

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
December 2, 2022

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas in the Sierra Nevada, but It's Still Looking a Lot Like Drought in the American West

This week, California and the Mountain West are welcoming a couple of [significant snowstorms](#). That's good, because mountain snowpack is the source of water supplies across the west, and the [predicted snow season forecast](#) isn't the greatest. At least, it's not great enough to reverse the multi-year, megadrought that's driving decisionmaking from Wind River to West Hollywood.

Much of that decisionmaking is through the lens of the, as of last week, [100-years-old Colorado River Compact](#). As you might imagine, it's gotten a bit creaky as it approached the century mark, setting up legal promises that mother nature is incapable of delivering upon. It's forcing [hard choices throughout the basin](#). Perhaps there's some hope, at least as far as administration of the compact goes. The [CO River's users](#) are [meeting in Las Vegas this month](#). So, perhaps some progress can be made. After all, it's Vegas, [everyone's a winner](#), right? Right?

As has been made clear by [report after report](#), meeting water demand across the West (in and out of the Colorado River Basin) has got to be about lowering that demand, as [supply is simply limited](#) by a reality incapable of the same flexibility. Sometimes lowering demand happens just by eliminating the business that needed the water, like [the loss of 10% of California's farmland](#). However, it sure seems like most of the stories coming out of the Golden State are about stretching supply more than curbing demand. Stretching supply by [covering canals in solar panels to reduce evaporation](#). Stretching supply by approving [new desalination plants](#) along the coast (given the huge energy needs of desal, it makes us wonder how the new plants fit with the state's net zero carbon plan). Stretching supply in individual counties by trying to [block the export of groundwater](#) (just export it once it's in the alfalfa, right?). Oddly, though, stretching supply by bolstering [the state's ability to stop water thieves](#) doesn't seem to be a priority.

The National Basketball Association has a couple of teams with nicknames that, thanks to the movement of franchises, are comically incongruous. One is from when the Minneapolis Lakers moved to Los Angeles, where there are noticeably fewer lakes. The other is from when the New Orleans Jazz moved to Utah, where this is noticeably less jazz. However, could it be, that even if the Jazz moved to Los Angeles, where there's been a lot of very [cool jazz](#), and the Lakers had moved to Utah, where there's a big ol' lake, we could still have the same incongruity?

This is a very roundabout way to get to talking about the present and future of the Great Salt Lake. Back when [Stockton and Malone](#)

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:

[Center for Planning Excellence, 2022 Louisiana Smart Growth Summit](#); December 7-8; Baton Rouge, LA

[Restore America's Estuaries, 2022 Coastal and Estuarine Summit](#); December 4-8; New Orleans, LA

[CRCL Lecture with Clint Willson](#); December 13; Baton Rouge, LA

[Hypoxia Task Force Public Meeting](#); December 14; Washington, D.C. and Virtual

Tulane Environmental and Energy Law Summit; March 17-18; New Orleans, LA

[2023 State of the Coast Conference](#); May 31-June 2; New Orleans, LA

Water jobs:

[Assistant Professor of Marine Affairs: Fisheries Management and Policy](#); University of Rhode Island; Kingston, RI

[Restoration Programs Director](#); Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; New Orleans, LA

[Regional Watershed Coordinator](#); Capitol Region Planning Commission; Baton Rouge, LA

[Water Quality Technician](#); Pontchartrain Conservancy; Metairie, LA

[Associate Attorney, Senior Attorney, and Paralegal](#); Earthjustice; Multiple Locations

6325 Freret Street, 1st Floor
New Orleans, LA 70118
504-865-5982

tulanewater.org

TWITTER: [@TulaneWaterLaw](#)

INSTAGRAM: [@TulaneWaterLaw](#)

came to its briny shores, the lake covered more than 3,000 square miles, but now it covers less than one third of that. Its ecosystem and any economy that's based around it or having breathable air free of industrial toxins are on the brink of collapse. So, how to save it? By [finding ways to preserve the rivers that feed it](#), especially the Bear River, the longest river in the US that doesn't make it to the ocean. And, like a miniature version of the fights going on in the Colorado River Basin across the Uinta divide, drought and climate change are driving tension between agricultural users and urban development, between upstream and downstream. But here, the impacts are being felt more clearly as the Lake is drying up in real time and heading towards the kind of disaster that during the heyday of [Showtime](#) and [pick and roll](#) basketball were thought to be restricted to [sad, Soviet republics](#).

[Hey! We're Still Looking For...](#)

The top water songs of 2022 and we need your help because, despite our best efforts to do nothing but sit around listening to music and watching TikTok videos, work keeps getting in the way. That's where you come in. What do you think were the best water songs of the year? And by "best" we don't necessarily mean good--you get the picture. Our [panel of experts](#) will review all submissions and compile the definitive playlist, a top 14 list and maybe even bestow a [meaningless award](#) to the top tune. This is more important to the economy than your holiday shopping. Vote early, vote often! [We even made this Google form for your submissions!](#)