

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
May 6, 2022

Doing [What It Takes](#)

Quick, pop quiz. What's the 4th most abundant element in the universe, makes up both the hardest and one of the softest minerals on earth (as well as 20% of the human body), and gets its name from "charcoal"?

And the answer is . . . carbon—something that has been getting a lot of attention these days. Everywhere you turn, there's talk of carbon. [Carbon tax](#). [Carbon capture](#). [Carbon credits](#). To be clear though, all of that refers not to the carbon element, but *carbon dioxide*, which we know is a greenhouse gas. With all the rhetoric being used, it's hard to understand how these things will help us tackle climate change—and it becomes especially hard to distinguish between earnest efforts and superficial successes. When it comes to big businesses, it's no secret that greenwashing is rampant. That was already the case before [the new kid on the block](#), ESG, started strutting through town. But now, as CEOs and Boards of Directors are finding it better for business if they appear to be environmentally responsible, greenwashing is more than likely going to become commonplace (see the [war on straws](#)). [Sixty-eight percent of U.S. executives admit that their companies are guilty of greenwashing](#). According to a survey conducted by Harris Poll, only 36% of executives said their companies had a way to track sustainability efforts, but even then, only 17% of those are using data to optimize and develop the best way to achieve sustainability goals. Despite lacking the tools (or motivation?) to meet their professed climate goals, [many major companies also routinely exaggerate their progress](#). And from a business perspective, why not? As a company, you get to look good, and the customers get to feel like they're making responsible decisions. All without having to spend the money on actual sustainability efforts. Except, people are going to find it hard to spend money when water refuses to be in the right place in the right amount and they're too busy fighting droughts, fires, floods, and storms. You know, [the uzhe](#).

Big [Business may be the poster child](#) for greenwashing, but they're not the only ones. Countries do it, too. With talk of the carbon market percolating through the discussion on climate change, countries want in, whether by selling credits for assets they already own, or revitalization projects for assets that may have fallen to the wayside. [Mangrove forest restoration](#) is one type of these projects. However, an investigation has found that, in many places, reforestation efforts often fall short of their goals. Even if trees are actually being [planted](#), these endeavors may just be another form of greenwashing. For example, as part of their National Greening Programme, the Philippines planned to grow 1.5 million hectares of forest and mangrove, but [an audit revealed that 88% of the program had failed](#),

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:

[Lessons from Maine: Food, Farms and Forever Chemicals — Understanding and Addressing the Harmful Legacy and Ongoing Challenge of PFAS and Agriculture](#); May 18

Water jobs:

[Lead Technology and Innovation Programs](#); Environmental Law Institute; Washington, DC

[Fellowship for Climate Change and Environmental Professionals](#); Atlas Corps; USA

[Policy Officer on Climate Risks and Adaptation Policies](#); Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations; Paris, France

[Colorado Water Center Associate Director](#); Colorado State University; Fort Collins, CO

Expert@ en Derecho Ambiental; American Bar Association; [Honduras](#), [El Salvador](#), and [Guatemala](#)

[Legislative Analyst, Coastal and Flood Resilience](#); Environmental Defense Fund; Washington, DC

[Manager, Resilient Fisheries Policy](#); Environmental Defense Fund; Remote

6325 Freret Street, 1st Floor
New Orleans, LA 70118
504-865-5982

tulanewater.org

TWITTER: [@TulaneWaterLaw](https://twitter.com/TulaneWaterLaw)

partially because the wrong type of mangrove was planted and partially because proper care wasn't given to the seedlings after plantings. Similar issues plague other replanting efforts within the international community because many countries lack the capacity to keep up with the necessary maintenance. The oldest trees are the ones that convert the most carbon dioxide into oxygen, [so the planting of a seedlings doesn't really help if those seedlings can't grow beyond the initial stages of their life cycle](#). Sometimes greenwashing is done in bad faith, but sometimes it's done by accident when good intentions lack good resources and large projects like this can be [hard to handle](#).

[Standing Up to Hurricanes](#)

Speaking of resources, if you want to talk about what's [hip and happenin'](#) in hurricane protection, here's a resource for ya: After some lawsuits, arguments over costs, and a re-release of the Draft EIS, the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain levee project is steadily moving forward. As part of the comment period, which ends May 30, the Army Corps of Engineers will be [holding two public meetings on May 11 and 12](#), which will be conducted via WebEx and streamed on their Facebook page. So, if you have [dreams](#) of making your opinions about the project known, now's the time. And it's a good thing progress is being made because we're about a month away from hurricane season, and with every season comes new trials.

It's going to take more than [hurricane-proof houses](#) to protect us—but it might be a good place to start. These houses were designed to deal with the all the challenges of owning a home in Louisiana. Worried about termites? Pish posh. That won't be an issue anymore! It's a termite-free home. Concerned about flooding? Well, these houses are on pilings with springs that rise and fall in water, which means flooding [can't break](#) the foundation as easily. Thinking about gutters? [Don't need it](#). Curved edges on the roof means the rain rolls right off, and bamboo floors mean no warping. This upcoming season will be the first one for the two houses already built, and you can be sure the folks at the LSU Ag Center, the Building Science Corporation, and the Department of Energy Building America Program will keep a close eye on its performance to see whether it'll help more people come home to intact houses and [carry on](#) with life as normal.

[Groundwater Found Underneath the Surface of Antarctica](#)

Scientists have just detected a huge water reservoir underneath the [West Antarctic ice sheet](#), which may provide insight as to how the glaciers will react to warmer temperatures. Liquid water beneath glaciers is referred to as meltwater, which acts as a lubricant that speeds up the movement of glaciers. While scientists have hypothesized the existence of a groundwater system beneath the ice, no one has mapped it until now. Who knows, [maybe this water also contains probiotics](#). This groundwater system is wedged [between the floating marine ice shelves and bedrock-bound land ice](#) and the balance of these three components is what determines the behavior of the glacier. Knowledge about this groundwater system can help predict glacial behavior, like how much it will contribute to sea level rise. We heard that's a concern some people have nowadays.