

I am here today as a parent, a teacher, and a campus ministry professional with a deep love of this region, particularly our natural resources. I prioritize, in all three of those areas of my life, helping my kids, young people and Ohio University students to gain an appreciation for the biodiversity of our region and a better understanding of the decades of devastation of extraction industry, both environmentally and economically, to the land and the people of Southeast Ohio. Over my 17 years with United Campus Ministry, I have taken hundreds and hundreds of students into the Wayne with Monday Creek Restoration Project and other community groups to learn about the history of this forest, the long-term devastating effects of AMD, and to do clean-up projects. Alongside residents in and near the Wayne, we've hauled thousands of pounds of fires and trash out of the Wayne, helping to revitalize habitat, increasing the recreation value of our forest, and protecting vulnerable and recovering watersheds, which are absolutely vital for healthy forests and people. I'm personally devastated that anyone would consider deliberately putting toxics into our forest after I and many others have put our blood, sweat and tears to clean up year after year! These efforts have even received mention by President Obama in recent years as a national model of positive campus/community collaborations.

Does Appalachia want to continue to be recognized as an impoverished, polluted area subject the exploitative whims of boom and bust extraction industry? It's well documented that fracking financially benefits a very small minority for a very short time, while putting all the rest of us, the majority, at risk of polluted water, soil and air and for decades to come.

We have opportunity now with Ohio's only national forest to show true forward-thinking leadership, to choose a different course - to be a leader in recognizing the intrinsic and economic value of our forests. I helped organize a young naturalist club for the youth of our region and worked with the first Birds in the Hills weekend conference this April, which brought hundreds of families (and dollars) to the area and into the Wayne to witness the incredible flora and fauna biodiversity here! We're hoping to grow this event and other opportunities like this, which have long term economic and environmental benefits to the region! Not short-term, short-sighted, toxic effects. You can and should withhold consent to fracking our only national forest and be a forward thinking leader for our forest and our children for years to come.