
Georgia WAND (Women's Action for New Directions)

Environmental Justice and Climate Protection Conference

6/15/2023

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Georgia WAND empowers women to advocate for climate, environmental and social justice, grounded in racial equity.

Founded in 1984, Georgia WAND is a women-led organization that historically has sought to educate and advance policy and legislation that brings about lasting and systemic change in frontline communities.

Reality CHECK! -We now acknowledge the intersectionality between environmental social injustices from nuclear energy infractions and climate change whose impacts exacerbate the livelihood and viability of systemically underserved and under-resourced communities.

Georgia WAND continues to sound the alarm of environmental, climate and social injustices and strive to come up with healthy and equitable solutions to reduce nuclear harm in our communities.



Georgia WAND WORK

3 J's- Climate Justice, Environmental Justice and Energy Justice

Georgia WAND works statewide bridging the urban/rural divide in our frontline communities of Waynesboro, GA located in Burke County, and communities in the rural portion of eastern Georgia and Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) that are surrounded by the commercial nuclear power Plant Vogtle, weapons facilities & energy burdened neighborhoods in Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU)-V where residents are overwhelmed by exorbitant energy bills that go toward expanding nuclear power facilities in Burke County.

Grounded in racial equity our 4 Focus Groups of work:

- 1) Quality of Life issues
- 2) Health Hazards, including production of nuclear energy & weapons that impacts air, water and soil
- 3) Climate Justice
- 4) Gender and racial justice

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS

Our environment shapes who we are. Our wealth attainment, the quality of our schools, and our overall health and wellbeing are determined by our environment. Past and present environmental injustice negatively impacts all Georgians and effects the quality of:

- Air and water: GA is #10 of states with the highest amount of chemical releases that affect human development as of 2020 (Environment America, Wasting Our Waterways report). The Middle Savannah is also one of the top 20 waterways with the highest releases of chemicals affecting human development.
- Health: Georgia exceeds the National Average in incidences of Prostate Cancer (males), Breast Cancer (female), and Lung and Bronchus Cancer.
- Property: Proximity to certain facilities (e.g., landfills, waste sites, hazardous manufacturing facilities, power plants) reduce property values in their direct vicinity up to 5.3 percent. Such concerns range from concerns about health risks to the public image of the community, and impact property markets and values.
 - Education: 45 percent of Georgia public education funding comes from local (property) tax revenues. Low income communities house a disproportionate share of toxic waste sites and storage of contaminants in Georgia. This depreciates the land value, resulting in an unequal education funding system.
 - Wealth attainment: cumulative toxins and industrial pollution and waste depreciates land/property value, impacting property owners financial stability, and the local economy.

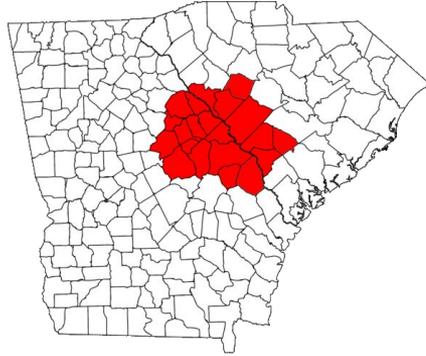


3 W's of Justice- Climate, Environmental & Energy

- **Underserved Communities**
Lack resources to fight back
- **Resource Scarcity**
Valuation, Where to start
- **Under Valued**
Major polluters can cause low property values which then impacts quality of our schools, housing stock and more.

Where is the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA)?

CSRA is made up of 14 Southeast Georgia Counties including Burke and Richmond along the Savannah River and SRS in Aiken, SC



**Burke
County in
the
Crosshairs!**

Plant Vogtle Towers 1,2,3 and 4 (towers 3 & 4 are constructed, which is the first new build in 40 years)
Surrounded by SRS weapons facilities & other industries.

BE in the KNOW!



- Tritium, Plutonium and Uranium are all environmental bi-products deployed nuclear weapons/energy production.
- Savannah River Site (SRS) – only place in the country that produces tritium (and plutonium in the past) and has recently increased production.
- Other Private Industries Proximity
 - Paper plants
 - Polymer plants
 - Beef and cotton industry
 - Agriculture

There are plans for a new mission Pit Production at SRS in the future

Plant Vogtle – commercial nuclear energy plant in Waynesboro,GA in Burke County.

The cost of two nuclear reactors being built in Georgia is now \$28.5 billion, more than twice the original price tag.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a total of up to \$12 billion in loan guarantees to Georgia Power Company (GPC), Oglethorpe Power Corporation (OPC), and three subsidiaries of Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG Power) to support the construction of Vogtle Units 3 and 4. Unit 3 went online last year and is now offline due to Mechanical issues and Unit 4 is expected to be online in the second quarter of 2023

ALA (American Lung Association)- April 2023 Annual State of the Air Report

- 1 Georgia city on the Most Polluted list for PM: Augusta,GA (CSRA) in Richmond County.
- 4 counties got a "D" for ozone, all metro Atlanta: DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Henry. (We had more exceedances last summer than the previous few years, it was hot and dry May-June and we're back to pre-lockdown driving patterns.)



A view of Augusta from across the Savannah River.(August Station-WRDW)

- 3 counties get a "D" for PM, all non-metro Atlanta: Dougherty, Houston, and Richmond, and 2 get a "C": Washington, Bibb.

Airborne particulate matter (PM) is not a single pollutant, but rather is a mixture of many chemical species.

DEEPER FINDINGS: Five metro Atlanta counties earn a failing grade for air quality: Photo & Article by Nedra Rhone, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Burke County Public Health Crisis

In 2019, Georgia WAND started the work of establishing a public health baseline metric in partnership with Georgia State University's Master of Social Work department. The data obtained spanned approximately 50 years and 36 health categories. It compares 10 years before Plant Vogtle start-up to 18 years after the start up in Burke County. Although the work was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings from this study are highlighted in Figure 1.

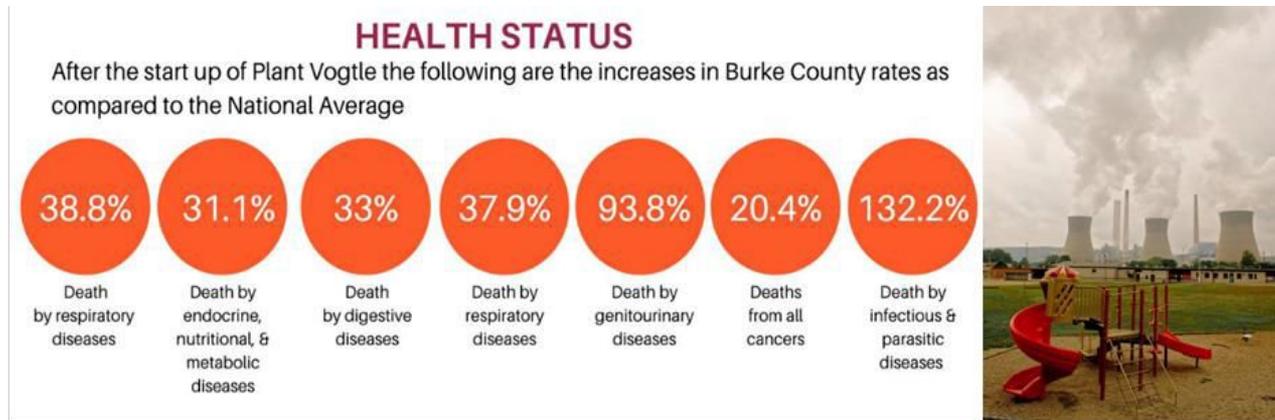
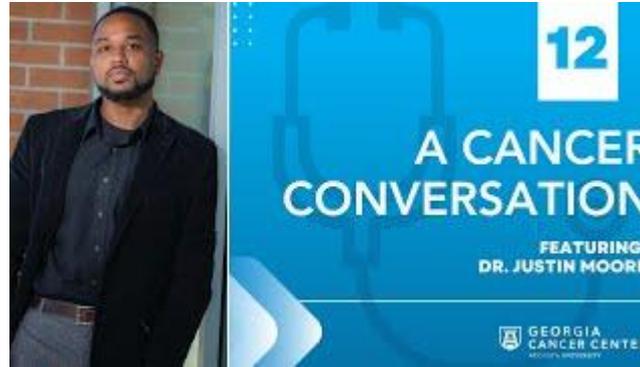


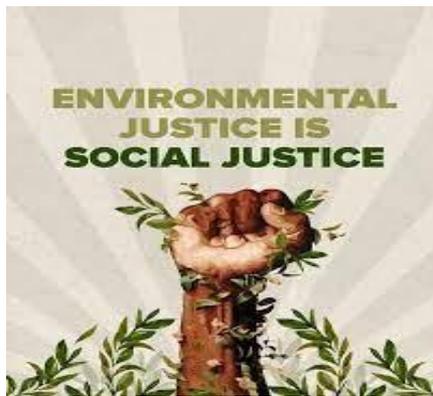
Figure 1 shows percent increases in death rates in Burke County, GA due to various diseases after the start-up of Plant Vogtle (left) and a picture taken from an elementary school next to plant Vogtle (right).

Burke County,GA & Richmond County- Designated Cancer Hot Spots

[I-TEAM: Deadly cancer hotspots
uncovered across the CSRA](#)



Dr. Justin Moore, Social Epidemiologist
“Race” and “Place”- social structures to state of health.



Climate Justice *** Environmental Justice **** Energy Justice

Georgia WAND's Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Clean Air Campaign: The Impacts of Environmental Contamination on CSRA Communities Air Quality

This campaign will involve launching a civic engagement and awareness grassroots campaign around the impacts of environmental contamination on CSRA's air quality and consistent issues with upper respiratory problems, cancer related illnesses, and deaths.

This project will be the first step in understanding the contribution of air quality to environmental exposures in Burke and Richmond Counties. Technical activities will include mobile air quality monitoring to identify potential hotspots of air toxics, criteria pollutants, and greenhouse gases in environmental justice communities in these counties. Low-cost sensors will be deployed in the selected neighborhoods to understand temporal variability in air pollutants and exposure analysis conducted.

BENEFITS

The environmental/public health results the project will achieve include:

1. A comprehensive baseline study of community-scale air pollution and exposure risk assessment in the Central Savannah River Area, specifically Burke and Richmond County, Georgia.
2. Development and establishment of an air quality monitoring network for the community, with special focus on air toxics.
3. Documentation and reporting of community-scale air pollution maps to understand air pollution hotspots in the community and identify the primary sources and their contributions to criteria air pollutants and air toxics in the region.
4. Establishing a system to provide enhanced data and information access to the community members on air pollution.
5. Training and education curriculum for students in the community.
6. Documentation and prioritization of local air pollution hotspots for outreach and engagement with local agencies for effecting change.



Georgia WAND's CSRA Work

- **Public health assessments: Identify how much of air pollution is contributing to health inequities experienced**
- **Identify the cumulative effects of exposure to pollution - air and water**
- **Public Education: Community led air monitoring program**
- **Capacity building: Mapping tools to fight back**
- **Grassroots organizing: Use data to inform our statewide EJ Bill**

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What else can we do about it today? **How can we communicate with the rest of the state of Georgia regarding this issue?**

Georgia Environmental Justice Act

Georgia EJ Bill- create a Commission with regulatory & compliance authority and tasked with developing policies and processes that:

- Protect the health of rural and urban communities historically overburdened with legacy pollution, under-resourced and underserved with targeted investment;
- Set policies for sharing the burden of energy production & waste disposal throughout the state.
- Expanding fair housing law to include environmental justice
- Make Environmental social justice part of the Georgia Ballot measure

Similar to our neighbor state South Carolina's [Act 171](#) created an EJ Advisory Committee commissioned by the General Assembly and tasked with the following:

- Passed the S. C. General Assembly in 2007, mandated that a governmental advisory committee be created; consisting of approximately 12 agency heads or their designees and 3 academia.
- Task to study and consider existing practices at state agencies related to environmental justice in economic development and revitalization projects in this state and to make recommendations.



Thanks for listening!



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