Standing Up for Healthy Communities in Flint and Porter Ranch
Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director

As you’ve undoubt-edly heard, two disasters have been unfolding, over many months, in Michigan and California, respectively. In Flint, Mich., the water system has essentially been poisoned through mismanagement by an unelected emergency manager appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder, who campaigned on running the state “like a business.” Every day it seems that new information is coming out about what Snyder’s administration actually knew about the disaster months before any problems were admitted. Unfortunately, it’s many months too late for Flint’s children, many of whom will likely face the damaging neurological effects of toxic levels of lead exposure for the rest of their lives.

And Porter Ranch, a community near Los Angeles, faced another disaster. The Aliso Canyon Storage Facility had been gushing natural gas into the surrounding community between October 2015 and the end of February of this year. Despite claims from SoCalGas that the leaking gas was safe, residents reported nausea, nosebleeds, headaches, rashes, shortness of breath, burning eyes, sore throats, sick pets and more, and over 10,000 residents had to evacuate as the gas was found to contain toxins like mercaptan, benzene and even

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Trans-Pacific Partnership Update

In February, the Obama administration signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) at a New Zealand casino. This controversial trade deal will be a risky bet for the American people. It will cost jobs, exacerbate economic inequality, accelerate fracking and threaten environmental, public health and food safety rules.

After signing the TPP, the president can submit it to Congress, which would then have only 90 days to reject or approve the deal. As of this writing, the TPP had not been submitted, and the president won’t send it to Congress unless he thinks it will pass. According to the best rumors, the TPP vote might come either by early summer or even after the election — immunizing Congress from the voters.

So far, the broad-based opposition has prevented easy passage of the TPP, and the movement is getting stronger. Together, we can defeat the TPP and force the next administration to negotiate trade deals that work for America.
GMO Labeling Campaign Update

Thankfully, with your help, we kept “Monsanto’s dream bill” from passing last year, but with the Vermont law requiring GMO food labeling going into effect this July, the industry is in a panic and pushing harder than ever.

In January, Campbell’s announced that it will label all of its products that contain genetically engineered ingredients to comply with the Vermont law. This was big news, and we hope that other food companies will stop lobbying against GMO labels and also comply with the state law. However, food industry executives and some GMO labeling supporters met behind closed doors at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in January to try to work out a compromise, and those discussions broke down with no agreement.

The industry is still pushing the dangerous QR code idea. A QR code is a square of black and white dots; you can scan it with a special smart phone app and it will take you to a webpage with product information. Big food corporations and some senators are proposing to put QR codes on food products as a solution to labeling genetically engineered foods. There are more than a few things wrong with this approach:

- QR codes don’t actually give you any information on a food package.
- Most people don’t know what QR codes are.
- Many people do not have the smart phones that would be required to read QR codes.

If companies are able to update a label to include a QR code, they could easily update a label to include the words “Contains Genetically Engineered Ingredients.”

Also, last November the Food & Drug Administration approved genetically engineered salmon for human consumption. We’ve been fighting to keep GMO salmon from entering our food supply for the last five years, and we’re continuing our work for a full rejection of this approval. We’ve had a couple of small victories, including legislation that passed in December requiring GMO salmon to be labeled in the United States, and this year, the FDA said that it would reject the importation of any GMO salmon until the agency has finalized its GMO labeling guidelines for salmon.

Check out foodandwaterwatch.org for the latest action on this issue.

Standing Up for Healthy Communities (continued from page 1)

hydrogen sulfide. Not only is the gas hazardous to residents’ health, but methane is a greenhouse gas many times more potent than carbon dioxide, making the leak a full-fledged climate disaster. We spent much of the climate conference in Paris last December bird-dogging California governor Jerry Brown, asking him to be a true climate leader and to shut down the facility and ban fracking and extreme extraction in the state. As of the printing of this letter, the leak was plugged, but the aging facility remains in operation.

We’re pleased to feature contributions from Lynna Kaucheck, our senior organizer in Michigan, as well as Matt Pakucko, founder of Save Porter Ranch, talking about how we’ve worked with local organizations to mobilize people to put pressure on Governors Snyder and Brown to address the disasters. We’ll continue to put pressure on them to do the right thing to protect our communities.
New Report Exposes Pay-to-Pollute Schemes in Pennsylvania and Ohio

Water pollution trading — or water quality trading, as proponents call it — is allowing polluters to opt out of installing pollution reduction technologies and, instead, to purchase pollution “credits” from other sources that may or may not be controlling their own discharges. This pay-to-pollute scheme is not only endangering our rivers, streams and lakes, but threatening the very underpinnings of our successful water quality laws.

Food & Water Watch’s timely report, Water Quality Trading: Polluting Public Waterways for Private Gain, provides an in-depth examination of how water pollution trading is being implemented in two key states: Pennsylvania and Ohio. While this market-based approach to water pollution control is quietly being introduced throughout the country, its supporters (including many in the environmental movement) continue to focus on trading as an abstract concept full of promise. This report cuts through the theory and abstractions and establishes what water pollution trading really is: a regulatory avoidance scheme fraught with unaccountability that is destined to destroy waterways and communities.

SAVE THE DATE

APRIL 16-18, 2016
Democracy Awakening, a three-day mobilization in Washington, D.C., will bring together over 100 groups pressing for reform proposals focused both on restoring and expanding voting rights protections and curbing the influence of wealthy interests and corporations on elections.

JUNE 7, 2016
In her new book, Frackopoly: The Battle for the Future of Energy and the Environment, Food & Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter exposes how more than 100 years of political influence peddling facilitated the control of our energy system by a handful of corporations and financial institutions, and chronicles the inspiring movement to ban fracking and take back our democracy. For more information, go to Frackopoly.org.

JULY 24, 2016
With the eyes of the world on the Democratic National Convention in July, thousands will march and present these demands directly to our current and future national leaders at the March for a Clean Energy Revolution in Philadelphia.

WATER QUALITY TRADING
Polluting Public Waterways for Private Gain

MARCH FOR A CLEAN ENERGY REVOLUTION
PARTNER PROFILE: Save Porter Ranch
By Matt Pakucko • President and Co-Founder, Save Porter Ranch

I first met [Food & Water Watch organizer] Alexandra Nagy on April 1, 2014 at a Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council meeting. Alex was counter- ing The Termo Company’s proposal to drill 12 new oil wells in the hills where SoCalGas maintains the Aliso Canyon Oil Field. Save Porter Ranch Co-Founder Kyoko Hibino and I created Save Porter Ranch (SPR) just a few days later, with the sole intent to stop that project. Because we were neither activists nor organizers, we contacted Alex for help on how to proceed. She and fellow organizer Walker Foley were crucial in turning SPR into a force to be reckoned with.

In the course of addressing the Termo problem, we found that SoCalGas was an even bigger threat and started to investigate their facility and its emissions. Alex and Walker put together an air monitoring and health study that was set to launch two days after the storage facility blew out and began leaking methane gas. Game changer.

SPR is grateful to have the expertise of Food & Water Watch, specifically Alex and Walker, as we navigate through this disaster. As mentors and partners, they’re helping us organize and galvanize the community in targeted and effective actions aimed at protecting the North San Fernando Valley from the dangerous practices of Big Oil & Gas.

The gas leak disaster in Porter Ranch parallels the water crisis in Flint, wrought with corporate lies and misinformation, government failure and their attempts to downplay the current and longer-term health and environmental crisis. Save Porter Ranch and Food & Water Watch are going to be at the forefront of that fight.


We’ve known for years that when communities sell their water systems to private companies, water bills tend to go up. But by how much?

Food & Water Watch recently published a survey of 500 municipal water systems — the largest survey of its kind — and found that public utilities charge an average of $315.56 per year for a typical household. Private water utilities averaged $500.96 — an increase of 59%.

That’s an extra $185 each year for the same amount of water.

In some areas, private water companies’ track records are even worse:

• In Illinois, private water cost $286 more.
• In New Jersey, private water cost $230 more.
• In New York, private water cost $260 more.
• In Pennsylvania, private water cost a whopping $323 more.

What do residents get for their extra money? Generally, nothing good. As we’ve worked with communities affected by privatized water systems, we see the same trends everywhere: service gets worse, maintenance costs increase and jobs vanish. Private water companies are motivated by their own profits, not by the public good, and they make decisions about their services accordingly. And, unlike publicly operated systems, these companies aren’t accountable to residents, leaving people with little recourse to fix the situation.

Keeping our water in public hands usually means water service that’s more equitable, more affordable and more reliable. Learn more at foodandwaterwatch.org.
Working with partners at the national, state and local levels, we achieved the following victories this quarter:

**VICTORIES**

- GMO labeling for salmon was required as part of the spending bill passed in December, and the use of arsenic in animal drugs officially ended at the end of 2015.
- We convinced the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) science advisory board to reject the agency’s inaccurate statements that fracking has not lead to widespread water contamination.
- We won the fight to stop the Port Ambrose liquefied natural gas facility in Long Island, New York, when Governor Andrew Cuomo vetoed the project.
- We successfully pressured Oregon Governor Kate Brown to block a water rights transfer that would have facilitated the development of a Nestlé bottling facility in the town of Cascade Locks. We are engaged in a ballot measure to permanently stop Nestlé’s attempts to take water out of the gorge.
- We passed ordinances prohibiting fracking waste in the New Jersey towns of Highland Park, Red Bank, Neptune, South Brunswick and Aberdeen, and passed 41 municipal and county resolutions opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline in the state. All 30 municipal governments along the proposed route are now opposed to the pipeline.
- We passed bans on fracking waste in Coventry and Mansfield, Connecticut.
- We prevented an attempt by Pennsylvania congressman Keith Rothfus to block the National Park Service phase-out of disposable water bottles at parks across the country.
- The Take Back the Tap student program got new water bottle filling stations installed at Cal State University East Bay, Colby-Sawyer College, Johns Hopkins University, Marist College, Montclair University, Rider University and Tulane University.
- We defeated legislation in Pennsylvania that would have facilitated the raising of water and sewer rates by private water companies following water privatization.

**MILESTONES**

- In 2015, our members and supporters took over 2 million actions.
- We sent 85,901 letters to President Obama asking him to revoke the approval of genetically engineered salmon.
- We sent 56,000 messages to Congress asking them to oppose the TPP.
- We sent over 100,000 letters to members of Congress asking them to oppose the DARK (Deny Americans the Right to Know) Act and support mandatory GMO labeling.
- As part of the Global Frackdown, we delivered a sign-on letter calling for a ban on fracking, joined by over 1,250 organizations, to President Obama and other decision makers across the United States and internationally.
- We organized, with partners, a coalition petition delivery of over 360,000 names from 15 organizations calling on the Department of Justice to investigate ExxonMobil after reports surfaced that the company’s own researchers were aware of the devastating climate impact of fossil fuel extraction and consumption as far back as 1981.
- We organized, with partners, a coalition petition delivery of 350,000 names from 17 organizations to Congress calling for support of the Protect Our Public Lands Act, which would ban fracking on public lands.
Fracking Campaign Update

In the aftermath of the climate talks in Paris, there has been a lot more discussion about the need for U.S. action on climate and the need to keep more fossil fuels in the ground — and some progress has been made. The Protect Our Public Lands Act (POPLA) now has 37 co-sponsors, and legislation has been introduced in the Senate to ban all fossil fuel leases on federal lands. The EPA science advisory committee confirmed that a previous report that downplayed the impacts of fracking was flawed, and several federal lease sales have also been postponed.

While these developments are welcome news, they come against a massive headwind of policy at the federal level as well as in many states that, for over a decade, have been encouraging and promoting fracking and increased oil and gas. This is having devastating impacts not just on water and public health locally, but on our climate. We cannot hope to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and safeguard our water, air and health without bold and aggressive action.

That’s why Food & Water Watch and our allies in Americans Against Fracking are taking action to further elevate the need for bold action in this critical election year. We will be screening and promoting exciting new documentaries by Jon Bowermaster and Josh Fox on fracking and climate change, and we will be battling in the states to protect local control, to ban fracking, and to stop pipelines.

This will lead into July, when we will catapult the call for a ban on fracking and a quick and just transition to a 100% renewable future into the national spotlight at the March for a Clean Energy Revolution — a major march and rally on July 24 in Philadelphia on the eve of the Democratic National Convention. It will be a big, beautiful and powerful action to hold our elected officials accountable to the bold and fundamental changes we need to protect our communities and the planet for generations to come.

Dear President Obama Screenings

This spring, Food & Water Watch will be hosting screenings of Dear President Obama, a new film by director Jon Bowermaster that aims to appeal to President Obama to leave fossil fuels in the ground as he shapes his environmental legacy. The film, narrated by actor Mark Ruffalo, takes a cross-country look at extreme oil and gas extraction, highlighting instances of contamination and the stories of its victims, while focusing on the solutions that would allow us to proceed toward a future that does not rely on yet another dirty fossil fuel extraction process. To find out if there is a screening near you, visit dearpresidentobama.com.
IN HIS OWN WORDS

There are pivotal moments in history that can alter the lives of all living beings and the planet. This is one such pivotal moment. Accepting a position at Food & Water Watch allows me to put my 30 years of organizing experience in the United States and around the world to work toward that end.

There are few organizations in the world with the vision, dedication and commitment to saving our planet that Food & Water Watch possesses. I’m honored to continue to keep working with them as a regional organizing director. As a nationally and internationally recognized trainer in organizing and storytelling as a tool for social change, I worked as an associate trainer at the Midwest Academy for 15 years, helping to train organizers to win real improvements in people’s lives and alter the relations of power. That’s where I came to know Food & Water Watch as an agent of change.

I’ve worked in Washington, D.C. and around the country on campaigns to secure access to prescription drugs and affordable housing policies, and I’m proud to join the staff of such a dynamic, life-changing organization to secure real policy changes that will protect everyone’s access to safe food and clean water.
Get Ready for Climate Ride 2016!

Are you ready to bike for a cause? Join Food & Water Watch in one of this year’s Climate Ride events! Sign up to have your ride support solely Food & Water Watch, and you’ll get a water bottle, t-shirt and Food & Water Watch team jersey. Food & Water Watch teams will be involved in three Climate Ride events this year:

- **California North Coast**
  - May 22-26
- **Bar Harbor to Boston**
  - September 8-12
- **New York City to Washington, D.C.**
  - September 17-21

Interested in learning how you can participate in the ride of a lifetime and support Food & Water Watch at the same time? Contact Aliya Mejias at aliya@fwwatch.org. For more information on Climate Ride, visit climateride.org.

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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

Renew your membership!

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?

Spread the word! Join us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and more!

Did we miss something you want to hear about? Have ideas to improve our newsletter? Contact us at info@fwwatch.org or (202) 683-2500 to give us your feedback.