FROM THIS 25 TO THE NEXT 25 YEARS OF
FORESTs, CLIMATE, & JUSTICE.
RIGHT PLACE. RIGHT TIME.
25th Anniversary Report
DOGWOOD ALLIANCE ADVANCES ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE ACTION BY MOBILIZING DIVERSE VOICES TO PROTECT SOUTHERN FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES FROM INDUSTRIAL LOGGING.

CHIEF PARR OF THE PEE DEE INDIAN TRIBE
FORESTS.

OUR SOUTHERN FORESTS ARE SOME OF THE MOST BIODIVERSE IN THE WORLD.

They provide tourism, recreation, clean air, clean water, regional climate regulation, and protection from extreme weather events. Yet, industrial logging and wood production are destroying and degrading our Southern forests and communities. Forest protection, restoration, and expansion must become a top priority in the US.

25 YEARS
SOLUTIONS FROM THE START... AND STILL GROWING STRONG.

2000-2013
Foundational Years

Dogwood founded by grassroots organizations and community groups to protect Southern forests from the expansion of chip mills supplying wood for increased US paper production.

OUR IMPACT:

• Federal government and states (TN, VA, NC, and MO) conduct comprehensive studies of the economic and environmental impacts of chip mills and industrial logging.
• State policy enacted that stopped the expansion of chip mills in NC and MO.
• Dogwood receives EPA award for its grassroots efforts to educate the public.

VICTORIES:

• Office Supply giants Staples, Office Depot, and others adopted the first-ever corporate environmental paper purchasing policies aimed at protecting forests.
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• The Paper Campaign catalyzes a national and regional movement.

2013-
Our Forests Aren’t Fuel
Clearcutting of Southern US forests for wood pellet biomass to fuel European power stations in Europe under the guise of “renewable” climate-friendly energy began to ramp up in 2014. In response, we launched the Our Forests Aren’t Fuel Campaign with NRDC and European partners.

VICTORIES:

• Wall Street journal covers the launch of the Our Forests Aren’t Fuel Campaign.
• Outstanding investigative and community-organized media coverage exposing the clearcutting of mature Southern wetland forests for wood pellet fuel, degrading industry and EU government claims.
• Outreach to frontline communities sparks a region-wide movement exposing the health and environmental justice impacts of the wood pellet industry.
• Proposed wood pellet mill in South Carolina mapped by local citizens.
• NC DEQ requires Enviva to install pollution control equipment at wood pellet mills, costing the company millions of dollars.
• Outreach to frontline communities leads to sustained, high-profile international news coverage exposing the clearcutting of mature Southern wetland forests.
• Our Forests Aren’t Fuel Corporation engages 300 organizations across 13 states in the South, bringing a message of 100% clean energy, forest and environmental justice to frontline communities.
• Forests and Frontline Communities catalyzes a national and regional movement.

VICTORIES:

• Release of report with IPCC scientist Dr. William Moomaw sparks a movement of scientists pressuring Congress to protect forests from being used as a carbon sink.
• Stand4Forests Platform elevates protecting forests from being clearcutted as a national priority among environmental and conservation organizations.
• Justice is Always a Social Movement convenes Southern US communities affected by forests, climate, and justice in the South, bringing a message of 100% clean energy, forest protection and environmental justice to frontline communities.

2017-
Forests and Frontline Communities
Dogwood’s leadership at the intersection of forests, climate and justice in the Southern US catalyzes a national and regional movement.

VICTORIES:

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2021-

Dogwood’s leadership at the intersection of forests, climate and justice in the Southern US catalyzes a national and regional movement.

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• Stand4Forests Platform elevates protecting forests from being clearcutted as a national priority among environmental and conservation organizations.
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JUSTICE.

COMMUNITIES AT THE FRONTLINES OF FOREST DESTRUCTION ARE OFTEN THOSE ALREADY EXPERIENCING OPPRESSION.

Communities of color, Indigenous communities, low-income, and rural populations disproportionately bear the impacts of climate change as well as the health, economic, and social costs associated with industrial practices. It is critical that impacted communities are leading the forest protection movement.

CLIMATE.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE NUMBER ONE THREAT FACING THE WORLD TODAY.

To protect our communities and our future, we need to address the problem before it is too late. Scientists confirm, we must reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere immediately. We cannot solve the climate crisis without our forests.

2017-
Forests and Frontline Communities
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• Justice is Always a Social Movement convenes Southern US communities affected by forests, climate, and justice in the South, bringing a message of 100% clean energy, forest protection and environmental justice to frontline communities.
Dogwood Alliance’s reach has grown beyond the Southern US to impact global industries and policies. Since 2013, the Alliance has expanded its efforts to bring awareness to the climate impacts of the biomass industry and to pressure policy makers to support reform. In 2020, the Alliance joined with grassroots partners and organizations through power building, education, and resource sharing. We have the solutions for our forests, and we are seizing the opportunity over the next four years to change the dominant thinking about forests and address long-standing inequities related to US forest protection. This is not enough. We must persist in holding policymakers and industries accountable. On February 4, 2021, residents from across the country joined together to demand action in front of the White House. 

We have the solutions for our forests, and we are going to get them in front of this administration by working together. For decades, forest policy in the US has served to ensure economic returns for large corporations and private landowners, the expense of healthy forests, and communities. The forestry industry has manipulated language use and understanding of “forests,” and advocating for younger trees as having more climate benefit than old growth. This reflects a growing recognition among industry experts and the public that burning trees for electricity and to put pressure on policy makers to support reform will not prevent catastrophic climate change. The solutions are to end subsidies for burning trees for power stations, and since 2016, we have played the vital role of providing strategy support and resources to Dutch power stations, and since 2016, we have played the vital role of providing strategy support and resources to Dutch power stations.

We are seizing this moment to provide a collective space to exposed the UK’s wasteful subsidies for companies that burn trees for electricity and to put pressure on policy makers to support reform. In 2020, 98% of Dutch citizens polled favor ending subsidies for biomass. In February 2021, the Netherlands declared there would be no new subsidies for woody biomass without a phase-out plan and has created pressure for utilities to develop those plans before the deadline for new subsidies. In the fall of 2020, increased scrutiny pushed Drax, the world’s largest wood pellet producer, to off the S&P’s Clean Energy Index. This reflects a growing recognition among industry experts and the public that biomass is no better for the climate than burning coal.
Perhaps the most important thing is that over the last decade or so people from every corner have come together to build a vast movement. You can see it changing our politics in real time.

—Bill McKibben, Author, Educator, Environmentalist

WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE [OF] THIS HUGELY IMPORTANT CULTURAL RECKONING with systemic racism and how we've treated black and brown immigrants, underprivileged, poor people. I think that it makes complete sense to take that one degree further. It's time to recognize that we have treated the south lands with the same systemic oppression."

—Janisse Ray, Award-Winning Author

I think when you're calling for justice, there's no wrong place, wrong time, for one thing. But I also think that RIGHT NOW, SEEMS LIKE A MOMENT OF GALVANIZATION.

—Mary Annalise Heglar, Climate Justice Leader

RIGHT NOW, SEEMS LIKE A MOMENT OF GALVANIZATION.

25 years strong, Dogwood Alliance joins together with communities to protect forests, challenge climate change, and fight for justice.
The coming decade will be one of the most critical in human history. By 2030, we as a species will have turned decisively away from extractive industries, mismanagement of our natural world, and the burning of fossil fuels. Dogwood Alliance will play a central role in making this happen.

From our grassroots forest protection work in the 90s that led to the first-ever multi-agency federal study of Southern forests, through our early victories holding Staples, KFC, Georgia-Pacific, International Paper, and other corporate giants accountable for their impacts on Southern forests, to rebranding biomass as a false climate solution, time and again we have proven that people-power, backed by science, hard evidence, and compelling story-telling that highlights the damage industrial logging does to forests and communities works.

This work does not just matter because of what we have already achieved. It matters because it provides important lessons and a strong foundation for how we move forward together in the years to come. Whether it’s building community-level resistance, developing viable economic alternatives, or centering the skills, stories, and needs of frontline communities, we have consistently helped push the movement itself to be better and to do more.

Now, we need to pick up the pace once again.

As the world grapples with the twin weights of the climate crisis and systemic racism and inequity, a whole new generation of citizens is rising up to demand more. Disillusioned with ideas of incremental change and consumer-centric environmentalism, they are identifying the challenge for what it really is— and what Dogwood has always known it to be—a question of power, of politics, and of who gets to decide the fate of this planet we call home.

We are at a time when we are now seeing, at the national level, environmental justice and climate change at the forefront of the national conversation. A time when listening to the climate scientists, addressing racial injustice, and advancing a just green economy are stated national policy priorities. We’re learning to be a partner in a way that allows historically marginalized communities to lead, while we use our resources and expertise to support their vision, work, and victory.

As we celebrate our 25th year, we know Southern US forests will be central to meaningful climate action. We recommmit ourselves to transform not just how those forests are managed, but how all of us—especially those who have traditionally been locked out of decision making—relate to the ecosystems that we rely on for survival. In doing so, our goal is not just to protect Southern forests or Southern communities. Instead, it is to provide a model and a beacon for the entire climate movement.

Just like the trees in the forests we seek to protect, we know we are only a part of a much bigger whole. That’s why we are already helping build the largest, most diverse, and most powerful social movement the world has ever seen.

Now is the time.

This is the place.

We have solutions... and they not only include forests, they also include you.

From Executive Director and Co-Founder, Danna Smith

This is the time.
We must protect nature for fresh water, clean air, storm protection, climate stabilization, and wildlife.

WE MUST END THE FURTHER DESTRUCTION OF OUR FORESTS & COMMUNITIES BY THE WOOD PELLET BIOENERGY INDUSTRY

Over a million acres of US forests have already been cut for biomass. Wood pellet bioenergy threatens our forests, climate, and communities. Forests across the US are being cleared for wood pellets, which are being exported to the EU and UK where they are burned in power stations for electricity. The science confirms that this so-called “green renewable” alternative to fossil fuels releases more carbon at the smokestack than coal.

At a time when we are in a global climate, biodiversity, and racial justice crisis, clearing forests as fuel to generate electricity is taking us in the wrong direction. Not only do power stations that burn biomass emit massive amounts of carbon, fueling the climate crisis, but industrial logging also harms precious forests and the wildlife that depend on them. Equally as important, the processing of trees into wood pellets creates harmful air pollution linked to serious health problems. Wood pellet mills are twice as likely to be sited in environmental justice-designated communities. That’s why Dogwood Alliance and our allies are leading the charge to stop the burning of our forests as fuel.

SUPPORT ANTI-BIOMASS PARTNERS IN EUROPE

We’re making sure the world sees how destructive this industry is. Dogwood’s European partners are using our research, resources, and input from our frontline partners in affected communities to end biomass subsidies in the EU.

FIGHT BIOMASS EFFORTS IN THE SOUTHERN US

Dogwood shares resources and experience in collaboration with impacted communities on the ground. As across the Southeast, our team joins local partners in raising awareness and compelling governments to protect our local forests, and federal levels to end the pollution and forest destruction from existing facilities as well as the expansion of new facilities.

‘I appreciate Dogwood Alliances’ bold stand to stop the wood pellet industry’s decimation of our Southern forests. The damage they do to our woodland environments and the nearby communities is inexcusable. Dogwood Alliance has done an amazing job of educating the public and putting pressure on the right officials to actually move toward stopping this industry from expanding. I plan to continue to be a good steward of my forest land and to continue to support Dogwood Alliance. Congratulations, and thank you for your 25 years of service!’—JANE RITCHIE (LANDOWNER AND DOGWOOD DONOR, NORTH CAROLINA)

CITIZENS VS. BIOMASS

Several residents knew what was coming when the Renewable Biomass Group sought to bring a wood pellet biomass plant to the rural, predominantly Black community of Adel in Cook County, Georgia.

“Our town is an environmental justice community that has been targeted over and over by polluters,” said Dr. Treva Gear Chair of the Concerned Citizens of Cook County (or 4C). “If the proposed wood pellet plant is allowed to be built, it will be the death knell for our small town. The help provided by the Dogwood Alliance has allowed us to bring the fight all the way to the federal level and has given us hope that we can stop it.”

In spite of overwhelming opposition from citizens, rezoning for the plant was approved. Now, Dogwood Alliance and 4C are taking steps and mobilizing support to prevent the biomass wood pellet plant from breaking ground, including filing a formal petition with the EPA and engaging in direct communications with the community’s elected representatives to encourage them to honor what the community is clearly saying “Stop the Plant!”

RIGHT PLACE. RIGHT TIME.
We have to be in the climate conversation, connected through collaboration.

Natural forests are the most efficient climate-stabilizing technology we have. When left standing, natural forests can pull vast amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere, storing it in plants and soil. They’re also the best natural defense against the impacts of extreme weather events, providing flood control and stabilizing fresh water supplies. When cleared, forests release carbon and their ability to help stabilize the climate is compromised.

The South is the world’s largest wood-producing region. Logging rates in the Southeastern United States are four times as great as South American rainforests. The large-scale industrial logging of forests in the US poses one of the largest threats to climate progress.

While forests are finally getting on the national climate policy radar, government and industry often promote increased logging as a climate solution in direct conflict with top scientists and environmental justice communities. We cannot solve the climate, biodiversity, or environmental justice crises without a major scale-up in forest protection and restoration. That’s why we are working with groups at the federal, state, and local levels to create policy changes that will safeguard our forests for the future and to transition the forest economy away from forest destruction and towards equity and protection.

CHANGE COMES FROM COMMUNITY ACTION

A long history of land exploitation, pollution, and injustice in the Southern US has left a legacy of economic inequity. The degradation of forests, air, water and rural communities has had disproportionate impacts on low-wealth communities of color which are being hit hardest by the effects of climate change.

The need to address climate change, green jobs, and justice has now been recognized as a national priority. It’s time to elevate a new vision for the South, a vision grounded in equity and one that accelerates the protection of forests, air, and water.

That’s why Dogwood Alliance joined climate and justice leaders to create the Southern Communities for a Green New Deal (SC4GND), a new policy platform that builds on the Green New Deal to center and serve low-income communities and communities of color on the frontlines of the climate crisis in the South. Wood production and industrial logging topped the list of climate justice priorities in the SC4GND platform endorsed by more than 300 organizations.

“From its inception, Dogwood Alliance has worked in local communities to affect positive change. Dogwood is very effective in working at the intersection of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and environmental justice, which is critical to long-term success.” —PHILIP BLUMENTHAL (BLUMENTHAL FOUNDATION)

Our lives, our communities are at risk

NATURAL FORESTS

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Impacted communities lead the forest protection movement.

The Yadkin-Pee Dee River has been the site of human civilization for over twelve thousand years as home to the Pee Dee Tribe and other indigenous societies. Today, numerous biomass facilities threaten the future of the region’s rich resources which provide drinking water for surrounding communities.

Through a partnership with Dogwood Alliance and the New Alpha Community Development Corporation, the newly opened Pee Dee Indian Tribe Educational Center in McColl, SC is a place where people can learn about the culture, history, and language of the Pee Dee Indian Tribe and see the value of preserving wetland forests. This community-led vision and project by the Pee Dee Indian Tribe is a solution that can be replicated in other communities impacted by climate change and flooding.

This generative economy project has now captured the attention of bipartisan leaders as a strategy for building climate resiliency and developing new engines of economic development tied to land conservation and advancing wetland forest protection.

INDUSTRIAL LOGGING AND THE BIOMASS INDUSTRY ARE ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES

It is critical that impacted communities, who have often been silenced or sidelined by corporations, industries, and government officials, are leading the forest protection movement.

Forest protection is a central component of a just solution to the climate crisis. Communities living at the forefront of forest destruction are often the same ones who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and face oppressive, polluting, and extractive industries. Communities of color, indigenous communities, low-income, and/or rural populations disproportionately bear the impacts of climate change as well as the health, economic, and social costs associated with industrial practices.

Only approximately 10% of the forestland in the Southern US is publicly owned compared to 33% nationwide. Of the 90% in private ownership, less than 1% is owned by people of color.

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

“We hen you look at the history of this country, and when we talk about institutionalized racism, from slavery to the days of segregation to this current time, if you are going to practice institutional racism, if you want to have power and control, then the first thing you have to do is make sure that the people that you are using have no assets.”

—REV. LEO WOODBERRY, DIRECTOR NEW ALPHA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND DOGWOOD ALLIANCE BOARD MEMBER
Statement of Activities for Year Ended December 31, 2020

50% of Support

~60% of our support comes from individual donors.

~70% of our spending goes directly to programs.

Grants: $2,745,360 (40%)

Program Management, Facilitation, Administration: $1,290,773 (20%)

Other: $1,496,023 (25%)
To mitigate the impact of printing and paper usage on forests, we have only done a limited run of 100 copies of our 25th Anniversary Annual Report using 100% post consumer recycled paper. The online version can be found at dogwoodalliance.org/about-us/reports.

To donate, visit dogwoodalliance.org/donate.