



Clean Water Currents

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The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Looking Forward

A Message from Lynn Thorp, Clean Water Action President



In 2025, we had to remain nimble to push back on an unprecedented onslaught of efforts to weaken federal health and environmental protections. As I stepped into the role of Clean Water Action President at the beginning of this year, it was clear that in 2026 we will still be standing up for bedrock federal programs around water pollution, toxic chemicals, climate change and more. And we won't always be in a defensive posture. Clean Water Action has a proactive agenda, and we push for solutions at every level. We have innovative projects to reduce the use of single-use plastic in restaurants and schools. We're helping people engage in Clean Water Act programs to keep pollutants out of our water. We're leading efforts for state policies to keep the notorious and dangerous "forever" PFAS chemicals out of products and out of the environment.

A note on my new role: On January 1st, I stepped into the role of Clean Water Action President. I have worked with the organization since 1999, leading campaigns around water pollution and drinking water and coordinating our engagement in a wide range of federal policy issues. I've worked with our state offices and our Canvass programs, and I've represented the organization with allies, government agency staff, and every other audience you can imagine. What has kept me at Clean Water all these years? The organization's multiple approaches to taking on polluters and standing up for people and the planet that is our life support system are

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part of it. Being offered the opportunity to develop expertise and create unique projects has been a plus. Clean Water's staff are tremendous too, powered by vision and hope and backed by the organization's proud history. Our organization has unique strengths, and I am honored and humbled to help lead our work at this critical moment. Clean Water Action is meeting that moment ready to mobilize people, to stand up to polluters, and to encourage our members to vote pro-environment candidates into office at every level.

Mobilizing Against the Polluted Water Rule

When the public comment period opened on the Trump administration's so-called "Polluted Water Rule," Clean Water Action didn't waste a minute. The proposal would weaken protections for wetlands, seasonal streams, and headwaters, the very waters that feed our rivers and drinking water supplies.

The administration claimed this action was clarifying legal language behind the 2023 *Sackett v. EPA* decision, an already devastating U.S. Supreme Court decision that removed protections for thousands of wetlands and streams. But the Polluted Water Rule is so much more than that — a dramatic overreach that would not only reduce wetlands protections but also create new definitions, putting many more miles of streams and rivers at risk.

During the 45-day comment period, our members and supporters showed up in force. Together,

we delivered more than 6,200 public comments opposing the rule, including thousands of messages online and more than 1,100 handwritten postcards collected in Philadelphia alone. Our teams also submitted detailed technical comments explaining why the proposal goes beyond what the Supreme Court's *Sackett v. EPA* decision requires and fails both scientifically and legally.

At the same time, Clean Water Action worked with allies across the country to raise the alarm, develop shared messaging, and connect the struggle for strong clean water protections to the need to safeguard drinking water sources. From grassroots postcards to expert policy analysis, our network made one thing clear: people across the country are paying attention, and we won't back down when it comes to protecting our waters. You can learn more about all we did, and what the response was on our [blog](#).

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Clean Water Victory in Colorado: In December 2025, Colorado became the first state in the nation to restore critical protections for small streams and wetlands that were lost as a result of the devastating *Sackett v. EPA* decision. This was a culmination of more than a year of hard work from Clean Water Action and our allies, which ultimately concluded after an intense three-day rulemaking hearing process. Thousands of miles of stream and numerous acres of wetlands in Colorado are now better protected from development, mining, and construction activities. This victory serves as a great example of how states can step in to better protecting waters and fill the gaps in protections left behind by the *Sackett* decision. Read more about the win [here](#).



Protecting Our Communities from Toxic Chemicals

Chemical lobbyists are pushing to weaken the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), making it easier for toxic chemicals to enter our drinking water, food, or communities. TSCA was updated in 2016 to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals linked to serious health conditions, like cancer and liver failure. Draft bills in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate could roll back these critical protections and weaken the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to protect public health. We are urging Congress to oppose any efforts that undermine TSCA. [Take Action Today!](#)

National Parks Reuse Project

Clean Water Fund's national ReThink Disposable program is partnering with three unique [National Parks](#) to eliminate single-use waste, protect fragile ecosystems, and build a model for parks across the country. Petrified Forest, located in the high desert of northeastern Arizona on Navajo and Apache lands, and Jamaica Bay's two beach clubs, part of the Gateway National Recreation Area located in the bird sanctuary within the New York Harbor, are introducing reusable foodware and access to fresh and free drinking water. Mammoth Cave, the world's longest known cave system located in south-central Kentucky, is transforming their dine-in and takeout operations as well as launching a dynamic circular composting system while also providing their visitors and campers with access to fresh and free drinking water. Stay tuned for ReThink Disposable's case studies in each park and the annual reduction of thousands of pounds of single-use items.



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

- **Called on Congress to Protect our Environmental and Health Safeguards** through our Action: [Tell Congress – Don't Reverse Environmental and Health Safeguards](#).
- **Revealed the Dangers of EPA's Regulatory Rollbacks** through our blog [EPA Rollbacks: A Gift to Polluters](#) and [short video](#).
- **Outlined the Harms of Cutting EPA's Staffing and Budget** through our blog [Clean Water in Crisis: The Devastating Impact of a 65% EPA Budget Cut](#) and [video](#).
- **Called Out Attacks on EPA's Ability to Take Climate Action** (known as the Endangerment Finding) by submitting thousands of comments and joining our [National Allies on Capitol Hill](#).
- **Opposed PFAS Rollbacks** by speaking out against delays to the Safe Drinking Water Act: [PFAS Drinking Water Limits](#).
- **Urged EPA not to Delay or Weaken Power Plant Wastewater Pollution Limits** through mobilizing thousands of comments, voicing our opinion through our blog [EPA Seeks to Prolong Harmful Coal Plant Wastewater Pollution](#), and working across sectors to submit a powerful [joint comment letter with the American Water Works Association](#).
- **Stood Up to Clean Water Threats in Congress** by opposing one of the worst-ever attacks on the Clean Water Act introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (known as the "Permission to Pollute" Act) through mobilizing thousands of comments, developing a public-friendly [fact sheet](#) and [videos](#) to help spread the word.
- **Advanced our Putting Drinking Water First Concept** by publishing white papers focused on [protecting all waters under the Clean Water Act](#) and [the risks of cutting federal infrastructure funding](#).

State and Regional News

CALIFORNIA

ReThink Disposable

Clean Water's ReThink specialists just wrapped up outreach in Fremont, converting 15 restaurants from single-use disposables to reusables. These changes are saving nearly \$12,000 and diverting over two tons of waste from landfills annually! That translates into a lot of happy businesses that are saving money, and happy customers who'd rather eat off dishes than plastic! Win-win!

Legislative Preview

In Sacramento, the 2026 legislative season is gearing up. Even with the ongoing budget woes, Clean Water Action is working with allies and water agencies to move forward on a statewide low-income rate assistance program for water. Senator Menjivar has introduced SB 1125, which creates a program framework, and our allies are developing funding options to include in another bill. Meanwhile Clean Water Action continues to facilitate the PFAS working group, a coalition of scientists, businesses, advocates and impacted community members that meet to discuss the latest science about detection, water treatment, and alternatives. Finally, in Lost Hills, the community has drafted a thorough plan to reduce the impact of local emissions on community health. The draft plan will be released in early April.

CHESAPEAKE REGION

Maryland

Maryland is almost through its annual 90-day legislative session. Clean Water staff have been working on a variety of bills, including creating grants for compost and food waste diversion, requiring septic system inspections at property transfer, and the CHERISH Our Communities Act to incorporate cumulative impacts into Maryland's permitting system. As of this writing, the House has passed a bill to create and fund a grant for on-farm compost and food waste diversion, as well as requiring septic system inspections — so both bills are halfway through!

Unfortunately, this will not be the year that Maryland joins New Jersey, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and

others in requiring permits to consider how much pollution is already present in an area, not just the potential pollution from a new proposed source. Instead of passing a fundamentally broken version of the CHERISH Act, frontline community leaders decided to withdraw support from the highly-amended version of the bill. Clean Water Action was proud to stand with community leaders in this decision, and we appreciate the leadership of the bill's sponsors, Senator Brooks and Delegate Behler, in also following the community's lead.

District of Columbia

Clean Water Action is welcoming spring in collaboration with our local DC partner, the Anacostia Parks and Community Collaborative (APACC), with events inside and outside of the parks east of the Anacostia. These events are designed to deepen connection with the park as we advocate for greater investment in green spaces in DC Wards 7 and 8.

On April 22, APACC will be part of the coalition hosting the DC Mayoral Sustainability Forum, an event that gives DC residents the chance to hear from mayoral candidates about health, education, affordable energy, and resilient green infrastructure. On April 25, APACC volunteers will be showing up for the 2026 Oxon Cove Earth Day Cleanup, an annual event dedicated to removing plastic and other trash from the District's largest park.

MICHIGAN

Defending Democracy

In Michigan, Clean Water Action and coalition partners are addressing corporate corruption with the Michiganders for Money Out of Politics (MMOP) ballot initiative. We're taking on the political influence of utility companies and large

► *MMOP West MI regional organizer and Clean Water Action field director Duncan Donahue.*

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government contractors that have undermined progress in Lansing for decades — from pushing through support on data centers, weakening climate legislation, stopping community solar, and more. With strong support across the state, we can bring people power back to Lansing — but we need your help to get on the November 2026 ballot! [Learn more and get a petition to sign here](#), and [volunteer to help us collect signatures](#).

Line 5

We're still working to shut down the dangerous Line 5 pipeline and stop the proposed tunnel construction under the Great Lakes. The legal fight has been brought to both the Michigan Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. We are currently waiting on decisions from both courts, as well as the final decision on the tunnel permit from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. [Stay up to date with the latest news](#) from our coalition, Oil and Water Don't Mix.

MINNESOTA

Legislative Updates

Minnesota is in the full throes of legislative session, with the state legislature primarily focused on the fallout of Operation Metro Surge and advancing environmental priorities. Clean Water Action is tracking nearly 100 different bills related to toxic chemicals in our environment, data centers, democracy, and civil rights.

The top priority remains defending Amara's Law, the nation's most comprehensive ban on toxic PFAS "forever chemicals," against relentless attacks from polluters. The cookware and veterinary industries have been working to get PFAS exemptions for their products codified in law, which if passed, would continue to expose humans and animals to toxic PFAS. We are putting pressure on our legislative allies to stop these bills in their tracks.

AI data centers in Minnesota also continue to be a priority. Along with legislative and coalition allies, Clean Water Action has introduced six bills this year to prevent — or rein in — the development of these AI data centers that are poised to drain the state's finite natural resources. Most notably, one proposed bill would establish a two-year moratorium on AI data center

construction in MN, and another would implement robust regulations on these facilities regarding water and energy consumption.

Clean Water Action is also working to pass stricter regulations to protect manoomin (wild rice) cultivation, reduce the use of dangerous pesticides like paraquat dichloride, and fund lead service line replacement for homes in Minnesota. Finally, we're working to pass pro-democracy legislation to strengthen voting rights and protections, while defending against bills that would weaken these protections.

NEW ENGLAND

(Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island)

CONNECTICUT

ReThink Disposable

Connecticut has a waste crisis, paying rising fees to truck trash to landfills in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Clean Water Action is supporting both local and statewide policies to stop trash before it starts by reducing single-use plastic and diverting organic and food waste out of the waste stream. This will save businesses and municipalities money while also reducing waste and pollution. [Send a message to state legislators today!](#)

MASSACHUSETTS

Legislative Progress

It's crunch time at the State House, and young organizers took over the hallways for a youth climate lobbying day in February. Clean Water Action's Youth Action Collaborative students and alumni were among those meeting with legislators and speaking at the rally. Check out this video on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) to get inspired by their efforts!



◀ Youth Action Collaborative students rallied at the Massachusetts State House in February.

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Clean Water Action's priority bills are on the move. Thanks to the efforts of grassroots members writing and calling their legislators, the climate bill that passed the House in March is a big improvement over what was proposed last fall. Clean Water Action will continue to press for the restoration of funding to Mass Save, the program helping residents reduce their energy bills by making homes and apartments more energy efficient.

Next, the fight for healthier families is taking center stage. On April 7, Clean Water Action was joined by health care leaders from Boston Children's Hospital for an event highlighting legislation cleaning up air pollution and getting toxic chemicals out of common products, especially products marketed to children. Take a moment and [send a message to your state legislators today](#).

RHODE ISLAND

Heavy Metals

This session, Clean Water Action is continuing to advocate for legislation that protects Rhode Islanders from toxics in common products, building off the state's landmark 2024 legislation restricting PFAS. Heavy metals like lead, cadmium, and arsenic do not belong in the products people put on, or in, their bodies, but studies have found these toxic metals in personal care products like tampons. Clean Water Action is advocating for the passage of S2117/H7110 to get them out. [Send a message to your legislators today](#).

Chemical Safety Laws

This winter, Clean Water Action Rhode Island's State Director, Emily Howe, also traveled to Washington, DC to join Senator Sheldon Whitehouse in opposing the chemical lobby's proposed rollbacks to federal chemical



safety laws. Clean Water Action and our allies will continue to stand up to attacks on the Toxic Substances Control Act. Rhode Island is small, but our leadership on fighting toxics is mighty.

◀ *RI State Director Emily Howe with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse in DC.*

NEW JERSEY

Plastics and Waste Reduction

In January, Clean Water Action secured passage of the strongest Skip the Stuff legislation (S.3195 & A.5157) in the country. Starting August 1, 2026, if a person wants single-use cutlery or condiments they merely need to ask instead of getting handfuls of items that cost businesses money, add to pollution in the environment, and negatively affect health throughout the lifecycle of plastic. Clean Water Action is now leading a coalition to create educational materials, making presentations at local and state gatherings so the public and businesses understand the benefits of the law and how to implement it. [More info here](#).

Clean Air

Clean Water Action co-leads the Coalition for Healthy Ports and Zero Emissions Now campaign, fighting for clean air at ports, warehouses, and places where trucks congregate. This spring, Clean Water Action plans on doing more truck counts and port tours with community partners to raise awareness of diesel truck pollution and advocate for clean air policies like Indirect Source Review (ISR) in addition to advocating for "Kids Clean Air Zones" (truck-rerouting policy) at the local level. Stay tuned for updates on developments with the Kids Clean Air Zone campaign, and participate in our current call to action to Governor Sherrill [here](#).

PFAS Victories & Make Polluters Pay

At the end of the 2024-2025 Legislative Session, Clean Water Action spearheaded and won the fight to pass a more comprehensive Protecting Against Forever Chemicals Act and ban of PFAS in firefighting turnout gear. They were both signed into law by former Governor Murphy. While other legislative efforts were stalled, we now have momentum for our toxics agenda in the upcoming 2026-2027 legislative session and with our new Governor, Mikie Sherrill. [Take action here](#). Our biggest fight is to get legislative leadership to put our Polluters Pay bill up for a final vote. A majority of the NJ Assembly and Senate are currently co-sponsors. Big Oil would pay \$50 billion over 20 years to the state for climate resiliency infrastructure. [Call for a vote!](#)

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PENNSYLVANIA

AI Data Centers

In the face of over 40 proposed AI data centers across Pennsylvania, residents are voicing concerns about how their development could impact local water resources, electricity prices, and our environment. Clean Water Action helped develop state legislation (HB 2246) which focuses on AI data centers' impact on our water. It requires companies to show that their water use will not adversely affect the quality or quantity of local water supplies. It also gives the PA Department of Environmental Protection the authority to deny a permit if it finds that there is an adverse risk to the water source or nearby water users. Clean Water Action is making this one of our top priorities in 2026.



▲ *West Philadelphia neighbors gather to discuss priorities for community greenening.*

West Philadelphia Green Vision

Building off the success of the [Kingsessing Green Vision Plan](#) produced through the Kingsessing Working Group, Clean Water Action expanded our work in Community Greening to West Philadelphia and created the West Philly Greening Coalition. Clean Water Action joined gardeners, elders, residents, educators, organizers, and community partners in West Philadelphia to participate in a series of workshops, events, and conversations that produced The West Philadelphia Greening Coalition Action Plan: a collective vision for a greener, healthier neighborhood.

The plan outlines agreed-upon priorities to heal the environment, heal people, grow local food, and

strengthen the West Philadelphia community through collaboration, mutual aid, and community advocacy. Clean Water Action looks forward to supporting coalition meetings to implement and carry out the goals outlined in the Action Plan. View the full plan [here](#).

TEXAS

Legislative Priorities

The next legislative session will begin in January 2027. Looming large for both houses is the issue of energy and water use by data centers. The GW Ranch in West Texas was recently approved by our TX Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). It's now the site of the largest permitted data center in the U.S., with a private, off-grid energy generation capacity of 7.65 GW. Many more facilities are being developed all across Texas, and they bring up critical concerns about water and energy use, and how they may affect nearby residents, habitats, and ratepayers.

EarthShare Texas Green Leader Fellow



This year, we've hosted young environmental communications professional Giselle Rodriguez through a competitive placement by EarthShare TX's Green Leaders Fellowship program. "Meet" Giselle on our Clean Water Action [blog](#), and stay tuned for her forthcoming mini-series explaining carbon capture and storage in Texas.

Spring for Water Benefit

Join us for our Annual Spring for Water Benefit Bash on Saturday, May 2nd in The Gallery at Chez Zee American Bistro in Austin! We will celebrate victories; hear from West Texas rancher Schuyler Wight about past and future water-related challenges from oil and gas; enjoy delicious food and drinks; and bid on some truly unique silent and live auction items! [Get your tickets or become a sponsor here!](#)