



# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy  
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## Quick! The COP is About to Start

Wasn't the Institute JUST talking about this [COP a few weeks ago](#)? Believe it or not, no. This is a completely different summit, except it's so similar you might think it's the same. Last month, the U.N. hosted COP16 on biodiversity in Cali, Colombia, which focused on exactly that—biodiversity. This week, Azerbaijan is hosting the big one, the 2024 U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP29), bringing together more than 60,000 delegates. Based on the number of attendees, it sounds like this will be the year where actual change happens, right? Right? Well, even though it's early in the conference, [some deals have been struck](#). The Asian Development Bank announced a [7-year program to promote food security and sustainable water use](#) in the face of accelerated glacial melt. According to the [COP29 presidency](#), one of the expected outcomes for this conference is the COP29 Declaration on Water for Climate Action. This effort would call for measures to be put in place to combat climate change impacts to water basins and water ecosystems, but it has not been brought up as of yet.

COP29 is being held as concern and outrage over destructive flooding around the world persists. At the end of October, sudden catastrophic rains and flooding hit [Valencia, Spain](#). One of the [biggest critiques](#) by people in Valencia is the negligence of and [inadequate warning from public officials despite multiple warnings from Spain's Meteorological Agency](#) in the days before the floods. Last year, a left-wing alliance from the Valencian government, Compromís, presented a proposal which involved measures for flooding in the city, but it did not pass. This most recent unfortunate event forces a larger conversation in Spain over flood prevention and emergency management. Many feel it's too late. [Spain's Consortium of Insurance](#) said that it has received over [21,000 home insurance claims, 12,000 for business properties, and 44,000 for motor vehicles](#). Those numbers are only expected to grow.

Now, let's not ignore the elephant in the (oval) room. Trump's win in last week's election brings a lot of uncertainty when it comes to international goals and promises regarding the environment. As a reminder, last time he was in office, the [US withdrew from the Paris Agreement](#), only to [rejoin with the Biden](#) administration in 2021. The [Paris Agreement](#) is an international treaty from 2015 whereby nations pledged to address climate change by doing things like using low-carbon alternatives, reducing emissions, and supporting each other in these efforts. It's legally binding to consenting parties. Nothing (yet) has been officially said about the treaty by the new (old) president. However, another country has taken a stance—[Argentina](#). President Milei appears ready to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which is worrisome, given that 1) Argentina belongs to the [lithium triangle](#) which raises pollution concerns for neighboring communities and countries, and 2) Argentina has been in a drought for years now, which has impacted its [agricultural](#) sector. This is extremely concerning, and no one is asking the real important question: how are they going to make [alfajores](#) without any corn???

## When the Levee Breaks, Who'll be There to Guide Us?

Excitement turned quickly to angst when Donald Trump picked former [New York congressman Lee Zeldin](#) rather than the award-winning musical group, Led Zeppelin, to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Zeldin was a

member of the House Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, casting [questionable votes](#) for someone who may become the nation's top environmental regulator. If you're feeling [dazed and confused](#) about this appointment, you're not alone.

But before the baton is handed off, President Biden and the current EPA have been hard at work making decisions that'll hopefully withstand the [good times and bad times](#) of the future administrations. Turning North, federal agencies just released a [Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement](#) for drilling in the [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#). It doesn't prohibit oil leases, but it reduces what areas can be leased. It would also confine seismic exploration to leased tracts rather than allow exploration throughout the entire coastal plain. On top of that, Biden Administration recently introduced a rule that would make companies [pay a fee for releasing more than the allowed amount of methane into the air](#). Methane, a potent greenhouse gas that's emitted throughout fossil fuel and agricultural production processes, is a primary contributor to global warming. With this new rule, EPA estimates a 1.2 million metric ton reduction of methane released through 2035. The fees, called Waste Emissions Charge, start at \$900 per metric ton and can increase up to \$1,500. Oil and gas companies are already gearing up to oppose this rule, but what about the cows burping methane? Everyone knows they're the ones to blame.

Additionally, EPA has said that at least 7 more of [Iowa's rivers should be placed on the state's impaired waters list](#) due to high levels of nitrate. Among the rivers listed is the Raccoon River, used by companies like OpenAI (ChatGPT) to cool its data centers, which has caused water management challenges in the region. EPA has criticized Iowa's Department of Natural Resources for its approach to calculating nitrogen levels in drinking water sources. With these new additions, [Iowa](#) would have 581 impaired waterbodies. [EPA will be accepting comments on the proposed additions through Dec. 13 of this year.](#)

With all these new rules, it seems like the US is on the [stairway to heaven](#). But as things continue to shift and change over the next couple of months, the Biden administration will have to continue giving a [whole lotta love](#) to environmental programs before January 20<sup>th</sup> to preserve the progress made over the past four years.

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### Coming Up:

[Tulane Environmental Law Summit](#)  
March 28-29, 2025

[Water in Americas' Human Landscapes: Tulane Law & Policy Symposium](#)  
June 16-18, 2025

### Water jobs:

[Water Resources Program Manager; National Wildlife Federation; Washington D.C. / Mississippi River states](#)



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.

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