

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. Ohio is home to so many natural resources for sportsmen. Hunters, trappers, and anglers in Ohio are part of a \$2+ billion industry that supports tens of thousands of jobs. To maintain and ultimately grow, we must ensure that Ohio facilities are top notch and public lands are available and continue to be places that sportsmen from all over the country want to visit.**

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?

**Yes. Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans enjoy our lakes, parks, and shooting ranges. Ohio has a responsibility to update those facilities and amenities to ensure they can be used by future generations. All avenues of funding need to be considered including capital dollars, federal dollars, public private partnerships, and more.**

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?

**Yes. I will have a knowledgeable and professional staff within the Ohio Division of Wildlife without regard for politics.**

- 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?

**Yes. It is vital that the chief and senior leadership have professional experience in wildlife management as well as a passion for the outdoors, hunting, fishing, trapping, and shooting sports.**

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 dollars, 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?

**Yes. Ohioans will not lose access to this beautiful outdoor recreation area when I am governor. Although, we will need to be creative and seek many sources of funding including public and private opportunities.**

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?

**While Ohio's budget situation in 2019 is unclear, it is obvious that Ohio needs more wildlife officers who spend time in their county and interact with Ohio sportsmen. That will be a priority when I am Governor.**

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?

**Yes. Wildlife law enforcement officers are an important part of the sportsmen and outdoor community.**

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?

**I will commit to working with the legislature to find a better process that allows flexibility to for the state to maintain and expand facilities and programs while encouraging more Ohioans to use the outdoors.**

**Candidate's Name:** Mike DeWine

**Candidate's Signature/Date:**



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