

Natural Ohio

Division of Natural Areas and Preserves

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National Natural Landmark Program celebrates 40th Anniversary

National program influenced development of Ohio program



WHAT DO CRALL WOODS IN ASHLAND COUNTY, CLIFTON GORGE IN GREENE COUNTY, LYNX PRAIRIE IN ADAMS COUNTY AND TINKER'S CREEK GORGE IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY ALL HAVE IN COMMON? THEY ARE ALL NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS.

The national program was developed to bring attention to the importance of conserving outstanding examples of our country's natural history. It is the only program of its kind which designates both public and private lands as landmarks based upon their biological and geological significance.

With landowner permission, National Natural Landmarks (NNLs) are designated by the Secretary of the Interior. Only 23 sites in Ohio belong to the 587-site system, a program of the National Park Service. Ohio has had three rounds of designations, beginning in the mid 1960s. Many of Ohio's sites feature both geological significance, as well as pristine natural features including rare plant communities and habitats.

Six of Ohio's national sites are owned and managed by the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. If you've

been to Goll Woods in Fulton County, Mentor Marsh in Lake County or Cranberry Bog in Licking County, then you've visited one of our National Natural Landmarks. Each site is significant for individual reasons—and the protected habitats range from old growth woods to high quality wetlands and fens.

Another half-dozen sites on Ohio's list have been dedicated as state nature preserves but are owned or managed by other agencies, such as Blacklick Woods and Highbanks, which are both owned and managed by Columbus and Franklin County Metroparks. To see the entire list, visit the National Park Service website at www.nature.nps.gov.

The national program not only brought attention to some of Ohio's most important natural areas, but it also influenced the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves to develop its own state landmarks program in 1981. Since its inception, the division has honored 72 sites with a State Natural Landmark designation. Like the national system, many of the Ohio sites slated for state recognition are sites owned by private citizens.

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Best Plant Finds of 2007 The Best of the Best

IN 2007, MANY OHIO BOTANISTS AND NATURALISTS VENTURED INTO THE STATE'S NATURAL AREAS IN SEARCH OF RARE PLANTS. THERE WERE MORE THAN 20 NOTEWORTHY FINDS INCLUDING TWO WHICH STOOD OUT FROM THE REST—CANADA PLUM (*PRUNUS NIGRA*) AND ELLIPTIC-LEAVED ARROWHEAD (*SAGITTARIA PLATPHYLLA*). BOTH SPECIES WERE PRESUMED EXTIRPATED IN OHIO, BUT THANKS TO THE SHARP EYES OF TWO BOTANISTS, BRIAN RILEY AND MARJIE BECUS, THESE TWO SPECIES ARE ONCE AGAIN KNOWN TO BE A PART OF OHIO'S LANDSCAPE.

In Ohio, there are five species of plums, the most common is wild plum (*Prunus Americana*) and the rarest is Canada plum. As its name implies, Canada plum is a northern species that reaches its southern limit in northwestern Ohio, primarily in the Oak Openings region near Toledo. The last known occurrence was collected in Wood County more than 30 years ago. Ohio botanists had not been able to find it since.

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pictured above, Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve, steamboat rock.



FROM THE CHIEF

Finally, exuberant, irrepressible Spring! Winter bears its own charms—but they fade quickly under Ohio’s late snows and gray skies. Spring’s reawakening is more than the wildflowers of our woodlands; it is the reawakening of the possible in all of us. The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves exists because more than a generation ago, there was an awakening in many that the people of Ohio should rightfully provide a focus to whole ecosystem protection.

As the seasons pass, our work continues. I cannot stress enough the importance of the work and its support by so many other individuals and organizations. Without your support, places like Fowler Woods and plants like the American chestnut at Sheldon Marsh might have been lost to the public. Without the energies of botanical staff, the number of rare plant finds might diminish. Without this work, our natural heritage and our lives would be diminished.

As we begin another busy field season, much remains to be done. Development and agricultural pressures in our state will require continued diligence. Thanks to those of you whose work and support for our Natural Ohio ensure an exuberant spring for generations to come. ✨

Steve Maurer
Chief
Division of Natural Areas
and Preserves

(Plant Finds, continued from page 1)

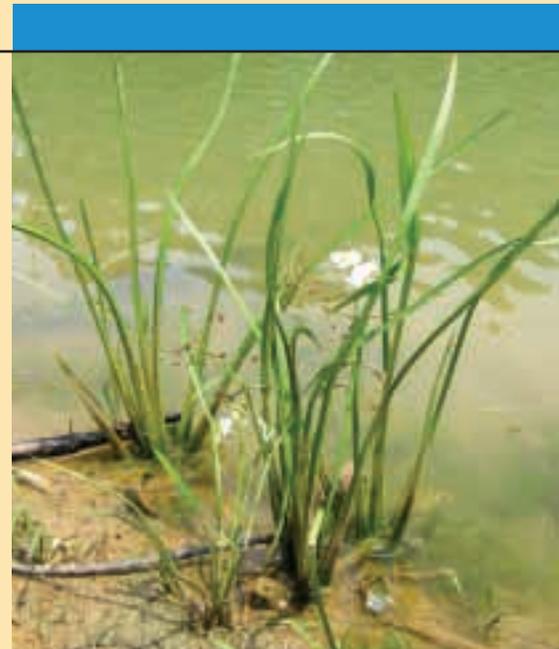
Brian Riley, a state forester with ODNR’s Division of Forestry, has made a number of rare plant finds in the past, including several new populations of the endangered bigtree plum (*Prunus mexicana*) in southern Ohio. After moving to northwest Ohio, he set out to find Canada plum. Beginning in 2006, Riley searched many specimens of wild plum until the spring of 2007 when he finally found a population of the elusive Canada plum growing along a fence line on U.S. Route 6 in Wood County.

Flowers and/or fruit are necessary for proper identification of plums and Riley found a nice stand of flowering shrubs that gave solid proof that he had found this once extirpated shrub. After confirming his specimens, there was no doubt he had rediscovered Canada plum.

Protecting the population became a priority after it was found growing partially in a highway right-of-way. Working with the Ohio Department of Transportation, the area was designated as an endangered species management and recovery area, which will protect it from future mowing and/or herbicide spraying. In total, Riley found three sites for this species—two in Wood County and one in Lucas County.

At the opposite end of Ohio, Marjie Becus, a botanist living in Hamilton County and a dedicated participant in the annual quest to find Ohio’s rare plants, found another presumed extirpated species, elliptic-leaved arrowhead. Elliptic-leaved arrowhead is a southern species occurring primarily in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. It reaches its northern limits here in Ohio. This species was previously only known in Ohio from one 1972 collection found in Huron County.

Becus, who is also a volunteer with the Cincinnati Nature Center, found this species growing in a pond on the nature center’s property. She had seen the submerged form of this species the year before, but since it did not flower, she couldn’t determine its identity.



elliptic-leaved arrowhead

Thanks to a dry summer, the water levels in the pond dropped enough for mudflats to be exposed. Several plants bloomed in July giving Becus a chance to identify the unusual plants she had seen the year before. Identifying characteristics of this species include its elliptic-shaped leaves and the fruit stalks which become bent and re-curve as they mature. She returned several times during the summer and recorded about 50 plants, which bloom until the first frost in mid October.

The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves congratulates Riley and Becus for their fantastic field work. Other 2007 rare plant finds include new localities for endangered species, such as Appalachian quillwort (*Isoetes engelmannii*), winged cudweed (*Gnaphalium viscosum*), Missouri rock cress (*Arabis missouriensis*) small purple fringed orchid (*Platanthera psycodes*), wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) and burhead (*Echinodorus bertoi*).

The division appreciates the work of all of the botanists and naturalists who shared their discoveries with us, advancing our knowledge of Ohio’s flora. To learn more about 2007 rare plant finds, visit www.ohiodnr.com/dnap and click “Natural Heritage Database.” ✨

Rick Gardner
Heritage Botanist

(Landmarks, continued from page 1)

Earlier this year, the division designated several more State Natural Landmarks, including Buffalo Hill Cemetery Prairie which is located in Harrison County. Currently owned by Glenn Mills, his family has owned the cemetery since the early 1800s. Headstones from the cemetery date to the 1820s.

Buffalo Hill Cemetery is a small island of native prairie in an area where acres of natural landscape have been stripped for coal and reclaimed to fields of grasses. A least eight species found at this prairie remnant had never been recorded for Harrison County.

The prairie is dominated by three species of prairie grasses—big bluestem, little bluestem and Indian grass. It also boasts an amazing assemblage of forbs, including hoary



Buffalo Hill Cemetery Prairie

Cranberry Bog State Nature Preserve



puccoon, whorled rosinweed, green milkweed, little skullcap and the state threatened Drummond's aster.

This highly diverse prairie remnant was at one time in jeopardy from a coal company which owned the mineral rights, but Mills' father convinced the company that extracting the coal beneath the cemetery wasn't worth it and the cemetery was spared.

Mills is an active land steward. He has managed the site for its prairie habitat, removing trees and shrubs to keep the prairie open. His hard work is paying off, as the prairie is now expanding from the cemetery.

Ohio's State Natural Landmark program enables the division to highlight landowners who through their own initiative and commitment to conservation, have made an effort to preserve Ohio's unique natural areas. Participation in the Ohio Natural Landmark Program is voluntary, and in no way impacts private property rights.

For more information on Ohio's Natural Landmark Program, contact Rick Gardner at **(614) 265-6453**.



Ohio's National Natural Landmarks

- Blacklick Woods
- Brown's Lake Bog
- Buzzard Roost
- Cedar Bog State Nature Preserve
- Clear Fork Gorge State Nature Preserve
- Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve
- Crall Woods
- Cranberry Bog State Nature Preserve
- Dysart Woods
- Fort Hill State Memorial
- Glacial Grooves State Memorial
- Glen Helen Natural Area
- Goll Woods State Nature Preserve
- Hazelwood Botanical Preserve
- Holden Natural Areas
- Highbanks Metropark
- Hueston Woods State Nature Preserve
- Mantua Bog State Nature Preserve
- Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve
- Serpent Mound Cryptoexplosive Structure
- Tinker's Creek Gorge
- White Pine Bog Forest
- Arthur B. Williams Memorial Woods

Fowler Woods

AS THE SUN STARTS TO PEAK OVER THE HORIZON, THE CHILL OF THE NIGHT IS SLOWLY RELIEVED BY THE WARMTH OF THE SUN. AS THE FOREST AWAKENS, BARRED OWLS GIVE THEIR LAST HOOTS, SIGNALING THE COMING DAY WHILE TREE FROGS AND SPRING PEEPERS TAKE SHELTER UNDER FERN FRONDS AND BUTTON-BUSH STEMS. WILD TURKEYS COME DOWN FROM THEIR NIGHT ROOST AND FOX SQUIRRELS START TO NIBBLE ON FRESH GREEN BUDS. OFF IN THE DISTANCE, THE LOUD KNOCKS OF A PILEATED WOODPECKER ECHO THROUGH THE TOPS OF THE TREES.

The sun has been up for an hour now and its warm rays reveal the bountiful blooms of the bright marsh marigold. Lining all of the vernal pools and wet seeps, this carpet of gold has adorned this north central Ohio landscape since the last Ice Age retreated more than 10,000 years ago.

As I wonder how many pictures have been taken of this sight over the years, a twig snaps. I look toward a dogwood thicket in time to see a flicker of white as a deer slips out of sight. The silence is interrupted by the sounds of a red-bellied woodpecker tapping into a dying limb on a white ash tree, looking for the grubs just below the bark.

This is a typical spring morning at Fowler Woods State Nature Preserve. Located in rural northern Richland County outside of Mansfield, Fowler Woods is a fine example of the historical old growth forest which once covered much of the landscape of Ohio.



Chester and Hettie Fowler purchased the land now named in their honor in 1917. They had lovingly protected a 50-acre block of land from timber harvesting. Later their heirs and descendants

repeatedly declined offers to timber the land, even though the woods offered a tempting yield of more than 1 million board feet of lumber.

The family sold the land to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in 1971. It became one of Ohio's first dedicated state nature preserves in 1972.

There is a 1.3 mile boardwalk trail which takes the visitor through a variety of habitats. Starting at the parking lot, you'll enter a young growth woods dominated by hawthorns, dogwood and poplar. This area was originally farmed but is reverting back to woods.

Slowly the trail takes you into an old growth forest. Oak, hickory and ash trees are all present but the woods here are dominated by sugar maple and American beech. American beech is easily recognized by its smooth gray bark. Unfortunately people have carved their initials into the bark of the beech, enabling disease and fungus to affect the tree and eventually lead to an early death.

One of the most interesting habitats at Fowler Woods is the buttonbush swamp. This area is wet most of the year, which prevents most trees from growing here. Amphibians are abundant as they use the seasonal pools to lay their eggs. Amphibians are dependent on areas like this to complete their lifecycle.

A lovely little wildflower



The sounds of frogs are frequently heard at Fowler Woods. Green, leopard, chorus and gray tree frogs, as well as spring peepers and American toads are common residents. Salamanders are harder to find because of their subterranean habitats, but several varieties may also be found in the wetter areas of the swamp woods.

Fowler Woods has a wonderful assemblage of spring wildflowers. The marsh marigolds are by far the most striking, however the trilliums are just as beautiful. Other common wildflowers seen at the preserve include cohosh, Dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, meadow rue, spring beauty, swamp buttercup and Virginia waterleaf to name a few.

Not as colorful but just as vibrant are the greens of fern fronds which can be seen throughout Fowler Woods. You'll find more than 12 fern species here including Christmas, fragile and royal fern.

Most preserves offer visitors scenic views whatever the season, however, the best time to see Fowler Woods State Nature Preserve really is during the spring. And don't forget to bring along your camera! ✨

Steve Harvey
Northern District
Preserve Manager

marsh marigold

Most of Ohio's spring wildflowers can not be missed. They are big, bold and beautiful. Large flowered trilliums, Virginia bluebells and marsh marigolds reach their showy peak in April, but if you look close enough, down at the leaf litter, you may spot one of Ohio's tiniest spring ephemerals—*Obolaria virginica*.

My first encounter with this Lilliputian sized wildflower first occurred, not when I was out scouring the forest for Ohio's rare species, but when I was attending to another kind of nature call. After a long day of hiking at Clear Creek Metropark, also Ohio's largest dedicated state nature preserve, the restrooms at the Valley View picnic area were a welcome site for my wife and I. But as we made our way there, underneath some young trees growing in the grass of the parking area, we stumbled upon the most magnificent tiny plant.

Standing no higher than the length of my thumb, the entire above-ground portion of the plant consisted of a head of elegant white flowers arranged amongst fleshy, purplish-green leaves. What was this strange botanical gem? I took a few digital images so I could investigate further.

After a few quick Internet searches, I discovered the identity of this fascinating plant. *Obolaris virginica*, sometimes called pennywort gentian or Virginia pennywort, is a member of the Gentian family. What is particularly interesting is that this species is the only member of the genus *Obolaria*. Scientists believe that Virginia pennywort is so different from other members of the family that they placed it in a genus all by itself.

Where does the name *Obolaria* come from? According to M. L. Fernald, *Obolaria* is from the Greek word, *obolus*, which was a small coin used in



Obolaria virginica

ancient times. Apparently, 18th century taxonomist Carl Linnaeus was inspired by the plant's entirely round leaves which look like coins and used the name *Obolaria*. *Virginica* simple means "of Virginia." In Linnaeus' time, the colony of Virginia laid claim to large portions of today's mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes states.

Found most commonly in the southeastern United States, Virginia pennywort reaches its northern point here in Ohio. Look for it growing up from the leaf litter of southern and eastern Ohio woodlands in April. And just remember, if you're following the call of nature, it pays to look down along the way. Happy botanizing! ✨

Tom Arbour
Heritage Ecologist

Will Ashtabula County be home to third scenic river?

LOCATED IN THE FAR NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE STATE, ASHTABULA COUNTY IS HOME TO TWO STATE SCENIC AND WILD RIVERS—THE GRAND RIVER AND CONNEAUT CREEK. THE ASHTABULA RIVER IS THE LATEST ASHTABULA COUNTY RIVER UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR STATE DESIGNATION—WHICH WOULD BRING THE NUMBER OF STATE DESIGNATED RIVERS IN THE COUNTY TO THREE, *THE MOST FOR ANY COUNTY*.

Designating the Ashtabula River as a state scenic river may surprise many who've only heard about the river in connection to its challenges with industrial contamination. Those who live in the watershed and know that the contamination is limited to its harbor also understand the importance of highlighting the beauty and biological qualities of this river.

With the Ashtabula River's harbor dredging completed after years of hard work and local support, protection efforts are moving forward to recognize the river for what it is—a high-quality stream worthy of state scenic designation.

The Ashtabula River watershed supports an exceptional river system featuring an outstanding wooded riparian corridor and diverse populations of wildlife and plants. Its high-quality river corridor benefits the Ashtabula by offering the filtering capabilities for excellent water quality attributes.

Spring is the best time to enjoy a canoe trip through the river's gorge and its biological diversity is a draw for nature enthusiasts and birders. Anglers will find ample opportunities for catching steelhead and smallmouth bass. Hikers will appreciate the parks, covered bridges and bucolic scenery.



Ashtabula River

Local support for the designation came from a number of agencies including the Ashtabula Township Park Commission, Ashtabula Metroparks, Ashtabula City Parks, Sam Wharram Nature Club, Ashtabula Parks Foundation, Grand River Partners, Inc., Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Ashtabula Soil and Water Conservation District.

In 2006, representatives from these groups, as well as local citizens formed the Ashtabula River Watershed Steering Committee. Mike Wayman, steering committee chair, was instrumental in leading the committee, garnering resolutions of support for the designation study and bringing a number of local partners to the table.

“Scenic river designation is a source of pride for the community, promotes tourism and economic benefits” said Wayman. “It is extremely important that we work to keep the river as pristine as possible... it is a very valuable natural resource to the Ashtabula community.”

In August 2006, the committee met with Scenic River staff to discuss initiating a designation study for the Ashtabula River. Begun in December 2006, the study was funded by an ODNR Office of Coastal Management grant.

The study process is comprehensive and includes collecting information from site evaluations, field reporting and dozens of sources including the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Staff evaluate aquatic habitat, land usage and development as well as research historical, cultural and natural aspects of the river.

After the Ashtabula Scenic River Designation Study is completed, recommendation will be made to the director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources regarding its eligibility for designation. It is hoped that the Ashtabula River will become Ohio's newest scenic river before the end of the year. ✨

Matthew Smith
Northeast Ohio
Assistant Scenic Rivers Manager

Preserve is Home to Rare Ohio Big Tree

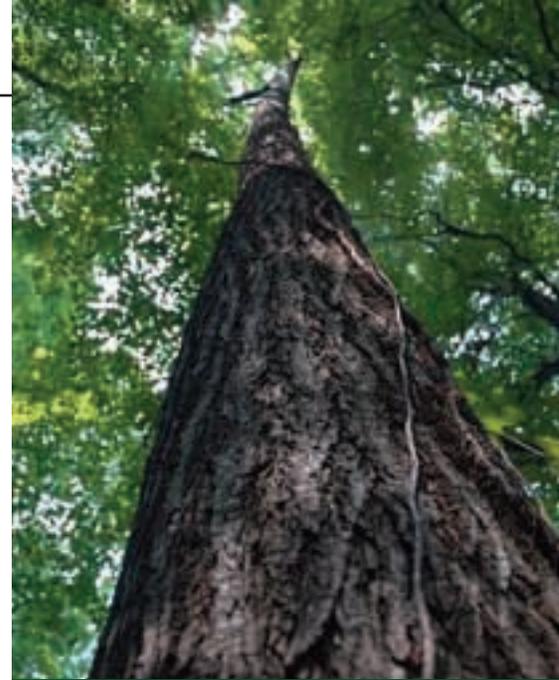
Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve boasts many natural features, such as a high-quality barrier beach and great birding opportunities. Now it has another unique feature to add to its list. This Erie County preserve harbors Ohio's largest American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) specimen.

Newly added to Ohio's Big Trees list, the chestnut at Sheldon Marsh stands an impressive 89 feet tall, with an average crown spread of 41 feet and a 64-inch circumference. Found several years ago by a DNAP staffer, the Division of Forestry has made it official—it is the largest American chestnut recorded in Ohio in the 53 years of record keeping for Ohio's Big Trees Program.

A few months ago, Steve Harvey, the district manager responsible for Sheldon Marsh and seven other northern Ohio preserves, gathered scion wood

from the tree for the American Chestnut Foundation. They will propagate the Sheldon Marsh specimens to ultimately learn whether Ohio's big American chestnut is immune to the chestnut blight, a fungal disease which killed nearly all of the American chestnuts in the U.S. by the early 21st century. Like other diseases, the fungus was introduced around 1900.

Although a number of American chestnuts have survived, most are individual trees which grew more than 10 miles away from other infected trees. Sapling-sized trees continue to sprout where diseased parent trees once stood, but they never reach maturity as the fungus continues its attack. It doesn't help that other trees, such as post oak harbor the fungus, yet are untouched by it.



American chestnut

To learn more about the chestnut blight and the work of the American Chestnut Foundation, which aims to reintroduce a blight-resistant American chestnut to its original forest range, including Ohio, visit www.acf.org ✨

Heidi Hetzel-Evans
Public Information

Northwest Ohio Preserve Gains State Status

Forrest Woods Nature Preserve in Paulding County became Ohio's newest state nature preserve in February. The 193-acre site is owned by the Black Swamp Conservancy, a northwest Ohio land trust.

Forrest Woods is one of the finest remaining floodplain associations in the area. The property is located along Marie DeLarme Creek, which is a tributary of the Maumee State Scenic River.

The site had been on the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves' protection priority list for years. The preserve harbors several potentially-threatened and endangered species, such as leafy blue flag, lake cress and several sedges. It also provides great habitat for amphib-

ians and breeding birds, such as eastern meadowlarks and prothonotary warblers.

"Forrest Woods Nature Preserve is a remnant of the Great Black Swamp that our conservancy is named after, so we are especially pleased to preserve this beautiful property," said Kevin Joyce, Black Swamp Conservancy executive director. "Dedication of the property as a state nature preserve is truly the result of a team effort."

In addition to the Black Swamp Conservancy, funding for the project included \$25,000 from the divisions of Natural Areas and Preserves and Wildlife. The project utilized Clean Ohio Conservation funding, and three families greatly contributed to the project by



selling the land to the conservancy for less than market value.

The new nature preserve is open to the public with written permission. To obtain a permit, please contact the Black Swamp Conservancy at **(419) 872-5263** or email bsc@blackswamp.org.

For more information on other conservancy projects, visit their website at www.blackswamp.org ✨

Natural Areas Discovery Series

Kokosing Scenic River Day, Knox County

Saturday, June 21, noon to 4 p.m.

This family-friendly event, held in cooperation with Kenyon College, features displays, stream activities, hikes, aquatic critters and other river-related fun. For more details and directions to the Brown Family Environmental Center, contact **(614) 265-6422**.

Great Rhododendron Ramble, Fairfield County

Saturday, July 5, 10 a.m.

In conjunction with the Ohio Historical Society, the division invites you to explore the rugged cliffs, hills and valleys of the Wahkeena and Rhododendron Cove State Nature Preserve complex. This 3-4 hour rigorous hike begins at the Wahkeena Nature Preserve visitor center. Participants should wear proper footwear and be in good physical condition. Pre-registration is required – event is limited to 30 participants. Parking fee is \$3. To register, call **(740) 420-3445** or email jeff.johnson@dnr.state.oh.us

Chaparral Prairie Open House, Adams County

Saturday, August 2, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The blazing colors of prairie flowers in bloom are breathtaking at Chaparral Prairie State Nature Preserve. Enjoy a prairie program and naturalist-led hike during the height of prairie blooming. For more information, call **(937) 544-9750**.



*Preserving Nature Today
for the Needs of Tomorrow*

Mission Statement:

Administer a system of nature preserves and scenic rivers by identifying and protecting Ohio's significant natural features.

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www.ohiodnr.com/dnap



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