

2015 State Legislative Round-Up

2015 was a mixed bag for the environment in the California Legislature. Clean Water Action achieved a number of big water and climate wins, but defeats at the hands of the oil industry were a jolting wake-up call about polluters' power in the state.

First the good news: California continues to lead the nation in protecting communities from climate change impacts. SB 350, authored by Senate Pro Tem De Leon, passed on the last day of the session, mandating that 50% of California's energy come from renewable sources and that the state double buildings' energy efficiency by 2030. Clean Water Action also helped pass AB 888 (Bloom), banning the use of plastic microbeads in personal care products. The budget, which passed in July was also a step toward a new era of transparency on water well information so the state can better manage groundwater, and increasing water regulators' oversight and scrutiny of oil and gas disposal and injection well permitting.

Unfortunately, Big Oil flexed its muscle to block some of the most important and commonsense bills to protect water, families and the environment. With the help of their Assembly allies, the oil industry was able to remove an aggressive, yet achievable goal to reduce petroleum use by 50 percent, in SB 350. Industry lobbyists also scored a win for polluters by delaying a vote on SB 32, which would have set ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

Industry used their influence and money to kill other sensible measures, including bills to:

- keep oil industry wastewater out of drinking water aquifers;
- require groundwater monitoring to detect pollution near oil and gas injection wells;
- prohibit oil production wastewater dumping in unlined pits;
- limit oil companies' dangerous chemical use in oil and gas development;
- improve environmental review and safety standards for oil well permitting;
- protect sensitive marine areas from new coastal and offshore drilling.

Once again, Big Oil spent millions of dollars fighting protections that could interfere with profits. The industry is consistently the biggest spender in Sacramento, averaging more \$10 million annually for the last 15 years. 2015 was a reminder of just how much bad policy polluters' money can buy and the need to end their unhealthy influence.



Celebrating 25 Years in California!

Clean Water Action celebrated its 25th year in California on September 20 at Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley. The celebration featured the band *Darkness into Light* and guests were treated to band member Jody Yeary's new song, "Clean Water, Sweet Water," celebrating our accomplishments.

Our early victories included stopping new dams and diversions on the Tuolumne River by getting portions of it designated as "wild and scenic," defending wetlands and waterways that supply drinking water to thousands by mobilizing Californians to protect the Clean Water Act, stopping proposed toxic waste incinerators in low income communities, and working to eliminate sources of copper, lead, mercury, and PCBs that contaminate California waterways.

We also celebrated passage of last year's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act last — a significant step forward to address drought and ensure a sustainable water supply in the future. In the last three years, we've won big improvements in how the state regulates the oil and gas industry, rectifying years of uncontrolled discharges of toxic waste into drinking water sources and ensuring better oversight in the future. We reformed the state drinking water program, speeding up standard-setting for key contaminants. Clean Water Action has also emerged as a leader in fighting plastic pollution, helping to enact 137 local bag bans, 88 foam container bans, the statewide plastic bag ban, and a ban on plastic microbeads in personal care products.

Those are just the highlights. There's so much more that we have accomplished and none of it would have happened without you, our members. You respond quickly to our calls to action. You contact your elected representatives. You show them that you care, and you watch how they vote. Keep up the good work — and we will, too!

Miriam Gordon, California Director



celebrating
25 YEARS
Clean Water Action
in California



Thank you AVEDA!

This past April, also known as "Earth Month," Aveda stores throughout northern California held fundraising events, like the annual Trashion Show, raffles, and cut-a-thons to support Clean Water. It was another unbelievable AVEDA Earth Month. The hard-working employees in northern California Aveda salons raised \$98,000 for Clean Water in California. We couldn't be more grateful.

Thanks so much,
AVEDA!

AVEDA
EARTHMONTH2015

Going “Old School” at Bishop O’Dowd

When Clean Water Action’s *ReThink Disposable* team entered the cafeteria at Bishop O’Dowd High School in Oakland to investigate reducing disposables in its food service, they found empty spaces in the cafeteria where, in the past, students would have left their trays and dishes, and where the dishwasher used to be. Like many schools in the 1990s, Bishop O’Dowd got rid of its dishwasher and ceramic dishes. They started using waste and litter-producing paper plates, disposable cups, and plastic utensils to serve breakfast, snacks, and lunch for the school’s 450 students and faculty.

The school has a focus on sustainability, and prepares sustainably sourced food on-site. Something was badly out of sync.

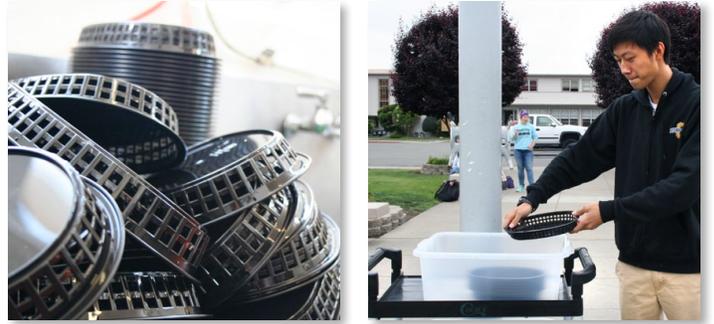
Working with *ReThink Disposable* on the transition back to reusables, the school considered installing a commercial dishwasher, but the cost was too high. Instead, they decided to replace two sizes of disposable plates with re-usable baskets that could be washed in the existing three sink system.

Winning the War on Drugs (in Water)

U.S. consumers pay higher prices for medications than consumers in other industrialized countries, like Canada, where drug manufacturers collect and pay for safe disposal of unused medications. Meanwhile, in the U.S., many drug companies spend millions to fight against responsibility for these costs. However, with strong public support, Clean Water Action has helped pass four county ordinances this year that require manufacturers to establish collection programs for unused household medications.

Following Alameda County’s lead with its first-in-the-nation ordinance requiring industry-funded prescription drug collection in 2012, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Marin Counties passed laws this year, both for prescription and over the counter medications. These programs alone have the potential to keep significant quantities of drugs out of water supplies.

Pharmaceuticals are routinely detected in U.S. waterways at low, but measureable levels. Eighteen drugs have been detected in the South San Francisco Bay, including drugs for hypertension, angina, arrhythmia, and migraines, as well as antihistamines



The simple change from paper plates to reusable baskets yielded amazing results. Before the change, the school used 123,719 disposable plates each year, creating 4,701 pounds of waste at a cost of \$8,991.

After students from the Sustainability Club helped roll out the program by teaching their peers to drop dirty baskets at collection points around the school, the school was able to cut waste by 3,376 pounds and save \$6,459.

Chef Todd, the school’s head chef and a key leader of the effort, said, “I think it has been a success and will go a long way towards reducing landfill waste and show alternatives to disposables to the adults as well as the kids who go to school here.”

— all of which have contaminated mussels in the San Francisco Bay. While the effects on aquatic species are well-documented — including reproductive failure, behavioral changes, and bioaccumulation up the food chain — the long term effects on humans are not well understood. What is clear is that reducing the quantities entering the water can help prevent serious public health problems.

The industry defeated a bill to require similar programs statewide two years ago, but Clean Water Action continues to press for action, and more local governments are responding. Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles and other counties are following the Bay Area’s lead and considering similar ordinances. Clean Water Action is involved in shaping these laws and organizing citizens to voice their support.



Learn more, www.cleanwateraction.org/CA_SafeDrugDisposal

Real-Time: Community-Based Air Monitoring in Lost Hills

There should be a warning sign for anyone entering Kern County: “Breathing May Be Hazardous to Your Health.” Kern County and the San Joaquin Valley are where you will find the nation’s worst air, two out of every three days, year-round. The local Air Pollution Control District has never met federal smog standards, and Kern County received failing grades for ozone and fine particle pollution from the American Lung Association in 2015.

Lost Hills’ 2,200 residents are 97% Spanish-speaking Latinos and 43% live below the poverty level. This unincorporated farming community also sits on the fenceline of California’s sixth largest oil field. AERA Energy and Chevron run the oil operations there.

Clean Water began organizing in Lost Hills in February 2014, documenting the cumulative health of the community. Community members shared health histories with unusually high rates of thyroid disease, skin rashes, and respiratory illness. Air sampling detected elevated levels of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) near the oil and gas facilities. These findings are

summarized in a January 2015 report by Clean Water Fund and Clean Water Fund, www.cleanwateraction.org/feature/californians-risk

Now, Lost Hills residents are working with Clean Water to see how community members might help document these problems by collecting their own air pollution data. The project will train local volunteers to record real-time data on harmful particulate matter and volatile organic chemical concentrations at households closest to oil and gas production, using low-cost monitors. Whenever air pollution levels spike, residents and researchers would know to collect air samples for specific contaminants.

In collaboration with Kern Environmental Enforcement Network, Earthworks, the state Department of Public Health and university researchers, this Air Monitor Feasibility Study could create a new model for empowering people in communities impacted by oil and gas pollution to collect scientific data and use the information to demand action.



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1444 Eye Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005
Phone 202.895.0420 | **Fax** 202.895.0438 | cwa@cleanwater.org