

More than 40 Groups Call on EPA to Slash Landfill Methane Emissions by Strengthening Clean Air Act Regulations

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Today, more than 40 environmental, government, public health and justice groups sent a [letter](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), urging swift action to control methane and other harmful pollutants from municipal solid waste landfills.

Landfills are the United States' third largest source of methane, a super-potent greenhouse gas with about 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over 20 years. Landfills also emit hazardous air pollutants, odors, and other dangerous gases that impact the health and wellbeing of nearby communities, many of which are [disproportionately low-income or communities of color](#).

“Landfill methane emissions are a neglected problem hiding in plain sight – and the problem is much bigger than anyone realizes,” said **Liz Kunkle, Zero Waste Policy Manager for Illinois Environmental Council**. “Landfill emissions estimates are based on outdated and flawed models rather than direct measurement. Studies have found that landfill methane emissions are two to four times higher than estimates show. We need to stop underestimating methane emissions from landfills and properly regulate these harmful emissions.” [Illinois ranks ninth](#) among states in harmful methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills.

Fortunately, there are proven, cost-effective strategies to prevent and mitigate methane emissions from landfills. States like California, Oregon, and Maryland have already implemented policies to strengthen landfill methane controls and/or reduce organic waste disposal. In their letter to the EPA, groups encourage the agency to build from the work of leading states – and EPA's own efforts to control oil and gas methane pollution – by swiftly opening a rulemaking to update the Clean Air Act regulations (New Source Performance Standards and Emission Guidelines) for municipal solid waste landfills.

The EPA can significantly cut emissions by revising landfill regulations to: improve gas collection system coverage and performance, expand methane monitoring, include robust and effective cover requirements, and encourage the diversion of organic waste. Signatories also urge the EPA to take action to prevent food waste and to collect organic waste separately for composting.

Andres Restrepo, Senior Attorney for Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program, said, “If we have any hope of stemming the worst effects of climate change, we must tackle methane emissions from all sources. Once we throw things away, we want our garbage to be out of sight and out of mind, but in reality, landfills emit large amounts of methane that is driving the climate

crisis. EPA must not abandon its efforts to curb methane pollution to the trash heap. Alongside its proposal to cut methane pollution from the oil and gas industry, EPA must also open a rulemaking to find the best way to address methane emissions from landfills.”

In June 2023, 14 public interest and environmental groups submitted a [petition](#) to the EPA for stronger regulations to control methane pollution from municipal landfills.

Signatories

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Beyond Toxics Oregon
C40 Cities
Californians Against Waste
Center for Biological Diversity
Change the Chamber
Clean Air Task Force
Clean Water Action
Climate Action California
Climate Generation
Conservation Law Foundation
Earthjustice
Eco-Cycle
Ecology Center
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Integrity Project
Elders Climate Action
Florida Clinicians for Climate Action
Fresh Energy
GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives)
Go Green Northfield
Harvard Food Law & Policy Clinic
Hispanic Access Foundation
Illinois Environmental Council
Industrious Labs
Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Interfaith Power & Light
Just Zero
Minnesota Environmental Justice Table
Naeva
Natural Resources Defense Council
RMI
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Sierra Club
Stewards of the Potomac Highlands
University of California, Berkeley - Center for Law, Energy, & the Environment

Union of Concerned Scientists
We Don't Waste
Yellowstone Bend Citizens Council
Zero Waste Washington
350 Humboldt
350 Sacramento