

TUWaterWays

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

[September 10, 2021](#)

[Hurricanes Can't Bring Us Down](#)

Welcome folks, to the second "Ida" edition (unfortunately) of Tulane WaterWays! More than a week has passed since Hurricane Ida's landfall, and the cities impacted by the impressive storm are still experiencing the aftermath (hence, this not yet being a "post-Ida" edition). Many of us stayed to weather the storm and many of us evacuated. But no matter which route each chose to take, we are all experiencing some difficulties. Perhaps you stayed and had first-hand experience with the scarcity of many necessities, such as gasoline, running water, and electricity. Perhaps you left and are now returning to a [leaky roof](#) and a fridge infested with mold. One thing's for sure, all of us were waiting for that sweet, sweet [electricity](#). Now, 12 days after, [running water is hard to come by in some places](#) and other places still don't have electricity, despite [Entergy's massive effort](#) to restore power to the region. Add onto this the number of [oil and chemical spills](#) from damaged oil wells and flooded refineries that responders, like the Coast Guard and Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, are still trying to assess. By the way, the number is now at 350. That's right, there were 350 spills (that we currently know of). One of the spills resulted in an oily sheen 11 miles long and, so far, at least 50 oil-coated birds have been found. This comes as a [shock to no one](#), as Louisiana is riddled with [abandoned pipelines and wells](#). Add that to the [hundreds of oil or chemical sites were in Ida's path](#), and *something* was going to go wrong.

There's a saying; we've all heard it, especially around this time: every hurricane is a lesson. And Ida has taught us many of those. Some about the importance of building more storm-and-flood-resistant buildings and [levees](#), and others about just [how vulnerable our tribal communities are](#), especially those without federal recognition. But one of the most important lessons to come of all this is one of just how wonderful our community is at coming together amid hardship. Whether it is the Krewe of Red Beans distributing food and tarping roofs, or Culture Aid NOLA helping to [fill your fridge](#), goods taken down to the Bayou Region one pickup at a time, or the countless restaurants around the city providing free meals, the camaraderie is often a reminder of why we stay.

Still, the decision to stay becomes more and more expensive and difficult with every passing storm, and without significant action by federal, state, and local governments, our coastal communities [may no longer have a choice](#) about whether to [stay or go](#). It just so happens that [FEMA's new policy](#) went into effect August 27. The policy requires homes rebuilt with mitigation grants to be elevated at least 2 feet above the expected height of floodwaters. So, those

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:

[French American Innovation Days on Physical Sciences and Engineering Solutions for the Environment \(FAID Green & Blue\)](#); September 13: Innovations in Energy; September 15: Water and the Environment; September 17: Resilience in the Built Environment

[2021 National Coastal Conference](#); September 28-October 1

[Eighth Biennial University of Florida Water Institute Symposium Abstract Deadline](#); October 6

[The Seminar Group: Coastal Law in Louisiana](#); October 21-22

Water jobs:

[Summer Associate](#) and [Associate Attorney](#); Sher Edling LLP; San Francisco, CA

[TMDL and Water Quality Improvement Lead](#); State of Washington Water Quality Program; Lacey, WA

[Program Operations Associate](#); The Ocean Foundation; Washington, DC

[Senior Attorney, Fossil Fuels Program](#); Earthjustice; New Orleans or Texas

[Senior Manager, Environmental Policy \(EMEA\)](#); Amazon; Brussels, Belgium

Louisiana Bucket Brigade; [Campaign Director](#), New Orleans, LA; [Economic Development Manager](#), River Parishes, LA; [Liquefied Natural Gas Campaign Coordinator](#), Lake Charles, LA

[Staff Attorney](#); Great Rivers Environmental Law Center; St. Louis, MO

Sierra Club; [Gas Exports Campaign Representative](#), New Orleans/Gulf Coast, LA; [National Distributed Organizing Representative](#), LA/TX/DC.

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who do choose to stay may have homes that can better withstand floods. But every solution comes with its own set of problems, and elevated homes come with accessibility and wind concerns.

A Tale of Two Parishes

Ida has been compared to Katrina before, during, and after its impact. There are comparisons about its size and strength, its trajectory, and the date of its occurrence. One thing is for sure, however; unlike [during Katrina](#), the levees held. Leading up to Ida's landfall, the Army Corps of Engineers reassured nervous Louisianians that the levees would be able to withstand the storm surge. This may have mattered for those within levee protection, but for residents in areas located outside the levee system, it did little to assuage fears. Indeed, Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes experienced a deluge while the leveed parts of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish remained relatively dry. Talk about a dichotomy (it seems unclear at this point what effect on flooding the federally-approved-but-not-funded [Morganza-to-the-Gulf](#) levee system had in its current iteration and would have had in its originally-envisioned scope). With grand action required to protect everyone and little funding to go around (what else is new?), government officials are grappling with the dilemma of deciding whether to build better protection for those smaller coastal communities or admitting defeat and letting them go. Coastal projects, like the [Mid-Barataria Diversion](#), can delay our journey to the precipice, but won't halt it forever. We are certainly more prepared than we were 16 years ago. The question is whether that will be enough. Heavy is the head that wears the crown.

But at the moment, in the present, whether you're seeking resources or would like to provide assistance, here are some lists for resources in [Baton Rouge](#), [Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes](#), [New Orleans](#), [Jefferson Parish](#), and [Plaquemines Parish](#). If you're looking to help, here are some organizations doing some [great work](#).

Climate Change Exhibit No.2

Hurricane Ida was a force to be reckoned with, and not just in Louisiana. Not spent after the damage it did down south, the storm made its way up to New York and New Jersey. Up in the northeast, Ida hit as the [deadliest storm since Hurricane Sandy](#) and caused massive flooding and as it moved through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, which resulted in a situation not dissimilar to the flood scene in *Parasite* (too intense to link to); [six to ten inches of rain](#) in a few hours for an area that experiences 40 inches annually is nothing to scoff at. In fact, the intense and immediate flooding led to the loss of many lives. The storm crippled New York City's mass transit system and grounded planes, which left many stranded. There's also another layer to all of this.

Many of the resultant deaths were of those who died in their basements. As New York's cost of living becomes ever higher, people are forced to seek residence in basement apartments that don't meet building codes. The ones forced to do so are usually the ones who are especially vulnerable in these environmental crises—immigrants, poor, minorities, and oftentimes all-of-the-above. A list of resources and ways to help can be found [here](#).

President Biden has issued federal disaster declarations for New Jersey and parts of New York, releasing much-needed funds for recovery efforts. Surely, questions will be raised as to how to prepare infrastructure to deal with these increasingly erratic forces of nature. Not only that, but northeastern states may find themselves considering and getting used to evacuations. One in three Americans experienced a weather disaster this year, and [multiple scientists have connected](#) them to climate change. If you didn't believe in climate change before, it's time to take off the tinfoil hat.