Continuing the push for stronger protection

The Great Lakes are a central part of our natural heritage and part of the legacy we want our children to inherit and enjoy. But the health of the Lakes is at risk, and efforts to protect them are falling short.

This summer, Environment Ohio had an opportunity to protect the Great Lakes, and we jumped at it. Congress is considering legislation—the Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act—that would give efforts to restore the Lakes a needed upgrade and increase future protections for our waters. Specifically, it will help mitigate sewage pollution and stop the spread of Asian carp. Opportunities like this don’t come along often, so we launched a nationwide effort to push Congress to make the right choice.

Together with our allies in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and New York, we saw our first victory on this campaign in June, when the bill unanimously passed a key Senate committee. This is a big first step, but much more work lies ahead.

On the street and in the Senate
Throughout the summer, while scientists warned that Asian carp were being continuously found ever closer to Lake Michigan, and hundreds of beaches were closed each week due to pollution, our staff worked hard to ramp up support for this much-needed legislation.

Our citizen outreach team went door to door in communities across the state.

Combined with allies throughout the Great Lakes region, we spoke with nearly 60,000 people about the threats facing the Lakes. Our staff also wrote and released a report highlighting the steps needed to restore our great waterways.

When the bill passed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in June, it passed along with eight other national bills addressing Long Island Sound, Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound and more. These bills will provide an infusion of new resources for our most precious waters and set up projects to restore them to health. Our staff are working with lawmakers and building public support to overcome the opposition of polluters and break through political roadblocks in Congress. Our goal is to pass these bills into law this year, so we can protect and restore these special places for generations to come.

Get the latest news on our website:
www.EnvironmentOhio.org/news
BP’s Deepwater Horizon stopped gushing—but we don’t know what long-term damage the disaster will cause for the ecosystem and communities of the Gulf. There’s no better motivation to push toward a future in which Americans use as little oil as possible, protecting our oceans and beaches and reducing global warming pollution as well.

Our staff is working in Columbus and in Washington, D.C., to ensure BP is held fully responsible for the disaster, and to win a permanent ban on new drilling off our shores. But we must do more to prevent future tragedies.

Thus, Environment Ohio is joining our national federation to launch a major program to reduce our dependence on oil. Our work with Ohio’s leaders, Congress, and with the Obama administration will slash oil consumption and move America toward a clean energy future.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director

Recent action

400,000 strong against new offshore drilling
The impact of America’s dependence on oil became tragically apparent when BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded in April, gushing more than 120 million gallons of oil into the Gulf. The spill devastated wildlife, coastal marshes, and the people who depend on the Gulf for their livelihoods—and the aftershocks will be felt for years.

In the past, we stopped BP from dumping hundreds of pounds of toxic pollution into the Great Lakes. The surest ways to prevent a catastrophe on scale of the Gulf spill are to build public support for better regulations and ban drilling in new areas. We’ve spoken to 80,000 people in six states to build support against expanded drilling. And in June, Environment Ohio and our allies submitted 400,000 petition signatures to President Obama, asking him to stop the rush to expand offshore drilling.

Saving energy with better building codes
Forty percent of all global warming pollution comes from buildings—but it doesn’t have to be that way. We have the technology to build better, smarter buildings today—buildings so smart they run on renewable energy generated on site, producing as much or even more energy than they consume. In April, Environment Ohio released a report, “Building Better: How High-Efficiency Buildings Will Save Money and Reduce Global Warming.” The report outlines the benefits Americans would gain by reducing overall building energy consumption, and making all new buildings use zero net energy.

We’re working to move toward this vision, calling on Gov. Ted Strickland to support adoption of the 2009 International Energy Conservation Codes (IECC), which will put Ohio on the path to cutting pollution and saving energy costs. With deep-pocketed special interests digging in their heels against change, it won’t be easy. So Environment Ohio is working with a broad coalition of environmental, clean energy, low-income, and even industrial groups to show the governor that building better is a no-brainer for Ohio.

To our members

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Ohio.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentOhio.org.
The United States just suffered the greatest environmental disaster in our history. At least 120 million gallons of oil poured into the Gulf after BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded on April 20—the equivalent of more than 10 Exxon Valdez spills. Oil contaminated 580 miles of coastline from Texas to Florida, and the spill has already proven catastrophic for local wildlife—from oil-soaked pelicans, to dolphins choking on fumes, to the sea turtles who nest in the Gulf’s warm waters. Oil contaminated 580 miles of coastline from Texas to Florida, and the spill has already proven catastrophic for local wildlife—from oil-soaked pelicans, to dolphins choking on fumes, to the sea turtles who nest in the Gulf’s warm waters. It will also be catastrophic for shrimpers, fisherman, and the men and women who work in the Gulf’s $20 billion tourism industry, all of whom now face a difficult and uncertain future. It may take decades for the ecology and the economy of the Gulf Coast to recover.

As we begin the long process of cleaning up the spill, compensating those affected, and rebuilding the Gulf Coast, we must ensure that a crisis of this magnitude never happens again. We have known for decades that America’s dependence on oil is environmentally and economically unsustainable. Beyond the threat of catastrophe, our addiction to oil pollutes our air, endangers our climate, enriches our enemies, and robs our economy of billions of dollars every day.

**We can get off oil permanently**

Environment Ohio is joining our national federation, Environment America, in launching a major new program to free America from our dependence on oil. We want American-made electric cars instead of more air pollution, walkable communities and public transit instead of price shocks at the pump, and clean electricity instead of oil spills. The result will be more jobs, less pollution, improved public health, and thousands of dollars in savings for American families.

We are bringing together a coalition of environmental groups, public health organizations, consumer advocates and national security groups to build a sustained campaign to end America’s addiction to oil. Even with all this support, getting off oil will be no simple task. There is no easy solution, no silver-bullet legislation. It will require a sustained commitment from supporters and activists to change policy at every level of government, from the local zoning board to the president of the United States.

Right now, we are fighting to ensure that any climate or energy bill passed by Congress includes strong policies to reduce oil dependence.

Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon recently proposed visionary legislation that could reduce our oil consumption by over 40 percent by 2030 through increased fuel efficiency, support for electric vehicles, and regulatory reform to ensure our tax dollars support public transit and smart growth instead of highways and sprawl. We call on the Senate to pass Sen. Merkley’s oil savings plan.

Visit our website to write your member of Congress and express your support for ending America’s addiction to oil.

Next step on clean cars

The BP oil spill in the Gulf demonstrated in heartbreaking terms why we need to move away from oil as quickly as possible. That’s why Environment Ohio is working to set aggressive new standards requiring cars and trucks to go farther on a gallon of gas.

In May, President Obama announced historic new clean car standards, which our national federation, Environment America, helped secure. These new rules are expected to cut gasoline consumption by more than 11 billion gallons per year in 2016, nearly as much as all the vehicles in Texas use annually. This is a great start, but not nearly enough—the standards are slated to expire in 2016.

The disaster in the Gulf demands that we go further after the current standards expire, so Environment Ohio is calling for even stronger rules requiring the average car and light truck to travel 60 miles on a gallon of gas by 2025. We know that car companies have the technological know-how to make it happen, so we’re working to convince the Obama administration to make this goal a reality. As our campaign kicks off, we’ll collect thousands of public comments and mobilize support from leaders within the national security community and from areas impacted by the Gulf oil spill.
As oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico in June, Sens. Sherrod Brown and George Voinovich had to decide whether or not to increase America’s dependence on oil and block Clean Air Act rules. Sen. Brown stood up for the environment by voting against a measure that would have done so; Sen. Voinovich stood by the side of Big Oil.

The measure, dubbed the “Dirty Air Act,” would have crippled future attempts to reduce our dependence on oil by blocking any regulation of global warming pollution—including new federal clean car standards.

“The Senate must get down to business passing a bill to lessen the extensive damage caused in the Gulf, cut our oil dependence, and move to a clean energy economy that caps carbon pollution and finally priorities energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy,” said Emily Figdor, our federal global warming program director, in a statement following the Senate’s vote.