

## Putting Drinking Water First

Polls show that people consider drinking water one of the most important public health and environmental issues, but our policies don't always reflect this. That's why Clean Water Action campaigns to protect our water and urges everyone to "Act like drinking water matters."

Everyday activities — turning on the faucet or lights, flushing the toilet, growing food, getting around, making and purchasing products, and building communities — impact water and the environment.

Despite this, government planning, management, and decision-making doesn't always do what it should to protect clean water. And contamination and destruction of our drinking water sources can even happen as a result of poor decisions or inaction at a federal, state, or local level. Then communities are left to deal with the consequences; taxpayers foot the bill to clean up the mess either at the source or at the water treatment plants.

Putting drinking water first means using laws and regulations to prevent as much water impact as possible. This is the efficient and cost-effective approach. Consumers, taxpayers, and water systems all save money, have cleaner water to drink and recreate on, and less risks to our health.

Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, the agriculture industry, the largest water polluter in the country, has been largely exempt from Clean Water Act protections/programs — which is a problem for water and the broader environment.

When it rains, fertilizer and animal waste pour into nearby streams and rivers, contributing to



***"Act like drinking water matters."  
This approach has always been at  
the core of Clean Water Action's  
programs.***

toxic algal outbreaks and dead zones downstream. This pollution also seeps into groundwater — the drinking water source for 75% of Minnesotans. Because of those exemptions, industrial agriculture's nitrogen and phosphorous pollution is among the biggest obstacles to fishable, swimmable, drinkable water.

The oil and gas industry also enjoys a number of exemptions from federal environmental laws. For example, the industry's activities are exempt from several parts of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. Many of those exemptions were *continued on page 2*

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granted long before hydraulic fracturing technology was widespread.

The water pollution risks from gas and oil development or from agriculture are not significantly different from risks posed by other activities that do not enjoy such exemptions. It is just that the industries have been successful at getting special treatment under the law. Oil and gas companies and Big Ag are not the only powerful players who get to play by different rules. Energy production and agriculture are important, but federal clean water laws and other environmental protections exist for a reason: to protect our health.

Most people would agree that nothing is more important than our safe and affordable drinking water. Activities that threaten drinking water should be subject to those water and health protection laws all the time, and we should not exempt certain industries and not others. It is time to end the exemptions and special treatment. When we apply the law equally and protect water from all activities pollute them, it saves us money, keeps communities healthier, and lets people enjoy lakes and rivers without worrying about exposure to harmful pollution. That is what it means to be Putting Drinking Water First.



### **Stay in the Loop: 3M Settlement Part 3**

*This is part three in a series of updates regarding the implementation of the settlement reached between 3M Corporation and the State of Minnesota in February 2018. You can find the first part [here](#) and the second part [here](#).*

After months of planning, gathering input, and drafting project criteria,

the Pollution Control Agency and Department of Natural Resources (co-trustees of the \$850 million settlement award) are nearly ready to begin deciding the first major projects that will receive money from the 3M settlement. Helping to evaluate the drinking water needs of the impacted communities is consulting firm Wood, which has brought together engineers from each municipality and their own experts to determine the best options.

For the municipalities that are closer to the cities and have more dense populations, these options could include drilling new municipal wells in optimized locations, connecting to St. Paul Regional Water Services, creating new surface water treatment plants in order to use water from the Mississippi or St. Croix, or creating new drinking water treatment systems at existing treatment facilities. For more rural areas, things may look a bit different — there could be whole new rural drinking water supply systems created, or drinking water

treatment added to existing systems, or possibly even point-of-use treatment systems in really sparsely populated areas.

Clean Water Action has been following the 3M PFAS contamination in the SE metro area for years, so we're excited to be this close implementing large-scale projects that will result in clean drinking water for residents in the region. However, there's still a long way to go, and it will likely be the better part of a year until the first drinking water projects break ground. During that time, the state agencies will be taking input from the Government-3M and Citizen-Business working groups, as well as inviting public comments on the proposed projects. Throughout this lengthy process, we've been impressed by the transparency of the Pollution Control Agency and Department of Natural Resources, as well as their involvement of stakeholders and the public.

Keep an eye out for updates on Clean Water's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts! You can also find more info on the 3M Settlement at <https://3msettlement.state.mn.us/>

# Engaging the Public To Make “Big Ag” Change Its Policies

Changing the market is one of two major goals identified for achieving sustainable meat in Clean Water Action’s *Field to Fork: Sustainable Feed, Sustainable Food* campaign. With corporate agriculture conducting business as usual it’s up to consumers to change the marketplace from the bottom up. Customers of corporate agriculture — grocery stores, restaurants, and food service companies — can all improve their supply chains when it comes to sourcing meat produced with sustainable practices. Corporate agriculture has shown no urgency in implementing sustainable policies within their own supply chains. Consumers must urge Big Ag’s customers to do so instead.

*Field to Fork* aims to engage consumers in marketplace demand change under all sectors of corporate agriculture’s customers, beginning with grocery stores. With an increasing desire, and need, for transparency in our food system it is important consumers start speaking up. When grocery shopping, ask questions about where the meat comes from and how it was produced. Look for products

with trusted third-party verifications such as American Grassfed, Food Alliance Certified Grassfed, or Animal Welfare Approved. If you can’t find what you’re looking for at your local grocery store, tell the manager what you’d like to see! The best way to ensure you’re buying from a trusted producer is to buy local. Get to know your farmer and choose those with transparent practices.

To better understand where consumers are grocery shopping in Minnesota and what factors play in part in purchasing meat, *Field to Fork* has developed a survey to share with members and consumers. From there, we’ll identify the best stores to target, further engaging with consumers to push for implementation of sustainable policies in the stores’ supply chains. We all have a responsibility to be conscious consumers, taking care to vote with our dollar and our fork. Eventually, when there’s enough demand within the marketplace for meat raised and produced through sustainable supply chains — corporate agriculture and their customers will have to follow suit.



To find out how you can get involved, visit <https://cleanwateraction.org/campaign/field-fork>



# Zero Waste at Work, Home and in the Community

Our society uses and tosses way a lot of waste, a lot of single-use disposable products. We are already seeing the impacts through climate change, habitat destruction, and species extinction. Clean Water Action's *ReThink Disposable* program is dedicated to educate and engage businesses, institutions, government, and community members on solutions to eliminate single-use waste.

Over the past few months, Clean Water's team in Minnesota has focused on developing tactics to make changes easier for consumers. In the early stages, the organization conducted more than 200 surveys and found that most people forget to bring their reusable, but are interested in protecting the environment.

To help people recognize what they can do, Clean Water Action has created a simple pledge to help people realistically commit to making a change in their habits and checked in a few weeks after to enforce progress.

With over 300 pledges to decrease disposables, we offered our first zero-waste lesson, *Lunchbox & Lessen*. This free event provided innovative information from a panel of experts. Mallory Anderson, Hennepin County and Tom Johnson, Clean Water Action, facilitated conversation for best practices at home, work, and in the community.

We are continuously committed to helping people learn about overcoming obstacles and integrating new practices towards a less wasteful lifestyle.



# Best Buy Should Give Us the Gift of Transparency

Over the past several years, Best Buy has certainly progress in addressing the toxic chemicals found in their products. In 2017, the Minnesota-based electronics retailer released a new Chemicals Management Statement, which describes plans to phase out chemicals of concern and improve overall chemicals management. A critical piece of this Chemicals Management Statement is its reference to a Restricted Substances List (RSL) and Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL). These types of lists are a great way for a company to tell their customers and shareholders which hazardous substances they've eliminated or reduced in their products.

However, despite assurances that Best Buy would publicly disclose this critical information in 2017, the company has yet to release either their RSL or MRSL, and new information from *Mind the Store* and *Toxic Free Future* suggests that these lists are not going far enough. In their new report [Toxic TV Binge: An](#)



[Investigation into Flame Retardants in Televisions](#), three different Best Buy televisions were found to contain significant levels of organohalogenated flame retardants, a group of hazardous chemicals recently banned in furniture, mattresses, and children's products in Minnesota.

While Best Buy assures us that some of these televisions are no longer on store shelves, the testing results from *Toxic TV Binge* indicate that the company's lists of restricted substances either do not fully capture all the hazardous substances they should, or they aren't restricting these substances to a level that adequately protects their customers.

This year, before holiday shoppers go out and buy a new television or other electronics this holiday season, Best Buy should publicly release its Restricted Substances List and Manufacturing Restricted Substances List. Transparency is a gift that keeps on giving.

**Minnesota Environmental Fund:** The Minnesota Environmental Fund's (MEF) workplace giving programs support Clean Water Fund and more than 20 other respected and responsible nonprofit environmental and conservation organizations. MEF's local workplace giving option connects people to Minnesota's environmental charities through payroll giving and employee engagement. **Ask your employer to be part of MEF today.**



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