

TUWaterWays

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

Bureau of Reclamation Report Explores All Options for Meeting Colorado River Demands

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (B of R) made headlines this week releasing a [report](#) addressing the Colorado River Basin's 21st Century needs. The study highlighted both the Basin's expected drop in precipitation and the growing population that depends on the Colorado River's water. At the heart of B of R's potential fixes to the forthcoming gap between water supply and demand are conservation measures and water trading within the basin. However, the report also includes a number of options for increasing supply. Among those options are widespread desalinization, towing icebergs or giant bags of water to Southern California, tapping the Columbia River system, and a pipeline delivering water from the Missouri River to Colorado's Front Range. Part of the need for such drastic measures are agreements between states promising specified amounts of water combined with a wide array of areas outside of the Basin dependent on the Colorado River's water (i.e. Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Denver, Albuquerque, and San Diego).

[Colorado River seen as depleting regional resource. Ken Ritter, Associated Press, December 13, 2012.](#)

Meanwhile, the Mississippi River Basin Deals with its own Shortfalls

The drought across the Great Plains continues. Water levels in the Mississippi River [threaten](#) shipping and the nation's agriculture. The Corps of Engineers are [draining](#) a lake in Illinois as a stopgap measure. Against this backdrop, America's Wetland Foundation continues its [Big River Works](#) campaign, and they held a meeting last week in St. Louis that prompted some to imagine a better-run Mississippi River system. A St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial paints a picture of the MS River Basin's 31 states acting in unison against plans such as the MO to CO diversion mentioned above and of a system managed a whole – not pitting sub-basin against sub-basin as it is now.

[Editorial: Time for river states to stop bickering and work together, Editorial Board, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 10, 2012](#)

New Book Highlights Petrochemical Industry's Presence and Effects in Louisiana

Petrochemical America, by Kate Orff and Richard Misrach, has images and infographics too good not to mention here. The book concentrates on the industry lining Mississippi River and its relationships with landscape, people, and ecology. We see it also as a reminder of what is at stake for the region in efforts to improve management of the Mississippi River (that these plants depend on for water and transport) and the Louisiana coastal wetlands (that these plants depend on for storm protection).

[Fascinating Infographics And Gorgeous Photos Document Our Deadly Chemical Industry, Emily Badger, Fast Company, 2012.](#)

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:

[January 17, 2013](#)

America's Wetland Foundation
"Big River Provides"
Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

[February 22-23, 2013](#)

18th Annual Tulane Environmental Summit

[February 27-28, 2013](#)

America's Wetland Foundation
"Big River Moves"
Chicago, IL

Job Opportunities:

University of Wisconsin-Madison Freshwater Institute, Center for Water Policy

- [Assistant/Associate Professor](#)
- [Assistant Director for Center Coordination](#)
- [Research Manager](#)

National Wildlife Federation, Mississippi River Delta Restoration

- [Senior Policy Specialist](#)

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Deepwater Horizon-Related News Roundup

A committee for Florida's eight "disproportionately impacted" counties has [devised](#) a formula to split up funds allocated by the RESTORE Act. Where the RESTORE Act was silent, these counties have stepped forward with a formula of their own. Should the counties approve the formula, it will be sent to the Department of the Treasury, who is still writing regulations for the application of the RESTORE Act.

Internal emails [documenting](#) BP's cover up of the flow rate from the Macando well for weeks during the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster have come to light. The attorney for a former BP engineer plans to introduce these emails at the February hearing that will determine fault for the disaster as part of the case's civil proceedings. This news is good for the Department of Justice's push to prove BP's negligence was so gross as to merit civil fines and penalties at a higher rate. Although corporation has entered a plea agreement for criminal charges, these emails could be used in forthcoming criminal cases against individuals within the company.

A [hearing](#) regarding the BP criminal plea agreement is scheduled for January 29 in front of Judge Vance in New Orleans. Those who would like to comment on the plea agreement may do so in writing before January 16. Judge Vance is not expected to reject the plea agreement, but she may modify it.

After the Deepwater Horizon spill, safety standards on Gulf oil rigs were tightened, and the Federal government dismantled the Minerals Management Service and created the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. More than a year after these changes were made, not a single inspection of a Gulf rig has been made. [Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.](#)

Onshore, the struggle to move along a path towards Gulf [restoration](#) continues. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council [held](#) their initial public meeting on Tuesday, December 11, in Mobile. The Council took over the reins from the Task Force (as directed by the RESTORE Act), and although the Council heard public comments, little of the path ahead was illuminated. Other meetings along the Gulf should happen in January and February.

New Storm Surge Warning System Coming from the National Hurricane Center, Eventually.

The NHC is working on a much-needed storm surge [warning system](#) to warn of the flooding associated with hurricanes. The widespread flooding associated with "minor" Hurricanes Isaac and Sandy highlighted the need for a warning system based around something besides wind speed. Unfortunately, the new system won't be up and running until 2015, leaving many [exposed](#) to unexpected storm surge dangers for the next couple of storm seasons.

