

# GREEN CORPS

The country's most respected training program for environmental organizers



2020 PROGRAM REPORT

*“Green Corps helps aspiring organizers develop the skills and locate the commitment they’ll need for a lifetime of environmental action.”*

## A COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

How do you become an environmental organizer? It’s simple—and daunting.

Pick one of the myriad problems afflicting life on Earth: say, plastic pollution killing ocean wildlife or carbon emissions wreaking havoc on our climate. Find a way to make a real difference, such as winning a local ban on single-use plastics, or a statewide policy making it easier to go solar, or a national commitment to drive our carbon emissions to zero by 2050.

Then, talk to people—people who will raise their voices together in support of the change you’re after. Amplify that support every way you can. Make friendly decision-makers feel emboldened. Make less-friendly deciders feel accountable. Either way, make it more likely that they will decide to do the right thing by the environment.

It’s simple. But it requires a commitment that can be daunting. Because as an organizer, you repeat this process again, and again, and again, and again, each time shifting the frame of public debate ever so slightly in the direction of a greater harmony between people and the natural world of which we are part.

Green Corps helps aspiring organizers develop the skills and locate the commitment they’ll need for a lifetime of environmental action. During this unique one-year program, our trainees learn in the classroom, as well as “learn by doing” on real environmental campaigns. They study and practice the mechanics of organizing. They win some and lose some. They learn how to leave it all on the field and still get up to fight another day.

After nearly three decades, hundreds of Green Corps graduates are now at work with nonprofits and campaigns, applying their training and skills to the race to save the environment. To restore our natural world to health, we’ll need even more of them for many years to come.

Thank you for making this mission possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Phelps", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Phelps  
Chair, Green Corps Board



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*2020 was a challenging year, especially for those who lost loved ones to COVID-19. Yet even as the pandemic ravaged our health, economy and communities, the previous administration rolled back more than 100 environmental protections.*

*Our organizers—working online, safely socially distant—mobilized people across the country to advocate for some of the most critical issues facing our planet. Our team learned by doing as they campaigned for climate solutions, ocean protections and preservation of our public lands. They also innovated new approaches, overcame obstacles and built systems that will enhance environmental campaigns for years to come.*

*The problems facing our planet are of our own making. Yet, if some good comes from 2020, it will manifest in a deeper appreciation for human connection, a renewed belief in collective action and a commitment to the ingenuity we're capable of in the face of great challenges.*

*Thank you for making our work possible, come what may.*

*Onward,*

*Annie Sanders*

*Executive Director*



# YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION: ADVOCATING FOR 100 PERCENT CLEAN ENERGY WITH AUDUBON SOUTH CAROLINA

Every year the need to act on climate change becomes more and more urgent. While the new administration is moving quickly to undo the environmental rollbacks of the last four years, there are also opportunities for meaningful climate action at the state and local levels. And while states like Washington and California have been paving the way for a clean energy future, it has been encouraging to see states like New Mexico and Arkansas also pass meaningful policies and make commitments to renewable energy.

Green Corps is all about going where we're needed and meeting communities where they're at. After all, we can't achieve a clean energy future unless everyone comes together and advocates for a better way forward. To that end, Audubon South Carolina helped lead a campaign to pass South Carolina's first

landmark solar bill, which has led to a boom in the solar industry in the past few years. Since the passage of that legislation, an opportunity to close two coal plants and replace them with clean infrastructure opened up, and Audubon South Carolina partnered with Green Corps in the spring of 2020 to help move the state toward that clean energy future.

With the momentum of the recent solar victory at their backs, two Green Corps organizers landed in South Carolina in January 2020 to help make sure the two coal-fired power plants were replaced with clean energy sources. The organizers were tasked with bringing constituent voices to South Carolina legislators to ensure that they introduced and passed a bill guaranteeing a clean energy future for the plants. We know that more people means more power, so investing in recruitment





and training community members to take action was a top priority on this campaign. Our goal was to establish South Carolina as a clean energy leader in the South and create momentum for more clean energy progress in the region.

Our organizers, Julie Johnson and Olivia Perfetti, were based in two key districts in the state. Julie organized in the city of Columbia, the capital and focal point of the state, critical for engaging lawmakers; Olivia built power in Charleston, the quintessential South Carolina city, home to the environmental base needed to put pressure on state legislators. The pair worked quickly to build up volunteer teams and grassroots pressure. With the help of dozens of community groups, they turned out nearly 50 South Carolinians to their kickoff meetings by the end of their first four weeks on the ground.

Though the legislative session was suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak, Julie and Olivia's volunteers are prepared to support the state conservation coalition for a Conservation Lobby Day when elected officials are back and

it is safe to gather. They worked closely with volunteers, business leaders and faith leaders to garner citizen support in the form of personal video testimonials on the importance of clean energy, and they signed more than 65 businesses onto a support letter. They also delivered over 1,500 petitions and nearly 300 handwritten postcards that demonstrate the need to take large-scale, decisive action on the climate crisis by committing the state's utility to 100 percent clean energy.



*Image courtesy of Mireille Bejjani*

## POWER FROM THE GRASSROOTS

*(Left) Organizer Angie Torres (left) and her team of Texas Southern University volunteers pose with former Vice President Al Gore, CEO of Climate Reality Project, in the spring of 2020.*

*(Right) Organizer Gwen Nahnsen (bottom middle) at her kickoff meeting with Solar Rights Alliance in Sacramento, CA, to advocate for better solar policy in the spring of 2020.*



*Volunteers gather over Zoom for a campaign action meeting focused on Pennsylvania wildlife corridors.*

## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION: **ADVOCATING FOR WILDLIFE CORRIDORS WITH THE ENDANGERED SPECIES COALITION**

The pandemic prompted many of us to reevaluate our relationships with the ecosystems around us and intentionally build toward a more sustainable future for wildlife and humans. Green Corps did just that in the summer of 2020, partnering with the Endangered Species Coalition on their wildlife corridors campaign.

We’re losing species at an alarming rate, and we know that habitat loss and fragmentation are the biggest reasons for this problem. Wildlife corridors not only counter habitat fragmentation, they can also decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions, mitigate the likelihood of infectious diseases and increase communities’ access to natural spaces.

A pair of Green Corps organizers, working remotely, partnered with the Endangered Species Coalition on campaigns to promote wildlife corridors in Colorado and Pennsylvania.

Our organizers started off the campaign strong by recruiting 90 new volunteers to join kickoff meetings. In the following weeks, they collected more than 2,800 petition signatures from concerned Pennsylvanians and Coloradans, held multiple “days of action” that generated more than 750 emails and 100 calls into state representatives’ offices, built a coalition of 70 businesses and organizations in support of habitat connectivity, and turned out more than 450 people to campaign events.

When our organizers wrapped up their work, they left the campaigns in good hands: Each state has a robust team of now-experienced volunteers with fully developed campaign plans for the next four months of work and beyond. These volunteers are eager and ready to continue the work to protect endangered species in their communities.

# YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION: ORGANIZERS PUSH FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD WITH MIGHTY EARTH

The U.S. meat industry is this country's leading source of water pollution and a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and is driving the destruction of our last remaining wild places. As one of the largest agribusinesses in the world, Minnesota-based Cargill has made repeated and highly publicized promises to end deforestation in its supply chain. It has not yet lived up to that commitment, and continue to encroach on critical ecosystems in the U.S. and around the world.

To convince Cargill to change its practices, Mighty Earth partnered with a team of two Green Corps organizers in the summer of 2020 to convince grocery store chains Stop & Shop and Costco to cut ties with Cargill until the agribusiness fulfills their commitment to adopt sustainability practices across their entire supply chain.

Green Corps organizers Angie Torres and Hayley Berliner recruited volunteers from across the country to virtual kickoff meetings

and webinars on "Corporate Campaigning 101" and "The Story of Meat." Angie recruited volunteers to deliver comments to 10 Stop & Shop locations in five states across the northeast, and organized four online campaign events that turned out nearly 100 people. Meanwhile, Hayley's volunteers in California and Washington made seven deliveries to Costco, turned out 39 attendees to their virtual press conference, and generated 147 member comments to Costco.

Overall, Angie and Hayley built grassroots pressure on some of Cargill's biggest customers and raised the visibility of the issue to the public and key stakeholders through the media. While Cargill has yet to end deforestation in its supply chain or adopt more sustainable practices, our work helped to elevate the issue and build a grassroots base that will continue pressuring one of the largest, most powerful agribusinesses in the world to do its part to protect our planet.



*Volunteers deliver comments to Stop & Shop asking them to protect forests by cutting ties with Cargill.*

*Image Courtesy of Mike Ritter*





## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION: GREEN CORPS ALUMNI PUT THEIR SKILLS TO WORK



### JESSE LITTLEWOOD, GC'04

As Vice President for Campaigns with the democracy reform advocacy group Common Cause, Jesse Littlewood works on pressing issues affecting our most fundamental right: the right to vote in a free and fair election. While Common Cause employs a range of strategies (including crafting policy, litigation and direct lobbying), Jesse has focused on building a grassroots organizing strategy

to recruit, engage and mobilize everyday Americans to build power to protect and expand our democracy.

“I’m a lifelong environmentalist,” said Jesse, “And I believe we’ll be able to solve the environmental crisis only if we also solve the crisis of our democracy.”

When the Trump administration set up a “voter fraud” commission in May 2017, Jesse mobilized Common Cause members to submit over 30,000 comments to the commission’s staff, registering disapproval of its mission and support for voting rights. The commission shut down the following January.

“Green Corps taught me to be adaptable and innovative and to always look for opportunities to build power for the grassroots,” said Jesse. “We won’t be able to just litigate or lobby our way to a stronger civic society. It will take all of us to be actively engaged in our democracy to make that happen.”





## TOM MOOERS, GC'93

Tom Mooers graduated with the very first class of Green Corps organizers back in 1993. Since that sunny summer day in Boston nearly three decades ago, he's been applying what he learned in Green Corps to establish himself in a leading role in land conservation in his native Northern California.

Tom currently serves as founding Executive Director of Sierra Watch, defending the integrity of great mountain places like Tahoe's Martis Valley, Donner Summit and Squaw Valley.

"Every day, I apply something I learned in Green Corps to the work we're doing now," said Tom. "Whether it's crafting a strategic plan, pitching a news story or asking for money, those skills provided the building blocks for a fulfilling career in conservation."

## ANYA FETCHER, GC'19

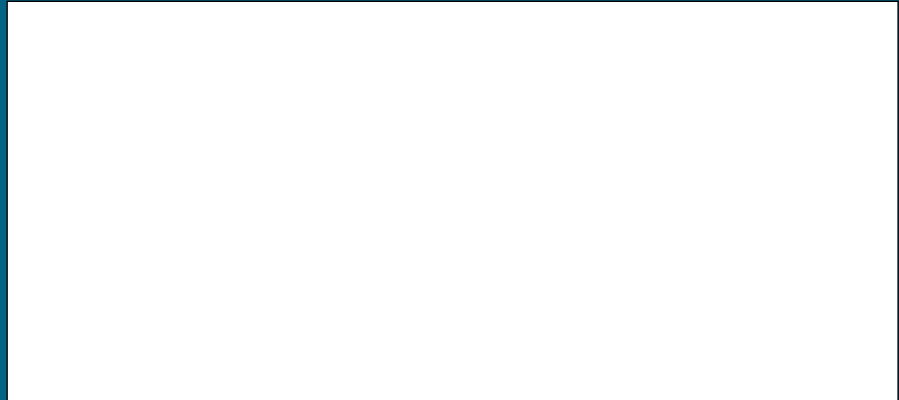
While most Green Corps organizers join the program straight out of college, Anya Fetcher came to Green Corps after seven years of pursuing a career in music and theatre. After the 2016 presidential election, Anya decided to switch gears and make advocacy her focus by joining the Green Corps Class of 2019.

Anya's third campaign with Green Corps landed her in Portland, Maine, where she directed the Environment Maine canvass office, leading her staff in a record-breaking summer of fundraising. Now, as Environment Maine's State Director, Anya regularly connects with Environment Maine members, hosts events, engages local media and trains volunteers. She also communicates directly with decision-makers and recently worked closely with state Rep. Nicole Grohoski to introduce a bill that would ban bee-killing pesticides in Maine.

# GREEN CORPS

The Field School For Environmental Organizing  
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