



TUWaterWays

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

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Don't let Academy Award winner Olivia Colman's charming character fool you; while she satirizes the oil economy, she's right on the money. Debates over fossil fuels have dominated the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties, or [COP 28](#), especially since it's being held in Dubai. This year's COP has us holding our breath and we don't know what to expect, as this year is the culmination of the [Global Stocktake](#). One of the most important subjects that we'll see being discussed is whether the nations should prioritize the ongoing plans to keep phasing out oil, coal and, and gas, or whether they believe it would be a better use of time and money to invest in developing technologies that will diminish climate impact. This topic became highly controversial as [Sultan al-Jaber](#), CEO of the state-owned UAE oil company, was assigned the presidency of the COP28.

With all of this talk about fossil fuels, let's not forget about other major climate change impacts escalating in smaller states and territories which will hopefully be discussed in COP28. For instance, just off the coast of Sierra Leone, [Nyangai Island's citizens](#) are witnessing their homes succumb to water as sea levels rise. In parallel, as oceans' waters continue to warm, the risk of hurricanes escalates with them. In fact, [this year's Atlantic hurricane season came in 4th for having the most-named storms](#) within one year. This is specially concerning to [East Coast citizens](#), as more and more people are moving to these states, with the demand having to build their home in flood zones.

Now, now, let's finish this story with good news. During the first day of the COP, delegates announced the decision to adopt a [loss and damage fund; governments pledge different amounts](#), giving smaller nations a win as the actions they've been demanding for decades finally become a reality. The fund will help the nations that have been affected the most by climate change, which the World Bank will oversee temporarily. So yeah, there are many topics we wish to see during the COP28, and we hope the policy makers feel [under pressure](#).

Groundwater Management District 3

No, this is not a reference to the new Hunger Games' District 12 tributes. We're talking about the small group of [13 persons who manage the use of groundwater in the southwestern part of Kansas](#). As groundwater is over pumped, and consequently depleted, this group of people oversee its management in a land that relies mostly on farmland for wheat, hay, and corn. This is highly concerning for the communities in southwestern Kansas, but it's not like they can vote them out. No, really. The Board can only be elected by [eligible voters](#) who are either landowners of 40 or more contiguous acres within the district, or a person who withdraws 1 acre-foot or more of groundwater per year, so it's safe to say that only a small portion of citizens of the district fulfill any of these requisites, however the public can attend their monthly meetings and comment on their agendas. Recently, an investigation found that the GMD3 has pumped 16.2 trillion gallons of groundwater, and while the U.S. Drought Monitor may show that the area GMD3 oversees is the one place in Kansas not facing an intense drought right now, just a year ago the entire state of [Kansas was under an exceptional drought](#). But again, let's bring some good news into this piece, during

spring of this year [state legislators from Kansas passed two bills](#) to increase the funding of water conservation, and accountability measures for groundwater authorities.

Did we mention [corn](#)? A lot of people seem to implement this grain as part of their diets, and now even [airplanes are starting to take a liking to it](#). Airlines are implementing new types of sustainable jet fuel, part of it which is heavily composed of corn, would reduce the carbon emissions of the aviation industry. This seems like an ideal scenario for climate and environmental issues, [but something's gotta give, and that something is water](#). Specifically groundwater, since corn is a water-intensive crop, and it takes a large number of acres in a field for only a couple of gallons of ethanol. Let's just hope that there's enough corn left for next year's Thanksgiving, but enough jokes—we wouldn't wanna seem corn-y.

[Where you lead, I will follow](#)

Or so said EPA officials on Thursday as it proposed a new Safe Drinking Water Act rule that would set a ten year deadline for [water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes](#). If the rule is promulgated, EPA would require all lead pipes to be removed, regardless of the lead levels in the water. Lead pipes have been banned in new plumbing systems since 1986; however, the ones installed before the restriction are still in use. Currently, the U.S. has approximately 9 million lead pipes. Lead, as any metal, can corrode. The corrosion infiltrates and contaminates the water passing through the pipes before it's delivered to residences, schools, and different facilities across the nation. The consumption of lead causes great harm, including [lead poisoning](#), which affects countless families across the US, with an increased risk to those who live in lower income communities.

[What about the costs](#)? A project this massive would require millions of dollars that some communities simply cannot fund. Well, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allocates \$15 billion to replace lead pipes, and an additional \$11.7 billion is available through the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund, however water authorities fear that is not enough, and the costs will be greater than that. This could even mean higher water bills for consumers. The public will have the opportunity to comment and give their opinion on the project in mid-January 2024, exact dates still pending. Might an additional cost mean scaling up production of plastic or steel pipes and increased pollution near those factory sites? Perhaps, but it would be a pleasant surprise if that was part of the considerations the public comments on.

[Do you feel the need to redeem yourself after Spotify Wrapped?](#)

This year's Spotify Wrapped made us all [question the songs and artists](#) we've been listening to the past year. And hey, you may feel like your list was underwhelming to show just how amazing your music taste is. It's the most wonderful time of the year, we need you (yes, specifically you) to send your choice of the best water song of the year. You read it right, folks, it's Top Water Songs of 2023! This is your one-way ticket to show your friends and loved one just how amazing your music taste really is, despite a data collective app opinion. Our panel of expert judges will [delicately review](#) your submissions and create a playlist of the top 14 songs. The prize will be the satisfaction of showing everyone your song during winter break. So what are you waiting for? You can submit your nominations [here](#).

[Coming Up:](#)

[Gulf Hypoxia Task Force Meeting](#); Fayetteville, AR; December 6, 2023

Tulane Environmental Law Summit; New Orleans, LA; February 23 & 24, 2024 (save the date!)

[Water jobs:](#)

[Associate, Programs](#); Restore America's Estuaries; Remote (US)

[Senior Policy Manager, Water](#); National Audubon Society; Sacramento, CA

[Law Fellow \(2024 – 2026\)](#); Environmental Law Institute; Washington, DC

[Research Fellow and Policy Engagement Leader](#); Resources for the Future; Washington, DC

[Water Policy and Science Communications Graduate Student Research Fellowship](#); University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Milwaukee, WI



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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