



TUWaterWays

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

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Groundwater Well-ness Check

Tangipahoa Parish's Dutch Lake groundwater well imploded. This week, the [Parish's water district commenced an investigation](#) into what might have caused the underground implosion. Some are [pointing fingers](#) at Air Products, the company conducting seismic testing in the neighboring parish. Air Products has been under scrutiny over its carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) project sited beneath Lake Maurepas, the first CCS project approved in Louisiana. Experts retained by Air Products claim there is no connection between its seismic testing and the cause of the implosion. Investment in CCS projects, fueled by Inflation Reduction Act subsidies, continues to grow amidst public backlash and concerns over the safety of this newer technology. [EPA will soon make a final decision on whether to grant regulatory oversight](#) to Louisiana's Department of Natural Resources to administer the state's CCS program. Whatever the outcome of the Parish's investigation, this latest controversy will certainly [add some spice](#) to the conversation.

In other [groundbreaking](#) Louisiana news, the state's largest (and most expensive) coastal restoration project has officially commenced! On Thursday morning, [state officials broke ground on the Mid Barataria Sediment Diversion!](#) When it is fully operational, which won't be for another five years, the project is expected to build between 20-40 square miles of wetlands in the following 20 years. The state has set aside funding to mitigate damages to commercial fisheries and to address flooding concerns in communities south of the diversion that are outside of the levee system, including [a plan to help save dolphins in Barataria Bay](#).

You Can't [Flush Away](#) Your Problems

At least [57 people fell severely ill after swimming in England's northern coast](#) in the World Triathlon Championship Series. The culprit? High levels of e-coli in the water. This area has already been at the center of disputes over severe problems with England's privatized water system. These water firms, which have been under fire recently, [may now face liability](#) for severe pollution across the country's waterways. A [class action legal claim has been filed](#) against Thames Water, alleging it violated competition law by failing to report discharges of sewage and other pollutants. The number of incidents, among other factors, determines the price a company may charge for water. If successful, households could recoup millions of pounds in penalties from being overcharged for water services. Although this first action is being brought on behalf of Thames' customers, the other companies aren't off the hook. Parallel claims against the other water firms will be brought in the coming months.

The public health risks from sewage contamination are severe. Even if it's not being directly discharged, there are other ways for wastewater to creep into our waterways. An analysis of First Street's new flood risk methodology found that [one-third of U.S. wastewater facilities are at risk from flooding](#). That risk materialized earlier this week in Alaska, where record glacial flooding [wreaked havoc in Juneau](#). The floodwaters [submerged three wastewater pumping stations](#). Luckily, they were not critically damaged and are operational again. But it goes to show that these threats don't just come from major storms and sea level rise.

Amazon's New Plan

To clarify, we aren't referring to the alphabet company's announcement of another Prime Day (though they've surely got some new plan to benefit the whole globe, too). This week, South American leaders convened in Brazil for a summit to set conservation goals for the Amazon Rainforest. The region, which covers roughly 2.5 million square miles, is home to 50 million people in eight countries and [one territory](#). It serves as an important carbon sink, absorbing almost one-fourth of the world's CO₂. [That amount is about 30% less today](#), because of [past policies encouraging deforestation](#). The continued loss of these valuable resources will significantly accelerate global climate change impacts. Conditions are already at a tipping point—the eastern Amazon is [now considered a carbon source](#) due to the amount of carbon being released back into the atmosphere as human activity degrades the rainforest.

At the summit's close, delegates from the [Amazon Cooperative Treaty Organization](#) announced a joint declaration creating an alliance to end deforestation. [Climate activists are skeptical](#), pointing out that the declaration lacks enforceable measures and the nations' failure to set compliance deadlines, leaving countries to pursue their own individual conservation plans. Beyond deforestation, talks at the summit focused on cooperative water management goals, which are important for the region but also, well, everybody. To put this into perspective, the Amazon region [contains roughly 20% of the world's freshwater](#). But these resources have been degraded not only by deforestation practices, but also by widespread intense (and illegal) gold mining. On the bright side, [deforestation rates in Brazil have dropped 66%](#) under Brazil's new president. Yet with all the ongoing efforts to address past harms from the previous presidential administration, [Brazil's legislature recently stripped powers](#) from the country's Indigenous People and Environment ministries. On top of that, a massive gold mining project, which could get the green light, would displace Indigenous communities. It also presents severe threats to the Xingu River, a vital part of the Amazon's watershed.

Coming Up:

Tulane Environmental Law Summit, New Orleans,
February 23 & 24, 2024 (save the date!)

Water jobs:

[Program Director, Southern Aquatic and Coastal Programs](#); National Fish
and Wildlife Foundation; Washington, DC

[Senior Attorney](#); The Nature Conservancy; Remote

[Fisheries Legal Fellow](#); Conservation International; Various Global
Offices



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.

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