



Clean Water Action News

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2007

PENNSYLVANIA NEWSLETTER

New State Drinking Water Protection Legislation Introduced

In October, new legislation crafted by Clean Water Action was introduced into the State Senate to better protect rivers, streams, and aquifers that are the sources of our drinking water in Pennsylvania. Introduced by Senator Charles McIlhenny, the bill is called the “Safer Drinking Water Act” and was co-sponsored by ten additional senators from both sides of the aisle, including Senators Tomlinson, Boscola, Rafferty, Dinniman, Connie Williams, Greenleaf, Wonderling, Kitchen, Ferlo, and Washington.

Why do we need more protection for our drinking water? After all, the original federal Safe Drinking Water Act was passed in 1974 to establish federal standards for drinking water to protect our health. Unfortunately, our water rules rarely make the connection between what comes out of our tap and what pollutants we allow in our rivers and streams. In fact, we allow hundreds of pollutants into our waterways that are the source of our drinking water, often at levels much higher than allowed coming out of our taps. Most local water utilities do not have sophisticated treatment systems, and often conduct testing for contaminants infrequently,

sometimes as little as one test a year. Even if contamination is found, generally cleanup is many times more expensive than preventing contamination in the first place.

Further, **Pennsylvania provides no special protection for rivers or aquifers (groundwater) that supplies drinking water to a community.** Ironically, the most protected waters in Pennsylvania are cold water trout streams, because of how sensitive these fish are to pollution levels. While CWA has been a strong supporter of making sure that fish have clean water, we also feel strongly that people deserve special protection as well!

The Safer Drinking Water Act will mandate that Pennsylvania start protecting our drinking water sources properly. A first step is to ensure that no permits are issued to companies that would degrade water quality within a “critical zone” upstream of a drinking water intake on a river. Public groundwater wells will be protected by requiring municipalities to adopt wellhead protection ordinances. Wellhead protection rules will restrict certain activities that could contaminate groundwater in a “critical zone” near a well. Examples of these activities could include citing a gas station, or storing tanks of hazardous chemicals.

Clean Water Action applauds Senator McIlhenny and all the co-sponsoring senators of this common sense public health legislation. We are looking forward to the State Senate moving forward with enacting the Safer Drinking Water Act in the coming months.



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**SUPPORT
SAFER
DRINKING
WATER!**

Contact your state senator and ask them to co-sponsor and support SB 1109, the Safer Drinking Water Act.

You can send an e-mail to your state senator from our website at cleanwateraction.org/pa (click on the 'safer drinking water' link). If you would like to send your own letter, simply address it to State Senator _____, Main Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120. To find out who your legislators are, go to www.legis.state.pa.us.

It's Time for Action on Climate Change!

The science is clear: we need to reduce the pollution that leads to global warming in order to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change.

A world-wide panel of leading scientists put the debate about global warming to rest last year. They found that climate change is happening and that human activities are helping cause the problem. They outlined a litany of serious effects: rising temperatures; rising sea levels and melting glaciers; more severe storms and more severe droughts.

For Mid-Atlantic states like Pennsylvania, the result could be more frequent heat-waves and bad "air quality" days; prolonged droughts and extreme storms; damage to agriculture and fisheries.

We'll have less water available, due to less snowfall to feed our streams and more extreme storms where the rain washes away instead of recharging our groundwater. Warmer temperatures will also warm our streams, ruining some of the trout streams that attract anglers to our state. Lower flow in our rivers and streams will also make the pollutants in them more concentrated.

We know what we need to do to avert the worst problems. We must reduce global warming pollution by 80% by 2050 to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. To do that, we must move away from over-reliance on fossil fuels and grow a clean energy economy in our state and nation. That means increasing energy efficiency and growing renewable energy sources like wind and solar on a large scale.

There are two bills currently introduced in the US Congress that would enable us to achieve this goal. S 309, the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act, was introduced by Senators Sanders and Boxer, and HR 1590, the Safe Climate Act, was introduced by Rep. Waxman would both commit our nation to the 80% reduction we need.

We need all of Pennsylvania's Congresspeople and Senators to cosponsor these vital bills. So far, Senator Casey has cosponsored S 309 while Senator Specter has not. On the House side, Representatives Brady, Fattah, Patrick Murphy, Schwartz and Sestak have cosponsored HR 1590, while our fourteen other Congresspeople have not.

In addition, a new Senate bill, S 2191, introduced by Senators Warner and Lieberman, is starting to move in the Senate. However, the bill does not go far enough, and would fail to achieve the 80% reduction that scientists say we need to prevent the worst effects of global warming from happening.

What you can do: Write your Senators and Congresspeople today. Tell them that we need to take strong action soon to ensure 80% reduction in global warming pollution by 2050. Urge them to support strong legislation like S 309 and HR 1590 to fight climate change soon!



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Pennsylvania Newsletter

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Clean Water Action is a national citizen's 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. This update was prepared for our Pennsylvania members who contribute at the sustaining member level of \$60 or more.

Local Updates

Lehigh Valley: The CWA office in Allentown grew to become one of the largest CWA offices in the nation this summer. That means that we are able to reach out to involve more concerned Pennsylvanians as members and activists. Outreach efforts have been particularly focused on Monroe County, which is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. For years, CWA has had loyal members in the Stroudsburg area, but we are now able to involve new members in some of the fastest growing townships in the county. In Ross, Chestnut Hill and Polk Townships, 363 people signed on to add their voices to CWA's mission to protect the environment and public health, and to hold politicians accountable.

The strong response from Monroe County residents has helped CWA to continue its efforts in fighting a proposed sports car racetrack for amateur drivers in Eldred Twp. A developer wants to build the track on the north slope of Blue Mountain, near the Appalachian Trail, above the Aquashicola Creek, a high-quality waterway and trout stream. CWA staff and members testified against the granting of DEP permits to the developer.

CWA has also been involved in generating public support for special protection of the Tunkhannock Creek in Monroe County (part of the Bethlehem City water supply) and getting public comment in favor of a proposed county ordinance for strong protection for other area streams.

Philadelphia Area: In August, Clean Water Action attended a DEP public hearing in Collegeville to provide testimony on the dangers of trichloroethylene (TCE). Superior Tube Company, located in Collegeville, is one of the top five polluters of TCE in the nation. TCE causes headaches, liver and kidney diseases, and even cancer. The company has a history of violating their permit limits and having major accidents. The most recent accident occurred last July 10 when Superior Tube released over 3 days worth of TCE into the air in a span of just two hours!

Superior Tube recently submitted a permit application to DEP asking to change their process with the goal of eventually reducing TCE emissions. While in theory this is a positive step, Clean Water Action urged DEP to consider two changes to the permit application. First, it appeared that while Superior Tube would eventually bring TCE emissions down, that there could be some initial increases. Any increase in TCE emissions is unacceptable to Collegeville residents. Second, CWA has been urging

both DEP and the company to start working on safer alternatives to TCE that could be used at the plant. This permit application to DEP is a good opportunity to get a cleaner process in place at Superior Tube.

Pittsburgh Area: In 2006, Clean Water Action's Pittsburgh office began work combating diesel emissions, due to the serious impacts that diesel exhaust has on public health and the environment. Particulate matter, or soot, from diesel vehicles is known to trigger asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, heart attacks, and is a carcinogen. It is these concerns that bring together over a dozen local community, health, and environmental groups in the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution. The Partnership advocates the reduction of diesel pollution by installing tailpipe filters on existing vehicles that can reduce particulate pollution by over 85%, replacing diesel vehicles too old for particulate filter technology, and by policies to reduce diesel idling.

While these efforts are focused on all sectors of diesel vehicles, much of our initial energy has been centered on school buses, due to children's vulnerability to the health impacts of particulate matter. The result of this work is the launch of the **Pittsburgh Healthy School Bus Fund**. The first of its kind, this program provides the opportunity for school bus contractors operating within the Pittsburgh Public Schools to retrofit their school buses with diesel particulate filters and closed crankcase ventilation systems, free of charge. These technologies will nearly eliminate student exposure to diesel pollution on these buses. The Heinz Endowments has generously provided \$500,000 in seed money for the Fund, and the Partnership is actively seeking further funding from other sources. Clean Water Action is actively promoting the use of existing funds, and will continue to fundraise until all eligible buses in the county's largest school district are retrofit, clean, and healthy.



Make Your Voice Heard for Clean Water!

IN WASHINGTON, D.C.:

Congress continues to deliberate on the recently introduced Clean Water Restoration Act (HR 2421 and S 1870). Hearing will be held by the U.S. House of Representative's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in early December. We are hopeful that a full Committee vote will follow shortly.

Please take a moment to e-mail your representative and urge them to vote for the Clean Water Restoration Act (CWRA)! By going to our website at www.cleanwateraction.org you can do this in just a minute of your time.

CWRA is one of the most important clean water issues that Congress will be debating this session. Removal of Clean Water Act protections from streams and wetlands under the Bush Administration continues, and we need Congress to make a stand against these rollbacks by passing CWRA. Representatives who are undecided on CWRA or have already co-sponsored the bill are under great pressure from lobbyists representing developers, agribusiness, mining, and other polluting industries. **Make sure your representative hears from you before the vote!**

IN HARRISBURG:

The clock continues to tick on the upcoming bankruptcy of the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act (HSCA). Without additional state funding, HSCA will be officially broke on December 31, and the state will halt current hazardous site cleanup efforts. The state legislature has still not passed the funding HSCA needs.

Clean Water Action urges our members to contact your state representatives and senators and let them know that they need to find a way to permanently fund HSCA.

The state legislature must act to protect the public's health by enacting new funding for HSCA by the end of the year.

Go to www.cleanwateraction.org/pa and click on the "toxic waste sites cleanup" link to send an e-mail to your state representative immediately. If you would like to send your own letter, simply address it to your legislators at: Main Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120. To find out who your legislators are, go to www.legis.state.pa.us.



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