



CHESAPEAKE CURRENTS

Fall 2020 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

Elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris



The stakes have never been higher for our water, health, or climate. We need a President who has a bold vision to address the climate crisis, who follows the science, and who will put our water and communities first. Joe Biden will be that President.

The country can't afford another 4 months of the Trump administration, let alone another 4 years. In late September, during a trip to California in the wake of devastating climate-fueled fires, the President had the gall to say "it'll get cooler" and "I don't think the science knows, actually" during a discussion that mentioned climate change. That is a stunning amount of deliberate ignorance from the President.

That alone should make him unfit to serve. But it goes deeper than that — the Trump administration has spent the last four years weakening the Clean Water Act, refusing to take steps to address the climate crisis, and doing everything it can to pad the profits of corporate polluters like the fossil fuel industry. This has to stop.

How it stops is electing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

A Biden-Harris administration will use the power of the federal government to fight environmental injustice. Biden has committed to holding polluters accountable for the damage they do to communities. A Biden administration will restore our country's global role in addressing climate change and has committed to significant investments in clean energy and to aggressive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Biden and Harris are committed to critical democracy reforms to ensure that people and community voices are not drowned out by money in politics, lack of ballot access, and ethics problems.

The bottom-line: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will lead the way in restoring critical environmental and public health protections to safeguard our water and communities. It's that simple.

Make sure when you cast your ballot, you cast it for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

For more information: <https://cleanwateraction.org/biden-harris>

Be a Clean Water Voter in 2020. You might cast your ballot differently this year. To make sure your vote gets counted, make a plan. That means doubling checking your voter registration status; deciding if you want to vote via absentee ballot, and knowing the rules; finding out if your polling location has changed; and more.

We've created a handy resource — learn more here:

<https://cleanwateraction.org/features/be-clean-water-voter-2020-voter-information>



VIRGINIA

2020 Endorsements: Putting Pro-environment Leaders in Congress

Clean Water Action is focused on electing candidates who will put people first by supporting common sense laws to protect our water, health, and environment.



VA-05: Doctor Cameron Webb (Challenger)

A practicing physician, Dr. Cameron Webb treats patients in Charlottesville as a general internist, teaches students and serves as the Director of Health Policy and Equity at UVA's School of Medicine. Cameron is running for Congress to serve his community at this critical time. In Washington, he will be a fierce advocate to ensure opportunities for clean water, health and success for all Virginians.

In his Clean Water Candidate Survey, Cameron stated that there is no more pressing emergency than our climate crisis and protecting clean water, and if elected will fight for clean energy and the Clean Water Act, "President Trump's attacks on the Clean Water Rule will lead to countless illnesses, deaths, and environmental destruction." (www.drcameronwebb.com)



VA-07: Abigail Spanberger (Incumbent)

Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger's election in 2018 made her the first Democratic representative of the district since 1971. In Congress, Abigail has dedicated herself to growing the economy and protecting the environment. Abigail's leadership along with Virginia's record of restoring the Chesapeake Bay while being one of the best states for business shows how compatible these goals are.

Abigail received her M.B.A. from a dual-degree German-American program between Purdue University and the GISMA business school, and served as a federal law enforcement officer for the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and a case officer for the CIA. (www.abigailspanberger.com)



VA-10: Jennifer Wexton (Clean Water Action Hero)

Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton has been serving the people of Northern Virginia and Shenandoah Valley for nearly two decades. In Congress Jennifer has worked to protect open space, invest in Metro and clean energy technology, and defend protections for streams and wetlands across the nation.

A native of the Washington area, Jennifer graduated with honors from the University of Maryland in College Park, and earned her law degree in 1995 from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. (www.house.wexton.gov)

MARYLAND

Our Canvassers at Work

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has upended Clean Water Action's field teams as the organization was forced to suspend door-to-door operations, laying off staff and shifting entirely to phone calling. Our field canvass leaders stood together, faced uncertainty and anxiety together, promised to ride it out, and began phone canvassing. Field staff making this transition were lucky — Clean Water Action has several established and successful phone canvasses, and the team was able to draw on their knowledge and experience to ease the transition.

Door-to-door canvassing has been a hallmark of political campaigns for decades. There exists an idealized view that canvassing is about changing the hearts and minds of the undecided or the apathetic. And while there is evidence¹ that it can be a deciding factor in primary elections and campaign-based issues, when it comes to general elections, the role of canvass teams is to turn out as many voters as possible. The last few months, Clean Water Action

has worked in partnership with the Center for Voter Information to reach thousands of voters in the “Rising American Electorate”² — people of color, unmarried women, and young people.

It was an adjustment, but for the organization’s field canvassers, it has been nice to connect with people again, even to commiserate. Recently, one of our canvassers shared that they had talked to an older woman on the phone for 20 minutes. They emphasized that it was the sweetest conversation that they had had in a long time. They were able to bond over their shared anger and disappointment about the political situation that we are in but also were able to express their shared hope.

Every time organizers are able to clear a misconception or answer a question about voting by mail moves the country one step closer to removing the most vehemently anti-environmental administration from power.

¹<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/28/16367580/campaigning-doesnt-work-general-election-study-kalla-broockman>

²<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/voter-registration-is-soaring-amid-nationwide-protests-but-its-unclear-what-that-will-mean-in-november/>

Here is some of the important information you need to know for voting.

**Election Day
is Tuesday,
November 3rd!**



MARYLAND

- Ballot applications will be sent to every voter, *not* ballots. This is different from the primary.
- To request a mail-in ballot, the State Board of Elections or your local board must receive the request by October 20.
- Mail-in ballots must be postmarked (or placed in a designated drop box) by 8:00pm on November 3.
- Early voting will be held October 26 to November 2.
- Voters may register to vote during early voting or on Election Day (in person).

VIRGINIA

- The deadline to register to vote or update your registration is October 13.
- To request a mail-in ballot (by mail), your ballot must be received by your registrar by October 20.
- Early voting takes place from September 18 to October 31.

DISTRICT

- DC will mail all active registered voters a mail-in ballot at their registered address beginning the first week of October.
- Early voting will be held October 27 to November 2.
- You may register to vote during early voting or on Election Day (in person)

MARYLAND

Securing More Assistance for Baltimore Residents Dealing with Sewage Backups

Raw sewage backs up into thousands of homes in Baltimore City every year. Sometimes, that's a small backup caused by tree roots infiltrating the home's sewage line, but many times, it's a massive flood of other homes' sewage caused when rainwater gets into the sewage system through cracks in the pipes. And the number of sewage backups in the city have increased from hundreds to thousands in the past two decades, as the city shut off overflow pipes that were designed to let sewage escape into local streams rather than back up into homes.

For the past two years, Clean Water Action has worked with community leaders whose neighborhoods experience this problem, and who have received grossly inadequate assistance from the city government. Until 2017, the City refused to create programs to help people dealing with sewage backups in their homes, even when those damages were caused by flaws in the city's infrastructure; legal claims filed to recoup damages would sit in limbo for years. In 2018, MDE and EPA required the City to launch an Expedited Reimbursement Program to help residents more quickly, but it had some fundamental flaws: it was limited to only sewer backups caused by wet weather events, only applied to cleanup costs not property damage, and only up to \$2,500. And in speaking with community associations across the

city, we found that the vast majority of people didn't know the program existed: in the first year of the program, about 4,500 households reported sewer backups happening to them, but only 74 applications for reimbursement were processed, and only 10 were accepted.

Working closely with community partners and environmental allies, Clean Water Action raised the alarm at MDE, in the City Council, and in the press over the past year; and this summer, we finally saw results. At a City Council hearing in July, Baltimore City's Department of Public Works announced that it had implemented two changes we've been asking for (increasing the cap on reimbursement to \$5,000, and removing a requirement that someone report their sewage backup within 24 hours to be eligible for reimbursement) and is investigating two more expansions to their program (covering more sewage backups than just those caused by rain, and providing direct immediate clean up and disinfection assistance, instead of merely reimbursement after the fact). These changes are very much needed, but there's a lot of work still to do to make sure that people facing sewage backups caused by city-owned infrastructure get all the help they deserve — and to eliminate the capacity problems that cause sewage backups in the first place.

Be Septic Smart!

- 1 Inspect and Pump Frequently.** Have your system pumped and inspected on a regular schedule. 
- 2 Spread out water usage,** including loads of laundry, so you do not overwhelm your tank. 
- 3 Be careful with what you flush** and don't kill your septic bacteria! Never put kitchen grease, paint, litter, "disposable" wipes, toxic chemicals, or pharmaceutical products down the drain! 
- 4 Protect your drainfield.** Never use your septic area as a driveway or parking area. Do not plant trees within 20 feet of any part of your septic system. Direct flowing water away from your drainfield. 

Are people more motivated to protect their home values or the environment? In summer and fall 2020, Clean Water Action created materials about septic system maintenance and is testing which way is the best way to talk about them!



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Supporting COVID-19 Response Programs and Census 2020 Outreach in DC

Clean Water Fund serves as the fiscal agent for Anacostia Park & Community Collaborative (APACC) — a network of organizations working together to make the Anacostia River and its park system become the best possible resource for residents of the District of Columbia who have lived east of the river for a long time.

When the pandemic struck, APACC reconfigured its internal member-accessible fund to focus on providing organizational capacity and resources to members engaged in COVID-19 response programs and other critical support to urban communities in Wards 7 and 8. The Anacostia Coordinating Council, founding member of APACC, is leading outreach efforts to inform people about COVID-19, provide tests and help keep the community safe. In addition, the Collaborative is supporting programs to disseminate information about the 2020 Census in an effort to increase our communities' response rate, which will help the District unlock funding and other resources in the future.

VIRGINIA

Protecting Virginians from Toxic Chemicals

Thousands of Virginia residents are taking action to hold the chemical industry accountable and take control of our health and environment. Together, we're building momentum to eliminate toxic pollution that threatens our families and communities. We need to take action here in Virginia now to tackle the problems of dangerous PFAS "forever" toxic chemicals and the risk they pose to our drinking water and health.

Earlier this year, Clean Water Action and its allies secured a big win when state lawmakers passed two bills on toxic PFAS chemicals. This set the stage for further action with a Department of Health study on the potential health risks of PFAS in drinking water. The next step is for the agency to set limits on PFAS and other "emerging contaminants" in drinking water. Chemical industry lobbyists are hoping efforts to curb this toxic pollution will end with this "study," so they are lobbying hard to weaken the study. To ensure that this won't happen, Clean Water Action is building support for these toxic pollution prevention priorities in 2021:

- Complete a strong, science-based PFAS drinking water study, leading to PFAS pollution limits necessary to protect people's health.

The APACC Urban Nature

Healing Fall 2020

Webinar Series:

APACC's Urban Nature Healing Fall 2020 Webinar Series, featuring APACC members Akiima Price and Brenda Richardson on Best Practices in Engaging Vulnerable Communities in Nature. The webinar series was sponsored by APACC with generous support from The Conservation Fund. If you missed the live sessions, you can view them [here](#).



- Push for "upstream" solutions that identify and eliminate PFAS contamination at the source (via pollution dumping permits, rules for landfills, sewage waste disposal and air pollution and getting PFAS chemicals out of food packaging).
- Identify and create action plans to control and prevent other toxic pollutants that threaten our health here in Virginia, including 1,4 dioxane and other dangerous chemicals still in use.
- Inventory all toxic coal ash waste disposal sites around the state, aggressively test them for water contamination, develop cleanup plans and phase out the dirty old electric plants that cause the pollution.

This is an ambitious toxics prevention campaign that will protect our water and health in Virginia. Now is the time to get serious about stopping toxic water pollution in the state, once and for all. What matters is that we all do our part, now and for the future. Consumers have incredible power to drive change in the marketplace to build a toxic-free future. Learn what you can do to help protect Virginians from toxic chemicals [here](#).

MARYLAND

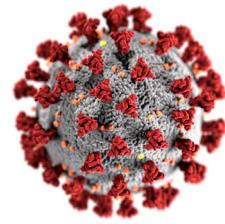
Protecting Our Workers

Maryland's farmworkers, poultry, and seafood workers are crucial members of our communities — yet they lack the basic protections from COVID-19. Their working conditions, housing, low-incomes, inability to access healthcare, pesticide exposures, and lack of protections make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Across the country, over 200 workers in meat processing plants have died, including at least 5 in Maryland, as of June. As supply lines slowed, about two million chickens on the Shore were slaughtered, stressing our ability to safely dispose of carcasses.

Many in Maryland rely on these people to pick the watermelons that are synonymous with summer, pick the crab meat that we turn into crabcakes and soup, and slaughter and pack the chicken that was so scarce on our shelves early on in the pandemic.

Many of these workers are exempt from paid sick leave and other worker protections, and their ability to work directly impacts their ability to remain in the United States. Many are hesitant to speak out against employers who are sponsoring their visas, and so these workers are the most vulnerable to Maryland's system of complaint-based enforcement.

Other states, like Virginia, have issued Emergency Temporary Standards to protect workers with required, not recommended, practices. We cannot wait for federal OSHA to do more than recommend worker protections. Clean Water Action has joined with workers, labor groups, and health professionals to ask Maryland and Governor Hogan to issue Emergency Temporary Standards to require workplace protections.



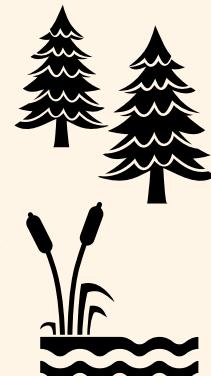
Legislative Updates

Pesticides: Governor Hogan vetoed a bill to ban chlorpyrifos, opting to ban by regulation. Unfortunately, regulations can be undone with a single pen stroke, which is why Clean Water likes strong legislative language!



Look at the Pollinator Protection Act of 2016 which required that stores only sell neonicotinoids to people who are licensed to spray them. However, the Maryland Department of Agriculture decided to draft regulations so that a store that sells to registered pesticide applicators can ALSO sell to the public. Yikes! We cannot control the regulation, but we can pass a law to tighten the language and hold state regulators accountable.

Wins for Clean Water and Climate Action: Clean Water Action has been working with local partners in Frederick County for years, and this past summer realized big wins for clean water and climate action. The county passed two forest conservation bills which, put together, give Frederick the strongest forest protections in Maryland.



A waterbody buffer bill reinstates prior policy, rolled back by earlier developer-friendly County leadership, to protect vegetative buffers surrounding waterways from development when land is subdivided. And with the passage of a Climate Emergency Resolution and creation of a Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup — which includes a Clean Water Action intern — Frederick County is well poised to lead on protecting the climate, water quality, and public health.

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