

# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy  
June 11, 2015

## Water Systems and Utilities Have to Catch Up or Die-Offs Will Continue

In August 2011, along hundreds of kilometers of California's coast, several species of sea creatures experienced a [massive die-off](#). A new [study](#) blames an algal bloom.

At the eastern tip of Long Island, the Peconic Estuary has seen algal blooms cause die-offs of turtles and fish. There, [the cause is clear](#) – nitrogen pollution leaking from septic tanks and cesspools leaches into aquifers that are hydrologically connected to the surface waters of the estuary. Suffolk County is taking steps to improve and update its water management, and NY Gov. Cuomo has [announced](#) the intention to develop what they hope will be “the Silicon Valley of wastewater technology.” Until the [Steve Jobs of wastewater](#) comes along, [clams](#) out there in Long Island's Great South Bay remain at risk. If all else fails – water management can't be fixed and nitrogen pollution can't get under control – Rob Lowe has [the only answer left](#).

As Toledo learned [last summer](#), it's not just critters in the water that can be harmed by algal blooms. Other Great Lakes cities are [trying to get ahead](#) of the curve, and it's not easy given the aging infrastructure, entrenched cultures of utilities, and the need to integrate stormwater, municipal water supply, and wastewater management (the linked story is definitely worth checking out to see the variety of challenges to overhauling a water system). Unlike many of the world's biggest lakes, at least the Great Lakes are [protected](#) from water mining by their [Compact](#).

Circle of Blue [reports](#) that large lakes around the world are suffering from water management systems that favor near-term industry and agriculture over long-term ecosystem health of the lakes. Therefore, some of the world's biggest lakes are shrinking, warming, and becoming more and more polluted.

## Rare Estuary Restoration Victory in Tampa Bay

Four cheers for [Tampa Bay Watch](#) and [Tampa Bay Estuary Program](#) (because three just isn't enough)! It's hard to compare estuary restoration programs. Each one has its own situation and measures of success, but rarely does a major restoration effort [achieve such a lofty goal](#) as restoring conditions to what they were over sixty years ago. Tampa Bay, measuring their progress in acres of seagrass, has done just that, and it indicates a successful effort that took decades of work and cooperation among environmentalists, industries,

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:

[Water Challenges Showcase](#)

[June 15, 2015](#)

[Propeller Incubator, 4035 Washington Avenue  
New Orleans, LA](#)

[Horizon Initiative Water Committee](#) &  
Louisiana Water Network Meeting

[June 24, 2015](#)

[Garden Study Center, City Park  
New Orleans, LA](#)

## Water jobs:

[President and CEO](#)

[Bureau of Governmental Research  
New Orleans, LA](#)

[Communications Director](#)

[Gulf Restoration Network  
New Orleans, LA](#)

[Policy Director, MD and DC](#)

[Potomac Conservancy  
Silver Spring, MD](#)

[Manager, Coastal Habitat Restoration](#)  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Baton Rouge, LA

[Attorney](#)

[Community Water Center  
Sacramento, CA](#)

[Visiting Scholar](#)

[Sabin Center for Climate Change Law  
Columbia Law School  
New York, NY](#)

# Tulane Institute

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government agencies, and the whole of the basin's residents. Seagrass restoration depends on certain water quality improvements and then brings about other improvements itself, so it works as an indicator of the overall health of the bay. Tampa Bay now has as much seagrass as it did in the 1950s. Of course, a restoration effort's work is never done. Progress will have to be maintained in the coming years, and pressures on the estuary are sure to grow.

### **A Drought in a Country Named For Water?!? What Are the Odds?**

Nicaragua has joined Brazil in suffering a [major water shortage](#) that could have been avoided. In many neighborhoods of the capital Managua (more "agua"), water is only delivered a couple of hours a day in the middle of the night. In the country, wells and streams have dried up, and the walks to find water have grown longer. In an already poor country, the loss of time to these increased treks for water is not only a significant burden on the people lugging 5 gallon buckets, it's a drag on the entire country and causing a food crisis. Whereas Brazil's drought is partially caused by deforestation in the Amazon, Nicaragua's is exacerbated by land degradation that has altered the water systems by keeping water from soaking in to replenish streams and aquifers.

Additionally, Nicaragua is going ahead with its Chinese-backed effort to build a canal to rival the soon-to-be-super-sized Panama Canal. Landowners are concerned about property rights – this being not so long since Sandinistas and land reforms in the 1980s. Costa Rica, Nicaragua's neighbor with an ecotourism reputation worthy of Jurassic Park minus the [running and screaming](#), is [concerned](#) about the environmental impacts from the canal project. They want to know if impacts to the San Juan River that runs along the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border have been studied. So far, the [Ticos](#) haven't gotten any communication back yet, despite the project being controlled by a Chinese Telecom mogul. Who would have thought such problems were possible in a place named for water? In related news, Los Angeles, CA has experienced a severe angel shortage ever since that one Nic Cage and Meg Ryan [movie](#) that you only remember because of the Goo Goo Dolls [song](#).

### **Can Pop Culture Lead the Way on Climate Change and Drought Awareness and Adaptation?**

Think you've got it bad now, California, Nicaragua, and Brazil? Read "Dune!" Want to waste time AND give climate change a thought at the same time? Check out the next Angry Birds game! Think your water distribution system stinks? See "Mad Max: Fury Road" (no, really, if you like action movies, see Mad Max: Fury Road)! But can these and others [shift the conversation](#) (and action) forward on climate change and other issues? At least some people working on water issues are [inspired by "Dune."](#) And maybe some who [see their current situation](#) echoed (and intensified) in the new Mad Max will be spurred on by seeing such a vivid depiction of a dried out dystopia. But [Mad Max 2](#) didn't seem to lead to any change in petroleum use, and despite Gregory Peck's best efforts in [Big Country](#) to make peace between Burl Ives and Charlton Heston, they're still fighting over water out West (and [back East](#)). So how much good [Pharrell Williams](#) and [Matt Damon](#) can do is unclear, but it doesn't mean they shouldn't try. *And, yes, of course, once we run out of our occasional solicitations for songs about water, we'll surely move on to movies about water. Still looking for songs about rain, by the way.*