



Summer 2018

green watch



The Road to Fair Representation



Will Wayne National Forest Save the White Oak?



A Day Without Water



Your Voice is Important and Powerful



Ohio Environmental Council

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The Road to Fair Representation



Heather Taylor-Miesle,
Executive Director

Ohio's congressional delegation has had the same players for years. The reason is obvious. Just look at a map of Ohio's districts—they have been gerrymandered to ensure incumbents are re-elected.

The OEC has done extensive research that shows Ohioans overwhelmingly support initiatives to address environmental issues, yet our congressional members' track records don't reflect public sentiment.

At the crux of this disconnect is a democracy that is not accountable to the people.

In March 2017, the OEC partnered with Common Cause Ohio and the Ohio League of Women Voters to reform one broken piece of Ohio's democracy: gerrymandering. The story of the gerrymander is not new. For generations, political parties took advantage of their elected positions to maintain power. Now, technology has allowed gerrymandering to become a fine-tuned science. We could not wait any longer to fix this problem. That's why the Fair Districts=Fair Elections coalition decided to seek a referendum to enshrine a redistricting reform amendment in the Ohio Constitution.

Clearly, Ohioans noticed the lack of representation, too. When we began our petition drive, it caught fire. In just a few months, thanks to hundreds of volunteers, the Fair Districts=Fair Elections coalition had more than 200,000



Fair Districts=Fair Elections volunteers pack the Statehouse to testify.

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General Counsel
- Ricardo Granados,**
Public Lands Coordinator
- Melanie Houston, MS,**
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- Nathan Johnson, Esq.,**
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valid signatures collected across all 88 counties. Statehouse leaders took notice and scrambled to create a process to counter the volunteer movement by creating a redistricting reform working group of lawmakers.

Come January, I found myself at the negotiating table with Statehouse leaders in an attempt to strike a deal. It took long hours, constant back-and-forth communications, and meetings at odd hours (even during the Super Bowl), but in February, we got a win for redistricting reform by having Democratic and Republican lawmakers come together to agree to a compromise amendment that reflected the values and intent of the citizen-led effort. The resulting proposal had widespread bipartisan support. The State Senate voted unanimously and the House voted 83-10 to pass the resolution.

We were able to create a redistricting process that:

- Keeps communities together. County splits are severely limited under this proposal, which means neighbors won't be voting for different congressional candidates.
- Is bipartisan. The General Assembly will have to draw districts that pass with a 3/5th vote of support in each chamber and 50% minority party support.
- Invites public input. The map will also be treated as a bill, which is subject to a governor's veto, and referendum by the people. Members of the public can submit their own versions of the district maps for consideration by the legislature. This process will be open and transparent.

Ohioans overwhelmingly voted for this process when it was on the May 8 ballot as Issue 1. This victory will change Ohio's constitution so democracy can thrive in our state and lawmakers are held accountable to their constituents.

We cannot thank enough the hundreds of volunteers with the Fair Districts=Fair Elections Coalition for providing us with the leverage needed to make this historic deal. With our May 8 victory, we will have fair congressional districts for the 2022 general election, following the 2020 census.

With our congressional delegation beholden to the voters, they will be more willing to take up issues that matter to all Ohioans, like ensuring access to clean air, water, and land.

Will Wayne National Forest Save the White Oak?



Nathan Johnson,
Director, Public Lands

The U.S. Forest Service just made a very big announcement about the Wayne National Forest. The Wayne's Forest Plan is open to revision! As part of this multi-year public engagement process, Ohioans now have the chance to determine, in part, the future of the Wayne, Ohio's only national forest.

I couldn't be more excited about Ohio residents getting to weigh in on the Wayne's plan revision. These plans often last 15-30 years, making this a once-in-a-generation public lands opportunity.

Will the Wayne be a haven for mature, interior forest habitat and sensitive wildlife species? Will it be a destination for hikers, bikers, horseback riders, birders, campers, and families and individuals looking to get away from it all? Or, will large swaths of the Wayne be sacrificed on the fossil fuel altar, scarred by pipelines and wellpads? We have a say.

The OEC has a lot of tools in its toolbox: top-notch communications, experience running local and statewide issue campaigns, and policy and legal expertise. We will be pulling out all the stops as we launch a major campaign for the Wayne. Our core objectives: (1) keep the Wayne free from pipelines and oil and gas development; (2) win enhanced protections for the Wayne's old growth areas; (3) secure special status for Ohio's most important (and majestic) wildlife tree, the imperiled white oak; (4) and propel the OEC's Million Voices Movement to impressive new heights.

There will be more to say about all of these core objectives, but I'd like to use this opportunity to tell you more about the plight of the white oak and what it means for Ohio's forests.

The white oak is the most important wildlife tree in Ohio, and is the keystone tree species in many Ohio forests. Many forest mammals and birds depend on its acorns. Unlike oak species in the red oak family, which tend to produce very bitter crops, the acorns of white oak are relatively sweet and low in tannin. They're the preferred food of the state-endangered black bear, whose reproductive success depends on good acorn crops.

A whole world exists in the white oak. Oaks host caterpillars of more moth and butterfly species than any other tree at 534 known species. Of course, this is great for the moths and butterflies, but it's also vital for many of Ohio's migrant songbirds, which depend mightily on these little wrigglers for their survival. For example, the imperiled Cerulean warbler is largely dependent on older, larger white oaks for nesting and reproductive success. The Cerulean warbler is an important indicator species for healthy and mature interior forest habitat. They have also declined more dramatically in recent years than any of our other migrant songbirds. The recovery and future success of white oak is key to their survival.

On top of all of these great qualities, white oak also provides important habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat and the federally threatened Northern long-eared bat, both of which enjoy roosting in the very distinctive and large, platy bark that older white oaks develop on their upper trunks and branches.

Truly, the bark of an old and majestic white oak is one of the most aesthetically appealing sights

600-year-old white oak in Logan, Ohio.



in any eastern forest. When allowed to grow old, the tree often exhibits impressive girth and spread with twisting branches. White oak is, in my humble estimation, the most beautiful of Ohio's native tree species. Oh, and did I mention, it's also one of the longest living organisms in the Eastern United States, commonly living for 300 to 600 years (when allowed to), with some specimens living a good deal longer.

Sadly, though, white oak is in serious decline in Ohio, and it's being unsustainably harvested in the state. White oak is second only to the disease-devastated white ash in volume loss in Ohio since 2011. The wood of white oak is durable, attractive, and watertight (think wine and whiskey barrels). It's second only to black walnut in price fetched on the timber market. As a result, perhaps, these special trees are being logged much faster than they can grow back.

As white oak is unsustainably harvested on our private forests, the Wayne can stand as the public fortress for white oak recovery. Ohio's only national forest can be the backbone of white oak restoration, and, perhaps someday, the source of a return to dominance for this peerless forest keystone.

Thanks to donors like you, the OEC is able to reach thousands of Ohioans everyday with opportunities to learn and take action. This is a pivotal moment for the Wayne, and your generous contributions will be hard at work to create a beautiful future for Ohio's only national forest.

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/oecwayne>

How the Dayton Area Solar Co-op Became a Reality

By Philip J. Leppla with Miranda Leppla, Clean Energy Attorney for the Ohio

My wife and I really wanted to power our home with solar. But, what started as just an idea quickly snowballed into a county-wide solar initiative.

After explaining that a co-op would lower the cost of our system and encourage others in our neighborhood to install solar, my sister Miranda put me in touch with Luke Selfridge of Solar United Neighbors of Ohio (then known as Ohio SUN).

The Solar United Neighbors co-op model is a group of homeowners in a defined geographic area who use their combined bulk buying power to save on the total cost of going solar.

Solar installers face significant marketing costs trying to find solar customers. By forming a group of interested buyers, co-op members can receive a significant discount because the group has done some of the work for the installer. Co-op members also have the benefit of working with a group and with Solar United Neighbors of Ohio, who helps educate and guide them through the selection of an installer and the installation process.

After speaking with Luke and reviewing Solar United Neighbors' website, I composed an email and Facebook post and put together an information sheet for my historic neighborhood, McPherson Town, on the edge of the Great Miami River.

The response to my email and post on our neighborhood Facebook page was surprising and extremely encouraging, with over 20 households (out of 80 structures in our neighborhood) indicating that they were interested and wanted to know more. I then sent out an email to family, friends, and acquaintances, and encouraged them to spread the word. I set up a Facebook page, titled Montgomery County Solar Co-op, and invited anyone to the page that lived in the Dayton area.

While attempting to gain support for the initiative, I reached out to the City of Dayton, University of Dayton, and local businesses, including Dayton Beer Company and Mudlick Tap House.

I met with the Mayor of Dayton, Nan Whaley, and explained the project. She expressed her support and allowed us to use the City of Dayton's logo. We also received permission to use the University of Dayton logo after meeting with Professor Kevin Hallinan, who created UD's Master's Program in Renewable and Clean Energy. Such support from well-respected entities was very beneficial because it added credibility to the project for those unfamiliar with a solar co-op.



Laura and Marlin Boyd, Farmersville, Ohio



With the backing of the City of Dayton and UD, we chose to change the name to the Dayton Area Solar Co-op.

Our first information session and launch party was held at Mudlick Tap House in downtown Dayton, and featured a speech from Mayor Whaley. The turnout was excellent, as was the turnout at our second information session at Dayton Beer Company. Suddenly, the number of households expressing interest in going solar grew to over 40 households in the Dayton area.

We had reached our critical mass of 30-40 potential roofs to place panels on, which was necessary prior to moving on to the request for proposal (“RFP”) phase. Because of the level of interest, Luke and I decided to divide the Co-op into two geographic areas—Dayton Area Solar Co-ops North and South with State Route 35 as the dividing line. This would give us approximately 20 households in each Co-op.

The RFP phase began with Solar United Neighbors of Ohio reaching out to various solar installation companies in Ohio, requesting proposals or bids to be the sole installer for each Co-op. A handful of each Co-op’s membership volunteered to review the proposals and compare apples-to-apples: the price per watt, types of panels, experience of the installers, etc.

In the end, the North Co-op selected Ohio Power Solutions and the South Co-op selected Appalachian Renewable Power. From that point forward, individuals that had signed on to the Co-ops were contacted by the selected installers, who then evaluated each homeowner’s property to determine the suitability for solar.

The installers provided full estimates for homeowners, and the homeowners then decided whether to move forward with the contract and project or not. To date, we have 7 happy homeowners with new solar panel systems installed, powering their homes directly from the sun, while lowering their energy bills.

The number of installed projects continues to grow with additional solar arrays in the planning process. The more people see our solar panels and hear about the savings, the more their interest grows. We are encouraged and excited each time we hear about another project moving forward.

It is amazing for me personally to stop and reflect on the fact that less than a year and a half ago, this all started because we wanted solar on our garage.

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/oec-clean-energy>



Watch out for white flowers on invasive Garlic Mustard. Dispose of uprooted plants.

Green Isn't Always Good



Ricardo Granados,
Public Lands Coordinator

Invasive plant species, like Japanese honeysuckle, purple loosestrife, and teasel, overrun Ohio's native plant species, which provide critical food supply and biodiversity to Ohio's natural habitats. Invasives spread quickly with little encouragement, taking over vital space and resources

that our native species need. Eradicating them often takes multiple removals and treatments.

Fortunately, you are part of the solution. Overcoming one's "plant blindness" is the first place to start. Learn to identify invasives and find native alternatives at <http://ohiodnr.gov/invasiveplants>. Then you can begin zapping and removing these nasty invaders in your own backyard.

Once you've taken care of your backyard, help out your local park districts and state parks. Spring is a great time to help with invasives removal because plants like honeysuckle are some of the first to sprout leaves, making them conspicuous in the landscape.

"Many hands make light work" is especially true in combatting prolific invasive plants, but many of the groups doing the hard work day in and day out struggle to find volunteers. That's why I am calling on you to save our parks, forests, and precious lands from invasives plant species!

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/oecnnis>

We are spreading the word about invasives spreading through Central Ohio thanks to a generous grant from the Columbus Foundation and the Benva Foundation Field of Interest Fund. Please join these fantastic Central Ohio groups:

- Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW)
- Columbus Ecological Restoration Program (CERP)
- Friends of Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks

Not in Columbus? Here are some statewide resources:

- Ohio Invasives Plant Council
- The Nature Conservancy - Ohio Chapter
- Ohio Natural and Areas and Preserves Association

Pipeline Polluters Should Pony Up



Melanie Houston,
Director, Climate Programs

The OEC is keeping an eye on a proposed pipeline that would cut across the Wayne National Forest.

The OEC plays a unique role as public defender of Ohio's public lands, water, and people. We work within the law to be a voice for folks who are worried about big industry running roughshod over Ohio's most precious natural resources.

Right now, natural gas pipeline projects are all the rage in Ohio as the shale gas boom continues. The Rover pipeline project, owned by Energy Transfer Partners, put Ohio in the national spotlight after over 25 drilling spills, including a release of millions of gallons of

drilling fluid into sensitive wetlands, leaving many outraged. Luckily the Ohio EPA was there from the beginning to fight for Ohioans.

With the potential for environmental impacts, the OEC has a duty to monitor pipeline projects in Ohio. It wasn't long before an application came in that alarmed us. During the Summer of 2017, Columbia Gas and its parent company, TransCanada, started the application process with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to construct the Buckeye Xpress pipeline in Southern Ohio. This pipeline is an expansion of an already-existing pipeline to a larger capacity pipeline. Its proposed route traverses the Wayne National Forest and will impact over 1,400 acres of land throughout the region.

In October, FERC signaled the beginning of the agency's internal environmental review procedures on the Buckeye Xpress. In response, the OEC provided comments on behalf of our thousands of members across the state.

Specifically, we advocated for FERC to analyze all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the Wayne National Forest. This includes the removal of hundreds of acres of forest habitat in the Wayne. We asked the commission to consider all greenhouse gas emissions that could result from the methane transported by the pipeline. We also urged FERC to consider denying the pipeline expansion project or to retire the existing pipeline entirely.

We hoped that these comments would encourage FERC to assess the Buckeye Xpress project with a careful eye toward Ohio's valuable resources and our comments have already made an impact! Earlier this month, FERC specifically referenced our comments when it asked Columbia Gas to respond to our concern that the pipeline violated the Forest Plan for the Wayne National Forest.

Commenting during this process should help FERC more fully consider the environmental impacts of the Buckeye Xpress proposal, while also setting up the OEC for a successful lawsuit should the agency fail to properly assess those impacts. The OEC will closely engage at every step along the environmental review process, advocating for Ohio's air, water, and public lands.

The OEC has a history of holding bad actors accountable and successfully advocating for our environment. This legacy would not be possible without the support of Ohioans like you. As natural gas pipeline construction spreads, the OEC will fight to protect our neighbors' health and well-being, and we know you'll be with us every step of the way.

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/BuckeyeXPress>

A Day Without Water

The stress of dealing with issues related to your drinking water is not something you want to ever think about, but unfortunately, it's a common reality for Ohioans.



Nicholas Mandros,
Northwest Ohio Regional Director

In 2014, Toledoans faced the prospect of going without clean drinking water for days. We all know the story. Health officials were alerted in the middle of the night that things weren't right with the water coming out of the taps. Mass alerts went out. People went door-to-door trying to alert neighbors and protect their community.

The OEC refuses to accept that any Ohioan should go through what Toledoans went through in 2014. That's why on March 22, we continued our tradition of working with local leaders to take action for safe drinking water by holding a World Water Day event in coordination with the Cincinnati Chapter of the NAACP and the City of Cincinnati.

Our panel focused on the importance of clean and safe water and water infrastructure funding. Panelists included Joe Mallory, NAACP Cincinnati Chapter; Cathy Bailey, Greater



The third largest algal bloom on record hit Toledo in Summer 2017.

Cincinnati Water Works; Linda Butler, Lincoln Heights Community Development Corp; and the OEC's Kristy Meyer.

During the event, Cincinnati Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld announced the Mayor's Proclamation recognizing World Water Day.

With over a hundred people in the audience and plenty of elected officials on hand to have concrete conversations about the health of Cincinnati's water, progress was made. The partnerships created and strengthened through events like these are critical to ensuring the conversations about clean water issues continue.

Since the water crisis, Toledo has implemented methods to keep their drinking water safe. However, every summer toxic algae persists and leaves the community in fear. Cincinnatians face similar fears with the health of the Ohio River in the balance.

The OEC will continue to work with our partners to ensure that these Ohioans' fears are heard by decision makers and considered when clean water solutions are developed.

Your contributions to the OEC make it possible to have staff in all four corners of the state to build strong relationships with local leaders and create tangible change for all Ohioans. With your generous support, the OEC will continue to work towards ensuring Ohioans have safe drinking water today and in the future. Thank you!

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/oectoxicalgae>

The U.S. Department of Defense preparing supplies during the 2014 water crisis.





Senator Gardner quoted Marilyn's letter in his public announcement.

Your Voice is Important and Powerful

By Marilyn Evenson

I should know, as Senator Randy Gardner did the right thing for Ohio by publicly announcing that he is against drilling in state parks, quoting the following letter that I wrote to him:

"Sen. Randall L. Gardner,

I urge you to vote against efforts to override Governor Kasich's line item and veto the Oil and Gas Leasing Commission Amendment to the budget bill.

The Leasing Amendment paves the way for oil and gas development in Ohio's state parks and most of Ohio's state-owned public lands. This is completely unacceptable. I love my state parks and state public lands and I want oil and gas operations to stay out of them.

I support the Governor's actions to protect public lands and hope you will, too.

I urge you to vote to protect Ohio's public lands, including our state parks, for present and future generations to enjoy."

What I've learned through writing letters to newspapers and my representatives is that I actually do have the power to influence my decision makers. Even if you've never written a letter to your lawmaker or local newspaper, there are tons of free resources out there to help you get started.

Learn more at <http://theoec.org/advocacy-toolkit/>



The Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

By Alaina McCleery
Development Associate

Last year, three of OEC's millennial staffers hatched an idea for a young professionals program for individuals who care about our environment. From this, OEC Emerging Leaders was born.

The program launched in July 2017 with what was intended to be a small gathering to gauge community interest. The first event turned out 80+ young Columbus residents. Since then, the network has grown to 300+ strong and Columbus' young environmentalists have been stepping up for a greener city and state.

Both Central Ohio's environmental movement and the OEC benefit from this program's monthly engagement opportunities. For example, the Emerging Leaders hosted a panel event in October 2017 on environmental justice through lenses of women's health, racial justice, young conservatism, and refugee and immigrant populations. More than 40 young leaders attended, discussed how we all approach environmental issues differently, and strengthened their understanding of the issues and one another.

In March 2018, group members got their hands dirty and gathered at Scioto Audubon Metro Park to prep the park for spring by pulling invasive honeysuckle. The OEC shared its priorities with members and educated them on non-native invasive species and how they crowd out native plants and reduce biodiversity.

We are excited to continue to develop leadership and collaboration within this energetic environmental community and use it as a model for engagement throughout Ohio!

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/oeclleader>

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