

40 YEARS TOXIC FREE NC



Our Impact 2026

Advocacy for change

In 2026, sixty-nine environmental health and justice champions joined us in meetings with decision-makers to advocate for healthier communities. Through lobby days, policy trainings, and a series of monthly "Advocate's Hours," we deepened relationships and helped community members gain skills and confidence to share their stories and perspectives.





Protecting communities from harmful chemicals

In another year of rollbacks, Toxic Free NC fought to defend critical science-based safeguards that protect our water, soil, air, and food. We pushed back on weakened standards for PFAS, biosolids, and 1,4 dioxane, raised the alarm on new registrations for PFAS-pesticides, and helped state and national partners understand the implications of "forever" chemicals for NC agriculture.

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By the Numbers

6

New members joined the Women of Color Farmers Network to share skills and strengthen their farm businesses

30

Farmworkers and rural Latino families graduated from the 4th Environmental Justice Academy

49

Workshops and presentations engaging 1,523 parents, farmworkers, and community members

600+

Homes canvassed, 3 soil testing events, and 8 meetings for concerned residents near Durham's contaminated parks

49

Meetings with legislators and decisionmakers to lobby for reform

785

Letters, petitions, and actions demanding safer policies





Women of Color Farmers Network

This year, the Women of Color Farmers Network continued to grow as a statewide community rooted in mutual support, shared learning, and collective power, welcoming six new members and expanding its reach across 26 North Carolina counties. Through skill-sharing, storytelling workshops, advocacy, and five mutual aid workdays, members strengthened their farms, developed leadership, and supported one another. Collaborative projects like Rooted Blends, Veggie Van, and composting initiatives helped farmers diversify income, improve soil health, and deepen relationships, while wellness retreats at the start and end of the growing season offered space for rest and reflection. With seven farmers receiving grants shared through the network, we continue to celebrate how solidarity, shared resources, and connection can build a more resilient community.

Advocacy wins

This year brought challenging rollbacks and deepened injustice. Yet we found hope in the power of advocacy and celebrated when:

- The Safe Parks Act (S958) was introduced! This was an important step toward funding remediation of contaminated parks across the state though much more will be needed to get a bill across the finish line.
- Syngenta announced it will stop production of paraquat, a deadly herbicide linked to Parkinson's disease. In 2027, we're pushing for North Carolina to join California and Vermont in leading the way to remove this harmful product from the market altogether.
- Together, we stopped a provision in the NC Farm Act that would have protected pesticide companies from responsibility for the harms of exposure, though that victory soured with the Monsanto v. Durnell ruling. We are working to champion legislative solutions that can restore pesticide protections weakened by the Supreme Court.





Contaminated parks

Toxic Free NC supported residents demanding environmental justice and action to address the legacy of soil contamination in five Durham parks. We organized local partners to host neighborhood soil testing events and reported back to the community with results and resources. With the research of two Duke Nicholas School students, we helped the community better understand remediation possibilities, which prompted the city to explore options beyond "cap and cover" of contaminated soil.

EJ Academy

In June, a fourth cohort graduated from the Environmental Justice Academy, a series of leadership workshops in Spanish providing advocacy skills and training on climate and environmental health issues impacting NC farmworkers and rural immigrant families. This year's program included a farm tour, intergenerational activities to involve the children in learning, and local community projects.





Worker protections

This year, NC farmworkers faced H-2A wage cuts, extreme heat, reduced hours during a statewide drought, immigration attacks, and the health toll of intersectional injustices. Through leadership of the Farmworker Advocacy Network and the NC Heat Stress coalition, Toxic Free NC advocated alongside workers for dignity, justice, and safer protections.

Safeguarding biodiversity

Toxic Free NC promoted safer pest management to protect pollinators, birds, and wildlife through statewide distribution of bilingual Spray Free Zone signs, mosquito control education, and advocacy for local Integrated Pest Management policies. In partnership with New Hope Bird Alliance and Xerces Society, we hosted a webinar on reducing insecticide use and worked with Duke and UNC students to develop materials supporting stronger health and environmental protections.



Celebrating 40 years of Toxic Free NC

Friends and supporters from across North Carolina gathered in May to celebrate 40 years of Toxic Free NC and our shared vision for a healthier, more just future. The celebration featured community art, reflections from co-founder Allen Spalt, Community Champion Awards, and refreshments from local chefs Malik Walker and Irma Juarez.

As we mark four decades of pesticide reform and environmental health advocacy, we honor the organizers, farmers, scientists, supporters, and farmworkers who built this movement.

Thank you to everyone who celebrated with us and has been part of our journey. Whether you joined us in person or from afar, ***thank you for being part of the movement!***







Photos by: Aniya Bourne