FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, October 21, 2026

Media contacts: Sam Law | FracTracker Alliance | sam.law@fractracker.org
Vanlyn Ramsay | Buckeye Environmental Network | 614-233-1584 | comms@benohio.org

Ohio Oil and Gas Incidents are Rising. Is Oversight Keeping Up?

Report finds persistent misclassification, overburdened inspectors, and inadequate enforcement in new analysis of 2,529 incidents

COLUMBUS, Ohio (October 21, 2026) – A new analysis by FracTracker Alliance and Buckeye Environmental Network of Ohio Department of Natural Resources records found persistent problems with incident classification, unrealistic inspector workloads, and lax enforcement as reported oil and gas incidents increased. The analysis identified **2,529 incidents** from 2015 through 2025, with annual incidents rising from 103 in 2015 to 268 in 2025.

“Ohio is recording more oil and gas incidents, but the records still make it too hard to tell how serious many were and what, if anything, happened afterward,” said Gwen Klenke, the report’s author. “ODNR needs more inspectors, clearer incident records, and enforcement of the laws already on the books.”

The report sheds light on significant problems with ODNR’s oversight of the oil and gas industry. The report found a lack of consistency in inspections, enforcement, and follow-up on the part of ODNR when wells have incidents or violations. Some incidents were classified as minor, including a 2025 spill of 1,000 gallons of crude oil that reached a tributary. ODNR says its division seeks to “return the regulated community to compliance at the lowest level of enforcement possible.” This lax regulatory attitude is reflected in incident reports that do not clarify whether enforcement or follow-up actions were taken, leaving Ohioans in the dark about whether laws are being enforced and the oil and gas industry is being held accountable.

“With fracking now expanding into our state parks and public lands and national news stories about toxic waste tied to injection wells bubbling up to the surface, many eyes are on the lax oversight of the oil and gas industry in Ohio. The ODNR as well as the Ohio legislature have allowed this unfortunate situation to continue to worsen. The findings from this new report are alarming, and it’s incredibly important that ODNR and the legislature get their act together,” said Bev Reed, Appalachian Organizer with Buckeye Environmental Network.

The report also found that roughly 25 ODNR inspectors are responsible for about 96,000 active oil and gas wells. Based on recent inspection durations, FracTracker estimates that visiting each active well once would require an average of 664 workdays per inspector—more than two and a half working years between visits.

“It is shameful the way ODNR has turned its back on Ohioans by ignoring our pleas for help. Those of us who are small oil and gas producers have had wells ruined and properties contaminated by nearby injection wells. We have lost all faith in the agency charged with regulating the industry and enforcing the laws,” said Bob Wilson, a conventional oil and gas well company owner/operator and resident of Washington County.

Ohioans deserve an oil and gas industry held to the highest standards the law permits, rather than the lax ODNR pursuit of the “lowest level of enforcement possible.” As FracTracker Alliance and Buckeye Environmental Network prepare for ODNR’s Division of Oil and Gas Rulemaking submission to the Ohio State Legislature on January 13th, 2027, we call on ODNR to make incident reports clearer and more accessible, increase the number of inspectors so inspections can occur more regularly and thoroughly, and pursue formal enforcement for long-running incidents and violations, including civil penalties and immediate stop-work orders until contamination is remediated. These changes would let Ohioans know that the oil and gas industry is cleaning up their spills, not allowing their waste to leak or migrate underground, and being held to account before proposing changes to the current rules.

> **Read the report:** fractracker.org/2026/10/ohio-oil-gas-incidents-2015-2025
>
> **Interactive incident map:** fractracker.org/2026-ohio-incident-map
>
> **The data:** fractracker.org/2026-odnr-incident-list

FracTracker Alliance is a nonprofit that maps, analyzes, and communicates the risks of oil, gas, and petrochemical development. To learn more, visit fractracker.org or connect with us @FracTracker.

Buckeye Environmental Network is a grassroots organization dedicated to protecting the health and future of Ohio communities. We believe that every neighbor has the right to clean air, safe drinking water, and a say in the industrial practices that affect their home. To learn more, visit benohio.org or connect with us @buckeye_network on Instagram.

###