

# GROUND ZERO: US Southern Forests

The visual story captured here takes place all across the Southeastern U.S. It tells of the critical need to increase the protection of our standing forests against the threat of industrial logging. It tells of the communities that are impacted by the degradation of our forests, at a rate which is four times that of South America. And it tells of the precious gifts standing forests provide as we face the intense storms, flooding, and sea rise that climate change brings to our doorstep.



1 Wetland forests are worth 15X more standing, for the services they provide, like flood control, than they are for their timber value. 2 Less than 10 percent of wetland forests in the US South are currently protected from logging, agriculture, housing developments, or development into parking lots. 3 Forests give us a place to rest and experience the wonder of the natural world. Memories are not made in plantations. They are made by bird watching, hunting, and playing in forests. 4 Standing forests are one of our best defenses against climate change. They are critical for clean water and clean air. Forests support our food system and protect our communities from natural disasters, like flooding. Unfortunately, our current economic system favors forest destruction over forest protection. 5 Wetland forests act as sponges and filters, absorbing floods and cleaning water for downstream communities. The Southeastern US was designated as a global biodiversity hot-spot for animal and plant species, including Florida nutmeg and the Louisiana black bear. 6 In the US South, more than half of our forests are less than forty years old, and less than 7% of our forests are 80 years or older. 7 Plantations are composed of only one tree species. The "goal" of a plantation is to grow trees and make money. In contrast, the "goal" of a forest is to support and sustain life. 8 Logging accounts for 85% of emissions from U.S. forests, more than five times the emissions from conversion, fire, wind, insects and tree mortality combined. 9 Across the South, the most overburdened communities have been targeted by the wood pellet industry. Several chapters of the NAACP have opposed wood pellet production facilities in their communities, with one chapter stating that a nearby facility was "a clear cut example of environmental racism." 10 In 2017 investigators tracked logging trucks carrying whole hardwood trees and other large-diameter wood from a destroyed bottomland hardwood clearcut back to the Enviva Sampson County, North Carolina facility.

For more information and citations, please visit the digital version of this poster at [www.dogwoodalliance.org](http://www.dogwoodalliance.org)



# NAVIGATING OUR CHANGING CLIMATE ANNUAL REPORT



In 2017, our ecological, political, and social environments changed in profound ways. The Southern United States experienced increased climate change impacts, with hurricanes causing devastating flooding that affected millions of people. The national political climate shifted dramatically when the US announced it was pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement, and federal protections for land, air, and water were rolled back. Our social climate despaired as reports of police brutality against black men dominated the media, and we witnessed horrifying public displays of racial discrimination, violence, and hate speech.

These changes had significant impacts on our work at Dogwood Alliance. To protect the forests and communities of the South from destructive industrial logging in the face of these new upheavals, we needed to adapt and rethink our strategies.

The changes we made in the turbulent months of 2017 have carried well into a volatile 2018, in which the country seems to be ever more divided, and the needs of the people and planet are being sidelined. By changing, adapting, and diversifying, Dogwood is creating a foundation for a stronger movement of forest defenders across the region that has the power to push back threats like the wood pellet biomass industry, advance long-term solutions that protect our forests, and help our most vulnerable communities.

## ROOT FOCUS: Standing Forests & Our Future Climate

The Paris Climate Agreement gave the world a charge: get off fossil fuels while removing carbon dioxide from the air. The best and most cost-effective solution we have to remove carbon from our atmosphere lies in the power of forests. Standing forests mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, especially from hurricanes and floods, for our most vulnerable communities. Unfortunately, logging in the US releases large amounts of carbon while degrading our forests' ability to provide these critical climate benefits.

Despite these facts, forest protection remains on the sidelines of the national climate agenda and renewable energy policy in the US. Dogwood Alliance launched a new Forest & Climate program in 2017 to: (1) elevate the need for forest protection as a priority within the US climate agenda, (2) build and launch an inclusive national platform on forests and climate, #Stand4Forests, and, (3) develop new synergies between the forest protection, climate, and social justice movements.



In 2017, our Executive Director, Danna Smith, with world-renowned climate scientist, Dr. Bill Moomaw of Tufts University, released a groundbreaking report on why forest protection needs to be a national priority. "The Great American Stand: US Forests and the Climate Emergency" calls for policies that recognize the indispensable benefits of standing forests, call out the logging industry's role in carbon emissions, and demonstrate that greater protection and restoration of forests can create economic opportunities for rural landowners and communities. The report was picked up by dozens of media outlets including The Huffington Post and CBS News.

Connecting the dots between forests and climate has also led Dogwood Alliance deeper into the work of climate justice. We were invited to march with frontline communities at the People's Climate March in Washington, DC. This led to our partnership on the Justice First Tour in 2018 with leading climate justice activist, Reverend Leo Woodberry of New Alpha Community Development Corporation. The tour spanned 24 cities in 12 states with 300 organizations participating.

We concluded the year with the F.O.R.E.S.T. Summit (Frontline Organizing, Resistance, and Entrepreneurial Solutions Training) that brought together frontline communities, alternative economic development experts, and leading organizations to envision a new forest economy that moves away from logging and extraction to models that restore rather than harm our communities—important focus work in the years to come.



### RETHINKING VALUES

To address the increasing flood and storm damage, we brought international and national attention to the critical role that Southern forests play as a solution to stopping catastrophic climate change and protecting our communities from extreme weather events. Our research, investigations, and work with partners and communities reached hundreds of millions of people with an urgent message: it's time to value standing forests for their ability to help solve the climate crisis and protect people.

## ROOT FOCUS: Wetland Forests, Our Southern Treasures

A national treasure that spans 14 states and 35 million acres, Southern wetland forests provide critical flood control, a stable supply of clean water, and one of the most biodiverse habitats in the nation. 65% of the nation's wetland forests are found in the Southeastern US, and 90% of these forests are classified as highly vulnerable. They are vital for helping our communities survive the numerous threats of climate change. Protecting wetland forests is an urgent national climate and social justice priority.

With a vision to restore wetland forests by expanding protected areas and improving management, Dogwood Alliance convened a unique collaborative of conservation organizations, landowners, tribes, and government agencies to launch the Wetland Forest Initiative (WFI) on World Wetlands Day in February 2017. We continue to lead this coalition, which now has over 50 organizations involved, including American Rivers and Ducks Unlimited.

2017 focused on research with leading forest economists to discover the economic value of wetland forests across the Southern US. Wetland forests are the "filters" of our natural system, combating pollution and securing fresh drinking water for surrounding and downstream communities. They provide critical protection from dangerous flooding and rank among the most important in the nation for capturing carbon.

If we protected an additional 13 million acres of wetland forests and increase truly sustainable practices, we could increase their ecosystem service value to almost \$550 billion.

In 2018 and beyond, WFI will continue to advance protection and restore these critical, life-giving forests. Through our diverse coalition of conservation, community, landowner, advocacy, and forestry groups, WFI will elevate wetland forest conservation as a regional priority, improving management standards, and increasing access and availability of conservation funding.



**FOREST PROTECTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE SOUTH**  
In 2017, Dogwood Alliance prioritized the work of aligning with the people on the frontlines of forest destruction and grassroots organizations in the South fighting for social and environmental justice. By being good allies, listening, and following the lead of our frontline community partners, we have found strength and inspiration. We are much more powerful when we work together.

We witnessed racial injustice and the deep-rooted inequities across the South as we stood in solidarity with the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County in the fight to stop the world's largest wood pellet manufacturer, Enviva, from building a mill in their community. We saw how community voices were ignored and their health concerns dismissed in favor of corporate interests. Forest protection in the South will not and cannot succeed without addressing rampant social, economic, and political inequities. Bridging the historical divide between forest protection and social justice work in the South is long overdue.

## ROOT FOCUS: Our Forests Aren't Fuel

Since 2013, Dogwood Alliance has been an international leader in the movement to stop the use of forests as fuel. In 2016, 99% of exported US wood pellets, which are often made from whole hardwood trees and shipped overseas to burn, were harvested from the US South. Despite numerous scientific studies warning that burning trees to generate electricity increases carbon emissions (and is dirtier than coal), governments and utilities in the European Union (EU) and the UK are actively replacing coal with wood to fuel power plants.

The biomass industry is bad for our forests, climate and communities, particularly for communities of color along our Southern coastal plain—those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change and extractive economies. Research shows that the industrial biomass facilities manufacturing wood pellets are twice as likely to be placed in counties that have been identified as hotspots for environmental injustice.

Our work has paid off. New data is showing that growth in the biomass industry was 24% lower than experts predicted. We haven't stopped it yet, but we have slowed the industry down. Our focus is to continue to limit and decrease the growing demand from Europe while working with frontline communities across the region to keep new wood pellet mills from being built or expanded.

One such community in the heart of North Carolina became a national battleground on wood pellets. Richmond County, a community that ranks in the bottom 10% on health outcomes and where cancer is the second leading cause of death, is already home to multiple toxic industries. Enviva proposed building a new wood pellet facility here, following the company's pattern of building in Environmental Justice designated communities. We teamed up with Concerned Citizens of Richmond County to raise awareness and fight to stop the facility from being built.

In a few short months, thousands of people called and emailed newly elected NC Governor Roy Cooper, over 100 scientists sent a letter of opposition, health professionals highlighted the damaging impacts, and the NC Legislative Black Caucus held a town hall meeting in Richmond County. The momentum was palpable.

Yet, by the beginning of 2018, in an unprecedented legal move, a North Carolina judge threw out a key legal appeal against the air-quality permit for Enviva's proposed facility in Richmond County, NC. The fight is not over, however. Our team responded by broadening the Richmond County campaign in 2018 to target North Carolina Governor Cooper and his administration to take steps to halt the growth of the biomass industry and give communities the power to protect themselves.

The future of biomass is now in serious question. Across the region, 6 local governments working in conjunction with Dogwood Alliance have passed policies and resolutions that say YES to true renewables and NO to biomass. Member states in the European Union have taken serious steps to limit biomass imports. In 2018, our international work has helped sparked a global coalition, building long-term power to expose the impacts of industrial scale bioenergy and halt industry growth.

### A FUTURE FOR FORESTS AND PEOPLE

When we stand for forests, we stand for community rights: the right to breathe clean air and drink clean water; the right to protect the health of people, and the right to enjoy the benefits that healthy, standing forests provide.



Photo credit: Mac Stone

We will continue to work for equity, knowing that our ability to stand strong and resilient, to navigate the winds of a changing climate towards a better future for everyone is dependent on doing it together. And through it all, we will continue to find our peace of mind and strength in the forest.

To the foundations and individuals who contribute their money, time, ideas, and encouragement, we say thank you. Thank you for believing that together, we can change the way forests are valued across the South and across the US. For those new to Dogwood Alliance, we encourage you to follow our work throughout the upcoming years and get involved as we continue to lead the movement for standing forests.

For the Forests,

Danna Smith

## 2017 FINANCIALS

INCOME	
	OFAF: \$423,372
	WFI: \$66,050
	Paper: \$35,000
	Unrestricted: \$1,465,125
TOTAL INCOME: \$2,017,047	
Total increase over 2016: 25%	
EXPENSES	
	OFAF: \$695,897
	WFI: \$214,568
	Paper: \$97,479
	Management: \$260,440
	Fundraising: \$301,772
TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,570,156	



# OUR FORESTS. OUR STRENGTH.