

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
June 24, 2014

In New Orleans, Sewerage & Water Board Dives into Rainwater Education

Every day the S&WB faces an uphill battle. Literally, it must pump collected rainwater (and seeping groundwater) over natural ridges, over the levee, and into the lake. Combined with a ban on uncovered cisterns and water barrels, this drainage system helped end the [era of mosquito-borne epidemics](#). However, after more than one hundred years, we now know this system is sucking the elevation out from under the city. So in an effort to [reduce subsidence](#) and comply with water quality standards, the S&WB will be [funding a host of non-profits](#) to educate the public about green water management infrastructure as a step to catalyze a shift in how the city thinks about and manages its water. While the board must vote on final approval of the grants later this month, the non-profits are hoping to make a splash. As Aaron Chang of the Ripple Effects Project put it, "The long-term goal is that by the time every New Orleanian graduates, they will have an understanding of these issues." Widespread public education about water issues? Yes, please!

Flush Twice, Chalmette, the Wetlands Need the Water

Wastewater treated in Violet, LA will now be put to use restoring wetlands damaged by the saltwater intrusion. St. Bernard Parish council [voted](#) to forward a \$2 million [project](#) to begin restoration for the Parish's Central Wetlands. Those wetlands were a thriving freshwater cypress-tupelo swamp before the opening of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). Now that [MRGO is gone](#), restoration efforts can begin, and this project, funded by [CIAP](#), is expected to revitalize the wetlands by introducing a source of freshwater. The project should improve storm protection and fit with the Louisiana [Coastal Master Plan 2012](#)'s envisioned sediment diversion near Violet to go from the Mississippi River into the Central Wetlands.

Energy-Water Nexus, Part Two (Hundred)

Hardly a week goes by without some news or report on the energy-water nexus, and this week it is a [new report](#) from the Department of Energy, "[The Water-Energy Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities](#)." The DOE is sharing its vision for its own role in the water world. They look to forward research on water efficiency and using polluted ("nontraditional") waters, improve modeling, and data gathering on water quantity and quality use in the energy sector. Additionally, they forward the idea that

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The Institute is dedicated to fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of the vital role that water plays in our society and of the importance of the legal and policy framework that shapes the uses and stewardship of water.

Coming up:

[Restore America's Estuaries and Coastal Society Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration](#)

November 1-6, 2014
Washington, DC

[Chicago Water Summit](#)

July 21, 2014
Chicago, IL

Water jobs:

[Executive Director](#)

Everglades Law Center, Inc.
South Florida

[Executive Director](#)

Center for Climate Change Law,
Columbia Law School
New York, NY

[Program Director](#)

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary
Program
Chauvin, LA

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water and energy systems need a more integrated approach. The report comes a several months before DOE's [quadrennial energy review](#) is due, and, judging by DOE's [scoping of stakeholder meetings](#), the water-energy nexus could be a priority in that larger review, as well.

Water, Water Everywhere, and We're Going to Find a Way to Have a Drink

Many countries have a to-do list that reads like "waste less water, find more usable water for people, farms, and industries." Well, in many places, there's plenty of water. It's just not useable, yet. In the face of increasing demand from growing and developing populations and decreasing security from changing climates, "unconventional sources" of water are looking better and better. A [new article](#) in *Nature* reviews the variety of efforts underway across the globe. Desalination is still costly and uses a lot of energy (the nexus!), but it is already essential to water supply in some places and saved Israel's turkey-bacon when last winter's rains never came. Ancient Persian tunnels inspire efforts to move groundwater in Ethiopia. Riverbank filtration may be the only thing that can save Indian groundwater. Fog and condensation are being harvested in new ways in arid and semi-arid areas around the world. Where there's water, there's a way.

California Water Conservation not Meeting Gov. Brown's Goals

Back in January, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a drought emergency for the entire state of California. He set a target of reducing water use by 20% for the whole state. It turns out that the state has only [decreased use](#) by 5%. In fact, water used didn't decrease at all until May. The California State Water Resources Control Board has cut water rights for 4,200 junior rights holders, but has received pushback from local and regional water authorities who bemoan any one-size-fits-all mandate and have responded to the state board's survey of water use with an awful lot of silence. Given that the state and the water authorities must work under the assumption that the drought will not end any time soon, this lack of cohesion indicates we should expect to see more water conflicts in the Golden State in coming months (or years?).

Excessive Groundwater Use Shuts down Coca-Cola Plant in India, for a While.

In a move that would have made [many in Baton Rouge](#) happy, an industrial user was shut down for overtaxing groundwater resources. A Coca-Cola bottling plant in Northern India was [shut down](#) for excessive groundwater extraction. The state of Uttar Pradesh closed the plant down for using too much groundwater and exceeding pollutant limits in its effluent. The plant was ordered to recharge the groundwater it was depleting. Coca-Cola appealed to the country's environmental court, the National Green Tribunal. In a shockingly-quick turn of the wheels of justice, the Green Tribunal [ruled](#) that the plant could reopen just two weeks after being shut down by the state's pollution control board. Any expansion by the plant's operations must wait for a review by the water board, and there will be another hearing in August for the water board to present recommendations. Until then, Uttarpradeshi can have a Coke and a smile, but it sounds like the plant's neighbors won't be smiling for a little while.

The Garden State Needs \$40 Billion worth of Pipes, Pumps, and Plants

\$17 billion for wastewater. \$16 billion for stormwater. \$8 billion for drinking water. That's the [estimated bill](#) to fix New Jersey's water infrastructure. New Jersey, like so many other states, has aging infrastructure long overdue for renovation. [\\$1.25 billion](#) in state and federal funds are slated to be spent next year to fix problems exposed by Hurricane Sandy. That only leaves \$38.75 billion unaccounted for. We're not trying to pick on New Jersey who, with the highest population density in the country, likely has some advantages over other states in making water infrastructure less costly per capita. But if New Jersey needs \$40 billion, how much do other, less compact, states need? Five years ago the American Society of Civil Engineers [estimated](#) a funding shortfall for the whole country's water infrastructure of \$107 billion. Suddenly, that number seems low. Really low. Until water infrastructure updates get prioritized at the local, state, and federal level, we can't imagine the bill getting any smaller.