



# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy  
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## Got a Weather [Whiplash](#)? Lemme Get You Some Melting Ice.

In the past few weeks, extreme weather events have had detrimental impacts on communities, economies, and politics. In the United States, just weeks after Hurricanes Helene and Milton, [every state except Alaska and Kentucky is now experiencing a drought](#). That's the most According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), roughly [45% of the U.S. and Puerto Rico and about 54% of the lower 48 states were in a drought this week](#), affecting more than 150 million people in the country. This is a 153.5% increase since September. A drought watch has been issued in New Jersey, where climate change has resulted in increasingly intense rainfall events followed by periods of little to no rain. A similar alert has been implemented in [New York City](#). Meanwhile, in South Carolina, following the devastation of Helene, [drought conditions were reported](#), leading to [146 wildfires that burned 518 acres of land](#) across the state. This "[weather whiplash](#)" illustrates the severity of climate change in the United States and points to larger, more severe trends in the global water cycle.

It's evident that, [around the world](#), new governance structures that shift water resource management from a commodities lens to a "[global common good](#)" are a necessity. In the [United States](#), some are calling on legislators and policymakers to reevaluate the entire water rights structure, ensuring that it is fair and reflects current conditions. This would involve a fundamental shift in how we view and manage water, with a focus on sustainability and equity. These lofty goals would take years to pass, so what are policymakers doing now? [This week](#), states like [California](#), [Minnesota](#), [Louisiana](#), and [Rhode Island](#) passed ballot measures to strengthen climate resilience and conservation as an imbalanced water cycle becomes a reality. These measures would provide various funding mechanisms for states and communities affected by climate change and natural disasters. Massive overhauls of water rights and resource management regimes seem far-fetched, but state-led climate resilience measures can aid in the present and set the tone for the future.

## Look Out Dead Zone, Your Time is Up!

Because there is a new Louisiana Nutrient Reduction and Management Strategy in town. Well, not exactly, but a draft of it is. With concerns about the nutrient pollution in the Mississippi River and its impact on flood control and coastal restoration projects at all-time highs, an eager public is standing by. Wait no longer, you can [download and review the draft strategy right here](#). Make reading it a highlight of your Tulane Green Wave Homecoming weekend. To put this in context, Louisiana is part of larger effort EPA-led effort called [the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force](#) which was established to reduce nutrient loading in the Gulf of Mexico. Louisiana's past strategies focused mostly on Louisiana's admittedly modest contributions to nutrient pollution in the River and the Gulf of Mexico rather than on getting a River that Louisiana can live with and use, but maybe this one will [kick it up a notch](#). After all, a project that is a [keystone of Louisiana's coastal restoration plans](#) is [stalled and may be scratched because of concerns about what polluted river water \(aka river water\) would do to the coastal waters and resources it is supposed to benefit](#). Previous state nutrient management/reduction strategies did not ask anything of upstream states but, instead, offered up Louisiana's coastal wetlands and river diversion projects as ways of cleansing the nutrient laden water from upriver. Yes, those same river diversions that are now stymied by concerns over polluted river water. So, will Louisiana's new

strategy take a different path and recognize that diversions are not the solution to pollution, but that pollution is a limiter of river diversions? Spoiler Alert! No, but maybe the state is waiting for the public to raise these matters during the [comment period \(that ends December 4\)](#) and the final strategy will bring coastal restoration, pollution control, Gulf hypoxia reduction and public confidence together into a tidy package. Talk about three-dimensional chess. [BAM!](#)

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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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