

# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy  
April 26, 2017

## Trump's Dream of a Wall [Haunted by Waters](#): A Treaty Runs Through It

Ever since the world started hearing about "[the greatest wall that you've ever seen](#)" a year and a half ago, some, shall we say, cooler heads have been raising practical questions: [What about the underlying geology?](#) [What about the environmental impacts?](#) [Couldn't we have something more useful?](#) [Couldn't we build a wall to keep water out of Houma instead?](#) [You think WHO'S going to pay for it?](#)

Well, none of those questions or concerns have real legal teeth that could stop a determined President and Congress. What does have legal teeth, though, is the [Boundary Treaty between the United States and Mexico from 1970](#). That treaty set up the International Boundary and Water Commission to manage the shared resource of the Rio Grande Basin, and any structure on one side that would affect the river or floodwaters has to be approved by the other side. It turns out that a giant wall along the river just might affect the Rio Grande, and [Mexico would be well within its rights](#) to pursue the matter, ultimately, in international court.

## Know What Everyone Needs? Water. Know What Sucks? Not Having Any.

In fact, [folk'll do just about anything to get the water they need](#). So, who's hurting in the water category these days, and what are they doing about it?

Well, 8 million Floridians from Orlando to the Keys have received a [water shortage warning](#). Voluntary efforts are underway to reduce use, but [brush fires](#) are blazing away and likely to worsen. Solutions? Well, the water management plan continues to be fought over in the legislature, and although it would do the most good in water-rich times and keep pollution out of estuaries, it would also increase water storage capacity that might soften the blows from frequent droughts. The Tampa region, however, is [benefiting](#) from regional water planning and a desalination plant that keeps them from having to over-pump groundwater. It's times like this that make the decades of fighting and setbacks that it took to get the region's water management to this point seem worth it. How else would Tampa remain home to [so many professional wrestlers](#)?

California and most of the American West have [emerged from drought](#) thanks to a very wet winter, but long-term prospects are still droughty – largely due to [rising temperatures](#) and reduction in [snowpack](#) (because of those

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:

[GiveNOLA Day](#)

May 2nd

## Water jobs:

[Advocacy Director](#)

Neponset River Watershed Association  
Canton, MA

[Program Director \(Climate Resilience\)](#)

Sonoran Institute  
Phoenix, AZ

[Associate \(Policy\)](#)

Ceres  
Boston, MA

## Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy

6325 Freret Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
New Orleans, LA 70118  
504-865-5982

[tulanewater.org](http://tulanewater.org)

TWITTER: [@TulaneWaterLaw](https://twitter.com/TulaneWaterLaw)

rising temps). Though [overarching problems remain](#), lots of local and regional [water conservation efforts](#) are underway. Some other ideas are being bandied about, but they're more along the lines of increasing supply rather than managing demand. [Those ideas](#) are more like robbing Peter to pay Paul and assume that those who do have water don't need it and it doesn't serve a purpose where it already is. Nonetheless, it seems as though the memory of the latest drought hasn't faded away just yet, and we should all be thankful the citizens of the American West haven't taken inspiration from [one particular Australian](#).

As issues with [flood insurance](#) take center stage, an international pooling of [drought insurance](#) has buoyed Senegal through their recent drought and reduced the need to depend on disaster-response international aid. Kudos to anyone trying to get out in front of [the oncoming increase](#) in climate extremes.

### **New Zealand's Secret Weapon Against Sea Level Rise Actually Not All That Helpful**

And it's not [boomerang fish](#). Much of New Zealand's 8,000+ mile coastline is [under threat](#) from climate change and sea level rise. As in the US, many homes are potentially stranded assets, uninsurable and unsellable. But getting away from the situation is not easy; coastal regions include some of the country's poorest communities, and others aren't interested in leaving communities even if they could. A lot of this should sound familiar to those of us in South Louisiana, and this country largely descended from oceangoing, canoe-based explorers, whalers, and shepherds will have to balance among being tough, smart, innovative, and responsible. The two places might have something to learn from each other.

While Louisiana's not-so secret weapon against sea level rise, the Mississippi River, has been at the center of the state's plans for decades, New Zealand's newly-discovered secret weapon is harder to plan for. That's because, in addition to killing two people, a 7.8 earthquake in Kaikoura last November [lifted dozens of miles of coastline](#) up to 26 feet! Although at least one resident calls the newly risen seabed an "[eyesore](#)," she probably has a lot less flood insurance to pay.

### **Plastics May Have Finally Met Their Match (and it's not [Anne Bancroft](#))**

Plastics. They're super. They might even be "[the reason humans were allowed to be spawned in the first place](#)." But, they're super hard to get rid of, too. Plastic bottles are out of control [London](#). Plastic straws are [cluttering beaches](#) and [turtle noses](#). And, plastic waste generally is finding its way into the [ocean's food chains](#). But, now, stepping, well, crawling, into the arena comes a new foe in the mounting battle to get rid of all this waste. Meet the humble [waxworm](#), the caterpillar stage of the wax moth will be familiar to many small pet owners and fisherman as a great little meal for insectivores. But, a [new study](#) shows that these little tubes of fat and protein are also [adept at digesting plastic](#)! [Godspeed you white caterpillars](#), time for you to undo what we have done!

### **Give NOLA Day May 2, A Chance to Show Your Love**

We are pleased to provide the newsletter for free, but that doesn't mean that it costs nothing to produce. Like the rest of our work here at the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, this newsletter depends on gifts and grants to happen. If you have been looking for a way to support that work, we have just the ticket: [Give NOLA Day](#) on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Thanks to the Greater New Orleans Foundation, Give NOLA Day allows groups like ours a chance to ask for support across the community with the potential for receiving a measure of matching support from GNOF itself. So go to our [profile page](#), it's easy, painless, and sure to make you feel better. Please consider it. Thanks.