

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
August 28, 2013

Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan—The Curtain Rises September 6

Two years in the making but about a century overdue, a new blueprint for [managing water](#) within the portion of the New Orleans metropolitan area on the east bank side of the Mississippi will be rolled on September 6 at the Port of New Orleans. The plan aims to inspire a more comprehensive approach to valuing and managing water beyond the traditional flood walls and pumps approach, though there will still be flood walls and pumps. The plan considers water as both an asset to be optimized and a risk factor to be minimized and works within and across the political boundaries of Jefferson, Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes.

A major feature of the plan will be its emphasis on managing groundwater and subsidence—the leading factors in making these below sea-level communities. The plan was financed by a grant by the Louisiana Office of Community Development to Greater New Orleans, Inc. The plan itself was developed by a local and international team of experts led by the architecture and planning firm, Waggoner and Ball. Also on the team were members of the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, including Harry Vorhoff and Fredrick Augonnet. For more information about the roll out, contact Dawn Greatrex at dgreatrex@gnoinc.org.

You Call this a Partnership? Florida's Governor Unloads Against Feds over Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades.

Florida's Governor Rick Scott has been thinking a lot about water recently. A week or so after [announcing](#) that the state is going to sue Georgia over the Apalachicola River, he penned a blunt [letter](#) to the Army Corps of Engineers complaining about the Corps' under investment in the Everglades and the dike around Lake Okeechobee. To be accurate, the complaint is more about the failure of Congress and executive branch budgeteers to provide the dollars necessary to meet the Corps maintenance and cost sharing commitments. The frustration behind the letter is not unique to Florida. The dollars for Federal project authorizations and cost sharing arrangements are still subject to appropriations, dollars that ever harder to find. The real lesson taught (re-taught) is that federal dollars are often the last dollars to show up.

Downstream from Lake Okeechobee, well... down-canal from "Lake O" coastal [residents](#) on Sanibel Island are [protesting](#) the releases of water from the Lake into the Gulf of Mexico. Lake waters laden with nutrients and pesticides usually dump into the Everglades, but when they reach Sanibel they are called "worse than the oil spill."

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:

[August 28, 2013](#)
[Restore Act Council Meeting](#)
New Orleans, LA

[September 6, 2013](#)
[Greater New Orleans Water Plan](#)
[Port of New Orleans](#)
9-11 a.m.

[September 23-26, 2013](#)
U.S. Water Alliance
[One Water Leadership Summit](#)
Los Angeles, LA

[October 24-26 2013](#)
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation
[Basics of the Basin 2013](#)
New Orleans, LA

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Panamex v Santamex? First Container Ship Crosses the Arctic

Just as the [new lock](#) gates are being delivered as part of the Panama Canal expansion, a container ship has travelled from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean using the “[Golden Waterway](#)” across the Arctic. Melting Arctic Ice has opened the new corridor that allowed the Yong Sheng to travel from China to Rotterdam in the Netherlands in 35 days instead of the usual 48 days it would take to travel via the Suez Canal. The prospects of rising temperatures and less ice are spurring greater interest in the Arctic route which could have significant implications on the economics of shipping—and canals.

Rising Seas, Sinking Lands, and More People Equals Increased Flooding Risk

Not that you probably did not already know that, but a new [study](#) published in Nature Climate Change attempts to analyze the implications of that rising risk on future flooding losses. In the aggregate, the study concludes that by 2050 global flooding losses could reach \$1 trillion per year. The study also evaluates the flood loss risk in 136 of the world’s largest coastal cities—including Miami, New York and our very own New Orleans. The study is something of a worst case scenario and an understanding of its methodology is important in understanding how it was conducted and how to respond to it. One important lesson is that exposure to risk does not equal vulnerability to loss and the how one manages for risk matters a lot.

Council Releases Initial Comprehensive Plan for RESTORE Act Funds

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council [released](#) the Initial Comprehensive [Plan](#) for spending funds allocated to Gulf restoration by last year’s RESTORE Act. Since releasing a draft in May, the Council has hosted a series of public meeting and taken thousands of public comments. The resulting changes are few and largely nonspecific; the plan now calls for considering “the most effective means of ensuring that the Council’s decisions are based on the best available science, including formation of a scientific advisory committee” and creating “a public engagement structure.” The overall situation creating uncertainty for RESTORE Act funds hasn’t changed since the Plan draft came out in May: we’re still waiting on Treasury regulations and the BP civil trial still has settled nothing. The need to monitor RESTORE Act implementation and Council performance will continue to be a constant for all those interested in Gulf restoration. The Council will formally present the plan at a public meeting in New Orleans on August 28.

Canadian Author, Activist Says Humans Have Right to Water AND Water Has Rights of its own

Maude Barlow, [Canada’s leading water activist](#), has completed a trilogy of books on the global water crisis. The first two emphasized the importance of public control over water and water’s nature as a fundamental human right. Ms. Barlow led a campaign to get the UN to recognize that right, which it did in 2010. Now, she is calling for putting water “at the centre of our lives and around which we build all policy.” Also, she says water has rights and imagines a world in which the Gulf of Mexico itself could sue BP.

UN Conference on International Water Cooperation Held in Central Asia Calls for International Water Cooperation in Central Asia

The United Nations is following the lead of Tajikistan, a small central Asian country dominated by the Pamir Mountains and upstream from nearly the rest of the world. The UN declared 2013 the year of international water cooperation and held an international water cooperation [conference](#) in the Tajikistan capital of Dushanbe. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon called for countries to work together to address water and sanitation problems. Luckily for us, Forbes Magazine was there to summarize the events thusly: [Water is the New Gold!](#)