

Decade-long Battle for Clean Air is Supported by New Science

Clean Water Action has provided support to the Comite Lost Hills in Accion (Comite) since 2014, helping residents protect their small community in west Kern County from multiple sources of pollution.

In 2019, Lost Hills became the first California community selected for state-of-the-art air monitoring through the California Air Resources Board's Study of Neighborhood Air near Petroleum Sources (SNAPS). SNAPS is able to detect contaminants that are not part of standard air quality monitoring.

The results were concerning. Western Kern is known for high levels of ozone, NO_x and particulate matters. But Lost Hills's results held an unwelcome surprise. An industrial chemical, acrolein, was found at levels more than double that of other Kern County communities. Acrolein is used as a biocide and fungicide and is also a by-product of industrial processes. The Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) recently released a cancer risk assessment of acrolein, concluding that it poses a potentially unacceptable risk of cancer.

In response, the Comite has hosted briefings from the SNAPS monitoring team and OEHHA, successfully lobbied for additional monitoring to confirm acrolein levels and determine its source, and are now about to kick off a community health survey.

The discovery of a problematic carcinogen is not good news, but the community's success in advocating for increased attention and their commitment to addressing future impacts demonstrates their growing authority over their own destiny.

TAKE ACTION!

Over the course of the past decade, Lost Hills community members have put significant effort into securing resources to address the environmental and health impacts plaguing their community. They were the first to receive the SNAPS state-of-the-art air monitors that detected extremely high levels of acrolein, and now they're responding to OEHHA's recent Cancer Risk Assessment, which determined that acrolein is 10 times more carcinogenic than benzene.

Support Lost Hills families in their fight for clean air. [Write a comment to OEHHA](#) and let them know you support the science and evidence Lost Hills families have fought hard to develop.



ReThink Wraps Up City of Alameda



In 2021, the ReThink Disposable Program embarked on a 5-year contract with the City of Alameda to reduce single-use disposable plastics in the food service industry. Times were very different in '21 — we had just endured the worst of the pandemic, people were still hesitant to dine-in even at their favorite restaurants, and fears around reusable foodware were palpable. Working with the forward-thinking City of Alameda staff, we decided to push forward with the program.

When we started, approximately 75% of dine-in restaurants were using single-use disposable foodware, like plastic straws, sauce cups, cutlery, coffee and drink cups, and paper plates. But costs were adding up — aside from the cost of the disposables themselves, staff time is required to inventory, order, and stock the single-use items, plus the cost for increased waste hauling. We found that offering even a small amount of incentive funding to restaurants who were struggling to hold on made a world of difference.

Since 2021, we have offered services to long time Alameda restaurants, helped new restaurants start their business with reusables from the get-go, celebrated saving local favorites money and time, and mourned when a restaurant couldn't make it and had to close its doors. We have converted over 100 restaurants and diverted hundreds of thousands of pounds of trash from the landfill, *saving tens of thousands of dollars* for the establishments still serving the community. Through it all we will carry with us the relationships and the deep respect for the City of Alameda that saw a need and decided to step up and lead.



▲ *Allie Hawkins owns Bay Lights Charters. She converted her 49-passenger dinner cruise to 100% reusable! Allie is diverting over 18,000 single-use pieces from waste per year and saving over \$1,500 annually that she can reinvest in her business.*

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In this final year of the contract, we can see great progress. Now as we visit the restaurants in the city, only around 65% are using some single-use disposable foodware, a 10% decrease from 5 years ago. That is significant progress towards helping Alameda reach its zero waste goals. Our ReThink team also kept our promise to focus on restaurants owned by historically-marginalized individuals, and we are proud to say that over the last five years over 85% of restaurants we partnered with are women/BIPOC/LGBTQIA+-owned. We have provided the city with case studies documenting what businesses can and are saving by switching to sustainable reusables, and now we're in the process of finding new funding to start tackling the takeout problem!

As we look forward to what's next for ReThink Disposable in California, we are committed to building on what is already working. We are excited to share our success in Alameda and more about the upcoming ReThink expansion, and we look forward to your continued support.

Making Progress on Affordability

Affordability is a popular term in political circles, and it's good that the struggles of American families are part of the political discussion. We look forward to that discussion translating into real change that benefits American families.

When Clean Water Action thinks about affordability, we think about millions of Californians that struggle to pay their monthly water bill, families that have to pay twice for drinking water because their tap water isn't safe to drink, or households that rely on hauled water because their well's gone dry.

Our water affordability efforts date back decades; we've advocated for bond funding for safe drinking water, co-sponsored the effort to create the SAFER program that has provided safe drinking water to over a million Californians, pushed state agencies to get dollars out the door faster, and procured a billion dollars during COVID to help households falling behind on their water bills.

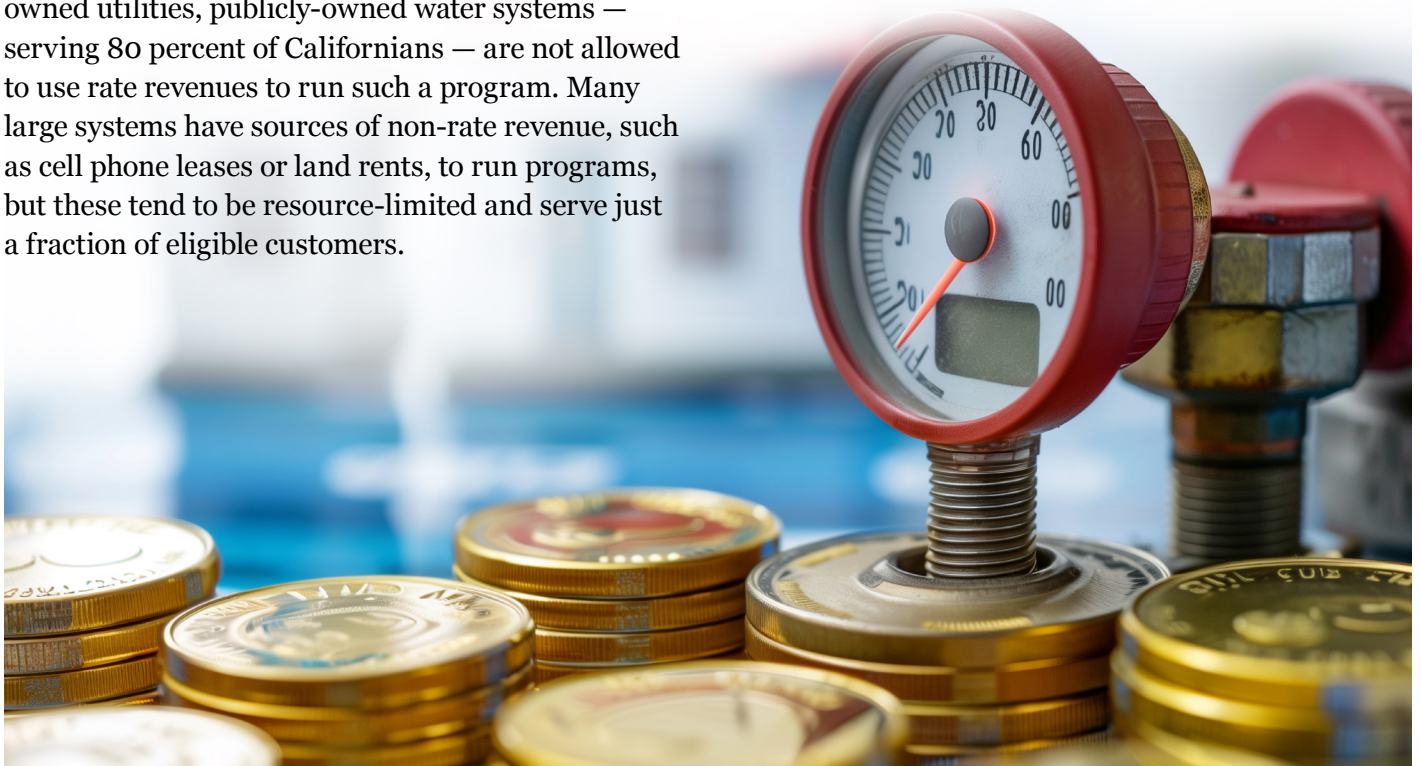
Unfortunately, water debt among California households continues to climb. And while electric utilities have provided rate assistance for more than 3 decades, each of the state's 2,700 community water systems is on its own. And, unlike privately-owned utilities, publicly-owned water systems — serving 80 percent of Californians — are not allowed to use rate revenues to run such a program. Many large systems have sources of non-rate revenue, such as cell phone leases or land rents, to run programs, but these tend to be resource-limited and serve just a fraction of eligible customers.

That's why Clean Water Action and its allies have been working for the past five years to develop a statewide low-income rate assistance program. Our goal? To slow the accumulation of water debt and help prevent water shutoffs.

This year, Clean Water Action and allies have introduced SB 1125, a bill that would create a low-income rate assistance program. And, after 5 years of meetings, discussions and research, the bill has broad support among the public water systems that would be providing the benefits. In fact, we're now working with a group of water systems to identify funding for the program.

SB 1125 has passed out of the Senate and two Assembly policy committees. Next month, it faces its biggest hurdle: the Assembly Appropriations Committee. If it can gain approval from that committee, the bill will be voted on by the full Assembly, then go to the Governor for a signature or veto.

This is just the first step in the effort to provide low-income rate assistance. We'll still need to find funding for the program. But we're not looking for easy victories; we're looking for results.



Turning the Tide in Congress

Over 90 percent of American voters, regardless of party, support protecting clean water and clean air. That support provides an important opportunity to replace anti-environmentalists in Congress with those who will protect California. With this goal in mind, Clean Water Action has endorsed candidates in key congressional races.



Mike McGuire (D) will face off against James Gallagher (R) in District 1. Both are coming from the state legislature. Gallagher has one of the poorest environmental records in the Assembly, whereas McGuire, the former leader of the Senate, demonstrates a clear understanding of the effects of climate change-related sea level rise and wildfires

on Northern California. As he says, “We have to stop the crazy, and get back to the priorities of taking care of people and our environment.”



While both candidates running in San Francisco’s District 11 are from the same party, our choice was clear. As a State Senator, Scott Weiner cut environmental reviews that protect low-income communities of color living next to industry. Meanwhile, County Supervisor **Connie Chan** understands that such communities bear

the greatest burden from pollution and has vowed to promote environmental justice in Congress.

Finally, **Randy Villegas** (D) will take on incumbent Dave Valadao (R) in Kern County’s District 22 (*See box, right*).

[Visit our website](#) to learn more about our endorsements.

Fresh Air in Kern County

For too long, communities in Kern’s District 22 have been represented by both Democrats and Republicans with closer ties to Big Oil and Big Agriculture than to the people living near these industries. However,



a new wind is blowing in this district as political newcomer **Randy Villegas** beat out industry

defender Jasmeet Baines in the California Primary — even though the Democratic Party had endorsed Baines.

Villegas, who has a strong commitment to the working communities he grew up in, proved that voters are turning away from the status quo and looking for leaders who care about their water, air, and futures. If Villegas picks up Baines’ votes in November, he can unseat incumbent Dave Valadao.

Your Vote is Your Voice. With federal efforts to limit access to voting, now, more than ever is the time to vote. With the state’s primary over, candidates will be vying for your vote in November. Be prepared to make your choices.

Election Day is November 3, 2026. Californians must be registered to vote at least 15 days before Election Day in order to cast a ballot — so **get your registration in before October 19**. If you miss the May 18th deadline, you can still register up to or on the day of the election, but your ballot will be given to you in person and considered “conditional.” That means that it may take a while for your status to be checked and your vote counted. **All mail-in ballots must be postmarked no later than November 3, 2026.** If you are mailing your ballot on the day of the election, make sure you have it hand-stamped with the date at the post office.

View our full 2026 California Voting Guide [here](#). You’ll find even more information on the [California Secretary of State website](#).

NATIONAL UPDATES

EPA Proposes to Roll Back PFAS Drinking Water Protections

In 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the nation's first drinking water standards for six toxic PFAS "forever chemicals," a major victory for public health after years of advocacy. Now, the Trump administration is proposing to rescind protections for PFHxS, PFNA, GenX chemicals, and PFAS mixtures while also creating a pathway for some water systems to delay compliance with the remaining PFOA and PFOS standards until 2031. PFAS contamination has been found in drinking water sources across the country and exposure to these chemicals has been linked to cancer, immune system suppression, developmental harms, and other serious health effects.

Clean Water Action strongly opposes these rollbacks. Communities should not be forced to wait longer for protection from toxic chemicals in their drinking water. Instead of weakening safeguards, EPA should accelerate efforts to prevent PFAS pollution at its source, hold polluters accountable, and strengthen protections for public health. During the public comment period, Clean Water Action is mobilizing members and allies to urge EPA to reject these proposals and maintain strong federal drinking water standards for PFAS. [Take action today](#) before the comment period closes July 20, 2026.

Honoring Excellence in Lead Pipe Replacement

On June 23rd, the Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative recognized 16 people and programs leading the charge to remove lead from the nation's drinking water systems. During the recognition ceremony, Lynn Thorp, President of Clean Water Action and Lead Services Line Replacement Collaborative Steering Committee member, presented the block of awards related to excellence in community engagement, ensuring equal access to replacement, promoting public health protection, and other aspects of program design that reflect a collaborative approach to getting the job done. Read more [here](#).



Our National Campaigns Team is excited to welcome two fellows for the summer from the Yale Environmental Fellows Program and the Yale Conservation Scholars-Early Leadership Initiative: **Jagur Parks** and **Brandi Williams**. As part of their first week, they had the opportunity to visit Climate Action Campaign's unique pop-up, the Museum of Unnatural Disasters. This moving exhibit highlighted how extreme climate events are affecting us all through artifacts and survivor stories.



EPA's Latest Giveaway to the Coal Industry

Clean Water Action has worked on securing stronger wastewater limits for coal plants for more than 13 years. In 2024, EPA finalized long-overdue protections to help control the hundreds of millions of pounds of toxic pollution being released by coal plants each year. Yet, in December 2025, EPA extended compliance deadlines by up to five years, prolonging the release of dangerous pollutants into our waterways. Now, in a second giveaway to the coal industry, EPA is proposing to weaken federal wastewater standards at up to 113 coal plants across the country. The proposed rule would threaten drinking water, damage critical ecosystems, and put the health of communities across the country at risk.

During the comment period, we spoke out at meetings with EPA, mobilized thousands of comments urging EPA to withdraw its plans, and coordinated a [community comment letter](#) with nearly 65 national, state, and local organizations opposing the rule. Thank you for helping us push back against EPA's latest giveaway to the coal industry.

Juneteenth and Environmental Justice: Juneteenth is a celebration of liberation, resilience, and the ongoing struggle to ensure that the promise of freedom is realized for everyone. As part of our efforts commemorating this important day, we're proud to highlight the environmental justice work happening across Clean Water Action. Read about it in [our latest blog](#).



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