

TUWaterWays

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

[August 7, 2020](#)

Wondering If WRDA Will Do Wonders . . .

. . . For blue-green algae woes in Florida, the Great Lakes, coastal New Jersey, coastal Louisiana and California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. While wonders are a lot to ask, the [Water Resources Development Act](#) just passed in the US House of Representatives and holds out some hope for improvement. Section 321 of WRDA authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers to [move forward with work in the 10,000 acre Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir](#). This will help reduce nutrient discharges into coastal estuaries that have been having a rough go of it recently. Plus, the reservoir is a key component of the Everglades Restoration Plan. Beyond that, Section 128 authorizes the Corps to do a demonstration program aimed at identifying and dealing with algae blooms linked to Corps projects. Algae bloom problem solved! Well, maybe not since WRDA still has to pass the Senate, and funds still have to be appropriated. By the way, that Everglades Restoration Plan was adopted in 2000. At that pace it is easy to see why [some Floridians are making their own plans for the future](#).

And Yet More WRDA

WRDA does more than target algae blooms, floods and navigation needs. It also aims to improve the way the Army Corps of Engineers manages the Mississippi River in terms of flood control, navigation, water supply, recreation, hydropower and ecosystem restoration—looking at you coastal Louisiana. Truth be told, when you read Section 210 of WRDA it becomes clear that harmonizing the Corps' plans for the lower River (from Cape Girardeau, MO, to the mouth) with Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan is the primary aim of the Corps' study. This makes almost too much sense to be possible. If it makes it through unscathed, we'll throw a virtual party and DJ it with songs from our [playlists](#). That's both a threat and a promise.

Well, This Was Weird

Researchers conducted [the annual of a dead zone off the Louisiana coast](#) this summer. Despite very little change in the amount of the nutrient pollution that causes this dead zone when it comes out of the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico, this year's dead zone clocked in at 2,116 square miles and was the third smallest since measurements began 34 years ago. That is good news given that the zone averages 5,408 square miles. But, since the goal of the [Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force](#) is to reduce the zone to 1900 square miles, there are still many square [miles to go before we sleep](#), so to speak. That is especially so since the cause of the dead zone hasn't changed, and the drop may have had more to do

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 less stewardship of water.

Coming up:

[Louisiana Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife Photo Contest](#); Now - October 18

[Governor's Advisory Commission Meeting](#); New Orleans, LA; August 12

[Public Comment Deadline for Louisiana Watershed Initiative Regional Plans](#); August 14 (Region 5)

[Public Comment Deadline: Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion](#); August 16

[Early bird registration for WEFTEC Connect Virtual Conference](#); Now - August 14

[CPR Board Meeting](#); Lake Charles, LA; August 19

[Public Comment Deadline: Draft Ambient Water Quality Criteria Recommendations for Lakes & Reservoirs](#); August 20

[Public comment deadline: Pebble Mine water quality certification](#); August 24

[Webinar: Wildfires and Resulting Impacts to Water Bodies Used as Drinking Water Sources](#); August 26

Water jobs:

[Communications Intern](#); National Caucus of Environmental Legislators; D.C.

[Legislative Associate/ Senior Legislative Associate](#); The Southern Environmental Law Center; D.C.

[Communications Manager \(The Water Center\)](#); University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, PA

[Water Policy Development Manager](#); City of Phoenix; Phoenix, AZ

[Stream Restoration Manager](#); Ausable River Association; Wilmington, NY

[Project Coordinator \(Global Science\)](#); The Nature Conservancy; Arlington, VA

[Drinking Water Data Research](#); EPA; Cincinnati, OH

[Legal Externship](#); Earthjustice; New York, NY

[Water Quality Improvement Coordinator](#); North Shore Land Alliance; Oyster Bay, NY

[Water Infrastructure Fellowship](#); EPA; D.C.

[Mid-Atlantic Wetlands and Chesapeake Bay Watershed Internship](#); EPA; Philadelphia, PA

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with when the survey cruise took place than any improvement in actual nutrient loading in the Mississippi River and the Gulf. Shortly before the cruise, Hurricane Hanna churned through the zone with wind and wave action, disrupting the water column and eliminating the layering of hot and cold, fresh and salt, polluted and not that leads to the dead zone. Prior to that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had estimated the zone would measure about 6,700 square miles. So breaking up the dead zone to 30% of it's predicted size, but at the cost of South Texas being slammed by a hurricane, it's that kind of "Mussolini making the trains run on time" ([not really](#)) or "[the cursed doll comes with a free cup of frogurt](#)" silver lining no one should be hoping to repeat.

Awash with Possibilities

[Isn't it ironic](#), that the Awash River is not always awash with water? But then again, in the rainy season it might be more than awash with water. How can anybody know where the line between the literal and the ironic is when talking about one of Africa's most heavily used rivers? You could fly to Ethiopia to check for yourself (hard to do in these days of [travel restrictions](#)) or you could develop a remote sensing tool. Better yet, you could check in with others already working on those tools. People like those at the Delft Institute for Water Education and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations who have just released a report called "[Water Accounting in the Awash River Basin](#)." Some even speculate that remote water sensing could do more than prevent social faux pas, perhaps even aiding in water management that could lead to greater community resilience, agricultural efficiency, environmental sustainability and social stability. If so, it could join [Tang](#) on the list of science breakthroughs that turn out to have impacts beyond our daily lives. [Good job science!](#)

Lagniappe

As we enter the dog days of August, agonize over if and how schools and businesses will reopen, and contend with the stress of another election cycle, it is worth remembering that these are not our first hard times; that better is possible; and that something as simple as a dip in a stream, lake or pool can reset your bearings—maybe even letting you [feel tremendous](#).