

Spring 2017

# green watch



Hike the Wayne.  
Love the Wayne.  
Save the Wayne.



The Heart of Shale  
Country: Jenny's  
Story



Politics vs.  
science: EPA  
changes a study



#100DaysofAction  
inspires Ohioans  
to act locally



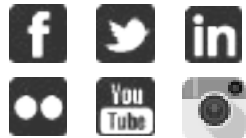
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**This year, we will face new obstacles, but we're up for the challenge. Why? Because in 2016, we saw Ohio's environmental movement grow, and, as a result, we scored some amazing victories.**

Whenever I meet new people or catch up with leaders across the nation, I cannot help but brag about our team. Of course I count the expert staff at the OEC as our team, but our team also includes you!

In 2016, we celebrated many victories for Ohio's people and environment that would not have been possible without the contribution of thousands of Ohioans, just like yourself. I invite you to take a few minutes to truly celebrate your victories.

#### **We passed the strongest protections in the country against lead in drinking water.**

The news coming out of Sebring, Ohio was shocking. The city's water was tainted with lead and, worse, residents were not notified until long after it was discovered. Suddenly, our Ohio neighbors were vulnerable to the dire effects of contaminated drinking water. We had to put a stop to it.

The OEC's team of experts quickly crafted a proposal and took it to key decision-makers. We took it to Ohio EPA leadership, Ohio lawmakers, to Capitol Hill and even to the White House. Once our proposal was unanimously passed with bipartisan support, it was hailed as one of the strongest lead in drinking water protections in the country. Now, it is a model for national protections.

#### **We reinstated Ohio's clean energy standards.**

In a true show of spirit, Ohioans came out in droves to stop attacks on Ohio's clean energy standards. More than 5,000 calls and emails flooded Ohio lawmakers' offices demanding they stop the bad bills that were moving out of the Ohio House. We have been relentless in pushing Ohio's clean energy standards for several years, but what tipped the scales on this issue was the passionate voices of everyday citizens. **This victory belongs to you!**

**Cover photo:** David Rigney, Ash Cave in the Hocking Hills

#### **We saved 2,000 acres of Ohio's public forests.**

Ohio's natural heritage deserves to be celebrated by Ohio families for generations to come. That's why the OEC mounted a fierce battle to stop logging that would have harmed Spruce Run, Rock Run, and Pike State Forest.

Now, we are leading the legal charge to protect the 40,000 acres of the Wayne National Forest, Ohio's only national forest, that are up for auction to oil and gas companies. Already, we have a huge backing of Ohioans echoing our call to defend this precious forestland. Learn more on **page 4**.

#### **We slashed climate-warming pollution for the oil and gas sector.**

Oil and gas operations leak methane, a potent greenhouse gas that has been linked to increased rates of asthma and other respiratory issues. Shockingly, more than three million Ohio families live within a half-mile of oil and gas operations.

The OEC is a leader in a nationally coordinated effort to keep these protections in place, which are under threat from current U.S. leadership. Last year, Ohioans sent more than 80,000 comments to the U.S. EPA asking them to rein in methane leaks, and they listened. You can stay up to date with next steps to defend methane protections at [www.theoec.org](http://www.theoec.org).

#### **We passed landmark safeguards for Lake Erie.**

Lake Erie is an important source of drinking water, and a natural gem that makes up more than a quarter of Ohio's tourism industry. Thanks to decades of outreach at the state and federal level, we saw some of the most comprehensive protections for Lake Erie finalized. Read more about this victory on **page 6**.

#### **We brought together Ohio's environmental legal experts.**

A solid legal strategy is the linchpin that secures many of our environmental victories. In 2016, we grew our roundtable of pro-bono legal experts to 20. They were an important resource during last year's legal efforts that we will continue to consult in the coming year.

#### **We broke barriers to the polls.**

With your support, we were able to send more than 160,000 vote-by-mail applications to Ohio households as part of the largest non-partisan voter participation effort ever led by an Ohio environmental group.

I wish I could tell you 2017 is going to be easy, but, so far, it has been the toughest year on environmental protections that I have seen in a long time. Still, I remain optimistic, because Ohio's environmental movement is growing by leaps and bounds. And because you're on Team OEC! Together, I know we can keep Ohio on a path that protects our families and our environment.

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Watch and share our video celebrating these victories:

<http://bit.ly/2016OEC>

## our 2017 goals

- 1 Protect Ohioans from the negative impacts of oil and gas development
- 2 Secure funding to prevent toxic algae in Lake Erie
- 3 Eliminate lead and toxins in Ohioans' drinking water
- 4 Give Ohioans' clean, efficient, & affordable energy choices
- 5 Protect Ohio's forested and public lands

Read more at:  
<http://bit.ly/oecreport>





## HIKE THE WAYNE. LOVE THE WAYNE. SAVE THE WAYNE.



Hannah Tyler,  
Director of Communications &  
Marketing

Recently, I had a chance to visit the Wayne National Forest and see, firsthand, the place I've been working to protect. Today, I'd like to bring you along my hike through this special forest.

The day was cold and the forest was shrouded in mist. As we parked, I grew excited at the prospect of a strenuous hike through the rolling foothills of Appalachia. It's a rare find in Ohio's otherwise flat landscape.

My fellow hikers and I began at Ring Mill Campground in the Marietta Unit of the Wayne National Forest. This was the perfect spot for a family picnic — it was completely quiet except for the streams trickling nearby. From here we entered the dense, winter-barren forest.

Immediately, the Wayne felt wild — in the best kind of way. The forest floor was thick with brown leaves that crunched underfoot. Mossy, fallen trees and jutting rock precipices added pops of bright green and slate-blue to the landscape.

Shortly after we entered Archers Fork Trailhead, we encountered the Great Cave. Crouching under this enormous structure, I felt as if it scooped me up and held me securely in its might.

After our trip, I posted photos of the Great Cave on the OEC's Facebook page. I asked people to describe it in a word. Some of my favorites were sanctuary, peace, hideaway, tranquil, and escape.

My favorite part of the trip was climbing the Irish Run Natural Bridge. This unique rock formation connects two sides of a steep valley. I would recommend viewing from a distance if you're afraid of heights. Naturally, as a thrill seeker, I balanced on its highest point and waved my arms in victory!



**Above:** I felt victorious standing atop the gigantic natural bridge. **Below:** We hike the cold, misty hills of Wayne National Forest.



When I see this picture, I can't help but hope it foreshadows what's to come: Victory for the Wayne. About 2,000 acres of the Wayne have been auctioned off to oil and gas operations since December, and up to 40,000 are slated for oil and gas development.

The only thing that's going to save the Wayne is a legal battle. The OEC is leading this fight thanks to the support of generous members like you!

On our hike, locals shared their many memories of the Wayne. We spent a lot of time lamenting the federal government's plans to lease this beautiful place, but we parted resolute in our intentions to save the Wayne. It's going to take all of us - locals, activists, and the OEC's team of experts - to secure victory and save the Wayne.

If you want to get involved in the fight to keep Wayne wild, sign up today to receive updates by going to [www.bit.ly/savethewayne](http://www.bit.ly/savethewayne).





Managing Director of Natural Resources Kristy Meyer [right] and colleagues enjoy a boat ride on Lake Erie.

## ENDING THE YEAR ON A HIGH NOTE FOR LAKE ERIE

In the wee hours of December 10th, the U.S. Senate passed the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN), later enacted by former-President Obama. Thanks to your support, we were able to advance monumental safeguards for Lake Erie, the Great Lakes, and the people of Ohio within this act. Managing Director of Natural Resources Kristy Meyer lead the charge by:

- 1 Securing \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) through 2021.
- 2 Funding drinking water tests in daycares and schools, as well as new water infrastructure, health programs, and services for communities facing lead crises.
- 3 Working closely with Congressman Tim Ryan to create a new, full-time position within the U.S. EPA dedicated to reducing toxic algae in the Great Lakes.
- 4 Stopping the Army Corps of Engineers from dumping sediment into Lake Erie without the approval of the Ohio EPA.

These steps are huge for Lake Erie, but a threat looms on the horizon. A proposed federal budget would eliminate the \$300 million in Great Lakes funding! Zeroing out funds for restoration projects would be a huge blow to Lake Erie. We are calling on our bipartisan allies statewide to defend the GLRI. [You can take action now at http://bit.ly/glriattack.](http://bit.ly/glriattack)

## THE HEART OF SHALE COUNTRY: JENNY'S STORY

Jenny Hunkler's story is every mother's nightmare — a son suffering from mysterious symptoms, a home that is no longer safe, and seemingly no one to turn to for help.

Jenny has lived in Barnesville, Ohio for most of her life. In 2009, she and her teenage son settled into a new property just outside the village. By the end of 2014, her son began having bizarre, unexplainable symptoms. He was having sinus problems, frequent and severe headaches, blistering rashes, and was sleeping excessively.

Jenny sought help from several doctors and specialists, but found no answers. Then, Jenny developed rashes of her own. The Hunkler family found out they were not alone in their problems. Some of their neighbors were having the same mysterious symptoms.

Eventually, the family learned they were just downhill from a compressor station, a place where natural gas is prepared for transport. A strange-smelling smog hugged the compressor station and lingered in the valley below.

Jenny tried to fight for her family's health, but it seemed no one would listen. Doctors scoffed at her requests to be tested for harmful chemicals like benzene, and neither the Ohio EPA nor the Department of Health offered any help.

As she unfortunately found out during this desperate time, most state and federal environmental and regulatory agencies do not monitor the air directly around well sites and facilities.

Yet the negative health effects of many of the chemicals and pollutants associated with oil and gas development are scientifically well-established. There have been nearly 400 studies on the environmental and health impacts of shale gas development to date. Of these, 84% show a link between shale gas development and health impacts.



Jenny tears up as she tells us about her son's health issues. [Watch the full video at http://bit.ly/jennystory](http://bit.ly/jennystory)

By 2015, Jenny and her family were forced to flee. They decided to sell their home. Jenny felt helpless in the fight for her son's health and says, "it's basically destroyed his life."

The expansion of fracking is appealing to Ohio's lawmakers. It offers temporary jobs for Ohioans and produces natural gas, an inexpensive energy source. But inadequate protections can make these benefits underwhelming compared to the costs. Jenny wonders if the benefits are worth the cost she and her family has had to pay.

"You can't buy your health. You can't get that back," she warns.

Now, there are even more frack pads in the area and even more pollution in the air. Our state level decision-makers have yet to put in the protections that people like Jenny need.

The OEC is determined to change this. We are advocating for protections through the state budget bill. We are demanding fracking operations disclose all of the chemicals they use in the event of an emergency leak, fire, or spill. We also want to require a safer distance between homes and fracking operations.

[Learn more about our state budget requests at www.theoecactionfund.org.](http://www.theoecactionfund.org)





# POLITICS VS SCIENCE:

Right before its publication, the U.S. EPA made changes to the summary of its fracking and water study. We caught it. A year later, NPR's Marketplace investigated. The question remains: who provoked the changes and why?



Melanie Houston, Director of Oil and Gas

In June of 2015, the headlines all read the same way: fracking poses no threat to drinking water. This claim was based on the executive summary of a study conducted by the U.S. EPA.

When I read the study from top to bottom, I was confused. The results showed pretty much the opposite. In fact, 3 out of 5 of the case studies found clear evidence of water contamination as a result of hydraulic fracturing.

I responded with a blog and our followers spread it like wildfire, but, for most of the public, the damage was done.

Then, a year later, NPR's Marketplace released an investigative report about the discrepancy. Politics, they claimed, had outweighed science. Some behind-the-scenes pressure had forced the executive summary to be rewritten at the last minute.

The political influences that provoked the last-minute changes remain a mystery, but the results of the U.S. EPA study are clearer than ever. In December 2016, the U.S. EPA reissued the report thanks to overwhelming criticism from the public, the environmental community, and even their own

Science Advisory Board (SAB). It was not easy, but it's evidence that, in the end, truth will prevail.

Here are the main findings from the EPA's final, revised water study report, as presented in the agency's own slidedeck:

- Hydraulic fracturing can impact drinking water resources under some circumstances
- Examples of impacts were identified for all stages of the hydraulic fracturing water cycle
- Impacts can range in frequency and severity, depending on the combination of hydraulic fracturing activities and local or regional-scale factors.

The OEC caught these inconsistencies when the report was released, and we will continue to stay vigilant to ensure science trumps politics. The only way we can remain Ohio's environmental watchdog is through the support of members like you! Make a special donation today, and you will aid our effort to debunk misleading and incorrect news.

Donate today at <http://bit.ly/scivpol>

# DONOR SPOTLIGHT: PAMELA UNGER

A longtime activist is inspired by #100DaysOfAction to reach out to her connections across the nation and encourage them to follow suit.

Pamela Unger is no stranger to activism. Throughout the '60s, '70s, and '80s, Pam was on the front lines of historic social justice movements. Today, at 73, she dedicates her energy to environmental protection. We were fortunate enough to speak with Pam about her passionate contributions to this cause.

"I was at City Hall last night, meeting with you guys today, a redistricting meeting tomorrow, and no-[Dakota Access Pipeline] action on Saturday!" she said.

To say Pam is active would be an understatement! In addition to her financial support of the OEC and other organizations, she dedicates hours a day to advocacy. She makes phone calls, attends meetings and rallies, volunteers, and dedicates a lot of time to e-activism. She digs through emails, compiles the most critical and concrete actions and forwards that out to her own list of like-minded, passionate people.

For this reason, she has really enjoyed the OEC's #100DaysOfAction, a campaign designed to provide the public with 100 days of easy actions that can lead to concrete environmental victories. She appreciates the campaign's versatility and breadth. And although the campaign is centered around Ohio, Pam sees its national relevance and forwards it to her friends out of state, challenging them to learn by example and figure out how to apply those actions in their own states.

Pam explains that her passion for the environment comes from growing up in a small town where nature was never far from reach. As a child, she could lie in bed and identify the countless bird calls she heard every morning. As she heard fewer and fewer bird calls each year, she witnessed the true consequences of

pollution and poisons, like DDT. After this personal realization, she knew she had to get involved.

"After my generation, people don't know what it's like to fight the same battles over and over again and keep losing. This is a marathon not a sprint," Pam said.

In the months and years ahead, Pam doesn't want people to be discouraged. She knows from experience that change takes time. She says start small and do what you can. To take care of the things you care about, you have to take care of yourself first.

Until recently, Pam was planning to move out of Ohio in search of warmer weather. But she has since reconsidered. She knows that Ohio is too important in this battle. We are a bipartisan state with enough power to create change that will ripple through this nation. So she's digging her heels into Ohio's fertile soil and rolling up her sleeves for the long, crucial fight ahead. Because, after all, "It matters what Ohio does. It matters a lot."

## 5 EASY ACTIONS

- 1 Follow national bills with GovTrack and state bills with OpenStates
- 2 Call your Senators and Representatives about issues you care about
- 3 Attend townhalls, rallies and public meetings in your community
- 4 Brainstorm with friends about how to impact your local environment
- 5 Write a letter to the editor to your local paper about an issue you care about

Find these actions and more at: [www.theoec.org/100daysofaction](http://www.theoec.org/100daysofaction)





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