

# Food & Water Watch: Take Back the Tap Campus Coordinator

Stephanie Bosits

University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

## History and overview of Food & Water Watch

- Food & Water Watch is a national non-profit organization founded in 2005 with 10 offices throughout the United States. The organization aims to empower people to take action to protect the food we eat and the water we drink by spreading awareness and holding policy makers accountable for the impacts of their policies within the U.S and overseas.
- This organization focuses on the following resources:



- Food-making food sustainable and accessible
- Fish-maintaining the quality of ocean environments to protect fish as food sources
- Water-promoting policies that keep water under public control, safe, and affordable to avoid reliance on bottled water

- The office I worked for was located on Madbury Road in Durham, New Hampshire. Workers in this office wanted to bring their work related to water to the University of New Hampshire's campus via a campaign that they sponsor called Take Back the Tap.
- This campaign is being activated in communities and colleges across the nation including the University of Colorado, Colby college, and American University.

## Water Use on Campus

An important step in reducing bottled water use on campus was hearing student and faculty opinions about water access as well as how different departments are distributing drinking water.

- 48,000 bottles of water are sold on campus through retail locations and vending machines every year.
- When classes are in session, the Arthur Rollins Treatment Plant distributes 1,100,000 gallons of water a day.
- A majority of students do not like the taste of tap water they are getting on campus and prefer the use of filtration systems.
- Filling stations are being put throughout dorms and campus housing for a cost of about 800 dollars (Figure 4). This machine has a counter on the filling station in order to determine the use the machine is getting.
- The student union is raising funding to install filtered hydration stations at much higher rates of 2-6 thousand dollars.
- I met with representatives from different departments on campus to provide an informational brochures outlining different filling stations that can be installed on existing water fountain
- UNH Catering has stopped using bottled water except for when it is requested.



Figure 4 : Example of a filling station in residence halls



Figure 5: Union Court, the dining area where the tap dispenser was removed

## Background Research on Campus Tap Water Supply

Before I could educate people on why to choose tap water over bottled water, I had to find out about where our tap water was coming. One way I did this was by meeting with the chief operator of the water treatment plant on campus and touring the facilities.

- The water that is distributed throughout the University of New Hampshire is a combination of Durham town water and water from the Arthur Rollins Treatment Plant which was founded in 1935 (Figure 1).
- Because of the combination of the two suppliers, UNH is receiving water from the Lamprey Watershed, the Lee well, and the Oyster River Watershed.
- The treatment facility pumps water from a dammed area of the Oyster River Watershed (Figure 2).
- One concern for future water quality is that part of oyster river watershed is located in College Woods, which is a public area causing minimal watershed protection to be implemented (Figure 3).



Figure 1: Arthur Rollins Treatment Plant



Figure 2: Oyster River Dam from which water is pumped



Figure 3: Outline of college woods showing parts of the Oyster River Watershed that fall within it

## My Position:

- My role was to launch the campaign on campus, to gain student and faculty support, and hold policy makers responsible for the distribution of clean, accessible water on the UNH campus.
- In order to accomplish this I had to do research to gain a background on water use and dispersal on campus.
- I also needed to come up with ways to spread awareness of the environmental and societal impacts of bottled water use.

## Education and Outreach Methods

- I held information tables in the Student Union
- I helped organize an educational film screening about depleting water resources throughout the world called F.L.O.W- For the Love of Water (Figure 6).
- I contacted student organizations on campus, along with faculty members and did presentations during their meetings or class times.
- In order to do this, I prepared numerous speeches and visual aids for various outreach occasions.
- I also did media outreach by writing an Op-Ed in the school newspaper and a radio submission with some fast facts about bottled water use.

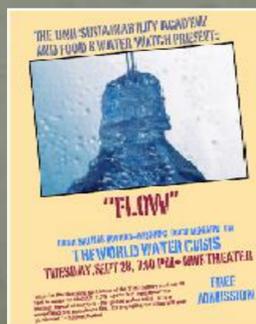


Figure 6: An advertisement used for the F.L.O.W screening

## Addressing Policy Makers

A common practice when working to create a movement towards change in non-profit organization is the creation of a strategy chart. This is a way to plan your approach to the situation, organize the supporters you have, and recognize some of the struggle that may lay ahead.

My Focus: After talking to a number of students and faculty members, I learned that a major topic of concern was the removal of a tap water dispenser in Union Court, one of the dining areas on campus (Figure 5).

Goals:

- Short Term Goal: Build a constituency of students, faculty and staff who support having a water filling station returned to the Union Court.
- Intermediate Goal: Gaining the attention of Dining Services about this issue.
- Long Term Goal: A water filling station or option will be returned to the Union Court, either at the soft drink dispenser or as a separate entity.

In order to gain support for this notion and the campaign, I created a petition and on which I got 127 student signatures.

I also gained the support of people and departments with more authority on campus such as the student and faculty senates. I also did a presentation to the UNH Sustainability Stewards, who are faculty representatives from various departments on campus.

After gaining enough support, I set up a meeting with the director of the University's dining services. Although he is not currently able to install a tap dispenser for economic reasons, we are working towards a compromise in the future.

## Water Treatment Process:

- After water is pumped, a positively charged coagulant chemical is applied to the water. This is attracted to negatively charged organic material known as floc. By then slowing the velocity of the water in the first tank, 99% of this floc, which has binded with the coagulant is removed.
- The water is then filtered through coal, sand, and gravel.
- Bleach consisting of 12-15% chlorine is also added to kill bacteria and viruses.
- A somewhat controversial addition to our drinking water is Fluoride which is added to prevent tooth decay. There is some public opposition to this addition due to potential risks to bone strength with very high consumption. The town of Durham insists that it be added to our drinking water and covers the finances of this process at the Arthur Rollins Treatment Plant.
- Daily testing for PH, Chlorine, color, turbidity (free floating material) is done in addition to bacteria monitoring being done daily for two weeks of every month.

## Water Distribution:

- The Arthur Rollins Treatment plant is also responsible for making sure pipes and infrastructure are performing adequately.
- Because of the corrosion that is occurring in many pipes throughout campus, sodium hydroxide has also been added to the water to put a micro film on the inside of pipes to prevent lead from leaking into drinking water.
- To assure that lead is not entering water at a dangerous level the plant monitors water from fountains at 30 sites throughout campus once each year.

To get involved with Food & Water Watch or the Take Back the Tap Campaign contact Denise Hart, New England Regional Director, at [dhart@fww.org](mailto:dhart@fww.org).