

## **The Ripple - From Our Readers:**

*Melinda Zemper from Save Ohio Parks explains why, "If we want clean air, fresh water and pristine Ohio state parks, it's time to speak and act now to end fracking."*

Like most children growing up in the 1960's and 70's, most of my free time was spent outdoors.

After being gloriously unleashed from the bus after school each day, my siblings and I rushed home to change into play clothes. We roamed the neighborhood, riding our bikes, cutting through backyards or jumping fences to visit our friends.

Mothers rarely allowed us inside. Kids were supposed to be outside.

At dinner time, my parents would ask, "What'd you do today?" The answer was usually nothing. Which was true in a sense, because we likely did little of importance. But being outside and doing nothing is never doing *nothing*.

We children were observers of weather and nature. We watched the clouds and smelled the air when the wind picked up and ran home when it started to rain. We all knew whose house to visit to hold new kittens or puppies, or if someone found a turtle or massive spider in their yard. We'd run to the woods and play creek tag-- a rather wet and muddy game-- which often didn't last long when the spring winds picked up.

Our family loved camping and every year we vacationed at Ohio and other state park campgrounds.

Loving nature was a wonderful part of growing up. Loving nature is loving beauty and freedom.

Which leads to how I learned about fracking and volunteering to support Ohio state parks and public lands through [Save Ohio Parks](#). I never intended to become an environmental advocate. Like most people, I always want to do good, but also do the easy thing.

Besides, I trusted government to protect our clean air, water and pristine parks because government is supposed to serve the people of Ohio, not themselves or corporations.

I discovered I was wrong.

Like a lot of Ohioans, I heard about Ohio's frack boom in 2011 or so, when it first began. Back then natural (methane) gas was looked upon as a bridge fuel from polluting coal until carbon-free energies like wind and solar became viable.

We all know so much more now. We know that methane gas emissions from accidents, leaks, flares—including production and transportation from fracking-- make up a large percentage of

all global greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the planet. And while we all first learned about global warming in 1988, since the global frack boom began, greenhouse gas levels shot up like a hockey stick.

Our planet is heating and heating up quickly from many things, but a key reason is fossil fuel energies like coal, oil and gas. We are walking now along a narrow path on the edge of a precipice; one false step and we'll slide down the face of our planetary mountain and into a deep, inescapable crevasse.

Climate scientists warn us we've breached the [1.5 degrees Celsius tipping point](#), but there is still a short window of time to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. That's when warming oceans, melting glaciers, and mass extinctions of marine animals like polar bears and whales begin.

When 1.5 degrees warming is consistent, a domino effect will start with the extinction of our coral reefs, the little fish that feed on them on up the food chain, until the commercial fishing industry that feeds billions of people is destroyed. That will launch mass refugee migrations--and more global political unrest than we are experiencing today.

Indeed, we see the beginnings of all those things right now. The Danube River dried up this summer. The Colorado River, which provides drinking water to four western states, lost 20 percent of its fresh water over the last 100 years.

The time to act was yesterday, but today will help, too.

**In late 2022**, I read a news article in the Cincinnati Enquirer (I still read daily, local newspapers) that the state of Ohio was considering fracking state parks for natural (which is mostly methane) gas.

I didn't believe it. Fracking meant oil and gas rigs and 20-acre well pads. Oilfields don't belong in parks. Oil and gas production is loud, dirty and dangerous, even [explosive](#). I felt the reporter must have somehow been mistaken.

A friend had tried to get me involved in greater Cincinnati environmental causes for years. I always intended to, but our kids were growing up. I started a business, my parents became ill, then died; the time was never right and there was never enough time. It's the same story everyone can tell at various times of their lives. I was just like everyone else I knew: too busy making a living and raising a family to think I could do more.

One morning my friend and I drove on a whim to Columbus to submit testimony to the Ohio Oil and Gas Land Management Commission (OGLMC) against proposed legislation to frack Ohio public lands. We listened to compelling comments from knowledgeable students, writers, environmentalists and even a medical doctor.

I introduced myself to Rob Brundrett, CEO of the Ohio Oil and Gas Association (OOGA) and asked him if he and the Ohio oil and gas industry had a net-zero energy plan Ohio could begin incorporating over the next few years.

He looked at me as if I had a third eye.

The answer, in a nutshell, was no. He was there to drill and make money now, not preserve our parks or planet for future generations. I'm convinced today that if he and OOGA were presented with the last two passenger pigeons in existence, they'd shoot one and eat the other.

Out of those OGLMC hearings, Save Ohio Parks was formed. In our naivete, we thought Gov. Mike DeWine, state legislators, the OGLMC, and OOGA could be persuaded to see the big picture once they made connections between fracking and methane gas emissions, our heating planet, increased poor health from pollution, contaminated water and climate change in addition to desecrated public lands.

We thought if enough people knew of fracking's forest fragmentation as trees were cut for well pads; of noise and 24-hour lighting that stresses birds and animals and affects their circadian rhythms and mating habits, that legislators would stop fracking.

We thought if enough people learned that [living within a mile of a fracking well pad](#) increased early childhood cancers, along with increased COPD, asthma, low fertility and low birth weights, that fracking would be stopped.

We even formed a [30-member coalition of Ohio statewide environmental organizations](#) petitioning Gov. Mike DeWine for a moratorium on fracking state parks and public lands, to no avail.

And though Ohio reporters have been telling the story of toxic, radioactive gas and oil waste brine migration into conventional oil wells in Washington County for a few years now, the state still won't act to protect drinking water in [Marietta and Washington County](#). They are expanding [fracking to power AI data centers](#) while doing nothing about southeast Ohio's looming drinking water crisis impacting nearly 60,000 people.

Three years have gone by, and Save Ohio Parks now realizes that the only way Ohio will stop fracking its state parks, wildlife areas and forests is if we elect legislators who pledge to expand renewable energy, stop fracking public lands and support laws protecting clean air, clean water, pristine parks and a viable planet.

Solar energy is now cheaper, reliable with battery storage and has a zero-carbon footprint. Ramping up renewable energy as we simultaneously phase out fossil fuels from our homes, businesses and manufacturing means [no data centers should run on natural gas](#) with polluting, diesel generator backups.

We urge you to do your candidate research carefully and vote only for candidates this fall who pledge to protect Ohio's health, clean air and water and pristine state parks and public lands.

How can you get involved? Click on the [Join Us](https://saveohioparks.org/) button on the Save Ohio Parks website (<https://saveohioparks.org/>) and give us permission to contact you. We'll send periodic emails and Action Alerts asking you to call or send emails to state legislators on important issues or proposed legislation; we'll invite you to attend in-person or virtual events; or even donate. With bipartisan voter support, we can all make a difference this fall!