

FALL 2025

green watch



Ohio Environmental Council

POWER TO THE PEOPLE: A REFLECTION FROM THE OEC'S CEO CAROL KAUFFMAN

Dear Members and Supporters,

It is during difficult moments in history like this one that we must celebrate our wins, build our community, and create a vision of our shared future. Recently, the staff completed the annual planning process. We reflected on the victories, defeats, and pivots of the past year and reaffirmed our strategic goals. I'm pleased to share we've come out of that process clear-eyed about the path ahead and more rooted than ever in our mission.

This work isn't done by any one organization or individual, however. It is by building dense webs of community that we gain the power to weave a better world. Every pro-environment, pro-democracy policy win happens because of and with all of you—our community of OEC members.

One way the OEC invests in its community is by serving as a trustworthy source of information on complex issues. This fall, we have a number of events to keep you informed and support you to take action. The Civic Engagement Series helps our members learn about what steps they can take to get involved in the political system, from explaining the complexities of redistricting in Ohio to the process of a bill becoming a law. Our quarterly Law Webinars offer a space to dig deeper into complex environmental law topics; these webinars are open to all but also offer CLE credits to attorneys. These are just a few of the upcoming events. I encourage you to stay up to date by bookmarking and reviewing our events webpage or following the OEC on social media.

The OEC's Law Conference is a can't-miss opportunity to connect with the Ohio environmental community in person and hear from world-class speakers. This year's event will be on September 26 at The Ohio State University. After the conference, we

hope you'll join us for a screening of 'How to Poison a Planet,' which is a documentary about the largest litigation involving drinking water in America's history. You can learn more about the event from our General Counsel, Chris Tavenor, at the end of this edition of GreenWatch.

As you read the stories in this issue of GreenWatch, I challenge you to think about how you can become a more active member of our community. Maybe you will attend an event, call your representative, write a letter to the editor in your local newspaper, or make a donation. Together, one action at a time, we will create a better future for all Ohioans.

Warmly,
Carol Kauffman
CEO



Ohio Environmental Council Events

Civic Engagement Series, Law Webinars, Regional Events



2025 OEC Law Conference

September 26
The Ohio State University



Donate to the Ohio Environmental Council

Your donations make our work possible!

REFLECTION:

A LEGAL INTERN WRITES ABOUT HER EXPERIENCE AT THE OEC



Erin Goodburn
Legal Intern

My name is Erin Goodburn, and I am one of the Ohio Environmental Council's (OEC) 2025 legal interns. I am a rising second-year law student at The Ohio State University, and my passions and goals align closely with the OEC's mission.

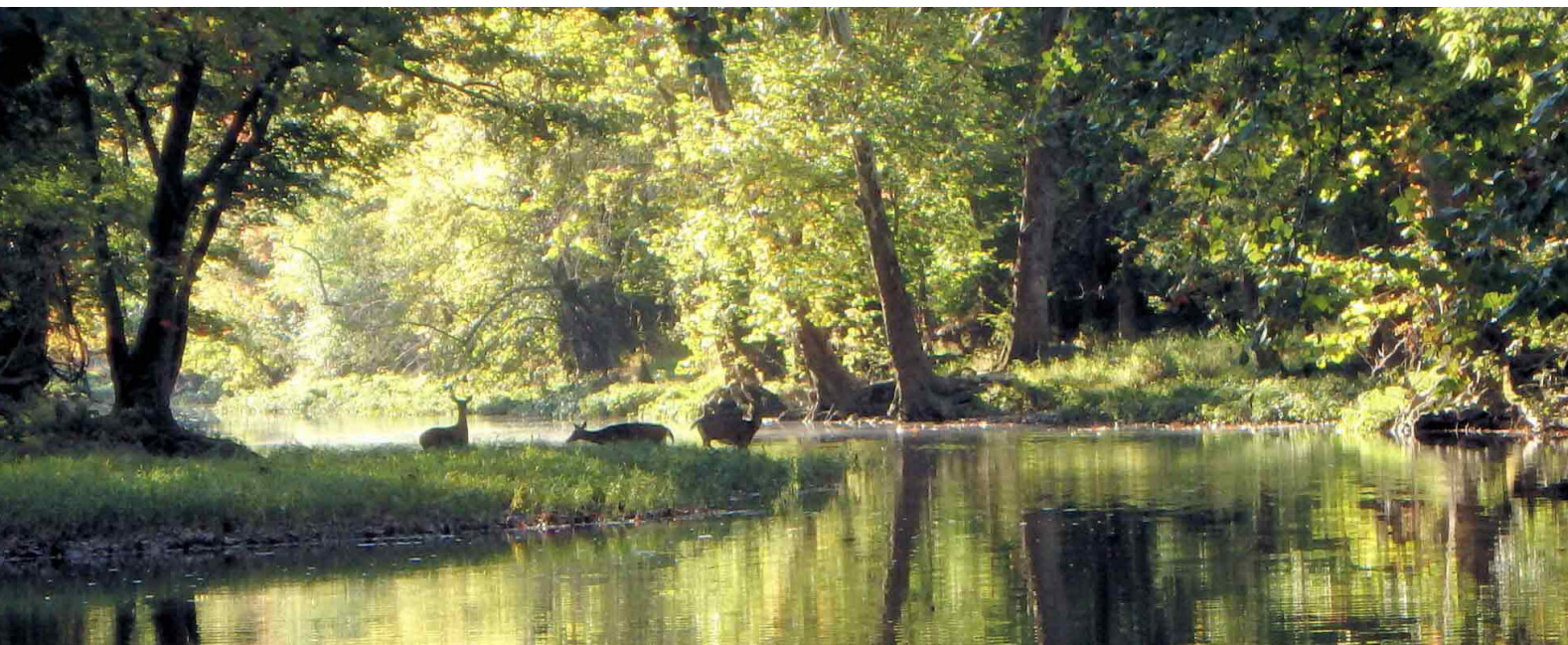
The OEC is a team of ambitious environmentalists who deeply care about the communities of Ohio. When I say "communities," I mean more than just human ones. Yes, many of the communities that the OEC supports include local municipalities, utility ratepayers, voters, people lacking safe drinking water, and students. But its work doesn't stop there.

The OEC protects communities that are not human at all. The OEC advocates for the endangered mussels in the Big Darby Watershed, defends the trees in the Wayne Valley National Forest, supports the fish in Lake Erie, and safeguards the wildlife surrounding oil and gas fracking sites. These are just a few examples of the ecosystems and species the OEC champions, both through legal tactics and other advocacy strategies.

The OEC's longstanding leadership and expertise in defending Ohio's communities is why I wanted to join this team. Over the last ten weeks, I have learned about many challenges facing Ohio communities. My primary focus has been on the Big Darby Watershed, where I've researched how local governments can fund long-term conservation efforts.

The Big Darby is one of the most biodiverse places in the Midwest. The creeks support over 100 species of fish and 44 species of mussels. The watershed stretches 557 miles through Central Ohio and touches 10 different jurisdictions in Franklin County alone. Through this project, I've come to appreciate just how special this watershed is—and why its protection matters so much.

Working alongside people who are committed to protecting Ohio's more vulnerable communities has reaffirmed my goal of becoming an environmental lawyer. I am incredibly grateful to the OEC and everyone who makes its work possible. The impact will resonate in Ohio for generations, and I take pride in being a part of it.



OHIO'S REDISTRICTING PROCESS:

GET INVOLVED IN THE MAP MAKING PROCESS AND USE THE POWER OF YOUR VOICE



Franklin Davis
Director of Climate and Democracy Organizing

In 2025, Ohio's redistricting process begins again! This year, we'll be receiving a new congressional district map, and we all have the opportunity to weigh in on the process.

Four years ago, the Ohio General Assembly passed a congressional map found unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court twice. Unfortunately, it ultimately ended up being the map we voted under in our elections in 2022 and 2024. Because the map didn't receive bipartisan support, the maps are being redrawn in 2025. That means we, as Ohioans, have the opportunity to use our power to influence what our congressional map looks like for the next six years.

The map passed this year, regardless of the step in the process or whether it receives any bipartisan support, will remain in place until 2031. That means the next three congressional elections will use the map that comes out of the process ahead of us.

Stand with us, and help drive the fight for congressional maps approved by the Ohio legislature that promote fairness to the greatest extent possible. How can you get involved?

How can you get involved?

- Call and email your legislators.
- Write and present testimony at the Public Hearings.
- Create and submit your own map; public submissions are welcome.
- Engage your community in the process.



Franklin Davis speaking about the redistricting process at the Licking County Good Trouble Event in July.

Call and email your legislators. Write and present testimony at the Public Hearings. Create and submit your own map; public submissions are welcome. Most importantly, continue to bang the drum in your community that the fight for fair maps is, and must be, fought right now! If you have any questions about how to get engaged, don't hesitate to reach out to our team.



Learn more about how to make your voice heard by reviewing our Advocacy Toolkit at: theoec.org/advocacy-toolkit/

REGIONAL REPORT:

BUILDING LOCAL POWER IN CENTRAL OHIO



Annalisa Rocca
Central Ohio Regional Director

In Central Ohio, the momentum for environmental progress is building—and it's powered by the people who live, work, and organize here. From neighborhood leaders to policy advocates, communities across the region are stepping up to shape a cleaner, healthier, and more equitable future. To ensure the region continues to advance towards a sustainable future, **the Ohio Environmental Council has launched its first-ever Central Ohio field advocacy program!**

I'm honored to serve as OEC's first Central Ohio Regional Director, leading efforts to strengthen local engagement and drive community-based environmental policy solutions. After years of working on statewide water policy, I'm thrilled to return my focus to the region I live in and support the bold, people-powered progress already underway.

Why now, and why Central Ohio?

Central Ohio is one of the most influential, wealthy, and rapidly growing regions in the state. By 2050, over 600,000 more people will move to the region, making it one of the largest urban areas in the country with over 3,000,000 residents. This growth will bring new opportunities, as well as new stresses to our communities and environment. As Central

Ohio Regional Director, I'll be leading place-based policy and advocacy efforts and building relationships throughout the region. Together with our communities and local leaders, we'll work to advance lasting progress across a few key areas:

- **Clean Water** – Protecting the Big and Little Darby Creeks, advocating for water affordability, and supporting lead service line replacement programs
- **Affordable & Reliable Energy** – Supporting local community choice aggregation programs and ensuring affordable and reliable energy for all residents and businesses
- **Sustainable Development** – Ensuring local growth supports people and our environment

There's so much important work ahead, and we want you to be part of it. Whether you're a longtime advocate or just beginning to get involved, I invite you to stay connected and engaged. Sign up for our Central Ohio Quarterly Newsletter to follow our work and take action with us.



Sign up for our email newsletters
to stay in the loop!
bit.ly/OECMailingList



HOW TO MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT IN GOVERNMENT AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS:

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC COMMENT



Nathan Johnson
Senior Attorney, Land and Water



Molly Jo Stanley
Southeast Ohio Regional Director

Administrative agencies at the state and federal levels make many decisions that affect our environment—approving pipelines, issuing permits for pollution, or creating new rules for protecting air and water. Fortunately, federal and state administrative laws often gives members of the public the right to participate in many of these decisions through a process called notice and comment.

Why Comment?

Given the right circumstances, and when done well, your public comments can lead to more well-informed agency action and lead to better environmental and public interest outcomes. This can include securing more protective permit requirements, influencing agency projects, and even stopping bad projects entirely.

Participating in agency notice and comment opportunities is essential to a healthy democracy. While elections choose leaders, much of the actual policymaking happens in government agencies through decisions about regulations, permits, and environmental reviews. These decisions shape the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the lands we cherish. Public comment gives ordinary people a voice in these often complex and technical processes.

By submitting comments, citizens help hold agencies accountable to the law, to science, and

to the public interest. Meaningful comments can influence final decisions, strengthen environmental protections, or stop harmful actions. Participation also creates a factual and public record of opposition or support, which can be important in court challenges or legislative oversight.

Moreover, notice and comment ensures that policymaking is not captured solely by industry insiders or special interests. It invites community knowledge, lived experience, and local concerns into the federal decision-making process. For example, a resident who fishes a stream daily may offer insights missed by consultants hundreds of miles away.

Victories are not guaranteed in agency public involvement processes, as many agencies tend to be resistant to change, with their actions often shaped by political pressures, agency culture, and budgetary incentives. However, wins small and large are real and achievable.

At the very least, by submitting quality public comments you are building what is called the “agency record,” the overall written body of information before an agency that it must consider in coming to its decision. Notably, if an agency action is challenged in court, the agency record serves as the primary (and often exclusive) body of evidence over which the litigants contest and the court rules.

OEC continues to monitor proposed fracking and timbering projects in Ohio’s only National Forest and anticipates opportunities for public comment in the near future. Please stay connected to learn about proposals and calls for action.

How to Make Your Comments Effective

1. Know Where to Look

Environmental NGOs at the state, national, and local levels can be a great resource for alerting members to comment opportunities.

2. Be Timely and Follow Instructions

Always submit your comments before the deadline listed in the notice. Use the official submission method—usually an online portal like Regulations.gov, email, or postal mail. Failure to follow instructions can lead to comments that do not make it into the agency record.

3. Be Specific and Evidence-Based

Agencies must generally support their actions with meaningful data. The most effective comments tend to focus on factual information. That said, facts that arise from personal experience rather than, say, scientific journals are often invaluable in the comment process.

4. Be a Force for Reason

To survive judicial review, agencies typically need to support their decisions with valid information and reasonable explanations. If you see flawed reasoning or decisions that are unsupported by meaningful evidence be sure to point those flaws out and to explain your own reasoning.

5. Join Forces and Amplify Your Voice

Coordinated campaigns can be powerful. Consider partnering with environmental organizations, writing group letters, or hosting community comment-writing events.

6. Keep a Record and Follow Up

Save your comment and watch for the agency's response in the final decision document. If they ignore key factual or scientific issues you raised, that may open the door for an administrative appeal or legal challenge.

Common Opportunities to Comment

Agency Projects: These include decisions to approve or deny proposals like logging in a national forest. At the federal level, major government projects are usually evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and often come with opportunities to comment on draft Environmental Assessments (EAs) or Environmental Impact Statements (EISs).

Permits: Often, permitting is handled by state agencies that implement federal law through a process called “cooperative federalism.” In Ohio, the Ohio EPA issues permits for water pollution discharges (e.g., under the Clean Water Act), and air emissions (Clean Air Act), and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) issues permits for resource extraction. Permit proposals typically come with public notice and comment opportunities.

Rulemakings: Most often, this involves changes to existing regulations. The Federal Register publishes these announcements for federal rulemakings, providing a minimum 30-day comment window (often longer).

Current and (likely) Upcoming Opportunities in Ohio



ODNR State Forest Annual Work Plan:

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is accepting public comments on the 2025-2026 DRAFT Annual Work Plan until October 5, 2025.



Ohio State Public Lands Fracking Nominations:

Despite significant opposition, ODNR is actively accepting and approving nominations to frack under Ohio's State Public Lands. For each nomination, there is a 45-day period to submit comments to the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission through the official portal. To stay informed of all land nominations, register for updates from ODNR Oil & Gas Commission (send an email to Commission.Clerk@oglmc.ohio.gov) or join Save Ohio Parks email list.

WETLAND TOURS: THE IMPORTANCE OF H2OHIO FUNDING TO COMMUNITIES



Emily Kelly
Agriculture and Water Manager

Recent cuts to H2Ohio funding jeopardize the state's commitment to ensuring clean water in communities. The recent budget bill process has resulted in a reduction of H2Ohio funding by \$105 million over the next two years, representing nearly a 40 percent cut. This significant decrease threatens to undo the progress we have made. It underscores the urgent need for a long-term funding source for H2Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources is responsible for restoring and creating new wetlands through H2Ohio, which helps improve water quality in nearby waterways and Lake Erie. On August 11th, the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) partnered with the Junction Coalition to host a tour of one of these wetlands for local and state lawmakers, as well as congressional members, near Toledo, OH.

The tour showcased the Howard Marsh Metropark wetland expansion, which was guided by Metroparks Toledo and supported by both H2Ohio and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). This expansion is part of a 1,000-acre wetland near the lakeshore in Jerusalem Township, designed to promote

activities such as paddling, birding, and fishing through ecological restoration. Wetlands play a crucial role in filtering pollutants from the water and storing rapidly moving water off the landscape before it flows into our lakes and rivers.

These essential restoration projects rely on both state and federal investments. During the tour, we learned from the Junction Coalition how these investments impact the local community. The Toledo region has become more resilient to flooding, thanks to the increased wetland buffer against extreme storms. Additionally, the area has seen a boost in tourism, offering more opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts to engage with local waters. As a result, residents now enjoy cleaner water, which attracts new industries to the region.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative represents the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades and strategically addresses the most pressing threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem, accelerating progress toward long-term goals. Its funding is due for reauthorization this year, and communities cannot afford further cuts.

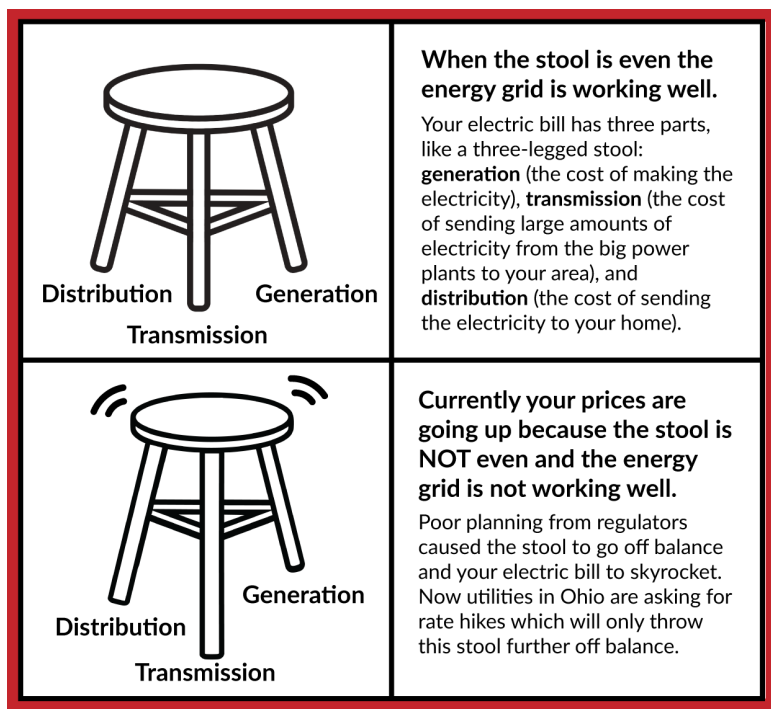
The OEC is committed to collaborating with legislative leaders and all stakeholders to ensure that H2Ohio and GLRI continue to flourish, safeguarding our most vital natural resource for every Ohioan.



FEELING THE HEAT OF HIGH PRICES: ENERGY COSTS ARE RISING AROUND OHIO



Karin Nordstrom
Clean Energy Attorney



Electric bills skyrocketed this summer, and rates are likely to increase even more. Your electric bill has three parts, like a three-legged stool: generation (the cost of making the electricity), transmission (the cost of sending large amounts of electricity from the big power plants to your area), and distribution (the cost of sending the electricity into your home). Poor planning from regulators and policies stifling renewable energy generation caused the stool to go off balance and your electric bill to skyrocket. Now, utilities in Ohio are asking for rate hikes, which will only throw this stool further off balance.

Ohio legislators and regulators made the generation leg of the stool shrink by slowing down renewable energy generation. State laws like SB 52, which let counties ban renewable energy, slowed solar energy development in Ohio. Regulators have also slowed the process for renewable energy to come online. At the

same time, high costs and supply chain constraints on natural gas turbines are slowing the construction of new natural gas plants. So, while hotter summers and new industries like data centers have also increased demand, and regulators slowed the process for new energy to meet that demand, the generation leg of the stool shrank.

The transmission leg of the stool was not prepared for the generation leg to shrink and had to overcompensate by raising prices. Instead of fixing these issues, the transmission operators tried to blame the generation leg of the stool. With no fixes, prices are climbing again.

Now, distribution utilities like AEP Ohio and FirstEnergy want to increase prices on the distribution leg too.

The OEC is taking action to rebalance this stool and make your energy bill affordable, while decarbonizing our grid. Will you join us? You can visit the energy page to sign up for alerts and check our latest blog posts.

The OEC is actively working to restore stability and reduce emissions in the grid. Will you take part in this effort?



Stay up to date on our work:
theoec.org/energy/

THE OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL 2025 OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE



Chris Tavenor
General Counsel

On Friday, September 26th, the Ohio Environmental Council is excited to host the 2025 Ohio Public Interest Environmental Law Conference. I would love to see you in attendance this year! Whether you're an attorney, student, advocate, or someone who just wants to learn more about environmental issues facing Ohio, the Ohio Public Interest Environmental Law Conference is for you. For the 2025 conference, we are once again collaborating with the Ohio State University's Environmental Professionals Network, whose monthly breakfast will begin the day at the Ohio Union. After the law conference during the day, a documentary screening and a complementary panel on How to Poison a Planet will occur in the evening.

Tickets for the Ohio Public Interest Environmental Law Conference will automatically register attendees for all three events!

The 2025 conference will focus on legal issues and policy problems, all centered on "Looking Back and Looking Forward for Ohio's Environment," promising engaging conversations throughout the day. Abby André, the Executive Director of The Impact Project, will deliver our keynote address, exploring how changes made at the federal level since January 2025 deeply impact communities locally.



Law Conference Ticket Details

- **Attorney Registration:** \$100, includes breakfast, lunch, and the film screening, 5.75 hours of CLE credit
- **Advocate Registration:** \$50, includes breakfast, lunch, and the film screening
- **Student Registration:** Free! Includes breakfast, lunch, and the film screening

If you are interested in only attending the EPN breakfast in the morning and/or the film screening in the afternoon, please visit EPN's registration page for separate ticketing options. I'll be there all day for everything, and I hope you'll join us this year. You can view the entire day's agenda, including all of the exciting panels, on the OEC's website.

AGENDA FOR THE DAY

You can see the agenda in full here:



ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS NETWORK BREAKFAST

7:15 - 9:30 AM
Great Hall at
the Ohio Union

OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE

10 - 3:30 PM
The Ohio State
University Mortiz College
of Law

HOW TO POISON A PLANET DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

6:15 - 9:00 PM
USBank Theater
inside the Ohio
Union



HELP SUSTAIN THE OEC'S MISSION: BECOME AN IMPACT PARTNER



Alaina McCleery
Managing Director of Individual Giving

Impact Partners fight side by side with the OEC to create a healthier Ohio for us all. Together, we create a force for true and lasting change.

As an Impact Partner, you are joining a community of people like you who want to invest in climate change solutions. They are our trusted partners who work with the OEC to protect and expand our public lands, secure healthy and affordable water, fight for energy justice, and strengthen our democracy for all who call Ohio home. Members of this community make a positive impact on Ohio's future by investing in the OEC at a level of \$1000 or more each year.

Partner with us, and you will connect directly with the OEC staff. Together, we make sure you engage with the issues that matter most to you. You'll get the insiders' view of what your partnership supports and how we are protecting Ohio together. And you'll gain community and connection through our insider events and webinars, where you can engage with our issues and staff more intimately.

"Being an Impact Partner gives me hope. As an integral part of the larger OEC community, I have been able to connect with experts and other activists through OEC Civic Engagement workshops and quarterly briefings. These help me to recognize the wider impact of OEC's work, and to bring more informed and effective focus to my personal climate activism."

- Tracee Laing, Impact Partner since 2016

Our goal is to provide our Impact Partners with a more personalized experience and access to our work. When you're ready to learn more, please reach out to me directly with questions or ideas, or to receive specific information tailored to your giving interests.

Alaina McCleery
Managing Director of Individual Giving
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PLEASE RECYCLE AFTER READING



September 26 - The Ohio State University

OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE

Looking Back and Looking
Forward for Ohio's Environment

