Why Food & Water Watch Is Committing to Move America Off Fossil Fuels

Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director

For five years, Food & Water Watch has worked to ban fracking because we’ve determined that it presents unacceptable risks to our water supply.

Now, we’re taking on dirty energy for another reason: climate chaos.

Food & Water Action Fund has launched a bold new effort to move America Off Fossil Fuels by building political power, beginning at the local level. Together, we’ll cultivate climate champions in government, ban fracking, keep fossil fuels in the ground, stop dangerous pipelines and infrastructure projects, and transition to 100% clean, renewable energy, starting now.

We know that burning fossil fuels contributes to climate change and that a warming climate will have many impacts on society. But it will also have impacts on our access to safe food and clean water supplies — two things that are essential to our survival.

Climate Impacts on Food
The impacts on our food supply could be immense. Lloyds of London, an insurance industry giant, has written that the global food supply is very vulnerable to uncertain climate impacts. Another study by the U.S. Global Change Research Program shows that climate change will continue to reduce the nutritional value of our food, as rising atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels decrease the concentrations of protein and essential minerals in crops like wheat and rice. Increasing risks of food-borne illness also are expected, as are increases in chemical contamination.

Rising levels of CO₂ emissions in the earth’s atmosphere are causing a phenomenon called ocean acidification, which is already setting off a chain reaction throughout entire ocean ecosystems, bringing with it serious implications for marine habitats and food security.

Climate Impacts on Water
Climate change will have a range of impacts on our ability to have safe drinking water. Aging drinking water systems are often built with lead and other toxic materials, making the water unsafe. Additionally, warmer temperatures increase the risk of harmful algal blooms, which can contaminate drinking water. The WATER Act: A Comprehensive Approach to Fixing Aging Water Infrastructure

The WATER Act: A Comprehensive Approach to Fixing Aging Water Infrastructure

The water crisis in Flint, Michigan shocked the nation, but it uncovered a problem that has afflicted many U.S. communities for years: aging, outdated water pipes. Out of sight and out of mind, many of the systems that deliver water to homes, businesses and schools were built over a century ago. But replacing outdated drinking water and sewer systems costs money, and many communities struggle to fund these improvements.

That’s why the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability Act (WATER Act) is a big deal. Introduced in March by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), with the help of Food & Water Watch, the bill is the most comprehensive approach to fixing aging water infrastructure.

Food & Water Watch’s Public Water for All Campaign Director Mary Grant speaks at the introduction of the WATER Act on Capitol Hill.
Maryland Bans Fracking in Huge Win for People Power

In March, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan signed into law a statewide ban on fracking, becoming the third state to ban the risky practice. Here’s a short history of our campaign to ban fracking in Maryland, and five key pieces to the winning strategy.

1. **We stuck to our guns.** Food & Water Watch has been working toward this victory for more than five years. We were the first national group to call for a ban on fracking everywhere, and since then we’ve kept statewide bans like the one in Maryland squarely in our sights.

2. **We focused on building political power.** Ever since 2013, our focus was on organizing in key districts across the state so we would have the power needed to win. We knocked on doors, held film screenings and volunteer meetings, and pushed elected officials to come out against fracking.

3. **We played to win.** Food & Water Watch organizers and volunteers generated more than 5,500 phone calls to Senate offices during the legislative session. More than 1,000 people marched in Annapolis calling for a ban on fracking, and 13 activists even went to jail demanding that senators pass our bill.

4. **We grew the movement at the local level.** In March 2013 we helped pass a ban on fracking wastewater in the Baltimore City Council, and in 2014 we worked with Montgomery County to ban fracking there. When the state legislature passed a fracking moratorium in 2015, things really started to pick up steam. Working with partners, we passed fracking bans in Prince George’s County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City and Friendsville in Garrett County. We also passed fracking resolutions in Frederick County and about a dozen other jurisdictions across the state.

5. **We organized a statewide coalition.** We helped form the Don’t Frack Maryland coalition and, against the odds, won a two-year moratorium on fracking during the 2015 legislative session. Between 2015 and 2017 the Don’t Frack Maryland coalition grew to include more than 170 organizations in support of a statewide ban on fracking.

How We’ll Defend the EPA from Trump

*Michele Merkel, former EPA staffer, reflects on her work at Food & Water Watch*

Sixteen years ago, I took a stand and quit working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Why? Because when I was there, the EPA was prevented from doing its real job — protecting our food, our water and our environment — because the government sided with corporate interests over people.

After I left the EPA, I helped to create the Food & Water Justice program, the legal arm of Food & Water Watch. Now, I’m doing the job I wanted to do at the EPA: I use the legal system to protect people and the environment. And since the Food & Water Justice program accepts no corporate or government money, I don’t have to worry about pressure to put profits over the people I want to help protect.

Now, during the Trump administration, the EPA faces a threat like it’s never seen. Problems that the EPA was created to prevent, such as rivers catching on fire and thick smog making people sick, could become common occurrences again. The legal system is the best chance we have to stop Trump from rolling back the basic environmental laws we’ve come to depend on. That’s why our mission is more important than ever — and we rely on your support to make sure we can take the legal action necessary to protect safe food, clean water and a livable environment.
Working with allies at the national, state and local levels, we recently achieved some of the following outstanding victories:

VICTORIES

- Defeated legislation in Colorado that would have further prioritized the rights of the oil and gas industry over the public.
- Supported a lawsuit won by Colorado youth against the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission for failing to protect public health, safety and our climate during the process of approving permits for oil and gas development. We supported this effort through an amicus brief.
- Passed three more local fracking waste ban ordinances in Connecticut this quarter — in Hampton, Woodstock and New London. In total, we have now successfully won bans in 12 different Connecticut communities.
- Defeated a bill in Florida that would have forced ratepayers to pay for fracking outside the state.
- Passed a fracking ban in Maryland that was signed by Governor Hogan.
- Defeated legislation in New Mexico that would have allowed private operation of virtually any public facility in the state, including water systems and other critical environmental infrastructure.
- Stopped the Seneca Lake fracked gas storage facility in the Finger Lakes region of New York, working with grassroots partners.
- Stopped the Northern Access Pipeline in New York when Governor Cuomo’s Department of Conservation denied its permit.
- Stopped legislation in Virginia that would have allowed fracking companies to keep chemicals secret from landowners and local residents.
- Secured public commitment from Pennsylvania’s Governor Wolf to oppose fracking in the Delaware River basin.
- Continued to make progress in our Take Back the Tap program to support public water on campuses. Notable victories included: securing a commitment at Central Michigan University for installation of 10 fill stations each year for the next three years; at Denver University the administration agreed to stop distributing disposable water bottles at admission and welcome events and to provide a grant for reusable bottles; and at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, the administration provided $14,000 in funds for additional water fill stations.

MILESTONES

- Worked with Representative Conyers’ office to introduce the WATER Act to fully fund public water infrastructure, with 22 original co-sponsors.
- Submitted an additional 47,306 public comments to the Army Corps of Engineers in opposition to approval of the Dakota Access Pipeline.
- Sent an additional 33,567 messages to members of Congress asking them to support the Keep It In the Ground Act.
- Organized opposition to Scott Pruitt as EPA Administrator with a 500-organization sign-on letter, while generating over 75,000 messages to members of Congress urging opposition to his nomination.
- Sent 58,411 messages to members of Congress asking them to protect funding for the EPA in the upcoming budget.

The WATER Act (continued from page 1)

approach for fixing our nation’s aging drinking water and sewer systems, replacing lead pipes and halting the looming water infrastructure crisis. It establishes a sustainable, dedicated source of funding for community water systems, generating $35 billion a year to keep these critical systems in working order, hopefully avoiding more tragedies like the one we saw in Flint.

Water is a human right — one of the very few resources that nobody can live without. The WATER Act will help communities uphold the human right to water by ensuring that water service is safe and affordable for all.
**OFF Fossil Fuels Campaign Launches**

On May 13, our sister organization Food & Water Action launched the OFF Fossil Fuels Campaign, an all-out campaign to stop fossil fuel projects and transition right away to 100% renewable energy.

On launch day, hundreds gathered in living rooms across the country and thousands more watched the launch event online or at a Food & Water Watch office to hear powerful presentations from our executive director Wenonah Hauter, Hip Hop Caucus’s Rev. Lenox Yearwood, National Nurses United’s Rita Collins and grassroots leaders from California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania all talking about how the kind of organizing that Food & Water Watch champions leads to real victories.

The campaign aims to throw down the gauntlet for urgent action to protect our climate and to prevent climate change’s worst impacts on food, water and communities. It also seeks to empower activists to organize in their communities, to hold elected officials accountable and to support each other from coast to coast.

Using distributed organizing tactics popularized by the Bernie Sanders campaign, we are making available powerful tools to anyone who wants to take action in their community to move us off fossil fuels. Find out more about how you can get involved at [www.OffFossilFuels.org](http://www.OffFossilFuels.org).

---

**IN HER OWN WORDS**

**Katy Kiefer**  
Distributed Organizing Director

My family is from the coal region in Pennsylvania, a state that’s been ravaged by the fossil fuel industry. I also worked for a power company in the coal business while I was in college. Now, I’m working to shut down dirty energy and fight climate change through our OFF Fossil Fuels campaign.

It’s important to keep in mind that there are many good people who work in fossil fuels — they are people like my family — and they are not the ones we’re fighting. But we can’t accept that in order to provide good jobs, we need to rely on industries that destroy our planet and our future. Too often, these industries exploit their workers, cut corners and do whatever it takes to make more money. And when prices fall, or the resources are gone, so are they.

I came to Food & Water Watch in 2010 because I believed in the mission of fighting for everyone’s basic right to safe food, clean water and a stable, livable climate. When activists banned fracking in New York in 2014, I remember watching the announcement at my desk. One of the main reasons cited was the studies of the health impacts of fracking in Pennsylvania and Colorado. I had mixed emotions — relief for everyone in New York who would be protected from fracking, but anger that people in my home state were in the testing grounds for this dangerous process. And that’s why I do this work, because we won’t be done until we stop fossil fuels everywhere.

Activism as a career is hard work: you throw your whole world into it, and sometimes you lose, or you take a step back. But we also win. And when we do, it’s all worth it.
ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT: Brenda Probasco

On May 13, people gathered at more than 100 house parties across the country, and thousands more watched the launch of the OFF Fossil Fuels campaign online. One of the speakers was Brenda Probasco, who has been working with Food & Water Watch to ban fracking in Florida. Below are her remarks from the event.

Florida has been a hotbed of political activity, from deciding national elections to now being the home of the “Winter” White House, whether we like it or not. When I transplanted here a little over two years ago, I knew that I would need to find a way to unite my two passions — politics and the environment — and to help nudge Florida in the right direction. I’m not retired or independently wealthy with unlimited time to volunteer. Just like most of you, I have bills to pay, a wacky schedule and little beings that depend on me, so I need my volunteer time to be efficient and effective.

As I sought out opportunities to get involved with environmental causes in Florida, I learned a lot. We are dependent on our environment to drive the economy. Whether it is tourism or agriculture or development, we have no economy if we degrade our environment. This point was driven home by the BP oil spill in 2010. So, water quality is paramount, and a fracking ban a necessity.

As a Republican-led state, we have had issues with pushing fracking ban legislation forward in years past. Generally, we’ve seen either pro-fracking legislation or weak attempts at regulation. This year our efforts changed things drastically. We were able to get a Republican-backed fracking ban co-sponsored by nearly half the Senate through the committee, and we were repeatedly in the media spotlight. Food & Water Watch led the way, and as I grew to know some of the players, their work ethic and their level of organization (and besides, they are fun!!!), I joined the fracking fight. I am a veteran of many years of phonebanking, but this was by far the best experience ever. With just an hour here and there to spare, and my laptop and my phone, I was able to reach hundreds of just the right constituents and to drive calls into just the right legislators’ offices at just the right time when they were considering our bill. There was no wasted time dialing, no leaving the same message over and over, no calling the wrong people or calling the right people at the wrong time, etc. The targeting and the technology made this the most efficient and effective campaign I have ever worked on.

It’s empowering to know that with just a laptop and a phone, I was able to effect change. In just this past legislative session, we were able to build a tremendous amount of bipartisan support for a statewide fracking ban, and we successfully defeated a bill that would have allowed power companies to charge ratepayers in Florida for out-of-state fracking. The guy who blocked it was the target of our phonebanking. We made that happen!

In Florida, a small number of people were able to drive a huge amount of progress due to focus, our resolve, and a brilliant, strategically designed and technologically supported campaign, proving that you don’t need to be as rich as the Koch Brothers and you don’t need to quit your full-time job to make a real difference.

Brenda Probasco, a resident of Gulfport, Florida, has worked on several environmental campaigns in the state. Most recently, she worked with Food & Water Watch organizer Michelle Allen on the campaign to ban fracking in Florida.

Move America Off Fossil Fuels (continued from page 1)

water and wastewater systems could fail under the stress of adverse weather events. Runoff from storms will directly impact the water supply, introducing pathogens and increasing the prevalence of algal blooms. And of course, climate change is increasing droughts, as well as heatwaves and floods. Globally, water supplies are already stressed — and climate change will only exacerbate those stresses.

Low-income communities, communities of color, indigenous communities and immigrants are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and will be hit disproportionately by health and other impacts — as will people with disabilities, pregnant women, children and the elderly. The poorest communities are also the ones that are saddled with polluting fossil fuel infrastructure that not only contributes to climate change, but also impacts public health locally. Climate change isn’t just an environmental issue; it’s a social justice issue.

The scale of what’s needed is immense. But we’ve learned one powerful lesson from our experience organizing alongside grassroots partners to ban fracking in states and communities across the nation: when large numbers of people come together, we can win even in the face of powerful opposition. To join the OFF Fossil Fuels mobilization, go to OffFossilFuels.org.
In April We Took To the Streets for Climate Justice

On Trump’s 100th day in office, Food & Water Watch participated in the People’s Climate March in Washington D.C. and headlined the People’s Climate March in Chicago to demand climate action and social justice. Both marches included thousands of people; the D.C. march capped off at 200,000 people and the Chicago march convened over 5,000 people despite heavy downpours. Hundreds of organizations collectively united to protest threats to federal funding of supportive and environmental agencies, elevate voices of communities most impacted by fossil fuel pollution, and pressure state-level leaders to endorse a holistic commitment to climate justice. The marches were a key part of the resistance movement and helped embolden thousands from across the country to build a powerful movement against climate catastrophe from the ground up.
Fighting Dangerous Pipelines and Their Financial Backers

For almost a decade, Food & Water Watch has been leading the charge against fracking in America. But the system of connected and corresponding underground pipelines required to transport fracked oil and gas has become an equally critical target for resistance in the fight against fossil fuels and climate chaos. We are making a unique contribution to this fight.

Recently, our research team delved deeply to identify the complex network of global banks and Wall Street firms that are funding — and seeking to profit from — fossil fuel pipelines across the country. Our “Who’s Banking on the Dakota Access Pipeline” project gained international attention and helped spur a growing divestment movement, and our stunning data visual on the pipeline and its financial backers was recently featured in an art exhibit at UCLA’s Hammer Museum. We’re pleased to see our research and activism making waves across the cultural spectrum!

Final installation of artist Andrea Bowers’ mural depicting Food & Water Watch’s research on the financial backing of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The artist contacted Food & Water Watch after seeing the initial data visualization on Food & Water Watch’s Twitter feed.

Food & Water Watch Senior Researcher Hugh MacMillan, who compiled all of the financial research on the Dakota Access Pipeline, explains the project to attendees at the Hammer Museum’s exhibit opening in May.

Food & Water Watch Data Visualization Specialist Lily Boyce collaborated with the artist to turn the original data visualization into a large-format wall mural.
Be an Action Partner to help us move OFF Fossil Fuels!

Your monthly gifts will power the Clean Energy Revolution!

In the age of Donald Trump and his planet threatening, pro-big corporate agenda, everything we care about — safe food, clean water, a stable climate that supports life — is under direct assault.

It is up to us — you and me — to join together to stop his extreme and dangerous agenda.

Alone, we are easy pickings for big corporations like Exxon-Mobil or Monsanto, or their bought and paid for politicians. Who can stop them when they want to drill a new oil pipeline through your backyard? Or frack a new oil well near the school your children attend? Or dump toxic pollution from a factory farm in the river where you get your drinking water?

Who can stop them? **WE can — but only when we come together in a sustained and focused way.** Think of it like water: one drop is nothing, but wave after wave of drops can carve a mountain.

You know from your own budgeting that regular, reliable income is the best way to be able to plan for the future. That’s why one of the best ways you can make a real difference is by making a small monthly donation of $10, $20 or even $50 as a Food & Water Action Partner. And for each new Action Partner who joins through the newsletter, a generous donor will contribute $100 to Food & Water Action Fund! To become a Food & Water Action Partner, please complete the form below, detach this page, and return it in the envelope provided. **Thank you for your support!**

To keep administrative costs low so that your donations go to support our campaigns to move us OFF Fossil Fuels and protect our food and water, we can only accept credit cards or electronic funds transfer for monthly gifts. **Please note that because your donations fund the lobbying and aggressive political work of Food & Water Action Fund, they are not tax deductible.**

**YES!** I want to become a Food & Water Action Partner by making a contribution of:

- [$10/month](#)
- [$20/month](#)
- [$35/month](#)
- [$50/month](#)
- [OTHER $ __________________](#)

I can’t become a monthly giver at this time, but please accept my membership contribution of:

- [$20](#)
- [$35](#)
- [$50](#)
- [$100](#)
- [OTHER $ __________________](#)

I have enclosed:  
- [a check](#)
- [cash](#)
- [please see credit card information below](#)

---

**NAME**

**EMAIL ADDRESS**

**STREET ADDRESS**

**CITY**

**STATE**

**ZIP**

**PAYMENT INFORMATION** —Please charge my:

- [ Bank account for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT): ](#)

  - [ACCOUNT NUMBER](#)
  - [ROUTING NUMBER](#)
  - [PHONE NUMBER](#)

- [ Credit card: ](#)
  - [Visa](#)
  - [Mastercard](#)
  - [American Express](#)

  - [NAME ON ACCOUNT](#)
  - [CREDIT CARD NUMBER](#)
  - [SECURITY CODE](#)
  - [EXPIRATION DATE](#)

**PAYMENT SIGNATURE REQUIRED**  

[ ]

If envelope is missing, please mail this completed form to:

**Food & Water Action Fund**

**PO Box 97381**

**Washington, DC 20090**

foodandwateractionfund.org
act. join. give.

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, D.C. and in statehouses across the country. See more at: foodandwateractionfund.org/give

Already an activist and a member? Spread the word!
Join us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and more!

To donate by mail:
Please send your check made out to Food & Water Watch or Food & Water Action Fund and mail to:
Food & Water Watch/
Food & Water Action Fund
Attn: Member Services
1616 P St. NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

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.