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2019: A HISTORIC YEAR AND WE ARE JUST GETTING STARTED

CELDF, our partner communities, and allies made remarkable advancements in Community Rights and Rights of Nature this year. Together—despite corporate and state level efforts to stop this work—we made history. From the right to climate laws adopted by New Hampshire communities, to the globally-recognized *Lake Erie Bill of Rights*, we know to be true on a broad scale what was written about our partners in Lincoln County, Oregon, last fall:

*“...that a small, committed band of people” can make change
“even when their resources are dwarfed by those of their
opponents.”¹*

Efforts to stop Community Rights and Rights of Nature, in fact, are galvanizing communities. Here are some of our successes over the year:

- In February, the *Lake Erie Bill of Rights* was adopted by the people of Toledo. This is the first law in the United States to secure the rights of a distinct ecosystem, recognizing the Lake’s rights to exist, flourish, and naturally evolve. Media coverage was global, including by CNN, the *New York Times*, NPR, *Mother Jones*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Daily Show*.

¹ (<https://theintercept.com/2018/09/15/oregon-pesticides-aerial-spray-ban>)

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LAKE ERIE BILL OF RIGHTS SPARKS CULTURAL SHIFT

Indigenous cultures have held a longstanding recognition of nature’s right to exist, flourish, and evolve. Today, shifts are happening in western cultures, including the U.S., sparked by the growing Rights of Nature movement and the *Lake Erie Bill of Rights*.

CELDF assisted Toledo, Ohio, residents to draft the *Lake Erie Bill of Rights* (LEBOR), which was adopted by Toledoans in February 2019. Toledo residents recognize that they cannot be healthy in a polluted environment.

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- Inspired by the *Lake Erie Bill of Rights*, several Florida counties are partnering with us to advance Rights of Nature laws to protect Florida waterways. This includes the Santa Fe, Wekiva and Econlockhatchee River ecosystems, among others.
- In Exeter and Nottingham, New Hampshire, community members adopted CELDF-drafted ordinances securing their right to a healthy climate. The laws ban harmful corporate activities—including fracking infrastructure and toxic waste disposal—that would violate those rights.
- On behalf of seven Ohio communities, CELDF filed a federal lawsuit against the state for First Amendment and other civil rights violations. This comes in response to repeated efforts by state officials to block citizens from exercising their right to direct democracy via the citizen initiative.
- Our work is growing as CELDF is engaged with Community Rights and Rights of Nature work in Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, Maine, and other states.
- CELDF and our partners are advancing state constitutional amendments in New Hampshire, Oregon, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The state amendments would establish the right of communities to secure greater environmental protections at the local level than in place at the state and federal level—including securing the Rights of Nature—and prohibit corporate or government interference in that process. This year, state representatives in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania introduced rights-based legislation.
- In Sweden, CELDF has been working with activists and a Member of Parliament on a proposed

amendment to Sweden's constitution to enshrine the Rights of Nature. The measure was introduced into the Riksdag this fall, and is the first time such a measure has been introduced in the E.U.



- In the Philippines, CELDF has been working with a coalition of indigenous, faith, and environmental advocates on national Rights of Nature legislation. The bill was introduced into the Filipino Senate this October.

- Through our Community Rights Video Series released this fall, we shared inspiring stories of heartbreak, grit, and necessity, as growing numbers of people and communities recognize we must overcome systemic legal barriers that protect fracking and other threats over people and nature. Check out the stories here:

celdf.org/grassroots-video-series.

- CELDF has been sharing our work with new audiences—in the U.S. and abroad—including at the University of Illinois's conference this November: "Can a River Be a Person? Indigeneity, Law, and Climate Change" Symposium.
- Berrett-Koehler published *How Wealth Rules the World: Saving our Communities and Freedoms from the Dictatorship of Property*, the new book by CELDF's National Organizing Director Ben Price.

Community Rights and Rights of Nature are capturing the hearts and minds of people around the world. They are uniting communities across the country, in a vision for a healthy, just, and vibrant future. Our accomplishments and ability to support, protect, and grow this movement across the United States and around the world are possible because of your commitment. Thank you for making our work possible, and please join us to make 2020 the *Year of Community Rights and Rights of Nature*!

WATER IS AN ECOSYSTEM NOT A RESOURCE

Water privatization: taking that which belongs to no one, and claiming it belongs to a select few. It can include bottling water for resale. Delightful, perhaps, to corporate profiteers. Unwelcome to communities such as Williams County, Ohio.

Williams County residents learned that Artesian of Pioneer Corporation had its sights set on the Michindoh Aquifer—an underground drinking water source for communities across the county. Artesian planned to withdraw the water for resale to suburbs surrounding Toledo.

First, community members turned to the state for protection. They swiftly learned there are no state protections to prevent a community's water source from being drained and sold for profit by a corporation.

Then, they partnered with CELDF to draft a Community Rights and Rights of Nature county charter that included recognizing the rights of the Michindoh Aquifer to thrive and regenerate. They gathered signatures to place the measure on the ballot for a democratic vote by the people of Williams County.

But Ohio is not a democratic state. The local Board of Elections voted to keep the charter off the ballot. CELDF represented community members in the Ohio Supreme Court, where the judges refused to overturn the Board's decision based on a technicality that keeps moving with every decision (12 similar cases have gone before the state supreme court).

"The aquifer is of this community. We all depend on it for our survival," stated Sherry Fleming of Williams County Alliance, the local community group advancing the county charter. "We should be able to assert our constitutional right to place this charter on the ballot and let the people vote on the fate of their fu-



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NEW ENGLAND IN 2020

From New Hampshire, to Maine, to Vermont, Community Rights and Rights of Nature are growing.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Last March at Town Meeting, Nottingham and Exeter community members adopted rights-based ordinances (RBO), drafted with CELDF's assistance, to protect themselves from corporate harms. Both laws assert the right to a healthy climate, the right to local community self-government, and the Rights of Nature to exist and flourish. Both laws ban harmful activities that violate those rights.



Exeter residents are protecting themselves from a fracked gas pipeline project. When their local elected officials expressed their uncertainty about how to apply the RBO when faced with new proposals for commercial development within the town, the local *Citizen Action for Exeter's Environment* group took action. They are working to integrate what townspeople envision for their future—clean water, air, and soil—within the policies and procedures of the town. Local departments responsible for considering proposed development will have direction that is in alignment with the people's RBO and a healthy climate.

In addition to working with communities in New Hampshire to advance and enforce rights-based ordinances to protect them from environmental harms, CELDF is also engaging with residents around “free and fair elections” ordinances. These local laws

would make clear the right of local election officials to verify the accuracy of ballot-counting devices through random checks.

NEW HAMPSHIRE & VERMONT

Regular Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) checkpoints in communities throughout New Hampshire and Vermont entail government officials harassing and violating community members' human rights. New Hampshire and Vermont border Canada and the seacoast, and are therefore subjected to ICE enforcement within 100-miles of these international borders.

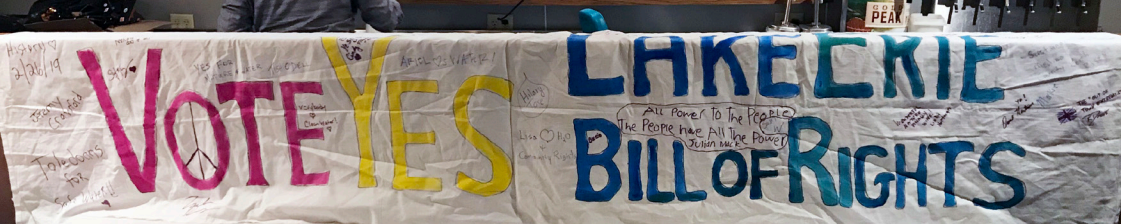
CELDf and several communities in both states are exploring a *Sanctuary from Official Violation of Rights* ordinance to ban the harassment and challenge the legal apparatus that enables such violations. The task at hand: the people targeted are at great risk if they come forward to advance these protections. Will those who are *not* targeted take bold action in 2020 to protect those who are targeted by unjust law?

MAINE

Belfast area residents are facing an industrial land-based salmon facility that threatens local ecosystems, economies, and quality of life. They are in discussions with CELDF as they work to protect the air, water, and soil, for both community members and Nature.

Residents are exploring how they can use local rights-based lawmaking to protect water flowing through surrounding watersheds from being extracted to fill indoor pools that house salmon for commercial food production. They also seek to protect the ecosystems of the Penobscot Bay off the Atlantic Coast of Maine. The Bay is threatened by the dumping of toxic wastewater that land-based fisheries produce.

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Lake Erie Bill of Rights – Continued from page 1

The local law recognizes Lake Erie ecosystem's right to be healthy and thrive.

The historic vote captured the country's imagination, beginning to shift national discourse on humankind's relationship with nature.

From the United Nations, where Toledo residents were invited to speak on Earth Day, to *The Daily Show*, which aired a segment on LEBOR in May, to the popular game show *Jeopardy*, which included LEBOR as a clue, Rights of Nature is entering the consciousness of the broader population.

These advancements are taking place despite corporate state efforts to stop them. Corporate agriculture lawyers filed a lawsuit to overturn LEBOR, and the state of Ohio joined the lawsuit on behalf of agribusiness. That case is ongoing—as is the case filed by Toledo community members against the state for violating the rights of the people and Lake Erie.

Other efforts include those by Ohio legislators. They accepted language

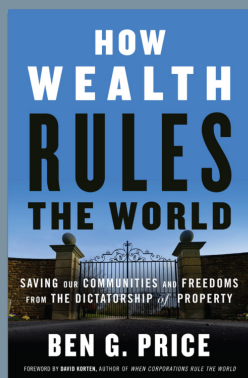
drafted by the Chamber of Commerce in an underhanded effort to quash enforcement of Rights of Nature laws going forward, tucking the language into the state budget bill last summer.

Boards of elections continue attempting to block rights-based citizen initiatives from advancing to the ballot.

And yet...Ohio communities keep advancing Rights of Nature, today and in 2020. They are joined by communities in Colorado, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington State. Rights of Nature is being discussed in blogs, newspapers, legal journals, climate strikes, and classrooms. LEBOR, and other Rights of Nature advancements around the world, are inspiring them all.

It's too late, corporate America. The Rights of Nature genie is out of the bottle.

Let LEBOR be the inspiration for your community. Isn't it time to recognize nature's rights where you live?



HOW WEALTH RULES THE WORLD

Ben Price reveals that our Constitution and legal system were intentionally designed to give more rights to the wealthy propertied class than the rest of us. Price exposes how this hamstrings our ability to effectively address a host of pressing social and environmental problems—and what we can do about it.

Learn more at HowWealthRulestheWorld.com.

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OREGON

WATER IS SACRED

This is a phrase we innately understand, and we've heard it uttered in association with numerous high-profile catastrophes over the last few years in Flint, Michigan; Standing Rock; and in communities around Lake Erie.

Water is sacred. Yet human actions—often corporate-driven and with government's legal approval—continue to threaten and destroy it. These human actions expose people and ecosystems to high concentrations of lead, threaten them with tar sands oil pipelines under rivers, and legally authorize industrialized agriculture waste to flow into waterways.

None of these insane actions have gone unnoticed. None have gone unchallenged. However, the venues in which communities bring forward legal challenges are owned and controlled by those who have continuously disregarded the sacredness of water. The assaults on water were—and still are—legal. The law is on their side.

Multiple Oregon counties are answering the call to protect water and watersheds. They understand the law must change, and are moving forward rights-based “watershed protection” laws.

They are inspired and impelled by Toledo, Ohio, residents adopting the *Lake Erie Bill of Rights*; by the White Earth Band of Ojibwe legally protecting their sacred wild rice species and clean water in their *Rights of Manoomin* law; by Lincoln County, Oregon, residents protecting their water and all that rely on that sacred source of life by banning aerial spray of pesticides; and by the Yurok Tribe of northern California, rightfully and forcefully putting forward a law to secure the rights of the Klamath River.

Leading the way are CELDF partners *Community Rights Lane County* and *Lincoln County Community Rights*. They each are advancing “watershed bill of rights” laws that protect all the watersheds in their respective counties from harmful practices that undermine the quality of life necessary for ecosystems to exist, persist, thrive, and naturally evolve. Further, they are advancing human rights to quality and affordable water. The community groups are aiming to qualify measures for 2020 or 2021 ballots.

The laws make central the Rights of Nature and people, elevating them above commercial pursuits that cause harm in the name of profit.

Lane and Lincoln are not alone in advancing public votes. In partnership with CELDF, new and rekindled Community Rights groups in Douglas and Yamhill counties will also be pursuing measures to protect water and watersheds from current and future corporate harms. Will your community join us?

SELF-GOVERNMENT GOES TO SALEM

In 2018-2019, CELDF provided legal and organizing support as our partner, the Oregon Community Rights Network (ORCRN), worked to advance the *Right of Local Community Self-Government* state constitutional amendment.

The 2020 Oregon legislative session begins in February, and Oregonians' legislative efforts have laid the groundwork for the amendment's introduction. Through the work of the ORCRN, the amendment is working its way through the process for introduction, committee debate, and possible floor votes in both

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WASHINGTON

THE RISE OF RIGHTS FOR THE SALISH SEA

The Salish Sea, with its marvels and tragedies, are omnipresent for many in the region. Though public-awareness is at an all-time high, the necessary actions to stop violence and irreparable harm to the sea's human communities, kelp forests, salmon, and orca, are not.

That is changing. CELDF is assisting partners in Kitsap County, the City of Bainbridge Island, and the San Juan Islands, as they work to legalize nature's rights and the rights of the Salish Sea to exist, flourish, regenerate, and evolve. More and more people are recognizing that our environmental laws are not protecting the environment. In fact, such laws legalize the harm and see nature as commerce. Rights of Nature is a remedy, and within reach for the Salish Sea in 2020.

COMMUNITY RIGHTS REJUVENATED IN WASHINGTON STATE

Washington State is the birthplace of today's "Community Bill of Rights,"—local laws establishing the democratic, environmental, and economic rights of

community members, beginning nearly 15 years ago in Spokane. Community Rights campaigns launched as well in Bellingham, Seattle, and Tacoma. Not only is Spokane home of the first efforts to codify a Community Bill of Rights—but also the first Clean and Fair Election Law, Worker Bill of Rights, rights-based water protection law, and healthy climate law.

Across Washington, CELDF and our partner communities have held Community Rights workshops, *We the People 2.0* screenings, CELDF Democracy Schools, and provided grassroots organizing support in communities such as Olympia, Port Townsend, Newport, Mt. Vernon, Seattle, Snoqualmie, Hoquiam, Port Angeles, Tacoma, Lopez Island, and Monroe.

Today, the communities who have persisted in this work and continued building relationships are now rolling up their sleeves. They are rebooting Community Rights in Washington State, reactivating the Washington Community Rights Network (WACRN). The communities comprising the WACRN are laying the groundwork for 2020, when they will challenge the current corporate-controlled legal structure that is denying communities their right to self-govern.

Oregon – Continued from page 6

the House and Senate. If successful, legislators will send the question to Oregon voters: in the name of health, safety, and welfare, and for the sake of freedom from state "ceiling" preemption and constitutionally-protected corporate privilege, do they want to secure communities' right to self-govern?

CELDf, the ORCRN, and community allies anticipate the amendment will have a strong showing. This will be evidenced not only by the showing of support from those who want to expand community decision-making in the

name of democracy and sustainability—but also by the strength of opposition from those who want to maintain the corporate state status quo. 2020 is shaping up to be an exciting year for Community Rights in Oregon!

COMMUNITY RIGHTS MAKING THE ROUNDS

What's ahead for Oregon Community Rights and Rights of Nature in 2020? In addition to grassroots and state level legislative advancements, the ORCRN, in partner-

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COMMUNITY RIGHTS ENTERS THE STATE LEVEL IN PENNSYLVANIA

On October 3, history was made in Pennsylvania. House Representative Danielle Friel Otten (D-Chester) introduced HB 1813, a constitutional amendment to recognize and secure the right of local community self-government (RLSG). The amendment was introduced with the support of the Pennsylvania Community Rights Network (PACRN), which has been educating state legislators over the past two years on how Pennsylvania communities have been sacrificed by harmful preemptive laws and corporate power.

CELDF provided legal and organizational support in drafting the amendment.

Over the last 20 years, CELDF has assisted more than 100 Pennsylvania communities to enact rights-based laws that ban harmful industrial activities including fracking, factory farming, and dumping of toxic waste.

Several of those communities have been sued for protecting their own health and safety. Corporate interests brought many of those lawsuits, claiming that corporate “rights” are superior to the rights of those living in the community. Pennsylvania governmental agencies—including the Department of Environmental Protection and the Attorney General—have also brought lawsuits, claiming that Pennsylvania communities are preempted by state laws from banning activities such as frack waste and sewage sludge dumping.

It cannot be overstated: both corporations and state agencies (funded with taxpayer dollars) sue to force communities to accept toxic waste (and other harmful activities) against their will.

This is why nothing less than amending our fundamental governing documents, including the Pennsylvania constitution, will suffice to meet the challenges we face. Language like this, from the Pennsylvania RLSG amendment, must be introduced, enacted, and enforced:

“The right to local self-government includes, without limitation, the power to enact local laws: (1) protecting health, safety and welfare by establishing the rights of people, their communities and nature and by securing those rights using prohibitions and other means; and (2) establishing, defining, altering or eliminating the rights, powers and duties of corporations and other business entities operating or seeking to operate in the community.”

New Hampshire legislators were the first to partner with CELDF’s community groups and the New Hampshire Community Rights Network to advance a Community Rights state constitutional amendment. Now, Pennsylvania. Oregon communities and the Oregon Community Rights Network are engaged with their legislators, and Ohio residents are gathering signatures for a similar ballot measure. Together, we are working to advance all of our inalienable Community Rights, codifying in law what is true in fact.

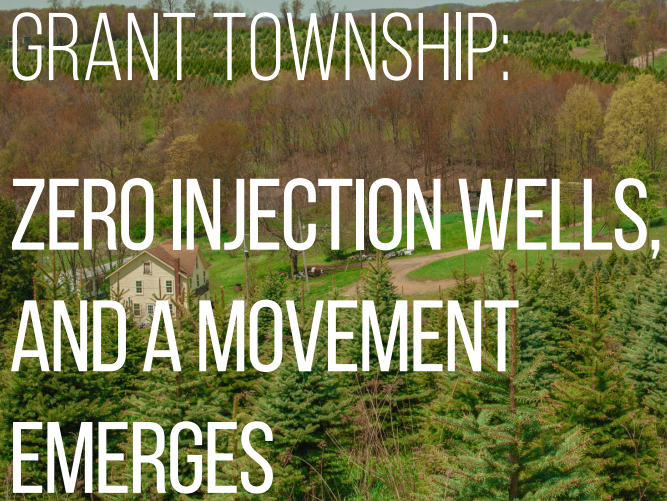
Water is an Ecosystem – Continued from page 3

ture in Williams County. Why are they so afraid to let the people vote?”

The people of Williams are attempting to join a federal civil rights case brought by seven other Ohio communities against the state of Ohio. These communities charge the state with violating their civil

rights of freedom of speech, the right to petition their government, due process and voter suppression.

Meanwhile, they are looking ahead to 2020. What will it take to protect their water? CELDF and our partner, the *Ohio Community Rights Network*, stand with them.



GRANT TOWNSHIP: ZERO INJECTION WELLS, AND A MOVEMENT EMERGES

Readers of the Susquehanna are familiar with the ongoing saga of Grant Township, Pennsylvania. This rural community of 700 people has partnered with CELDF since 2014 to block a frack waste injection well from being forced into their community.

Fracking operations produce radioactive waste that is injected into wells for storage. The waste can also contain cancer-causing chemicals such as toluene and benzene and cause earthquakes. Wells have been shut down from Ohio to Oklahoma to California.

As of this writing, more than 2,000 days since the DEP issued its first permit to legalize frack waste dumping in Grant, there is no injection well.

All of this is historic in its own right. Grant Township has been on the front lines and the cutting edge of a radical new form of environmental activism for several years. This includes the Township enacting an ordinance that legalizes nonviolent direct action to protect residents and ecosystems from injection wells if the courts fail the Township.

Key to this new form of environmental activism as well: community. More than 20 grassroots groups representing myriad issues packed the courthouse this past October in Pittsburgh. These dozens of people from at least 5 states stepped forward in solidarity with the people of Grant Township as the Department of Environmental Protection argued to throw out residents' democratically enacted Home Rule Charter banning the injection well.

There is no turning back when the future of all our communities is threatened. People are uniting. A movement has emerged, and will continue building in 2020.

New England in 2020 – Continued from page 4

Since 2009, Maine residents have partnered with CELDF to draft local rights-based laws securing their right to access quality drinking water, recognize the right to determine local sustainable energy solutions, and establish community-based food systems that allow for the local sale of homemade food products without burdensome and costly state oversight.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMUNITY RIGHTS NETWORK (NHCRN)

As we continue working with communities across New Hampshire and the region to advance economic, social, and environmental justice, free from state preemption and corporate interference, the NHCRN is expanding its reach.

In 2020, the NHCRN is growing its education and out-

reach beyond New Hampshire borders to bring Community Rights Awareness Workshops and CELDF's Democracy School to communities in surrounding states. As in New Hampshire, residents across New England states face increasing threats from fracked-gas pipelines, voting restrictions, unsustainable energy projects, migrant injustice, hazardous waste sites, unlivable wages, and increasing contamination of their drinking water.

Residents are seeking tools to protect what they value most—people and Nature, in the places where they live. The NHCRN is partnering with CELDF to respond with information and education about our inalienable right to self-governance, the Rights of Nature, and the barriers we face to realizing those rights. Together we are exploring how driving Community Rights into local and state law is necessary to create local solutions that meet the needs of those most affected by governing decisions.



FLORIDIANS EMBRACE RIGHTS OF NATURE

Rights of Nature is growing, and Florida is next.

Toxic “red tides” are forming again off the coast, Nestle plans to pump massive amounts of water from one of the state’s aquifers, and the state plans to bulldoze for a new toll road network. Thus, it should come as no surprise that leaders of Florida’s grassroots environmental movement are embracing the idea of recognizing legally enforceable rights for rivers, bays, and lagoons.

CELDF is supporting them as they do.

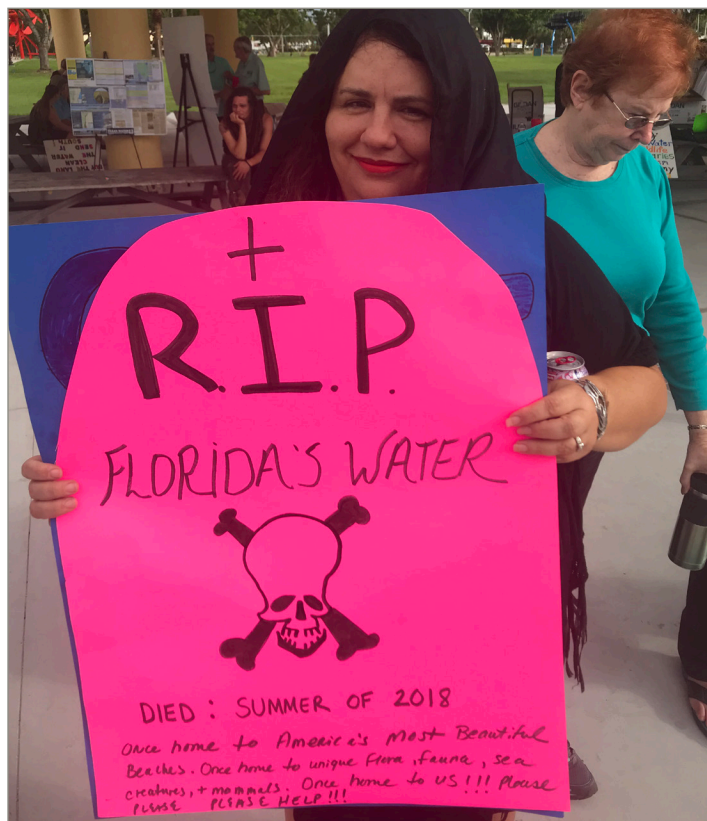
From Lee County on the West Coast to Brevard County on the East, groups have formed in seven Florida counties to advance the Rights of Nature. In Orange County (which includes Orlando), the county’s Charter Review Commission’s vote to advance a proposal to recognize rights for rivers means that the initiative may appear on the November 2020 ballot.

In Alachua County (which includes Gainesville), petitions to qualify an initiative to recognize rights for the Santa Fe River will be circulated until February. If successful, voters of that County will also get a chance in November 2020 to vote to protect that River.

In early February 2020, groups from the seven counties will be hosting “RONCON”—Florida’s Rights of Nature Conference. This first RONCON in the state coincides with the University of Florida Levin College of Law’s Public Interest Environmental Conference (PIEC) and

the Conference theme of “The Rights of Nature: Defending our Biosphere.” RONCON will gather people across the state who are working to drive the Rights of Nature into law. CELDF is helping to organize both events, and Thomas Linzey, senior counsel for CELDF, has been invited to keynote the PIEC conference.

2020 promises to be a break-out year for the Rights of Nature in Florida. Stay tuned.



RIGHTS OF NATURE 2019

During 2019, our International Center for the Rights of Nature has worked with people, communities, civil society organizations, and governments to advance the Rights of Nature. This includes working with tribal nations, as well as in Ecuador, Canada, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Nepal, and other countries.

Earlier this year, Friends of the Earth UK invited CELDF to Northern Ireland. We held a work-

shop on the Rights of Nature, as well as met with community groups fighting gold mining and other threats. Professor Peter Doran hosted a public event with CELDF at Queen's University in Belfast. In a recent article he wrote with CELDF's Mari Margil, he explained the situation on the island of Ireland and the need for recognizing ecosystem rights (celdf.org/2019/08/uniting-behind-the-rights-of-nature-the-rights-of-ireland):

"The choice confronting us, it seems, is this: we can choose to accept the current environmental crises or shape a new constitution that protects all our futures by extending rights to the species and ecosystems.... It is time to consider embedding the Rights of Nature in any new island constitution."

In addition, for over a year, we have been working with the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI), which is a coalition of faith-based, environmental, and civil society organizations. Together we developed national legislation to secure the Rights of Nature in Filipino law. In a major step forward, the legislation was introduced in the Senate of the Congress of the Philippines this October.

As well, this year CELDF broadened its work with Rights of Nature Sweden and Lodyn, keynoting at the Earth Rights Conference, and presenting on the Rights of Nature at a seminar held at Parliament—known as the Riksdag—in Stockholm this May. At the seminar, Swedish Member of Parliament, Rebecka Le Moine, expressed her support for advancing these rights, ex-

plaining that current environmental laws are not properly protecting the environment. She stated, "Even if we follow all the rules, it will not be enough."

This summer, we worked with Le Moine and the organizations to develop a proposed Rights of Nature amendment to Sweden's constitution. We are pleased to announce that it was introduced in Parliament this fall.

This coming year, CELDF and our International Center for the Rights of Nature will continue this important work in Sweden, Philippines, the UK, as well as Ecuador and elsewhere. The movement to protect the legal Rights of Nature is growing globally, and we invite you to get involved—learn more at celdf.org and contact us at rightsofnature@celdf.org.

Oregon – Continued from page 7

ship with CELDF, will grow education and outreach to continue building the movement. The ORCRN is taking its show on the road with Community Rights and Rights of Nature tours; partnering with Will Falk, author of *How Damns Fall*, on a speaking tour "road show" on rights-based organizing; conducting Community

Rights workshops; CELDF-led Democracy Schools; film screenings of *We the People 2.0* and *Invisible Hand*; and state summits to bring diverse issue groups together. We will be on the road in Salem, Roseburg, Ashland, Eugene, Newport, Corvallis, Portland, Bend, McMinnville, Baker County, and other communities. Join us!



COMMUNITY
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Happy Holidays



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