

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
October 15, 2021

[Hello. It's Me, the New Mitigation Plan](#)

Everyone is buzzing about Adele's anticipated new album, but we at the Water Castle have our eye on another announcement. The City of New Orleans has released its FEMA-approved [2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan](#). Developed through a joint effort by the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, Housing Authority of New Orleans, and Tulane University, the plan tries to boost resiliency efforts and increase community outreach and risk education. Part of the City's mitigation strategy involves natural resource protection, such as erosion control and water quality improvement, property protection, structural project protection, emergency services measures, and public education and awareness.

[Show Me the Money!!!](#)

It is a truth ([almost](#)) universally acknowledged that glass is more environmentally-friendly than plastic; it's more easily recyclable and can be reused for multiple purposes. Heck, it can [whip up some drama in the Jane Austen community](#). Let's see plastic do that! Still, when it comes to glass consumption, two issues come up. First, what happens when we [run out of sand](#)? Second, where, oh where, does one recycle glass? Well, in Louisiana, not in a lot of places. In fact, the need for glass recycling has inspired [several people](#) to stop waiting for government action and address the issue themselves. One of them is Glass Half Full, started by some Tulane alumni, who [recently received a grant](#) from the National Science Foundation to fuel their operation and mission to turn glass into sand that can be used to restore the coast—and heaven knows [we can always use more coastline](#). And in a state where tailgates, parades, and happy hours are part of life, it's nice to see our vices finally being put to good use. Glass Half Full may be \$700,000 richer, but that doesn't mean they're close to full coastal restoration. There's still research for them to conduct and hoops to jump through. Oh, and there's that [glass shortage](#) going on, too. [Hold onto your Topo Chico bottles](#), folks.

Speaking of Tulane, the EPA awarded a [\\$1.24 million grant to Professor Tiong Aw](#) of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine to develop more efficient ways to detect viruses in wastewater. [Viruses are abundant in wastewater](#) and their presence can pose risks to human health, especially when that wastewater is used to replenish aquifers or empties into recreational waterbodies. The more methods we have to detect them, the easier it will be to

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.

Coming up:

[ELI Webinar: Achieving Environmental Justice](#); Oct. 19

[ELI Webinar: Advancing Environmental Justice and Climate Change through Pro Bono Initiatives](#); Oct. 27

Water jobs:

[Associate Attorney](#); Sher Edling LLP; San Francisco, CA

[TMDL and Water Quality Improvement Lead](#); State of Washington Water Quality Program; Lacey, WA

[Program Operations Associate](#); The Ocean Foundation; Washington, DC

[Senior Attorney, Fossil Fuels Program](#); Earthjustice; New Orleans or Texas

[Senior Manager, Environmental Policy \(EMEA\)](#); Amazon; Brussels, Belgium

Louisiana Bucket Brigade; [Campaign Director](#), New Orleans, LA; [Economic Development Manager](#), River Parishes, LA; [Liquefied Natural Gas Campaign Coordinator](#), Lake Charles, LA

[Staff Attorney](#); Great Rivers Environmental Law Center; St. Louis, MO

Sierra Club; [Gas Exports Campaign Representative](#), New Orleans/Gulf Coast, LA; [National Distributed Organizing Representative](#), LA/TX/DC

[Adaptation Program Director](#); Georgetown Climate Center; Washington, D.C

[Sustainability/ESG Director](#); PwC; multiple locations

[Research Associate](#); University of New Orleans; New Orleans, LA

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eradicate them and ensure safer drinking water. Until then, [don't go near the water](#) just yet.

COP26

Halloween is a little under 3 weeks away (cue [Nightmare Before Christmas theme song](#)), and some of us at the Water Castle are already thinking of our costumes. There are also quite a few things going on this year. Krewe of Boo is rolling next week, and the Saints game is on the day of. But there's something else happening on All Hallows Eve. The UN's Climate Change Conference, commonly called [COP26](#), is going to be held October 31. The two-week conference will be a gathering of who's who of world leaders and climate experts; it'll be held in Glasgow, where world governments will try to tackle climate change issues—namely, the inevitable 1.5C goal. It's something to keep an eye on, especially since Governor John Bel Edwards [announced](#) last week that Louisiana will be joining the U.N.'s "Race to Zero" campaign. We will look forward to what comes out of this conference. [Good luck and many shoelaces to them.](#)

Good News and Bad News from the UN

Let's start with the bad news, first—we hate ending on a sour note. In their [State of Climate Services 2021: Water](#) report, U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization announced terrestrial water storage levels have dropped over the past 20 years at a rate of one centimeter per year. That may not sound like a lot, but in 2018, 2.3 billion people were living in countries under water stress; that number is expected to increase to 5 billion by 2050. And a [deteriorating oil tanker](#) is definitely not helping the problem (another oil spill—anyone else getting *déjà vu*?). This comes as no surprise to anyone who has kept up with what's going on in the [western United States](#). Or [Afghanistan](#). Or [South America](#). We're going to be seeing some [dry golf courses](#) soon.

Okay, onto the good news. The U.N. Human Rights Council declared on October 8 that access to a clean and healthy environment is a fundamental right. It's about dang time, but does that mean it is protectable in court? Not exactly. The proposal, which was first conceived in the 1990s, had a massive amount of support, except from a few countries: Russia (no surprise), India and China (definitely no surprise there), Japan, and the United States. ([whaaaa?](#)) That's actually not surprising either, considering the U.S. courts' treatment of climate change cases over the years (e.g., *Juliana v. United States*, [Aji P. v. Washington](#), etc.). *Juliana* was dismissed in the Ninth Circuit, and the Supreme Court of Washington just denied *Aji P.*'s petition for review, though with a strong [dissent](#) from Chief Justice Gonzales. When the news came out, many might have wondered how it would affect Greta Thunberg's climate case. Here's the thing, [it doesn't](#); not yet, anyway. A U.N. panel insists that the litigants should have filed their case in national courts first. So far that has been rough sledding in US Courts. Hey, we said *good* news, not *great* news. Still, if the case does make it to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, the outlook may not be as bleak as it used to be. Studies upon studies show the causal link between climate change and human actions. The [U.S. has experienced \\$18 billion worth of climate disasters](#) so far in 2021. While we're past the point of avoiding a global temperature increase, we [can still prevent it from getting worse and limit sea level rise](#). If worse comes to worst, we can always just send the population in to space, right? Wait, [that's only for billionaires and former starship captains](#). Salute from us [common people](#), [Rocket Man](#).