

# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy  
August 17, 2012

## ***On Your Marks, Get Set, Go!***

The Tulane Environmental Law Society is pleased to announce the dates for the much anticipated 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Tulane Environmental Summit. Mark your calendars for February 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. For more information, please contact [Sandra Trahan](#).

## ***Going Green to Manage the Rain: A Look at Atlanta***

Much like the rest of the nation, the City of Atlanta has experienced record droughts that threaten the city's drinking supplies. Rather than perpetuating the status quo, two new movements are currently underway to revamp the way the city harvests and manages storm water: proposed policy changes to the city's storm water management system and a revitalized movement for property owners to gather rainwater. Joy Hinkle of Southface, a local organization working on the policy changes, says the focus is on using plants and soil to manage where rainwater falls and to keep storm water on developed sites. City water officials and local organizations hope these policies will help "emphasize natural resource protection and better site design principles including the use of green infrastructure and runoff reduction." [Saporta Report: Atlanta](#)

## ***Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink***

The saltwater traveling up the Mississippi River that caused Plaquemines Parish to declare a state of emergency last week is now within six river miles of New Orleans' water supply. Recorded sodium levels in Plaquemines are ten times the recommended concentration levels for drinking water. The Army Corps of Engineers has begun construction of a \$5.8 million underwater dam to prevent the saltwater from travelling farther upstream. The project is expected to take about six weeks and parts of the Mississippi were closed this week to install the pipeline needed for construction. New Orleans Sewage and Water Board agreed to sell Plaquemines Parish up to a million gallons of potable water a day at the cost of \$2.89 for every 1,000 gallons, or \$29,000 a day. S&WB Executive Director Marcia St. Martin says this will not adversely affect the agency's capacity or New Orleans water supply. This recent sale has prompted discussion of future water sales.

[Saltwater Reaches Chalmette: Plaquemines Buys N.O. Water](#)

## ***What's your Virtual Water Footprint?***

The United States faces record droughts yet continues to export water with each product. Items such as corn, beef, and even blue jeans contain a "virtual water footprint" because of the water component interlinked with production. A pound of beef costs 1,800 gallons of water to manufacture and export. Beef production in the United States alone requires 30 trillion gallons annually, enough to dry the Colorado River six times. Joe Whitworth from the American Leadership forum takes a look at America's water management problem. [Exporting Water in a Drought](#)

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:**

[September 19, 2012](#)

Louisiana Water Resources Commission and Advisory Committee Meeting  
11:00 a.m.

House Committee Room 1, State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, LA

[September 25-27, 2012](#)

America's Great Watershed Initiative Summit  
St. Louis, MO

[October 2012 \(date TBD\)](#)

America's Wetland Foundation  
"Big River Thrives"  
Memphis, TN

[October 20-25, 2012](#)

Restore America's Estuaries Conference  
Tampa, FL

[February 22-23, 2013](#)

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Tulane Environmental Summit

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## ***Where Did the Water Go?***

The national drought epidemic can be seen most notably in its largest river, the Mississippi. It has been 24 years since the river was this low, and water levels show they continue to drop. This affects commerce, recreation, and even drinking water here in Louisiana. The industry that has felt the most financial impact from record-low water levels is the shipping industry. The mighty Mississippi carries about 60 percent of our nation's grain, 22 percent of the oil and gas and 30 percent of the nation's coal, and barge companies are forced to lighten their loads by about 25 percent to compensate for low water levels. There have been at least fifteen cases of barges running aground and in some cases, river traffic has stalled for up to 72 hours. Experts point to mild winters in the Upper Midwest that produced little to no snow melt and dry spring and summers to account for this erratic drop.

[Drought Affects Mississippi River Levels](#)

## ***Emiquon Preserve Designated as a Wetland of International Significance***

The Ramsar Convention recently recognized the Emiquon Preserve, located along the Illinois River, as a Wetland of International Significance. In 2000, the Nature Conservancy completed a \$18.6 million deal to purchase 7,600 acres of wetlands along the Illinois River, and there are already marked improvements to the area. The wetlands are now rich with rare migratory birds, the area has seen an improvement to its water quality, an increase in recreational opportunities and tourism revenues.

[Emiquon Preserve Recognized by Ramsar Convention](#)

## ***Water: America's Next Currency***

The Texas Lyceum, a leadership training group, met last Friday to discuss the economic benefits and legal matters surrounding water management. The central focus of the meeting was water reuse, conservation and desalination, but the conversation kept coming back to the bottom-line: money. Ed Archuleta, the head of El Paso Water Utilities, is concerned about water management and sees water spending as an investment. "At the end of the day, water is economic development."

[Texas Leaders Focus on Water Conservation](#)

## ***Customary Practices and Water Management: Saving Taro***

The Hawaii Supreme Court recently overturned a decision by the Intermediate Court of Appeals and ruled in favor of Native Hawaiian and environmental groups. The Court found the state Commission on Water Resource Management had failed to adequately consider stream flows and their impact on Native Hawaiian customary practices, specifically taro harvesting. The Commission had granted permits to two sugar companies to divert water from the Waihee, North Waiehu and South Waiehu streams in central Maui. The Court has required further review by the Water Commission as to how much must be returned to the streams, but locals are optimistic that the balance between industry and customary practices has been met.

[Hawaii Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Environmentalist Groups](#)

## ***Has EPA Lost that Love Canal Feeling?***

August 2 marked the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the New York State Commissioner of Health declared a state of emergency at Love Canal. This toxic waste site quickly became known as "the most appalling environmental tragedy in American history," and inspired the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program. Funded with industry tax dollars, the program effectively worked to clean up massive toxic waste sites. That is until Congress refused to renew the taxes in 1995, slowing bankrupting the program. As EPA continues to face increasing budget cuts and attacks from the coal-ash industry, the future of this program remains uncertain.

[Love Canal's 34th Anniversary](#)