

Summer 2026 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

A Dollar Saved is a Dollar Earned — Skip the Stuff!

Every fork and ketchup packet avoided adds up to money saved, less waste and exposure to toxics in plastic. On August 1, the strongest plastic reduction law goes into effect since the 2022 NJ bag ban. Commonly called Skip the Stuff, single-use cutlery and condiments will only be provided upon request for take-out orders. Full-service restaurants with seating capacity of 10 or more will only provide reusable cutlery.

Clean Water Action led a state-wide coalition in support of this campaign both at the municipal level with the passage of 65 local ordinances and then for the strongest state policy of



its kind in the country. The success of the new law depends on education. Marta Young, our NJ Deputy Director, has been busy making presentations and working to ensure people learn the many benefits of plastic reduction and provisions of the law.

Thank you to Clean Water Action members for speaking out during the campaign and helping us get the bill over the finish line! Now we need you to continue to educate your friends and neighbors as well as local businesses about the law and why it is important to follow it. Refer to Clean Water Action's [Skip the Stuff Toolkit](#) or [contact Marta](#) for more information.

Making Polluters Pay for Climate Damages

The deadly heat, corresponding loss of 29 NJ lives, shutdown of NJ Transit and subsequent flash floods over the July of 4th weekend are another reminder that the NJ legislature was derelict in its responsibility by failing to pass the Polluters Pay to Make NJ More Affordable Act (S2338/A3725) into law before the summer break. The bill requires the largest oil and gas extractors to collectively pay NJ \$50 billion over 20 years for past climate damages. These funds would be used for flood control; protection from extreme heat in schools and communities; road, infrastructure, and community repair, as well as agricultural impacts. We will be back in the fall to apply the collective effort of EmpowerNJ, a state-wide coalition which Clean Water Action co-leads, the 135+ supporting groups, grassroots activists who came to the State House for months on end, 75 towns that passed local resolutions, 43 Assembly co-sponsors led by Alixon Collazos-Gill, 19 Senate co-sponsors led by John McKeon. [Contact your NJ legislators](#) to urge them to vote YES this fall!



Kids Clean Air Zone Campaign Launched

Clean Water Action is leading a multi-pronged Zero Emissions Now campaign focused on fighting for clean air in communities adjacent to NJ's ports, warehouses, and other truck attracting facilities.

At the state level, Clean Water Action in collaboration with the Coalition of Healthy Ports (CHP), Earthjustice and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has put forth NJ Indirect Source Review (ISR) legislation. ISR would require air pollution reductions at warehouses, ports, and other truck-attracting facilities with higher thresholds for environmental justice communities that are disproportionately burdened by diesel and other pollution harms.

At the local level, Clean Water Action recently launched an exciting community-driven initiative, *Kids Clean Air Zones* (KCAZ). This initiative educates, engages, and empowers families to advocate for cleaner air and safer neighborhoods by passing local KCAZ ordinances that reroute trucks away from schools, homes, community centers, etc. In doing so, we create healthier communities where children can thrive.

Together, both state and local policy pathways will help reduce diesel truck pollution where our most vulnerable and exposed are most present. Additionally, Clean Water Action has organized several truck count & air monitoring sessions and port tours this summer. Collecting data and organizing annual truck counts in diesel hotspots like the City of Elizabeth (close to ports and lots of warehouses!), will be key to advocating for statewide policy like the NJ ISR bill in addition to establishing local Kids Clean Air Zones.

Our port tours are designed to increase community and local officials' understanding of the adverse impacts of moving goods, mostly by dirty diesel trucks across NJ, from port to warehouse to delivery, is having on public health and air quality for both workers and frontline communities.

Over the past six years, warehouse development has surged across the state. But for many New Jersey residents, especially those in already overburdened urban communities, this is not a new problem. Now, that footprint is expanding into more suburban and rural parts of the state. In response, communities are organizing, pushing back, and in some cases successfully stopping proposed warehouse developments.

In other instances, already approved warehouses remain vacant, fueling frustration and raising questions about local land use planning, zoning decisions, and future use.

We are also keeping an eye out for attempts to convert warehouses into ICE detention facilities and AI data centers. Clean Water Action is working together with other groups and local leaders to oppose efforts to modify existing permits and use. See separate article regarding data center proliferation.

While we may not be able to resolve all the issues surrounding warehouses and ports right now, we are off to a good start and ramping up our campaigns! Help us secure clean air for all by learning more about our [newest campaign](#). Contact [Tolani Taylor](#), our NJ Zero Emissions and Warehouse Organizer.



◀ **Warehouse Victory.** *Tolani Taylor of Clean Water Action (far right), Allentown leadership, and several other community advocates with Monmouth County Commissioners in Freehold, NJ after making an announcement of the rejection of warehouse development through a historic preservation bond ordinance.*

Protecting NJ from Data Center Harms

ChatGPT and its AI siblings are causing NJ communities to raise the alarm and locally fight back against data centers. Since the Governor and NJ Legislature have not yet established enforceable guardrails, Clean Water Action and 60 allied groups are calling for a state-wide moratorium on data center permits. [***NY is close to being the first state to do so.***](#)

Data Centers require a significant amount of energy to operate, as well as utilize PFAS (forever chemicals) and water to cool their internal systems. They provide little to no benefit to the communities they invade and can lead to local and worker health impacts from the toxics used, air emissions, noise, and water usage.

So far, Governor Sherrill has only announced a call for responsible data center development -requiring them to create and pay for their own power, mitigate impacts and more, but no state policies have been adopted to date.

For years, Clean Water Action has been working diligently as part of EmpowerNJ to transition away from fossil fuel and towards Class 1 renewables. The Governor's plan to advocate for an "all of the above approach" could undo our past successes — i.e., more gas and nuclear at data centers or on the grid. On a positive note, a proposed state bill (A1170/S680) would require data centers to invest in their own clean energy source.

NJ already has [***over 65 data centers.***](#) The proposed much larger data centers could have catastrophic



[NJ State Director, Amy Goldsmith, joined students, Pinelands Alliance, and others in an outdoor rally, press and flyering event at Rowen University where an industry Data Center conference was held.](#)

consequences for the state and NJ towns left to bear the long-term environmental, energy and health impacts. While we hope State House leadership will establish a moratorium, local NJ residents and advocates are not waiting. They are taking action to protect their communities by denying permits and/or passing ordinances to halt or completely ban data center development.

Red Bank (NJ) is among the recent towns to update its land use planning and development laws to ban them. That is not all...The Borough took it up a notch by becoming the first municipality to call for a state-wide moratorium on large-scale data centers. Our very own NJ Director, Amy Goldsmith, alongside Climate Revolution Action Network (CRAN) collaborated with Red Bank's Mayor and Councilmembers to deliver this historic win. Check out the [***model resolution***](#) used in this victory and protect your community from the environmental strains of AI data centers.

Rethink Disposable in our National Parks. Do you need a vacation this summer? Plan a trip to the National Parks and support [***Clean Water Action's national ReThink Disposable program.***](#) They are making great strides to reduce plastic pollution in [***three National Parks:***](#) Mammoth Cave in central Kentucky, Petrified Forest on Navajo and Apache lands in Arizona, and Jamaica Bay within NY's Gateway National Recreation Area. Water refill stations have been installed, and single-use foodware is being replaced by reusables. Public education is now underway, so visitors understand the many benefits of plastic reduction. Stay tuned for more updates!



Legislative Updates: PFAS, Toxics, and Microplastics

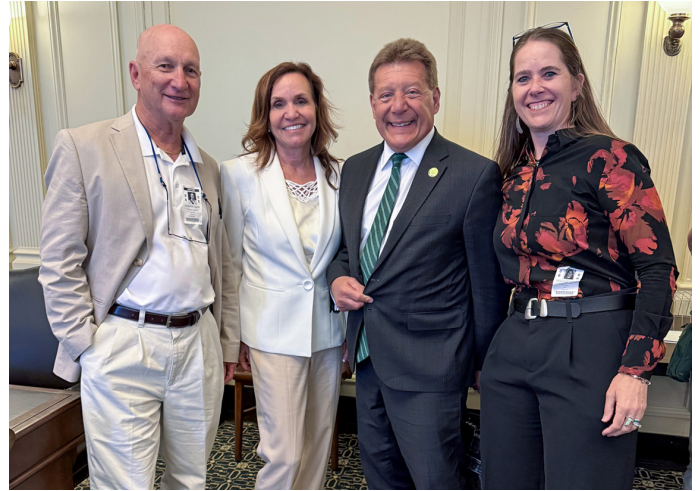
June has been a successful month for Clean Water Action when it comes to keeping pressure on the state to reduce our exposure to toxics. Thank you to our champions in the State House and our members' support.

PFAS are linked to numerous health issues and commonly referred to as “forever chemicals” because they never go away and accumulate in our water, soil, and environment.

Last session, NJ passed strong legislation to get a multitude of polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS) out of firefighting gear. On June 30th, S.1281 which limits PFAS in clothing apparel and diapers received bipartisan and unanimous support from the NJ legislature. It now awaits the Governor's signature.

It is refreshing to see both sides of the political aisle aligned on this issue. Water and sewer utilities are also allies in this effort as they are now stuck with installing costly treatment systems to reduce PFAS levels.

Plastic is used increasingly in construction. A current Rutgers study confirms that billions of nanoplastics are released into the environment per one Trek board cut. A landmark bill (S4058/A3763) passed out of the NJ Senate Environment Committee on June 4, requiring plastic dust collection at construction sites.



▲ Marta Young, NJ Deputy Director (far right) stands next to Senator John McKeon, prime sponsor of construction dust containment bill (S4058). Sherri Lilienfeld and Stephen Jasiacki (on the left) secured municipal ordinance in Margate, NJ.

We are also supporting efforts (S3254/A4908) to eliminate state Green Acres funding for artificial turf. It has received widespread support as it moves through the NJ Legislature. Clean Water Action has drafted a bill to be introduced this fall requiring [truth in labeling and removal of microplastics](#). Stay tuned for more on this and other legislative updates to reduce toxics exposures and plastics.



Welcome Cass

We are so excited to have Cass Lainez join the Clean Water Action team as NJ's new Environmental Justice Organizer:

“Hey, I’m Cass! I am excited to join Clean Water Action and wanted to share a little bit about myself. I am a proud New Jersey native who is dedicated to improving their home state through community organizing and impactful policy reform. As a progressive changemaker, my work has always entailed advocating for historically excluded and disinvested communities. I’ve learned life isn’t all work and no play, I find joy on the winter mountains snowboarding or binge watching a great series with my partner and two fur babies.”

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](#).



NEW JERSEY CURRENTS

Summer 2026

570 North Broad Street, Suite 6, Elizabeth, NJ 07208
njcwa@cleanwater.org | www.CleanWaterAction.org/nj
[X@CleanWaterNJ](#) [f cleanwaternj](#)

With staff based in Mercer, Monmouth and Passaic Counties

CURRENTS is published by Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund.
Reproduction in whole or part is permitted with proper credit. © 2026 All rights reserved.