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Comments: Drilling the Wayne National Forest is likely to have serious negative effects on the economic, environmental, and human health of Washington County and southeastern Ohio.

First, Washington County is becoming known as a tourism destination, with positive profiles in Smithsonian and on a variety of tourism-related websites. A 2014 study found that tourism sustained 7% of Washington County jobs (over 2000 of them) and generated over \$200 million in sales. Much of that tourism is based on outdoor activities, as demonstrated by the growth and success of the Rivers, Trails, and Ales and Inland Waterways festivals; just last month, House Beautiful noted Marietta's reputation as a site for family-friendly outdoor adventure. The Marietta Convention and Visitors Bureau lists the Wayne as a major attraction in our area and details the variety of activities available to visitors to the forest. Mountain bikers, kayakers, hikers, and campers will be less likely to choose the Wayne if it becomes an industrial site, criss-crossed with roads clogged with brine trucks. Endangering this vital part of our county's overall economy is short-sighted.

Second, allowing fracking in the Wayne endangers what is currently a healthy ecosystem. The Wayne is a second-growth forest, now making a comeback following its abuse by extractive industries in the early twentieth century. Forest Service documents stress the centrality of a biological assessment to any forest plan, and a recent survey of the lease sites by local naturalists revealed biodiversity of both plants and animals; the Wayne is known to host brown bats, which are declining in number. The WNFwebsite describes our local streams as "some of the cleanest streams on the whole Wayne National Forest" and notes the diversity of fish, mussels, and salamanders found here. Moreover, the Little Muskingum, which flows through the Wayne, is a major tributary of the Ohio River, currently the most polluted waterway in the US and one on which millions of humans depend for drinking water. Drilling in the Wayne would place this area, which only now is again a mature forest, at risk.

Finally, allowing fracking in the Wayne would endanger the health of nearby residents by increasing air and water pollution. Fracking is known to release methane, a potent greenhouse gas, nitrous oxide, and a number of volatile organic compounds into the air. In Wyoming and Pennsylvania, groundwater contamination has occurred. The chemicals involved can cause respiratory and neurological problems in adults, as well as serious defects in developing fetuses; some are known carcinogens. The CDC notes that Washington County already has respiratory disease and cancer rates well above the national average; further increasing the risk of serious illness for people in our area is unacceptable.

The Wayne National Forest is an invaluable resource, improving the economic, environmental, and human health of our region. It should not be placed at risk by permitting hydraulic fracturing within the forest.