

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
August 12, 2022

When the Freshwater Goes, the Saltwater Comes

Even if you're not [perched above the Kawarau River](#) or [taking a ride in a gondola](#), there's probably water under your feet right now (and if you are, get back to your vacation. TUWaterWays will still be here). How accessible and how useful that water down in the ground is depends on its amount, its depth, and its quality. The biggest threat to the usefulness of that groundwater around the world is salinity. Yes, [PFAS](#), we see you. But [the balance between saltwater aquifers and freshwater aquifers is constantly in flux](#), especially in coastal areas around the world. And, with increased draws on the freshwater and rising seas pushing the saltwater higher, that balance is shifting in very many places. Coastal communities up and down the [U.S. East Coast](#) see the most issues in both the poorest and the richest areas—the former where resources to rise to the occasion are limited and the latter where demand is strongest and most seasonal. But it's not just there—saltwater intrusion is making its way [up rivers and aquifers in California](#) and [Southeast Asia](#), [threatening agricultural systems](#) depended on by millions. In Louisiana, it's [killed off ecosystems](#) already, and is [threatening the capital's drinking water supply](#), where they just have to muster the political will to kick industrial users off of the groundwater supply and onto [some surface water source](#) that just may be nearby. Drought is increasing saltwater intrusion from [Italy](#) to [India](#). In Bangladesh, it's driven some communities to be [dependent on collecting rainwater](#). Unfortunately, they're collecting it as it runs off of roofs made of asbestos and getting sick. And [that water under you riding in the gondola](#) isn't as fresh as it used to be either.

Countries and states around the world need to properly manage their water usage from this perspective knowing that they're playing with a deck that's loaded against them. And they need to win anyways. For some, yeah, desalinization and throwing money and energy at the problem might make it go away for a while, but managing aquifers and coastal streams to maintain or even rebound from their current state is the only way to ensure we have a chance to keep coastal regions habitable.

It's So Easy to Feed The Cow When You Get The Water For Free!

It's usually frowned upon when state agencies give resources away for free or even just for a sweetheart deal. But it happens pretty often, and [it's the same old song](#). Most recently, that song's played in Arizona where [water from a groundwater reserve has been sold or given away to a company called Fondomonte](#). That company seems to love to [grow alfalfa in the deserts of Arizona and California](#). It can afford to do so no matter how expensive land or water get because

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.

Coming Up:

[Water Collaborative Seeds of Innovation: Resilient Design Competition](#); Registration ends August 25

[ABA SEER 30th Fall Conference](#); September 21- 24

[Louisiana Climate Initiatives Task Force Fall Meeting and Workshop](#); October 22

[Restore America's Estuaries, 2022 Coastal and Estuarine Summit](#); December 4-8; New Orleans

Water jobs:

[Water Quality Technician](#); Pontchartrain Conservancy; Metairie, LA

[Clinical Instructor Tulane Environmental Law Clinic](#); New Orleans, LA

[Associate Attorney, Senior Attorney, and Paralegal](#); Earthjustice; Multiple Locations

[Climate Risk Legal Fellow](#); Environmental Defense Fund; Boulder, CO

[Summer Associate 2023](#), Sher Edling LLP, San Francisco

[California Resources Control Water Board](#); Sacramento, CA

[Maryland Staff Attorney](#); Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Annapolis, MD

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it's part of Almarai, a huge dairy company owned by the Saudi royal family that exports all that alfalfa back home to feed to [milk cows](#). It's a better deal than draining their own groundwater supplies to grow alfalfa themselves in the even drier conditions of the Arabian Peninsula.

That groundwater was supposed to function as a reserve for the Central Arizona Project, the infrastructure that taps into the Colorado River and allows millions of people to reside in the Valley of the Sun like it's [Xanadu](#). Instead, that groundwater's been given away for free and going to Fondomonte's alfalfa fields on land the state is leasing them for just \$25 an acre. This is, of course, a violation of the Arizona Constitution. Did we [blow your mind this time](#)? Probably not. It's surprising how often an agency says to some ultrawealthy corporation, "[my world is empty without you](#)."

TEN YEARS!

A couple of weeks ago, we hit a milestone here at [TUWaterWays](#): our tenth anniversary of putting this newsletter out into the world. So, we thought it an appropriate time to share our appreciation. Although [the first issue](#) wasn't entirely legible, you've stuck with us for nearly 500 issues of this newsletter and helped expand our readership by telling your friends and colleagues about it. Thank you. We've been hovering a bit below 900 email subscribers for a couple of years now, and it seems like hundreds of you even open it up every week! Thank you! Here's to us getting another 900 subscribers, drumming up enough funding to keep our team employed, and putting news, analysis, and bizarre internet links out into the world for another [TEN YEARS!](#)