Times may be tough, but that hasn’t discouraged us from continuing to take bold stands to protect people and the environment, all made possible with your generous support. In May, we launched a campaign demanding a ban on factory farms — the ultra-intensive method of raising livestock for food that poisons air and water, damages public health and contributes to the climate crisis.

If it seems like calling for an all-out ban on factory farm is audacious, that’s because it is. But if we’ve learned anything from the fight to ban fracking, it’s to go big or go home. In 2011, we joined grassroots groups to become the first national organization to demand a ban on fracking because it’s a threat to our water that turns rural areas into sacrifice zones. Bold? Yes. But achievable? Also, yes! Within a few years the collective movement banned fracking in Vermont, New York and Maryland, showing that when we come together, audacious goals can be achieved.

Your support has also helped us boldly tackle the climate crisis that threatens our food, water and very lives. We recently marked the one-year anniversary of Off Fossil Fuels — our program to make a massive shift in our energy system in the next 10 years that is engaging volunteers across the country to support policies and leaders who can take similarly bold action to protect our planet. We’ve even helped introduce legislation — the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act — which is the boldest federal climate bill yet.

From standing up to the oil and gas industry at every turn, to moving forward bold legislation at the state and federal level, to calling for a ban on factory farming, your help has been, and will continue to be, critical.

Back in 2016, Congress bowed to pressure from biotech and processed food companies and passed a law blocking states like Vermont from adopting their own requirements for labeling GMOs. Food & Water Watch supporters fought tooth and nail to stop this law from passing, and while we held it off for years, it ultimately passed by a narrow margin.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was given two years to come up with a plan for labeling GMOs — and here it is.

There’s a reason why that law was commonly referred to as the Deny Americans the Right to Know (or DARK) Act. As expected, what the USDA is offering us is a far cry from what we asked for. Instead of clear,
Flint, Four Years Later: Water Justice With the WATER Act

It’s been four years since Flint, Michigan began receiving water from the polluted Flint River. We know what’s happened since: residents like Melissa Mays, whose children suffered skin rashes and hair loss shortly after the switch, now wait to learn the extent of the long-term health consequences of their lead exposure. Having trust in what comes out of the tap must seem like a distant memory in Flint. Nevertheless, water bills there keep rising: Mays’ bill one month this year was $352.

The fight for Flint and other communities suffering from tainted water is far from over. That’s why on the fourth anniversary of the Flint water crisis in April, we joined Rep. Keith Ellison to call for a massive public investment in our water infrastructure with the reintroduction of the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act.

In fact, water affordability is a deepening crisis around the country for thousands of people in cities like Detroit and Baltimore and in rural areas across America like Martin County, Kentucky. We’re fighting for all of these communities by demanding federal action — but we’re fighting at the local level as well. We worked to ensure that legislation passed in Maryland guaranteeing that homes won’t be auctioned off for non-payment of water bills, and in Camden, New Jersey we sued the city to force private water operator New Jersey American Water to disclose information on shutoffs. We’ll continue to fight to make sure people continue to have access to the clean water they need.

VICTORY: Kentucky Attorney General promises to investigate Martin County Water District

In May, Food & Water Watch joined with the Concerned Citizens of Martin County to ask Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear to investigate the county’s water system because of its gross financial mismanagement and alleged misuse of public funds. The community has been plagued by toxic water contamination, leaks, service problems and financial shortfalls that have led to an emergency rate increase there. Less than a week later, Beshear’s office responded that it was opening the investigation. We’ll continue to hold the county’s officials accountable to providing the community with safe, affordable water.

Deceptive GMO Labels (continued from page 1)

on-package labels, the USDA is offering propaganda and the runaround:

- Companies could label foods as “bioengineered” or “BE,” rather than the more recognizable “GMO” or “genetically engineered.”
- Companies could use symbols, like smiley faces and suns, that are anything but neutral.
- Companies could use QR codes that have to be scanned by smartphones, instead of clear, on-package information that anyone can access.
- Companies could get away with NOT disclosing GMO ingredients if they’re highly processed (like refined sugars and oils).
- It’s not clear whether newer types of genetic engineering (like gene editing) would trigger labeling requirements.
- And, finally, the USDA wants to give companies until 2022 to start labeling GMO foods.

Over 80 percent of the American public wants GMO foods labeled. We have a right to know what’s in the food we’re eating. That’s why Food & Water Watch, our supporters and our allies fought the DARK Act so hard — and it’s why we’ll continue to fight attempts to limit the information people have about their food.
Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site located in the desert Southwest in New Mexico, is still at risk from oil and gas exploration. We’ve been fighting long and hard to preserve Greater Chaco. Already, 91 percent of surrounding lands have been leased out for drilling exploration. Food & Water Watch, in coalition with Indigenous groups plus national and local organizations, has been holding the line against this persistent onslaught.

In spring of this year, after much local and national outcry, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke unexpectedly halted a planned auction of more than 4,000 acres of parcels near the canyon, stating that the area deserves more study. New Mexico Senators Udall and Heinrich are keeping a close watch on the process. Now the Bureau of Land Management will perform an extensive cultural report to determine which parcels are appropriate for leasing.

Subsequently a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit against the federal government regarding drilling permits in the San Juan Basin, including sites near the sacred site. Sadly the industry keeps pushing for more, and in May it expressed interest in 55,000 acres in the Greater Chaco region for fracking. We remain committed to working with Indigenous people and grassroots organizations to keep the oil and gas industry at bay. Without these coalition efforts, Greater Chaco would already be lost.

We’re Fighting to Save Chaco Canyon From Fracking

We’re Working Toward 100 Percent Renewable Energy in Los Angeles

Energy experts say Los Angeles’ electrical grid can reach 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, leading the way for California and the rest of the country, so we’re working with Los Angeles City Councilmembers to require that the local utility make it a reality.

A study by Synapse Energy Economics shows that the publicly owned Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) can rely on energy efficiency, increased storage and smart management of the electric grid to achieve this groundbreaking transition. Two City Councilmembers have introduced a motion that would make studying a 100 percent renewable scenario part of LADWP’s planning process, opening up the discussion for public involvement.

Food & Water Watch is also working to get the Los Angeles school district to roll out a 100 percent electric school bus fleet, after winning a commitment to transition city and county buses to electric power. And we’re fighting dangerous fossil fuel infrastructure with our efforts to shut down two gas storage facilities: the Aliso Canyon storage fields, the site of the worst gas blowout in U.S. history two-and-a-half years ago, and the Playa del Rey storage facility on the city’s densely populated West Side.

For more on our work to move Off Fossil Fuels, visit our website: foodandwaterwatch.org.
Oregon Victory Against Factory Farms!

In a historic push against Big Ag, WE WON! On Wednesday, June 27, Oregon’s Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality revoked Lost Valley Farm’s CAFO permit.

The Lost Valley mega-dairy has been a spectacular mess since the day it opened its doors. Cows stand ankle-deep in a slurry of their own waste. Dumpsters of dead cows and pits of manure are so full they’ve overflowed. The factory farm’s violations have put drinking water for local families at risk. And on top of that, recent reports show that Lost Valley doesn’t even have enough water to provide working restrooms to its employees.

Lost Valley Farm is the second-largest mega-dairy factory farm in Oregon. It’s permitted for 30,000 cows (yes, thirty-THOUSAND cows). We fought this proposal from the first day it was proposed.

We joined with more than a dozen coalition partners to call on Governor Kate Brown to do the right thing. Food & Water Watch members, along with members of partner organizations, generated over 3,000 emails to Gov. Brown calling on her to shut down the mega-dairy once and for all.

Thanks to everyday Oregonians, we will shut down Lost Valley for good, and we will make sure Governor Brown doesn’t allow another mega-dairy to open up shop in its place.

The Urgent Case for a Ban on Factory Farms

In May we released the new report, The Urgent Case for a Ban on Factory Farms, which outlines the risks factory farms have to people, animals and the environment. We also joined with farmers, advocates and community leaders in Des Moines to call for a ban on any new or expanding factory farms, as well as new policies to create a food system that can feed people without this destructive model. Those new policies should include:

- Enforcing antitrust laws to break up the agribusiness stranglehold on our food system;
- Establishing programs to ensure that grain producers can make a fair living without flooding the market with cheap grains that feed factory farms;
- And rebuilding the local and regional infrastructure needed for small- and mid-sized livestock producers to transport animals to market.

For more information or to download the whole report, go to foodandwaterwatch.org.
In the last few months, working with allies at the national, state and local levels, we achieved the following victories:

- The Williams Transco Pipeline was blocked in New Jersey when the company pulled its application in the face of likely rejection.
- We worked to block an attempted water privatization in Baltimore, Maryland.
- More members of Congress joined the Off Fossil Fuels Act, which now has 42 co-sponsors in addition to author Rep. Tulsi Gabbard.
- We defeated a bill in Minnesota that would have allowed people to be charged with a crime if they were part of a demonstration where someone else happens to engage in vandalism.
- The Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act, the most comprehensive approach to improving our water systems and helping ensure that every person has access to safe and clean water was reintroduced by Rep. Keith Ellison, and the bill now has 47 co-sponsors.
- We organized a large rally in Albany calling for Governor Cuomo to move New York off fossil fuels.
- We passed legislation in Maryland ensuring that homeowners and renters won’t lose their homes for unaffordable and incorrect water bills.
- The Glendale, California City Council voted to delay a gas-fired power plant — an important step to defeating this project.
- Culver City, California voted to move away from plans to expand drilling, and to explore a fracking ban and a phase-out of oil production.
- Stopped a proposed gas pipeline in San Diego, California.

Planned Giving Spotlight: Carol Markewitz

“Our common humanity asks that we have a love affair with the world.”

Carol Markewitz recently let us know that she has included Food & Water Watch in her estate plan. Carol is a longtime supporter, and here’s why she feels so strongly about supporting us:

“I believe that our capacity for caring must extend beyond our immediate family and circumstances; our common humanity asks that we have a love affair with the world.

“We Oregonians are fiercely protective of our environment. To live among tall trees, rivers and lakes, mountains and oceans is to feel deeply connected to the earth and to resonate with all of life.

“I am impressed by the accomplishments of Food & Water Watch and its Food & Water Action to inform, advocate, legislate and promote environmental candidates. This organization is a leader in preserving and protecting all that sustain us — our air, land and water. Each of us can join in this legacy for successive generations.

“I am optimistic. The wave toward change is gathering force. Sustained citizen action will be instrumental in reclaiming a more humane, sustainable and peaceful nation.”

We’re having fun getting to know Carol. We’re inspired by her optimism and enthusiasm for creating a legacy she can be proud of.
Climate Disaster Up Close

*Our Senior Web Developer, Rebecca Negron, was in Puerto Rico recently to help with Hurricane Maria relief efforts. Previously she was in Houston when Hurricane Harvey hit. Here’s a firsthand look at these two climate disasters from Rebecca."

**Food & Water Watch:** How did you find yourself visiting Houston and Puerto Rico?

**Rebecca Negron:** I was in Houston on vacation to visit family and friends (I used to live an hour and a half from the city). I had heard news that there was a storm, but I didn’t think about what would happen if it hit, and I definitely didn’t think it would be this bad. The hotel we were staying at told us that we might need to evacuate for flooding, so we drove out of the area to stay with friends. We were supposed to fly out of Houston, and there was just no way to get to the airport. There were no flights leaving anyway. We ended up flying out of San Antonio.

**FWW:** What did you see in Houston?

**RN:** The craziest thing was seeing the neighborhood where our hotel was completely under water days later. It was shocking how much water came in. It was covering highway overpasses we had driven on days before.

**FWW:** What led you to visit Puerto Rico?

**RN:** My church had a mission trip, and I decided to go for 10 days. I lived in Puerto Rico 11 years ago for five years, so I know the island well. I have family that lives there in a town called Aguas Buenas — about an hour from San Juan — and thought it would be a good opportunity to help and be of service.

**FWW:** What did you see there?

**RN:** My family tried to prepare me, warning me about the need for mosquito repellant and to bring a filtered water bottle. Family told me they wouldn’t even trust the bottled water being distributed or sold. The mission had a water filter for us. My family still boils all the water that comes out of their tap before drinking it or cooking with it.

Another thing: because there is still no water in some towns, they use big blue containers to collect rainwater. These are exposed to the elements, attracting mosquitoes and bugs. Yet that’s how many people get their drinking water, by boiling the water collected in these blue containers. Electricity has always been a problem, so people are used to boiling their water because you need electricity to treat it. Some of the areas do have water and electricity. Others have to improvise, like by connecting washing machines to a generator.

A lot of businesses have closed down because they don’t have the resources to run generators. The grocery stores that are open and running are full — we stood in line for 30 minutes to buy groceries in Comerio, the town where I volunteered. Sometimes people bathe in the river. Pretty uniformly, if you aren’t in San Juan, you are struggling.

People were saying that their biggest fear was that they could have another hurricane [note: hurricane season started June]. People don’t know what’s going to happen next.

FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency] is providing support in San Juan, but they aren’t doing things in the towns I went to in the inner island. Our church was connecting with local groups on the ground to help coordinate relief.

Hurricane Maria’s winds damaged many of El Hoyo, Puerto Rico’s roofs. Nearly a year later, blue tarps still serve as roof replacements for many residents.
helping to find everyday necessities: generators, portable fans, candles, water filters, food, cleaning and hygiene products, etc.

At a local school in Comerio, we helped clear trees and remove wet, mildewed drywall and replace it. The school has not had any classes since Hurricane Maria, but we were helping get it ready for the school year that starts in August. Some of the students are at other nearby schools, but not everyone has a spot. Teachers at this school, on their own time, go to their students’ homes to make sure they don’t fall behind. It’s basically volunteer work for them.

FWW: What were the differences and similarities between Houston and Puerto Rico?

RN: From the Houston experience, I was just there as a visitor, not a helper. I believe there was more support in Houston. I was back there in February 2018, and I couldn’t see the devastation. Houston looked like it was back up and running. Returning to Puerto Rico in May 2018, I could see the devastation before I even landed.

FWW: Any last thoughts?

RN: I was thinking about Food & Water Watch and our work while I was on the trip. These issues are real. There is a problem with water, with global warming, and I talked to older people who had been through several hurricanes in Puerto Rico, and they had never seen anything this devastating, this dangerous. The winds, the amount of damage that it did, they were just in shock. It’s incredibly important that we take action to prevent more climate-fueled disasters.

By Adam Mason, State Policy Organizing Director

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement is a statewide, grassroots people’s action group that uses community organizing to win public policy that puts communities before corporations and people before profits, politics and polluters. We have been working since 1975 to empower and unite grassroots people of all ethnic backgrounds to take control of their communities, identify problems and take action to address them. Our members work on campaigns to stop the spread of polluting factory farms and dangerous fossil fuel pipelines, make our communities welcoming for immigrants and fight abusive payday lending schemes.

Currently Iowa houses an estimated 10,000 industrial livestock operations that pack thousands of animals into confined spaces, pose enormous public health risks and generate massive amounts of waste that pollute waterways around the state.

Factory farms are not our vision for Iowa. We want more family farms, not fewer. We want clean water, not dirty water. We want thriving communities, not corporate-controlled communities. Which means we need to take on the giant meatpacking companies that want to turn our communities into rural sacrifice zones.

That’s why we have worked for years with Food & Water Watch to pressure the Environmental Protection Agency to actually enforce the Clean Water Act in Iowa, and in the last year we’ve been working together to organize groups around the state to call for a moratorium on new or expanding factory farms.

Senior Web Developer Rebecca Negron helps repair a school in Comerio to get it ready for a new school year — the school’s first since Hurricane Maria struck the island in September 2017.
OFF Volunteer Susan Clancy Hits 100 Volunteer Shifts

Our Off Fossil Fuels (OFF) volunteer program is a little over a year old, and in that time we’ve been working with some incredible volunteers. One of those, Susan Clancy, has been with us since we launched the program last May. Less than a year after getting involved, Susan was the first on our Central Volunteer Teams to complete 100 volunteer shifts — a huge milestone both for our volunteer program and, of course, for Susan!

Susan heard about the Off Fossil Fuels effort last spring, and in her own words, “It was the perfect time to do more than send donations and respond to email campaigns.”

Even though Susan lives in Connecticut, she has supported campaigns from Florida to California and everywhere in between — working to ban fracking, keep fossil fuels in the ground and fight for climate justice. As a member of our Texting Team, Susan is able to volunteer from home, at her computer, sending text messages through a website that allows her to reach many hundreds of people about important events and activities near them. With the help of volunteers like Susan supporting so many initiatives from afar, we’re able to have a much bigger impact than we can with just our boots on the ground.

And Susan isn’t planning to stop there. As she continues to volunteer with us, she’s hoping to gain the skills to become a community organizer herself.