

Looking Forward

Clean water, clean energy, clean planet



By Mark James Miller, February 23, 2018

Food and Water Watch (FWW) is an international environmental organization whose goals are nothing if not ambitious.

The group assisted in writing and supports HR 3671, a federal bill that would define at a national level exactly what clean energy is, and calls for the United States to have 80 percent clean energy by 2025, and to be at 100 percent by 2035.

That is a tall order when you consider that, as of now, only between 10-15 percent of the total energy produced in this country comes from clean sources. Added to that is the stark reality that the White House is occupied by a man openly skeptical of climate change and who wants to increase coal production, the dirtiest of energy sources, as well as opening up public land to more oil drilling.

As if that wasn't enough, the man Trump appointed to head the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, said recently that climate change may not be a bad thing. Put these together and you have the political

equivalent of trying to swim to Catalina with a one-hundred pound load of bricks on your back.

But FWW is not daunted, and neither is Alena Simon, the organization's representative in Santa Barbara County.

“The Earth has a short window of six or seven years to turn climate change around,” she said. “This will require organizing around environmental issues” and “shifting the balance of power away from the corporations.”

FWW takes no donations from either government or corporations. All of its funding comes from private donors, giving the group complete independence to focus on creating energy sources from solar, wind, geothermal and tidal power.

FWW is about more than clean energy. The group “champions healthy food and clean water for all,” and believes in working from the ground up to “get people into office that will enact environmentally friendly legislation.” Alena said that will require “constituents who will hold their leaders accountable” once they have gotten into office. “The urgency of climate change demands that we take political action,” she said.

FWW works at the local, state, federal and international level. Its headquarters are in Washington, D.C., but it has a strong presence in Europe. It has worked on clean-energy bills in New York, New Jersey, Virginia and Maryland, all of which call for 100-percent clean energy by 2035. New York's date is 2030.

Besides Alena, FWW's California presence includes organizers in Ventura, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area. Locally, FWW is campaigning to prevent 750 new oil wells from being built in Santa Barbara County. These wells

would extract oil by “cyclic steam injection,” otherwise known as fracking, a process FWW opposes.

Alena is passionate about her work and committed to its goals. Enthusiastic and positive, she has taken her message to local progressive groups like the Santa Maria Valley Democratic Club and the Little House By The Park in Guadalupe. While she acknowledges the challenges ahead, she is confident we can turn things around before it’s too late.

“There is still hope for a livable planet,” she said, “but we need to act now. We need to make a just transition off of fossil fuels.”

When asked what the individual can do, she replies, “Call your congressional representative, your state senator, your county supervisors. Attend public meetings. Above all, vote. We need to fight like the world depends on it, because it does.”

You can find out more about Food and Water Watch by going to www.foodandwaterwatch.org/state/california, or calling 202-683-2500.

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