

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



delta institute 🛕



TOGETHER WE THRIVE

A message from Bill Schleizer



What a remarkable year it's been. We have seen some exciting developments, like the growth of new Delta collaborations that tackle complex environmental issues across the Midwest, as well as a few obstacles, including natural disasters and threats to federal programs that fund critical environmental restoration, coal transition, and community development work in our region.

In the face of climate change and atrophying political leadership, we continue to meet challenges head on with our unique blend of tenacious optimism and pragmatism. In this report, we share just a few stories from across our portfolio of work about how we are bringing together a diversity of perspectives, from community organizers to grain farmers, to chart a new path forward to create thriving communities and landscapes.

And we've pushed ourselves to ingrain cooperation and adaptation into how we work internally at Delta, drawing inspiration from the biosphere and, in particular, honey bees.

Bees can teach us a lot about the power of cooperation and mutually beneficial interaction. Plant-pollinator interactions lay the foundation for a complex web of interdependent activity—one that our food systems and landscapes rely upon.

Everything is connected.

That's why we embrace an integrated approach to environment, economy, and community; why we organize our work internally by "hives"; and why partnership is central to how we achieve impact.

In 2018, we will celebrate Delta's 20th anniversary. That's two decades of partnerships, built across sectors, geographies, and impact areas. We hope that you will join us in celebrating 20 years of impact and that you continue to help us demonstrate the power of partnership in the next 20 years.

— Bill Schleizer, CEO, Delta Institute



Our work with the Artisan Grain Collaborative is aligning the market actors necessary to bring healthful, sustainably-grown grains into Chicago's foodshed.



Supporting healthy soil, food, and people

The Midwest proudly holds the title of America's breadbasket. However, the majority of our agricultural landscape is used to mass produce commodity crops, such as corn and soy, for feed and fuel to distribute across the globe.

Can America's breadbasket reclaim its name? We think so, and we are working with partners across the grain value chain in our region to make it happen.

"We are all eaters, so we all have reasons to come back to the table every day. Breads, whole grains, and beans are really the essence of how we survive," said Ryan Anderson, Program Lead at Delta Institute.

Delta cofounded the Artisan Grain Collaborative in 2016 and received a Food:Land:Opportunity grant in 2017 to bring artisan crop varieties into the Chicago foodshed through regenerative farming systems that restore soil health and produce more nutrient-dense food.

Delta serves as the facilitator of this diverse collaborative bringing together bakers, chefs, nonprofits, farmers, millers, distributors, agriculture researchers, market developers, entrepreneurs, food system venture investors, and school nutrition experts to coordinate efforts and build demand for small-batch artisan grains in Chicago and throughout the Midwest.

One member of the collaborative is Plovgh, a Wisconsin-based company that sources perennial, rotational, and emerging crops for food and feed markets across the U.S.



"Plovgh provides the nexus between growers that produce these unique or emerging varieties, and buyers that want a distinctive ingredient on their labels and menus," said Elizabeth Haucke, President of Plovgh.

The collaborative is already starting to build key connections and feedback loops across the grain value chain.

"Being a member of AGC has facilitated some relationships with buyers that could provide feedback on the crops we work with," said Haucke. "I can see that the network AGC is building is valuable."

Plovgh plans to introduce perennial rye in 2019, a crop variety with deep roots that can hold soil in place and that stays in the ground for multiple years, enabling the farmer to save on the costs of tilling and replanting year after year.

Perennial rye can also compete with annual rye on yields and test weight, and from the end user perspective it could replace annual rye in a recipe or product, which can help adoption.

"We see ourselves diversifying the landscape by providing farmers with clear alternatives to the mainstream corn and soy rotation," said Haucke.

"Research has shown that adding a small grain into an otherwise corn-soy rotation has considerable soil and water benefits, and also improves yields on those commodities that farmers rely on. But without a clear destination for that third (or fourth, or fifth) crop, a farmer has no incentive to diversify."

Through the coordinated efforts of collaborative members, Delta is working to support the value chain from farm to consumer for small-batch, artisan grains, and grow market demand for these unique varieties. By working together with our regional community and evolving with an ever-changing market, we can taste a bountiful future for the Midwest.





Research has shown that adding a small grain into an otherwise corn-soy rotation has considerable soil and water benefits.

ELIZABETH HAUCKE, PRESIDENT OF PLOVGH



The Shared Air, Shared Action initiative is helping neighborhoods thrive by empowering local changemakers to advocate for clean air.



SHARED AIR, SHARED ACTION

Empowering communities through air quality monitoring

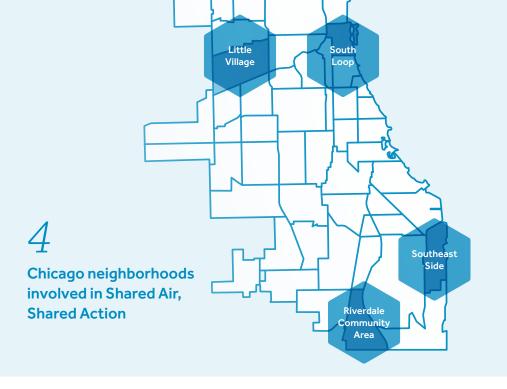
For decades, Chicago was ranked among the nation's most heavily polluted cities due to its poor air quality. Chicagoans born before 1960 remember the city's dirty past and hope for a cleaner future for their children and grandchildren. While smoke, steel factories, and coal plants no longer paint all of our city black with a thick coat of soot, air quality concerns persist for Chicago residents living with a disproportionate amount of pollution.

In 2016, Delta launched a two-year air quality monitoring initiative in partnership with community-based organizations and public health groups, including University of Illinois at Chicago, Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago, Kansas State University, Southeast Environmental Task Force, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization,

Alliance for a Greener South Loop, and People for Community Recovery.

The initiative aims to help communities across the city gather data on air quality through a collaborative effort of residents, community groups, and technical professionals.

With funding from U.S. EPA, Delta is working with community-based organizations in the Southeast Side, Riverdale Community Area, South Loop, and Little Village to monitor pollutants using low-cost air monitors. They use a system of mobile and stationary air monitors to collect their own data about the pollutants in the air they breathe.



"Petcoke, like many other bulk handling materials, has been assaulting the quality of life for residents of the Southeast Side. We share a footprint with our industrial neighbors. The residents of this community have become imprisoned in their homes due to the fear of what's in our ambient air," said Samuel Corona, a community organizer for Southeast Environmental Task Force

A key component to this project is community science, or data collection by members of the community who collaborate with research scientists. This project aims to empower residents by giving them the ability to gather relevant data themselves guided by scientific principles. The ability to quantify data is critical for these communities advocating for cleaner air.

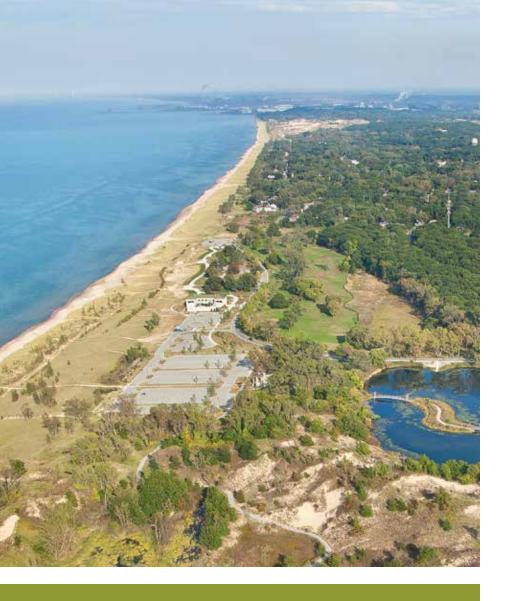
At the end of the research project, the team will compile training materials, methodology, and lessons learned into a guidebook that other communities across the country can use to develop their own resident-led, low-cost air monitoring programs. Delta hopes that the data gathered and the lessons learned will not only benefit the participating communities, but also provide best practices for other communities seeking concrete data to use in order to advocate for cleaner, healthier air.





The residents of this community have become imprisoned in their homes due to the fear of what's in our ambient air.

SAMUEL CORONA, SOUTHEAST ENVIRONMENTAL TASK FORCE



Phytoremediation of brownfields is helping communities thrive by revitalizing vacant spaces and cleaning up contamination.



FROM BROWNFIELD TO BEAUTY

Spurring community revitalization through urban tree farms

The Midwest region is home to postindustrial cities with thousands of vacant, polluted properties, or brownfields. Pollution from these once industrial uses can linger in the soil and groundwater complicating future development.

Delta is collaborating with communities across the region to tackle this environmental and economic challenge.

"There are few things more satisfying than seeing the look on someone's face when they see a beautiful restored Muskegon Lake shoreline, or when they use the Lakeshore Trail bike path," said Kathy Evans, Environmental Program Manager at the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC).

Thanks to funding provided by the U.S. Forest Service through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Delta has been

teaming up with local partners, like Kathy, since 2013 to plant hybrid poplar trees in Muskegon, Michigan as an interim land management strategy.

Over time, through a process called phytoremediation, the trees will help clean up the soil, beautify the site, and pave the way for a more permanent redevelopment solution.

As of spring 2017, Delta maintains over 7,280 thriving poplar trees across 16 acres of brownfield sites in Muskegon. The trees take up or stabilize environmental contaminants, like heavy metals, chlorinated solvents and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can find their way into a community's drinking water. Over ten years, these trees are expected to absorb millions of gallons of stormwater and over 500 tons of carbon dioxide.



"These trees are going to protect our investment in Muskegon Lake by making sure that groundwater and soils are clean and can no longer affect the quality of the lake," said Evans. "It's great to know that local people understand that a formerly degraded, industrial shoreline can become a beautiful, natural area."

The trees also reduce stormwater runoff, which the EPA identified as the most important remaining uncontrolled non-point source of water pollution.

Once the poplar farm is mature, the trees can be harvested and sold locally, creating economic opportunity within the local community. In fact, Delta identified dozens of businesses in West Michigan as potential end users of the hybrid poplar trees that could produce lumber, mulch, fuelwood, crafts, and more.

Delta sees brownfields as an opportunity and phytoremediation as a viable interim land management strategy for communities all over the Midwest. In order to continue to extend Delta's reach, we've created tools for other post-industrial communities to use to tackle this challenge and increase their economic and environmental resilience.





There are few things more satisfying than seeing the look on someone's face when they see a beautiful restored Muskegon Lake shoreline.

KATHY EVANS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM MANAGER, WMSRDC



ENERGY

Delta is working with commercial, institutional, and residential stakeholders to advance smart energy solutions that help building managers and consumers better manage their energy use, increasing efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Chicagoland

WASTE

Delta is conducting research and piloting programs that aim to transform waste material from an environmental liability into an economic asset. Through this work, we're reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills and creating the framework for a smarter, more efficient waste system.

Chicagoland, Northwest Indiana, Central Michigan

▲ AGRICULTURE

Delta is collaborating with public and private sector partners regionally and nationally to catalyze stewardship of our land and water resources. By enabling impact investing into sustainable agricultural practices, supporting the full valuation of ecosystem services, and promoting regenerative agriculture approaches, this work is achieving measurable improvements in soil and water quality and enhancing regional food systems.

Chicagoland, Central Illinois, Western Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Fast Central Wisconsin



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Delta is helping communities across the Midwest grow stronger ecologically, socially, and economically. By activating vacant and underutilized property and creating empowering tools and solutions, we're helping local changemakers reduce blight, mitigate flooding and the spread of pollutants via stormwater, beautify streetscapes, increase property values, and create resilient communities.

Chicagoland, Northwest Indiana, Western Michigan, Eastern Michigan

COAL

Delta is helping coal plant communities navigate the closure and potential reuse of their plants in a way that promotes environmentally sustainable and socially equitable development. Through this work, we're facilitating the transition from fossil fuels in a way that ensures coal plant communities are not left behind economically, socially, or structurally, but can thrive in a post-coal economy.

Central Illinois, Southern Illinois, Eastern Michigan, Northeast Ohio, Western New York

THANK YOU

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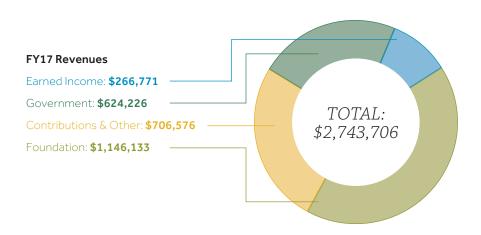
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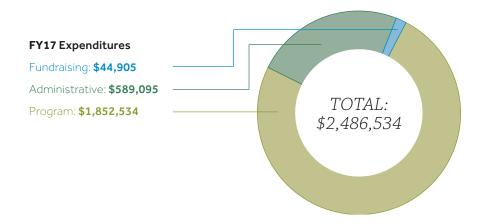
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