

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy

[January 16, 2020](#)

Hot Water (Not the **Fun Kind**)

The [world's oceans were at their hottest in 2019](#), and have been steadily warming. The years 2015-2019 are the five hottest on record. If you want an even bleaker way of thinking about that, the oceans are warming at the [same rate](#) as if the heat energy from five to six Hiroshima bombs were being dropped into them every second. Oceans have been absorbing about 93% of the excess heat caused by greenhouse gas emissions over the past 50 years, meaning that ocean temperature change is a solid marker of climate change progress (the other 7% has been funneled into [K-pop superstars](#)). Hotter oceans also create a myriad of climate-related problems, such as [marine ecosystem destruction](#), [hurricanes](#), and [sea-level rise](#), as well as less obvious ones, like [flooding](#) and [drought](#) due to exacerbated climate change impacts in areas surrounded by hotter seas. Scientists say that although some of these effects are irreversible, if we are able to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, we can halt such rapid ocean warming and slow many of these catastrophic consequences.

Water Warfare

In other depressing news to start the new decade, worldwide violence surrounding water [rose significantly in the past decade](#) and likely will continue to do so if some sort of global solution is not implemented. This increase in water-related violence includes violence caused by lack of access to water, as well as instances of weaponized water supplies and infrastructure. The Pacific Institute think-tank created and maintains a [water conflict database](#), which lists water-related incidents starting as far back as 3000 BC. Throughout the past decade water-related violence occurred all over the world, from the United States, to Yemen, to Ukraine, to India. Recently, in Australia there have been growing incidents of water-theft as the country faces raging wildfires and record-breaking heat and drought. As the science news journal Gizmodo [points out](#), the events unfolding there and [subsequent consequences](#) are reminiscent of the [especially dismal future](#) portrayed in [Mad Max: Fury Road](#).

One new study [published](#) recently in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences pushes back on one of the assumptions that climate change and widespread drought will lead to more conflict. As one of the authors [points out](#), yes, abnormal drought leads to more conflict, but as drought ceases to be *abnormal*, the economic incentives that favor conflict change. Why make land grab against your neighbors if you can't expect that land to be any more productive in the future than your own dried-out land?

The worldwide water-related violence will hopefully not reach a *Mad Max*-level nightmare dystopia, although it may feel that way for

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:

[Draft Fiscal Year 2021 Atchafalaya Basin Annual Plan Public Hearing](#); January 16; Henderson, LA

[Friday Nights at NOMA: Arts and Letters Series with Nathaniel Rich discussing *Losing Earth*](#)
January 17; New Orleans, LA

[Watershed Projects Grant Program Pre-Application Deadline](#); January 17

[Oyster Shell Bagging](#); January 18; Buras, LA

[Navigating Legal Waters: Water Resources Law Symposium](#); January 24; Baton Rouge, LA

Manchac Swamp Reforestation Plantings
January [24](#) & [25](#); Akers, LA

[Inventing Acadia: Painting and Place in Louisiana Exhibit](#); Now – January 26; New Orleans, LA

[Artist Salon with Nick Slie: "Invisible Rivers"](#)
January 30; New Orleans, LA

Water jobs:

[Operations and Land Management Assistant Bureau Chief](#); SW Florida Water Mgmt; Brooksville, FL

Various Positions at Earthjustice:
[Associate Attorney](#) or [Staff Attorney](#); Seattle, WA
[Staff Attorney](#); Anchorage, AK
[Staff Attorney](#); New York, NY

[Assistant Attorney General \(Water\)](#); Wyoming AG's Office; Cheyenne, WY

[Urban Stormwater Associate Director](#); American Rivers; New Cumberland or Philadelphia, PA

[Environmental Protection Specialist \(Floodplain Management\)](#); DC Government; Washington, DC

[Exec. Director](#); Alabama Water Institute; Tuscaloosa

[Environmental & Energy Law Program Legal Fellow](#); Harvard Law School; Cambridge, MA

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those in Australia and the Middle East (a region in which 12 of 17 of the world's most "water-stressed" countries are located). And, as opposed to Max's [opinion](#), hope is not a mistake. In some places, like Darfur, water is actually [easing tensions](#). Previously combative communities are working together on new weir projects to increase water availability throughout the region, thus displaying that peace is possible. And, [new technologies](#) can predict where water-related conflict may arise in the future, creating a possibility to lighten tensions before they occur. However, as climate change impacts grow more severe, hope alone will not suffice; we must take a cue from these communities and globally [work together to take action](#) in order to make [water systems more resilient](#) and encourage [peace on earth](#).

PFAS [Are Forever](#) (Or, at Least for a [Long Time](#))

After the EPA missed its self-imposed deadline at the end of last year to regulate [per- and polyflouroalkyl substances](#) (or PFAS for those of us who are not scientists and cannot pronounce that), last week the House of Representatives took matters into their own hands and [passed a bill](#) to regulate the class of carcinogenic chemicals. PFAS, also called "forever chemicals," take years to break down in the environment and accumulate and remain in humans for years as well; they [stay a little longer than all night](#) (R.I.P. Sleepy LaBeef). They seep into freshwater supplies all over the United States, causing major health concerns that many believe should have been more solidly acted upon decades ago. The House bill would force the EPA to set new limits on PFAS in drinking water (currently, the EPA "recommends" that PFAS not exceed 70 parts per billion). However, because PFAS are a class that contain numerous chemicals, Republicans say that the bill is too broad, and placing a strict limit on every PFAS could be disastrous for drinking water companies. The Trump Administration has already [threatened to veto](#) the bill if it were to pass the Senate as well. Well, [at least you tried](#), Congress.