

Currents

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

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New Report Demonstrates Need for Clean Water Trust Fund

The 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act is on October 18th and Food & Water Watch will commemorate the anniversary by drawing attention to the consequences of perpetual water infrastructure funding shortfalls. Our upcoming report, "Clear Waters: Why America Needs a Clean Water Trust Fund," is one way we are raising the profile of our nation's clean water infrastructure needs. The report will document the need for a federal trust fund in order to protect America's water resources.

Wastewater infrastructure is essential to keeping our communities livable, lifestyles possible, and industries viable. However, some of our sewer systems are more than 100 years old, and the pipes under our homes and streets are deteriorating at a rapid rate. States and communities rely on funding from the federal government to keep their systems working, but federal spending on clean water has shrunk by two-thirds since 1991.

Now facing substantial project backlogs, states and communities must struggle to make due as old pipes fail, releasing more than one trillion gallons of untreated sewage every year, polluting our environment, and closing record numbers of beaches. The report details this and other consequences of funding shortfalls for each state in the nation. In order to meet the standards of the Clean Water Act and ensure the future of clean water in the United States, we need a clean water trust fund that safeguards federal funding for water infrastructure from the politicized appropriations



process. A clean water trust fund would provide a steady, reliable, and equitable source of funding for needed projects across the country.

The new report, "Clear Waters: Why America Needs a Clean Water Trust Fund" will be available on October 2nd. If you would like to release a copy of the report to your local newspapers, send us and email at water@fwwatch.org.

Citizens in Córdoba Argentina Win Water Referendum

On September 2nd, after years of community resistance, the citizens of Cordoba, Argentina won a referendum asking for the cancellation of a controversial private water contract between the provincial government and the water company Suez-Roggio. An association made up of trade unions, political parties, and other social organizations, called the Comisión Popular por la Recuperación del Agua (The Popular Commission to Recover Water), led the effort to prevent both the extension of the current contract and any future contracts privatizing water services in Cordoba.

More than 75 percent of voters favored canceling the contract with Suez-Roggio. Although the referendum is non-binding, it gives the people of Cordoba the moral support to continue their fight to compel Suez to leave the city.

The Popular Commission will now work to make the referendum results binding and start discussions on how to create an alternative proposal for the local water company that is based on the principle of a public, social and communitarian company managed by the people and the workers.

American Water: On Sale Soon

Water privatization firms around the world have been changing hands in recent years as disgruntled owners seek to distance themselves from controversial or unsuccessful deals, and American Water is just the latest.

The largest private water company in the United States, American Water, is to be sold on Wall Street in the coming months. In late August, German-based utility giant RWE announced an initial public offering in which they plan to sell shares of its American Water subsidiary after deciding in 2005 to abandon their water investments in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Among its reasons for selling American Water, RWE cited “considerable political resistance to privatization of the water sector.” American Water began the sale process by filing the necessary papers with the Securities and Exchange Commission. These papers include 14 pages of “risk factors” — warning flags that potential investors should know about before advancing hard-earned money in the company.

So what’s risky about investing in a company that privatizes public water?

For one thing, everyday Americans have shown that they want their water to be treated as a public resource rather than a profit-driven commodity. Across the country, communities like Lexington, Kentucky and Felton, California have challenged privatization by organizing their neighbors and friends. This movement for local control is even referenced in American Water’s recent filing:

“Municipalities and other government subdivisions have historically been involved in the provision of water and wastewater services in the United States, and organized movements may arise from time to time...”

Specifically, American Water cites the current campaign for public control in Felton — where 75 percent of voters cast their ballots to remove American Water and return their water to

local control — as one fight in which they “might not prevail”.

RWE does not believe that private water companies in the United States are a good investment, yet the company is dumping their bad investment on Wall Street investors and American ratepayers.

Now how’s that for an investment?

Poseidon’s Desalination Distraction

Poseidon Resources, a private water corporation based in Connecticut, is seeking to build a massive water desalination facility in Carlsbad, California. If the plant is approved, Poseidon would own the water it produces, effectively turning ocean water, a public resource, into a private commodity.

Although desalination is often lauded as offering a drought-proof supply of water, the Poseidon plant would cause more problems than it would solve. The enormous amount of energy required by desalination is only the first drawback. The intake pipes used to draw in ocean water would kill marine life and the highly concentrated salt water, or brine, discharged into the ocean could upset local habitats. Meanwhile, local water districts have not yet pursued a comprehensive program of water conservation, which would free-up water at a much lower price than desalination.

The State Lands Commission and the California Coastal Commission must first approve the plant, and Food & Water Watch is working with allies to have these boards reject Poseidon’s application. Stay tuned for ways that you can help.

! Become a member of Food & Water Watch at:
www.foodandwaterwatch.org

Join the National Call-in Day for Water

On October 11th, activists, community members, and citizens will mark the 35th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act by calling on Congress to create a clean water trust fund. The National Call-In Day to Congress will be a crucial opportunity to tell our representatives from across the country that their constituents care about clean water infrastructure. According to Luntz Research Polls, more than 86 percent of Americans believe clean, safe and affordable water should be a national priority and support the creation of a water infrastructure trust fund. It’s time for our leaders to hear from us all!

If you would like to participate or sign up to be a phone captain in key districts, send an email to water@fwwatch.org.



Call in from anywhere!



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