

SCEN BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The Southeast Climate and Energy Network (SCEN) stands as the largest regional collaborative of clean energy and climate change advocates and organizations in the region. With nearly 200 member organizations and advocates working from Chesapeake Bay to the Gulf Coast and from Appalachia to the Everglades, **the mission of the Southeast Climate & Energy Network is strategic coordination among organizations in the Southeast to secure fair, just and science-based climate and energy policies.**

The network now has deep roots in at twelve states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

SCEN originally served as a fluid space to support national, regional, state and local organizations for effective education and push for climate and clean energy solutions in Congress. The initial focus of SCEN was to coalesce a diverse network of organizations in the Southeast in support of a national effort for a Federal climate and energy bill, while building more capacity in the region to effectively work on climate and clean energy issues on the local, state and federal levels.



As early as October 2008, stakeholders in the environmental community identified a clear gap and need for climate and clean energy organizing in the southeastern United States. Participating groups included national organizations, such as the Energy Foundation, League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Interfaith Power & Light, and U.S. Climate Action Network, as well as regional groups, such as the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Southern Environmental Law Center. among others.

The network then evolved to become an open and safe space to share ideas and best practices. Over the next several years, SCEN hosted numerous regional bi-annual summits in the southeast, including in Charlotte NC, Atlanta GA, Charleston SC, New Orleans LA, Raleigh NC, and St. Petersburg FL.

After the failure of the climate bill in 2010, SCEN turned its focus to enhancing the breadth and impact of its members while at the same time supporting national campaigns led by the broader climate community. Some of the biggest threats to climate and energy impact southeastern communities the most, such as threats to the Environmental Protection Agency's authority to regulate pollution and emissions under the Clean Air Act, Congressional efforts to continue fossil fuel subsidies, breaking the grip of powerful investor-owned utilities, and ongoing damage to communities resulting from fuel extraction, like coal and natural gas hydraulic fracturing.



We realized that only a strong network of coordinated organizations can elevate and transform the way the Southeast produces and uses energy—moving away from fossil fuels while transforming an economic downturn into an opportunity for a new energy economy. The network began providing support for state and utility regulatory work by member organizations.

In 2013, it was decided that SCEN would undergo a strategic planning process, with funds from the Energy Foundation. While the SCEN Coordinator at the time, Rudi Navarra, did an excellent job in developing a clear process that included a committee and several key actions, the strategic plan was never completed due to a series of contextual factors beyond the control of the SCEN Coordinator. Notwithstanding, the process itself is considered valuable and will help guide the current re-analysis of SCEN.

STAFFING

Day-to-day operations are managed at SCEN by a network director. Employed by the US Climate Action Network, the Southeast Regional Coordinator's responsibility is to build, manage and strengthen the southeastern network of organizational partners engaged in climate and energy policy initiatives.

Led by Kellyn Garrison for its first 5 years, the SCEN Network was grown from just handful of states and only 25 member organizations to what it is today. In 2013, Rudi Navarra succeeded Kellyn in her role bringing a set of skills and experience in communications, civic engagement, community organizing, and political campaigns. In March, 2016 Rudi transitioned to a position with Solutions Project, and has since been replaced by consultant Alexander Easdale, who brings a wealth of experience working in the nonprofit sector, government, business and academia in the U.S. and in Latin America.

BRIEF BACKGROUND ON USCAN

The US Climate Action Network was founded in 1989, to coordinate US non-governmental organization (NGO) voices in UN climate negotiations. USCAN's vision is a powerful, inclusive, diverse, interconnected, nimble US climate movement that operates effectively from local to global scales towards promoting: a renewable energy future; an end to fossil fuels and net greenhouse gas emissions; prepared and resilient communities; and equitable and just transitions. USCAN is currently an increasingly diverse and growing network of 160 member organizations dedicated to advancing climate action, maximizing stakeholder involvement while moving groups from shared vision to collective action.

Our work and our network is guided by the following principles (these values relate to both USCAN and SCEN):

1. **Be Inclusive** - USCAN is a space where a broad and deep network of civil society organizations can establish the relationships and processes needed to achieve transformational change in climate policy. We value diversity, rejecting any form of mistreatment, discrimination or oppression.



2. **Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality** - The power of the network is derived from the contributions and unique expertise of our local, state, national, and international members. Groups working on similar issues with compatible visions consciously act in solidarity and, when appropriate, support each other's work.
3. **Let People Speak for Themselves** - Members respect each other's rights to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation.
4. **Elevate Community-based Approaches** - Members are asked to ensure that the knowledge, experience and wisdom of grassroots organizations are drawn upon as problems are defined, solutions are generated and strategies are laid out.
5. **Make Justice and Equity Central to Climate Policy** - We strive to be accountable to those communities that are disproportionately impacted by climate change. As a network, we recognize the past and current imbalances in power, access, branding, and funding among our members and model a more just and balanced system.
6. **Own the Network** – Members hold themselves and each other accountable, creating an environment that facilitates our ability to build trust, solidify connections, create shared meaning, and achieve our common goals.

SCEN'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The primary objective of the SCEN network in its eighth year has been to keep our members connected, aligned, and producing the power it will take to bring about a just transition from fossil fuels.

Despite the ever-increasing body of evidence pointing to the devastating impact of climate change- particularly in low income communities and communities of color, the issue has been met with opposition from important business and political sectors that believe they stand to lose from policies that move us away from an overreliance on fossil fuels. Opposition is greatest in the South, which is a region on the frontlines of struggles for racial, economic and environmental justice. The largest carbon polluters in the U.S. power sector are in the South, with extreme extraction practices of fossil fuel companies having a devastating impact on local ecosystems and economies. Many elected officials are beholden to supporting a continuation of current energy policies while a growing number of advocates, activists and allied organizations fight for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In light of the above, SCEN has several natural abilities to play an important role in both facilitating, empowering and supporting its members.

1. SCEN works with Big Green organizations and can effectively connect those organizations with local, grassroots organizations. These are collaborations that do not regularly occur, and an important area of opportunity for both SCEN and USCAN.



2. SCEN can continue to set a good example (especially in the context of point 1 above) by implementing and living the Jemez Principles. Specifically, by going about its work in a supportive fashion without an attitude of *taking over*.
3. SCEN has and needs to increase lifting-up the Movement's leadership in the South as a partnership, moving us away from typical patron-client relationships, to instead cultivating relationships and partnerships born on equal footing.
4. SCEN has the potential capability to elevate thinking around equity and energy on a global scale. Its work in the Southern U.S. can teach other parts of the country and the world. Conversely, lessons learned elsewhere (including other countries) should and will guide initiatives in the South.

An important objective of SCEN is to lift-up the voices of environmental and non-environmental groups within diverse communities of color. As part of this work, SCEN supports the work of the Advancing Equity and Opportunity (AEO) Collaborative, by co-chairing the Clean Power Plan working group. The AEO collaborative and the SCEN network together are building connections and alignment in the Southeast for advocates.

The immediate work of SCEN is to consolidate its wide network to prioritize working with those members that have been the most active and bought in within the network. To do so, its Steering Committee has already been surveyed, while a membership-wide survey is forthcoming. This feedback mechanism will guide the development of 2 to 3 working groups for our work in 2017, based on topics and issue areas identified by the membership. An important cross-cutting priority for our network will be to increase the capacity of environmental justice and other grassroots community based organizations in the Southeast in areas such as increased sustainable funding, legal support, organizational capacity, organizing acumen, and other needs identified by our membership.

1. Other points to bear in mind and explore in further detail are:
 - a. Increased work around *Equity* – strategies around this element will be discussed in depth;
 - b. What networks different groups are a part of - including alliances, communities of practice, coalitions and movements - and where there is potential for cross-pollination; and,
 - c. Garnering what shared strategies relate to tangible goals in the different SCEN regions, as well as opportunities to work in a localized fashion with grassroots groups around specific issues within those states, regions and municipalities.

INTERIM ACTIVITIES

Until the new working groups are voted upon, SCEN will work on the activities outlined above, while continuing to set the agenda priorities and manage monthly conference calls for the following working groups:

- 1- Survey the entire network on outlined priorities and to have them choose the main topics that will become two user groups that will share information and presentations through



monthly calls that may lead to direct collaborations around specific issues in the 13 SCEN states.

- 2- In conjunction with the USCAN Annual Conference to be held in Richmond, VA in June 2017, convene the Network to a conference whose agenda will be designed in coordination with the co-chairs of the 2 user groups.
- 3- AEO's Equity in the Clean Power Plan call, with the goal of organizing attendees to create and deploy work products that will move states towards equitable deployment of the Clean Power Plan in Southeast states

CONCLUSION

Advocates in twelve states, and in our nation, will continue to benefit from the important work carried out by the SCEN network over the next two years as we transition SCEN's structure and governance away from being a USCAN program. Specifically, our work seeks to positively impact entire communities, states and regions, with an emphasis on lower-income communities, communities of color, indigenous peoples, immigrants, women, and others who currently bear the brunt of the fossil fuel industry and are the first to be adversely affected by climate change.

We strive to be accountable to these communities, with justice and equity featured at the center of our common policy designs as we look forward to building upon the success of this Network for the past 8 years, while working in a more targeted and impactful fashion.