



The Ohio Ornithological Society
PO Box 14051
Columbus, Ohio 43214

August 6, 2012

An Open Letter to Mr. David Payne, Chief of Ohio State Parks:

On behalf of our 640 members and the estimated 3.5 million people who participate in wildlife viewing in Ohio (Ohio portion of the National Study on Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, 2006), the Ohio Ornithological Society hereby opposes allowing oil and gas extraction and commercial logging in our Ohio State Parks.

Ohio sets aside less than three percent of its land for State Parks, ranking 48th among all states in this regard, yet the annual reports prepared by the Chief of the Ohio State Parks have consistently indicated increased park usage (54,339,406 visits in 2010) and a high level of visitor satisfaction (92% in 2010). In the 2010 report, the State Parks identified their purpose as "...providing special places where generations of Ohioans and our guests from around the world can see Ohio's scenic beauty, and experience the simple pleasures of wholesome outdoor recreation."

Commercial logging and oil and gas extraction simply do not fit with this purpose. Ohioans count on the State Parks to be "special places" protected for "generations" to enjoy "Ohio's scenic beauty" and the "simple pleasures of wholesome outdoor recreation". Ohio birds and wildlife likewise depend on these islands of protected habitat to insure their continuation as a part of the ecological network of Ohio.

While commercial logging and oil and gas extraction all too often provide profits for a single generation, studies indicate the economic benefit of providing viewing opportunities for birds and wildlife is a trend that spans multiple generations (Socio-economic Impacts of Birdwatching along Lake Erie: A Coastal Ohio Analysis, Xie, Bowling Green State University).

The opportunity exists for these commercial activities in much of the 97% of Ohio that is not set-aside as State Park land. The opportunities found in our parks are simply not available to many Ohioans outside of the parks. The impact of these proposed activities in terms of noise, habitat destruction, lost scenery, and the potential for contamination is simply not congruent with the purpose of the State Parks.

No one wants to camp, hike, play, or view wildlife beside a gas pump! These activities are not even possible in most commercial logging areas. Our parks boast a 92% approval rating from the citizens who visit them – would the introduction of these activities result in the maintenance of this high accomplishment?

These activities, even when mitigated, result in significant degradation to the specific types of habitat have already been most reduced by human influence.

The Ohio Ornithological Society therefore strongly opposes all proposals that would introduce these industrial activities into our State Parks. We do so as strong supporters of the State Parks and with the hope that our parks remain the treasures that they are today.

Ohio Ornithological Society
"Ohio's Birding Network"
www.ohiobirds.org