

## **Transcript**

### **Frontier Boat Launch Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

GARY: Welcome everyone, to the Marietta unit of the Athens Ranger District for the Wayne National Forest. I'm Gary Chancey, the acting District Ranger and also the master of ceremonies for today. The Marietta unit is almost 65,000 acres in size, and contains some of the most beautiful scenery in Ohio, as we see here today. I mean, this is a beautiful location, and no rain as an added bonus too, right guys? All right, so the beautiful forested hills that are in this area, are just beautiful. Rolling farmlands and streams that offer fishing and canoeing opportunities along, of course, the Ohio River here, it's just beautiful.

Among some of the highlights of the Marietta unit is the Leith Run Recreation Area, just down the way, that offers an abundance of opportunities for camping, fishing, right here on the river, and shelters for group picnicking, maybe on the way back to your home or wherever you came from today. You might want to take time to stop in and take a look at the recreation area. It's a great place to visit. It's also home to the annual Leith Run Fishing Derby, held in June. This year, it will be held on June the 12<sup>th</sup>. It's a free fishing derby for kids. It's also on National Get Outdoors Day.

Also here on the unit, you've got State Route 26, which is a national forest covered bridge scenic byway along the Little Muskingum River. There are five Forest Service campgrounds along the way, and I can assure you, the grass has been mowed because I was out there the other day helping out, along with many other Forest Service employees here today. Over 80 miles of hiking, mountain biking and horse trails are here. The North Country National Scenic Trail comes through the Wayne, and now, thanks to a partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft, the forest can add the Frontier boat launch facility to the list of attractions. And of course today, we are here to celebrate the opening of this new recreation area.

Up next on the agenda is recognizing some of our folks that are here today. We certainly appreciate Jo Reyer, Forest Supervisor, being here today. We have Glen Cobb. He's the Deputy Director for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. We have Bill McGarity also, acting chief for Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft. We have Ben Keeler, field representative for Congressman Bill Johnson. We have the Mayor of New Matamoras, Dennis Agin. We have County Commissioners Steve Webber and Cora Marshall. Thank you for coming today. Appreciate it very much. Vesta Kidd, president of FLEDA, the Frontier Local Economic Development Association. Certainly appreciate you coming today as well. And Jeri Knowlton, Executive Director for the Marietta Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Also today, Steve Williams is here with us with ODOT, Deputy Director for District 10. One person who we all miss being here today, is Sam Kidd. Many of you know him. He passed away shortly after the groundbreaking ceremony on October 26, 2009, at this location. Sam was very active in this community and was the president of the Frontier Local Economic Development Association, or better known as FLEDA. When it came to bridging the gap between the Wayne National Forest and this construction project, Sam and FLEDA helped connect us with the local community. We certainly appreciate that. And today, we are happy of course, to have Vesta here with us, and she'll be having some comments later, and of course, she's now the president of FLEDA, carrying that onward.

We'd like now for the benediction, with Pastor Dennis Williams, with the United Methodist Church in New Matamoras. Please come up.

PASTOR WILLIAMS: Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, as we gather on the banks of the beautiful Ohio River, we stand in awe of your creation. Lord, as we gather here, we ask a special blessing on all of the individuals and organizations that took a part in that this facility might be made available to us. Lord, we thank you for this beautiful place. We thank you for the opportunities that we have, as individuals and families, to take part in this, as people gather to have fun, to observe the beautiful scenery along the banks of the river. We ask that you would be with them in a special way.

Lord, we know that it is dangerous to be on the river at times, and lord we pray that all would come on the river soberly and with attention to what they are doing. We pray that all would consider courtesy and safety utmost, but that all may have enjoyment as they appreciate this beautiful facility. And now as we continue our service today, we ask that you would be among us and bless this proceeding, bless this community and all the visitors that come here. In the name of our savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

GARY: Thank you Pastor Williams. Today we include a flag raising ceremony. Thanks to the DJ Group from Beverly, Ohio. Jerry Welch, president of the company, a service disabled veteran who served in Vietnam, donated the flagpole along with having it installed. Of course, he was the contractor for this site. Jerry partnered with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who donated the flag as well. He also worked with the American Flag and Pole Company of Marietta to get everything here today, and getting it here in time, in between the rain showers. A plaque will be mounted nearby the flagpole to honor present, past and future veterans. And please stand for the flag raising ceremony.

We'd like to thank Brian Schwab (sp?) for participating in today's ceremony from Cub Scout Pack 250. He helped with the flag there, and also the veterans groups from 6387 and of course, 5108, New Matamoras and Marietta.

Up next is the Pledge of Allegiance with Heather Booth. She's the vice president of the student council at the Frontier High and Middle School. If she will please come up..

HEATHER: I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

GARY: Please be seated. Our first speaker today is Jo Reyer, forest supervisor for the Wayne National Forest. Jo.

JO: Thank you, Gary, and welcome everybody. It's great to see such a good turnout and we have a beautiful day. The Frontier Boat Launch is the culmination of years of planning, designing and implementing, and I wanted to recognize some folks here today. The firm that designed – I'm looking for them – there they are. The architects are here. The DJ Group. The contracting crew. Raise your hands. All right. The whole crew is here, I think. And I really want to thank the Ohio D&R Division of Watercraft. They provided most of the funding for this project. Also FLEDA and the community. Without your vision and support, we wouldn't be here today. Thank you so much. Sam Kidd would be very proud.

I also wanted to mention some of our employees from the Wayne National Forest that have worked on this project. Steve Marchi and Chris Wilson, our engineers. Yeah, raise your hands as I say your name. Our contracting officer was not able to be here today, Mark Corse. We have Tom Thompson, from the Marietta office. He did the oil and gas work with the permittee that we have here. Pam Myer worked on the grant. Cheryl Coon and Nick Galentin did a lot of the plantings around here. Ann Kramer and Chris Euler did some emergency artifact recovery out here. There were artifacts. Heritage resources. Mike Reebeck (sp?), where's Mike? Mike was the inspector. He was the hard-nosed inspector for the project. Darryl Stevens (sp?) did drafting and inspection. Art Martin, Dave Greenwood, Warren Tucker, did the timber removal contract here. Also want to thank Gary. Gary has been our acting District Ranger for a couple of weeks now, since DeVela Clark moved on to become the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Monongahela National Forest.

I want to close with remarks from DeVela, because DeVela is so much more eloquent than I am. OK. DeVela says, I'd like to begin by thanking everyone for allowing a few moments to share my thoughts about this project. Those that know me and my love for public speaking know this will be brief. Also, for the Forest Service staff, no, he did not insist this event take place after he safely moved to the other side of the river. However, he realizes there are many people who made substantial contributions to the project's success, who are not here with you today. Former forest supervisors, former state forester and directors and elected officials and staffers, to name a few. Now, other public servants who have the same passion, fulfill these positions.

What makes this project special and successful is how it was proposed and supported by lifelong, dedicated community leaders, like Sam Kidd, and the local residents represented by FLEDA. Without their support, you would be standing within a white pine timber stand. Now you're at a modern recreational facility which is an accessible gateway to the beautiful Ohio River, all with no user fees. In these hard economic times, our agencies and communities must continue to find ways to work together and make Southeast Ohio a better place. Not only to stimulate our local economies and meet our current public's recreational demands, but to create a place for future generations to enjoy.

In closing, I challenge us all to continue to work together and build on what has been established here today. As always, it has been a pleasure and honor to have worked with each of you. Congratulations, and I look forward to seeing you at the next celebration.

And with that, I want to introduce our acting District Ranger for the Athens District, including the Marietta unit, will be Chad Wilberger. Chad's over here.

(applause).

Chad is our Recreation Program Manager, and we're in the process of finding a new district ranger on a permanent basis. We want to make sure that that person is good at working with partners and working with communities, because that's really important to us, and we've got some great candidates. And I think it'll be two to four months that Chad will be acting before we get a replacement for DeVela.

Gary wants me to tell you that I'm also moving on to the Hiawatha National Forest in the upper peninsula of Michigan soon, and so they have not started the process yet for a replacement behind me. That will come along in a few months and we'll have somebody acting in the meantime for that. That's it. Let's get on with the celebration. Thank you.

(applause)

GARY: Mr. Cobb, if you will, please come up.

GLEN: It's my pleasure to welcome you here today at Frontier Launch Ramp. This is a wonderful partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. I think it's very fitting, whoever put this together, to have our veterans involved, seeing that this is Memorial Day weekend upcoming, and if you would, join me in giving those folks, our veterans, a nice round of applause.

(applause).

I recently started as Deputy Director. I spent most of my career in Ohio State parks, but with this spring, in my new position, with all the rain that we've had, I asked our acting chief of Division of Watercraft, if he had any plans for an ark (laughter). He thought that he did. He'd have to go back and dust off some of the plans, but the pastor here said, don't worry about that. God's taking care of that. We don't have to worry about that. That's why we have rainbows in the sky, so, we'll settle on a Boston Whaler. (laughter).

Boating remains very popular in the state of Ohio. Last year, we had a record number of registrations, boater registrations, at 424,000. I think that is quite significant. Ohio remains ninth in the nation for total number of registrations. You know, this day and age, right, at the present time where we're at, jobs are very, very important. And tourism ranks in Ohio the third largest industry at 38 billion economic dollars per year. Recreational boating, in Ohio, accounts for \$3.2 billion in economic activity. I think that's very significant. You don't often think about boating as part of jobs and tourism and sustaining in our economy, but it is. And boaters in Ohio take this very seriously and we appreciate the work of the Ohio Division of Watercraft.

We've also seen here, in Washington County, since 2005, a 10% increase in the number of registrations, which I think is significant. We're on an upward trend. Boaters are surveyed often by the Division of Watercraft. We feel that in the Department of Natural Resources, that if we're going to be effective with the monies that we're provided, whether it's boater registration funds, whether it's general revenue funds, we need to be in touch with the users. And they, every so many years, the Ohio Division of Watercraft goes around the state and they survey boaters and ask what they want. Number one on that list is boater access. And the Division of Watercraft has responded to that with a facility, such a fine facility as this. You also find the Division of Watercraft has also given out over \$38 million since 1997 to local communities to help with boater access which is wonderful.

In this particular case, Division of Watercraft awarded \$2.2 million to this effort and we appreciate our partnership with the Forest Service. The new Frontier ramp replaces the old Leith Run boat ramp, and so the next closest public facility is Marietta, and so it's good that we have this facility here. In an era of budget concerns, the Division of Watercraft made the money available, not with general revenue funds, not with tax dollars. The majority of funding to the Division of Watercraft comes from seven-eighths of 1% of a marine fuel tax. That's the lion's share of their budget. And then also boater registrations, which I mentioned.

Waterway Safety Fund is the dedicated fund that was created by the 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in 1955. And the fund as I mentioned, is comprised of the registration and titling fees, and also the marine fuel tax.

Ohioans find an abundance of water to boat on. On the Ohio River, they have a 451-mile stretch. They have 51% of the surface water at Lake Erie, and there is over 600 lakes, ponds, streams throughout Ohio that they can boat.

In closing, this is Memorial Day weekend. This is generally the kickoff for the big summer push on recreation and boating. I would be remiss if I did not mention this, but we want to ensure that folks have fun boating and the way to ensure that is that they boat safely. And last year, in 2010, we had over 157 boating accidents in the state of Ohio, with approximately 16 fatalities, on average, per year. Now that number has been trending downward. I think the Division of Watercraft's been getting the message out.

A couple of things to remember when we're boating. Number one is life jackets. We just had a tragic accident up in Akron about a month ago. We had three individuals go out on the water in a very small boat. Rough winds came up, and there was only two life jackets, and neither one – none of the three – were wearing life jackets. So life jackets are crucial to boater safety, and if I can't stress anything more, that is the piece that I want to get across.

And also, what we find is, on average, between a third and half of the fatalities related to boating involve alcohol. Alcohol and boating do not mix. So look, we want you to go out there and have a great time, but also be safe. Have a wonderful weekend. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your support for boating in Ohio.

(applause).

GARY: Thank you, Glen. Bill McGarity please.

BILL: Thanks Gary. Glen just took every one of my speaking points, so thank you very much. I just wanted to – it's great to be here today. It's a great facility. I do want to start by recognizing some of our Division of Watercraft staff. Julie McQuade, who is our capital improvements coordinator, who oversaw this project and handles our cooperative boating facility grant program. Gives away a lot of money every year for boating related facilities only, and she does a great job. Also next to her is Brenda Sams. Brenda's our regional manager. Brenda's area covers all the way over west of Grand Lake St. Marys, all the way over to the Ohio River, so she has a big area to cover. Also here today is Cathy Janosko. She is a area supervisor at our Cambridge field office with – her responsibility is Eastern and Southeastern Ohio. And also we have on the boat today, that are hopefully going to launch us successfully, everybody's watching you guys, is Officer Moore and Officer Plumley. So, after we're all done, we're going to go down there for an initial launching of the vessel.

I just want to point out a couple of features of this boat ramp. There is a – it is handicap accessible. It's totally handicap accessible. That's very important. We try to work that into all of our facilities, so everybody can use them, regardless of whether they're able-body or they have some limiting disability. Way out front, there are gates out here to close the facility down when the weather, or the river, is up. And Glen mentioned about a fatality that took place up on the – near Akron. And you would think, well why would – you know, people know not to boat when the boat when the water's bad, or the river's up, or something, but people don't always make the right decisions when it comes to boating. So having that gate to be able to – you know, somebody being able to close it, the forest staff to close it when the water's up. Keep people from making a bad decision about going boating. So, we appreciate that.

The facility has 70 car-truck-trailer combination parking spaces. It has, I think, 13 passenger spaces, so it's ample parking but I'm sure after a couple of years of use, the Forest Service will be asking for some money for additional parking, because that seems to happen with a lot of our facilities. We also have boarding docks. Usually, on facilities like this, our boarding docks are made of wood. These are concrete, so that we don't have to remove them when the water level gets too high, so we'll eliminate that type of a maintenance problem. And there's also some baffles built in underneath those boarding docks, so when the water starts to come back down, it can blow away some of the debris that's left on the ramp, so that's some stuff that was – some features that were designed into this. Also, those big posts down there, when the water level gets high enough, markers will come out to warn the barges about the fact that there's a facility here, and hopefully they'll steer clear of it and not take out the fencing and part of the boarding dock. So another nice feature of this.

I can't emphasize enough, the importance of having the cooperative boating facility program in place, to be able to return boaters' dollars to the communities across the state of Ohio. The success of these boating access projects rely upon the partnerships, both at the local level, city, county, state and at the federal level, like to here today, with the Forest Service. I cannot think of a better time to dedicate this facility, except this is National Safe Boating Week. It started last weekend. It'll run through this Memorial Day weekend. Glen mentioned this is the unofficial start of the boating season. Hopefully the weather will cooperate.

So in closing, I'd just like to say, if you're going to be out boating this weekend, boat safe, boat smart and boat sober. Thank you.

(applause)

GARY: Ben Keeler, please come up.

BEN: I'm Ben Keeler. I am the Deputy Communications Director for Congressman Bill Johnson out of the Marietta office. It's great to be here on behalf of the Congressman and thanks for the invitation. I've had the privilege to work with Gary and Jo and Chad and the Forest Service on a few issues already. I'm looking forward to working with you guys in the future. Also, Mr. Cobb, you took all of my talking points too. I did some quick editing, so I'll keep it short with Representative Thompson after me. Hopefully, this is the first of many new projects in this area. From a recreation standpoint, this has long been an under-served area. And now that we have this brand new facility here, year round, that's going to be used by the public, for free, and that's a great thing for the area. And it offers new recreation opportunities for the residents of Washington and Monroe counties.

This ramp provides a great opening to showcase our area to all the visitors. As the people from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources mentioned, boating and tourism is a big component of Ohio's economy. And this ramp can be an important piece of the economic development puzzle. It's also, as other people have mentioned, a great example of what the state and federal agencies can do when we work together. As you see, it's – this project, I know, it's been a little bit delayed by the rain, which is out of everyone's control, but it looks really, really nice. So once again, thanks again to the Wayne National Forest and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for working so hard on this facility. As you call can see, their determination has definitely paid off. Thanks.

(applause)

GARY: And joining us, Andy Thompson, state representative from Ohio's 93<sup>rd</sup> district. Welcome sir.

ANDY: Good afternoon. It was a – came directly from Columbus this morning and just barely got here in time, but I'm glad to be here because this is, as all the previous speakers have noted, an outstanding example of the partnership here. State government needs to work with the federal government to make sure that nothing stands in the way of opportunities for great recreation, and I think this is a prime example of it. And as we said, most of the talking points have been taken. But when Ohio – Ohio for many, many years, has considered our part of the state, the recreation playground. We have so much wonderful, natural beauty here, and we also have wonderful natural resources in the ground. And one of those things that's great about the natural resources in the ground is, I think that's going to bring tremendous prosperity to our part of the state. We were in the legislature yesterday voting on a drilling bill, which related to some our public lands, and while that –, some people consider that something that they're not in favor of, I think the good thing about it, in working with the Department of Natural Resources, is that that can provide money flows to enable us to better maintain our facilities.



I want to reassure everyone that as we go forward with this, we have many safeguards in place to ensure that we're going to do it in a way that is environmentally responsible and as I said, capital projects here in the state are very important. Projects like this one that we have here, but also, in our state parks, which are badly in need of repair and maintenance. I believe the figure was \$500,000,000 behind in capital projects, so this is a good partnership with DNR and I was with Director Mustine in Monroe County last week and I had a chance to see what's going on there.

So, as we play that leadership role in the state of Ohio, as the recreation playground, we want additional access. We want to manage it well. We want to be attentive to safety concerns, because if something goes wrong in the safety realm, then that's going to change the opportunities that our citizens have to enjoy here. But we have, as I said, a fantastic partnership with the Forest Service and Ohio DNR. The role that I play is, of course I'm showing up at ribbon cuttings, but more importantly, to make sure that I'm an advocate for those of you in this area, so if you have concerns and if you feel like there's something that we can do better, please be in touch with me and let me know how I can be of help. And I will, as I said, be working very closely with ODNR to make sure that we maximize the opportunities, not just for you, but for the other residents of Ohio who come and get a chance to explore what we know is the most beautiful of the state.

So thank you very much for coming today. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your devotion to this area, and there are good things coming for Ohio. So, glad to be part of that and I am glad to have your help and support.

(applause).

GARY: And up next is Mayor Agin.

DENNIS: I'd first like to thank the members of the VFW for being here today, and on this Memorial Day weekend, for their service to the country (applause) that we're able to have something like this. I'd also like to introduce from the Matamoras Village Council, he's someplace, Roger Weddle, and also from the Grand View township, trustee Danny Riggs .

(applause).

Now I'd like to talk about Sam Kidd. Sam was – the best way to describe him, I guess, would be the modern day Will Rogers. Sam could walk into your office, tell you a joke, ask you to do something you didn't want to do, but by the time he got done talking about it, you were convinced it was your idea and you couldn't wait to do it. Thing about Sam, he loved Washington County. He really did. And anything that he could do to better this area, he would do it.

On the boat ramp, this is beautiful. This is just great. This is what this area needs, just that punch in the arm that hopefully will carry us to the next step. I always consider the mid-Ohio valley the best kept secret in Ohio. And maybe other people will discover that. That's my hope. It's been interesting for those of us that live here and travel State Route 7 every day, to watch this go from a field to this beautiful facility. And we want to thank everyone that was involved.

They tell me there's three things about giving a speech. If you want to be seen, you stand up. If you want to be heard, you talk loudly. And if you want to be appreciated, you sit down. So thank you all very much.

(applause).

GARY: Up next, Vesta Kidd please. Appreciate her being here today.

VESTA: I had actually pawned this job off onto somebody else, and then somebody made me feel bad, so – we won't say who, Gary. (laughter). On behalf of FLEDA, I would like to welcome everybody here today. This is an idea that became a reality. I know, personally, someone who was really excited about this. Sam. But first of all, I'm not a real good public speaker. I talk in front of senior citizens every day, and I figure half of them don't hear me, and the other half don't comprehend what I'm saying, so it's OK, so here we go.

On October 26, 2009, I left home at 4:00 in the morning to go on a trip with my sister. Sam was up. He was pretty excited about that day, because he was coming here for the breaking – groundbreaking of the boat ramp. At around 9:00 he called me. He'd gone and bought new suspenders for this occasion, and they were camouflage. (laughter). Ooh, if you knew Sam, this was a treat, let me tell you. He also wanted to know where I'd put his jar of pickles, because he had to have pickles. And some people know what these pickles was for, but I had no idea. At 2:40, he called again. I got to hear all about the boat ramp. Every detail. Parking. Camp sites. How it was going down to the river. How it was handicap accessible. He talked all about the people that was here. He told me why he needed those pickles, and I'm not going to say, but if DeVela was here, he would tell you. He said he walked with his walker. Those of you knew that he'd just got his prosthetic leg on Thursday and this was a Monday and he was excited.

He said he loved me and he was happy. At 3:01, he was gone. But he died doing what he was happy doing. He had the perfect day. He lived, doing what he believed in, up until then. He saw the benefit of this ramp being built in this area, and the potential, and all this started with an idea. Now, I'm turning this over to Mr. Brightbill (sp?). He's going to finish this. (laughter).

(applause).

BRIGHTBILL: Yeah, Vesta, thanks a lot. There's not really much to say, following that. I do want to say, again on behalf of FLEDA, that this is a fantastic opportunity for the community. I think it's going to provide the resource for people not just in this area, and I want people from this area to obviously use this, but I want people in Akron to use it and I want people in Canton and Cleveland to use it. Because they're going to bring money into our small businesses and benefit the economic activity of the region. I had some things to say about Sam, but I'm not going to try to say anything about Sam after Vesta. Except to say that as President of FLEDA, he started a lot of things and helped make a lot of things possible to promote this area. The annual dinner that we have, where we recognize citizens and we recognize businesses in the community. The scholarship fund that a couple of Frontier students receive financial help to go to school. The fall foliage tour. Those of you know that he always was promoting that and working at the Grange, taking care of that.

Something that you might not know about that Sam did. We, the agency that I work for, has, for several years, brought a group of students from North Olmstead, Ohio, down here for a service learning project. And I think the second or third year that we were involved with that, Sam got involved because they needed some place for the kids to work. And so he, the Grange, and they were working on Sitka Church and Leith Run, actually. So Sam got involved. Well Sam got the idea, as those of you that know him, know that he did many things, tell stories and bad jokes, but he also had a lot of ideas. So he had the idea that Frontier students ought to have this experience. So Sam worked year round with some students at – various students at Frontier, and actually started a service learning program here. And they did some things during the school year, and then in the fall, he would take them up to North Olmstead.

But part of the process when the kids were down here, Sam of course, couldn't just have them work at the grange or have them work at Sitka Church. He'd take them out 26, and they'd go to Boland's (sp?) Dairy Farm and then he'd take them out and show them the covered bridges. And – this must be his favorite place in the world, I don't know – he had to take me there too. Lew Wetzel, for those of you that know Sam, Lew Wetzel's cave was a big deal to Sam. He had to show everybody that. So he promoted the area in lots of different ways. And as Vesta said, his last official act as president of FLEDA, was here at the groundbreaking ceremonies for the boat ramp.

I'd like to thank the Forest Service and Department of Natural Resources, their Division of Watercraft. And also, DeVela was mentioned, but DeVela, when he was here, spent a lot of time, attended most of our FLEDA meetings. Many of our FLEDA meetings, at least. And really worked hard to involve this local community in the activities of the Wayne, and I think it would be safe to say, serve as a bridge between a community that might not always have been as responsive or as welcoming or felt that the Wayne was as welcoming as it could be. So he did a

great job. And this is a perfect example of what can be done when state and federal and local people work together. So thanks a lot.

(applause).

GARY: Thanks Jerry (sp?). I appreciate it very much. We have one more speaker, Jeri Knowlton, our last speaker for today, and the executive director for the Marietta Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, which I bet looks forward to promoting this location.

JERI: Absolutely, can't wait. What a labor of love. And a tribute to everyone's hard work. This is amazing. I have not been this far up the river, being a newbie to the area, and so this was a great drive today, and certainly a delightful visit down to the waterfront. Absolutely beautiful. And Mr. Cobb stole a good portion of this. So guess what? It's going to be short. (laughter).

The boat launch is soon to be a very important asset to Wayne National Forest, our community and certainly to our state. In addition to this incredible launch site, we've heard of the many opportunities that the outdoor recreational activities bring to the area. And it draws not just people within the community, but around the state and our neighboring states as well. A lot of opportunity to get these recreational activities, exercise and bring pleasure to your daily life. And it is a quality of life that is truly an Ohio experience unto his own, wouldn't you agree?

The Wayne National Forest waterways are very popular to the paddlers and the power boaters and the Ski-Dooers and they bring people from throughout Ohio, and the neighboring states and beyond. It is a popular contributor to the good life in Ohio, and it is a part of that good life that draws people to the great outdoors and it contributes to those tourism dollars that we heard about earlier. It is a \$38 billion dollar a year industry, and it ranks number third in the state, in terms of industry support. And \$10 billion dollars in direct earnings for more than half of the Ohioans who are employed by the tourism industry. When it comes to boating, you know, again, Ohio ranks within the top ten at number nine, for boating. So there is an incredible opportunity for me to go out and promote this to others across the state and around our neighboring states as well.

It is estimated that three million Ohioans enjoy boating each year, and those boating jobs account for 26,000 jobs, just related to boating. Anyway, since 1999, 38.8 million in grand funding has been provided by the Division of Watercraft Cooperative Boating Facility grants for public boat launches such as this. Opportunities abound for what this boat launch can do, and what it can mean for this particular area. As we've seen, boating contributes tremendously to the economy. There are small business opportunities for bait and tackle, boat fuel gear, apparel safety, etc. Here's to another great asset in Washington County, right?

Another opportunity to contribute to the good life that we all share and enjoy.  
Thanks for having me today.

(applause).

GARY: All right. The next part of our ceremony. Before we have the ribbon cutting ceremony, we wanted, in honor of Memorial Day, we want to take this opportunity to honor our fallen veterans and those still missing in action, and prisoners of war. Let us not forget the service members who are serving in the military today, around the world, helping protect our freedom. At this time, we're going to go ahead and have the playing of taps in honor of Memorial Day, and I hope our veterans over there are ready, and we want to stand for this please.

(gun salute, *Taps*)

Thanks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for their outstanding performance today in participating in our ceremony. At this time, we're going to have ribbon cutting, and the way we're going to do this, we're going to have the folks with the Division of Watercraft, are going to back down into the water. And we're going to have a ribbon in the front and then we're going to have our dignitaries that are here today, which I'd like to include the trustees and county commissioners and also our friends from the Coast Guard are here today as well. So if you will make your way forward please. Thank you. Be careful walking, OK.

END OF TRANSCRIPT