Earth Law Center (ELC) works to transform the law to enforce Nature’s inherent rights to exist, thrive, and evolve. Towards this goal, ELC serves as the legal team for grassroots movements across the world. Our partners are local leaders seeking better ways to protect threatened ecosystems, asking for help in crafting ‘Rights of Nature’ policies and other legal approaches to create a better planet.

2019 IN NUMBERS

“Mission accomplished” in 7 legal initiatives.

6 amicus briefs submitted to courts.

36 local community partners in Argentina, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, France, Mexico, Nigeria, the United States, Uruguay and elsewhere.

20+ volunteers donated over $600,000 worth of expertise and time.

18 chapters completed of our Earth Law casebook (published by Wolters Kluwer).

2 published e-books
Three Solutions to Save Planet A
Ocean Rights: A Roadmap to a Livable Future


6 book chapters and 4 webinars.
Dear Friends,

Thanks to your support, 2019 was Earth Law Center’s best year ever. Here are only a few of our many victories:

- We passed the Rights of Nature laws in El Salvador, Mexico, and the United States;
- We won a major Clean Water Act lawsuit;
- We secured an industry-leading publisher for our casebook; and
- We built a major movement to recognize the rights of Southern Resident Orcas.

At our core, we believe that our legal system must change to solve our planet’s greatest environmental challenges. One way we do this is to pass laws that recognize Nature as a subject of rights. We are leading legal experts in this field.

We also advance other cutting-edge environmental movements—defining “ecocide” as an international crime, advancing the human right to a healthy environment, recognizing animal rights, and others. Together, we call these fields “Earth law.”

Much more is coming. We need our work to be supported by tens of thousands of lawyers, judges, politicians, and leaders from across the world. To help, we are launching the first-ever Earth Law Society. We invite you to join.

ELC is gaining momentum, and we can’t do it without you. Help us pick up speed in 2020 by making a recurring gift on our website today.

In gratitude,

The Earth Law Center Team

Grant Wilson
Executive Director & Directing Attorney
THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, 2019 WAS EARTH LAW CENTER'S BEST YEAR EVER.
THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, 2019 WAS EARTH LAW CENTER’S BEST YEAR EVER.
SECURING EARTH LAW

34 ACTIVE PROGRAMS WORLDWIDE

Asmara, Eritrea
Angoon, Alaska
Auckland, New Zealand
Belgrade, Serbia
Bogotá, Colombia
Boulder, Colorado (Boulder Creek)
Crestone, Colorado
Durango, Mexico (Magdaena River)
El Daunibio, Colombia (Anchicayá River)
Fernando de Noronha, Brazil
Hanalei, Hawaii
Jablanica, Bosnia (Doljanka River)
Jerusalem, Israel
Karachi, Pakistan (Indus River)
Kasenyi Village, Uganda (Lake George)
Lewison, Idaho (Snake River)
London, United Kingdom
Lucknow, India
Manila, Philippines
Mexico City, Mexico (Magdalena River)
Pacatuba, Gearsá (Brazil)
Paris, France
Patagonian Shelf
Puebla, Mexico (Atoyac River)
Quito, Ecuador
Rome, Italy
Sacramento, California
Salish Sea, Washington and Canada
San Francisco, California
San Salvador, El Salvador
Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala (Lake Atitlán)
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Umuaja, Nigeria (River Ethiope)
Vancouver Island, British Columbia
2019 ACHIEVEMENTS

ELC continues the fight to give a voice to Nature across the world. This year, our team expanded into wider geographical locations and collaborated with over 120 organizations and governments around the globe. We also helped to put in place world-first laws and legislation in some of the Earth’s most fragile and vulnerable areas in order to build a future in which humans live in harmony with Nature.

LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL CHANGE

ELC assisted the State of Colima in Mexico to pass a groundbreaking constitutional amendment recognizing the Rights of Nature.

In collaboration with Philippine-Misereor Partnership Inc., ELC provided input to a draft a Rights of Nature bill, which was filed in the Senate in October 2019.

Earth Law Center was granted special consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

A number of the pieces of work below were also included in the 2019 ‘Harmony with Nature’ report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
THE OCEAN

Earth Law Center is leading a coalition of community groups, NGOs, scientists, and indigenous peoples in both Washington and Canada to recognize in law that the orcas have rights to exist.

With its coalition, ELC created a Declaration on the Rights of the Southern Resident orcas that has received 15 organizational endorsements.

ELC submitted a comment letter to the Orca Task Force, drafted a resolution for Legal Rights for the Salish Sea (LRSS), and co-drafted a Senate Bill on this topic (pending introduction).

ELCs work to recognize the rights of the Southern Resident orcas in Washington and Canada has been featured in over 12 articles, including in YES! Magazine and The Conversation.

Earth Law Center is leading a coalition of community groups, NGOs, scientists, and indigenous peoples in both Washington and Canada to recognize in law that the orcas have rights to exist.

ELC gave two webinars on ‘Rights for Reefs’, one to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. We also held an event and training on ocean rights at Patagonia in Seattle.

ELC released its Coral Reef Toolkit. Drawing from this knowledge, ELC provided input and consultation to a new coral reef bill in Palau, pending finalization.

ELC provided two more consultations and drafted a recommendation letter and position analysis for the International Treaty to protect Biodiversity on the High Seas.
In September, ELC and a coalition of river defenders won a major lawsuit against California’s State Water Board for violating the Clean Water Act.

ELC and partner ‘Yes for the Rights of Nature’ secured a proclamation from the El Salvadoran Legislative Assembly recognizing that “forests are living entities” with duties to care for, preserve, and respect forests.

Alongside indigenous leaders in their respective locations, ELC launched campaigns to give legal rights to the Snake River in Idaho and the Hanalei River in Hawaii, amongst others.

ELC secured an agreement from the Senate of Nigeria to allow us to present a proposal to give legal rights to all rivers nationally. ELC also established “ELC Africa” with partner Irikefe V. Dafe and 30 other leading experts.

ELC submitted 6 amicus briefs to courts in Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico. A district court in Oaxaca, Mexico quoted our brief extensively and ordered the cleanup of two rivers, the Atoyac and Salado.
ELC and leading publisher Wolters Kluwer agreed to release a casebook titled “Earth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law” in 2020. This pioneering casebook will train the next generation of “Earth lawyers.”

ELC hosted 5 webinars on Ocean Rights and the Earth Law Framework with over 200 collective participants.

ELC co-sponsored a webinar series with the Environmental Law and Governance Association, the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, and others.


ELC released a Rights of Nature community toolkit to help local governments pass rights of nature laws. We are now putting together an ocean plastic toolkit to provide similar support.
WHAT’S NEXT?
BUILDING A RIGHTS-BASED MOVEMENT

- Establish 10 new Rights of Nature laws at local, state, regional and/or national levels across the world;
- Pass a constitutional amendment at national level to include the Rights of Nature in a new country;
- Establish at least one new Rights of Nature law at a US statewide level;
- Implement three new laws establishing the rights of rivers, including the appointment of legal guardians to oversee these rivers;
- Recognize the rights of Southern Resident Orcas;
- Recognize the rights of marine ecosystems and/or coral reefs in five places; and
- Secure adoption of the Earth Law Framework for Marine Protected Areas by the IUCN Congress in 2020.

EDUCATING EARTH LAWYERS

- Publish our Earth Law casebook and teach from the casebook in ten schools;
- Win lawsuits in at least three countries on behalf of the Rights of Nature and the basic human right to live in a healthy environment;
- Begin the process of incorporating new ecocentric legal work into the ELC mission;
- Launch our Earth Law Society to obtain at least 5,000 members; and
- Launch our Earth Law Clubs in at least 10 law schools.

EXPANDING CAPACITY

- Hire two new staff and increase our annual budget by 50 percent; and
- Open a physical office where we can place interns, volunteers, and others.
1. **TRAIN THE TRAINERS**
   By creating robust Rights of Nature movements in new countries that operate independently of Earth Law Center.

2. **DEVELOP ROBUST OUTREACH STRATEGIES**
   Including through social media, film, art, news, and written publications—so that millions of people are inspired by our work, including the thousands of people who will join our Earth Law Society.

3. **CREATE REPLICABLE MODELS**
   So that multiple countries, municipalities, and other entities can pass rights-based laws that elevate the protection of ecosystems based on our guidance.

4. **SECURE PRO BONO LEGAL SUPPORT**
   From lawyers across the globe who wish to give back to our planet.
A heartfelt thank you to the 200+ volunteers and interns from over 15 countries who shared their time, talent and expertise with ELC with the shared mission of saving our planet. Without your help, we could not accomplish all that we do. Bravo!

To volunteer with Earth Law Center, visit our webpage.

VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIALS

“Working with ELC allows me to be proactive in changing the way nature is treated for years to come.”
- Oliver Porter, Earth Law Center Volunteer

“I have high hopes for this work and our fight to give legal standing to the remaining, fragile ecosystems within islands and elsewhere.”
- Paris Marler, Earth Law Center Volunteer

“Through the law, we are realizing that we need to protect all life on Earth, rather than just humans.”
- Mikaela Kyle, Earth Law Center Volunteer

“If you care about environmental justice and are eager to contribute to an actionable cause, then volunteering with Earth Law Center is an experience unlike any other!”
- Olivia Leeder, Earth Law Center Volunteer
ELC is a pioneer in creating new legal paradigms that harmonize with Nature. We have been featured in newspaper and magazine articles, documentaries, and events throughout the world.

In 2019, Earth Law Center’s campaigns were featured in leading publications such as the Chicago Tribune, The Conservation, Phys.org, Pew Trusts, and The Ecologist, reaching tens of millions of readers.

Over 20 news outlets featured our campaign to give legal rights to Southern Resident Orcas. We also appeared in almost 10 publications in Spanish.

Finally, Earth Law Center published six book chapters and appeared in four international webinars.
Could rights of nature laws help save endangered orcas?
Should orcas have the same rights as people?
Whales are People too: Could granting legal personhood save an endangered species?
Ecological grief: A little hope remains
On environmental grief and the rights of nature
Earth Day reminds us of our duty to nature, including protecting its wild creatures
Why the southern resident killer whales should have the same rights as people
Fighting for the rights of southern resident orcas
Tear down the dams: New coalition strives to enshrine rights of orcas
Legal personhood for Northwest orcas? Only radical thinking may save them
Humans have practically doomed the orca. We must save them via new legal protections
California fights for rights of the ocean
Make rights of ocean legal
Orca task force meets in Port Angeles Monday
Ocean commons, law of the sea and rights for the sea by Vito de Lucia
Will a massive MPA be sufficient to save Cook Islands ocean?
Ships, sharks and the rights of nature; Two-part series
Cities, tribes try a new environmental approach: Give nature rights
Victory for defenders of California waterways
El Salvador recognises forests as living entities
Does the Arkansas River deserve rights?
Boulder Rights of Nature looks to ignite a new environmental rights movement
Rights of rivers enter the mainstream
Forests are now ‘living entities’ under El Salvador law

Toledo, Greenpeace y Earth Center Law, al rescate de ríos Atoyac y Salado
Qué pasa con los ríos en el país y la fuerza social para restaurarlos (Artículo)
PIF ratifica protección de los ríos Salado y Atoyac
Triunfa rescate de ríos Salado y Atoyac; ordena Poder Judicial sanear afluentes
Ordenan a Gobierno de Oaxaca, sanear Río Salado y Atoyac
Última lucha de Toledo el rescate de los ríos Atoyac y Salado
Se debe reconocer el derecho legal a existir de la naturaleza: expertos
Urgen acciones para revertir el deterioro ambiental
Histórico: Colima reconoce derechos de la naturaleza en Constitución

Ocean Rights: A Roadmap to a livable future; ebook on Amazon in English and Spanish
Earth Law: an indispensable tool for the management and governance of Marine Protected Areas; XI Congress on Protected Areas, Cuba June 2019.
The Law of Mother Earth: A vision from Bolivia, World Ocean Observatory
The Earth Law Center, World Ocean Observatory

Ocean Rights: An Emerging Movement
Plastic Pollution Webinar
Rights for Reefs Webinar
Activism and Advocacy for Environmental Movements Webinar
Our heartfelt thanks to all our donors and foundation partners whose generous donations make our work possible.

In addition, 100% of Earth Law Center’s dedicated and committed Board of Directors donates to ELC in addition to volunteering their expertise and time.
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STAFF & ASSOCIATES

GRANT WILSON: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & DIRECTING ATTORNEY
Grant is a leading expert in international law, environmental law, and the rights of nature movement, with a focus on rivers and forests. He earned a J.D. with a Certificate in Environmental and Natural Resources Law from Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon. Contact him at gwilson@earthlaw.org.

MICHELLE BENDER: OCEAN RIGHTS MANAGER
Michelle Bender is an environmental law and policy specialist with expertise in ocean and wildlife law. Michelle graduated Summa Cum Laude from Vermont Law School, where she earned a Master’s in Environmental Law and Policy. Contact her at mbender@earthlaw.org.

MARSHA MOUTRIE: SENIOR COUNSEL
Marsha Moutrie is an attorney who has practiced in the public, private and nonprofit sectors since 1975, when she graduated from UCLA Law School. In 2016, she retired from government employment after serving for 22 years as the City Attorney of Santa Monica, California. Contact her at mmoutrie@earthlaw.org.

GREG NAYLOR: LAW AND POLICY LEAD
Greg Naylor is an attorney and environmental advocate who has worked with NextGen Climate Action and former V.P. Al Gore’s Climate Reality Project to educate the public on climate change and the need to protect the Rights of Nature. Contact him at gnaylor@earthlaw.org.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD CHAIR ANTHONY R. ZELLE brings 25+ years of litigation experience to lead the Earth Law legal textbook project, chair a panel discussion at the Vermont Law School Rights of Nature Symposium and speak as a leader in the Earth Law movement.

BOARD VICE-CHAIR RACHELLE ADAM has 25 years of experience in Rights of Nature legal issues. As an attorney for Israel’s Environment Ministry, she worked extensively on nature protection and biodiversity issues. She is a primary contributor to the Earth Law casebook.

BOARD SECRETARY ELISE GARCIA brings 20+ years of experience in nonprofit communications, development and strategic planning.

BOARD TREASURER RELLIE SEVILLE has 20+ years of financial experience and a lifelong passion for protecting ecosystems and animals. He joined the Board as Treasurer in June 2018.

BOARD MEMBER JOANNE BOREK is a Digital Marketing and Creative Leader, offering her clients 20+ years of experience with a proven track record in integrated marketing, digital strategy, social media and e-business solutions.

BOARD MEMBER DARLENE MAY LEE brings 20+ years of leadership and management experience both in the US and internationally and most recently served as ELC’s Executive Director.
Asmara, Eritrea
Angoon, Alaska
Auckland, New Zealand
Belgrade, Serbia
Bogotá, Colombia
Boulder, Colorado (Boulder Creek)
Crestone, Colorado
Durango, Mexico (Magdaena River)
El Danubio, Colombia (Anchicayá River)
Fernando de Noronha, Brazil
Hanalei, Hawaii
Jablanica, Bosnia (Doljanka River)
Jerusalem, Israel
Karachi, Pakistan (Indus River)
Kasenyi Village, Uganda (Lake George)
Lewison, Idaho (Snake River)
London, United Kingdom
Lucknow, India
Manila, Philippines
Mexico City, Mexico (Magdalena River)
Pacatuba, Ceará (Brazil)
Paris, France
Patagonian Shelf
Puebla, México (Atoyac River)
Quito, Ecuador
Rome, Italy
Sacramento, California
Salish Sea, Washington and Canada
San Francisco, California
San Salvador, El Salvador
Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala (Lake Atitlán)
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Umuaja, Nigeria (River Ethiope)
Vancouver Island, British Columbia