

# Fighting the Wood Pellet Industry in Real-Time Part II: The Power of Collaboration

Dr. Treva Gear, Dogwood Alliance  
Georgia State Manager



# **ABANDONED**

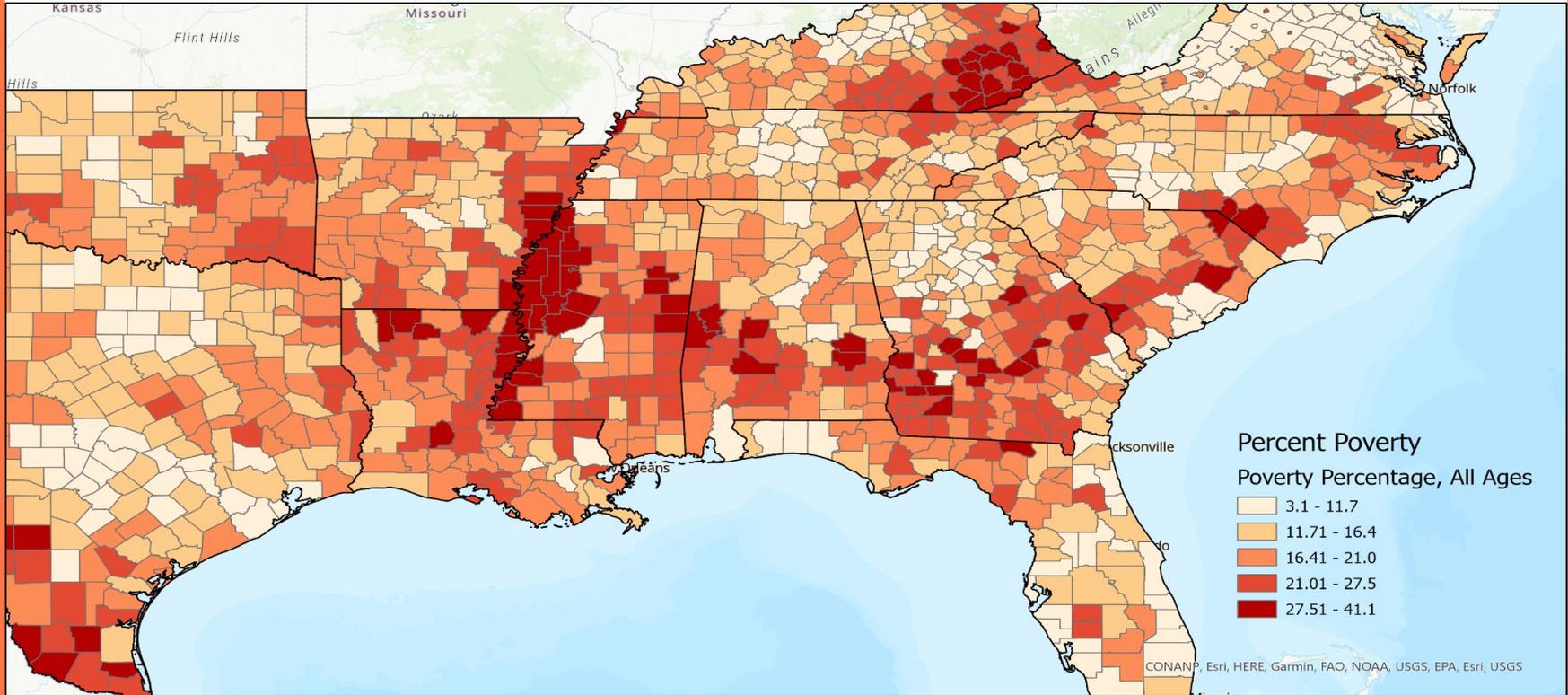
**GREED, NEGLECT AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN ADEL**

# Environmental Injustice: The Issue with Adel

- High levels of polluting industries in communities of color
- Lack of enforcement of environmental protection laws or ordinances
- Lack of communication by government and industrial agencies
- Community members uninformed and misinformed about polluting industries

**Wood Pellet Plants are 2x as  
Likely to Be in an EJ  
Community**

# Poverty in the US South



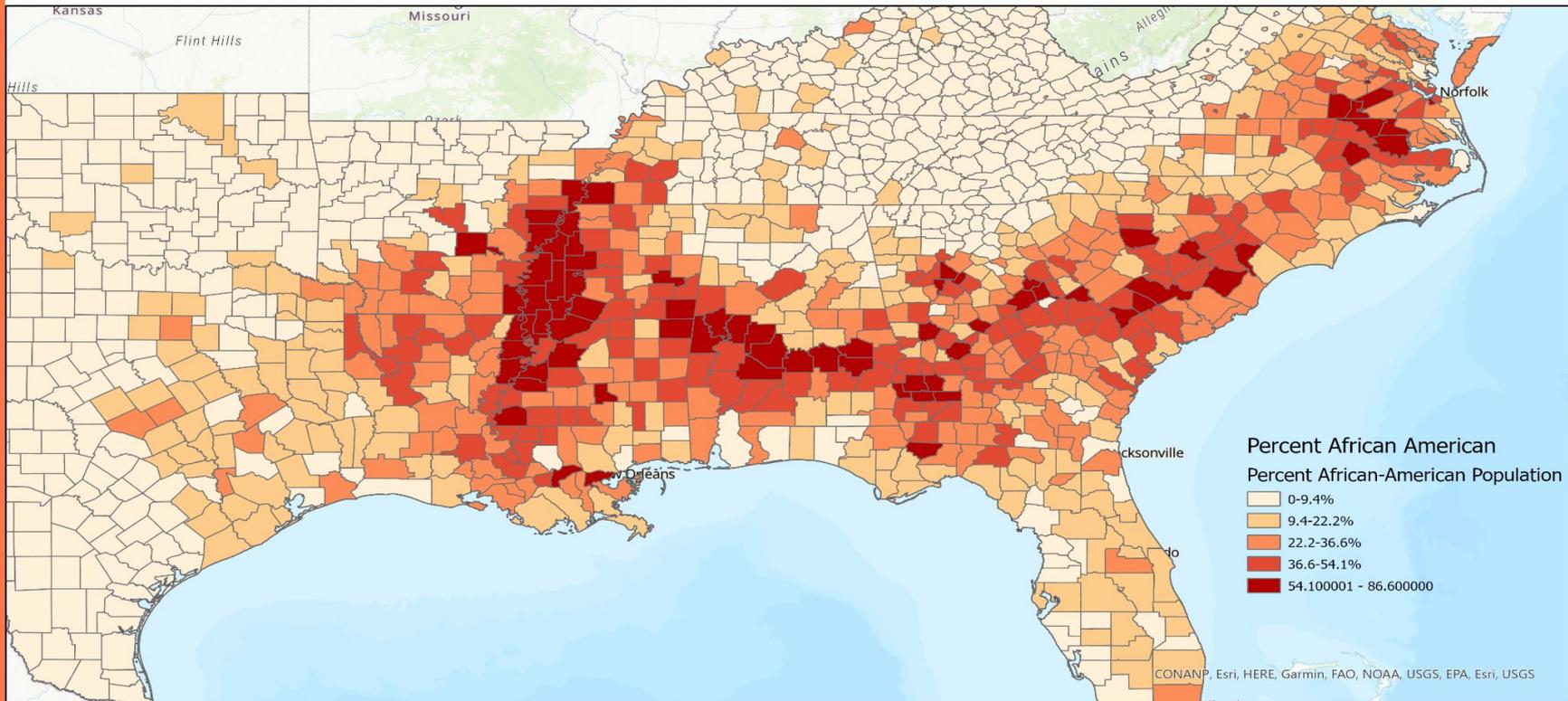
For more information, contact  
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist  
sam@dogwoodalliance.org | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

0 50 100 200 300 400 Miles



Percent poverty across all ages in the US South. Estimated for 2019 based on the 2010 census and the 2019 American Communities Survey. Data from the US Census Bureau.

# African American Population in the US South



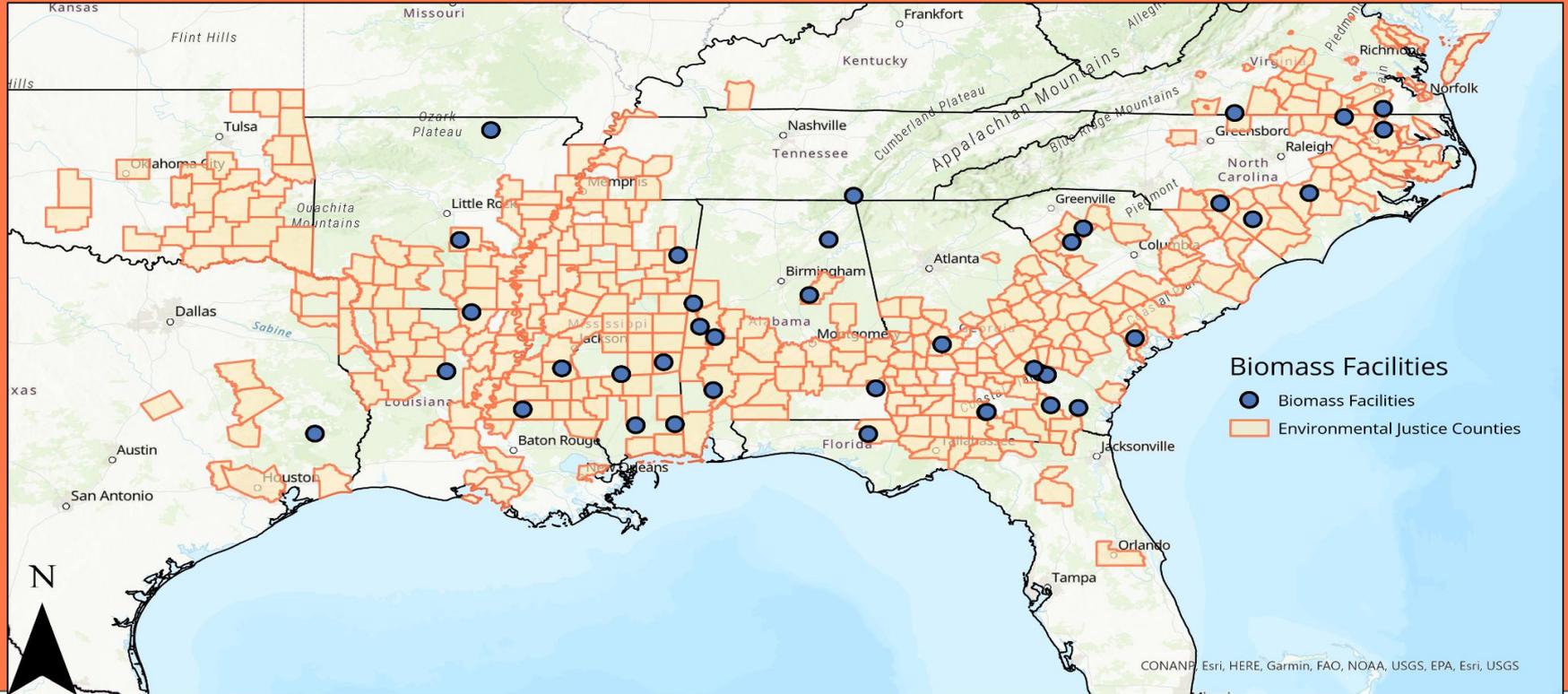
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African American population in the United States, estimated for 2019 from the 2010 census and 2019 American Communities Survey. Data from US Census Bureau.

# Biomass & EJ Communities



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0 50 100 200 300 400 Miles



Biomass facilities are a growing problem in the US South, and are twice as likely to be sited in Environmental Justice communities.

Data source: Koester & Davis (2018) Environmental Justice 11(2).  
Siting of Wood Pellet Production Facilities in Environmental Justice Communities ...  
<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/env.2017.0025>

# Adel, Georgia

Case-Study: A Community Fighting the Biomass Industry

# Demographics of Adel, GA

Population: 5,571

African-Americans: 46.5%

White: 43.9%

Hispanic/Latino: 3.5%

Two or more races: 3.8%

Asian: 2.3%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)



# Demographics of Adel, GA

Poverty: 23.1%

No Health Insurance: 27.5%



# Health Impact on Adel Community

- Decrease air quality  increase in respiratory illness
- Fine particulate matter
  - Asthma
  - Cardiovascular disease
- Nitrogen oxides
  - Smog and acid rain
- Wood dust and soot

# The Power of Grassroots Organizing

## Concerned Citizens of Cook County

- Convened on June 12, 2020 to discuss concerns
- Priority focus was environmental threats
- Learned that a wood pellet plant was coming
  - Renewable Biomass Group (RBG)
- The biomass battle begins
- Spectrum Energy applies for air permit in Oct. 2021
- Spectrum





# Adel Council votes 3-2 to approve rezoning for wood pellet plant

By Charles Shiver

The Adel City Council voted 3-2 Monday, Sept. 21, 2020, to approve rezoning land for a new wood pellet facility to be built in Adel.

A public hearing was held at the Tuesday, Sept. 8, meeting on the rezoning and annexation request by the Adel Industrial Development Authority (AIDA) for the new industry.

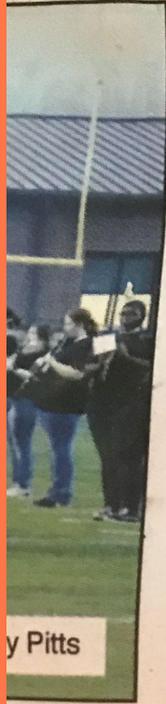
During Monday's meeting, the Adel City Council members did not discuss the request prior to voting. Protestors with signs against the wood pellet plant rallied in front of City Hall prior to the meeting and then carried the signs into the Council's meeting room



171.03 acres - located on Highway 41 South and located south of Faussett Road; west of Southern Railway; east of I-75 and the land of Otis Faussett

AIDA also asked to have the land rezoned from Agricultural (AU) to Heavy Industrial (HI) for the new industry.

During Monday's meeting,



y Pitts

**FRIDAY  
COUNTY**

day, Sep-  
Memorial  
towns and  
page 14

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” –Margaret Mead



# Our Actions to Protect Our Community

- Ads in local newspaper; billboards
- Commented on draft air permit to GA EPD
- Phone and email campaign to city council to vote “no”
- Members spoke at public hearing on Sept. 8, 2020
- Met with agencies and legislative staff
- Educated community on issues
- Requested open records
- Documentary

# 4C Key Collaborators



# The Power of Collaboration

- Dogwood Alliance
- Anthropocene Alliance
- Georgia Conservation Voters (GCV)
- Environmental Integrity Project (EIP)
- Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL)
- Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC)
- WWALS Watershed Coalition - Suwanee Riverkeepers

# Renewable Biomass Group (RBG) Opposition

*PROTECT* OUR CHILDREN  
*SAVE* OUR FORESTS  
*STOP* THE WOOD PELLET PLANT

[JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG](http://JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG)



Spectrum Energy Opposition

# STOP THE WOOD PELLET PLANT



[JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG](https://www.joincookcitizens.org)



# Mailers to Cook County Residents

## SPECTRUM ENERGY AS OUR NEW NEIGHBOR MEANS:

- **1,000** tons of air pollutants
- **332** tons of fine particulate matter
- **238** tons of nitrogen oxides
- **240** tons of volatile organic compounds
- **10** tons of toxic/cancer-causing pollutants
- **Dust, soot, smoke, & high potential for fire**

\*Statistics from Spectrum Energy air permit issued by GA EPD



**JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG**

**Is this a neighbor that you want next door to you? Do you want your children breathing this in?**

The impact of air pollution cannot be isolated to one location. Sign our petition to stop the Spectrum Energy wood pellet plant. Protect our community!



 Follow us on Facebook

# Early Accomplishments in the Fight

- Inspector General of EPA issued report of state non-compliance with public comment on final permits
- April 1, 2022 Georgia EPD began holding 30 day public comment period on “synthetic minor” air pollution permits
  - First time in over 20 years

# The Fight and Victories

- Renewable Biomass Group has not broken ground yet.
- Spectrum's air permit approved July 2022.
- Appeal made to Georgia Office of Administrative Hearings to revoke permit
  - December court date set to hear discrimination claims against GA EPD; then January 2023
- December 24, 2023 settlement reached with Spectrum
- January 2023 Title VI Complaint with EPA against EPD

# The 4C - Spectrum Settlement

## Community Engagement

## Air Monitors and Air Filters

## Reducing Dust, Noise, and Traffic

- o Spectrum will create and carry out plans, with comments from 4C, to minimize 1) the amount of dust in the air that could leave the facility's property, and 2) the impacts of truck traffic on the surrounding community.

# The Settlement: More Testing

## Testing, Monitoring, and Sharing Information about Pollution

- o Spectrum will provide 4C with information about the construction and operation of the facility, including all reports provided to the Ga. Environmental Protection Division (EPD), construction updates, and information about pollution control devices and release of pollutants.

## Settlement: More Pollution Controls

- o Spectrum will test for more hazardous air pollutants than required by EPD.
- o Spectrum will hire an independent engineer to monitor the biofilter (main pollution control device), measure the facility's monthly pollution emissions, and ensure that the facility is not releasing pollution beyond certain levels each month.

# Settlement: Permitting

## Permit Amendment and Phase II Construction Pre-Conditions

- o Spectrum will apply for a permit amendment from EPD to allow it to use an additional pollution control machine during the first phase of the facility's operation.
- o 4C will have the opportunity to comment and raise concerns about the permit amendment with Spectrum directly, but not with EPD.
- o Spectrum will not begin construction to start the second phase of its operations until it:
  - 1) proves to 4C that it has met the conditions of the agreement for 6 months, and 2) shows, based on all of the pollution information developed from its operations to that point, that its future operations will not release more pollution than allowed by EPD.

If you want to go fast, go alone.  
If you want to go far,

**GO TOGETHER.**

African Proverb



# For more information

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