

## Northeast Ohio Sierra Club July & August 2014 Newsletter

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### **A Sincere Thanks to SB 310 Opponents**

By Andi Whitaker, NEO Communications Committee Chair

On June 13, Ohio became the first state in the nation to roll back a clean energy law. The majority in the Ohio House and Senate and Gov. Kasich stood with big utility lobbyists over Ohio citizens when they [signed into law Senate Bill 310](#).

[David Scott](#), National Sierra Club's board president and Columbus resident, commented, "[t]his reckless step backward gives Ohioans fewer energy choices, fewer jobs, and dirtier air... As even Lake Erie shows adverse impacts from climate disruption, as respected scientific bodies warn we must cut carbon pollution now, this is grossly irresponsible."

Sierra Club members fought to halt SB 310, delivering thousands of calls, letters, and emails in opposition. Working with other groups and citizens, we made so many phone calls that Gov. Kasich's voicemail was filled for days. Activists, ordinary folks, made their voices heard.

The repeal of our renewable energy standards is a step back for Ohio. But while SB 310 is a setback, everyone who took the time to make a call, send an email, write a letter, or provide testimony helped to build a movement. Through our combined efforts, we can continue fighting for clean energy and clean air in Ohio. [Click here](#) to send a message to Gov. Kasich and the Legislature expressing your disappointment with their decision.

Thank you all for your activism.

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### **Meat-Free Monday**

By Laurel Hopwood, NEO Agriculture Committee Chair

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club is organizing something exciting and new... The Meat-Free Monday Campaign !!

We are creating a grassroots movement to encourage people to refrain from consuming animal products one day a week. The goals of this project are:

- \* to educate how purchasing animal products impacts the ecosystem
- \* to reduce climate change and nutrient/water pollution "one forkful at a time"

We need volunteers who have specific skills, ie: creating a website and/or making a brochure/postcard. If you can help, please contact Laurel Hopwood, NEO Agriculture Committee Chair at:

[lhopwood@roadrunner.com](mailto:lhopwood@roadrunner.com)

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## **Sierra Club's Water Alert Reporting Network (WARN) Reports First Incident in North Olmsted: SSOs, CSOs, and Community Response**

On the evening of Monday, May 12th, an intense storm dropped more than two inches of rain in North Olmsted, OH on ground which was already saturated from previous rainfall. Flooding affected many of the city's homes, businesses, parking lots and streets, and local news outlets featured photos of partially submerged cars and pick-up trucks at Great Northern Shopping Mall the next day. The Rocky River Valley was flooded badly, too.

Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, less than 48 hours after the storm, two volunteers hiked Cleveland Metroparks trails behind the Rocky River Nature Center. Coincidentally, both volunteers had been trained to report water pollution incidents at the Sierra Club's Water Alert Reporting Network (WARN) training the evening before.

The North Olmsted Waste Water Treatment Plant is perched on a high plain nestled in the sylvan Rocky River valley. Below the plant, the Cleveland Metroparks' Rocky River Reservation broadens to include two abandoned channels of the West Branch of the Rocky River. On their way down to the Rocky River, the channels weave around a high hill called Mount Pleasant. Part of the western channel is dredged and impounded to form West Channel Pond, the water feature beside the Rocky River Nature Center.

Wednesday afternoon, both channels on either side of Mount Pleasant smelled strongly of untreated sewage. The creek, which runs alongside the North Olmsted Waste Water Treatment Plant and through the northern channel, had garbage bags festooning the bushes and tree branches up to 10 feet above the usual water level. (The piped outflow of the North Olmsted Waste Water Treatment Plant flows to the Rocky River underneath the creek.)

On the other side of Mount Pleasant, what appeared to be sludge covered about 20 feet of a low spot on the Mount Pleasant Loop trail. Looking up the dry watercourse from the sludge-covered trail toward the waste water treatment plant a couple of hundred feet away, pools, gullies, garbage and scoured leaf litter were evidence the flow emanated from the direction of the plant. A blue bag 4 feet up in a bush near the waste water treatment plant indicated the flood level.

Downstream, the dry watercourse flowed into West Channel Pond. Yes, West Channel Pond smelled of sewage, too.

To the north and upstream of West Channel Pond, where there had previously been a wetlands viewing platform on the water, the volunteers watched water drain out of two culverts under West Channel Pond Trail toward West Channel Pond. The streams each had 6 foot long reddish-brown plumes with scum on either side. The smell of partially-treated sewage hung in the air.

The WARN volunteers wrote a WARN incident report mostly to practice what they had learned the night before at the WARN training. They did not think anybody would be interested in the report. However, several people from the Sierra Club expressed dismay at the incident and appreciation for the report. Not only did the report cover an incident the Sierra Club considers significant, the report served as a test case. The WARN incident report system is under development. We're all practicing and learning, and incidents such as these give Sierra Club staff and volunteers an opportunity to reach out to municipalities and

agencies to help them identify problems.

Before the training, the volunteers knew of no simple way for citizens to report a water pollution incident. The WARN incident report is a good start. Maybe, someday there will be an even simpler way to report pollution incidents - a way which would generate a timely, coordinated and appropriate response from all appropriate agencies. Imagine a single phone number which, like 911, would put a caller in touch with the proper response team for a pollution incident!

Note from Sierra Club Staff:

The North Olmsted Waste Water Treatment plant is under capacity. The amount of rainfall that particular Monday evening was a record breaking event for the community of North Olmsted. Stormwater infiltrated and inundated the sanitary sewer network feeding into the treatment plant. Overwhelmed by excess flows to and within the plant, the plant released partially-treated sewage into Cleveland Metroparks Rocky River Reservation and the Rocky River itself. Where the sanitary sewers are not connected to the storm sewer system, as in North Olmsted, this type of event is called a Sanitary Sewer Overflow, or SSO. Ongoing construction at the plant, which has a history of SSOs, will help to address the problem. But there is more that can be done both here and in other communities, and we can all help.

Sierra Club will be working with flood-prone communities to increase reporting from homeowners and businesses of basement floods that result from sanitary and combined sewer systems as they become flooded with rainwater. If you experience a sanitary basement flood at your home or business this rainy season, please report the incident to your local sewer authority. This data helps public works managers and Ohio EPA track and pinpoint problem areas so that communities can identify necessary repairs. This data also points to locations where green infrastructure projects may have the most beneficial impact. The City of North Olmsted is working toward putting a basement flooding report form online, and Sierra Club is working toward a similar goal with other communities.

If you are interested in more ways to get involved through hands-on training or volunteering, please follow [this link](#) to the Ohio Chapter's Clean Water Campaign page. There you can sign up for a future Water Sentinel or WARN training, or be notified of upcoming stewardship events!

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**Events:**

► **Saturday, July 12 & Sunday, July 13**

GardenWalk Cleveland is a free, self-guided tour of gardens, urban farms, vineyards and orchards in several neighborhoods of Cleveland, Ohio. Tour each of the designated neighborhoods at your own pace. Each neighborhood on the Walk has a headquarters where you'll find car parking, bike parking, restrooms, water and maps.

For complete information, please visit [gardenwalkcleveland.org](http://gardenwalkcleveland.org).

(Sierra Club is not affiliated with this event.)

► **Gay Games Rowing Regatta**

Sunday, August 10, 8 AM - 4 PM

Cleveland Metroparks Rivergate Park  
[1785 Merwin Ave. Cleveland](#)

Join us at the NEO Sierra Club table and cheer on the rowers!

The [Gay Games Rowing Regatta](#), will be hosted by the Cleveland Rowing Club on their famous rowing course on the Cuyahoga River in downtown Cleveland. The race will be a 3,200 meters (2 miles) head race, consisting of several challenging turns under six bridges. The course runs through varied areas of Cleveland, from industrial to parkland to downtown Cleveland. The finish line will be located on the CRF Property so that spectators will be able to view the finish.

► **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. Meetings will be held at Lakewood Library Main Branch on 15425 Detroit Rd on the following dates:

July 2 & August 6

**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 the first Mon. of each month at 1 PM in the Linking Employment Abilities and Potential 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 Tues. of each month at 6 PM. Contact Akshai to get on a call, or to connect with Ohio cycling advocacy.

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