These are trying times for people who care about safe food, clean drinking water and a healthy environment. The Trump administration seems hell-bent on rolling back environmental protections, handing over our drinking water to Wall Street and privatizing our food safety inspections. And so much of our work is undertaken with a long view toward a world where people can access all of these things they need to survive, even as our world faces so many threats — climate change, pollution and water scarcity among them. We know it can sometimes all seem so discouraging.

But something important is happening: more and more decision makers are recognizing that renewable energy sources are not only cleaner — they are rapidly becoming cheaper. In March, Arizona regulators froze the local utility’s plans for more gas-powered plants in favor of renewables.

As the New York Times reported, “Existing gas plants are being shut because their economics are no longer attractive.... At the same time, state legislatures and regulators are increasingly demanding that utilities rethink how they manage their systems to reduce carbon emissions.”

Food & Water Watch believes that we can’t let the market guide our energy choices — we need strong policies to tackle the climate crisis. Nonetheless, the emerging consensus that natural gas is a raw deal is heartening. And the movement to transition away from fossil fuels, fueled by your support, has played a major role. Even Jim Cramer of

(continued on page 2)
Working On the Ground in Pennsylvania to Stop a Massive Sunoco Pipeline

As soon as they caught wind of it, communities across Pennsylvania were concerned about the massive, 350-mile gas liquids pipeline called the Mariner East 2. They knew they needed to get organized to fight to stop it.

A project of Sunoco Logistics (now part of the Energy Transfer Partners company), this pipeline represents a triple threat: It would ramp up fracking in the western part of the state, it would pose a deadly explosive risk to communities along the pipeline route (including 40 schools), and the material would be carried via ships to Europe, where it would be turned into plastics at heavily polluting petrochemical plants.

The local communities in Pennsylvania studied the risks of gas liquids pipelines and wondered how on Earth state officials would allow this threat so close to schools and homes. Then came the school emergency evacuation drills, dozens of drilling spills, water contamination and massive sinkholes near homes.

Food & Water Watch is on the ground working with local activists to use every tool at our disposal to stop Sunoco. That means working hand in hand with local champions to assert the rights of local communities to protect them-selves from this dangerous pipeline. We have joined community groups organizing public demonstrations against Sunoco, we have rallied to gather support from other lawmakers, and we have taken the fight directly to Governor Tom Wolf, who has the ultimate authority to stop this dangerous project once and for all.

Our Movement Is Working (continued from page 1)

CNBC cautioned investors away from gas stocks because of this “backlash.” “I think the new hate on natural gas is here to stay,” Cramer concluded. “Don’t try to bet on this group. Don’t speculate on it. It’s just too risky in a world where everyone loves renewable energy and the younger generation absolutely despises fossil fuels, including the younger generation of portfolio managers.”

Big Oil & Gas Is Not Going Down Without a Fight

Of course, the oil and gas industry isn’t going down without a fight. Recently, Trump appointees at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a decision that could force renewable electricity generators to have to bid into electricity markets at artificially high prices. The only reason for this decision is to drive more natural gas and fewer renewables onto the grid.

As the first national organization to call for a ban on fracking in 2011, we know that our water and climate can’t afford many more years of use and abuse by the oil and gas industry.

The good news is that we don’t have to wait. Along with Synapse Energy Economics, we recently released a report showing that the nation’s largest municipally owned utility in Los Angeles could transition to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030 if strong policies were put in place today. On the federal level, we are working to advance Rep. Tulsi Gabbard’s Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act for a rapid and ethical transition to renewable energy by 2035 nationally.

The science is clear: We must act now to move off fossil fuels to avert the worst of the climate chaos ahead, and we’re seeing more and more leaders agree that it makes good financial and logistical sense, too.
Campaign to Move Off Fossil Fuels Ramps Up

With a new study or extreme weather event nearly every week highlighting the need to urgently address the impending climate crisis, Food & Water Watch’s campaign to move America Off Fossil Fuels continued to gain momentum. There is no greater threat to our food and water than climate change, and we need to address it head on—not around the edges with phony market schemes or half measures. It’s why Food & Water Watch is all-in on moving major action on climate in the next 10 years and moving the United States to 100 percent renewable energy by 2035 at the latest.

At the federal level, the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (introduced by Rep. Tulsi Gabbard) continued to gain support. In the first two and a half months of the year, 9 new cosponsors joined the bill, and now over 400 organizations nationally support the measure. We’re actively working in congressional districts across the country to continue to grow support for this visionary legislation that ends fossil fuel subsidies, places a moratorium on new fossil fuel projects and mandates 80 percent renewable energy nationally in the next 10 years and 100 percent by 2035.

At the state level, bills were introduced in Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Virginia to move those states to 100 percent renewable energy by 2035 at the latest (New York’s bill mandates the transition by 2030). And the date by which we transition is critical. Food & Water Watch has been calling for 100 percent renewables by 2035 since prior to the Paris Climate conference, and growing scientific evidence shows that we need to make this transition now. We cannot wait until 2050, 2080 or beyond.

The good news is that we can do it. We can win these fights, prevent the worst of climate change and usher in a more just and livable future. You can help by getting involved at www.offfossilfuels.org/off-act.

Stopping Trump’s Infrastructure Scam (continued from page 1)

make sure private companies—and Trump’s friends—see a return on their investment.

Suing Trump and Jared Kushner

This isn’t how our government is supposed to work, and we’re fighting for water justice. Last fall we sued Trump over his shady “infrastructure council” that devised these plans to hand over our roads, bridges and water systems to Wall Street, all behind closed doors. And in February we sued Jared Kushner’s so-called Office of American Innovation for failing to respond to our Freedom of Information Act requests to shine a light on potential conflicts of interest in the development of the administration’s plans for our water systems.

And We’re Telling Congress:
No Compromise on Our Drinking Water!

We are working hard (alongside our great volunteers) to get calls into Senate Democrats urging them not to compromise and to keep our water in public, not private hands.

For more information or to take action, visit our website: foodandwaterwatch.org.
Jamilah Elder

Like so many of us, I was motivated to do more after the 2016 election. In a time when our elected officials no longer speak for or represent us, I believe it becomes even more important for each of us to do our part (big or small!) to protect and stand up for people, groups, ideals and values that have become marginalized and villainized through false information, propaganda and ignorance.

There are so many fights to be fought, with environmental and climate action being among the more critical of our time. I’m very inspired and passionate about the work that organizations like Food & Water Watch do to protect our air, water, lands and climate. These elements represent life, and I wanted to be part of the movement to make our planet more livable for my own and future generations.

I joined the Food & Water Watch texting team two months ago. My experience has been positive and rewarding. Positive because the Food & Water Watch team has been very welcoming and inclusive. Rewarding because I see firsthand which initiatives are going to be the focus, and I get to interact with the people I’m texting, who are sometimes willing to share their feedback. This further validates the importance of the work that Food & Water Watch is doing, and I am proud to be part of the team.

Since joining, I’ve become more informed as an activist and as a citizen. I feel energized and hopeful about the future, and I look forward to continuing and growing my involvement!

Factory Farms and Climate Change

Factory farms are a climate catastrophe. The United Nations estimates that the livestock industry contributes 14.5 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions that originate from human activity.

Feed production makes up nearly half of the livestock industry’s emissions. Growing corn and other crops to feed cattle produces fewer calories than if we instead grew crops for human consumption. It also requires more grazing pastures and grasslands to be converted to cropland, releasing carbon that previously was trapped in soils.

Unlike less-intensive pasture-based systems that can use animal manure as fertilizer, factory farms produce more manure than nearby fields can absorb. Instead, manure is stored in lagoons and other settings where it decomposes and releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

As we work to get off fossil fuels, taking on factory farms needs to be part of the fight to stop climate change.
We’re Fighting for Water Justice in Martin County, Kentucky

In January we received a message from RAMP, an organization that provides hunger and relief programs in Martin County, Kentucky — a community in the eastern part of the state where coal barons and fossil fuel interests have extracted wealth at an astonishing rate. RAMP informed us that the schools were disrupted due to catastrophic failures of the water system, and children weren’t getting school lunches that they depend upon.

When we looked into the situation more, it became clear what we were dealing with: a rural Flint, Michigan.

We began working with RAMP and an attorney with the Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center that was representing the community group in the county fighting for water justice, charting a strategy to bring attention to the crisis. We helped publicize the story in the media, working with a Los Angeles Times reporter and others to bring the situation to the nation’s attention. It was subsequently featured on CNN.

We also released research showing that the community’s fiscal problems stemmed in part from distant absentee owners like Norfolk Southern and Harvard University that have controlled a huge amount of the land and mineral assets in Martin County — many of them facing no (or very low) taxes. We also called on the state’s congressional representatives, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, to help the community. A few weeks later, aid came in the form of federal government assistance from Rep. Hal Rogers.

As this goes to print, we are still working to make sure that the impoverished community doesn’t face hundreds more in water bills per year for a system that is essentially failing. We’re calling for full federal funding for Martin County and for all water systems across the country that urgently need upgrades.

Thanks for your support in helping us fight for water justice!

On World Water Day, Food & Water Watch joined Michiganders at a rally to hold Gov. Rick Snyder and other leaders accountable for ongoing disasters around the state, including in Flint. “As water warriors prepare to rally, Flint, the poorest city in the country, still has toxic water and now faces a new injustice that threatens residents’ human right to water: mass water shutoffs,” said Jessica Fujan, Midwest Region Director, at the rally. “Already, more than 1,000 Flint homes have lost water service since last January.”

Your Legacy Matters!

This month I’m celebrating 10 years on staff with Food & Water Watch.

After working in many areas for the organization, our executive director Wenonah Hauter asked me to take on a new challenge and work with you on planned giving.

I’m excited to be involved because I recently handled my own estate plans and included Food & Water Watch among the organizations I support.

Having been born into a working-class family where neither of my parents graduated high school, I’m surprised to be talking about having an “estate.” Still, with the home I purchased decades ago, a pension fund and an IRA, I have assets I needed to plan for.

Food & Water Watch knows how critical it is to help its supporters in this process. I’m incredibly fortunate to be in the position to work with all of you.

Working together we can make a difference! Planned giving is the perfect way to support the next generation of activists as they continue this crucial work of building a better future.

If you need help with your planned giving needs, please contact me. I look forward to talking with you!

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In the last few months, working with allies at the national, state and local levels, we achieved the following victories and milestones:

- We sued Jared Kushner and the Trump administration for secrecy around their water infrastructure dealings.
- We blocked initiation on fracking in Illinois and got a bill introduced into the legislature to ban fracking in the state.
- We defeated an ordinance in Sandoval County, New Mexico that would have brought fracking to the county.
- We helped advance the Florida fracking ban bill, clearing two committees in the Republican-controlled Senate.
- We got a factory farm moratorium bill introduced in Iowa.
- We got the Community Healthy Air Act introduced in Maryland, which would require the state’s Department of the Environment to identify and monitor all air pollutants emitted by factory farms.
- We supported a commitment by the Goleta, California City Council to go 100 percent renewable.
- We defeated the Pilgrim Pipeline, which would have gone through New York and New Jersey.
- We secured commitment from Sen. Schumer (D-NY) to resist cuts to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency budget.
- National volunteers across the country completed over 1,000 shifts since the April 2017 launch of our Off Fossil Fuels Program. To get involved, go to: www.offfossilfuels.org/off-act.
- Over 40 members of Congress have now sponsored the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act.
- We blocked water privatization efforts in Baltimore, Maryland; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; High Bridge Borough, New Jersey; and Long Hill Township, New Jersey.
- More than 30 members of Congress have now sponsored the Off Fossil Fuels Act.
- Bills that move to 100 percent renewable energy by 2035 were introduced in Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Virginia.
- Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh ordered an end to taking people’s homes or churches under a tax lien in her city.
- We submitted 17,207 comments to the Nebraska Public Service Commission in opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline.
- We submitted 14,252 comments on the proposed Delaware River Basin Commission regulations and will participate in the public hearings in 2018.
- We submitted 12,448 comments in opposition to the federal tax bill.
- We released a series of videos for our campaign to stop the use of toxic oil wastewater to irrigate crops in California. The videos have been viewed more than 80,000 times.
- We released a report on the social and environmental impacts of bottled water that shows that Nestlé is cashing in on the country’s water infrastructure crisis.
- We helped publicize the water crisis in Martin County, Kentucky and a possible water rate hike that would leave families paying hundreds of dollars more per year for a catastrophically failing system.
I was fortunate enough to go on an alarming but thoroughly enlightening “toxic tour” of the Houston Ship Channel, where about a quarter of U.S. petrochemicals are manufactured. The tour, led by the local advocacy group Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services, gave me a very valuable understanding of the ubiquitously hazardous impacts that the oil and gas, petrochemical and plastics industries have on the communities that surround their facilities.

Many people don’t realize that the process of creating plastics is inherently toxic — reliant on dirty fossil fuels and chemical manufacturing.

The fracking boom and its result — cheap natural gas — have spawned a resurgence in plastics manufacturing and the pollution it creates. Specifically, the fracking boom has produced an oversupply of ethane, a hydrocarbon present in certain shale gas reserves. This has been a boon for the plastics industry, which relies on petrochemical manufacturing to turn ethane into plastic.

But transforming ethane into plastic pollutes the environment and imposes public health risks on industry workers and nearby communities. Plants that convert natural gas into petrochemicals are known to emit massive amounts of air and climate pollutants, including ozone-creating volatile organic compounds (such as benzene and toluene) and nitrogen oxide.

Seeing the Impact: Playgrounds and Polluting Plants

Our first stop on the tour was a community park, surrounded by homes, directly across the street from ExxonMobil’s Baytown Complex. While only there for 30 minutes, some in my group had to cover their faces with their shirts or hands, unable to tolerate the stench coming from the facility.

One group member had to flush her eyes in a bathroom sink because of the irritating emissions.

On a later stop in the Manchester/Harrisburg neighborhood, I was shocked to see that Valero’s refinery (which is one of sixteen chemical plants within a three-mile radius of the community) — with its colossal emissions plumes — is literally in the backyard of homes, and less than two miles from schools. Just this year the first national study analyzing air pollution and schools found that exposure to toxic emissions not only affects children’s health but also can negatively impact academic performance. The study also found that children of color are more likely to live near air pollution than white children.

Dirty Industries Profit by Destroying Frontline Communities

All of this spells doom for the frontline communities in Houston and elsewhere, where children and families bear the startling human cost of dirty industry profits. Rather than continually investing in fossil fuels and chemical industries, we must invest in clean, renewable energy. It’s time to move off fossil fuels once and for all. This means moving away from plastic as well.
Going Up Against a Polluting Industrial Ag Facility

Gina Burton, a resident of Millsboro, Delaware, lost her son Kiwanis to an acute asthma attack when he was 24 years old. Burton, a plaintiff in a legal action that Food & Water Watch is now pursuing against a neighboring Mountaire chicken processing facility, wonders if contaminated water has anything to do with her family’s ongoing health problems — and the death of her son.

“For years I’ve been trying to figure out the cause of my son dying of an asthma attack,” she told the local paper the News Journal. “Who dies of an asthma attack these days with the medications and the treatments that he had? They’re saying it’s going to cost millions and millions and millions of dollars to fix the problem. It’s not going to bring my son back. It’s not going to change a lot. They let it go for too long.”

A significant number of wells in the communities adjacent to Mountaire’s processing plant have routinely shown high levels of nitrates, which have been proven to increase serious health risks including “blue baby syndrome,” some forms of cancer, and autoimmune system dysfunction.

Food & Water Watch is working with Public Justice and lawyers in Washington, D.C. and Delaware on the legal action. We plan to sue after the required 90-day notice if Mountaire doesn’t clean up its act.

Bad Bunny

California allows oil wastewater to be mixed with the water used to irrigate crops — even organic ones. Grimmway Farms, the owner of Cal-Organic and Bunny-Luv carrots, wants us to stop telling people that it grows its carrots in a district that allows this disturbing practice, but we’re determined to get the word out. Check out foodandwaterwatch.org/JustBanIt.