COMMENTS REGARDING THE BIG AND LITTLE DARBY CREEKS
TO BE CLASSIFIED AS
OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATERS (ONRW)
— Early Stakeholder Outreach —
OAC 3745-1-05

Ohio Environmental Council

The Nature Conservancy

Darby Creek Association

CENTER for BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

OSRA Ohio Scenic Rivers Association

AMERICAN RIVERS
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No fracking on public lands

November 17, 2023

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Mark Johnson, Chief
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To Ohio EPA Director Anne M. Vogel, Mark Johnson, Chief of the Division of Surface Water, and the Rules Coordinator for the Division of Surface Water:

We appreciate the Ohio EPA's decision to consider designating the Big and Little Darby Creeks as Ohio's first Outstanding National Resource Waters.

The comments contained herein support why Outstanding National Resource Waters is the appropriate antidegradation categorization for both Big and Little Darby Creeks. During the 2023 Triennial Review conducted under OAC § 3475-1-05(E)(2), the Ohio Environmental Council, Darby Creek Association, Center for Biological Diversity, American Rivers, Forest Keeper, Ohio Scenic Rivers Association, Sierra Club Ohio, and The Nature Conservancy submitted comprehensive comments regarding the importance of this designation (those comments are attached as Appendix 1). The signatory organizations recognize the significant step Ohio EPA is taking toward appropriately categorizing these nationally significant waterways, and we look forward to engaging with the agency throughout the rulemaking process.

The Big and Little Darby Creeks form one of the most important ecological and recreational watersheds in Ohio, the Midwest, and the United States as a whole. Because of their outstanding aquatic biodiversity, the state has classified both creeks as State Scenic Rivers, Exceptional Warmwater Habitats, and Outstanding State Waters. Despite these protections and designations, the creeks are currently facing an uncertain future. With increasing urban and suburban development in the area, many of the watershed's protected mussel species are in decline, and in some cases species are in imminent danger of disappearing.

Without stronger protections, including appropriate antidegradation tier categorization as ONRWs, we will lose one of the most biologically significant stream systems in the Midwest and

the nation. The Big and Little Darby Creeks' current Outstanding State Waters antidegradation categorization does not appropriately reflect or protect their national significance. Both creeks are textbook examples of the Clean Water Act's most protective designation—they are Outstanding National Resource Waters.

Since our comment submission of January 2023 through the Triennial Review, a number of key developments have occurred regarding the Big and Little Darby Creeks:

- Two more mussel species recorded in Big Darby Creek were listed as federally threatened;
- The Scioto madtom was declared extinct;
- Federally listed mussel species were discovered in Big Darby Creek upstream of Plain City by Ohio State University researchers;
- The Eastern hellbender is once again under review as a candidate endangered species; and
- Local communities are proposing regionalized wastewater systems with more than $170 million in WPCLF loan applications, all designed to avoid discharging into the Creeks.

We further discuss these relevant developments below, in the body of our comment.

In addition, we have identified additional pieces of evidence and research pertinent to the Ohio EPA's decision to classify Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters. We have attached those files as additional appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Triennial Review Comments regarding ONRW for Big and Little Darby Creeks (Appendix Pages 1 - 55)
- Appendix 2 - Evidence Towards an Outstanding National Resource Water (Appendix Pages 56 - 63)
- Appendix 3 - Final Comments on the Ohio EPA Draft 2023 Program Management Plan (Appendix Pages 64 - 108)
- Appendix 4 - Comments regarding Draft General Permit - OHC000006. Draft general permit for stormwater, Big Darby Creek Watershed (Appendix Pages 109 - 167)
- Appendix 5 - Project Priority and Intended Projects List for PY 2023 12/15/2022 DRAFT (Ohio EPA) - Partially or fully within Big Darby Creek watershed (Appendix Pages 168 - 169)
- Appendix 6 - Ecological Risk Assessment of the Proposed Expanded Effluent Discharge from the Plain City WWTP (Appendix Pages 170 - 207)

Finally, given the significance of designating these creeks as Ohio's first Outstanding National Resource Waters, we encourage the Ohio EPA to host a stakeholder meeting where all interested parties can come together and collectively understand what the designation does—and does not do—regarding regulatory impacts.

If your team has any additional questions regarding the need to designate the Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters, our team would welcome the opportunity to meet with them.

Respectfully submitted,

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INTRODUCTION

The future generations of Ohio, the Midwest, and the United States deserve to experience the joys of Big and Little Darby Creeks. Establishing the watershed as Ohio's first Outstanding National Resource Water sets us on the path to guarantee protections for decades and centuries to come. The creeks bring joy; they provide peace and solitude. The creeks teach; the creeks benefit young and old. They represent the best of the diverse ecosystems living across our state.

Simply put, the Big Darby and Little Darby Creek watershed is one of the most biologically diverse in Ohio, the Midwest, and the Nation. The watershed has had more than 100 species of fish and 45 mussel species recorded, including eight federally listed and forty state listed aquatic species. It is one of the most ecologically significant watersheds in the Midwest—with unique geology, high stream gradients, relatively intact landscapes, and minimal industrial development. Both creeks are textbook examples of the Clean Water Act's most protective designation, as they are the highest scoring streams in terms of fish diversity in Ohio.[1] Simply put, they are Outstanding National Resource Waters. It is long past time for the Ohio EPA to provide them both with the protection due to such waters.

Without further and appropriate protection, existing trends suggest that the water quality of the Big and Little Darby Creeks is at great risk for further degradation. Without the Outstanding National Resource Waters designation, we are likely to lose key components of one of the most biodiverse stream systems in the Midwest and nation. We must maintain them as the rare, nationally significant gems they are.

[1]This conclusion comes from Ohio EPA's own data. *Evidence Towards an Outstanding National Resource Water Antidegradation Tier for Big and Little Darby Creeks in Ohio: Avoiding Ecological Mediocrity in Ohio's Best Streams and Rivers",* Midwest Biodiversity Institute, (October 20, 2022).

Therefore, the Ohio EPA must move forward with its consideration to categorize the Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters. If the Ohio EPA Director takes this action, it will be one key step of many needed to preserve this ecosystem for future generations.

The highly diverse aquatic fauna of the Creeks is present due to the fortuitous combination of an extensive conservation effort,[2] limited dense development and wastewater, few dams, favorable geology, good connectivity to the historically diverse Scioto River and Ohio River systems, and diverse surrounding upland ecosystems with protected riparian land. In addition, the streams flow mostly through agricultural land, land thus far largely spared from extensive industrial and residential development. Despite these advantages, the watershed is showing signs of stress, and massive proposals for new development threaten to forever alter the landscape and instream habitat that supports the Big and Little Darby Creeks' nationally significant biodiversity and recreational values. Now is the time to act, designating the Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

Central Ohio is predicted to expand significantly over the next few decades, with incoming business investments and a shifting residential landscape. Ohioans are excited to have more people joining our communities. As we build new places to live, work, and play, we must be thoughtful. We must consider the long-term; the choices we make now have far reaching consequences into the future. We envision a future where the Big and Little Darby Creeks are a pristine ecosystem within the greater context of Central Ohio's urban landscape, and this designation will help make that future a reality.

[2] These conservation efforts are driven by many different entities, including Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals from across the region.

To borrow a phrase from the Ohio EPA, the Darby is at a crossroads.[3] Without stronger protections, including appropriate antidegradation tier categorization, we will lose one of the most biologically significant stream systems in the Midwest and the nation. The current designation, as Outstanding State Waters, does not appropriately reflect or protect their national significance. Time is of the essence; we urge the Ohio EPA Director to act swiftly, amending OAC 3745-1-05 to accurately reflect Big and Little Darby Creeks as the Outstanding National Resource Waters they already are.

SUMMARY OF TRIENNIAL REVIEW COMMENTS

During January 2023, many of the co-signed parties submitted their original comments regarding the Big and Little Darby Creeks, herein incorporated as Appendix 1. While originally communicated during the Ohio EPA's Triennial Review, all of the information provided to the agency remains profoundly relevant to its Early Stakeholder Outreach process.

First, we established the legal requirements for Outstanding National Resource Waters.[4] They have national ecological or recreational significance, and as OAC 3745-1-05(A)(10)(d) further states, national ecological significance "may include providing habitat for populations of federal endangered or threatened species or displaying some unique combination of biological characteristics in addition to those factors listed in [the definition of 'superior high quality waters' found at OAC 3745-1-05(A)(10)(b)]." The Big and Little Darby Creeks overwhelmingly meet this definition, meaning they are currently improperly designated as "Outstanding State Waters."

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[3] See *Darby at the Crossroads: A Summary of Ohio EPA's Work and Collaboration to Protect and Restore an Important Water Resource,* The Ohio EPA, (June 30, 2004), available at: https://epa.ohio.gov/static/Portals/35/documents/Darby%20Crossroads_june04.pdf.

[4] Appendix 1 at 3.

Then, we outline how the Big and Little Darby Creeks overwhelmingly meet the legal standard, surpassing them all. The evidence indicates both Creeks should have been classified as Outstanding National Resource Waters decades ago; now is the time to take action, providing the necessary protections moving forward.

A. The Creeks have national ecological significance.

G. Thomas Watters, well-known malacologist, wrote that the Darby, "for its size, has the greatest diversity of freshwater mussels in North America, perhaps on Earth."[5] It is through this framing we contextualize the biodiversity of the Creeks' ecosystem. When the National Park Service recognized both the Creeks as National Scenic Rivers, they based their decision on "their remarkable aquatic diversity and their importance as refugia for rare and endangered species, specifically the watersheds' remarkable and federally endangered mussel fauna."[6]

B. The Creeks provide habitat for populations of federal endangered and threatened species.

The watershed of Big and Little Darby Creeks provides critical habitat for multiple federally threatened and endangered species, a fact that on its own qualifies the creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters.[7] Each federally listed species has declined in recent decades within the watershed, showing that designation of the creeks as Outstanding State Waters is insufficient to meet the state's antidegradation responsibilities.[8]

C. The Creeks display a "unique combination of biological characteristics in addition to those listed under OAC § 3475-1-05(A)(10)(b).

An unprecedented number of Ohio endangered, threatened, and species of concern—as well as declining species—find their home in the watershed of Big and Little Darby Creeks. The

[5] *Id.* at 6, citing G.T. Watters, *Freshwater Mussel Survey of Big Darby Creek,* The Ohio State University, at 1 (1996).
[6] *Id.*, citing *Big Darby and Little Darby Creeks, Ohio*, The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, available at: https://www.rivers.gov/rivers/big-darby.php.
[7] *Id.* at 7.
[8] *Id.* at 8.

Creeks demonstrate the highest level of biotic integrity in the state, according to Ohio EPA's own monitoring data.[9] Using the "Index of Biotic Integrity" (IBI) scoring system, the mainstem of the Little Darby Creek, followed by that of Big Darby Creek, had the highest recorded mean IBI of all Ohio streams. A refined IBI scoring system—the CIBI—helps separate index scores at the highest levels of biological condition, and this measure finds Big and Little Darby Creeks to have the highest CIBI scores and the only mean scores greater than 90.[10]

More specifically, the Creeks exemplify "biological significance" for Ohio, serving as a home to forty-one species listed by the state, including:

- Fifteen fish species;
- Twenty-five mussel species; and
- One amphibian species

Of the eleven species of mussels listed as federally endangered or threatened in Ohio, seven have been recorded in Big and Little Darby Creeks. Two of these, northern riffleshell and clubshell, were recorded as widely distributed and sometimes abundant in these streams' mainstem in the recent past. Both species likely have their last Ohio populations in the Creeks. These two species were the subject of a major augmentation project in Big Darby Creek between 2008 and 2015, led by The Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity, the Columbus Zoo, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Seven federally listed mussel species have been recorded in Big and Little Darby Creeks, as follows:

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[9] *Id*. at 9, citing *Evidence Toward an Outstanding National Resource Water Antidegradation Tier for Big and Little Darby Creeks in Ohio: Avoiding Ecological Mediocrity in Ohio's Best Streams and Rivers, Midwest Biodiversity Fact Sheet,* Midwest Biodiversity Institute, (October 10, 2022).
[10] *Id.* at 9, citing Rankin, E. T., *The calibration of the Ohio IBI and ICI using continuous scoring methods*, ILGARD, Voinovich School, Bldg 21, The Ridges, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701 (2010).

Federally Endangered

- Rayed bean (*Paetulunio fabalis/Villosa fabalis*)
- Northern riffleshell (*Epioblasma rangiana*)
- Clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*)
- Snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*)

Federally Threatened

- Rabbitsfoot (*Theliderma cylindrica/Quadrula cylindrica*)
- Longsolid (*Fusconaia subrotunda*)
- Round hickorynut (*Obovaria subrotunda*)

Occurrences of these species are recorded in the databases of The Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity, Ohio EPA, ODNR Division of Wildlife, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

D. The Creeks possess unique geological features, contributing to their national ecological significance and unique combination of biological characteristics.

The Creeks and their tributaries straddle several geobiological regions, resulting in an unusually rich cumulative aquatic biodiversity in the watershed. Overall, the watershed includes glaciated land in the North Central Till Plain of Central Ohio, but the watershed is not uniformly flat. In its headwaters, the Darby streams flow out of the Bellefontaine Escarpment, a region of high elevation described as an "erosional remnant of Devonian limestone, dolomite, and shale."[11]

[11] *Id.* at 15, citing *Shaded Elevation Map of Ohio*, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological Survey, at 2.

In addition, portions of the watershed are situated in the easternmost extension of the "Prairie Peninsula."[12]

The fact that Big Darby is situated in the middle section of the Scioto River drainage—as opposed to being further upstream—has helped in the aquatic species recovery of the lower Scioto River and tributaries and made the watershed an important habitat for a number of large river fish. Examples include many of the buffalo fish, carpsucker, and redhorse suckers, as well as spotted bass, sauger, freshwater drum, and slenderhead and dusky darters. Many of these species are rarely or never recorded for streams that are situated farther from the Ohio River or lower Scioto River.

E. The Creeks have national recreational significance.

The National Park Service has recognized both Big Darby Creek and Little Darby Creeks as refuges for rare and endangered species. Through its designation as a State Scenic River, Ohio has recognized how Big Darby Creek is "highly valued for [its] aesthetic and recreational enjoyment."[13] In that same report in 2002, Ohio EPA remarked that "this water is clearly a SRW at minimum and should be considered for Outstanding National Resource Water."[14] Importantly, the 1993 classification as a National Scenic River occurred primarily for its ecological significance and recreational significance. The relevant creek segments assessed by the National Parks Service were found to be "free-flowing" and "outstanding resources," meeting the legal criteria for a Scenic River.[15]

Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park features over 7,000 acres of forests, wetlands, and prairies, including 1,600 acres of restored wetlands and prairies, and a pasture for bison

[12] *Id.* at 15, citing Applegate, et al, *Conservation and Restoration Plan for Ohio's Native Glacial Lake and Wetland Fishes*, 2019.
[13] *Id.* at 19, citing Appendix 1: Ohio Streams and Rivers Antidegradation Tier Justification, SRW & SHQW, The Ohio EPA, (2002), at 18, available at: https://epa.ohio.gov/static/Portals/35/rules/antideg_justif_appendix1.pdf
[14] *Id*.
[15] *Id.* at 19.

reintroduced into the region. Prairie Oaks Metro Park includes about 2300 acres along Big Darby Creek. In 2021 and 2022, over 1.8 million and 1.6 million people, respectively, visited Battelle Darby Creek and Prairie Oaks Metro Parks, the two parks adjacent to the Creeks. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources also maintains nearly 1,600 acres of fee simple and conservation easement acres in the watershed, The Appalachian Ohio Alliance owns over 1100 acres in the watershed, and the Nature Conservancy maintains 1,200 acres of watershed conservation land, with over 1,000 acres in the headwaters. In total, about 14,000 acres of the watershed are under public or environmental NGO conservation management.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE ONRW DESIGNATION

People from Ohio and beyond have shown immense public support for designating Big and Little Darby Creeks correctly, as Outstanding National Resource Waters. During the initial comment period for the Triennial Review, thousands of individuals submitted comments. During the present Early Stakeholder Outreach for OAC 3745-1-05, our organizations' records indicate hundreds of individuals, if not thousands, have submitted letters in support as of the submission of this comment.

Public support also comes from the organizations signed onto this comment. Each organization represents different constituencies and perspectives. For example, the OEC has over 3,000 members from all corners of Ohio. The Center for Biological Diversity has 1.7 million members, online activists, and supporters from across the country, and 5,038 members in Ohio. Darby Creek Association, focused specifically on the Creeks themselves from a local perspective, has hundreds of active members and supporters.

Finally, we know a number of elected officials across Central Ohio and in the watershed who have communicated their support to the Ohio EPA for the designation. These elected officials are familiar with the watershed and its issues and represent communities whose residents benefit from the Creeks in myriad ways, all while the region continues to grow. These elected officials understand the importance of sustaining ecosystems as a fundamental piece in sustainable growth for future generations.

ADDITIONAL ARGUMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Since we submitted our comments during the Triennial Review, we have identified a few key developments that further support the need for Outstanding National Resource Water designation for the two Creeks. Specifically:

- Two more mussel species were listed as federally threatened;
- the Scioto madtom was declared extinct by the federal government;
- Listed mussel species were discovered in Big Darby upstream of Plain City by Ohio State University researchers;
- The Eastern hellbender is once again under review as a candidate endangered species;
- Big Darby and Little Darby Creek are comparable or more ecologically significant than Outstanding National Resource Waters in nearby states; and
- Local communities are proposing regionalized wastewater systems with more than $170 million in WPCLF loan applications, all designed to avoid discharging into the Creeks.

The evidence for each subject is further outlined below.

A. Two more mussel species were listed as federally threatened.

Longsolid and round hickorynut, two mussel species found in the Big Darby watershed, are now federally listed under the Endangered Species Act. They were officially listed as threatened on March 9, 2023.[16] Thus, seven federally listed mussel species have been recorded in the watershed: Rayed bean, northern riffleshell, clubshell, and snuffbox are listed as endangered, and rabbitsfoot, longsolid, and round hickorynut are listed as threatened.

B. The Scioto madtom was declared extinct.

The Scioto madtom was declared extinct by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.[17] According to the declaration, "the Scioto madtom was a small, nocturnal species of catfish in the family Ictaluridae. The Scioto madtom has been found only in a small section of Big Darby Creek, a major tributary to the Scioto River, and was believed to be endemic to the Scioto River basin in central Ohio."[18]

C. Listed mussel species were discovered in Big Darby by Ohio State University researchers.

An OSU mussel class surveyed Big Darby Creek RM 54.1 at US 42 / State Route 736 on September 18 and September 28, 2023. The survey was led by Nate Shoobs (Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity, Curator of Mollusks), among others. In the survey, they identified two mussel species (live clubshell and rayed bean) were identified.[19]

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[16] *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Threatened Species Status With Section 4(d) Rule for Longsolid and Round Hickorynut and Designation of Critical Habitat*, 88 FR 14794, Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior, (March 9, 2023), available at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/09/2023-03998/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-threatened-species-status-with-section-4d-rule-for

[17] *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removal of 21 Species From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife*, 88 FR 71644, Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior, October 17, 2022), available at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/17/2023-22377/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-removal-of-21-species-from-the-list-of-endangered-and

[18] *Id.*

[19] Information provided via personal communication with Nate Shoobs. It is our understanding that further documentation regarding the study will be available in the future.

D. The Eastern hellbender is once again under review as a candidate endangered species.

The Eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*) is under review for federal listing.[20] Hellbenders were previously recorded in the 20th century in lower Big Darby Creek and are documented and preserved in the Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity collection. Hellbenders were reintroduced to Big Darby Creek in 2017 in Battelle Darby Metro Park, as detailed by Franklin County Metro Parks.[21]

E. Big Darby and Little Darby Creek are comparable or more ecologically significant than Outstanding National Resource Waters in nearby states.

Kentucky, for example, has eight creeks classified as Outstanding National Resource Waters. One such Outstanding National Resource Water, the Big South Fork Cumberland River, approaches the biodiversity of the Big and Little Darby Creeks. At 132 miles long, it has 92 species of fish, 42 mussel species, and three federally protected fish in the ONRW stretch of the stream. Five of the mussel species are federally listed. It is also highly valued for recreation, like the Big Darby watershed.

Other Kentucky Outstanding National Resource Waters include Rock Creek of Big South Fork, Marsh Creek, Red River, Rockcastle River, War Fork of Station Camp Creek, and the underground river system of Mammoth Cave. Of the Outstanding National Resource Waters that are creeks (excluding the underground river system), At approximately 1,123 square miles, Big South Fork's watershed is twice the size of Big Darby's, and is comparable in species richness, and it has fewer fish and mussel species than Big and Little Darby Creeks.[22]

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[20] As detailed by Center for Biological Diversity: https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/amphibians/hellbender/pdfs/2023-09-06-Hellbender-ORDER-Granting-Summary-Judgment.pdf

[21] To read about their reintroduction, visit the Franklin County Metro Parks website: https://www.metroparks.net/blog/hellbenders-make-splash-return-big-darby-creek/

[22] Another example is Virginia. That state lists 30 Tier 3 ONRW streams.

F. Local communities are proposing regionalized wastewater systems with more than $170 million in WPCLF *loan applications, all designed to avoid discharging into the Creeks.*

Governmental entities in Madison and Logan Counties have proposed over $170 million in loan applications for wastewater system upgrades, and in those applications, they have indicated they will avoid discharging into the Big Darby watershed. This decision potentially represents recognition by these governments of the importance of the ecosystems in the watershed. More importantly, designating Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters would not impact the creation of those facilities given their discharges being in different watersheds. Conversely, the expansion of these wastewater systems indicates significant development will impact the region in the long-term. Providing Big and Little Darby Creeks the appropriate protections now helps ensure all planning and development appropriately accounts for the watersheds and their water quality needs.

CONCLUSION

The Ohio EPA has an obligation, under the Clean Water Act, "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." 33 USC § 1251(a). The Big and Little Darby Creeks have national ecological significance and national recreational significance. If the agency fails to designate Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters, it fundamentally misses the mark in its core mission under federal law. The Outstanding National Resource Water designation was designed precisely for waters like these two creeks. Neighboring states have taken the necessary steps to protect their best streams and rivers; it is well past time that Ohio took similar action, and Big and Little Darby Creek represent the best of what Ohio, the Midwest, and the United States has to offer.

By classifying these two creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters, Ohio EPA will play a role in facilitating how Central Ohio should develop in its western regions. Development will happen, but it must happen sustainably—and shown to be done in a scientifically proven, adequate way—in relationship with the surrounding environment and ecosystems. The ONRW designation will provide additional protections necessary to help address that goal.

Big and Little Darby Creeks have long been recognized by Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for outstanding qualities. Big and Little Darby Creeks have long served as reference sites to determine Ohio's Exceptional Warmwater Habitat use designation. They have been designated a State Scenic River in large part because of known species richness and diversity including at least 40 species (15 fish, 25 mussels) that are state-and federal-listed. For antidegradation, they have long been considered Outstanding State Waters because of the listed species richness. Big Darby Creek served as a refuge and major resource for the recovery of many aquatic species when the Scioto River and its other tributaries were of much lower quality when monitored in the 1970s and 1980s. Species migrated from Big Darby through the recent past when those species began to be regularly recorded in those other streams.

We close by reiterating our request outlined at the beginning of this comment. Given the significance of designating these creeks as Ohio's first Outstanding National Resource Waters, we encourage the Ohio EPA to host a stakeholder meeting where all interested parties can come together and collectively understand what the designation does—and does not do—regarding regulatory impacts. We also request that comments of all parties be made available as soon as possible following their receipt by the Ohio EPA.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to further conversations around the designation of Big and Little Darby Creeks as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

Respectfully submitted,

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