

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
February 18, 2022

It's Bad, You Know

A new [report](#) from federal climate scientists across multiple agencies updated projections for sea level rise, and it's bad news. In the past 100 years, the relative sea level has risen an average of one foot. It's expected to rise another foot in the next 30 years, and more than that on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. So, what does that mean? It means blue-sky, high-tide flooding will increase several times over. It means high storm surge for every tropical storm and hurricane. It means more saltwater in places that used to be freshwater and figuring out [what that does to those wetlands](#). It means a higher certainty of increased, continued sea level rise beyond 2050, too. Will [New York and New Jersey](#) make the changes they need? Will [Florida](#)?

In Louisiana, the report is spurring many to call for even [greater urgency to implement the state's Coastal Master Plan](#) (something few, if any, other states have developed so well). The plan centers on massive infrastructure projects to extend the lifespan of the still potentially habitable parts of the coastal Louisiana. But the real question is how seriously will the state's legislators (and entire political class) take the news? Will they get serious about [fully funding the Coastal Master Plan](#) and all the work needed to give the state a fighting chance? Will they embrace the Governor's [Climate Action Plan](#) and work towards eliminating Louisiana's own contributions to the greenhouse gases driving sea level rise? Will they stop trying to [block federal efforts](#) at dealing with climate change? Will they make sure that the [carbon capture and storage they're working to get subject to state and not federal oversight](#) actually helps and isn't just a rubber-stamped, greenwashing, money laundering scheme for the same actors who got us into this mess?

Some (cynics or realists, depending on your perspective) think the answer is most definitely "no" and given that increased sea level rise will have open water lapping against current and planned levees, and levees are very much not the same thing as seawalls, spending money on any coastal project is wasteful and that money should be spent on abandoning the coast and moving people, well, somewhere else. Of course, if the state's politicians can't get it together to help the people of the coast, those same cynical realists probably shouldn't expect the state to help the people leave the coast either. It's enough to make you want to give up and just [go to the Mardi Gras](#). How about we go to [Mardi Gras](#) so we don't give up? What [a way](#) that would be.

Is the Rights of Nature Movement Approaching Critical Mass?

The [rights of nature movement](#) is based on the idea that an ecosystem itself should be able to bear legal rights. [It's not a new idea](#), but it has new developments every time there's a chance to check in

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:

[UF Water Institute Symposium](#), February 22-23

[Tulane Environmental Law Summit](#), March 11-12

[SLU Summit for Water](#); March 22 – 23

[ABA SEER 51st Spring Conference](#); April 6 - 8

[Coastal Law in Louisiana \(CLE\)](#), April 21- 22

Water jobs:

[Senior Research Fellow](#), Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy; New Orleans, LA

[Ocean and Coastal Law Fellow](#), National Sea Grant Law Center; Oxford MS

[Western Water Policy Specialist](#), The Nature Conservancy; flexible within the Western US

[Water Justice Specialist](#), Bayou City Waterkeeper, Houston, TX

[Sustainability/ESG Director](#), PwC; multiple locations

[Research Associate](#), University of New Orleans; New Orleans, LA

[Research Associate 1](#), University of Louisiana Lafayette; Lafayette, LA

[Organizing Representative](#), Sierra Club; New Orleans, LA

[Advocacy Director](#), Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; New Orleans, LA

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on it. In Chile, it's [being considered](#) at the current constitutional convention. In Ecuador, [the constitutional court decided](#) that proposed mines in the cloud forests would violate nature's rights. In the US, voters in Orange County, Florida approved the idea and now developers [are being sued](#) in state court by plaintiffs like Crosby Island Marsh and Lake Mary Jane. But what's the real tipoff that some "crazy" idea is gaining traction? When people start trying to preemptively block it. Well, tick that landmark off the list. A Representative in Idaho's legislature has [introduced a bill](#) preventing animals and natural resources from ever gaining "personhood status." She said, "Children are not equal to bodies of water or trees, so their rights shouldn't be equal to those as well." Maybe she's right. Children's rights should only be equal (or [subservient](#)? [Or maybe not?](#)) to ([some](#)) adults, [corporations](#), and [ships](#).

[Hot Fun in the Summittime](#)

The highlight of the New Orleans social calendar is upon us once again. That's right, it's time for the 27th Annual Tulane Environmental Law & Policy Summit! Final details are still being finalized, but we can tell you that it will be held March 11 and 12, attendance will be virtual, CLEs will be available, and Governor John Bel Edwards is slated to give a keynote address. That address will be the in-person cherry on the sessions' virtual sundae! Get your best summiting gear ready now!

We're Hiring!

It's time for the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy to find our next postgraduate fellow! [We are now accepting applications through the Tulane Jobs portal, where all the relevant information can be found.](#) Okay, most relevant information. The position is for a 1 or (hopefully) 2-year stint doing public service policy work here with us at Chateau d'Eau. It's open to students graduating from a JD or LLM program this spring as well as those who graduated in 2021. The posting says it will stay up until the position is filled, but we anticipate starting to review resumes at the end of the month. Tell everybody! But mostly, you know, tell new law grads who'd actually be eligible.