

Winter 2023 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Urge Your Elected Officials to Protect ALL of Our Water!

On October 18, 2023 — the 51st anniversary of the Clean Water Act — members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Clean Water Act of 2023 (H.R. 5983). This bill would restore protections to vital water resources that lost them as a result of the May 2023 Supreme Court decision in the *Sackett v. EPA* case. Ensuring that all water bodies, including streams and wetlands, are protected as Congress intended remains a priority campaign for Clean Water Action. You can help by [taking action today](#) to urge your U.S. Representative to support this bill that would protect water quality and our drinking water!

We CAN Get the Lead Out of Drinking Water!

We will be mobilizing people to weigh in on a new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposal to reduce lead in drinking

water. EPA's proposal, though not final, is in itself a victory. We have been urging drinking water systems to fully replace all the lead "service line" pipes in their systems for many years and have urged EPA to include that in Safe Drinking Water Act regulations. Read our press release on EPA's proposal [here](#).



Federal Budget Update — Critical Protections and Investments Remain at Risk

As we go to press, the U.S. Congress has not finalized a federal budget for the fiscal year that began October 1. Extremists in Congress continue to propose massive cuts to clean water and clean air programs as well as to historic investments in water infrastructure and addressing the climate crisis. Your federal elected officials need to hear from you. Tell them to protect people and not polluters [here](#).



Environmental Champions Win Across the State

It was a great election night for Clean Water Action's slate of endorsed candidates in 2023, one that potentially set a barometer for the upcoming 2024 Presidential election!

Dan McCaffery was elected to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court which is the last arbiter for state environmental laws as well as voting rights cases.



Dan McCaffrey



Sara Innamorato

Sara Innamorato was elected Allegheny County Executive. She is the first woman to hold this seat and a leader with a strong environmental track record from her time in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. She'll be a critical ally in helping us tackle lead hazards and air quality issues in the Pittsburgh area.

Jamie Gauthier won re-election to Philadelphia City Council in district 3, and **Katherine Gilmore Richardson, Nina Ahmad, Kendra Brooks** and **Nicolas O'Rourke** all won Philadelphia City Council at Large seats. These victories will give us important partners in advancing our local efforts to address litter and invest in resilient community green infrastructure projects to reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.



Jamie Gauthier

We also had a series of commissioner victories in some of southeast PA's collar counties which resulted in not only maintaining control of these bodies but ensuring we have leaders who'll safeguard county election processes. **Josh Maxwell, Marian Moskowitz** and **Eric Roe** won election as Chester County Commissioners; **Bob Harvie** and **Diane Ellis-Marseglia** won re-election as Bucks County Commissioners; and **Jamila Winder** won re-election as Montgomery County Commissioner.

Speak Up for Environmental Justice!

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently finalized revisions to their Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy. We spoke out at hearings in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and generated public comments in support of DEP's efforts

to enhance opportunities for greater participation for Environmental Justice communities in the industry permitting process. **Protecting environmental justice communities isn't just about elevating residents' voices; it's also about holding companies accountable.** That's why we also backed their plans to prioritize inspection and monitoring at sites within environmental justice communities that have complaint records, habitual violations, or unique permit conditions.



PHOTO: ROY LUCK (CC BY 2.0) VIA FLICKR 21550937@N03/890060912

Philadelphia: Working for Clean and Green Neighborhoods

ReThink Disposable: Clean Water Action developed the ReThink Disposable campaign to prevent trash before it starts. We've worked in states around the U.S. to collaborate with a variety of establishments, ranging from family-owned restaurants to music



venues and school districts to fight plastic pollution by helping them make the switch from single-use

disposable food service items to reusables! We just recently launched a ReThink Disposable effort in Philadelphia. So far, we've been able to secure the commitment of eight restaurants in Center City and West Philadelphia to participate in the program.

Do you know a business or institution that would be interested in participating in ReThink Disposable? Contact Mercedes in our Philadelphia office,

mforsyth@cleanwater.org.

Neighborhood Green Visioning: Clean Water Action is helping bring green visioning to Environmental Justice neighborhoods in Philadelphia, starting with Kingsessing. We're partnering with a collection of organizations and local residents as part of the

Resilient Communities Stormwater Initiative (RCSI) to build new green stormwater infrastructure. That new infrastructure can include rain gardens, trees, permeable pavement, or any other structure that helps reduce flooding and pollution caused by stormwater. This infrastructure can also add other benefits, like reducing local temperatures and improving air quality.

Over the summer, several neighborhood workshops were held where RCSI partners, local residents and community leaders mapped out all of the existing greening programs and vacant lots in the neighborhood, toured them in person to evaluate options for further greening and potential challenges, and reviewed and approved a draft "Green Vision for Kingsessing" plan which categorizes the sites and shares information that potential developers should know. Over at least the next two years, RCSI will use this plan to work with Kingsessing residents and coordinate with resource organizations and funders to make the actual projects happen. As development continues to unfold, we're hoping this will serve as a resident driven model for other areas of Philadelphia.



▲ **Green Infrastructure:** Rain garden and landscaping that work to reduce flooding and pollution caused by stormwater.



Pittsburgh: Breathing Easier, Eliminating Trash



Single-Use Bag Ban Starts:

We helped get the City of Pittsburgh to pass a ban on single use plastic bags last year, in order to limit plastic waste, litter and environmental contamination. It officially went into effect as of

October 14th. When you shop at a retail store you will now either have to pay 10 cents to purchase a paper bag, buy a reusable bag or bring your own reusable bag. There are a few exceptions including purchases using an EBT card, dry cleaners, grocery store produce, meat and bakery goods. In order to ensure a smooth rollout and raise greater awareness among businesses and residents, Pittsburgh Mayor

Ed Gainey hired the first ever Environmental Enforcement Manager for the City of Pittsburgh.

Mon Valley Air Filter Distribution: In 2020, Clean Water Action helped the Clairton area-based organization Valley Clean Air Now (VCAN) start the region's first effort to bring residents suffering from poor air quality home portable air cleaners. Seeing the huge need (and long waiting list) for this program, we helped VCAN find significant new resources to help Mon Valley residents in a bigger way. Already VCAN has been able to distribute nearly 200 home air cleaners and is looking to get hundreds more out to families impacted by the high levels of industrial pollution that residents in Clairton and nearby communities face.

Learn more [here](#).

PFAS: State Hearing Highlights Risks to Fire Fighters

Clean Water Action recently testified at a meeting of the Pennsylvania House Veteran Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee on battling occupational diseases in firefighting. Fire fighters face occupational hazards every time they respond to calls. But the hazards also extend to the equipment they use in response to them. That's because this equipment often contains perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals.

PFAS are used in a variety of products that are resistant to heat, water, grease and oil. They're known as "forever chemicals" because they don't easily breakdown and persist in the environment as well as the body. Potential health effects include liver damage, increased risk of thyroid disease, and likely cancer.

The biggest cause of contamination in Pennsylvania has been the use of PFAS laden firefighting foams. Yet the threat to fire fighters doesn't end there. They also face additional risk just by suiting up because



studies have also found PFAS in the fabric used for firefighter turnout gear.

Clean Water Action recommended the committee press manufacturers to remove PFAS from turnout gear and in the short-term requiring warning labels on turnout gear containing PFAS. We also urged passage of legislation banning the use of PFAS laden firefighting foam.

Raising Awareness and Funds for Clean Water and Environmental Justice

Clean Water held a Bike-a-Thon for Environmental Justice that raised awareness of environmental justice issues in Pennsylvania and generated financial support our ongoing efforts to organize impacted residents and ensure low-income and communities of color in Pennsylvania are not unjustly and/or disproportionately burdened with further adverse environmental impacts. The first leg took place on October 28th at the Harrisburg Incinerator located in the Susquehanna Resource Management Complex and traveled 35 miles south along the Susquehanna River to the Modern Landfill in York, PA. The second leg on November 4th started near the site of the Nicetown Combined Heat & Power plant and peddled to southwest Philly passed the junkyard and tire dumps in the neighborhoods of Kingsessing and Elmwood. The 30-miles trip ended in the City of Chester passing the Chester Waste to Energy Incinerator.

In Pittsburgh, Clean Water held our 14th Annual Fall Fundraiser and Dewey Awards. This year we honored **North Braddock Residents For Our Future**, the volunteer-run, grassroots organization challenging unconventional shale gas extraction and pollution from Edgar Thomson Steel Works; **Pittsburgh City Councilperson Erika Strassburger** who secured passage of a ban on single-use plastic bags; and **Mark Dixon**, a documentary filmmaker, activist, and public speaker whose latest film “Inversion Documentary” is set to be released soon.

Thanks to all who turned out for these important events!



▲ Bike-a-Thon participants included Clean Water's Maurice Sampson, above left.



Thank you for supporting our year-end campaign, and our ongoing work to restore and protect our communities:
cleanwater.org/PAyearend

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1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1650, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Diamond Building, 100 Fifth Ave, Suite 1108, Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone 215.545.0250 | www.CleanWaterAction.org/pa
[@cleanH2OPA](https://twitter.com/cleanH2OPA) [Facebook.com/CleanWaterActionPA](https://facebook.com/CleanWaterActionPA)

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