenic River. In April, the Salt Fork Eco-Discovery Center opened as our first eco-centric center for visitors to walk through and learn about living environmentally friendly lives. In June, we opened the Clifton Gorge Exploration Center in Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve, our first center in a state-owned nature preserve that welcomes Ohioans to learn about the area’s history. Ohioans also are much more likely to see an Eagle in the wild as evidenced by a census showing a 36% increase in confirmed active nests, a testament to decades of conservation work and community support.

We didn’t just build and protect—we connected. We expanded inclusive access across our parks, launched new educational centers, and reached thousands through outreach programs, social media, and hands-on learning. Our teams worked tirelessly to plug orphan wells, reclaim mine lands, and restore habitats, all while earning national recognition for safety and excellence. Whether it was a new trail, a restored river, or a classroom full of students learning about pollinators, every effort was rooted in our mission to serve all Ohioans.



These accomplishments are the result of collaboration—between divisions, with local communities, and alongside our many partners and volunteers. They reflect the dedication of our staff and the trust Ohioans place in us to be stewards of the land, water, and wildlife that define our state. We were honored to be named a finalist for the 2025 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, and to receive national recognition for our mine safety training program.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building on this momentum. We will continue to invest in sustainable infrastructure, expand access to nature, and protect the resources that make Ohio a place we’re proud to call home. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are shaping a future where every Ohioan can explore, enjoy, and be inspired by the great outdoors.

Sincerely,

Mary Mertz
Mary Mertz, Director

Gateway to OHIO'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Accessible Columbus Blue
Jackets-themed playground



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

Accomplishments are bountiful at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources where hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and our 76 parks alone contribute \$19 billion to Ohio's economy, according to studies conducted in 2022 and 2024. Below are a few of the biggest feathers in our cap from FY25 followed by highlights of additional work from our divisions in FY25.

1

BALD EAGLE BOOM

Since 2020, there has been a 36% increase in the number of confirmed active bald eagle nests! More than 1,800 reports from the public helped complete the census. Nests were confirmed in 87 of Ohio's 88 counties with the most – 112 – reported in Ottawa County. What a huge win since just 40 years ago they were on the brink of extirpation in Ohio.

2

BACK TO LIFE

When Raccoon Creek became Ohio's 16th Scenic River, it also became the first in southeastern Ohio, the first ecologically restored stream, and the longest in the system at 111.9 miles. Designated in November, it represented 40 years of local and state efforts which succeeded in restoring a nearly life-less stream to a waterway exhibiting excellent warmwater aquatic habitat and biodiversity. This was a huge win for the public, the environment, wildlife, and our teams at the Divisions of Mineral Resources Management and Natural Areas and Preserves.

3

GROWING OUR OWN

In FY24, we embarked once again on growing our own tree seedlings due to increased demand and difficulty obtaining native varieties. In FY25, the Division of Forestry's new Buckeye State Tree Nursery completed construction of a new production barn and 10 hoop houses, providing more than an acre of dedicated growing space, and is currently growing a half million trees scheduled for distribution in spring 2026. Looking ahead, the division anticipates further expansion and output of more than one million trees annually!

4

GATEWAY TO OHIO'S GREAT OUTDOORS

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is the Gateway to Ohio's Great Outdoors, and we continue to open that gate for as many people as possible by adding inclusive features across state parks and public lands. In May, we opened an accessible Columbus Blue Jackets-themed playground specifically designed for children with disabilities at Delaware State Park. Additionally, we opened several new inclusive features in Strouds Run State Park including beach access, an ADA kayak launch, and ADA compliant restroom. Additional projects included an ADA kayak launch at Alum Creek State Park, inclusive sensory equipment at Indian Lake and Lake Loramie state parks, and a haiku trail at Van Buren State Park, and an Ohio Accessible Trails Guide.



We opened our first-ever eco discovery center at Salt Fork State Park, introducing children and visitors to sustainability education in a building modeled with sustainability in mind which includes a wall and roof partially covered with vegetation to absorb water as a waterproofing system. The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves also opened its first education center at Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve.

5

CLEAN WATER

Since its inception in 2019, Gov. Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative (as of May 2025) has led to a decrease in 41,308 pounds of Phosphorous from Ohio waterways, including Lake Erie, annually. ODNR's contributions to H2Ohio continue to be significant. In FY25, our team initiated 65 new wetland projects and completed projects which created 1,664 acres of new wetland and associated habitat. Meanwhile, the Rivers Program cleared 487,000 pounds – about the equivalent of 41 average-sized African elephants – of trash from 190 river miles.

6

REVITALIZING OHIO

FY25 was a fantastic year for making Ohio safer and investing in projects to help boost communities impacted by past mining. The Division of Oil and Gas Management plugged 412 orphan wells, a 28% increase over FY24, which itself nearly doubled the number of orphan wells plugged in FY23. The division also began using specialized drones to help identify orphan wells. Locating and plugging these inactive oil and gas wells reduces the risk of environmental contamination and surface hazards.

Meanwhile, the Division of Minerals Resource Management continues efforts to reclaim abandoned mine land (AML) properties at a higher rate. In FY25, the division completed 41 AML projects, 17 more than the previous year. The division also doubled project awards for its Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program which provides money for economic development projects in former mining communities.

COASTAL RESOURCES

The Office of Coastal Management protects and restores the resources of Ohio's Lake Erie coastline and watershed.



Boating in Vermilion



COASTAL BY THE NUMBERS



\$295K

IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE GRANTS AWARDED



\$337,965

OF SUBMERGED LANDS LEASE RENT PAYMENTS DISBURSED TO COMMUNITIES



10,000 +

PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH OLD WOMAN CREEK VISITOR CENTER AND OUTREACH EVENTS



1,300

WATER SAMPLES ANALYZED AT OLD WOMAN CREEK



242K

WATER QUALITY & WEATHER DATA POINTS COLLECTED BY SENSORS AT OLD WOMAN CREEK

In FY25, the **OFFICE OF COASTAL MANAGEMENT** and Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve achieved significant milestones in coastal restoration, education, public engagement, and resource management. We processed twice as many structure permits as in FY24, experienced a 58% increase in submerged lands lease actions, and received 31% more submerged lands lease rental payments which were disbursed to communities.

LAKE ERIE SCENIC VISTAS LAUNCHED

The Lake Erie Scenic Vistas initiative designated 72 views at 59 public access sites across seven counties along Lake Erie. These sites illustrate the fusion of the coast's natural beauty, recreational value, environmental importance, and economic impact.

OUTREACH

The Old Woman Creek visitor center welcomed over 5,300 visitors, and its education staff hosted 128 outreach events attended by more than 2,800 people. Another 2,000 were reached via 22 training events. These programs covered wetlands, watersheds, and Great Lakes coastal ecosystems, reaching teachers, volunteer naturalists, and visitors from across the region.

TRAINING

The Old Woman Creek training program hosted its eighth Clean Water Contractor Expo in collaboration with the Erie Conservation District, reaching 103 practitioners from 78 organizations. The event engages contractors and stormwater professionals in Ohio's Lake Erie Watershed, focusing on permit compliance, sediment control, and green infrastructure.

RESEARCH

The Old Woman Creek research program completed the installation of telemetry infrastructure at long-term monitoring stations so that data from all six of the reserve's water quality stations and two weather stations can now be accessed in near real time, making it easier to identify problems with sensors and increasing the availability of data for external users.

NATURAL AREAS & PRESERVES



The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves seeks to preserve Ohio's unique natural heritage by protecting and restoring our finest land and water resources for future generations. The division protects some of the best remaining examples of Ohio's rich ecological history.

NATURAL AREAS BY THE NUMBERS



1,121

ACRES OF HIGH-QUALITY HABITATS AND RARE SPECIES ADDED



2,037

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS COMPLETED



111.9

RIVER MILES ADDED TO THE OHIO SCENIC RIVERS PROGRAM



29,000

VISITORS ATTENDED 550 PROGRAMS AND EVENTS



8,616

HOURS SPENT CONTROLLING INVASIVE SPECIES ON 2,314 ACRES

The **DIVISION OF NATURAL AREAS AND PRESERVE'S** made great strides in protecting significant habitats and endangered plant and animal species by dedicating four new state nature preserves and designating the first southeastern Ohio scenic river in FY25 detailed at the beginning of this report. The division protected an additional 585 acres through direct acquisition using donations, H2Ohio Rivers Program funding, or donations from conservation organizations across the state.

PRESERVATION

In an unprecedented timeline of less than a month, the division added four new preserves in Jackson, Knox, Lucas, and Ross counties which brought the total of Ohio state nature preserves to 151. The new preserves are named Baker Swamp, Jefferson Ridge, Mohican, and Girdham Road Dunes.

The division also dedicated over 8,000 hours to controlling invasive species. A glowing example of the impact of this work is at Gott Fen State Nature Preserve where the presence of the state-endangered lady's slippers flowers has increased 2.5 times over the last few years.

OUTREACH

New facility enhancement projects included developing the Exploration Center at Clifton Gorge, installing a new viewing deck and bench seating at Old Woman Creek, and adding a boardwalk trail at Solon Woods. In December, construction began on the division's largest trail project to address areas of significant erosion along the 4-mile multipurpose path at Blackhand Gorge. The trail is due to reopen in FY26.



ENGINEERING SERVICES

An aerial photograph showing a building with a dark roof and a walkway, surrounded by dense green trees and vegetation. The scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the building and the surrounding landscape.

The Division of Engineering provides professional and technical engineering and related support required by ODNR to help plan, implement, and manage capital improvement programs, construction and renovation projects, and coordinate road and facility maintenance.

Falls Edge Glass Walkway at
Nelson-Kennedy Ledges State Park



Muskingum River Parkway Lock & Dam construction

The **DIVISION OF ENGINEERING** closed out 38 projects in FY25 for a total of \$116.9 million in improvements across the agency which represents a 5% increase of project investments over FY24. Garnering probably the most attention this year was the Falls Edge Glass Walkway project completed at Nelson-Kennedy Ledges State Park. The breathtaking 137-foot-long pedestrian bridge, the first of its kind at an Ohio state park, features structural-grade glass decking and an elegant “S” shape design that allows visitors to walk directly above Sylvan Creek’s gorge and gaze down 50 feet to the water below. The walkway is constructed with galvanized and painted steel, stainless steel cable railings, fiberglass grating, and transparent glass panels. It ends just short of Minnehaha Falls, with a section that gives visitors the sensation of floating above the waterfall itself.

Many of Engineering’s projects were focused on improving infrastructure and amenities, which are vital to the user experience. In FY25, the team completed six park restroom projects totaling nearly \$6 million and garnering much appreciation from frequent fliers at those parks. There are another 33 restroom projects in the works. Several projects also are focused on increasing accessibility to ODNR properties through the creation of ADA boat ramps, playgrounds, and more.

ENGINEERING BY THE NUMBERS



\$116.9
MILLION IN
IMPROVEMENTS



6
BOATING
ACCESS
PROJECTS



2
DAM/SPILLWAY
PROJECTS
COMPLETED



39
COMPLETED
PROJECTS



3
STATE PARK LODGE
PROJECTS

MANAGING FORESTS

Hocking State Forest

The Division of Forestry promotes and applies management for the sustainable use and protection of Ohio's private and public forest lands. It maintains 24 state forests covering over 200,000 acres. Priorities include creating recreational opportunities, improving the health of all forests, and protecting forests against wildfires, littering, and other threats.

FORESTRY BY THE NUMBERS



500,000

SEEDLINGS GROWING AT THE NEW BUCKEYE STATE TREE NURSERY



263

ACRES ACQUIRED FOR SHAWNEE STATE FOREST THROUGH THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM



12,949

ACRES OF GROUND SURVEYED FOR INVASIVE INSECTS AND DISEASES



\$562k

AWARDED TO 90 GRANT PROJECTS THROUGH THE VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM



73,356

ACRES IMPACTED BY MANAGEMENT ADVICE PROVIDED BY SERVICE FORESTERS

Overall, FY25 was remarkable for the **DIVISION OF FORESTRY** in terms of progress and collaboration that enhanced Ohio's forest resources, improved quality of life in its communities, and supported the state's \$30.4 billion forest products-based economic impact. Our new tree nursery continues to be expanded, as detailed at the beginning of this report, and we continue partnerships with educators, landowners, and the Girl Scouts of the USA, just to name a few.

URBAN FORESTRY

In FY25, our urban forestry program celebrated 45 years and Ohio's 239 Tree City USA designations, the most of any state. The program awarded \$5.5 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grant funds to communities for urban program organization and management. IRA funds also provided the division the means to increase the urban forestry team to better meet the growing needs of communities.

Because the regional urban forestry positions are unique in scope, urban forestry leadership adopted an apprenticeship-like training model so new staff work with veteran foresters until they are well prepared to best serve Ohio's communities. The Tree Commission Academy got a major update in FY25 and educated over 1,600 tree commissioners, elected officials, and public staff.

CERTIFICATION

Fernwood, Willow Grove, Sunfish Creek, Harrison, and Yellow Creek state forests all continued to be certified after an annually audit which ensures compliance with the certification standards set forth by the Forest Stewardship Council® and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®.

OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIP

A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant helped the division's service forestry team to make meaningful partnerships to reach small-acreage landowners in the Lake Erie watershed. These partnerships enhance and broaden the reach of the important work being accomplished by our Lake Erie service foresters.



GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Mapping the Lake Erie coastline in Ashtabula County aboard the RV Erigan, a research vessel



As the state's oldest natural resources agency, the Division of Geological Survey provides geologic information and services needed for responsible management of Ohio's natural resources. The data is important in part because the topography and chemistry of Ohio's rocks and soils help dictate what plants and animals live and thrive here.

GEOLOGY BY THE NUMBERS



810

SQ. MILES OF DETAILED GLACIAL GEOLOGY MAPPING COMPLETED



>3,000

FEET OF ROCK CORE SCANNED TO SUPPORT BEDROCK GEOLOGY MAPPING



17,476

PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH 105 EVENTS



3

NEW SEISMIC STATIONS ADDED TO THE OHIOSEIS NETWORK



100

SQ. MILES OF NEW SURVEY DATA ON LAKE ERIE COAST

The **OHIO GEOLOGICAL SURVEY** continued in its mission to deliver essential geologic information and services that support the responsible stewardship of Ohio's natural resources. The addition of new maps and well data is enhancing access to critical groundwater information across the state. Ongoing surficial mapping efforts are deepening our understanding of glacial deposits over bedrock, with particular focus on the buried Teays River Valley. The survey also connected with thousands of Ohioans interested in geology, the natural environment, and science education. Access to geologic data and information has further expanded through 1,600 new additions to the survey's geologic library catalog.

NEW MAPS

The survey produced new aquifer yield and hydraulic conductivity maps which depict the rates at which groundwater may be produced from, and how it moves through, Ohio's aquifers. These maps and their underlying datasets can be used to estimate the expected yields of an aquifer, model groundwater flow, predict contaminant transport, calculate irrigation rates, and for other applications important to land-use development.

INCREASED ACCESS

A newly acquired multi-sensor core logger allowed the division to photograph and create geophysical logs for thousands of feet of rock core in its rock core repository. These data will allow people from around the world to better use our rock collection to investigate Ohio's subsurface geology and will help preserve the collection.

RESEARCH

The division continued mapping segments of the Lake Erie coastline in Ashtabula County, using the RV Erigan, a research vessel equipped with high-resolution side-scan sonar, bathymetric, and sub-bottom profiler technology. This section of the Lake Erie coastline has not been mapped in over 30 years. The new data provides insight into the sediments found on the bottom of the lake, including sediment type, thickness, and movement over time. This information has been used for shoreline erosion studies, fish habitat research, and coastal engineering projects.



Core scanner

MINERAL RESOURCES

CCU Coal & Construction surface coal mine in Harrison County. (Coal Regulatory program)

The Division of Mineral Resources Management is charged with regulating coal and industrial mineral mining in Ohio while also protecting the public, miners, and the environment. The division's mission is to provide for the safe and environmentally sound development and restoration of mineral and fossil fuel extraction sites.

THE DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT had a great FY25 where they trained 11% more miners, doubled Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) project awards, and completed 17 more Abandoned Mine Land projects. A highlight of the year was another national award, this one being the Annual Mine Safety and Health Training Award (State Category for Metal/Nonmetal Surface Mining) from the Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC). The award recognized the division's 2024 Surface Mine Safety Training Manual.

ABANDONED MINE LAND PROGRAM

The Division administers both a state abandoned mine land (AML) program and a federal AML program to address the highest priority problems resulting from coal mining that occurred prior to the enactment of today's stricter reclamation requirements. The program was awarded over \$62 million through the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (\$46 million in 2024); AML Economic Revitalization (AMLER) funding (\$11 million); and the AML Fee Based Grant, or coal severance tax, (\$3.8 million). The division completed 41 projects in FY25 at \$19,891,209.

- Dangerous highwall reclaimed = 7,801 linear feet
- Mine subsidence sinkholes stabilized = 20
- Vertical openings into mines closed = 15
- Acres of spoil area reclaimed = 31
- Mine-related landslides stabilized = 4

AMLER

Since inception in 2017, the program has awarded over \$80 million in federal funds to 44 projects in 16 counties. Of those, 16 have been completed. Projects are focused on economic revitalization and community development and reuse goals in areas affected by AML. In 2024 alone, the division awarded \$21 million to 12 projects which was twice as many projects as awarded last fiscal year. The newest projects include:

- Pickleball courts (Village of Bellaire)
- Wildlife area (Ohio Division of Wildlife)
- Rail trail and visitors center (Village of Adena)
- Outdoor YMCA camp (Ohio Valley YMCA)
- Locomotive and platform upgrades (Dennison Railroad Depot)



ODNR Director Mary Mertz and Mineral Resources Management Chief Benny McCament pose for a picture at the construction kickoff for the Tecumseh Theater Renovation project in Shawnee, Ohio

MINERALS BY THE NUMBERS



2,890
ACRES OF MINE
LAND RECLAIMED



\$21M
AWARDED TO 12
AMLER PROJECTS



2,890
TOTAL COAL
AND INDUSTRIAL
MINERAL SITE
INSPECTIONS



41
ABANDONED MINE
LAND PROJECTS
COMPLETED



5,646
MINERS TRAINED IN
HEALTH & SAFETY
PROGRAMS

OIL & GAS RESOURCES

The Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management regulates Ohio's oil and natural gas industry by protecting Ohioans and the environment while ensuring that the state's natural resources are managed and developed responsibly.

Wellpad Drilling Rig

OIL & GAS BY THE NUMBERS



25k+
SITE
INSPECTIONS
COMPLETED



412
ORPHAN WELLS
PLUGGED



357
DRILLING
PERMITS
ISSUED



948
RADIOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENTS
PERFORMED



1,529
COMPLIANCE
NOTICES AND
ENFORCEMENT
ACTIONS

THE DIVISION OF OIL AND GAS RESOURCES MANAGEMENT continued its successful program to identify and plug orphan wells. The division managed the plugging of 412 orphan wells in FY25, a 28% increase over FY24, which itself nearly doubled the number of orphan wells plugged in FY23. In FY25, the division also completed more than 25,000 site inspections, and 77% more radiological assessments than the previous year. The division continued to experience an upward trend in unitization applications, processing 156 unitization applications – 43% more than the previous year. As for the oil and gas industry in Ohio, gas production dipped slightly while oil production set a new record for the second year in a row with total oil production of 34,560,271 barrels.

ORPHAN WELLS

The Orphan Well Program plugs improperly abandoned oil and natural gas wells. Proper plugging of orphan wells is necessary to protect public health and safety, conserve natural resources, and allow the efficient development of Ohio's oil and gas resources. This past year, the Division plugged 176 orphan wells – a 22% increase over the previous year.

In addition to a continual increase in the number of orphan wells plugged, the division also has stepped up how it identifies the location of these wells. In FY25, the division used statewide reporting and specialized drones to identify 1,140 new orphan wells. The division plugged 79 orphan wells at a cost of \$7,798,579.99 using a portion of the \$25 million initial grant awarded by the Department of the Interior (DOI) under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. DOI also awarded the division a Phase I Formula Grant for \$57,757,052. At the end of FY25, the division had awarded contracts totaling nearly \$2.8 million to plug 34 wells using money from the Phase I Formula Grant.

PROCESSING UNITIZATION APPLICATIONS

Ohio law, like the laws of many oil and gas producing states, provides a means to combine mineral rights from individual tracts of land to form a drilling unit to efficiently and effectively develop the oil and/or gas resources beneath those tracts. The division reviews applications for compliance with state laws and conducts a hearing on applications where any person who may have an oil and/or gas interest in the proposed unit may present oral and/or written statements. Unitization applications increased 43% in FY25, following an upward trend of applications in recent years.



STATE PARKS & WATERCRAFT

The Division of Parks and Watercraft serves as the state's primary provider of outdoor recreational experiences, with 76 state parks located in 59 counties. Our mission is to provide exceptional outdoor recreational and boating opportunities by balancing outstanding customer service, education, and protection and conservation of Ohio's state parks and waterways.



Wingfoot State Park

The **DIVISION OF PARKS AND WATERCRAFT** continued its partnership with the Ohio State Parks Foundation, and thanks to that support, customer enhancement projects were completed across the state park system. An infusion of accessible amenities were completed at different parks as detailed at the beginning of this report, while other projects were focused on providing unique experiences.

Continued improvements and efforts of division staff (in partnership with other divisions) led to Ohio State Parks being one of three finalists in the 2025 National Gold Medal Award Program for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. The Gold Medal Award winner will be announced during a conference in the fall of 2025.



BOATING SAFETY

Our Natural Resources Officers are a key component to keeping our parks and waterways safe for all visitors. While patrols and enforcement are a big part of their duties, so is preventative safety measures and education. In FY25, our NROs performed 13,418 vessel safety checks and 8,448 inspections of livery vessels.

The Ohio Boating Education Course is required for operators of vessels over 10 horsepower, and our team issued 17,364 certificates.

PARKS & WATERCRAFT BY THE NUMBERS



1+ MILLION
OVERNIGHT STAYS



17,364
OHIO BOATERS EDUCATION
CERTIFICATES



630,628
WATERCRAFT REGISTRATIONS



197,650
VISITORS PARTICIPATED IN
NATURALIST PROGRAMMING



13,418
VESSEL SAFETY CHECKS

To further enhance safe boating practices, Ohio State Parks also installed life jacket loan stations at 32 state parks across the state. Each station offers free access to life jackets in an array of sizes for guests to borrow before heading out on the water.



PRESERVATION & UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

In addition to the beautiful Falls Edge Glass Walkway (detailed under the Division of Engineering), another big project for parks was the restoration of Rokeby Lock #8 in Muskingum River State Park. Restored to full navigation promoting access from Marietta to Zanesville. The lock had been closed since 2020 as part of a series of projects the Division of Engineering has been doing along the parkway corridor, and its completion meant the river parkway was once again fully navigable from Marietta to Zanesville. The parkway, constructed in the 1800s, is the most intact system of large hand-operated locks in the United States.

SUSTAINABILITY

Incorporating more sustainability at Ohio State Parks was the impetus for the creation of our ConServe Ohio initiative in 2023. In FY25, we celebrated that 65 of our 76 parks have now met requirements for ConServe Ohio certification. There are four certification levels (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum):

- Bronze: 11 parks
- Silver: 19 parks
- Gold: 20 parks
- Platinum: 15 parks



Rokeby Lock #8 in Muskingum River State Park



Salt Fork Eco-Discovery Center

KEEP WHAT MATTERS AFLOAT



It only takes an instant for a drowning to occur. No matter your experience on the water, always wear a life jacket.

Learn more at ohiodnr.gov/boating



REAL ESTATE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

The Office of Real Estate and Land Management provides real estate services and solutions to ODNR's landholding and natural resource-based programs and canal programs (over 240,000 acres managed lands and over 610,000 acres owned lands). The office also provides real estate, environmental, land surveying, historical preservation, and recreational grant services for the general public.

REALM BY THE NUMBERS



2,025
ENVIRONMENTAL
REVIEWS
COMPLETED



\$35.5M
IN STATE FUNDS
FOR LOCAL
COMMUNITY PARKS,
RECREATION, AND
CONSERVATION
PROJECTS
DISTRIBUTED



140
REAL ESTATE
TRANSACTIONS



15
PUBLIC LAND
DONATIONS
COMPLETED



1,559+
ACRES OF PUBLIC
LANDS ADDED

The **REAL ESTATE SECTION** provides services related to departmental acquisitions, land sales, leases, and licenses, and assists with the management of Ohio's historic canal waterways and lands. FY25 marks a year of growth and unprecedented productivity for the office, with significant increases in the number of completed real estate projects, environmental reviews, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) compliance reviews and overall canal revenue collection.

For FY25, the Real Estate Section completed 165 real estate transactions including 9 acquisitions and 15 donations which added 1,559.45 acres of new public lands at a cost of \$3.6 million

PRESERVATION

In FY25 the historical resources section designed and opened the first Heritage of Freedom Trail at Alum Creek State Park. This interpretive trail features historical signage to engage visitors with Ohio's legacy of the Underground Railroad and the fight for freedom in the 1800s. Additional trails are opening at East Fork State Park and Portage Lakes State Park in early FY26, and the team hopes to install more of these features in the future.

The section also installed six new markers. Installations detailing the history of Neutrino Astronomy at Headlands Beach State Park and the Big Muskie at Jesse Owens State Park received public dedication ceremonies that were well attended. Additional markers are in production for installation in FY26 and FY27.



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

REALM's environmental services section conducted 2,025 environmental reviews on public and private projects and conducted 50 technical assistance visits at project sites, and wetland and stream restoration sites. The reviews are a top priority to ensure compliance with all environmental regulations while improving and protecting water quality, streams, wetlands and habitat for threatened plants and animals. This number marks a 26% increase in completed reviews from last year.

Environmental services also welcomed its first malacologist to the team, helping to provide mussel survey assistance and training to our landholding divisions, our Division of Engineering, and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT).

RECREATIONAL SERVICES

In FY25 the recreational services section distributed \$50,587,139 in reimbursement funds across all programs. The section contracted for 136 projects under the capital local recreation pass through program, awarded 118 projects through our competitive grant programs, and conducted 367 site inspections.

WATER RESOURCES



Inspection of Hoover Reservoir

The Division of Water Resources ensures the wise management of Ohio's water resources and infrastructure through three primary programs: Dam Safety, Floodplain Management, and Water Inventory and Planning.

WATER BY THE NUMBERS



280
DAM SAFETY
INSPECTIONS



50
DAM EMERGENCY
ACTION PLANS
APPROVED



19
DAM REPAIR
PROJECTS
APPROVED



\$488K
IN FEDERAL
GRANTS FOR
FLOODPLAIN
MANAGEMENT



2,100+
WATER
WITHDRAWAL
REPORTS
COLLECTED FOR
WITHDRAWALS
OF 100K+
GALLONS
PER DAY

The division continued to see increased demand for high-capacity water use in FY25. The division collected 2,100 water withdrawal reports for facilities withdrawing over 100K+ gallons of water per day and registered 78 new facilities withdrawing that amount.

In response to the continued increase in high-capacity water use driven by population growth, industrial expansion, and agricultural needs, in January 2025, the division launched the Water Withdrawal Facility Locator Tool online. The tool provides critical insights into high-demand areas and sustainability concerns. Users can visualize trends, query and download information, create custom maps, and submit tailored data requests through the tool.

SAFETY

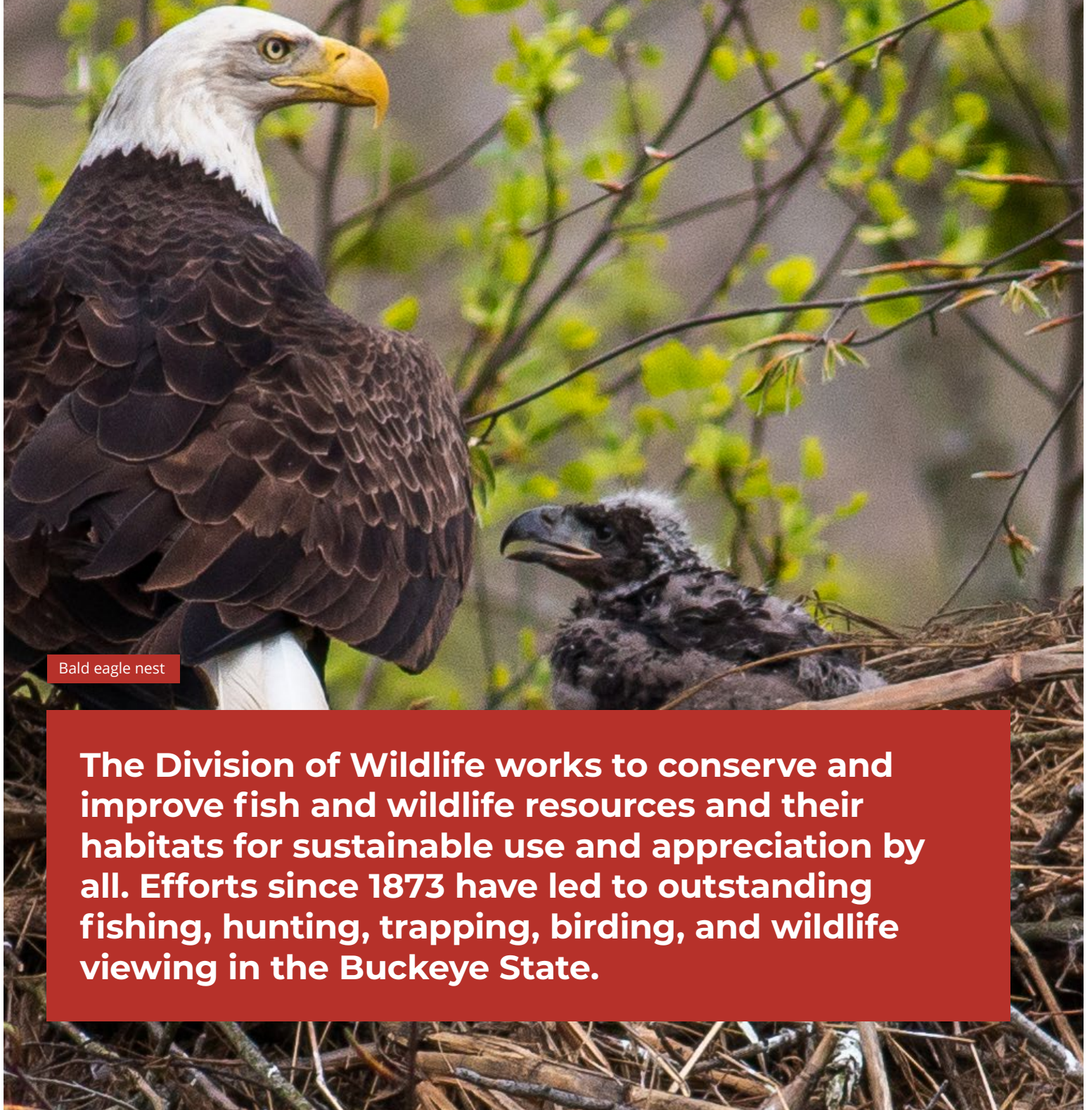
Flood and dam safety continues to be a focus for the division. In FY25, the floodplain management program completed an assessment of how all 80 state agencies and institutions manage flood risk. About 40 agencies/institutions ultimately were engaged to develop internal processes. The FEMA-required assessment provided a valuable all-encompassing look at Ohio's investment in development as it pertains to developing in the floodplain.

In FY25, several long-term deficient dams were brought into compliance with Ohio's dam safety laws. Examples include Swan Lake Dam and Southern Silica Lake Dam. While dams have multiple benefits, they also represent a risk to public safety and economic infrastructure if they are not properly maintained.

In an effort to improve inspections to identify safety risks, the Dam Safety Program began using drone technology to inspect hard-to-reach and see components of dams. These drones have given the program the ability to inspect important dam safety components that were previously unreachable.

The team also conducted a tabletop exercise for a fictional emergency response to a dam failure to be better prepared in case of a disaster.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



Bald eagle nest

The Division of Wildlife works to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. Efforts since 1873 have led to outstanding fishing, hunting, trapping, birding, and wildlife viewing in the Buckeye State.

WILDLIFE BY THE NUMBERS



964

ACTIVE BALD EAGLE
NESTS DOCUMENTED



16K

WILD TURKEYS
TAKEN DURING
SEASONS



238K

DEER CHECKED BY
HUNTERS, A NEAR
RECORD SEASON



2.46M

MILLION WALLEYES
CAUGHT IN LAKE ERIE



46M

FISH STOCKED

The excitement and numbers continue to grow for the **DIVISION OF WILDLIFE**. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the bald eagle census revealed 964 active nests in 2025, a 36% increase from the last census in 2020. The white-tailed deer hunting season resulted in the fourth-highest harvest of all time, and the deer archery harvest was the highest ever. More than 200,000 saugeye were stocked at a new location, Grand Lake St. Marys. Volunteers counted 428 sandhill cranes in 31 counties, revealing a strong breeding population. Our wildlife officers also had a record-breaking restitution order for a single white-tailed deer – an 18-point trophy buck – of \$35,071.73. That one order represented nearly 19% of the \$188,000 in restitution payments from law enforcement cases in FY25.



At the same time, correspondence with the public also continues to be strong. Nearly 200,000 Facebook followers receive division news and notes. Wild Ohio Magazine averaged 44,000 paid subscribers, a record high for the publication.

RESEARCH

A female black bear was live trapped and collared in Ashtabula County to learn more about how this species is expanding its range in Ohio. This was the first time a female black bear in Ohio has been fitted with a GPS collar. Black bears are rare in Ohio and are considered a state-endangered species. In the last few decades, black bears have been naturally recolonizing the state from healthy populations in bordering areas. Tracking the bears will help the division learn more about the actual population in Ohio.

The division also continues an in-depth study of wild turkey nesting and movement. The study began in 2023 to better understand and manage the state's turkey population. In FY25, the division have added 97 hens to the study, bringing the total number being monitored to 248 hens. The Division of Wildlife's turkey study is in collaboration with researchers conducting similar studies in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

ANNUAL DETAILED FINANCIAL REPORT



For Fiscal Year 2025

(July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025)

**The Annual Report of the Department
of Natural Resources covers the receipts
and expenditures of all moneys.**

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES – FISCAL YEAR 2025

By Appropriation Line Item

QUICK FISCAL NUMBERS



\$200M

GENERAL REVENUE (GRF)
OPERATING EXPENSES



\$765M

TOTAL OF
ALL EXPENSES



\$565M

NON-GRF
EXPENSES



\$378M

NON-GRF
REVENUE

Fund	ALI	Appropriation Line Item	Expenditures
GRF	725401	DIVISION OF WILDLIFE-OPERATING	\$1,700,000
GRF	725413	OPFC RENTAL PAYMENTS	\$77,818,679
GRF	725456	CANAL LANDS	\$118,000
GRF	725459	BUCKEYE STATE TREE NURSERY	\$1,715,346
GRF	725460	LWCF RECREATION LANDS	\$249,999
GRF	725505	HEALTHY LAKE ERIE FUND	\$911,000
GRF	725507	COAL AND MINE SAFETY PROGRAM	\$3,049,677
GRF	725520	SPECIAL PROJECTS	\$959,539
GRF	725903	NATURAL RES GEN OBLIG DEBT SRV	\$38,580,076
GRF	727321	DIVISION OF FORESTRY	\$9,561,999
GRF	729321	COMPUTER INFO SVS/COMMUNICATNS	\$525,000
GRF	730321	PARKS AND RECREATION	\$55,000,000
GRF	736321	DIVISION OF CHIEF ENGINEER	\$2,400,000
GRF	737321	DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES	\$1,925,000
GRF	738321	OFF OF REAL ESTATE & LAND MGMT	\$1,100,000
GRF	741321	DIVISION OF NATURAL AREAS	\$4,736,995
		Total GRF	\$200,351,310

Fund	ALI	Appropriation Line Item	Expenditures
1550	725601	DEPARTMENTAL PROJECTS	7,692,689.28
1570	725651	PROGRAM SUPPORT	25,969,879.78
2270	725406	PARKS PROJECTS PERSONNEL	3,170,800.39
3320	725669	FEDERAL MINE SAFETY GRANT	257,595.31
4300	725671	CANAL LANDS	687,714.21
5090	725602	STATE FOREST	10,283,534.64
5100	725631	MAINTENANCE-STATE-OWNED RESID	110,778.35
5110	725646	OHIO GEOLOGICAL MAPPING	6,359,495.38
5110	725679	GIS CENTRALIZED SERVICES	288,574.04
5120	725605	STATE PARKS OPERATIONS	43,952,672.34
5140	725606	LAKE ERIE SHORELINE	1,462,945.60
5160	725620	WATER MANAGEMENT	4,509,787.09
5180	725677	OIL & GAS WELL PLUGGING	60,051,143.27
5180	725643	OIL AND GAS PERMIT FEES	38,281,378.47
5180	C725U6	OIL AND GAS FACILITIES	751,349.29
5210	725627	OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAILS	212,110.23
5220	725656	NATURAL AREAS CHECKOFF FUNDS	1,506,029.57
5290	725639	UNRECLAIMED LANDS	4,434,577.78
5310	725648	RECLAMATION SUPPLMNTL FORFTURE	56,665.36
6150	725661	DAM SAFETY	1,417,468.30
6970	725670	SUBMERGED LANDS	1,032,217.82
7015	740401	DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVTN	92,863,944.37
7015	C725K9	WILDLIFE AREA BLDG DEV/RENOV	4,217,738.39
7026	C725D5	FOUNTAIN SQ BLDG/TELPHNE IMPRV	178,317.70
7026	C725D7	MARCS EQUIPMENT	2,972,935.03
7026	C725N7	DIS OFC RENOV DEV	374,136.92
7031	C725E1	LOCAL PARKS PROJECTS-STATEWIDE	107,677.88

Fund	ALI	Appropriation Line Item	Expenditures
7031	C725K0	STATE PARK RENOVATIONS/UPGRDNG	682,347.82
7031	C72549	ODNR FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT	841,715.00
7031	C725K0	STATE PARK RENOVATIONS/UPGRDNG	682,347.82
7035	C725A0	ST PKS CAMPGROUNDS/LODGS/CABNS	8,791,295.93
7035	C725B2	PARKS EQUIPMENT	370,812.00
7035	C725C4	MUSKINGUM RIVER LOCK & DAM	535,165.06
7035	C725E2	LOCAL PARKS PROJECTS	7,171,182.48
7035	C725E6	PROJECT PLANNING	129,081.92
7035	C725L8	STATEWIDE TRAILS PROGRAM	292,275.73
7035	C725N6	WASTEWTR & WTR SYSTMS UPGRDE	36,572.68
7035	C725R3	ST PKS RENOVATIONS/UPGRADE	459,025.57
7035	C725R4	DAM REHABILITATION-PARKS	1,144,725.75
7061	725405	CLEAN OHIO OPERATING	260,532.46
7086	725414	WATERWAYS IMPROVEMENT	6,087,688.81
7086	739401	WATERCRAFT OPERATIONS	31,324,965.85
8150	725636	COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT PRJCTS	570,267.94
8160	725649	WETLANDS HABITAT	853,287.91
8170	725655	WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CHECKOFF	2,348,983.38
8180	725629	COOPERATIVE FISHERIES RESEARCH	1,500,000.00
8190	725685	OHIO RIVER MANAGEMENT	28,580.04
3B30	725640	FEDERAL FOREST PASS-THRU	780,000.00
3B40	725641	FEDERAL FLOOD PASS-THRU	109,822.20
3B50	725645	FEDERAL ABANDONED MINE LANDS	44,890,491.36
3B60	725653	FEDERAL LAND & WATER CONSERVTN	13,884,004.37
3B70	725654	RECLAMATION-REGULATORY	1,178,061.39
3P10	725632	GEOLOGICAL SURVEY-FEDERAL	569,099.60
3P20	725642	OIL AND GAS-FEDERAL	146,067.07

Fund	ALI	Appropriation Line Item	Expenditures
3P20	725698	OIL AND GAS - FED ORPHAN PLUG	10,916,984.82
3P30	725650	REAL ESTATE & LAND MANAMNT-FED	4,638,780.05
3P40	725660	WATER-FEDERAL	935,277.70
3R50	725673	ACID MINE DRAINAGE ABATE/TRTMNT	1,226,746.78
3Z50	725657	REALM FEDERAL	1,097,817.23
4S90	725622	NATUREWORKS PERSONNEL	244,266.83
4U60	725668	SCENIC RIVERS PROTECTION	84,853.58
5CV3	C725V4	PARKS ARPA	25,019,972.37
5CV3	C725V5	TRAILS ARPA	2,223,616.08
5CV3	C725V6	WASTEWATER/WATER SYSTEMS ARPA	8,454,822.40
5HK0	725625	OHIO NATURE PRESERVES	27,467.32
5P20	725634	WILDLIFE BOATER ANGLER ADMIN	7,505,588.22
5TD0	725514	PARK MAINTENANCE	1,653,000.00
5ZT0	7256A2	STATE PARK LODGES MRR	12,000,000.00
6H20	725681	H2OHIO	46,621,351.66
81B0	725688	WILDLIFE HABITAT	784,518.15
R017	725659	PERFORMANCE CASH BOND REFUNDS	766,125.50
R043	725624	FORESTRY	1,989,530.41
		Total Non-GRF	\$565,063,276
		Total All Fund	\$765,414,586

ANNUAL REVENUE—FISCAL YEAR 2025

Fund Code	Fund Description	Revenue
1550	DEPARTMENTAL SRVCS-INTRASTATE	\$1,337,980
1570	CENTRAL SUPPORT IND CHARGEBACK	\$26,183,149
2270	PARKS CAPITAL EXPENSES	\$3,264,445
3320	MINE GRANT	\$166,322
3B30	FOREST PRODUCTS	\$255,696
3B40	FLOOD CONTROL	\$113,437
3B50	ABANDONED MINE RECLAMATION	\$42,642,347
3B60	LAND WATER CONSERVATION	\$7,237,930
3B70	REGULATORY	\$1,225,289
3IR0	LONG-TERM ABANDONED MINE RECLAMATION	\$15,133,760
3P10	GEOLOGICAL SURVEY-FEDERAL	\$576,684
3P20	OIL AND GAS-FEDERAL	\$12,518,004
3P30	REAL ESTATE/LAND MANAGEMENT	\$4,975,515
3P40	WATER-FEDERAL	\$676,970
3R50	ACID MINE DRAINAGE/ABATE/TREAT	\$210,896
3Z50	REALM FEDERAL	\$1,578,233
4300	CANAL LANDS	\$722,934
4S90	CAPITAL EXPENSES	\$251,460
4U60	SCENIC RIVERS PROTECTION	\$49,605
5090	STATE FOREST	\$12,003,464
5100	PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	\$81,335
5110	GEOLOGICAL MAPPING	\$6,174,235
5120	STATE PARK	\$45,287,160
5140	PERMIT AND LEASE	\$1,640,025
5160	WATER MANAGEMENT	\$4,756,475
5180	OIL & GAS WELL	\$73,670,837
5210	STATE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE	\$472,499
5220	NATURAL AREAS & PRESERVES	\$1,395,206

Fund Code	Fund Description	Revenue
5290	MINING REGULATION SAFETY	\$3,706,641
5310	RECLAMATION FORFEITURE	\$123,657
5EL0	WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT	\$565
5EM0	PARKS & REC LAW ENFORCEMENT	\$871
5HK0	OHIO NATURE PRESERVES	\$50,760
5LD0	OIL AND GAS LEASING COMM ADMIN	\$2,750
5P20	WILDLIFE BOATER ANGLER	\$5,435,667
5UV0	MULTI-YEAR LIFETIME LICENSE	\$4,596,758
5ZT0	STATE PARKS LODGE MRR	\$7,911,152
6150	DAM SAFETY	\$1,748,045
6970	LAKE ERIE SUBMERGED LANDS	\$609,683
6H20	H2OHIO	\$1,441,588
7015	WILDLIFE	\$76,879,914
7035	PARKS AND RECREATION IMPROVEMENT	\$1,252,332
7086	WATERWAYS SAFETY	\$35,899,467
8150	COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT	\$513,867
8160	WETLANDS HABITAT	\$438,837
8170	NONGAME & ENDANGERED WILDLIFE	\$1,945,355
8180	COOPERATIVE FISH RESEARCH UNIT	\$1,641,313
8190	OHIO RIVER MANAGEMENT	\$24,545
81B0	WILDLIFE HABITAT	\$811,477
GRF	GENERAL REVENUE	\$35,918
QG19	COURT ORDERED SETTLEMENT	\$1,123,444
R017	BOND REFUNDS	\$437,950
R043	TIMBER SALES REDISTRIBUTION	\$1,470,379
R063	WILDLIFE HOLDING FUND	\$16,071
R064	PARKS AND WATERCRAFT HOLDING	\$404,658
R074	STATE LAND ROYALTY FUND	\$58,687,797
	TOTAL	\$378,551,066



Department of Natural Resources

ANNUAL REPORT

2045 MORSE RD
COLUMBUS, OH 43229

ohiodnr.gov

2025

FISCAL YEAR

GLASS WALKWAY AT NELSON-KENNEDY LEDGES

GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE | DIRECTOR MARY MERTZ