Sacrificing public lands for private profit

Trump’s giveaway to big oil and gas
Dear Friends,

I recently celebrated my 20 year anniversary at Friends of the Earth. Like our President Erich Pica, I came to this organization fresh out of college on a Friends of the Earth fellowship.

People have often asked me about the changes I have seen in the environmental movement over the years. And while there have been huge shifts, in some ways things are as they have ever been.

Corporate consolidation of power, over both our economic and political lives, remains at the heart of our struggle for a healthier planet and just society. As Antonio Roman-Alcalá describes in his article, “Top Five Reasons Why We Must Block Agrichemical and Seed Mega-Mergers,” three proposed mergers will give mega-corporations unprecedented control over our food and farming systems, and lock in our dangerous dependence on pesticides, genetic engineering and industrial monocultures. Today corporate consolidation looks like Bayer+Monsanto, Dow+DuPont and Syngenta+ChemChina. Back when I first started at Friends of the Earth, it was Exxon+Mobil, Chevron+Texaco and JP Morgan+Chase.

That’s not to say that there is nothing new under the sun with the Trump administration. Indeed, today we have an Exxon CEO helming our State Department, making the corporate capture of our government glaringly obvious. But we also have the likes of Steve Bannon, Scott Pruitt and Jeff Sessions in power, and they have made our politics uglier, more hateful and more dangerous. My article, “Our Connected Struggle,” is a personal reflection on how Trump has stoked the flames of racism and militarism in our country. It calls on us as Friends of the Earth to use our ecological mindset to see how the struggles of women, Muslims and people of color are intertwined with the fight to save our planet. It argues that the only way we can win is by being united.

Finally, being an old-timer has provided some grounding and perspective in these turbulent days. I remind myself that some of Friends of the Earth’s best campaign work was actually done during the dark days of the George W. Bush administration. For example, we ran a campaign to successfully oust – and eventually imprison – J. Steven Griles. Griles was second in command at Bush’s Interior Department and intent on giving away our public lands and resources to his cronies.

As our cover story describes, today we are facing the same situation with Trump’s Interior Department, which is similarly awash in conflicts of interest. So we are taking a page from our Griles ethics campaign and making it new again. With solid research and hard-driving advocacy, who knows: we might see some Trump appointees going to jail, too.

We know we have the strategies to fight Trump. And with Friends like you and inspiring activist Janet Henderson (see page 10) helping to lead the ever-growing movement to resist Trump, we also have the power and strength to win.

Thank you for standing with us.

Michelle Chan,
vice president of programs
Get involved in issues and debates affecting human health and the planet by signing up for Friends of the Earth action alerts. Visit us at www.foe.org today!

www.foe.org
Environmentalists understand one thing above all others: in any ecosystem, everything is interconnected. Bears rely on salmon, which rely on rivers, which rely on trees – all the way down to the microorganisms that sustain our soil. Every part plays a critical role, even if we don't understand it. All of life – and our fates – are intertwined.

This is why, as environmentalists, we cannot sit on the sidelines, letting women, Muslims, people of color, immigrants and others fight their own battles while saving our strength to speak for the trees.

When the crises of mass incarceration and police brutality rip up black and brown communities, and immigration raids tear families apart, these phenomena ultimately hurt everyone. I may not face these trials personally, but as an environmentalist I understand that poison travels.

Nature also teaches us that the web of life is powerfully resilient. Poison can spread quickly, but so can healing. Restoring eelgrass in the San Francisco Bay can protect spawning grounds for herring, which in turn supports tuna, which helps sustain us. So when three million people around the world marched for women’s rights the day after President Trump’s inauguration, it gave me hope.

Nature inspires us to love

Nature inspires hope and awe: The mind-boggling 3,000-mile migration of the monarch butterfly, alight on paper-thin wings; the damp quiet of ancient redwoods, which have stood in witness to history for thousands of years.

Nature also inspires humility. Those of us who are spiritual see a glimpse of the Divine in nature. For those who are not believers, nature reminds us that there is so much we don't understand, and that there is something far bigger than ourselves.

When we are at our best, nature inspires us to love boundlessly. It inspires us to overcome the meagerness of our hearts and the smallness of our prejudices, to mirror the expansiveness and abundance that we see in nature.

As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si*, “A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if
our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings…When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one.”

Excludes nothing and no one. Our fraternity with one another, and with nature, cannot exclude Muslims, immigrants, people of color, or those who disagree with us politically. This communion does not build walls or prohibition lists; it doesn’t divide the world between “worthy” or “unworthy” people, or into places to be protected and those to be sacrificed. As our nation becomes increasingly divided and laden with hate, fear and militarism, it flies against nature’s most powerful and enduring lesson: everything and everyone is intrinsically valuable and vital to the whole.

Our ethical challenge

When we embrace the dignity and interconnection of all things, this recognition gives our lives beauty, meaning, and even sacredness. It also brings responsibility.

Our environmental ethic requires us to consider not only our planet’s crisis, but our role in creating and solving it – which includes both ecological and social dimensions. We begin by making changes in our own lives to get in “right relationship” with the planet and with others. Then we take that to the systemic level, to transform the institutions that perpetuate environmental and social injustice – understanding that these are interconnected.

Working for systemic change is hard. But an ecological mindset enables us to see relationships and to look for the root of our problems and solutions. When overwhelmed by systemic battles, sometimes we need to start by taking care of what is most vulnerable. That could mean planting eelgrass in the bay – protecting one part of the ecosystem that ultimately helps nurture the whole.

Nature teaches us that all things are interconnected and intrinsically valuable. As environmentalists, we have the opportunity, and responsibility, to let our interconnectedness inspire and animate us to overcome these turbulent and dangerous times. Let us exclude nothing and no one.
In a publicity stunt disguised as a nod to Theodore Roosevelt, the Trump administration’s new Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke rode a National Park Service horse to his first day at the office.

But Zinke, a former one-term congressman from Montana, has values more closely aligned with his fossil fuel-loving boss than those of our “conservationist president.”

While Roosevelt famously expanded the national parks system and championed conservation, in Trump’s America, the lands set aside for all Americans are under threat.

The great public lands giveaway

Since taking office in January, Trump has shown himself to be a powerful ally of the fossil fuel industry, prioritizing their profits over the planet and people at every opportunity. With the appointments of former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State, and industry loyalist Scott Pruitt as head of the EPA, the Trump administration has proven its loyalty lies with its industry cronies, not with the American people.

Trump has signed legislation to reverse President Obama’s rules giving the public more input into public land management decisions and requiring more transparency from oil companies. He lifted the moratorium on federal coal leasing and has promised to expand offshore drilling. He ordered the EPA to begin dismantling Obama’s signature initiative to reduce the power sector’s carbon emissions. And of course, he announced his intention to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement.
These destructive moves are just the beginning of a broader and more insidious effort to hand over our publicly owned lands and waters to the fossil fuel industry.

For a few billion dollars and a few more years of profit from planet-destroying coal, oil and gas, the Trump administration and its congressional allies are more than willing to trash over 100 years of public lands conservation efforts – betraying the public they are supposed to serve.

It didn’t take long for the attacks to start. Just days after Trump’s inauguration, the House passed an arcane rule change to make it easier to sell off public lands by telling the Congressional Budget Office to ignore the budget implications.

A few days later, House Republicans introduced a bill to allow drilling in pristine Grand Teton, the imperiled Everglades, and more than 40 other national parks.

The Senate then cleared a resolution decreasing the input of local communities into land use planning – a transparent move enabling fossil fuel companies to steamroll communities in their quest for fossil fuel leases.

Meanwhile, over at Zinke’s Interior Department, a regulation to keep coal companies from cheating taxpayers was put on hold – a move that could prove illegal. The so-called “valuation rule” is mainly meant to stop companies from dodging royalties, and reversing it could mean windfalls of as much as $85 million a year for coal companies and other polluters.

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And in a huge blow to the planet – and a massive giveaway of taxpayer dollars – Trump has indicated that he will lift President Obama’s moratorium on federal coal leasing and end the current review of the environmental impacts from the entire coal program – potentially reopening this fossil fuel floodgate.

There is some good news. Many of these moves are too extreme even for some Trump allies. That means we have a real shot at keeping our public lands in public hands – and not in the clutches of the fossil fuel industry.

**Friends of the Earth fights back**

Friends of the Earth has long been a leader in the fight to keep polluting companies out of our precious public lands and waters. And right now, we’re redoubling our efforts.

**We’re exposing the cozy ties between the fossil fuel industry and the Trump administration.** Friends of the Earth conducted a new analysis of congressional lobbying reports, revealing several links between the industry and the administration:

- During the first quarter of 2017, oil companies lobbied Congress extensively to kill an Obama-era regulation that charges royalties on natural gas wasted through flaring on public lands. One of the key lobbyists now works as a top energy policy aide for Trump.

- An official from George W. Bush’s Interior Department, who later joined a lobbying firm with financial ties to destructive fossil fuel projects, has been chosen as the new deputy secretary of the Interior. This position gives him the power to approve projects worth millions of dollars to his former lobbying firm.

- ExxonMobil hired the Nickles Group to lobby Congress on their behalf, including on the specific subject of the flaring rule. Former U.S. Senator Don Nickles (R-Okla.) is listed as a registered lobbyist for both companies in the first quarter.

Trump ran on a promise to “drain the swamp,” so we’re making sure the public knows just how “swampy” the Trump administration really is.

**We’re uniting a new and invigorated corps of community activists.** Our new training program is honing the powerful public resistance to the Trump administration into an effective force for our planet. These activists are joining us at town hall gatherings across the country.
meetings, political fundraisers, and anywhere we can find members of Congress. Together, we are sending the message to our elected officials that they will pay a punishing price for their neglect of climate issues, the environment and the health of our planet.

**We’re taking the Trump administration to court.** Friends of the Earth won’t hesitate to pursue legal action against the administration’s illegal moves. We’ve already relaunched a lawsuit about the federal coal leasing program that was set aside after Obama initiated an environmental review of potential new coal leases on federal lands and put in place a moratorium while the review was being conducted. Now that the Department of Interior has undone Obama’s decision, we’re asking the Washington, DC Circuit Court to let our suit move forward.

**We’re winning key battles.** From the moment Trump took office, Big Oil has tried to overturn the Obama-era Bureau of Land Management rule regulating methane emissions from oil and gas developments on public lands.

The new rule forced fossil fuel companies who drill on our public lands to pay taxpayers and tribes for any wasted natural gas – a common practice as companies often burn away excess natural gas when they drill, sending climate-harming CO2 straight into the atmosphere and polluting air in local communities.

Despite a massive push from Big Oil, we prevailed in the Senate – a victory for the American people and for our climate.

This was a key win for another reason: it proved that we can fight back against the dangerous and irresponsible administration efforts to hand over our government and public assets to the fossil fuel industry.

The Trump administration’s vision for our environment is clear. They want to give polluters free rein over our forests and oceans and our other precious public lands and waters.

And they think that putting on a good show – like Zinke riding a horse to work – will distract the American people from their truly anti-environment agenda.

Friends of the Earth and Members like you have a different vision...one we’re willing to fight for – in Congress, in court, and on the ground across the country. And we will not rest until we have created a more just, healthy and green planet for us all.
Like millions of Americans, Janet Henderson was stunned when Donald Trump shocked the nation last November. But that distressing election jolted her into action. Instead of mourning the defeat, Henderson, of New Salem, Massachusetts, quickly joined Friends of the Earth as a volunteer activist.

“Remorse at not having done more during the campaign got me motivated,” said Janet. Under the dark cloud of a Trump presidency, she found hope in volunteering. “Being an activist for Friends of the Earth is my silver lining.”

Friends of the Earth spoke with Janet in July, and she shared what being a volunteer activist for Friends of the Earth means to her.

What inspired you to volunteer for Friends of the Earth?

An email from Friends of the Earth was the catalyst. I had planned to go to the Women’s March on Washington but had to cancel due to the flu. I was so disappointed, but also motivated to do SOMETHING. The email from Friends of the Earth was an invitation to learn about being an activist. I forwarded the email to my nephew as he had been making noise about going into politics as a result of the election. He had too much work but I thought, “Hey, why don’t I do it?” So I filled out the application, got a call, and suddenly I had committed to going to Washington for a two-day training which would culminate in marching in the People’s Climate March.

What did you think about the activist training?

It was a wonderful experience. I met like-minded people from all over the country, which gave me a feeling of solidarity, learned about activism from experienced activists, and got to participate in a huge demonstration in support of the planet. WOW!

How are you applying what you learned at the activist training in your own community?

I do a tabling activity on Thursday afternoons at the Orange, Massachusetts farmers’ market. My table is decorated with Friends of the Earth posters and handouts, and it’s a great place to be visible and talk about the cause with locals. I also use a visioning
strategy to get people engaged. This activity asks people to think about and then draw a picture of what they want to see in their community.

I also heard that you used your musical talents to spread word about the cause?

I am in two musical acts that often perform at community events, and I’ve used my music (and the microphone!) as a way to promote our cause and get people to sign petitions in support of the EPA. I even got the conductor of the Orange Community Band to promote the cause between their song selections!

What are the most rewarding (and challenging) aspects of volunteering for Friends of the Earth?

For me, the most challenging aspect of being an activist is going up to that first person and asking them to read and sign your petition. It’s kind of a step into the unknown. But once you start, it gets a lot easier. People are curious and when they see one person signing they often approach you and ask what the petition is about.

Another challenge is when you ask someone who is adamantly against your cause. I recommend simply asking that person to read the petition before they decide it’s not for them. Sometimes you do get a person to change their mind, and sometimes you don’t. But when you do, it’s very rewarding! Seeing how many people are supporting your position by signing the petition gives that feeling of solidarity and comfort. You are not alone, and being an activist helps more people get involved by offering them a chance to support a cause that they believe in, too.

What would you say to someone thinking of volunteering for Friends of the Earth?

If you are thinking of volunteering with Friends of the Earth – just go right ahead. The training gives you skills necessary to make a difference, and you will get that feeling of being one of many who care about the planet. You will also experience the thrill of going forth and helping other people experience that feeling of support for an issue they care about.

If you’d like to follow in Janet’s footsteps and become a volunteer activist for Friends of the Earth, please visit foe.org/volunteer or call 1-866-217-8499.
Three mega-mergers between six corporate giants threaten to further consolidate agricultural seed and pesticide markets – leading to more dangerous corporate control over our farms and plates.

The U.S. has already approved the mergers of Dow+DuPont and Syngenta+ChemChina, and Monsanto+Bayer are up next. President Trump’s pre-inauguration meeting with CEOs from Bayer and Monsanto indicates that politics may trump antitrust law and precedent.

But the merger is not a done deal. Widespread opposition is mounting from farmers, consumers, workers, environmentalists and regulators. A recent poll shows that 9 in 10 Americans have serious concerns about the potential merger and 90% of Americans, including 92% of Trump voters, believe that the Trump administration should take a more aggressive stance towards corporate monopolies.

These mergers endanger nearly every sector of society, and must be stopped.

1. Agribusiness mergers harm farmers

Polls show that 67 percent of United States farmers oppose the mergers – farmers know the mergers will reduce options for seeds, meaning higher prices for these and other inputs.

Monsanto already controls much of the global seed market. If the merger is approved, Monsanto+Bayer and just one other company will sell 77% of all the corn seed grown in the U.S.; meanwhile, about 95% of all seed for corn, soybean, cotton, canola and wheat will contain a Monsanto+Bayer gene that enables the extensive use of herbicides like Roundup® on the fields. In addition, Monsanto+Bayer will be the world’s largest seed business for vegetables such as broccoli, green beans, carrots and onions.

This monopolistic ownership is a recipe for price collusion and the reason why antitrust law exists: to prevent firms from having so much power that they control markets and prevent competition.

Already, commodity farmers struggle with falling prices for their soy and corn due to the small number of buyers who dominate grain markets. These mega-
mergers will squeeze farmers further: as they lose money and default on loans, we could see a repeat of the 1980s farm foreclosure crisis.

For organic farmers, greater market penetration of genetically engineered (GE) seeds will increase the potential for cross-farm genetic contamination, when wind-blown GE pollen drifts onto their fields and into their crop. This contamination could mean more company lawsuits against farms alleging improper use of patent-protected traits.

2. Consumer food prices will rise

Higher prices for farmers’ inputs will likely drive up consumer prices for all foods with commodity-crop ingredients, and for animal products. Previous mergers of telecommunications and airlines industries show that mergers hurt rather than benefit consumers.

3. Workers will suffer

Despite Trump administration assurances that the mergers will add jobs, mergers are designed to increase profits by cutting costs and reducing “redundancies” by creating “synergies” – code words for layoffs. Already, DuPont announced it would cut 1,700 jobs in Delaware. Dow plans to eliminate 2,500 jobs and close some plants before the mergers go through.

Farmworkers could suffer even more, both financially and physically. As farmers absorb higher input costs, they may pay farmworkers less. Increased pesticide use due to these firms’ pesticide-associated seed varieties will mean worse pesticide exposures for farmworkers.

4. Industrial agriculture will expand its environmental damage

These corporations’ expanded power will further entrench destructive industrial agriculture. Since Roundup® Ready seeds were introduced in 1996, usage of glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup®) has expanded 15 times over. Combined with consolidation in dairy, meatpacking and other sectors, these mergers will reinforce the environmentally damaging practices of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), which rely on feed grown with the genetically engineered, industrial farming technologies pushed by the merging companies.

5. Locking in industrial agriculture will harm alternatives for people, pollinators and planet

Expanding corporate agrichemical power could harm vital efforts to create a sustainable and just food system. The “pesticide treadmill” that keeps farmers hooked on chemicals will further shrink opportunities for more sustainable and healthful farming.

As industrial methods dominate both private and public investments, research into more sustainable methods will shrivel, further shrinking the availability of diverse, non-GE, locally appropriate seed varieties. These mergers harm our environment, farmers and consumers by reducing seed diversity and undermining alternatives.

Take action!

- Sign Friends of the Earth’s petition to the DOJ to stop the Bayer+Monsanto merger: http://bit.ly/stopthebayermonsantomerger
- Tell your state attorney general to join DOJ’s investigation into the merger, and outline your concerns about the mergers and their impacts on you as a constituent.
- Urge your senator and representative to speak up and take a critical stand by sending a letter to the Department of Justice opposing the mergers. Call them today: (202) 224–3121.
Fighting for Bees on Capitol Hill

by Tiffany Finck-Haynes, food futures campaigner

Friends of the Earth’s Bee Action campaign created some serious buzz this June, organizing a congressional briefing and “fly-in” to raise awareness about the $66 billion Bayer+Monsanto merger and the dangerous grip these companies have over our food and agriculture system. The top six agrichemical and seed companies are negotiating mergers which could result in just three powerful multinational corporations controlling this market. If approved, the toxic Bayer+Monsanto mega-merger will devastate American consumers, farmers, workers and our environment.

Teaming up with farming, food, beekeeping, environmental and consumer groups, Friends of the Earth helped mobilize over 15 farmers and beekeepers from ten states to lobby Congress and the U.S. Department of Justice, the agency responsible for approving the merger. These farmers and beekeepers shared their concerns about the mega-merger in over 40 meetings with senators, representatives and Department of Justice officials, including five in-person conversations with members of Congress.

These grassroots efforts persuaded a number of House and Senate offices to ask their state attorney general to join the Department of Justice’s investigation of the Bayer+Monsanto merger. And we achieved success on both sides of the aisle, convincing three Republican offices to consider pursuing a hearing on the merger. These meetings also helped secure the signatures of 19 Democratic senators on a letter that was sent to the Department of Justice in July, which expressed their concern over the Bayer+Monsanto merger. The issue was elevated and highlighted as an area of concern as part of the Democrats’ new policy agenda, which calls for a crackdown on corporate monopolies and adoption of new standards for merger review.

Perhaps our biggest achievement was securing the commitment of two House offices to work with Friends of the Earth to craft federal legislation protecting farmers and the American public from agribusiness consolidation and concentration.

Successful efforts like these are only possible thanks to support from Friends of the Earth Members like you. Your continued generosity will help us keep the pressure on as we seek commitments from state attorneys general to join the Department of Justice investigation into the mergers in the coming months. Thank you for all you do to protect people, the planet and our pollinators.
Friends of the Earth Members Turn Up the Heat on Kroger

In June, Friends of the Earth and allies delivered over 400,000 Member signatures to the CEO of Kroger at Kroger Company’s annual general meeting, urging the grocery retailer to protect pollinators by removing food produced with bee-killing pesticides from store shelves. “Kroger’s bottom line will suffer if it doesn’t take steps to address its contribution to the bee crisis,” said Tiffany Finck-Haynes, food futures campaigner with Friends of the Earth. “From the produce section to the dairy aisle, food sold at top U.S. food retailers is produced with pollinator-toxic pesticides. Polling shows the majority of consumers believe grocery stores should eliminate these harmful pesticides from the food they eat.”

Sanderson Farms’ “100% Natural” Advertising Claim is 100% False

Friends of the Earth and two ally groups have filed a lawsuit against poultry company Sanderson Farms, Inc., the nation’s third largest chicken producer, for falsely advertising as “100% Natural” products that contain a wide range of unnatural and in some cases prohibited substances. USDA inspections of Sanderson products at five processing plants revealed steroids, human antibiotics, and the hallucinogenic drug ketamine in the chicken they sell. “The presence of drug residues in chicken is anything but natural,” said Kari Hamerschlag, Friends of the Earth’s deputy director of food and technology. “This scandal is a wake-up call to all consumers who want healthier meat.” Sanderson sells its chicken in grocery stores across the U.S., and supplies restaurant chains including Olive Garden, Arby’s and Dairy Queen.

Friends of the Earth Urges Major Investments in Renewables

In July Friends of the Earth and allies released “Talk is Cheap,” a report outlining how G20 nations – including renewable energy advocates Germany and Canada – invest nearly four times more in public financing for polluting fossil fuels than for clean, renewable energy. The United States is the fourth-largest investor in fossil fuel projects, spending almost $6 billion a year on oil, gas and coal projects. These toxic investments directly contradict the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, while ignoring the economic, environmental and job-creation benefits of renewable energy. The report calls for G20 nations to live up to their climate commitments and end all public fossil fuel financing by 2020.

Your legacy and ours...

A bequest is a simple way to pass on your values. You can make Friends of the Earth part of your life story by naming us in your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or financial accounts. Anyone can make a bequest, and every gift makes a difference. Together, we can create a lasting legacy for the planet.

CONTACT US TODAY!

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