

green watch

Fall 2018

**Lessons Learned
Appalachian
Organizing**

**HOW OHIO
CAN SAVE
THE WORLD**

**Ending Stagnation
in Lake Erie**



Griggs Reservoir Park, Columbus, Ohio
Submitted by Chase Sparks



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The OEC's Confidence in the Face of the Unknown



Heather Taylor-Miesle
Executive Director

If 2018 has taught us anything, it's that great triumphs can often go hand-in-hand with great challenges.

I'm very proud of what the OEC has accomplished this year with the support of our members and donors. But, I like to get the bad news out of the way first.

At the federal level we've seen unprecedented attacks both on climate protections and funding for science programs. Climate denial has become ever more mainstream and underpins a number of the anti-environmental policies we see from this Administration. At the state level, the same old line of attack against clean energy has resurfaced, and we've had to continually fight attempts to enrich energy companies at the expense of Ohioans.

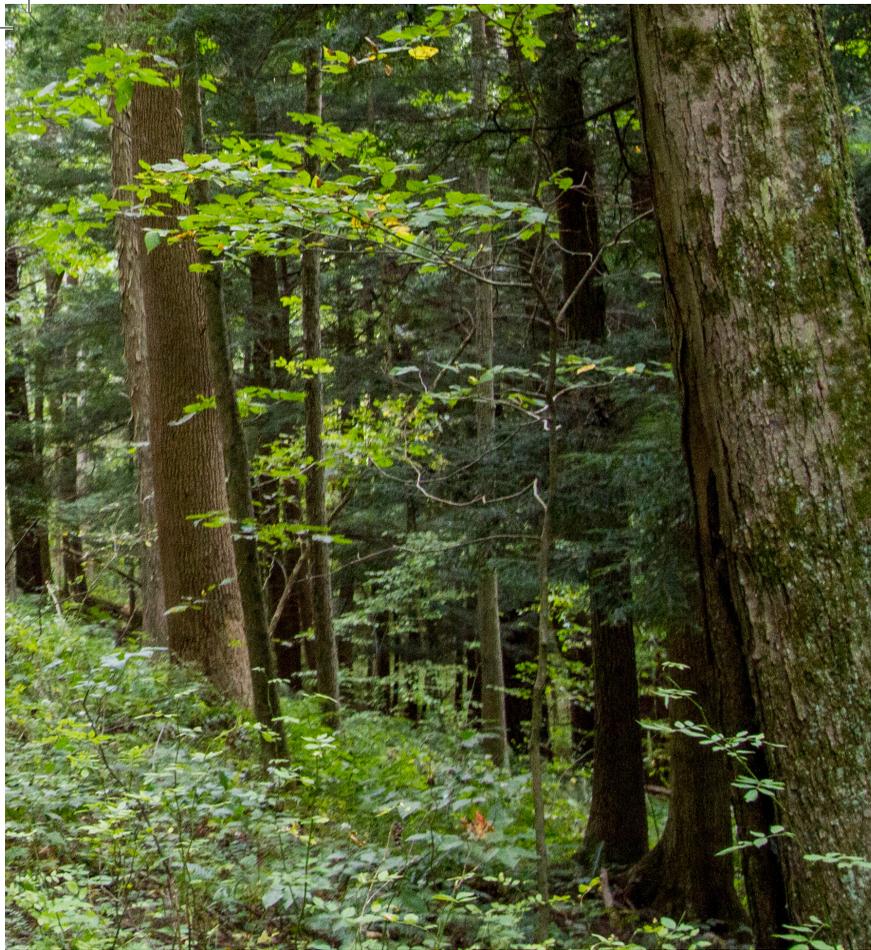
But here's the good news. As our nation and state seem to grow more divided, groups like the OEC are helping to unite different people and organizations across a number of movements and issues to find innovative solutions to our biggest problems. The OEC has extended a welcoming hand to anyone who decides they want to do something good for our state, and we're seeing results.

1 | FALL 2018 [more news and info at www.theOEC.org](http://www.theOEC.org)

This was especially clear in our work with the Fair Districts Coalition. We helped lead an effort to redraw Ohio's Congressional Districts to put the power of our democracy back into the hands of the people. Thanks to the passion of hundreds of volunteers, insider access to decision-makers, a tough few days of negotiations I helped lead, and a strong public push, Ohio passed a new amendment to the constitution that requires fairly drawn congressional maps. Ultimately, this will lead to greater accountability to citizens and more competitive elections. **Most Ohioans care about the environment, so when our democracy works correctly, our environment and our health win.**

The good news doesn't stop there. At a very local level, we secured final protections for Central Ohio's Sawmill Wetlands, keeping them safe from development. We also helped open Jesse Owens State Park, adding 13,000 acres to Ohio's public lands.

We protected our air from harmful methane emissions by working to pass a law that calls for plugging abandoned oil wells all across the state. We pushed for funding for critical programs to reduce toxic algae in Lake Erie. We



saw the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio lay out its PowerForward program which illustrates a future for Ohio with clean energy at the forefront of the conversation. We played great defense and stopped bills that would weaken Ohio's clean energy standards, bailout dirty coal plants, and commercially sell untested oil brine waste.

There has been huge growth in environmental awareness in our businesses, our communities, and our homes. The conversation is changing in Ohio and we like where it's headed.

These wins are thanks to the support from our membership who give our talented staff the ability to take risks, make new partnerships, and make real differences day-in and day-out. **You've made our successes this year possible, and will be our backbone as we face some stark unknowns in 2019.**

We will see a transition in the halls of power at the Statehouse, resulting in both challenges and opportunities. This transition will result in new folks making incredibly important decisions relating to the health of our environment and all Ohioans.

No matter what, the OEC will be working with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to protect air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. You can count on that.

How Ohio Can Save the World



Chris Tavenor
Law Fellow

As the only nonprofit with an Environmental Law Center in the state of Ohio, it seems only fitting that the OEC hosted the first Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in the state.

For a long time, Ohioans have needed a forum to engage with one another on legal aspects of the environmental concerns facing us. Whether it's through an expansion of wind power across the state, battling toxic algal blooms in Toledo, or protecting the Wayne National Forest from oil and gas drilling, our ingenuity can help us set an example for other states as we try to solve some of the greatest crises in environmental history. Ohio can save the world, we just need a place to collaborate.

On September 14, the OEC Law Center brought together 150 attorneys, students, and environmental advocates. For the state's first ELC, this unique gathering kick-started a distinctly Ohioan conversation to discuss complex environmental concerns and how we can build toward solutions.

Attendees heard over a dozen experts explore Ohio's environmental landscape, from the state's renewable energy future to how to manage pollution in the Ohio River.

Our keynote speaker, Professor Robyn Wilson from The Ohio State University, shared her fight for the environment. In 2017, she fought back when the Trump Administration arbitrarily ousted her from the U.S. EPA Science Advisory Board. We face serious challenges on the road to making a cleaner Ohio, but heroes like Professor Wilson demonstrate the bravery needed to save the world.

Next year, the conference will focus on environmental justice, with an emphasis on the just transition of marginalized and exploited communities. We hope you will join us.



Ending Stagnation in Lake Erie

Pete Bucher
Water Resources Director

Satellite image of the 2017 algal bloom from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The OEC is constantly working to turn the tide toward a long-term plan to protect one of Ohio’s greatest natural resources.

We had a major win this year when we helped pass the Clean Lake 2020 Plan, which will provide \$36 million in state funding to better protect our great lake. The funding will be used for water quality research, soil and water conservation projects in northwest Ohio, and a new agricultural conservation program to reduce runoff of algae-causing nutrients like phosphorus.

Although this funding will be critical to making Lake Erie healthy again, the funds will need to be increased over time to continue these efforts.

In addition to this major funding, we also saw new recognition of toxic algae when the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) made the decision to designate the open waters of western Lake Erie as “impaired.” Getting an impaired designation is like getting a diagnosis from the doctor because now OEPA has the resources and funding it needs to monitor the lake and watch out for threats to our drinking water.

Following OEPA's decision, Governor Kasich signed an executive order that would designate eight surrounding watersheds in the Maumee River basin as "distressed." This designation

raises the stakes even higher for finding a workable solution to nutrient runoff.

However, in both of these cases, the designations only bring us so far. The state still has to establish limits on agricultural pollution for there to be any real progress toward our 2020 goal to reduce phosphorous outputs by 20 percent.

As we approach 2019, the OEC is eager to build on these accomplishments and continue working with the community. Together, we will find a solution that works for all Ohioans — from homeowners and healthcare experts to business owners and local farmers — to ensure a clean future for our beautiful Lake Erie.

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



Pete Bucher (left) meets with U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's staff at the Myerholtz Farm to discuss best management practices.

Protecting the Lands that Link Us

Ricardo Granados
Public Lands Coordinator

I've been connected to Ohio's public lands for my entire life. I have had the privilege of exploring some of Ohio's best natural areas, whether it has been on childhood camping trips at Lake Hope State Park, hiking Cuyahoga Valley National Park, working for Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, or working as the public lands coordinator at the OEC. These experiences have inextricably linked me to our public lands, which is why I've devoted my career to protecting them.

One of the most rewarding parts of my career is sharing these childhood stories — and the stories of our OEC members — with our elected representatives. We recently had the opportunity to co-host Representative Mike Turner (R-Dayton) at Carriage Hill MetroPark outside of Dayton, where we were able to connect on our experiences in Ohio's public lands.

Providing Rep. Turner with real life examples of how his district is directly impacted proves why it is so important to share our stories with lawmakers. When we do this, we change the conversation about environmental policy. Our stories can restore forests, save wildlife, and open up new parks for our communities.

Our stories also helped us save 13,000 acres from development when the Ohio Department of Natural



Resources purchased a portion of the AEP Recreation Lands — now known as Jesse Owens State Park (pictured above).

Ohio ranks as one of the lowest in the country for public lands per capita so when we are able to come together to save places like the AEP Recreation Lands, it is a huge step up for all Ohioans.

The OEC is also working to protect our parks, from keeping fracking out of the Wayne National Forest to passing levies across the state that will fund local parks and recreation areas.

As we move into the 50th year of the OEC, we are eager to share your stories so we can continue these efforts. Together, we can create a cleaner, healthier landscape that we are proud to call home.

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

Kristy Meyer (far left), Ricardo Granados (mid- right) and Alaina McCleery (far right) meets with Rep. Mike Turner (mid-left) to talk about public lands.



MOXIE

Carol Davey
Southeast Ohio Regional Director

Appalachian organizing is akin to making the perfect Sunday supper. It takes the proper planning and recipes, and it also takes an infusion of tradition and reverence. As a native of the southeast Ohio region, I know firsthand the tenacity, resilience, moxie, and innovation that are spurred within Appalachia. I also know the challenges of reaching folks spread across hundreds of square miles, many of whom do not have unlimited internet access or even reliable cell service. While access may seem like small barriers to some, for me, it became the biggest lesson in rural organizing.

The OEC's regional organizing program started two years ago to build a stronger understanding of the challenges each region faces. We work with each community to tackle those issues together. We bring the expertise, mission, and strategic goals of the organization to every corner of the state, and help those most impacted by environmental injustice.

Where We Are

The southeast region, by its very nature and geography, is completely different than the other regions across the state. Whereas our other regional directors base operations from one city (Lorain, Cincinnati, and Toledo) to reach impacted populations, in southeast Ohio, there isn't a central

Lessons Learned in Appalachian Ohio Organizing

hub. We have to meet people where they are, both metaphorically and logistically.

Instead of hosting happy hours downtown, we meet supporters at their front doors and drink iced tea on their porches. Instead of sticking to one zip code, we jump from town to town, attending community events and festivals. To make a real impact, it takes being seen and being impactful, not just in one city but in a dozen throughout the region.

It's All Relative

Being so widely dispersed often leads to a disconnect and strife. From environmental threats to stagnant local economies and the looming opioid crisis that has taken hold of small Appalachian towns, the biggest challenge is not "how do we get folks to care," but rather, "how do we make them see how all of these issues are related?"

It is hard to walk into a community and ask them to spend their finite resources protecting the forest, when we cannot even keep our next generation alive and thriving. We need to connect to those people that are out of work, out of money, and out of hope and give them the tools they need to fight for a healthier, stronger environment that doesn't destroy their communities but instead raises them up.

I graduated from high school with less than 60 people in my class, and we've already lost too many to count from opioid overdoses, suicide, and environmentally-induced diseases like cancer. As a single mother who calls this region home, I want a better future for my son and we are learning powerful tools that will bring us together.

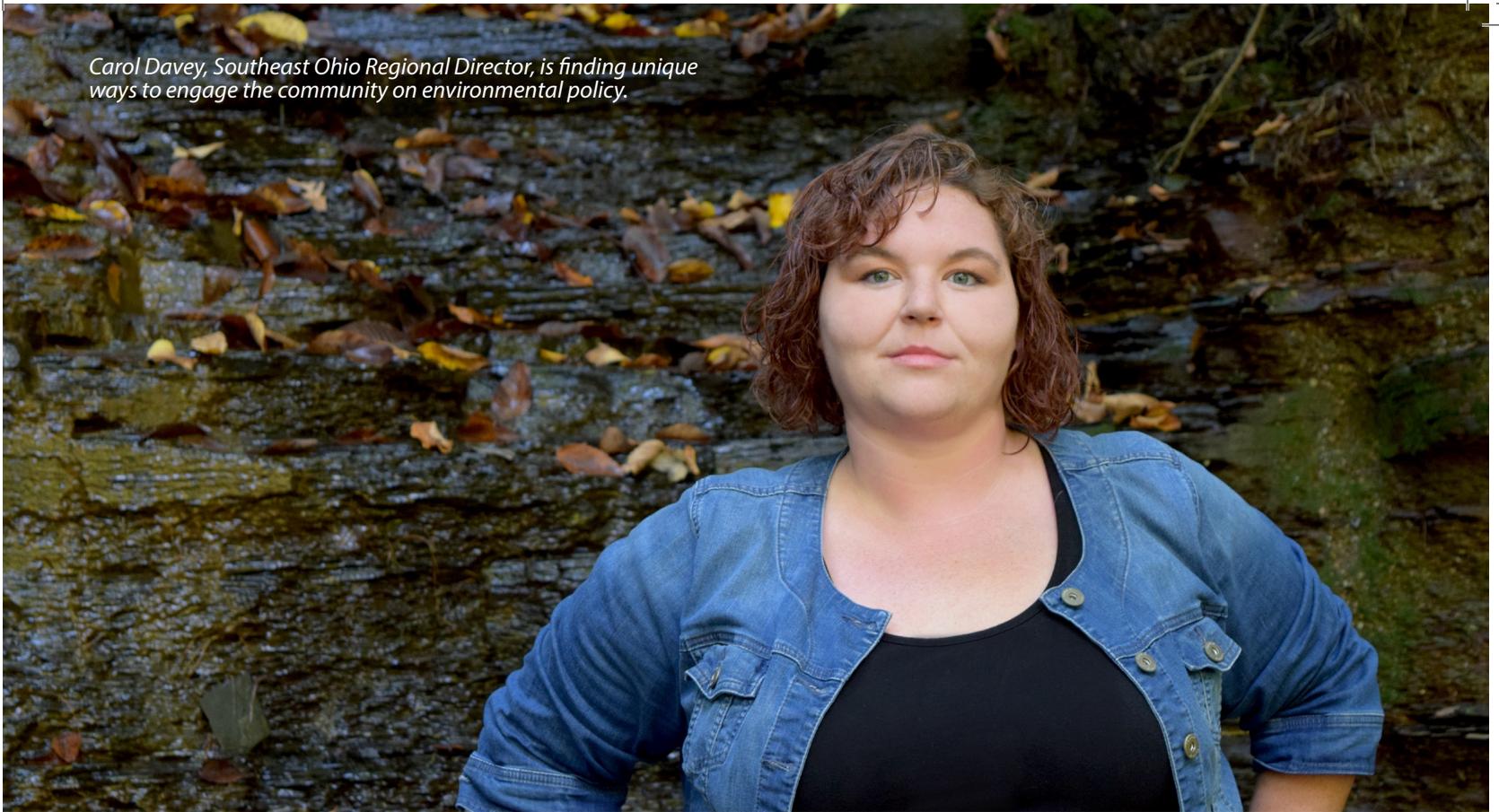
More Than Labels

In 2002, when my polluted town of Cheshire was bought by a large utility, families were relocated to

The groundbreaking ceremony for the John Glenn Astronomy Park in Southeast Ohio.



Carol Davey, Southeast Ohio Regional Director, is finding unique ways to engage the community on environmental policy.



nearby communities and most of our homes were subsequently demolished. We knew it was wrong, but didn't know that made us "environmentalists." The environmental movement has to listen to southeast Ohio residents and understand that when they come to this movement, it isn't necessarily because of a desire to save the planet. It goes much, much deeper than that.

When we meet mothers and grandmothers who are scared of the water coming from their taps, they do not know that just by wanting their kids to be healthy, they're environmentalists.

There are folks who vividly remember the old coal company store days, before the industry tanked, and tore this region apart. They just want stability in order to keep food on their kitchen tables. They don't know they're environmentalists.

What we have realized in southeast Ohio is that there are a ton of environmentalists, they just don't call themselves by that name.

The way southeast Ohioans talk about the environment centers around health, legacy, safety, tradition, economy, and protection. This is because the region is populated by generations of people who have bore the brunt of energy extraction.

Whole towns have been wiped off the map when companies decided to close up and move on. Landscapes and waterways have been forever changed. With each passing year, the threats continue under new names and new logos, while the safety and environmental threats persist. The new factor is that all of these unknown environmentalists are ready to stand up and fight.

The Path Ahead

The OEC is ready to stand alongside this new era of southeast Ohio environmentalists. We're showing up at public hearings. We're holding big polluters accountable. And we're listening to the people of this region and documenting their stories so this precious land is never taken for granted again.

I'm motivated to ferociously protect this landscape for my little boy and all future Appalachians, because this isn't just our home, it's our legacy. With the OEC's support, the region can be hopeful for a healthier tomorrow.

<http://bit.ly/OECsoutheastohio>

Jeremy King from Denison University gives a tour of the Denison Solar Array at the Growing Local Solar event.



Growing Local Solar from the Ground Up

Trish Demeter
Vice President, Energy Policy

Did you know?

1 Megawatt powers
an average of 164
Homes.

What do big household names JPMorgan Chase, Owens Corning, Walmart, and Whirlpool all have in common? A commitment to solar energy and a desire to see more opportunities for it in Ohio.

These companies were among many that recently endorsed a report called *Powering Ohio: A Vision for Growth and Innovative Energy Investment*, which estimated Ohio would reap great benefits if it were to build about 2,200 megawatts (MW) of solar energy by 2030. This is enough to spur \$3.6 billion of investment, and sustain 800 direct jobs.

As of right now, Ohio has installed about 176 MW of solar. However, the OEC is working with the state and utility companies to move forward with four proposals for large-scale solar arrays that would bring the total to about 750 MW, much closer to our 2030 goal.

With plummeting installation costs, and a growing list of eager consumers and companies ready to install systems of their own, it's undeniable that the market is trending toward solar. Ohio has a bright future with this renewable energy source, we just

have to embrace it.

This is why the OEC co-hosted an educational workshop in partnership with Denison University and Green Energy Ohio in August. The goal of the workshop was to explore the areas where a neighborhood could be proactive in enabling and encouraging solar development in their communities. We recruited local government officials and leaders as well as local solar advocates and developers, with more than 50 people in attendance representing approximately 13 different Central Ohio communities.

During vibrant panel discussions, we gathered key insights and wisdom from one another. We completed the day with a tour of the Denison Solar Array, which provides about 15 percent of the university's power.

Leaving the event that day, it felt as though we had started something big. Bringing communities together like this to learn from one another reminds us that a renewable energy future is not only well underway, but that communities are eager to arm themselves with tools and knowledge so that they can be part of it. With your help, the OEC is fostering these partnerships and growing local solar across the state.

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



OEC's Events Coordinator Tamaliyapo Mphande leads a group at The Big Table.

Gathering Around The Big Table

Cassie Kelly
Digital Organizer

Sometimes, the easiest way to solve a problem is to just sit down around a table and have a nice long talk. The OEC Emerging Leaders did just this when we hosted a Big Table event in August.

Every month, the Emerging Leaders program brings together environmentally-minded young professionals to network, learn, and inspire each other to take action on the issues that impact our community. In the year since we started the program, it has grown to six staff organizers working with more than 300 community members. We've also started many new partnerships and received support from like-minded organizations such as the Columbus Foundation.

The Columbus Foundation has an annual event called The Big Table where central Ohioans come together for small, family-table style conversations. We talk about how we can make our community a safer and healthier place to live, work, and enjoy everything the region has to offer.

The Emerging Leaders' Big Table event brought people together from all walks of life to discuss environmental issues in our hometown. We broke down the guest list into eight diverse groups so each individual would have a chance to share their

personal experience and learn from others in the same space.

The uniting factors between all of us were our passion to get involved in environmental causes and connect on a local level. We had enlightening conversations on everything from our daily habits, to statewide policy initiatives, to our hopes and fears for the future of the environmental movement.

When the event came to a close, my group, like many that night, found it difficult to simply stand up and leave. Connection like that is hard to come by these days with social media and an over abundance of online resources constantly at our fingertips. The Big Table event was a rare opportunity to truly listen to other's experiences without crowding up the room with unnecessary or silencing remarks that can often lead to polarizing viewpoints.

We were very thankful to have partnered with the Columbus Foundation on this event, bringing together different perspectives to strengthen our community. We look forward to hosting similar events and continuing to connect people on what matters most: our environment, our families, and our community.

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

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*Deceased

To learn more about the Legacy Club, contact us at (614) 487-7506 or LegacyClub@theOEC.org

We work very hard to ensure all donors are listed correctly; however, we do make mistakes. Please e-mail OEC@theOEC.org with any questions or corrections.



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A special thank you to Guy Denny for hosting the
OEC Alumni Picnic and sharing his beautiful native prairie!