

NORTHCOAST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
STAFF OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
NEC STAFF UNION

We have Unionized.

We are Striking.

This strike begins today, **Monday, September 15, 2025 at 5 PM Pacific** and will continue for as long as needed to have our demands met.

Monday, September 15, 2025

To the Executive Committee and the Board of the Northcoast Environmental Center,

Two Indigenous, Trans Staff Directors at the NorthCoast Environmental Center are being targeted for off-duty, First Amendment protected political activity. Over the course of July and August, multiple staff members were told by Board leadership that the Mayor of the City of Arcata called to complain about private citizens employed by the NEC voicing outrage at anti-homeless sweeps, police violence, and continued gentrification in their City of residence.

During the events in question, the individuals did not name themselves, where they are employed, nor did they claim to be present as representatives of any organization. As these individuals are longtime local activists who have attended many meetings as private citizens over the years, their presence at a City Council meeting was not unusual.

During our interviews, prospective staff are asked to speak in depth of our political activity. We are encouraged and valued for our activism. Our engagement thus, is not unusual or unexpected.

At first, employees were reassured of the right to free speech on private hours, only to have those statements backtracked. What has followed has severely ruptured the trust and faith of the Staff and destroyed the working conditions for all employees.

Some members of the Executive Committee, which contains the Personnel Committee and is only a portion of the Board, has provided unclear pathways toward conversation, ignored employee communication on the initiating issue mentioned above, backtracked multiple meeting requests, misled staff about our rights, claimed some Board members were fabricating procedures without informing others, issued escalatory threats and disingenuous accusations, refused or outright ignored staff efforts to engage with the Board on this issue, amongst other, ongoing poor workplace communication and hostile working conditions.

While the above grievances regarding certain Board members' refusal to engage in fair, clear, good faith processes and adherence to the Board-approved staff leadership model are themselves

severe enough to warrant our collective actions, the NEC Staff Union is making a further statement regarding our collective rights to assembly, association, and of the necessity of a free press.

*It is misleading and manipulative to both claim that the targeted employees are **so important and powerful as directors that they warrant constant surveillance and control by the Board both on and off the clock**, yet also the Board President and certain Board Members assert that the Board-approved model of staff governance is merely a placeholder with no enforceable power.*

Are we (NEC Staff) the leaders of the NEC and thus our behavior must always be held to account—even in our private lives? Or are we merely individual staff with no authority to lead or direct the organization internally?

By the logics presented by the Executive Committee, it would seem that a “leadership” of mostly Indigenous, transgender, feminine staff are only leaders in so far as that image benefits the personal politics and relationships of the Board.

It would seem “leadership” means only our bodies rendered docile and as a convenient source of grant-funding.

Many of these issues regarding tokenization in non-profits were referenced by the very same Proposal the Board approved less than one year ago. These issues are vital to the formation and logics of the Staff Leadership Proposal.

The spirit, intention and purpose of the 2024 Staff Proposal was built to bring leadership and direction into the hands of those doing the work of the organization.

The intention was never to further disempower an already socially and economically marginalized staff. Certainly, the Staff would never have agreed to take on the increased workload and responsibility if we knew it meant that the authority granted by the proposal were merely window dressing and would be used as justification for punishing our private activity.

Given the above grievances, our working conditions, and the collectively experienced impact of having our private Free Speech rights infringed upon by our employer, the Staff of the NEC have decided to move forward in collective solidarity.

We are living in a time of increased censorship of media and scrutiny of private political activity, and our staff will not pretend to be separate from the issues we are impacted by in our daily lives. We will not allow individual staff members to be punished for free speech, nor will we allow our collective rights be degraded such punishments.

The NEC Staff are informing the Board that we have formed a Union with 100% staff support for unionization. We invite the Board to celebrate with Voluntary Recognition and to move forward with good faith dialogue with the Union to improve working conditions and strengthen the Organization as a whole.

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We will only return to work if the following conditions are guaranteed in writing:

1. No staff member is fired in retaliation for our collective labor-related organizing.
2. Staff Oversight Committee is granted its proper authority to self-direct its own labor, policies, and procedures as it relates to Advocacy, Operations, Fundraising, and Communications as described by the Board approved Proposal.
3. Staff retain editorial control of EcoNews. Staff will continue to print views we disagree with, but we will not be censored or told what write as individuals.
4. The Board will cease surveilling the off-duty protected political activity of the staff.
5. The Board rescinds its disrespectful pursuance of discipline for off-duty, protected political activity.
6. Board Members cease contacting employees outside of normal business hours.
7. Board Members endeavor to better consolidate their communications to enhance clarity and transparency.
8. The Board resumes inclusion and recognition of a Staff Representative Member of the Board, as enumerated in the Bylaws.
9. The Executive Committee will cease speaking for the entirety of the Board or referring to itself as “the Board” without other Board members (including Staff Representative) being present and consenting.

Labor fundraises for the Center.

Labor prints EcoNews every month.

Labor diverts tens of thousands of pounds of trash from our waterways every year.

Siding with Labor and the Union is siding with the futurity of the NEC.

We look forward to collective dialogue.

With Collective Power,
The Staff Oversight Committee/NEC Staff Union

Alice Bundy
EcoNews Layout Editor, Communications Co-Director

Carlrey Arroyo
Administrative Co-Director

Moxie Alvarnaz
EcoNews Co-Editor, Communications Co-Director

Sable Odry
Coastal Programs Lead, Advocacy Co-Director

Tali Trillo
Advancement Co-Director