

GLOBAL WARMING

A Powerful Champion For the Southeast

Results and leverage are two words frequently used to describe the Southern Environmental Law Center. Since our founding in 1986, we have earned a reputation as one of the most effective environmental groups in the U.S. Guided by a focused, unique mission—to defend the health and environment of the Southeast—SELC works in Congress and with state lawmakers to inform and pass new legislation; with regulatory agencies to implement environmental law and policy; and, when necessary, in the courts to stop abuses or set far-reaching precedents. Our programs champion healthy air and clean water, native southern landscapes including mountain forests and the coast, and our scenic countryside and community character. With 74 staff members in seven offices, we are able to take on, sustain, and win complex, long-term efforts that have national and regional impact. To learn more, visit SouthernEnvironment.org.



Southern
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Global Warming, Healthy Air, and a New Energy Future

If SELC's six southeastern states were viewed as a country, it would rank as the seventh largest source of heat-trapping carbon dioxide on the planet due to our high concentration of coal-burning power plants, overdependence on cars and trucks, and sprawling development patterns that increase driving distances. The South is also the fastest growing region in the U.S., and projected future growth will only exacerbate our air problems.

The South is central to any global solution because it is disproportionately contributing to the problem—and because it offers such promising possibilities for change.

A number of political, economic, and environmental factors are converging as never before to create important opportunities for progress:

- There is mounting public concern about rising temperatures, severe storms, and prolonged droughts, and growing consensus we need effective climate policies.
- High gas prices and a stalled housing market, painful as they are to our economy, create openings for change in transportation and development.
- Federal global warming legislation is on the horizon.
- The primary federal transportation law is up for renewal.

The Southern Environmental Law Center is the only organization in the South that has a track record of comprehensively addressing both mobile and stationary sources of greenhouse gases. As the South's environmental champion, we at SELC feel a responsibility to exercise global warming leadership, so we are expanding our resources and mounting a major initiative that ties together three of our primary areas of expertise: power plants, transportation, and coastal protection and adaptation.

Power Plants

Our most urgent priority is to prevent construction of a new fleet of coal-burning power plants in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. These facilities would lock us into a half-century of increased global warming emissions, pumping out tens of millions of tons of carbon dioxide each year. What's more, they would undercut incentives to create a new energy future based on renewables, energy conservation, and efficiency.

Achieving significant gains in energy efficiency is key to reducing the region's outsized carbon footprint. SELC is going before utility commissions and working with state officials to promote the policy changes necessary for aggressive utility investment in robust energy efficiency programs as the first alternative for meeting electricity demand. These programs provide customers with financial incentives to invest in energy-saving appliances and to make improvements to homes and businesses that reduce power consumption.



TIM WRIGHT

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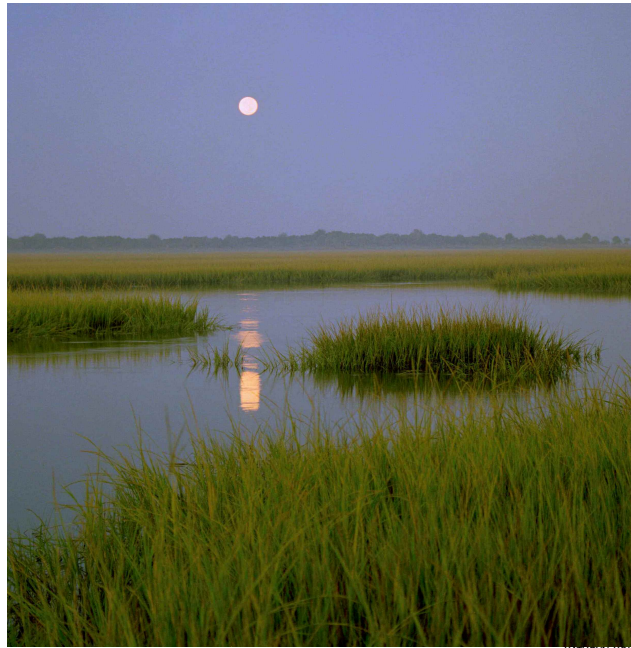
Transportation

Transportation is the Southeast's fastest growing source of greenhouse gases and accounts for about a third of its CO₂ emissions. SELC is helping policy makers recognize how our region's land use and transportation decisions are contributing to this problem, and we are offering alternatives that reduce tailpipe pollution, save fuel, protect our countryside, and strengthen our communities.

Building on SELC's achievements in reforming our states' asphalt-centered policies, we are spurring increased investment in well-designed, attractive, and reliable alternatives to driving, such as transit and rail. We are also showing how a "fix-it-first" approach that places a priority on repairing existing roads can enhance safety, ease congestion, and eliminate the need for expensive new highways that destroy rural lands and trigger more sprawl. To rein in far-flung, poorly planned growth that increases our commuting distances, we are fostering stronger links between transportation and land use planning to promote more traditional, compact development patterns.

And by shielding our countryside and forests from sprawl and destruction, we are helping to preserve natural ecosystems that take up and store carbon dioxide.

Our arguments are resonating with increasing power. For the first time since the advent of the interstate system, southerners are seriously examining their high driving rates and the assumption that more asphalt is the answer to all of our transportation needs.



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environmental legislation affects people and places, and our organization must be at the table to ensure that both bills contain the litigation and implementation tools needed for meaningful results and enforcement.

Coastal Protection

As global temperatures rise, sea levels and storm activity are expected to rise with them. By some estimates, sea levels could rise as much as 18.9 inches by the year 2100, resulting in the inundation of extensive areas of the South Atlantic coast and wetlands.

Steering where and how development occurs—keeping roads and development off of our beaches and out of our wetlands to provide flood control, storm buffers, and a “fallback zone” for wildlife—is an essential part of a climate change agenda. Through our enhanced climate change initiative, SELC will use a variety of law and policy approaches to 1) serve as an effective counterbalance to poorly planned coastal development; 2) maximize federal protection for wetlands; and 3) defend and strengthen state-level coastal and wetland safeguards.

A Strong Voice for the South in Congress

Our Washington, D.C., office is increasing SELC's presence on Capitol Hill and mobilizing our region-wide network of influential friends. This will be increasingly important in the upcoming reauthorization of federal transportation and global warming legislation. The daily work of SELC's attorneys throughout a six-state region enables us to be firmly grounded in the reality of local politics and how

To learn more, sign up for updates, or support SELC's climate change work, visit SouthernEnvironment.org.