



Summer Report

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Keeping the Hocking Hills clean and beautiful

Funding on the chopping block

The Hocking Hills are beautiful in every season. In winter, thousands of Ohioans brave even the coldest days to experience their quiet beauty. In the spring, foxes and squirrels venture back out, and the woods come alive again. And in the summer? No explanation necessary.

Walking around Old Man's Cave, jogging after the dogs at Ash Cave, bringing the kids to Conkle's Hollow—more than 3 million Ohioans all have their own reasons for heading to the Hocking Hills. But our favorite escape is in danger of falling into disrepair.

The iconic A-Frame bridge at Old Man's Cave sorely needs repair, trails aren't properly maintained, and park staff can't always keep up with the trash. And this year, our governor has said that when it comes to balancing the state's budget, nothing is off the table—meaning that our parks are on the chopping block.

Pressure on the parks

Hocking Hills State Park relies on state funding to hire park rangers, keep park facilities maintained, and make basic resources like clean water available to visitors. But a half-billion dollar backlog for improvement projects makes it difficult to maintain the parks, and the governor's proposed budget cuts will make it even harder.

With less money to pay for the basics, there's more pressure to turn to desperate measures like opening up park land



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▲ Old Man's Cave, Hocking Hills.

to drilling and logging. That's why we're working this summer to make sure the parks get the funding they need.

Members spring into action

When we told members in March that the Hocking Hills were threatened, the response was overwhelming. We researched the threats, spread the word—and, most importantly—began laying the groundwork for a big push this summer, as we

get thousands of Ohioans involved and speak to tens of thousands more.

Nearly a thousand Ohioans have already called on Gov. John Kasich to protect the Hocking Hills' funding. The already strong response made clear what we already knew: Protecting our favorite places to get out and enjoy nature is a priority for Ohioans, no matter what the economy is doing.



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more online

A thousand Ohioans wrote in to tell Gov. Kasich why they love the Hocking Hills. You can join the call and tell your own story at:

www.EnvironmentOhio.org/action

To our members

For millions of Ohioans, summer means spending time on the water—whether it's boating on Lake Erie, or fishing and swimming at a lake closer to home.

Our waterways are cleaner today than they once were, thanks in large part to the Clean Water Act and other rules set by state and federal environmental officials. Unfortunately, despite the progress, too many of our precious waterways are still not clean enough—hundreds of our beaches end up closed because pollution makes them unsafe for swimming, and our drinking water suffers at the same time.

As we work to strengthen our laws and ensure that all of Ohio's and America's waterways are safe for swimming and fishing, polluters are filing lawsuits and pushing some in Congress to block the EPA from doing its job. I hope you'll join us this summer is showing your support for clean water.

Sincerely,



Julian Boggs
Program Associate

Recent action

2010 was breakthrough year for solar

In an otherwise lackluster economy the solar industry shined brighter than ever before in 2010, with a 67 percent increase in the amount of solar energy projects installed across America compared to 2009.

That means more homes and businesses powered by pollution-free solar energy, an increase made possible by strong solar policies implemented at the urging of Environment Ohio. In December, federal Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend critical incentives for solar power. In Cumberland, a new large-scale solar installation is currently under development. Additionally, the Wyandot Solar Farm near Sandusky, the Midwest's largest solar facility, is now generating enough electricity to power 1,400 Ohio homes.

Environment Ohio, along with the rest of the Environment America federation, continues to strategize with entrepreneurs within the solar industry to hit a far more ambitious benchmark: getting 10 percent of our nation's energy from solar by 2030.

Cleaning up our beaches

When we spend the day at Lake Erie this summer, no one wants to worry about whether the water is clean. But hundreds of beach closings every year have made the concern all too familiar. In 2009, the most recent year for which data is available, there were more than 1,000 days of beach closings on Ohio beaches.

Much of the pollution is due to sewage overflows—24 billion gallons of sewage pour into the Great Lakes every year, and contribute to a dead zone in the middle of Lake Erie the size of Connecticut. Fortunately, the Environmental Protection Agency is working to update its rules to cut the sewage pollution that threatens Lake Erie, but polluters and their allies in Congress are trying to prevent the EPA from doing its job. This summer, staff in our Washington, D.C., office are working to build the support necessary for the EPA to take strong action.



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▲ Headlands Beach State Park, Lake Erie.

For a healthy future, update the Clean Air Act

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There's no doubt that the Clean Air Act, which turned 40 in 2010, has improved the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Its protections are credited with saving the lives of 160,000 Americans in 2010 alone.

Of course, air pollution remains a pressing health threat in this country, a stark reminder of the work still left to do. In 2010, 13,200 Americans lost their lives as a result of heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks and other fatal conditions brought on or exacerbated by air pollution from power plants. It's estimated that one in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her bloodstream (a byproduct of coal power production) to put her child at risk should she become pregnant.

Thankfully, the Obama administration has announced it will seek to strengthen and update portions of the Clean Air Act in the coming months.

An assault on our health

With some vocal opponents of the Clean Air Act throwing their weight around in Congress, Environment Ohio, along with our national federation Environment America, the American Lung Association and other public health organizations are building support to make sure the administration's proposals are enacted.

In January, Environment Ohio Field Associate Craig Willert released a hard-hitting examination of one of the most dangerous air pollutants: mercury. That report, "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," documented waterways that carry advisories warning against fish consumption due to mercury pollution. According to the report, power plants in Ohio emitted 9,518 pounds of mercury pollution in 2009. The Gavin Power Plant in Cheshire is the third-largest polluter of mercury of any power plant in America.

A taste of things to come?

The Obama administration's updates to the Clean Air Act face great uncertainty, with polluting industries and their allies in Congress having launched an all-out assault on the Clean Air Act.

In February, the House of Representatives attached a provision to a federal funding bill that would have blocked the Environmental Protection Agency from cutting mercury pollution from cement plants, cleaning up soot pollution, and reducing carbon dioxide from coal-fired plants.

Less than a month later, the Senate rejected the funding bill, with many senators citing the environmental and public health attacks within the bill as one of the reasons for their opposition.

Yet, with some members of Congress still trying to block the EPA from doing its job in protecting our air, Environment Ohio is continuing to work for clean air and a healthier future.



in the news

Mercury

Environment Ohio Field Associate Craig Willert released our report on mercury pollution.

Read it online at:
www.EnvironmentOhio.org/reports



Is nuclear power worth the risk?

Our hearts go out to the people of Japan who, after seeing a massive earthquake and tsunami strike their country, were forced to contend with an escalating nuclear crisis.

At press time, the consequences were still unfolding: Drinking water samples in Tokyo were contaminated with radioactive iodine at a level dangerous to infants; the sale of a dozen types of produce from the Fukushima region were banned due to potentially dangerous levels of radioactivity; hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from the area around the reactors; and high radiation levels were found in the nearby ocean waters.

Should we be concerned about America's 104 nuclear plants, especially the Perry plant in North Perry, posing similar risks to our children's health and our environment? Based on our analysis, yes. At the most basic level, Mother Nature proved stronger than the best safeguards that Japan could design. Why would we be different?

Environment Ohio is urging the Obama administration and others to improve the safety of existing nuclear plants, declare a moratorium on new plants, and begin to responsibly phase out our use of nuclear power in favor of clean, renewable energy, like wind and solar power.

▲ Perry Nuclear Power Plant in North Perry.

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Environment Ohio

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open space. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Ohio. We focus exclusively on protecting Ohio's air, water and open space. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Clean energy: Ohio utilities improving

Two years into the implementation of the state's Clean Energy Law, which sets standards for both renewable energy and energy efficiency, Ohio is saving enough electricity each year to power 43,000 homes.

We scored the state's investor-owned utilities, and most of them have made significant progress: Duke Energy, Dayton Power & Light, and American Electric Power have all made strong commitments to solar energy, and Duke Energy has helped its customers save large amounts of electricity. FirstEnergy scored worst, meeting only a small fraction of its energy efficiency and solar goals.

The report notes that while Ohio's current law has given the state a leg up on clean energy, Ohio's clean energy grant program expired in December—causing some installers to look for work in neighboring states such as Indiana and Pennsylvania. Program Associate Julian Boggs said it's time for Ohio to once again strengthen its standards. "To lead in the clean energy race and win the solar jobs of the future, we need to be raising the bar, not struggling to clear it."



Lance Anderson Photography

In the spring, Environment Ohio released "Ohio's Clean Energy Report Card."

◀ *Environment Ohio Program Associate Julian Boggs (at right) at the event.*