



Mission-driven investing: How Green Century helps you align your portfolio with the planet

BY [PAULA DELAURENTIS](#)

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As concerns about climate change and corporate accountability rise, more people are looking for tangible, everyday actions that can drive real impact. One of the most powerful tools at their disposal? Their money.

For Leslie Samuelrich, president of [Green Century Funds](#), this is more than a theory — it's the foundation of everything her firm stands for. Green Century offers a compelling alternative to traditional investing by helping people align their portfolios with their environmental values.

And with Earth Day 2025 arriving on April 22, Samuelrich says it's the perfect time to consider whether your money is working for the future you believe in.

"We want investors to see their investments not as separate from their values, but as an extension of them," Samuelrich said. "Every investment has an impact. Why not make it a positive one?"

Founded in the early 1990s by environmental and public health nonprofits, Green Century Funds is structured unlike any other mutual fund family in the U.S. Its impact is driven by a three-pronged approach: fossil fuel-free investing, shareholder advocacy and nonprofit ownership.

From its inception, Green Century has excluded investments in coal and major oil and eliminated any remaining gas companies from every fund in 2014. While many competitors have softened their environmental screens or compromised on criteria in recent years, Green Century has remained unwavering in its commitment.



"We screen out exploration, extraction, refining, processing, and even transmission—pipelines—across all our funds," Samuelrich said. "We're not just trying to look good on paper. We're doing what investors expect from a truly environmentally responsible fund."

This clarity matters, especially in a landscape where "greenwashing" is becoming a widespread concern. Many investment firms market ESG (environmental, social and governance) products that include fossil fuel companies under the promise of future improvement. Green Century sees that approach as too little, too late.

"We've been down that road," she said. "Oil companies are pulling back on their clean energy commitments. We don't

invest in promises—we invest in progress."

While fossil fuel divestment is a critical step, Green Century goes further by actively engaging with the companies it does invest in.

Through a robust shareholder advocacy program, Green Century works directly with about 50 companies each year to improve their environmental practices. The results are impressive: Green Century has influenced major shifts at companies like TD Bank, Nvidia, Disney, Mattel and Choice Hotels.

"We helped TD Bank improve its climate transition plan," Samuelrich shared. "We've pushed semiconductor companies, including Nvidia, to reduce carbon emissions and source cleaner energy. And we've worked with toy companies and hotel chains to reduce single-use plastics."

These advocacy wins ripple through entire industries. "When one company changes, others feel the pressure to follow," she said. "That's how we move markets."

Perhaps Green Century's most unique attribute is its ownership model. The firm is owned entirely by environmental and public health nonprofits, and 100% of its net profits go back to these groups to support their work.

"In the last several years, we've returned more than \$1 million annually to our nonprofit owners," Samuelrich said. "They use that money to run campaigns that protect forests, clean water, public health and more."

This model stands in stark contrast to the Wall Street status quo. "We're not owned by a bank or insurance company. We're owned by organizations working to make the world better. That's who we answer to."

No sacrifice on performance

One common myth about ESG investing is that it requires sacrificing financial performance. But Samuelrich points to data that debunks this notion.



"There's a great chart from MSCI showing that, over the past 10 years, a fossil fuel-free index has sometimes outperformed and sometimes underperformed those with fossil fuels," she said. "The point is, there's no consistent penalty. Performance depends on broader market forces, not just exclusions."

What matters most to Green Century investors, she noted, is trust. "They know we're not going to compromise. When they choose us, they're getting transparency, consistency and alignment with their values."

Green Century is designed to be accessible—not just to institutions or high-net-worth individuals, but to everyday investors. Minimum investments start at \$2,500, or just \$1,000 if contributing monthly.

That accessibility is especially timely as we approach Earth Day. As April 22nd approaches, many people are reevaluating where they put their retirement savings. Green Century offers a way to invest for your future—and the planet's.

"People already recycle. They reduce waste. They drive hybrid cars," Samuelrich said. "But their investments? Those are often left out of the equation. Earth Day is a great time to change that."

Despite political turbulence and shifting regulations, Samuelrich said she's seeing more interest from investors and advisors alike.

"Just because an administration deprioritizes climate doesn't mean people stop caring," she said. "We've actually seen a bump in interest during times of political frustration. People are turning to investing as a way to express their values."

That includes a growing number of financial advisors seeking tools to support environmentally conscious clients. Green Century works closely with advisors to offer education, impact reports, and a dedicated portal to help guide conversations with clients.

"These stories stick with people," Samuelrich said. "They remember that we got Starbucks to expand ceramic mug use. They remember we helped Costco develop a climate plan and pushed Verizon to shift from 4% to 50% clean energy. That's what keeps investors engaged."

The rise of Millennials and Gen Z

One of the biggest trends in finance today is the rise of the next-gen investor. Millennials and Gen Z are not only more climate-aware—they expect their financial lives to reflect those values.

Samuelrich sees this as a huge opportunity. "Advisors who want to grow their practice need to be fluent in sustainable investing," she said. "It doesn't have to be the core of your business. But you need to know what your clients are asking for."

Investing in Green Century is straightforward. Investors can:

- Go directly to [GreenCentury.com](#)
- Invest through platforms like Fidelity or Schwab
- Ask their financial advisor to include Green Century funds in their portfolio

Samuelrich also shared that some families are choosing to open Earth Day-themed accounts for children or grandchildren — turning a holiday into a long-term gift. “It’s a great way to teach the next generation that money can be a force for good,” she said.

At the end of the day, Green Century is about more than mutual funds. It’s about changing the way people think about money — and what it can do.

When asked to sum up Green Century in just three words, Samuelrich responded without hesitation: “Mission-driven investing.”

In a world where each choice has consequences, Green Century offers a clear, uncompromising path for people who want their money to reflect their values. This Earth Day, that mission may matter more than ever.

Read more: [Green Century request leads Coke to report reusable-bottle investments](#)

°Green Century Capital Management, Inc. (Green Century) is the investment advisor to the Green Century Funds (the Funds).

The Green Century Funds are a family of fossil fuel-free, environmentally responsible mutual funds. Green Century Capital Management hosts an award-winning and in-house shareholder advocacy program and is the only mutual fund company in the U.S. wholly owned by environmental and public health nonprofit organizations.

*As of 3/31/25, TD Bank; NVIDIA Corporation; The Walt Disney Co; Mattel, Inc.; Choice Hotels Intl; Starbucks Corporation; Costco Wholesale Corporation; Verizon Communications, Inc comprised 2.30%, 0.00% and 0.00%; 3.63%, 11.32% and 0.00%; 0.00%, 0.76% and 0.00%; 0.00%, 0.03% and 0.00%; 0.00%, 0.01% and 0.00%; 1.20%, 0.47% and 0.00%; 1.86%, 0.00% and 0.00%; 0.00%, 0.10% and 0.00% of [Green Century Balanced Fund](#), the [Green Century Equity Fund](#), and the [Green Century International Index Fund](#) respectively. As of the same date, other securities mentioned were not held in the portfolios of any of the Green Century Funds. References to specific securities, which will change due to ongoing management of the Funds, should not be construed as a recommendation by the Funds, their administrator, or their distributor.

You should carefully consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses before investing. To obtain a Prospectus that contains this and other information about the Funds please visit [www.greencentury.com](#), email info@greencentury.com, or call 1-800-934-7336. Please read the Prospectus carefully before investing.

Stocks will fluctuate in response to factors that may affect a single company, industry, sector, country, region or the market as a whole and may perform worse than the market. Foreign securities are subject to additional risks such as currency fluctuations, regional economic and political conditions, differences in accounting methods, and other unique risks compared to investing in securities of U.S. issuers. Bonds are subject to a variety of risks including interest rate, credit, and inflation risk.

A sustainable investment strategy which incorporates environmental, social and governance criteria may result in lower or higher returns than an investment strategy that does not include such criteria.

This information has been prepared from sources believed reliable. The views expressed are as the date of this writing and are those of the Advisor to the Funds.

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Paula is an award winning business development and marketing executive who optimizes people, resources and products to achieve ambitious goals. She was named Top 100 Women in Fintech 2018. Paula's more than 30 years of experience in financial services from TD AmeriTrade and Goldman Sachs to impact-oriented companies like the SRI Conference and Portfolia have firmly positioned her to lead Equities.com into its next stage of growth. She is a champion for women in business and passionate about impact investing to improve environmental and social conditions for our future.

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