

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
February 22, 2017

Climate Change: It's Not Just for [the Coast](#)

Two of the America's great cities are struggling with basic water supply and management. Although a variety of factors has played a role, climate change has eliminated nature's resiliency and laid bare our management issues.

Mexico City, a city of more than 20 million that's [really high](#) up, is [struggling to supply water](#) to all of its citizens, even though the not-so-simple acquisition of water has become central to the lives of many poor women. Climate change has increased temperatures and made droughts more frequent. Downpours are also more frequent, but urban sprawl has placed a giant concrete cap over the volcanic soils that would absorb rain to replenish the city's aquifers. Those aquifers are now being drained with 1,000-foot deep wells, leading to subsidence rates unseen outside of California's Central Valley. That subsidence then wrecks infrastructure, including roads and schools.

La Paz, [even higher](#) up and home to a metro area of more than 2 million, is [also being tested](#) by the combination of higher temperatures and more frequent droughts. Drought means less precipitation. Higher temperatures mean rain instead of snow. Less precipitation and more rain means the loss of glaciers that had always been the city's dependable water source. So, once again, climate change has cut out nature's ability to absorb human mismanagement. In La Paz, that has meant an attempt to privatize water that never had the support of the people followed by a reversal to water as a human right that lacks the technological and managerial follow through.

Both articles on these slow-moving disasters are worth reading, and they are surely not the only cities dealing with climate change making life difficult for administrators and policymakers, eliminating their leeway for managing their resources. Expect more of these stories, not less.

US Water Infrastructure Pains Not Going Away

Until something major changes, cities and states across the country are going to continue to have [serious funding needs](#) for water infrastructure. Louisiana's coastal master plan continues to need scores of billions of dollars, but coastal projects are facing another sizeable [state budget deficit](#). California, home of the hopefully-not-crumbling Oroville Dam and victim of the all-too-familiar [worsened droughts combined with more-frequent downpours](#), [needs to spend \\$2.8 billion](#)

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:

[CRCL Coastal Restoration Road Show](#)

Abbeville, Lafitte, Cameron & Lacombe, LA
February & March, 2017

[Tulane Environmental Law & Policy Summit](#)
New Orleans, LA

March 10-11, 2017

Water jobs:

[Senior Analyst/Water Resources](#)

Abt Associates

Cambridge, MA

[Project Specialist \(Enviro. Initiatives \(Temp\)\)](#)

World Economic Forum

Geneva, Switzerland

[U.S. Government Relations Coordinator for Water Policy](#)

The Nature Conservancy

Washington, DC

[Assistant Analyst \(Climate Finance\)](#)

Climate Policy Initiative

San Francisco, CA

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per year on water infrastructure and \$65 billion on infrastructure overall, and there are already calls to move money [away from high speed rail](#) to water projects. New York, home to a mega-sized metropolis [preparing for sea level rise](#) and climate change, has managed to avoid the water shortages of Mexico City and other giant cities, but it comes at a cost; the State of New York is looking at [an \\$80 billion bill over the next 20 years](#) for its extensive water infrastructure needs.

Give Scott A Chance?

The Senate [confirmed](#) Scott Pruitt as EPA Administrator last Friday, and he [addressed](#) the EPA staff on Tuesday where he [asked](#) for a chance and for civility. He's on record as saying he believes the EPA's job is to ensure clean air and clean water (CERCLA and RCRA fans must wonder what he's got against clean land). Let's hope he means it, because we've got too much [dirty water](#)! It turns out that fracking well sites in just four states have had [more than 4,000 spills](#) – spills that are often of [dirty water](#) brought up from deep underground. The [dirty water](#) in Flint, Michigan continues to be a problem; so much so that Gov. Snyder has [asked](#) for an additional \$49 million to continue to deal with the crisis. Concerns about [dirty water](#) keep protesters at [Standing Rock](#) and have led to [a bill in Montana](#) to prevent pipelines from crossing rivers and lakes. New Mexico legislators are trying to create the authority to [penalize](#) oil and gas companies for making [dirty water](#), something they apparently lack right now. Of course, Mr. Pruitt's boss seems to be very [proud](#) of doing something that sure [seems likely to make more dirty water](#). Maybe, upon further review of [a few thousand emails that were just made public](#), we'll find out if his friends have any really good ideas about cleaning up all this [dirty water](#).