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The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. With a long track record, SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities.

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**CHAPEL HILL
CHARLOTTESVILLE
ATLANTA
ASHEVILLE
BIRMINGHAM
CHARLESTON
NASHVILLE
RICHMOND
WASHINGTON, D.C.**



Dear Friends of SELC,

At SELC, we believe in the power of storytelling to tackle our greatest environmental challenges. And our place-based approach makes us uniquely positioned to share Southern stories, both from places we all know and love, and from the quieter corners of our region. Sharing these lived experiences is part of the solution to our environmental challenges, shedding light on them and reminding us all of the many reasons for hope. That is why I'm thrilled to introduce our new magazine, created to amplify the incomparable power of storytelling.

In this issue you'll hear from people across the South who are making a difference, see the incredible natural wonders tucked away in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, and have the opportunity to join us and our partners in pushing back against the wood pellet biomass industry that is deepening the climate crisis.

As I read through the illuminating stories in our inaugural issue, I am reminded that the stakes for our environmental future have never been higher, and the opportunities have also never been greater. At SELC, we know the path forward and we are already leading the charge.

We know stories can illuminate not only what needs to be done but also what is possible. At this pivotal moment for our environment, for the South, and for all of us, we're committed to bringing you the stories that matter, that might otherwise go untold, and that move us toward a healthy environment for all.

Thank you for sharing these stories and joining us in building a better future, together.

Sincerely,

DJ Gerken
President and Executive Director, SELC

The biomass climate hoax

SHIPPING SOUTHERN FORESTS OVERSEAS TO BURN

By Alexandra Marvar, Photos by Julie Dermansky

It's a sunny April day in Adel, Georgia, the seat of Cook County, about 150 miles south of Macon on I-75.

The last azalea blossoms are dropping to the ground, cedar waxwings are trilling, and neighbors' porch visits cover the usual topics: the weather, who's moving in or out of town, and the latest talk about what kind of pollution might come with the new business setting up down the road.

Community organizer Dr. Treva Gear is even-keeled about the possibility: This is just another hazard in the whack-a-mole game of industrial development she has been trying to win since moving back to her hometown.

An Army veteran and former educator, Gear now works with the forest-focused environmental justice group Dogwood Alliance, helping Adel survive an onslaught of polluting industries that has included everything from a propane refurbishing plant's noxious chemicals to a crypto-mining operation's helicopter-like noise, day and night. Increasingly, Dogwood Alliance, SELC, and other environmental organizations have been zeroing in on a different threat to Southern neighborhoods, forests, and global climate progress: the wood pellet industry.

Gear and her neighbors formed the grassroots organization Concerned Citizens of Cook County, known as 4C, in 2020 to challenge the first proposed biomass production facility in Adel. The operation turns trees into wood pellets, which are then burned as an energy source. Residents were wary of the project and soon got



busy petitioning, speaking at city meetings, and submitting comments during the permit process.

But in October of 2021, 4C received bludgeoning news: Not only had the Georgia Environmental Protection Division granted the permits they were challenging to a business calling itself Renewable Biomass Group; a second venture, Spectrum Energy USA, was applying for an air permit for their own pellet plant just a few miles away.

"We were flabbergasted," Gear recalls. "A second wood pellet plant? Two in one city?"

Her reaction is in no small part because Gear knows the public health implications of biomass: Wood pellet processing generates dust that travels to nearby homes, carrying hazardous pollutants that can worsen respiratory and other health issues.

Spectrum plans to start operations on two neighboring polluted properties, including the site of a now defunct sawmill called Del-Cook. Once a big employer in town, Del-Cook looms large in the memory of Adel's Black and Latino communities. Census data shows the population surrounding the site is 77 percent people of color and they live within one mile of the property, which is so riddled with contaminants, it was designated a toxic brownfield. Cancer has already taken a staggering toll on the neighborhood.

The Spectrum facility intended for this site will be more than twice the size of Renewable Biomass Group's nearby plant. In fact, with a proposed capacity of 1.2 million metric tons of forest-derived biomass fuel per year, it would be one of the largest wood pellet plants in the world. According to climate experts, this isn't just bad news for Adel.

Greenwashing biomass's dirty reality

The biomass industry is growing fast because, even though it relies on clear-cutting forests, it calls itself renewable. According to Nicole Rycroft, executive director of the environmental nonprofit Canopy, it's anything but. Our planet is grappling with two ecological crises: unprecedented biodiversity loss and climate change. Biomass, she says, is fueling both. A mature forest can absorb 40 times more carbon than saplings, and there's a massive release of carbon when a forest is cut down, she explains. "It will take decades, if not hundreds of years, for that original loss of carbon to be back to neutral."

Yet, SELC Senior Attorney Heather Hillaker says, biomass producers are incentivized to push the "renewables" myth, because, in the European Union and the U.K., their customers — wood-pellet-fueled

electric utilities — receive large subsidies intended for green energy, despite the fact that biomass fuel generates more carbon emissions than coal, according to data compiled by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Boosted by these subsidies, the industry has seen virtually unchecked growth, especially in the South.

Currently, there are 28 large-scale pellet plants across the region, most of which opened only in the past decade. Today, they ship more than 9 million metric tons of trees and other types of biomass from Southern forests overseas annually. By SELC's count, another 10 plants are in the works.

"In the South, we have mostly private land, and there are not a lot of regulations on what a landowner can do," Hillaker explained. "There's a big incentive for this industry to have access to this 'wood basket' in close proximity to ports."

The clustering of these plants amplifies their impact, Hillaker says. And considering this North American coastal plain is a global biodiversity hotspot, ecologists are concerned about sweeping impacts. Looking at birds alone, there has been a dramatic decline in



Dr. Treva Gear grew up in Adel, Georgia, and now dedicates her time to pushing back against the concentration of dirty industries, like this propane recycling business, setting up in her hometown's Black neighborhoods.

species found where biomass logging dominates. The expansion of biomass in the U.S. is also a threat to public health. While its toxic byproducts are regulated, Environmental Integrity Project data shows that, in 2017, one in three wood pellet plants violated permitted limits. Even at legal limits, communities near these facilities have reported it necessary to wear masks outdoors.

State-level discrimination, federal action

As of 2018, every single wood pellet mill in North and South Carolina was in a low-income community of color. Across the South, these same neighborhoods were more than 50 percent more likely than affluent ones to become home to a wood pellet plant.

Dr. Gear chalks the pattern of wood pellet plants opening specifically in Black and Latino neighborhoods up to systematic oppression.

“These issues are not new,” Gear says. They’ve gone on for so long, she says, that the presence of polluters in these communities becomes normalized — and citizens aren’t necessarily aware of their rights to things like clean air or safe water.

Dr. Sacoby Wilson, an environmental health scientist, environmental justice expert, and professor at the

“We’re trying to live as long as we can, but those jobs they’re bringing in, it’s dangerous to our health.”



University of Maryland, says this is true in Adel, just as it’s true throughout the South.

“You have to look at Black Adel versus white Adel: The heavily industrialized area is primarily Black. The rest of the Adel is white,” Wilson says. “You can see a stark racial divide in the distribution of the industrial hazards, from a snapshot perspective and over time. That is not by accident. That is planned.”

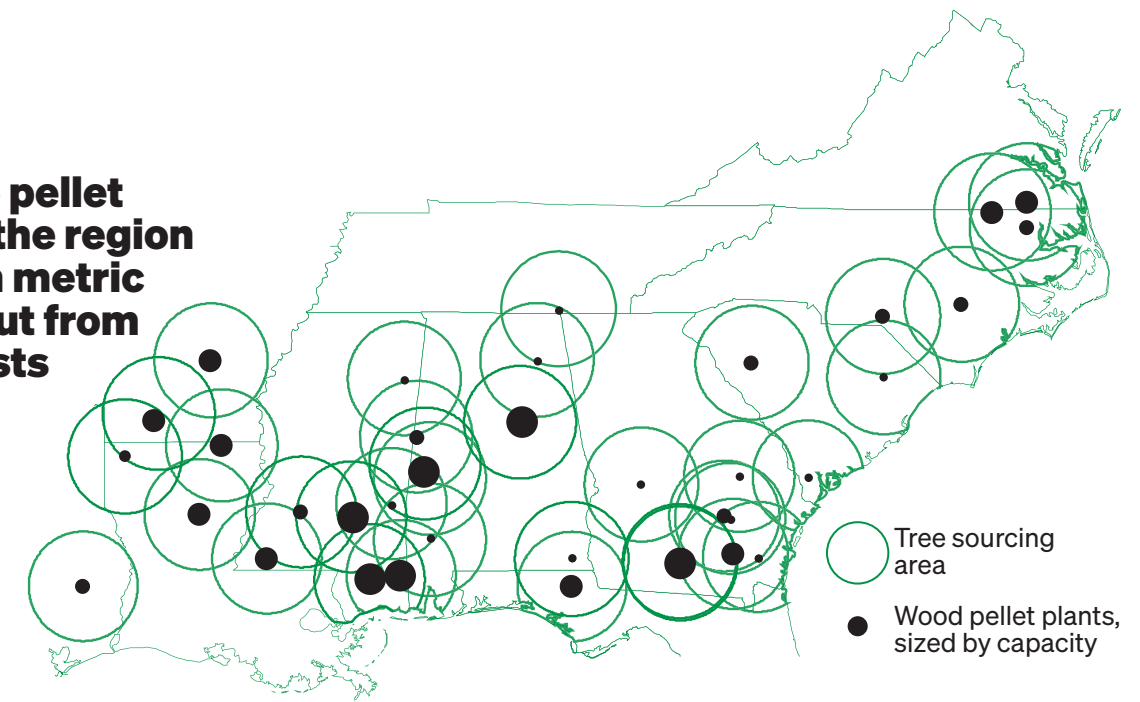
In Adel, SELC is working with community members to break this pattern. Attorneys worked with 4C to negotiate a settlement with Spectrum around their air pollution permit. In an industry first, Spectrum agreed to purchase air monitors and provide pollution data to the community monthly, rather than annually. They also committed to cutting noise and traffic and providing air filters to local churches, daycare centers, and homes close to the facility. If they exceed pollution limits, they agreed to pay a hefty fine into a community fund.

“This facility is going to be in their backyard and, without this legal intervention, they may not have had a say,” says Senior Attorney Jennifer Whitfield, who led the negotiations.

SELC’s work on the settlement also made clear that Georgia officials are shirking their responsibility under



28 large-scale pellet plants across the region ship 9+ million metric tons of trees cut from Southern forests each year.



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by “failing to take into account specific marginalized communities, and their past and present exposures to environmental burdens,” Whitfield says. SELC filed a complaint with the EPA about this overlooked obligation, which is still pending.

Adel resident Alicia Pinkney has four young grandchildren growing up not far from the biomass plant site in this city of 5,500. One day, they might apply for one of the jobs promised by the developers. But Pinkney, who is Black, is wary.

“We’re trying to live as long as we can, but those jobs they’re bringing in, it’s dangerous to our health,” Pinkney says, standing outside her trailer while the kids romp and play behind her. “I worry about their future here.”

Toward a future of carbon reduction

This is a pivotal moment for the biomass industry. According to Rycroft, Europe is beginning to realize that their biomass policy is “completely unsustainable.” Yet, Hillaker says, the U.S. may be at the brink of another explosion of industry growth. When President Biden signed historic climate legislation into law last summer, the White House statement called the Inflation Reduction Act “the most significant action Congress has taken on clean energy and climate change in the nation’s history.”

“The priority really needs to be on true renewables, solar, wind, geothermal,” Rycroft says. “Equating tree

plantations to a ‘renewable’ source — it’s not based on any of the credible science to date.”

SELC has been working for years to deepen the science around biomass’s impacts, from soil to smokestack, and to make that information accessible.

In the coming year, the U.S. government will be making key decisions about how to dole out funding to support climate action.

“Biomass is not a genuine solution to climate change, and we shouldn’t make the same mistakes that the E.U. made in categorizing it as ‘renewable’ and ‘carbon neutral,’” Hillaker says.

While it’s too late to stop the wood pellet industry from putting down roots in Adel, the settlement with Spectrum provides the community with infrastructure for monitoring and accountability.

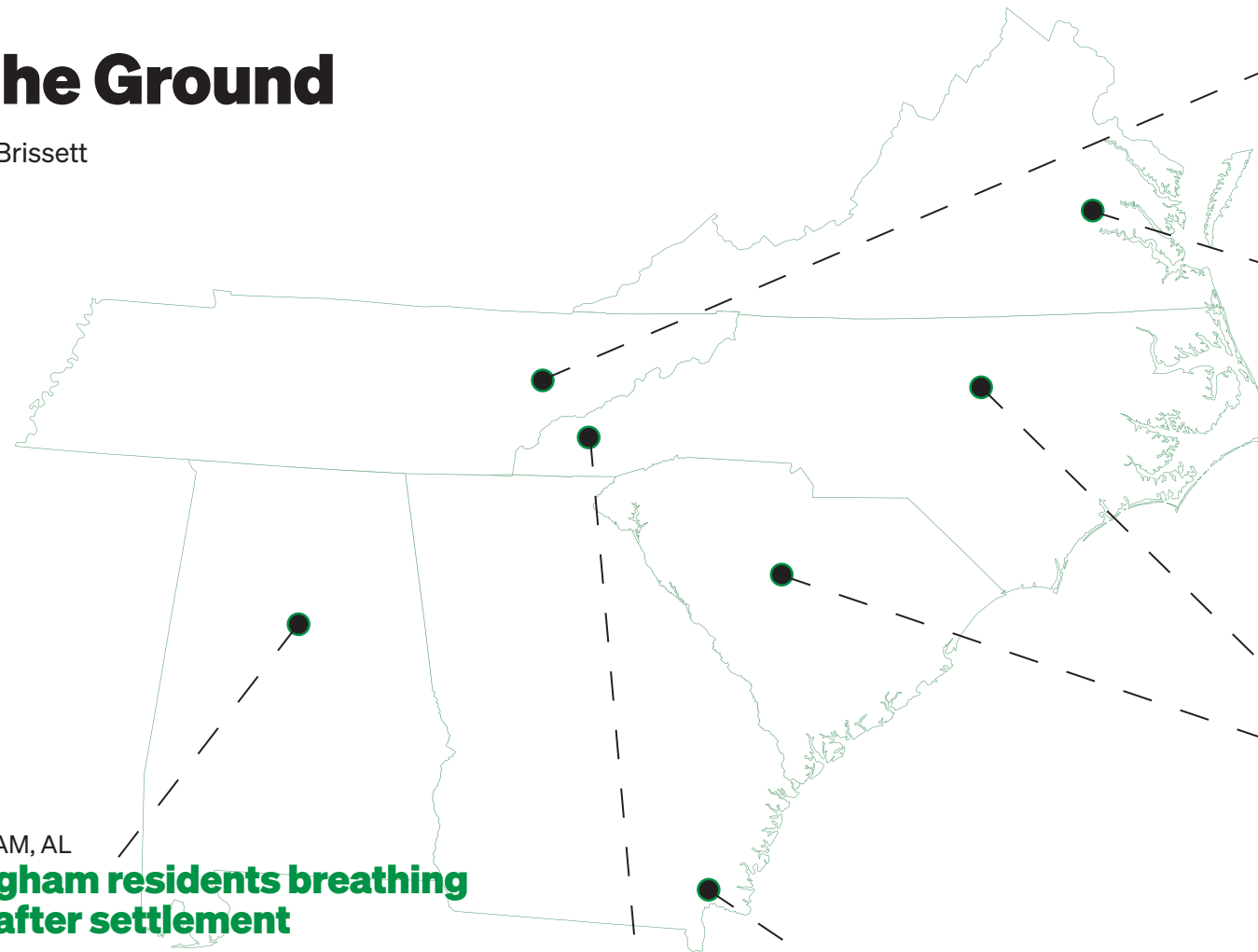
And according to Gear, other communities can get ahead of biomass, if they stay vigilant: “We’re always going to have to keep our eyes open for the next plant,” she says. “Our experience is a call to action for other communities.” ■

Tell federal officials biomass is not a clean energy source. Scan to speak up.



On the Ground

By Wilson Brissett



BIRMINGHAM, AL
Birmingham residents breathing easier after settlement



It was no secret the Bluestone Coke facility was pumping toxic pollution into the air around their North Birmingham site, which is ringed by Black neighborhoods and a stone's throw from a school. Neighbors, officials, SELC attorneys, and our local partners, including the Greater-Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution: GASP, all knew, but violations continued despite the outcries. Years of work finally led to a historic settlement, shutting down the smokestacks and securing the largest fine in county history, nearly \$1 million. Half of the funds will help create green spaces and environmental projects in nearby neighborhoods, giving local community members a say in how the funds will be used.

KNOXVILLE, TN
Opposing TVA plans for a fossil fuel binge

Against the backdrop of ambitious national climate goals, the Tennessee Valley Authority is planning one of the country's largest methane gas buildouts. As the biggest public utility in the U.S., TVA can derail the Biden administration's effort to decarbonize the power sector by 2035. Instead of leaning into solar, efficiency, and storage, this federal utility is proposing multiple investments in fossil-fueled projects. We're stepping in to challenge two large projects that would replace coal-fired plants at the Cumberland and Kingston facilities with gas.

RICHMOND, VA
Virginia leads the way on clean energy

Virginia's cost-effective clean energy revolution got another big boost as lawmakers defeated multiple attacks this legislative session on historic laws supporting clean cars and clean power. SELC put in long hours, and won, defeating seven bills that would have repealed Virginia's Clean Car standards. While keeping Virginia on track to cut tailpipe pollution, we also defended against a coordinated effort to take the state out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. The program is already driving down air pollution and bringing in millions of dollars to help Virginians deal with increased flooding. And, in a win for utility customers, a successful bill we championed restored regulators' ability to lower electricity rates when utilities overcharge users.



RALEIGH, NC, AND COLUMBIA, SC
Homebuyers win as Carolinas adopt commonsense flood disclosure rules

Amazingly, in coastal states like North and South Carolina, there is often little to no information about flood history shared between seller and buyer during a home sale. This practice unfairly leaves buyers in the dark and leaves states unprepared for the accelerating impacts of climate change on our coasts. Thanks to SELC and our partners, real estate commissions in North Carolina and South Carolina will require more comprehensive flooding disclosures for every home that goes on the market, starting this summer. These changes give homebuyers more information and power, and they promote better decision-making along our Southern coasts.



BRYSON CITY, NC
Dam removal creates a generational opportunity for justice

For nearly 100 years, North Carolina's Ela Dam has cut off the Oconaluftee River watershed from downstream areas. The dam disrupts waterways that flow through the home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and destroys habitat for rare and threatened species, including the sicklefin redhorse. This suckerfish, known as the salmon of the South, is an important part of Cherokee culture. SELC is working with a coalition led by the Eastern Band to seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to remove the dam, improve habitat for rare species, and strengthen the connection between the Eastern Band and their ancestral lands.



FOLKSTON, GA
Standing up for the Okefenokee Swamp

Georgia's beloved Okefenokee Swamp—an unparalleled natural wonder and the largest blackwater swamp on the continent—is under threat from a plan to open an 8,000-acre titanium mine next door. This irresponsible project would threaten the flow and levels of water in the swamp and hurt the area's economy, not to mention habitat for many unique plants and animals. As part of a broad coalition, SELC helped coordinate robust expert responses to state regulators evaluating the plan and rallied more than 200,000 people to join our calls to reject the proposed mine. While we await the next state action, we are also in federal court challenging the decision that led to the loss of Clean Water Act protections from almost 600 acres of wetlands next to the Okefenokee, leaving them vulnerable to mining and other development.

SEEING THE SOUTH

The Mobile-Tensaw Delta

Photos by Neil Jernigan

As the most biodiverse state east of the Mississippi River, Alabama ranks first in species number for crayfish, freshwater turtles, snails, and mussels, and carnivorous plants such as the pitcher plant. The Mobile-Tensaw Delta bolsters this reputation with a huge variety of plant and animal life, including green tree frogs, great blue herons, alligators, cypress trees, painted buntings, and black-bellied whistling ducks, earning it the nickname America's Amazon.







But the delta is also home to Alabama Power's Plant Barry, which stores more than 20 million tons of toxic coal ash on the banks of the Mobile River in a low-lying floodplain. SELC and Mobile Baykeeper are challenging the company's plans to permanently leave this waste in place, a reckless proposal that keeps this unparalleled landscape, wildlife, waterways, and surrounding communities at risk.



North Carolina's hog problem

By Samantha Baars, Photos by Cornell Watson

In eastern North Carolina, where pigs outnumber people by a ratio of 30-to-1, it's not uncommon for folks living near the region's many hog operations to keep candles burning to help them tolerate the odor.

"I'm about three miles away from the Smithfield processing plant and some days I can smell the stench all the way at my house," says Sampson County resident Sherri White-Williamson. "And there are people who live within 100 yards."

"The state has a responsibility to protect people from pollution. We have the solutions, we need the industry to use them."

Layered on top of these unpleasant smells are air and water pollution from various components of the commercial hog industry that proliferates across this rural part of North Carolina, known for its agricultural heritage and rich farmland.

One product of that heritage is today's landscape, which is often interrupted by warehouse-size holding pens alongside facilities that turn hog waste into energy. The industry calls this greenwashed fuel biogas, and claims it is good for the environment. Yet these same sites store and spray billions of gallons of hog feces and urine onto nearby fields, polluting groundwater and waterways. The noxious spray doesn't respect property lines, often landing on nearby homes and cars.

SELC is representing residents of Sampson and Duplin counties like White-Williamson who are pushing for



protections from an industry that continually dumps its pollution on local Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities, and in areas where household income is below the state average.

Progress through partnership

White-Williamson is part of a group of Vermont Law School alumni who started the Environmental Justice Community Action Network, or EJCAN, in 2020 to

inform, educate, and empower communities to confront environmental injustice. Cofounding EJCAN brought her back to Sampson County, where she's from, and which holds the title of second-highest hog-producing county in the nation.

Her time away from home included nearly 20 years in D.C. and a stint at the EPA before returning to her hometown in Clinton with a new perspective on how the hog industry treats its neighbors.

White-Williamson says her work at EPA afforded her the "opportunity to see the breadth and depth of environmental injustices across the country." It also made clear that most people don't think of the rural South when considering environmental inequities: "They think of smokestacks in the city."

So White-Williamson has made it her mission to educate others on rural environmental justice issues, with a priority on stopping pollution from hog operations.

"There has not been a lot of information provided to the community," she adds.

This lack of transparency becomes more dangerous as the climate continues to change. The low-lying coastal plain where these operations establish is experiencing record flooding and other impacts from natural disasters. Neighbors worry, are the hog operations going to be prepared for floods? What happens when waste seeps into local creeks? What happens when there's an overflow?

These unanswered questions and lack of public transparency, combined with the continued efforts to cut back oversight instead of stepping it up, reinforce ongoing patterns of environmental injustice throughout the South.

Holding polluters accountable

"The state has a responsibility under the law to protect people from pollution," says SELC Senior Attorney Blakely Hildebrand. "Current plans for biogas are poised to double down on the public health and environmental harms that industrial animal operations have caused for decades."

Hildebrand leads SELC in addressing pollution from industrial hog operations, an issue SELC has worked on since the 1990s. Most recently, in summer 2022, on behalf of EJCAN and Cape Fear River Watch, SELC challenged a one-size-fits-all permit issued by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. The permit would give hog operations carte blanche to use giant pits of untreated hog feces and urine to produce methane biogas, while continuing to spray the harmful waste on surrounding fields with minimal oversight.

Cleaner technologies for managing billions of gallons of hog



Co-founder Sherri White-Williamson at the EJCAN office.

waste were developed in North Carolina and address many of these concerns but they have not been widely adopted. SELC and our partners are asking the court to require state officials to comply with a law requiring cleaner technology to manage hog waste.

"There are few environmental justice issues in our region that are as significant and as well studied," says Hildebrand. "We have the solutions, we need the industry to use them." ■



Mt. Zion AME Zion Church in Clinton, North Carolina, can't use their well water since it was contaminated by hog waste sprayed on the field next door.

CHANGEMAKER

Alys Campaigne

SELC's Climate Initiative Leader on common ground and climate progress

By Samantha Baars



What makes the South uniquely positioned to tackle climate change and environmental justice issues?

I grew up riding the school bus from Maryland to Pennsylvania across the Mason-Dixon line every day and was fascinated by the geography of the North-South divide. Deep scars from the Civil War remain in the South in the form of persistent structural, racial, and economic inequities. But there is also a legacy of resistance, movement building, innovation, beauty, and large swaths of protected land and forests. We have an opportunity, and obligation, to use our skills to build and implement inclusive climate solutions.

I'm particularly drawn to the rural and working landscape because of my childhood on a farm, and I've always thought we should engage and communicate in a more connective way to find solutions that work for all of us. I enjoy the challenge of bridging cultural divides, and we need an all-hands-on-deck spirit to succeed. I also love to remind those who don't live in the South that, while we have a unique set of barriers to equitable change here, there's a lot of really exciting and inspiring change-making happening on the ground.

What can we expect from SELC's new Climate Initiative?

Climate change is the challenge of our time, and we at SELC have the skills to deliver results. We are already working throughout our region to demonstrate what it looks like to decarbonize our energy and transportation systems and make way for renewables and efficiency improvements to lower people's utility bills and minimize the climate risk.

We're not just working on the technological fix, we're also identifying and implementing land use planning and management practices to store water and carbon, and protect our land, wildlife, and our communities. It has to be a top-down and a bottom-up approach.

The South plays an outsized role in contributing to climate change and is already seeing severe consequences. We know we can't tackle the defining environmental challenge of our time without starting in our region.

That's why SELC is thrilled to have our new Climate Initiative Leader, Alys Campaigne, joining the organization at this pivotal moment for us and the planet.

Campaigne, who has a long history of identifying and honing opportunities to drive climate solutions through congressional, nonprofit, and strategist roles, will serve from SELC's Charleston office as our principal spokesperson on climate change and climate policy.

Why is Charleston a great home base for SELC's climate work?

We're ground zero in terms of vulnerability and exposure if we don't get it right, and we're already seeing the effects of worsened flooding from extreme weather and sea level rise firsthand. We have tremendous coastal assets, like undisturbed acres of wetlands and marsh, and the potential — if not always the will — to innovate ways we can live with water.



Left and above: Campaigne's childhood on her family's farm still inspires her work today.

Right: Campaigne traveled to Kyoto, Japan, for the historic 1997 climate negotiations with U.S. officials, including Congressmen Henry Waxman and George Miller.



We are also helping unleash the ability of individuals and communities to roll up their sleeves to help define what works best and be part of the solution because pretty much everything touches climate — the way we grow our food, where we live, how we get around — all of it.

It can either be overwhelming or empowering. Having climate touch all those places means there's somewhere for everyone to jump on board and make the change that we need. We're acting fast and with urgency while making space for local innovation.

How will SELC help implement directives from the Inflation Reduction Act, the most ambitious climate legislation ever passed in our country's history?

Investments in things like energy, roads, and developments lock in decades of climate consequences, and right now we have the opportunity of a lifetime to leverage leadership and momentum at the federal level. The biggest manifestations of that are the IIJA and the IRA — the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

SELC is well equipped to make sure this generational investment is put to good use in our states. We know the forums where decisions are made. We have

the trust of decision makers and other stakeholders. We have the technical understanding of what is happening in our states, and we're dedicated to the task of getting the best outcome possible. Our goal is to make sure those dollars are put to work on the ground in inclusive and transformational ways that demonstrate the power of public investments in climate solutions.

What do you like to do when you're not at work?

I love to hike, bike, and go critter-spotting. I love music in almost all forms, so you'll catch me regularly at local concerts, or I'll travel for a good show now and again.

What's your favorite Southern food?

It's a toss-up between boiled peanuts or any kind of good steamed Southern greens. ■

SELC'S Climate Initiative drives climate solutions. Scan to learn more.



Southern wetlands: A key climate solution

By Jennie Daley, Photos by Stephanie Gross

When streets and yards are underwater on sunny days, there's no denying flooding presents serious problems along our coast. What's murkier, however, is how decision-makers will handle these problems, caused by rising seas and stronger storms and made worse by outdated development practices.

As our coast becomes wetter, it's also welcoming more and more residents, drawn to life by the water. This growth coincides with climate change, and wetlands are caught in the crosshairs—heralded for their ability to hold floodwaters, yet seen as obstacles when development interests seek new land near desirable waterfronts. Already we're losing wetlands at an alarming rate: The contiguous United States loses more than 80,000 acres of coastal wetlands every year, and 4 out of 5 of those acres are in the Southeast.

"It makes you ask, are we doing what is needed to address climate change on our coast?" said Chris DeScherer, Director of SELC's South Carolina Office. "Or are we going to make an already difficult situation worse?"

Charleston's Cainhoy conundrum

Putting these questions into focus are two projects unfolding in Charleston. Downtown, rising seas and increased flooding have pushed the city to seek answers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Their solution: an 8-mile seawall costing more than \$1 billion surrounding the peninsula.

At the same time, officials are greenlighting a 9,000-acre development the size of a small city on a low-lying and flood-prone peninsula along the tidal Wando River. The massive Cainhoy project would forever change one of Charleston's last undisturbed natural spaces, destroying flood-storing wetlands in the process.

Bordering the Francis Marion National Forest and home to species like the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, in many ways Cainhoy is one of the most ecologically important tracts of undeveloped land remaining on the South Carolina coast.

Covering nearly half the property, Cainhoy's wetlands act like a sponge, absorbing and holding waters along the peninsula's edge. The land is teeming with wildlife and its surrounding waters host nature tourists in kayaks peering through the salt marsh beside small-scale fishers looking for crabs.

This is where developers are proposing to put thousands of homes, almost half of them in the floodplain, where floodwaters already show up during storms.

Better options

We knew there had to be a better plan for Cainhoy. To identify other options, SELC and our partners at the Coastal Conservation League engaged land-planning experts to review the proposal. Their findings show that it's possible to build the same number of homes on higher ground out of harm's way—while cutting the number of impacted wetlands from hundreds of acres to a dozen.

"You're talking about putting a small city in a floodplain a few feet above sea level."

— CHRIS DESCHERER
DIRECTOR, SELC SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE



SELC's Chris DeScherer and Catherine Wannamaker explore the Cainhoy Peninsula.



When we showed those alternatives to the Corps during the permitting process, the Corps gave them little consideration.

"Even the Corps itself admits that there are smarter, more responsible alternatives," said Senior Attorney Catherine Wannamaker, who is litigating our case. "Approving a huge new development in such a vulnerable area is completely at odds with ongoing efforts to protect Charleston from the flooding and storm surge that happens regularly now."

What's next

The dilemma in Charleston mirrors what many other cities are facing as climate change increasingly impacts our ways of life. But when cities choose to fill wetlands, they make flooding more likely by removing an existing solution already absorbing rising waters.

"As coastal communities face choices about how to adapt to a changing climate, the Cainhoy proposal is a reminder that nature provides us an obvious solution," said DeScherer. "It's sitting right outside our door, if we can just recognize it." ■

**Come with us to Cainhoy.
Scan to watch the video.**



MY SOUTH: HEATHER MCTEER TONEY

Bush Mountain

Atlanta, Georgia



“The West Atlanta Watershed Alliance is the conservator of a space that used to be the old Black baseball league’s practice facility. It’s in the middle of Atlanta — not far from the interstate — and off the side of it, you can actually walk down the side of a mountain. It’s steep, and as you begin to walk down there’s a distinct temperature change. The sound changes, too, and you can hear nature sounds instead of trucks. Markers show you where the old river went down through Atlanta, and there are trees still standing from when the city was burned during the Civil War. This was a pathway and hiding space that the Indigenous and Black communities used to stay safe, and it still feels like a really protected, sacred place.”



Heather McTeer Toney is an accomplished environmental advocate, politician, and attorney originally from Greenville, Mississippi, who now serves as the executive director of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Beyond Petrochemicals Campaign.

**Solutions
start in the
South.**



**Be a part of the solution
and support this work.**
southernenvironment.org/give

