

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
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Getting Moody About Climate and Coastal Change

From [Shishmaref, Alaska](#) to [Jamestown, Virginia](#) and all points in between (including, of course, our home state of Louisiana), warming temperatures and rising seas are combining with other factors to redraw the face of America's coasts. As bad as the physical changes can be, that is only half it. Long before nature does her worst, the fates of people and places will be decided by policy makers, like [Moody's](#), in the financial and commercial sectors, sectors that show increasing concern both about climate trends themselves and "climate shocks" like storms, droughts, and floods. Moody's drove that point home last week in [announcement](#) explaining how it was factoring climate change into the ways it rates investments bonds and issuers, such as the City of New Orleans. (Yes, the Crescent City got a shout out). Sure, we are smart creatures with vast technical tools at our disposal to mitigate and adapt to the changes coming at us. But will we? The early returns from Harris County, Texas suggest "maybe." The County, which is home to Houston but does not speak for Houston, has just approved [much needed new flood plain development rules](#) following several years of floods, capped by Hurricane Harvey. But then again, Houston itself has not. Delay in doing smart things might be a "[tactical error](#)" where survival is concerned. Just ask Warren Zevon.

To Flush or Not to Flush, That is the Question

America can be defined by its feuds. North v South, Hatfields v McCoys, Celtics v Lakers, [Johnny Cash v Nashville](#) to name just a few. But those are all prelude to the fight that is dividing households, industries and communities today: To flush or not to flush, [wipes that is](#). Are flushable wipes the [hygienic wonder](#) of the age or the [scourge of plumbing and utility budgets](#)? And who should decide? This being America, it was inevitable that this would find its way to the courthouse with suits be filed from every perspective. Angry home owners with clogged plumbing? [You know it](#). Frustrated local governments? [Check](#). Wipe manufacturer, challenging a local rule against calling wipes "flushable"? [Got one of those now](#). Trade associations with poetic names defending the right to proclaim and sell nonwoven fabrics as flushable? [Check and double check](#). It all seems to add up to years of contention to come.

Note to File: Double Check the Anchors

Clogged pipes are one problem (see previous story) but leaking pipes are quite another, especially when those pipes are leaking oil. And [leaking is just what the much squabbled over Keystone Pipeline](#) has been doing. So, what does this have to do with water? Lots, apparently. According to a [Corrective Action Order](#) from the Pipelines

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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.

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Tulane Institute
on Water Resources Law & Policy

6325 Freret Street, 1st Floor

New Orleans, LA 70118

504-865-5982

tulanewater.org

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and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (part of the U.S. Department of Transportation) that oversees pipeline safety, the spill may have been caused by [anchor weights](#) added to the pipeline to counter buoyancy triggered by changes in the water table, changes that themselves can induce pipes to rupture. Add to that the fact that spills can damage aquifers and surface streams and the watery connections become clear. As a result, the PHMSA has scaled back the operation of the controversial pipeline. South Dakota could go even further and is threatening to [revoke its permit](#) for the project. All of this comes as construction of the associated Keystone XL pipeline comes to a head following its [resuscitation by the Trump Administration](#). Nebraska has also thrown a wrench into the mix by approving continued construction on the associated Keystone XL Pipeline but along a [different alignment](#) than previously proposed. There are miles to go before this one sleeps.