

From SELC's President

Dear SELC Friends,

This is both a perilous and promising time for the country, and for the South. Never in the 23 years since I founded SELC have I seen a greater array of environmental threats, greater urgency to act, and at the same time, greater potential for positive change. As head of an organization that has been engaged in protecting the environment and human health in our region for more than two decades, I would like to share with you my perspective on the challenges we face today, the outlook for progress, and how SELC intends to achieve it.

On Course for Continued Success

Like everyone, we are contending with the effects of the economic crisis, but I am pleased to report that SELC enters 2009 from a position of financial strength, and we could not be better positioned to succeed. For this we owe a debt to our friends and supporters. In a year of hard philanthropic choices, you continued to make SELC a priority, and I thank you.

We are also buoyed by the extraordinary accomplishments of 2008. Over the past year, we have secured precedent-setting victories, and we have expanded our programs and our presence across the Southeast to confront its most serious environmental problems.

Applying the Power of the Law

Litigation is our most powerful weapon, and we wield it judiciously, often in combination with our policy advocacy and legislative activities. We began 2008 with big wins that drew on all these capabilities: halting a Navy jet landing field that threatened a globally important wildlife preserve, stopping the "Road to Nowhere" in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and sharing in a federal court victory that will require the maximum achievable limits on mercury and other hazardous pollutants from coal-burning power plants.

Our successes continued. Over the course of the year, our attorneys

- secured tougher pollution controls for shellfish waters in North Carolina;
- won stronger safeguards for cypress swamps and other wetland forests in Georgia, South Carolina, and across the Southeast;
- protected nesting wildlife from excessive beach driving on the Cape Hatteras National Seashore;
- helped Tennessee combat destructive rock removal in parklands on the Cumberland Plateau; and
- upheld the right of citizens to sue polluters in Alabama and other states.

We also stayed true to our commitment to prevent commercial logging in 723,000 acres of our most wonderful Southern Appalachian mountain forests, despite an eight-year drive by the outgoing administration to roll back protection of these wild public lands. And as I write to you, Congress is on the verge of preserving 53,000 acres of new Wilderness and National Scenic Areas in southwest Virginia.

I could not be more pleased with the law and policy team that achieved these results, and it is only getting stronger. This past year, we added nine outstanding attorneys to our ranks. Among them are young attorneys who represent the next generation of exceptional environmental lawyers and leaders. They are working side by side with our veteran law and policy experts on critically important cases, such as our challenge of a new federal rule that effectively legalizes the obliteration of streams by mountaintop removal mining.

Strategic Initiatives: Global Warming and Coastal Conservation

Our southern states are among the world's largest contributors to global climate change, and with our low-lying coastal areas, we are especially vulnerable to its consequences. SELC has



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launched a comprehensive global warming initiative that addresses these issues by tying together three of our primary areas of expertise: transportation (to reduce driving and tailpipe emissions), coastal protection (to dampen the impacts of global warming), and power plants.

Eight SELC attorneys are engaged in proceedings in four states to prevent southern utilities from building more coal-burning power plants—facilities that would lock us into decades of increased carbon emissions and air and water pollution. We are keeping these projects in check and promoting clean alternatives, such as increased investment in energy efficiency.

Related to our work on global warming, we are undertaking a coastal conservation initiative aimed at protecting our beaches, wetlands, and lowland natural areas from further development.

A Voice for the South on Capitol Hill

At a pivotal moment in history, SELC's new office in Washington, D.C., is providing a much-needed voice for our region in the nation's capital. Not since my early days in the environmental movement—when the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act were on the table—have I seen a more important slate of federal legislation. Economic recovery, transportation, energy and global warming, clean water, forest protection—all are high on the agenda for the new Congress. Working with members of both parties, and with the new administration, we will help shape laws and regulations that profoundly affect our health, our communities, and our natural resources in the Southeast.

Economic stimulus funds, for instance, could be used to rebuild crumbling roads and bridges and expand clean and efficient transportation options. Conversely, they could finance unnecessary highways that fuel haphazard growth, destroy rural lands, and elevate harmful emissions. We will fend off destructive projects that arise in our states and steer dollars toward smart transportation choices that spur real prosperity.

Enhancing Our Presence on the Ground

In our multi-state organization, there is no substitute for local presence, and we have enhanced our on-the-ground capabilities with satellite offices in key parts of the South. SELC's new Charleston office puts us closer to partner groups in our coastal conservation initiative and is bolstering our ability to shield the Lowcountry from unchecked growth. We also opened an office in Richmond, which will further our work with Virginia lawmakers and state agencies on issues such as transportation policy reform and clean energy.

The Power of the Law Campaign

We owe much of our progress this past year to the success of our Power of the Law campaign, a three-year, \$45 million effort to fulfill our strategic vision for protecting this region. We have just finished the first year (the “quiet” phase) of the campaign, which seeks to secure three years of core operating support, to enhance the reach and capacity of our programs, and to build an endowment. I am very pleased to report that, as of December 31, we have received \$28 million in gifts and pledges toward our goals, a remarkable expression of support for our mission. You will be hearing more about our campaign in the months ahead.

Let me end by thanking you for your interest in our work, your commitment to our success, and your partnership, which makes all our achievements possible. Together we can continue to defend this region we all love so much and preserve its natural treasures for future generations.

Sincerely,



Frederick S. Middleton III
President and Founder