

Pushing for the Reduction of Pollution in NJ's Freight & Goods Movement

Clean Water Action, in collaboration with the Coalition of Healthy Ports and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) held a virtual Town Hall focused on the recently introduced NJ Warehouse and Port Pollution Reduction Act ([A4679/S3546](#)). Featured speakers included Assemblywoman Katz (LD-8) and Murphy (LD-7), and Gaige Kerr, Assistant Research Professor at the Milken Institute School of Public Health. Check out the video [here](#).

At least [one in three New Jersey residents](#) lives within a half mile of a warehouse. Air pollutants deriving from diesel-fueled freight vehicles has led to 340 deaths, nearly 3,000 cancer cases, 164 heart attacks, and 3,921 asthma flareups in [2023 alone!](#)

A4679/S3546 would curb pollution at warehouses, ports and other truck-attracting facilities by requiring them to implement concrete emission reduction measures through an “indirect source review” (ISR) program. If passed, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) would establish flexible compliance options alongside permitting requirements, with higher thresholds for environmental justice communities that are disproportionately burdened by diesel and other pollution harms. The NJ Warehouse and Port Pollution Act (A4679/S3546) was inspired by California’s South Coast Air Quality Management District’s ISR policy. Since 2021, [it is already driving down truck pollution in Southern California](#).

Residents across NJ, frontline and overburdened communities, freight and goods movement workers deserve to breathe clean air to live and thrive in a healthy environment. Getting this bill to the finish line would be a critical step towards righting the daily wrongs of this environmental injustice.



The hard-won Advanced Clean Truck (ACT) rule is under attack and it’s coming from the NJ State House. ACT phases in the sale of electric-powered medium and heavy trucks starting January 2025. Without it, respiratory issues for frontline communities and climate crisis will worsen.

NJ legislators recently proposed [A4967/S3817](#) which would delay implementation of ACT for two years despite NJDEP’s successful get-ready efforts.

TAKE ACTION! Send a message to your NJ legislators. Tell them NOT to listen to industry falsehoods and NOT delay ACT, a life-saving program bringing clean air and good jobs to our communities. Explain why this rule is important to you!

Get involved, contact [Tolani Taylor](#) or visit our [website](#).

The Fight for Environmental Justice in NJ Prisons

When we talk about environmental justice, we often focus on neighborhoods impacted by pollution, hazardous facilities, or lack of green spaces. Yet, **some of the most overlooked and vulnerable populations are those behind bars**. Incarcerated individuals in New Jersey face serious environmental challenges — especially when it comes to accessing clean water and living in safe, healthy conditions.

This winter, Clean Water Action has partnered with Kean University and [Women Who Never Give Up](#) to tackle these injustices head-on. Our Environmental Justice Organizer X Braithwaite and Sydnie Bogan, Special Project Coordinator and Graduate Assistant at Kean University, had the opportunity to meet with the Returning Citizens Support Group based in Newark, NJ.

The group, composed of formerly incarcerated individuals and allies dedicated to advocacy and support, brings an invaluable perspective to the fight. **Their firsthand experiences reveal the unacceptable reality of prison conditions: contaminated drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and extreme temperatures in poorly ventilated facilities.**

At the heart of our joint efforts is the [Safe Water, Safe Lives](#) campaign. Through petitions and advocacy, we're calling on the New Jersey Department of Corrections and NJDEP to address the failing water systems across the state's correctional facilities. These systems not only endanger incarcerated individuals but also **violate basic human rights**.

The Returning Citizens Support Group has played a critical role in elevating this campaign. By sharing their stories, they remind us that environmental justice extends beyond the prison walls. For individuals re-entering society, the environmental harm they've endured often compounds existing health disparities and social barriers. Advocating for better conditions is not just about those currently incarcerated — it's about ensuring healthier futures for everyone.

But this fight is far from over. As we push for legislative action inspired by the [Environmental Health in Prisons Act](#), we need your help to amplify these voices and demand accountability. Environmental justice isn't just a policy issue; it's a moral imperative. Together, we can ensure that no one is left behind.



▲ X Braithwaite, Sydnie Bogan, and Edwin “Chino” Ortiz meet with the Returning Citizens Support Group (RCSG) in Newark, NJ. Founded by Chino, Carmelo “Melo” Ortiz, and Al Tariq Witcher, RCSG has supported over 5,000 individuals, empowering them to become business owners, college graduates, and community leaders.

Environmental Justice Behind Bars

New Jersey's correctional facilities face alarming environmental challenges, from unsafe drinking water to poor ventilation. Join the fight to protect incarcerated individuals and support the [Safe Water, Safe Lives](#) campaign. Learn more and [sign the petition here!](#)

Plastic Reduction at the State and Local Levels Continues to Grow Strong

Clean Water Action and our [ReThink Disposable](#) program continue to lead the strong state-wide [Skip the Stuff](#) campaign. Skip the Stuff calls on restaurants to provide cutlery and condiments only upon request for take-out orders. Too often single-use disposables are unnecessarily provided only to get taken home and thrown in junk drawers or immediately in the garbage. This is a cost burden for businesses and for the environment.

There were a handful of towns in New Jersey that wove Skip the Stuff into their 2019 bag ban ordinance. Since March, Clean Water Action has helped ten (10) new municipal ordinances and one (1) municipal resolution get passed, including towns like Jersey City and Hoboken. A case study of Red Bank businesses found a 70% reduction in cutlery and condiments distributed for take-out orders after the Borough adopted a Skip the Stuff ordinance.

At the state level it will be the first such law that applies to both take-out and dine-in.

Through the momentum and support of municipalities and local activists, the New Jersey Legislature introduced a strong Skip the Stuff bill ([S3195](#)), prime sponsored by Senators Smith and Mukherji and co-sponsored by Senator Greenstein. The Senate Energy and Environment Committee heard testimony and moved the bill by a 3-2 vote. The next committee is slated to be the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, chaired by



▲ [Marta Young testifying at the New Jersey Senate Environment Committee hearing on October 10, 2024.](#)

Senator Paul Sarlo and Vice-Chaired by Senator Linda Greenstein, a co-sponsor of this bill. As of this publication, S3195 will soon be introduced in the State Assembly, giving it the legs it needs to become state law. Public involvement is crucial in this stage as true for passing local ordinances. We thank our partners and activists for getting us this far. Look out for more opportunities to speak out, take action, and ensure Skip the Stuff becomes a state law.

Election Results

After a grueling Election season, the New Jersey office is pleased to announce that four of Clean Water Action's five endorsed federal NJ congressional candidates won their elections! Although some races did not end as we hoped, we must push through and persist to ensure a cleaner, greener future for all. The winning roster includes Andy Kim for U.S. Senate, Congresspeople Frank Pallone Jr., Mikie Sherrill, and Bonnie Watson-Coleman.



ReThink Disposable Helps Reduce Air Pollution in Newark

Clean Water Action's *ReThink Disposable* team partnered with the Dodge Poetry Festival, the largest poetry festival in North America, to help eliminate and divert waste that otherwise would go to the local Covanta incinerator. The festival hosts approximately 16,000 poets and guests over a three-day event. For the past seven festivals, Clean Water Action has worked with the Dodge Foundation, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, NICO Restaurant and concessionaire to reduce and educate about waste.

This year, over 751 pounds of materials (80% of total collection) that otherwise would have gone to the local incinerator were either composted or sent to a recycling facility. Waste collection bins were set up and staffed for inside and outside locations in order to separate compostable waste from recyclable paper, glass and metal. ReThink Disposable and the festival green team helped educate visitors about the benefits, importance and ease of composting and recycling.

In addition, technical assistance was provided in advance of the event in order to further eliminate waste. Poets were provided meals on reusable foodwares instead of single-use disposables. Some of the concession items were provided on parchment paper rather than plastic clamshells or plastic-lined disposable foodboats. We thank the many community members who helped staff the zero waste stations and manage the “back of the house” where all materials were weighed and tabulated.

For more information about ways to get involved or to volunteer with ReThink Disposable's efforts to reduce pollution, contact Marta Young.



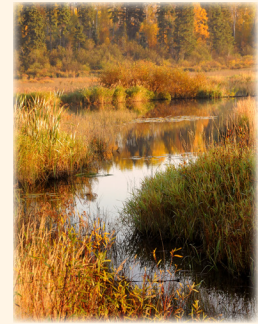
▲ *The ReThink team.*

Annual Autumn Toast a Success!

On November 17th, we held our 15th annual fundraising event in Newark. We were joined by family, friends, volunteers, community members and colleagues. We honored Kim Gaddy, former NJ and National Environmental Justice Director, for her 23 years of service at Clean Water Action. NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette offered remarks about her incredible work. We would love for you to join us next autumn as we toast to more environmental wins and our amazing staff and board.

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.