

Top 10 Environmental-Conservation Priorities for Budget Bill Conference Committee

1. Keep our air, land, and drinking water clean and safe and conserve our soil and water resources



Basic funding for oversight of public water systems and other critical environmental protections are up for grabs in the Budget Bill.

- SUPPORT the full waste disposal fee increase as proposed by the Governor on Mixed Solid Waste (MSW) and on Construction & Demolition Debris (CD&D) to fund critical Ohio EPA programs and the ODNR Division of Soil and Water Conservation. REJECT the loosening of the definition of “unrecognizable” waste, as proposed by the Senate. (Items 254, 257, 258 + 259)

Rationale:

Without the revenue from these fee increases, public water systems oversight will be reduced substantially, stream cleanups will slow down considerably, and local governments (esp. counties) will have to fully fund the soil and water conservation districts on their own.

2. Keep Ohio’s promise to protect our Parks, Nature Preserves, and Historic Sites



The Ohio Senate voted to break Ohio’s historic promise to forever keep our state parks, nature preserves, and historic sites free of extractive activity.

- REJECT the Senate proposal to open state lands to oil and gas drilling. (Item 401)

Rationale:

Though not common, dangerous spills and explosions do happen. In 2004, a massive gas well blowout led to a 126,000 gallon crude oil spill and costly clean up in Delaware County. In 2007, an explosion caused by natural gas that had leaked from a gas well into a water well lifted a house from its foundation in Geauga County. Our precious parks, preserves, and historic sites are too valuable to put at risk. The General Assembly should fix the private lands drilling law before even considering opening up more public lands to drilling.

3. Save Ohio’s Scenic Rivers Program



Forty-one years ago, Ohio passed the nation’s first Scenic Rivers Act. Today, Ohio may be the first state to kill its Scenic Rivers program.

- SUPPORT the proposed transfer of the Scenic Rivers program to the ODNR Division of Watercraft as proposed by Governor and approved by the Ohio House. (Item 406)

Rationale:

Ohio has designated 800 river miles on 14 separate river systems as State Scenic Rivers and protected 4,000 acres of forested river corridors and public access sites. The ODNR proposal would move the program off the GRF, funding its \$550k annual program mostly with fees collected from canoes and kayaks owned by paddlers and liveries. The Ohio Senate plan would all but kill the program, leaving it only \$75,000 per year.

4. Invest in safe and clean energy technologies (Items 261, 433, 565)



Renewable Energy is clean and green and perpetually renewing. Let’s keep it that way!

- SUPPORT 1) State Clean Diesel Funding Task Force, 2) Municipal financing for roof-top solar, and 3) Convert 10% of state fleet to propane fuel, as proposed by the Ohio Senate.

- REJECT 1) Defining tires, trash, and coal methane as Renewable Energy, 2) Abdicating Ohio’s definition of Renewable Energy to other states, 3) Empowering homebuilders with the power of veto over the energy efficiency housing code, as proposed by the Ohio Senate.

Rationale:

Suddenly altering the Renewable Energy Standard will upset the reasonable balance that was achieved in the Ohio Energy Bill (S.B. 221, 127 G.A.). Also, privileging homebuilders with the ability to determine the regulations by which they are held accountable while silencing the energy efficiency concerns of consumer, environmental, and efficiency manufacturing advocates is wholly unbalanced and inappropriate.

5. Keep watch on coal mining impacts (Item 402)



Some streams in Ohio actually run orange due to acid mine drainage.

- SUPPORT the 8 cents/ton Coal Extraction Fee as approved by the Ohio House.

Rationale:

Staffing levels for Ohio DNR regulatory oversight of coal mining have not kept pace with the significant expansion of regulatory responsibilities. This new fee will shift \$1.2 Million off of the GRF to the coal industry, which mined \$655 M worth of coal in Ohio in 2007. The coal industry can and should afford to bear a greater share of the cost of regulatory oversight.

6. Don't let big business escape compliance with health, worker safety, and environmental standards



The Ohio Senate's "regulatory reform" proposal could compromise public health, worker safety, and clean air and water protections.

- **REJECT** the Senate's proposed "regulatory reform" amendment (S.B. 3, 128 G.A.).

Rationale:

This "reform" lets employers of up to 500 workers avoid full compliance with health, safety, and environmental protections that may pose an undefined "adverse impact" to the business, as measured by a "cost/benefit analysis" that considers only impacts to the business, not benefits to public health, worker safety, or environmental protection.

7. Help keep people and freight moving with less energy



For many citizens, the bus is their only transportation option. By 2025, one in every five Americans will be over age 65—and wanting more transit options.

- **SUPPORT** the Public Transportation subsidy and the Ohio Rail Development Commission at the levels as proposed by the Ohio House, \$39.9 M and \$6 M, respectively.

Rationale:

Each weekday, public transit buses deliver half a million Ohioans to work, school, and other important destinations. Railroads move more freight, using less fuel than any other transportation mode in the state. Moving commuters and freight by public transit and rail saves energy, reduces air pollution, lessens America's reliance on foreign oil, takes more trucks off the highway, and gives people and shippers more transportation options.

8. Keep our food safe and food production facilities inspected (Item 36)



ODA's inspection fees help to ensure processed food remain safe for human consumption

- **SUPPORT** the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Food Safety inspection fees, as proposed by the Governor and approved by the Ohio House.

Rationale:

These modest fees (less than \$100 per year for most food processing facilities) will help assure adequate inspection and help protect the public from food borne illness.

9. Help assure more timely review of appeals of environmental permit and orders (Item 260)



The ERAC desperately needs more staff attorneys to consider thousands of appeals each year of EPA orders and permits.

- **SUPPORT** stepped up funding for the Environmental Review Appeals Commission (ERAC) to hire two new staff attorneys, as proposed by the Ohio House. *Caution:* This funding, however, should come from the GRF—not from the Ohio EPA because 1) the Ohio EPA cannot afford to fund ERAC out of its budget and 2) it is inappropriate for the Ohio EPA to fund ERAC, which sits in judgment of appeals of EPA permits and orders.

Rationale:

Any citizen, business, or group can appeal any permit or order of the Ohio EPA to the Environmental Review and Advisory Board. However, it can take months or even a year for the appeal to be heard. ERAC desperately needs more adequate staffing resources.

10. Protect consumers and ensure utility companies engage in least-cost planning



Protecting consumers from big utility companies takes adequate resources.

- **SUPPORT** Ohio Consumers' Counsel budget, as proposed by the Governor and approved by the Ohio House. Please restore at least \$427k per Fiscal Year.

Rationale:

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel is empowered to advocate for utility customers in all proceedings before the PUCO. The OCC is funded through a tiny assessment on each utility customer's bill (3 cents per \$100 of utility charges). Consumers deserve and need the protection this vital office provides.