

PRESS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Defend the Atlanta Forest Week of Action Begins this Saturday, Protest at Gresham Park

On March 4th at 11AM, the fifth Week of Action to Defend the Atlanta Forest and Stop Cop City will begin with a rally and protest at Gresham Park.

The Week of Action is a mass mobilization against Cop City, a \$90 million police training facility slated to be built in the South River (Weelaunee) Forest. If built, Cop City would further militarize police in Georgia and across the country [<https://atlprescollective.com/2023/01/24/over-40-of-anticipated-cop-city-trainees-would-come-from-from-out-of-state/>], and the destruction of the forest would lead to increased flooding and unmitigated heatwaves in a predominantly Black, working-class neighborhood in south Atlanta.

From March 4th to March 11th, supporters of the movement will converge in Atlanta for a week of protests and festivities including collective meals, forest tours, live music, movie screenings, and the Weelaunee Food Autonomy Festival. Following the protest at Gresham Park, there will be a two-day music festival including popular artists such as Zack Fox and Faye Webster.

Week of Action events will be hosted in Weelaunee People's Park (3251 West Side Place, Atlanta, GA) and other locations across the city. Journalists are invited to cover the protest this Saturday and any public events associated with the Week of Action. A comprehensive calendar of events for the week can be found here: <https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/calendar/>.

The Week of Action, like the movement itself, is composed of many different individuals and organizations doing their part to protect the forest and ensure that the "lungs of Atlanta" remain a forested public park for residents and visitors to enjoy for many generations to come.

Students, faith leaders [<https://atlprescollective.com/2023/02/22/atlanta-clergy-join-call-to-defend-the-atlanta-forest/>], environmentalists (including People vs. Fossil Fuels [<https://peoplevsfossilfuels.org/cop-city/>]) and the Sierra Club [<https://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/blog/2023/01/statement-sierra-club-georgia-chapter-stands-those-protecting-our-forests>]), preschoolers, teachers, doctors [<https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/2023/01/23/emory-doctors-condemn-cop-city/>], activists, and neighbors of the forest--among many others--have all expressed support for the movement since it began in early 2021. Given the broad composition of the movement, journalists should be aware that any one person or organization does not represent the entire movement.

The fifth Week of Action comes amidst unprecedented repression of the Defend the Atlanta Forest / Stop Cop City movement, a backroom agreement between Mayor Andre Dickens and

Dekalb County CEO Michael Thurmond on January 31st to approve the Land Disturbance Permit, and Dickens' creation of a new task force that is intended to salvage the legitimacy of the Community Stakeholder Advisory Committee after a quarter of its members left, or were kicked out of the committee, because of their opposition to Cop City and police violence against protestors [<https://saportareport.com/training-center-permit-challenged-by-its-own-review-committee-member-another-quits-over-protester-killing/sections/reports/johnruch/>].

The Week of Action also honors the life of Manuel "Tortuguita" Paez Terán, a forest defender who was murdered by Georgia State Patrol while living in the forest to protest its destruction. In response to the murder, protests and vigils sprung up around the world, from Miami and San Francisco to Athens, Greece. A Week of Solidarity with the movement followed, from February 19th to 26th. Supporters across the country protested contractors and funders involved in the construction of Cop City and held events in solidarity with the movement.

The rapid spread of the movement following Tortuguita's death--despite baseless domestic terrorism charges and pending RICO charges against forest defenders--suggests that police violence and repression against the movement has ultimately led to more, rather than less, support for its demands.

Demands of the movement include:

1. **Stop Cop City.** Do not build this facility in the Weelaunee Forest, nor anywhere else.
2. **Defend the Forest.** End the lease with the Atlanta Police Foundation, cancel the land-theft of Intrenchment Creek Park, and create permanent and legally-binding protections for this area.
3. **Amnesty and Justice.** Drop the charges against all participants of this movement, especially those facing politically-motivated "domestic terrorism" charges. Hand over all evidence surrounding the killing of Tortuguita to the lawyers of the family and to independent investigators who were not party to the fatal raid on the forest.

Cop City will never be built.

