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Building a Good Food Future with Eco City Farms



A sunny day in the hoop house at Eco City Farms in Prince George's County, Maryland. Photo: Eco City Farms

One of the biggest challenges facing the eco-

restoration movement is a continued lack of diversity; it often does not adequately represent the human populations it is largely intended to serve. Fortunately, several organizations are actively working to increase the diversity of voices and leaders in the movement while also demonstrating how ecological restoration can provide a wide range of benefits for their communities.



Morgan-Hubbard (third from the left) with fellow Eco City staff. Photo: Eco City Farms

We recently caught up with Margaret Morgan-Hubbard, Founder and CEO of Eco City Farms - an urban farming non-profit in Prince George's County, Maryland. Morgan-Hubbard [presented at Scenario 300](#), our climate change conference in D.C. this April. As the former associate director of the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland, who also worked multiple years at the EPA, she understands the deep connections between issues around social justice, the food system, and climate change. Eco City Farms (ECO) emphasizes the importance of social justice and ecological restoration in its mission to provide sustainable alternatives to the existing food system.

While Prince George's County previously had one of the highest-income majority-black communities in the world, the recession wreaked financial devastation on the community. The majority of current Prince George residents are low-income and 90% are nonwhite; ethnically, they are mostly African American, or have roots in the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Established in 2010, ECO works to reinvigorate the Chesapeake foodshed by providing educational resources and promoting income-generating enterprises that involve growing and selling healthy, local food. Their motto is: "We grow great food, farms and farmers."

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About Biodiversity for a Livable Climate

Through education, policy and outreach, our mission is to promote the power of the natural world to stabilize the climate and to restore biodiversity to ecosystems worldwide. Collaborating with organizations around the globe, we advocate for the restoration of soil, and of grassland, forest, wetland, coastal and ocean



Group projects at Eco City's Bladensburg Farm.
Photo: Eco City Farms

ecosystems - along with the associated carbon, water and nutrient cycles - to draw down excess atmospheric greenhouse gases, cool the biosphere, and reverse global warming, for the benefit of all people and all life on earth.

Learn more about our ongoing projects and upcoming events and find additional information and resources at bio4climate.org.

ECO has a total of five acres of land on [two urban farms](#) in the Port Towns, located adjacent to Washington D.C., and is working with partners at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and private landowners to identify more urban spaces to farm. They grow healthy, nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits and herbs year-round on the farms; the produce is available through [winter and summer CSAs](#), on-farm sales, and at both the [Riverdale Park and Port Towns farmers markets](#).

And ECO offers a variety of educational opportunities, including an intensive [beginning farmer training program](#) ; apprenticeships and internships; beginning, advanced and master [composting courses](#) ; the [SEED2FEED summer youth program](#) ; [nutrition classes](#) ; and a [certificate in Commercial Urban Farming](#) through Prince George's Community College.

ECO uses recycled materials for its on-farm construction projects: "We're trying to make this sustainable and affordable, so everything we do is a do-it-yourself project," says Morgan-Hubbard. Their creative projects include using a recycled shipping container to build a processing kitchen, and they are working with a group of young people in the

Conservation Corps to make a classroom out of a shipping container for use this summer.



Vegetable rows in a hoop house. Photo: Eco City Farms

Growing nutrient-dense food in urban areas often requires extensive soil remediation. "We started growing above the soil, but we've been remediating the soil beneath it as we go," says Morgan-Hubbard. ECO uses a variety of practices to enhance the soil fertility on its farms, including minimal tillage, cover cropping, and crop rotation. They implement composting of various types - including a large-scale [vermicomposting](#) operation with over 100,000 worms - and incorporate several [permaculture techniques](#) to work in tandem with the natural environment. Areas that are not producing food are converted into native gardens to attract local pollinators, and rain is captured for irrigation and to recharge the local watershed.

ECO also creates and uses biochar on its farms to increase its soil's carbon content. Morgan-Hubbard is a big proponent of using inputs that increase soil organic matter and long-term carbon capture and storage: "Soil carbon sequestration really informs the work that we do," she says.



Vermicompost bin ready for harvest. Photo: Eco City Farms

Morgan-Hubbard sees ECO as a part of the larger solution to addressing food justice: "My theory of change is that it really matters what exists in your community. When you ask kids what they want to be, if they see farmers, they'll want to be farmers. That's what happens on our farms. Kids love seeing vegetables grow. We're not just a farm, we're a total ecological system."

To find out more about Eco City Farms and their latest projects, [visit their website](#) and [Facebook page](#). You can donate to [help fund future projects here](#).

**Thank You to All Speakers,
Panelists and Attendees at
Scenario 300: Making
Climate Cool!**



Community and Movement Leaders on Legislation, Advocacy and What Can I Do

Thank you for contributing to an inspiring and thought-provoking conference that explored the ways in which regenerating healthy ecosystems can sequester excess atmospheric carbon and support a diverse, carbon-stable future.

If you missed the conference, or wish you could attend it again, [check out our video links here!](#)

Regenerative Projects Mapped Around the World



The Buckminster Fuller Institute creates an amazing [map of regenerative projects and videos](#) from around the world. There is immense potential in restoring atmospheric carbon to safe levels through ecological restoration - this is only the beginning!