



Environmental advocates protest the event of fracking in Ohio State Parks at the Nov. 15 meeting in Columbus.

THE NEXT STEP

In a sea of Patagonia and formal white button-downs, environmental advocates gathered to plead with land commissioners against a decision that would allow fracking in Ohio State Parks.

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Fracking: Part 2

On Nov. 15, The Oil and Gas Commission held a meeting discussing the decisions on which parcels of public land would be approved for oil and gas drilling in Ohio. Many protesters, the majority from Save Ohio Parks (SOP), gathered in the meeting to speak out and give public opinion on the matters discussed.

In a sea of Patagonia and formal white button-downs, environmental advocates gather to plead with land commissioners against a decision that would allow fracking in Ohio state parks.

"I am completely devastated about today's results. I can not believe that people do not care about the future. I do not even have kids. I just do not understand," SOP member Mary Jo Bole told Spark at the meeting. "Who elects those commissioners and how do we get them changed to a more representative board? That is my goal, to look into that. I do not understand why we're trying to stay in the 20th century."

Spark was not able to reach the Ohio commissioners for comment.

Amended House Bill 507 was recently passed in the Ohio General Assembly which requires state agencies to open their land to oil and gas drilling. This bill became effective in April and a governor-appointed commission could begin approving fracking leases on Ohio's state lands as early as November. This law largely targets Ohio public parks due to the amount of available resources in those areas.

Also known as hydraulic fracturing, fracking is a process that uses pressurized water to extract oil from supplies of minerals thousands of feet below the Earth's surface. Over the last 10 years, oil and gas companies have swept across the Ohio Valley region, striking deals with area residents — landowners can lease their land for companies to frack beneath it, and in return, they will receive a part of the profit.

Fracking has been a topic of discussion associated with both economic advantages and disadvantages. The most prominent economic benefit from fracking is the lower cost of natural gas, which has resulted in a significant



Left and far right Environmental advocates protest fracking with signs and voices.

reduction in energy prices and given consumers additional economic gains.

"For our economy, shale drilling will continue to lead to decreased energy prices, create new jobs, increase revenue for the state, and increase Ohio's efforts to produce domestic energy," Ohio Senator George Lang told Spark. "This is more important now than ever, and will ensure our state is in a strong position to sustain itself from an energy perspective."

Lang represents Butler County and is a co-sponsor of House Bill 507.

"My response to environmental critics would simply be that the positive effects of shale drilling far outweigh the negative," Lang said. "Fracking emits much less carbon dioxide than coal when used to produce electricity, and is generally considered safe to the environment. While I support an increased effort to innovate energy technologies, Ohioans need reliable energy until that transition is made. Fracking presents a great opportunity for doing so."

As of Nov. 15, The Oil and Gas Land Management Commission opened parcels of land underneath Salt Fork State Park and two other state-owned wildlife areas to oil and gas development. A public comment period was open for different applications that gas companies had reportedly filed with the state to open up different tracts of land for oil and gas exploration.

In the first set of general comments, there were 1,139 PDF pages of comments submitted to the commission. Of those, 1,100 of them were in favor of oil drilling in the commissioned parcels of land.

Cathy Becker, a steering committee member of Save Ohio Parks (SOP), stated that her anti-fracking organization has since gathered evidence to show that, allegedly, these comments were fraudulent.

"They were the exact same text, all of them. And the only difference was the names at the bottom," Becker told Spark. "There would be hundreds posted from the same minute."



Approved For Fracking

Not Approved



Zepernick Wildlife Area Columbiana County

- land approved for lease to fracking companies
- 521 acres of land, more than 66 acres needed to frack



Salt Fork State Park Geurnsey County

- three parcels of land were approved for fracking, two were denied
- aquifer located in park land
- 20,181 acres of land and water, 20,000 needed to frack



Valley Run Wildlife Area Carroll County

- land approved for lease to fracking companies
- 304 acres of land, more than 300 acres are needed to frack



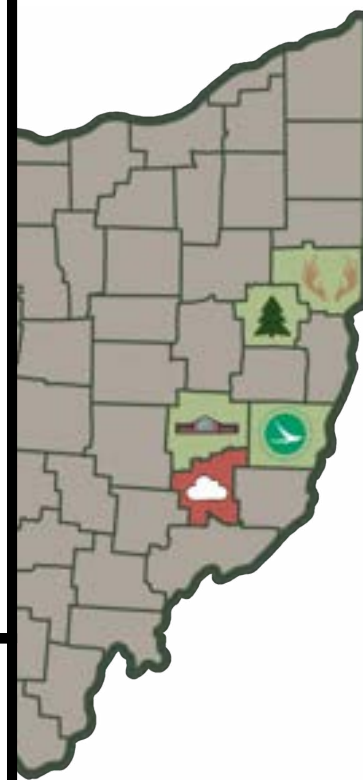
Ohio Dept. of Transportation Belmont County

- land approved for lease to fracking companies
- 595 producing wells for fracking currently



Wolf Run State Park Noble County

- one part of land denied for fracking because more than one state agency manages the land
- aquifer located in park land
- 1,558 acres of land and water, companies wanting to frack over 2,000 acres



source ohio department of
natural resources

Becker went on to say that her committee proceeded to make 735 phone calls to the numbers listed in the pro-fracking comments. Of those, around 100 people responded, and 98 of those claimed they never made the comment. This has sparked talk of a state-wide investigation with State Attorney General David Yost.

Yost opened "a civil investigation and filed subpoenas against consumer Energy Alliance," according to Ohio Capitol Journal Reporter Jake Zuckerman.

"In terms of what is going on with the attorney general investigation, we have no idea. He announced that they were going to investigate and then we have not heard anything since," Becker said.

Environmental advocates of various organizations at the meeting confirmed that they will continue to work towards an end to oil and shale drilling.

"We are gonna keep on keeping on," Third Act Ohio and SOP member Carrie Gibbons told Spark. "This is not the end, we are not done."•

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OHIO STATE PARKS MEETING

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