

# TUWaterWays

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

April 26, 2016

## **The Senate is Taking Care of its Water Business. Or Not.**

Busy times on the US Senate water beat these days. The Environment and Public Works Committee has got a [draft WRDA bill](#) up and going. The Institute will be taking a closer look at it soon, but beyond the usual Corps marching orders for navigation and restoration projects, it does include language for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, including a package to support Flint and other cities with lead in their water. EPW Chair Sen. Inhofe (R-OK) says it has “a lot of ingredients... almost like the highway bill.” These WRDA bills are supposed to happen every two years, but 2014’s was only the second since 2000. So make assumptions about it being passed at your own risk.

Additionally, the Senate is adding amendments to the [Energy and Water Development appropriations bill](#) to steer increased funding to the Army Corps of Engineers (after the Obama administration proposed cutting their budget by \$1.4 billion) and to Lake Mead. As of now, it’s unclear how steering money to the lake will steer water there.

Elsewhere in the Senate, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) water battle is holding up the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations [bill](#). Why might the country’s [most endangered river](#) stop funding for the Commerce and Justice departments? Because senators from Alabama and Florida are moving to insert language to aid in their [water fight](#) with Georgia. They tried to insert similar language last fall and almost derailed the Energy-Water spending bill last year until the language was thrown out. So, not only does the twenty-five year battle and current Supreme Court case currently affect the three states, but it’s starting to bleed over to the rest of the country. This hasn’t happened since the [heyday of Alan Jackson](#).

## **Las Vegas Ignores Wesley Snipes’ [Advice](#). Bets on Water, Instead**

We’ve known for a while that Las Vegas values water conservation probably more than any other city. It has to. It keeps growing but still gets only four inches of rain a year and sources its water from a lake that’s half empty (Mead). The region is now trying to [leverage that water conservation](#) to spur job creation at a new water technology incubator, WaterStart. The most notable aspect of the arrangement might be that innovators get to work with the Southern Nevada Water Authority to test their work. No word yet on

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 stewardship of water.

## Coming up:

[River Rally](#)

Mobile, AL

May 20-23, 2016

[State of the Coast 2016](#)

New Orleans, LA

June 1-3, 2016

[RAE/The Coastal Society Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration](#)

New Orleans, LA

December 10-15, 2016

## Water jobs:

[Staff Attorney](#)

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

[Clean Water Advocate](#)

Environment America

**Tulane Institute**  
on Water Resources Law & Policy

6325 Freret Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

New Orleans, LA 70118

504-865-5982

[tulanewater.org](http://tulanewater.org)

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

whether or not they'll be able to get eBay's founder, boxer Floyd Mayweather, Jr., or the Sultan of Brunei's brother [on board](#). Vegas problems, am I right?

### **Water: Not Just a Solid, Liquid, or Gas Anymore**

We all learned in grade school that there are three states of matter, right? Well, it seems that with water, in a very specific circumstance, ignores that rule. There's this thing called [quantum tunneling](#). Near as we can tell, in quantum mechanics, where matter is like both waves and particles, sometimes matter tunnels through a barrier it shouldn't be able to get through. This has applications in stuff like quantum computing and nuclear fusion. Well, according to a [new study](#), it seems as though water molecules, when they're in super-duper small spaces like within minerals, do quantum tunneling differently than other matter. So, they're [calling it a new state](#) for the water molecule. What this all means going forward is unclear, but it's cool to know that if you've got an emerald or aquamarine ring, there are water molecules inside there doing things that would blow your middle school science teacher's mind.

### **Chinese Water Woes Seem to be a Zero Sum Game**

The Chinese government, as it is wont to do, has undertaken multiple massive water infrastructure projects to address its growing water needs and uneven water distribution. The [South-North Water Transfer Project](#) and the [damming of the Yangtze](#) are probably the most prominent, but they're far from the only ones and may be just [trading one problem for another](#). Hundreds of cities, like Lintao, have water shortages that affect the poor and rich alike. Overdrawn streams and aquifers are dropping around the country and leaving some farmers high and dry ([sorry, had to](#)). As one hydrologist points out, China has 20 percent of the world's population, but only 7 percent of the world's fresh water. It might be that moving water around isn't going to be enough. Expanded [desalination](#) is already underway, too. Will China try to conserve its way out of these problems? Or will its propensity to throw money at the situation persist with attempts to import fresh water from neighbors?