



# Winter Report

Jennifer Stone (Shutterstock.com)

## Strengthening the Clean Water Act

### More protections needed for Ohio's waterways

We've come a long way since 1972, when the Clean Water Act promised clean, safe water for all Americans.

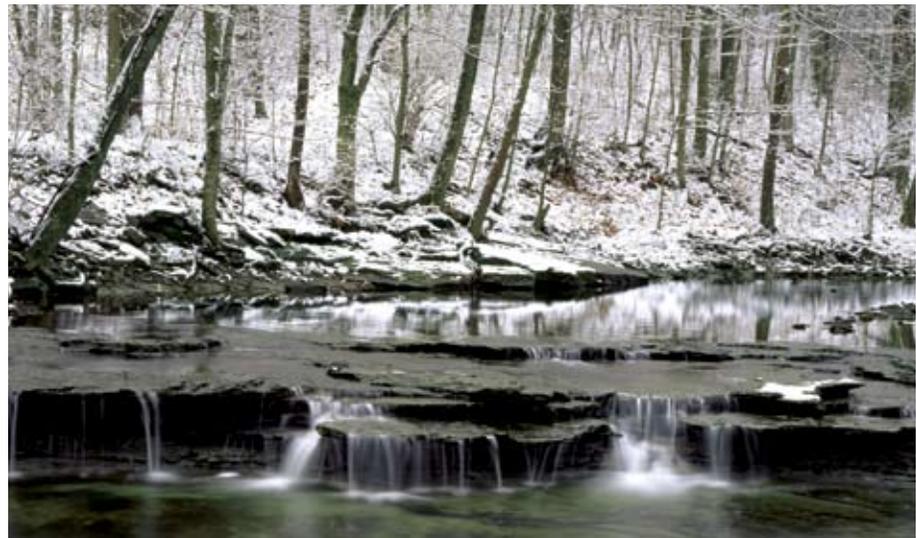
Yet the promise is still unkept. A recent investigation by The New York Times found sewage overflowing treatment systems, farm runoff polluting wells and scores of illegal polluters escaping punishment.

While the Clean Water Act works to protect drinking water and iconic waterways such as the Great Lakes, under a recent Supreme Court decision it does not protect many of the smaller streams and rivers that feed these waterways.

In October, Environment Ohio released a report, "Wasting Our Waterways: Industrial Toxic Pollution and the Unfulfilled Promise of the Clean Water Act." In it, we showed that industrial facilities dumped more than 9 million pounds of toxic chemicals into Ohio waterways in 2007, the date for which the most recent data is available.

Among the toxic chemicals discharged by facilities are lead, mercury, and dioxin. When dumped into waterways, these toxic chemicals contaminate drinking water and are absorbed by the fish that people eventually eat. Exposure to these chemicals is linked to cancer, developmental disorders and reproductive disorders.

Of the 1,900 waterways nationwide into which toxic chemicals were discharged, the Ohio River received the most: 31 million pounds. The Ohio also received the greatest



Douglas Jenke (Shutterstock.com)

▲ The act will protect the Great Lakes by protecting the streams and rivers that feed them.

amount of discharges of chemicals linked to cancer, and also of chemicals linked to reproductive disorders.

While nearly half of the rivers and lakes in the United States are considered too polluted for safe fishing or swimming, our report showed that polluters continue to use our waterways as dumping grounds for their toxic chemicals.

To protect the waterways we treasure for their beauty, recreational use and drinking water, we need to make sure all of Ohio's surface waters are protected. Tougher enforcement, money to upgrade sewage plants and steps to prevent pollution at the source are common-sense ways we can turn the tide against toxic pollution. We're working to make sure Congress passes the Clean Water Restoration Act.



Lisa F. Young (Shutterstock.com)

### more online

Links to additional content are posted in the online version of the newsletter: [www.EnvironmentOhio.org/newsletters/winter10](http://www.EnvironmentOhio.org/newsletters/winter10)



## To our members

"This progress did not come easily and we know that this progress alone is not enough," said President Obama, about the Copenhagen Accord.

I share the president's sober assessment. Unless we do more and do it quickly, temperatures and sea levels will keep rising. That's why we continue to urge strong action in cities, at the state level and in Washington.

Yet the profound challenge we face on global warming also brings opportunity—to clean our air and water, end our dependence on oil, and rebuild our economy.

The vested interests on the other side remain strong, but I'm putting my faith in the millions of Americans who understand that the time for a new energy future is now.

Thank you, as always, for making this work possible.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler  
Regional Program Director

## Recent action

### Here comes the sun

Ohio schools are one step closer to energy independence after a vote by the Ohio House of Representatives on Dec. 17. The "solar schools" bill (HB 113), which passed with a bipartisan vote of 91 to 5, directs about 70 of the state's largest school districts to install renewable energy systems, including solar, wind and geothermal. Rep. Louis Blessing, a joint sponsor of the legislation, called it a "win, win, win for Ohio schools, Ohio businesses and Ohio residential electric customers. All three will see savings."

The bill creates a Renewable Energy Schools Pilot Program for the biggest Ohio school districts. Districts with 5,000 to 10,000 students are asked to install 250 kilowatts of renewable energy, while districts with over 10,000 students are asked to install 500 kilowatts. Environment Ohio will work in 2010 to make sure the state Senate passes this important legislation.

### Toxic chemicals on tap

New technology and government incentives are spurring a move to expand a dangerous form of gas drilling called "hydraulic fracturing" in Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states. Hydraulic fracturing has been linked to contamination of residential drinking water wells and the potential for explosive gas leaks.

The process uses more than 260 types of chemicals, many of them toxic, such as benzene, which remain in the ground long after the gas companies have moved on. Just two years ago in Bainbridge, an improperly drilled well contaminated local groundwater, and after building to high pressures, gas migrated through underground faults and blew up one house.

Environment America Research & Policy Center, a project of our national federation, released "Toxic Chemicals on Tap," a thorough examination of the growing threat to waterways. The report recommends solutions, including an end to the drilling exemption from the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Photo: Robert Byrd, Shutterstock.com

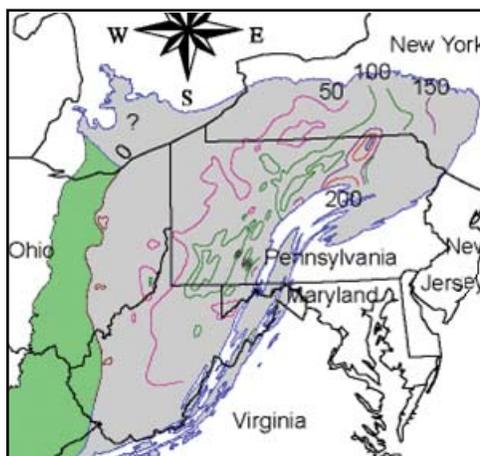


## How do you want to be remembered?

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](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentOhio.org).

### Hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale in Ohio



*New technology and government incentives are spurring a move to expand a dangerous form of gas drilling called hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale, a large portion of which lies in Ohio.*

*The process has been linked to contamination of drinking water and gas leaks, and uses more than 260 types of chemicals, many toxic.*

# New light in the search for climate solutions

As America's leaders searched in recent months for the right responses to global warming, Environment America Research and Policy Center, a project of our national federation, released four studies illuminating the paths forward—and at least one dead end.

Our first report looked at America's carbon pollution since 1990. The national trend is troubling, with emissions rising by nearly a fifth. Yet we found that in 17 states and in Washington, D.C., emissions peaked by 2005 and began to decline thereafter.

Why the decline? A key factor is the decision by state and local governments to improve energy efficiency programs and invest in clean energy.

"These findings suggest that the pollution reduction goals being debated in Congress are modest and achievable," said Emily Figdor, Environment Ohio's federal global warming program director.

## America on the move

We further examined state initiatives in another report, released on the eve of the global summit on climate change in Copenhagen. While most of the world views the United States as a laggard on the issue, and rightly so, our report found state initiatives having a significant impact: By 2020, they should reduce carbon emissions by 536 million metric tons. That's more global warming pollution than is currently emitted by all but eight of the world's nations.

The report won praise from many of the nation's governors, including California's Arnold Schwarzenegger, Colorado's Bill Ritter, Wisconsin's Jim Doyle, and Illinois's Pat Quinn. Dan Jacobson and Courtney Abrams, federal advocates for Environment Ohio, traveled to Copenhagen to trumpet the report's findings.

Further reductions are, of course, both possible and necessary, and a third report suggests where we can achieve them. "America's Biggest Polluters" found that

power plants released 2.56 billion tons of carbon pollution in 2007, a whopping 42 percent of the country's total. We found the nation's oldest plants to be the dirtiest. Less than half of all plants were built before 1980, but these coal-fired clunkers emit nearly three quarters of the industry's carbon.

Finally, our research team also released a report taking a critical look at nuclear power's role in solving global warming (see sidebar, at right).

As our advocates lobbied senators to strengthen and pass national global warming legislation, we also sought to build support for a series of Obama administration initiatives. In November, Figdor testified at an EPA hearing in favor of strong action to hold power plants accountable for their carbon emissions.

Our citizen outreach staff, organizers and online activists helped demonstrate public support for the proposal. Together with our allies, we helped mobilize tens of thousands of people to send official comments to the EPA.



Flickr user: jpmatth (Creative Commons)

## report

### "America's Biggest Polluters"

*Our report found that power plants released 2.56 billion tons of carbon pollution in 2007, 42 percent of the country's total emissions.*



Flickr user: ilovecocacola (Creative Commons)

## Report highlight: Generating Failure

In November, an Environment Ohio report, entitled "Generating Failure," investigated whether nuclear power can help solve the climate crisis.

The nuclear industry is seeking tens of billions of dollars in new federal subsidies, on top of hundreds of billions of dollars in existing subsidies.

While scientists recommend deeper cuts, members of Congress have called for a 20 percent reduction in global warming pollution by 2020. However, planning and constructing a new nuclear plant takes time. As the Los Angeles Times reports, "The last time there was a wave of nuclear construction in the United States, it took an average of nine years to build a plant." Even if work began today on the estimated 100 plants envisioned by the industry, the first plants wouldn't come online until 2019—too late to make a significant dent in the 20 percent goal.

Building the plants would cost at least \$600 billion. Yet a similar investment in energy efficiency and renewable power would deliver twice the carbon reduction by 2030. "The nuclear option would deliver too little, too late to matter, while diverting money from safer, faster alternatives," said Emily Figdor, Environment Ohio's federal global warming program director.



Please visit our Web site at [www.EnvironmentOhio.org](http://www.EnvironmentOhio.org) to sign up for e-mail alerts to stay updated about and involved with our efforts.

203 E. Broad Street, Suite 3  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614) 460-8732

# Environment Ohio

Address service requested

NON-PROFIT  
ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BROCKTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 430



## Winter Report

VOLUME 4 | NO. 1 | 2010

## Environment Ohio

### Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. 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 spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

## Stay warm, save money

The quickest and cheapest way for Ohioans to reduce our dependence on coal and foreign oil is to use energy more wisely—and we're promoting smart policies at the state and federal level that can help homeowners make simple upgrades that will save money.

We released a report in September analyzing the clean energy legislation currently being considered by Congress, and found that American households would save \$486 per year by 2030 through its energy-efficiency provisions alone. The legislation would also create jobs for Ohioans: More than 1,100 energy efficiency businesses are already at work in Ohio, and studies suggest that this industry could employ more than 2 million Ohioans by 2030.

Environment Ohio worked to pass energy efficiency legislation in Ohio in 2008, and we continue to advocate for federal legislation that similarly recognizes the economics of efficiency.



Staff

◀ *Environment Ohio hosted events, such as this energy audit, to demonstrate how simple updates will save homeowners on energy costs.*

➡ You can download and read the report "Energy Efficiency in the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009," as well as other reports on our energy efficiency program, on our Web site. Please visit [www.EnvironmentOhio.org/reports/energy](http://www.EnvironmentOhio.org/reports/energy).