



# 2022 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

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*The Ecology Center is part of a global tsunami of community action, and we are your local champion for adopting and accelerating solutions*

Dear Friend,

As humans, we are struggling to address the existential environmental threats of global warming, ecosystem collapse, mass extinctions, and petrochemical and toxic pollution. Despite all of our technological advances and our ever-increasing wealth and capacity, sometimes it seems like we just can't get it together to save ourselves.

But 2022 was a hopeful year. Important framework agreements on sharing the benefits and burdens of climate funding were made at COP 27 in Egypt. We are moving significantly toward reducing our emissions by 50% by 2030 and reaching carbon net zero by 2050. The Biden administration was able to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest-ever US investment in a clean green future. Governments initiated a Global Plastics Treaty process through the United Nations. By October of 2022, more than 100 nations had joined together to protect 30% of the land, air, and sea by 2030, known as the 30x30 initiative. There is a lot of forward motion.

At the Ecology Center, our work begins at the local level and spreads from there. We steward the local solutions needed to shift toward a more sustainable, just, and resilient future, and partner with you to make them the norm.

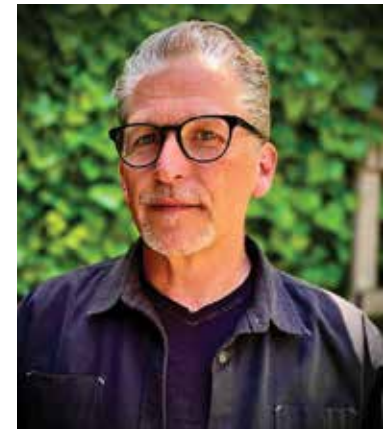
In this report, you will see our impacts in the areas of zero waste, climate equity, food and farming, and youth development. We are in the community educating, advocating, demonstrating, and replicating the solutions that have proven successful. We are bringing thought leadership, education and outreach, infrastructure, and many other elements to the movements, local and global, that address the acute threats we face as a community and a species.

You are integral to this effort. Your support makes our innovation and advocacy possible. Please join us in celebrating our shared successes and investing in a healthy, sustainable, and just future.

With hope and gratitude,



Martin Bourque  
Executive Director





*We are small but mighty,  
providing top-notch  
services and leadership  
for lasting change*

## ABOUT US

Incorporated in 1969, the Ecology Center is a nonprofit organization located in Berkeley, California, that models how to reduce the impacts of urban society on people and the planet. Our mission is to inspire and build a sustainable,

healthy, and just future for the East Bay, California, and beyond. We envision a world where human activity nurtures the ecosystems that we all depend on.

Faced with our current crises, we work to develop empowered, resilient communities; pathways to zero waste and zero toxics; equitable access to

a healthy regenerative food system; sustainable resource use; and a safe and stable climate.

We provide solutions that are equitable and accessible for all. We are community-based and people-powered. We think globally and act locally.



## LEADERSHIP FOR LASTING CHANGE

### CURRENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Curbside Recycling  
Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR)  
Public Resource Center, Help Desk, and Online Sustainability Tools  
Classes, Events, and Workshops

Book, DVD, and Seed Libraries  
California Alliance of Farmers' Markets  
Market Match (CalFresh Match Benefit at CA Farmers' Markets)

Youth Environmental Academy  
EcoStore for Sustainable Living  
EcoHouse Demonstration Home and Garden

### FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

Indigenous Permaculture Project  
Greywater Action

Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters (BACH)  
Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative

**2022**  
Climate Equity Collaborative

**2019**  
Nation's First Disposable Foodware Reduction Ordinance

**2014**  
Nation's First Soda Tax

**2013**  
Berkeley Climate Action Coalition

**2012**  
California Market Match

**2009**  
Nation's First "Plastic Free" Farmers' Markets

**2003**  
First CA Farmers' Markets to Accept EBT (electronic food stamps)

**2002**  
Nation's First Biodiesel Powered Recycling Fleet

**2001**  
Berkeley's Food and Nutrition Policy

**1996**  
Report of the Berkeley Plastics Task Force

**1990**  
Support Base for Redwood Summer

**1988**  
Styrofoam Foodware Ban

**1987**  
Berkeley Farmers' Markets

**1982**  
Waste Incinerator Ban

**1973**  
Nation's First Curbside Recycling Program

**1970**  
Founded on the First Earth Day

# HOW WE MAKE CHANGE

The Ecology Center addresses critical issues through a model of education, demonstration, replication, and advocacy.



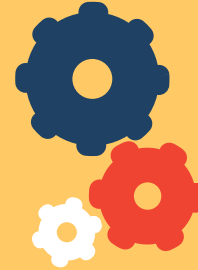
## EDUCATION

Hosting classes and workshops in our Resource Center, facilitating conversations and panel discussions, and leading campaigns. Connecting people and decision-makers with the information they need to make change and engage in solving problems from the local to the global level.



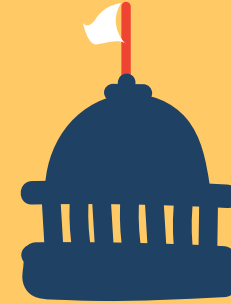
## DEMONSTRATION

Piloting new solutions and building infrastructure to support a safe and stable climate, healthy and sustainable urban ecosystems, and equitable food access. Testing and improving new ideas while countering deceptive claims and greenwashing that mislead the public.



## REPLICATION

Laying the groundwork to spread scalable solutions more widely by sharing our successes and providing the information, training, and technical support to help others adopt effective models.



## ADVOCACY

Advancing policies that support the mainstream adoption of demonstrated local successes. Stewarding pilot efforts to full scale, embracing early adopters, and bringing along the holdouts.

*We use this approach to punch above our weight and leverage our local program work to generate broadscale transformative change*

## It all starts with education

We deliver information you can act on and help connect people with the resources they need to take the next step on their sustainable living journey. We build coalitions and organizational partnerships that inspire and build a sustainable, healthy, and just future for the East Bay, California, and beyond.

In 2022, our Education and Engagement team served over 106,000 community members by responding to help desk questions and requests for information or library materials; hosting educational events; delivering information through fact sheets and blogs; and maintaining a database of ecological resources called Resourceful.

Some highlights include:



**47,377**  
pageviews of our blogs



**28,000**  
searches in our Resourceful database



**24,840**  
views of our fact sheets



**2,168**  
participants in our online and in-person events





WASTE AND CONSUMERISM

# UNTRASHING THE PLANET

Our consumption of the Earth's resources has accelerated to an unsustainable pace, leading to biodiversity loss, water stress, climate change, ecosystem collapse, toxic industrial pollution, and more. The reassuring truth is that we hold the key to meaningful change. By embracing sustainable resource practices, we can not only reduce our environmental footprint but also foster economic growth and enhance individual well-being.

Recycling has stood as a cornerstone of our work since 1973, when we pioneered the nation's first curbside recycling program. Today this practice has evolved into one of the simplest and most readily available methods for American households to participate in environmental sustainability. Our commitment to authentic mission-based recycling stands within a larger framework of zero waste goals, safeguarding ecosystems, curbing energy and water consumption, minimizing toxic waste, and fostering meaningful employment opportunities. Our advocacy challenges false solutions and the corporate greenwashing of recycling.

In 2022, our Berkeley curbside recycling program collected over 14.9M pounds of recyclables, the equivalent of 7,469 tons of material. This achievement serves as a prime example of the Ecology Center's commitment to harnessing local solutions and steering them toward their maximum potential.

In 2022, we also fought to ensure that SB-54, a sweeping new extended producer responsibility for packaging law, had strong governmental oversight, contained precise and effective definitions of recycling, and included formidable objectives for reuse and refill goals. Moreover, we were resolute in our efforts to avert waste incineration and other misguided alternatives such as "advanced recycling," which, despite its name, represents neither new technological interventions nor real recycling. Our leadership in the Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR) and the Break Free From Plastic movement leverage our local operational know-how toward state, national, and global change.

## EDUCATION

**2,168 people** attended our zero waste and sustainable living events, which included Plastic Free July events

**28,000 searches** in our Resourceful App database of zero waste and sustainable resources

**564 people** participated in 10 Recycling Education events in the Berkeley community

## DEMONSTRATION

**7,469 tons** of material diverted from landfill and recycled through our curbside recycling program

**3,305 shoppers** purchased sustainably sourced products in our EcoStore

## REPLICATION

**28 women-owned businesses** and 10 local businesses sold their zero waste and toxic-free products through our EcoStore

**4 years of research & data** collection were completed, resulting in the development of a new Disposable Foodware Policy Toolkit. The package shares our theory of change, campaign structure, and media kit; helps other communities replicate our success passing disposable foodware reduction policies; and moves us away from a throwaway culture and toward a circular economy

## ADVOCACY

**Joined a movement-wide conversation on recycling** at the convening of the Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR), GAIA, Safer States, and US BFFP organizations, where leaders shared information and strategy about US recycling and plastic packaging from a variety of perspectives, as we strengthened our coalition to shape the movement



## FOOD AND FARMING

# UNBREAKING THE FOOD SYSTEM

Today's consolidated corporate food system is vulnerable. It is ill-equipped to face heat, drought, plant disease, loss of pollinators, and erosion compounded by climate and other environmental crises. It is destroying the soil, biodiversity, and rural communities vital to our long-term survival.

Farmers' markets sustain leading regenerative, independent farmers who hold and develop the knowledge that will be needed to survive the challenges facing industrial agriculture in the years to come. Not only do farmers' markets bring us fresh, nutrient-rich, seasonal produce, but they also create local jobs and keep farming profits in local communities. They are more resilient against the acute problems that are endemic to big agriculture like e. coli outbreaks and supply chain disruptions.

Further, local farmers invest in rebuilding the soil by keeping pesticides and toxins out of the land. The organic, sustainable, and regenerative methods that small farmers practice sequester carbon, thereby limiting emissions and lessening the strain on the environment.

For decades, the Ecology Center has worked to realize a vision for a healthy, sustainable, and just food system. In 1987, we launched Berkeley's first on-street farmers' market, laying the foundation for an alternative local food system. In the 1990s, we banned methyl bromide, a severely toxic and ozone-depleting pesticide. In 2003, we pioneered CalFresh EBT, an electronic system for using food stamps, giving access to fresh, affordable produce to thousands of low-income families.

Today the Ecology Center continues to build toward that same vision through three Food and Farming programs. First, our Berkeley Farmers' Markets serve our local community and model the values that we advocate. Second, our Access & Equity program coordinates CalFresh EBT and the statewide Market Match incentive program that matches CalFresh benefits dollar-for-dollar. Third, the Ecology Center hosts the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets, which promotes the farmers' market industry statewide and provides market operators with resources to run safe, inclusive, thriving markets.

## EDUCATION

### 100+ market operators

trained across California on the basics of managing a market, preparing for climate-related emergencies, and implementing anti-racist practices

### 22+ community-based nonprofits

and public services hosted information tables at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets. The markets also served as distribution points for WIC funds and worked with the Office of Emergency Services to prepare a community response to local disasters

## DEMONSTRATION

### \$20.1M of CalFresh and Market Match

food benefits were distributed to over 595K low-income shoppers at over 270 farmers' markets in 39 counties across California. This program tripled since the start of the pandemic

### 200K+ visits

to the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, representing a 2.8% increase in attendance and meaningful growth for a direct farm-to-customer local food market.

## REPLICATION

### 29 additional farmers' markets

began or resumed accepting CalFresh EBT and Market Match through our technical assistance

### 16 farmers' markets, farmers,

and food hubs in Northern California expanded CalFresh EBT access through funding and technical support provided by the California Farmers' Market EBT Access & Capacity Building Project, an Ecology Center program

### 1.7M CalFresh shoppers

in Northern California increased their access to farm-direct fruits and vegetables through our California Farmers' Market EBT Access & Capacity Building Project

### Berkeley Farmers' Market plastic reduction

practices were shared with the Agricultural Institute of Marin and the Healdsburg Farmers' Market





# CLIMATE EQUITY OVERCOMING CLIMATE INEQUITY

The effects of climate change are palpable: intense heat waves, relentless rainfall, and uncontrollable wildfires represent some of the defining challenges of our generation. These existential climatic threats will permeate every facet of our lives, affecting our actions and well-being. As we shift to meet the crisis head-on, we know that overcoming climate inequity must be part of the solution because the indiscriminate effects of climate change are stacked upon historic inequity and oppression. This results in disproportionate suffering for the most vulnerable community members who have also contributed the least to the problem.

Since our inception, the Ecology Center has operated at the intersection of environmental issues and social justice. Our programming, policies, and practices have long held justice and equity as central elements, often serving as a bridge between movements, communities, and agencies. Through the years, the Ecology Center helped establish forward-thinking enterprises including Berkeley's groundbreaking

Residential Energy Conservation Ordinance; the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition; the East Bay Community Energy; and a more equity-minded Existing Buildings Electrification Strategy for the City of Berkeley.

In November 2022, we established the Climate Equity Collaborative using the Berkeley Climate Equity Fund grant we secured in 2021. Through the collaborative, we convene trusted community- and faith-based organizations serving Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), low-income/ low-wealth communities, people living with disabilities, non-English speaking communities, immigrants, refugees, seniors, young children, the LGBTQIA+ community, and others who have been historically marginalized. We aim to amplify their voices, elevate their experiences, and build their capacity to collaborate as partners in developing and implementing climate change and resilience solutions.

By equipping our partners with the tools and resources, we lay the groundwork for the community-based climate solutions.

## EDUCATION



**2,077 people** participated in our climate action events, including the East Bay Green Home Tours

## DEMONSTRATION



**62 induction cooktops** lent to community members, supporting the transition of households from gas to electric appliances

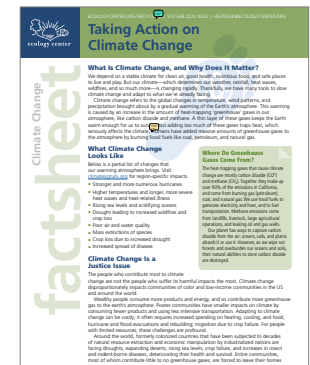
## REPLICATION

**Established the Climate Equity Collaborative** community network and engaged an initial 19 community-based organizations in groundbreaking discussions on defining pathways to clean energy use and solutions to the barriers faced by historically marginalized communities.

## ADVOCACY

**13 letter signing campaigns** undertaken to support clean energy, climate resilience, and zero waste initiatives

*“I was raised cooking with gas, and very hesitant about making the switch to electric induction. Using this proved it to be a lot easier to cook on than expected”*





## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

# RELEASING LEADERSHIP

Since 2001, the Ecology Center has hired and trained young people from our community with a focus on youth from low-income, BIPOC, and marginalized communities historically excluded from environmental opportunities and leadership roles. The Ecology Center has opened doors for these young people to gain the language, skills, and experiences needed to become leaders in their own ways as they grow into active adults in our community.

Youth alumni have gone on to be leaders in health, environment, and community engagement. They have become program managers within the Ecology Center and other local non-profits, and one alum now serves as the vice president of the Ecology Center Board of Directors.

Youth have been important participants in all of our campaigns and played a key role in passing the Nation's First Soda Tax. They provide peer-to-peer education on nutrition and Big Soda's marketing of sugary drinks to teens. In 2021, Ecology Center youth advocates'

efforts helped pass the city ordinance to expand Berkeley's plastic bag reduction regulations, eliminating non-compostable produce bags, among other things.

## EDUCATION

### 700 Berkeley High School first year students

were educated on the dangers of sugary drinks and Big Soda's marketing to teens through an orientation day water bottle give away, an online workshop with Youth Speaks, and an interactive classroom curriculum presented to 9th graders

## DEMONSTRATION

### Youth interns

supported activities, programs, and services, especially at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, the Ecology Center Store, and in our Resource Center. Youth were trained in and supported the delivery of our Market Match and EBT CalFresh food benefit programs at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets

## ADVOCACY

### Plastic Bag Ban 2.0

Our youth interns and program assistants initiated, helped write, and pass Berkeley's new expanded plastic bag reduction ordinance



*“Working as a youth program assistant in 2022 has given me many different skills, practices, and knowledge. Being a youth program assistant at the Ecology Center has helped me become more open-minded and resourceful about what it is to be part of a non-profit organization and the importance of being part of this community.”*

- Dayana Rivas Pineda







# LEVERAGING YOUR SUPPORT

Your support is what makes the Ecology Center truly impactful. While we have been able to bring many pilot programs into the mainstream and fund them with a strong business model, grants, or government contracts, it is your individual support that allows us to innovate, activate, and advocate.

Most grants and government contracts have strict limitations on how we can spend the funds and even prohibit policy advocacy. Your unrestricted donations give us the flexibility and freedom to pilot new approaches; provide untainted accurate, independent information; and speak truth to power.

Without your support, we cannot take on corporate interests, pilot new innovations, or leverage our success through legislation.

*Your financial support empowers us to make lasting transformative change at the local, state, and national levels*

## Please Make A Donation Today

Together we can build a more healthy, sustainable, and just community for now and for generations to come.

Make a secure donation online:  
[ecologycenter.org/donate](https://ecologycenter.org/donate)



## WAYS TO GIVE

### One-Time Gift

Your one-time gift is always appreciated and will go directly to Ecology Center programs.

### Monthly/Recurring Gifts

This is an easy and convenient way to spread your generosity throughout the year. Knowing that we can rely on your sustained contributions makes your gift especially valuable.

### Annual Giving

Plan your giving at the end of the year as part of your tax planning.

### Major Gifts

Become a major donor with a gift that will make a substantial and positive impact on our ability to fulfill our mission.

### Estate Planning/Legacy Giving

Honor the past and ensure the future by joining our Legacy Circle. Including the Ecology Center in your estate plan or will is a tax-effective way to give and a lasting way to ensure your wishes will live on through the work of the Ecology Center for generations to come.

### Memorials and Dedications

Celebrate the life of a loved one by making a donation in their honor or memory as a one-time gift. Or create a continued memorial gift each year, leaving your loved one a long-term legacy.

### Company Match/Workplace Giving

Companies big and small often match their employees' charitable giving. Check if your company will match your donation.

### Donor Advised Fund

These are charitable giving accounts, offered by a sponsoring organization. This is an easy way to support the Ecology Center.

### Stock Donation

Consider giving stocks instead of cash to the Ecology Center. This often results in a larger donation to the organization, as the gift is tax-deductible, and there are no capital gains taxes to pay.

### Start a Giving Circle

Making your donation through a giving circle of friends and family has become popular because it is both fun and practical and creates increased financial impact in your giving.

### Donate a Vehicle

Donating your vehicle is a great way to support our work. Proceeds from the sale of your donated vehicle will help support Ecology Center programs, and you may qualify for a tax deduction.

*For help making any donation, please contact:*

[give@ecologycenter.org](mailto:give@ecologycenter.org)

