

Ohio Renewable Energy Low-Conflict Zone Research Study Executive Summary

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Background: The Nature Conservancy in Ohio (TNC) commissioned a research project (deemed the Low Conflict Zone) with The Great Plains Institute <https://www.betterenergy.org/> to gather data regarding interest in, or expressed willingness to site, renewable energy sources throughout Ohio. Extensive research was done to determine how many political subdivisions (townships, cities, and counties), public and private entities, including port authorities and regional planning commissions had either designated geographic locations available for wind and solar renewable siting, included renewable energy as an optional or desired land-use, or expressed goals for renewable energy within their current or future energy portfolio.

This project was commissioned specifically to use this data to overlay with TNC's "Site Renewables Right" mapping (which is still being finalized) to determine "Low-Conflict Zone" areas of the state that allow and/or welcome renewable development and that are better suited from an environmental standpoint. The Site Renewables Right mapping tool will provide an in-depth, data-driven tool for siting these energy sources in areas with the least possible impacts to water quality, wildlife habitat and more. Combining that tool with local and regional political acceptance or desire to allow for and/or expand renewables will be very valuable to numerous entities associated with energy development and permitting in Ohio.

Highlights of the data are listed below. All data is current as of August 2021:

Townships:

- There are **1,308 total townships** in the State of Ohio.
- **306** townships (nearly 25%) allow some form of utility-scale renewable energy (solar or wind) generation as a land use.
- Zoning codes are not available for 784 Ohio townships.

Cities:

- Zoning codes were investigated for **254 total municipalities** in the State of Ohio, including all 248 cities, as well as 6 villages with populations over 5,000.
- **85** cities (over 33%) allow utility-scale solar or wind energy generation as a land use.
- A number of Ohio cities have renewable energy or greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions goals. Of the **13** cities that have specific renewable energy goals, the average target is **72%** by **2027**.

Counties:

- There are **88 total counties** in the State of Ohio.

- **12** county zoning codes (about 14%) allow utility-scale solar or wind energy generation as a land use.
- **74** counties do not have available zoning codes, and **2** counties have zoning codes that do not mention utility-scale renewables or generation.
- **2** counties (or about 2%) have specific renewable energy goals, highlighted by Cuyahoga County's **100% renewable energy by 2050** commitment as part of its climate change action plan.

Companies/Organizations:

- In Ohio, about **60 large companies** and non-governmental organizations (e.g., hospitals and universities) have some form of renewable energy or GHG reduction's goal.
- Of these organizations, nearly **60% are headquartered in Ohio**.
- The average renewable energy goal for these organizations is **80%**, with many listings **2025** or **2030** as target years to meet these goals.
- While many organizations more broadly list GHG emissions reduction targets, even more specify carbon reductions in particular (at an average reduction percentage of **65%**).

Regional Planning Commissions:

- There are **24 total regional planning commissions** in the State of Ohio.
- Nearly **70%** of these regional planning commissions have publicly noted an interest in renewable energy or environmental sustainability plans. For instance, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) has developed a roadmap to **100% emission-free energy** for local governments in the Columbus area.
- Several other regional planning commissions in Ohio have helped member communities with broader energy and sustainable planning efforts.

Port Authorities:

- There are **61 total port authorities** in the State of Ohio.
- Roughly **30%** of these port authorities mention renewable energy or sustainability on their websites, with several helping offer local incentives to homeowners and businesses, such as PACE financing and low-interest loans for efficiency upgrades.

Contact Information

Data-related inquiries:

Specific questions related to the data can be directed to Gilbert Michaud, Ph.D. at gmichaud@luc.edu.

General or Renewable Energy-related inquiries:

To learn more about The Nature Conservancy's work to advance renewable energy in Ohio, please contact Tracy Freeman, Director of Government Relations, at tracy.freeman@tnc.org.

Media Inquiries:

Media inquiries and interview requests can be sent to Jen Murphy, Associate Director of Strategic Communications, at jmurphy@tnc.org.