

# green watch

AUTUMN 2022

## *In This Issue:*

- *Our Fight Against Forever Chemicals*
- *A Participatory Democracy Protects Our Environment*
- *New Cost of Climate Change Report: "The Bill Is Coming Due"*



Ohio Environmental Council

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHY OHIO

Securing a healthy environment for each and every Ohioan is hard work. Work which **takes all of us**—members, partners, elected officials, businesspeople, grassroots community leaders, and more. And it takes the talented staff at the OEC using every tool in our toolbox to **secure important wins for our environment and Ohioans who depend on it.**

In this edition of GreenWatch, you'll see these dynamics at work.

In our fight for clean drinking water, OEC staff and our partners continue to call for stricter regulations on forever chemicals that already put Ohioans' health at risk. We're in court to protect Ohio's public lands and forests. And in our work to ensure a justice-centered clean energy transition, we engaged alongside community members in our participatory democracy. We continue to work with local elected officials to not only draw attention to the impacts of climate change on Ohio communities, but to also institute important policy changes that facilitate climate action. And we're growing our movement, through collaborative efforts like the Ohio Emerging Leaders Initiative as well as our summer internship program, to do even more.

Each of these critical, ongoing efforts are made possible by **members and partners like you** investing in our mission. And together, we're making progress. We recently celebrated two major victories in our fight against climate change that were years in the making.

**At the federal level,** Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act which includes serious investments in climate work.

After many *months* of advocacy around President Biden's Build Back Better agenda—as well as many starts and stops—Congress passed many of the bold climate provisions as part of the Inflation Reduction Act this summer. For Ohio, investments in clean energy projects, jobs, and incentives to modernize our energy grid will result in cleaner air, more electric vehicles on the road, a bolstered and advanced manufacturing sector, and lower energy bills for our families.

**At the local level,** following more than 10 *years* of OEC's careful study, strong advocacy, and legal intervention, the Ohio Supreme Court approved a permit to construct the Icebreaker Wind Project—North America's first freshwater offshore wind-powered electric-generation facility. Responsibly developing this thoroughly vetted project will help us not only achieve cleaner air and healthier communities, but it will also put Ohio on the map as a leader in renewable energy technologies.

Groundbreaking victories like these remind us of the importance of persistent advocacy, creative problem solving, and working together—principles that have guided our work at the OEC for more than 50 years and will continue to guide our work as we approach the many opportunities before us.

With gratitude,

**Emily Bacha**

Vice President of  
Public Affairs



# OUR FIGHT AGAINST FOREVER CHEMICALS



**MELANIE HOUSTON**

Managing Director of Water Policy

If pollution is present in water, your senses usually detect something isn't right. Unfortunately, waterways across the country have been degraded by invisible and odorless pollutants called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances: PFAS.

## WHAT ARE PFAS?

PFAS are a family of nearly 5,000 chemicals used to make many common products, from food packaging to firefighting foams. Often dubbed "forever chemicals" for their ability to linger in the environment, these pollutants were first introduced into consumer products in the 1940s.

Since then, PFAS have contaminated our environment through the release of emissions from polluting factories and discarded consumer products. Drinking water, surface, and groundwaters are all at risk for PFAS contamination because PFAS can disperse into the air, soil, and water at any place they're used.

These pollutants are also known as "forever chemicals" because they accumulate in our bodies and never decompose. According to the Ohio Department of Health, risk of illness is determined by duration, frequency, and dose of exposure. Even in low concentrations, PFAS have been linked to cancer, reproductive and immune problems, and more. After decades of use, PFAS contamination is now not only in our lakes, rivers and even rainwater, it's widespread in the human body as well.



Credit: Austin Amburgey



The OEC's Water Team hosted a water policy advocacy day at the Ohio Statehouse with our partners at the Alliance for the Great Lakes and Black Environmental Leaders in May 2022.

Credit: Marisa Twigg

## RULES REGULATING PFAS ARE CHANGING

In 2020, Gov. DeWine's Administration tested almost 1,550 public water systems for PFAS, part of the administration's Ohio PFAS Action Plan. The results showed that 6% of Ohio's public water systems had some detectable level of PFAS, though all but two were under the federal health advisory level, according to the Ohio EPA.

At the time, the U.S. EPA's contamination limit for some types of PFAS was 70 Parts Per Trillion. In June 2022, the agency announced new guidance for four PFAS chemicals ahead of new national drinking water regulations coming this Fall 2022. The U.S. EPA's June PFAS health advisory levels are well below previous U.S. EPA advisories—providing stronger protections for our communities.

## THE OEC'S DUAL APPROACH TO TACKLING PFAS

Since 2018, the OEC has called for a more stringent water standard to address PFAS contamination at the state and federal level. That year at the federal level, the OEC submitted a Petition for Rulemaking calling on the U.S. EPA to create standards limiting PFAS substances in our waterways. At the state level, the OEC has explored opportunities to establish stricter regulatory standards to reduce PFAS exposure. In case U.S. EPA does not act, the OEC continues to work with Ohio lawmakers in pushing the Ohio EPA to establish maximum contaminant levels for PFAS as a class of chemicals in both surface water and drinking water.

**The science on PFAS is certain: PFAS pose a significant public health risk to Ohioans.**

With support from people like you, the OEC keeps advocating for Ohio to join states across the country taking action to protect their residents from the known health impacts of these forever chemicals.



**SCAN FOR MORE:** To learn more about the OEC's work to secure clean water for all who call Ohio home, check out our 2022 Water Policy Priorities booklet by scanning the QR code with your mobile device, or by visiting [bit.ly/2022WaterPolicyPriorities](https://bit.ly/2022WaterPolicyPriorities)

# OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

Ohio sure is beautiful! Our team was out and about this summer working hard to advocate for bold climate policy, while also taking time to enjoy the wonderful outdoor adventures that Ohio offers.

From the rolling hills of the rural countryside in Southwest Ohio, to the crisp, calm waters of the Mahoning River in Northeastern Ohio, and so many incredible places in between, our staff traveled with the OEC's Public Affairs Intern Austin Amburgery across the Buckeye State to capture footage of all Ohio.

**Take a look at what we've been up to this summer—maybe you'll spot a familiar face or place!**

*The city of Youngstown was built along the Mahoning River as the once-booming industry of steel manufacturing grew. Dams used for steel production are now being removed. Credit: Marisa Twigg*



*Public Affairs Intern Austin Amburgery and Managing Field Director Rafe Lewis joined VP of Public Affairs Emily Bacha and Cleveland Metro Advocacy Director Brian Siggers at a City Club of Cleveland event in July.*



*OEC Staff Attorney Chris Tavenor and OEC Board Member Jeniece Brock joined Cincinnati Councilwoman Meeka Owens on a breakout panel to discuss "Accelerating Climate Action Through Democracy" at the 2022 Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit in June.*



*While taking photos at Burr Oak State Park, Public Affairs Intern Austin Amburgery interviewed a Southeast Ohio resident and business owner about our efforts to protect the Wayne National Forest.*



*Southwest Ohio Regional Director Kylie Johnson was our tour guide during Public Affairs Intern Austin Amburgery's photo trip to Cincinnati, where we were in awe of the beauty and magnitude of the Ohio River.*

*Wind turbines pierce the deep blue sky at Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio, hometown of OEC Public Affairs Intern Austin Amburgery.*



# A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY PROTECTS OUR ENVIRONMENT



**CHRIS TAVENOR**  
Staff Attorney

Democracy is not a spectator sport. While your vote is the core of your democratic rights, we must think beyond just the elections occurring a few times a year. We must constantly advocate both for the health of our democracy and the health of our environment.

## Democracy is a years-long, participatory process.

This past June, Central Ohio experienced a nearly three-day blackout following a severe wind storm that whipped across the Midwest. The blackout occurred during record high temperatures, a heatwave in June unlike anything most people had ever experienced. [AEP Ohio intentionally disconnected over 160,000 customers](#) due to the stress placed upon power distribution systems.

Columbus residents were outraged. Most didn't understand why the blackout occurred. Why wasn't the electric grid able to handle both the storm and the heat? Why did AEP Ohio shut off their power, rather than someone else's? Who was to blame for the crisis?

**"Under the direst of circumstances, residents of Central Ohio participated in the democratic process. They called out bad actors, asked for accountability, and urged elected officials to take action."**

Energy policy is complex. But within days, Columbus residents were holding conversations with each other and learning about what caused the blackouts. They began calling for accountability, and both local and statehouse leaders spoke up for their concerns.

The [public outrage in response to the crisis catalyzed government action](#) and sparked renewed calls to modernize our electric grid in the face of climate change.

*Credit: Marisa Twigg*



*Redistricting advocates attend a public forum, an opportunity to participate in democracy.*

That's participatory democracy in action.

## Democracy advocacy is more than voting rights and redistricting.

At the OEC, we believe in a vibrant, inclusive democracy welcoming all voices. [Everyone deserves access to the ballot](#). Everyone deserves representatives who listen to concerns of their constituents. Everyone deserves a fair opportunity.

Our democracy advocacy goes beyond voting rights and even redistricting. It means fighting for the [right for public hearings, sunshine laws, and campaign finance reform](#). It means fighting for direct democracy, and the right for Ohioans to put new statutes and constitutional amendments directly on the ballot.

It means [educating people about the issues](#) they need to know so they can make informed decisions at the ballot box.

A participatory democracy is our best pathway toward ensuring a healthy environment. We need people from all corners of Ohio—from every zip code, from every community, from every race, religion, and worldview—to join their voices together in a chorus fighting for Ohio.

Powerful special interests, fossil fuel companies, and other groups desperately want Ohioans to give up on the process. But in the face of the climate crisis—in the face of immediate threats like extreme weather and power outages—we must participate in our democratic processes.

Our environment depends on us working together. We must call out injustice, vote, learn the issues, and organize our communities.

**We must participate in our democracy, and the OEC is beyond grateful to members like you who help make this education and civic participation around Ohio's environment possible.**

# CLIMATE ACTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Despite Ohio's rising climate adaptation costs, local communities forge ahead on emission reductions

Illustration By: Marisa Twigg



**NOLAN RUTSCHILLING**  
Managing Director of Energy Policy

## THE BILL IS COMING DUE

Local governments often bear the costs of pressing public policy issues, from modernizing infrastructure to navigating public health emergencies. Addressing climate change is no exception, states a new report that estimates Ohio will need to increase municipal spending by upwards of 82%—approximately \$5.9 billion—per year by 2050 to combat climate change.

**"The Bill is Coming Due: Calculating the Financial Cost of Climate Change to Ohio's Local Governments"** is a groundbreaking report that analyzes the impacts of climate change on local municipal budgets in Ohio. Authored by the OEC, Power A Clean Future Ohio (PCFO), and Scioto Analysis, this report is a tool for local governments to drive climate action in their communities.

Fifty major climate impacts are accounted for in the report—with just 10 of these driving the nearly **\$6 billion cost estimate for Ohio's future climate crisis adaptation**. Impacts include increasing temperatures, extreme precipitation and flooding, erosion, and other extreme weather. The report breaks down costs associated with climate adaptation measures local governments will be expected to bear, such as major infrastructure projects and public health costs.

Costs associated with climate-driven disaster recovery and adaptation will create a major financial burden on already overstretched municipal budgets. Financially, local governments will need to explore every option to pay for these adaptation costs, including **addressing these costs with the industries that created them**. As we work to combat the climate crisis at the local level, this report is critical to understanding what needs done to keep our communities safe and healthy.

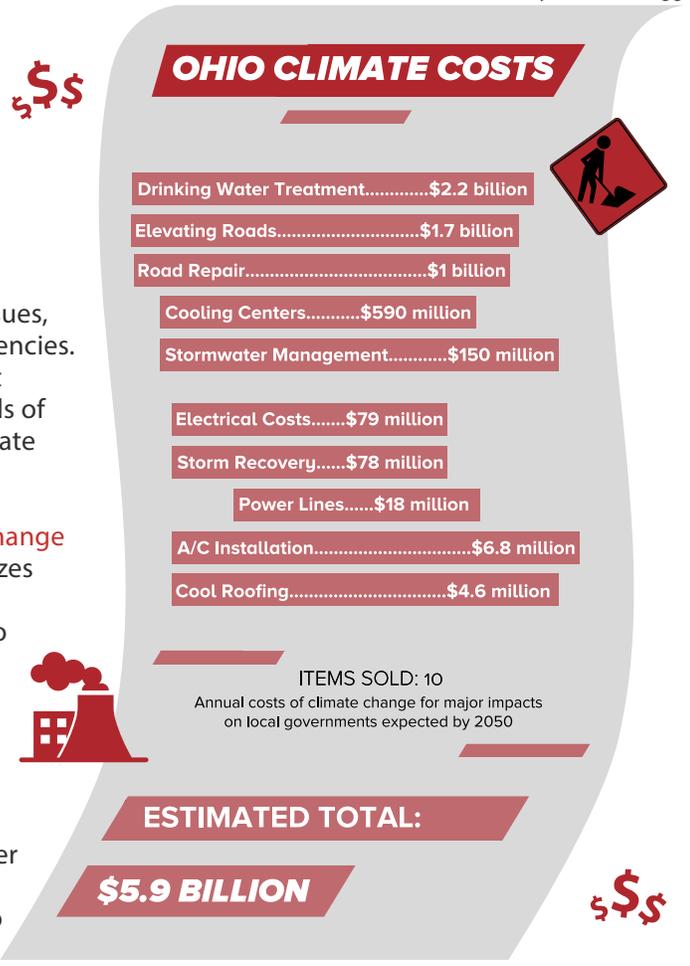
"The Bill Is Coming Due" report was well received, garnering news coverage in virtually every major Ohio media outlet, reaching millions of folks. Even **Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown noticed the report**, and his staff invited OEC and our partners PCFO to join a U.S. Senate Banking Committee hearing on August 4th to share our findings. PCFO Executive Director Joe Florida addressed a national audience, drawing attention to the need for bold climate action.

Credit: Nolan Rutschilling

Although the costs of adapting to climate change will be high, local leaders can take advantage of a cost-free opportunity today to reduce carbon emissions across our state and protect their communities.



**SCAN FOR MORE:** Read "The Bill is Coming Due: Calculating the Financial Cost of Climate Change to Ohio's Local Governments" by scanning the QR code with your mobile device, or by visiting [bit.ly/OHclimatecosts](http://bit.ly/OHclimatecosts)



# GET TO KNOW THE POWER A CLEAN FUTURE OHIO COALITION

The OEC is proud to partner with **Power a Clean Future Ohio**, a nonpartisan coalition that empowers local leaders with technical support and resources to implement **local-level solutions** to the global climate crisis.

The statewide initiative launched in February 2020 to ensure Ohio's local governments are well-positioned to achieve necessary emissions reductions by 2030. We're one of a diverse set of advocacy organizations supporting PCFO's mission to **reduce carbon emissions in an achievable, equitable, and economical way**.

Earlier this year, the coalition achieved a major milestone: **more than one-third of all Ohioans live in a PCFO community**. Ohio communities and counties can join PCFO by passing a resolution with a commitment to work towards reducing carbon emissions. Once a community joins, they access technical assistance and planning resources at no cost that serve as catalysts for change. PCFO currently supports **more than 35 communities across Ohio**, from large metropolitan areas, mid-sized legacy cities, and county governments to smaller villages in every corner of the state.

## **Locals lead the way: a Dayton, Ohio case study**

In the spring of 2022, PCFO worked with Dayton to create a greenhouse gas inventory—an assessment of emissions that contribute to climate change—through the **PCFO Technical Assistance Team**, including OEC energy experts and our partners. The team discovered that the city could significantly cut emissions in its operations, which account for about 14% of Dayton's total estimated emissions.

Because of PCFO's greenhouse gas inventory, city officials now look to **pursue federal funds through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (also known as the bipartisan infrastructure law) and other avenues to reduce the city's carbon footprint. They seek to switch to **renewable energy sources** and are looking at different ways to make their city's buildings and infrastructure more energy efficient.



**"Whether by joining Power a Clean Future Ohio or taking time to understand Ohio's climate costs, cities have an opportunity to take bold climate action that creates true, sustainable change at the local level."**

The city also relaunched their community choice aggregation program for residential electricity purchasing by joining the **Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC)**. This transitioned every automatically-enrolled resident to 100% clean energy and also **saved these residents 30% per kilowatt-hour on their bill** compared to their local utility's rates.

Communities and their leaders also have opportunities for peer-to-peer networking through the PCFO coalition. PCFO has brought together 13 communities throughout Ohio to engage in a sustainability planning cohort. Members actively workshop the different components of **creating a sustainability or climate action plan centered on authentic community engagement**. Local communities can also tap into the collective knowledge of experts and communities throughout Ohio who are striving to reduce and stop climate change in their backyards through a dedicated learning space.

**We can all work together to create a clean energy future for Ohio where everyone—no matter where they live—has access to renewable energy harvested in Ohio, beautiful green spaces full of native species, green manufacturing jobs, and affordable sustainable housing that's ready for the technology and power of the 21st century.**



Credit: Kylie Johnson



Credit: Austin Amburgey

# SEEING THE MYCORRHIZAL FOREST FOR THE TREES



NATHAN JOHNSON  
Director of Public Lands

We can no longer ignore the fundamental role that fungal networks play in connecting and sustaining our public lands.

The importance of the “Wood-Wide-Web”—known as mycorrhizal (my-cor-RHY-zuhl) networks—for forest health and carbon storage is one of the major reasons why the OEC is currently litigating *Ohio Environmental Council v. United States Forest Service* in federal district court.

This case challenges the “Sunny Oaks” timber project, which authorizes nearly 2,500 acres of clearcutting and similar forms of logging in the Wayne National Forest in Southeast Ohio.

## UNDERSTANDING THE SUNNY OAKS CASE

The Sunny Oaks project developed from 2017 through 2020, a time when the Trump Administration dramatically increased timber sale quotas in many national forests, including the Wayne. The OEC’s litigation touches on the role of timber quotas in national forest management as well as the decline and fate of the critically important American white oak.

And, we believe this lawsuit is the first in the nation to focus closely on forest fungal networks.

All trees and certain types of fungi connect at the roots to form partnerships called *mycorrhizas*. These mycorrhizal relationships are the rule, not an exception. In fact, plants and fungi have been partnering for millions of years—since before the evolution of roots. The small and profuse strands of mycorrhizal fungi have 60 times more absorptive area than fine roots. As a result, mycorrhizal fungi dramatically enhance their host trees’ ability to take up water and nutrients. These fungi also connect trees to one another in mycorrhizal networks that can span many acres. Amazingly, trees connected by these networks can share nutrients, carbon, water, biochemical information, and even electrical signals.

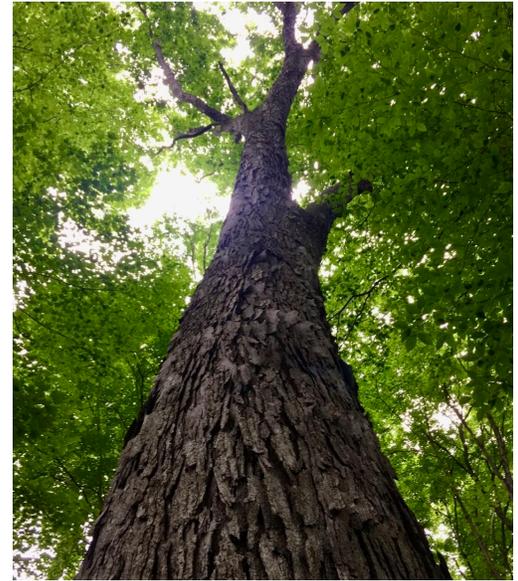
Part of the trouble with the Sunny Oaks project is that science shows that fungal networks are highly sensitive to heavy timbering. Fungal network diversity, structure, and function can take 80 or more years to recover following clearcut logging—and may never fully recover.

The outlook for fungal network recovery in oak-dominated forests like Sunny Oaks is even more problematic because oak-affiliated fungal networks are especially sensitive to heavy timbering. Clearcutting oak forests in the Wayne may not just eliminate the mature oak trees now present, it may also destroy the soil’s suitability for future oak ecosystem success.

Heavy timbering threatens to destroy many of the fungal networks that connect, sustain, and protect the Wayne. Yet throughout Sunny Oaks’ development, the Forest Service declined to acknowledge or evaluate the ecological importance of fungal networks or the harm heavy timbering causes them.

This “failure to look” is one of the live legal issues in this litigation: environmental law requires federal agencies to disclose and analyze the significant impacts their projects may have on the environment. If destroying the living networks that connect, protect, and sustain forests is not a significant impact requiring agency analysis, then what is?

***We will keep you updated on the status of Ohio Environmental Council v. United States Forest Service as this litigation continues.***



Credit: Molly Jo Stanley

**Fungal networks** are what make forests more than mere collections of trees. These networks are what connect trees to one another and make forests dynamic communities of interrelating and communicating members. Failing to see this fundamental aspect of forest ecology means failing, literally, to “see the forest for the trees.”



# ONE CHANGE: OEC INTERNS REFLECT ON CAREERS AND CLIMATE ACTION



**AUSTIN AMBURGEY**

2022 OEC Public Affairs Intern

Coming from all over the country and with diverse academic backgrounds, this year’s summer intern cohort was united by our shared desire for change. This year’s internship cohort consisted of in-person and online work, while many met daily in OEC’s Columbus office and others enjoyed the flexibility of remote work. Each of us brought genuine passion to our work, and dreams of where things could be in the future.

In speaking with each intern, I was struck by the passionate way they spoke about these changes, and so I asked them, **“If you could be responsible for one change in the environmental world, what would it be?”**

**Lenny Zaleski**, one of our political interns, arrived in the office early this year as part of the University of Dayton Civic Scholars Program. Hailing from Chicago, Lenny saw the OEC as a perfect blend of non-profit work, issue advocacy, and environmental politics. Growing up in the Windy City, he recognized the different environmental needs of people and desired to help provide information and resources they deserved. The change he saw himself making was a bridge between digital communications and in-person relationship-building to reach the most people possible. At the OEC, Lenny was able to take steps along that path, creating social media posts and a press release to help disseminate that crucial information.

Another political intern, **Gillian Champoir**, grew up on the shores of Lake Erie in Cleveland and comes to us from Denison University. Living on the lake, Gillian’s community was dependent upon and at the will of the environment. She was inspired by both her love of the lake and the fear of harmful algal blooms that continue to damage our most precious natural resource. If she could change anything it would be the minds of those opposed to minimizing the damage of climate change—to make them believe in the science that will, ultimately, help them too. Since joining the OEC, she’s worked on watershed studies, inspecting phosphorus levels and algal blooms, and on legislation to make that change a reality.

Coming all the way from Tampa, Florida, **Graham Johnson** of Ohio State University served as OEC’s water intern. Growing up in Florida, Graham bore witness to the policies and processes that lead to ecosystem degradation in his community. Building upon his first internship experience with the OEC, he hopes to help reverse environmental harms and stop similarly damaging policies from taking effect elsewhere. He wants to see environmental policy placed on the same playing field as other aspects of our society and be discussed as necessary for a safe and stable country. He’s already worked on a comparison of water affordability across the country at the OEC, helping make this a priority issue as we all need access to clean, safe, and affordable water.



Photo By: Austin Amburgey

**Jess Reiser** is a law student at Northern Kentucky, and served as one of OEC’s legal interns. She felt called to action by the devastating prognosis of climate change on the world, and hopes to continue working in the legal field to help mitigate and reverse the effects we are having on the planet. In the long term, via intense legislation and society-wide action, she wants to help support the transition from fossil fuels to renewables. With the OEC, she has already done work reviewing legislation that would have stymied this change by protecting the corporations that continue to negatively impact the environment.

Originally from Toledo, OEC’s other legal intern, **Kennedy Sattler**, attends George Mason for law school. There, she grew an appreciation for the natural resources that make that part of Ohio so beautiful and a wonderful place to spend time. But she also saw the steady decay of areas, particularly Maumee Bay, a place she swam in as a child now often cordoned off for harmful algal blooms. Through her work as a lawyer, Kennedy hopes to establish constitutional amendments, at the state or federal level, for environmental protections. She hopes to protect ecosystems by ensuring our right to a clean environment, and began this in her work with the OEC to increase protections for the Darby Creek watershed.

**Hannah Zoldesy**, another OSU grad, served as our development intern. Her love of philanthropy and experience in fundraising lends her to non-profit work, and the mission of the OEC was one she could get behind. She wants a greater level of collaboration between environmental and community organizations, and in her position she has begun to see that come to fruition, creating a database of granting organizations across Ohio.

As for myself, as public affairs intern, I grew up in rural Northwest Ohio. I spent much of my childhood camping and enjoying nature in and around my small hometown, and I fell in love with conservation-related media. If I could change one thing about how environmentalism is perceived, it would be to draw attention to the local action that has been and should continue to be taken to protect the environment. I have been able to do so through the OEC thanks to a number of projects highlighting local efforts, like OEC’s effort to protect Wayne National Forest.

# GROWING NEW CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADERS THROUGH THE INAUGURAL OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS INITIATIVE

Written by the OELI Cohort

The inaugural cohort of the **Ohio Environmental Leaders Initiative (OELI)** has been an amazing opportunity for the seven of us chosen to participate in this program. Over the course of six months, local experts from the OEC and Black Environmental Leaders

Association trained us to **grow our environmental advocacy skills** in areas such as community organizing, board leadership, policy work, and more. Organizers ensured we were paid for our time, provided a budget for our projects, and shared resources such as Zoom to make our learning and project planning easier.

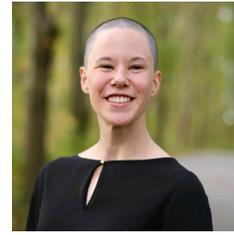
For some cohort members, OELI was an intro to the policy side of climate justice work that provided a platform to ask questions and develop skills. For others, an opportunity to fine-tune their existing expertise. But for all, OELI was a chance to **create relationships with like-minded young professionals pursuing climate justice** in their communities throughout Ohio.



**NYAH CARRUTHERS**  
Legislative Aide



**CHRISTIAN BENNETT**  
Community Organizing



**BAILEY FULLWILER**  
Community Social Worker



**BRITTANY MONTGOMERY**  
Climate & Sustainability Communications



**ANDREW LINEBARGER**  
Recycling Data Analyst



**MAYA CANAZTUJ**  
Environmental Scientist



**JAZMON STEWART**  
Agriculturist & Teacher

***With the guidance of hosts the Ohio Environmental Council and the Black Environmental Leaders Association, we have grown into better environmental advocates.***

Throughout the program, we learned how **Ohioans face a range of stressors and challenges influenced by climate change and injustice**—from higher rates of respiratory illnesses to inequitable greenspace access, to pockets of food apartheid and everything inbetween. Despite these overwhelming realities, we reminded each other that we all have the agency and strengths to make small changes in our lives that allow us to be kinder to ourselves, our fellow humans, and this amazing place we call home.

We co-created a final project to showcase our strengths, utilize our training, and meet the diverse needs of our communities who are **disproportionately experiencing the challenges of climate change and injustice**. We developed three lesson plans with three video sessions consisting of individual research and information provided by local experts through interviews.

Coming from land that was inhabited by indigenous tribes such as the **Lenape, Miami, Ottawa, Seneca, Wyandot, and many more**, we found ways to honor the place that was stolen from them not that long ago in each one of our lessons.

## The lesson plans include:

- **Climate Justice 101:** An introduction to understanding climate justice and how community members can act
- **Climate Action:** Understanding how anyone can take climate action in their community; and
- **Food Injustices and Solutions in Ohio:** An introduction to understanding the history of food injustice in Ohio and how to help communities impacted with food hunger

***If nobody knows what to do in the face of injustice, how will anything ever get done?***

Although our time in the cohort is coming to an end, our work is not completed. As the inaugural cohort, **we must continue to encourage the next environmental leaders**. Be it through this important initiative or mentoring a future leader, it is our duty to pass on the knowledge and advice we've gained.



**SCAN FOR MORE:** Community groups and educators seeking to learn more about how to take climate action in their neighborhoods can find these intentionally designed lesson plans by scanning the QR code or by visiting [ohioenvironmentalleadersinitiative.org](https://ohioenvironmentalleadersinitiative.org).

**The Ohio Environmental Leadership Initiative is a crucial program and we are all looking forward to the accomplishments future cohorts create.**



# GREEN GALA 2022: CELEBRATING OHIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES



**ANNA SIRIANO**

Director of Membership Engagement

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, our team was excited to join together once again for the OEC's premier member event, the Green Gala. To many who've attended over the years, the Green Gala has always felt a bit like a homecoming of Ohio's greatest environmental advocates, and this year was no different...well, except for a few updates.

We redesigned this year's event and hosted it at Columbus' Grange Insurance Audubon Center, a park near downtown with beautiful vistas and spaces for indoor and outdoor connection. In addition to the annual silent auction, guests enjoyed painting, yard games, a wine pull, and bird tours—quite possibly the most attended activity of the evening! The real draw, though, was the opportunity to network and be in community with environmental enthusiasts and advocates from around the state.

During the event, OEC Staff Attorney Chris Tavenor presented the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission with our Civic Engagement Award for their unwavering dedication to protecting our democracy and our votes. Sponsored by the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, Ohio Chapter of the NAACP, and the A. Philip Randolph Institute of Ohio, the non-partisan Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission showed Ohioans what it meant to create a map by the people and for the people.

**As always, we were honored by the vocal support and generosity from our members, partners, and sponsors as we joined together in celebration of our collective mission for clean air, land, water, and a healthy democracy for all who call Ohio home. We can't wait to see you again next year!**



Photos By: Marisa Twigg

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## GREEN GIVING CLUB: HELP SUSTAIN OEC'S MISSION

Our **Green Giving Club Members** support the OEC's mission through automatic monthly or quarterly donations. These donations provide **ongoing, reliable support** for the OEC team, ensuring we're ready to fight for Ohio's air, land, water, and democracy **now and in the future.**



Plus, we're happy to provide you easy monthly processing, an end-of-year donation summary to assist you in tax preparation, and dedicated OEC staff members to answer your questions.

**Make your first monthly gift today at: [theoec.org/give-monthly](https://theoec.org/give-monthly)**

*The OEC restricts contributions from individual businesses to less than 5% of our total operating budget and limits total business donations to less than 15%. The OEC requires all business donors to acknowledge that acceptance of a gift does not hinder or place limits on the OEC's ability to comment on, litigate, or participate in processes related to any permit, legislation, policy, or related decision.*



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## JOIN US FOR THE **OEC ANNUAL MEETING:** **ADVOCACY IN ACTION**

Ohio Environmental Council members have always shown us that we are stronger, smarter, and more effective when we work together.

*What does our advocacy in action look like?* Join us virtually for the 2022 Ohio Environmental Council Annual Meeting to hear from our team about our recent successes and our plans ahead.

**Register today for our virtual gathering:**

[theoec.org/event/2022-annual-meeting/](https://theoec.org/event/2022-annual-meeting/)