

## **Northeast Ohio Sierra Club May & June 2014 Newsletter**

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### **Earth Fest Thanks**

By Steve Gove

What had thousands of visitors, wind, hundreds of exhibitors, wind, a huge variety of gourmet food, wind, a spinning wind turbine, carnival rides, wind, balmy weather, AND finally, our NEO group front and center?? Why, the 2014 Earthfest of course!

Many smiles and signatures on petitions made the day fly swiftly by with help from diversions like Mayor Jackson, Dick Goddard, "Jungle Bob" and his critter friends, a plethora of food trucks, and Great Lakes Brewery!

HUGE thanks to Steve M., Larry, Dave, Grace, Andi, Randy M., Ann, Jessica, Akshai, Phil, Christina, Gabriella, and Bob S. for their time, expertise, and ENTHUSIASM.... making for a truly fun and worthwhile day!

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### **News Release from Ohio EPA, 4/14/14:**

#### **Ohio EPA Decision Clears Way For Cleveland Harbor Dredging**

Keeping Waterway Open to Shipping Traffic Essential to Regional Economy

Ohio EPA today approved a request by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Cleveland Harbor and Cuyahoga River, which is essential to allowing shipping traffic to continue using the economically important waterway.

Ohio EPA's Section 401 water quality certification allows the Corps of Engineers to dredge up to 225,000 cubic yards of material and deposit it in the designated confined disposal facilities, as it has done since the early 1970s. No dredging material can be placed in the open lake.

"Using the confined disposal facilities is the right decision and the decision Ohio and the Army Corps made for 40 years," said Ohio EPA Director Craig Butler. "Placing the material in the open lake doesn't make sense for the health of Lake Erie."

Ohio EPA did not authorize open-lake placement of the dredge material this year because the Agency has concerns about the potential of increased PCB bioaccumulation in fish. This is a concern because Lake Erie already has fish consumption advisories due to legacy PCB contamination and PCB bioaccumulation. In addition, the water quality certification application contained insufficient data to characterize the sediments and the proposal was contrary to the federal Great Lakes Testing Manual.

Ohio EPA will continue to work with the Corps to more fully analyze the dredged material in the future and work with the Corps, the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority and other interested parties to develop appropriate long-term strategies for managing and the beneficial use of material generated by future dredging activities.

Ohio EPA held a public meeting on March 6, 2014, in Cleveland to discuss the issue and take public comments. Issuance of the final certification can be appealed to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission (ERAC).

*Editor's Note: Ohio Leaders Support Ohio EPA's Approval of Cleveland Harbor Dredging is [available online](#).*

*The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency was created in 1972 to consolidate efforts to protect and improve air quality, water quality and waste management in Ohio. Since then, air pollutants dropped by as much as 90 percent; large rivers meeting standards improved from 21 percent to 89 percent; and hundreds of polluting, open dumps were replaced with engineered landfills and an increased emphasis on waste reduction and recycling.*

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## **Senate Bill 310 Would Freeze Ohio Energy Standards**

By Tim Kovach

As you may have heard, Ohio Republicans are attempting to force through a dangerous new plan to freeze Ohio's renewable energy and energy efficiency portfolio standards indefinitely.

The Ohio Senate Republican leadership, including Senate President Keith Faber (R-Celina) and Senator Troy Balderson (R-Zainesville) introduced Senate Bill 310 on Friday, March 28. **SB 310 calls for an immediate freeze on energy efficiency and renewable energy standards** at their current 2014 levels and for the creation of an "Energy Mandates Study Committee" to review existing law.

As a refresher, Governor Strickland signed Substitute Senate Bill 221 (SB 221) into law on May 1, 2008, making Ohio one of 29 states (plus DC) in the country to establish energy efficiency resource standards (EERS). The bill mandates that the state's investor-owned utilities (AEP, Dayton Power & Light, Duke Energy, and FirstEnergy) **reduce their energy consumption by 22.2% by 2025**. This mandate is broken down into yearly increments, which gradually increase over time. The bill also instituted peak demand energy reduction requirements and a renewable portfolio standard (RPS). The latter requires utilities to **generate at least 25% of their electricity from advanced energy sources by 2025**.

While the policy has become beset by partisanship, there was nothing controversial about SB 221 in the spring of 2008. The bill passed both the Ohio House and Senate overwhelmingly by votes with 93-1 and 32-0 votes, respectively. There are still 23 GOP legislators in the Statehouse today who voted for the bill,

including Senator Faber and Senator Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), the most vociferous opponent of the clean energy standards.

When the bill was introduced, Senator Faber told the *Columbus Dispatch* that Ohio has “spent \$1.1 billion since 2009 on energy efficiency” and that he is “not quite sure what we’ve gotten out of it.” But just because Senator Faber doesn’t know what Ohio has gotten in return for its investments doesn’t mean that the rest of us are equally oblivious.

In fact, there is ample evidence that SB 221 has been a remarkable success. A 2009 analysis of energy efficiency mandates in 14 states found that, on average, **every \$1 invested generates at least \$3 in savings for consumers**. In Ohio, ratepayers saved \$1.70-\$4.20 for every dollar invested in efficiency in 2011. And economists with the Public Utilities Commission (PUCO) concluded that renewable energy has already lowered electricity prices by 0.51%.

Moreover, according to a 2013 report from economists at Ohio State, **SB 221 has helped reduce electricity use and overall energy demand in the state by 2.6% and 2%, respectively**. Through the end of 2012, Ohioans have enjoyed a cumulative savings of at least 5 million megawatt hours (MWh), more than the annual energy use of all households in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Dayton *combined*.

Provided we keep these standards in place, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy projects that Ohio can reduce its total electricity consumption by 64 million MWh through 2025, which would **save ratepayers nearly \$19 billion** on their electricity bills.

SB 221 has also helped drive the steady growth of Ohio’s energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors. In 2007, there was less than 9 MW of combined wind and solar energy in the entire state. Last October, Environment Ohio reported that Ohio had 429 MW of wind and 95 MW of installed solar capacity.

The growth of these industries has been a boon for our economy. It sparked more than **\$660 million in public and private investment in 2012** alone. More than 25,000 Ohioans are employed in the advanced energy industry, and the state is home to more wind-related manufacturing plants than any other. These investments can continue to grow, but only if we protect SB 221’s clean energy standards.

The Blue Creek Wind Farm, located in Van Wert and Paulding counties, demonstrates the importance of this legislation. Without SB 221, this project, which created 180 jobs and provides \$2.8 million in annual local tax revenues, would have never have occurred. As the project developer told Environment Ohio,

“Early development plans for the Blue Creek Wind Farm placed it just inside the Indiana border. But passage of SB 221 in 2008 caused us to shift our plans a few miles to the east and develop the project in Ohio.”

Lastly, SB 221 has benefited public health. In 2007, Ohio got 85% of its electricity from coal, the dirtiest of all fossil fuels. This dependence on coal has taken a serious toll. Coal-fired power plants cause 13,200 premature deaths, 20,400 heart attacks, and 217,600 asthma attacks each year. **Ohio ranked 2nd in 2010 for in coal-related mortality risk**, while Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus were all in the top 12 among metro areas.

Thanks in part to SB 221, the share of **Ohio’s electricity generated by coal has fallen by 20% in just 5 years**, improving the quality of our air and water. And this does not even touch upon climate change,

though the bill has also reduced greenhouse gas emissions. This legislation is not just saving us money; it's saving people's lives as well.

Senator Faber made it clear that he hopes to rush this bill through the legislature and have it on the Governor's desk before the May recess. The GOP is counting on the idea that you aren't paying attention to this issue or that you will buy into the misinformation they are spreading. SB 310 supporters will say and do nearly anything to prove their fealty to the fossil fuel industry.

On April 9, Sen. Seitz had the audacity to tell Sierra Club organizer and Iraq War veteran Dan Sawmiller that SB 221 was "on the Bataan death march for clean energy." This type of outlandish, disgusting rhetoric is, unfortunately, par for the course for Sen. Seitz and it shows the lengths that clean energy opponents will go in service of groups like ALEC and FirstEnergy.

But these individuals should be wary of their actions, as Ohioans overwhelmingly support the state's standards. In a recent poll, **72% of respondents want support the existing mandates**, while a solid plurality (49%) oppose SB 310. These results back of findings from last fall, when the Yale Project on Climate Communications found that **59% of Ohioans support the renewable energy standards**, even if they cost \$100 more per year. Republicans may be buying what FirstEnergy and ALEC are selling, but this is clearly a case of buyer beware.

As we can see, the Ohio GOP is not targeting SB 221 because it has failed to work; they're targeting it precisely because it has worked so well. In order to defend the well-being of economy, environment, and the people of our state, Ohioans need to stand up and protect SB 221.

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### **Events:**

#### **► 2nd Annual Black River Cleanup**

Saturday, May 3 & Sunday, May 4

FREE

[LoCo'Yaks](#), a Lorain County kayaking group which has been doing a wonderful job living the Sierra Club credo of Explore, Enjoy, and Protect, is hosting its second annual Black River Cleanup, and Northeast Ohio Sierra Club invites its members to volunteer! Last year's event was a huge success, with hundreds of participants removing hundreds of pounds of trash both by land and by sea, and enjoying a great dinner afterwards. If anyone is interested in carpooling to this year's cleanup on either day, contact Jessica Ferrato at [sierrawater@zoho.com](mailto:sierrawater@zoho.com) who will collect and coordinate ride share information.

Location: [421 Black River Lane, Lorain, OH](#)

#### **► Riversweep**

Saturday, May 10, 9 AM- noon

FREE

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club will again partner with Ohio & Erie Canal to sponsor and bring volunteers to

[Riversweep](#). NEO group volunteers will be directed once again to the cleanup site at Mill Creek, and, depending on the number of volunteers who can commit prior to the cleanup, we may also be able to help manage sites in Tremont and West Creek. It all depends on you!

If interested, please contact Jessica Ferrato at [sierrawater@zoho.com](mailto:sierrawater@zoho.com). Volunteers will receive Riversweep T-shirts to commemorate this year's cleanup, which will be notable for taking place close to the unveiling of the new Scranton Road section of trail!

► **Water Alert Reporting Network (WARN) Training**

Tuesday, May 13 6-8pm

FREE

Watershed Stewardship Center at West Creek

- Monitoring
- Learn more about the WARN program and how you can help report pollution incidents of concern.
- The Water Alert Reporting Network (WARN) is designed to help Ohioans record and report suspected incidents of pollution or misconduct that could potentially harm our natural environment. The goal of WARN is to ensure that state regulators are aware of incidents of concern and that they address these incidents in a timely and appropriate manner. This network is also designed to empower volunteers to communicate ways to protect our waterways and stand as watchdogs against environmental harm.

To register for WARN Training, please [click here](#).

► **Deep History and Urban Stream Ecology of West Creek Stream**

Sunday, June 1, 2 PM

FREE

Lace up your boots and join geologist Roy Larick for a 3 mile hike and learn about the geologic history of the West Creek Valley. As watershed stewards we'll contemplate possible futures for West Creek. Space is limited and will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

► **Explore Maine's Allagash Wilderness Waterway**

September 2 - 6

Join us for a five day trip down the Allagash Wilderness Waterway in Northern Maine. We'll start at Churchill Dam on September 2, paddling down the pristine Allagash River and along a few lakes longer than wide to the junction with the St. James River.

The early autumn season in the Maine North Woods is typically characterized by mild temperatures, blue skies and few insects. A side trip is possible to Acadia National Park. Previous canoeing or camping experience would be a plus.

For more information call one of the trip co-organizers: Dennis Michael Plank at 216-939-8229 or John Holian at 440-777-7903.

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### **Meetings:**

**Executive Committee** meetings begin immediately after the 7 PM Conservation meeting. Meeting locations will be changing as follows:

May 7 - at Lakewood Library Main Branch on 15425 Detroit Rd.

**Coal & Energy Committee** meets at 4105 Stilmore Rd, South Euclid, Ohio 44121. Please contact Randy Cunningham at (216) 631-3337 for the time and date of the next meeting.

**Green Transportation Committee** meets on the first Monday of each month at 1 PM in the Linking Employment Abilities and Potential (LEAP) offices at 2545 Lorain Ave. Please contact Akshai Singh for more information: [akshai.singh@sierraclub.org](mailto:akshai.singh@sierraclub.org). State Transportation calls are on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 PM. Contact Akshai to get on a call, or to connect with any cycling advocacy going on in NEO or statewide.

**Rainforest Committee** typically meets every month on the third Sunday of the month. Call Michael Melampy at 440-826-2263 for time and place.