

Triangle Ecosocialism Working Group: Scope and Goals

Scope

As ecosocialists facing an unchecked global climate crisis, failures of environmental justice, and regulatory capture by manufacturers and fossil-fuel companies, we believe that a more sustainable society that cares for the future habitability for human and non-human life is logistically and morally necessary. Through seeking lower costs in the pursuit of wider profit margins, the production of surplus value presently encourages the exploitation of land and its gifts, leading to its degradation. Therefore, ecosocialism recognizes that a more sustainable society is inextricably linked to dismantling the existing capitalist mode of production.

The vision of a better society is shared internationally by farmers and indigenous folks who fight against ongoing exploitation by big landowners and imperialist interests in the Global South. Nationally, DSA Ecosocialists have banded together in programs under the “Green New Deal” plank of the national Political Platform. Locally, we contend with environmental and sustainability issues at home. As with much of the United States, the Triangle’s reliance on car-centric infrastructure threatens existing green space and exacerbates both the reliance on fossil fuels and the dehumanization of urban spaces, itself an environmental issue. The capturing of municipal and state government by developer and power utility interests underscores the threat of degradation, environmental justice issues from urban planning, and legal barriers to realizing a public-owned power infrastructure.

Context

The Raleigh Ecosocialism Working Group was started in August 2021. A round of suggestions from members was held for the first organizing effort to be done by ourselves. The winning suggestion was a public transit campaign in Raleigh, named Fare-Free Forever (FFF). Its three fundamental demands were to make the suspension of fares permanent, increase bus driver sick pay, and have benches at all stops by 2023. It targeted Raleigh City Council and Raleigh Transit Authority members with letters triggered by residents signing on. FFF launched in early 2022 and lasted until July 2022, shortly after adoption of the new fiscal year’s budget. We sought to coordinate with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), who passed our project to membership and endorsed it. An extension to suspended fares was approved, but the campaign also revealed dissatisfaction with the status quo of the bus system by riders and happened alongside a development proposal for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lanes in Raleigh that would displace low-income families from public housing and drive gentrification, all without any improvement to the busing system for most residents.

In October 2022, we voted to become the Triangle Ecosocialism Working Group to accommodate the entire NC Triangle DSA Chapter. Now in 2023, after some false starts, we are currently holding outside social events focused on political education and are in the process of rebuilding capacity, investigating possible coalitions, and planning for more organizing.

Goals

Near Term

The Working Group presently aims to attract new members through these social events, in particular urban hikes and relatively laid back ecologically themed activities such as trash pickups. By building capacity, we aim to resume building our organizing ability and pursue future campaigns comparable to Fare-Free Forever.

To rebuild capacity for running our own campaigns, we may also build coalitions with other organizations and communities, uniting on responses to local threats and opportunities at present. This would involve working with other organizations and their members, which may include Sunrise Movement, People's Power NC, and North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. Issues that may be appropriate for coalition-building include the following:

- Campaigning against Duke Energy's rate hike schedule
- Protecting green space against for-profit projects with severe environmental impact, including the a proposed quarry impacting Raleigh's Umstead Park
- Environmental justice issues that are local or implicate offices in the Triangle (e.g., the NC Department of Environmental Quality's role in holding Alcoa responsible for cleanup in West Badin, North Carolina)
- Surveying and addressing the impact of Raleigh's Transit Overlay District (TOD) and its associated projects on low-income communities

General and Longer Term

The following is an intentionally broad list of goals the Working Group wants to work toward:

- Political education
 - Explore and expose fellow chapter comrades to ecosocialist principles, ideas, and schools of thought
 - Learn and educate about international ecological justice issues, such as the plight of Amazonian farmers, the impact of landfills on the Global South, and issues of climate justice
 - Survey and raise awareness of ongoing environmental degradation in the Triangle and threats to that effect, through social events and urban hikes and surveys

- Learn *and use* essential organizing skills: designing and running campaigns and demands, “six-step” structured one-on-one conversations, power mapping, coalition building, etc.
- Organizing
 - Public transit
 - Organize over demands for needed improvements to the Triangle’s public transit that residents have raised, including permanent fare suspension, safety, worker compensation, reliability, and scheduling (such as the need for 24/7 service to accommodate night-shift workers) to make it a viable alternative to car dependence for more local residents
 - Campaign for public transit that accommodates lower-income residents rather than a more profitable ridership
 - Encourage and facilitate rider organizing through a transit riders union
 - Urban planning
 - Hold leaders and land developers accountable to local environmental justice issues in the Triangle, such as localized downwind pollution and urban heat islands
 - Campaign for the building and preservation of genuine low-income and public housing with an emphasis on responsible environmental stewardship
 - Identify and organize against rampant environmental degradation, or the threat thereof, whenever possible
 - Public power
 - Campaign to end Duke Energy’s regulatory capture of local and state governments to make public power feasible, possibly through wider state-level action
 - Support the organizing of public power initiatives in the Triangle