



Dear Friend,

A word I've been using to describe recent times is 'erratic'. From an incredibly wet early summer to the drought-like dog days this August has brought; to the freezing and thawing of funding and programming, it has felt like a substantial feat to weather and navigate the season. I am thankful to find myself enjoying a respite from extremes amidst a week of relatively mild conditions. These cool, calm days remind me of the promise of Autumn and the rhythms of this miraculous planet we call home. Despite the inconsistencies, Goldenrod and Ironweed are in full bloom; Monarch Caterpillars are metamorphosing; Hazelnuts and Hickories are ripening; and everywhere I go, people continue to share stories of resilience, innovation, collaboration, and connection.

With gratitude and hope,

Jo

Southeast Ohio Regional Director



Regional Events

Saturday, September 6: | [Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day](#) | Stuart's Opera House (52 Public Square, Nelsonville, OH) | 10:30 AM – 6:00 PM

September 12-14: | [Ohio Pawpaw Festival](#) | Lake Snowden (5900 US-50, Albany, OH)

September 26-27: | [Blue Blaze Festival](#) | Village of Shawnee, OH |

September 26-28: | [Southern Ohio Forest Farming Conference](#) | United Plant Savers
Goldenseal Sanctuary (35703 Loop Road Rutland, OH)

October 4-5: | [Chest Fest](#) | Route 9 Cooperative

Saturday, October 18: | [Take the Macho out of Mechanics Workshop](#) | Future Days Farm
(37870 Chase Run Road Albany, OH) | 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Friday, October 24: | [Fungi in the Forest: Mushroom Farm Tour](#) | Soulshine Earth (10550
Salem Rd. Athens, OH)

November 6-7: | [Appalachian Green Teachers Conference](#) | Camp Oty'Okwa (24799
Purcell Road South Bloomingville, OH)



Regional & Partner Updates



Photo Credit: portsmouthohio.org

GOOD NEWS ALONG THE OHIO RIVER

The Lawrence-Scioto Solid Waste District recently unveiled the [Queen of Clean](#), a 30-foot barge designed to remove large debris and waste from the Ohio River. With support from the H2Ohio Rivers program and Lawrence and Scioto County Commissioners, this vessel will assist large scale clean-up projects for years to come, restoring habitat and recreation opportunities for communities in Portsmouth and beyond. The vessel is already expanding collaborative clean-up projects up and down the Ohio River with partners like [Ohio River Way](#), [Living Lands and Waters](#), and [ORSANCO](#).

Additionally, the [Portsmouth Riverfront Park Project](#) received a \$34.2 million grant from the Appalachian Community Grant Program's [Wonderful Waterfronts Initiative](#). The funding will support improvements to Alexandra Point Park including a scenic riverfront overlook, an amphitheater for concerts and festivals, a riverwalk trail network, an RV campground, and improved access to the water for people and businesses. This is one of [many investments](#) designed to enhance walkability, access to recreation opportunities, and economic opportunities along the Ohio River.



Wayne National Forest. **Photo credit:** Taylor McKinnon, Center for Biological Diversity. [Image is available for media use.](#)

AN EYE ON FRACKING & CARBON CAPTURE

Despite setbacks, citizens and leaders across the state continue to [demand policies and practices](#) that will protect the long-term health of Ohioans and our Public Lands.

We continue to watch the development of [HB170](#), [House Bill 399](#), and [proposed fracking](#) in the Marietta Unit of Ohio's National Forest; we are grateful to everyone involved in advocating for thoughtful energy and economic development. We will continue to share updates and action alerts on these issues and encourage folks to stay involved with [Save Ohio Parks](#) and [Buckeye Environmental Network](#), as well.

INCHING CLOSER TO A COMMUNITY FOREST

Building upon the momentum of the US Forest Service funded [Community Ecology Apprenticeship Program](#), and the soon-to-be "Forest Products Processing Facility" made possible through the [Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization](#) (AMLER) program, funding to acquire land through the [USFS Community Forest program grant](#) for the [Sugar Creek Community Forest](#) has been awarded to [Rising Appalachia](#), pending equal matching funds.

There is [a growing effort](#) to strengthen local economic opportunities by [tending thriving ecosystems](#); to reconnect with [Indigenous foodways](#) and rural livelihoods that enhance our forests and waterways; and to build upon the recovery of once decimated landscapes to increase their productivity and resilience. In Southeast Ohio and across the state, organizations like Rural Action and the [Appalachian Staple Foods Collaborative](#), the [Southern Ohio Chestnut Company](#), [Route 9 Cooperative](#), [Blue Rock Station](#) and [Integration Acres](#) continue bringing innovation and energy to an industry that can nourish people and the places we depend on. The Sugar Creek Community Forest aims to be a shining, replicable example. Please reach out to jstanley@theoec.org if you wish to learn more or get involved.

LANDMARK CONSERVATION EFFORT PROTECTS NEARLY 3,000 ACRES

Athens Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy are working together to conserve nearly 3,000 acres of forested land in the southern Ohio foothills that are part of a vital wildlife corridor in the majestic and globally significant Appalachian Mountains. The endeavor marks one of the largest private land-protection initiatives by nonprofit organizations in the state's history.

Thanks to an extraordinary donation, private landowner Betty Lowe – whose family has owned the land for a century – will transfer ownership of the 2,973-acre parcel to Athens Conservancy, a local land trust that protects the forests and hills in Athens and Morgan counties. The Nature Conservancy, a global environmental nonprofit committed to conserving nature for the people of Ohio, will hold a permanent conservation easement on the land. [Read the full story here.](#)

PLASTIC BAG ORDINANCE

For now, the City of Athens' attempt to eliminate single-use plastic bags through a [2023 ordinance](#) has [come to an end](#). After the ordinance briefly went into effect, the Ohio Attorney General's Office sued the city, and the Athens County Court of Common Pleas [found](#) that the local ordinance violated state law. Though local governments are meant to have 'home rule' authority to implement practices that are [in the best interest of their communities](#), the Fourth District Court of Appeals agreed with the lower court in a July 16 decision, forcing the City of Athens to either drop the case or take it to the Ohio Supreme Court.

“This decision does not reflect a change in the City’s commitment to reducing single-use plastic bags or defending Home Rule,” Eliason said in [a statement to the media](#). “Rather, the decision is based on the reality that due to the current political makeup of the Ohio Supreme Court, the City has very little chance of prevailing.”

BUCKEYE HILLS FORWARD

Buckeye Hills Regional Council recently released its updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), [Buckeye Hills Forward: A Regional Economic Plan](#). Approved by the US Economic Development Administration in July, it outlines a 5-year plan for economic growth and resilience across eight Southeast Ohio counties — Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington.

Key priorities include (1) Launching community-driven projects that align with regional goals. (2) Securing state, federal, and private investment to support economic growth. And (3) providing data, mapping, planning, and grant support to help communities bring their ideas to life in eight goal areas: Agriculture, Energy Development, Housing, Manufacturing, Outdoor Recreation, Small Business Core, Barriers to Workforce, and Regional Leadership.

THERE’S STILL TIME TO TURN YOUR PLASTIC WASTE INTO A BENCH FOR BURR OAK!

[Burr Oak Alive](#) is accepting donations of film plastics that will be used to create a bench for Burr Oak State Park. Clean plastic bags, including those made for produce, ice, sandwich-style, and box liners, are being accepted, along with bubble wrap and case overwrap (plastic bags/film with metallic backing are not acceptable materials). Drop off at Glouster post office, Glouster Public Library, or the United Bank locations in Glouster and Nelsonville.

Ohio Environmental Council Updates



September 26 - Ohio State University

OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE

Looking Back and Looking
Forward for Ohio's Environment

Upcoming Events

We have a variety of exciting events happening all the time, so we encourage you to keep up to date with our [events page](#). Keep your eye out for our two quarterly series, Civic Engagement and Law Webinars, coming later this fall.

September 21, 2025 | SunDay | All Over Ohio | FREE! | [Find an event near you](#)

September 26, 2025 | [2025 Ohio Public Interest Environmental Law Conference](#) | Ohio State University | Attorney, Advocate, & Student Tickets Available

October 3, 2025 | [Energy Champions Series: Smart Choices for Your Home](#) | Virtual | FREE!

October 15, 2025 | Civic Engagement Series: Civic Engagement: Organizing Mobilizing (Details coming soon) | Free for members or a onetime \$35 donation

November 6, 2025 | [Energy Champions Series: Neighborhood Power Virtual](#) | FREE!

Education & Advocacy

Stay up to date by checking the [blog section](#) of the website for more updates.

Redistricting Process: Learn more about [Ohio's redistricting process](#) and how you can be involved by reading blogs from our Director of Climate and Democracy Organizing, Franklin Davis.

Darby Accord: The OEC is working to keep up to date on the Darby Accord and ensure members are aware of [how they can make their voice heard](#) to help protect Ohio's biologically diverse streams.

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) & Deer: EHD is on the rise in Ohio, especially in the Southeastern region. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is asking folks to [help report instances](#) (or possible instances) of the disease. EHD is not transferable to humans, and Deer can develop more resistance to the disease over time. Still, this is a tough situation with significant implications.



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