

# Industrial Logging and Environmental Justice in the U.S. South

Dr. Treva Gear, Concerned Citizens of Cook County  
Adam Colette, Dogwood Alliance

# Environmental Justice (EJ): What is it?

- The **fair treatment** and **meaningful involvement** of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the **development, implementation, and enforcement** of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (EPA, 2022).

# Fair Treatment

Means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from operations or policies

- industrial
- governmental
- commercial



# Meaningful Involvement

Oppportunity to participate in decisions

Community concerns are considered in decisions

Decision makers seek out involvement of impacted people

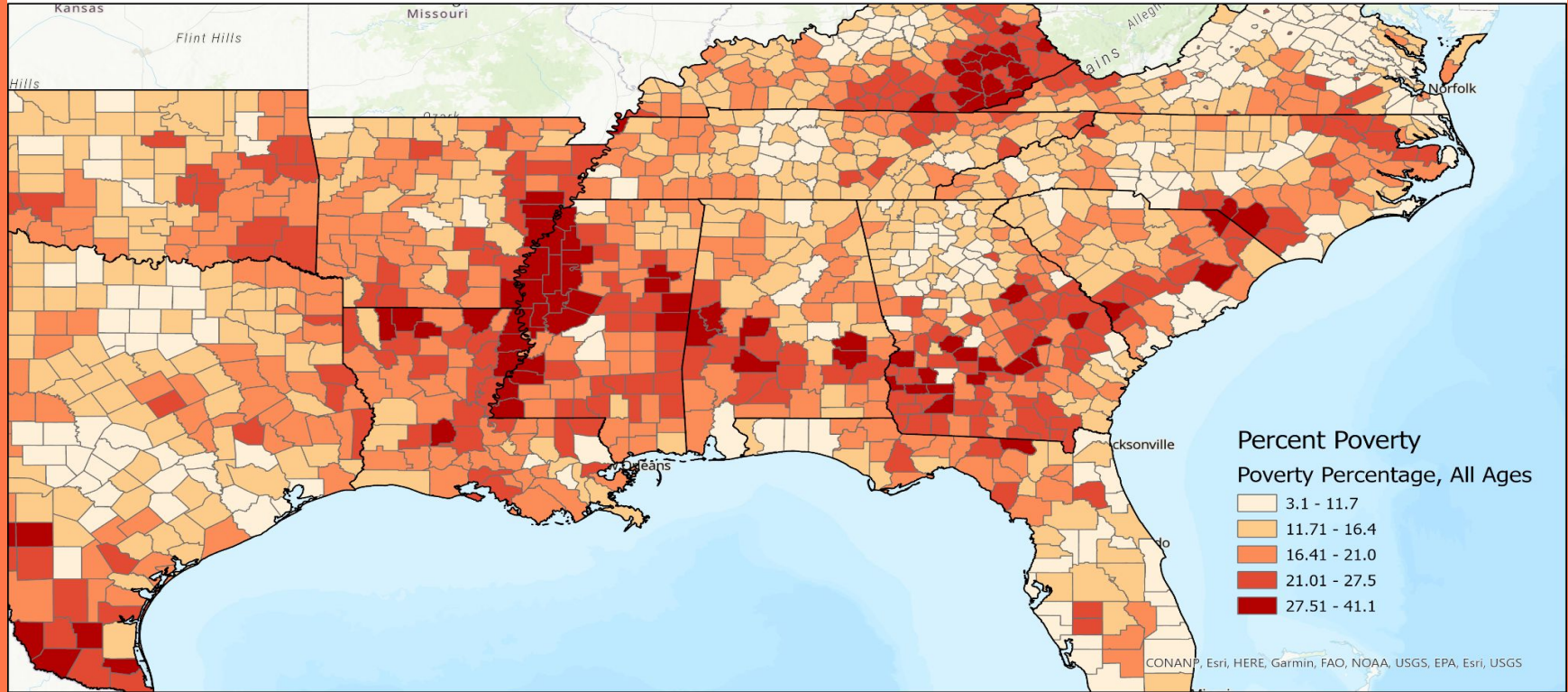


# Environmental Injustice: The Issue with Adel

- 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

**Industrial Logging is an  
Environmental Injustice**

# Poverty in the US South



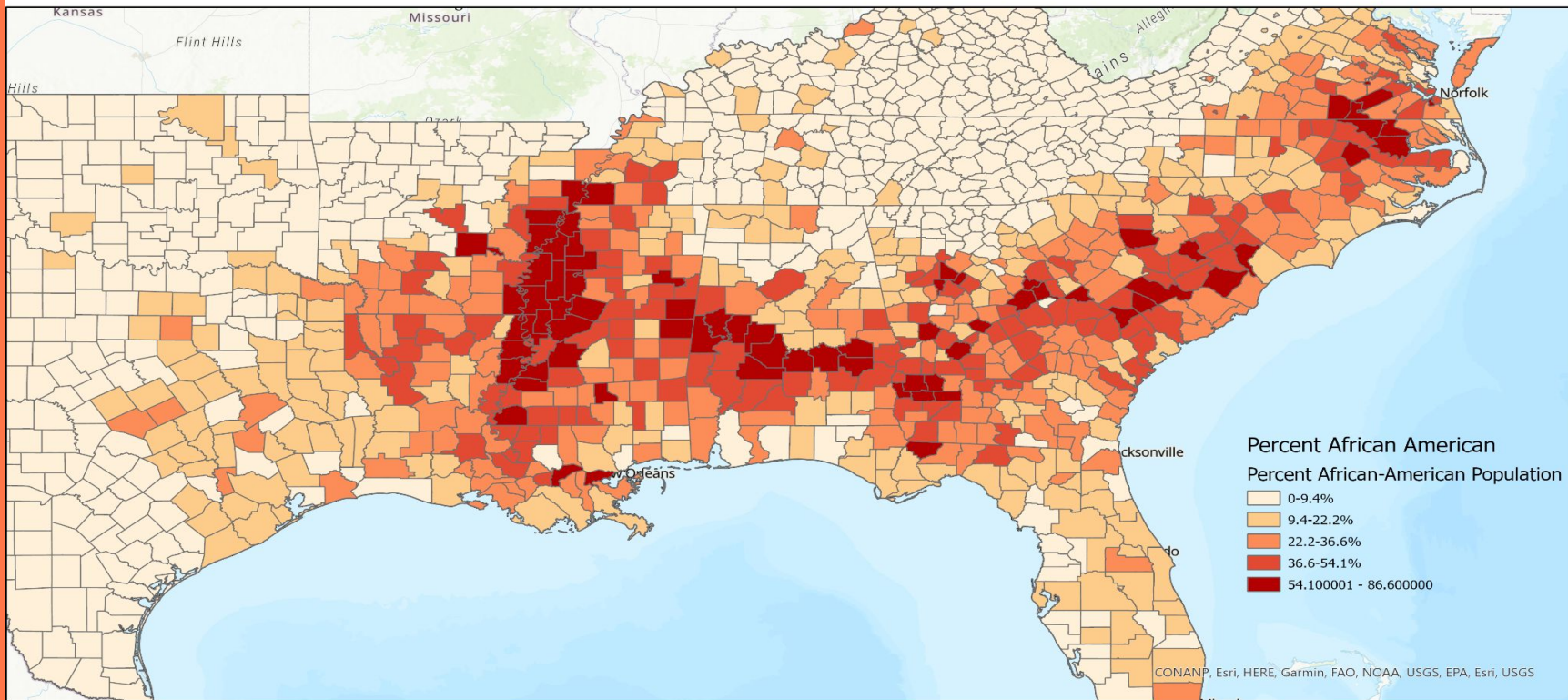
For more information, contact  
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist  
[sam@dogwoodalliance.org](mailto:sam@dogwoodalliance.org) | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

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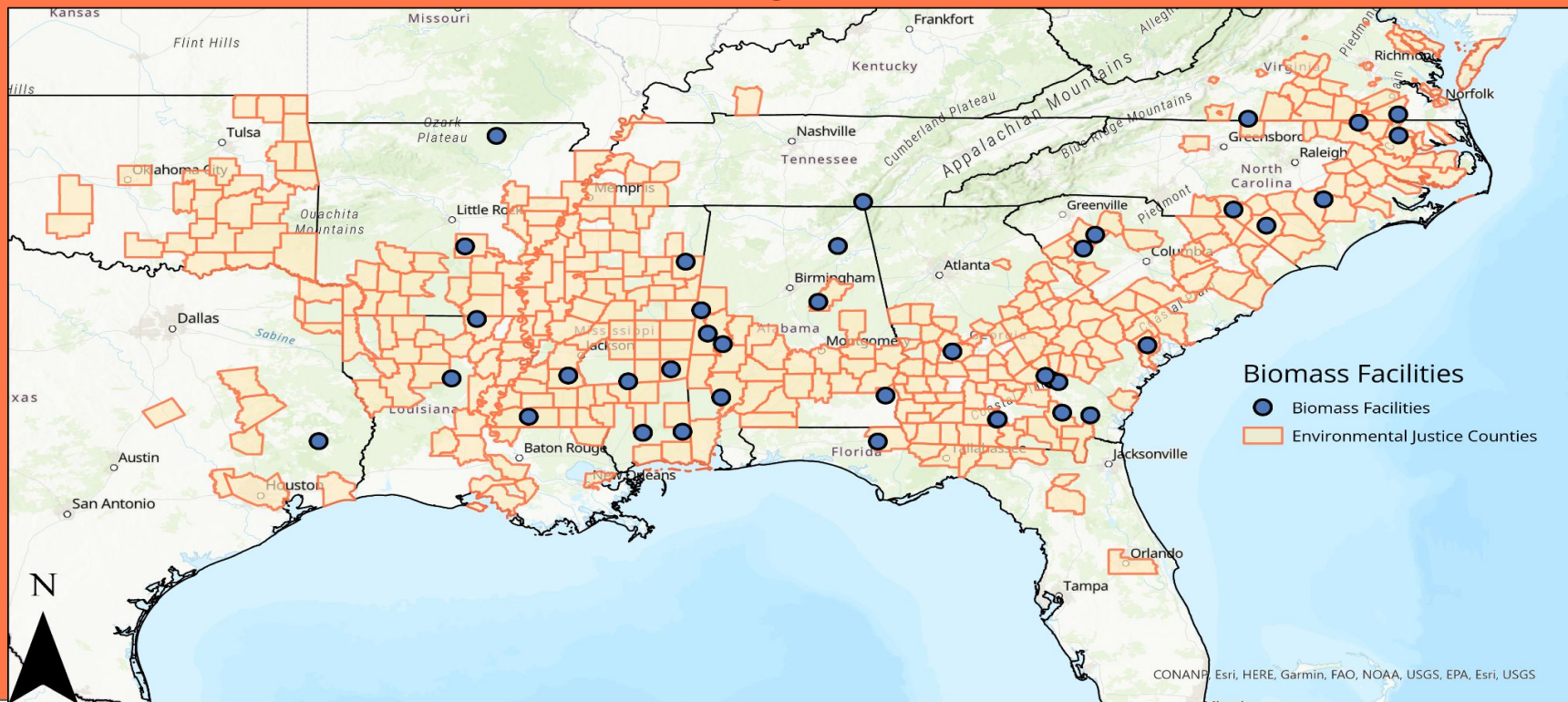
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African American population in the United States, estimated for 2019 from the 2010 census and 2019 American Communities Survey. Data from US Census Bureau.



# Biomass & EJ Communities



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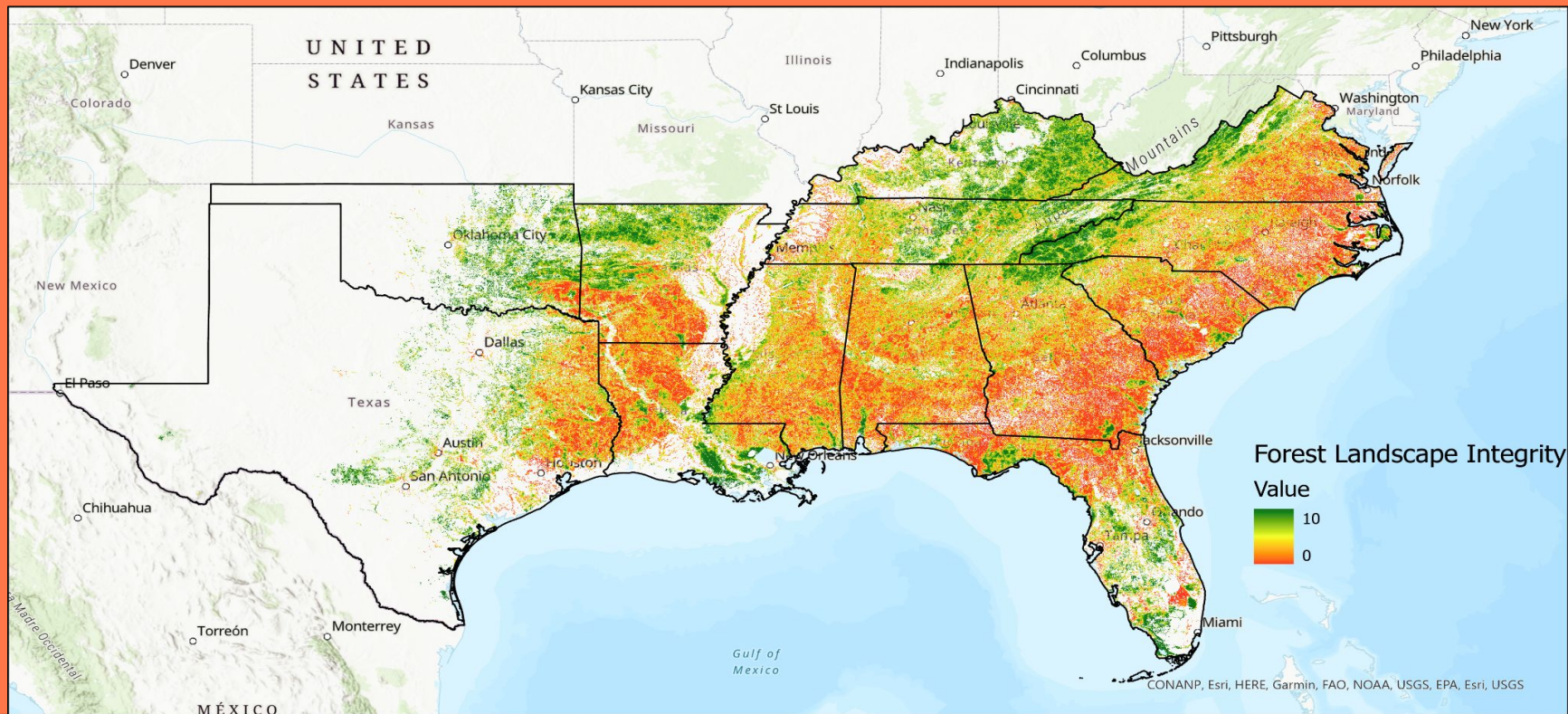
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Miles



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>

# Forest Landscape Integrity In The US South



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0 70 140 280 420 560 Miles

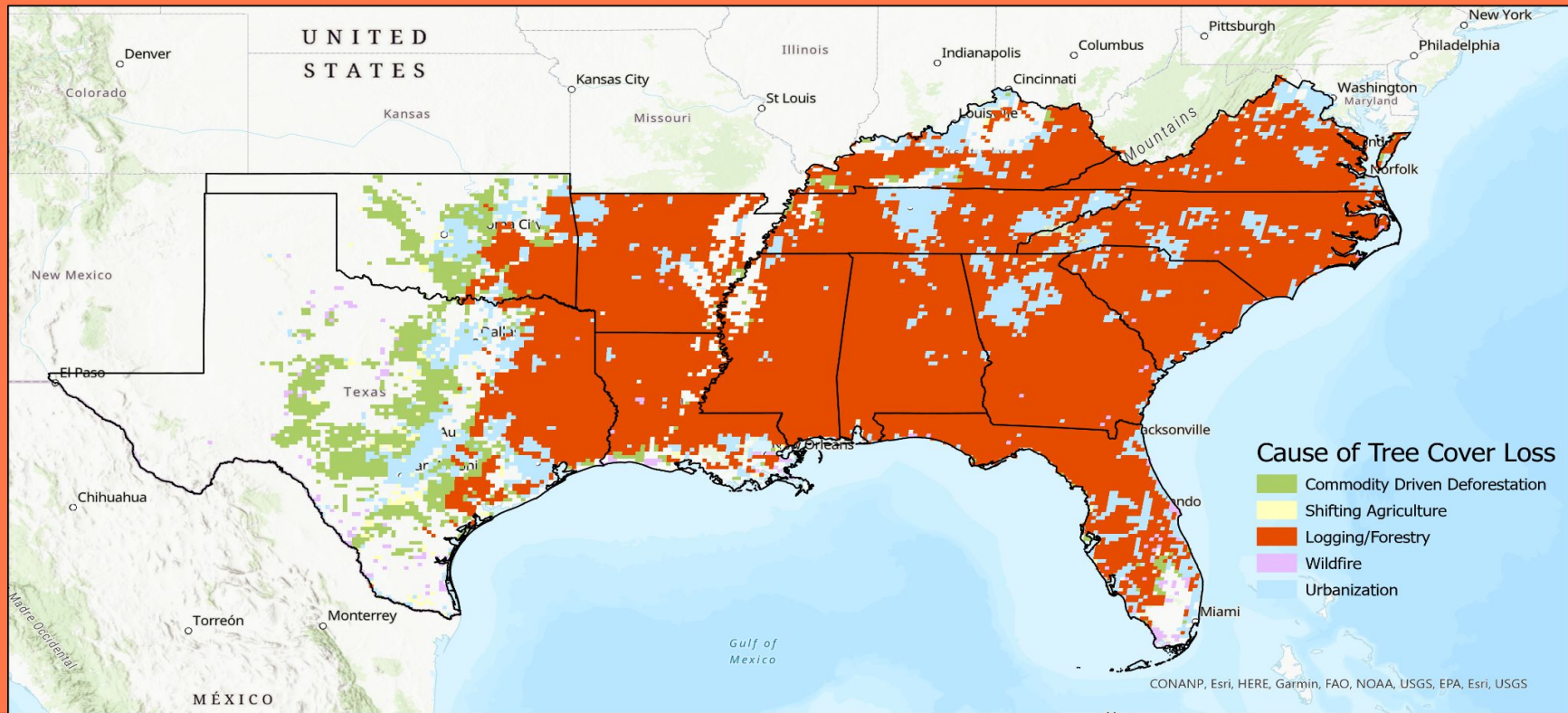


Forest landscape integrity index - FLII scores range from 0 (lowest integrity) to 10 (highest). Reds and oranges indicate poor forest integrity.

Data from: [forestintegrity.org](http://forestintegrity.org)  
Grantham et al. (2020) Nature Communications 11(5978).



# Cause of Tree Cover Loss In The US South



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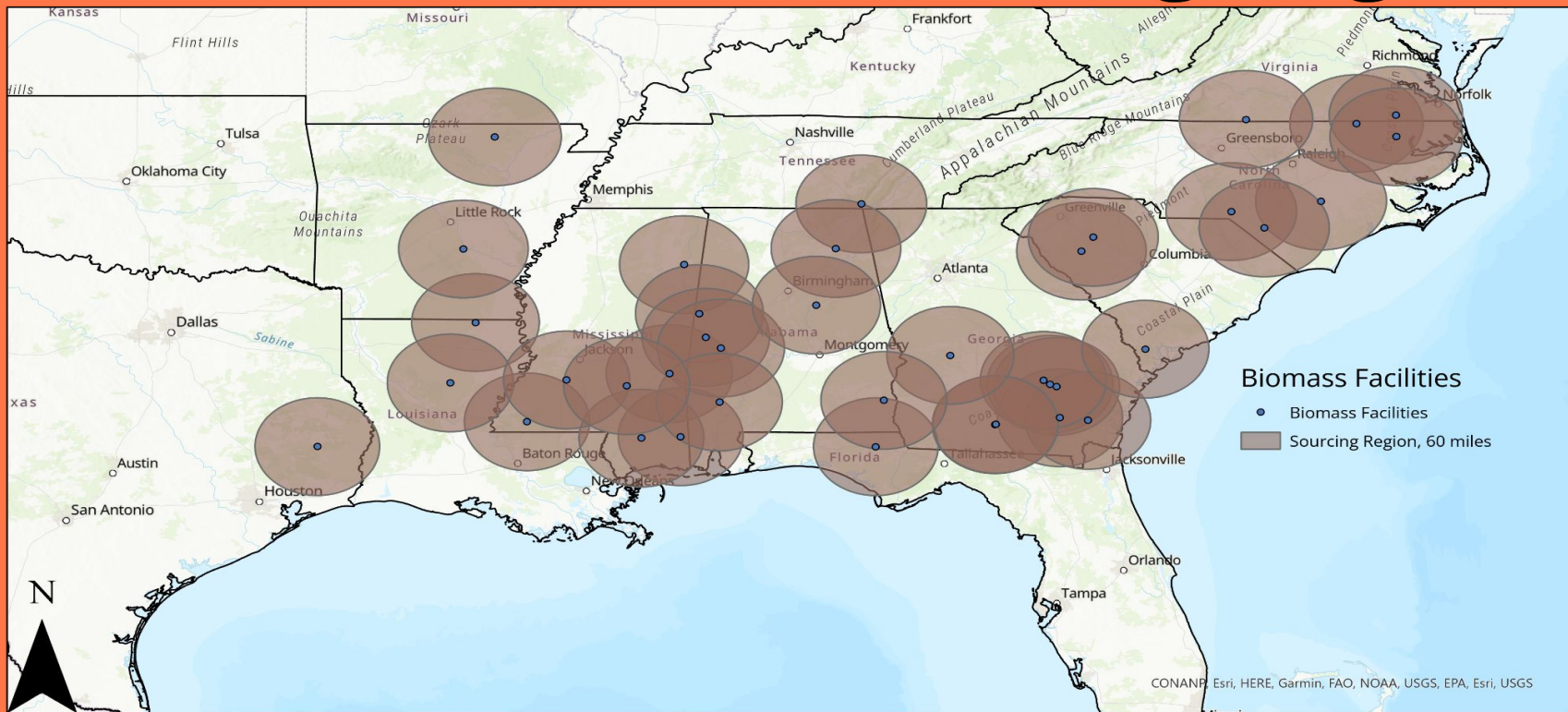
0 70 140 280 420 560 Miles



Cause of tree cover loss. This indicates forest disturbance, not necessarily long-term or permanent forest loss.

Data from: Curtis et al. (2018). Classifying drivers of global forest loss. *Science*. 2018; 361:1108-1111. doi:10.1126/science.aau3445

# Biomass Facilities Sourcing Regions



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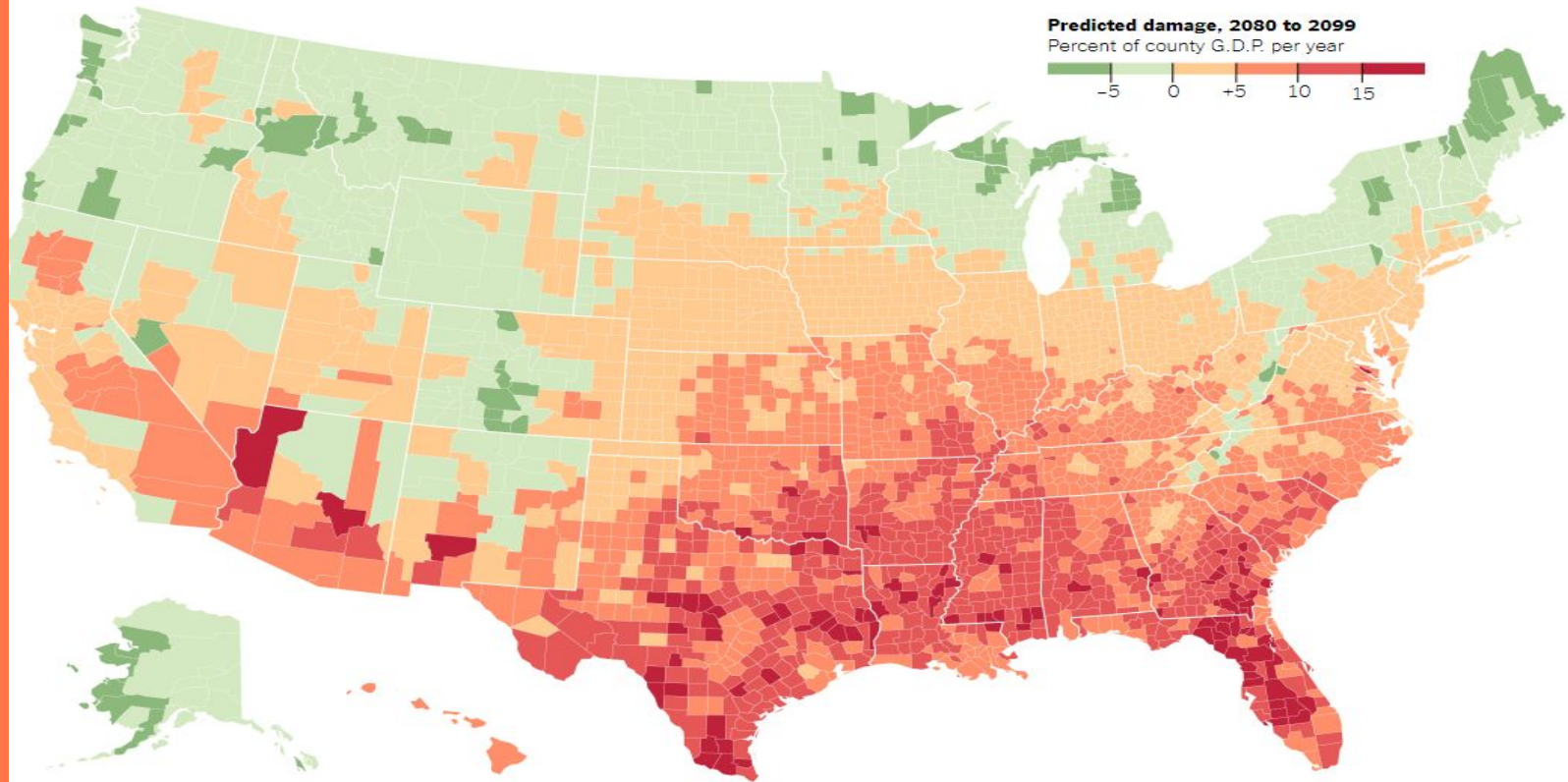


Biomass facilities have been growing exponentially since 2011. These facilities export hundreds of thousands of tons of material each year to European and Asian countries. Biomass releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than burning coal.

Data source: SELC ([southernenvironment.org](http://southernenvironment.org)) and others.



# Predicted Climate Change Impacts to GDP



Map from: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/06/29/climate/southern-states-worse-climate-effects.html>





# 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)



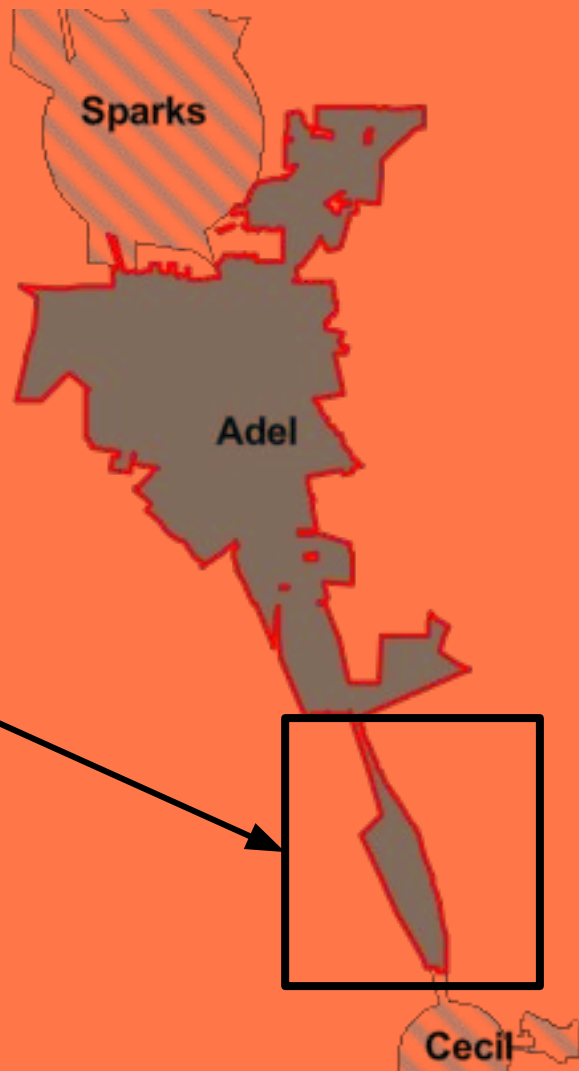
# Demographics of Adel, GA

Poverty: 23.1%

No Health Insurance: 27.5%



Impact of annexation  
of property into Adel  
for industrial  
purposes



# 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










# Health Impact on Adel Community

- Decrease air quality  increase in respiratory illness
- Fine particulate matter (100 tons/yr)
  - Asthma
  - Cardiovascular disease
- Nitrogen oxides (250 tons/yr)
  - Smog and acid rain
- Wood dust and soot

# Other Negative Impacts

- Noise 24 hours/day and 7days/week
  - Up to 80 decibels
- Truck traffic
  - More air pollution
- Longer train which would hinder crossing
- Fires and explosions

“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









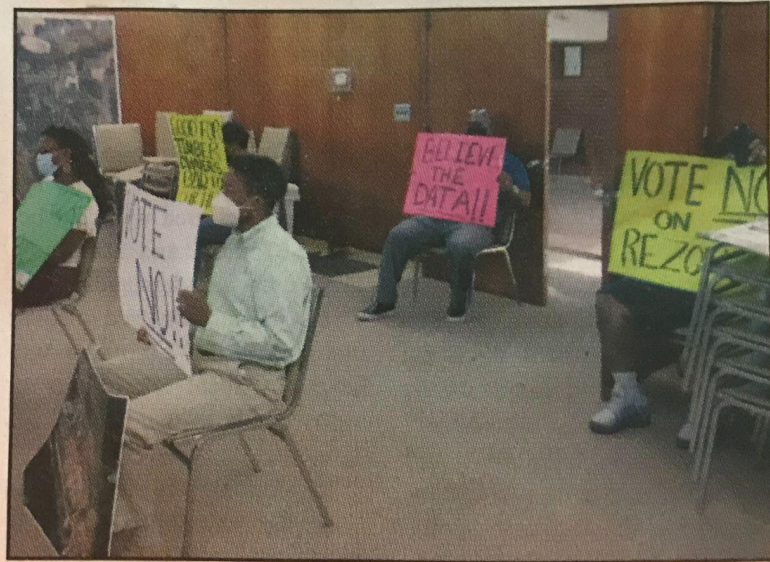
# Adel Council votes 3-2 to approve rezoning for wood pellet plant

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 Fausett Road; west of Southern Railway; east of I-75 and the land of Otis Fausett

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

During Monday's meeting,



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FRIDAY  
COUNTY

day, Sep-  
Memorial  
towns and  
page 14

# 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



# Our Actions to Protect Our Community

- Ads in local newspaper
- 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







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

**JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG**







# **ABANDONED**

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

# 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 Continues...

- Renewable Biomass Group has not broken ground yet
- Spectrum's air permit is not yet approved
  - Public comments due by May 2, 2022
- Educating the community continues



# For more information contact

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