



# 2022 MID YEAR REPORT



Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program. Flight courtesy of SouthWings





## ABOUT SOUTHWINGS

SouthWings partners with conservation groups, community groups, media, and decision-makers to provide a unique perspective to better understand and solve pressing environmental issues in the Southeast.

SouthWings advocates for the restoration and protection of ecosystems across the Southeast through flight.

## MISSION AND VISION

The mission of SouthWings is to protect and restore ecosystems of the Southeast through flight.

SouthWings envisions the Southeast as a landscape of healthy communities that value and cooperatively steward our natural, cultural, and economic resources. SouthWings helps ensure that the region's unique identity and globally significant biodiversity are held in trust for current and future generations.

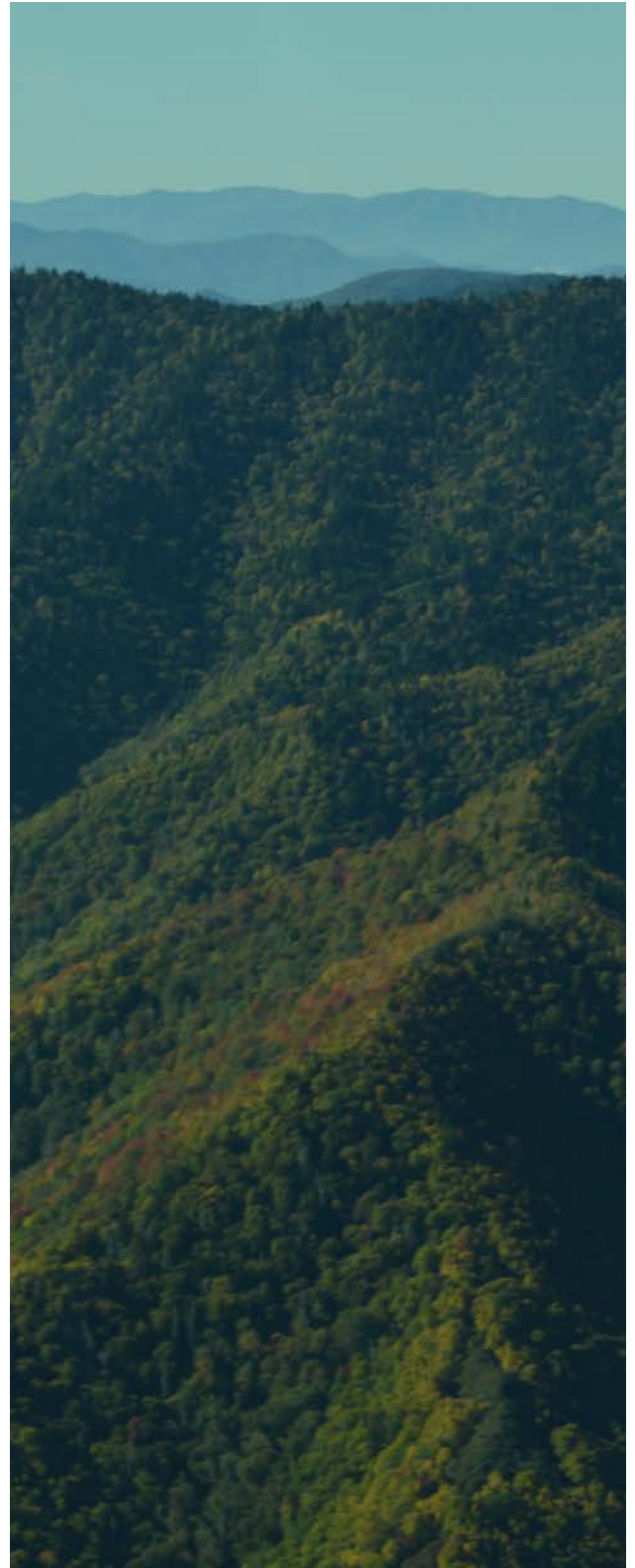


Photo by Jake Faber. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHT: WOOD PELLET BIOMASS

Clearcutting of forests is an issue for which the sheer magnitude of the destruction is revealed from the air. SouthWings flights have been documenting the extent of clearcutting in the Southeast since the early days of the organization. In recent years, the demand for wood pellets as a form of biomass fuel has driven expedited harvesting of both farmed timber and natural hardwood forest ecosystems. Despite claims from the wood pellet industry that burning wood pellets for energy is a climate change solution, the process has many negative environmental impacts from harvesting to processing to burning.



Enviva Southampton wood pellet plant near Franklin, VA. Photo by Dogwood Alliance, March 2022. Flight courtesy of SouthWings.

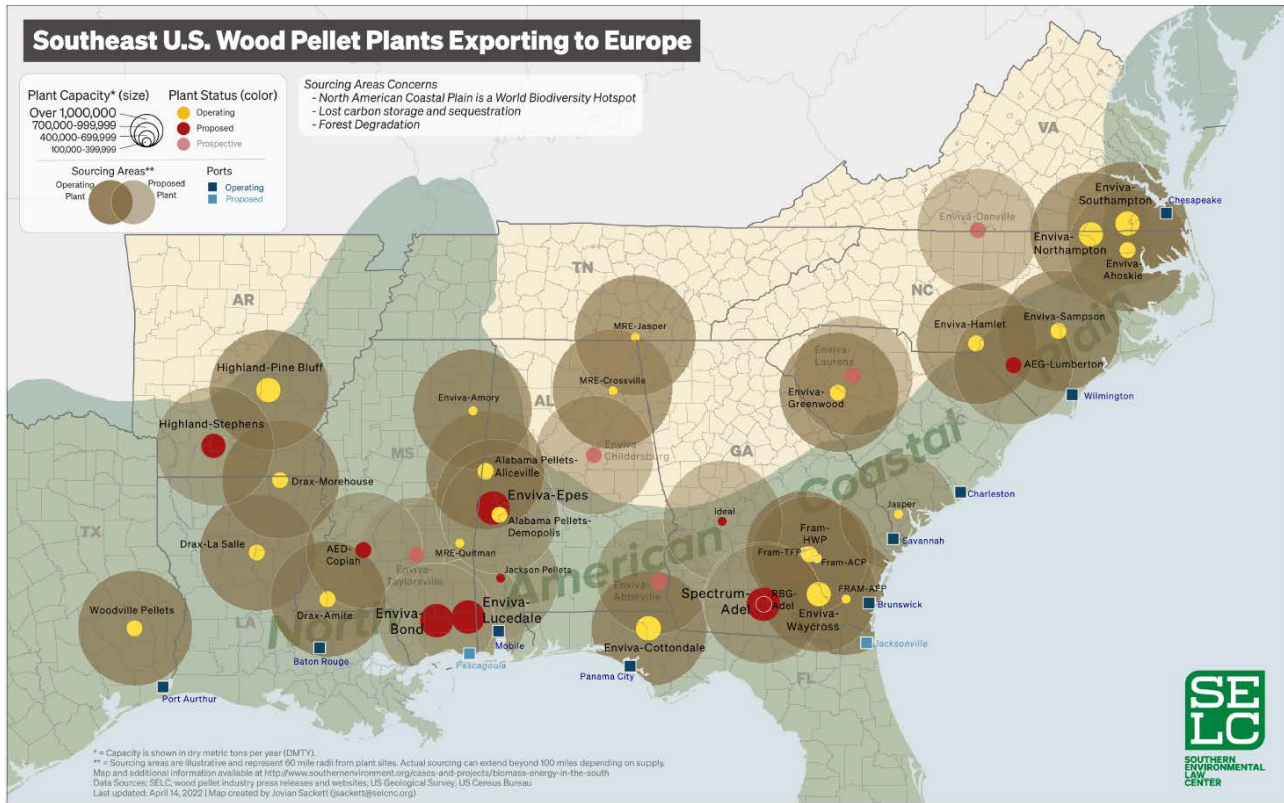
When natural forest communities are destroyed across the Southeast, there is a release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in addition to loss of carbon sequestration abilities. Clearcutting also contributes to water quality issues by releasing sediment to nearby streams and eliminating the flood control services of forests and forested wetlands.

The facilities that manufacture the wood pellets also present air quality concerns for nearby communities, furthering environmental justice issues. There are currently over 30 operating or proposed pellet mills within our region. Burning wood pellets produces more carbon emissions per unit of energy than coal.

*...many of these trees are taken from clearcuts of ecologically valuable and highly biodiverse natural upland and lowland hardwood forests, including bottomland hardwood and other wetland forests.*

*-[SELC Biomass Study, 2022](#)*





SouthWings flights have shed light on harmful practices by helping grassroots organizations [document the logging operations](#) that source local pellet mills (including multiple flights with the Dogwood Alliance in northeastern NC and investigations of Drax plants in LA and MS with the National Wildlife Federation in 2018) and engage both local and international media (including a BBC docu-series in 2018 and reporters from the UK in 2020.)

Save Our Saluda has participated in three flights over the years, and on the most recent flight, they noted a significant increase in clearcuts around the Enviva facility in Greenwood, SC since 2020.

SouthWings has also joined our partners in advocating for protection of forests and communities by signing on to comments for an air permit application from the Spectrum Energy facility in Adel, GA and a letter asking the Biden administration to carefully consider the threats of the wood pellet biomass industry. Most recently, we joined partners in a letter calling on the Netherlands to put an immediate end to burning wood pellets for energy. A month later, the Dutch Parliament enacted a permanent moratorium to subsidies for the wood pellet industry.



Clearcut near Lake Greenwood in SC. Enviva is the world's largest pellet producer and is looking to expand the Greenwood plant. Photo by Melanie Ruhlman, Save Our Saluda. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Woody Beck.



## ISSUE HIGHLIGHT: LIQUID NATURAL GAS



The Freeport LNG export facility sits on Quintana Island, surrounded by water. In June, there were explosions at the facility, which alarmed residents who believe the company has not been transparent in communications and the government has not been responsible in regulating industry. Photo by Naomi Yoder, Healthy Gulf. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Humphries.

For years, communities on the frontlines of climate change and petrochemical pollution have been fighting the false solution of liquid natural gas as a climate-friendlier alternative to other fossil fuels. The Environmental Integrity Project warned in its 2020 report titled Greenhouse Gases from Oil, Gas, and Petrochemical Production: [U.S. Fracking Boom Fuels Rise in Greenhouse Gasses and Health-Damaging Pollutants](#) that:

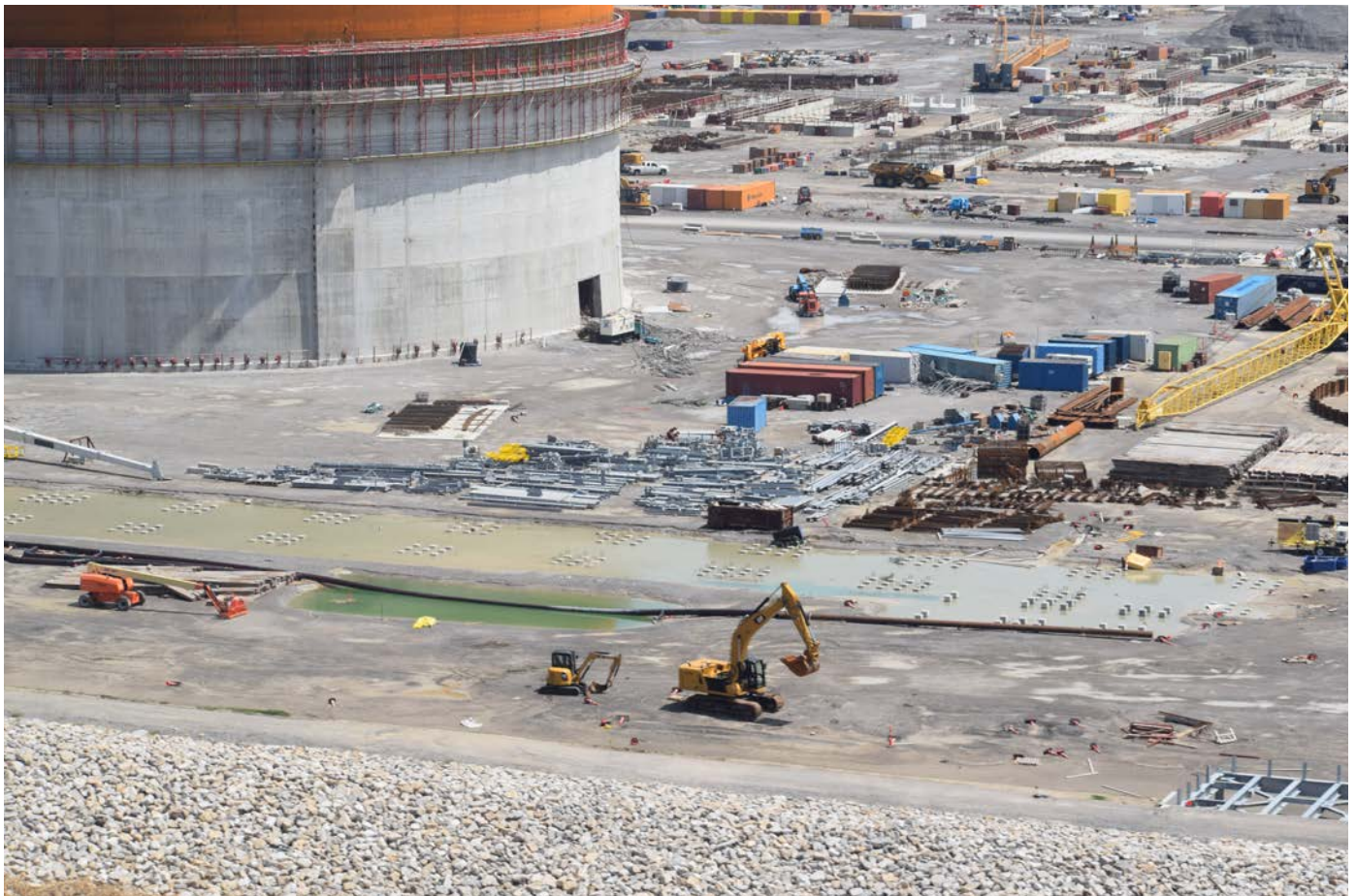
*Liquefied natural gas export terminals have the greatest potential for growth in coming years, with 19 new projects in planning or construction that have the potential to increase greenhouse gas emissions by 79.8 million tons by the time they are fully operating...*

*...The liquefied natural gas buildout is overwhelmingly concentrated on the Gulf Coast, where processing, storage, and transport infrastructure is already somewhat developed and where politics are favorable. Fifteen of the 19 forthcoming liquefied natural gas projects are located in Gulf states.*



Construction continues along the Gulf Coast at breakneck speeds, despite years of “historic” climate catastrophes including hurricanes, floods, and freezes. While people suffer due to lacking basic and reliable infrastructure, climate change, and pollution, states like Texas and Louisiana continue to welcome the buildout of LNG pipelines and export terminals. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has further complicated the issue as many fossil fuel companies hide behind a veneer of supporting democracy by supplying fuel to Russia’s markets. In reality, this narrative supports a very short-term solution at the expense of transitioning to a low carbon future.

Groups like **Louisiana Bucket Brigade**, **Healthy Gulf**, and **Sierra Club** have joined the fight with community members to stop the buildout of LNG export terminals (and other infrastructure) in areas vulnerable to climate disasters, while shedding light on the fact that extracting, producing, transporting, and burning liquid natural gas contributes to the very same climate change that it supposedly will help mitigate.



The juxtaposition of a tank at an LNG facility in Southwest Louisiana to construction equipment, taken in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, shows the massive scale of LNG production and distribution. LNG export terminals are being built in coastal areas, which are especially vulnerable to climate disasters. Photo by Naomi Yoder, Healthy Gulf. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Leonard Guidry.



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# APPALACHIA TO ATLANTIC

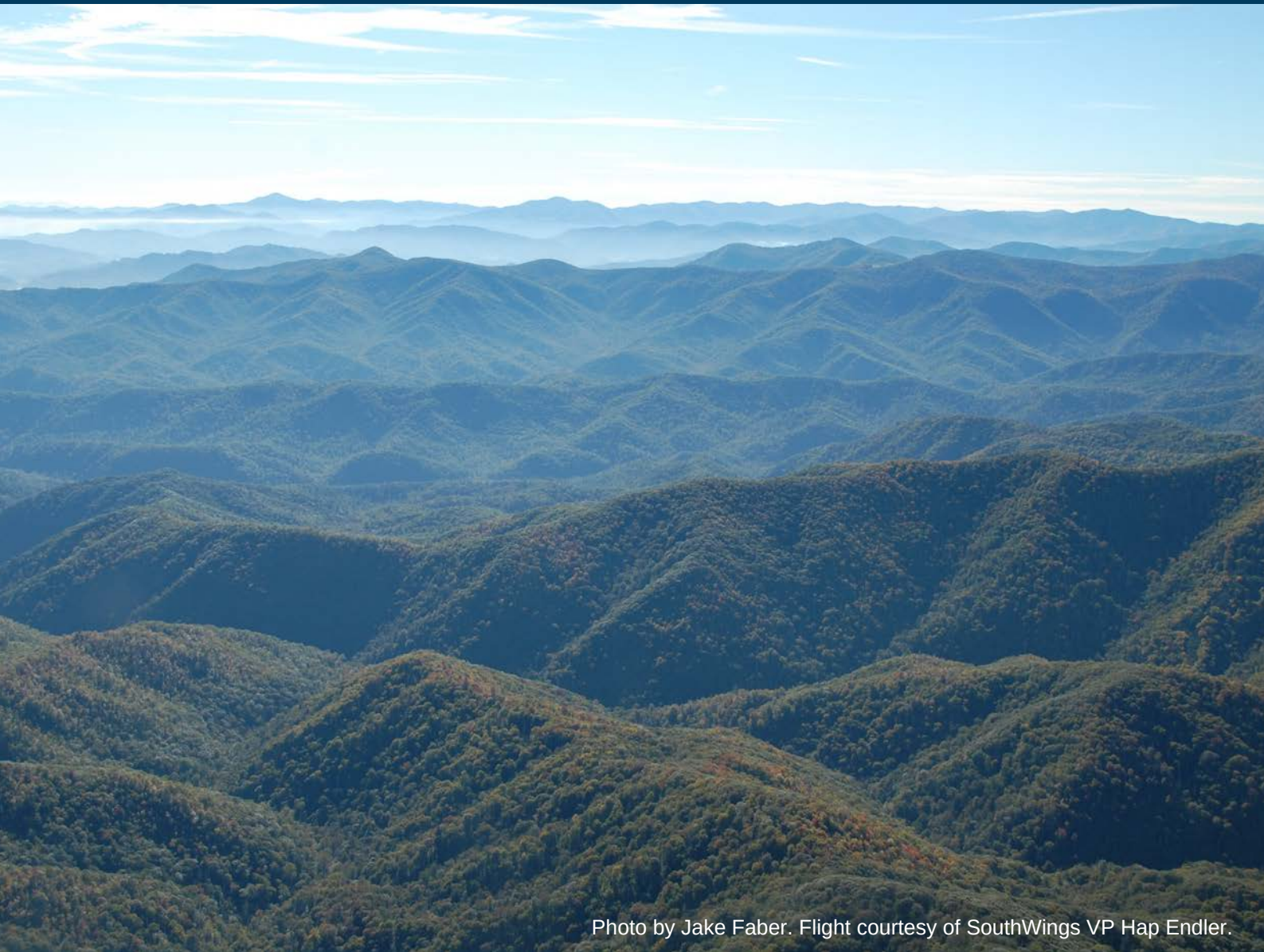


Photo by Jake Faber. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.



# GEORGIA

Five flights have been arranged in Georgia so far this year, carrying a total of nine passengers.

SouthWings continues to support the fight to protect the Okefenokee Swamp from a proposed titanium mine near Trail Ridge.

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*It was an amazing day! Mark was fantastic. Thank you SouthWings!*

-Kim Bednarek, Okefenokee Swamp Park

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In April, Volunteer Pilot Mark Andrews flew **Okefenokee Swamp Park** Executive Director, Kim Bednarek, and a potential partner from **Okefenokee Farm** over the vast Swamp. Okefenokee Swamp Park is working to [encourage economic development that highlights the region's unique natural attractions](#). Following the flight, Okefenokee Farm has become a corporate sponsor of the St. Marys Riverkeeper and is working with One Hundred Miles and Okefenokee Swamp Park on agri- and ecotourism opportunities for the region.

SouthWings and Volunteer Pilot Tim Moran were acknowledged in the recent release of PBS EcoSense for Living episode [Okefenokee Destiny](#), from a flight in fall 2021.

A huge step forward in protecting the Okefenokee came this summer, when the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reversed a previous decision](#), now requiring the mining company to apply for federal permits for the proposed project.



Wetlands and water trails in Okefenokee Swamp. Photo by Kim Bednarek. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Mark Andrews.



On the coast of Georgia, **One Hundred Miles** is working to prevent the development of a massive gas station with 120 gas pumps and an impervious footprint the size of three football fields in an area surrounded by conservation lands and historic sites. A reporter from **The Brunswick News** accompanied Coastal Advocate, Susan Inman, on a flight to demonstrate the landscape impacts of the proposed project.



*"To be able to see how much land is in conservation within this area can only be seen from the air. From the canals, hand-dug by enslaved people from the plantation era, to the wildlife conservation areas is truly something!"* -Susan Inman, One Hundred Miles. An undeveloped interchange on I-95 in Brunswick is the target for this development. Flight courtesy of SouthWings.

Brunswick, GA is also fraught with several Superfund sites that threaten the local environment. The **Glynn Environmental Coalition** and filmmaker **Sam Ghioto** surveyed Brunswick's industrial facilities and Superfund sites for an [in-progress documentary film](#).

Volunteer Pilot Landon Thorne supported ongoing content and data collection for **Emory University's** [Georgia Coast Atlas](#) with a flight this spring. The atlas is a means to combine various forms of digital media with scholarly content to produce a website that they anticipate will be of great value to educators, conservationists, students, and the general public.

Volunteer Pilot Richard Embry flew with **Savannah Riverkeeper** this year to gather photographic evidence of questionable waste application on agriculture fields near Augusta.

*It was amazing to see how everything is connected. I saw how big these superfund sites are... the aerial perspective really allows one to see that these aren't some small, abstract parcels of land. Rather, these highly polluted areas are very large and connected to some sources of water that make their expanse even bigger.* -Sam Ghioto, filmmaker



## SOUTH CAROLINA

Seven flights have been arranged so far in South Carolina this year, carrying a total of four passengers.

*“Having aerial shots is invaluable to illustrate all of these issues we are working on.”* -Melanie Ruhlman, Save Our Saluda

This Spring, Volunteer Pilot Woody Beck worked with **Save Our Saluda** to fly Melanie Ruhlman over the Saluda watershed. She aims to fly the same route each year from downtown Greenville, following the Reedy River to Lake Greenwood and then following the Saluda River back up towards the headwaters in the mountains. This helps the organization document the rapid development in the greater Greenville area and monitor other issues in the watershed. Save Our Saluda is working with local partners to promote good land use policies in rural Greenville County. Over 200,000 new residents are expected for the county by 2040. Despite overwhelming support from citizens and environmental leaders for smart, guided growth, there is a lack of political will to enact local ordinances to reign in the fiscally irresponsible sprawl growth that is straining services and negatively affecting natural resources and quality of life in local communities.

On the flight, they found a particularly egregious sediment pollution problem from a site cleared for cattle in southern Greenville County. Save Our Saluda partnered with South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCELP) to submit a Freedom of Information Act request, through which they learned of corrective actions previously issued by the Department of Health and Environmental Control. Unfortunately, corrections were insufficient and impacts to surface waters are ongoing as massive loads of in-stream sediment are transported downstream during stormflow.



Photo by Melanie Ruhlman. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Woody Beck.



**Photographer J. Henry Fair** is embarking on a project to illustrate the little-known story of Harriet Tubman's rescue mission to free numerous enslaved people from rice plantations along the Combahee River. Tubman coordinated two steam-powered paddle boats to navigate the winding tidal river in the middle of the night. Fair's images and videos will be used in a book and accompanying museum exhibits.



The Combahee Raid took place on the full moon in June. It was an essential aspect of the mission, providing the cover of darkness and the aid of the tides to navigate the shallow, twisting coastal river. Photo by J. Henry Fair. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.



Combahee River wetlands. Wiggins, South Carolina. Photo by J. Henry Fair. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.

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*We hope to make people aware of the heroic deeds involved in bringing an end to the industry of slavery, and the priceless value of the ACE Basin ecosystem which was shaped by human hands, and has evolved into one of the last extensive wild coastal habitats in the USA.*

-J. Henry Fair

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On the coast of South Carolina, Volunteer Pilot Jon Engle captured photos of the restored Crab Bank, an island in the Charleston Harbor. **South Carolina Audubon Society** worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to restore this important shorebird nesting habitat. In January, the project was [featured on the Audubon website](#).

In April, **photographer Mac Stone** and Volunteer Pilot Georgina Rhinehart flew the Congaree River and National Park at dawn to capture images of the winding river and mature floodplain for ongoing work on a story for National Geographic about old growth swamps.



**"The Army Corps has completed construction of the island and nesting is well underway this year! The project has been a huge success so far with lots of nesting seabirds and shorebirds on the island."** -Nolan Schillerstrom, Audubon South Carolina. Photo by Jon Engle. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Jon Engle.

*An aerial photograph is really the only way to capture the majesty of this waterway and seeing it as the sun rose over the horizon was the best way to showcase the importance of this wilderness to an audience that might not have ever heard of this region.* -Mac Stone

Often, outcomes from SouthWings flights materialize months or even years after the flight. This summer, the final report for the master planning process for the [new Black River Water Trail & Park Network](#) was released. Georeferenced aerial photos from two flights in 2021 aided the comprehensive analyses conducted by **Earth Design**.



Screenshot of VP Jon Engle's photos in the Black River Water Trail & Park Network Master Plan (p.22), released June 2022. Photo by Jon Engle. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Jon Engle.

Also this summer, litigation over the ownership of Waties Island was settled, allowing the **Open Space Institute (OSI)** to move forward with permanent protection of the island. **South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCELP)** represented Olivia Boyce-Abel in the dispute over ownership of about 100 acres of accreted land on the island. The lawsuit was preventing OSI from acquiring the property. OSI plans to hold the property until it can be transferred to South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for a heritage trust preserve. Photos taken for SCELP in 2021 by Volunteer Pilot Chris Carmel were used to announce the victory on [Facebook](#) and in a [My Horry News article](#).



Waties Island, looking south. Photo by SouthWings VP Chris Carmel.



North Myrtle Beach and Waties Island, looking north.  
Photo by SouthWings VP Chris Carmel.

*You can count on just a few fingers the number of opportunities in South Carolina to protect 260 acres and almost a mile of ocean front... so this is an incredibly rare opportunity to protect a real gem of a property.*

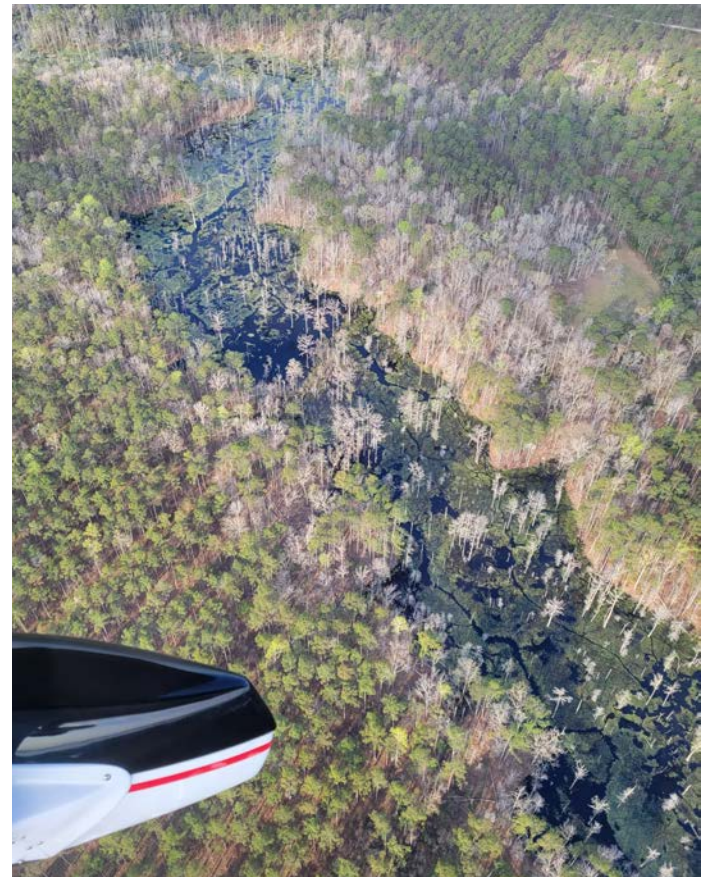
-Nate Berry, Senior Vice President OSI, quoted in [My Horry News](#)



# NORTH CAROLINA

18 flights have been arranged in North Carolina so far this year, carrying a total of 34 passengers.

This spring, Volunteer Pilot Art Falk conducted a series of flights to support a team of wildlife biologists at **N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission**. The biologists were surveying Great Blue Heron and Great Egret nesting colonies along inland rivers in the coastal plain. The data gathered from these flights will supplement on-the-ground surveys and will help inform conservation efforts and management decisions. (Photos provided by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Art Falk.)



*“It was my first time in a small aircraft and it was very fun and a much different experience... It was nice to get a "bird's eye view" while looking for nests and it gives you an idea of what the birds see when flying into their nesting site. I learned a lot about the habitat selection of the herons and egrets that I was unaware of prior to the survey.”*

-John Lynch, NCWRC



In western North Carolina, SouthWings has continued to support the work of the **National Parks Conservation Association** (NPCA) and the **Safe Passage Coalition** in their work to study and recommend solutions regarding wildlife movement along the I-40 corridor through the Pigeon River Gorge. A [report of the research findings and recommendations](#) was recently released by NPCA and **Wildlands Network**. The study identifies priority areas along I-40 where mitigation strategies such as road crossing structures could be best implemented to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and increase wildlife habitat connectivity.

In May, Volunteer Pilot Hap Endler conducted a scoping flight for the team's next study area - the stretch of I-26 from Mars Hill, NC to Erwin, TN. This study aims to assess wildlife road mortality and wildlife activity near the interstate to improve wildlife connectivity and public safety. Several photos from the flight were used in NPCA's research permit application to the Tennessee Department of Transportation, detailing the plans for the study.



SouthWings VP Hap Endler, Jeff Hunter (NPCA), Aurora Wynn (NPCA), and photographer Taylor Barnhill prepare to scope I-26 study area.



The study will assess wildlife use of existing structures such as this span bridge in TN. Photo by Taylor Barnhill, flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.



The study will also look at wildlife activity within the I-26 right-of-way, such as this scenic overlook in TN. Photo by Taylor Barnhill, flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Hap Endler.



SouthWings continues to support Waterkeepers across the state of North Carolina. This year, volunteer pilots have conducted a total of 12 flights with the **Waccamaw Riverkeeper**, **Cape Fear Riverkeeper**, **Yadkin Riverkeeper**, **Broad Riverkeeper**, **Dan Riverkeeper**, and the **Haw Riverkeeper**. Flights have assisted with holding polluters accountable and monitoring concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), sedimentation, algal blooms, and coal ash ponds.

This spring, The NC Department of Environmental Quality fined Bottomley Evergreens & Farms and Bottomley Properties more than [\\$268,000 for water quality violations](#), one of the largest civil penalties ever assessed by the agency, an instance that the **Watauga Riverkeeper** investigated on a flight with Volunteer Pilot Holliday Obrecht in 2021.



New poultry litter barns, lessening noncompliance regarding poultry litter storage. Photo by David Caldwell, Broad Riverkeeper. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Peter Stauble.



Black mat algae in Tuckertown Reservoir in the Yadkin River watershed. This cyanobacteria has the potential to produce harmful toxins. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Holliday Obrecht.



Cape Fear River Watch submitted documentation of 4 cases of improper waste management on CAFOs. Two of those referrals resulted in 2 separate notices of violations for waste discharge into adjacent water bodies. Photo by CFRW. Flights courtesy of SouthWings VPs Doug Oakley and Bill Kahn.

“One thing to note is that the poultry producers are doing a better job at handling their waste. I rarely see uncovered piles now. Which, I believe, is due in a large part to our efforts over several years reporting possible violations to DEQ, and then DEQ putting heat on the poultry growers.”

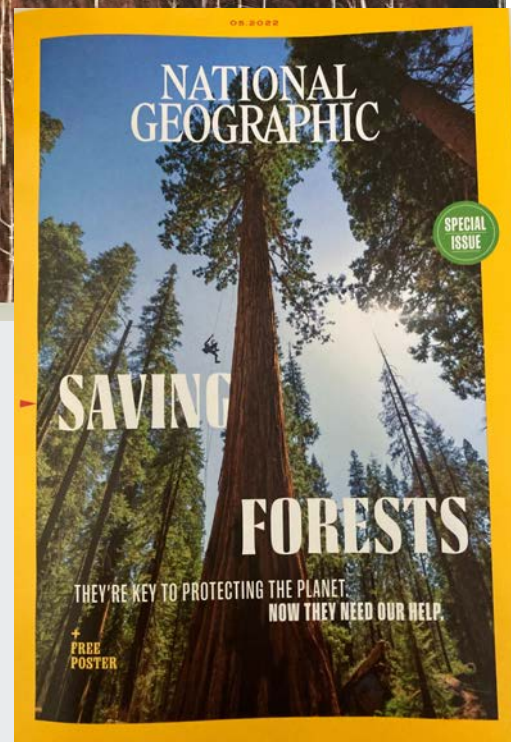
--David Caldwell, Broad Riverkeeper



Photographer Mac Stone's work was featured in this year's May issue of **National Geographic Magazine**. Mac flew with Volunteer Pilot Robert Searfoss on a series of flights in 2021 over the coastal Cape Fear River. The photograph is part of the story [Forests are reeling from climate change -- but the future isn't lost](#).



***"Along the Cape Fear River, North Carolina • Seawater seeps into aquifers and freshwater wetlands, killing vegetation such as these bald cypresses near Eagles Island. Dredging encouraged the intrusion and killed the trees long ago. Cypress stands all over the Southeast have been decimated since the 19th century by logging and draining of wetlands."*** Photo by Mac Stone on p. 54-55, May 2022 issue of National Geographic. Flights courtesy of SouthWings VP Robert Searfoss.





# WEST VIRGINIA

Two flights have been arranged in West Virginia so far this year, carrying a total of three passengers.

Author and freelance writer **Bob Wyss** was able to join Vernon Haltom, Executive Director of **Coal River Mountain Watch** (CRMW), on a flight over mountaintop removal (MTR) sites in West Virginia with Volunteer Pilot Scott Simonton. Wyss is working on a book about the history of coal in America to be published by University of Connecticut Press.



**"One chapter of my book... will be devoted to mountaintop removal, and the whole reason I came to WV was to see it for myself and then report on it. You have provided an invaluable resource."** - Bob Wyss.

Alpha Metallurgical Resources operates a 12 square mile mountaintop removal complex on Coal River Mountain. Photo by Vernon Haltom, CRMW. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Simonton.

Vernon Haltom was able to learn the extent of new MTR activity in areas that are otherwise inaccessible to the public and advocacy groups. CRMW used photos and videos from the flight to raise awareness in the local community that MTR is still happening near them. CRMW also submitted two reports on possible permit violations.

*SouthWings flights reinforce our work to let the public know the ongoing nature of MTR, its hazards and proximity to communities, and its vast scale.* -Vernon Haltom, CRMW



CRMW submitted this photo to WVDEP for a potential violation for erosion and failure to stabilize the valley fill at the active Twilight II mountaintop removal permit operated by Lexington Coal Company. Photo by Vernon Haltom. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Simonton.

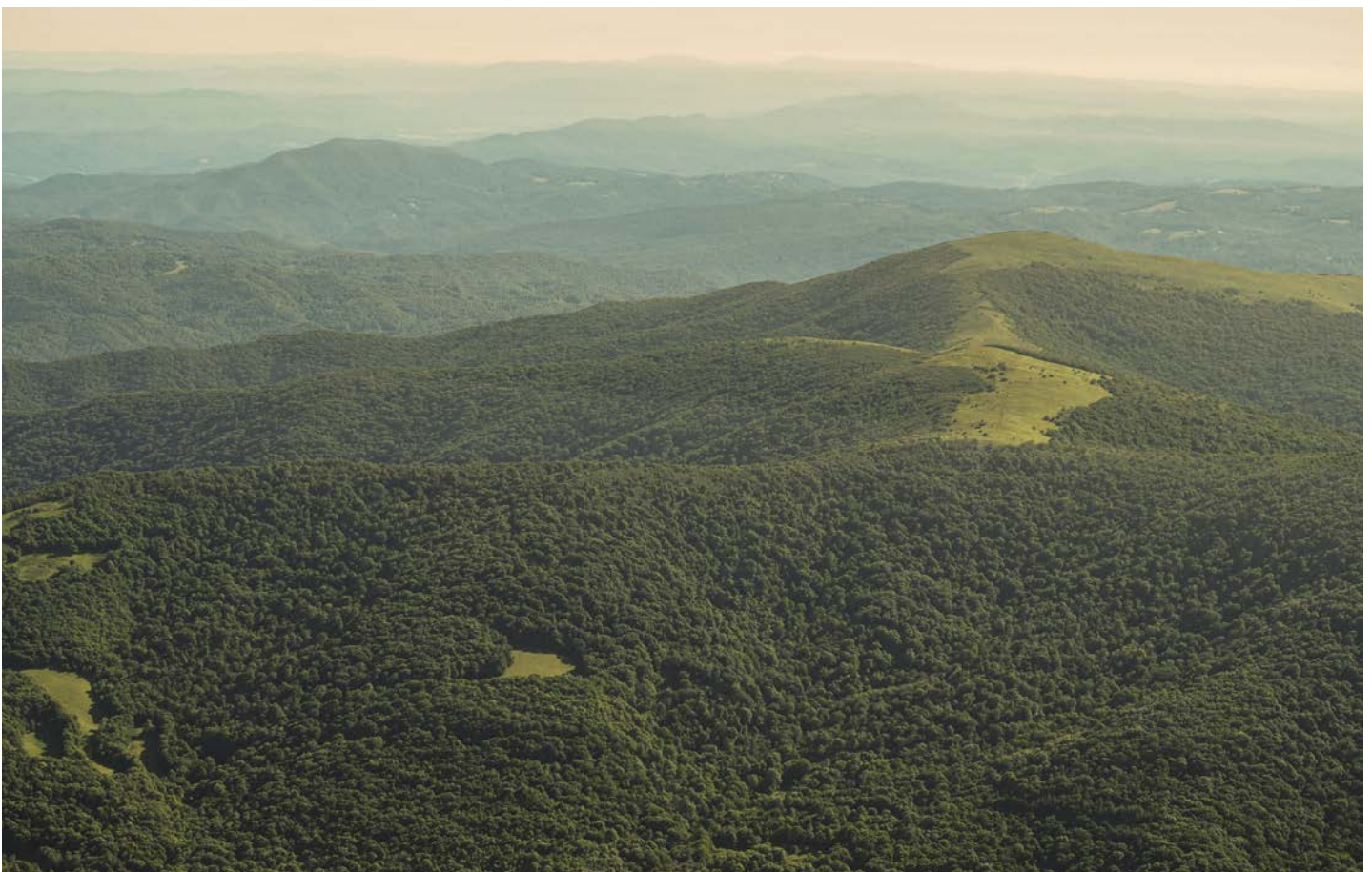
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## TENNESSEE & KENTUCKY

One SouthWings flight with one passenger has been completed in Tennessee this year. No flights have been completed this year in Kentucky.

Volunteer Pilot Frank Bell worked with a photographer to capture images of the Cherokee National Forest along the Tennessee/North Carolina border. These images will be used by **Southern Environmental Law Center** and **Cherokee Forest Voices** to assess landscape conditions and support an updated inventory of eligible wilderness areas in preparation for the upcoming Forest Plan Revision.

SouthWings continues to participate in the Alliance for Appalachia and is eager to build new partnerships to support conservation in Kentucky and Tennessee.



Roan Mountain is one of the identified and prioritized "Tennessee Mountain Treasures," which is being depicted and described in the forthcoming report on eligible wilderness areas within Cherokee National Forest. Photo by Jack Henderson. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Frank Bell.



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# CHESAPEAKE BAY



Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Pogram, Flight courtesy of SouthWings.



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# VIRGINIA

Three flights have been completed in Virginia carrying a total of seven passengers.

In Virginia's southern coastal plain, representatives from **Southern Forests Conservation Coalition** and **Dogwood Alliance** flew with Volunteer Pilot Brian Creed to investigate logging surrounding Enviva's Southampton wood pellet production facility. Clearcut logging and destruction of wetlands can impact water quality, flooding, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitat.



Clearcut near Hargraves Millpond, Sussex, VA within Enviva sourcing radius. Photo by Dogwood Alliance. Flight courtesy of SouthWings.

SouthWings also worked with the **James River Association** to plan two field trip flights for the **Choose Clean Water Coalition Conference** in Richmond, VA that unfortunately had to be cancelled due to weather.

In March, Volunteer Pilot Jeremy Jacobsohn worked with a new SouthWings partner, **The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust** to complete annual monitoring of several conservation easements over 1,000 acres each. At 125 miles long, the Cacapon River is the third largest tributary to the Potomac River. The Cacapon watershed sits on the border of WV and VA.



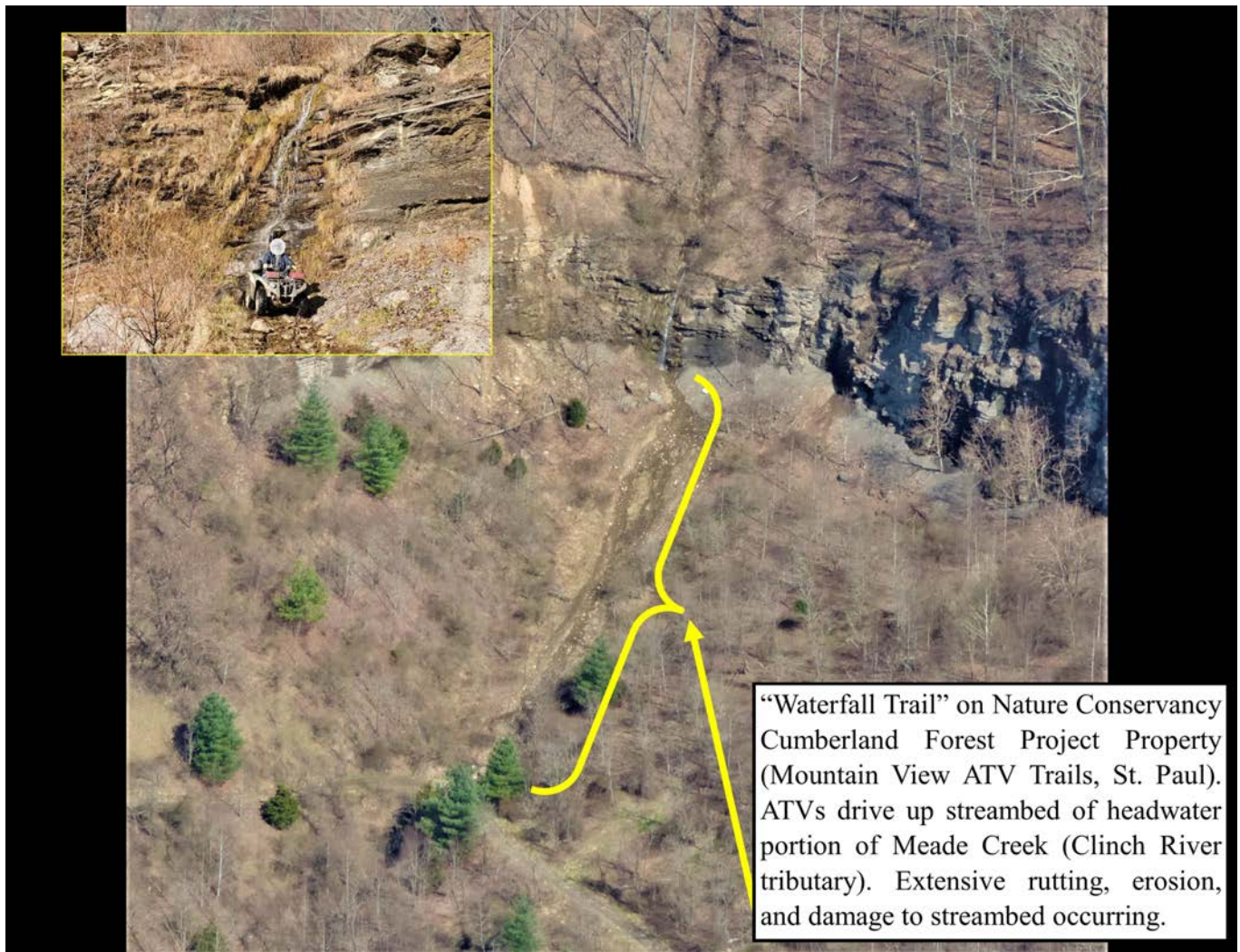
Volunteer Pilot Rankin Whittington supported new SouthWings partner The Clinch Coalition with a flight in early Spring to document the effects of logging operations and environmental damage on motorized vehicle trails. Following the flight, one of the state-run ATV trails they documented and reported to regulators as a possible regulatory violation has been closed and barricaded. The Clinch Coalition protects the forests and watersheds in southwestern VA, and will also use photos from the flight in a video to share on social media to demonstrate the extent of logging in the National Forest.

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*"...We have a strong hunch this happened at least in part because of our ability to fly over the site and document it extensively."*

-Wally Smith, The Clinch Coalition

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“Waterfall Trail” on Nature Conservancy Cumberland Forest Project Property (Mountain View ATV Trails, St. Paul). ATVs drive up streambed of headwater portion of Meade Creek (Clinch River tributary). Extensive rutting, erosion, and damage to streambed occurring.

Photo by Wally Smith, The Clinch Coalition. Flight courtesy SouthWings VP Rankin Whittington.

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# MARYLAND, PENNSYLVANIA & DELAWARE

No flights have been completed this year in Maryland, Pennsylvania, or Delaware.

However, SouthWings' Eastern Program Manager attended the Choose Clean Water Conference in May and was able to connect with several existing flight partners and learn about projects that may benefit from a SouthWings flight in the future.

During the conference, Will Parson, Media Specialist for the **Chesapeake Bay Program** presented a session on visual storytelling that featured aerial photographs from previous SouthWings flights. Some of the tips he offered were that an unusual perspective makes a photo more interesting and that the longer you look at a photograph, the longer you are likely to engage with the associated text.



Elk Neck State Park, from a 2021 SouthWings flight. Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program. Flight courtesy of SouthWings.



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# GULF OF MEXICO



©2018 Julie Dermansky



# LOUISIANA

SouthWings volunteer pilots completed 18 flights carrying 36 passengers in Louisiana during the first half of 2022.

The first flights of the year centered around investigating and reporting instances of pollution, as well as visibility on the damage that petro-chemical industries have inflicted upon the disappearing coastline. Julie Dermansky with **DeSmog Blog**, in cooperation with **Healthy Gulf**, documented a major diesel pipeline spill outside of Chalmette, LA on a flight with Volunteer Pilot Jared Savage. Her subsequent [article](#) called attention to the casual attitude of regulators toward environmental protection and climate change in Louisiana, as well as lack of transparency with the public.



PBF's Chalmette Refinery in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Photo by Julie Dermansky. Originally published in [DeSmog](#). Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Jared Savage.



In April, SouthWings helped expose [controversial flood-prevention projects](#) in Acadiana, Louisiana as the area continues to have “historic” floods due to climate change. **The Current** credits its flight with SouthWings Volunteer Pilot Leonard Guidry for the development of [another story](#), and stated to SouthWings, “...the Corps of Engineers has launched an investigation into this unpermitted work and the implications for wetlands that may have been destroyed.”

*In order to tell the story, the audience must understand and see the landscape.*

-Jazmin Miller, Jonesland documentary

A large portion of flights in Louisiana also centered around logistical and public support of coastal restoration projects. In April, Volunteer Pilot Christopher Noth flew a scientist from **Louisiana State University** and a GIS expert to scope potential sites for a tribal-led restoration project. They documented extensive damage done by years of unchecked industry along the coastline, and provided useful information to the tribe.



A liquid natural gas export terminal in Southwest Louisiana. Photo by Julie Dermansky. Originally published in a [DeSmog](#) article by Justin Nobel. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Leonard Guidry.



Travis Gauthier of The Current photographs controversial detention pond projects in South Louisiana's Acadiana area. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Leonard Guidry.



A liquid natural gas export terminal in Southwest Louisiana. Photo by Mike Lee. Originally published in [E&E News](#). Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Humphries.

Throughout May and June, SouthWings completed five media-focused flights on liquid natural gas export infrastructure in an area hammered by Hurricanes Laura and Delta, a freeze, and a flood. Journalists from [E&E News](#), [Floodlight News](#), and other outlets saw first-hand, along with Volunteer Pilots Leonard Guidry and Scott Humphries, the enormity of LNG infrastructure, and their experiences and photos informed national reporting. Additionally, a report from **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** titled “[Gas Export Spotlight: Venture Global Calcasieu Pass Facility Accidents](#)” features a photo from one of these flights. Going forward, photos and videos will continue to be used by the media and frontline organizations to educate and mobilize the public around LNG export issues and the communities directly impacted.

SouthWings also worked with **Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana** and **Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition** to arrange flights for a variety of influential stakeholders as well as staff. Volunteer Pilots Les Abend, Christopher Noth, Jared Savage, and Emmet Bartholomew flew partners including **Chef Dana Honn of Chef's Brigade**, **Urban Conservancy**, **City of New Orleans' Infrastructure Program Manager**, and the **Walton Family Foundation**. Les Abend shared his experiences flying for SouthWings with [Flying Magazine](#)!

*I've driven [the flight route] many times and I've been out on the water, but being above really gives you a sense of the vulnerability and the urgency of the work that is being done to build land and stabilize that whole region...*

-Dana Eness, Executive Director of Urban Conservancy



Over the years, SouthWings has supported **Dr. Alex Kolker** of **Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)**'s research on emerging crevasses in the Mississippi River. These crevasses have significant implications for coastal restoration, and one of them, **Neptune Pass**, is getting [local](#) and [national media attention](#).

Thanks to all of SouthWings' volunteer pilots who have helped Dr. Kolker with his research over the years: Lance Rydberg, Emmet Bartholomew, Ken Knevel, Leonard Guidry, and Mike Guidry.

*I just wanted to say a big thanks to SouthWings. Last year, you helped us get in the air to look at a developing crevasse in the lower Mississippi River. Today, we released our first technical report on this crevasse, which is now one of the larger pathways in the lower Mississippi River.*

-Dr. Alex Kolker



Image used in the [Grist](#) headline about Neptune Pass. Photo by Dr. Alex Kolker, LUMCON. Flight courtesy of SouthWings.

# TEXAS

In February, SouthWings welcomed its first ever volunteer pilot based in Texas, [Scott Humphries](#)! Scott enthusiastically helped out with flights in Louisiana, and in June piloted the first ever Texas flight! The flight, planned with **Healthy Gulf** and **Sierra Club** and carrying one passenger, investigated the [Freeport LNG facility explosions](#) that have rocked the global LNG market and left locals with questions about emergency management and safety. It also documented sprawling local industry along the coast area. Scott wrote about his experiences in his [professional blog](#).



The Freeport LNG export facility next to the Quintana Island beaches, after June's explosions. Photo by Naomi Yoder, Healthy Gulf. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Humphries.

A shot of some of Freeport's sprawling industry that sits along the Texas coastline. Coastal fossil fuel infrastructure is increasingly vulnerable to climate disasters, while at the same time, fueling climate change. Photo by Naomi Yoder, Healthy Gulf. Flight courtesy of SouthWings VP Scott Humphries.



*I hadn't been to Freeport before, so I didn't appreciate the density of the industrial development there [until the flight].* -Naomi Yoder, Healthy Gulf



## MISSISSIPPI, ALABAMA, & FLORIDA

One flight in Mississippi with one passenger and one flight in Florida with two passengers have been completed so far in 2022. There have not yet been any completed flights in Alabama this year, though one that has been delayed by the weather is in the works with Volunteer Pilot Robert Searfoss.

In May, SouthWings Volunteer Pilot Tim Walsh completed a flight with **Cherokee Concerned Citizens** over industry in Pascagoula. The group is using the surveillance and information gathered from the flight to fight pollution in their [subdivision which has unusually high cancer rates](#). They are in the process of not only using the images to bolster their regulatory efforts, but also to educate community members via their [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

The same month, Volunteer Pilot Mike Guidry flew Save Our Soundside to document irresponsible development of wetlands leading to flooding and degraded ecosystems in the panhandle of Florida. SOS continues to use [aerial photos and videos to educate the public on their social media](#), [hold developers responsible](#), and [advocate for policy change](#) with officials.



**“You all have destroyed the ecosystem and our quality of life,” says SOS president, Dara Hartigan**

Dara Hartigan of Save Our Soundside testified for policy change and enforcement, using photos and video from her SouthWings flight. Source: [Facebook](#)

# COMPLETED FLIGHTS BY PROGRAM AND STATE



\*SouthWings launched the Texas flight program in June 2022.



# VOLUNTEER PILOTS

SouthWings' Volunteer Pilot roster is made up of the most generous, talented and inspiring individuals. We are so grateful for each and every one who chooses to devote their time, energy and resources to the restoration and protection of the ecosystems of the Southeast.



PICTURED ABOVE ARE SOME OF THE **18 NEW VOLUNTEER PILOTS** WHO HAVE BEEN ONBOARDED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS.





**THAT'S A 14% NET INCREASE TO OUR VOLUNTEER CORPS!**

# VOLUNTEER PILOTS BY STATE




(SOME PILOTS ARE OMITTED BY REQUEST)

## CHESAPEAKE (12 TOTAL)

### MARYLAND

Ron Baker   
 Stephen Haggard  
 Jeremy Jacobsohn   
 Larry Petro   
 Ken Shaffer 

### VIRGINIA



Dave Brubaker  
 Brian Creed   
 Glenn Sanders   
 John Sapienza  
 Paul Werbin 

## GULF (20 TOTAL)

### FLORIDA

Les Abend   
 Mark Andrews  
 Roy Brewer   
 Hart Fessenden   
 Mike Guidry  
 Christopher Noth 

### ALABAMA



Jared Savage   
 Bryan Tauchen  
 Charles Welden 

## APPALACHIAN TO ATLANTIC (30 TOTAL)

### WEST VIRGINIA

Scott Simonton 

### TENNESSEE

Joe Creecy   
 Jay Mills   
 Micheal Spurgeon

### ILLINOIS

David Warner 

### NORTH CAROLINA

Frank Bell   
 Richard Embry   
 Hap Endler   
 Art Falk  
 Bill Kahn  
 John Leder   
 Doug Oakley   
 Holliday Obrecht   
 Peter Stauble   
 Bob Thomason   
 Rankin Whittington 

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Chris Carmel   
 Jon Engle   
 Kimberly Métris   
 Georgina Rinehart  
 Landon Thorne 

### GEORGIA

Steve Ashby   
 Woody Beck   
 Michael Henley  
 Tim Moran  
 Brian Robbins  
 Robert Searfoss  
 John Steward

### LOUISIANA

Emmet Bartholomew   
 Owen Bordelon  
 Leonard Guidry  
 Ken Knevel   
 Tim Walsh

### TEXAS

Scott Humphries 



New recruit within past 12 months



5+ years of service



10+ years of service



# MEET OUR STAFF

We are grateful to our staff working behind the scenes to support this great work across the Southeast



**MEREDITH DOWLING**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**VIRGINIA RICHARD**  
GULF PROGRAM MANAGER



**LAURA EARLY**  
EASTERN PROGRAM  
MANAGER



**CHELSEA EASTER**  
OPERATIONS AND  
VOLUNTEER PILOT  
MANAGER