ISSUE NO. 1

E2I2 ACCESS POINT

Spring 2025 Newsletter

As We Forge Ahead
Letter from the Executive Director

Spring has always been my favorite season. I love the colorful spring blossoms and the return of my favorite birds—hummingbirds and blue birds—along with warmer days and longer evenings. In the nonprofit world, this annual rebirth serves as a powerful metaphor and provides the inspiration and energy to tackle the important work before us.

With the rollback of environmental and climate funding and proposed environmental deregulation, the work of nonprofits like E2I2 is more important than ever.

Therefore, this Spring, I'm asking the question: where is the opportunity for us to move forwards individually and collectively for continued impact? Here are a few of my ideas. Email me at lpalmer@e2i2.org and let me know how you are re-committing to the environmental and climate movement. I would truly love to hear from you.

Coalition and power building. By joining forces, we can protect the gains made not only over the last four years, but the last four decades. Find like-minded people or groups in your community who you can volunteer with here.

Small acts. Each of us has a role to play in safeguarding the environment for generations to come, but it can feel overwhelming. You can find low-cost tips for being environmentally friendly on our website.

Contact your local state and federal representatives to encourage their support for environmental and climate issues. You can find numbers for your representatives here.

Donate to grassroots organizations like E2I2!
A sustaining monthly donation of $5 or more to small nonprofits demonstrates to funders that people believe in the organization's mission and increases their confidence in providing substantial funding to the organization. Here's our donation link and check out our Green Horizon Society corner below!

The rollback of environmental protections will only happen if we allow it to.

With hope and determination,

Louise

E2I2 UPDATES

- Five of our community-based air quality monitors are now installed in St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana and will soon give community members real time estimates of chloroprene, ethylene oxide, and particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) in the air. Learn why community air quality monitoring in this region is so important **here**.
- The **EJ Data Action Portal** is live! E2I2 continues to play a supporting data analytics role to ensure communities have continued access to important environmental and climate data. Plug in your zip code to see data for where you live.
- Dr. Femi Adesanya, E2I2's Founder and Chief Operating Officer of Intellectual Concepts, was awarded the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice's Damu Smith Power of One Award for his dedicated support of the environmental justice movement and community-based organizations.
- Our data report on pollution in Augusta is being used by Savannah Riverkeeper and Healthy Communities Augusta to drive change! Read more **here**.

THE GREEN HORIZON SOCIETY

From all of us at E2I2, we would like to send a heartfelt thank you to our first three Sustainability Circle members.

To DeLois Babiker, Sharon Marshall, and Holly Schmidt-Davis—your commitment to putting scientific tools in the hands of communities at risk of hazardous environmental exposure and strengthening resilience against pollution will enable us to continue the work we've been committed to since 1994. We launched this campaign at the end of 2024 to mark our 30th anniversary providing sustainable environmental solutions for leaders in Louisiana, Virginia, Texas, and right here in Georgia.

You've seen the news—we're facing a bombardment of attacks on our right to clean air, water, and soil, and nowhere else is being hit harder than the Southeast. In times of adversity, linking arms with like-minded people through contributions, big or small, sets up the next generation of environmental defenders for success and helps keep our vision alive. You can step up for environmental justice by joining the Green Horizon Society Founders' Circle.

By becoming a member of the Green Horizon Society Founders' Circle, you're not just supporting our projects—you're enhancing the fruitfulness of our partnerships with environmental justice community organizers, the longevity of our community training programs, and ensuring that environmental data can be understood and used by people who are fighting for a cleaner, healthier future for our loved ones, our neighborhoods, and our planet.

Our Founder's Circle campaign ends on April 30th during Earth Month, when people all across the country are renewing their commitment to a future free of pollution and contaminants, no matter where you call home.

We invite you to join us on the ground floor as a sustaining contributor as we lift our tiny-but-mighty organization to new heights in 2025—together.

Click here to support our work today.

DATA CENTER SPOTLIGHT

Georgia is officially a Data Center hub. Why are communities across the state raising the alarm?

A data center houses computer system equipment to store, process, and distribute large amounts of data. Data centers power applications such as online banking, email, virtual data hosting platforms (i.e. "the cloud"), and generative artificial intelligence (AI). A data center can be as small as a single-family home or as large as an entire city block.

2024 saw the busiest year for data center construction in the Peach State.

Data center construction is skyrocketing across the Southeast. According to current data, Georgia hosts 105 data centers with 96 located in Atlanta alone. This surge in demand for data centers from major tech companies like Meta, Google, and AT&T is already increasing energy costs for everyday people like you. In March, a bipartisan bill to protect consumers from utilities imposing higher electric bills to offset costs from commercial data centers failed in the Georgia House.

Data centers are generating rollbacks on environmental pledges from major utilities.

In addition to consumer concerns over rising energy bills, data centers present growing environmental concerns. Data centers require a staggering amount of freshwater for liquid cooling, a process that keeps equipment from overheating. You may have heard an alarming statistic—that each query you make in ChatGPT needs 16oz, or one bottle, of water.

In Georgia, data centers consume approximately 300,000 gallons of fresh water daily, which is enough for over 1,000 households. Left unchecked, these centers threaten Georgians' recreational and drinking water supply—our scarcest natural resource.

The sustainability problem for data centers goes beyond water consumption. For now, natural gas is the primary fuel source for Georgia-based data centers. However, with projected demand exponentially increasing by 2035, we're already seeing utilities backtracking on pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Instead, electric utilities are doubling down on the use of dirty, coal-fired plants like Plant Bowen in Bartow County, GA which, according to the Sierra Club, is responsible for approximately 59 premature deaths annually from exposure to soot.

A Google data center in Lithia Springs, GA (AJC, 2020)

Data center campuses and the invisible threats to environmental health.

Georgia's rapid growth of industry also bears an overlooked environmental health issue for the people living, working, and playing next door to data center campuses. Residents impacted by these developments are saying that formal assessments of public health risks are being treated as afterthoughts rather than central to planning and execution.

Project Sail, a proposed $17B data center campus 45 miles south of Metro Atlanta, will become the nation's 4th largest facility upon completion. Its sheer size threatens to generate sustained noise pollution exceeding healthy thresholds for Coweta County families.

The World Health Organization links noise pollution, the second largest cause of environmental health problems, with premature hearing loss, cardiovascular disease, and poor mental health outcomes, with children and older adults facing heightened risk. Community members opposing the project say their concerns about excess water and energy consumption, destruction of pine forest, and noise pollution should be paramount as the developer behind the project is petitioning to rezone over 800 acres of conserved rural land.

Where do we go from here?

At E2I2, we're focused on real-world solutions. The explosion of AI means data centers are here to stay.

How can companies and states minimize environmental harm? Green City Times put together a great link of seven ways data centers can be more environmentally focused. We would like to add: seek community engagement and input before breaking ground.

Community members are resourceful and can anticipate problems and identify solutions. We encourage data centers and their largest clients to develop community advisory boards (CABs). CABs can provide critical input to ensure data centers minimize harm from noise pollution and increased emissions to the surrounding communities, as well as develop beneficial solutions.

Founders' Circle Corner

Green Horizon Founders' Circle
E2I2

Holly Schmidt-Davis
Sharon Marshall
DeLois Babiker
Louise Palmer
Babafemi Adesanya
Kristina Murphy

ICYMI: Positive Climate News

- A January 2025 report concluded that, in 2024, global investment in clean energy exceeded 2 trillion dollars for the very first time, marking a positive sign in the international push for a transition to renewable energy sources and electrified transportation. You can read more here.

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized its plans of expanding the boundary of the Okefenokee Swamp by 22,000 acres, which includes the site of a proposed titanium mine. Additionally, a bipartisan bill—the Okefenokee Protection Act—was introduced in February. Lawmakers in Georgia seek to prevent future mining projects for a minimum of 5 years to allow ecological surveys in the largest blackwater swamp in North America. Read more about the latest updates on the fight to protect the Okefenokee Swamp here.

- Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp is undergoing a hefty restoration project to revive it as a vital carbon sink in efforts to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Over 60,000 acres of wetland habitat have been rehabilitated by The Nature Conservancy and, upon completion of the project, could significantly reduce carbon emissions. You can learn more about this development here.