

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

The Nature Conservancy
Jennifer Morris
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Ms. Morris,

The undersigned 158 organizations with over 3.5 million members working to protect forests as a critical climate justice solution, are writing to express our deep concerns with The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) pattern of promoting policies that favor the financial interests of the industrial logging and wood products industry at the expense of solving the climate crisis, protecting nature and advancing environmental justice. Our concerns, outlined in more detail below, were brought to your attention in a similar letter signed by 50 organizations on June 25, 2020. These concerns also parallel those expressed in two separate open letters sent to Congress signed by over 200 climate scientists across the country.¹

Your failure to address these concerns over the past year has left us no choice but to make our concerns public. We cannot remain silent while the world's largest conservation organization continues to ignore science and the concerns of environmental justice communities. In sum, TNC programs are promoting false climate solutions that center the financial interests of large lumber, pulp/paper, biomass/wood-pellet and other corporations that perpetuate carbon emissions, biodiversity loss, pollution and environmental injustice.

As an organization whose mission and brand is focused on protecting nature we find TNC's "natural climate solutions" program quite troubling. TNC consistently promotes wood products, biomass energy, ineffective carbon offsets and logging as climate, fire management and forest restoration solutions. This is providing green cover for countless corporations that are responsible for climate change, pollution and the destruction of nature, all of which disproportionately affect low income and communities of color. In various public policy arenas across the country, TNC is promoting wood markets and/or logging in direct conflict with environmental justice communities and scientific evidence regarding the impacts on climate, biodiversity, fire risk and human health. There is a recurrent pattern in which TNC omits the scientific research that reveals problems with the sort of logging projects that TNC is endorsing, and at the same time TNC overlooks or excludes concerns raised by those local groups that are most actively challenging the harms from this logging.

¹ <http://forestlegacies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Scientist-letter-to-Congress-13May20.pdf>
https://johnmuirproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ScientistLetterOpposingLoggingProvisionsInBBB_BIF4Nov21.pdf

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

For example, a recent scientific analysis documents that logging is the single largest driver of carbon emissions from US forests, six times greater than from fires, land-use change, insects, drought, and wind damage combined.² TNC consistently omits this fact in relevant communications and has refused to publicly acknowledge it. Equally concerning, TNC has refused to publicly acknowledge the well-documented disproportionate health impacts associated with the pollution emitted from the manufacturing of wood pellets and other wood products on environmental justice communities. Given TNC's power and influence as a \$1 billion/year nonprofit, your organization is effectively using large charitable contributions that should be spent on protecting nature to assist the forestry industry in blocking, ignoring and deflecting hard evidence and voices of concern detrimental to industry interests in a manner that is preventing vital progress on the climate, environmental justice and biodiversity crises we face.

At a time when we must be diligent and aggressive in our efforts to address the health impacts on communities of color overburdened with pollution, protect biodiversity and keep as much carbon -- including from fossil fuels and logging -- out of the atmosphere as possible, promoting wood products, forest biomass energy, logging and ineffective carbon markets is dangerous and irresponsible. Yet, TNC remains engaged in a partnership with Bain & Company that promotes an increase in wood consumption and the establishment of commercial tree plantations as climate solutions.³ As discussed above, hundreds of climate scientists and ecologists have concluded that we must reduce wood consumption to draw down atmospheric carbon and mitigate the climate crisis, and any increase in wood consumption equates to an increase in carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

There is ample evidence that corporations such as Drax and Enviva -- two of the largest corporate players in the biomass and wood pellet markets -- are harming forests and environmental justice communities across the South. Some 800 scientists globally have publicly expressed concerns that the production and burning of wood pellets to produce electricity will accelerate climate change and biodiversity loss.⁴ TNC has refused to join scientists, climate and forest protection organizations, and environmental justice communities in publicly opposing biomass as a false climate solution. Instead, TNC chooses to align with the Forest Climate Working Group (FCWG) which includes Enviva and Drax. According to the FCWG website its members "have found common ground on forest-related solutions to climate change."⁵ TNC's participation in this group amounts to a public endorsement of biomass.

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5108824/>

³ <https://socialimpactatbain.com/environment/environment-spotlight.html>

⁴ <https://empowerplants.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/scientist-letter-on-eu-forest-biomass-796-signatories-as-of-january-16-2018.pdf>

⁵ <https://forestclimateworkinggroup.org/about/>

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Finally, for its own financial benefit, TNC continues to promote forest carbon markets that allow fossil fuel polluters to offset their emissions with sham forest conservation efforts when the science is clear that a rapid phase out of fossil fuels is necessary to protect human health and avoid climate chaos. There is also ample evidence that forest carbon offsets allow corporations to continue to pollute while failing to deliver actual carbon emission reductions. We are dismayed with the extent to which TNC is focused on promoting false solutions that work for corporations and large landowners at the expense of a safe climate, vibrant natural systems and healthy communities.

We urge you to take immediate steps to align TNC's programs with its vision "where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake" including:

1. Publicly acknowledge the climate, biodiversity and environmental justice impacts associated with industrial logging and wood production and end the promotion of logging, wood consumption and the expansion of commercial tree plantations as a climate solution.
2. Eliminate all conflicts of interest with partners, investors as well as members of TNC's Board and Advisory Boards that have financial ties with, or who promote, large-scale extractive industries that exacerbate climate change, including specifically the Forest Climate Working Group and Bain & Company.
3. Reallocate resources and staff time to advance a massive scale up in strict protection for all primary and mature forests (including those recently burned, where fire creates ecologically vital "snag forest" habitat⁶) as well as vast acreages of currently degraded natural forests, such as across the coastal plain of the Southern US and numerous areas in the Northeastern US.
4. Stop promoting logging as a strategy for fuel reduction for managing wildfire and acknowledge the evidence⁷ that logging is exacerbating climate change and often fire intensity, while harming ecosystems that local organizations have identified as priority for protection.
5. Advocate for a shift in societal behavior away from wasteful consumerism of wood-based products in order to allow nature and communities to recover from logging and pollution impacts.

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/book/9780128027493/the-ecological-importance-of-mixed-severity-fires>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320722000520>

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

6. Cease support for forest carbon offsets and all forms of forest biomass energy.
7. Publicly acknowledge the disproportionate impacts of the forestry industry on environmental justice communities, including from pollution and flooding. Align all policy positions with environmental justice principles and the needs of affected environmental justice communities in relation to community health, safety and resiliency considerations, including pollution caused by wood product facilities.

As organizations whose constituents rely on us as leaders in the fight to address the climate crisis, protect biodiversity and advance environmental justice, we feel compelled to publicly confront TNC with these issues since you have thus far refused to take action to address these concerns.

We sincerely hope that given the gravity of the challenges we face that you will take these concerns more seriously and avoid further risking TNC's brand and credibility as an organization that is supposed to be focused on protecting nature, not destroying it and harming environmental justice communities in the process.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle

A Community Voice - Louisiana

Adopt-A-House/American Venice Civic Association

Advocates for Forest Carbon

Ahora Inc.

Alabama Interfaith Power and Light

Alaska Rainforest Defenders

Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Amis de l'Afrique Francophone- Bénin (AMAF-BENIN)

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Anthropocene Alliance

Applegate Neighborhood Network

Arm in Arm

Athens County's Future Action Network, acfan.org

Bark

Battle Creek Alliance

Bay Area - System Change not Climate Change

Bellingham Environment Centre

Biofuelwatch

Biomass Action Group

Black Christian Leadership Coalition

Black Hills Clean Water Alliance

Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project

Botanigrafika

California Chaparral Institute

Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development

Cherokee Concerned Citizens

Christians Caring for Creation

Christians For The Mountains

Citizens Committee for Flood Relief

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Clackamas County Climate Activists (CCAC)

Climate Hawks Vote

Climate Justice Alliance

Climate Reality Project - Charlotte

Coal River Mountain Watch

Coalition for Wetlands and Forests (CWF)

Coastal Plain Conservation Group

Colectivo VientoSur

Collective Medicine

Concerned Citizens of Cook County

Concerned Citizens of Franklin County

Concerned Citizens of Northampton County

Conservation Congress

Dogwood Alliance

Earth Action, Inc.

Eco Advocates NW

EcoEquity

EEECHO

Elders Climate Action

Empower Our Future - Colorado

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Environment East Gippsland

Environment Now

Environmental Protection Information Center - EPIC

FERN

For Kids & Nature

Forest Web

FreshWater Accountability Project

Fresnans Against Fracking

Friends of Mohawk Trail State Forest

Friends of the Bitterroot

Friends of the Clearwater

Friends of the Earth

Fund for Democratic Communities

Fund for Wild Nature

Gallatin Wildlife Association

Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance

GASP (Greater-Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution)

Global Justice Ecology Project

Grassroots International

Grazing Reform Project

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Great Old Broads for Wilderness - Central Oregon

Green Root Podcast

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

Greenpeace US

Heartwood

Hometown Action

Idle No More SF Bay/Indigenous Women of the Americas

IdleNo More SF Bay

Indigenous Environmental Network

Institute for Policy Studies Climate Program

Interfaith Climate Action Network of Contra Costa

John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute

Justice First Coalition

Kingdom Living Temple

Klamath Forest Alliance

Lakelands Citizens for Clean Air, Inc

Landelijk Netwerk Bossen- en Bomenbescherming

Last Tree Laws

LEAD Agency, Inc.

Los Padres ForestWatch

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Mason County Climate Justice

Massachusetts Forest Watch

Michigan Interfaith Power & Light

Movement Rights

MS Communities United for Prosperity

NAACP - Mecklenburg Chapter

National Coalition on Creation Care

Natural Resources Law

NC Climate Justice Collective

NC WARN

New Alpha CDC

New Jersey Forest Watch

Nicaragua Center for Community Action

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Olympic Climate Action

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

Organized Uplifting Resources & Strategies

Partnership for Policy Integrity

PeaceHost.net

Pee Dee Indian Tribe

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

People for Community Recovery

People's Justice Council

Pivot Point

Public Lands Media

Rachel Carson Council

Rainforest Action Network

Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales

Renewal of Life Trust

RESTORE: The North Woods

Richwood Advisory Council

Sacred America

Santa Fe Forest Coalition

Save Massachusetts Forests

Save Our Sky Blue Waters

Save our Soundside

Saving Island Green Wildlife & Beyond

SC Environmental Justice Network

SC State University Environmental Action Club

Sequoia ForestKeeper®

Somos Semillas Antillanas

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Southern Forests Conservation Coalition

Stand.earth

Sunflower Alliance

Sunrise Movement

Sunrise PDX

Swan View Coalition

Tennessee Heartwood

The Clinch Coalition

The Enviro Show

The Forest Advocate

The Vocal Seniority

U2U

UnKoch My Campus

VientoSur

Wasteful Unreasonable Use

Water Justice and Gender

Wendell State Forest Alliance

West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs

West Street Recovery/Northeast Action Collective

Whitney M Slater Foundation

OPEN LETTER TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: STOP PERPETUATING FOREST DESTRUCTION,
POLLUTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

April 5, 2022

Whole Earth Balance

Wild Heritage

Wild Nature Institute

Wilderness Watch

WildLands Defense

Windrose Fund

Wiyot Natural Resources Dept.

Women's Forest Sanctuary Land Trust

Yellowstone to Uintas Connection

Cc: TNC Board of Directors