

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
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Another Gulf Oil Spill

A little-known oil spill 12 miles off of the coast of Louisiana may now become the worst spill [in United States history](#). According to a new report by the federal government somewhere between 300 and 700 barrels of oil have spilled into the Gulf of Mexico every day for the last 14 years after a Taylor Energy oil platform was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan. For reference, a single barrel holds 42 gallons of oil. Traditional repair methods are not feasible for this particular spill, because the damage was actually caused by an [underwater landslide](#).

Taylor Energy, a New Orleans-based energy company that has since [ceased operating](#), has been seeking to force the government to return the roughly \$450 million dollars the company placed into a trust [to fund recovery](#) after the spill. Taylor Energy originally stated that the leak only amounted to a total of two gallons of oil a day, but new [estimates](#) have put the leak at significantly higher rates. In 2015, the Coast Guard revised its prior estimates for the spill, and admitted that it was actually around 6 times as much as their 2013 estimate, and over 20 times as much as the figure provided by Taylor Energy in a court filing. If the new report is correct, then the wells have been leaking [this much](#) oil into the Gulf every 15 days over the past 14 years.

For years, Taylor Energy was allowed to keep information related to the oil spill private in order to protect the company's trade secrets. Heck, Taylor and the US Coast Guard kept the spill completely secret for six years until environmental groups monitoring the Deepwater Horizon spill kept coming across the Taylor spill's oil slicks. However, in 2015 (years after the company ceased operations), several of those same environmental groups reached a [settlement agreement](#) with Taylor Energy, in which the company agreed to make [information related to the spill publicly available](#). For now, it seems that the spill isn't going anywhere – anyone who could afford to solve the problem isn't interested in doing so.

Southern California Wetlands Preservation

A number of environmental agencies in California recently approved a [strategy document](#) aimed at wetlands preservation and restoration. The move comes in large part because Southern California stands to lose [significant amounts of its wetlands](#) if sea level rises 2 feet by 2050 (sound [familiar?](#)). Estimates vary, however, and some predict even faster levels of sea level rise than that. As it stands today, Southern California has already lost 62% of its coastal wetlands in the last two centuries, primarily due to urbanization.

Under the new plan, open spaces will be designated and set aside so that wetlands can actually move further inland as the water rises

The **Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy** is a program of the Tulane University Law School.

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:

[The International Water Conference](#)
November 4-8, 2018
Scottsdale, AZ

Water jobs:

[Postdoctoral Fellow \(Hydrology, River-Coastal Science and Engineering\)](#)
Tulane University
New Orleans, LA

[Executive Director](#)
Freshwater Land Trust
Birmingham, AL

[Staff Attorney](#)
Conservation Law Foundation
Concord, NH

[Climate Adaptation Manager](#)
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over time. The plan is based on open spaces that are actually currently available, which includes existing parking lots and spaces used for agriculture. However, the plan might be too [ambitious](#) as it would require the state to acquire roughly 1,500 acres of private land in heavily populated areas of Southern California. Don't Californians have [enough to worry about right now](#)? Maybe it's not the right time to worry about wetlands, you heartless Sacramento robots.

Water Wars?

A [new study](#) released in September has pinpointed a number of regions around the world where tension and conflict over water (politely termed "hydro-political interactions") is likely to erupt in times of water scarcity. The study [found](#) that these interactions are more probable in regions with shared water bodies, and also where there is little freshwater, a lot of people, significant disparities in power, and environmental stresses. The study singled out 5 rivers in particular as potential sources of future conflict: the Colorado, Nile, Gangus-Brahmaputra, Indus, and Tigris-Euphrates. As discussed in [last week's TUWaterWays](#), it looks like this prediction is already coming true to a degree in the [Colorado River Basin](#), where officials from several states are scrambling to create a plan to better manage the Colorado River's dwindling water supply. Demand for water from the Colorado River has already exceeded [supply](#) for over two decades, and all the tears shed over [This Is Us](#) won't make up the difference.