



Climate Justice Case Studies

2023



A Note from B Lab U.S. & Canada

We know that as urgency for climate action increases, it is essential to center our climate action efforts in justice. We must create inclusive, equitable, and regenerative solutions that place the needs and perspectives of people and communities most impacted by climate change at the forefront. Many Certified B Corporations are looking for insight and examples of how to advance climate justice within their own work.

As a response, [B Lab U.S. & Canada](#) has partnered with [Measure Meant](#), a Certified B Corporation, to develop a series of case studies of B Corps advancing climate justice. Measure Meant is a women-owned consultancy in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States that partners with businesses to build a legacy for a sustainable future. They help companies earn B Corp Certification, create sustainability strategies, complete ESG reporting, and commit to climate action.

In creating these case studies, we interviewed a representative from each company to discuss their climate justice initiatives. The interviews were conducted virtually and focused on company learnings from previous climate justice initiatives and their potential future impact. In each case study, we aimed to provide a high-level overview of the company and draw out the more prominent climate justice themes in each company's work.

Learn more about B Lab U.S. & Canada's [Theory of Change](#) and [climate justice work](#).

MEASURE
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Lab
United States & Canada

Case Study: Tradewater



Tradewater

Introduction

[Tradewater](#) addresses climate justice both in their business operations and through their product itself. In the B Corp world, you might draw the connection to the Operations and Impact Business Model sections of the assessment. As a Certified B Corporation since 2022, Tradewater's business is focused on mitigating non-CO2 greenhouse gasses through various offset projects. Non-CO2 GHGs include methane, nitrous oxide, fluorinated gasses, and refrigerants, all more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to global warming potential. Tradewater sells carbon offsets through their website to fund their work. The offsets are verified to very high standards.

Jenny Morgan, Market Development Manager at Tradewater, explains that an important facet of their climate justice work is recognizing that underserved communities are often left out of the conversation and will feel the largest impacts of climate change.



At a Glance

1. Headquarters: Chicago, IL and Costa Rica
2. Employees: 50
3. Years in business: 7

Impact

Marginalized and underserved communities are directly dealing with the effects of hazardous emissions that companies have left behind, and in many cases do not have enough resources or technical expertise to implement solutions. As a result, they face increased health problems, contaminated soil and water, and decreased land values from issues that they did not create. There are often a lack of economic incentives to support solutions. Tradewater is helping communities manage these hazardous materials, often providing an economic incentive, and reducing GHG emissions in the process.

The first project area Tradewater focuses on is halocarbons, which are 10,200 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Halocarbons are found in refrigeration, fire suppression systems for airplanes and data centers, and common household items. These substances are difficult to destroy. It is often underserved communities that have a high concentration of chemicals and lack a safe, eco-friendly disposal method. Tradewater partners directly with communities to destroy these toxic substances so that they no longer have a high global warming potential.

“Transparency, asking for help, finding allies, sharing your successes and the challenges that you're experiencing... that not only establishes trust, but then people are really excited about that collaboration. And I don't think starting small should be shameful.”

As Tradewater evaluates projects, they consider the relative impact they can make in a region. Jenny Morgan explains, “we're very interested in partnering in regions where we can provide economic value.” In some cases, Tradewater is able to provide significant revenue for local waste haulers who have identified halocarbons in their community. Tradewater partners directly to transport and safely destroy the materials. As much as possible, Tradewater hires locally and empowers communities to do the collection work.

Impact (continued)

Their second project area focuses on methane, a highly prevalent greenhouse gas that is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Tradewater plugs oil and gas wells – orphaned by oil companies that have escaped responsibility – to stop methane and other harmful chemical leaks. Beyond their negative climate impact, these wells are toxic to humans, crops, and animals, leaving landowners with unusable land, and worse – polluted air and water. Unfortunately, this is a big market opportunity – there are at least 3.5 million abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells in the U.S. alone.

Tradewater recognizes that landowners may mistrust outside companies wanting to use their land. Demonstrating how Tradewater can restore these landowners' properties is key to building trust. Tradewater also hires local contractors. And in a serendipitous fashion, Morgan notes, “a lot of these contractors used to work for oil and gas companies.” It’s a win-win-win for Tradewater, who is able to work on climate justice by supporting landowners who have been left with toxic infrastructure, by hiring people with local, skills-based knowledge, and by mitigating climate change.



Key Partnerships

Tradewater works with communities, governments, and businesses across the world. The demand for Tradewater's services has largely come about organically as more people learn about the company and the urgent need to prevent non-CO2 gasses from leaking into the atmosphere. This demand has led to strong partnerships, because both parties share a common mission. B Corp Certification has been a key part of forming partnerships, as Morgan notes, "our marketing dollars are spent on sharing the message versus a sweeping campaign. Our B Corp Certification is part of how we share that message." This has delivered them credibility, and it continues to build as more regions become aware of Tradewater's capability and approach to business.

Looking Ahead

Morgan's advice for how companies should think about climate justice? "Transparency, asking for help, finding allies, sharing your successes and the challenges that you're experiencing... that not only establishes trust, but then people are really excited about that collaboration. And I don't think starting small should be shameful."

Learn More

- [Tradewater website](#)
- [Tradewater's Climate Impact](#)
- [Why We Must Prioritize Non-CO2 Projects to Fight Climate Change](#)
- [How to Evaluate High Impact Carbon Offsets](#)

Takeaways

1. Lead with openness, honesty, and good data.
2. Creating an economic incentive for people to do the right thing is successful.
3. Consider your marketing budget - can it be used to better support your mission?

Case Study: Bonterra Organic Estates

BONTERRA
ORGANIC ESTATES.®

Introduction

[Bonterra Organic Estates](#) has been championing responsible business practices and organic farming for decades, and has been a Certified B Corporation since 2015. They have 850 acres of vineyards in Mendocino County, CA and also source from vineyards located throughout California, giving them insight into both the growing and sourcing processes. With a long and pioneering history of caring for environmental sustainability, Bonterra is taking a deeper look at their worker practices, and the treatment of people throughout their value chain. Joseph Brinkley, Bonterra's Director of Regenerative Organic Development, believes that taking care of people at all levels of their organization is paramount to successful business. To understand the implications of climate justice, Bonterra looks to their own employees, leading certification standards, and business groups who are advocating for change.



At a Glance

1. Headquarters: Hopland, CA
2. Employees: 240
3. Years in business: 55

Impact

Bonterra realizes their mission is only possible if their employees are treated well - from farm to winery to the corporate level. One of the primary ways that Bonterra sets internal standards is through cutting edge certifications. In 2021, Bonterra became one of the first Regenerative Organic Certified® wineries in the world. Essential pillars of Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) are empowering workers, soil health, and animal welfare. Through the ROC framework, Bonterra advances climate justice through the intersection of these pillars, including by: paying living wages, encouraging employees to voice concerns without fear of retaliation, increasing soil health and biodiversity in their vineyards, and expanding the carbon sequestration potential of their land.

“When there's a lot of us that are asking for the same thing, it's a much stronger, more powerful message”

Joseph Brinkley notes that standards are not meaningful without a reinforcing culture. He describes, “in vineyards... it seems to be a bit of the culture that you keep your head down and just move forward if you have an issue. So it's a bit of culture reformation or new culture inception [that we are working on] so that people are comfortable and really empowered to bring these things up.” This culture building takes time, which reinforces a key lesson – wherever you are, just begin.

While supporting workers is a key practice, Bonterra also thinks about their role in climate justice work as one of education. Bonterra feels an urgency to educate their stakeholders on ROC because, “one of the bigger barriers is this understanding of what regenerative organic is... and at the same time... just like we've seen with sustainability through the years, once there's a buzzword, all of a sudden there's a lot of people claiming that.” Bonterra feels a responsibility to prevent misuse of the term regenerative because it hurts the producers, like Bonterra, who have implemented very high, third-party-verified standards.

Key Partnerships

There are many stakeholder groups that Bonterra engages. From distributors and retailers, to farmers, politicians, and end consumers, Bonterra is spurring a demand for Regenerative Organic Certified products. This demand will help more companies implement positive practices. Brinkley acknowledges that every mechanism for change works on its own timeline. Consumer demand is one of the most meaningful avenues for change. Alongside growing consumer knowledge and demand, Brinkley says that business will respond, and policy needs to follow.

Bonterra Organic Estates' political advocacy exceeds expectations for an organization of their size. They have a staff member dedicated to political advocacy and education as a primary job function. They come to the table with organizations far larger in size and add tremendous insight as they actually farm land – unlike many of the multinational players they advocate alongside. Through partnership with Ceres and participation in campaigns with the Organic Trade Association, Bonterra is working to spur a regenerative policy shift. A key part of moving the needle is for companies to work together, “when there's a lot of us that are asking for the same thing, it's a much stronger, more powerful message,” explains Brinkley.



Looking Ahead

Within their own organization and supply chain, Bonterra is in the process of finalizing their Climate Action Plan, which will outline their emissions reductions plans in line with what is necessary to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, as stated in the Paris Agreement, and per the Science Based Targets Initiative, which they signed on to in 2022. This will include various initiatives including electrifying their fleet and exploring alternative packaging options for their products.

In their political advocacy, Bonterra is pushing for technical assistance for farmers to transition to Organic practices for the next round of the Farm Bill (an important package of legislation passed roughly every five years in the United States). This work is part of a vision to build more resilient systems for those most affected by climate change, including farmers and farm workers. As Brinkley says, “whoever you are, wherever you're operating, there's something that you can do for climate justice.”

Takeaways

1. You can participate in political action and advocacy.
2. Education is key and will help create a common language.
3. We can accomplish more together.



Learn More

- [Bonterra Organic Vineyard website](#)
- [Bonterra on LinkedIn](#)
- [Regenerative Organic Certification](#)

Case Study: Persephone Brewing

Persephone
BREWING COMPANY BEER, FARM-FRESH.

Introduction

Persephone Brewing Company, a Certified B Corporation since 2015, was founded in part to show that for-profit businesses could be a force for good. With deep experience in community development and finance, Persephone's founder and CEO Brian Smith had an idea to, "take back alcohol as a community building tool as opposed to the association with addictions." The notion came from Smith's background working closely with underserved communities in Vancouver's Downtown East Side.

The idea for a brewery flourished as they looked for space. They didn't find it in a typical, industrial building. Instead they found a farm. After happening across the farm, they started to realize "the destructive nature of conventional farming both in terms of our food security and our climate," Smith explained. They saw an opportunity to run a farm and a brewery in a way that could address food security and climate change and be a place for community gathering.



At a Glance

1. Headquarters: Gibsons, BC
2. Employees: 40
3. Years in business: 10

Impact

Part of being a Certified B Corporation is a commitment to continuous impact improvement and an acknowledgement of where companies are falling short in how they serve people, communities, and the planet. Brian Smith is the first to say that Persephone is not doing enough on climate justice, and is wary to overinflate Persephone's impact. However, as a small business, Persephone represents an important demographic in the B Corp community, and there is inspiration to be gained from their story.

Persephone's location and land has shaped both their identity and impact, and especially their work on climate justice. Brian explains that to begin this work, Persephone had “the conversation [as a team] to address our privilege... to call out the fact that we don't acknowledge the extraordinary circumstances that we have all sort of fallen into.” Part of their acknowledgement of privilege is recognizing the ancestral lands that the brewery and farm reside on. The land acknowledgement is front and center in the brewery for all guests to see. And beyond that, Brian says, “we are trying hard to work with our local Indigenous groups, the Shíshálh Nation and the Squamish Nation.” Persephone understands that building trust will and should take time.

“We partnered with Telus, which is the biggest telecom provider in Canada, in order to build a fully traceable beer called our the Pollinator pilsner. So that we know where all of the ingredients come from and we can push that supply chain towards being more ecologically responsible.”



Impact (continued)

Persephone Brewing Company's drive to make their beer farm an accessible, community oriented space is a key part of their current impact and starting place for future work on climate justice. They've welcomed many partners into their ecosystem, including a local beekeeper who tends bees and hosts workshops on the farm, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program, and an organic feed program aimed at helping "local farmers become more profitable by providing access to certified organic bulk feed locally."

The bulk feed program was created in response to a need that community members identified, and has side benefits – like reduced packaging and transportation emissions. Their CSA program, called the community food box has taken off and is now run by another local organization. Persephone was able to incubate the community food box program, taking on the initial risk, and found a proper home in the community for it to grow. It's now a very successful program, delivering organic local food to the community. Through these experiences, Persephone has learned how to be a good community partner by opening up their space, being curious, and most of all willing to work together.



Key Partnerships

Partnership is foundational for Persephone. They've engaged diverse partners, from national companies to neighbors. In 2021, Smith shared, "we partnered with Telus, which is the biggest telecom provider in Canada, in order to build a fully traceable beer called our the Pollinator pilsner. So that we know where all of the ingredients come from and we can push that supply chain towards being more ecologically responsible." Customers can scan a QR code on the can to learn about where the ingredients come from. This level of traceability can help identify specific areas for climate justice work as well.

While projects like the Pollinator Pilsner are great, Persephone has learned that small, community-led projects can inspire equal or even more meaningful change. Community-led projects allow for complexity and are able to include many voices. And all of this is fertile ground for future climate justice work. Whether it be supporting local farmers, Indigenous peoples, or other underserved groups, Persephone has established a foundation of trust and innovation in their community for future partnership.



Looking Ahead

Persephone's advice for pursuing climate justice work is to begin wherever you can, and invite your neighbors, peers, and employees to join you. Persephone has recently been working with an Indigenous-owned compost company to implement new and better farming practices on their land. They might start with one patch of potatoes and try out a no-till method. And that practice might grow out into many other sustainable agricultural practices. And then the next goal might be to inspire all farmers on the Sunshine coast to be farming thoughtfully. Brian Smith has found that movements that begin at a grassroots level bear the most fruit.

Takeaways

1. Relationships require time to build trust.
2. Climate justice work is complex and requires continuous learning.
3. Openness to new ideas can mean both more impact and business opportunities.

Learn More

- [Persephone website](#)
- [Crowdfunding investment page](#)
- [Persephone on Instagram](#)
- [Bespoke social network](#)

Case Study: Evolution Marketing

Introduction

Evolution Marketing is a small but mighty firm. Fearlessly led by Lisa Geason-Bauer, who founded the company in 2007, Evolution Marketing helps organizations increase their sustainability efforts and showcase their social and environmental actions. A Certified B Corp since 2018 and deeply rooted in Wisconsin, Evolution Marketing's super power is connection. Having built trust with people on both sides of the aisle in policy and business, Evolution Marketing is uniquely positioned to make the case for climate justice

Impact

Evolution Marketing understands climate justice as an important piece of a larger landscape of injustice and inequality. They use the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as their guide in climate justice work. As Geason-Bauer says, the SDGs, "show the interconnected nature of everything... you can't pull climate justice out and just talk about it as its own thing, [you must] also talk about education, food security... it's all interconnected." Just as the SDGs are interconnected, so is Evolution Marketing's work. Their client work, advocacy, and volunteering combine to have an outsized impact on the community.

At a Glance

1. Headquarters: Nashotah, WI
2. Employees: 1 (working owner)
3. Years in business: 16



Lisa Geason-Bauer at a key stakeholder meeting discussing workforce training needs with respect to the coming opportunities from the Investment Reduction Act.

Impact and Key Partnerships

Geason-Bauer's time on the Waukesha Ozaukee Washington County Workforce Development board is a primary example of Evolution Marketing's intersecting client work and social policy advocacy. On behalf of Green Homeowners United (an Evolution Marketing client), Lisa led a meeting of key stakeholders across labor unions, residential green building, sustainability, and community advocacy to interact with Wisconsin workforce development leaders. The convening addressed workforce training challenges in the residential green and healthy home space, tied to meeting the coming demand for trained, certified laborers who will be to do the work required for homeowners to take advantage of the rebates tied to the Inflation Reduction Act.

Because of the breadth of experience at the table, the group was able to have a constructive conversation on how to create career pathways for individuals with barriers to employment. Further, they anchored the conversation around the understanding that frontline communities are facing high energy burdens tied to their dwellings. It was important to hear from stakeholders that represent different community advocacy organizations that Green Homeowners United is partnering with to understand the climate justice implications of their work.

Looking beyond energy, Evolution Marketing found education on sustainability and climate justice for youth to be lacking the depth and breadth of knowledge needed to address the climate emergency. To address this educational gap, Evolution Marketing has worked with Oconomowoc High School (OHS) teachers for years in an advisory capacity. As part of this volunteering, Evolution Marketing supported a new high school program that brought together AP Environmental Science and Spanish 5 students to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals. To show support for the program, Lisa wrote a letter on behalf of Evolution Marketing highlighting the need for sustainability education. The program launched in the 2019-2020 school year and has continued successfully since, spurring many fruitful student projects.



"You can't pull climate justice out and just talk about it as its own thing, [you must] also talk about education, food security... it's all interconnected."

Oconomowoc High School students, their teachers, and Lisa in the Evolution Marketing booth at the Wisconsin Sustainable Business Conference

Looking Ahead

The Midwest is expected to see millions of climate refugees over the coming years. Evolution Marketing is uniquely positioned to not only call attention to the proposed influx of people, but to help prepare their state, local government, business, and environmental organizations to address the needs that climate refugees will have. It seems there will be no shortage of work for Evolution Marketing, a company that helps organizations advocate for equitable public policy and has worked at the hyper local level to create lasting and sustainable changes. Evolution Marketing will continue to seek opportunities to be an advocate and connector for underserved, underrepresented communities. The relationships that Evolution Marketing has set in motion over the last two decades will continue creating opportunities to make Wisconsin a better place for all people.

Takeaways

1. Establishing shared meaning, a foundation for partnership, requires putting yourself in others' shoes.
2. Implementing global goals, like the UN SDGs, can be a helpful way to guide climate justice work.
3. Youth education is vital for climate justice work to succeed.



A Wisconsin 2023 Snapshot of Green & Healthy Residential Construction Careers: Emerging Green Skills, Review of Future Workforce Requirements in Homes



Learn More

- [Evolution Marketing website](#)
- [Report: “A Wisconsin 2023 Snapshot of Green & Healthy Residential Construction Careers: Emerging Green Skills, Review of Future Workforce Requirements”](#)
- [Operational Impact and Carbon Footprint Report](#)
- [Putting the Sustainable Development Goals in Action](#)

Case Study: Cooperative Coffees



Introduction

Cooperative Coffees is made up of 23 coffee roasters in the U.S. and Canada that joined together to import coffee in a way that benefits the livelihood of smallholder farmers (typically one to four hectares). They take an approach to impact that can teach us a lot about climate justice. First, they recognize the importance of fair trade practices. Cooperative Coffees' fair trade practices support farmers through the ups and downs of the coffee commodity market. When trading practices aren't enough to support farmers, they receive support from roaster members through their Climate Impact Fund, managed by Melissa Wilson Becerril.



Juan Jesus Jimenez, CENFROCAFE producer and Cool Farm Tool Pilot Project Participant, in his coffee plot. Jaén, Cajamarca, Peru. Photo credit: James Rodriguez for Cooperative Coffees

Right: Group photo of participants at a Cooperative Coffees conference at the CENFROCAFE processing plant. Jaén, Cajamarca, Peru. Photo credit: James Rodriguez for Cooperative Coffees

At a Glance

1. Headquarters: Americus, GA & Montreal, QC
2. Employees: 11
3. Years in business: 24



Impact

Roaster members, in partnership with farmer cooperatives, designate \$0.03 on every pound of coffee sold to farmer-led innovation. This results in \$150,000-\$200,000 invested annually. Wilson Becerril directs resources and technical assistance through the fund to support farmer-identified solutions. It's key that the contribution remains independent of coffee prices so that farmers are not left behind in times of need. The fund began as a response to a coffee leaf rust (or *roya*) outbreak, a fungus that devastated many farmers' production. Cooperative Coffees realized that this was an issue that could not be solved through trade, because the farmers had no product to trade.

As natural disasters and other crop failures became more frequent due to climate change, the fund changed from the *Roya* Fund to the Climate Impact Fund. The fund focuses on supporting farmers to build resilience while promoting regenerative practices and natural disaster recovery. One of Cooperative Coffees' long-time partners, COMSA, trains farmers from around the world in sustainable agricultural practices. Cooperative Coffees offers a training grant for other growers to visit and learn. Over the years, Cooperative Coffees' projects have covered a diverse range of issues, from water and food security to schooling for children in areas devastated by natural disasters, and directly funding farmer-owned organizations on the ground.

Critical to the success of the fund is Cooperative Coffees' governance model, which uses cooperative principles for decision making. The coop has roaster members and staff that actively participate in committees that govern the organization. The Producer Voice Committee allows Cooperative Coffees to receive input directly from farmers. When asked how to create conditions where farmers feel comfortable to share their voice, Melissa said, "the most important part is making space and recognizing when you have a position of power... figuring out how much you can actually take a step back and bring these communities directly into the decision-making process to represent themselves because they know what they're doing."

COMSA's Diplomado Organico event. Marcala, Honduras. Photo credit: Cooperative Coffees



Key Partnerships

Cooperative Coffees works with the National Cooperative Business Association to promote the benefits of shared ownership. As an organization, Cooperative Coffees contributes to higher farmer income and positive environmental practices by sourcing 100% Organic and Fair Trade coffee. These certifications also help Cooperative Coffees mitigate risks of human rights or environmental violations in their supply chain. Cooperative Coffees is also active in the B Corp Community through the B Corp Climate Collective's Regenerative Agriculture Group.

Cooperative Coffees has recently completed their pilot project “Carbon, Climate and Coffee: Moving the Needle from Cool Farms to Soil Carbon Premiums” along with their partners Cool Farm Alliance, Root Capital, Sustainable Food Lab, and The Chain Collaborative. Funded by the InterAmerican Development Bank’s EcoMicro, the project contributed to the development of the Cool Farm Tool perennials methodology, prototyped carbon footprinting with smallholder farmers practicing organic agroforestry, and proposed a scalable compensation model for their ongoing environmental services.



Jose Renulfo Perez, Sol&Café producer and Cool Farm Tool Pilot Project Participant, in his coffee plot. Jaén, Cajamarca, Peru. Photo credit: James Rodriguez for Cooperative Coffees

“The most important part is making space and recognizing when you have a position of power... figuring out how much you can actually take a step back and bring these communities directly into the decision-making process to represent themselves because they know what they're doing.”

Looking Ahead

Cooperative Coffees is looking to scale their work and share what they've learned. As Wilson Becerril puts it, "as much as we can encourage businesses to support these types of farmers to stay on their land, we're very happy to do that." And Cooperative Coffees is looking for creative ways to scale. From Melissa's perspective, "conventional monoculture or large scale farming has no place in the future of a healthy planet."

Takeaways

1. Cooperative governance facilitates democratic decision making.
2. Farmer-directed projects address actual needs and in turn, build a more viable value chain.
3. Smallholder farmers are vital to a sustainable coffee industry.



Coffee Cherries. Photo credit: Cooperative Coffees

Learn More

- [Coop Coffees website](#)
- [Carbon, Coffee & Climate Project](#)
- [How Cooperative Coffees is Leading the Way on Coffee and Climate](#)



Thank You

For questions regarding this document, please contact community@bcorporation.net. For more information about B Lab U.S. & Canada and climate justice, visit usca.bcorporation.net/climate-justice.

