

## GETTING TO THE SOURCE OF PLASTICS AND TRASH IN OUR WATERWAYS

By Eleanor Jaeger

Clean Water Action wanted to know where all the plastics and trash in the world's oceans and inland waterways, such as the San Francisco Bay, are coming from. Research has long held that 80% of ocean debris is generated from land-based sources. It enters waterways through the storm drain system or gets blown into waterways from open garbage dumps and trash containers. But where is all that trash originating? There research just wasn't there.

Meanwhile, in California, some Regional Water Quality Control Boards have required local jurisdictions in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas to eliminate trash discharges to waterways. Local governments are meeting these requirements through increased litter collection, expensive devices to capture trash in the storm drain system, and public education. While



Debris in Baxter Creek.

these responses can control litter, they are costly and require taxpayer funding in perpetuity. They do nothing to reduce the amount of trash that is generated to begin with.

Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund's "Taking Out the Trash" program seeks to identify the types of trash being generated and to develop creative solutions to eliminate them at the source.

Clean Water Action partnered with four local jurisdictions — South San Francisco, Richmond, Oakland, and San Jose — and conducted a litter audit in them over the 2010 to 2011 winter months. Volunteer trash monitors collected trash at six different sites within the four jurisdictions and identified more than 11,300 pieces of litter. The data collected helped provide a snap shot of each jurisdiction's litter.

### The Results:

- Cigarettes are the most highly littered product, with quantities too high to count.
- Food and beverage packaging accounted for 67% of the litter collected.
- The biggest known sources were primarily businesses that do "to go" food service: fast food (49%), grocery stores (11%), convenience stores (10%), retail stores (8%), and café/coffee shops (7%).

### Solutions for Businesses:

As the biggest source of food and beverage related litter, the food and beverage take-out industry has the most significant

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*from the California Director of  
Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund*  
**Miriam Gordon**

Despite a challenging 2011 legislative session during which business and industry outdid themselves painting a false picture that environmental protection comes at the expense of jobs, Clean Water Action had several victories! The Governor recently signed four bills put forward by Clean Water Action and allies as “the Human Right to Water” package. These measures will:

- help disadvantaged communities obtain funding for wastewater and drinking water treatment;
- deliver drinking water contamination notices to non-English speakers in their own languages; and,
- provide smaller communities with contaminated water supplies access to safer water nearby.

The Governor also signed AB 1319 (Butler), finally ending the use of bisphenol-A, a toxic plasticizer, in baby bottles and formula containers. Our priority bill, SB 568 (Lowenthal) would make California the first state to phase out foam food containers. It made significant progress after passing the Senate with bi-partisan support and is poised for passage in 2012.

After years of campaigning for a safe drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium — the pollutant featured in the movie *Erin Brockovich* — Clean Water Action was pleased with the final Public Health Goal (PHG) of 0.02 parts per billion issued by the state. The standard faced repeated industry challenges, but the state’s decision favoring health protection is based on sound science. Now state regulators must factor cost and technical feasibility into the final standard-setting. We will fight to ensure that public health is protected in the process.

As always, our dedicated staff is active at the local, state, and federal levels — building policy from the ground up, working to stop pollution at the source, and seeking effective cleanup of contaminated waterways.

**Miriam Gordon**

*State Director, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund*

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## ANNOUNCING THE CLEAN WATER CARD

### Clean Water Action announces a new partnership with Capital One®.

Through this partnership, Clean Water Action and NJEF members and supporters applying for the **Clean Water Action VISA® credit card**, will be able to select between three different credit options to fit individual needs. Purchases made with your Clean Water Action VISA card will help support our Clean Water Action movement.

You can select between three great card art designs, and choose the credit option that you feel best meets your needs while showing your support for Clean Water Action. Great rewards, low introductory interest rate, or build your own credit — you decide.

Members who apply and qualify for the Rewards card will earn 1.25 miles for every \$1 spent on purchases with the card.

**This Clean Water Action VISA® card is the only credit card offered to support our cause. Apply today at [www.cleanwatercard.org](http://www.cleanwatercard.org)!**



## PLASTICS AND TRASH *Continued from page 6*

role to play in solutions. Clean Water Fund is identifying ways that this industry can reduce its reliance on single use disposable products. Recommendations to be shared in a new Clean Water Fund report to the industry and local governments include:

- Encourage customers' use of "bring your own" food and beverage containers.
- Provide more receptacles for garbage, recycling, and composting, making sure that all container types are properly covered.
- Implement an "Ask First" policy before providing additional items such as receipts, napkins, and bags.
- Use bulk dispensers for products such as straws and condiments to help eliminate unnecessary single-serve packaging.
- Establish "take-back" programs which require suppliers to take back and re-use or recycle packaging.
- Educate employees and customers about how to reduce disposables.

### **Solutions for Local Jurisdictions:**

- Incentivize businesses to adopt practices that reduce disposable foodware use.
- Enact measures that charge customers extra for "to go" packaging, thereby encouraging reusable containers.
- Enact measures that require "for here" meals to be served with reusable plates or cups.
- Introduce a disposable packaging reduction program.
- Provide litter education and outreach.
- Enforce anti-litter rules.

*Taking Out the Trash* revealed that up to 40% of the trash studied could be replaced with reusables, such as reusable food and beverage containers.

Substituting reusable products for disposable ones, can eliminate as much as 27% of disposable foodware and 13% of hot and cold beverage containers. For more information about this study is at [www.cleanwateraction.org/ca](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/ca)



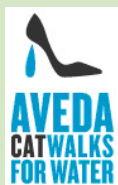
### **What Can You Do?**

*Bring your own!* Bring your own mug, re-usable cold drink container, bags, and food containers!



### **"TO GO" has to go!**

Volunteers with Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund's first Taking Out the Trash survey found that 67% of trash on Bay Area streets is take-out food and beverage packaging and fingered major national fast food and coffee chains as the biggest culprits. The best solution is to get rid of the most harmful packaging — foam containers — and switch to reusable containers.



Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund rely heavily on the financial support provided by our members, and through funding from foundations and other nonprofit and business community partners. This year, for the third year in a row, AVEDA selected Clean Water Fund as its annual Earth Month partner in Northern California. In addition to fundraising by AVEDA salons and retail stores, 2011 Earth Month also featured a Catwalk for Water "Trashion Show" event at Ruby Skye Club in downtown San Francisco. Runway models showcased designs made from recycled trash, raising environmental awareness and funds at the same time. **Thank you from all of us here at Clean Water!**



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Clean Water Action saw some significant progress on environmental and health protections this year, even with the legislature's focus on state fiscal woes and the economy. Here is a summary of measures backed by Clean Water Action in Sacramento, and their status.

### Human Right to Water:

Clean Water Action worked with community and faith community groups to win passage of a "Human Right to Water" suite of bills. All but AB 685 were approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

**AB 685 (Eng)** — Would have formally established the human right to sufficient safe and affordable water to meet basic human needs, but was held in the Senate.

**AB 938 (V.M. Perez)** — Ensures that non-English speakers receive written notification in their language if their drinking water becomes contaminated.

**AB 983 (Perea)** — Makes it easier for very low-income communities to seek funding to address problems with water quality and access to water.

**AB 1221 (Alejo)** — Creates funding opportunities for disadvantaged communities who lack traditional public drinking or wastewater systems.

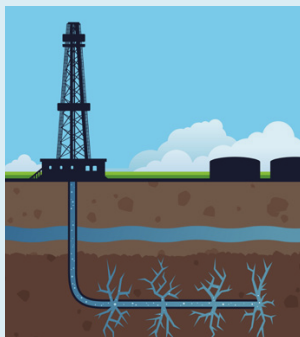
**SB 244 (Wolk)** — Requires local jurisdictions who are updating their general plans to plan at the same time to provide water services to adjacent unincorporated communities.

### Polystyrene Ban:

**SB 568 (Lowenthal)** — Building on the 54 jurisdictions that have banned polystyrene foam take-out food containers, this Clean Water Action-backed bill creates a statewide ban. SB 568 passed the Senate with bipartisan support, but was held in the Assembly until next year. *Ask your Assemblymember to support SB 568* when it comes to a vote in 2012.

### BPA Ban:

**AB 319 (Butler)** — Clean Water Action members helped achieve a major victory by contacting their state representatives and Gov. Brown in support of AB 1319, which bans Bisphenol A in baby bottles and children's sippy cups. The Governor signed the bill into law on October 4.



### Hydraulic "Fracking":

**AB 591 (Wiecowski)** — This bill would ensure Californians' right to know where hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is occurring as a means of mining gas or oil, as well as the chemicals and amount of water being used. Though fracking threatens local groundwater and water supplies, companies like Haliburton oppose the bill. AB 591 was held in the Senate until 2012. Please *sign Clean Water Action's online petition* to support its passage next year.



Find more on the above bills and how to advance these priorities in 2012 [here](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/feature/clean-water-action-california-2011-legislative-priorities): [www.cleanwateraction.org/feature/clean-water-action-california-2011-legislative-priorities](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/feature/clean-water-action-california-2011-legislative-priorities)

## HOW THEY VOTED:

### California's Legislative Scorecard

The U.S. House of Representatives is engaged in an all-out assault on the laws and regulations that have kept our water drinkable and our air breathable for decades. In addition to passing a bill that will gut the Clean Water Act, H.R. 2018, the House has also voted to make our air less breathable, with the passage this September of the TRAIN act. Representatives voted in October to reduce protection from emissions from cement plants and industrial boilers. Additional dirty water votes are expected.

Clean Water Action analyzed votes on 12 key bills. Scores for California's Representatives and Senators are shown below. More information and details on individual votes are available on Clean Water Action's web site: <http://www.cleanwateraction.org/feature/did-your-representative-vote-protect-environment>

CALIFORNIA			% PRO-ENVIRONMENT VOTES					
<b>REPRESENTATIVES</b>								
1	Thompson, M. (D)	92%	9	Lee (D)	100%	17	Farr (D)	100%
2	Heger (R)	0%	10	Garamendi (D)	100%	18	Cardoza (D)	42%
3	Lungren (R)	0%	11	McNerney (D)	100%	19	Denham (R)	0%
4	McClintock (R)	0%	12	Speier (D)*	100%	20	Costa (D)	33%
5	Matsui (D)	100%	13	Stark (D)*	100%	<b>SENATORS:</b>		
6	Woolsey (D)	100%	14	Eshoo (D)	100%		Barbara Boxer (D)	100%
7	Miller, George (D)*	100%	15	Honda (D)	100%		Dianne Feinstein (D)	100%
8	Pelosi (D)	100%	16	Lofgren (D)	100%			

**TAKE ACTION:** *Call or write your Congressperson and let them know how you feel about their votes. Urge them to let EPA do its job and tell them to protect us, not polluters! Go to [http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2155/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=8217#action](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2155/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=8217#action)*

### Phasing Out Foam Food Containers: Support SB 568 (Lowenthal)

Clean Water Action is working at both the local and state levels to get rid of foam food containers — a bad actor in the marine environment. Small pieces of foam evade litter cleanup and are mistaken for food by all kinds of marine wildlife. Polystyrene foam (incorrectly referred to as Styrofoam™ — a material used for transport packaging) is bad for the environment and toxic too. It contains Styrene, which the National Institute of Environmental Health Services determined is “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.” Styrene readily leaches out of foam food containers into food and beverages. Clean Water Action has helped pass dozens of bans at the local level and is pushing for a state-wide solution in this year's legislature. Ask your state Assemblymember to support this bill. [Go to www.cleanwater.org/ca](http://www.cleanwater.org/ca) and **TAKE ACTION TODAY!**





## CLEAN WATER FOR MONTEREY PARK?

The City of Ceres, near Modesto, may be coming to the rescue of Monterey Park Tract. Residents of Monterey Park (population about 130) have been warned for years not to drink their tap water, which is contaminated with nitrates and arsenic. Treating the contaminated well water is prohibitively expensive for so small a community. Drilling a new well is not a viable option; there are no available nearby locations that are not also contaminated.

Enter Ceres. The two communities have begun discussions about the possibility of piping Ceres drinking water to Monterey Park Tract. At a special study session before its July 25 meeting, the Ceres City Council heard presentations on the project's feasibility. Clean Water Action's California Director, Miriam Gordon, urged the Council to act quickly to help the community. A majority of the Council members then agreed to support the project.

However, the problem will not be resolved quickly. The Monterey Park Tract Water Board must complete detailed feasibility studies and find funding for the new pipeline. Costs for the new water supply may still be too high for Monterey Park Tract residents to afford. State health officials, the County and both communities would all need to approve any final plan.

*More information on arsenic and nitrates in drinking water and Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund's Central Valley drinking water programs is at [www.cleanwateraction.org/programinitiative/safe-drinking-water-central-valley](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/programinitiative/safe-drinking-water-central-valley).*

## COMMUNITY ACTION = CLEAN WATER

Activists and community volunteers in Morgan Hill, San Martin and Gilroy in Santa Clara County are organizing at the grassroots to fight toxic pollution, and they are winning.

In 2003, area residents learned that their drinking water was contaminated with perchlorate from a former Olin Corporation highway flare manufacturing site. They eventually learned that the plume of underground pollution extends more than ten miles from the site, impacting hundreds of public and private wells.

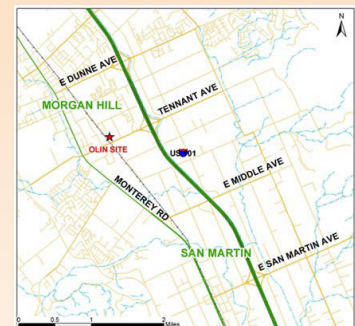
Setting aside their initial fears, community leaders formed the Perchlorate Community Advisory Group (PCAG) to work with water authorities for effective cleanup and to protecting public health while the cleanup was underway.

PCAG, whose meetings encourage public participation, now consists of community members, Central Coast Regional Water Board staff, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and local government and agricultural interests. Led by Chairperson Sylvia Hamilton, a former San Martin teacher, the group educated itself about groundwater geology, perchlorate health impacts, and treatment options.

Through PCAG's oversight and efforts by Regional Board staff, families whose well water was contaminated received bottled water to replace it. The site of the original contamination has been cleaned up so that it no longer adds perchlorate contamination to the water, and groundwater contamination is dropping as a result.

In July, after years of study and community input, the Regional Board approved a PCAG-supported plan by which Olin will pump and treat contaminated ground water and then re-inject the perchlorate-free water underground for future use.

*Clean Water Action is proud to be, at the invitation of this remarkable community, a part of PCAG, helping to restore safe drinking water.*



*Location of the Olin Corporation manufacturing site.*

# IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Clean Water Action has worked to improve water quality in the San Joaquin Valley for nearly a decade. Hundreds of small communities there lack safe drinking water and do not have the resources to treat or replace their contaminated source water. Despite myriad projects and bond initiatives to address these problems, the list of contaminated water systems continues to grow.

Nitrate is the most common contaminant in the region. In drinking water, nitrate can make it hard for the blood stream to absorb oxygen, causing “blue baby syndrome” in infants. Other health effects linked to nitrate are cancer, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and thyroid disruption.

San Joaquin Valley dairies, food processing plants, irrigated farms and other agricultural activities use or produce vast quantities of nitrogen. Nitrogen is converted into nitrate as it leaches through the soil and ultimately into the groundwater on which a majority of Valley residents rely for all or part of their drinking water. With more than seven million irrigated acres under production, this region is farmed more intensively than any other on the planet. Serious nitrate pollution problems are among the results.

Nitrate levels in Valley groundwater are increasing. Unless action is taken now to prevent further pollution, more communities there will lose access to safe drinking water.

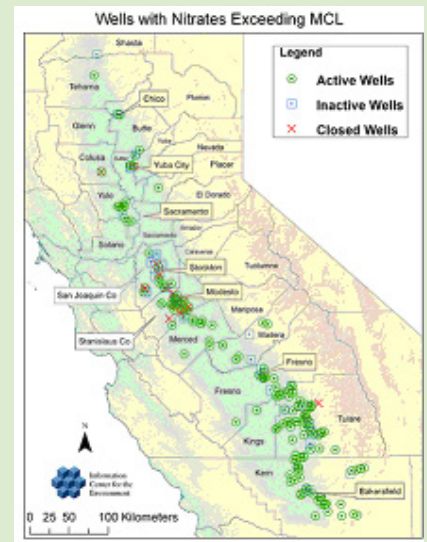
Before 1999, waivers granted under state water quality laws meant that this kind of agricultural pollution was not regulated. In 1999, California lawmakers passed legislation requiring State and Regional Water Boards to begin protecting water from agricultural discharges. In 2003,

the Central Valley Water Board began requiring farms to monitor surface water quality. Groundwater monitoring is still not required, however, and regulations to require reduced fertilizer use are still being developed.

Meanwhile, on the Central Coast, where strawberries, spinach, baby lettuce, and nitrate in groundwater are all common, the Regional Water Board is poised to adopt a pollution reduction program. That can happen once Board vacancies are filled. The governor is expected to begin making appointments before year-end.

Once in place, programs like these can begin to protect and restore water quality through reduced fertilizer use and improved irrigation methods. Additional benefits will include cost savings on fertilizers and water use, as well as reduced greenhouse gas pollution. Over-fertilization of fields can have 300 times the climate-changing impact of carbon dioxide pollution.

*More on Sustainable Agriculture solutions and how you can help is available online: [www.cleanwateraction.org/programinitiative/making-farms-and-farm-communities-sustainable](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/programinitiative/making-farms-and-farm-communities-sustainable)*



Department of Public Health, 2009

## California Currents

### WINTER UPDATE 2011

Clean Water Action is a national citizens' organization working for clean, safe and affordable water, prevention of health-threatening pollution, creation of environmentally-safe jobs and businesses, and empowerment of people to make democracy work.

Clean Water Action organizes strong grassroots groups, coalitions and campaigns to protect our environment, health, economic well-being and community quality of life.

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Turn this:  
**CLEAN WATER**  
into this:  
**CLEAN WATER**

When it comes to year-end giving, you already know that Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund are smart choices to receive your financial support. Your gifts can have a huge positive impact, helping to protect water and health, now and for the future.

Here are four tips for how you can make the positive impact from your year-end giving even greater.

**YEAR-END GIVING TIPS**

**1. Matching Gifts.** Many employers will match donations made to **Clean Water Fund** dollar for dollar or sometimes even 2:1 or 3:1. That could allow your \$100 donation to have a \$200 or \$300 impact for our water.

**2. Giving at Work.** You can support Clean Water through your company's payroll deduction program. Federal employees can designate Clean Water Fund to receive their gifts through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #10636). Contact us for help adding Clean Water Fund as a workplace giving option, or establishing a payroll deduction program in your workplace.

**3. Retirement Resource Opportunity.** 2011 is the last year for special retiree-only giving incentives created by the federal government. Until December 31, 2011, anyone 70<sup>1/2</sup> or older can donate up to \$100,000 tax free to nonprofits like Clean Water Fund from their Individual Retirement Accounts (traditional or Roth IRAs). Mandatory IRA distributions are otherwise subject to income tax, but not if they're given directly to charities in 2011. Call Clean Water Fund for details, (202) 330-2379.

**4. Give the Gift of Clean Water.** You can designate your online donation(s) as gifts in honor or memory of a special person or occasion. Visit the "Donate" buttons on the [Clean Water Action](#) or [Clean Water Fund](#) web sites to learn how.

**Questions?** Contact us by e-mail, [development@cleanwater.org](mailto:development@cleanwater.org) or phone (202) 330-2379.



## Surveys, anyone?

Do you have opinions to share?

Then you might be interested in a new program from SurveyMonkey that benefits Clean Water Fund.

**Sign up here:** [www.cleanwaterfund.org/opinion](http://www.cleanwaterfund.org/opinion)

### How it works:

SurveyMonkey sends you surveys to take online. For each one you complete, \$.50 is donated to Clean Water Fund (plus a chance for you to win \$100).