

Getting a Raw Deal

The deal to sell U.S. Steel to Japanese company Nippon Steel grabbed headlines across the world. But it did little for the residents living in Pittsburgh's Mon Valley who continue to bear the brunt of U.S. Steel's pollution incidents. With most of the focus on workers at the plants, Nippon Steel has made no promises to even address U.S. Steel's long history of flagrant violations of laws meant to protect our health. In 2025 alone, U.S. Steel has already had three significant pollution incidents at their facilities, and has been fined over \$900,000 for past violations of clean air laws.

In early February, an issue with one of the batteries at U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works caused an explosion. Then in late February, a situation at its Edgar Thomson Works left a hole in a facility building leading to multiple exceedances of standards for Sulfur Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide, and Hydrogen Sulfide. The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) has yet to take enforcement

action for these infractions, a frequent complaint of residents. The latest incident in June was the result of a breakdown that required the shutdown of a control room, meaning that coke oven gas was only partially cleaned. This led to area monitors recording elevated sulfur levels.

Residents are left asking what is going on and when will U.S. Steel finally be held accountable? [Clean Water Action is renewing calls for ACHD to step up](#) by meeting with Mon Valley residents about these pollution incidents and taking expedited steps to hold U.S. Steel accountable and prevent future issues.

◀ *Residents living in Pittsburgh's Mon Valley who continue to bear the brunt of U.S. Steel's pollution incidents.*



Clairton Coke Works



Edgar Thomson Works

Lobby & Day of Action in Harrisburg

Clean Water Action descended upon the State Capitol in Harrisburg for our annual Lobby and Day of Action. Members of our team were joined by residents from across Pennsylvania. Over 60 people registered for the chance to interact with likeminded advocates and directly engage with their legislators to discuss important health and environmental issues.

The Trump Administration hasn't wasted any time targeting environmental programs, safeguards and agency staff for elimination. In response, Clean Water Action is pressing our state elected officials to fill the void by protecting residents' and fire fighters' health from toxic PFAS chemicals, ensuring our Environmental Justice communities aren't further burdened by industrial pollution, and preventing our children from being exposed to lead hazards. We used our Lobby and Day of Action to draw added attention to several legislative efforts.

Clean Water Action collaborated with Rep. Greg Vitali to draft HB 109, which helps **Environmental Justice** communities by requiring known polluters to prepare a cumulative environmental impact report as part of their permit applications. The bill empowers the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to deny a permit if the impacts further harm residents or require a company to implement added controls.

Clean Water Action partnered with Rep. Brian Munroe, Rep. Jared Solomon and members from the International Association of Fire Fighters to develop protections for fire fighters and our environment from **toxic PFAS forever**



chemicals, which are known to cause health impacts, like cancer and have already contaminated water supplies across Pennsylvania. Our

efforts resulted in HB 1261 which bans PFAS-laden firefighting foam and requires warning labels on the gear they wear until safer alternatives are available. The bill unanimously passed the State House in early July.

Clean Water Action is also working with Rep. Greg Scott to look at the presence of PFAS in common household items. Soon to be released legislation will prohibit the sale and manufacturing of cosmetics, dental floss, juvenile products and menstrual products containing PFAS.

Clean Water Action called for **cleaner and safer drinking water in our schools** by urging the passage of SB 759, requiring school districts to replace old drinking fountains with lead-filtering hydration stations. Lead is still a pervasive problem in Pennsylvania's schools' water. A 2021 survey found 90% of school districts that test their water discovered lead contamination and a 2024 report found all of the school districts surveyed were failing to implement best practices to keep students safe from lead in their school drinking water.

You can still be part of the spirit of the day by weighing in with your legislators on the [Environmental Justice Bill](#) and the [bill to protect fire fighters from PFAS](#).



◀ *Rep. Chris Rabb (Philadelphia) addresses Clean Water Action members and supporters on the Capitol steps.*

Philadelphia Environmental Justice Summit

Clean Water Fund hosted the second annual Philadelphia Environmental Justice Summit at the Academy of Natural Sciences in May.

The event was an enormous success, It brought together 150 attendees and also featured organizations like William Penn Foundation, Philadelphia Water Department, Trash Academy, Glitter, Center for Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET) at the University of Pennsylvania, Tiny Trekkers and Black Farmers Cooperative.

This year's theme was "The Invisible Labor of Community Leaders". It centred on the often unseen and underfunded efforts that keep our communities thriving. Four inspiring community leaders delivered powerful reflections on their personal experiences, victories and the broader challenges of grassroots leadership:

- **Dianna Coleman**, Founder of *Ms. Verna's Garden* and recipient of the *Block Captain of the Year* award
- **Dr. Carol Simmons**, Founder of the *Black Farmers Cooperative*
- **Gail Pryor**, Founder of *Ur the Key: Block Captains Association*
- **Kiasha Huling**, Executive Director of *Food Moxie*

A deeply engaging panel discussion followed, moderated by **Xeyah Martin**, President & CEO of *Empowered CDC*. The panel included both this year's speakers and two distinguished leaders from last year's summit:

- **Meeka Outlaw**, Founder of *Residents Organized for Advocacy and Direction (ROAD)*
- **Elaine Wells**, Founder of *Global Thinking Initiative* and Executive Director of *Tiny Trekkers PHL*

Audience members asked thoughtful questions about the nature of this work, the barriers community leaders face, what keeps them motivated, and how institutions can better support them. The summit offered a rare and important opportunity to 'flip the script'; allowing community leaders to speak directly to an audience of funders, non-profit professionals, academics, and resource providers about what it truly takes to do this work.



▲ *Neighborhood leaders are celebrated at the Philadelphia Environmental Justice Summit.*

The event concluded with a moment of deep recognition. As the panel closed, Xeyah Martin addressed the speakers saying, "We would like you to know that in this moment you are seen, you are heard, you are recognized. Thank you for all you continue to do."

The room responded with a standing ovation — a spontaneous and heartfelt acknowledgment of the invisible labor that so often goes uncelebrated.

We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's summit.

A Victory for Residents Concerned About Their Water

Clean Water Action keeps building upon efforts to uplift ratepayer voices! Several years ago we helped get Pittsburgh Water to establish a Community Lead Response Advisory Group to assist their lead team and provide valuable resident feedback to the authority. Now we helped get the Wilkesburg Penn Joint Water Authority (WPJWA) which services the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh, to approve the creation of a Customer Advisory Council (CAC) earlier this year!

The newly created CAC is composed of representatives from four main sectors — WPJWA leadership, community organizations, state elected officials representing the area and customers in the service area. As part of organizations sector, Clean Water Action has a spot on the council. The CAC is meant to provide a structure for community input and inform the WPJWA Board's decision-making through providing recommendations to the Board about general operations overview, upcoming initiatives or projects, community priorities and regional coordination between local governments, among other things. It, however, does not have policymaking, rulemaking, or rate approval authority.

The inaugural meeting of the CAC took place in May. The agenda include initial topics for discussion pertaining to lead, lead service line replacements and how to improve outreach efforts to the community. This is great progress for uplifting ratepayers' voices!

Keeping Water Public Controlled

Clean Water Action backed an Anti-Privatization Referendum that appeared on the primary election ballot in the City of Pittsburgh and overwhelming passed. The referendum amends Pittsburgh's Home Rule Charter — which governs the City and its authorities — to prevent Pittsburgh Water from being leased, sold, or transferred to a private entity. This was in response to an expiring capital lease agreement between the City and Pittsburgh Water that would have allowed the authority to purchase its assets outright for a dollar come September. This could have opened the door to future privatization efforts.

Ending Illegal Dumping in Philly

At the invitation of Philadelphia City Councilmember Anthony Phillips, Clean Water Action participated in a council hearing earlier this year on illegal dumping. This was the first follow up action by City Council's Street and Services Committee to their Illegal Dumping Resolution which called for "examining the city's response to illegal dumping, focusing on monitoring high-activity areas, enforcement strategies, and the development of effective tools to combat this issue".



We used the hearing was an opportunity to re-launch [Clean Philadelphia NOW](#) whose campaign platform outlines a comprehensive approach through prevention, abatement, enforcement, and education to eliminate litter and dumping by 2028.

All Philadelphia residents deserve to live in clean, safe, healthy, and thriving neighborhoods.

◀ [Philadelphia City Council hearing on illegal dumping in Philadelphia neighborhoods](#)

Drastic Budget Cuts Would Put Clean Water at Risk

The Trump administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget proposal threatens to eliminate critical State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) under the Clean Water Act — putting public health, environmental protection, and local economies at serious risk. These grants fund essential state programs that monitor water quality, control pollution, issue permits, and support community-led restoration. Without this funding, many states report they would be forced to shut down core clean water operations, lay off staff, and abandon key projects that protect drinking water, prevent harmful algal blooms, and ensure safe rivers and lakes. Clean Water Action has urged Congress to reject this proposal and is partnering with fellow advocacy groups to educate lawmakers on its harmful consequences. Learn more about potential impacts of the White House budget proposal [here](#).

Clean Water Action has been monitoring the reconciliation Bill H.R. 1 (the “Big Beautiful Bill”), which would gut essential protections for our water and communities. This legislation slashes funding for coastal resilience, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) facilities, and environmental justice programs. These are vital investments that safeguard drinking water, protect vulnerable communities, and prepare for climate impacts. It strips away the regulatory tools needed to prevent pollution and hold polluters accountable. We need bold, equitable action to protect clean water, not rollbacks that put public health and our environment at risk.

Around Town: **Source Water Collaborative** **Member Meeting**

Source Water Collaborative's Co-Chairs Lynn Thorp (Clean Water Action) and Deirdre White (Association of State Drinking Water Administrators) welcomed attendees to the annual Source Water Collaborative Member Meeting on June 17. This hybrid gathering brought together 31 national organizations to give updates, exchange ideas, and advance the shared goal of protecting America's drinking water at the source.

Toxic Chemicals:

EPA Should Do More — Not Less — to Keep PFAS Chemicals Out of Our Water

In April 2024, Clean Water Action applauded EPA for finalizing drinking water limits for six of the notorious per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals. PFAS are widely used chemicals that are highly persistent in the environment, have been found in drinking water sources nationwide, and are known to cause serious health problems. Yet this May, EPA announced plans that it would reconsider these Safe Drinking Water Act limits for four PFAS chemicals and delay protections for two more. Clean Water Action [released a statement](#) opposing weakening these health-based drinking water limits and urging EPA to accelerate Clean Water Act pollution limits and other initiatives that would keep PFAS out of our water and the environment in the first place.

These are examples of why we must urge our representatives not to cut EPA's budget or weaken our environmental and health safeguards.

[Take action today!](#)

Celebrating \$1 million in micro-donations!



Clean Water Fund's long-running partnership with SurveyMonkey's Contribute program recently passed a major milestone: \$1 million donated to Clean Water Fund, and counting. One powerful demonstration of what we mean when we talk about “strength in numbers.”

You can help speed us on our way toward a second \$1 million. Just join the almost half-million others who have signed up to take surveys benefiting Clean Water Fund.

Learn more at
cleanwater.org/surveys