

Clean Water Currents

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The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Clean Water Act Protections Under Attack:

Urge EPA to Protect Our Water



The Clean Water Act could be further weakened if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and polluting interests get their way. In March, the agencies announced plans to revise the “Waters of the United States” definition — the definition specifying which water resources can be protected under the Clean Water Act.

The law was already weakened by the devastating May 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Sackett v. EPA*) which removed protections for more than half of all wetlands and thousands of miles of streams nationwide. Streams and wetlands are critical parts of our nation’s water infrastructure. They help prevent flooding, filter out harmful pollutants, and protect clean drinking water.

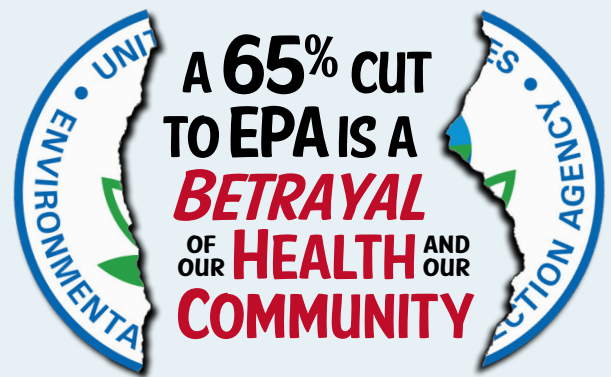
Now EPA and the Corps want to limit protections for these critical resources even more — a giveaway to developers and corporate polluters that would endanger the clean water relied upon by everybody else. As noted in our [public statement](#) and further explained in our recently released [white paper](#), EPA is ignoring overwhelming scientific evidence and jeopardizing downstream water, including drinking water sources for millions.

EPA is required by law to seek and consider input from the public and other “stakeholders,” before making these kinds of changes. During the initial comment period, we urged EPA not to further weaken these protections. As the process moves forward, Clean Water Action, along with members like you, will mobilize during any future comment periods on proposed rollbacks.

Defending Our Safeguards

Clean Water Action has...

- **Outlined the Dire Consequences of the Proposed EPA Budget Cuts** through our blog [Clean Water in Crisis: The Devastating Impact of a 65% EPA Budget Cut](#) and [video](#)
- **Revealed the Dangers of Regulatory Rollbacks** through our recent blog [EPA Rollbacks: A Gift to Polluters](#) and [short video](#)
- **Called on Congress to stand up for our Environmental Protections** through our recent Action: [Tell Congress — Don't Reverse Environmental and Health Safeguards](#)
- **Mobilized Public Support to Defend the EPA** by collecting nearly 2,500 signatures for a petition to Congress
- **Joined our National Allies to Defend Federal Budget from Drastic Cuts**
- **Submitted a letter to the House Representatives of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee** regarding the March 11th hearing on the State Revolving Funds calling for increased support to national water infrastructure investments



CUTS TO EPA WOULD:



POLLUTE OUR AIR & WATER

Weakened enforcement of clean air and clean water laws means more pollution in our lungs and drinking water.



CRIPPLE RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS

Toxic spills, wildfires, and other crises will take longer to contain, putting lives in danger.



ELIMINATE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES

Neighborhoods suffering from pollution and industrial waste will lose critical support to clean up their water and land.



MAKE US SICK

Less monitoring of hazardous chemicals means more exposure to dangerous toxins in everyday products.

Dismantling Environmental Justice Initiatives Harms Us All

Since inauguration day, the Trump administration has [undermined efforts to address environmental injustice](#). Federal employees focused on environmental justice have been fired. Environmental justice offices across the country have been closed, and the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council has been shut down. By eliminating these programs, including the historic Justice40 Initiative, the administration has dismissed critical measures aimed at protecting and supporting low-income people and communities of color who have been disproportionately affected by pollution.

These actions make protecting polluters' interests the priority, showing alarming disregard for the most vulnerable among us. Instead of targeting resources to the places with the most pollution, where people face the greatest health risks, they are weakening environmental and health protections across the board. By combining environmental justice rollbacks with so many other sweeping cuts and rollbacks, the administration places everyone at risk from pollution and health harm.

Environmental justice remains a Clean Water Action priority. Clean Water Action is committed to supporting all communities, especially those on the frontlines and fencelines of pollution.



Update From Jeff Carter, President & CEO

Looking back over the first few months of the Trump administration, while we knew that the President and his allies were planning to vigorously attack the hard-fought protections that have been put in place over

the last several decades to protect our waterways and ecosystems, it now seems our predictions were not dire enough. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulatory rollbacks, especially the package of 31 regulations announced in March, have largely matched our expectations. EPA Administrator Zeldin's announced intent to cut 65% of EPA's budget, which would all but decimate the agency, was also not completely surprising — we knew big cuts would be proposed. However, the sheer chaos, disruption, and maliciousness of this administration has been breathtaking.

I want to assure you that we are not backing down in the face of these threats. We are actively engaged in advocacy efforts, community organizing, and policy initiatives to push back against harmful policies and promote sustainable water management practices.

One of the ways we are fighting back is by amplifying our voices and making sure that decision-makers hear our concerns loud and clear. To cite one example: In late March, as part of a broad deregulatory rampage, EPA announced its intent to weaken the already-weakened definition of "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS) for purposes of the Clean Water Act. They have opened a comment period for input on their eventual proposal and will also hold "listening sessions" to take testimony. Because this is a long-time priority issue for

our organization, the national campaigns team, communications team, canvass programs and state program staff are engaging in this first comment period in multiple ways.

Additionally, Clean Water Action is dedicated to empowering communities to act at the local level. We are providing resources, tools, and support to help individuals and groups advocate for clean water in their own communities. By mobilizing grassroots support and building coalitions with other environmental organizations, we can create a powerful resistance force that cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, we are committed to raising awareness about the importance of clean water and the urgent need to protect our water resources. Through educational campaigns, outreach initiatives, and media engagement, we are working to inform the public about the threats facing our water and inspire action to safeguard it for future generations. We have created new materials and used our communications channels to alert Clean Water Action members and the public to important developments. We are also working to increase the volume and breadth of our outreach tools, including the use of short videos.

As members of Clean Water Action, your support and engagement are crucial. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can ensure that clean water remains a fundamental right for all. Together, we can stand up to the challenges posed by the Trump administration and work towards a future where clean water is protected and cherished.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to clean water and environmental conservation. Let's continue to fight together for a sustainable future.



State and Regional News

CALIFORNIA

Legislative Update

California's legislative season is off to a fast start, with all four Clean Water Action sponsored bills surviving their first policy hearings in March and early April. In addition to our bill to ban all non-essential uses of PFAS (SB 682, Allen), Clean Water Action is sponsoring AB 794 (Gabriel) to ensure that the national PFAS drinking water standards will be adopted in California if the US EPA suspends them; AB 823 (Boerner) extends the current ban on plastic microbeads; and SB 350 (Durazo), which would establish a statewide low income rate assistance program for water.

ReThink Disposable

Outside of the legislature, our ReThink Disposable program is working to convert San Francisco daycare centers to reusable foodware; and our Kern County organizer is working to inform local communities about sustainable groundwater management and the advent of free domestic well testing.

CHESAPEAKE REGION



▲Rallying against incinerator subsidies and for renewable energy.

MD Ends Flawed Incinerator Policy

We are thrilled to announce that burning trash is no longer considered renewable energy in Maryland! This policy will end state subsidies and greenwashing for polluting trash incinerators and redirect those investments towards renewable energy. This has been

a long-fought campaign alongside community leaders throughout the state.

Anacostia Park

In DC, our team is preparing for a long summer of activities in Anacostia Park. As part of our work with the Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative, the team organizes community-building events in the park.

MICHIGAN

Defending Democracy (and Clean Water)

Clean Water Action's Michigan team is organizing with coalition partners to defend the state's people and environment — and to strengthen democracy and civil society in the state. The biggest threat “comes from the Trump administration and its enablers in Congress,” says Clean Water Action's Sean McBrearty, Michigan Director.

“We have been helping to organize protests, workshops and town hall meetings,” McBrearty reports, “and we will continue bringing people across the state together around this. We can't have clean water or solve the climate crisis without a healthy and functioning democracy.”

Clean Water Action is also active in the permitting process for Enbridge's controversial Line 5 pipeline tunnel plan, that threatens the Great Lakes. One key aim is to ensure that the permitting process itself, and the state agency responsible for permitting (the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, EGLE) are full and robust in addressing the potentially catastrophic impacts, before any permits are issued. You can take action [here!](#)

MINNESOTA

Legislative Updates

With just weeks left in the legislative session, Clean Water Action MN is staying vigilant as we fight to defend our biggest wins and advance urgent priorities. We've made major headway on the E-Waste Product Stewardship bill — now included in the Senate's

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continued from page 4

environment omnibus — and have built strong momentum with key allies and statewide support. Meanwhile, we’ve held the line on Amara’s Law against industry efforts to weaken it, keeping the world’s strongest PFAS ban intact. At the same time, we’re pushing back on massive corporate tax breaks for water-guzzling data centers and calling for smart, equitable regulations. The fight isn’t over — but we’re ready.

Healthy Homes

Our [Healthy Homes presentations](#) are in full swing thanks to a grant from Hennepin County, the state’s largest county. We are meeting community members on their turf to help them understand the toxic chemicals they encounter every day while shopping, cooking, cleaning, and making home improvements. This grant has allowed us to identify vulnerable communities and hand out 240 reusable bags filled with nontoxic, safe cleaning alternatives. These samples will help families across the state switch to sustainable options, which protect their families!

NEW ENGLAND

(Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island)

CONNECTICUT

PFAS

What do you do when lobbyists for the chemical industry try to take away hard-won protections from toxic chemicals? Connecticut fights back! Clean Water Action and allies are pushing back to make sure no exemptions get carved into the 2024 state law banning toxic PFAS in many consumer products. Connecticut said “no” to toxic PFAS in cookware last year. “We still don’t want PFAS in our cookware in 2025,” says Anne Hulick, Clean Water Action’s Connecticut director

MASSACHUSETTS

Legislative Updates

With the 2025-26 legislative session underway, Clean Water Action is building bigger, broader coalitions. The coalitions’ advocacy and grassroots campaigning are

focused on bills to protect families from PFAS and other toxic chemicals — and to stand up for clean air in every zip code statewide. Clean Water Action co-hosted a State House event to support indoor and outdoor air quality legislation, together with bill sponsors and advocates. And, on May 6th, Clean Water Action and allies are honoring World Asthma Day by rallying for asthma justice in East Boston. Hope to see you there!



▲ *Massachusetts Co-Director Elizabeth Saunders (left) leads a skills-building workshop with our Youth Action Collaborative students in Malden.*

RHODE ISLAND

Reducing Trash and Waste

Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund’s ReThink Disposable campaign led inspiring campaigns this winter helping schools in Johnston phase out single-use disposable trays and dining ware. That means less trash and waste headed to the landfill and healthier meals for students. With legislation introduced to fight plastic pollution, Clean Water’s waste programs are organizing to get the bills passed before June, when the Rhode Island legislative session ends. Priorities include a “bottle bill” that would reduce litter, and a measure to study and regulate the microplastics, the tiny plastic bits contaminating the floor of Narragansett Bay.



◀ *Rhode Island Director Emily Howe leaves the State House after another marathon evening of bill hearings.*

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NEW JERSEY

Climate Superfund Act

In the face of federal level pushback and backsliding on climate, Clean Water Action continues to push for final passage of NJ's [Climate Superfund Act](#). The bill would make big oil and gas corporations, not the public, pay for the industry's climate damage.

Reducing Waste

Also with Clean Water Action's support, [Skip the Stuff](#) is moving rapidly — both municipal ordinances and state legislation — to reduce single-use items and plastics in takeout orders. And the Clean Water Action-backed [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) bill will be one of the strongest in the country — to reduce plastics and toxics in packaging.

Clean Water Action's ReThink Disposable program has removed more than 20 million single use disposables annually in the Garden State, working with local businesses and governments as shown in the program's recent [Red Bank Case Study](#).

Healthy Ports

Clean Water Action is a part of the Coalition for Healthy Ports, fighting for clean air at ports, warehouses and where trucks congregate. This summer the coalition campaign is focused on community action to advance Indirect Source Review (ISR) protections. [ISR](#) would curb pollution at warehouses, ports and other truck-attracting facilities. It would require specific emission reduction steps, with higher thresholds for environmental justice communities that are disproportionately burdened by diesel and other pollution harms.

The hard-won [Advanced Clean Truck \(ACT\) rule](#), which phases in the sale of electric-powered medium and heavy trucks starting January 2025, is being threatened by legislation that would delay implementation by 2 years. Clean Water Action is working in a broad-based coalition to stop this bill. This would ensure that respiratory health and climate impacts will not worsen for frontline communities.

Beauty Justice

Clean Water Action's [Beauty Justice campaign](#), launched

in New Jersey, addresses the ways that communities of color are disproportionately exposed to chemicals through personal care products. Research shows that [black women and other minorities experience health impacts](#) such as increased rates of breast cancer, fibroids and [chronic health issues related to use of beauty products](#). Clean Water Action is organizing locally and statewide policies to address this serious concern.

Save Water, Save Lives

Safe and affordable drinking water for all is fundamental to who we are at Clean Water Action. Read more about NJ's [Safe Water Safe Lives campaign](#) — designed to address water issues in our state prison system.

PENNSYLVANIA

Keeping Environmental Justice Alive

With the environmental justice movement in the Trump Administration's cross hairs and crippling cuts underway for the federal programs aimed at protecting communities of color and low income neighborhoods who face the most pollution, Clean Water Action is building support across Pennsylvania for state actions needed to ensure clean water, clean air and health communities for all.

Following well-attended public hearings in Chester and Harrisburg, state lawmakers voted to move Environmental Justice legislation backed by Clean Water Action out of a key committee. Now the measure (HB 109) needs Clean Water Action members' support to get a vote by the full State House.



▲ Residents gather at recent state legislative hearing in Chester, Pennsylvania.

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June 3rd Lobby Day and Day of Action

State lawmakers in Harrisburg need to hear loud and clear that Environmental Justice is a priority and now is the time to act. [Sign up for Clean Water Action's annual Lobby Day and Day of Action](#) — on June 3 this year — to lend your voice in support of a cleaner and more equitable Pennsylvania. Clean Water Action members and supporters will come together to push their legislators forward on environmental justice, water supply protection and keeping first responders safe from toxic PFAS forever chemicals. Buses will be provided for travel from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, along with lunch for participants.

TEXAS

Harris County Climate Justice Plan

Harris County Commissioner's Court voted to adopt one of the nation's first Climate Justice Plans at this high level of government. Harris County is the third-most populous county in the U.S., encompassing Houston and dozens of cities and towns and totaling over 5 million residents. [See the Harris County, TX Climate Justice Plan here](#). Lisa Lin, Director of the Harris County Office of Sustainability, led this effort in close coordination with the Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience (CEER). Together, these individuals and

groups created an historic interactive process which has centered climate-impacted community members' voices, experiences, and recommendations. Clean Water Action is proud and grateful to be a member of the CEER coalition.



▲ Clean Water Action joined other fossil fuel protesters in downtown Houston for a March 10th rally.