



# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy

Authors: Christopher Dalbom, Mark Davis, Haley Gentry, and Ximena De Obaldía

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## Flood. It's not just a [great album](#).

It's a fact of life and a looming specter around the globe. It can come from the streams, the skies, the seas, or even the sewers. At this very moment, [across multiple continents](#), thousands of people are displaced and mourning the deaths of hundreds of other people due to floods and the catastrophes they cause, like landslides. Given that one of the basic facts of global warming is that warmer air can hold more moisture and, in turn, then release greater amounts of moisture more often, flooding is expected to become an ever-greater hazard. So, what can be done to decrease people's exposure and risk? What can be done to minimize the harmful, anthropocentric effects of a flood, while—dreaming big here—not forfeiting the ecological benefits of flooding that make many landscapes and ecosystems thrive?

Well, if there's funding available, there are a lot of things that can be done. In the US, [improving flood resiliency](#) is a big part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (aka Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, aka "[Bill](#)") that was passed nearly three years ago. Nonetheless, spending that money is proving to be a bit of a challenge. It's almost a Brewster's Millions situation. If you're not equipped to put that much money to use that quickly, it can be harder to spend than you'd think. For instance, the California Department of Water Resources recently [announced](#) \$1.4 million in spending on flood response, but that is coming from state, not federal, funds, and is a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed. In New York, flooding has increased in frequency and severity. It's led to [overwhelmed sewer systems](#) that end up putting raw sewage straight into the estuary they sit in, in effect bringing back the bad old days of [ocean dumping](#). But it's also [killed several people](#), most of whom live in basement apartments that are [not exactly street legal](#). In response, the city has [a plethora of green infrastructure projects](#) in the works, including installing [permeable pavement](#). Four miles down, who knows how many hundreds to go!

Again, though, so much of this comes down to money. Even though [financing for resilience and adaptation](#) is hard to get right now, somewhere like New York is able to afford it. Here in New Orleans, on the other hand, we recently had a round of flooding from Hurricane Francine. The system that powers drainage out of the subsidence-exacerbated bowl that is New Orleans is antiquated, rickety, and the bane of Sewerage and Water Board's existence. To no one's surprise, [that system lost power](#) during Francene. The city had hoped for state funding for a new power plant, but the legislature decided against including it in the budget this spring. Nonetheless, after [Francine exposed the system's flaws](#) (once again), the [City Council made room in its budget](#) to finish the funding for the much needed project. But that was only the last \$17 million in a total financing package of \$300 million. Next door to New Orleans in Jefferson Parish, they are looking at a potential array of flood prevention and mitigation measures that would cost [billions of dollars](#) that the parish doesn't have. What do you want them to do? Raise taxes? That's what they moved to the suburbs to get away from in the first place! If you go just a little farther upriver from Jefferson Parish, you'll find a huge, nearly-century old infrastructure investment that was a response to another devastating flood, the [Bonnet Carre Spillway](#). With increasing frequency that spillway has been opened to relieve the flood pressure from the Mississippi River. It has proven a burden for the economy of the Mississippi coast, so interests there sued the Corps of Engineers over the spillway's operations.

Last week, [a judge dismissed the suit](#), but the spillway remains an example of the scale of the response sometimes needed in the name of flood resilience, even if it has to be funded through taxes. Perhaps, in the face of these flooding threats, if we really do want to “make America great again” the answer is to look at the [tax rates](#) from those halcyon days.

But what if you’re not in one of those places where finding billions of dollars to fund flood resilience is even an option? Well, a [new study](#) from scientists at Indiana University combines geography and statistics to come up with a model to [better predict](#) places where river avulsion (somehow not one of the few fluvial geomorphology terms in the Louisiana Civil Code, but at least we have [this one](#)) may occur, often to devastating results. The study authors hope that [knowing is half the battle](#), at least in terms of getting people out of [harm’s way](#). The other half is probably still money, though.

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### Coming Up:

[State of the Coast 2025](#)  
Proposals Deadline EXTENDED to October 7, 2024

### Water jobs:

[Engagement Manager](#); National Audubon Society; New Orleans, LA  
[Community Science and Environmental Education Manager](#);  
Pontchartrain Conservancy; New Orleans LA  
[Sportsmen Outreach and Policy Specialist](#); National Wildlife Federation;  
New Orleans, LA



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 legal stewardship of water.

6325 Freret Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
New Orleans, LA 70118  
504-865-5915  
[tulanewater.org](http://tulanewater.org)