



CALIFORNIA CURRENTS

Fall 2016 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Vote for Environmental Leaders

This November, Californians face plenty of voting opportunities to showcase our national environmental leadership around the nation and the world.

As always, the involvement of Clean Water Action members in the Golden State is needed to win for the environment and send the message to Congress, Big Plastic, and to other corporate polluters that Californians won't stand for politics that compromise the environment!

Dozens of Clean Water Action members in California have already volunteered precious hours of their time to call voters across the state, **reminding them to uphold California's ban on single-use plastic bags with a YES vote on Proposition 67, and a NO vote on Proposition 65.** And dozens more have called key voters in swing states, reminding them that a vote for Hillary Clinton in the presidential election is the only choice to avoid an environmental catastrophe.

Secretary Clinton has called climate change defining challenge of time, and she promises carry out commitments made this country in the Paris climate treaty. She will uphold the recently completed Clean Water Rule, too, which restored the Clean Water Act protections to the streams that feed the drinking water for 1 in 3 Americans and many of the wetlands that protect filter pollutants from our water. Meanwhile, her opponent has proposed hiring a climate change denier as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). His goals include evisceration of the Clean Water Act, and the agency itself. Perhaps unsurprisingly: Clean Water is with her.



CALL TO ACTION:

Vote Locally to Elect Clean Water Champions

Voting for clean water and the environment means voting for Hillary Clinton in the Presidential election, and casting a **YES vote on Proposition 67, and a NO vote on Proposition 65,** to uphold the state's single-use plastic bag ban.

Californians have the opportunity to elect environmental champions in national and state races across the country. Your vote really does count! To find out which candidates we've endorsed because they will stand up for important environmental legislation, check out:

www.cleanwateraction.org/states/California



PHOTO BY TERRY MCCORMACK, 2011.

Toxics In Packaging: The Right To Know

Clean Water Action's new report *What's in the Package: Unveiling the Toxic Secrets of Food and Beverage Packaging*, shines a light on the use of thousands of unknown chemicals in food packaging, many of which migrate and become actual ingredients in the food they contain.

Many packaging chemicals migrate into food and beverages. The FDA's lax regulatory oversight of chemicals in food and packaging allows companies to decide whether or not a chemical is safe and to keep secret what chemicals they put in the package. Consequently, consumers are being exposed to a wide array of substances on a daily basis without their knowledge or permission.

There is serious reason to be concerned. Little health and safety data is available for most FDA-approved food packaging chemicals, and where such data is available, it fails to consider repeated daily exposures to multiple products.

This approach has allowed chemicals tied to cancer, reproductive harm, obesity, cardiac and pulmonary problems, and other health effects to accumulate in food. One study identified 175 chemicals used in American food packaging as known or suspected endocrine disruptors, or exhibiting characteristics of carcinogenic, mutagenic, or reproductive toxicity.

Examples include carcinogenic perfluorinated chemicals in take-out food wrappers, bisphenol A (BPA) in can linings, and styrene in foam meat trays. The health implications are disproportionately serious in low-income communities and communities of

color that are more dependent on packaged food because of a lack of access and/or the inability to afford fresher alternatives. Most of the trash entering the marine environment from land is food and beverage packaging. The plastics and chemicals become part of the marine environment. Fish and marine life can become contaminated from ingesting plastics, packaging, and the chemicals in these products.

In the absence of federal protections, Clean Water Action's report is a call to action. The *What's in the*

Package? campaign calls on California to require food packaging chemicals to be put on the label, along with other food ingredients. The purpose is to give consumers more information when making purchasing decisions, and to drive companies to find safer alternatives in order to avoid having to disclose a dangerous chemical to the public.

It's going to be a heavy lift, especially given the influence of the packaged food industry, which has already delayed product specific warnings about BPA in cans as required by California law.



CALL TO ACTION:

Demand The Right To Know: What's in the Package?

Clean Water Action needs thousands of Californians to let legislators know that the people of the state have the right to know what is in their food. Sign the petition today and demand your right to know what you are being exposed to:

<http://www.cleanwateraction.org/features/whats-package>



Groundwater Matters: *Announcing a New Film Series*

Talking about groundwater regulations and governance can occasionally seem a little dry and boring, but it's a huge issue for California. And while the drought may be dry, its potential implications for the state are anything but boring.

In fact, the future of California as a whole is tied up in the health of groundwater basins. Did you know, for example, that groundwater has been providing nearly two-thirds of the state's water supply during the recent drought? Even if your water supply doesn't use groundwater, there's a good chance you're connected to a system that does.

Clean Water Action has been working to protect California's groundwater supplies for years. We've been working harder than ever in recent years, getting the Legislature to approve the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014 and ensuring it is implemented effectively. Because the issue is so important, Clean Water is launching a new project, aimed at engaging residents.

The "Groundwater Matters" film series will tell the story of California groundwater from one end of the state to another, over the coming months. The kickoff

film highlights the problems faced by two small communities in the Central Valley, whose groundwater levels are dropping at alarming rates.

Go to www.cagroundwater.org to learn about what the residents of Allensworth and Alpaugh, two rural communities between Fresno and Bakersfield, think about groundwater. And check back in another month or two for the next film in the series.

By 2042, SGMA says all groundwater basins in the state must be operating sustainably. That means that over wet and dry years, the amount of water pumped from the ground equals the amount of water recharged into the ground.

That's an ambitious goal, and right now, there is a deadline to meet. By June 30, 2017, the 127 groundwater basins that are subject to SGMA have to develop governance structures called Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), whose first task will be to create a Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

GSAs need to have water and land use authority in the area that they cover, which means that cities, counties, water systems, tribes and irrigation districts are all eligible to form or be part of the GSA.



Residents of two small Californian communities explain why groundwater matters in Clean Water's new film about the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Check it out at www.cagroundwater.org

If basins don't meet the deadlines, or if local agencies can't reach agreement about boundaries or governance, then according to SGMA, the State Water Board will intervene and figure things out for them. Local agencies don't like the sound of the term "state takeover", particularly not where water is involved, so most are trying very hard to work things out.

► [Join the groundwater journey at www.cagroundwater.org.](http://www.cagroundwater.org)

Another Award for the Rethink Disposable Program

The **ReThink Disposable** program aims to stop waste before it starts, and overall, it's now reducing disposable products usage by over 10 million products annually, preventing more than 100,000 pounds of waste each year, and saving small business operators thousands of dollars a year.

Waste prevention starts with you. By choosing to bring a reusable cup and packaging, you prevent single-use packaging entering the waste stream and causing pollution. But it's also about businesses and local governments.

By partnering with local government stormwater and zero waste programs, local food businesses, and academic and corporate institutions with food service operations, Rethink Disposable has, to date, engaged 112 food businesses and five institutions around the San Francisco Bay Area in reducing single-use disposable packaging.

And ReThink Disposable is just getting started. The program won the 2015 Governor's Economic and



Clean Water's ReThink Disposable team members accept the 2016 California Resource Recovery Association's Outstanding Waste Prevention Award at CRRA's annual conference in Sacramento in August, 2016.

Environmental Leadership Award, and has just picked up another: The 2016 California Resource Recovery Association's Outstanding Waste Prevention Award. What's more, local government agencies, mayors, and city councils have bestowed awards and recognition on several participating business and institutions. Let's Rethink Disposable, together!

Welcome to Guillermo Ceja Clean Water's new Kern County organizer!

Clean Water Action is happy to welcome Guillermo Ceja to the organization. As the Kern County Organizer in the Oil & Gas program, he will be working hard in affected communities and in policy arenas to reduce the impacts of oil and gas production.

Guillermo has been active in social justice issues for many years. He has experience in negotiations, educational equality, lobbying, and grassroots community empowerment. He has worked to enable and educate members in under-served communities to become independent active leaders. Guillermo received his B.A. in Visual and Public Arts with an emphasis in large-scale mural design, from California University Monterey Bay.

Welcome, Guillermo!



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