

## Urge Your Elected Officials to Protect ALL of Our Water!

On October 18, 2023 — the 51st anniversary of the Clean Water Act — members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Clean Water Act of 2023 (H.R. 5983). This bill would restore protections to vital water resources that lost them as a result of the May 2023 Supreme Court decision in the *Sackett v. EPA* case. Ensuring that all water bodies, including streams and wetlands, are protected as Congress intended remains a priority campaign for Clean Water Action. You can help by urging your U.S. Representative to support this bill that would protect water quality and our drinking water!

Take Action: [cleanwater.org/CWA23](https://www.cleanwater.org/CWA23).

### We CAN Get the Lead Out of Drinking Water!

We will be mobilizing people to weigh in on a new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposal to reduce lead in drinking

water. EPA's proposal, though not final, is in itself a victory. We have been urging drinking water systems to fully replace all the lead "service line" pipes in their systems for many years and have urged EPA to include that



in Safe Drinking Water Act regulations. Read our press release on EPA's proposal at [cleanwater.org/lead-drinking-water](https://www.cleanwater.org/lead-drinking-water).

### Federal Budget Update — Critical Protections and Investments Remain at Risk

As we go to press, the U.S. Congress has not finalized a federal budget for the fiscal year that began October 1. Extremists in Congress continue to propose

massive cuts to clean water and clean air programs as well as to historic investments in water infrastructure and addressing the climate crisis. Your federal elected officials need to hear from you. Tell them to protect people and not polluters at [cleanwater.org/budget](https://www.cleanwater.org/budget).



# Cancer-Causing Chemicals in Our Water is Unacceptable

At a recent State Water Board public workshop, a long line of people from impacted communities testified in opposition to a proposed 10 ppb drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium. While acknowledging hexavalent chromium treatment can be financially burdensome for ratepayers, every single person called for the standard to be more health protective regardless of the cost.

At the end of the workshop all but one board member then delivered a massive slap in the face by saying they couldn't set a stronger standard. Their excuse was that they had to think about the water rates. In reality, they ignored the cost of cancer and caved in to pressure from bad actor water systems who have been fighting the regulation of hexavalent chromium for 20 years.

Clearly, something is wrong at the Water Board. That's why we need Governor Newsom to step in.

The 10 ppb standard for hexavalent chromium is 500 times over what is considered safe, and will leave over 80% of impacted water systems — and an estimated 11 million Californians — without protective water treatment. The Water Board is failing in its mission to put public health first. Help us fight back and save millions of Californians from cancer. [Contact the Governor today.](#)

## *Tell Governor Newsom to stand with us in demanding a health protective drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium*

Hexavalent chromium has been detected in drinking water sources in 53 of California's 58 counties, putting millions at risk for cancer. In response to the danger, state scientists set the public health goal at 0.02 parts per billion.

After years of delay, the State Water Board is proposing an enforceable drinking water standard of 10 ppb, over 500 times what's considered safe. This proposal is all about money. Polluters don't want to be held liable for the harm they cause. Some water systems don't want to install expensive treatment, even though they've had two decades to plan for this and there are lower cost options that could be employed by many water providers.

Polluters and water systems alike are prioritizing costs over human life. We need the Governor to step in. [Please contact him today](#) and help us stop this dangerous proposal. Learn more at [cleanwater.org/hexchrome](https://cleanwater.org/hexchrome).

## *Keeping Californians Safe*

This legislative year we sponsored several bills and supported many more with the goal of ensuring the safety of Californians. We had a few successes, with a major one being the passing of SB 3, which will expand current state laws on relief from water shutoffs due to unpaid bills to smaller systems to protect our most vulnerable communities. Unfortunately, we also experienced some losses, particularly in terms of keeping the toxic chemical PFAS out of our everyday lives. We will continue to fight to enshrine laws that keep California communities safe!



## Making Lemonade:

# How to Deal With the Combination of Pollution and Climate Change

Clean Water Action was founded on the need to protect and restore our nation's waters. To do that, we argue that it's better to avoid a problem than to clean up after the fact. Unfortunately, we almost always have to do both; we have to work to avoid new pollution while addressing the problem our society has already created.

Nitrate pollution is probably the oldest example of this dilemma. It's the most common manmade contaminant polluting our drinking water supplies. In some agricultural regions of California, decades of fertilizer and manure application have

In the northern half of San Francisco Bay, wastewater dischargers need to follow the lead of South Bay wastewater agencies, which were required to act decades ago to denitrify their effluent before it's released into the San Francisco Bay. Expanding that requirement to the whole of San Francisco Bay can help protect our ecosystems from toxic algae blooms. Upgrading wastewater treatment plants can also be paired with an increase in recycled water production, increasing our ability to withstand droughts and lessening our impact on the watersheds that provide our water supplies.

In the agricultural heart of California, San Joaquin Valley farmers are already operating under new requirements to reduce their use of fertilizer. Farmers now have to measure the nitrate in their irrigation water — and can use that nitrate to reduce or eliminate their application of commercial fertilizer. Farmers in areas most impacted by nitrate contamination are also now required to offer free water quality testing to domestic well owners — and to provide replacement drinking water to households whose wells are



▲ A close up image of red algae bloom.

contaminated up to 30% of domestic wells. In the San Francisco Bay, the red algal bloom in the summer of 2022 (which recurred at a smaller scale this past summer) has been linked to higher water temperatures due to climate change combined with nutrient-laden discharges from wastewater treatment plants that surround the bay.

So, is it too late to prevent nitrate pollution? Of course not; we must act to prevent future pollution so that we can start solving the problems we've already created.

contaminated by nitrate. More than 1,300 families are receiving potable water now, about twelve percent of the total estimated need.

Looking at a seemingly intractable problem in a new way can turn a problem into a solution. But it can take decades to turn the tide. That's why the long-term, consistent support of members like you is so important: it allows us to work on these important issues for as long as it takes to make a difference. Give at [cleanwater.org/CAdonate](https://cleanwater.org/CAdonate), and thank you for making a difference.

# The Battle Not Yet Won

In 2022, after nearly five years of sacrifice and advocacy, fenceline communities finally got a 3200 foot health and safety buffer zone to protect their families from the cancer-causing contaminants spewing from oil wells just a few feet from their homes, schools and health clinics. With the passing of SB 1137, the legal protection for 7.5 million Californians that these communities have fought long and hard for was finally in their grasp.

However, in just a few months and through the spending of several millions of dollars, the oil industry collected enough signatures to put an immediate halt to those protections. While they were momentarily successful in their efforts to continue to pollute our communities, they have only delayed our hard-earned protections until November 5th of next year. That is when California voters will be able to take a stand against Big Oil by voting to keep the 3200 foot health and safety buffer zone, for their own sake and for the sake of their families.

This is not just some number pulled from thin air. 3200 feet is backed by health and science professionals. Shortly after meeting with advocates and community members, Governor Newsom required the California Geothermal Energy Management Division (Cal GEM), the agency that

oversees and regulates oil and gas production, to set a health safety buffer zone standard.

To do this they formed the Public Health Science Panel, which consisted of health and scientific experts, to assist in determining whether there was a need for such a buffer zone and, if so, what distance to set. The panel determined not only a strong need for every owner of a wellhead to have a Leak Detection and Response Plan (LDRP), but also a minimum 3200 foot health and safety buffer zone due to oil and gas emissions having a higher impact within that radius.

79% of Californians surveyed are in favor of a health and safety buffer zone, including in communities dominated by the oil industry.

Our families deserve a right to breathe clean air. Emissions from oil and gas production have been shown to cause low birth weight and other complications at birth, a reduced lifespan, cancer, and pulmonary and cardiovascular diseases. No person or child should be struggling to breathe in their own home or their school.

On November 5th 2024, Californians need to take a stand against Big Oil and show them the united power of our communities.



▲ An oil drilling site with only a chain link fence separating it from the local community.

# ReThink Disposable: Expanding in the Bay Area

As we head into winter, [ReThink Disposable](#) has been busy collaborating with different organizations, making inroads into local festivals and events, and expanding throughout the Bay Area.

Building on our recent successes in San Francisco, we worked with the City of Mountain View, the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, and r.World to convert the Mountain View Art & Wine Festival to reusable cups. Over the 2-day festival, we diverted over 5,500 single use cups and eliminated nearly 300 pounds of CO2 from our air.

Our team pulled together for a successful event that has led to further discussions with the Chamber to convert a corporate campus to reusables and approved compostables for their cafeterias and catering. We're excited for this continued collaboration and opportunity to implement what we've learned from our work in other California cities and counties!

Along with our work in Mountain View, by the end of the year we expect to expand further into Contra Costa County and Berkeley, as well as collaborate with Alameda County's StopWaste program to convert First Fridays, a monthly community event in the city of Oakland, from single-use to reusables. These ambitions work to further our goal of making a significant change and impact in historically marginalized areas throughout the Bay. Learn more at [ReThinkDisposable.org](#).



▲ *ReThink Disposable volunteers at the Mountain View Art & Wine Festival.*



## **Another way ReThink Disposable has grown: The addition of a new member to the team!**

◀ Introducing Julie Wedge as our new California ReThink Director. She takes over for Grace Lee, who will be working to expand the program even further in her new position as the National ReThink Director. Julie has decades of experience at the intersection of human health and the environment, in both leadership and collaborative positions, and is excited to grow along with us!



Thank you for supporting our year-end campaign, and our ongoing work to restore and protect our communities:  
[cleanwater.org/CAYearEnd](https://cleanwater.org/CAYearEnd)

## CALIFORNIA CURRENTS

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