



ELAW

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advocate

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Protecting Communities & the Climate

(pgs. 1-5)

Economics for
Climate Justice
(pgs. 2-3)

Victory in Peru
(pg. 4)

Reducing CO₂
Emissions
(pg. 5)

ELAW Fellows

Mexico
(pg. 6)

Nigeria
(pg. 7)

Gathering to Align Our Strategy and Vision

(pg. 8)

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ELAW helps communities speak out for clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. We are a global alliance of attorneys, scientists, and other advocates collaborating across borders to build a sustainable, just future.

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Protecting Communities & the Climate



Bahuaja-Sonene National Park in the Peruvian Amazon (see pg.4) PHOTO: SERNANP

In October 2025, Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Jamaica then Cuba, causing catastrophic damage to Jamaica's southern and western parishes. This was Jamaica's strongest recorded hurricane. Weeks later, two powerful back-to-back typhoons struck the Philippines causing extensive damage and loss of life.

"The scientific evidence is overwhelming: The climate is changing and burning fossil fuels is the leading factor," says Dr. Johnnie Chamberlin, ELAW Scientist.

Small island nations are severely affected by the increasing frequency and intensity of storm systems, while UN agencies report that half the world's population now struggles with rising heat.

ELAW partners around the world are stepping up to keep fossil fuels in the ground, while at the same time helping communities and pushing governments to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to more frequent and severe weather, ocean warming and acidification, and extended periods of drought and extreme temperatures.

"Our partners are advancing many diverse and creative strategies and actions led by communities that contribute to adaptation and mitigation," says Dr. Lalanath de Silva, ELAW Executive Director. "These cases include challenging short-sighted and poorly designed plans for coal, oil, and gas development; reining in wasteful use of plastic, which consumes vast amounts of oil and gas; and ensuring carbon sinks like forests are conserved and protected." (Continued pg. 2)



A house destroyed by Hurricane Melissa in Santa Cruz, Jamaica.

"The place looks bombed, the vegetation burned, shelter and possessions scattered, crops flooded, roads reverted to rivers or blocked by landslides and fallen trees, leaning or sheared off power lines, dead animals, desperate people. But also, in the paradox that is Jamaica, people smiling, expressing gratitude for life, farmers beginning to plant, neighbors helping to spread tarpaulins over standing walls, men sitting astride roofs, hammers in hand."

Diana McCaulay, ELAW Board Member
From "Diana's Substack – Inroads," November 15, 2025
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Protecting Communities & the Climate



Fossil fuel extraction and burning can leave local communities with degraded ecosystems and long-term environmental liabilities.

(continued from pg. 1) This critical work takes perseverance and courage. In South Africa, a high court halted a seismic oil exploration project along South Africa's West Coast in 2022, following support from ELAW's Science Team showing that claims of using best practice seismic technology to minimize harm to marine species, especially whales, were inaccurate. In August 2025, ELAW partners at Natural Justice announced a follow on landmark victory, with the Western Cape High Court shelving the South African government's decision to grant environmental authorization for offshore drilling in three concession blocks along the southwest coast.

In November 2025, ELAW partners celebrated when Kenya's Environment and Land Court upheld a 2019 ruling revoking the license for a proposed 1,050-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Kwasasi, Lamu County, Kenya, an area north of the coastal town of Lamu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Beyond Lamu's extraordinary cultural heritage, the area is rich in biodiversity within both the marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

The ruling honors the leadership and vision of those who fought for more than a decade to protect cultural heritage and vital ecosystems from unsustainable energy investments.

Economics for Climate Justice

Dr. Megan Egler, ELAW Ecological Economist

The recent typhoons in the Philippines and Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica brought devastating losses. Homes, fisheries, farms, and critical infrastructure and ecosystems were destroyed, and more than one million people have been displaced.

Extreme weather events like these are intensified by climate change, severely straining local economies and eroding community resilience. They also reflect a pattern that has persisted for decades: The countries and communities that contribute least to the climate crisis are the ones enduring the most severe climate impacts.

Climate justice means recognizing that climate risk and climate responsibility are not evenly shared. It also means acknowledging the inequities built into many of the decisions driving and related to the climate crisis. For example, communities in Rivers State in the petroleum-rich Niger Delta have suffered for years due to leaking circa 1950s oil pipes and continuous gas flaring (see page 7). New mineral and energy projects that promise the global benefits of a

International judiciaries are also issuing promising decisions. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) each recently determined that States must do more to address climate change and are liable for harm caused by climate change traceable to their actions and omissions. The IACtHR affirmed the human right to a healthy climate. The ICJ affirmed that all States have legal obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These landmark opinions provide authoritative interpretations of existing international law, underscoring the legal duties of States in addressing the climate crisis and its devastating environmental and human rights impacts, and offering guidance for future legal action and accountability.

These Advisory Opinions will shape the global legal landscape for future climate action," says ELAW Attorney Leticia Aleixo. "They will serve as vital references for domestic courts and policymakers, and set the stage for civil society to demand government and corporate responsibility in addressing climate change."

"Our aim is to help partners stop the emissions before they happen."

Dr. Johnnie Chamberlin, ELAW Scientist

Protecting Communities & the Climate



Mangroves protect communities from storms and flooding, support fisheries and local economies, filter water, and store large amounts of carbon.

Economics for Climate Justice (CONTINUED)

low-carbon energy transition may still place the environmental and social burdens on communities. For instance, on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, major wind and solar projects have faced strong pushback from local communities who argue that the developments threaten their forests, communal lands, and sacred sites, illustrating how even renewable energy projects can undermine the environment and deepen existing inequalities. ELAW Fellow Aarón Siller (see page 6) is working with the ELAW Science Team to review the environmental impact statement of a proposed solar farm.

Climate justice requires not only the fair distribution of risks and responsibilities, and challenging new fossil fuel infrastructure, but also the careful scrutiny of the energy and mining projects that support a low-carbon transition.

ELAW uses economics to help our partners tackle climate issues by:

- Revealing full costs of fossil fuel and large-scale developments, including ecosystem damage, climate and climate-related health impacts, sociocultural impacts, and the financial risks tied to stranded assets and long-term environmental liabilities.
- Demonstrating the value of ecosystems that protect communities from storms, flooding, and erosion, and showing that losing them creates far greater costs for those already most exposed to climate impacts.
- Challenging flawed economic arguments for new fossil fuel and mining projects, and supporting decisions that reflect both economic realities and the unequal distribution of climate risks and responsibilities.

In several countries where our partners work, mangrove forests face growing pressure from both climate change and expanding fossil fuel development. For example, in Colombia, a proposed offshore oil project risks devastating mangrove ecosystems and coastal livelihoods in the event of a spill or well blowout.

Economic analysis helps show what is at stake: Mangroves protect communities from storms and flooding, support fisheries and local economies, filter water, and store large amounts of carbon. In addition, values such as the cultural and spiritual connections that communities have with local mangrove ecosystems are challenging to quantify and impossible to replace.

Replacing the "ecosystem services" that mangroves provide with built infrastructure or trying to offset the carbon stored in these ecosystems costs far more than preserving the ecosystems themselves.

Economic analysis can bring decision-makers closer to understanding the true cost of development, while highlighting that many essential values cannot be captured in monetary terms. It also exposes the weak economic logic behind new fossil fuel developments.

By drawing on the expertise of ELAW's Science Team and its expanding economic capacity, ELAW assists public interest lawyers around the world in ensuring that the communities most exposed to climate impacts are not also asked to sacrifice their health, land, or stability for other people's energy needs.

In November 2025, ELAW partners celebrated when Kenya's Environment and Land Court upheld a 2019 ruling revoking the license for a proposed 1,050-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Kwasasi, Lamu County, Kenya, an area north of the coastal town of Lamu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Court Halts Fossil Fuel Development in Bahuaja-Sonene National Park



The Pampas deer is just one of countless flora and fauna under threat by government plans to permit exploration for oil and gas.

Bahuaja-Sonene National Park in the Peruvian Amazon encompasses more than one million hectares of pristine tropical rainforest. Since 2024, this sanctuary of flora and fauna and its unique tropical grasslands ecosystem—Pampas del Heath—has been threatened by government plans to permit exploration for oil and gas.

ELAW partners are celebrating an October court decision that halted those plans and reaffirmed the park's protected status.

Henry Carhuatocto filed a legal action demanding that Peru's Ministry of Energy and Mines, and the state oil company, Perupetro, stop the process that would allow preliminary studies for oil and gas development activities in the park. Henry is Executive Director of the Institute for the Legal Defense of the Environment and Sustainable Development (IDLADS). He has partnered with ELAW for many years.

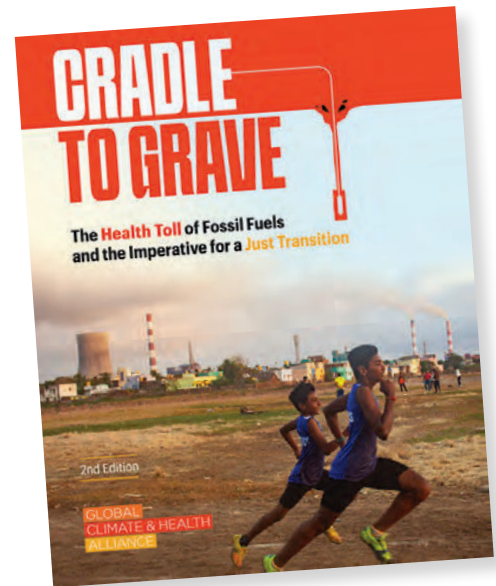
ELAW submitted an amicus brief highlighting the risks that hydrocarbon development poses to biodiversity, indigenous peoples, and the climate.

In October, both the Fifth Constitutional Court of Lima and the Third Constitutional Chamber of Lima ruled that even preliminary efforts, such as the initial technical evaluation proposed in this case to promote extractive projects, violate regulations protecting Peru's natural areas.

Following this ruling, The Court informed IDLADS that Perupetro canceled its Technical Evaluation Agreement.

The ruling is a milestone in Peru's environmental jurisprudence: It reinforces the State's obligation to prevent damage before it occurs. It protects critical biodiversity and clarifies that Peru's Natural Protected Law No. 26834 does indeed prohibit extraction of natural resources and any modification of the environment in the specific category of protected areas that includes national parks.

Congratulations Henry and IDLADS!



ELAW partner Shweta Narayan is Campaign Lead at the Global Climate & Health Alliance (GCHA). Shweta is based in India and took the lead on developing GCHA's "Cradle to Grave." This online resource maps the entire fossil fuel lifecycle, exposing the health harms at every stage, from extraction to abandoned sites. The report is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French at climateandhealthalliance.org.

ELAW Impact – Reducing CO₂ Emissions



Protesters outside the Court of Session in Edinburgh, January 2025. PHOTO: Andrew Perry

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report, "Global Warming of 1.5°C," concludes with the statement: "Every bit of warming matters, every year matters, every choice matters."

ELAW is working with partners on dozens of projects to reduce or halt CO₂ emissions in proposed mining, transportation, coal, oil, gas, and LNG projects in Brazil, Guyana, Indonesia, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and around the world.

"Our aim is to help partners stop the emissions before they happen," says Dr. Johnnie Chamberlin, an ELAW Scientist with years of experience conducting and evaluating climate change, greenhouse gases, air quality, and energy impact assessments for environmental impact reports.

ELAW partners at Uplift and Greenpeace UK recently succeeded in having the 2023 approval of the Rosebank oil field overturned by the Court of Session in Edinburgh, since it did not account for the emissions that would be caused by burning the field's oil and gas. ELAW will continue to provide them with the assistance they need as they challenge the revised and updated environmental statement for the development of the Rosebank field.

ELAW has assisted partners in opposing projects that, if implemented, cumulatively would have emissions of well over 1 billion tons of CO₂ – larger than Japan's annual emissions from fossil fuels and industry.

The ELAW Science Team provides expertise to partners around the world seeking to protect communities and the climate.

This includes:

- Evaluating or calculating CO₂ emissions from proposed projects.
- Describing the significance of project CO₂ emissions in terms of social and economic costs and environmental impacts.
- Evaluating the potential for proposed fossil fuel projects to become stranded assets.
- Providing critical reviews of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for fossil fuel or other carbon intensive projects.
- Assessing project compatibility with State pledges to the Paris Agreement (Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs).
- Assessing potential emissions impacts of policy changes (e.g. forest policies).

"Every bit of warming matters, every year matters, every choice matters."



ELAW Fellow

Aarón Siller

Mexico

Sept. 22 – Dec. 8, 2025

Aarón Siller serves as Director of the Southeast Office of El Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (Mexican Center for Environmental Law, CEMDA). He was in Eugene for an 11-week ELAW Fellowship to advance his work. He also participated in an English as a Second Language program at Lane Community College.

“Improving my English is essential for collaborating with English-speaking organizations and international institutions, as well as for accessing cutting-edge legal and technical research that is primarily published in English,” says Aarón.

Aarón worked closely with the ELAW Team to refine legal strategies, strengthen protections for environmental defenders, and build the capacity of CEMDA’s Southeast Office. He collaborated with ELAW’s technical experts to analyze the environmental impacts of energy projects that threaten to upend local ecosystems and began developing a strategy to advance an emergency declaration on the health of the Mesoamerican Reef System.

Aarón said: “I also engaged in meaningful cultural immersion. I attended theater performances, parades, protests, enjoyed street food, attended a University of Oregon football game, played soccer with Bernard [ELAW Africa Law Associate], explored the city on foot and by bicycle, and much more.”

Read more about Aarón’s work to the right.



ELAW Host Families enrich the lives of ELAW Fellows. Many thanks to Susan and Dennis Sibilia-Young, and Lisa Moeller and Scott Johnson for hosting Aarón. See Lisa and Scott above, with Aarón at Mt. Pisgah in Eugene.

Victory for Cozumel: Saving the Reef and a Public Beach

The island of Cozumel off Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula is surrounded by coral reefs that are home to more than 1,000 marine species. Cruise ship traffic in and out of three busy ports in Cozumel already threatens marine areas. Meanwhile, a private company has proposed a fourth cruise ship port that would destroy the Villa Blanca Reef—part of the Mesoamerican Reef—and the only remaining public beach in Cozumel.

ELAW Fellow Aarón Siller reported in October that plans for the fourth cruise ship port were shelved!

“Back in 2021, when communities learned that our environment ministry approved plans to construct the new port, they took to the streets in protest,” says Aarón, whose office worked for years with the Cozumel community and local organizations to protect Cozumel and the Villa Blanca Reef from short-sighted plans for a fourth cruise ship port. Together, they designed and implemented a comprehensive defense strategy that demanded a public consultation process, promoted citizen participation, and included filing legal and administrative actions for failure to comply with the law.

Following years of litigation and community opposition, the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources revoked approval of the project’s environmental impact assessment.

The port project directly threatened the Villa Blanca Reef, which provides habitat for numerous species protected under national and international law. Aarón adds: “On an island increasingly marked by coastal privatization and restricted access due to tourism development, the public beach represents a community space of great social, cultural, and recreational importance.”

Over the years, the case became emblematic. Hundreds of people mobilized on multiple occasions, organizing marches, water flotillas, festivals, conferences, and other events, drawing significant media coverage.

Congratulations Aarón and the CEMDA team!

“The victory in Cozumel stands as a clear example of how social organization, strategic litigation, and the defense of human rights can stop megaprojects that threaten nature and collective well-being.”

Aarón Siller



Right to left: ELAW Fellows Courage Nsirimovu and Victory Timizimor join ELAW Scientist Bree Yednock and her husband Eric Dean at the Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint on the Oregon coast.

ELAW Fellows

Courage Nsirimovu & Victory Timizimor

Nigeria | October 13-24, 2025

Communities in Rivers State in the petroleum-rich Niger Delta have suffered for years due to leaking circa 1950s oil pipes and continuous gas flaring. "The air, water, and soil is absolutely contaminated," says Courage Nsirimovu, Coordinator, Pilex Centre for Civic Education Initiative (also known as The Peoples Advocates).

Courage and his coworker Victory Timizimor, Pilex Program Officer, traveled to Eugene from Port Harcourt, Nigeria, to participate in ELAW Fellowships. They are collaborating with our Law and Science Teams to advance their work ensuring that oil companies operating in the densely populated Niger Delta focus on long overdue clean up efforts.

"ELAW Team members were very responsive to our professional and personal needs. You all went overboard to ensure our welfare."

Courage Nsirimovu

Courage, Victory, and the Pilex team conducted an in-depth assessment of public health and the environment in three impacted communities: Rukpokwu, Rumuekpe, and Ibaa. Their January 2025 report, reviewed by ELAW Science Program Director Dr. Mark Chernaik, revealed drinking water bore holes and wells so contaminated with petroleum that a lit match thrown into them exploded into fire balls.

"These formerly vibrant communities are intensely polluted and the sources of their livelihoods are gone," says Courage. "Community health is severely compromised," says Victory, with Pilex's report noting community reports of excessive rates of birth deformities, respiratory and eye problems, and early menopause.

While in Eugene, Courage and Victory had intensive meetings with the Law, Science, and Defending Defenders Teams. They also worked to build the capacity of their organization to ensure that community voices in Rivers State are heard and polluted airways, waterways, and soil are cleaned up.



Courage Nsirimovu (left) and Victory Timizimor, Pilex Centre for Civic Education Initiative — The Peoples Advocates, visit a soil and groundwater remediation site in Port Harcourt, Nigeria (September 2025).

"I enjoyed my trip to the Oregon Coast with Bree and Eric – learning about all the protected areas, conservation efforts, and local species."

Victory Timizimor



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Gathering to Align Our Strategy and Vision

The ELAW Team has grown. In addition to our home base in Eugene, Oregon, our team of 32 now work from their home offices in California, Maine, Massachusetts, Washington D.C., Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, and Mexico.

In November, the team gathered in Eugene for a four-day strategy meeting and workshop. This gathering is key to building the human connections that drive our work together every day. Skilled facilitators at Colectivo Meta joined us from Mexico. We left the week with a renewed sense of community and shared priorities to build on our work in the year ahead.

Thank you for being a part of the movement to advance environmental justice and defend critical ecosystems. Please consider making a gift today to help increase ELAW's impact as we take on even greater challenges.



MAKE A GIFT TODAY!



Charity Navigator and Candid give ELAW their highest rating for financial management, accountability, and transparency. You can be confident that your gift helps advance our mission of helping communities speak out for clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. Please visit elaw.org/give to make a tax-deductible gift.