



# 2022 Impact Report

Conservation Voters of South Carolina and CVSC Education Fund (CVSCEF) are celebrating 20 years of protecting the rights of South Carolinians to clean and abundant water, clean air, and a legacy of protected lands to share with generations to come.

As a CVSCEF supporter, you know that our work elevates public dialogue regarding environmental issues by educating citizens and maximizing their participation in decisions on the most pressing environmental issues threatening South Carolina at the state and local levels. We've achieved great success over the past 20 years, publishing educational tools, hosting regional projects, and building a conservation movement of informed and engaged South Carolinians — and 2022 was no exception.

*That's why we're excited to share this 2022 Impact Report. 2022 stands out as a year of exceptional coalition building for CVSCEF. And we couldn't have done it without you!*

## Clean Drinking Water and PFAS Advocacy

In recent years, CVSCEF's work to protect South Carolina's water has focused on mobilizing communities and partner organizations to limit exposure of South Carolinians and our natural resources to PFAS chemicals that have been found in surface water, public drinking water systems, and private wells throughout the state.

To raise the profile of this issue and drive action, CVSCEF worked with people who are living with drinking water contaminated by PFAS in Whitmire, Society

Hill, North Charleston, and Little River on an earned media campaign — sharing these community stories through the press, and putting pressure on state agencies and decision-makers to act.

These stories inspired and motivated agency and state leaders to act swiftly, providing critical leverage and momentum to create a new ‘remediation fund’ in the state budget to address PFAS contamination. This innovative approach, providing a ‘carrot’ that would clean up these cancer-causing chemicals in private wells and public drinking water systems, would not have been possible without the deep partnerships built by CVSCEF as well as the personal stories elevated from communities across the state. Despite intense opposition, \$10 million was dedicated to this remediation fund in 2022, with a specific focus on investing in rural communities. We are now working directly with DHEC to ensure these funds get to the people that need them the most.

### Work with the Public Service Commission

South Carolina’s utilities are regulated by the Public Service Commission (PSC), a quasi-judicial body selected by the General Assembly that has to follow stringent guidelines for public engagement. CVSCEF has learned how to expertly navigate their complex rules surrounding public testimonies, comment periods, and allowable ex parte briefings to ensure that South Carolinians can be heard in the debate about our clean energy future.

In 2022, PSC Commissioners expressed concern over the impact of electric vehicles on the grid, so CVSCEF facilitated our first *allowable ex parte briefing* – an educational presentation for Commissioners. Experts Mathias Bell from WeaveGrid and Philip Jones from Alliance for Transportation Electrification presented on the grid resilience benefits of electric vehicles. Commissioners responded positively to the briefing, asking many questions, and we hope for well-informed decisions on EV issues in the future.

Recently, our work with the Commission has prioritized grassroots engagement with the Commission’s dockets and actions – helping ratepayers and others understand the impact of Commission decisions on both energy bills and the clean

energy landscape in South Carolina. See [www.uPowerSC.com](http://www.uPowerSC.com) for details on these issues, which we revamped in 2022 to include an Energy Progress report and ongoing PSC-related updates.

When, in 2022, Dominion announced that they wanted to increase rates by a whopping 14% (on top of a 5% increase earlier last year) to cover the rising cost of fossil fuels like coal and natural gas, CVSCEF responded quickly; educating our supporters and advocates on the issue and preparing them to testify and submit comments to the PSC — arguing that ratepayers shouldn't pay for the utility's refusal to transition to renewable energy. **This public outcry at the PSC bore fruit — in the end, Dominion and the PSC agreed to a much smaller increase of only 6%.**

### **Just Transition at Santee Cooper's Winyah Plant**

One of the big wins for CVSCEF and our clean energy partners in 2021 was the passage of Santee Cooper Reform, requiring the state-owned utility to retire the Winyah coal plant in Georgetown County and develop and implement a community-driven economic transition plan for this closure.

The conservation community has seen many of these transition plans across the nation end with just a plan and nothing more. In these cases, communities are left only with broken promises and weakened economies. With all of this in mind, CVSCEF assembled and engaged a dynamic group of over 20 local community leaders, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, academic institutions, faith leaders, and businesses from Georgetown County to engage - and lead - in this transition process.

As a result, we helped community partners come together on a series of accountability strategies to bring Santee Cooper to the table and initiate a constituent dialogue on effective implementation of this element of reform. Santee Cooper responded by inviting the group to participate in its Integrated Resource Planning process — a new long-term planning requirement in the Santee Cooper Reform legislation. **Santee Cooper also agreed - at our urging - to hire an outside firm to facilitate this process, achieving another one of the community's goals**

But, our work is far from complete. In 2023, CVSCEF and our local partners continue to work together to hold Santee Cooper accountable to ensure the community's vision is reflected in the final plan. This historic opportunity will set an example showing how legislation can protect the well-being of our local people, places, and economies.

### **Energy Justice Coalition and Residential Survey Efforts**

Back in 2021, CVSCEF hosted a convening of over 50 organizations from across South Carolina, now known as the Energy Justice Coalition, to discuss options for energy policy, specifically focusing on addressing high energy burdens — when a customer pays more than six percent of their monthly income to energy bills.

Based on the group's consensus, in 2022, CVSCEF worked with partners to develop and deploy a statewide residential energy survey to better understand the energy burden individual households across South Carolina face. Following the completion of the survey and report, the Energy Justice Coalition will meet and identify policy options to address and reduce the energy burden in South Carolina.

We have facilitated dialogue with the Coalition on funding opportunities, weatherization assistance programs, energy burden assistance programs, tips to increase public accessibility, and opportunities for public engagement at the Public Service Commission and South Carolina General Assembly.

### **Electric Vehicle Transportation**

Despite millions of federal dollars coming to our state for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the SC Energy Office delivering EV stakeholder recommendations to the General Assembly last summer, and electric vehicle manufacturers expanding operations locally, South Carolina was lacking a coordinated network focused on electric transportation.

In 2022, CVSCEF stepped up to build and coordinate the SC Electric Transportation Network – a coalition with over 75 organizations, agencies, and

manufacturers across South Carolina who represent varied interests in electrifying our state's transportation. The Electric Transportation Network serves as a space for organizational updates, networking, and collaboration around funding opportunities and state and local EV policy – and has quickly become a trusted partner that state agencies and others encourage new EV stakeholders to engage. In addition, CVSCEF is focused on stakeholders on federal funding available for electric transportation and offering technical assistance to pursue these funds. **CVSCEF has established ourselves as a leader in the EV space - both in partnerships and policy advocacy - and we look forward to spearheading EV efforts in 2023 and beyond.**

**Your support made all of this possible! We could not have been building coalitions, helping CVSCEF members take action, educating decision-makers, and working directly with community members all over South Carolina without the generosity of donors like you. I cannot thank you enough!**

## **Looking Ahead**

For two decades, CVSCEF has made a profound impact on our environment and the daily lives of people across South Carolina – 2023 and the decades to come will be no different.

In 2023, we're rolling out a Boards and Commissions Fellowship Program to help community members step into leadership roles on these critical decision-making bodies in communities across South Carolina. The goals of our efforts are simple — ensure that these governing bodies reflect both the diversity of South Carolina and its core conservation values. The program will foster the necessary skills for seeking and serving in these positions through intense training and mentorship, setting fellows up to make a meaningful impact in their communities and grow into strong and effective conservation champions.

In addition, CVSCEF continues to nurture and grow partnerships with new and traditional conservation allies, strengthening the conservation movement in South Carolina as a whole. We will continue to elevate the voices of community members as we highlight the need to provide clean drinking water to all

communities, reduce air pollution and energy bills across the state, and protect important landscapes and historic sites.

We can't do this alone. We'll make sure you have plenty of opportunities to take action and get more involved with CVSCEF because we'll need your help if we are to bring our conservation priorities to life. So be sure to keep an eye out for updates via our new website, email, and social media!

Every dollar makes a difference to our work, and your contribution has not gone unnoticed — thank you again for your ongoing support.

We can't wait to see what 2023 and the next 20 years have in store!

Best,

John Tynan  
Executive Director