

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5966

To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish an Ohio River Basin Restoration Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 7, 2025

Mr. MCGARVEY (for himself, Mrs. HOUCHIN, Mr. RULLI, Mrs. SYKES, Mr. MESSMER, Mr. DELUZIO, Mr. SHREVE, and Mr. MRVAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish an Ohio River Basin Restoration Program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ohio River Restoration
5 Program Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. OHIO RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM.**

7 Title I of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act
8 (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
9 the following:

1 **“SEC. 127. OHIO RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM.**

2 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

3 “(1) ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The term ‘advisory
4 council’ means the advisory council established
5 under subsection (b)(5).

6 “(2) AGENCY.—The term ‘Agency’ means the
7 Environmental Protection Agency.

8 “(3) OHIO RIVER BASIN.—The term ‘Ohio
9 River Basin’ means the portions of each Ohio River
10 State that contain the watershed of the Ohio River.

11 “(4) OHIO RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PRO-
12 GRAM.—The term ‘Ohio River Basin Restoration
13 Program’ means the Ohio River Basin Restoration
14 Program established by this section.

15 “(5) OHIO RIVER STATE.—The term ‘Ohio
16 River State’ means Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia,
17 Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, New York, Virginia,
18 Maryland, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Ten-
19 nessee, Mississippi, or South Carolina.

20 “(6) PROGRAM DIRECTOR.—The term ‘Program
21 Director’ means the Director of the Program Office.

22 “(7) PROGRAM OFFICE.—The term ‘Program
23 Office’ means the Ohio River National Program Of-
24 fice established under this section.

25 “(8) TRIBAL GOVERNMENT.—The term ‘Tribal
26 Government’ means the recognized governing body

1 of any Indian tribe individually identified (including
2 parenthetically) in the list published under section
3 104 of the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List
4 Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 5131).

5 “(b) OHIO RIVER NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall es-
7 tablish an Ohio River National Program Office with-
8 in the Agency to carry out the Ohio River Basin
9 Restoration Program.

10 “(2) PROGRAM DIRECTOR.—The Program Of-
11 fice shall be headed by a Program Director, ap-
12 pointed by the Administrator, who, by reason of
13 management experience and technical expertise re-
14 lating to the Ohio River, is highly qualified to direct
15 the development of programs and plans on a variety
16 of issues related to restoration of the Ohio River
17 Basin.

18 “(3) FUNCTIONS.—The Program Director
19 shall—

20 “(A) coordinate actions of the Agency that
21 seek to protect and restore the Ohio River
22 Basin;

23 “(B) develop, implement, and update the
24 Ohio River Basin Restoration Program and ac-

1 tion plan required by this section, in coordina-
2 tion with the advisory council;

3 “(C) document information and updates
4 related to the development and implementation
5 of the Ohio River Basin Restoration Program
6 and action plan required by this section, and
7 make such information and updates available to
8 the public, including on a public website; and

9 “(D) facilitate, in cooperation with the Bu-
10 reau of Indian Affairs, engagement and con-
11 sultation with Tribal Governments and Tribal
12 organizations to ensure Tribal needs and prior-
13 ities are solicited early and throughout the de-
14 velopment of the actionable goals and action
15 plan required by this section.

16 “(4) AGREEMENTS.—In carrying out paragraph
17 (3), the Program Director may enter into agree-
18 ments, as applicable, with relevant Federal agencies
19 and non-Federal entities.

20 “(5) ADVISORY COUNCIL.—In carrying out this
21 section, the Program Director shall establish an ad-
22 visory council consisting of relevant Federal entities
23 and non-Federal stakeholders, including representa-
24 tives from—

1 “(A) each State located in whole or in part
2 in the Ohio River Basin;

3 “(B) each of the lower, middle, and upper
4 basins of the Ohio River;

5 “(C) each Tribal Government located in
6 the Ohio River Basin; and

7 “(D) the Ohio River Valley Water Sanita-
8 tion Commission.

9 “(6) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The Pro-
10 gram Director shall submit to Congress, and make
11 available on a public website, the action plan and
12 updates required by this section, and an annual re-
13 port describing—

14 “(A) progress made in implementing the
15 Ohio River Basin Restoration Program;

16 “(B) coordination of the Ohio River Basin
17 Restoration Program with other Federal, State,
18 Tribal, and local programs;

19 “(C) any funds transferred to relevant
20 Federal agencies under this section;

21 “(D) any grants awarded under this sec-
22 tion;

23 “(E) specific projects and activities carried
24 out pursuant to this section; and

1 “(F) agreements with relevant Federal
2 agencies and non-Federal entities.

3 “(c) OHIO RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM.—

4 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established
5 within the Agency the Ohio River Basin Restoration
6 Program to carry out projects and activities that ad-
7 vance systemic, large-scale restoration and protec-
8 tion of the Ohio River Basin.

9 “(2) ACTIVITIES.—Any project or activity car-
10 ried out pursuant to the Ohio River Basin Restora-
11 tion Program shall be designed to address at least
12 1 of the following:

13 “(A) Improvement of water quality in the
14 Ohio River Basin and drinking water in the
15 Ohio River States.

16 “(B) Increasing community resilience to
17 flood and storm risk, including through restora-
18 tion of natural systems in the Ohio River
19 Basin.

20 “(C) Protection and restoration of fish and
21 wildlife habitat in the Ohio River Basin.

22 “(D) Prevention and control of the spread
23 of aquatic invasive species in the Ohio River
24 Basin.

25 “(E) Remediation of toxic substances.

1 “(F) Improvement of opportunities for
2 public access and recreation in the Ohio River
3 Basin consistent with the ecological needs of
4 fish and wildlife habitat.

5 “(G) Collection, monitoring, and evaluation
6 of data needed to plan, implement, and assess
7 the effectiveness of projects or activities carried
8 out under this section.

9 “(H) Improvement of public outreach, edu-
10 cation, and citizen involvement in the develop-
11 ment and implementation of projects and activi-
12 ties carried out under this section.

13 “(3) APPROACHES.—Projects and activities car-
14 ried out pursuant to the Ohio River Basin Restora-
15 tion Program shall prioritize use of natural infra-
16 structure, nature-based, and non-structural solutions
17 to the maximum extent practicable, including—

18 “(A) protecting or restoring naturally oc-
19 ccurring hydrologic, geomorphic, and ecological
20 functions and processes; and

21 “(B) removing or modifying structures
22 such as culverts, levees, and dams to restore ec-
23 ological functions and processes.

24 “(4) PROJECT AND ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTA-
25 TION.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Funds made available
2 to carry out the Ohio River Basin Restoration
3 Program may be used to plan, design, imple-
4 ment, or construct projects and activities de-
5 scribed in paragraph (2) that are carried out by
6 a relevant Federal agency or by a non-Federal
7 entity in accordance with the action plan devel-
8 oped under subsection (d).

9 “(B) GRANT AUTHORITY.—The Program
10 Director may make a grant to, or otherwise
11 enter into an agreement with, any non-Federal
12 entity (including any State, interstate, regional,
13 local, or Tribal governmental entity, nonprofit
14 organization, institution of higher education, or
15 individual) that the Program Director deter-
16 mines is qualified to carry out a project or ac-
17 tivity described in paragraph (2).

18 “(5) PROJECT AND ACTIVITY SELECTION.—

19 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Program Direc-
20 tor, in collaboration with the advisory council,
21 shall select projects and activities to be imple-
22 mented pursuant to the Ohio River Basin Res-
23 toration Program using appropriate principles
24 and criteria, including—

1 “(i) the selection of projects and ac-
2 tivities that are equitably distributed
3 throughout the Ohio River Basin;

4 “(ii) the ability of a project or activity
5 to achieve strategic, measurable, and re-
6 portable environmental outcomes in accord-
7 ance with the action plan developed under
8 subsection (d);

9 “(iii) the recognition that projects and
10 activities may provide economic benefits to
11 local or regional communities, or to the en-
12 tire Ohio River Basin;

13 “(iv) the feasibility of prompt imple-
14 mentation, timely achievement of measur-
15 able results, and resource leveraging; and

16 “(v) the opportunity to reduce dupli-
17 cation and improve measurable environ-
18 mental outcomes.

19 “(B) COMPATIBILITY.—The Program Di-
20 rector shall ensure that projects and activities
21 carried out under this section are compatible
22 with—

23 “(i) the ability of the Corps of Engi-
24 neers to maintain navigation and other
25 Federal projects in the Ohio River; and

1 “(ii) the structural integrity or effec-
2 tiveness of Federal, State, local, or Tribal
3 disaster risk reduction infrastructure.

4 “(d) ACTIONABLE GOALS AND ACTION PLAN.—

5 “(1) ACTIONABLE GOALS.—Not later than 1
6 year after the date of enactment of this section, the
7 Program Director shall develop actionable goals for
8 the Ohio River Basin Restoration Program, which
9 shall be measurable and reportable and shall include
10 criteria for measuring their success in making
11 progress toward restoring the ecological health and
12 resilience of the Ohio River Basin.

13 “(2) ACTION PLAN.—Not later than 2 years
14 after the date of enactment of this section, the Pro-
15 gram Director shall develop an action plan for ad-
16 vancing the actionable goals developed under para-
17 graph (1).

18 “(3) CONTENTS.—The Program Director shall
19 include in the action plan developed under para-
20 graph (2)—

21 “(A) a description of existing Federal,
22 State, Tribal, and regional commissions, and re-
23 gional plans, programs, and activities affecting
24 the Ohio River Basin, that may be used to ad-

1 vance the Ohio River Basin Restoration Pro-
2 gram;

3 “(B) recommendations for a comprehensive
4 approach, which (where appropriate) leverages
5 existing Federal, State, and Tribal programs,
6 to—

7 “(i) advancing systemic, large-scale
8 restoration and protection of the Ohio
9 River Basin; and

10 “(ii) improvements to water quality
11 within the Ohio River and its tributaries;

12 “(C) a multi-year plan that identifies spe-
13 cific objectives with corresponding commitments
14 for activities, research, and measures for
15 progress; and

16 “(D) a plan to maintain and monitor the
17 implementation of any specific projects or ac-
18 tivities identified in the action plan.

19 “(4) PROJECT AND ACTIVITY RECOMMENDA-
20 TIONS.—The action plan may include recommenda-
21 tions for specific projects or activities that advance
22 the action plan objectives, including timelines, antici-
23 pated costs, and the identification of entities respon-
24 sible for carrying out such projects or activities.

1 “(5) UPDATES.—Not less often than once every
2 5 years, the Program Director shall review and up-
3 date the actionable goals and action plan developed
4 under this subsection.

5 “(6) CONSULTATION WITH ADVISORY COUN-
6 CIL.—In developing and updating the actionable
7 goals and action plan under this subsection, the Pro-
8 gram Director shall consult with the advisory coun-
9 cil.

10 “(7) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.—The Program Di-
11 rector shall provide public notice of, and an oppor-
12 tunity for comment on, the actionable goals and ac-
13 tion plan developed under this subsection, including
14 during each update period under paragraph (5).

15 “(e) FUNDING.—

16 “(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
17 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
18 this section \$350,000,000 for each of fiscal years
19 2026 through 2030.

20 “(2) TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO FEDERAL ENTI-
21 TIES.—With funds made available to carry out this
22 section for each fiscal year, the Administrator
23 may—

24 “(A) transfer funds to the head of any rel-
25 evant Federal agency, with the concurrence of

1 the head of such agency, to carry out activities
2 in accordance with this section; and

3 “(B) enter into an interagency agreement
4 with the head of any relevant Federal agency to
5 carry out activities in accordance with this sec-
6 tion.

7 “(f) BUDGET ITEM.—The Administrator shall, in the
8 Agency’s annual budget submission to Congress, include
9 a funding request for the Ohio River Basin Restoration
10 Program as a separate budget line item.”.

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