

Eco-Justice Collaborative Report, 2023

1. What do you want the PYM body (all 10,000 of us in PYM membership) to know about your collaborative?

The first thing that PYM members should know about Eco-Justice Collaborative is that it is a Friends community. Solidarity and unity are as important as the business we conduct. The work of EJC is urgent to each of us, and solidarity and mutual support make us effective workers in the difficult tasks in which we choose to engage.

EJC is comprised of Friends with extensive expertise in policy/legislation, money systems, climate science, energy, food, land, education, media, law, biodiversity carbon forests, resilience, and activism. EJC is a collaborative of professionals who represent different concerns and experiences, but who consider each other's work as crucial as their own and each works to advance the goals of the whole collaborative.

The EJC continues to put out a monthly newsletter, which is distributed through the PYM [Peace and Justice Network] to more than 2,000 people. Sections on Action, Upcoming Events, Good News, and Resources provide Friends with information and inspiration to support their work on the existential challenges of climate change, environmental injustice, and biodiversity loss. The Action section is divided into five parts that reflect the five action areas listed in the Climate Change Sprint Report: advocacy, education, finance, lowering our carbon footprint, and mourning loss and instilling hope. All sections include links to articles, reports, workshops, and websites where Friends can find more information. We also try to highlight resources, actions, and events that show what other Quakers in the Yearly Meeting and Quaker organizations beyond the YM are doing so that readers can connect to the wider community.

2. How does your group meet and how frequently?

The whole collaborative regularly meets each month. However, small ad hoc subcommittees meet more often to address particular actions or monitor a continuing project. Even before Covid, we met by Zoom or conference call, because our members are widely distributed across PYM. We may have hybrid meetings in the next few months.

3. How is the work of the collaborative being shared with the PYM community?

EJC publishes a monthly newsletter, which is distributed by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting staff. EJC also produces regular webinars on important climate and climate justice topics. We connect

to the YM through presentations at Monthly and Quarter Meetings and at workshops at Annual Sessions. In the past year and a half, EJC has been compiling information on the climate work of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, specifically climate, environmental racism, and biodiversity.

4. How does your collaborative remain spiritually grounded through its work?

EJC begins every meeting with worship, acknowledging the spiritual foundations of our work, because we are members of the Religious Society of Friends and would be overwhelmed by grief and burnout if we were not deeply grounded in the Spirit. Worship is followed by check-ins, which allow members to share their grief, their hopes, and their current state of being. Though grief, hope, and deep spirituality are individual conditions, sharing them is a spiritual exercise in humility and trust. We believe unity is possible when the community is strong and deeply committed to each other.

5. If possible, please provide a report showing the requested budget vs actual expenses.

Our budget is not ready, yet.

6. What are the major accomplishments for the year?

Since the adoption of the Climate Change Sprint Report in 2021, EJC has been serving the yearly meeting by engaging the five action areas proposed in the report. There is considerable crossover among the action categories, and our choice of categories for particular actions is sometimes arbitrary.

- a. Advocacy: During 2021-2022 EJC began teaching Friends how to lobby with FCNL and at the state level. Part way through 2022 PYM leadership concluded that any lobbying was a risk to the yearly meeting's tax status. Consequently, several members created a separate 501(c)4 organization to work on policy in coordination with Eco-Justice discernment on legislative issues. The 501(c)4 is Quaker Action Mid-Atlantic Region (QAMAR).
- b. Education: Thread Gathering to support Friends' access to funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). This was followed up by preparation and distribution of documents and information from the IRS on the availability of funds. Recent work includes a partnership with the Concord Quarter Climate Action Working Group(CAWG) to educate Friends about the crucial need to create ecologically diverse habitats in sacred spaces. Currently, the Eco-Justice Collaborative and the CAWG have been co-hosting the Greening Sacred Spaces Series of webinars.
- c. Reducing our Carbon Footprint: We are in the process of finding ways to support Unami Meeting's carbon forest project.
- d. Finance: EJC has carried a concern for toxic banking systems and has continued to advocate for public banking. Members of EJC sometimes work with EQAT to confront energy and finance institutions that have negative environmental practices.
- e. Mourning Loss and Instilling Hope: To address the frightening reality of global warming and assess the work we need to do, we will first have to understand what is already lost, mourn that loss, possibly adapt to it, and then begin again with the necessary response.

7. What are the things that are stopping/hindering your mission, if any?

Formerly, EJC had permission to update our part of the PYM website, but that permission/access was withdrawn, making it impossible for us to make necessary updates and remove material that has become irrelevant.

8. Would you like additional support from PYM staff, the Quaker Life Council Clerk, your Program Committee liaison, or the Program Committee?

EJC is extremely grateful for the support that we get from Olivia Brangan. That being said, there are things that staff and leadership could do to better support our work. First, we believe that our corporate witness calls for the Yearly Meeting leadership to make a strong public statement about climate change both inside PYM and in the larger community. Our PYM community would feel inspired and supported by the acknowledgment of our leadership that the existential crisis of climate change and climate injustice really is the moral issue of our time and therefore calls us to a profound spiritual commitment. Second, EJC still needs support for organizing the EJC web pages. We would like to see a website to which we have timely access so that the website can be dynamic and current. Climate, earthcare, and environmental racism are ever-changing and nuanced concerns to which we should be able to respond and educate with agility. We would also like to see the climate and DEI sprint reports featured prominently on the PYM website. Currently, members need to know that the reports exist, what they are called, and how to search for them. Several Yearly Meetings are interested in both reports but struggle to find them.