



[dogwoodalliance.org](http://dogwoodalliance.org)

# MID-YEAR REPORT 2023

# SPECIAL REPORT



## EPA VISITS GLOSTER, MS

In May, after 18 months of false starts and delays, the EPA, USDA, and other government entities finally fulfilled their promise to tour the small, rural community of Gloster, Mississippi (pop. 900). Gloster is the site of a Drax-operated wood pellet mill. Over 200 residents showed up to discuss Drax's impacts on the community.

## IMPACT

- The federal government's visit to Gloster sparked the MS-NAACP to get involved in the effort to stop biomass and wood pellets in Mississippi.
- EPA officials identified several new federal grants and funds for community projects that could benefit the people of Gloster. Dogwood Alliance and partners will be assisting Gloster community leaders to ensure those resources are secured.
- Congressman Bennie Thompson, who represents the people of Gloster, sent staff that expressed support for the community and their concerns about Drax. He has had follow-up discussions with EPA, Dogwood, NAACP, and local residents.
- The lead researcher on the EPA's current study into biomass also attended. The study findings could negatively impact the future of the wood pellet industry.
- Dogwood is expanding resources to support Greater Greener Gloster's on-the-ground organizing.



# SPECIAL REPORT

## GLOSTER VERSUS DRAX

Drax, a UK-based power company and wood pellet manufacturer, has been polluting the town of Gloster, Mississippi since it began operations in 2015. The company was fined \$2.5 million in 2021 for exceeding air permit limits. The Environmental Integrity Project gathered information through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in May. It revealed that Drax is still emitting hazardous air pollution beyond the legal limits, and they have been doing so for at least two years!

Drax declined to attend the community forum on May 9th. However, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), did attend. They're responsible for issuing and enforcing the Drax air permit. They'd issued a notice to Drax for exceeding legal limits for Hazardous Air Pollution just a few months before, but MDEQ failed to disclose the violation at the community forum. None of the agencies disclosed the violation at the forum. The impacted community was kept in the dark. Just a few weeks before the public forum, Dogwood partners Dr. Krystal Martin and Kathy Egland from Mississippi traveled thousands of miles to attend Drax's shareholder meeting in London. They met directly with Drax CEO, Will Gardiner. He promised Kathy and Krystal that Drax had fixed the pollution problem in Gloster. Clearly, the CEO did not have his facts straight.

### Drax-owned wood pellet plant in US broke air pollution rules again

Amite BioEnergy, which was fined \$2.5m in 2021, notified Mississippi facility had breached emission limits



Article from The Guardian, May 2023

[Read Dogwood's statement here](#)

## NC Legislative Day & Enviva Rally



Debra David, community leader from Dobbins Heights, site of Enviva wood pellet facility in Hamlet, NC, and member of the statewide Impacted Communities Against Wood Pellet Coalition (ICAWP), speaking at the rally about her community's health impacts.

On May 17th, Dogwood organized dozens of North Carolinians to attend a legislative day followed by a rally at Enviva Headquarters in Raleigh. Citizens from impacted communities met with representatives from across the state. They educated representatives about the harms of biomass wood pellet industry and called for a health impact study. After the legislative briefings, people gathered outside Enviva's offices. They called out the impacts of the wood pellet industry on climate, forests, and health. Dogwood Alliance and our partners called on Enviva to take responsibility for its actions. We demanded they stop claiming to produce green energy while polluting communities and destroying forests.



## The Fight to Breathe in Adel, GA

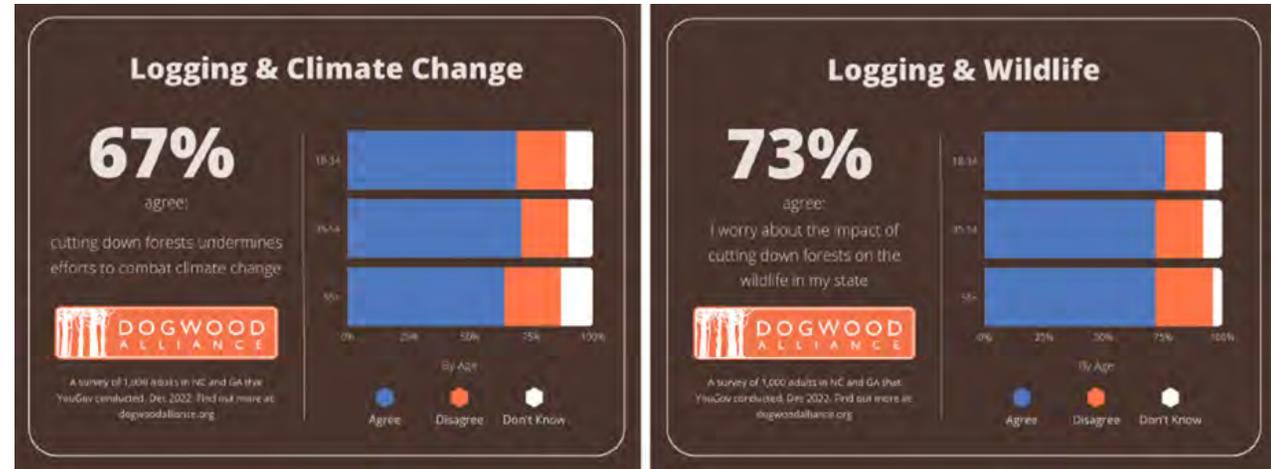
For several years, Dogwood Alliance has provided organizing resources and support to the Concerned Citizens of Cook County (4C) in their fight to stop two proposed wood pellet mills. Local and statewide organizing delayed the permits. The state of Georgia issued permits to both facilities despite statewide and local opposition. But local citizens didn't give up. Early this year, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) represented 4C. They finalized a settlement agreement with Spectrum Energy Georgia on the operation of its proposed wood pellet plant in Adel, Georgia. It's a 1.32 million ton production facility, which will clearcut 31,680 acres of Georgia forests per year.

The settlement secured groundbreaking health-monitoring concessions from Spectrum Energy. But the settlement did not address the wood pellet industry's destructive forest and climate impacts. SELC also filed a Civil Rights complaint against the Georgia Environmental Protection Division for its failure to protect the local citizens of Adel.

## What's in the Adel Spectrum Agreement?

- The settlement provides more protections for public health than the state-authorized permit.
- Spectrum has agreed to convene public forums twice a year and maintain a public hotline for concerns.
- Spectrum will purchase air monitors and filters for nearby areas.
- Spectrum has agreed to take measures to limit noise, traffic, and air pollution from its facility.
- 4C is designated as an enforcer of the agreement terms.
- Spectrum will pay \$25,000 to a public health and safety fund for each demonstrated violation of certain air pollution commitments.

## Poll: Logging in the South, a Keystone Environmental Issue



[A recent survey by YouGov and commissioned by Dogwood Alliance](#) shows that over two-thirds of Southerners surveyed in North Carolina and Georgia believe that logging is harming wildlife and people. Over half have seen logging around their local community. The survey also found that:

- **67% of Southerners believe that cutting down forests undermines efforts to combat climate change**
- **73% worry about the impacts of deforestation on wildlife**
- **67% worry about the impacts on people**
- **62% agree that the government should set carbon emission reduction targets for the forestry industry**



## DEMANDING CLIMATE JUSTICE IN DC

In February, Dogwood Alliance and other partners met with Southern members of Congress and top officials in the Biden Administration in Washington, DC. We asked for an interagency dialogue to address the pollution and logging impacts of biomass on environmental justice (EJ) communities. We advocated for new investments to build climate resilience in impacted communities.

Dogwood Alliance and New Alpha (SC), Concerned Citizens of Cook County (GA), Concerned Citizens of Richmond County (NC), and others met with senior-level directors from the EPA Department of Energy and Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ). That includes Directors of Environmental Justice at CEQ and EPA Deputy Director of Energy Justice at DOE, Rep. Benny Thompson (MS), aides to Rep. Don Davis (NC), Rep. Dan Bishop (NC), Sen. Thom Tillis (NC), Sen. Ted Budd (NC), Sen. Jon Ossof (GA), Sen. Raphael Warnock (GA), Rep. James Clyburn (SC).

### Our asks are straightforward:

- **Stop federal subsidies for wood pellet production in the US.**
- **Live up to the climate and justice promises of the Inflation Reduction Act. Address the impacts of the biomass industry on environmental justice communities in the Southern US.**
- **Redirect federal dollars to protect forests and communities.**

# GRANT-MAKING FOUNDATIONS TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

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**Staff from 12 grant-making foundations came from across the country to attend an on-the-ground briefing and tour of communities impacted by the wood pellet industry, deforestation, and climate change.**

Hosted by Packard Foundation and Dogwood Alliance, the Forests, Climate, and Equity Briefing took place from March 22-24 in Florence, South Carolina. Attendees toured communities and forests in the rural reaches of the ecologically significant and biodiverse Pee Dee Watershed. This is a "ground zero" for the recent expansion in the global wood pellet export market. Funders got a unique and authentic opportunity to connect with community residents, organizations, and experts on the frontlines of industrial logging and biomass and to cultivate a deeper understanding of the people, impacts, and solutions in this climate-vulnerable region.

Activities included a roundtable discussion with local community leaders, a driving tour of biomass facilities, clearcut forests, and areas impacted by flooding. Attendees visited NC counties Richmond and Robeson. They visited the Pee Dee Indian Tribe in McColl, SC. They toured the Tribe's community forest conservation project and cultural center as well as the Environmental Justice Education and Training Center in Britton's Neck, SC. Both are examples of green, community-led economic development. The briefing wrapped up with a community dinner and panel discussion in Florence, SC. The panel featured leaders from impacted communities across the region.







# Fighting Biomass Globally

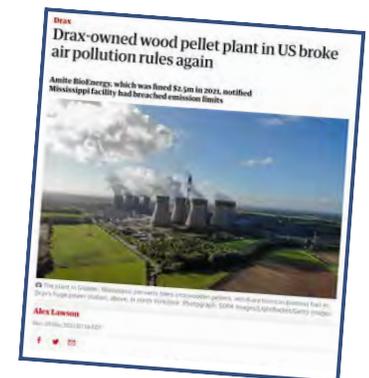
## Member States Take the Lead Against Biomass While Greater EU Ignores Trends

In January, Dogwood Alliance and community partners hosted reporters from three German media outlets working on the [Deforestation Inc Project](#). The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in collaboration with 39 media partners organized this global investigation into forest industry greenwashing. The investigation's report exposed more than 340 certified wood processing companies, including Enviva, for greenwashing and legal violations.

The media exposure of Enviva's greenwashing was timely. It coincided with government negotiations for a policy change. But the EU again failed to put meaningful restrictions on biomass subsidies as noted in [this Mongabay story](#). Advocacy efforts will now likely increasingly focus on individual EU countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium--all large biomass consumers.

Our work in the UK with the Cut Carbon Not Forests Coalition gained momentum. This [recent Guardian article](#) highlights how both Conservative and Labor MPs in the UK are rethinking their support for Drax subsidies.

In February, our environmental justice partner, Reverend Leo Woodberry (SC), travelled to London to advocate for ending subsidies to Drax. Rev. Leo met with government officials. He attended a protest that our UK partner, BiofuelWatch, organized. In May, two of our environmental justice partners from Mississippi flew to the UK to meet with Members of Parliament, attend the Drax shareholder meeting, and meet the Drax CEO.





## By the Numbers

650

**Scientists from around the world** released a letter at the UN Biodiversity Summit urging world leaders to end bioenergy and focus on forest conservation to protect vital wildlife habitats

1

**Nation has banned biomass energy**  
It's Australia!

\$8.7  
MILLION

**Total fines levied against Drax** the UK company with wood pellet plants in the Gulf South, for breaking air quality rules in Louisiana and Mississippi

\$10  
BILLION

**UK and European Union subsidies at stake** in the UK and EU as member states debate biomass subsidies and call out companies like Enviva for contributing to forest destruction and making false green claims

27k

**Messages sent to the Biden Administration** from Dogwood Alliance supporters calling for the White House to address the forest, climate, and justice impacts of biomass

## In the Media

Click articles to read:

### International focus

["How Europe's clean energy policies harm forests"](#) DW (Germany)

["How bioenergy causes air pollution: The dark side of renewable energy"](#) Alternet

["This US wood pellet giant is entering the German market"](#) Der Spiegel (Germany)

["Drax-owned wood pellet plant in US broke air pollution rules again"](#) The Guardian (UK)

["USDA's Support of Destructive Wood Pellet Industry Undermines Biden's Environmental Justice Commitment"](#) MSN

### Community Solutions and Environmental Justice focus

["Cook County citizens reach agreement on wood pellet plant"](#) Albany Herald

["North Carolina Trees Are Feeding Europe's 'Clean Energy' Revolution"](#) The Assembly

["Surviving to Thriving: Training Center opens in Marion Co. to teach sustainability"](#) WPDE (South Carolina)



**Dogwood Alliance is the only organization working exclusively at the intersection of forests, climate, and justice in the South.**

It's a big job to be the watchdog for Southern forests. The dirty biomass industry repeatedly violates the law and misleads the public and regulators. **And our government promises one thing and does another.**



WHAT THEY SAY	WHAT THEY DO
<p>President Biden signs a historic executive order on environmental justice.</p>	<p>USDA collaborates with the Industrial Wood Pellet Association to promote wood pellet exports to the Netherlands government.</p>
<p>The Biden Administration boasts unprecedented funding available to address climate change and expand clean energy.</p>	<p>USDA and Department of Energy facilitate massive subsidies for biomass in rural communities.</p>
<p>EPA announces historic funding to address environment injustice.</p>	<p>EPA delays and backtracks on promises to visit impacted communities. Meanwhile, the wood pellet industry continues to violate the Clean Air Act.</p>

**Our movement for healthy, diverse, Southern forests and communities demands that our government protect our future and hold dirty industry accountable.**

## FINANCIALS

# 2023 Budget SUMMARY



**Total Budget**  
\$2,702,846

**Our Forests Aren't Fuel**  
\$776,890

**Forests & Climate**  
\$553,587

**Community Solutions**  
\$334,587



## 2022 Audited Financials

You can access a full report [on our website.](#)



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