

What Climate Solutions Work Best in Georgia?

Summary

Drawdown Georgia started with a simple research question: what climate solutions work best in Georgia, not just for reducing greenhouse gases, but for advancing equity, creating jobs, and solving other challenges the state faces? In this short video, John Lanier of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, Blair Beasley of Drawdown Georgia, Dr. Beril Toktay of Georgia Tech, Jasmine Crowe of Goodr, and Codi Norred of Georgia Interfaith Power & Light explain how that research became the backbone of a statewide movement, and how different groups across Georgia are putting it into practice.

Key Takeaways

- Drawdown Georgia's research identified 20 high-impact climate solutions for the state, evaluated not just on carbon reduction, but on equity, jobs, and other benefits, intended as a roadmap other people and organizations can pick up and act on.
- Goodr joined the Drawdown Georgia Business Compact to help businesses divert excess food from landfills into donations, compost, animal feed, or energy, while giving them data on how much food waste they're preventing and what that means for their carbon footprint.
- Georgia Tech engages students in climate leadership through programs like the Carbon Reduction Challenge, where student interns identify a carbon-reducing project that also saves their host organization money, alongside degree programs like the Sustainable Cities minor and Energy Systems minor.
- Georgia Interfaith Power & Light helps congregations put Drawdown Georgia's 20 solutions into practice through professional energy efficiency assessments, rooftop solar programs, EV adoption, and zero-waste and food waste programs.
- The Drawdown Georgia website provides tools like a carbon emissions tracker that works down to the county level, intended to help anyone, whether coming at climate from academia or from their own community, find a way to get involved.

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John Lanier: Drawdown Georgia is trying to make climate solutions come alive within the state of Georgia, but how it does that was very thoughtfully constructed. We felt like the fundamental

starting point needed to be best-in-class research that answers a very simple question: what climate solutions work best in Georgia? And I don't just mean in terms of getting greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. Which climate solutions help advance equity, bring jobs to our state, and solve a whole host of other challenges? That's a research question, but in answering it, we realized it couldn't just be research. That research, which ultimately identified the 20 high-impact climate solutions for Georgia, forms the backbone of what we hope becomes a movement. It's meant to provide the information that people across the state can pick up and do something with.

Blair Beasley: We work to support Drawdown Georgia, a network of people, organizations, and individuals working to scale climate solutions in our state. There are many people who've already stepped up to use the Drawdown Georgia research and framework to guide their work. There's the Drawdown Georgia Business Compact, where businesses headquartered or with a major footprint in Georgia are coming together to build a community of practice around climate solutions.

Jasmine Crowe: Goodr joined the Drawdown Georgia Business Compact because we wanted to stand at the forefront of leading this change. We've built technology that makes it easy for businesses with excess food that would otherwise end up in a landfill to get it donated to people in need, or recycled into compost, animal feed, or energy, and we give them back data and analytics on how they're improving their carbon footprint, how many pounds of food they're keeping out of landfills, and what that means for our environment.

Blair Beasley: There's Drawdown Georgia Higher Ed, where institutions of higher learning work together to research and share stories about the role our universities and colleges can play.

Beril Toktay: As a Georgia Tech professor, I'm so proud of our students, they're true visionaries, they're the true leaders, and all we're really doing at Georgia Tech is helping them achieve their potential, both by engaging them in educational activities and in research. In terms of education, our faculty across all majors are integrating climate and sustainability lenses into their classes. We also have more targeted degree programs, like the Sustainable Cities minor, the Sustainable Business certificate, and the Energy Systems minor, and we have programs squarely focused on climate leadership, like the Carbon Reduction Challenge. This is a program where we invite students doing internships in industry and other organizations to also identify, on top of their internship duties, a carbon emissions-reducing project that will save their host money. It's been a fantastic way to engage both our students and their hosts in climate action.

Blair Beasley: There's the Drawdown Georgia congregations group, working with the faith community to think about how they can grow climate solutions in houses of worship across our state.

Codi Norred: We're helping congregations implement Drawdown Georgia's 20 solutions by bringing practical pathways and making them accessible for people. Think about energy

efficiency, we have a professional energy efficiency program where we help analyze a congregation's energy use and design solutions specific to them. We have a rooftop solar program for congregations, we help congregations implement EVs, run zero-waste programs, and eliminate food waste. All of these are ways we're helping implement Drawdown Georgia at congregations, and I'd encourage you to join us.

Blair Beasley: The research really underpins this entire initiative, and creates a roadmap for all of us to follow as we try to scale climate solutions in our state.

John Lanier: This theory of change, that research can be the backbone of a movement, shows up in multiple ways, from various stakeholder groups meant to situate climate solutions with the right audiences, to new and innovative tools on the website that let us track the carbon emissions we're seeing in Georgia, not just at the state level, but down to the level of an individual county. All of this is intentionally designed to make it possible for people to become inspired. No matter whether you come at climate from an academic standpoint, or just from wanting to make a difference in your community, we're providing the tools and the framework to become part of this leader-full movement we have. So I hope people will go look for inspiration at Drawdown Georgia's website, spend time with the 20 solutions and the tools we've provided, and find a way to use them to make a difference where you are, in your job, your community, or even just in your home.