

Testimony of U.S. Representative Tim Ryan (D-OH-13)
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Thursday, February 3, 2022 @ 10:00 a.m.

Thank you, Chairs Neguse and Grijalva, and Ranking Members Fulcher and Westerman for your leadership and hard work on these important initiatives, and for the opportunity to testify before you today about my bill – H.R. 6142, the Buckeye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act. And thank you to my Republican colleague Anthony Gonzalez who joined me in introducing this bill.

The Buckeye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act directs the Secretary of Interior to conduct a feasibility study on designating the Buckeye Trail as a National Scenic Trail. The bill does not authorize any new federal spending for this study. This study is the first part of the process they must follow to achieve a national scenic trail designation.

To provide some additional background, the Buckeye Trail is a system of trails creating a loop extending approximately 1,454 miles from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, through the farmland of northwest Ohio, the hills of Appalachia, the Black Hand sandstone cliffs of the Hocking Hills region, and the Bluegrass region of southwest Ohio. The Trail follows wooded footpaths, abandoned railroad corridors, historic canal towpaths, rivers, lake shores, and country roads, within both rural and urban settings.

Since it was founded by a group of volunteers in 1959, the Buckeye Trail has been a national attraction for over 60 years, receiving visitors from across the country and abroad—providing public access to Ohio's scenic and historic diversity. The Buckeye Trail is open to all, made possible through the cooperation of federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners,

and the tireless work of volunteers. The incredible work they do is what keeps this Trail going, and I have had the pleasure to see this firsthand.

National scenic trails were established to provide outdoor recreational opportunities and preserve portions of the natural landscape that hold historic, scenic, or cultural significance. There are currently only 11 National Scenic Trails nationwide. The Buckeye Trail is seeking this designation, so that they can receive additional funding to expand education programs, conduct much-needed maintenance, improve safety measures, and provide the proper staffing for a trail of its magnitude. This designation would also make it easier for them to access federal competitive grant programs.

The Buckeye Trail would become the 5th largest trail in the country upon receiving the National Scenic Trail designation. As mentioned, this feasibility study is the first step in this process to seek this designation, and that's why I am here today to advocate for my bill which would get this process started for my constituents.

Lastly, in closing, I would just like to add: This is not just a historic preservation issue, or a conservation issue – it is also a jobs issue. The Buckeye Trail plays a key role in the economic development of cities and communities all across the state. It spurs tourism, outdoor recreation, and improves the overall health and wellbeing. That is why it is so important to protect and preserve these historic trails, so they can continue to exist for generations to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share about how important this bill is to my district and for my constituents. On behalf of my constituents who use this trail, I ask for the committee's support on the Buckeye National Scenic Feasibility Study Act. I yield back the balance of my time.