



Jeff Burleson

Senior Vice President of Environment, System Planning, and Sustainability at Southern Company

2024 Individual Leadership Award

Southern Company is a leading U.S. energy company, which, through its subsidiaries, has 43,000 megawatts (MW) of generating capacity and 822 billion cubic feet of natural gas throughput volume serving nine million customers nationwide. The Company provides clean, safe, reliable, and affordable energy through electric operating companies in three states, natural gas distribution companies in four states and complementary natural gas businesses, a competitive generation company serving wholesale customers across the U.S., a leading distributed energy infrastructure company, a fiber optics network, and telecommunications service business. For more than a century, Southern Company has been building the future of energy, delivering the energy resources and solutions its customers and communities need to drive growth and prosperity.

Over his 44-year tenure at Southern Company, Jeff Burleson has overseen a dramatic shift in Southern Company's fleet of electric generating resources, furthering Southern's focus on reducing the full value chain of GHG emissions. Through his leadership of both environmental affairs and system planning, Southern Company's GHG emissions and other air emissions have declined significantly, [external reporting is best-in-class](#) and stakeholder relations are routinely touted by local and national organizations as a model for the industry.

- **Internal Leadership:** Jeff has provided consistent counsel to CEOs and Southern Company's Board of Directors as the number of coal-fired generating units in its fleet reduced to 15 in 2022 from 66 in 2007. The company's renewable portfolio continues to grow, and it expects to have approximately 20,000 MW of renewable capacity and storage in 2030. Since 2007, Southern Company has reduced its Scope 1 emissions by 46%. Jeff expanded his advocacy on GHG reductions to the natural gas subsidiary that was acquired in 2016. Embracing the company's founding role in ONE Future and joining the GTI Veritas effort, Jeff emphasized the company's commitment to driving upstream and downstream emissions reductions across the value chain.

- **Stakeholder Leadership:** Jeff has been a driving force behind establishing candid, respectful and trusting relationships with a wide variety of organizations and individuals. Jeff has been a staunch supporter of developing and publishing [environmentally focused disclosures](#) including Southern's decarbonization reports, Just Transition report, climate lobbying and trade association report, environmental justice disclosures and key ESG data. For more than a decade, Jeff and his team have led multiple structured conversations each year with local and national stakeholders who have an interest in Southern's environmental progress. Jeff successfully shared information, built bridges, and created trust between and among disparate groups such as NRDC, Sierra Club, Investor Advocates for Social Justice, Ceres, As You Sow, the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Sisters of St. Francis and more.
- **Industry Leadership:** Southern Company has become an industry leader in GHG emissions disclosures. In 2022, Southern Company expanded its GHG inventory to include all relevant sources of Scope 1, 2 & 3 emissions. Limited assurance was obtained for 2022, 2021, and 2020 Scope 1 and 2 emissions, as well as for the 2007 Scope 2 baseline. A key industry organization where Jeff has played a leadership role is [EPRI](#).

In 2020, Southern Company, under Jeff's leadership, updated its long-term GHG emissions reduction goal from low-to-no carbon emissions by 2050, which was defined as 80% to 100% reduction in emissions, to net zero GHG by 2050, as a result of the evolution and analysis of negative carbon technology concepts. This approach is driven by thoughtful scenario planning, long-term integrated resource plans (IRP), and constructive regulatory decision-making; and is enabled by active engagement and thoughtful public policy – all efforts which are led by Jeff at Southern Company.

In 2022, Southern Company received a CDP Climate Change Disclosure score of A- for transparency and leadership within the thermal power generation sector for its third consecutive year under Jeff's leadership, demonstrating the transparency and accountability vital to tracking progress toward a thriving, sustainable future.

In 2023, under his leadership, Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) signed a five-year partnership extension to keep the company active in voluntary wildlife conservation work until 2028, marking 25 years that the company has partnered with NFWF and demonstrating a corporate commitment to conservation. The partnership has been central to significant accomplishments, including restoring more than 3.7 million acres of important wildlife habitat, creating bat-related research grants for scientists through the Bats for the Future grant program, and building new community-based stewardship through the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration grant program.