What the 2016 Election Means for Our Food, Water and Democracy

Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director

In the first election in 50 years without the protections of the Voting Rights Act, Republicans have swept the House and Senate, and Donald J. Trump has been elected our new president on a platform that has featured racism and xenophobia.

This is a major disaster for human rights, civil rights and the environment. While Trump campaigned as a political outsider, his transition team is filled with corporate lobbyists. His agriculture advisors are agribusiness insiders. He has called climate change a hoax, and his energy advisor is a lobbyist for the Koch brothers. His reported top pick for energy secretary is a modern-day oil tycoon.

I believe this election is the result of the failure of both political parties to serve the needs of the millions of people who have been left behind by corporate globalization and policies that benefit Wall Street, not Main Street or farming communities. It’s the result of a media that has failed our democracy by not covering the issues that are most important to people and the planet.

On the bright side, we did have two election victories to celebrate. Our staff and allies passed Measure Z to ban fracking in Monterey County, California despite over $5 million in oil and gas industry spending to defeat us. In Washington state, our research to expose the sham of the carbon tax — an approach endorsed by ExxonMobil — helped to defeat a proposal that would do nothing to fight off climate change.

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Water, Jobs, Justice: Infrastructure During the First 100 Days

The U.S. interstate highway system officially turned 60 this year, but some of the infrastructure delivering water to our communities is over a century old, and that includes the pipes — many made of lead. So it’s no surprise that there’s an urgent national health crisis unfolding before our eyes. Far beyond Flint, Michigan, every week more information is revealed showing that millions of homes, schools, restaurants and small and large businesses in almost every state in the country are serviced by lead pipes or old crumbling water lines. Upgrading our water systems should be a top priority of our federal government.

Transforming our water systems also means good-paying jobs — and lots of them. A 2009 study by the Clean

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Monterey County Passes Fracking Ban!

In November, voters in Monterey County, California passed Measure Z to ban fracking and other dangerous extraction techniques, despite being outspent 30 to 1 by oil companies including Chevron and Aera Energy. Measure Z also phases out toxic wastewater injection and prohibits new oil wells in the county. Monterey is the fourth largest oil-producing county in California and the sixth county in the state to ban fracking.

Residents put Measure Z on the ballot after county supervisors rejected the unanimous recommendation by the planning board to enact a moratorium on fracking and wastewater injection in 2015.

The grassroots Protect Monterey County built a powerful coalition including businesses, labor, students, Latinos, homeowners and environmental organizations. In the days leading up to the election they fanned out across the county going door to door to drum up support for the measure.

“We congratulate the people of Monterey County for banning fracking and protecting California’s water, agriculture and public health,” said Adam Scow, California Director of Food & Water Watch. “This campaign proves that everyday people can defeat Big Oil’s millions, even in a place where it is actively drilling. We look forward to seeing Californians build on this momentum toward winning a statewide ban on fracking.”

BREAKING VICTORY: No Path Forward for TPP in 2016

The fatally flawed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the latest in a string of trade deals that put corporate interests ahead of communities, workers, public health and the environment, appears to be dead in Congress. In early November, the White House and House Speaker’s office effectively conceded that the TPP’s proponents lack the votes to pass the trade deal. Without the environmental, labor, consumer, farm, faith, development and so many other groups that highlighted TPP’s shortcomings and organized in their neighborhoods and communities, the deal would have sailed through Congress before the early presidential primary ballots were cast.

Food & Water Watch was proud to be an integral part of this movement to block the passage of the TPP. We will continue to campaign to build a trade policy that works for everyone — both here and abroad. We need trade deals that put people before profits, communities ahead of corporations, workers ahead of Wall Street and farmers ahead of food companies.

It’s time for a transparent, inclusive and equitable trade model that prioritizes human and labor rights, environmental protection and consumer safety. The success of our campaign to stop the TPP shows that the people’s movement can deliver real victories when we are united.
Working with partners and supporters at the national, state and local levels, we achieved the following victories this quarter:

**VICTORIES**

- We passed a law in **New York City** banning all oil and gas drilling waste from the City.
- We passed a ban on fracking in **Friendsville, Maryland** and a ban on fracking waste in **Portland, Connecticut**.
- We blocked an attempt to use taxpayer dollars to subsidize a fracked gas pipeline in **Rhode Island**.
- We passed local ordinances to ban fracking in **Miami-Dade County** and **Dade City, Florida**.
- We passed a ban on fracking, acidizing, and cyclic steam injection and several other methods of enhanced oil recovery in **Alameda County, California**.
- We passed a measure through the Los Angeles City Council to study how **Los Angeles** could move to 100 percent renewable energy.
- We delivered 33,000 signatures opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline and produced original research detailing how powerful Wall Street interests are bankrolling the pipeline — research that has been used in actions across the country opposing it.
- We generated 10,537 letters supporting the ban on bottled water in National Parks.
- We sent 4,752 letters to decision makers in **California** opposing the carbon pollution trading scheme.
- We collected an additional 25,696 comments to the Department of Justice (DOJ) asking them to block the Dow/DuPont merger, and submitted 34,718 comments to the DOJ asking them to block the Monsanto/Bayer merger.
- We sent 74,735 letters to President Obama asking him to Veto the DARK Act. Unfortunately, the DARK Act was signed into law on July 29, 2016.
- We sent an additional 52,099 actions to Congress asking them to oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- We sent an additional 22,167 letters to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) asking them to ban the use of Roundup.
- We participated in a rally and petition delivery calling on President Obama to keep fossil fuels in the ground and to end coal, oil and gas leasing on federal lands. Our staff attended the rally and submitted over 23,000 petitions.
- We sent an additional 21,436 letters to President Obama and the EPA opposing the EPA’s revised Protective Action Guides for responding to radiological releases (increasing radiation levels in drinking water).
- We sent an additional 19,723 letters to members of Congress asking them to co-sponsor the WATER Act.

**MILESTONES**

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So, what’s next? The staff at Food & Water Watch are putting together rapid response plans to protect our collective victories to ban fracking, keep our food safe and keep fossil fuels in the ground during this lame duck session, as well as ambitious plans for what we’ll need to do under a Trump presidency to work for equity and justice for all communities. Together, we will work even harder to create the socially, economically and environmentally just world that we all want.
Top 10 Victories of 2016!

Working with allies at the federal, state and local levels — and thanks to your support — we achieved these outstanding victories in 2016:

Working with communities on the ground in Flint, Michigan and with national partners, we joined with Representative Conyers to introduce the WATER Act — comprehensive public water infrastructure legislation.

We organized the largest march for a ban on fracking in U.S. history in Philadelphia. The March for a Clean Energy Revolution helped make fracking a top issue at the Democratic Convention and reflects a continued shift toward public opposition against fracking. For the first time, polling showed that a majority of Americans are opposed to fracking.

We continued to work across the country to battle factory farms. We passed a resolution through the Los Angeles City Council calling on Congress to protect consumer health by banning the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics on factory farms and blocked efforts to place factory fish farms off the coast of Michigan.

We made progress by passing a ban on fracking waste through the New York City Council and several similar local measures in Connecticut.

Working with allies, we scored a major win against the bottled water industry by passing the Hood River Water Protection Measure, where 69 percent of the county voted in favor of banning commercial water bottling countywide. Our campus program also got more water filling stations installed on campuses across the country, and over 7,400 students pledged to Take Back the Tap in just one month during our campus contest, Tap-a-palooza.

Working with allies, we won major victories from coast to coast against fracking infrastructure, including stopping the Port Ambrose, NY and Oregon LNG facilities as well as the Constitution and Northeast Energy Direct pipelines. We continue to support communities across the country battling pipelines, including the fight in Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Significant progress was made in the California campaign to ban fracking and move to renewables through the passage of fracking bans in Alameda, Butte and Monterey counties, keeping the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility closed, and passing a resolution in Los Angeles to move to 100 percent renewable energy.
How We’ll Work to Ban Fracking in 2017

The election has ended and it’s clear that with a President Trump, we will be spending significant time battling against his draconian proposals to gut our nations bedrock environmental laws, increase oil and gas production, and privatize our essential resources. Yet we still have big plans to ramp up our campaign to ban fracking, stop dirty fossil fuel infrastructure and advance the Clean Energy Revolution in the coming year in communities across the country. Here are some of our top state priorities:

**Stop dirty infrastructure:** The fight to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline has galvanized the nation. We have stood in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux and other indigenous communities across the country who have been working to protect their water and communities and are trying to stop the pipeline from being built. Dakota Access is one example of many pipelines that are being built out across the country. Food & Water Watch is on the front lines coordinating with grassroots partners from New York to Oregon and Michigan to New Jersey. We recently brought on a full-time national pipelines campaigner and will be working at the federal, state and local levels to fight back against pipelines, power plants and other dirty infrastructure.

**Stop oil waste for crops:** In California, Food & Water Watch has documented through public records requests that oil wastewater is being used to irrigate crops for some of the largest food brands, including Halos mandarins. In the coming year, with our partners in Californians Against Fracking, we are going to escalate this campaign in an effort to ban this practice.

**Banning fracking in Maryland:** Two years ago, with our partners in the Don’t Frack Maryland coalition, we won a 2.5-year moratorium on fracking. That moratorium is up, and we are bringing on additional temporary organizers to help this coalition effort ban fracking in Maryland for good. A win in Maryland would make it the third state (after Vermont and New York) to ban the practice.
This fall, Food & Water Watch senior researcher Hugh MacMillan revealed the banks — including Bank of America, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and numerous foreign-based institutions — that are funding the Dakota Access Pipeline and several companies behind it. This was in response to the Standing Rock Sioux’s call to action. The research was featured on “Democracy Now!” on September 6 and September 9, and as of October, “Who’s Banking on the Dakota Access Pipeline” had been viewed nearly 50,000 times on the Food & Water Watch website. Our design team made a beautiful graphic to accompany the piece showing the flow of money, which has also been shared widely on social media.

The work has spurred protests at many of these banks, in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux. Activists are organizing to ask these banks to stop funding the risky pipeline, and to stop paying for private security firms, which have used attack dogs, pepper spray and mace against the water protectors and attempted to infiltrate their camps. Of course the banks expect to be paid back over the coming decades, but by locking in widespread drilling and fracking in the false name of U.S. energy independence and security, they are increasing our disastrous dependence on fossil fuels.

Go to foodandwaterwatch.org to learn more.

IN HER OWN WORDS

Michelle Allen
Florida Organizer

My family has a horse farm, and growing up I helped my father with the barn chores: feeding, riding, cleaning stalls. It gave me a real sense of love and compassion for animals and it drove me to learn how to protect them and their environment. I learned about climate change and the implications it would have for animals and people all over the world, so I wanted to get active to make the changes necessary to protect the climate we all depend on.

In college I learned how positive, systemic change is being made through community organizing. Organizing is bringing ordinary people together to take political power away from the corporations and special interests that put profit before people. I learned how effective organizing can be as I worked to get my university, Kennesaw State, to power our campus with 100 percent renewable energy.

Now that I live in Florida, I fear the threat of rising sea levels and stronger hurricanes. But as an organizer with Food & Water Watch I get to continue working toward a future that won’t depend on energy sources that contribute to climate catastrophe. Once we ban fracking in Florida, we will be one step closer to that future.

Don’t Miss This Opportunity to Quadruple Your Impact!

Food & Water Action Fund doesn’t accept any money from corporations so that we can take the strong, independent stands necessary to ensure safe food and clean water for all. That means taking on some of the world’s biggest, most powerful corporations like ExxonMobil, Monsanto and Nestlé that are trying to control our most essential resources to increase their profits. Our members and supporters understand that it takes all of us standing together to overcome their power. Think of it as “organized money” versus “organized people.”

While we know we can never match their budgets, we know we can beat them when we are smart and strategic in our campaigns. That is why one of our best supporters has offered a match challenge: for every dollar you donate, they will match your gift 3 to 1. So your $100 donation will mean $400 for our campaigns to ban fracking, protect our food and water, and make our democracy work for people and the planet.

Please don’t miss the opportunity to make your special year-end gift have an even bigger impact. Your donation must be received by December 31 to qualify, so please consider donating today.
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 ensure your food and water is safe and clean. Join us at foodandwaterwatch.org/give

Make it political!
Your non-tax deductible donation will make possible our uncompromising lobbying and policy work in Washington, DC and in statehouses across the country. See more at: foodandwateractionfund.org/give

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