

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
May 6, 2014

With Action on Capitol Hill as Uncertain and Volatile as Last Week's Weather, Florida Looks to Reform Flood Insurance on Its Own

[Legislation](#) that opens the flood gates for the private flood insurance market is now waiting on Governor Rick Scott's desk for his approval (sorry, we couldn't help ourselves). Currently, most of the flood insurance policies in Florida are written by the federal government and comprise more than a third of the policies in the whole National Flood Insurance Program. The bill drew bipartisan support as a means to reduce dependence on the NFIP and increase consumer choice. Skeptics, however, worry that consumers will have less protection from rate increases in the private market and lose subsidies if they have buyer's remorse and wish to return to the NFIP. With [extreme weather](#) on the rise and the Panhandle still [recovering from last week's historic rain event](#), we imagine that greater choice will be welcome.

Newsflash: New Orleans Included in List of "Mega-Cities" . . . that are Sinking

While some of us in New Orleans may crack a proud smile that a foreign company considers New Orleans a mega-city, the conclusions made by applied-water research institute Deltares in its [recent report](#) are nothing to make light of. It found that several deltaic mega-cities, including the likes of Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bangkok, are "often not aware that subsidence is an urgent problem." In fact, it is even more pressing than sea level rise. Extraction of groundwater is the main culprit. The good news is that there are ways to [stop subsidence](#). Just look at Tokyo and Venice, which have already more or less stopped human-induced subsidence by banning or significantly reducing groundwater withdrawals. The difficulty, however, is finding a new water source for those cities that rely on groundwater for municipal and industrial uses. That means New Orleans has it easier than most of these other mega-cities because it pumps water for drainage, not for consumption. As is the case with all sinking cities, the solution starts with making it someone's job to manage groundwater and subsidence.

Miami's Resilience Planning Faces Inertia of Getting Started

A Miami-Dade County climate change task force has heard enough about the problems it faces with a changing climate and understands the need to [start developing a specific action plan](#) to protect its critical infrastructure. But the task force acknowledges that it has "got inertia" (of the at-rest kind, not the in-motion kind) and needs to start rallying

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:

May 10, 9am-9pm 2014

[The Wetlands Art Tour](#)

Faubourg Marigny and Bywater
New Orleans, LA

May 14, 11:30-1:15 2014

[Horizon Initiative Water Committee](#) Meeting

Garden Study Center, City Park
New Orleans, LA

Water jobs:

[Chief Resilience Officer](#)

City of New Orleans

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support for a plan that is likely to cost billions of dollars. The task force will look to break that inertia “by seeking and formally selecting the engineering expertise needed to develop the plan,” according to a draft resolution for the County Commission. However, as seen with New York, [that process](#) is easier said than done, as any action must overcome the reality of cost-benefit analyses, budgetary restrictions, and climate change uncertainty.

Amid Prolonged Drought, Sao Paulo Criticized for Stance on Water Rationing

With the state gearing up to host the World Cup’s opening game in just over five weeks, Sao Paulo is facing the [worst water shortage](#) in the last forty years. The main reservoir is at 10% of its capacity, which is a record low. Despite this apparent shortage, the governor Geraldo Alckmin vowed not to ration water in the city of Sao Paulo this year, instead opting to implement discounts for residents who reduce their water usage. But this vow didn’t extend to the neighboring Guarulhos and its predominantly working-class residents. Starting six weeks ago, their water service has been cut for 24 hours every other day. In order to get by when the water is off, residents scramble to store water when they can but are still left short of enough water for basics like washing dishes and clothes and showering. This uneven policy has caused resentment, according to Paula Sobrinho, superintendent of Guarulhos’s water service. As she put it, “What infuriates us is that only Guarulhos is going through it. The citizens of Guarulhos are not less than anyone else in the state.” Experts point to an upcoming fall election as the reason for delaying unpopular rationing statewide. And as droves of hooligans start to pack the city in the coming weeks, we’re confident they will largely opt for beer and spirits over a glass of water and a shower.

Hong Kong Struggles to Gain Handle on Its Water Security

Hong Kong is a bastion of free market activity, joining New York City and London to form the tripod of global trade. It may then be surprising to find out that Hong Kong heavily subsidizes its water, with rates frozen since 1995. This heavy subsidy has resulted in a population that uses water liberally. Some may even say wastefully. Well those days may be coming to an end as Hong Kong is currently [renegotiating its allocation](#) of the Dongjiang River, from which the metropolis gets 70-80% of its water. Five other major cities in the region depend on the Dongjiang, all of which are pushing or exceeding their limits. This is prompting some Hong Kong citizens and officials to rethink the pricing mechanism of municipal water. With a market-based approach, residents will be more likely to implement Bruce Lee’s conservation proverb, “It is not a daily increase, but a daily decrease. Hack away at the inessentials.”

Those Agonizing Minutes Waiting for the Shower to Heat Up May Soon Be a Thing of the Past

In a big step that cuts hot water waste by 15-30%, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials just modified the Uniform Plumbing Code to [require insulation](#) of hot water piping in new homes and commercial buildings. The requirement doesn’t kick in until 2015, but people are excited about the modification. “This is a great example of the untapped opportunities throughout the construction industry to make our buildings and our economy more efficient,” says Karen Hobbs, Senior Policy Analyst at the Natural Resources Defense Council. This development may be coming to a home near you if you live in Louisiana, as [legislation](#) adopting the International Plumbing Code has passed the House and is working its way through the Senate.

Struggling to Make Sense of the BP Crying Foul Play over the Settlement Agreement with Spill Victims?

Leave it to Scott Pelley and *60 Minutes* to boil it down into a cogent, balanced 13 minute [review of the facts](#). We’ll leave it at that and let you be the judge.

Lean on Me: Huntsville Does Its Best Bill Withers, Allows Rest of County to Lean on It for Water Supply

In a [deal](#) that County Chairman Dale Strong labeled as “historic”, Huntsville Utilities will provide more water to the rest of the county than in previous years but at a significantly reduced rate. Spurred by summer droughts that led to emergency water purchases, the [30-year agreement](#) will give the whole county a reliable source of water and allow for future domestic and agricultural growth. As weather patterns shift, we anticipate an increase in these types of regional water sharing agreements.