

TUWaterWays

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

[August 28, 2020](#)

First Things First: Laura Didn't Affect New Orleans, but the Extent of Her Impact on Louisiana (and Texas, and Arkansas, and...) Won't be Known for Weeks

A week ago, it looked like two tropical storms were going to make for a wet and unenjoyable, but not disastrous, time in Southeast Louisiana. One storm, [Marco](#), fell apart before making landfall, but the other, Laura, grew and grew. Laura was a tropical storm when it left Cuba, but when it made landfall in Southwest Louisiana early on Thursday it had [150 mile per hour winds](#) and had become the strongest storm to ever hit the state. The storm landed at Cameron Parish – a sparsely populated area notably lacking in elevation. That population never recovered after Hurricane Rita in 2005, and the parish tax base can't support large-scale storm protection or flood control projects needed in the face of sea level rise, marsh destruction, and storm intensification. The future for Cameron Parish has to be up in the air right now. Laura continued with hurricane force winds all the way across the state to the Arkansas border. The region is replete with oil and gas industry infrastructure from wells to pipelines to massive petrochemical plants. At the time of writing, at least one of these [facilities is on fire](#). Figuring out what damage, spills, and loss the storm left in her wake will be a major part of the recovery effort.

"Forever Chemicals" Keep Getting into Water and Soil. What's The Latest Being Done About That?

The chemicals, known collectively as PFAS, cause cancer, thyroid problems, and other health issues. Several states, like Michigan, Colorado, and California, have set [stricter limits](#) on their presence in drinking water.

In North Carolina, the Attorney General is [investigating](#) PFAS pollution from a plant that manufactured one for DuPont, and that investigation follows after a [private suit](#) against the plant from area property owners.

In Michigan, the Attorney General isn't just investigating, but is already suing PFAS manufacturers in order to have chemical giants like 3M and DuPont pay for testing, cleanup, and monitoring. The suits filed in January have [made it past motions for dismissal and have reached the discovery stage](#). Those suits were for commercial uses of PFAS and [new suits](#) filed this month are for firefighting foams.

But never fear, all of us who don't have the pleasure of being Michiganders. The EPA is on the case [offering \\$50,000](#) for someone who can come up with a way to destroy these forever chemicals. Unfortunately, from the EPA's perspective, efforts at learning how to destroy PFAS won't include a planned study to burn PFAS in

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 less stewardship of water.

Coming up:

EPA's Drinking Water Virtual Workshop: [Pre-Workshop In-Depth Training](#) (August 31) and [Workshop](#) (September 1-3)

[Water Budgeting Webinar](#); September 2

[Public Comment Deadline on Lake Powell Pipeline Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#); September 8

[Virtual ResCon](#); September 8-10

[Gulf Spill Restoration—Louisiana Area Annual Public Meeting Webinar](#); September 9

[Hot Topics in Clean Water Law Webinar](#); September 16

[AWWA Webinar: Smart Water 2020: Building a Resilient Water Future](#); September 20

[National Coastal and Estuarine Virtual Summit](#); September 29-October 1

Water jobs:

[Counsel \(Environmental and International Law Practice Group \(LEGEN\)\)](#); The World Bank; Washington, DC.

[Legislative Associate/ Senior Legislative Associate](#); The Southern Environmental Law Center; DC.

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

[Policy Manager \(Environment, Energy, and Climate Change\)](#); Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Cambridge, MA

[Policy Specialist \(Resilient Coasts & Floodplains\)](#); NWF; D.C.

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incinerators largely located in low-income communities to see, ya know, what happened if you burn PFAS and let them into the atmosphere to see if it worked, or if something went wrong, or whatever. Oddly, when announcing that the plan was scrapped, Administrator Wheeler [laid the blame](#) at the feet of a former EPA leader who has been out of the agency for three years, but has since fought against the study. Presumably the communities where the study was to take place would have a different perspective than Mr. Wheeler. Perhaps he was just on a [power trip](#), but for affected communities it was surely [nightmare logic](#).

\$600 Million on the Way for Flint, MI Residents

A class action lawsuit against the state of Michigan by Flint residents this week yielded [\\$600 million for residents impacted by the crisis](#) - \$500 million of that to go to people who were under 18 years old at the time. Unfortunately, there is no simple fix for the Flint water crisis - lead poisoning can affect families for generations, 12 people died, and many Flint residents are still afraid to drink tap water there - but this is a start. Suits by residents against other defendants will continue.