Every newsletter, we report our many victories. But this time, we must acknowledge that sometimes industry pushback is so great that winning is difficult and we must redouble our efforts. Despite a historic grassroots campaign that brought together an alliance of environmentalists, labor, Internet freedom, public health, food activists and many others, we lost the first round of stopping the legislation to fast track the Trans-Pacific Partnership. After months of holding the vote at bay, our broad-based coalition lost by one vote in the Senate. The bill was signed by President Obama, and while we didn’t win this fight, we will continue our opposition to these undemocratic trade deals (see page 3). At the same time that we were fighting fast track, the House of Representatives rolled back a U.S. law that requires mandatory country of origin labels (COOL) for meat. This right-to-know law is under threat thanks to a WTO dispute brought by Canada and Mexico, which claim that this common-sense consumer label creates a trade barrier. The meat industry used this WTO attack to mobilize support in the House to repeal COOL. Clearly, this battle is not over yet, as we focus our efforts on the Senate. We can’t be discouraged by these setbacks. We must have a long-term vision for change. Even when we lose, our massive mobilizations leave us stronger for the next fight. We will regroup, redouble our efforts and, eventually, we will win. So, let’s continue to build the movement to protect our food and water by building on both victories and losses.
Santa Barbara Spill Leaves Toxic Cocktail, Mobilizes Residents

The May 19 spill of more than 100,000 gallons of crude from a breached oil pipeline on the Santa Barbara coast spread more than 100 miles to the south. In its path, it left tarry beaches, noxious fumes, confused whales, and dead oiled birds, sea lions and dolphins. According to Scott Smith, chief scientist at Water Defense (founded by Mark Ruffalo), the spill also left behind a toxic cocktail of chemicals.

After the spill, Food & Water Watch’s southern California organizing team helped Smith collect oil and water samples from the fouled beaches. Test results confirmed the presence of several toxic chemicals known to be severe threats to human health, among them, ethylbenzene, toluene, xylene and naphthalene.

In addition, some chemicals found in the samples are commonly used by the oil industry when it injects fluids to stimulate the flow of oil using extreme methods such as fracking, acidizing and cyclic steam injection. An investigation by the Environmental Defense Center revealed that several of the offshore oil rigs that fed the breached Plains All-American Pipeline have used acidizing multiple times and have applied for permits to conduct fracking.

“People should not be exposed to these toxic chemicals so oil companies can make a profit,” said Becca Claassen, Food & Water Watch organizer in Santa Barbara County. “This spill was tragic, but it left in its wake a community ready to fight oil industry expansion, starting with a ban on fracking, acidizing and other extreme extraction.”

Monsanto’s Dream Bill Passes the House

In July, the House passed Representative Mike Pompeo’s (R-KS) bill that prohibits states from labeling genetically engineered (GMO) foods. This bill is truly Monsanto’s Dream Bill. We call it the DARK Act, because it would not only prevent states from labeling GMO foods, but also take away local and state control over regulating the growing of GMO crops. Several counties in multiple states have passed bans on growing GMO crops, which are untested and potentially unsafe for people and the environment.

The Senate will likely take up this bill in September, and a large coalition of non-profits, organic producers, farmers and eaters will be working diligently to stop it from moving forward. More than 100,000 Food & Water Watch supporters have already taken action to contact their members of Congress on this bill, and hundreds of people will be meeting with their Senators during the August congressional recess. Find out the latest and take action by going to foodandwaterwatch.org.
Earlier this year, the World Health Organization declared that glyphosate, the herbicide commonly sold as Roundup, is a “probable carcinogen.”

This is huge, because not only can this “weed killer” be found in the garden section of many stores, but hundreds of millions of pounds of it are used every year on farmland across America, because most GMO crops are designed primarily to withstand the spraying of this toxic chemical — not to “produce more food,” as GMO apologists claim. In fact, so much of it is used that the U.S. Geological Survey has detected glyphosate in rain, streams and air near agricultural areas, and we are exposed to it in our food, air and water every day.

This is extremely troubling because exposure to this chemical could cause cancer. Currently, the EPA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are not doing enough to protect us from these exposures and related health problems, which is why we’re calling for a ban on the use of Roundup.

The current regulatory system for pesticides is broken, and both the EPA and FDA must re-evaluate not just glyphosate, but other commonly used herbicides that have been applied in greater amounts as GMO crops have become more widespread — such as 2,4-D and dicamba. Learn more and get the latest on our website, foodandwaterwatch.org.

Trans-Pacific Partnership Update

Congress approved “Fast Track” Trade Promotion Authority on June 24 and sent it to President Obama for his approval. Food & Water Watch had worked to stop Fast Track, which allows the president to negotiate trade agreements and send them to Congress for limited debate and a “yes” or “no” vote.

The trade agreements currently being negotiated by the United States — the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the Trade in Services Agreement — could undermine vital health and safety standards here in the United States and around the globe. Provisions in these agreements could make our work to stop fracking, label GMOs and protect food safety standards much more difficult.

That’s why, despite the passage of Fast Track, we are continuing to fight against these deals. We will continue to work with a broad coalition from environmental, labor, public health and faith organizations to assure that these agreements are rejected by Congress.
As oil and gas companies rush headlong to frack America, they are also moving to build out an infrastructure to move the oil and gas — largely to coastal cities for export. Food & Water Watch has been working across the country to oppose these new pipelines as well as export facilities that would transfer domestic oil and gas abroad.

Pipelines pose significant environmental threats, and many are being placed in environmentally sensitive areas. In New Jersey, we have been working with allies to oppose two pipelines that would cross through the Pinelands, an environmentally protected area that preserves a 12-trillion-gallon freshwater aquifer in southern New Jersey.

In Michigan, we are working with allies across the state to oppose an aging existing pipeline — Enbridge’s Line 5 — that crosses the Straits of Mackinac and could rupture at any time, threatening the drinking water of millions.

These efforts are not isolated, with active pipeline fights happening across the country in Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and elsewhere.

Although these projects require some state and local approvals, much of the decision-making authority rests with the unaccountable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. We need federal legislation that makes it more difficult for oil and gas companies to get approval for these pipelines and that places more power in the hands of local communities.
PARTNER PROFILE: Susan Golas, Director, WATERSPIRIT

WATERSPIRIT, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, is a center committed to informing, inspiring and enabling people to deepen their consciousness of the sacredness and interdependence of all creation, with a focus on the role of water as critical in sustaining all life. Inclusive of all people who are pursuing a spirituality that deepens their connection with Earth, WATERSPIRIT educates, advocates and collaborates to promote individual transformation and systemic changes necessary to sustain water and life on Earth.

Our efforts have been informed, enriched and strengthened through our collaboration with Food & Water Watch. We have joined with Food & Water Watch in campaigns opposing fracking and the storage of fracking waste in New Jersey, opposing New Jersey’s privatization of water legislation, and supporting the NJ Clean Energy Coalition.

Sharing a common mission to educate people on water and water-related issues, WATERSPIRIT and Food & Water Watch have co-sponsored film screenings and educational sessions.

Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si’ – On Care for Our Common Home,” has been called the most amazing and ambitious church document to come out in years. In its section on water, it clearly states that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.” The encyclical criticizes “the growing tendency … to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market.”

WATERSPIRIT is happy to be collaborating with Food & Water Watch in protecting our waters from contamination, pollution and privatization.
In June, the world was buzzing over Pope Francis’ encyclical letter, which took a hard line on the need for true climate action. One place we won’t find a solution, according to the Pope, is pollution trading.

We agree. For years, Food & Water Watch has criticized cap-and-trade schemes and other market-based pollution control approaches as part of the problem, not the solution. It’s “pay-to-pollute,” and the Pope is absolutely right when he says that it doesn’t allow for the change needed to remedy our climate crisis.

Whether pollution trading is geared toward carbon emissions in the air or, in the new market push, agricultural pollution in the water, the result is the same. It’s an avoidance technique that prolongs business as usual and delays serious action regulating polluting industries. In the case of water pollution, it undermines existing proven legislation like the Clean Water Act.

Whether it’s climate denial, addiction to fossil fuels or the introduction of false solution schemes like pollution trading, there’s also one more important thing that the Pope understands about the mechanism for change: it’s going to have to come from organizations around the world that remain true to the cause while pushing for political power and better policies.

“The strategy of buying and selling ‘carbon credits’ can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide. This system seems to provide a quick and easy solution under the guise of a certain commitment to the environment, but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors.”

~ Pope Francis’ Encyclical Letter

Unfortunately, there are many in the current environmental movement who have capitulated to corporate power and embraced irresponsible trading and “market approaches” in hopes of solving the climate crisis. But these are no solution at all — they are shell games that allow pollution while creating new financial markets to benefit industry and financiers. Let’s hope the Pope’s comments help sway the debate on pollution trading and move us all away from fossil fuels.

The Pope has cut through the distracting noise on a complex global issue. He’s parted the Wall Street smoke screen and acknowledged that so-called market-based approaches to environmental problems — like cap-and-trade — aren’t solutions at all. This clear assessment puts him well ahead of the mainstream environmental movement on a critical issue.”

~ Media statement from Food & Water Watch’s executive director, Wenonah Hauter
“Buy This Fracking Album” Released in June

“Buy This Fracking Album,” released in June, contains a combination of original recordings, previous releases and live renditions of older songs, including:

- Pete Seeger’s first album recording since his passing — a never-before-released live rendition of Woody Guthrie’s classic “This Land Is Your Land”;
- “Hell to Pay” by Bonnie Raitt;
- Original recordings from Meshell Ndegeocello (“Never Still Water”), Marco Benevento and Dave Dreiwitz (“Freakin Frack”), and more.

“I feel that one of the most critical environmental issues of our time is banning fracking everywhere because it destroys our water, our communities and our planet,” Raitt said.

The two-disc compilation’s proceeds will benefit Marcellus Protest, a nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania, and other grassroots organizations around the country working to ban fracking. Album beneficiary Food & Water Watch is donating its share of the proceeds into a fund that album producers will distribute to grassroots organizations.

Many of the artists who have contributed songs to the album have openly voiced their opposition to fracking, with arguments ranging from the desire to champion community health, to the need to combat the corporate hold on American democracy. In the words of singer Kristen Graves, “I want future generations to have an example of what it looks like to live humbly, respectfully, and well with the earth.”

For more information on how you can support the album, visit movementmusicrecords.com.

IN HER OWN WORDS

It’s a great day when one person, aligned with others, can make strides in contributing to a better world. That’s how I see my life’s work: day by day.

As an immigrant family from the Philippines, we moved to the United States after World War II. I decided early on that if you aren’t part of the solution, you’re part of the problem. My dad, Justo B. Bravo, a soldier and then POW, was liberated by General MacArthur’s troops. He gave for his new country — and I do what I do in his name.

At Food & Water Watch, I have the opportunity to make the most of my efforts. Right now I work in New Mexico and with people in Texas, the birthplace of fracking. Their homes, lands, water and air are threatened. Their health is compromised by a behemoth industry that has no care for the common person.

It’s challenging, but I like that, and we are moving forward. People are desperate in some communities, facing water pollution and drought, and losing their homes to frac sand mines. Together we are learning to fight — and beat — Big Oil and Gas.
Factory Farms Make Me Sick

Factory farms produce more than the majority of the meat, milk and eggs we consume — they breed disease, misery and pollution. We took this message to Times Square this summer with an advocacy ad that ran through the end of July. We also released the latest edition of our Factory Farm Map, which showed how the size of factory farms in the United States continued a two-decade trend and grew significantly from 1997 to 2012. To see the interactive map, go to factoryfarmmap.org.

Become an activist!
Want to see the latest ways you can help drive the movement to end corporate control and abuse of our food and water supplies? Visit our website at: foodandwaterwatch.org/take-action

Become a member!
Your donation will help make our food and water safe and clean. Join us at: foodandwaterwatch.org/support-us
Or, please send your check for $20 to:
Food & Water Watch
1616 P St. NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

Already an activist and a member?
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Did we miss something you want to hear about? Have ideas to improve our newsletter? Contact us at info@fwwatch.org to give us your feedback.