

2018-19 ANNUAL REPORT OUR FORESTS. OUR STRENGTH.



JUSTICE FIRST

Celeste Byers

# PUTTING JUSTICE FIRST IN FOREST PROTECTION

Letter from Executive Director, Danna Smith



I met Reverend Leo Woodberry, climate justice leader and Executive Director of the New Alpha Community Development Corporation as the wood pellet export industry began its expansion across the South. Over the span of a year, we engaged in deep dialogue as the threats of air pollution, forest destruction, and extreme flooding escalated in rural, low-income communities of color. We reflected together as confederate monuments came tumbling down and reports of police brutality against black men dominated the news. We conversed almost daily about the connections between climate change, pollution, forest destruction, economic disparity, and racial injustice.

Our long talks illuminated a shared vision of a united movement across the South working together in the fight for climate justice. In 2018, Leo asked Dogwood to partner with him on the Justice First Tour to build region-wide solidarity behind a call for 100% clean energy, forest protection, and environmental justice.

From April to August, we traveled across the region, engaging over 300 faith, community, justice and environmental organizations as well as Native American tribes. From gatherings in community centers in Newport News, Virginia to churches in the Gulf South, our primary focus was creating spaces that brought people together to hear the voices of communities on the frontlines of injustice. We gathered in crowds both large and small with a simple message: it's time to unite and put justice first in our efforts to solve the climate crisis.

As we moved from state to state, our collective awareness expanded about the ways in which industrial logging contributes to health and economic disparities, makes climate change worse, and puts low-income communities and people of color at even greater risk. From a community-protected wetland forest in New Orleans, to the management of hundreds of acres of urban old growth forests in west Atlanta, we saw inspiring examples of community-led forest protection projects in Black communities. We found new allies who became partners in the effort to protect Southern forests and stop Enviva and the wood pellet industry.

Following the tour, on the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 2019, we held a Justice First press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. This historic press event was followed by three congressional briefings in the Library of Congress hosted by Congressman McEachin (D-VA). As a direct result, we were consulted during the drafting of the Green New Deal Resolution, which was introduced in the House and Senate in March of 2019.



2018 Justice First Tour Stop in South Carolina

(Cont'd) The Justice First Tour helped elevate Southern forest protection as both a regional and a national climate justice priority. At the same time we at Dogwood expanded our commitment as an organization to put justice first. From 2018 to 2019 we not only grew our Community Grant program, which provides direct financial support to community groups working on the frontlines of the wood pellet industry and industrial logging, we also helped some of these partners secure direct support from our funding connections. We shifted staff capacity to provide more support to our community and justice partners, and we started aligning our strategies and tactics to better reflect the needs and wisdom of those who bear the brunt of the impacts of industrial logging and associated pollution across the South.

We are deeply grateful to those on the frontlines who have taught us so much about how to truly be of service in the fight for forest protection and climate justice. We are equally grateful for the support we have received from our donors, members, and volunteers, who have stood beside us unwavering in their support as we committed to being an anti-racist organization. I look forward to the years to come as we continue to humbly learn, lean in and boldly unite for justice for our Southern forests and communities.

In Solidarity,

## Report Contents

- 4 Ensuring Standing Forest Protection in Future National Climate Policies
- 6 State-level Forest Protection Policies in the US South
- 8 Strategy Shifts in EU Lead to Victories
- 10 Forests and Communities Under Siege in the Southern US
- 12 Protecting Wetland Forests and Community-based Solutions
- 14 Building Community Sustainability
- 16 Financials

# Ensuring Standing Forest Protection in Future National Climate Policies

In 2019 Dogwood Alliance rose to become the go-to leader working at the intersection of forests, climate and justice. Our focus on deepening partnerships created opportunities to influence policy and policy makers at the state and national level, both to protect standing forests and oppose industrial biomass as a renewable energy pathway.

Following the success of the Justice First Tour in 2018 and bringing the important message of the need to keep forests standing as part of the climate talks in the halls of Congress in early 2019, Dogwood Alliance was invited to weigh in on the drafting of forest protection language in the **Green New Deal resolutions** which were introduced in the House and Senate, by sponsors Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey.

Diverse, intact forests are literally the greenest infrastructure on Earth. Yet environmental policy solutions put forward in America today largely fail to recognize protecting natural forests as a “green infrastructure” priority.

The Green New Deal calls for urgent action, which communities on the frontlines of climate change have been demanding for decades, and highlights the importance of investing in our natural carbon sinks, which are vital for carbon storage and climate resiliency. This is supported by the most recent **IPCC report**, which clearly lays out the need to draw carbon out of the atmosphere by dramatically scaling up forest protection and restoration, alongside drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors.



*Dogwood Alliance's Rita Frost, Danna Smith, and Rachel Weber in front of the Capitol, along with Carina Daniels, Co-Founder of Story & Reach*

(Cont'd) Meanwhile, in the late summer of 2019, Dogwood Alliance joined the Gulf Center for Law and Policy, Southeastern Climate & Energy Network and the Justice First Network to draft a Southern version of a Green New Deal. Funded by the US Climate Action Network (USCAN), Dogwood and other coalition members are working together with frontline groups across the region to draft the first-ever unified, grassroots, frontline community-led climate policy agenda in the Southern United States. The Southern Communities for a Green New Deal is a watershed opportunity for the policy writing process to be developed by and for the communities affected most profoundly by climate change and climate polluters -- a far cry from the norm of creating policy solutions in a back room on Capitol Hill.



*Justice First Tour on Capitol Hill, 2019*

## **READ MORE** [DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA](#)

The Hill ["On Martin Luther King's 90th birthday, a renewed commitment to climate justice" \[2019\]](#)  
Bloomberg ["New Congress, New House Push for Environmental Civil Rights" \[2019\]](#)

# State-level Forest Protection Policies in the US South

In the summer of 2018, Dogwood along with prominent environmental and community leaders and scientists from around the country spent several days together in a retreat to develop a national platform for protecting standing forests. The result was the subsequent launch of the Stand4Forests (S4F) platform to elevate the threats to US forests and amplify the need to protect them as a critical, national climate solution. This historic effort is working at the intersection of climate, forests, and justice, and connecting scientists, conservation groups, faith organizations, and climate activists with frontline communities bearing the brunt of climate injustices from industrial logging across the region.

Our work to spur a national conversation about the need to protect standing forests as a critical climate change solution led to evolving state-level policies in Georgia and North Carolina.



*"You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." Winnie the Pooh, A.A. Milne. Bringing together 30 organizations to launch a US Forest, Climate, and Justice movement encouraged Dogwood Alliance to stretch ourselves in new ways and also simultaneously learn to slow down, trust the process, and breathe more deeply into the work. When the moment is so urgent, it's important to take it slow and steady.*

(Cont'd) Early in 2019, Georgia Senator Lester Jackson introduced the #Stand4Forests Resolution (SR-108), calling for forest protection and opposing industrial biomass. After gaining traction and a half-dozen co-sponsors, Rep. Carl Gilliard (D) agreed to introduce a companion resolution in the Georgia House. At the end of the year, the resolution has bipartisan support and the backing of the entire Economic and Development Committee. While resolutions have so far not passed committee, the impetus and momentum for forest protection is still gaining traction, and exposure for the issues at hand (both to protect standing forests and stop biomass) are receiving more visibility in a state known for egregious forestry management practices and a long history of loyalty to industrial logging companies.



*Georgia State Senator Lester Jackson introduced Stand4Forests resolution, SR108, co-sponsored by six other State Senators*

## Special Report

**CLIMATE IMPACTS OF INDUSTRIAL FOREST PRACTICES IN NORTH CAROLINA**

Synthesis of best available science and implications for forest carbon policy

PART I—SEPTEMBER 2019

DOGWOOD CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY  
Building the Dink of the New Economy

Also in 2019, Dogwood Alliance partnered with the Center for Sustainable Economy to release “**Climate Impacts of Industrial Forest Practices in North Carolina.**” The report was sent to over 100 elected official targets in the US and overseas and generated significant industry response. The report itself reveals that logging in North Carolina is the third highest carbon emitting sector, just behind electricity and transportation for the state. Garnering significant media attention, the report was featured in an article in The New Scientist, which was retweeted by Bill McKibben (see link in the “Read More” section below.

Both McKibben and Mary Anne Hitt, prominent influencers in the anti-fossil fuel movement, worked with Dogwood to discredit biomass as a climate-friendly energy alternative to fossil fuels. The emerging solidarity between fossil fuel campaigns and forest protection efforts is critical to countering industry claims that biomass is a sustainable solution helping the world get off fossil fuels.

## READ MORE DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA

- Sierra Magazine "Forest Conservation Is Part of the Climate Conversation Too" [2018]
- The New Yorker "Don't Burn Trees to Fight Climate Change—Let Them Grow" [2019]
- The Hill "US climate policy must protect forests and communities, not the forest industry" [2019]
- Earth Island Journal "Logging Is the Lead Driver of Carbon Emissions from US Forests" [2019]
- The Hill "Chopping down and burning our forests for electricity is not a climate solution" [2019]

# Strategy Shifts in EU Lead to Victories, Hope for a Biomass-free Future

In January of 2018, after years of international campaigning with our partners to advocate against the use of industrial biomass as a renewable energy source, the EU Council failed to protect forests and acknowledge that the practice of burning trees not only adds carbon to the atmosphere but threatens our ability to keep carbon in the earth. Even with 800 scientists actively warning against the practice and thousands of petition signatures from across the Southern US and beyond, industry greenwashing won the day.

There was, however, a silver lining for forest protection in the EU. While the vote permitted industrial biomass as a renewable energy alternative, individual member states (countries in the EU) could optionally choose stricter limits. For Dogwood Alliance and our domestic and international partners, this meant the opportunity to double-down our efforts and refocus on changing individual member state policies by using something we do well: organizing and advocacy.

The shift in strategy has paid off. Several countries have recently begun to seriously question the errors around carbon accounting and acknowledge the devastation the industry is wrecking on forests and communities in the US. In addition, they are also enacting policies to limit biomass growth now and in the future. In a huge victory for Southern forests in late 2018, the UK decided that they would no longer be subsidizing future biomass conversion because there are too many carbon emissions associated with transport.





(Cont'd) Other international biomass victories include:

- Our investigation with TV2 Denmark in early 2019 turned into a national debate on biomass, causing the Danish Climate and Energy Minister to publicly question the country's reliance on wood pellets.
- In Ireland, as a biomass facility there was shut down after public opposition organized by Dogwood Alliance. The plant would have sourced its pellets from North Carolina.
- Two Netherlands-based companies who source from Enviva announced they will not open two planned facilities, one due to public protest.
- Finally, potentially reversing course, high-ranking EU officials have called into question the sustainability of logging forests for fuel in current policy, and have vowed to reopen the EU Council vote to address the biomass problem.

Together, these actions are indicators that industrial biomass may be losing its popular spin as a green, renewable energy in Europe.



## Special Report

For the fifth year in a row, Dogwood staff went out on investigation, following countless logging trucks and wading through wetlands, to gather evidence of Enviva's continued forest destruction. This photographic evidence was released in a new report produced with the Natural Resource Defense Council and the Southern Environmental Law Center. The report targets policy makers both in the US, UK and EU and documents Enviva logging mature hardwood and wetland forests since 2014.

## READ MORE DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA

The Independent (UK) "The UK relies on biomass energy – but it's not renewable and it's been accused of causing deforestation in the US" [2019]

TV 2 (Denmark) 5-part series on biomass [2019]

# Forests and Communities Under Siege in the Southern US



*Community members and allies speaking out against Enviva at a public hearing in Northampton in 2019*

As we worked internationally to change biomass policies on the demand side in Europe, we worked with partners and communities on the frontlines to stop the expansion of the wood pellet export industry across the US South. Early in 2017, Enviva, the largest exporter of wood pellets from the Southern US announced plans to expand its facilities in Richmond County, North Carolina. Despite thousands of people and 100's of scientists opposing the expansion, year later, a North Carolina judge threw out a key legal appeal against the air-quality permit.

Undaunted, our strategy turned to Governor Cooper in 2018, appealing to him to stand by his own statement to abide by the Paris Agreement and make strides towards protecting North Carolina's future in the face of undeniable climate change and crisis. Through work with the Governor's Natural and Working Lands group and through ongoing media and grassroots campaigning, Dogwood Alliance is ensuring that forests are part of the Governor's climate and energy plans and that biomass is not allowed a part in the state's energy future.

This shift in strategy created the opportunity for several victories. The Governor's recent [Climate Action Plan](#) contains the boldest statement to date about biomass in any US policy-related document, calling into question the carbon accounting practices related to industrial biomass at the national and international level and excluding biomass from North Carolina's clean energy future.

(Cont'd) That several expansions and new facility permits were granted to Enviva in 2018 and 2019 despite the stance in Governor Cooper's Climate Action Plan directly points to the much larger issue at play: policies are designed to enable forest destruction (and its associated pollution) under the guise of creating economic prosperity. Changes in policy will be the only way to prevent corporate interests from continuing to get a pass over community health impacts, environmental health and sustainable economies. **Policy change cannot happen quickly enough.** In the meantime, communities all across the US South are becoming increasingly aware of the threats of industrial biomass.

As Enviva sought to expand and build more facilities across the South, including the largest pellet mill in the world in Lucedale, Mississippi, and four mills in Alabama, Dogwood ramped up its work in the Gulf. Central to our strategy was partnering with organizations on the ground there to get public hearings and create community-led opposition. For some in these communities, it would be the first time speaking out at any public hearing.

Even though two permits were awarded to Enviva, the communities in the Gulf are now mobilizing to stop future expansions and secure new policies that better protect their forests and communities.



## **READ MORE** DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA

Raleigh News & Observer "**'Godsend' or threat to forests? NC weighs expansion of wood pellet mill**" [2019]  
NC Policy Watch "**North Carolina sends conflicting messages on burning wood as fuel**" [2019]  
Jackson Free Press "**Activists Warn Against 'World's Largest Pellet Mill' in Mississippi**" [2019]

# Community-based Solutions to Protect Valuable Wetland Forests

Dogwood's leadership in protecting critical wetland forests in the South from industrial logging, including biomass, gained momentum in 2019. Our leadership was critical in securing the endorsement of over 200 organizations, tribes, agencies and landowner associations on a strategic plan to protect wetland forests across the South. This plan focuses on measuring success on the ground, building a movement in priority watersheds and identifying key strategies that can be implemented at all levels.

Released in the spring of 2019, the 5-year plan lays out clear priorities:

1. Movement Building — build a strong grassroots movement around the value of wetland forests in the Southern US
2. Improved Management Standards — provide clear direction for specialized management approaches in wetland forests
3. Increased Funding Access — use wetland forests as a flagship issue to increase conservation funding for land trusts, landowners, and local governments

The plan makes use of **Conservation Priority Maps for Wetland Forests** highlighting fourteen watersheds to prioritize for conservation work. Watersheds along the coastal plain were repeatedly identified as among the most important to protect due in part to their high concentrations of unique species.

Now, Dogwood is on the ground in affected communities building a model of inclusive, rural organizing with people typically not included in the decision-making process regarding land use. In 2019, we began to explore opportunities for community-led economic solutions with partners in the Pee Dee watershed that will both protect standing wetland forests and provide economic sustainability for a community outside of traditional industrial logging.





(Above) Dogwood Alliance joined Reverend Leo Woodberry (New Alpha Community Development Corporation), Sierra Club, Pee Dee Indian Tribe, Union Height Council, and 50 frontline community members at the South Carolina Statehouse for a Legislative Day. We were able to talk to four representatives directly from the Pee Dee watershed.

## TREASURES OF THE SOUTH

THE TRUE VALUE OF WETLAND FORESTS



Report Author: Sam L. Davis, PhD  
 Research Provided By: Key-Log Economics



## Special Report

On World Wetlands Day in February 2018, Dogwood released **“Treasures of the South: The True Value of Wetland Forests”** a report highlighting the importance and value of wetland forests spanning 14 states and over 35 million acres. Conservative estimates place the value at over \$500 billion in the 14 state region stretching from Virginia to Texas. This value was based on wetland forests’ ability to provide protection against extreme weather events, recreation and tourism, water filtration and other benefits.

## READ MORE DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA

- Alternet **“By Logging Wetland Forests for Corporate Profit, the American South Is Ruining Its Own Backyard”** [2018]
- NOLA **“Louisiana’s wetland forests worth \$79.4 billion, study finds”** [2018]
- Miami Herald **“Sea rise is outpacing Everglades restoration — but scientists say there’s a solution”** [2018]

# Building Community Sustainability

## FOREST Circle

In 2017, Dogwood facilitated the first FOREST (Frontline Organizing Resiliency and Entrepreneurial Solutions Training) Circle: a network of activists, organizers, and community leaders. The mission of the FOREST Circle is to provide a collective space that intentionally fosters creativity and sustainability, while preparing frontline organizations through power building, education, and resource sharing.

Since then, FOREST Summits gatherings have been held semi-annually, hosted by FOREST Circle members with workshops and trainings designed to build skills, power, and relationships. The Summit is grounded in the needs and communities of FOREST Circle members. In addition to the annual gatherings, participants hold monthly calls for mutual education and support, and the gatherings themselves have become opportunities for hosting communities to share how they are creating sustainable futures through alternative economic solutions and community-building models.



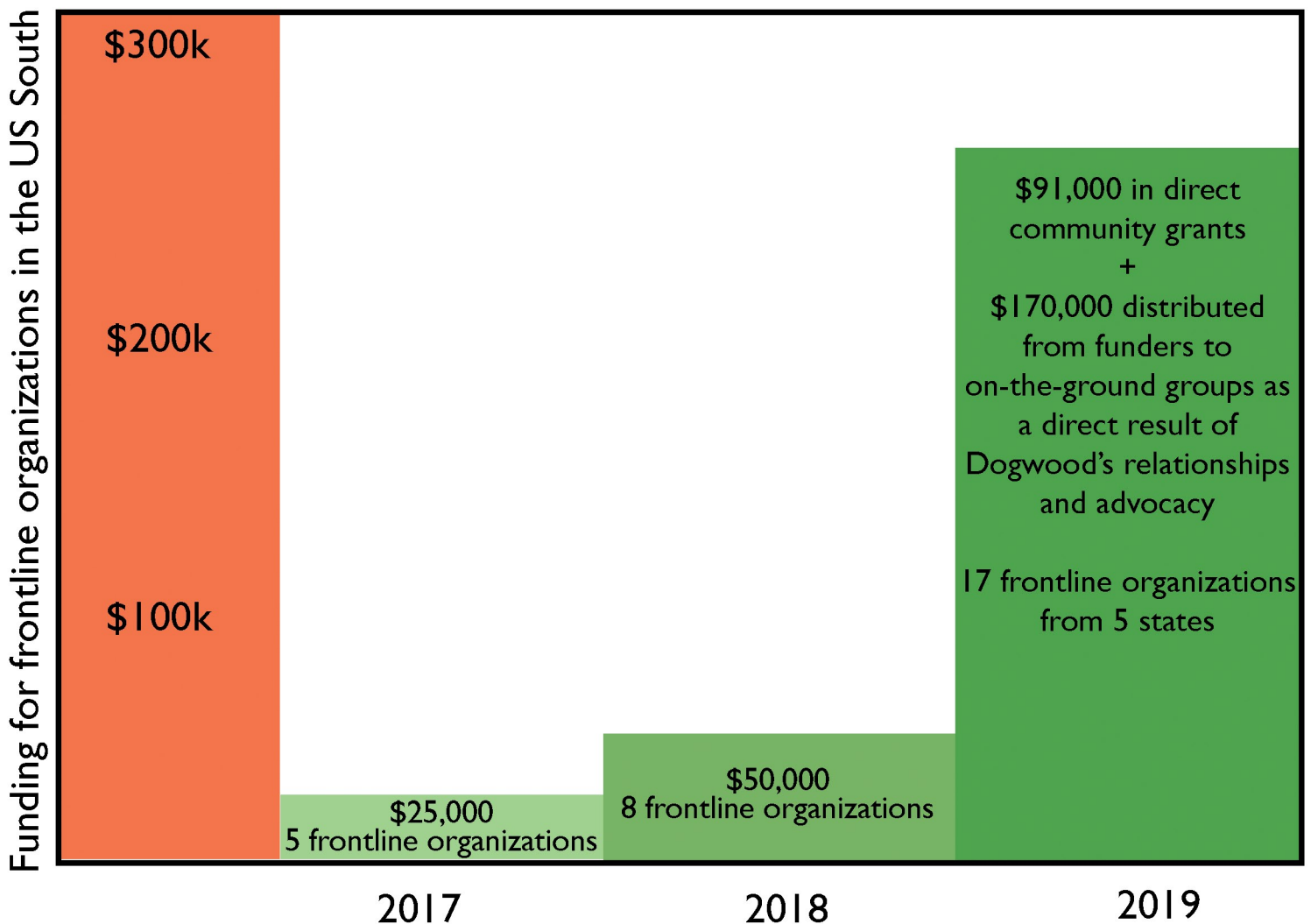
*A healthy, natural forest ecosystem represents who we are as a circle. A healthy forest is a diverse forest: there are old trees, young trees, different types of trees, and different sizes of trees. In a healthy forest ecosystem, trees support each other - they share nutrients, resources, and even information on potential diseases and other threats. A single standing tree is susceptible to being knocked down by wind or floods. But in a forest, each individual tree is stronger and supported by all the other trees.*

In December, 2019, members of the FOREST Circle gathered for our 4th FOREST Summit. The Summit brought together leaders from three different Southern states, representing rural areas and urban areas, and a wealth of knowledge and expertise. As our Circle continues to strengthen, we know we are creating something intentional and powerful. The work that we do for forest protection, clean air, clean water, healthy food, and strong communities depends so much on how we work together. And in a system that consistently works to keep us divided, it's more important than ever that we come together to build a strong and diverse network.

# Building Community Sustainability

## Community Grant Program

Because so many of our partners represent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) frontline community organizations, Dogwood is working to bridge the gap between their grassroots work and the larger environmental funding community by providing community grants and opportunities to meet with funders directly. Between 2018 and 2019, Dogwood has provided over \$140,000 to over 15 organizations. While not a permanent solution to the disparities of funding that frontline organizations typically experience, Dogwood Alliance seeks to both actively connect groups to further, ongoing support, as well as provide educational opportunities for foundations on the critical work these communities are doing in the Southern US.



### READ MORE DOGWOOD ALLIANCE IN THE MEDIA

Dogwood Blog [“FOREST Circle: Our Diversity is Our Strength”](#) [2019]

Dogwood Blog [“FOREST Circle: Building Solutions for Resilient Forests and Communities”](#) [2019]

# Financials

## INCOME

2018

\$2,019,866

2019

\$2,167,354

## EXPENSES

2018

\$1,752,367

2019

\$1,818,142

Continuing fiscal growth over the past five years has afforded Dogwood Alliance to invest in emerging programs such as the Wetland Forest Initiative and Forests & Climate. While 2014-2017 were years of significant capacity growth to meet the demands of our new programs and overall increasing scope of work and leadership on forest protection, 2018 and 2019 have been focused on partnerships, securing our fixed costs, and growing our reserve. At the end of 2019, our reserve will allow for a full nine months of operating at full capacity without any additional income resources.

As we look to 2020 and beyond, towards our 25th anniversary of protecting forests and communities in the US South from destructive industrial logging, our investments in partnerships and growing overall community resources through our Community Grant program will continue to be a focal point. In addition, we look for increasing support from foundations and individuals who understand and are committed to the intersection of climate, forests, and justice.





# At-a-Glance



## Looking Forward

In the years to come, we will:

Focus our growing leadership on forests, climate, and justice through collaborative policy development to ensure standing forests protection in the Southern US.

Continue to grow our allyship with citizens and communities across the South and internationally who are invested in protecting our standing forests from the threats of industrial biomass.

Advance wetland forest protection as a strategy for building climate resilience and developing new engines of economic development.

Bridge the gap between the grassroots work of frontline organizations and the larger environmental funding community by providing subgrants and opportunities to meet with funders directly.

## Thank You

Thanks to you, as we near our 25th year, we are recognized as leaders at the intersection of climate, forests, and justice in the South. Thanks to your support, we are challenging industrial biomass from North Carolina to the Netherlands and beyond, and communities across the globe are taking action to stop this threat to our valuable forests.

We are grateful that you, along with environmental activists from around the globe, have recognized Dogwood Alliance as a smart, science-based, climate-justice ally at the forefront of forest protection. Together, we will meet the challenges of this moment and keep the pressure on government, regulators, and the logging industry. We will stand united with communities on the frontlines of the health and climate impacts of deforestation.

We ask you to invest in Dogwood now—and continue to invest—so that we can continue our deep work to protect Southern forests for years to come. Thank you for being part of this movement.

For the future,

The Staff of Dogwood Alliance

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# Invest Today to Protect Our Forests

## Visit [www.dogwoodalliance.org](http://www.dogwoodalliance.org)

