

Working for a Waste-Free Philly

Clean Water Action is a part of the Waste Free Philly Coalition which developed a five-point agenda to help Philadelphia transform into a city where neighborhoods are litter-free, trash and recycling are properly collected, dumping is a thing of the past, and a low-waste circular economy can thrive. With a new mayor and city council being elected this year in Philadelphia, the coalition is working to make these issues a priority for our next generation of leadership in Philadelphia.

The plan calls for the next mayor and city council to:

- **Appoint a new position of Deputy Streets Commissioner for Zero Waste and establish a Mayor's Office of Zero Waste.**
- **Appoint experienced and accomplished individuals** as Streets Commissioner, Deputy Streets Commissioner of Zero Waste, Deputy Streets Commissioner of Collection and Abatement, and supporting them politically and financially.
- **Implement the Zero Waste Plan** and develop strategies to achieve goals 2035.
- **Develop and implement the Litter Action Plan with the goal of ending littering and dumping by 2028.**
- Mandate all departments under the oversight of the Mayor's Office of Zero Waste to **use data and outreach to hold departments accountable** for transparency **as well as regain public trust** through partnering with communities.

Across Philadelphia, recycling rates continue to fall; waste collection has become unreliable; open dumping is rampant and the Streets Department has a long history of being under-resourced. These conditions contribute to environmental violence harboring blight, crime, and a sense of hopelessness among residents. But there's hope if Philadelphia's next leaders are willing to embrace, adopt and implement this five-point agenda. Learn more at

www.wastefreephilly.org



Pittsburgh:

Getting Local and Federal Officials to Support Our Right to Clean Air

Allegheny County continues to experience regular periods of poor air quality days, from 3–6 in a row, violating state air standards. Levels in the Mon Valley regularly rank as the worst air quality in the nation. These ongoing conditions have caused asthma rates among residents that are 2-3 times the state and national averages.

The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) now issues air pollution warnings and requires major polluters in the Mon Valley, such as U.S. Steel, to reduce pollution on dangerous air quality days under the new Mon Valley Pollution Episode Rule. Clean Water Action worked to get Allegheny County Council to hold a public hearing investigating the effectiveness of ACHD's air quality regulations, especially the Episodic Rule. Since it was put in place a year ago, ACHD has not been forthcoming or transparent about the Episodic Rule's effectiveness. The hearing was sponsored by Councilmember Paul Klein, Chair of the Health & Human Services Committee and featured compelling testimony by impacted residents, healthcare professionals and environmental advocates.

During this same timeframe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released their proposal to strengthen the national air quality standard for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). PM_{2.5} comes from many sources, for Allegheny County the largest ones are burning fossil fuels and industrial pollution, especially from the steel industry. The annual and daily emission standards were last updated over a decade ago. That's why it was important for us to provide and organize public comments to ensure EPA makes the strongest improvements possible. By setting the annual standard at 8 micrograms/cubic meter instead of 12, and the daily standard at 25 micrograms/cubic meter instead of 35, requiring all regions meet the new standard within 3 years and devoting resources toward protecting vulnerable residents



▲ Qiyam Ansari, Environmental Justice Organizer for CWA (left) speaks to EPA Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz (right) during a visit to the Mon Valley.

now through providing home air filtration, this can be accomplished. As a result of the recent air quality hearing, Allegheny County Council passed a resolution, 11-1, supporting EPA setting a new strict standard for fine particulate matter.

Clean Water Action has been working with local allies in the Mon Valley, like Valley Clean Air Now (VCAN), to get more action from the federal government on air quality problems. One important victory has been to get the CDC to agree to conduct a Public Health Assessment of the impact U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works pollution is having on Mon Valley residents.

We were also part of a collection of organizations that secured a visit from EPA Region 3 Administrator, Adam Ortiz. During his trip to southwestern Pennsylvania, Ortiz toured areas impacted by pollution in Mon Valley and engaged with residents living in these frontline communities. As a follow-up, a letter from 11 local groups was sent to Administrator Ortiz urging EPA to take a more significant role and concrete steps to better protect the health and safety of southwestern Pennsylvania residents.

Pennsylvania Environmental Justice Bill Moves Forward

Clean Water Action's efforts to pass state environmental justice legislation is making progress, with the State House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee recently taking several actions to advance Environmental Justice permitting legislation (HB 652), including voting it out of committee.

The bill is the product of a collaboration between Clean Water Action and State Representative Donna Bullock (D-Philadelphia). It's modeled after a successful policy that passed in New Jersey. It requires facilities seeking permits to prepare an impact assessment that includes any potential negative impacts their operations may cumulatively have on the environment of surrounding communities as well as empowers the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to deny a permit application if it finds those cumulative impacts would be an added detriment to existing environmental conditions.

As part of activity around the bill, Clean Water Action's Eastern Pennsylvania Director, Maurice Sampson spoke before a State House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee hearing. Maurice testified that HB 652's provision for facility permits based on cumulative impact is the legislative gold standard to advance environmental justice and that this legislation will even the playing field for low

income and communities of color by valuing health over economics when considering whether or not to grant a permit.

The hearing also featured testimony from Fernando Trevino, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Special Deputy for Environmental Justice; New Jersey State Senator, Troy Singleton who was the prime sponsor of the bill that Pennsylvania's is modeled after, and a representative from the regulated community which was selected by the committee's minority party chair.

There are more than 1,000 identified Environmental Justice areas throughout Pennsylvania that are defined as any census tract where 20% or more individuals live at or below the federal poverty line and/or 30% or more of the population identifies as a non-white minority. Historically, polluting facilities are too often built in these areas because they lack the clout necessary to influence decision-makers. As a result, the people in these communities live with hazardous conditions that potentially poison their water and air, impact their health, and drive down their property values.

Pennsylvania's current Environmental Justice practices are limited to the primary goal of increasing communities' awareness through the permitting process's comment period. That's why we need Environmental Justice legislation, like HB 652, to ensure ALL residents have their constitutional right to clean air and water, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and ethical values of the environment.

Help us follow up on the positive momentum taking place by [reaching out to your legislator](#) about bringing HB 652 up for a vote before the full chamber.

► *Maurice Sampson, CWA Eastern PA Director, testifies to PA House Environmental Resources Committee on the need for environmental justice legislation.*



▲ *Rep. Abney (Pittsburgh) met with CWA members and volunteers during our recent Environmental Justice Lobby Day in Harrisburg.*

Clean Water Champions Succeed in Primary Elections

Thanks for being a Clean Water voter in the May 16th primary election! As a result, the majority of our endorsed candidates won their races including:

- Sara Innamorato for Allegheny County Executive
- Barb Warwick for Pittsburgh City Council, District 5
- Deb Gross for Pittsburgh City Council, District 7
- Khari Mosley for Pittsburgh City Council, District 9
- Jamie Gauthier for Philadelphia City Council, District 3
- Antony Phillips for Philadelphia City Council, District 9
- Katherine Gilmore Richardson for Philadelphia City Council, at Large
- Nina Ahmad for Philadelphia City Council, at Large
- Heather Boyd for State Representative, District 163

Heather Boyd's victory was in a special election that was critical for allowing Democrats to maintain their recently won control of the State House for the first time in over a decade. Sara Innamorato's win is also noteworthy because it's the first time a true environmental leader has become Allegheny County Executive. Clean Water Action has supported Sara since she first ran for State House in 2018, and we look forward to working with her on clean water and clean air issues in the Pittsburgh area.



▲ Heather Boyd and Sara Innamorato

Some of the other outcomes were real watershed events that signal a growing, strong, progressive leadership trend within our government. It also brings us a step closer to creating a cleaner and healthier environment for ALL, as this mix of candidates will apply their firsthand policy knowledge and community experience to lead on climate change, reduce plastic pollution, tackle flooding and stormwater issues by creating green spaces, uplift Environmental Justice communities and address ongoing lead hazards.

Now onto the general election!

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