

To Chair Blasdel, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Nicole Tabit and I am a representative of the Buckeye Environmental Network, as well as a citizen of Ohio who is concerned about the impacts of SB 219 on Ohio's public lands, and future impacts on oil & gas legislation in our state.

I am opposed to SB 219 and urge the committee to vote no on this bill. While framed as a change to the governance of oil and gas wells on Ohio's public lands, the bill ultimately prioritizes the interests of the oil and gas industry over the safety of Ohio's communities, public lands, and wildlife.

This bill, if passed, would require the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to prioritize plugging orphan wells located near frack waste injection wells, instead of plugging orphan wells based on how dangerous or polluting they are. Ohio has already seen the consequences of poorly regulated fracking systems.

- In Noble County in 2021, 360,000 gallons of fracking waste spewed out of an orphaned fracking well when waste from a DeepRock injection well migrated, and cost ODNR \$1.3 million to clean up. This incident killed hundreds of fish & amphibians in Noble County leading to irreversible environmental damage, not to mention the economical impact of fixing a fully preventable issue. Genesis Resources, the owner of the abandoned well, was then faced with the entire cost & no action was taken on DeepRock, the offending party.
- Just last year, an explosion at an orphan well in Wayne National Forest injured 6 and killed 2. The explosion was caused when oil & gas hit the engine of a nearby water truck diesel engine.

By prioritizing plugging orphan wells based on proximity to injection wells rather than the level of pollution or danger they pose, SB 219 puts Ohio residents at risk. Injection wells are meant to contain toxic fracking waste- it is important that they are properly regulated and addressed separately from orphan wells. Each injection well is allowed to take 40-60 million gallons of water to store toxic fracking waste, which has committed 1.9 billion gallons of our state's fresh water- and that's just accounting for land currently approved for fracking. All of that waste can migrate from an injection well into a production well, or even worse, into a water well.

Just 10% of orphan wells are responsible for a disproportionate share of pollution in Ohio. These wells should be plugged first regardless of their proximity to injection wells for the safety of Ohio's people, water, and public lands.

Nicole Tabit  
Board Member  
Forest Committee Co-chair, Buckeye Environmental Network