



A non-profit organization

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Upcoming Event

OHIO WETLANDS
ANNUAL SUMMIT

Saturday
November 15, 2014
Columbus, OH

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Ohio Wetlands Association

Newsletter - November 2014

Our Mission -

The Ohio Wetlands Association will work to protect, enhance and restore Ohio's wetlands by providing public education, promoting sound public policy, developing a network of citizen science volunteers and sharing the joy of wild places.

New Officers of U.S. Ramsar Committee



Professor **Bill Mitsch**, Eminent Scholar and Director of the Everglades Wetland Research Park, Florida Gulf Coast University, Naples, Florida, was approved as Chair of the **United States National Ramsar Committee** at a meeting of the Committee held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Arlington Virginia on May 8, 2014. **Suzanne Pittenger-Slear**, President of Environmental Concern, St. Michaels, Maryland, was chosen as Vice-Chair and **Ralph Tiner**, Association of State Wetland Managers, was chosen as Treasurer. **Deborah Hahn** of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington DC, was renewed as Secretary of the Committee.

Members of the United States National Ramsar Committee include representatives of United States nongovernmental organizations NGOs, both nonprofit and for-profit, and local and state governmental organizations that have an interest in supporting the objectives of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Committee has as its mission to support the mission of the Ramsar Convention in the USA and to encourage and facilitate the development of wetlands of international importance in the USA and encourage their proper management.

The Convention on Wetlands, formally called the "Ramsar Convention" is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories.

Unlike the other global environmental conventions, Ramsar is not affiliated with the United Nations system of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, but it works very closely with the other MEAs and is a full partner among the "biodiversity-related cluster" of treaties and agreements. It has its international headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.



Left to right, **Suzanne Pittenger-Slear**, Vice-Chair, **Deborah Hahn**, Secretary, and **Bill Mitsch**, Chair. Unavailable for the picture was **Ralph Tiner**, Association of State Wetland Managers, Treasurer.

(Continued from page 1)

“In Ohio alone there are many wetlands of international significance that should qualify for official Ramsar status.”

The Convention on Wetlands came into force for the USA on 18 April 1987. The USA presently has 36 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with a surface area of 1,854,546 hectares. Among these 36 are the Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Everglades National Park, Missisquoi Delta and Bay Wetlands, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, and, in Ohio, the Wilma H.

Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park on The Ohio State University campus. At Ohio Wetlands Association we believe that there are many hundreds of qualifying wetlands across the United States that have not yet been recognized by Ramsar. In Ohio alone there are many wetlands of international significance that should qualify for official Ramsar status. It is our intention to work with public and private entities and the U.S.

Ramsar Committee to recognize and elevate our world-class wetlands to Ramsar recognition and assure that they enjoy the “wise use” and sustainability that they are worthy of.



A Glimpse Ahead . . .

Our **Summer Wetlands Gala** is scheduled on Saturday, June 6, 2015 in Amherst Ohio. This year's native plant sale and silent auction were such a success for OWA that we will feature them again in 2015. The Gala will also include a potluck dinner and entertainment. All your native plant and silent auction donations are tax deductible, so keep us in mind when thinning out your gardens or cleaning out your closets!

The Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program - The Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program is a bi-national, long-term monitoring program that coordinates the skills and dedication of hundreds of volunteer Citizen Scientists throughout the Great Lakes basin of Ontario and the United States. We will come and speak to your group of ten or more about this program which includes monitor training. If you are interested, contact us at Ray@OHWetlands.org.

Need a speaker for your club or organization? Contact us at Ray@OHWetlands.org.

OWA's Goal

It is a goal of the board of directors of Ohio Wetlands Association to nominate an Ohio wetland for Ramsar recognition each year.

Applications must include a cover letter addressed to the Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service describing how the proposed site meets the Ramsar criteria and also;

- Written endorsements from each of the landowners, the local or state wildlife or natural resource agency, and a member of Congress representing the geographic area. Although not required, additional letters of support from other stakeholders associated with the proposed site greatly contribute to the nomination process; and
- A completed Ramsar Information Sheet.
- OWA is seeking volunteers to assist with these applications. Contact info@OHwetlands.org



Nine Criteria for "Wetlands of International Importance" Designation:

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it meets any one of the following criteria. The site:

1. contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region; or
2. supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities; or
3. supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region; or
4. supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions; or
5. regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds; or
6. regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird; or
7. supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity; or
8. is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend; or
9. regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal.

In the United States Ramsar applications are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ohio Wetlands Summit— November 15th

Join us for the third annual Ohio Wetlands Summit will be held on November 15, 2014 at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus, Ohio. As in the past it will run from 8:30am until 3:00pm.

Register using PayPal at www.OHwetlands.org

Our theme this year is Wetland Restoration.

Wetland restoration topics include:

- Restoration site selection - Mark A. Dilley
- Restoration in the Whittier Peninsula - Mick Micacchion and Pete Precario
- Restoration at The Wilds - Shana Byrd
- Restoration at the Dutch Fork Wetlands of the Dawes Arboretum - John Kiertchne
- Restoring the Great Black Swamp - Dr. William Mitsch
- Restoration in the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District - John Watts
- Funding wetland restoration - Mark DeBrock
- Wetland for agricultural drainage water management - Dr. Larry Brown

All too often heavy equipment is associated with habitat destruction. There is a new science of ecological engineering that requires heavy equipment operators with a broad understanding of the natural world. What a difference these students can make.

Hocking College Goes Wild for Wetlands

NELSONVILLE, OH – The Hocking College School of Natural Resources partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to bring wetlands back. According to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, since the late 18th century, 90 percent of Ohio's wetland resources have been destroyed or degraded through draining, filling or other modifications.

Students in Heavy Equipment Management, GeoEnvironmental Science and Wildlife Resources Management programs worked together to complete Phase I of the riparian wetland project located in the floodplain on Hocking College campus in Nelsonville. A riparian is an area of land bordering a river or stream. A riparian wetland is called such because of its position next to the river where the wetland is influenced by the overflow of the river.

Riparian wetlands are most commonly found in Southeastern Ohio. These wet-

lands are important because they can provide a natural way to decontaminate runoff water before it enters the surface flow into rivers and streams.

Lynn Holtzman, Wildlife Management instructor, has worked for more than two years to mitigate the riparian wetland. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided funds and materials for construction of the wetland, as well as on-site supervision in order to complete the first phase. "Hopefully this project is just the beginning of future wetland conservation projects on the Hocking College campus that will benefit students, the local community and wildlife alike. After all, that is what a Hocking education is all about, a hands-on ap-

proach with community service at its heart," Holtzman said.



The goal of the project is to provide an outdoor lab where students can study the development and ecology of wetlands, and to furnish stopover habitat for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. The project was made possible through Service Partners in Flight program, which focuses on creating habitats for migratory birds. Phase II will involve the diversion of storm water runoff into the restored wetland and is expected to be completed by summer 2015.

HOW GLRI Action Plan

Ohio Wetlands Association (OWA) signed on to a comment letter composed by Healing Our Waters (HOW) for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). OWA has always maintained a keen interest in Great Lakes Restoration and Lake Erie in particular. We assert that wetland health and restoration is a key component to any comprehensive restoration plan. The following paragraph speaks to the importance of science and long term monitoring of wetlands.

The importance of monitoring is recognized in the draft action plan (including in specific focus areas and in noting annual Great Lakes monitoring will be conducted). We still believe there should be greater specificity in regards to monitoring, including at the project level. The broad synoptic Great Lakes coastal wetland monitoring project is providing invaluable data on coastal wetlands, but it is important that the framework highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring of these important habitats and other key components of the ecosystem. It is also important to recognize that some monitoring efforts may need to be added or modified in order to be optimized to assess restoration success. GLRI funding may need to be available to allow groups implementing on-the-ground projects to assess the outcomes of their

projects on the long-term health of the Lakes. At this time, many groups do not have the resources needed to track progress outside of GLRI funding. We also believe that wetlands play a critical role in the water quality of tributaries leading into the Great Lakes. This plan specifically mentions the restoration of wetlands and other habitat in the overall effort to reduce nutrients, especially phosphorus, flowing into the Great Lakes. OWA has taken a firm stand for this practice in regards to the harmful algae blooms in the western basin of Lake Erie.

We assert that wetland health and restoration is a key component to any comprehensive restoration plan.



We like that the action plan continues to stay focused on five areas: cleaning up toxics and Areas of Concern, combating invasive species, promoting near-shore health, restoring wetlands and other habitat, and science-based adaptive management. We also continue to support maintaining a special emphasis on the new action plan's principal initiatives "Remediate, restore and delist Areas of Concern", "Control established invasive species", and "Reduce nutrient loads from agricultural water-

sheds."

OWA is proud to partner with HOW and is very grateful for their initiative on this matter.



Urge Congress to protect the Great Lakes

Tinker's Creek State Nature Preserve Field Trip



Babette Oestreicher,
Tinker's Creek Watershed Coordinator

The turnout for this hike was overwhelming. We double parked and still overflowed the main lot. Babette Oestreicher, Tinker's Creek Watershed Coordinator, joined us for an orientation to the watershed before the hike.

We walked the flat Seven Ponds trail through the rich swamp and upland forest to the observation platform. The vista at the platform overlooks a preserve that is nearly 786 acres and adjacent to a State Park with an additional 355 acres. This rich uninterrupted scene is home to all the diversity that one would expect

of a nature preserve. There are beaver, weasel, fox and deer along with a compliment of native wetland plant

species. Migratory waterfowl find Tinker's Creek a welcome stopover.

The largest tributary of the Cuyahoga River, Tinker's Creek slowly drains a large watershed across the Appalachian plateau of Portage, Geauga and Summit Counties. Draining nearly a hundred square miles this tributary flows about 30 miles before reaching the Cuyahoga River. This extensive protected area within a largely developed area provides critical services for maintaining water quality. Nutrients, pollutants and sediments are filtered as they pass through the swamps, bogs and fens of Tinker's Creek.

Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve

By Karen Jennings



Most wetland areas along Lake Erie have been destroyed and continue to be impacted. Much more should be done to reverse this trend. Doctor Sheldon was futuristic when he bought this property from the Cedar Point Company in 1954. His family later sold the property to the state in

serve. It was a great field trip with historical insights provided by Dean Sheldon, son of Dr. Sheldon, and scientific insights given by John Blakeman. President of Ohio Prairie Association.

We walked past the original entrance to Cedar Point and the

1979. The 465-acre state nature preserve includes the original 56 acre Sheldon parcel and adjacent property at the far east end of Sandusky Bay.

Recently members of Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association and Ohio Wetlands Association visited Sheldon Marsh State Nature Pre-

former cultivated fields that became a tree nursery turned woodlands. Here, as Mr. Blakeman observed, intelligent human beings intervened in the management of the land. Across the road from the nursery a prairie is being restored and the woods to the northeast contains all original woodland species.

The marsh with blue lacustrine clay soils was overflowing with blooming water lotus. A bald eagle and great white egret flew overhead. Marsh wrens were singing in the background. Green herons nest here and ospreys stop over during migration. Marsh mallow, button bush, arrowhead, swamp milkweed, and pickerel weed abound here. It's a fabulous natural area that is well worth visiting. Ohioans are very lucky that it isn't just another housing development.

Request of 404 Permit Denial

OWA prepared this letter to the Army Corps of Engineers in an effort to deny a permit to impact wetlands in the Rocky fork Creek Watershed. It was co-signed by Keith Deimoff, Executive Director at the Ohio Environmental Council. We think the logic is sound and our voices are clear. We will publish updates as the process continues.

RE: PN# LRH-1998-882-SCR

Dear Ms. Spagna:

We express the following concerns with the above project proposal and urge you to deny this 404 request:

-The applicant originally applied (and was approved) for a 404 permit in 1998. The applicant then filled the wetlands but failed to further develop the property. The wetland has reestablished itself in the intervening years. This should indicate that the land is unsuitable for building.

-The applicant is relying on its old mitigation plan for this new application. The applicant should not be permitted to use an outdated plan which designated most of the mitigation to occur outside of the Rocky Fork watershed.

-The PN states that if there are alternatives to wetland impacts then the impacts should be avoided. Wetlands are scarce in the Rocky Fork Creek Watershed and we believe there are plenty of other sites that would provide upland alternatives nearby and that the permit should be denied.

-The PN states that some of the wetlands are Modified Category 2 wetlands. This category of wetland does not exist. There are only Catego-

ry 1, 2, or 3 wetlands in Ohio Rules. The Modified Category 2 designation indicates that the wetlands are of lower quality than other Category 2 wetlands. Initial evaluations of the site from surrounding areas indicate given the ages, composition and sizes of the trees and other characteristics observable from a distance that the forested wetlands would likely be on the high quality side of Category 2. However, from a permit standpoint all Category 2 wetlands should be reviewed using the same standards.

- Impacts are proposed to 2.24 acres of forested wetlands on the site. There would be two fills in forested wetlands. One would fill a 1.51 acre forested wetland completely and the other would fill 0.73 acres of a 3.11 acre forested wetland. The remaining 2.38 acres of this wetland would be preserved and parts of the wetland perimeter, those not adjacent to the fills, would receive a 25 foot buffer (see Exhibit 7 on page 9 (sheet 2 of 2) of the attachment to the Public Notice. These wetlands are some of the best remaining in the Rocky Fork Creek Watershed and should not be impacted.

-Additionally, 25 foot is not much of a buffer and those buffers would be immediately adjacent to highly intensive land uses. Research has shown that much wider buffers are needed to provide long term viability for wetlands and streams. In fact, the Ohio Rapid Assessment Method for Wetlands (ORAM) assigns maximum points for wetlands with buffers greater than 50 meters (164 feet) which is more than six times the width proposed. A buffer width of 25 feet receives the lowest ORAM score for that metric illustrating that the proposed buffers would not be sufficient to protect the existing quality of the wetlands.

-Authorizing a fill activity that supposedly impacts only part of wetland is inaccurate in its footprint of impact. It is not possible to fill 0.73 acres of a 3.11 acre wetland and not have serious degradation occur to large parts or all of the remaining wetland. The degradation is increased when no buffers are provided adjacent to the fill activities. While it is better than filling the entire wetland, if the permit is not denied as we are requesting, there should be additional mitigation required and buffers should be established on the entire perimeter of the wetland.

-The PN states that the preservation aspects of the mitigation plan would be protected in perpetuity via a *real* estate instrument. It should be specified that the real estate instrument be a conservation easement or an environmental covenant so its conditions are enforceable. We strongly believe these well documented threats to water quality need to be addressed and a permit for the project as planned should not be issued.

“Wetlands are scarce in the Rocky Fork Creek Watershed and we believe there are plenty of other sites that would provide upland alternatives nearby ...”



Defining 'Waters of the United States

By Ray Stewart

One of the most important clean water rules in decades will better define the Waters of The United States (WOTUS). The public comment period will end October 20, 2014. Earlier this year the U.S. EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers released a draft rulemaking that will clear up some of the confusion about which waters fall under federal jurisdiction. Of particular importance will be those isolated waters, especially vernal pools and swamp forests that may not be identified by the legal phrase "significant nexus". An understanding of groundwater reveals that most waters are interconnected (have a "nexus") and may be "significant" even though that significance is not obvious on the surface. Why should defenders of public waters be forced to prove the connection? Rather, the burden of isolation should lie with the 404 applicant who intends to fill/dredge.

Supreme Court decisions in '01 and '06 have made enforcement of the Clean Water Act and protection of wetlands more difficult. Wetlands and other waters are categorically protected if, in relation to other covered waters, they are bordering, in the floodplain, or connected by shallow subsurface flow. Many waters are outside of floodplains and surface water systems. They are currently not provided adequate protection by the CWA. Science, however, supports the importance of isolated waters to WOTUS. Although they may be protected on a case by case basis, they are not protected on a categorical basis. Those who care about these waters must make the case to support them in this rule.

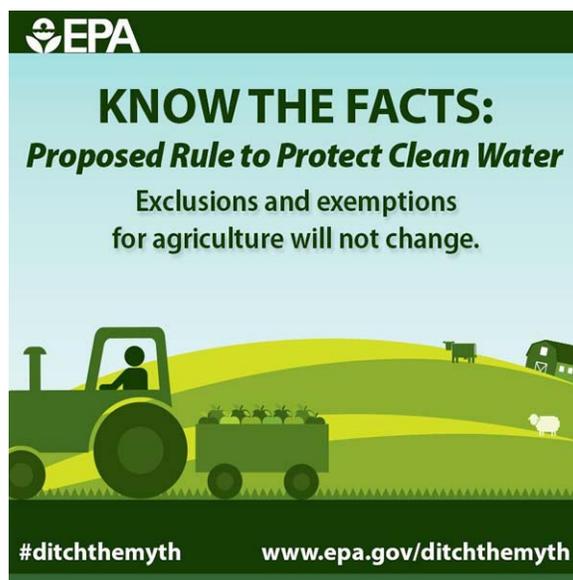
In the existing rule normal agricultural practices are exempt by Federal 404 jurisdiction. The proposed rule preserves existing Clean Water Act exemptions and exclusions for agricultural activities, yet the biggest contributor to nutrient pollution is agricultural.

Much hand-wringing about agricultural ditches has been in the debate over this clarifying rule. Making a distinction between a ditch and a tributary can be contentious. Sometimes tributaries have been ditched and it may be hard to document their history. Legal definitions matter, there is little clarity in the distinction between tributaries and ditches. The

proposed rule should have a functional definition; if a ditch acts like a tributary, then it should be considered a tributary.

Exempt ditches have the potential to add nutrients and toxins to water bodies but may not be covered by this rule. When a ditch is a point source of pollution that discharges into WOTUS then it should also be jurisdictional. Where Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) have intermittent streams that sometimes have high pollutant and/or nutrient loads, these waters should be regulated by the CWA. Ditches and intermittent streams that function as point sources of pollutants anywhere should be jurisdictional. We must carefully examine the wisdom of exempting ditches and prior converted cropland in future revisions of this rule.

Clean Water is the goal of the CWA. All watersheds lead to major navigable and internationally significant waters. The legal wrangling is convoluted and the reach of the constitution can be argued endlessly. Nevertheless, the CWA is the best tool available for protecting our public waters. If commercial rights to act irresponsibly supersede public rights to clean water then we have a dismal future in store. We must find a definition for jurisdictional waters to all waters and landscape features that may contribute to water quality.



Virginia Rail . . . kid-dik, kid-dik, kid-dik

Rallus limicola Viellot

By Delores Cole

Virginia Rails are small, secretive, waterbirds in the family Rallidae. These rails are more often heard than seen. They are mainly brown with reddish-brown legs, gray cheeks, slight white stripe over the eye, strong legs, and a long, slightly curved bill. Wings are rich chestnut with a 1-mm long claw on the outer digit. Legs and bill are reddish and flanks are banded black and white. Sexes are similar in plumage, but females are smaller than males. There is no way to tell a male from a female in the field.

Virginia Rails feed on a variety of aquatic insects such as beetles and flies. They probe with their bill in mud or shallow water, also picking up food by sight. They also eat slugs, snails, earthworms, and small fish. Compared to Soras, Virginia Rails consume more animal food, but Virginia Rails will eat aquatic plants and seeds, especially in the fall and winter.

The populations of Virginia Rails in Ohio are migratory, although there are some records where some have tried to make it through the winter. Spring migrants may arrive as early as late March and leave us sometime by the beginning of October. They prefer large cattail marshes with a water depth of one half to one and one half feet deep for their breeding grounds. Their populations are dependent on the availability of wetland habitat.

This elusive freshwater marsh bird is sometimes detected by its call- "kid-dik, kid-dik, kid-dik, kid-dik" and is more easily heard at night. Like other rails, the Virginia Rail prefers to escape intruders by running through protective marsh vegetation rather than by flying. It is a quick runner. When it does take wing, it often flies only a few yards before slipping back out of sight into the marsh. De-

spite its apparently weak flight, it migrates long distances each year.

Breeding Virginia rails are monogamous and territorial. As pair bonds are formed, pairs engage in preening each other, courtship displays where the

male bows and runs around the female with his wings raised, exchanges of calls, and vigorous defense of their territory. In Ohio, both sexes build their well-concealed nest in early May, adding material as eggs are being laid and incubated. The nest is a loosely woven basket made of marsh plants with a living plant canopy. By late May the female lays 5-13 brown-spotted buff-colored eggs, and both female and male incubate. Young develop very quickly and leave the nest 3-4 days after hatching in June. They can forage independently within 7 days of hatching. Both parents continue to defend the young through August.



This bird is one of the species monitored in The Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program.

If you have not renewed your Ohio Wetlands Association membership, it is not too late!
All membership dues are tax-deductible.
Renew using PayPal at www.ohwetlands.org or mail in the form on the back of this newsletter issue. Thank You!



Ohio Wetlands Association

P.O. Box 3
Amherst, Ohio 44001

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Wetlands for a Better Ohio

Issue

November 2014

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	We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your membership and donation is fully tax-deductible.									
MAIL TO: OWA PO BOX 3 AMHERST, OH 44001	<table><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$20 - Individual</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$30 - Family</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 - Heron</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$10 - Student</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$40 - Organization</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 - Rail</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$10 - Senior</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 - Business</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 - Swan</td></tr></table> <p>Donation: _____</p> <p>Total Enclosed: _____</p> <p>NAME: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____</p> <p>PHONE: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>Email is the default newsletter delivery method. Contact us for US mail delivery at 440 225-1279.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact me, I would like to volunteer with Ohio Wetlands Association.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 - Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30 - Family	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 - Heron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10 - Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40 - Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 - Rail	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10 - Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 - Business	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 - Swan
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You can renew your membership online using PayPal at www.OHwetlands.org