



TUWaterWays

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

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No Federal Emergency Assistance for Alaska Natives

On October 11, remnants of [Typhoon Halong](#)—which started in the Philippine Sea and moved eastward to the Pacific Ocean—hit the shores of western Alaska with typhoon-force winds and severe flooding, devastating many rural communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The communities, most of which are only accessible by airplane or boat, [suffered massive destruction](#) with uprooted roads and houses floating off their foundations. At least one fatality occurred, and over a thousand people were displaced. [The hardest hit](#) communities, Kipnuk and Kwigillingok—home to a combined 1,000 people, mostly Alaska Native or Native American—have been almost entirely evacuated. Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy declared a state of emergency, and survivors have been placed in a temporary sanctuary in Bethel and Anchorage. In the wake of the disaster, the governor, senators, and tribal community [leaders called for emergency federal assistance](#), and this Wednesday, [the Trump administration approved](#) a \$25 million [federal disaster declaration](#) for the damage caused by ex-Typhoon Halong.

This declaration comes on the heels of the Trump administration's cancellation of a \$20 million EPA grant intended for the village of Kipnuk for [climate change mitigation](#) (including [erosion and flooding protections](#)) and renewable energy projects. In a recent statement, the EPA press secretary [defended the cancellation](#) of the grant, stating, "To be brutally candid, due to the proactive cancellation of this grant, \$20 million of hardworking U.S. tax dollars are currently sitting in the U.S. treasury instead of swept into the Kuskokwim River." Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski also indicated that the grant, had it not been canceled, would have arrived too late to prevent the damage caused by the storm. Moreover, [cuts to the National Weather Service](#) could have affected weather forecasts and interfered with preparations for ex-Typhoon Halong's impacts in Alaska. The weather prediction for this storm was not as accurate as in previous storms, as weather balloon coverage in the surrounding areas has been disrupted, and technical problems have prevented routine launches.

Though it's unclear whether the canceled grants or additional weather balloons would have lessened the widespread damage, this latest disaster emphasizes the [serious threats to livelihoods and communities in Alaska Native villages](#) due to climate change and coastal erosion. The [Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta](#) spans 50,000 square miles from southcentral Alaska to the Bering Sea, home to 6,400 residents and 56 Alaska Native villages. Because this land is flat, major storms can quickly move water from the ocean into the delta, causing severe flooding. According [to a recent study](#), coastal erosion, permafrost thaw, sea-level rise, and saltwater intrusion are combining with storm surges [to dramatically transform the coastal area](#). This damage not only affects natural spaces but also the Indigenous communities who have

been in the area since time immemorial. This [region is home to three cultures](#)—the Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Athabascan—and the Yup'ik language is the first language of more than 14,000 men, women, and children in our area, making it the most widely spoken Alaska Native language today. Too often, Indigenous communities are forced to be on the [front lines of climate change](#) impacts, [losing not only homes and infrastructure](#) but also, and just as importantly, access to traditional foodways and practices. From Alaska to [South Louisiana](#) to [Northeastern Maine](#), tribes are on the front lines of climate change – and without increased funding for programs and a comprehensive federal framework to address such coastal issues, there is a very tough road ahead for these Native communities and other coastal dwellers alike.

Tulane Water Law's Involvement in Regional Water Dialogues for Latin America and the Caribbean Could Not Have Come at a Better Time: OpenAI Expands to Argentina

During the recent [Regional Dialogues on Water for Latin America and the Caribbean](#), attended by Tulane Water's very own Director Chris Dalbom and Research Fellow Matt Allen, AI data center water usage [reared its ugly head](#). Chris discussed the transparency gap in high level water resource management, particularly regarding [consumptive water uses by AI data centers](#), which rely on vast quantities of freshwater for evaporative cooling of their computing infrastructure, during a panel discussion on the valuation of water. As the conference was wrapping up, we learned that our concerns about AI data centers were particularly apropos to these dialogues; [OpenAI just announced its decision to build an AI data center in Argentina's Patagonia region](#). This underscores the importance of transparency surrounding the environmental impacts of data centers. Let's just hope Argentina's government didn't sign a non-disclosure agreement! You can read more about the Dialogues in our [blawg](#) (Perhaps to the dismay of our friend and board member Tad Bartlett, publisher of the [Take the Fifth Blog](#), we're bringing "blawg" back! Like [Alf in POG form](#)!)

Coming Up:

[CRCL Coastal Stewardship Awards](#); Baton Rouge, LA; November 13, 2025

[Tulane Environmental Law & Policy Summit](#); New Orleans, LA; March 5-7, 2026

Water jobs:

[Program Manager, Louisiana RESTORE Act Center of Excellence](#); Water Institute of the Gulf; Baton Rouge, LA

[Director of Philanthropy](#), Great Lakes & Central Regions; American Rivers; Remote (Great Lakes, Central, or Texas)

[Clinical Assistant or Associate Professor](#), Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, New Orleans, LA

[Operations Coordinator](#); Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; New Orleans, LA



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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