

To: Chairman and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

From: Gregory Witt

Date: March 15, 2026

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 219 – Protecting Ohio’s Public Lands and Water

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 219.

Speeding Up the Industrialization of Our Parks

My primary concern with SB 219 is that it drastically accelerates the timeline for fracking our state parks and public lands. Since 2023, Ohio has already approved over 11,000 acres of our state parks and wildlife areas for oil and gas development. These are lands that Ohioans cherish for peace, recreation, and the preservation of our natural heritage.

SB 219 seeks to "grease the skids" for industry by:

- Cutting the Oil and Gas Land Management Commission’s decision window from 180 days down to just 90 days.
- Mandating that approved nominations be put out for bid immediately, rather than in the next calendar quarter.
- Requiring agencies to execute leases within a mere 30 days—a timeframe far too short to ensure the complex safeguards necessary to protect public land.

General Impacts of Fracking

Fracking is a high-impact industrial process that is fundamentally incompatible with the mission of our state parks.

- **Air and Climate:** Fracking releases significant amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas 80 times more potent than CO₂, alongside volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that harm local air quality.
- **Industrialization:** Each well pad brings constant truck traffic, noise, and light pollution, destroying the "pristine" nature of our wildlife areas.

Water Use: 1.9 Billion Gallons of Fresh Water Lost

Research from the *Save Ohio Parks* website highlights a staggering environmental cost: fracking in our state parks and wildlife areas has already committed at least **1.9 billion gallons of Ohio’s fresh water**. This is water taken from our lakes and streams that can

never return to the natural water cycle. Instead, it is laced with toxic chemicals and sand, pumped underground, and converted into permanent waste.

The Wastewater Crisis: Ohio as a "Toxic Toilet"

The disposal of this wastewater is equally dangerous. Organizations like the Buckeye Environmental Network (BEN) have documented the risks of Class II injection wells. Ohio has become a dumping ground for the region's fracking waste, with more injection wells than Pennsylvania and West Virginia combined.

- **Brine Migration:** There are documented cases in Ohio where toxic, radioactive brine has migrated up to five miles from injection sites, surfacing in older wells and threatening drinking water aquifers.
- **Brine Spreading:** The practice of spreading "brine" on roads for de-icing further exposes our communities and waterways to radium-226 and other carcinogens.

Circumventing the Executive Veto

Perhaps most concerning is that SB 219 contains several provisions that Governor DeWine specifically vetoed from the state budget last year. These include:

- Prohibiting the ODNR from charging companies fees beyond those in the lease (potentially preventing fines for spills).
- Granting companies "surface use" of state land, which would allow actual drilling *inside* the park boundaries—violating the Governor's current "no surface use" rule.
- Extending lease terms for an additional five years.

Why is the legislature attempting to pass via SB 219 the very same policies that were deemed not in the public interest just months ago?

Conclusion

Ohio's state parks and wildlife areas were set aside for the "pleasure and leisure of the people." They are a refuge for our health and a legacy for our children. SB 219 prioritizes the short-term profits of out-of-state oil and gas companies over the long-term health of Ohio's environment. I urge you to vote NO on SB 219.

Sincerely,

Gregory Witt
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