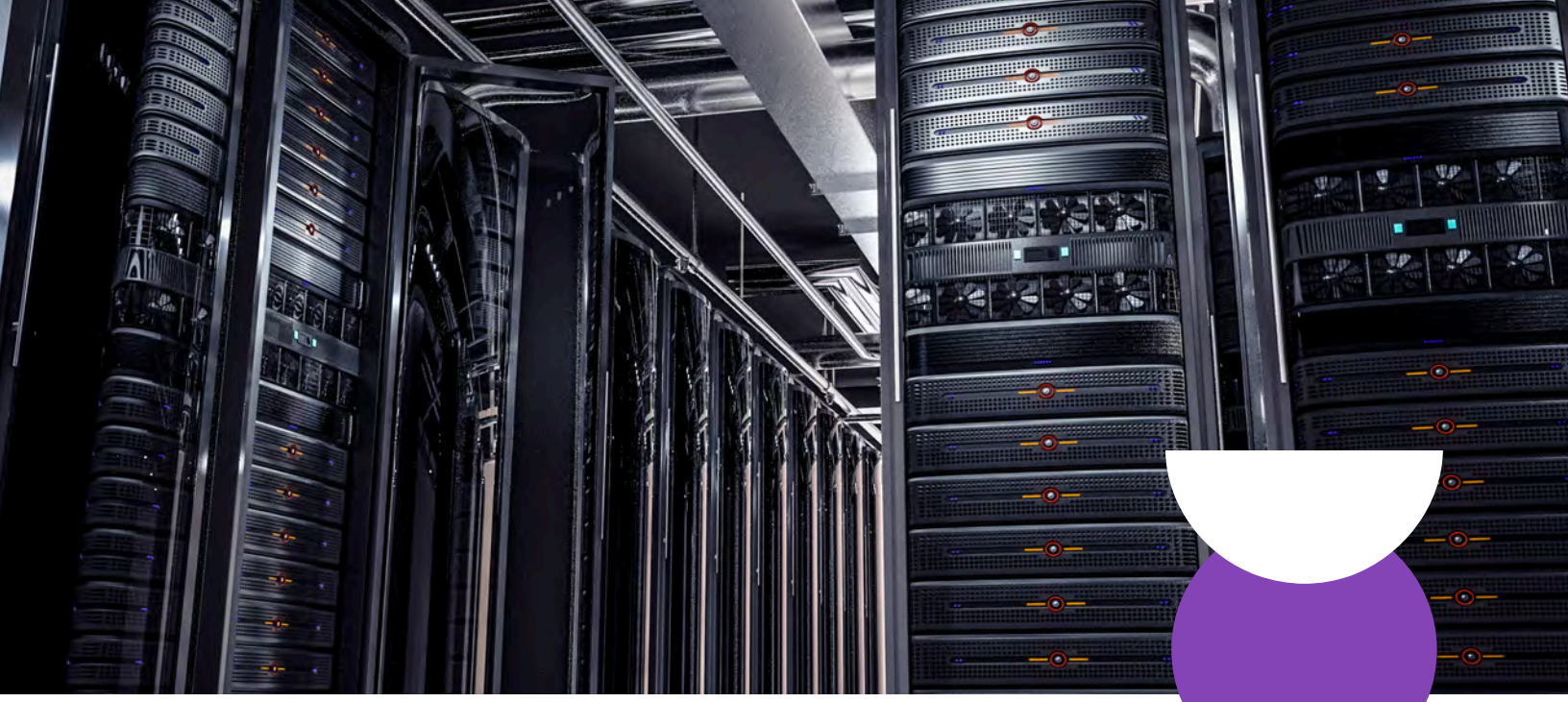
2026

OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE

Let's Talk About Data Centers

The Ohio State University - September 25 - 7 AM to 5 PM



Welcome!

Hosted by:
Ohio Environmental Council
at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

Special thanks to the following student groups:

Law for the Environment, Animals, and Food, Case Western Reserve University School of Law

Environmental Law Society, CSU Law

Energy & Environmental Law Society, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

Additional appreciation to Ohio State's Environmental Professionals Network for their collaboration on our September EPN Breakfast!

Brief Schedule of Events

FRIDAY — SEPTEMBER 25

7:30 - 9:30 AM	**ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS NETWORK BREAKFAST** The WOSU Sandy and Andy Ross Community Studio 1800 N. Pearl St. Columbus, OH 43201
10:00 - 4:30 PM	**2026 OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE** The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law *(55 W 12th Ave, Columbus, Ohio 43210)* See full agenda on page 3

AGENDA

FRIDAY

SEPTEMBER 25

7:30 - 9:30 AM

EPN BREAKFAST: MANAGING OHIO'S PRIVATE FORESTS: POLICY LEVERS, NETWORKS AND RESOURCES FOR LANDOWNERS AND STEWARDS

(1.5 Hours of CLE Credit) - The WOSU Sandy and Andy Ross Community Studio

Here in Ohio, over 85% of our remaining forests are privately owned. Across the state, landowners are tasked with making a variety of important decisions about the present-day management, and future plans for their forested lands—each with their own social, economic, and environmental considerations. In the absence of formal policy structures regulating private forests, and recognizing the impacts of increased forest fragmentation, several strategies and incentive programs have been developed to support long-term preservation of these spaces, and the myriad ecosystem services they provide.

Join this EPN Breakfast, as we examine the networks of stakeholders, resources, and policies that are guiding private forest management in Ohio. Throughout the program, we'll learn from a panel of forest management experts and stewards, who will provide insights on the programs, incentives, and opportunities available to landowners making management decisions, while also discussing the future outlook of Ohio's private forests, considering how factors such as rising demands for development and transfers in land ownership play a role in this dynamic system.

CLICK TO LEARN MORE

AGENDA

FRIDAY

SEPTEMBER 25

10:30 - 11:30 AM

SESSION 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSIGHTS INTO DATA CENTER REGULATION

(1 Hour of CLE Credit)

Join local government officials and policy analysts as they discuss how Ohio communities are approaching the complex question of data center regulation. Jon-Paul d'Aversa, from UNPREDICTABLEcity, provides support to local governments and advocacy organizations on a variety of policy solutions, including large-scale development. He will lead our panelists through a discussion of the complexities of regulating hyperscale data centers, and the policy questions communities must ask, especially at the intersection of local zoning decisions juxtaposed against state regulation of the systems that intersect with data centers, such as electricity and water.

Speakers:

- Jon-Paul d'Aversa, *Unpredictable City*
- Matthew Worsham, *Special Projects Administrator, City Manager's Office, City of Dayton*
- Kristy Hawthorne, *Executive Director, Licking County Soil and Water District*
- Chris Wyche, *Councilmember, Columbus City Council*

AGENDA

FRIDAY — SEPTEMBER 25

11:30 - 12:00 PM

LUNCH

Boxed lunches will be served outside Saxbe Auditorium.

12:00 - 1:00 PM

SESSION 2: TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY CONCERNS INTO COLLECTIVE ACTION

(1 Hour of CLE Credit)

Join legal experts and community leaders as they outline how they have turned community concerns about data centers into real action, holding developers and decisionmakers accountable. Liz Jacob, with the Sugar Law Center, will outline active data center fights in Michigan, illustrating lessons advocates in Ohio and across the region can learn from their neighbors to the north. You'll also learn from community activists across Ohio as they discuss the lessons learned from engaging with proposed data center projects in their communities.

Speakers:

- Liz Jacob, *Sugar Law Center*
- Quintin Koger Kidd, *local activist from Wilmington, OH*
- Jessica Baker, *local activist from Mount Orab, OH*

AGENDA

FRIDAY

SEPTEMBER 25

1:10 - 2:10 PM

SESSION 3: GOING TECHNICAL WITH THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND DATA CENTERS

(1 Hour of CLE Credit)

It's time we dove a bit deeper into how data centers actually work. What is actually inside a data center? How are they powered, and how are they cooled? How do different companies use data centers? Are hyperscale data centers just for artificial intelligence, or do they play other roles, too? How are they constructing these facilities? And how do these matters intersect with the important policy questions discussed across the country regarding data centers, such as flexibility and reliability concerns pertaining to the operation of data centers? We will explore these questions with an engineer and policy advocate from the Clean Air Council and an attorney from the Environmental Law & Policy Center.

Speakers:

- Karl Koerner, *Clean Air Council*
- Bradley Klein, *Environmental Law & Policy Center*

AGENDA

FRIDAY — SEPTEMBER 25

2:20 - 3:20 PM

SESSION 4: POWER, POLICY, AND PLANNING: HOW THE OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS RESPONDING TO DATA CENTERS

(1 Hour of CLE Credit)

Join state policy experts from across Ohio, who together will explore how the Ohio General Assembly has responded to data centers thus far. Because Ohio has proved to be an appealing state for data center construction, the manner in which state lawmakers respond is crucial. With panelists from Policy Matters Ohio, Save Ohio Parks, and the Ohio Environmental Council, this panel will delve into different policy approaches working to combat environmental consequences stemming from Ohio data centers.

Speakers:

- Molly Bryden, Sustainability Researcher, *Policy Matters Ohio*
- Rachel Kutzley, Board Member, *Save Ohio Parks*
- Spencer Dirrig, Vice President of Government Affairs, *Ohio Environmental Council*

AGENDA

FRIDAY — SEPTEMBER 25

3:30 - 4:30 PM

SESSION 5: HOW TO GET A DATA CENTER TO "LEAF" YOU ALONE: A WALKTHROUGH FOR AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

(1 Hour of CLE Credit)

Join Ohio's Fair Shake attorneys as they discuss their data center decision tool tree and how communities can control data center development occurring in their backyard. They will also touch on additional topics such as zoning, permitting, and ballot initiatives.

Speakers:

- Addison Caruso, Staff Attorney, *Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services*
- Michelle Browning, Staff Attorney, *Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services*

4:30 PM

CLOSING REMARKS FROM OEC GENERAL COUNSEL

Speaker:

- Chris Tavenor, General Counsel, *Ohio Environmental Council*

Thank you for attending the OEC Law Conference 2026!

Our membership powers our work at the Ohio Environmental Council. Our voices are stronger because we are backed by Ohioans who stand with us. If you gained a lot from this event, we strongly encourage you to join our movement as a member.

Your membership:

- Supports the Law Center in advocating for our environment and holding polluters accountable in court.
- Sends trusted OEC Advocates to to the Statehouse and the courts fighting for our lands, air, water, and public health.
- Provides you with the opportunity to stay informed by our expert staff and take action with our civic engagement resources.

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- The Ohio Environmental Council on LinkedIn

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2026

OHIO PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CONFERENCE

About the Speakers

The Ohio State University - September 25 - 7 AM to 4 PM

Speaker

Jon-Paul d'Aversa, *Founder and Principal, UNPREDICTABLEcity*

Jon-Paul d'Aversa, AICP, is the Founder and Principal of UNPREDICTABLEcity, a Columbus-based consulting firm specializing in energy planning, sustainable economic development, and clean energy transitions. A certified urban planner with over a decade of experience, Jon-Paul bridges technical energy modeling, policy, and federal compliance to help communities navigate complex environmental challenges and unlock clean energy investment.

Jon-Paul serves as Senior Energy Policy Advisor to Power a Clean Future Ohio, providing technical assistance for municipal and regional sustainability initiatives. Notably, he led the technical analysis that secured a $159 million U.S. EPA "Solar for All" award for the Industrial Heartland Solar Coalition, expanding solar energy access and lowering utility costs across multi-state communities.

His active municipal portfolio includes guiding climate action plans, energy studies, and climate risk assessments across Ohio. Additionally, in partnership with the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC), Jon-Paul authored key work analyzing large-scale development trends and environmental implications, equipping local leaders with a practical playbook to navigate rapid development, smart growth, and conservation.

Throughout his career, Jon-Paul has spearheaded high-impact policy frameworks. As Senior Energy Planner at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), he authored the landmark Franklin County Energy Study, identifying $348 million in annual cost savings. Prior to MORPC, he served at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), where he co-authored and led the technical analysis for the 2015 New York State Energy Plan. His work equips public, private, and non-profit leaders with the data-driven rigor needed to translate environmental policy into actionable, fundable outcomes.

Speakers

Matthew Worsham, *Certified Energy Manager and Special Projects Administrator at the City of Dayton's Sustainability Office*

Matthew Worsham is a Certified Energy Manager and Special Projects Administrator at the City of Dayton's Sustainability Office, focused on the city government's energy management programs for municipal operations and the community. With rising electricity costs increasingly burdening residents and governments, the City of Dayton is making strategic clean energy investments to cut costs and stabilize prices while meeting ambitious sustainability commitments. Matthew brings ten years of experience to this effort including past energy management roles in higher education and healthcare in Ohio.

Christopher L. Wyche, *Columbus Councilmember*

Currently serving his second term on Columbus City Council, Councilmember Christopher Wyche is committed to making Columbus a green hub that utilizes sustainable practices to strengthen our communities, improve air quality, and prepare for climate resilience.

As chair of the Public Utilities & Sustainability committee, Wyche has successfully passed ordinances to remove milkweed from the noxious weed list, allow pollinator gardens in city limits, and regulate submetering companies. In addition to spearheading county wide coordination during extreme weather events, he has also increased investments in community gardens and tree canopy expansion.

Prior to joining City Council, Wyche served the community as Director of External Affairs for AT&T in Central Ohio where he advocated for public-private partnerships and local initiatives aimed at making tech accessible to underserved communities.

As a father of three to his two daughters Mariah and Lulu Elizabeth, and his son Benjamin Elijah, he has a personal stake in the future of Columbus.

Speakers

Kristy Hawthorne, *Executive Director, Licking County Soil & Water District*

Kristy Hawthorne has served with Licking County Soil & Water for 11 years. In April 2020, Kristy was appointed as the District Program Administrator to lead the organization.

Licking County's diverse land uses creates a diverse Soil & Water Program. Kristy directs twelve staff members responsible for robust programming for the agricultural community, stormwater management and educational programming on water quality and healthy soil.

Licking County Soil & Water works with landowners to conserve the natural resources through local leadership, education and technical assistance. Kristy oversees programs such OEPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District and USDA cost share programs, ODA Farmland Preservation Easement management, and development of Nonpoint Source Implementation Strategies.

She chairs and serves on various committees, including Licking County River Round Up, the Licking Land Trust, Hartford Fair Natural Resources Area, and Licking County Farm Bureau Board. Partnering with federal, state and local entities, Soil & Water provides support for the Buckeye Lake for Tomorrow watershed group, South Licking Watershed Conservancy District, and the Central Ohio Watershed committee.

Liz Jacob, *Staff Attorney, Sugar Law Center*

Liz Jacob (she/her) is a Staff Attorney at the Sugar Law Center for Social and Economic Justice, where she practices environmental justice and civil rights law alongside communities of color and low-income families in Michigan. Liz practices movement and community-based lawyering to leverage the law in service of local movements fighting to advance environmental, social, and economic justice. Liz is a graduate of the College of William and Mary and Yale Law School. Liz currently serves on the board of the Solar Neighbors Community Energy Alliance, Detroit-Michigan National Lawyers Guild, the People's Solar Energy Fund, the DREAM Community Land Trust, and Inner Justice Works.

Speakers

Quintin Koger Kidd, *local activist from Wilmington, Ohio*

Quintin Koger Kidd is a citizen advocate and former municipal elected official from Wilmington, Ohio, where he has become actively involved in issues of local government transparency, land-use policy, and community participation in decisions surrounding large-scale data center development.

A former city council member and mayor of a small city in the San Francisco Bay Area, Koger Kidd brings both government and private-sector experience to his advocacy. He spent more than 16 years in internal and forensic auditing and previously worked as a consultant with Deloitte, specializing in governance, controls, and accountability.

In Wilmington, Koger Kidd helped organize a citizen initiative seeking to place proposed local data center regulations before voters. The effort grew from community concerns about land use, noise, transparency, property rights, and the role residents should have in decisions that can permanently affect their communities. The petition campaign collected more than 500 signatures and has since involved proceedings before the county board of elections.

Kidd describes his position as neither pro- nor anti-data center. His focus is on ensuring that communities have meaningful information, transparent government processes, and an effective voice in decisions about major developments.

He is the founder and administrator of the Clinton County (Ohio) Community Forum, an online community devoted to local issues, government accountability, and civic discussion.

Speakers

Jessica Baker, *local activist from Mount Orab, Ohio*

Jessica Baker is a Clermont County resident who found herself advocating for information and transparency in her home area of Southern Ohio. After learning about a proposed data center project just 10 minutes from her home, she went on a fact-finding mission that ultimately led her to help with others to create Conserve Ohio, a grassroots organization behind a citizen-led petition initiative seeking a constitutional amendment to prohibit the construction of data centers over 25 MW.

Jessica helps run Conserve Ohio, working with county leaders across the state, coordinating petition efforts, collecting petitions, and helping organize the grassroots effort. As a regular citizen, she attends local government meetings, files public records requests, gives testimony at the Ohio Statehouse, and works to make the information she uncovers accessible to the public.

Speakers

Lois Bower-Bjornson, *Southwestern Pennsylvania field organizer with Clean Air Council*

Lois Bower-Bjornson is the Southwestern Pennsylvania field organizer with Clean Air Council and the host of Fackland tours.

Frackland tours were implemented to give people a firsthand account of what it is like to live and grow up in the Shale fields of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

She has hosted numerous reporters local, state, national and international news outlets on her tours.
Lois has hosted tours for numerous elected officials along with international organizations for a fracking ban in Ireland. She had the honor of visiting Belgium and be a part of an international community to see the port of Antwerp, where Pennsylvania Fracked gas is being sent. She was able to meet with elected officials at the world's largest parliament in Belgium. Lois has also visited the United Nations to present her and her communities experiences with fracking.

She works with Townsend University and Penn State University with their students and for research purposes. She has also worked with Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh to educate students on the process and realities of the Oil & Gas industry.

Currently, her work is encompassed around the building of data centers and the gas plants that are being built to power data centers. Along with the feed stock that will be used to power data centers will be more fracked gas.

Lois advocates for communities who live next to Oil & Gas infrastructure to help them write zoning that is protective for communities, their air, water, and land. In addition, she helps communities become aware of the possible health impacts, they may be experiencing from industry. Lois helps communities to realize their rights as citizens living amongst industrial facilities. She has documented numerous stories of community members and their experience living next to gas infrastructure. Lois has also testified numerous times in Harrisburg and in Washington DC to protect people in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Speakers

Bradley Klein, *Managing Attorney and Clean Energy Program Lead, Environmental Law & Policy Center*

Brad is a Managing Attorney and Clean Energy Program Lead at the Environmental Law & Policy Center, a not-for-profit organization that advocates for clean energy development, pollution reduction, transportation and land use reform, and natural resources protection in Midwest states. ELPC's clean energy team develops and promotes ambitious policies to modernize the energy grid, accelerate renewables, reform energy markets, and decarbonize the economy. Brad engages at utility regulatory commissions and courts at the state, regional, and federal level to advance ELPC's clean energy goals.

Brad previously served as a federal judicial law clerk in Washington, D.C., a law fellow at the Environmental Law Institute, and an environmental engineer at CH2M Hill, Inc. Brad received his law degree with honors from New York University School of Law and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Washington University in St. Louis.

Molly Bryden, *Researcher, Climate & Sustainability, Policy Matters Ohio*

Molly holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Case Western Reserve University and a master's in public administration from the Maxine Goodman Levin School of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University, with a specialization in nonprofit management. Working as a Graduate Assistant, her research explored the accessibility of social services, focusing on energy insecurity and public energy assistance programs. Before joining Policy Matters Ohio, Molly worked as a Fellow at Cleveland Owns, a Cleveland-based nonprofit working to build energy and economic democracy by organizing cooperative businesses and grassroots campaigns. She also serves as the Board Vice President of the United Spinal Association Northeast Ohio Chapter, a membership-based organization providing educational and recreational opportunities to individuals with spinal cord injuries. Motivated by her commitment to serving her local community and her experience in energy insecurity research and promoting community ownership of energy resources, Molly's work at Policy Matters will focus on enhancing community-level outcomes for all Ohioans as the energy transition accelerates, both regionally and nationally.

Speakers

Rachel Kutzley, *Board Member, Save Ohio Parks*

Rachel Kutzley is a Save Ohio Parks board member and the lead researcher of their report, *Data Centers that Work for Ohioans*. Rachel is passionate about solar and its potential to create an abundant, flexible, and clean energy system. She completed her Master's degree from Ohio State University in Environment and Natural Resources, with a focus on sustainable energy systems. While at Ohio State, she contributed to research on agrivoltaics and consulted for Leeward Renewables on utility-scale solar siting. As a program associate with Solar United Neighbors, Rachel helps Ohioans go solar and advocate for more representative, transparent, and sustainable utilities.

Previously, Rachel served for more than 15 years as a U.S. diplomat, with assignments in Paraguay, Mexico, Ecuador, and Bangladesh. She also holds a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Notre Dame. She is married with three children and one Paraguayan street cat, who has happily adjusted to life in Dublin, Ohio.

Spencer Dirrig, *Vice President of Government Affairs, Ohio Environmental Council*

A native Central Ohioan and first-generation American, Spencer Dirrig was born and raised in Delaware County, just north of Columbus. He graduated from The Ohio State University with a B.A. in Political Science and a B.A. in Economics in 2019. An experienced political organizer, Spencer founded Breakthrough Advising LLC in 2019 and managed numerous campaigns throughout Central Ohio on the local, state, and federal levels. Spencer joined the Ohio Environmental Council in 2021 to help build the political power of the environment in Ohio. Spencer now serves as Vice President of Government Affairs for the OEC Action Fund.

Spencer serves as the President of the Franklin County Young Democrats, Vice President for the Midwest of the Young Democrats of America, and a Member of the Board of Directors for the Legacy Fund of The Columbus Foundation. Before moving into management, Spencer served as the President of Workers United Local 2843. Spencer loves gardening, hiking, and spending time with his 75-pound "lap dog" Saoirse.

Speakers

Addison Caruso, *Staff Attorney, Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services*

Addison Caruso (he/him) was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio where he developed a love of the natural world through his parents' frequent trips to Glen Helen Nature Preserve and hikes at the Dayton Metroparks. Addison became interested in the law as a vehicle for change through his experience working in local government in the Dayton area, where he saw how if our government passes and implements laws that help and represent everyday people, it creates a more equitable and just society. His love of history, through volunteering at the local historical park and taking classes at school, he also learned how positive social change occurred through changes in the law.

Addison believes that every client deserves to be heard and that real societal change comes from community lawyering, where the client's needs are centered. He believes in empowering communities and working with them to help them accomplish their goals. Addison started his legal career at the Ohio Environmental Council as a fellow where he worked on democracy and energy issues in Ohio. He then worked as a Staff Attorney at Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, where he represented tenants against their landlords and organized community events to educate tenants on their rights. Knowing his true calling was environmental law, however, he accepted a job at Case Western Reserve University Law School in their Milton and Charlotte Kramer Environmental Law Clinic, where he was the inaugural legal fellow. There, he worked on a variety of energy and environmental justice issues in the Northeast Ohio area.

Before becoming an attorney, Addison graduated magna cum laude from Miami University where he was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his degrees in both political science and history. Addison then received his Juris Doctorate from the Duke University School of Law where he served as the Managing Editor of the Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum. He also was a member of the Duke Law School mock trial team and coached their undergraduate team as well. Addison is admitted to practice in Ohio state courts and the Southern District of Ohio.

Addison currently resides in Cleveland, Ohio with his partner. In his free time, Addison enjoys volunteering, walking around Cleveland's picturesque neighborhoods, cooking, eating, and playing with his three cats, Lilac, Eloise, and Daisy

Speakers

Michelle Browning, *Staff Attorney, Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services*

Michelle Browning (she/her) was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and became interested in environmental law and policy as an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies, she went to Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon.

While at Lewis and Clark Law School, Michelle was a student attorney with Earthrise Law Center and worked on projects regarding climate change and the Columbia River Gorge. In the summer of 2019, Michelle worked as a Summer Legal Intern with Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services in Akron, Ohio. While at Fair Shake, Michelle enjoyed the opportunity to do environmental justice work in her home state and working with others who were passionate about environmental law. She then graduated from Lewis and Clark with her Juris Doctorate and an Environmental and Natural Resources certificate.

Following her graduation in 2020, Michelle returned to Cincinnati and worked at the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office and the City of Cincinnati Solicitor's Office. Michelle is admitted to practice in the state of Ohio.
Michelle lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with her husband and dog. Outside of work, Michelle enjoys yoga, hiking, reading, and exploring her city.

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- Provides you with the opportunity to stay informed by our expert staff and take action with our civic engagement resources.

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