

Summer 2025 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Taking Action in Trenton!

Clean Water Action has been ramping up its legislative work in Trenton with a focus on limiting exposure to PFAS (also known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or forever chemicals) and Climate Superfund Act. See article on page 2 about our policy initiatives on plastics.

A major victory was achieved in May when the NJ Assembly unanimously passed [A4767](#), a bill that limits PFAS in menstrual products to 100 parts per million. This has led to a massive flurry of action in both the State Senate and Assembly concerning “Forever Chemicals” and the products folks use every day that contain these harmful endocrine (hormone) disruptors. Two such bills are [S1042](#), “The Protecting Against Forever Chemicals Act”, which would ban PFAS in most consumer products in the state of New Jersey, and [S3946](#), which bans PFAS in firefighting

turnout gear and ensures a “Right to Know” if firefighters are being exposed.

Climate Superfund Act [S3545](#) is making its way through the NJ legislature with support from municipalities throughout the state. This bill requires the top Oil and Gas producers (Exxon, Mobil, BP, etc.) to pay into a state fund for their role in the climate disaster that the people of New Jersey are experiencing. With over 40 legislative co-sponsors and over 40 municipal resolutions in support of the bill, New Jerseyans are sending a clear message that polluters should pay for their wrongdoing!

Want to become a Clean Water Activist, join a lobby day, and more? Contact Molly Cleary, Clean Water Action’s Environmental Advocate.

Save Our State!

On July 22nd, activists arrived at the community of Plainfield, NJ, which saw some of this summer’s worst flooding, including tragic loss of life. In the wake of this destruction, advocates and legislators alike declared that it should be the polluters who should pay for these costs, not the community that is reeling from this tragedy. Environmental Advocate Molly Cleary and State Director Amy Goldsmith rallied with EmpowerNJ allies and legislators alike to support the Climate Superfund Act (S3545/A4696).

This law, with around 40 town resolutions in support and 47 cosponsors in both houses of the legislature, would create a fund that would have the top polluters pay for the climate crisis they caused.



ReThink Disposable — Stopping Single-use Plastics and Toxics!

Clean Water Action is working to reduce [single-use plastics](#) and the worst toxics associated with them. Our NJ staff is educating community members, government officials and organizations about the harms of plastic and providing technical assistance to help reduce and convert to reusables.

The basic building blocks of plastic are made from petrochemicals, mostly oil and gas. Plastic never biodegrades but breaks into micro and nanoplastics and can be small enough to be found in raindrops, snowflakes and throughout our bodies. Nanoplastics can be found in the air we breathe, foods we eat and beverages we consume. There are over 4,200 known toxic chemicals associated with plastic that are hazardous to our health. They cause harm to our health during manufacturing, use, and disposal. Plastic has been linked to numerous health problems including cancers, endocrine (hormone) disruptions, obesity and metabolic disorders, asthma, lung diseases, and neurological issues.

Our NJ ReThink Disposable program is partnering with emergency food providers and businesses as well as county environmental centers and National Parks. We are providing technical assistance to help them convert from single-use disposables to reusables all while saving them money that can be used on other important programs. We are producing [case studies](#) to demonstrate our successes to date and the value of adopting this program on a larger scale through municipal ordinances and state legislation.

Clean Water Action is also leading the strongest national [Skip the Stuff](#) campaign. There are cost savings for businesses who do not provide single-use cutlery and condiments — which more often than not simply get discarded as trash and are cumbersome for customers who did not want it in the first place. In NJ, twenty-five (25) local ordinances have passed which allow businesses to provide single-use cutlery and condiments only upon request for take-out orders. Our [case study for the town of Red Bank](#) shows a 94% reduction in single-use items that businesses are providing.



▲ Clean Water Action participated in rally at Livingston Municipal Court to help hold [Formosa Plastics](#) (headquartered in Livingston, NJ) accountable for the toxics they are illegally releasing into our air and water.

Skip the Stuff has become a larger bi-partisan effort with support from both Democrats and Republicans. Our proposed state bill (S3195/A5157) applies not only to take-out but also to dine-in with seating capacity of 25 or more. There are now 6 State Senate sponsors and strong Assembly sponsors, with more co-sponsors in the wings.

For more information and how to [Take Action](#), contact Marta Young, Zero Waste Specialist.

[ReThink Disposable](#) is working with NJ businesses, municipalities, emergency food providers and environmental centers to reduce plastics, trash and toxics. Our staff educates and helps them convert



from single-use disposables to reusables, saving them money they can use on other programs. Our NJ and CA staff is also partnering with several National Parks to help them virtually eliminate single-use waste. Stay tuned to hear more!

ReThink Disposable
STOP TRASH BEFORE IT STARTS

Environmental Justice in Action

Communities across New Jersey are organizing for environmental justice — whether behind prison walls or on beauty store shelves — to protect health, dignity, and human rights.

Fighting for Clean Water and Environmental Health in NJ Prisons

Incarceration is often viewed solely as a criminal justice issue — but behind the walls of New Jersey’s correctional facilities, a public health crisis is unfolding. The Safe Water, Safe Lives campaign exposes the environmental health crisis inside New Jersey’s correctional facilities and demands bold action to protect incarcerated people from toxic harm. Incarcerated individuals — disproportionately Black and brown — are confined in facilities near industrial pollution, aging infrastructure, and contaminated water systems.

The Facts at a Glance

- **Unsafe water access:** Incarcerated people are often limited to just 48 bottles of water per month — about 1.6 bottles per day— far below medical recommendations.
- **Toxic exposure:** Water used for drinking and bathing has tested positive for E. coli and PFAS — chemicals linked to cancer and reproductive harm.
- **Heat and air quality:** Cells can reach over 94°F, and there is no protection from wildfire smoke or industrial emissions.

Clean Water Action supports the creation of a New Jersey Declaration of Rights for Incarcerated People — a policy vision rooted in dignity, environmental health, and accountability. We’re also advancing tools like the Toxic-Free Prisons Project to track environmental threats and pressure state agencies to act.

We are organizing a state-wide effort to ensure no one is left behind. Clean water is a human right — no matter where you live or who you are.

The Tea on Toxic Beauty: Protecting Women of Color from Chemicals in Cosmetics

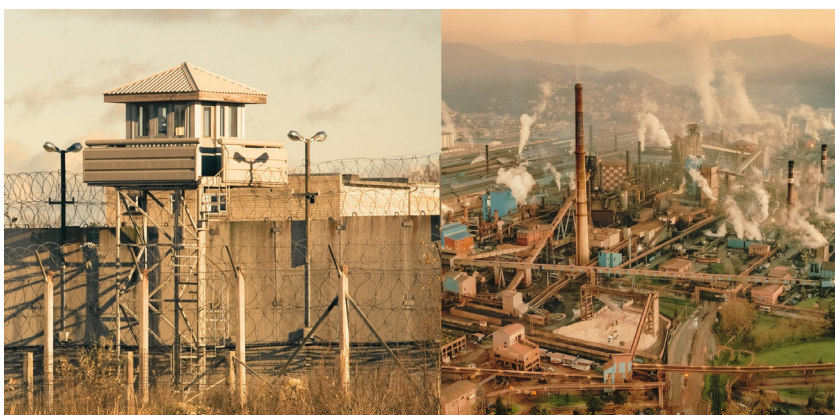
Clean Water Action is organizing against another form of environmental injustice—one that lives on store shelves and in bathroom cabinets. Beauty products marketed to Black women are far more likely to contain harmful chemicals like parabens, phthalates, and synthetic fragrances — many of which are endocrine disruptors.

Recent studies show that frequent use of chemical hair relaxers can increase uterine cancer risk by 50%. Yet, these products remain aggressively marketed to women of color, reinforcing beauty standards that come at the cost of health.

Through our Beauty Without Toxins campaign, we are educating communities and advocating for legislation like New Jersey’s Protecting Against Forever Chemicals Act ([S1042](#)), which would restrict the use of toxic PFAS in cosmetics and require clear labeling for consumer safety.

We’re also promoting safer alternatives — from natural hair care to clean beauty brands — and encouraging the public to explore tools like the EWG’s Skin Deep database. By raising awareness and pushing for stronger protections, we aim to end the silent harm of toxic beauty and fight for products that honor health, culture, and equity.

Get involved in our campaigns, contact X Braithwaite, Environmental Justice Organizer.



The Fight for Clean Air Continues

Clean air standards have been [under attack lately](#), but that hasn't stopped Clean Water Action staff and its coalition partners from tirelessly advocating for zero emissions in NJ's freight & goods movement!

Clean Water Action held a [truck count event](#) (Elizabeth, NJ) in May, honoring World Asthma Day. Local residents and member groups of the Coalition of Healthy Ports (CHP) monitored air quality in real time using Atmotube air sensors while counting trucks.

The data collected will document that as diesel truck traffic increases from nearby ports and warehouses local residents are exposed to higher levels of air pollution that create respiratory issues like asthma.

This truck count is also part of a larger *Why We Count* initiative being led by CHP member organizations including Clean Water Action, South Ward Environmental Alliance (SWEA), Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC), and the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA).

These truck counts and data collection efforts enable us to create hands-on opportunities for impacted community members to learn about the dangers of dirty diesel trucks used in port and warehouse operations. It also provides concrete evidence to motivate state and local officials to embrace the changes we seek like the rejection of (A4967/S3817), which proposes delaying implementation of the state ACT Rule (Advanced Clean Truck Rule) another two years and support for the NJ Indirect Source Review bill (A4679/S3546), which aims to curb pollution from port and warehouse operations. To learn more about *Why We Count*, contact CHP's Kelli Koontz-Wilson or Tolani Taylor, our Zero Emissions and Warehouse Organizer.



▲ Smart phone app (left) displaying air quality data collected in real time from Atmotube air sensor (right).



▲ Coalition of Healthy Ports members pictured after the Truck Count in Elizabeth, NJ.



▲ Truck Count in Newark, NJ organized by South Ward Environmental Alliance. (April 2025)

Clean Water Action will be hosting our annual **Autumn Toast to a Healthy Environment** at Weequahic Park (Newark, NJ) — with silent and chance auctions, games, music, food, good company, and more! We'd love to see you on Saturday October 18th, 2025 from 1-4 pm! Please visit cleanwater.org/autumntoast to buy tickets, become a sponsor, donate an auction item.

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

NEW JERSEY CURRENTS

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