

Winter 2024 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

California Voters Invest in Climate Reality

Even though California set rainfall records in 2023 and had a normal water year in 2024, this summer's record heat resulted in abnormally dry conditions. This leads to higher fire danger and higher water demand, for the environment as well as people — and is one of the guaranteed impacts of climate change. Voters clearly understand the need to both reduce our greenhouse gas footprint and adapt to our changing climate. That's why nearly 60% supported Proposition 4, the \$10 billion climate resilience bond.

A coalition of more than 180 environmental and environmental justice organizations worked with other stakeholders to craft this bond, taking into account immediate needs, the availability of other resources, and the ability to get money out the door quickly. This allowed us to make difficult decisions about what programs to fund and at what level. This bond also reflects the federal commitments made in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act to invest 40% of the bond funding in projects that benefit disadvantaged or vulnerable communities. These communities generally lack the capacity to self-fund needed infrastructure investments and are most likely to be impacted by extreme climate impacts.

Dozens of programs will be funded through this bond — our favorites are \$610 million for Safe Drinking Water and nearly \$800 million for groundwater sustainability. Other investments fund wildfire prevention, sustainable agriculture, coastal resilience, extreme heat protection, stormwater management and alternative energy development. Find out more at [cleanwater.org/SB867](https://www.cleanwater.org/SB867).

What comes next? While voters approved the measure, it's up to the governor and legislature to distribute the funds. This usually happens as part of the budget process, which would mean funds would be released beginning in July. However, existing programs could receive funding even sooner.

We'll keep you informed about these machinations as they happen in 2025!



▲ *The Climate bond will help fund many programs, including those for safe drinking water, groundwater sustainability, stormwater management and alternative energy development.*

California Communities Are Taking the Fight for Clean Air Into Their Own Hands

This year, Lost Hills residents have taken the reins of localized emission reduction. With continued support from Clean Water Action, and through persistence and perseverance, the community was able to receive the California Air Resources Board Cycle 4 Community Air Grant. This was through the Community Air Protection Program established by AB 617 (Garcia) that aimed to improve air quality in communities disproportionately affected by air pollution.

As Lost Hills is a small community, a mile downwind of large high producing oilfields and agricultural production, this grant was for the formation of a Lost Hills Local Community Emissions Reduction Plan (LCERP) modeled after the LCERPs of formerly selected communities like Shafter and Lamont/Arvin. They have been developed in partnership with residents, agencies and local stakeholders, and used in their communities to guide targeted, localized emission reduction efforts. In Shafter, this led to the development of a pesticide notification system for residents statewide. In Lamont/Arvin, wells within the developed boundary were investigated. All 27 found to be leaking were fixed and placed on a well abatement priority list to cap and discontinue the use of those wells.

To begin this process, our Oil and Gas program has worked with residents and stakeholders to develop a Community Steering Committee (CSC). This is a

community developed boundary map and charter and are in the initial stages of developing an inventory or profile of emissions, emission sources and sensitive receptors within the community identified boundary.

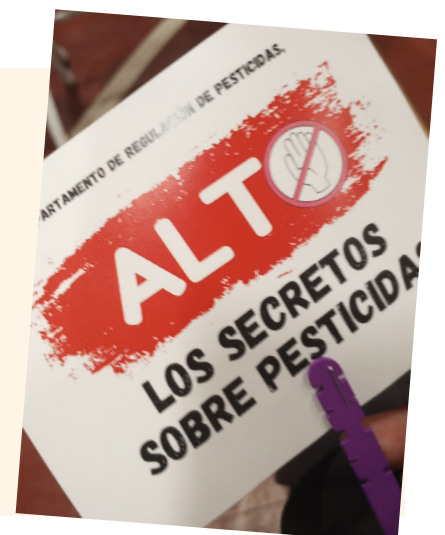
For the coming year, we will use the data collected from the community profile to identify key areas of concern for the community, and work with the CSC to develop or identify methods and measures that will help address or reduce contaminants and pollution sources based on prioritization identified by the CSC. In other communities this process has led to the development of a comprehensive vehicle replacement program, School bus electrification, vegetative barriers and other community forward incentive programs.

As an increase in local community monitoring helped previous communities develop and prioritize their LCERP, we have also partnered with local organizations to increase monitoring in the community. Throughout the process we will be regularly reviewing monitor data and conducting targeted in person monitoring using Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) cameras.

Families in Lost Hills are excited to be part of this opportunity, as there is now a clear and local avenue they can participate in that aims to make a localized reduction in emissions.

Through our joint advocacy with Comité Lost Hills En Acción (CLHEA), the California Air Resources Board selected Lost Hills to be the first community to host high quality air monitors from the Study of Neighborhood Air Near Petroleum Sources (SNAPS) from 2019 to 2020.

After years of waiting, Lost Hills families finally received results this year showing their community is nearly 2-3 times higher in levels of acrolein across the valley, enough to impact their respiratory and nervous systems. CLHEA and Clean Water Action are now collaborating with SNAPS to conduct acrolein-focused monitoring aimed at identifying the source and determining means to reduce acrolein.



A Year of Success for Our ReThink Disposable Program

California's ReThink Disposable program is proud to be ending 2024 on a high note! This has been a year of amazing accomplishments. We are so grateful to our Board, our members, and our valued supporters for trusting us to do this work.

In May, we hosted California's first ever Clean Water Making Waves fundraising event, to great success! Taking place at Fluid510 in Oakland, we honored three Bay Area champions — San Leandro Councilmember Victor Aguilar, Jr., mainstay in the reusable movement Miriam Gordon, and leaders of the next generation at Heirs to our Oceans. We brought together many more of our coalition partners for an evening of networking and connection, all while raising funds to continue our cause.

We launched several new case studies this year, including the Gurdwara Temple in Fremont who is saving a whopping \$46,000 annually by switching to reuse and a community study in Fruitvale. In Fruitvale, five local restaurants were able to collectively save \$10,000 per year and stop over 3,240 pounds of single use plastics from hitting the waste stream. We also wrapped up a two-year contract with the City of Mountain View where we stretched a little out of our comfort zone into the compostable takeout world. The Pokeworks case study shows that even with the higher cost of compostables, businesses can still save money with a full dine-in conversion. Read our latest case studies at [ReThinkDisposable.org](https://www.ReThinkDisposable.org).

We also kick started several new projects for the upcoming year including new grants and contracts



▲ *Patricia Hernández, Manager of Powderface, with new reusable foodware. Read about our work with Powderface and other Fruitvale restaurants at [cleanwater.org/Fruitvale](https://www.cleanwater.org/Fruitvale)*

with National Parks, the City of Berkeley, the City of Fremont, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation where we will launch a pilot program for San Jose. And of course, we look forward to continuing our existing partnerships with the City of Alameda, StopWaste Alameda County, the City of San Francisco, and Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority.



Thank you again for supporting our work, we couldn't do it without you! We look forward to a successful 2025 and hope we can count on your continued support in the new year. Happy Holidays from all of us at ReThink Disposable California.

Bringing PFAS Testing to California's Smallest Communities

Based on data collected from large and mid-sized water systems, we know that at least 25 million Californians have PFAS in their water. However, that doesn't account for the thousands of small water systems serving towns, mobile home parks, or schools. Unfortunately, PFAS testing is extremely expensive. That's where we stepped in.

After helping procure \$15 million in the state budget, Clean Water Action staff reached out to small, often-disadvantaged water systems around the state and helped them sign up for free testing.

The small system monitoring project is groundbreaking. While there are an estimated 15,000 PFAS in this chemical family, usual water testing methods only identify 25 of them. However, this project will also test for "total organic fluorine" in some systems, providing water regulators and the public with a more accurate picture of the real amount PFAS in California water, not just those we can name. That information will be essential in helping water systems and the state make the best decisions to protect the public.

To date, 937 out of 3,664 small system wells have been sampled and the data is starting to be analyzed. As that information comes in, the systems are being notified if they have PFAS, and what consumers can do. This is a great step forward and we're excited to report the ultimate findings in 2025.



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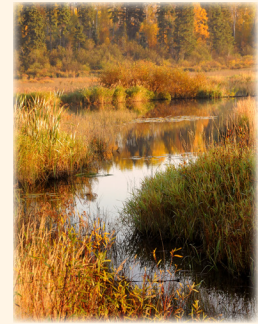
Hexavalent Chromium

It was especially gratifying to hear members of the State Water Board, during a spring 2024 hearing, shout out Clean Water Action's leadership over the last 15 years for pressing California to establish a drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium. California is the first state to regulate this cancer-causing chemical, also called Chromium 6, made famous by the movie "Erin Brockovich."

Hexavalent chromium has been detected in 2,475 water sources throughout the state. While we don't believe the standard 10 ppb is optimal, this is an important step in protecting Californians' health. We also procured a public commitment by the State Water Board to revisit the standard in 5 years as treatment technology improves. Learn more at cleanwater.org/hexchrome.

2024 Election Results and Our Work

We're proud of our work to motivate clean water voters in the recent elections. See our state updates in this issue. The impact of the election on our national level work will, unfortunately, be dramatic. The new administration has committed to gutting federal agencies, rolling back health and environmental protections, and to taking us backwards on addressing the climate crisis. Among its priorities are further weakening the Clean Water Act's stream and wetlands protections, despite the devastation already caused by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett v. EPA*. Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate will be controlled by a party now seemingly hostile to strengthening environmental and health protections. Many members are committed to extreme federal budget cuts. We know that despite this rather dire reality, people's voices matter and our work can make a difference. We will be working to oppose anti-regulatory initiatives, to protect the clean water and clean air protections that the public supports, and to stand up for effective government that implements our landmark environmental laws to make people and our communities healthier.



The Safe Drinking Water Act: 50 Years of Progress — But the Work is Never Finished

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) was signed into law by President Gerald Ford on December 16, 1974. The goal of the nation's first comprehensive drinking water law was to reduce risks to public health from drinking water. The law ushered in remarkable improvements and technical innovation in drinking water treatment and distribution. Still, the task is never complete. Clean Water's work around drinking water is focused on ensuring that we maintain the collective commitment to ensuring safe drinking water for all. Priority issues include:

- Making sure SDWA's contaminant limits keep up with health science around long-known contaminants like nitrates and arsenic and that regulations address "emerging" contaminants like microplastics
- Ensuring ongoing federal water infrastructure investments to support local drinking water system improvements and robust budgets for federal and state agency implementation of the law
- Elevating the need to keep pollutants out of our drinking water systems in the first place so that drinking water systems and their customers don't bear all the costs of removing contaminants like the notorious PFAS chemicals

A Win for Our Water: Progress On Getting Lead Out Of Drinking Water.

On October 8, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the *Lead and Copper Rule Improvements*, regulations which require full replacement of lead service lines in drinking water systems. Putting lead service lines behind us has been a goal of Clean Water's work.

The vast majority of lead service lines, which bring water from the large water main into the home or building, will be replaced within ten years of the new regulation's implementation. The effort is supported by targeted funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including \$2.6 billion in funding announced in October. "Because of lead's health impacts on children and adults, even at low levels, it is critical to reduce lead exposure wherever we can. We welcome the Biden-Harris administration and EPA's bold action. We can get lead out of drinking water and redouble efforts to eliminate lead exposure from paint, food, and other sources," National Campaigns Director Lynn Thorp said in our press release heralding the announcement.