

# Currents

food&waterwatch

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

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### Blue October: Be Part of the International Month of Action

Today, one out of every six people lack access to safe, affordable water, and two out of five lack access to adequate sanitation. The United Nations expects these proportions to increase – unless we act now. At the same time, water corporations like Suez and Coca-Cola are enjoying generous profits, often at the expense of the poor.

**With this in mind, Food & Water Watch has joined with our international allies to promote Blue October - an international month of action to challenge corporate control of water and to protect water as a shared natural resource available to all.** The month of October is significant because on October 31, 2004, the people of Uruguay voted to amend their constitution to recognize water as a fundamental right. Their Constitution now guarantees that piped water and sanitation be available to all Uruguayans, and it bans for-profit corporations from supplying this public good.

**Throughout October, Food & Water Watch members and activists are organizing dozens of house parties across the country to screen the new film *Fuera (Out!)*. *Fuera* documents the hardships that Bolivians have faced since Suez, the second largest water corporation in the world, privatized the city of El Alto's water in 1997.** To get a free copy of the film and an action kit, contact Victoria at [water@fw-watch.org](mailto:water@fw-watch.org) or 202-797-6556.

### Our Communities, Our Water

Food & Water Watch has been busy getting ready for an upcoming conference in Amherst, MA, on Sept 22-24.

“Our Communities, Our Water: Connecting the Local and the Global” will bring together grassroots activists from the region with students, people of faith and water utility workers to share strategies and information.

Frances Moore Lappe, author of fifteen books, most recently *Democracy's Edge*, will be the keynote speaker. Her 1971 three-million-copy bestseller, *Diet for a Small Planet*, continues to awaken readers to the power of our everyday choices to create the world we want.

Participants will look at the links between local, national & international water privatization and gain critical campaign skills. We'll map out clear action plans for future collaborations and build a regional support network. A co-sponsor of the event, the Water for All campaign has been active in the planning process and will moderate and speak on several panels at the conference. Register and learn more at <http://www.massglobalaction.org/home/conf-2006-3q/index.htm>.

In Bolivia, Suez has intentionally excluded tens of thousands of people from its service area. And, the price of a new water connection is US\$445, more than eight times the monthly minimum wage in Bolivia! These abuses compelled the Bolivian government to end its relationship with Suez, and the two parties are negotiating the company's exit. Now, Suez is threatening to sue Bolivia. The U.S. house parties will put pressure on Suez by generating hundreds of hand-written letters to Suez's manager in Bolivia, telling the company to leave Bolivia without filing a lawsuit.

Read more about Suez in Bolivia at: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bolivia>



Communities without potable water in Bolivia are forced to use contaminated water from hand-dug wells like these. Photo by Claudia Lopez.

#### TAKE ACTION

Join people around the world in celebrating Blue October, an international month of action for water justice! Contact [water@fwwatch.org](mailto:water@fwwatch.org) or 202-797-6556 to find out how to host a screening of the new film *Fuera (Out!)*, about water privatization in Bolivia. Or, you can send your own letter to Suez here: [http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationSORG/fwwatch/campaign.jsp?campaign\\_KEY=4677](http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationSORG/fwwatch/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=4677)

## South Africans Call for an End to Prepaid Water

Imagine having to insert a coin in your faucet every time you wanted a glass of water or needed water to cook rice. Prepaid water meters are used by private water companies in the poorest communities around the world. Families make difficult trade-offs between food, medicines, school fees or water. Women and children are forced to fetch water from unsafe sources even in towns that have the infrastructure to meet their water needs.

The South African Coalition against Water Privatization picketed Johannesburg Water and the Department of Water and Forestry on August 28 and challenged officials to stop the unconstitutional use of prepaid water meters. In July, the coalition filed a legal challenge based on the the South African Constitution's guaranteed right to water.



Prepaid water meters have been declared unlawful in the United Kingdom due to negative health impacts in low-income areas.

### U.S. Communities Challenge RWE: Lexington Readies for November Election While Felton Moves One Step Closer to Local Ownership

About 200 Lexingtonians turned out Sept. 12 to kick off the newest phase of their grassroots campaign for local ownership of water. Voters will decide Nov. 7 on a referendum that would steer the local government to end absentee ownership of the water system by German conglomerate RWE and its subsidiary Kentucky American Water. Former Lexington Mayor and current Bluegrass FLOW chair H. Foster Pettit told the crowd, "RWE has the money but we have the troops."

Last year, the troops beat the money in Felton, CA, when 75% of voters chose to bring their water system under local control, despite heavy-handed campaign tactics by RWE and its subsidiary California American Water (Cal-Am). Now, Feltonians are one step closer to owning their local water company. On Sept. 11, a local government commission gave clearance to the neighboring public water district to operate Felton's water system after Cal-Am leaves. Grassroots group Felton FLOW continues to pressure state regulators to support their efforts for democracy and accountability.

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

### California Update: New CA Organizer Makes Waves at CPUC Hearings

Food & Water Watch attended a California Public Utilities Commission sponsored symposium discussing affordable water on September 12 in Oakland. Joined by members of Felton FLOW (Friends of Locally Owned Water) and Larkfield FLOW, California Organizer Adam Scow protested the lack of ratepayer representation and demanded that the CPUC not foist public-private partnerships and astronomical rate increases on communities struggling to upgrade their outdated water systems. Adam asked that the CPUC not impede communities such as Larkfield and Felton that are seeking to claim local public control over their water systems.

On September 14 in Monterey, Adam spoke at a CPUC hearing on special rate increases proposed by California-American Water. After illegally over-pumping the Carmel River for 10 years, the State has ordered Cal-Am to find an alternate supply of water. Cal-Am's solution? A large desalination plant that Cal-Am is asking ratepayers to pay for before the plant is even approved for construction. Community members overwhelmingly spoke against the rate increase, which must be approved by the CPUC, while Adam highlighted how privatization and Cal-Am have made the community and its water supply secondary in importance to Cal-Am's shareholders.

There are two important upcoming hearings on RWE's divestiture from Cal-Am: September 18 in Santa Rosa and September 27 in Felton. Food & Water Watch demands that the divestiture shouldn't cost ratepayers a cent and that the CPUC require RWE to sell Felton its water system. For more information, contact Adam Scow at [ascow@fwwatch.org](mailto:ascow@fwwatch.org).



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