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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 Volunteer Pilot Hap Endler.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

This summer marked 15 years since I first joined the SouthWings team. It continues to give me hope seeing what just a handful of dedicated folks can accomplish when we simply refuse to give up. The victory spurring cleanup of one of the largest and longest-running oil spills in US history that we highlight in this report (pages 5-8) is one of my favorite stories of how we can work together to beat seemingly impossible odds.

After several long years of adapted operations, it was re-energizing to gather again in person this year. In April, we hosted our annual Fly-In at Kanuga Conference and Retreat Center in Hendersonville, NC, marking the first iteration of the event since the coronavirus pandemic began. Twenty-two volunteer pilots and their guests joined SouthWings board and staff for a three-day retreat in the beautiful mountains of Western North Carolina.

In October SouthWings board and staff all gathered at Wildacres Retreat in western North Carolina amidst the beauty of the ancient Appalachian Mountains. A rainbow opened across the mountains at sunrise, illuminating the splendor of the fall leaves in their fiery best. A perfect start to a day that filled me with hope for all that is possible when we work together towards common cause. Our mission that beautiful fall day: reflect on 27 years of SouthWings and put on paper the values we embody and are striving to cultivate in our world. We look forward to sharing the results of this work soon.

Each SouthWings flight adds a little more light to our world, putting hopeful sparks of fresh perspective and actionable information into the hands of our passengers. We’re pleased to share some of these stories here in this report.

We’re grateful for the many supporters and volunteers who make our work possible. Thank you!

Meredith Dowling
Executive Director
SouthWings and our volunteer pilots are characteristically determined: determined to help uncover the truth and determined to do what is right. Almost NINETEEN years ago, the Taylor Energy oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico began. SouthWings became aware of these leaking oil wells just over 13 years ago, and we have been working alongside our flight partners to hold Taylor Energy accountable ever since.

In the summer of 2010, SouthWings began flying to show the world the scope and scale of the infamous BP/Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Our partners at SkyTruth who use satellite imagery to monitor pollution noticed a nearby slick in April and May of 2010. SkyTruth estimated that it was probably “a small but possibly chronic leak”. It identified the leak as coming from Taylor Energy’s “26 wells that had been connected to an oil platform damaged (and destroyed, or removed) by Hurricane Ivan in 2004”.

Hurricane Creekkeeper John Wathen filmed this video on June 5, 2010, when organizations like SkyTruth and SouthWings were still unsure of the source of the second leak. John Amos of SkyTruth published a blog post about the flight, explaining that they were still working to figure out from where the second slick was emanating. Flight courtesy of Volunteer Pilot Tom Hutchings.
Because oil spills and leaks in the Gulf of Mexico are largely self-reported and policed (unless independent groups like SkyTruth, Healthy Gulf, Hurricane Creekkeeper, and SouthWings get involved), the Interior Department’s records showed that the leak averaged less than \( \frac{1}{3} \) of a barrel of oil a day, or only about 14 gallons. Based on the sheen, SkyTruth estimated the rate to be closer to 100-400 gallons a day, every day, for six years.

On June 5, 2010, SouthWings Volunteer Pilot Tom Hutchings took photographer J Henry Fair and Hurricane Creekkeeper John Wathen to the skies to again document the BP/Deepwater Horizon leak and the newly discovered one, which we now know as the Taylor Energy oil spill. This SouthWings flight marked what we believe is the first time that an independent group had collected photos of this longest-running oil spill in US history. Thus began years of flights in conjunction with partners like SkyTruth, J Henry Fair, Healthy Gulf (formerly Gulf Restoration Network), Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Hurricane Creekkeeper, and other partners to bring awareness, prove that the leak was larger than reported, and most importantly, to push for action.

In April 2011, SouthWings joined with SkyTruth and the Waterkeeper Alliance to found the Gulf Monitoring Consortium. The Consortium was formed to “fill the information gap exposed since the tragic BP/Deepwater Horizon explosion” and report pollution that otherwise went unnoticed or underreported. Gulf Restoration Network (now Healthy Gulf) joined the Consortium shortly after its founding.
In 2018, after twenty-four SouthWings flights with our partners to document and report the ongoing and significant nature of the leak, the US Coast Guard finally ordered Taylor Energy to clean up their mess. This historic victory was spurred by an article on the front page of the Washington Post, which SouthWings and our partners in the Gulf Monitoring Consortium helped to inform. In fact, the above-the-fold photo featured in this front page article was from a SouthWings monitoring flight of the Taylor Energy spill site that investigative journalist Darryl Fears had joined alongside our flight partners at Healthy Gulf.

A follow up article in the Washington Post described how Fears' reporting finally led to action. By this time, the amount leaked per day from Taylor Energy’s damaged wells was estimated to be up to 700 barrels or 29,400 gallons a day. The cumulative leak since 2004 was estimated at 1.5 million barrels to 3.5 million barrels of oil total, at the time of the second article’s publishing.

Unfortunately, Taylor Energy decided to fight the U.S. Coast Guard, disparage estimates of the size of the leak, and eventually sue the Coast Guard and Couvillion Group, which was tasked with creating a temporary containment system. Still, Couvillion Group successfully created a floating cap to collect most of the leaking oil and bring it to land for processing and sale. The amount collected from the underwater “volcano” as Timmy Couvillion called it, proved that the Gulf Monitoring Consortium was right about the large scale of the leak. In fact, Couvillion Group has been collecting roughly 1,000 gallons of oil a day from the site, and as of May 2022, had collected 23,214.5 barrels of oil since its first pump-off over 3 years earlier.
Taylor Energy fought taking responsibility in the courts and even sued Couvillion Group for trespassing. The cases continued to be dismissed. From 2019 to present, SouthWings provided thirteen more flights, most recently on April 28, 2023, to monitor the progress and support our partners’ work for a permanent solution.

Seeing that it is no match for dedicated groups like SouthWings, SkyTruth, Waterkeeper Alliance, and Healthy Gulf, on December 23, 2021, Taylor Oil Co. agreed to a settlement which required them to drop their remaining lawsuits, hand over a $432 million trust fund for well-plugging efforts, and pay all of its remaining assets, $43 million additional dollars ($12.8 million to the U.S. Coast Guard for past cost reimbursement, a $15 million Clean Water Act civil penalty, and $16.5 million to Natural Resource Damages [NRD] for compensatory natural resource restoration project). The consent decree was finalized in March of 2022.

While SouthWings is celebrating this consent decree as a hard-won victory, without some type of permanent plug or containment, current estimates are that these wells will continue to bleed oil into the Gulf of Mexico for 100 years. The Taylor Energy oil spill provides a cautionary tale of what can happen when you mix offshore oil extraction and hurricanes. Especially as the climate crisis escalates and hurricanes are more frequent and stronger, independent monitoring and advocating for a transition away from fossil fuels are a critical part of environmental protection and justice.

And, this spill is just one example of what happens across the Gulf of Mexico every single day. Most oil spills are not as large or long-lasting, but with thousands of wells in the Gulf, many of them spilling even small amounts each day, the cumulative impact is substantial. Because regulators rely primarily on industry self-reporting of oil leaks and spills, and enforcement action is often lacking when this pollution evades public awareness, the independent watchdog role that SouthWings and our partners play is critical.
FLIGHT STATS

127
Completed Flights in 2023

Flights by Region

Chesapeake
7%

Appalachia to Atlantic (A2A)
65%

Gulf
28%
FLIGHTS BY ISSUE

Flights are designed to uncover environmental challenges and inspire lasting solutions. Many flights focus on multiple issues. The percentages shown below describe the percentage of all completed flights that included a particular issue. So far in 2023, SouthWings has collaborated with our partners on a wide range of environmental issues, most often focusing on:

- **Watershed Protection**: 65%
- **Monitoring CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations)**: 34%
- **Solving the Climate Crisis**: 25%
- **Environmental Justice**: 25%
- **Land Use Planning**: 22%
- **Holding Polluters Accountable**: 20%
- **Monitoring the Oil Industry**: 18%
- **Wetland Protection**: 18%
- **Restoring the Mississippi River**: 11%
GEORGIA

Nine flights have been arranged in Georgia this year carrying a total of 15 passengers.

In April, Volunteer Pilot Woody Beck conducted a flight to help visualize the concentration of polluting industries in Adel, GA. Southern Environmental Law Center, Dogwood Alliance, and Concerned Citizens of Cook County are particularly concerned with two proposed wood pellet biomass facilities, and photographer Julie Dermansky captured aerial photos to help convey the environmental justice concerns facing this community. Dr. Gear has used photos from the flight in presentations, including one about effective partnerships at the annual One Hundred Miles Choosing to Lead Conference.

“The experience provided by the pilot was amazing. ...It was even more disturbing to see the close proximity of industries to our residential areas from an aerial view.”

-Dr. Treva Gear, Concerned Citizens of Cook County

In September, Volunteer Pilot John Steward flew to support the Altamaha Riverkeeper’s advocacy efforts for proper closure plans for coal ash ponds at several Georgia Power facilities. Reporters Gautama Mehta and Grant Blankenship accompanied Fletcher Sams, Altamaha Riverkeeper on the flight, resulting in a Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) article: Georgia environmentalists ask for a stronger EPA hand in coal ash regulation. In November, the Georgia Recorder published this article using photos from the flight to detail Georgia Environmental Protection Division’s decision to allow a closure plan that would keep toxic coal ash in contact with groundwater at Plant Hammond near the Coosa River. The Southern Environmental Law Center and other advocates have requested that the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) deny Georgia the ability to manage coal ash disposal permitting program, arguing that it is in violation of the federal rules. Advocates in Alabama similarly have been pushing for EPA to deny the State of Alabama’s plan to allow continued storage of coal ash in unlined pits near waterways.

Volunteer Pilot John Steward also flew Ogeechee Riverkeeper board and staff to investigate properties receiving “soil amendments.” Ogeechee Riverkeeper is concerned about industrial waste being applied to agricultural fields and its impacts to water quality, quality of life, and long-term environmental impacts. This summer, we hosted a virtual screening of Georgia’s Dirty Little Secret followed by a discussion with Savannah Riverkeeper Tonya Bonitatibus for our volunteer pilots. The film details the issues with “soil amendments” in Georgia and features footage from past SouthWings flights.
On the Georgia coast, Volunteer Pilot Landon Thorne supported One Hundred Miles in documenting widespread, rampant warehouse development surrounding Savannah. (In the past 3 years, 77 warehouses were built in Chatham County, averaging 300,000 square feet each.) With photos and maps, Jen Hilburn, North Coast Advocate at One Hundred Miles, is encouraging local jurisdictions to enact moratoriums on warehousing developments until they have a plan to protect water quality, sensitive lands, and residents’ quality of life.

Volunteer Pilot Landon Thorne also supported ongoing content and data collection for Emory University's Georgia Coast Atlas with a flight this spring and a flight in December. The atlas is a means to combine various forms of digital media with scholarly content to produce a website that will be of great value to educators, conservationists, students, and the general public. The project was recently highlighted in Atlanta Magazine.

It can take years and even decades to see action as a result of advocacy efforts. This spring, the US Army Corps of Engineers completed the first phase of a marsh restoration project in the Satilla River Estuary. Our flight partner, the Satilla Riverkeeper, monitored this area of salt marsh on flights in 2016 and 2017, and has been working with local partners to advocate for the closing of man-made cuts that have altered tidal flow and salinity gradient.
SOUTH CAROLINA

Three flights have been completed in South Carolina so far this year, carrying a total of three passengers.

Photographer J Henry Fair flew with Volunteer Pilot Landon Thorne in during a high tide this November to capture photographs of islands along the South Carolina coast. South Carolina Coastal Conservation League will use the photographs to illustrate the need to restore important bird habitat along the coast.

Deveaux Bank is a small island near the mouth of the Edisto River that serves as one of the most important sea bird rookeries in South Carolina, supporting more than a dozen bird species that rely on it during breeding or migration. Much of it was decimated during Tropical Storm Idalia in September 2023.

Images along the coast north to Cape Romain illustrate other important islands for bird habitat and the juxtaposition of developed areas where habitat no longer exists. View a snapshot of the flight in this short video.

Photographer J Henry Fair continues to collect imagery for a project to illustrate the little-known story of Harriet Tubman’s rescue mission to free 700 enslaved people from rice plantations along the Combahee River. Tubman became the first woman to lead a major US military operation as she 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 anticipated for February 2024 and an accompanying museum exhibit to open in Spring 2025. In early June, Fair flew with Volunteer Pilot Landon Thorne along the Combahee River to capture video for the upcoming exhibits.
This spring, Volunteer Chris Carmel flew the **Congaree Riverkeeper**, Bill Stangler, to monitor rocky shoals spider lily populations along the Broad River. The flight also allowed him to check on several sources of pollution. He was able to get progress photos of the early stages of the Congaree River coal tar cleanup, where they had begun by dewatering one of the cells from which they will remove coal tar and sediment. This cleanup was completed in early November. At the abandoned Carlisle Finishing textile facility along the Broad River where he was taking photos of waste lagoons containing PFAS and other pollutants, Stangler noticed something odd, which he later confirmed with the South Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DHEC) was a coal ash pond on the site. He will use this information to inform their advocacy for effective clean up plans of the site.

...I was looking at a photo of what I was pretty sure was a coal ash pond that I took from a plane 2 hours ago. They went on to acknowledge that yes, there is coal ash stored on site, and the company had even indicated they didn't want to clean it up. We may have come across that information later in document reviews, but we were able to flag a significant pollution concern in real time because of the flight.

- Bill Stangler, Congaree Riverkeeper

**Always a pleasure to work with SouthWings and committed environmental advocates like Bill Stangler. I always learn things on these flights.**

- Volunteer Pilot Chris Carmel
NORTH CAROLINA
This year, we have conducted 64 flights in North Carolina, carrying 101 passengers.

In April, Volunteer Pilot Richard Embry flew Catawba Lands Conservancy staff to monitor existing land conservation easements and gather photos of potential conservation opportunities.

I was surprised at the level of development pressure our existing conserved properties and priority conservation projects currently face. ...Hopefully seeing how threatened these lands are from being overrun by development will encourage donors to help us protect these last remaining wild islands from development.

-Sean Bloom, Catawba Lands Conservancy
SouthWings continues to support Waterkeepers across the state of North Carolina. This year, volunteer pilots have flown with the Cape Fear Riverkeeper, Haw Riverkeeper, Green Riverkeeper, White Oak Riverkeeper, Neuse Riverkeeper, Yadkin Riverkeeper, and the Waterkeeper Alliance. Flights supported holding polluters accountable, as well as monitoring concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and sedimentation. SouthWings also attended the Waterkeeper Alliance’s Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Summit this spring in Birmingham, AL.

Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin flew Haw Riverkeeper, Emily Sutton, with environmental reporter Lisa Sorg in March to examine sedimentation issues. Haw River Assembly staff flew again in May to follow up on sedimentation issues. During this flight with Volunteer Pilot Rankin Whittington, they documented sediment discharge into wetlands and creeks from failing retention ponds on the VinFast construction site. After submitting aerial photos to North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, staff did an onsite inspection of the project and stated they will continue monthly inspections of the site. Emily flew again in December to monitor sedimentation with Volunteer Pilot Wally Dixon.

^The sediment retention basin in the top part of the photo is nearly empty, having discharged into the adjacent wetland. The other release of runoff is in the bottom left of this photo.

<The VinFast development site is 1300 acres, including 36 wetland areas totalling 99 acres in Chatham County, NC.

Photos provided by Haw River Assembly. Flight courtesy of SouthWings Volunteer Pilot Rankin Whittington.
Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin has supported Sound Rivers’ Neuse Riverkeeper, Samantha Krop, with four flights this year. These flights have accomplished monitoring of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and documentation of sediment pollution in a drinking water supply. A reporter from The News and Observer was able to witness clearcutting and construction in the Lick Creek watershed that is contributing to sedimentation issues in Falls Lake. An attorney with Southern Environmental Law Center working on CAFOs, and an urban planner from Durham were both able to join on flights. Photos from one of the flights were used in a lawsuit against a developer in the Lick Creek Watershed, filed in September.

Coastal Carolina Riverwatch’s (CCRW) White Oak Riverkeeper, Riley Lewis, has flown with Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin ten times this year. The focus of these flights is to monitor CAFO operations in the upper portion of Onslow County and report any potential violations to NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). This monitoring is part of a multi-faceted water quality improvement project: Pure Farms, Pure Waters.

We were also able to support the Waterkeeper Alliance with multiple flights to build relationships and build awareness about CAFO impacts to water quality and healthy communities. Volunteer Pilots Doug Oakley and Rolf Wallin flew Catawba College students participating in the Waterkeeper Alliance’s Advocacy Boot Camp, a clean water advocacy experiential learning intensive. On the flight, students learned how to conduct aerial surveys of CAFO pollution. Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin also worked with Waterkeeper Alliance to demonstrate CAFO concentration and impacts to representatives of the Center for a Livable Future at John Hopkins University and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
Waterkeeper Alliance also worked with fellows at the North Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club to illustrate North Carolina’s CAFO issue. The fellows spent their summer researching the impacts of CAFOs on air, land, waterways, and communities in North Carolina as well as federal policies and regulations that are incentivizing hog waste biogas as a renewable fuel. This work will be used to advocate for elevating this issue within the Sierra Club. Flights with Volunteer Pilot Doug Oakley in Duplin County pulled it all together for the fellows. Hear their insights in this video.

In September, Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin flew photographer J Henry Fair to photograph CAFO facilities for an upcoming feature article in the Sierra Club magazine, scheduled for Spring 2024.

In October, the Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC) gathered advocates from across the country to meet in North Carolina. During their visit, Volunteer Pilots Bill Kahn and Rolf Wallin were able to provide a transformative aerial experience for eight of the participants.

The view from the plane was something I had never experienced before. From up in the air I could see the vastness of CAFOs in the radius of the airport which was shocking. Hearing the number and actually seeing it is two different feelings. While the sight of numerous CAFOs in the area was disheartening, I recognize the importance of such experiences in highlighting the vast extent of these industrial facilities and the environmental impact they impose.

- Chandler Allred, NC Sierra Club Fellow

Seeing the landscape from this removed perspective ironically made me feel more connected to it, more driven to protect its integrity and the well-being of all its inhabitants.

-Laura Fox, Vermont Law School

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Hog waste lagoon at a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) in NC. Photo by Laura Fox, Vermont Law School. Flight Courtesy of SouthWings Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin.
MountainTrue’s new Green Riverkeeper, Erica Shanks, flew with Volunteer Pilot Hap Endler early this year to get oriented to her watershed and investigate complaints about sedimentation and erosion. She followed up on a few pollution concerns, but over all she was happy to report that the Green River Gorge and watershed looked to be in good shape from the air.

Yadkin Riverkeeper, Edgar Miller took two flights in September and October with Volunteer Pilot Holliday Obrecht to monitor the watershed for potential CAFO violations, sedimentation, algal blooms, new developments, and scout river access points for the Yadkin River State Paddle Trail.

SouthWings flights have also helped gain media attention for the important work of our Waterkeeper partners. Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin flew Will Atwater, a reporter for NC Health News, with Larry Baldwin, Waterkeeper Alliance’s Pure Farms, Pure Waters NC Campaign Coordinator, and Environmentalists rely on pilot program to do aerial surveillance of animal facilities was published in April. In May, Kemp Burdette, Cape Fear Riverkeeper and Alfredo Sosa, Director of Photography for The Christian Science Monitor flew with Doug Oakley to gain aerial photography for an upcoming feature on the wood pellet biomass industry.
This June, a wildfire impacted the Green Swamp Preserve in eastern North Carolina. Volunteer Pilot Doug Oakley took two flights with The Nature Conservancy’s North Carolina staff shortly after the fire to assess the impacts. In September, they were able to fly again with Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin to gather information about the regrowth and resilience of the preserve ecosystems after the fire. The information from both of these flights was used to assess fire severity, populations of plants in hard to access areas (they popped up after the fire), refugia areas where the fire did not burn, and provided us a landscape scale perspective to more accurately talk about the fire effects and impacts to the Green Swamp. This understanding contributed to valuable outreach materials that explain the good effects of fire including The Pulp Road Wildfire Story Map and video.

"The flights were fantastic and we learned a tremendous amount about where the fire traveled, burn severity... We created a burn severity map, took photos, assessed burn pattern and ignition patterns, assessed how our controlled burns interacted with the wildfire to reduce severity."

- Deb Maurer, The Nature Conservancy
This spring, Volunteer Pilot Rankin Whittington worked with Wildlife Diversity Biologist John Carpenter to survey bald eagle nests in coastal North Carolina. Understanding the distribution and status of the nests helps the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to better manage the bald eagle populations throughout the state. During the flight, they actually saw a mature bald eagle in flight not too far off the left wing of the plane.

This year, SouthWings worked with Asheville based filmmaker Garrett Martin on a video to help ensure the continued sustainability of the organization. Volunteer Pilot Hap Endler provided the flight for and is featured in the video.
WEST VIRGINIA

Six flights have been completed in West Virginia this year, carrying a total of eight passengers.

This May, Vernon Haltom, Executive Director of Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW) and ADR German radio reporter Julia Kastein flew over new and active mountaintop removal (MTR) sites in West Virginia with Volunteer Pilot Scott Simonton. During the flight, they observed what appeared to be a violation of sediment control at Lexington Coal Company’s Crescent Mine site. Coal River Mountain Watch used aerial photos to report this to the state agency and advocate that they revoke Lexington Coal Company’s permit due to multiple ongoing violations.

CRMW has used SouthWings flights for years as one of the tools in their tool box to continuously advocate that West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection protect the environment against the harms of mountaintop removal coal mining. As a result of this constant advocacy, CRMW and Sierra Club finally were able to do a site visit of the Lexington Coal Company’s Crescent #2 permit in October. They are currently pushing for the permit to be revoked instead of renewed due to five cessation orders for unabated violations.

"Thank you very much for a unique and truly enlightening experience. Such a beautiful country. I hope the wounds will heal."

-Julia Kastein, ADR Radio

“Southwings flights have provided us a view of mountaintop removal sites that we wouldn’t otherwise have. We’ve been able to see and share the ongoing violations ... supporting our actions to have the practice of unlimited extensions ended and significant fines assessed."

-Vernon Haltom, Coal River Mountain Watch
In April, Volunteer Pilot Don Sutherland supported a new flight partner, **Friends of Blackwater**, with two flights over a 10-mile proposed highway route from Davis to Mackey, WV, known as Corridor H. Friends of Blackwater are concerned the route will damage Blackwater Canyon, and they are advocating that WV Department of Transportation consider alternate routes. Photos from the flight were used in the organization’s recent newsletter, and they intend to use photos to build grassroots support and engage WVDOT in discussion. They also flew in August to document a proposed clearcut in the Monongahela National Forest.

As a photographer, being able to get in the air and shoot a location with such a different perspective was really enjoyable.

-Marielle Scott, Chesapeake Bay Program

In September, Volunteer Pilot Don Sutherland also flew Marielle Scott, a media intern at the **Chesapeake Bay Program**. She captured photos of cities and tributaries in the Potomac River watershed that will be used to illustrate case studies, feature stories and reports published by the Chesapeake Bay Program.

In October, **Bloomberg Green** published “**Fear and Anger Follow the Path of Joe Manchin’s Mountain Valley Pipeline**,” which details ways that the pipeline project affects daily life in West Virginia. This piece was informed by and features photos from a flight with Volunteer Pilot Don Sutherland, who flew photographer **Kristian Thacker** along a significant portion of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in August.
TENNESSEE & KENTUCKY

One flight with one passenger was completed in Tennessee this year, and no flights were completed in Kentucky.

Volunteer Pilot Hap Endler flew MountainTrue’s French Broad Paddle Trail Manager, Jack Henderson along the French Broad River from Asheville to Del Rio, Tennessee. He documented current and new developments, existing public access points, riverside parks and more. The photos will be used in a comprehensive update of the paddle trail website and other print materials. A photo from the North Carolina portion of one of these flights was used recently to announce a collaborative land conservation project and new public access point near Brevard.

SouthWings continues to participate in the Alliance for Appalachia. We are also building off of in-person trips last year to Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as participating in The Appalachian Big Ideas Fest this year to build new partnerships to support conservation in both states.

This year, SouthWings has arranged four flights in Virginia carrying eight passengers.

In January, Volunteer Pilot Rolf Wallin worked with Dogwood Alliance and Southern Environmental Law Center to educate German news reporters and photographers about the destructive practices of the wood pellet industry in North Carolina and Virginia. The trip resulted in several German media pieces, including this Monitor television news feature. (The flight is featured about 10:33.)

Wood pellet biomass is being used as fuel for energy production, particularly in Europe, and this has accelerated clearcutting in the southeastern US. Our flights have been documenting the operations at pellet mills and the extent of logging for years, to help fight the false narrative that this is a viable climate change solution.

“Enviva and other biomass producers are going full force with a greenwashed PR campaign in the European Union...All these companies are also acknowledging that they would only use biomass if they could secure renewable energy subsidies similar to UK-sized subsidies. That's exactly where the power of investigations, and work with Southwings, comes in and why it's so important. The reporting helps bring the debate forward and combats the wood pellet industry's PR spin.”

-Rita Frost, Dogwood Alliance
In October, Volunteer Pilot Tim Burtch supported a flight over the Shenandoah Valley for Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley’s Community Outreach Manager, Maya Alexander and her mentee Valerie Washington. Maya and Valerie are participating in Choose Clean Water Coalition’s Young Professionals of Color mentorship program. The flight was a learning experience for both of them!

I don’t like flying at all so I was able to push my boundaries and am surprised that I enjoyed it! I really appreciated getting a bird’s eye view of the land I work to protect. Seeing the algal blooms along the Shenandoah River encourages me to continue to advocate for assistance to reduce nutrient runoff.

-Maya Alexander, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley

In November, Volunteer Pilot Wally Dixon supported a flight for a new SouthWings partner - the **University of Virginia’s Repair Lab**. The Repair Lab seeks to understand the relationship between racial injustice and climate change while studying the causes, consequences, and countermeasures. Photos from the flight will help depict the proximity of coal terminals to local communities and the air and water pollution that results from these terminals, helping to raise the profile of the issue by garnering media attention and community engagement.
This fall, Volunteer Pilot Tim Burtch flew **Piedmont Environmental Council** staff to gather photos of a new conservation project and to observe land use around Charlottesville and Albermarle County.

> This was an incredible experience for me as someone who lives and works locally in Albermarle County on land and water conservation and land use issues. I really valued the opportunity to see my project sites from this new perspective and understand how they fit into the broader landscape. In addition to the perspective gained on my project sites, I really have a better understanding of the land use variation in different geographies and communities.

-Kim Biasiolli, Piedmont Environmental Council

Last year, Volunteer Pilot Rankin Whittington supported **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 was closed and barricaded. This Spring, after only being open to foot traffic for just over a year, The Clinch Coalition reported that the streambed of Meade Creek is showing signs of recovery.

> While it’s still disappointing that it took public pressure for land managers to do the right thing here, it’s a reminder that advocacy works.

-Wally Smith, The Clinch Coalition

Last summer, Will Parson, Media Specialist with the Chesapeake Bay Program flew over the Middle Peninsula Habitat Focus Area with Volunteer Pilot Brian Creed to help tell the story of the area because many of the issues impacting the waterways begin upstream. Many of the photos have been used in communications pieces, including [Three Chesapeake Gateway Sites that Capture the Magic of the Region](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/article/three-chesapeake-gateway-sites-that-capture-the-magic-of-the-region). Photos are archived and are available for non-commercial uses by partners of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Several of Will Parson's aerial photos have also been used to celebrate the Chesapeake Bay Program's 40th anniversary this year.
SouthWings completed two flights in Pennsylvania so far this year carrying a total of 11 passengers.

SouthWings collaborated with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to offer a flight field trip at this year’s Choose Clean Water Conference held in Harrisburg, PA. Volunteer Pilot Glenn Sanders did two trips along the Susquehanna River highlighting the changes in geology, land use, and industry along the river and how it relates to water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. Passengers represented multiple organizations: Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Campbell Foundation, Nature Forward, FracTracker, Environmental Quality Resources, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, and Waterkeepers Chesapeake.

SouthWings’ Eastern Program Manager also attended the conference where she was able to make connections with new potential flight partners and learn about projects that might benefit from SouthWings flights.
MARYLAND & DELAWARE

Two flights have been completed this year in Maryland, carrying six passengers. No flights have been completed in Delaware this year.

In August, Volunteer Pilot Stephen Haggard flew staff of the Chesapeake Legal Alliance (CLA) to gather photos of sites in the Baltimore area that have been the focus of litigation efforts. Aerial photos of the Baltimore’s wastewater treatment plants helped illustrate CLA’s legal challenge to address pollution from the Patapsco and Back River Wastewater Treatment Plants. An agreement was reached between the Maryland Department of Environment, Baltimore City, and Blue Water Baltimore in November to address these pollution issues. Baltimore City will pay $4.75 million in penalties in addition to making necessary changes.

Another site of interest on the flight was Abingdon Woods, the construction site for a 2 million square foot industrial warehouse complex in an area of mature forests and wetlands in the highly degraded Bush River watershed. CLA, on behalf of the Gunpowder Riverkeeper, challenged the permit issued by Maryland Department of Environment to allow construction. They were successful in gaining the proper public comment period, but ultimately, the courts held up the permit. The photos were helpful in educating CLA’s constituents about their work.
SouthWings has been participating in the Choose Clean Water Coalition’s Young Professionals of Color (YPC) mentorship program which supports Black, Indigenous, and People of Color working in the environmental field in achieving their career and professional development goals, and works to close the racial diversity gap in the Chesapeake Bay restoration movement. Earlier this year, our Eastern Program Manager attended a leadership training at the Woodend Nature Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD.

SouthWings flights have also helped strengthen the relationship between mentors and mentees while immersing them in a shared learning experience. In August, Volunteer Pilot Bruce Angevine flew Briana Yancy, Knauss Marine Policy Fellow and her mentor, Kate Fritz, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay’s Executive Director.

“I knew that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is more land than water, but it was amazing to really see it from the air. It helped me contextualize so much about my work of restoring the Chesapeake and her rivers and streams.”

-Kate Fritz, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
GULF OF MEXICO
Volunteer Pilots Eric Jakimier, Jay Mills, Mason Gaines, Leonard Guidry, Lance Stuke, and Scott Humphries collectively flew nineteen Louisiana and two hybrid Louisiana/Texas flights in 2023. Flights ranged from supporting coastal restoration research, to educating and mobilizing local organizations and community leaders in the fight against pollution and false solutions, and beyond.

Many of our Louisiana flights centered around existing and new industrial build out, including false climate solutions like carbon injection and liquid natural gas. The company Air Products has plans for a “blue hydrogen” facility as well as accompanying carbon pipelines and injection. These threaten not only the rich and critical ecosystem of Lake Maurepas and the Maurepas Swamp, but they also pose a significant potential hazard to human life in a place like Louisiana with many active fault lines. Volunteer Pilot Eric Jakimier flew staff from Healthy Gulf as well as Caleb Atwell, Lake Maurepas Preservation Society member, ahead of a community meeting on the project where pictures from the flight were used to bring the public up to date on the company’s activities.

Volunteer Pilot Lance Stuke took to the skies with journalist Sara Sneath, as well as representatives from Louisiana Against False Solutions and Healthy Gulf to observe and document waste injection sites along the Mississippi River. These are all similar to the carbon capture and sequestration scheme proposed for the Maurepas area.
After the flight, **Healthy Gulf** published a [video](#) (embedded below, left) on their social media, educating the public on waste injection and highlighting the role of SouthWings as a partner in fighting false solutions.

Eloise Reid of **Louisiana Against False Solutions (LAFS)** reports that a photo they took on the flight of the site of the proposed ConocoPhillips CCS operation in Lafourche Parish was part of their success in shutting the project down. LAFS did public mobilization that included showing the image at a **meeting of approximately 70-80 residents** (embedded below, right), collecting signatures against the project, and other public education.
SouthWings has long supported coastal restoration and research in Louisiana. This includes **Dr. Alex Kolker**'s coastal research on **Neptune Pass**, the naturally occurring, largest distributary of the Mississippi River. In size, it is large enough to be considered a river in its own right, and has important implications for coastal restoration. **Dr. Kolker, one of the speakers at our 2023 Fly-In**, flew with Volunteer Pilot Eric Jakimier in March to check the pass for any changes.

They flew together again in October, this time joined by a videographer for a documentary being produced by **Emmy award-winning Caitlyn Greene**. Greene is currently working on a piece about the Mississippi River and coastal land loss in Louisiana. Greene reported to SouthWings that the flight opened up another perspective and allowed them to see from above the scale of land loss, as well as the new sandbars at Neptune Pass. Passengers were also able to spot the new [Bayou Sauvage marsh fire](https://www.southwings.org/news/2023/11/bayou-sauvage-marsh-fire/) before it began to get much attention from the media.

Additionally, Volunteer Pilot Scott Humphries flew **Dr. Kolker** and **Wild Mind Films**, which is producing an eight-part global documentary on climate change for [**Al Jazeera**](https://www.aljazeera.com), over Neptune Pass and the Louisiana coast. This year, there was historic low water, so Dr. Kolker and the documentary crews were able to see sedimentation, land building, historic drought, and land loss all together like never before.

> *It was amazing to see the emerging lands in the Neptune Pass/Quarantine Bay system. While I had seen these lands from satellite images, I've never seen them in person before.*

—Dr. Alex Kolker, LUMCON

In June, Volunteer Pilot Mason Gaines took staff from [The Times-Picayune/NOLA.com](https://www.nola.com) over the coast as part of the special piece, [**Louisiana 2050: Rising seas will upend life. Time is running out to limit the impact**](https://www.nola.com). The flight experience informed journalist Mike Smith’s work, and photos from the flight, are featured in the written piece, as well as [**Photos: Louisiana 2050, an uncertain future for the coast**](https://www.nola.com).
SouthWings continues to support regional and local fights against the massive build out of liquified “natural” gas (methane), or LNG, export facilities across the Gulf Coast. SouthWings flights have informed and/or provided images for media coverage of the expansion and its threats not only to human, but also planetary, health.

Pieces include: a mini documentary, Defend SWLA, Directed by Micheal Esealuka; article Louisiana Communities Already Vulnerable to the Climate Crisis Worry That the Expansion of the LNG Export Industry Could Be Catastrophic, By Julie Dermansky | DeSmog; article Southwest Louisiana residents grapple with pollution, clean energy during DOE’s Lake Charles visit, By Halle Parker | WWNO - New Orleans Public Radio; and article Activists Decry FERC Rush to Construct LNG Gas Terminal, Say Permits for More Potential ‘Train Wreck’, By Julie Dermansky | DeSmog.

SouthWings LNG flights provide timely updates to journalists and groups like Healthy Gulf on the continual buildout of LNG infrastructure, aiding in public outreach and strategy with photo documentation which they generously share.

In the August heat, wildfires were sweeping the country, and though it would have normally been a rainy time for much of South Louisiana, fires began across the state. Ted Auch with FracTracker and Volunteer Pilot Scott Humphries flew over Southwest Louisiana to document LNG infrastructure in a flight that Auch characterized as the most impactful of his career so far. Fires and smoke wafted from the north, the ever-encroaching Gulf of Mexico was to the south, and massive LNG infrastructure was right in the middle. It painted a disturbing image of what the future holds as the climate changes, Auch said.
Rise St. James' new video explains how Cancer Alley is overburdened with industrial pollution, and that it has filed a lawsuit against the St. James Parish Council. Some photos featured are from Healthy Gulf's flights with SouthWings.

SouthWings also continues to support pollution monitoring, reporting, and prevention, especially in areas like Cancer Alley. Healthy Gulf always spots, documents, and reports permit violations when they fly the stretch of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Their compilation of photographic evidence over the years helps to prove cumulative pollution impact in the area over time, and challenge Louisiana’s lax regulatory culture. It is also useful in campaigns to stop the expansion of industry in the petrochemical corridor where a disproportionate number of people, many of whom are Black, are sick or dying with cancer. Recently, Rise St. James used images from Healthy Gulf flights with SouthWings in a video highlighting Rise’s (and partner organizations’) lawsuit against the St. James Parish Council for discriminatory zoning practices.

"Thank you all so very much for taking the photos and allowing us to use them!! We really appreciate all you do to help make our environments safe."

-Shamell Lavigne, Rise St. James [to Healthy Gulf and SouthWings]
During their injection well flight with Volunteer Pilot Lance Stuke (previously mentioned), Healthy Gulf also collected photographs for Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) and Rise St. James. A representative of DSCEJ requested photographs of the massive Marathon Refinery fire which released toxins into the air and garnered a lackluster response from the local government. Rise St. James requested images of two local subdivisions being covered in bauxite to prove its source is the next door operation in violation of its permits, counter to the narrative that the red dust was simply soil. (This area of Louisiana does not have red soil.)
In April, SouthWings provided the capstone experience for Earthjustice’s South Louisiana tour. Throughout the week, participants learned about environmental and environmental justice challenges from south-central to southeastern Louisiana with groups like Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, Rise St. James, Louisiana Bucket Brigade, Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development, and more. The final leg of the tour consisted of three flights by Volunteer Pilot and SouthWings Board Member Jay Mills. However, the flights were not just educational. Passengers also learned how to, and were encouraged to, spot and report pollution from the air. Healthy Gulf and SouthWings collaborated to make interactive materials and guided the flights.

Executive Director Meredith Dowling and Gulf Program Manager Virginia Richard took to the air with Volunteer Pilot and Board Member Jay Mills for a practice flight over the River Parishes before the Earthjustice tour. An evening aerial view of the River Parishes/Cancer Alley appears to show cities. However, on closer inspection, these “cities” are often massive petrochemical and fossil fuel plants. Top photo credit: Meredith Dowling. Bottom photo credit: Virginia Richard. Flight courtesy of SouthWings Volunteer Pilot and Board Member Jay Mills.
Cindy Robertson of Micah 6:8 Mission captures images of her community which is impacted by the massive petrochemical and LNG buildout that continues along the Gulf Coast, as well as the salt dome in danger of collapsing. Photo credit: Julie Dermansky. Flight courtesy of Volunteer Pilot Leonard Guidry.

In October, SouthWings and community groups became aware of the potentially imminent collapse of one of Southwestern Louisiana's salt domes which has been used by industry for almost a century. The dome is located around Sulphur, Louisiana and over the Chicot Aquifer which according to the US Geological Survey, is the source of about 48% of Louisiana’s groundwater usage. Due to the amount of industrial operations in the area, collapse into the aquifer would likely release toxins into water used for drinking and farming.

Looking for more information and to document the situation, Cynthia Robertson of Micah 6:8 Mission took to the skies with Volunteer Pilot Leonard Guidry. She was joined by photojournalist Julie Dermansky. Robertson returned to her community to spread the word about the salt dome’s impending collapse and to organize. She spoke about her flight experiences in local newspaper The American Press and continues to raise awareness within and outside of her community.

Julie Dermansky went on to document the larger area and published Activists Decry FERC Rush to Construct LNG Gas Terminal, Say Permits for More Potential ‘Train Wreck' in DeSmog shortly afterward.
Throughout 2023, Volunteer Pilots John Steward, Rick Welch, and Woody Beck provided six flights for our partners in Alabama.

Volunteer Pilot John Steward took Little Riverkeeper Angie Shugart and a journalist from the Fort Payne Times-Journal above the Little River watershed in the first Gulf region flight of the year. They investigated improper stormwater management and potential biosolid dumping in various areas of the watershed.

The flight allowed us to patrol areas that we can't reach by drone or boat. [It] was great! The watershed amazes me every time I go up. Getting an aerial view allows me to see the changes in land use and allows me to guide policy on building and logging in a responsible way.

-Angie Shugart, Little Riverkeeper

Later that month, Volunteer Pilot John Steward brought another group, this time from Greater-Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP) and the Cahaba Riverkeeper, over the Moody Landfill fire in northern Alabama. The fire began in November 2022 and for months different government bodies volleyed back and forth about which was responsible for putting out the fire and cleaning up until the EPA stepped in. Meanwhile, residents continued to be exposed to toxic fumes as the landfill contained unpermitted waste like tires. GASP and Cahaba Riverkeeper were able to witness progress in putting out the fire and collect images for advocacy purposes.

For the third Alabama flight in March, Volunteer Pilot Rick Welch flew Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper Michael Mullen and volunteer Warren Whitmire over five segments of the watershed from the Rose Hill Landfill to the Little Choctawhatchee River. Following a citizen tip, the flight was successful in detecting possible permit violations at the landfill and after the flight Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper found there was no Best Management Practices plan for the site. The Riverkeeper was also able to rule out several sites as sources of suspected bovine fecal contamination, as well as to look for any potential hazards along the River.

Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper Michael Mullen and Riverkeeper volunteer Warren Whitmire pose in front of Volunteer Pilot Rick Welch’s plane after their flight. Said Michael Mullen of the experience, “[S]pecial thanks extends to SouthWings for the flight and especially to pilot Rick Welch who provided his time, piloted the flight and provided very useful pre- and post-flight debriefings.” Photo by Volunteer Pilot Rick Welch.
In the latter part of the year, Volunteer Pilots John Steward and Woody Beck took Coosa Riverkeeper above the watershed during the once-every-five-years drawdown of lakes along the river where they documented sedimentation. This documentation will help the organization note changes in sedimentation in areas of the river system over time. What Coosa Riverkeeper did not expect was to be inspired to take action regarding quarrying in the Coosa River basin. These quarries are often on private property and are difficult to capture using a drone. The ability to not only see the river as a connected entity, versus in smaller segments of drone imagery, but also viewing firsthand the number of quarry sites, helped inform Coosa Riverkeeper’s new focus which is now opposing a limestone quarry coming to an ecologically sensitive part of the watershed. They are now undertaking public education about and mobilizing their followers around the problematic proposed quarry.

Coosa Riverkeeper published the video to the right on their social media featuring Abby Brown, Director of Community Engagement, and Justinn Overton, Executive Director and Riverkeeper on their flight with Volunteer Pilot Woody Beck.

“It was absolutely incredible! This was my first time in a small plane... Our pilot Woody was amazing, kind, and kept us well informed! Being able to see the river from a birds-eye-view helps us move forward more informed.”

-Abby Brown, Director of Community Engagement at Coosa Riverkeeper
FLORIDA

In March, SouthWings Volunteers Christopher and Justine Noth took journalists from the Tampa Bay Times to the skies to document red tide events off the coast of Southwest Florida. Red tide, an overgrowth of toxic algae due to nutrient pollution, is not only hazardous to humans, but can also cause fish kills. While many people were headed to Southwest Florida’s beaches for Spring Break, literal tons of dead fish continued to wash up and the algae made it unsafe for many people to enjoy the beach.

Journalist Max Chesnes of the Tampa Bay Times featured the Noths and the flight they provided in his article about the ongoing red tide, which at that time was into its fifth month. The flight also informed the Tampa Bay Times editorial opinion that Florida must step up to the plate in controlling nutrient run off that fuels the red tide events. Later in March, one of the photos from that article was used in a NOLA.com piece.
Over the summer, Christopher and Justine Noth flew together, Christopher as the volunteer pilot and Justine as the volunteer photographer, for the CLEO Institute. Together, they documented the Curtis Stanton Power Plant to create baseline documentation for future storm events. In Hurricane Ian, the power plant had a breech and was completely flooded.

In October, the Noths flew Edinburgh-based documentarian for the BBC and writer for Bloomsbury, James Crawford, for a new book he is writing about the impacts of extraction on human communities and the landscape. They went over what is known as Bone Valley, a phosphate producing region in central Florida. Crawford described how the experience of driving through the area could not compare to the perspective one gains with flight. Industry is not always easy to see from a car, and what a person can see does not contextualize the large-scale impact that industrial development, partitioning of land, and greenwashing of reclamation sites in the way that an aerial view does. Said Crawford, that from the moment of takeoff, the “picture changes completely” and that the flight was crucial in being able to tell the story of Bone Valley.

SouthWings are a remarkable organisation. Often the only way to truly understand major landscape change is to see it in its widest context. This makes the view from above a powerful tool – but a tool that is subject to privileged access. Making connections with volunteer pilots to fly over diverse - and threatened landscapes – is an inspiring concept. I can't over-stress the importance to my research of my flight with SouthWings.

-James Crawford, documentarian and author
TEXAS

This year, SouthWings completed two flights in both Texas and Louisiana and four Texas only. We have onboarded five new Texas pilots recently, thus growing our Texas Volunteer Pilot base by 500%! As we continue to expand our flight capacity in Texas, we are also expanding our outreach to organizations and communities who would benefit from the tool of flight.

In May, Volunteer Pilot Scott Humphries flew organizers and representatives of Healthy Port Communities Coalition, Healthy Gulf, and Coalition Of Community Organizations over the Houston Ship Channel. Their goals included education and gathering baseline documentation of the Channel since an aerial view is not something to which all organizers have access.

The Houston Ship Channel has historically, and will continue to be, dredged in order to facilitate greater traffic flow. However, this sediment is highly contaminated by industry and has been dumped in communities with very few precautionary measures. Healthy Port Communities Coalition, Healthy Gulf, and Coalition of Community Organizers are actively advocating for communities where the dredging materials have been dumped and communities that are targets for future dumping. Images from this flight were part of an environmental justice tour held by these organizations for the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, and Port Houston.

In early June, Healthy Gulf, Lone Star Legal Aid, and Dr. Liza Powers, Post-Doctoral Fellow from the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice - Texas Southern University surveyed existing and under-construction LNG export facilities in Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana. It was a valuable opportunity to get photos that communities and organizations fighting the buildout can use without paying licensing fees or using "cleaner" looking ones shared with the media by industry. Healthy Gulf shares its photos, including those from flights, with many communities and organizations fighting for environmental justice.
Ted Auch of FracTracker’s trip to the Gulf (previously discussed in the Louisiana section) also included significant segments in Texas, especially in the Houston Ship Channel. Both he and Volunteer Scott Humphries were struck by the severity of the extreme heat, wildfires, and ongoing fossil fuel and petrochemical fossil buildout. Humphries described the scene upon returning to Houston from one of the flights as post-apocalyptic. FracTracker provides critical data about extractive industry and operations to frontline communities and organizations across the United States. The photos and data collected on their SouthWings flights contribute to helping equip these groups with information.

Volunteer Pilot Scott Humphries also flew the Surge Forward Coalition in October to collect footage for their film about the so-called “Ike Dike.” Local organizations like the Galveston Bay Foundation are extremely concerned about the impact of the proposed Texas Coastal Barrier meant to protect coastal Texas from storm surge, but will likely damage the ecosystems of the coast instead. Surge Forward Coalition plan to use the film to educate and mobilize the public.

"It was a wonderful experience. Scott was experienced and wonderful to talk to and had a lot of interesting things to say about the various landscapes we flew over. I have spent a lot of time looking at maps and driving around these landscapes so seeing them from above was wonderful.

-Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Director of Ike Dike Film"
None of this important work would be possible without our generous volunteer pilots, who donate their time, planes, and expertise to help our flight partners accomplish their goals.

72
Active
Volunteer Pilots in 2023
Volunteer Pilot Stats

### Tenure
- >10 yrs: 7
- <1 yr: 12
- 5-10 yrs: 23
- 1-5 yrs: 30

### Engagement
- Older or none: 17
- 2022: 23
- 2021: 4
- 2023: 28

11 Volunteer Pilots joined SouthWings in 2023
2023 VOLUNTEER PILOT ROSTER

SOME PILOTS ARE OMITTED BY REQUEST

CHESAPEAKE

MARYLAND
Bruce Angevine
Ron Baker
Stephen Haggard
Jeremy Jacobsohn
John Sapienza
Ken Shaffer

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Larry Petro
Tim Burtch

VIRGINIA
Dave Brubaker
Brian Creed
Glenn Sanders
Jim Stover
Paul Werbin

APPALACHIA TO ATLANTIC

WEST VIRGINIA
Scott Simonton
Donald Sutherland

TENNESSEE
Joe Creecy
Jay Mills
Micheal Spurgeon

ILLINOIS
David Warner

NORTH CAROLINA

Frank Bell
Wally Dixon
Richard Embry
Hap Endler
Art Falk
Bill Kahn
John Leder
Doug Oakley
Holliday Obrecht
Peter Stauble
Bob Thomason
Rolf Wallin
Rankin Whittington
Michael Zapata

FLORIDA
Mark Andrews
Hart Fessenden
Mike Guidry
Christopher Noth
Rick Welch

ALABAMA
Charles Welden

MISSISSIPPI
Tim Walsh

LOUISIANA
Emmet Bartholomew
Owen Bordelon
Cyril Gonzalez
Leonard Guidry
Lance Stuke

TEXAS
Scott Humphries
Eric Jakimier
Dave Kagey

GEORGIA
Steve Ashby
David Asman
Woody Beck
Tim Moran
Brian Robbins
Jared Savage
Robert Searfoss
John Steward

SOUTH CAROLINA

Chris Carmel
Jon Engle
Kimberly Métris
Georgina Rinehart
Landon Thorne

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