

Currents

food&waterwatch

News from Food & Water Watch's Water for All Campaign

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Constituents Tell Congress Members: We Need a Trust Fund for Clean, Safe Water

August is vacation time for many people in the United States, including members of Congress who often take advantage of the August recess to reconnect with the folks back home in their districts.

Food & Water Watch has been in touch with concerned constituents around the country, helping them contact their representatives and organize delegations to meet with their member of Congress. Constituents representing environmental groups, people of faith, the water sector and local decision makers will attest to the need for a stable funding source – a clean water trust fund – to ensure safe and healthy public water for all Americans.

The United States has one of the safest drinking water systems in the world, however, our infrastructure is old and will need funding to repair deteriorating structures. The bridge collapse

in Minneapolis is a tragic reminder of the consequences of under-funded and poorly maintained infrastructure. Our water system, although less visible, is also facing a similar problem – one which threatens our environment and public health.

Concerned community members will ask their representatives to co-sponsor a resolution to raise the issue of water infrastructure funding needs and to actively support the creation of a trust fund for clean and safe water.

To highlight the urgent need for a national trust fund constituents will also be sharing a new Food & Water Watch publication, "The Case for a Clean Water Trust Fund: New Realities, New Solutions", available at: www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/pubs/reports/clean-water-trust-fund/

The Eat Well Guided Tour of America

In August, Food & Water Watch joined The Sustainable Table to kick off the Eat Well Guided Tour of America. The Tour will visit 25 cities in 38 days before ending at Farm Aid's



The Eat Well Guided Tour bus makes its way through Wyoming. Photo by Paulette Philipot/www.p3images.com.

Homegrown Festival in New York City on September 9th. From Los Angeles to Missoula, from Cheyenne to New York City, we'll be taste-testing pies, educating consumers about local food and water choices, and enjoying the wares at some of the most sustainable farms and restaurants in the country.

The tour will also be a great opportunity for folks to sign the Take Back the Tap Pledge, and to learn more about the environmental, health, and economic problems associated with bottled water. Even Pepsi recently admitted that their popular bottled water brand, Aquafina, is just reprocessed municipal tap water, despite the mountainside depicted on the label. For these reasons, more and more people are choosing local tap water over expensive bottled brands.

Hundreds of people have already taken the pledge to:

- Choose tap water over bottled water whenever possible;
- Fill a reusable bottle with tap water;
- Support public funding for safe and affordable tap water.

To sign the pledge, check out www.takebackthetap.org. Better yet, join Food & Water Watch on the Eat Well Guided Tour of America! To find out if the tour is coming to a farmer's market or co-op near you, visit: www.sustainabletable.org/roadtrip

Colombia: A Referendum that Supports Water for All

On August 8, participants from grassroots and non-governmental organizations in Colombia set off on a nearly 1,000 kilometer expedition down Colombia's Magdalena River as a symbolic beginning to a campaign entitled, "Water: A Fundamental Right." The purpose of the expedition is to draw attention to the worsening conditions of the Magdalena River and promote a national referendum that would improve access to water in Colombia.

In recent months, an alliance of almost sixty social, indigenous, and environmental organizations has led a national campaign to change Colombia's constitution to declare water a fundamental human right. Food & Water Watch has supported the current referendum initiative, which would allow Colombian voters to include the right to water in their Constitution and keep the provision of water and sanitation services in public hands.

More than 1.3 million signatures are required for the Colombian Congress to consider the referendum, and the journey down the Magdalena River is part of the effort to meet that goal.

Mass Support for Water Rights in Italy

An effort to ensure clean and affordable water for all is on the march in Italy this summer. On July 10th in Rome, a coalition of labor, faith and environmental organizations known as the Italian Water Movements Forum (IWMF) delivered over 400,000 petition signatures to the President of the Italian Parliament's lower house, requesting a popular legislative to re-nationalize the water sector. The proposed legislation aims to improve the accessibility and affordability of water for Italians, by writing into law several key provisions. These include a baseline provision of water free-of-charge for all citizens and the return of all water utilities to public ownership.

In Italy, 50,000 signatures are required to bring proposed legislation before Parliament – the IWMF collected over eight times that amount.

Read about the past, present and future of privatization in Tanzania in The Guardian: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/aid/story/0,,2149628,00.html>

Look for our very own Maj Fiil-Flynn mentioned in the article!

In Colombia, water privatization has exacerbated a situation in which twelve million people do not have access to clean water and another four million have access only with a great deal of difficulty. Since the 1990s, privatization has been imposed on various cities in Columbia under the sponsorship of international lending institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. In many cities where the water system has been privatized, there has been an increase in water rates without any improvement to the delivery service. In Colombia's capitol city, Bogota, each year service is suspended to hundreds of poor residents, leaving them without water.

Food & Water Watch will be participating in the expedition on Amazon River mid-November.

Thirteen Detained for Weeks Following Water Protest

In El Salvador, thirteen individuals were released from jail last month after they were arrested at a protest against water privatization.

On July 2, thirteen individuals were arrested in Suchitoto, El Salvador en route to a protest against President Elias Antonio Saca's proposed decentralization of the country's National Water Company, ANDA. The new policy threatens to establish smaller municipal water companies that would be open to privatization.

The individuals were released on July 26, just days after Food & Water Watch met in Washington D.C. with the Colombian ambassador to the United States who was troubled to hear about the track record of privatization. Currently, the thirteen individuals are awaiting trial.



Food & Water Watch's Organizing Director Victoria Kaplan leads a protest outside the Embassy of El Salvador in Washington, DC.

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