

Currents

food&waterwatch

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

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Congress Resolves to Solve Nation's Water Woes

Last month Food & Water Watch, along with local allies and activists, succeeded in urging Congress to take the next step toward ensuring Americans have access to clean and affordable water.

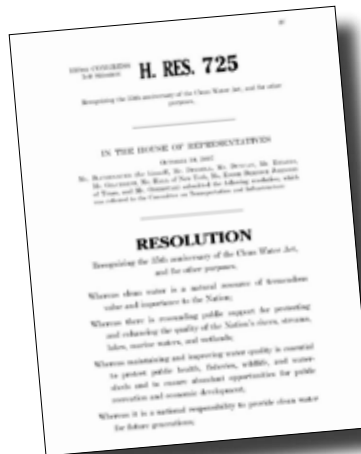
On October 17th, Congress renewed its commitment to clean water by passing a resolution recognizing the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Passed on the eve of the anniversary, House Resolution 725 is a huge step forward in establishing a clean water trust fund – a steady, reliable, and equitable source of funding for needed water infrastructure projects across the country.

In the resolution, Congress recognizes that “the Nation’s decaying water infrastructure and a lack of available funding to maintain and upgrade the Nation’s wastewater infrastructure pose a serious threat to the water quality improvements achieved over the past 35 years.”

The resolution goes on to state that Congress “dedicates itself to working toward a sustainable, long-term solution to address the Nation’s decaying water infrastructure.”

The resolution was introduced by Representative Earl Blumenauer of Oregon and co-sponsored by more than thirty Members of Con-

gress. However, the success of the resolution was due in no small part to hundreds of calls from concerned constituents during Food & Water Watch’s National Call-In Day.



The resolution and call-in day were part of a flurry of activities last month celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Food & Water Watch kicked off the anniversary on October 2nd, with the release of “Clear Waters: Why America Needs a Clean Water Trust Fund,” a new report highlighting the urgent need among states for federal funding for clean water infrastructure. The report was released with local partners across the country, from Washington D.C. to San Diego. In addition, Food & Water Watch op-eds –coauthored with utilities managers and local elected officials – appeared in major city newspapers across the country, introducing hundreds of thousands of readers to the campaign for a

clean water trust fund.

By month’s end, concerned citizens and elected officials had issued a decisive call for a solution to the nation’s water woes in the form of a clean water trust fund. Happy Birthday clean water!

Water Takes Center Stage in NYC

On October 30th, the water team at Food & Water Watch packed our bags and traveled from our headquarters here in the nation’s capital to New York City. We were there to celebrate the opening night of an exciting new exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, entitled “Water: H₂O = Life.” Over the next six months, visitors to the Big Apple can check out the exhibit for an in-depth and wide-ranging examination of water as a physical substance, a biological element, and as a cultural and socioeconomic force.

The exhibit begins with the water cycle and the role that water plays in creating and sustaining earth’s many life forms. It goes on to explore ways in which humans have utilized water throughout history, from hydroelectric dams and shipping canals to agricultural production and manufacturing industries. Finally, the exhibit explores the problem of worldwide water shortages resulting from population growth and degradation of existing water resources.

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What's Your Water Footprint?

Droughts are sweeping across communities and crops in the American South. Western states compete fiercely for dwindling resources. The city of Atlanta announces a state of emergency as aquifers and pipelines run dry. No wonder water scarcity and water consumption have received a rush of attention in recent months. The October 21st issue of the New York Times Magazine described the crisis, noting that one day we would talk about our "water footprint" the same way that we now talk about our "carbon footprint."

They were right—and that day has arrived sooner than they thought. This month Food & Water Watch is partnering with GRACE and the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University to launch "H₂O Conserve", a web-based project that shows consumers how much water they use in their daily lives and provides tips for conservation.

Hearing Could Sink Poseidon Desal Plant

The California Coastal Commission (CCC) may decide the fate of what would be California's largest private ocean water desalination facility this month. Poseidon Resources, a private company based in Connecticut, wants to build the facility in Carlsbad, just north of San Diego. However, desalination is a technology whose cons far outweigh its pros. Staff at the CCC has recommended that Poseidon's Coastal Development Permit Application be denied, as the facility would pollute the ocean, kill marine life, and undermine California's goal of reducing carbon emissions. The hearing is expected to take place in late November—stay tuned for updates.

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"Water: H₂O = Life" is different than most museum exhibitions because it proposes ways in which the public can be part of the solution to the water crisis it describes. On many of its displays attendees can find "Smart Solutions", which make recommendations such as supporting strong municipal systems, choosing tap water over bottled water, and conserving water at home. Many solutions are explored through profiles of real individuals who have cleaned up rivers, established purification systems, and built more sustainable homes, parks, and schools.

The exhibit will be on display at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City through May 2008, before touring 10 other U.S. cities. For more information, check out www.amnh.org/exhibitions/water.

The project's main feature is the water calculator, which not only factors in water used for cleaning, bathing, outdoor landscaping and recreation, but also assesses water use as related to an individual's dietary habits, energy consumption and recycling practices. The water calculator encourages Americans to ask questions about their water use and then recommends water-saving tips.

In the coming months Food & Water Watch will host events around the country to promote the water calculator. For more information on how to reduce your own water footprint, and to find events in your area, check out www.H2Oconserve.org.



Fort Wayne Says: Let's Go Public!

On October 10th, the Board of Public Works in Fort Wayne, Indiana voted to proceed with plans to purchase a private water utility serving part of the city's north side and bring it under public control. The purchase of the utility, currently owned by Aqua Indiana—a subsidiary of Aqua America—is expected to provide better water at a lower cost to 9,000 customers.

In 2002, the city began pursuing an eminent domain action in order to purchase the private utility. In July of this year the Indiana Supreme Court ruled that the process was undertaken correctly, allowing the city to move forward. The purchase would combine the private utility with the city's own public utility which currently serves more than 80,000 customers.

The city's acquisition has received huge support from Aqua Indiana customers in northern parts of the city, where complaints about water quality have been more than 250% greater than in Aqua Indiana's other nearby service area. Many affected neighborhoods have voiced support for the acquisition by circulating petitions for service from Fort Wayne. In certain areas, some of the petitions have been signed by 100% of Aqua Indiana customers.

Having adopted a value for the purchase of the system, the next step for Fort Wayne will be to pursue funding to purchase the water system from Aqua Indiana.

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