

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
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That Sinking Feeling

When you live in a place that is already [mostly below sea level](#) (hint, it might rhyme with Blew Blorleans), what would be the best thing you might suggest to make things better? If you said don't do things that make it sink faster, then [this song is for you](#). But all too often that's not the way it works, as a [new study](#) that looks at subsidence in metro New Orleans reports. People tend to like it when businesses build plants, hire people, and provide things we need, like electricity. But often those plants need water to run, and in New Orleans lots of that water comes from underground. As groundwater is drawn out, the soil that remains compacts and/or subsides and anything built on top of that soil sinks too. Things like roads, houses, and in the case of New Orleans, flood walls and levees. In the new study, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory starkly connects those dots in a way that maps subsidence at the most detailed and granular scale to date. They found that the areas with the highest rates of subsidence, around an inch and a half per year, were located around Norco, LA, home of several large industrial facilities, and around Michoud, where Entergy operates a [nearly sixty year old natural gas power plant](#). Entergy plans to [decommission the Michoud plant](#) in the next year, but plans to build a replacement facility on the same site.

The engineered stagnation of south Louisiana's delta system means that New Orleans experiences some of the highest relative sea level rise on the planet, roughly a quarter inch per year. Sea level rise is a risk factor in coastal regions all over the world, but rising seas coupled with subsidence accelerates and exacerbates the risk.

Say Goodbye to Your Productivity & Dive Into Some Serious Water Mapping

The Nature Conservancy has [released](#) its [Freshwater Network](#) flow tools out into the world. The app has all sorts of data for all the inland waters of Louisiana and Mississippi (with Alabama soon to come). They're also adding in Oyster Flows to show how upstream decisions about water affect coastal oyster beds. The whole suite is [intended to inform](#) sustainable water management decisions, and there's enough data crammed in it all to make that a real possibility. (Full disclosure: This institute has a memorandum of understanding with TNC-Louisiana to enable fully using these tools to inform the effort drafting a comprehensive water code for Louisiana).

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:

[State of the Coast 2016](#)

New Orleans, LA

June 1-3, 2016

[RAE/The Coastal Society Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration](#)

New Orleans, LA

December 10-15, 2016

Water jobs:

[Staff Attorney](#)

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

[Clean Water Advocate](#)

Environment America

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It's a [Texas Flood...](#)

...of water projects! Last week, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) [approved the latest iteration](#) of the state's water plan. It includes \$62 billion in capital projects to improve the state's water infrastructure and secure long-term supplies. If [you're not from Texas](#), the water plan is analogous to Louisiana's coastal master plan. And if you're not from Louisiana, it is a big plan for water supply. Like the coastal master plan, it looks ahead 50 years, and is updated every five years. The plan projects population growth and develops a strategy to meet the accompanying demand for water. It is an admirable effort at a state-of-the-art, comprehensive view of the Lone Star state's water future.

Texas takes a "bottom-up" approach, dividing the state into 16 planning regions that identify regional need, important in a state so hydrologically and economically diverse. Still there are a few broadly applicable trends. From [Luckenbach](#) to the [streets of Laredo](#), from [Dallas](#) out to the west Texas town of [El Paso](#), the state is projected to be [more populous and more urban](#). A greater share of water will be needed for municipal supply as agricultural use declines. To meet the increased demand, the largest proposed spending is on [water storage](#), including aquifer storage. Conservation, through better technology and [wastewater recycling](#), is the second largest component with project spending increasing from \$1 billion in 2012 to \$4 billion this time around.

Critics point out that the planning process [encourages regions to over-estimate](#) their needs to move up in the queue for state funds. Projects included in the plan are eligible for state funding through Texas' innovative [SWIFT](#) program, and at least implicitly, compete with other projects over limited funds. In total, the plan lists 5,500 projects and strategies. Some won't be built for decades; others won't be built at all. Limited funds and the uncertainty of a 50 year planning horizon certainly pose challenges, but the plan and its financing mechanisms are a commendable attempt to plan for and meet water need well before it becomes a crisis. [Deep in the heart of Texas](#), water planning is a top priority.

[COWABUNGA!](#)

For decades, six-pack rings have been something of a poster child for the harm caused by plastic pollution. We've all seen images of [turtles](#), [herons](#), [gulls](#), and other creatures ensnared in the plastic yokes. While you could argue the attention they receive is [outsized to the scale](#) of the problem they pose, there's no denying that marine life suffers.

Enter [Saltwater Brewery](#) out of Delray, Florida. Saltwater was founded by "a team of Floridians, and one transplant, whose roots and values stem from a lifestyle that revolves around the ocean." As surfers, fishermen, and ocean lovers, they wanted to make a difference through their product. [They've created six pack rings](#) made out of brewing byproducts that are compostable, biodegradable, and best of all, edible! According to Saltwater, their rings are just as durable and efficient as plastic. But unlike plastic, if they end up in the water they are safe for marine life to digest and biodegrade quickly.

The edible rings are slightly more expensive to manufacture, but Saltwater believes the cost is justified. While some larger beer companies are set on convincing us that [consumerism is synonymous with patriotism](#), Saltwater is banking on customers paying a little more for a product that benefits the planet. And *if* bigger breweries bought in, they say, this method could actually be cost competitive with plastic rings. For our part, we'll raise a can to a future when plastic six pack rings are a thing of the past.

New Croc on the Block

Scientists in Florida have made a discovery that should trouble anyone who has seen [Lake Placid](#), [Black Water](#), or any of the films in the [Croczilla/DinoCroc/SuperCroc/Crocosaur](#) vein. Yes that's right, it's crocodiles! Nile crocodiles, a larger and more aggressive relative of the [American crocodile](#), have been found in Florida. Using DNA analysis, [researchers at the University of Florida](#) (home of the Gators) have confirmed that Nile crocodiles can and do inhabit the swamps of the sunshine state. It's believed they reached the swamps of the sunshine state [as a result of the exotic pet trade](#). Like the [Burmese pythons](#) they now share habitat with, a few probably got free and found suitable habitat and ample prey waiting for them.

Florida is home to more invasive species than anywhere in the US, but there's a stark difference between a house gecko and an 18 foot apex predator. It's well known in academia that alligators, continental cousins of the

croc, are so [ornery due to an abundance of incisors and a lack of dental hygienic instruments](#). But alligators aren't known to hunt humans. Crocodiles, on the other hand, are opportunistic and indiscriminate predators. In Africa, crocodiles do more than just [snap their teeth on your cigarette](#). Between 2010 and 2014, they were responsible for [123 deaths](#). Woahhhoh [here they come](#).