

# Yolo Earth Day Pledge Challenge 2023



## Green Finances Guide Updated July 6, 2023

### WHAT IS GREENING YOUR FINANCES?

Many financial institutions perpetuate climate chaos by lending, investing, or engaging in fossil fuel projects or other environmentally damaging activities. Many are making pledges to reduce emissions while continuing business as usual. While it may feel like you have no control over these business decisions, it's actually your money that gives them the opportunity to invest in fossil fuels and other unethical practices.

By banking with credit unions or ethical banks, shopping with “green” credit cards, investing in socially responsible stocks and mutual funds, advocating for fossil free pension portfolios, and making charitable donations to organizations committed to tackling environmental issues, **you can align your money with your values and make a positive impact in the world.**

### WHY GREEN FINANCES?

According to a 2021 report by the Rainforest Action Network, 60 of the biggest banks in the world have spent \$4.6 trillion financing fossil fuels in the six years since the Paris Agreement. Six American banks provided 29 percent of all fossil fuel financing globally in 2021 including JP Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Citigroup, and Morgan Stanley. JP Morgan Chase is the worst offender at \$382 billion. Some banks are notoriously bad actors generally and a web search can ferret them out quickly.

# PLEDGE OPTIONS

Which pledge action(s) did you pick? Check off here. Still thinking? You've got (some) time.

- Learn about greening your finances and why it's important
- Move your money to an ethical and fossil-free bank or credit union
- Open a credit card with an ethical institution and select an organization to support
- Make a (significant-for-you) donation to a climate organization
- Change your investments to be socially responsible and fossil free
- Other: A different action in this category that fits you best!

## START TODAY

Think about where your money lives and what it does for you. Over the course of a month, you make purchases and pay bills; you might check an investment portfolio, balance your checkbook, or draw from a pension. But what's your money doing when you're not "using" it?

Your deposits in checking and savings accounts are used by your financial institution to loan money to others. But who are they loaning to and for what? Do you really need those credit card points and rewards or could you donate them to a good cause? Finally, think deeply about whether your retirement plan is a good thing for you, but a really bad one for younger generations. What do you want your legacy to be?

## TRY THE EASY ONES



**Move your money.** Easy but big impact! Why not exert some control by banking with an institution that, either by charter or commitment, uses your money to do good in the world. Not-for-profit **credit unions** offer similar or better services as commercial banks, often with better rates. Credit unions are generally small institutions that make small loans to local residents, loans that help strengthen the community and your neighbors' lives. According to their charter, credit unions cannot invest in the stock market, except for certain bonds.

Read more about [local credit unions](#) on our web site.

**What about an ethical bank?** Ethical banks could be non-profit or commercial, but all have made some kind of commitment to use your deposits to do good. Some questions to help you spot an ethical bank: Does it belong to the Global Alliance for Banking on Values or the Net Zero Banking Alliance? Is it a non-profit rather than for profit? Is it a BCorp? Does the website specify how deposits are used? Has it made commitments to be fossil-free or promote prosperity for people and communities?

- **BankTrack** *Find a Better Bank* tool lists about 30 institutions in the US but is also good for news, plus tracking campaigns focused on the Net Zero Banking Alliance, Principles for Responsible Banking, and encouraging banks to withdraw business from Russia and the war on Ukraine. <https://www.banktrack.org/>.
- **Bank for Good** website lists 15 banks in California with a fossil free commitment among other ethical designations, including Oakland and Portland-based Beneficial Bank. Service territories vary, and some are online only.
- **Green America's** Finance resources and the [Get a Better Bank](#) page provides a map-based search tool among other fabulous resources and ideas for greening your finances.
- **Mighty Deposits** website shows 180 institutions in California, including Beneficial, Metropolitan Bank, Community Bank of the Bay in Oakland, and Mission National Bank in San Francisco.

## RECEIVING AND GIVING

**Credit cards.** Credit card companies lure you in with rewards programs based on points. The rewards can be significant. But think about how credit card companies make their money: by collecting interest on credit card debt. Why not improve your impact on the world by opening a credit card that donates revenues to beneficial organizations. **Beneficial Bank** is a non-profit bank among only eight Certified BCorp banks nationally and is owned by former presidential candidate Tom Steyer and spouse Kat Taylor. Beneficial has a Climate credit card among its offerings and a long list of organizations to choose from.



**Green America** offers a credit card in partnership with TCM Bank, N.A. which is owned by ICBA Bancard, a subsidiary of the Independent Community Bankers of America. Every purchase on the card supports Green America's action campaigns and you still earn reward points. To learn about this and other cards that benefit environmentally and socially conscious organizations, visit [www.TakeChargeofYourCard.org](http://www.TakeChargeofYourCard.org).

**Beware of greenwashing:** “Just be aware that some cards you might hope would be backed by green ideals because of the associated co-brand are, in fact, backed by banks with significant investment in fossil fuel markets.”

**Donations.** Many people have never made a donation in their lives; perhaps they don't make enough to meet their own needs, or maybe they think donations have to be large sums. If you can spare even \$20 a year, and others do the same, the benefits add up quickly.

Cool Davis graciously [accepts donations](#) both one time and recurring. You can also choose among our non-profit [Coalition partners](#). If you give to the **Yolo Community Foundation**, you can let them do the sharing. Another way to give to environmental causes is through **estate planning**.

Leaving a small fraction of money to groups dedicated to fighting climate change and protecting the environment can make a big difference.

## THINK ABOUT BIGGER CHANGES

**Investments.** The financial realm is full of greenwashing and stocks and mutual fund investments are no exception. The new buzz is Environmental, Social, and Governance or ESG criteria, used to rate publicly traded companies. However, there is no regulatory body controlling ESG ratings and in fact they relate more to the internal operations and stability of companies than their external impact. The more reliable term is socially responsible companies and socially responsible investing. Sectors to explore that might match with your values include renewable energy ventures and car makers with successful or emerging EV models. BCorps and 1% for the Environment companies are good places to look.

**Green America** offers information, campaigns, and an extensive PDF guide to socially responsible investing (SRI) with a few pages covering banking and credit cards as well. The guide provides background on returns, divestment movements, community investment strategies, tips for different age brackets, shareholder activism success stories, plus lots of other resources and ideas.



## Investing for people and the planet

*For almost 40 years, Green America has been at the forefront of socially responsible investing.*



Green America also has a search tool for certified Green Business Network financial planners and advisors. Note: Cool Davis and Green America are not investment advisors, nor do they provide financial planning, legal, or tax advice.

Check out all their resources:

[www.greenamerica.org/finance](http://www.greenamerica.org/finance)

### The **Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment** lists

sustainable investment mutual funds and ETFs offered by US SIF's institutional member firms. This public tool is meant for individual investors to compare cost, financial performance, screens and voting records of competing funds. All listed funds are open to new investors, including Bloomberg, Calvert, Domini, Green Century, Neuberger, Parnassus, Pax, Praxis, and TIAA-CREF.

Check out the list: <https://charts.ussif.org/mfpc/>

**Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)** brings together socially responsible investors across many faiths (Catholic, Episcopalian, Jewish, Mennonite, and more), and members leverage a combined \$100 billion investment portfolio to sponsor shareholder resolutions on climate change, the use of sweatshops, human rights, and other crucial issues. To check whether your denomination is a part of ICCR, visit its website.

[Download a FREE copy](#) of Green America's **Plan for a Better Future: How to Add Socially & Environmentally Responsible Investment Options to an Employer's Retirement Plan**. <https://www.greenamerica.org/add-socially-responsible-investments-your-workplaces-retirement-plan>.

**Pensions.** If you are a CalPRS or CalSTS pensioner, your retirement funds are invested in fossil fuel companies to the tune of \$42 billion. Activists have been promoting divestment for several years. Visit [Fossil Free California](#) for updates.

# RESOURCES

**Slow Money** Another great opportunity is through Slow Money and their new Beetcoin program that turns donations into 0% loans, by majority vote of members, to local, organic farms and small food enterprises. Slow Money Northern California hosts events locally and recently wrapped up FarmFest 2023 at Full Belly Farm in the Capay Valley. <https://slowmoneynorcal.org/>

**Network for Greening the Financial System** (NGFS) is a network of 114 central banks and financial supervisors across the globe that aims to accelerate the scaling up of green finance and develop recommendations for central banks' role for climate change. The NGFS was created in 2017 and its secretariat is hosted by the Banque de France.

**REAL ORGANIC PROJECT**  
SLOWMONEY NORTHERN CALIFORNIA  
FOOD FUNDED  
ENTREPRENEURS & INVESTORS MAKING CHANGE HAPPY

**FARMFEST 2023**  
FULL BELLY FARM • CAPAY VALLEY, CA  
JUNE 16: ONLINE SUMMIT | JUNE 17: ON THE FARM

PHOTO GALLERY | THANK YOU! | PRESENTER INFO

JUSTICE EQUITY

Share your pledges on social media

#YoloEarthDayPledge2023

@cooldaviscity

Email [coolsolution@cooldavis.org](mailto:coolsolution@cooldavis.org)  
for more info

Sign up here thru July 31, 2023:

<http://www.cooldavis.org/pledge>

