

# Currents

food&waterwatch

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

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[www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)

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### Welcome to Blue October!

All over the world people are taking action for water justice!

Blue October is an international month of action to challenge corporate control of water and to protect water as a shared natural resource available to all. It celebrates the Uruguayan amendment to recognize the right to water in the national constitution.



Supporters will hold events in 28 countries, including protests at the Coca-Cola headquarters in India, street celebrations in Bolivia, photo stunts in the United Kingdom, and the kick-off of the Mexican campaign to include the

right to water in the constitution. The month culminates with a three-day conference in Uruguay.

In Washington, DC the month started with a successful showing of the documentary *Fuera! (Out!)* and presentations by Bolivia activists Oscar Olivera and Rogelio Mayta. Oscar Olivera, a trade union leader from Cochabamba, Bolivia, was a leading force in the popular mobilization that evicted Bechtel's water operations in 2000. Rogelio Mayta, a lawyer, defends the protesters who have challenged corporate exploitation of Bolivia's natural resources. Both shared captivating accounts of their experiences and motivated people to take action and unite to protect our essential resources. The room was packed to capacity with new activists who took the Blue October action to demand that the Suez corporation leave Bolivia.

Food and Water Watch members and supporters will host more than thirty house parties and community events all over the country. Be part of the action! Get involved at: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/blueoctober2006>

### Argentina: Another Water Corporation Leaves

Argentina was the global guinea pig for water privatization experiments beginning in the 1990s. But after years of water companies failing to deliver on promises, it now appears the last big multinational water corporation is leaving. Vivendi (now Veolia) and Azurix (Enron's water company) left several years ago. And in the last six months Suez has sold major portions of its shares or liquidated its companies in Buenos Aires, Cordoba and Santa Fe.

Investment treaties have enabled multinational corporations to sue Argentina when projects go bad. These cases are decided by the World Bank's secret court (ICSID) behind closed doors and with no appeals. ICSID has set a bad precedent by awarding Enron's water company (Azurix) \$165 million in the failed water privatization in Buenos Aires province. Suez has filed suits adding to more than \$2 billion.

The Argentine people should not pay for corporate mistakes. While the water corporations attempt to recoup self-declared losses through secret court procedures the Argentine government has estimated that Suez owes it 2.8 billion pesos for promised investment that never took place. Water for All will continue to expose unjustness of the secret procedures – stay tuned!

### Defend the Global Commons

Food & Water Watch' international activist magazine is now available online. The magazine provides news updates from water struggles from around the world and communities defending the right to water. Read about: The Peruvian water mafia; South Africans defines the right to water; Tanzanians work to stop Biwater's unjustified claims; New evidence in the case against Suez in La Paz; and much more.

You can find Defend the Global Commons on: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/publications/newsletters/Defend>



## Our Communities, Our Water: Connecting the local and the global in Amherst, MA

The New England water conference and the global was a rousing success! More than 200 people participated in the forum, held Sept 22-24 in Amherst, MA, attracting people from all over New England and as far away as Arizona.

Water for All organizer Jessica Roach presented on two panels. She and Baltimore water activist Art Cohen explored: Preserving and Promoting the Strengths of Public Systems. After all, eighty-six percent of Americans get their water from publicly owned and operated utilities and have for many years - so we must be doing something right!

Jessica also shared some of the basic tools for challenging water privatization in a community – from educating your neighbors to influencing local elected officials to talking with the media.



Above: DeeDee Consolati of Concerned Citizens of Lee, MA, pouring herself a cup of tap water.



Right: A Cape Cod WILPF member with her water bottle waste monster.

### Water Corporations Strategize in the Desert

National Association of Water Companies (NAWC) held its annual conference at a hideaway resort in the California desert Oct. 8-11. The association is the major trade lobby for water privatization. Speakers at the conference included executives of the nation's biggest water companies, their favorite state regulators, and the pro-privatization Reason Foundation, represented by Geoff Segal, who fielded questions about Food & Water Watch.

One attendee asked, "How do we counter [Food & Water Watch's] argument about local control?" Segal suggested that water privateers should seek support through Public Utility Commissions. Given the track record of the California PUC (see Currents Sept 06), this is hardly a good outlook for U.S. water consumers! Segal further suggested that water privatization could be promoted through emotional arguments – promising customers big savings. But did Segal forget to bring the facts on massive rate increases pushed by American Water and Aqua America in past years? Water privatization has caused sky rocketing rates and undermined accountability to consumers.

The private water companies seek to exploit the lack of funding for public water infrastructure. However, the finance panel later admitted that the expansion of water privatization has slowed as communities across the country reject private water. Turns out – communities know what is best for their residents!

Want the latest scoop on water rights, anti-privatization campaigns, and community struggles? Check out our blog! [foodandwaterwatch.org/blog](http://foodandwaterwatch.org/blog)

### Lexington Headed for Important Vote

After fighting Kentucky American in state courts for the right to vote Lexingtonians will decide the future of their water system in a November referendum. If successful the referendum will order the Urban County Government to purchase the water system at a fair market value. Our best wishes for a good turn out and result! Read more about the campaign on Bluegrass FLOW's homepage (<http://www.bluegrassflow.org/>).

### Salvadorans Defend their Water Rights

In July hundreds of water activists in El Salvador held a national gathering to make plans to improve and defend access to affordable water. A controversial proposal would move administration of water from the national to the local level and require local governments to sign "concessions" or contracts with private firms for up to 50 years. The legislation is linked to conditions in funding provided by the Inter-American Development Bank. While changes are pending localities resisting water privatization are put at the end of the list for receiving much-needed repairs.

More than 60 people attended California's first Blue October party in Los Angeles. Fuera! filmmaker Lindsey Katona hosted the event, which garnered 40 handwritten letters asking Suez to leave Bolivia immediately. For many attendees, the films were their first introduction to water privatization as the vast majority of Californians receive their water from publicly-owned utilities. There will be at least five more Blue October house parties in California. Contact Adam ([ascow@fwwatch.org](mailto:ascow@fwwatch.org)) about California house parties.



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