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Greenpeace Rewards Executives at Expense of Rank & File

By [Rico](#) | Published [December 14, 2011](#)

In today's post, I'll show you how Greenpeace USA is "bulking up" on executives and how those executives are claiming an increasing portion of the compensation pie. First, we'll need some background information, but if you've read the other posts in this series you can skip the Background section and move on to Findings.

Background

Greenpeace is an American non-profit organization, and as such it is required to file annually a [Form 990](#) with the Internal Revenue Service. The Form 990 is a tax return document providing information on a non-profit organization's financial status. And because non-profit, tax-exempt organizations are essentially [taxpayer supported](#), Form 990s are documents open for public review. How does one get a copy of a non-profit organization's Form 990?

An organization's Form 990 for any year may be obtained directly from the IRS, from the organization itself, or via intermediary organizations. One of those intermediaries is [Guidestar.org](#), which catalogues and makes available non-profit organizations' Form 990s. It was Guidestar that I used to obtain the financial information shown in today's post.

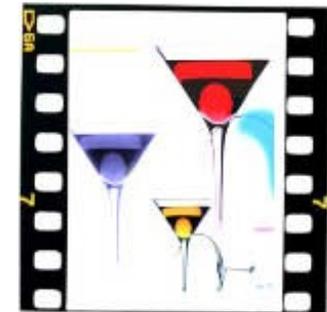
We'll get to the numbers in a moment, and believe me they're very interesting. But in order to understand this analysis better, let me explain how Greenpeace USA is organized.

Greenpeace USA is essentially comprised of two separate corporations. One is **Greenpeace, Inc.** which is a 501(c)(4)

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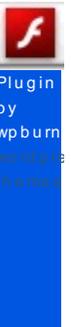


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organization. The other Greenpeace corporation, which is not as well known, is **Greenpeace Fund, Inc.** This corporation is a 501(c)(3) organization. What's the difference between them?

Greenpeace, Inc. is the well-known, general kibbitzing and protest organization that one usually thinks of when the word "Greenpeace" is mentioned. This is the organization that oversees the folks who climb corporate headquarters buildings, bridges, national monuments, and who dress up as animals and then burst into annual meetings of shareholders.

Greenpeace Fund, Inc. is essentially a philanthropic foundation which funds much of Greenpeace, Inc.'s operation.

If you'd like to learn the difference between a (3) and a (4), please let [Wikipedia explain](#), although an understanding of this difference is not necessary in order to enjoy the balance of this article.

What you should know, however, is how we're defining "executive" in this article.

Definition

In Part VII of each Form 990, the organization is required to provide information on the "Compensation of Officers, Directors, Trustees, Key Employees, Highest Compensated Employees, and Independent Contractors." So, on that Part VII page what can be seen is the compensation for the "high mucky-mucks," the "grand poopahs," the "honchos" of the organization. For simplicity, let's just call them the "**executives**."

Findings

Greenpeace USA - Select Financial Information - 2008 and 2010

	2008	2010	Percentage Increase
Total Revenue	\$35.518 million	\$35.856 million	< 1.0%
Total Salaries Paid	\$16.665 million	\$18.029 million	8.2%
Total Executive Compensation	\$417,503	\$881,639	111.0%
Number of Executives	5	10	100.0%

As I said above, I used Guidestar.org to retrieve the Form 990s which supplied the research used in today's post. I examined the Form 990s for the years 2008 and 2010 for each Greenpeace corporation. On each of the Form 990s, I compared the categories of Total Revenue, Total Salaries Paid, Total **Executive** Compensation, and Number of **Executives**. Please note that for the figures shown above, I have totaled the numbers from each category for both Greenpeace, Inc. and Greenpeace Fund, Inc., showing them both as Greenpeace USA

Discussion



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By looking at the table above, we can see that the amount of revenue Greenpeace brought in for 2010 increased by less than 1% over the revenue brought in during 2008. Yet, in 2010 Greenpeace USA increased the amount of **all salaries** paid by over 8%. And not only did they increase the amount paid out in 2010 salary to all Greenpeace workers, but the organization **doubled its number of executives** and also elected to increase its **executive compensation** by 111%. Yes, that's **111%**.

I wonder what the Greenpeace "rank and file" thinks about that?

Now, you might be thinking, "Well, Richard, you're comparing a 2008 to 2010 executive compensation increase with a 2008 to 2010 revenue increase. Maybe 2009 was a great year for revenue brought in and Greenpeace choose to reward their executives in 2010?"

If you're thinking that, it would be an astute thought . . . or maybe not. Remember 2009? The economy was in the dumper. Not that it isn't now, but things were worse in 2009 than now. And the numbers bear that out. According to Greenpeace USA 2009 Form 990s, total revenue in 2009 experienced a **decrease of 5.4%**, with a total of about \$33.6 million in revenue.

What is also interesting is that that 8% increase of all Greenpeace salaries was actually driven higher by the executive pay boost. If you subtract the executive compensation from the total salaries paid and then calculate the percentage increase, you will see that the increase of rank and file salaries moved by only 5.5% in 2010 as compared to 2008.

Again, I wonder what the Greenpeace "rank and file" thinks about that?

Conclusion

By doubling its number of executives, these figures clearly demonstrate that Greenpeace USA may be on its way to becoming a top-heavy organization. The numbers also show that Greenpeace rewards its executives disproportionately to its own rank and file. The pay increases have by-far favored the executive suite over the regular workers.

We might expect such behavior from for-profit companies; companies that Greenpeace chastises. But it seems very odd that a non-profit organization would double its number of highly-paid executives and increase its executive pay by over 100%. And what makes these actions even more questionable is that the Greenpeace did this in a time period when there was an increase in total revenue of less than 1%.

You are entitled to your opinion, of course. My opinion is that actions such as these represent very poor financial management. And it is financial management with funding that is [essentially taxpayer supported](#).

I believe that the common assumption about Greenpeace is that it is a charitable organization operating on a "shoe-string" budget, with self-sacrificing leaders. The numbers we see above, and the information presented in this entire series on [Greenpeace Executive Compensation](#), just don't support those assumptions.

Series Navigation

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Posted December 14, 2011 at 4:13 pm by [Mooloo](#) | [Permalink](#)

How many directorships or other lucrative perks do these guys pick up along the way? (The POTUS is paid a pathetic salary, but it is immensely lucrative later.)

Posted December 14, 2011 at 5:57 pm by [Boiling Frog](#) | [Permalink](#)

Other than green faith propaganda, sabotaging legal shipping and supplying pests dressed up as animals, does Greenpeace actually produce anything?

Posted December 15, 2011 at 12:03 am by [CharlieB](#) | [Permalink](#)

One of the ways that union executives enriched themselves was with positions at several locals and the national union as well as multiple positions within a single local. It might be worthwhile comparing the names of GPUSA with the names of execs at the GP international organization

and/regional or national groups.

Posted January 27, 2012 at 2:27 am by [Finance Guy](#) | [Permalink](#)

Yea, yea, I get it...total exec comp up 111%. But at the end of the day, we're talking about a small group (5-10) who average less than \$90k/year. Yea ok, maybe 1 of them gets 2-3 times as much – then the rest of the “execs” average \$50k/yr. Remember, total comp also includes employer-paid taxes, like the roughly 6% FICA. At that salary level, I'd be looking for other jobs too...

Posted August 20, 2012 at 12:43 am by [Georgia](#) | [Permalink](#)

Ok. While there are things you could criticize, you go about it in the weirdest way. I mean look at the way you are framing this. “Their pay went up 111%!!” Yes, so did the amount of executives. Five executives were making a certain amount. Then they added five more executives. Of course it would go up at the same. There are 100% more people so you spend 100% more on paying them. So really there was only an 11% increase in what type of salaries they were making. I mean .. duh. It's so common sense. You went about this is all the wrong ways.

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By [Finally – Real Journalism on NGOs](#) « [NoFrakkingConsensus](#) on December 14, 2011 at 11:52 am
[...] the way Greenpeace USA compensates its senior executives. Read Part 7 of his 7-part series here. (The box at the top links you to earlier [...])

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March 20, 2012
at 4:50 pm

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