

Summer 2023 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

## Environmental Justice Rule is Live!

After a fifteen-year wait, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection now has the power and mandate to deny permits for new polluting facilities, as well as set stricter conditions for existing permits and expansion. The [final adoption of New Jersey's Environmental Justice rule](#) is a milestone achievement and result of the unwavering dedication and advocacy of environmental justice organizations including Clean Water Action and concerned



▲ *Activists and residents rallying in Newark against proposed projects that would have added pollution to city neighborhoods.* PHOTO: FOOD & WATER WATCH NJ

individuals like you. Through sustained efforts, we successfully compelled decision-makers to address the persistent public health and environmental disparities faced by New Jersey's people of color, low income, and language isolated communities.

This first groundbreaking step will work to ensure that all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic status or race, have equal access to a clean and healthy environment. The law also emphasizes the inclusion of traditionally marginalized communities in the decision-making processes related to the siting of certain large facility permits.

By advancing these critical initiatives, we are not only safeguarding our communities' health and well-being but also fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for New Jersey. This progress serves as a testament to the power of collective action and demonstrates that change is possible when we come together for a common cause.

Our work is not finished. [Let us continue to work hand in hand](#), advocating for environmental justice and striving to create a world where everyone can thrive.

## New Jersey Needs a Budget that Prioritizes a Livable Climate Future

Springtime is New Jersey's official budget season! By July 1st, a balanced budget must be passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Murphy. By the time you get this issue of Currents, negotiations will have been completed and the projected \$53 billion for fiscal year 2024 will have been decided.

Did the budget prioritize investments that will grow the economy, reduce climate emissions, enhance community resilience, all while supporting the health and wellbeing of middle- and low-income families? Only time will tell... but in the meantime there is an ongoing fight to prevent a \$10.7 billion boondoggle from moving forward.

[Tell Governor Murphy, the NJ Turnpike Authority Commissioner, and your legislators this is not how the state should be spending public funds.](#) NJ should invest in repairing the bridge, expanding affordable public transit powered by clean renewable energy and making communities walkable and bikeable.

## ReThink Disposable Reduces Plastic and Costs for People Most in Need

New Jersey just celebrated its first year of the Bag and Polystyrene Ban. This was accomplished through the hard work of Clean Water Action in coalition with others. Approximately 8.4 billion single-use bags have already been avoided, and did not end up as litter, incinerated or landfilled. Thank you everyone for switching to a reusable solution.

Clean Water Action's ReThink Disposable program is now proud to partner with Franciscan Charities of Newark to help their food pantry convert from using single-use disposable food-ware to 100% reusables. Franciscan Charities currently serve mid-day hot meals to 200 to 400 clients (men, women, and children) five days a week. Families rely on these meals to survive. In the past, clients ate inside and enjoyed each other's company; but since the COVID pandemic, like many other pantries, they were forced to serve pre-plated, "take away" meals. Regardless of where they ate their meal, the pantry always served food on disposable plates or hinged containers, along with disposable plastic water bottles and cutlery.

Once Franciscan Charities move into their newly renovated building, meals can be served inside again, with dignity, on reusable plates with actual silverware, not plastic utensils, and beverages will be served in washable cups, not plastic water bottles. Switching to reusables is a huge win for everyone.



▲ *Approximately 300 million tons of plastic waste (an amount equivalent to the weight of the human population) are produced every year (UNEP). Only 5–6% gets recycled due to cross contamination of other products and types of plastic, lack of markets et al.*

By making this conversion from disposables to reusables, Franciscan Charities of Newark will save more than \$36,000 annually — eliminating the need to restock disposable containers. This in turn will prevent nearly one million individual disposable items (over 6,000 pounds of plastic ware) from getting littered or going into landfills or incinerators.

Clean Water Action and its ReThink Disposable Team helped Franciscan Charities of Newark make the switch. We are eager to continue to help other New Jersey non-profits and small businesses reduce plastic and waste while saving much needed funds for more urgent needs and services. For more info, contact Marta Young at [myoung@cleanwateraction.org](mailto:myoung@cleanwateraction.org).

**SAVE THE DATE!**

## Autumn Toast to a Healthy Environment

Clean Water Action is thrilled to host its 14th annual Autumn Toast to a Healthy Environment on **October 14th** at Feldman Middleton Community Center in Weequahic Park, Newark, New Jersey!

After hosting it for the first time in Newark last year, we are so excited to continue the tradition. Enjoy an afternoon filled with delicious hors d'oeuvres, wine and beer, live Jazz and a silent auction! We are looking forward to welcoming members of our community to this event, as well as new friends who want to learn more about Clean Water Action. Purchase tickets and learn about sponsorship opportunities at [www.CleanWater.org/AutumnToast](http://www.CleanWater.org/AutumnToast).

# The Fight for Zero Emission Standards

In March 2023, Clean Water Action's Zero Emissions and Warehouse Organizer, Tolani Taylor and Kim Gaddy, National and NJ Environmental Justice Director, attended the Moving Forward Network Conference in Washington D.C. Activists from across the country met with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) demanding that they include critical zero emission standards in the recently adopted Heavy Duty Truck Rule. That same month, EPA approved California's waiver requests — which allows several other states like NJ to adopt California's version of the Advanced Clean Truck Rule and Heavy-Duty Omnibus Rule. In May, EPA hosted public hearings on the draft Phase 3 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) rule. [See Clean Water Action's full set of recommendations for improving the proposed rule.](#)

When looking at the current state of the freight/goods movement in New Jersey, now more than ever stronger regulations like the ones mentioned above are desperately needed. New Jersey has been inundated with warehouse projects due to the increased demand of online shopping since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Port NYNJ, the largest port on the East Coast, has experienced a 27% increase in containers (since 2019) and more than 20,000 truck trips per day. Port trucks are typically some of the oldest and dirtiest trucks emitting pollutants like nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and many other harmful co-pollutants as they move from port to warehouse to delivery. They cause a wide range of health problems, including asthma, lung cancer, strokes, and heart disease — felt most acutely by our most vulnerable, children, elderly and environmental justice communities located adjacent to ports, warehouse facilities and where high concentrations of diesel trucks operate. The stark reality of these circumstances was witnessed at a recent tour at the [Port of Newark in April.](#)

Clean Water Action has been exploring a myriad of solutions to address this issue including NJ adopting an Indirect Source Review (ISR) policy. ISR is a provision of the federal Clean Air Act that allows states to impose pollution control requirements at ports and warehouses as if they had one smokestack (like a power plant) instead of many tailpipes. Down the road we hope to adopt a NJ Clean Fleet policy



▲ Clean Water Action Team before embarking on Port of Newark Tour.

▼ Image of truck traffic in Newark. In April, Clean Water Action and other grassroots environmental justice organizations toured of the Port of Newark to see the burden this pollution places on a community. PHOTO BY TOLANI TAYLOR



(similar to California's rule adopted in April 2023) which phases in truck sales to be all electric.

Clean Water Action recently held a Warehouse Convening (June 24th) to discuss not just ISR, but also provide networking opportunities, essential tools for activists fighting warehouse development in their community, as well as how best to use the 2023 election season to hold local and state elected officials accountable to this issue and communities most affected. Want to learn more and get involved? Contact Tolani Taylor at [ttaylor@cleanwater.org](mailto:ttaylor@cleanwater.org).

# Governor Murphy, We Need More Action and Less Words on Climate

Governor Murphy recently announced plans to rapidly advance New Jersey's clean energy agenda including mandating new cars sold by 2035 only be electric and accelerating the state's current goal of 100% clean electricity sold by 2050 to 2035. Unfortunately, the most important thing Governor Murphy could do to establish New Jersey as a climate leader was missing from his speech; just saying "no" to new sources of climate emissions.

[Seven currently proposed fossil fuel projects](#) threaten to waste money, make the problem even worse, and are environmentally unjust.

- Regional Energy Access Expansion's (REAE) new and expanded methane gas compressor stations (West Deptford, Branchburg, Old Bridge)
- Gibbstown Liquid Natural Gas Port and LNG bomb trucks and trains (along the Delaware River in South Jersey)
- Tennessee Gas Pipeline Compressors (West Milford, Wantage)
- Keasbey Energy Center Methane Gas Power Plant (Woodbridge)
- NJ Transit Methane Gas Power Plant (Kearny)
- Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission Methane Gas Power Plant (Newark)
- NJ Turnpike highway expansion — over \$10 billion for 7 miles of road (Jersey City)

Being a climate leader is much more than making speeches and issuing executive orders. It's about the policies and regulations you put into place to actually reduce emissions — and your willingness to stop new fossil fuel projects.

[Tell Governor Murphy we need more action and less words to combat the climate crisis.](#)

## Our Goal to Reduce Plastic Packaging

Clean Water Action and allies are working together on much-needed state legislation that will reduce excess plastic packaging. Customers currently have little to no choice but to buy products wrapped in single-use plastic. Toxic chemicals used in production pollute our communities and impact our health. Corporations need to reduce their packaging and waste! SB426 — New Jersey's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Bill — will hold plastics manufacturers responsible for the waste they produce rather than forcing taxpayers to foot the bill for plastics disposal. [Take Action: Tell your legislators to strengthen and support SB426!](#)



Photo: Bill McDonald, Algalita Foundation

## NEW JERSEY CURRENTS

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