

TUWaterWays

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

[October 23, 2020](#)

[What is a Subcabinet, Anyways? Is it Like a Subcompact?](#)

Last week, President Trump signed a broad-ranging [executive order](#) to create an Interagency Water Subcabinet. This subcabinet will be headed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Administrator of the EPA and is intended to focus on federal coordination of water issues. The order instructs the subcabinet to, among other things, address increasing water storage in the west, restoring the Everglades, and implementing the latest work of the Great Lakes Region Initiative that was started under the previous administration. Interior and EPA apparently spent the first week after the order was signed getting together and fleshing out this subcabinet; they have since [named its designees](#).

So why hasn't this news been greeted with more [fanfare](#) and [hubbub](#)? After all, we're the shop that just last year published [a paper](#) that called for a federal water czar. Wouldn't this be a step in that direction? Well, the [skepticism](#) is pretty well-earned. The cited areas of emphasis just happen to be in battleground states in an election just a few weeks out from when the subcabinet was announced and about four years after the President promised getting more water to Western farmers on the last campaign trail. His interest along those lines so far has only yielded [a couple of memoranda](#) intended to move water away from the environment and into a system that his Secretary of the Interior previously worked for. The White House has previously proposed cutting the entire budget for the Great Lakes Region Initiative. They also proposed slashing the budget for Everglades restoration. The order also calls for the subcabinet to enhance "coordination among the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force partners to support State implementation of nutrient reduction strategies[.]" Pretty weak sauce, especially considering they're also pushing to [revive](#) the [Yazoo Pumps project](#) that would increase nutrient runoff into the river, even though that project was vetoed under the George W. Bush administration. (As an aside, you can read the Army Corps' new Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement [here](#)). Skeptics probably wouldn't agree that it's purely coincidence that it's a pet project of one of the subcabinet's designees. Also, [gutting NEPA](#) and [not enforcing](#) the Clean Water Act seems like a funny way to carry out the stated purpose of this executive order: to ensure the "[a]bundant, safe, and reliable supplies of water [that] are critical to quality of life for all Americans," but maybe the skepticism is misplaced and this is a new leaf for the president. After all, [one of these things – I say – one of these things has GOT to be a chicken](#), right?

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:

[Drinking Water Webinar: Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts](#); October 27

[Health Effects Associated with Harmful Algal Blooms and Algal Toxins](#); October 28

[CPEX Virtual Growth Summit: Relapse or Resilience: Healthy Community Design](#); November 5

[AWWA: Swan International Smart Water Symposium](#); Virtual/Denver, CO; November 10-11

[Property Values and Water Quality: Supporting Decisions with the Hedonic Model](#); November 18

[Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation: Water Law Institute](#); November 19

Water jobs:

[Water Rights and Instream Flow Specialist](#); Montana Dept. of Fish Wildlife and Parks; Helena, MT

[Programme Associate](#); Global Water Partnership; Stockholm, Sweden

[Associate Attorney](#); Earthjustice; Seattle, WA

[Staff Attorney](#); Delaware Riverkeeper Network; Bristol, PA

[Senior Specialist \(Water Stewardship\)](#); Gap, Inc.; San Francisco, CA

[Hydraulics and Hydrology Lead](#); Dewberry; Raleigh, N.C.

[Great Lakes Equity and Justice Partnerships Senior Coordinator](#); National Wildlife Federation; Chicago, IL

[Surface Water Storage Fellowship](#); EPA; Cincinnati, OH

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Does The Mist Make [That Mountain Hop](#)?

Mountains. What's their deal? I mean, we know that plates move around and [slowly \(oh, so slowly\)](#) collide, pushing rock up into the sky. As the tectonics move the land up, erosion wears it away, shaping it into mountains. However, it turns out that when scientists have tried to find actual evidence of [what everyone already knows](#), it's been hard to find the correlation between precipitation and mountain erosion. Well, some scientists at the University of Bristol [came up with a new technique](#) to measure [mountains movement in response to rain](#). They studied rare elements created by cosmic radiation and used a whole bunch of words that are sure to show up in the [Marvel Cinematic Universe – Phase 9](#). It turns out that when neutrons bombarding earth from outer space hit an Oxygen-16 or Silicon-28 nucleus in quartz sand grains, it creates the rare element of Beryllium-10. But you already knew that, didn't you? Well, if you combine that knowledge with precisely dated and mapped grains of sand in Bhutan, the rate of cosmic radiation, precipitation data, and elevation data into some super sophisticated model, you isolate the relationship between precipitation and erosion to show how rain, [like love](#), can move mountains.