



## 2018 Gubernatorial Candidate Questionnaire

In addition to strong support within the hunting community for the Second Amendment, Ohio sportsmen and women have other serious concerns about the quality of hunting, fishing and trapping in Ohio. These invaluable parts of our heritage are increasingly threatened by a fiscal crisis facing the agency, and the direction of that agency that has exacerbated relations with the paying constituency – Ohio's hunters, anglers and trappers. Ohio needs a governor and an administration that values the partnership of sportsmen and women, and wants to work with us to address this crisis, and restore Ohio's natural resources to the quality people deserve. To help ensure this outcome, the Sportsmen's Alliance formed the Protect What's Right Campaign, which includes the Buckeye Firearms Association, Central Ohio Chapter of Safari Club International, Ducks Unlimited, Greene County Fish and Game Association, Ohio Conservation Federation, Ohio State Trappers Association, Pheasants Forever Chapters, Columbiana Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and Hocking County Fish and Game. The questionnaire should be sent to Luke Houghton, associate director of state services, Sportsmen's Alliance, 801 Kingsmill Parkway, Columbus, Ohio 43229. The questionnaire can also be emailed to [lhoughton@sportsmensalliance.org](mailto:lhoughton@sportsmensalliance.org).

1. The Ohio Division of Wildlife is facing a funding shortfall of \$185 million over the next ten years. Ohio's sportsmen's organizations overwhelmingly support modest increases in resident hunting, fishing and trapping fees to offset this crisis threatening hunting, fishing, trapping and quality habitat. Will you work with sportsmen's groups to create a plan that will be included in your first biennial budget to fully address the financial shortfalls of the Ohio Division of Wildlife?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:

Yes

No

Yes. I understand that without sufficient funding through this mechanism, the current shortfalls will mean that Ohio sportsmen will lose their quality habitat. This will directly threaten and undermine hunting, fishing, and trapping in Ohio. Without access to quality public lands and preservation of appropriate habitat, Ohio sportsmen will be left to beg for access to private lands which typically have exclusivity policies. They also will not be able to ensure that needed habitat is preserved and maintained for the sportsmen community that has been such a key part of the lifestyle and economy of this state. I will be a champion for this community and will work to restore the kind of public access that will make Ohio a premier destination for sportsmen from here and elsewhere. I am proud of our traditions and will work to maintain them in close coordination and consultation with the sportsmen community here. We will deal with these issues together, and I will fight with the legislature as needed to achieve these goals.

2. Because Ohio's hunting, fishing and trapping fees have not increased since 2004, the Ohio Division of Wildlife has a \$129 million backlog of capital projects that include \$50 million in dam repairs, \$25.5 million in shooting range development needs, and \$32.4 million in boat ramp and lake access. Will you agree to create a plan to utilize capital bill bond dollars to address this backlog, and work to see the plan enacted in your first term as Governor?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:

Yes

No

Yes. As Ohio Treasurer, I was directly engaged with strategizing and executing on Ohio's funding needs through bonded debt. For longer-term needs, bond moneys are an appropriate and feasible funding mechanism that match well with longer-range planning and support for such needs. We issued bonded debt for highway and other infrastructure needs, so I am familiar with how such funding works and with the importance of building and sustaining the kind of political capital needed to ensure its success and sustainability. I will bring this experience to the similar problems we need to address here with these capital projects, and I will see to it that we develop and apply capital bill bond dollars to achieve a lasting solution to meeting these critical needs for Ohio's sportsmen community that is now starving for the financial ability to maintain our longstanding traditions and our preferred way of life.

3. Ohio sportsmen and women have long supported the Ohio Division of Wildlife because it has consistently produced quality hunting, fishing and trapping, and abundant habitat to enjoy these activities. Additionally, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is designed to remove undue political influence and instead rely upon science-based wildlife management professionals. Since its creation, the Ohio Division of Wildlife has operated under this model, to great success. The agency has been seen as a leader nationally, while working to address the needs of all Ohioans and the customers who fund conservation programs. The agency has been recently politicized, which threatens these programs and support for the agency itself.

A.) Will you restore civil service protection for senior staff of the agency that will serve the interest of the paying public?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:

Yes

No

Yes. I have been appalled at the very recent politicization of the Division of Wildlife. The professional and expert senior staff that have been devoted to preserving and sustaining the activities that are so central to the way of life for our sportsmen community must be strengthened and protected. I will consult closely with the sportsmen community to ensure that we restore the right kind of professional leadership to the Division of Wildlife and that we then back that leadership by restoring civil service protection for the senior staff and other key personnel. Quality hunting, fishing, and trapping and the abundant habitat needed to support them do not happen by accident. My Administration will protect that kind of leadership against political encroachment from all comers, including those in the legislature.

B) Additionally will you commit to appointing a Chief and senior leadership of the Division of Wildlife based on sound wildlife management and leadership experience, as well as, their passion for hunting, fishing, trapping and the shooting sports?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:                      Yes                      No

Yes. Not only will I commit to appointing a Chief and senior leadership based on these key criteria, but I will commit to consulting closely with the sportsmen community over my selection and support of that leadership, in order to ensure that those most affected by the everyday operations of the Division of Wildlife are satisfied that we are in fact achieving these goals.

4. Ohio sportsmen and women have long enjoyed access to 60,000 acres of American Electric Power's ReCreation lands. Recently AEP announced its intention to sell the property, which comprises approximately 10% of all available public lands in Ohio. Estimates on retaining the property run as high as \$150 million, which is more than the Ohio Division of Wildlife can afford on its own. Will you create a multi-faceted plan that includes bond dollars, general revenue funds and other sources to help secure the preservation of this critical public access to conservation habitat?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:                      Yes                      No

Yes. Large tracts of contiguous habitat are increasingly rare in Ohio. It would be grossly short-sighted to lose access to these key lands now available to the public, and it would greatly diminish eastern Ohio as a preferred destination for hunters, fishers, and trappers from here and from neighboring states. I will commit to working closely with the leadership of the sportsmen community to develop an effective plan for securing control of this essential conservation habitat that has the necessary funding components to achieve this important objective. Again, I would envision this including bonded debt as well as funding from other available sources. I would urge the sportsmen community to push hard to prevent the current political leadership from squandering this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve public access and the sustainability of this key habitat, and to allow my Administration the opportunity to consult with you to develop an effective plan to achieve our mutual goals here.

5. The Ohio Division of Wildlife's wildlife officer ranks are currently understaffed by 25 officers, a historic low. Will you restore wildlife officer ranks to full staffing levels, including a minimum of one wildlife officer per county, and a fully-staffed Lake Erie unit?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:                      Yes                      No

Yes. From my prior experience with these issues and in ongoing discussions with members and leadership of the sportsmen's community, it has been clear that our wildlife officers are critical

to educating and encouraging the sportsmen community to thrive in Ohio. This means having the time and commitment to developing future generations of sportsmen as well as being able to staff up sufficiently to monitor and protect our public habitat for access by the sportsmen community and against potential abuses by others that would undermine or threaten this habitat and the way of life that depends upon it. The staffing levels described here are entirely appropriate and definitely needed and my Administration will support and maintain them.

6. Wildlife law enforcement requires specific and comprehensive training unique to hunting, fishing and trapping, separate from other, more traditional law enforcement agencies in the ODNR and the state of Ohio. Will you commit to maintaining the unique and separate wildlife law enforcement section under the direction of the Chief of the Ohio Division of Wildlife?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:                      Yes                      No

Yes. I am well aware that these are not generic law enforcement functions where these officers can be viewed as fungible with any other type of law enforcement officer. The job these professionals do is unique to the traditional way of life of Ohio's sportsmen community. It requires sensitivity and dedication to the mission and to preserving this way of life, including both understanding and helping to maintain key habitat, public access, and the kinds of specialized needs that our hunters, fishermen, and trappers have. In short, it requires officers we can count on to be dedicated themselves to the sportsmen way of life here and who will see it as a key part of their role to engage in education, monitoring, encouragement, and fierce protection of these activities and this way of life. That necessarily involves training unique to hunting, fishing, and trapping. But it also means maintaining a close association, cooperation, and consultation with the sportsmen community and a recognition of this key aspect of Ohio's economy and its longstanding traditions as reflected in how these officers do their jobs on a daily basis.

7. Because hunting, fishing and trapping license fees are only raised every 10-15 years, the fee hikes are often high enough to shock license sales and reduce participation by 5-10%. Studies have been shown that granting the executive branch the authority to raise fees administratively in smaller increments, on a more frequent basis, would address funding concerns, and help prevent the loss of customers that come with higher increases.

In your executive budget will you include language that grants fee increase authority to the Chief of the Division of Wildlife, while still remaining under the controls of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review?

Please circle one and provide written justification below:                      Yes                      No

Yes. The funding needs of the sportsmen community, which have been neglected under current leadership in this state, must receive attention and be addressed on an ongoing and consistent basis. I am familiar with the kind of economic shock described here from other areas of state

government as well, such as the periodic adjustments that have to be made to the state pension systems to keep pace with the demands of those obligations. Here, as there, we are far better off if those needs are addressed on a smoother and more incremental basis, rather than piling up the need until a crisis occurs and hunters, fishers, and trappers both in Ohio and those who come to Ohio for our preferred habitat are put off or discouraged, as a sheer financial matter, from engaging in these activities. Without addressing this issue as suggested here, we endanger the funding base of these operations for current and future generations.

**Candidate's Name: Richard Cordray, candidate for Governor.**

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**Candidate's Signature/Date:**



**February 13, 2018**

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**Campaign Contact/Phone: Tony Celebrezze, 614-668-8191 or Michael Halle, 217-649-4726.**

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