

TUWaterWays

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

[March 25, 2021](#)

Alfred Brownell Spearheads the West African Human Rights Defender Conference

The Tulane Center for Environmental Law is sponsoring a conference led by a Tulane alum. [Alfred Brownell](#) will be leading a virtual [West African Human Rights Defender Conference](#) to raise awareness of the issues indigenous communities face in the fight against environmental harm. This kind of work is familiar to Alfred, having [fled his home of Liberia](#) under threats of arrest and death due to his efforts to protect the Liberia's tropical forests from destruction at the hands of palm oil conglomerates. He won the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2019, previously served as lead counsel to organizations that represent indigenous people in West Africa, and is currently Yale Law School's Tom & Andi Bernstein Visiting Human Rights Fellow. His passion for environmental issues and compassion for those affected by them make him ideal for such a conference. The conference materials are available in English and French, and each session is capped at 300 attendees, so don't wait to sign up!

Water, Water, Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink

Many Louisianans get their drinking water from aquifers located beneath the ground. Why? Groundwater requires less treatment than surface water to ensure that it is safe for ingestion, and therefore is less expensive to use. However, the state's groundwater is currently in jeopardy. USGS published a report on groundwater in the United States in 2013. Recently, the folks at the Investigative Reporting Workshop and WWNO conducted an [investigation](#) to see where all the groundwater went and traced the cause to overuse and excess pumping by industry. Sixty-one percent of the groundwater is consumed by agriculture, fourteen percent is consumed by other industries, leaving the last twenty-five percent for the public. What's the cause? Lack of regulation. Louisiana has just two commissions that oversee the state's groundwater, and several commission members are facing conflict of interest charges. [How bizarre. How bizarre.](#)

To make matters worse, Louisiana doesn't have a plan to manage and regulate the use of groundwater; property owners can use as much groundwater as they'd like and, despite several reports urging the Legislature to create a water management plan, it's been slow-going. Louisiana has 11 major aquifers and according to the Director of this strange place called the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, there's little telling how much water is in those aquifers. There are fears that the practice is unsustainable; water is being pumped out faster than it can be replenished. Not only that, but excess pumping causes [problems for the aquifers](#)—namely,

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 legal stewardship of water.

Coming up

[ASBPA Coastal Summit](#); March 23-25

[EPA Small Drinking Water Systems Webinar: Disinfection Byproducts Control](#); March 30

[WRDA 2020 Army Corps Implementation Comment Stakeholder Session: Ecosystem Restoration and Nuisance Species Provisions](#); March 30

[WRDA 2020 Army Corps Implementation Comment Stakeholder Session: Water Supply and Hydropower Provisions](#); April 6

[Sinews in the Cypress: From Sustainability to Green Infrastructure](#); April 7

[WRDA 2020 Army Corps Implementation Comment Stakeholder Session: Any Provisions](#); April 13

[ABA 50th Spring Conference on Environmental Law](#); April 27-30

Water jobs:

[Assistant Director For Policy and Assistant Professor in Environmental Policy and Ecology](#); University of Georgia; Athens, GA

[Executive Director](#); Bayou City Waterkeeper; Houston, TX

[Manager of Equity and Resilience Programs](#); Groundwork USA; New York City, NY and Boston, MA

[Director, Sustainable Land Science](#); Conservation International; Arlington, VA

[Associate Research Scientist, Marine Protected Areas and Climate Change](#); Conservation International; Santa Barbara, CA

[Designer/Planner](#); Center for Planning Excellence; Baton Rouge, LA

Multiple Intern Positions with Conservation International: [Geospatial Trainer](#); [Conservation and Sustainable Development](#); [Climate Adaptation Science Intern](#); [Conservation Atlas Intern](#); [Evidence Review of Natural Climate Solutions Intern](#); [Indigenous and Community Lands & Climate Intern](#); [Wildlife Insights Business Development](#)

[New Orleans Policy Manager](#) and [Climate Coordinator](#); Alliance for Affordable Energy; New Orleans, LA

[Senior Staff Attorney](#); San Francisco Baykeeper; San Francisco, CA

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[saltwater intrusion](#). All of this is exacerbated by increasingly frequent hurricanes caused by climate change and [Louisiana's failing infrastructure](#). Despite the imminent threat, the [state is struggling](#) to get legislation together to address it. Many have called for a more aggressive water conservation policy. While the responsibility to oversee groundwater falls under the Department of Natural Resources, its authority is limited, and stronger regulation needs to come from the Legislature. As clean water is becoming scarcer, states find themselves faced with challenges of water management. Make no mistake, the [water wars are coming](#).

Someone Call the Plumber

Nevada's got some groundwater problems, too. The Nevada town of [Fernley](#) is suing the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in an effort to keep its water source. Fernley is a half hour outside Reno, NV and sources its municipal water from groundwater [seeping](#) out from the Truckee Canal. It then uses the seepage to replenish its aquifer. But as mentioned earlier, the water wars are coming, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation decided that allowing the leaks to continue is akin to [throwing away taxpayer money](#). The residents of Fernley might find it beneficial, but the seepage diverts water from farmers and the cracks in the canal have already caused it to [burst in 2008](#) which led to the flooding of almost 600 homes. [Advancement in technology](#) has allowed the Bureau to develop new ways to combat seepage, and they're looking to put it to good use. In its complaint, the town claimed a right to the continue usage of the water under the public use doctrine and that the government failed to consider the harm to the town's water supply if they patch the leaks. But what is this "public use doctrine?" [No one is really sure](#). That includes the Bureau, who has yet to respond to the lawsuit but has stated that Fernley's claim of right to the seepage isn't valid.

[Gotta Catch 'Em All](#)

[Nurdles, not Pokemon](#). The Southern Environmental Law Center has entered into a [settlement](#) with Frontier Logistics for \$1 million for the company's spilling of plastic pellets into the Charleston Harbor. The settlement also requires Frontier to have an independent auditor and a nurdle pollution expert visit its North Charleston facility to recommend methods to prevent future discharge. Despite the settlement, Frontier CEO George Cook maintains that they were not at fault for the nurdle spill. Despite the CEO's protestations, a bill dealing with nurdle pollution has been [introduced](#) at the South Carolina state house. The suit resolution and the bill may both help guide Louisiana in dealing with its own nurdle issues, and at the very least, showing that recovery efforts are possible.