

# TUWaterWays

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

[August 30, 2019](#)

## Well, There's Your Problem

You may have heard that New Orleans has had a few rounds of [flooding](#) from rainstorms this summer. It fits a [narrative](#) and makes for [great visuals](#). Even though these storms [dropped enough water](#) to throw [plenty of places](#) into a state of emergency, this is New Orleans, not plenty of places. We need to be ready for these heavy downpours, [now more than ever](#).

This duty falls to the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans. They're also responsible for treating and delivering drinking water, as well as taking away and treating waste water. Like many major city utilities since the beginning of white flight, they've had to do it while population has declined and infrastructure has decayed. However, with all those caveats and realities acknowledged, it's probably a tough day (of which there have been many lately) for S&WBNO's defenders. The Lafitte drainage canal, a 3 mile long box culvert that moves water out of the CBD and other neighborhoods, is being cleaned out this week. What is being cleaned out of it, you ask? As of yesterday, [370 tons of stuff](#). Two blue whales worth of [a car](#) and car parts, bicycles, a sofa, a grill, and who knows what else. The car has probably been there 14 years – since the Katrina levee failures. And clean-up crews aren't done.

The still-new(ish) director Ghassan Korban says there's no record of any comprehensive inspection of the city's canals. Rather than ask "why the heck not?" the more important question might be "is this an indication of a new, better-run utility that is going to [finish what it started](#) or just the latest in a long line of, frankly, humiliating stories about the utility and the city?" While time will tell the answer, only engaged citizenship can shape the answer.

## World Wide Water Pollution. Is it a [Party](#)? No. Is it [Suicide](#)? Possibly

A new [report](#) out from those noted tree-hugging hippies at the World Bank says that water pollution is reaching catastrophic levels around the globe. The report finds that consequences of poor water quality are [wide-reaching](#) and already can cut a region's economic growth by one third. The authors [note](#) that, even where standards are enforced, they may not be good enough; that polluting forces are accelerating; and that these challenges are facing both rich and poor countries. They counsel improved information sharing, valuing prevention over a cure (but isn't a whole lot of cure needed already?), and investing in technology that works. So, if you've got an aching to do things like improve lifespans and prevent infant deaths and some funds to invest, go for water quality technologies that work, whatever those might be.

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:

[America's Wetland Foundation Virtual Adaptation Forum](#)

September 5

[Coastal Land Loss Awareness Art Exhibit](#)

Now through September 6; Nicholls State University

[Bayou Bonfouca Marsh Planting](#)

September 5-7, 2019; Slidell, LA

[Downriver Festival](#)

September 7; New Orleans, LA

Walk and Learn Sessions: [Sewage and Water?!](#) and [Second Line at Sunset](#)

September 7; New Orleans, LA

[State of the Coast Session Proposal Deadline:](#)

September 13, 2019

[International Coastal Cleanup](#)

September 21; Elmer's Island

### Water jobs:

[Consortium Administrator](#)

LUMCON; Chauvin, LA

[Deputy Director](#)

Audubon Louisiana; New Orleans, LA

[Executive Director](#)

Network of Oregon Watersheds; Salem, OR

[Research Engineer](#)

ULL Watershed Flood Center; Lafayette, LA

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## Hooray for the Ancients!

Man, those ancients, with their [language](#) and their [sword of tongues](#) (video games are weird), they really had stuff figured out. Really, though, figuring out what to do about water – mostly how to have it available safely and sufficiently – was a common concern among a wide range of ancient civilizations, especially [Cecil Terwilliger's favorite](#). Well, in a changing world with greater demands placed on water and water infrastructure, many are turning to those hydrologic engineers of days long gone by. In Spain, where some still drink cool water without the help of refrigerants in [botijos](#), the city of Alicante is [utilizing designs](#) inspired by ancient Arab *aljibes* to collect and store rainwater in this arid region where water falls in sudden downpours. In Peru, where many people are dependent on the rapidly-shrinking glaciers of the Andes for their water, some indigenous groups are having to [push back](#) on modern engineering that relies on PVC and liners and other technologies that break down over a few years and only worry about moving water from point A to point B, rather than servicing the whole region. All the while, ancient methods have stood the test of time and supplied springs and wells across the whole area. Finally, in Sri Lanka, the ancient cascade system – a series of hundreds of small connected tanks – is being revived with UN Development Program funds to improve water supply in the face of uncertain monsoons. What [other wisdom](#) might the [Henry Darcys](#) of the long-long-time-ago past have left for us?