

Environmental Support Center

celebrates **15**

years of building power at the grassroots



Dear Friends,

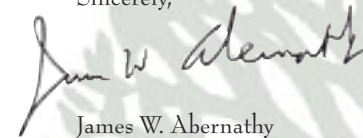
The Environmental Support Center is delighted to celebrate 15 years of building power at the grassroots.

ESC is the largest national organization focused solely on building the organizational capacity of grassroots environmental groups. We support groups that have vision, commitment and a sense of strategy, but need to increase and sustain their ability to deliver on their vision. We provide resources to help them strengthen their organizational capacity so that they can capitalize on the good ideas and talent they already have. Since 1990, we have been building power at the grassroots by providing resources to more than 2,200 nonprofit organizations in all of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

This booklet includes stories from ten organizations that represent the diversity of those whom we have helped over the past decade and a half. ESC fills an important niche in the capacity-building field by providing support to a wide range of environmental activist, environmental justice, and environmental health groups throughout the nation.

Mirroring the full range of groups we serve, the groups whose stories are included in this booklet range from small, all-volunteer, single-issue groups to large, fully staffed organizations, from start up organizations to long-standing ones. They work at the state, local, and regional levels. All of them promote environmental causes from the grassroots, and are stronger and more effective thanks to ESC's assistance.

Sincerely,



James W. Abernathy
Executive Director



ESC Staff

Washington DC Office

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Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice

Recognizing the direct link between economic and environmental issues, the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice develops strategies and perspectives on environmental degradation and other social, racial, generational, economic and gender injustices. The organization, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, represents indigenous people of African American, Latino, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander heritage.

“Our technology project partnered with ESC to provide computer training to around fifteen participating organizations,” said Richard Moore, Executive Director. “After five days of hands-on technology training, we saw increased efficiency and communication and better organization between groups. ESC also partnered with us for marketing training, increasing the self-sufficiency of people selling products such as chilies, jewelry and soaps to supplement the budget of their organization. It was an exceptional piece; the people learned an incredible amount through the professional training and through peer training as well.

“As a participant of ESC’s LEAP grant program, Southwest Network was able to concentrate on reviewing job descriptions, our mission, and trends to fulfill the needs of staff and organizations while becoming more effective with communication.”



the network Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network

The Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network is a grassroots, statewide advocacy organization working through education, policy advocacy and lobbying to become a leading voice for sustainable agriculture and a key catalyst for change in food and farming policies and practices in Washington State.



With a mission to bring communities together for environmental, economic and social benefit, the Network focuses on building relationships. As part of this goal, the support ESC provided for a leadership development and strategic planning retreat furthered the Network’s efficiency and communication.

Network Coordinator at the time, Bonnie Rice, said of the retreat: “We made

substantial progress in planning our program work for the next two years and in resolving some organizational issues...marking a significant step forward in our capacity building and organizational maturity, including the addition of 125 new members and ten thousand dollars in new and expanded membership. ESC’s assistance was critical to this growth in resources and effectiveness.”

Maryon Attwood, Executive Director, said, “The Environmental Support Center has supported our organization’s efforts to plan strategically and increase our capacity to fulfill our statewide mission for sustainable food and farming systems in Washington.”



(left page) A group of SW Network affiliates and staff participating at the NM Action in Santa Fe against the murdered women of Ciudad Juarez
(top) Young Sowing Seed Farmers in the Methow Valley
(right) Tanya’s Produce Vendor at Ballard Farmers Market

GreenFaith, an organization in Trenton, New Jersey comprised of people of diverse spiritual backgrounds working together for environmental quality, is a stronger, better organization thanks to ESC.

Within six months of receiving a TOA grant to develop a media strategy, they had received national press coverage for the first time in both the secular and religious media. The LEAP program enabled them to work with a branding consultant and a fundraising/development consultant.

“These are major, important steps forward for us, and ESC is a big reason that this can happen for us now,” said Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director. “We’ve also enjoyed the process of learning to take our capacity as an organization more seriously. I’ve grown as a leader and manager because of the thinking and planning that LEAP pushed me to do. We’ve grown as an organization because of the opportunity to undertake a thorough organizational assessment through LEAP – and that process has shaped profoundly the way we plan for our future. We are very, very grateful for the opportunities that ESC has offered us, and we’re proud of what we’ve been able to do with ESC’s support.”



Kahea, meaning ‘the call,’ is a community-based organization working to improve the quality of life for Hawai‘i’s people and future generations through the revitalization and protection of Hawai‘i’s unique natural and cultural resources. With a focus on issues where cultural rights overlap with the environment, Kahea strives to demystify the concept of paradise and educate people as to the fragile environment existing on the islands.

With a TOA grant from ESC, Kahea has continued to broaden the scope of their organization through education and advocacy, thereby increasing funding for and interest in projects such as saving the Hawaiian monk seal and creating a refuge for the coral reef ecosystem in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

“The Environmental Support Center understands the true meaning of *kokua* (*help*),” said Cha Smith, Executive Director of Kahea. “They know what grassroots groups need to function, survive and grow and they are there to help us get it. ESC has been a reliable pillar of strength for so many years. Well deserved congratulations are in order for the fifteenth anniversary of their phenomenal service to environmental justice. Mahalo nui loa!”

Gulls rest upon a sea turtle’s back on one of the many Hawaiian beaches.

A Brief History of ESC

1990-2005

In July 1988, at the first meeting of state environmental policy advocates, one issue discussed was that few of these organizations had resources enabling them to consistently and effectively represent the environmental community in state capitals. As a result, some of the participants formed a task force with funders and other environmental leaders to begin conversations, which eventually led to the creation of the Environmental Support Center (ESC) in early 1990.

The task force expanded to include leaders from environmental justice and environmental activist groups because they are just as critical to improving the environment, human health and community sustainability in the United States as the state environmental advocacy groups. The task force agreed that the Environmental Support Center should be formed to "...increase the effectiveness of state and local environmental organizations by providing assistance in the areas of fundraising, organizational capacity building, and communication." The first staff was hired and work began by October of 1990.

Since that time, ESC has worked to fulfill its mission by offering a variety of services. As 2005 approaches its end and ESC celebrates its 15th Anniversary, we continue to advance the original vision for the organization while adapting to changing circumstances. The need for our work is even greater than it was in 1988 and we will find ways to meet those needs even more effectively in the future.

Timeline

- 1990** The Workplace Solicitation was started to assist with the development of statewide or regional federations of environmental groups raising money together.
 - Training and Organizational Assistance (TOA) was created to help individual environmental organizations build their capacity with small, flexible grants.
- 1991** The State Environmental Leadership Program (SELP) became a program of ESC to focus on strengthening state environmental movements by enhancing the organizational capacity and policy work of state environmental policy advocates through network collaboration.
- 1995** LEAP (Leadership and Enhanced Assistance Program) was formed to address the needs of organizations that required intensive assistance in dealing with organizational change. LEAP involved organizational needs assessments and extensive advising and support to the participant groups' staff and board.
- 1996** The Environmental Loan Fund (ELF) was created to help organizations increase the diversity of their revenue streams.

- 1997**
 - The TOA program expanded to include a component that provided assistance for coalition building.
 - The Technology Resources Program was launched and focused on environmental justice groups in the Southeast and Southwest. It was developed to provide groups with an on-site technology assessment and the equipment and training needed to better achieve their environmental goals.
- 2000** With serious examination of ESC's work, the Strategic Plan 2000-2005 clarified our dual goals of restricting our support to environmental activist groups and increasing significantly our work with environmental justice groups.
- 2003**
 - LEAP introduced a workshop training component and a new ability of the groups to work with each other as they engage with consultants and participate in training programs.
 - The Workplace Solicitation Program, which had led to the creation of 19 statewide or regional federations that collectively raised over \$85 million for distribution to their members, began to be phased out since it had achieved most of its goals.
 - The State Environmental Leadership Program, which had developed over the years into a multi-service program for its members, became an independent organization.
 - Term limits provisions of the ESC bylaws started a process of significant change in the membership of our board, with the departure of many of our founding board members and others with long service. The board welcomed new members, while also asking a few of those who had departed to return after a brief absence.
- 2004**
 - The board created the Long Range Vision or "Futures" Committee to initiate a new strategic planning process to begin in 2006.
 - A new program, Fundraising for Sustainable Organizations or FUNDS, was conceived of to expand upon the objectives of the Environmental Loan Fund. FUNDS was developed to go further in helping groups increase their revenue diversity by providing assistance to develop a comprehensive fundraising plan and then offering small grants, technical assistance and loans to help participants implement those plans.
- 2005** ESC began a long-term Dismantling Racism Process with training for board and staff in March. This process was started to help ESC address the individual, cultural, and institutional impacts of racism on the organization and in our work with environmental justice and environmental activist groups. It will continue through 2006 and be integrated with the strategic planning process.



An all-Navajo environmental organization in the Navajo homeland, DinéCARE strives to educate and advocate for Navajo traditional teachings. Diné, roughly meaning 'the people,' is how the Navajo people refer to themselves. The Diné promote alternative uses of natural resources that are consistent with the Diné philosophy of Beauty Way.

"The government wants to develop natural resources, such as water, coal and uranium, but the grassroots people would have to be relocated and taken away from their grazing lands and put into HUD housing, which many are not adapted for," said Anna Marie Frazier, Executive Director. "We would mourn our loss of culture and our way of life. If we lose that, and lose our language, who will be after that?"

"Often they are intimidated by the government and do not want to speak out because it may jeopardize their assistance. DinéCARE is made of a grassroots people, often uneducated. ESC helped us build a committee to organize our efforts to resolve issues and problems. Some of the people have now become leaders in their community, able to coordinate with and support others because of ESC's support of us."

(right) Members of the community met to discuss solutions for a broken oil/gas pipeline break further up the mountain.

(below) The sludge that drifted down the river through the Red Valley Community.



Based in the capital city of Columbus, the Ohio Environmental Council strives to inform and empower citizens to protect their environment and conserve their natural resources across the state. OEC focuses on advocacy of critical legislative issues that impact the quality and protection of air and water and the preservation and restoration of Ohio's natural resources.

A non-profit organization, OEC relies on the support of foundations, community organizations and individuals who care about the preservation of the environment. As such, fundraising is a huge factor in how successful they can be. With ESC's support, OEC participated in a one year fundraising program to broaden ideas and methods and build confidence.

"Every board member committed to going with staff on major donor visits," said Vicki Deisner, Executive Director. "We raised 40k more in unrestricted funds for a total of 180k...giving us the opportunity to work on critical legislative, legal and unfunded issues such as the Cancer Amendment."

(above) In the wake of high profile environmental problems at Buckeye Egg and other factory farms around the state of Ohio, the Environmental Support Center provided key funding for strategic planning and coalition building for a loosely knit group of local grassroots groups across the state fighting factory farms.



Alternatives for Community and Environment is an organization based in Roxbury, Massachusetts that has built an impressive bottom-up model for environmental organizing and advocacy. Working within communities of color and lower income

communities – which are often hardest hit by environmental and public health problems

– to restore environmental justice, ACE impacts the entire nation by serving as a model for other communities seeking the

same objective. This vision ranges from clean water and green space to affordable public transit and quality schools and housing.

In achieving these goals, ESC has supported ACE through subsidies for fundraising training, helping them build skills to take fundraising efforts up a notch and through subsidies for their youth environmental justice summit, during which a couple hundred youth in New England gather for workshops in leadership and expertise while developing their own environmental justice principles.

Penn Loh, Executive Director of ACE, said the coalition building event “is a tremendous networking opportunity for the youth to build bridges to other groups doing the exact same thing and to learn from each other in this process.”



(this page) Photos from the Youth Environmental Justice Summit in July 2003
(right) Appalachian Voices staff and Board at an ESC-funded strategic planning meeting in November, 2004.

Appalachian Voices in Boone, North Carolina is dedicated to protecting and restoring the ecological integrity, economic vitality and cultural heritage of the Appalachian Mountains. Founded with the belief that Appalachia’s future lies in preserving the region’s environment, the organization works to fight against air pollution, mountaintop removal mining and the loss of public lands.

Between the assistance offered through the TOA program and the ELF program, Appalachian Voices has been able to expand their funding and programs as well as strengthen the effectiveness of the organization as a whole.

“Appalachian Voices was hit hard with the loss of foundation funding in the South and the loan money received from ESC was used to hire a Development Director, which was me at the time,” said Mary Anne Hitt, Executive Director. “Along with that, a grant allowed me to participate in the Complete Fundraiser program, giving me the necessary skills to do the fundraising. With that, Appalachian Voices was able to focus more time and energy into obtaining money from individual sources and we increased our funding from those sources by 80 percent in three years.

“ESC has been critically important to our evolution as an organization, and the funding for our capacity building work has helped us navigate successfully through all the challenges and opportunities we have faced.”



WildLaw

WildLaw

Native Seeds

Native Seeds/SEARCH



WildLaw is a non-profit environmental firm based in Montgomery, Alabama dedicated to defending the environmental integrity of human and natural communities through education, administrative actions and litigation. Without government enforcement of environmental laws, people turn to WildLaw to enforce the laws through citizen action and to expose violations of those laws.

“When I founded WildLaw in February 1997, I had no idea how to run a non-profit organization,” said Ray Vaughan, Executive Director. “Due to ESC’s help and training, we now have a finely crafted strategic plan that is being implemented, a great development plan with a new Development Director and a smoothly running organization. Through the help of the ESC, our strategic planning focused our work on two main areas: public forests defense and private forest conservation.



“Now, we are handling the leading national case over the new National Forest regulations, and more than 80 groups and companies in states throughout the South have joined the Southern Forests Network, the private forest education coalition we host. None of our past and current successes would exist without the ESC.”

WildLaw also has offices in Florida, North Carolina, Virginia and Utah.

In preserving the crop seeds that connect Native American cultures to their lands, Native Seeds/SEARCH, based in Tucson, Arizona, continues a cultural legacy. Across the greater Southwest, fields are planted and seed banks maintained and grown to preserve 2,000 varieties of arid-land adapted agricultural crops.

As former development director Deron Beal explained, “Native Seeds borrowed \$25,000 from ESC to cover the first year salary of our Farm Manager. With this staff position filled, we were able to plant more seeds – thus fulfilling our mission while being able to sell more seeds alongside produce, dried foods and crafts in our catalog and store. The sale of these items helps us to bring more unrestricted revenue into the organization and makes us less dependent on foundations.”

Executive Director Kevin Dahl appreciates ESC’s support to enable the organization to continue this mission. “Every ten years, we plant each seed in our 60 acres of farmland in order to maintain the seed bank and continue providing seeds free of charge to Native Americans and selling seeds to people across the country. Without ESC’s support, sustaining this project would have been a very difficult task.”



(opposite page) Happy Trails, a WildLaw program, works with the NAACP Youth Council and Paradise Community Center in Tuskegee to get local children out into the forest, most for the very first time.
(above) Amaranth diversity, one of the many plants whose seeds are maintained for future use.

Thank you

Contributors to ESC

The success of ESC over the past 15 years would not have been possible without the generosity of those who believe in our organization's mission. Foundations, corporations and individual donors who have given over \$5,000 over our 15 year history are listed below. Thank you to all who contributed.

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