



ECO-JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE
Building a Just and Sustainable World

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2021

This report focuses on the work of EJC in six primary areas:

1. **Middle Fork** — In June of 2021, Dynegy Midwest Generation entered into an agreement with the State of Illinois that requires it to move its coal ash out of the floodplain of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River, Illinois' only National Scenic River. This agreement triggered a series of events that will lead to permitting and implementation.
2. **Coal Ash Rules** — The adoption of coal ash rules in April of 2021 helped finalize agreements with Dynegy as well as for closure plans for power plants across the State of Illinois.
3. **Climate and Equitable Jobs Act** — Senator Don Harmon refused to call the climate and energy bill for vote as expected on May 31, 2021. This led to continued work and pressuring of senators to resolve outstanding areas of concern and pass what now is known as the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (versus the Clean Energy Jobs Act).
4. **Natural Climate Solutions** — Pam's two terms on the leadership team of the Downstate Caucus ended in December 2020. This gave her the opportunity to begin a Natural Climate Solutions Working Group of the Downstate Caucus. Interest is growing, and the focus on equity is strong. The group also is supporting the statewide 30 x 30 initiative, which is developing policy to protect, expand, and restore carbon sinks throughout Illinois.
5. **RE-AMP Regenerative Agriculture** — Over the past year, Pam worked with RE-AMP's Executive Director, Melissa Gavin, to co-author *Transforming Agriculture in the Midwest: Critical Responses to a Changing Climate*. This report was prepared in collaboration with RE-AMP's Agricultural Hub Team. It provides an understanding of what actions could be taken in Midwestern states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural and food systems and create carbon sinks, essential for stabilizing our runaway climate.
6. **EJC Video Production** — During 2021, EJC began to increase its use of video as a medium to address important issues and to convey campaign messaging. This includes beginning an educational series on climate change.



Middle Fork Campaign

Campaign Advances

2021 brought some surprising advances in the Middle Fork campaign. We achieved a major victory with Dynegy's decision to move its coal ash. This has been the primary goal of the campaign, started nearly ten years ago. It also comes with the realization that the actual clean up of over three million cubic yards of waste will require as many as 15 years to complete. Our work now moves into a public review, oversight and accountability mode, in order to ensure that commitments made by Dynegy are kept. Given the scale and enormity of the cleanup process, diligent public oversight will be essential.

Background

The Vermilion Power Station closed in 2011, leaving behind three, unlined coal ash pits in the floodplain of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion river, Illinois' only National Scenic river. These pits hold enough toxic ash to fill Chicago's Willis (Sears) Tower nearly two times. At least two of the three pits are known to be leaking, and the river is moving towards them at a rate nearly 3 times that previously predicted by Dynegy Midwest Generation's consultants, leaving some sections vulnerable to a breach. Given the need to protect the river "in perpetuity" from the threat of a spill and to stop the pollution, our work in 2021 continued to push for ash relocation. For the last ten years Dynegy-Vistra has sought approval to cap the ash; stabilize adjacent riverbanks; and leave the ash permanently in place.

Dynegy Is Referred to the Attorney General for Enforcement

The IEPA has issued Vistra two Notices of Violation of the Clean Water Act. The most recent Notice, issued in June of 2018 was referred by the IEPA to the Illinois Attorney General's office for enforcement. When this happened the path to requiring Vistra to relocate its ash away out of the floodplain moved out of the public domain and into litigation/enforcement. This made a public pressure campaign much more difficult, since information was no longer available through the Freedom of Information Act. Over the past year, EJC has continued, as able, to keep the threat of a coal ash breach at the forefront of agencies and the general public.

Citizen's Advisory Committee — In January, the IDNR agreed to our formal request to restore a long inactive Citizen's Advisory Committee that the 1992 Middle Fork Corridor Management Plan mandated. However, they declined to take action on this until after litigation by the IEPA was resolved. This meant that any interim actions requiring IDNR input, would be implemented without benefit of the Committee.

Request to IDNR to Monitor Riverbank Erosion — EJC continued to raise concerns that the IDNR was not frequently (once per year) nor adequately inspecting eroding riverbanks adjacent to the coal ash impoundments. We prepared a 30-page letter report on the status of riverbank erosion entitled "[Request for Action](#)" that called on IDNR, as administrator for this National Scenic River, to take responsibility for protecting it. IDNR was steadfast in its refusal to increase the frequency of its inspection or otherwise get involved during negotiations between Dynegy and the Attorney General's Office. This report, also forwarded to the IEPA and the Attorney General's Office, led to the monitoring of riverbanks now required by Dynegy's Agreement with the State of Illinois in June (see below).

Communication with Agencies and Partners— Over the succeeding months, EJC resumed contact with the IEPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and ultimately with the Attorney General's Office. During this time we provided periodic updates to Prairie Rivers Network and Earthjustice who had initiated litigation against Dynegy for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act. We also met with the Protect the Middle Fork Citizen's Advisory Group, and provided media updates.

Middle Fork Campaign *(continued)*

Interim Order and Agreement — In June of this year, in a welcome turn of events, the Illinois Attorney General broke a year-long silence and announced an Interim Order and agreement with Dynegy. The agreement required Dynegy to immediately make plans for 1) conducting an analysis of corrective actions to remediate groundwater pollution; 2) prepare a closure plan that included an evaluation of closure by coal ash removal; 3) installing a groundwater collection trench to intercept migrating pollution; 4) conducting monthly inspections of the riverbank; 5) preparing a Safety Emergency Response Plan; and 6) holding a public information meeting to present their plans on or before December 17, 2021. The day following the AG's announcement, Dynegy released a statement that it would commit to moving the coal ash away from the river. A major victory!!!

Since the agreement was signed, EJC has participated in several media interviews including on WBEZ, WILL public radio, the Mike Nowak Show and Live at the Heartland.



Gathering for the December 9, 2021, 3pm meeting in Danville to hear Dynegy Midwest Generation's proposal for coal ash removal. Over 80 people attended one of two meetings held. Photo by Pam Richart, EJC.

December 9 Public Information Meeting / Next Steps — Dynegy was required to present their proposals for coal ash removal to the public on or before December 17. The public information was scheduled for December 9, and EJC collaborated with Prairie Rivers Network to conduct two, online briefings to prepare the public for this meeting. The briefings included a [slide presentation](#) outlining Dynegy's plan, a [fact sheet](#), and preliminary questions that could be asked at the public information meeting.

Dynegy's public meeting was held on December 9th. An estimated 80 people attended the two meetings (60 in person and 20 on-line). Many of those who asked questions had been briefed about the proposal at [pre-meetings](#) held by Eco-Justice Collaborative and Prairie Rivers Network. Each provided context and background which helped attendees develop their questions.

Those who spoke expressed concerns over (see [Support for Removal but Questions Remain](#)):

Middle Fork Campaign *(continued)*

- Potential contamination drinking water.
- The design of the on-site landfill, and protection of the river, residents, and groundwater.
- Viability of plans to slow the release of contaminants discharged from the coal ash pits.
- Reducing the volume of ash stored on site through recycling.
- On-going erosion and protection of the river during ash removal.
- Removal of contaminated sediment from the river.
- Removal of the coal ash berms to allow the river to reclaim its floodplain.
- Protection of residents and the environment (and river) during plant demolition.
- Protection of the Orchid Hill Natural Heritage Site.
- Protection of workers during ash removal.
- Disruption of recreation; the length of the time to complete the project(15 years).
- Long-term responsibilities for maintenance and monitoring of the landfill.

Dynegy must prepare a summary response to these questions and send them to attendees by December 22. EJC will evaluate these responses, and continue to monitor agency reviews, communicating with the public as plans are finalized and prepared for permit.

Dynegy expects to submit its permit application to the Illinois EPA in February, 2022. The Illinois EPA will review the permit application and (eventually) publish a draft permit with a 45-day written public comment period. At that time we can (and we will) request a public hearing. The Illinois EPA is required to consider and respond to our comments.

###

Coal Ash Rules

Illinois Coal Ash Rules Now In Place

As of April 21, 2019, Illinois became the fourth state in the nation to regulate the operation, clean up and closure of toxic coal ash waste facilities that are polluting groundwater and rivers. Now, Illinois residents will be safer and our surface and groundwaters will be cleaner!

Over the past year, Eco-Justice Collaborative continued working with partners Prairie Rivers Network, and Earthjustice to ensure the rule included provisions that:

- Require industry permit applicants to evaluate multiple alternatives for closure, including removal of the ash.
- Make all reports and documents used in the permit application available for public review.
- Provide opportunities for public involvement in the decision-making process through pre-application meetings, public hearings and public comments with applicant and agency responses.
- Require owners with approved closure plans to set aside funds as financial assurance that cleanup and closure will not become the responsibility of the public.

These rules strengthen the [Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act](#) of 2019. Eco-Justice Collaborative was instrumental in developing the language for the public involvement process. The adoption of rules, just two years later, concludes a multiple-year saga that began with EJC's grassroots organizing in both Champaign and Vermilion Counties to protect the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River.

###

Climate and Equitable Jobs Act

CEJA Passed in September 2021

After a three-year campaign, the Climate and Equity Jobs Act passed the Illinois House and Senate in September 2021. During most of that time, Pam Richart, EJC, served on the leadership team of the Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, working with others to gain support of state representatives and senators. More recently EJC stepped up to pressure State Senator Scott Bennett to support the bill, which would close the Prairie State coal plant. The closure of this plant was thrust into the middle of state and national conversations about decarbonizing our power sector when Senator Don Harmon refused to bring the bill forward for a vote in May, because it would close this plant. This is a 1,766 megawatt behemoth located just 36 miles southeast of St Louis, is the largest coal-fired power plant and the largest emitter of carbon dioxide in Illinois. It is the 7th largest emitter of carbon dioxide in the country, and responsible for 76 premature deaths every year.

Ultimately, Senator Bennett voted for the bill, which closes this coal plant by 2045 and requires operators to reduce emissions by 45% by 2035 (unless 100% of the plant's CO₂ emissions are captured. In that case, the plant can stay open — see **Closing Prairie State**, below).



Champaign rally held to pressure Senator Bennett to vote for a strong climate bill that closed the Prairie State coal plant. Photo by Pam Richart. August 2021.

What Does CEJA Do?

The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act addresses climate, equity, and jobs. This urgent, [job-creating plan](#) puts Illinois on a path to a 100% clean energy future. It provides a just transition for workers and communities historically dependent on dirty fossil fuels, enacting some of the toughest utility accountability measures in the nation. The bill creates jobs and wealth in Illinois' Black and Brown communities, which are often the first to suffer negative consequences of pollution, but the last to reap the health and economic benefits of a clean energy future. The Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition was instrumental in developing groundbreaking equity provisions. Read more about the bill [here](#).

Climate and Equitable Jobs Act *(continued)*

Bill Implementation

Eco-Justice Collaborative already is working with representatives of the Downstate Caucus in Champaign and Vermilion Counties to pave the way for bill implementation. This includes:

- **Educating the Public** — Partnering with Faith in Place, the Prairie Group of the Sierra Club and Prairie Rivers Network, EJC is planning a Town Hall with Senator Scott Bennett in February 2022. Stakeholders will be invited to ensure that the facts of this bill, particularly as they relate to opportunities downstate, are conveyed, and that communities, business leaders, and community-based organizations are prepared to take advantage of the myriad of opportunities for transitioning from fossil fuels; training; and clean energy jobs.
- **Roundtables** — Planning is underway to host roundtables in Champaign and Vermilion Counties with community leaders (particularly those of color), labor, clean energy businesses, and institutions or community-based organizations most likely to host the workforce and contractor hubs associated with the Clean Energy Jobs Act. These roundtables are intended to pave the way for future requests for proposals to host training facilities; and ensure communities of color are ready to take advantage of trainings and incentives provided by the bill.



The Prairie State coal plant under construction in 2012. Located in Marissa, Illinois, just 36 miles southeast of St Louis, Missouri, the plant is the seventh largest carbon emitter in the country and responsible for 76 premature deaths every year. Photo by Pam Richart, Eco-Justice Collaborative.

Closing Prairie State

Closing coal and natural gas plants by 2045 is one of the key milestones of CEJA. This includes the Prairie State coal plant. Because EJC believes that the urgency of the climate crisis requires the plant to be closed earlier, it has teamed up with others in the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition to develop a campaign plan that uses the following as pressure points:

- **Discourages Contract Extensions** — Contracts expire between 2035 and 2052, and the municipal utilities already are seeking extensions to keep the plant open as long as possible (NOTE: this is a municipal coal plant, versus a privately-owned facility).
- **Require a Valid Operating Permit** — Plans are in process to push the Illinois EPA to require the coal plant to have a valid operating permit (it has never had one).
- **Oppose the NPDES Permit Amendment** — Plant operators are seeking approval to amend the plant's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES), which would add heat to tributaries that feed the Kaskaskia River. This additional heat would increase algal

Climate and Equitable Jobs Act *(continued)*

blooms in a river system already experiencing algal blooms and cyanobacteria (which kills pets) due to climate change. A public hearing has been requested. If the agency denies the permit, costs to operate the plant will increase, potentially forcing an early closure.

- **Stop Carbon Capture and Storage** — CEJA requires coal plants to close by 2045 unless they capture and store 100% of their carbon emissions. The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act sets up a task force to evaluate in partnership with the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois, the potential to extend the life of Prairie State via carbon capture and storage, or CCS. But this technology is unproven; expensive; and dangerous, and the general public, municipalities who rely on power generated at this plant, and legislators need to know the following:
 - There are no examples where carbon capture and storage has performed as promised. Most have been abandoned due to cost and cost overruns.
 - Carbon dioxide conveyed in pipelines for purposes of fracking oil or natural gas leak. When this occurs, CO₂, an asphyxiant, removes oxygen from the atmosphere, harming (and potentially killing) humans (see [The Gassing of Sataritia](#)).
 - If CO₂ injected into a well mixes with groundwater, it is partially converted into carbonic acid, which contaminates that source of water.
 - The coal plant sits on two major fault lines (Madrid and Wabash). Injecting CO₂ into wells has been known to cause seismic activity. That could release vast quantities of CO₂ back into the atmosphere (rather than permanently sequestering it), harming humans, much as residents were impacted from the leaking pipeline in [Sataritia, Mississippi](#).

Natural Climate Solutions

Background

The Downstate Caucus (DSC) of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition has, since its founding, recognized the importance of augmenting energy policy with natural solutions. When deployed in tandem with implementing the recently-approved [Climate and Equitable Jobs Act](#), natural climate solutions can further reduce GHG and stabilize our climate. This work is essential, given the facts outlined in the recent [technical report](#) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Scientists are saying that the ability of our planet's natural systems (e.g., forests, oceans, wetlands, grasslands, prairies) to take up CO₂ will decline as our emissions increase. This is because these systems already have been absorbing CO₂ generated by the burning of fossil fuels and other natural processes, and they will not be able to absorb the same proportion of greenhouse gases as temperatures continue to rise.

This past year, Pam Richart organized (and is leading) a Natural Climate Solutions Working Group of the Downstate Caucus of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition. Given the unique geography, opportunities, culture and other attributes specific to downstate Illinois, the DSC Natural Climate Solutions Working Group is uniquely suited to educate, build power around, and then help create, restore, and expand carbon sinks. We are working in the following areas:

- **30 x 30 Statewide Initiative** — Modeled after the UN's Campaign for Nature, the 30 x 30 campaign will educate and engage people to work to collaboratively to conserve, protect, and restore Illinois' land and water resources through policy and legislation. Currently only 4 percent of the land in Illinois is protected. Given that 75% of the land in Illinois is in agriculture, the

Natural Climate Solutions *(continued)*

campaign will emphasize conservation of agricultural lands and consider regenerative agriculture where it can be demonstrated that practices capture and store carbon.

The Natural Climate Solutions Working Group is working with the Illinois Environmental Council to ensure that proposed policies integrate local knowledge, equity, and potential job opportunities downstate. We are modifying their slide deck, developed for the northern tier of the state, and scheduling listening sessions to both educate and build power for policy, but also solicit input on policies under consideration. These sessions will begin in February 2022.



University of Massachusetts graduate student harvests vegetables under solar panels. National Renewable Energy Laboratory, DOE Inspire. 2019, [via flickr](#).

- **Agrivoltaics** — The ability to colocate solar panels on regeneratively-farmed land could provide another source of income for farmers; reduce the competition between solar energy and agriculture; and produce food, instead of commodity crops, for Illinois residents. Agrivoltaics also can provide numerous other benefits, including lowering carbon emissions; improving yields for a variety of crops; minimizing water use; and improving soil health, when land is farmed regeneratively or when farmland around solar panels is planted with deep-rooted, native plants that rebuild soil. Native plants can attract pollinators — or serve as forage for livestock.

EJC is inviting a representative of [Jack's Solar Garden](#) in Colorado, a pilot project of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, to speak with the Natural Climate Solutions Working Group after the first of the year. This project is combining solar with regenerative agriculture, and successfully producing root crops, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, peppers, beans, and greens. We also will talk with the solar experts who are part of the Illinois Clean Jobs

Natural Climate Solutions *(continued)*

Coalition to determine whether any funding or incentives from the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act can be leveraged for this purpose, as well as investigate federal incentives that might be available via the Rural Energy for America Program or other federal programs. Once this information is available, we will meet with regenerative agriculture advocates in Illinois, such as Regenerate Illinois; Food Works; Illinois Stewardship Alliance; Iroquois Valley Farmland REIT; etc., to generate interest in becoming early adopters — or developing a pilot project.

- **Tree Equity** — Urban trees capture and store [up to 2 percent](#) of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. But an inequitable distribution of trees places people of color at greater risk from rising temperatures and prolonged heat waves. [Expanding tree equity](#) can increase carbon capture and storage; protect all (not just some) people from the health impacts associated with rising temperatures; lower utility bills; improve property values; and reduce violent crime.

The Natural Climate Solutions Working Group has invited representatives of communities of color from Carbondale and East St. Louis to join us in creating a template that can be replicated for achieving tree equity downstate, as defined by American Forest's [Tree Equity Score](#). The group is committed to providing support for these communities in the form of expertise and funding (potentially via [Trees Forever](#) and President Biden's Build Back Better Plan, which would allocate \$2.5 billion to provide multi-year, programmatic competitive grants to eligible entities through the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance program).



- **Jemez Summit** — Under the leadership of EJC and with the support of the Sierra Club, the Natural Climate Solutions Working Group is planning to host a summit in February or March of 2022. The purpose of this summit is twofold: 1) to further diversify our group and engage people of color in natural climate solutions work; and 2) do the “deep tissue” work necessary to build relationships and trust; develop a common understanding of how systemic racism keeps structural barriers in place; and follow the lead and interests of communities of color who experience disproportionate impacts. The focus of the work will relate to open space (lack of access, poorly maintained, toxic); water pollution (lead pipes, contaminated drinking water); and agriculture and food systems (food apartheid and lack of access, poor quality food and nutrition, etc.). We need funding to help pay our colleagues of color to help plan and carry out this event.

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Regenerative Agriculture — RE-AMP

Background

Conventional farming in the Midwest is a major emitter of carbon that substantially contributes to climate change. The nine Midwestern states that make up the RE-AMP Network (Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) have vast agricultural resources that disproportionately contribute to U.S. agricultural emissions. These states are responsible for 42 percent of these emissions (Rhodium Group, 2020), which is the equivalent of about 4.2 percent of U.S. emissions from all sectors. Most are in the form of nitrous oxide (N₂O) and methane (CH₄) and are generated by current soil and livestock management practices. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the agricultural sector overall is responsible for 10.2 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. These are primarily derived from three sources: crop cultivation (55 percent), livestock (39 percent), and fuel combustion (6 percent).

Agriculture Hub Team, RE-AMP Network

In the summer of 2020, Pam Richart was selected to participate in the newly-created nine-person Agricultural Hub Team of RE-AMP, a network of over 140 environmental organizations and funders in the Midwest. This team consists of ten people, with representation from Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Several are farmers. One was recently been appointed to work with Tom Vilsak, Secretary of Agriculture.

Over the past year, Pam has been working with RE-AMP's Executive Director — in collaboration with the Agricultural Hub Team — to co-author *Transforming Agriculture in the Midwest: Critical Responses to a Changing Climate*. The report is expected to be released the week of December 20, 2021. The purpose of the report is to develop an understanding of what actions could be taken in RE-AMP states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural and food systems. It is meant for members, partners, and allies of the RE-AMP Network, many of whom have not yet engaged heavily in these areas, but increasingly see reducing emissions from agriculture and food systems as important ways to avert climate catastrophe.

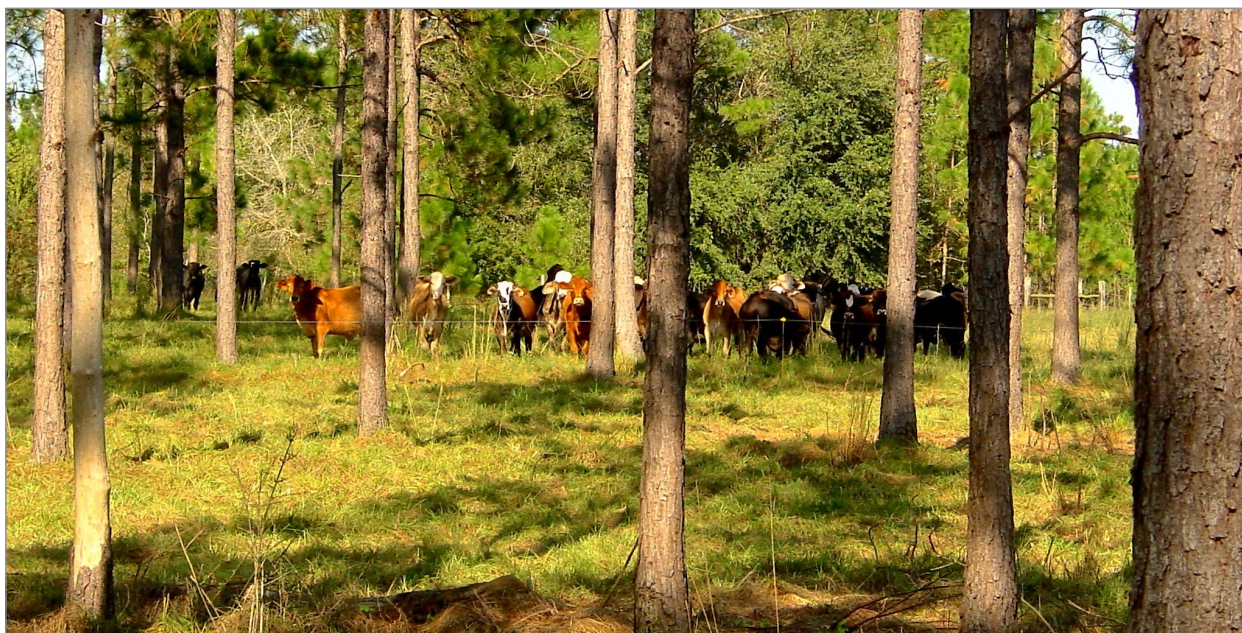
Chapter 4, OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATION, describes how members and allies of the RE-AMP Network can engage in efforts to equitably reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also exploring the many benefits that can result from responding to the climate crisis with agriculture, including:

- Addressing historical inequities in our agricultural and food systems.
- Revitalizing rural communities affected by the trend toward larger, highly-mechanized farms, global supply chains, and ownership of farmland by entities in other countries.
- Improving ecosystem services, which are benefits provided by natural systems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living. Plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms provide food, wood, and other raw materials. But they also provide essential regulating services such as pollination, decomposition, water purification, erosion and flood control, carbon storage, and climate regulation; and cultural services, such as recreation and a sense of place.
- Eliminating the use of harmful greenhouse-gas emitting chemicals by moving toward regenerative farming practices that rebuild soil.
- Potentially capturing and sequestering carbon, recognizing that soil science is nascent, and that practices such as agroforestry (particularly [silvopasture](#)) have the highest potential for storing carbon. Silvopasture is a type of agroforestry, created by introducing forage into a woodland or tree plantation or by introducing trees into a pasture. Silvopasture systems:

Regenerative Agriculture — RE-AMP

provide shade for livestock, which reduces heat stress and improves animal performance and well-being. Trees increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and improve water quality. The woody trees and shrubs capture and sequester carbon, and the forage protects the soil from water and wind erosion. The animals add organic matter to improve soil properties, potentially allowing for additional carbon storage.

According to [Project Drawdown](#), silvopasture outpaces any grassland technique for counteracting the CH₄ emissions of livestock and sequestering carbon. This system can sequester five to ten times as much carbon as pastures of the same size that are treeless, storing it in both biomass and soil. The diversification of trees, shrubs, and livestock increases farmer profit and helps insulate them from risk, while building local economic capacity.



Livestock grazing in silvopasture paddock.. Photo by Jim Robinson, USDA-NRCS, [via Flickr](#).

The policy and practice recommendations included in *Transforming Agriculture in the Midwest: Critical Responses to a Changing Climate* were developed to achieve the RE-AMP Network's North Star Goal of equitably eliminating greenhouse gas emissions in the Midwest by 2050. They attempt to address interconnections between climate, natural systems, and systemic social and economic inequities associated with current agricultural and food systems and practices. The promising models presented in Chapter 4 showcase organizations successfully working to tackle these challenges through farming. All three (policy, practices, and models) reflect opportunities for support and engagement by RE-AMP members and allies. A set of guiding principles were prepared to provide a foundation for analyzing support for policy or legislation, practices, and models included in the report.

Pam Richart will co-lead a webinar highlighting key components of the report in January 2022. This webinar and the release of *Transforming Agriculture in the Midwest* will serve as an official launch of the regenerative agricultural work by the RE-AMP Network.

###

Video Production

Video Production

During 2021, EJC began to increase its use of video as a medium to address important issues and convey campaign messaging.

Rise Up and Roll Away the Stone — Prepared for the 41st annual Chicago Good Friday Walk for Justice, this video highlights the fatal trajectory of our continued addiction to fossil fuels. Stopping the execution will require us all to be agents of change. [Click to watch.](#)

Code Red — Eco-Justice Collaborative, Faith in Place Action Fund, the Prairie Group, Sierra Club, and Prairie Rivers Network, co-organized a press conference and rally urging State Senator Scott Bennett to support an equitable clean energy and climate bill. At the end of the rally, those present taped personalized "While You Were Out" pink slips to his office door, urging the Senator to respond to our changing climate by voting for a bill that closes the Prairie State coal plant in southwestern Illinois. [Click to watch.](#)

Senator Bennett, What Will it Be? Fossil Fuels, or Fossil Free — In this video, members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign urged Senator Scott Bennett to help pass a true climate bill in Illinois. They wanted him to support a bill that ended our reliance on fossil fuels; provided a just transition to a clean, renewable energy future; and closed the Prairie State coal plant in southwestern Illinois. Prairie State is the largest emitter of carbon pollution in Illinois, and the 7th largest in the country! It's time to do what's right for our planet. [Click to watch.](#)

Reignite Solar Now — This video highlighted a local solar business dependent on the availability of consumer solar energy credits to attract customers. The last incentives for small solar installations in Illinois ran out at the end of 2020, leaving the state's industry looking over a "solar cliff." Businesses like New Prairie Construction in Champaign, Illinois, have been waiting for the Illinois legislature to pass a fix to the program that distributes solar renewable energy credits central to the state's solar incentive programs. [Click to watch.](#)

Goldens for a Fossil Fuel Free Future — This playful video used our two golden retrievers to send a message to State Senator, Scott Bennett to support the Climate Equity and Justice Act. Climate change will affect us all. For some it means:

- Fewer walks on hot days.
- More ticks and fleas.
- Scary storms.

The key message: It's time we ALL make our voices heard. It's time to move away from fossil fuels and close Prairie State, the 7th largest emitter of carbon dioxide in Illinois and the nation. [Click to watch.](#)

Sounding the Alarm — The August, 2021 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was both alarming and unequivocal. This video used statistics from the IPCC report to say "We need to stop our dependence on fossil fuels now." This is the first in a new series called "We Have But One Planet." [Click to Watch.](#)

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