

Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Campaign

Messaging Document



Mission and Vision

Mission: The Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Campaign is a forum for local leaders and residents to catalyze our past successes and strengthen our movement to take our public waterways back and return them to our communities.

Vision: *Every community has access to clean water.*

Elevator Speech

This statement informs an audience about the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary as thoroughly as possible in a short period of time, like the length of an elevator ride, as its name suggests. It's the answer when someone asks, "What do you do?". The following is language for an elevator speech:

Clean water is for everyone. We need it to keep our bodies healthy, our communities safe, and our economies strong. For five decades, the Clean Water Act has protected our waterways, placing pollution limits on what companies and utilities could dump into our waterways and giving affected communities the power to enforce the law and protect their families. But we still have work to do. Now, some 50 years after the powerful law took effect, we're at an environmental tipping point. In the Chesapeake Bay region, more than half of our local rivers and streams don't meet basic state water quality standards; in fact, some waterways are so polluted that it is illegal to swim in them. Too many of our communities are still overburdened by pollution. Waterways are public resources and belong to all of us, yet they've been given away to corporate and industrial polluters.

With industry's history of greed and inequality, we must demand corporate accountability and better enforcement, plan for climate impacts, ensure environmental justice, enhance access to nature for all, and invest in our communities. The 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act is an opportunity to catalyze our past successes into a cleaner, more just future. Together, we can harness the energy, success, and momentum of the past five decades to face today's challenges and obtain clean water justice for everyone.

To make this happen, we need to work at the community level. This powerful law gives us the tools to address today's challenges, but we need to engage communities on how to leverage it and take collective action. Waterkeepers Chesapeake, local Waterkeepers, and community partners are launching the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Campaign, a forum for local leaders and residents to strengthen our movement to take our public waterways back and return them to our communities.

Tagline: *Reclaiming Our Right to Clean Water*

This is short, memorable phrase is to be used throughout our communications and marketing materials. It conveys the main sentiment or feeling we want people to associate with the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary campaign.

Reclaiming Our Right to Clean Water

Core Messages

Use these basic questions and answers to inform partners, policymakers, media, and the public about the CWA 50th campaign.

WHAT is Waterkeepers Chesapeake?

Waterkeepers Chesapeake is a coalition of 17 Waterkeeper programs united around a shared goal of swimmable, fishable waters. Waterkeepers are the protectors of the Clean Water Act and other clean water laws, holding polluters accountable, and protecting our communities from pollution. By sharing resources and drawing on individual strengths, the members of Waterkeepers Chesapeake can strategize and work regionally to fight for safe and healthy waterways.

WHAT is the Clean Water Act?

The Clean Water Act resulted from public outcry over water pollution in the 1960s and '70s when rivers were so polluted, they would catch on fire. This revolutionary federal law—implemented through state and local governments—sets pollution limits on what companies could dump into our waterways and allows for penalties when they violated the law and endangered public health. The Clean Water Act also allows for community members to enforce the law, where the government has failed to do so, and hold polluters accountable. The passage of the Clean Water Act also sets precedents for making waterways clean for public enjoyment and provides safe drinking water to all Americans. This powerful law still gives us the tools to address today's environmental challenges. Now we need to engage communities in using them.

WHAT and WHEN is the campaign?

Through the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary campaign (CWA50), Waterkeepers in the Chesapeake region will use the Act's 50th anniversary to provide a platform for people to demand equal justice and access to clean water.

The campaign kicks off in March 2022. Throughout the spring and summer, Waterkeepers will hold on-the-water events throughout the watershed, as well as workshops and community forums to celebrate, educate, and advocate for clean water. In June, the Waterkeeper Alliance will hold its Global Conference and River Network will host River Rally, both in Washington, DC. The campaign will culminate with celebrations in October in DC and around the country. Beyond 2022, the work will continue. Waterkeepers will continue to listen to what local communities need and design tools and training to help local leaders advocate for their communities and recognize their power to make change.

Through storytelling, the CWA50 campaign will lift up the stories of local clean water champions in communities across our region who stood up to polluters and lax regulators and won. CWA50 will provide a platform for stories of low-income and marginalized communities still experiencing the effects of flooding, polluted waterways, and historical disinvestment, and the barriers they face in achieving solutions that must be addressed in order to fulfill the promise of the Clean Water Act.

WHO does it help?

Clean water is for everyone. The Clean Water Act established the precedent that access to clean, safe water is a critical human right. Beyond that, clean water can help communities thrive. Less pollution means fewer public health risks. Healthy rivers, lakes, and streams especially, are an economic benefit to local economies, including tourism and fishing industries. Unfortunately, polluters are still damaging our waterways to the detriment of residents' rights to fishable, swimmable, drinkable water. With this

campaign, we hope to shed light on the connection between water quality and quality of life, while empowering all communities to take action for clean water.

WHAT has it accomplished?

Nearly 50 years ago, the Clean Water Act passed, leading to a dramatic decrease in the levels of pollution in our country's waterways. This powerful tool ended the culture of dumping raw sewage and untreated industrial waste into our waters and led to a vast improvement in the health and safety of waterways and communities across the country. The Clean Water Act continues to safeguard our nation's waters as an important backstop to control pollution.

WHAT does it need to accomplish?

Waterways are public resources, but they've been given away to polluting industries. While the CWA was an important step in taking back these essential resources for the public, there's still work to be done to protect our communities, rivers, and streams from pollution. Through the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary campaign, Waterkeepers and their partners hope to build a movement for clean water in all communities across the Chesapeake region. The campaign seeks to attract new supporters and help them see the vital role they can play as members of the clean water movement.

WHERE does it work?

The 50th Anniversary campaign will be part of national efforts planned by Waterkeeper Alliance, River Network, and the Clean Water for All Coalition. Our campaign will specifically target communities that rely on waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed and coastal regions in the Northeast.

WHY is it important? WHY now?

We're at an environmental tipping point. For too long, polluters have been unaccountable for the toxic substances and waste in our water, and clean water laws are being rolled back, or even eliminated, to serve these powerful corporate interests. We're also seeing clear impacts of climate change on our waterways and injustice in our communities. But it's not too late to act. We have the tools and the agency, but we need to take collective action. 2022 marks a monumental year to celebrate the power and promise of this revolutionary law to protect our waterways, while also empowering communities to demand equal justice and access to clean water.

HOW can people get involved/make a difference?

We need people to power this movement. People can get involved directly by becoming a member, donating, and supporting their local Waterkeepers. Making a difference could entail participating in local policy advocacy or reporting pollution to Waterkeepers' hotlines. Campaign engagement could include learning about the issues related to your local waterways and educating others. We'll host trainings, events, and advocacy actions throughout the campaign. Become a member *now* to get involved and ensure your family and community have clean water. The campaign relies on individuals recognizing their power to make change, together. Join us!

Priority Issues

The 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act is an opportunity to catalyze past successes into a cleaner, more just future. We'll harness momentum to make significant progress and leverage the Act in new and necessary ways, including supporting advocacy toward priority issues, such as environmental and climate justice, climate impacts to waterways, corporate accountability, pollution enforcement and

public empowerment, and investment in local economies. The CWA provides practical tools and advice to address today's challenges — and we'll help communities understand how to leverage them.

- **Ensure environmental justice and public empowerment.** Working waterfronts, farmers, poor communities, and people of color are unjustly burdened by pollution. We must create better accountability, systems, and transparency for meaningful environmental justice review (especially in the permitting process) and enhance access to nature for *all*.
- **Plan for climate impacts to waterways.** To better prepare for the challenges of a changing climate, we must use the most up-to-date scientific data and models, invest in green stormwater management, and protect resources, such as wetlands and streams that are essential for mitigating storm impacts.
- **Demand corporate accountability for toxics and waste in water.** With industry's history of greed and inequality, the CWA must require corporations to be liable for the pollution they create and regulate emerging contaminants in their products.
- **Promote strong enforcement of environmental laws.** Communities should hold more power to enforce the law and protect residents. States must enhance citizen enforcement efforts in state law, increase budgets for inspection and enforcement personnel, and demand more serious repercussions for violators.
- **Invest in healthy waterways, ecosystems, and sustainable local economies.** The CWA and state agencies must be fully funded to protect species, promote sustainability initiatives in local economies, and improve recreational access to waterways and green spaces. Equity must be centered in all funding programs.

Talking Points

Waterkeepers Chesapeake and their community partners are launching the Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary (CWA50) campaign to offer a platform for people to demand equal justice and access to clean water.

For five decades, the Clean Water Act has safeguarded our waterways by placing pollution limits on what companies and utilities can dump into them and by giving affected communities the power to enforce the law and protect their families.

But we still have work to do. Now, 50 years after the powerful law took effect, we're at an environmental tipping point. In the Chesapeake Bay region, more than half of our local rivers and streams don't meet basic state water quality standards, and too many of our communities remain overburdened by pollution.

We have the tools and the potential, but we need to take collective action. 2022 marks a monumental year to celebrate the power and promise of this revolutionary law to protect our waterways while also empowering communities to demand equal justice and access to clean water.

The implementation of the Clean Water Act must evolve to best meet the needs of our current day. Challenges like climate change were not envisioned when the law was created, and, unfortunately, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities have been unjustly burdened by pollution. The CWA50 campaign focuses improving the implementation and enforcement of the Clean Water Act at the state and local levels so that it centers equity and addresses systemic racism and injustice.

With industry's history of greed and inequality, we must demand corporate accountability. We must also seek better enforcement, develop plans for climate impacts, ensure environmental justice, enhance access to nature for all, and invest in our communities.

The 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act is an opportunity to catalyze our past successes into a cleaner, more just future. Together, we can harness the energy, success, and momentum of the past five decades to face today's challenges and obtain clean water justice for everyone.

To make this happen, we need to work at the community level. This powerful law gives us the tools to address today's challenges — but, to do so successfully, we need to engage communities on how to leverage this law and take collective action.

In order to pursue this vision, Waterkeepers Chesapeake, its member Waterkeepers, and community partners are hosting the CWA50 campaign, a forum for local leaders and residents to strengthen our movement to take our public waterways back and return them to our communities.

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www.CleanWaterAct50.org