

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
December 21, 2016

Happy New Year's from Your Favorite Water Law & Policy Institute!

This will be our last TUWaterWays of 2016. We hope you enjoyed the newsletters. We hope you enjoyed the research we put out and the playlists we put together. Thanks to everyone for the support – both moral and monetary – it's literally what keeps us going. We look forward to continuing to put out the best work we can in 2017.

New Orleans Social Venture Incubator Launches 2017 Water Challenge

[Propeller's 2017 Water Challenge](#) is getting underway. The Challenge carries a [\\$15,000 prize](#) and the opportunity for semifinalists to present at New Orleans Entrepreneur Week. If you've got some good ideas for water, check it out!

Congratulations to our Colleagues at The Water Institute of the Gulf on your new President and CEO!

Justin Ehrenwerth is good people. The Water Institute of the Gulf is good people. Therefore, it just makes sense that Justin is [taking over](#) for the outgoing Chip Groat as president and CEO. Justin has done a great job getting the RESTORE Council off the ground, all the while having to answer to five different governors and several federal agencies. We're looking forward to seeing the kind of leadership he'll bring to TWIG.

Hi. I'm Groundwater. I'm Kind of a Big Deal Around Here. You Know, on Earth.

It turns out the good ol' hydrologic cycle that we all (hopefully) learned about in eighth grade was a bit incomplete. A new [study](#) published in *Nature Geoscience* estimates the total amount of groundwater, as well as the amount of groundwater that is less than fifty years old. In short, [there's a lot](#) of it. Especially as compared to all the other active parts of the water cycle (everything but the oceans). So, although all groundwater can have an effect on the water and uses we see on the surface, management of this young groundwater can play a huge role on how the rest of the hydrologic cycle and the resources we count on behave. Like the editors at *Nature* said, maybe we should "[get \[ground\]water governance on the global agenda.](#)" (Hiring Tulane Law grads to do so should go without saying, but just in case, we're saying it.)

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:

[Tulane Environmental Law & Policy Summit](#)
New Orleans, LA
March 10-11, 2017

Water jobs:

[U of Florida Water Institute Graduate Fellows Program](#)

University of Florida
Gainesville, FL

[Research Associate](#)

Environmental Law Institute
Washington, DC

[Senior Analyst/Water Resources](#)

Abt Associates

Caimbridge, MA

[Executive Director](#)

The Data Center
New Orleans, LA

[AgCenter Assistant/Associate/Extension Agent \(Fisheries/Coastal Issues\)](#)

Louisiana State University
Terrebonne Parish, LA

[AgCenter Assistant/Associate Professor \(Natural Resource Economics\)](#)

Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA

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While there is a lot of young groundwater compared to surface water, young groundwater isn't much at all compared to older groundwater. Maybe it's unfair to compare water from the last 50 years to water from the previous 1,999,999,950 years. And that's being generous. A group of researchers have discovered water at the bottom of a Canadian mine that hasn't been exposed to the surface for at [least 2 billion years](#). It even holds evidence of a long history of microorganisms – the kind we're keeping an eye out for in all the varied places across the solar system where we're now finding evidence of water.

Part of the reason groundwater is a big deal is because people tend to drink it. Our dependence on it has always far outpaced our understanding of it. Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise, then, that the EPA's [final report](#) on fracking's impacts on groundwater [changed from its initial draft](#) from mid-2015. Either way, the federal laws and regulations on fracking are pretty minimal, and early indications are that the incoming administration is going to be as fracking-friendly as possible. So, the draft report will be something for one side of the debate to point to, and the final report will be something for the other side of the debate to point to, but it's likely fracking will continue anyways. So will continue the need for clean groundwater to drink.

Across the world, efforts to better understand and manage our groundwater are happening locally. California is still trying to get a handle on its groundwater. So, armed with their Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, outfits such as Water in the West at Stanford are trying to figure out how to best proceed with [groundwater modeling](#) and groundwater [withdrawal permitting](#). Sounds familiar to some of our efforts here! In Utah, ranchers and tar sands miners are [battling](#) over the state's limited groundwater resources. Turns out, even if oil and gas development don't contaminate groundwater, it can consume it and leave wells high and dry. Bali, a place most would assume to have plenty of water is having its own groundwater challenge. In short, excessive aquifer use is allowing salt water to flow in under the island in areas where fresh groundwater could traditionally be counted upon. This [write up](#) has some really good graphics of how such issues arise. They're lessons that can be applied in Florida and other places just as easily as in Bali.