



Save Ohio Parks
No fracking on public lands

**Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Opposition Testimony on House Bill 308
Melinda Zemper, Save Ohio Parks
December 8, 2024**

Chairman Reineke, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present opposition testimony on House Bill 308 today. My name is Melinda Zemper, and I am a board member for Save Ohio Parks, an all-volunteer citizens group founded by Ohioans concerned about fracking of our state parks, wildlife areas, and other public lands.

It is with great incredulity and grave apprehension that I testify on behalf of Save Ohio Parks today about HB 308, a bill that would define nuclear energy “green energy.”

First, we know why Ohio lawmakers may seek that designation. Projects designated “green energy” are easier to obtain federal and state funding for in Ohio’s ongoing search for improved economic development and job creation.

But there is a word for calling energy-related projects green when they are not green at all. It’s called “greenwashing.” And this bill is just another example of that.

In fact, it's déjà vu all over again. In late 2022, Ohio law HB 507 passed during another lame duck session during the Christmas season, with virtually no public input. It included amendments that REQUIRED fracking under Ohio's state parks and public lands AND designated natural gas a "green energy."

Yet that legislation was wrong on many fronts, indicating lawmakers either didn't know the science, or just didn't care to learn it. Natural gas, primarily composed of methane, is not green energy. In fact, on the color spectrum it should be called a "black energy" because methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in heating and destabilizing the climate.

Our planet has now passed 1.5 degrees Celsius warming for many reasons, but at least 30 percent of global carbon and greenhouse gas emissions comes from methane leaks, flares, and accidents from gas and oil production, including fracking. Gas and oil emissions poison our air and cause rare cancers in children; increased asthmas, lung and thyroid conditions; and even low birth weights in infants born in close proximity to oil and gas production well pads.

In Ohio, only about 4 percent of our energy produced can be called truly green, which means it comes from clean, renewable energy sources with very low or no greenhouse gas

emissions. And while nuclear energy at its end point may have virtually no air emissions, what energy will be used to run Ohio's nuclear power plants?

The likely answer is gas and oil, which are fossil fuels whose greenhouse gases are fueling climate warming estimated by climate scientists now to heat the world by 3.1 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

We have already broken through the 1.5 degree warming threshold, and when that temperature range is constant throughout the world, we will see life on earth irrevocably altered as the oceans heat up; the fishing industry collapses; birds, plants, trees, and animal species die off; glaciers melt and coastal areas are permanently underwater; floods and hurricanes become more common; and political unrest worldwide pushes millions, perhaps billions, of people into climate refugees, causing even more political instability and chaos.

Indeed, we're seeing those outcomes already. 2023 was the hottest year on record, and Ohio had 36, 90-degree days in the summer of 2024. Our four seasons and our growing seasons are fading away along with native plants and trees, morphing into two seasons, with winter a cooler, rainy season, and summer, a hot, drought-filled season.

Expanding nuclear energy in Ohio will only give fossil fuels another reason to keep drilling when they need to be phased out and replaced with solar and wind power. Fossil fuels'

legacy is not only far from green, it's downright dangerous to human existence on a livable planet -- because what nuclear energy shares with gas and oil production is this final coupe d'etat: both create radioactive waste that causes cancer and death in human beings.

After gas and oil are brought up the surface of the ground and separated from the freshwater lakes and streams drained to obtain it, the wastewater, or "produced water" left behind is not only toxic, it's radioactive, too. It's so contaminated, in fact, that it's unfit for drinking ever again, and it's trucked off to state-licensed waste facilities.

Right now, gas and oil production in Ohio and neighboring states are injecting more than a billion gallons of radioactive wastewater a year into state of Ohio-licensed injection wells deep underground. And these wells can leak, endangering our drinking water supplies. By allowing gas and oil fracking in Ohio, we are essentially draining our state of its lakes and streams' fresh water and allowing that fresh water to be replaced by toxic, radioactive water.

Fresh water cannot be created; it can only be poisoned or filtered. And with half-lives of 1,600 years for Radium 226 and 228 -- which can be found in Ohio's oil and gas waste AND nuclear waste -- filtering will not make it safe.

Nuclear waste can be much more highly radioactive than some gas and oil waste. If radioactive nuclear waste comes in contact with human beings at a high dose, it will either cause cancer or kill. We know this from settled science and real-life experience: the nuclear bomb detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1985; the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor accident that shut down nuclear growth in the 1980s in the U.S.; and the 2011 tsunami that destroyed the Fukushima nuclear power plant's power supply and cooling systems and caused a nuclear core meltdown.

Vast areas of Chernobyl are still radioactive and uninhabitable, and Fukushima area residents were not allowed back into their community for years. Many Fukushima residents have still not returned to live there. The Japanese government plans to decommission the Fukushima plant over the next 30 to 40 years.

Ohio and its current gas and oil waste storage management practices, as well as all gas and oil regulations and storage management practices in the United States, have already been called a "slow rolling disaster" by award-winning science journalist Justin Nobel in news reporting and his new, groundbreaking book, *Petroleum 238: Big Oil's Dangerous Secret and the Grassroots Fight to Stop It* (Karret Press, 2024). Save Ohio Parks predicts this prophetic book will one day be seen as the Rachel Carson "Silent Spring" of our century.

Before Ohio legislators decide to declare nuclear power a green energy, please consider this important question: What has happened in Ohio or the United States regarding nuclear waste storage to change dangerous health outcomes for people, land and water exposed to radioactivity from nuclear accidents since 1979?

People cannot live healthy lives in communities with high radioactivity from nuclear or oil and gas waste.

Defining natural gas and nuclear energy green energies are examples of George Orwellian doublespeak.

Ohio lawmakers should pass on re-defining nuclear power a green energy and strive to learn and embrace what true green energy *really* is: energy that heats our homes, lights our houses, and runs our businesses with power like wind, solar, geothermal or hydropower, because they have the fewest amount of emissions and waste products and can ensure clean water, air and tillable land and a healthy, livable future for Ohioans for generations to come. And THAT is the true definition of “green” energy.

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