

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
March 29, 2017

[You Don't Miss Your Water...Until Your City Runs Dry](#)

The countdown is on in Cape Town, South Africa, where city officials estimate the current water [supply](#) is only enough for another 100 days. Reservoirs are only about ¼ full and that number is fast declining. The city's response has been to impose water restrictions and post the names of offenders to the public, relying on neighbors to shame one another into conservation. Use has dropped by about 27% but that's still unsustainable at current levels. As reservoir levels continue to decline, more severe [restrictions](#) might have to be implemented.

Cape Town is the legislative capital of South Africa and home to an estimated 4 million people. It's a world-class tourist destination that frequently on lists of the [best places](#) to visit. On the other hand, it's also a city wracked with massive economic inequality. Expensive solutions like desalination plants are hard to justify when many citizens lack running water and sanitation. Wastewater recycling has the [potential](#) to take some of the stress of the system, but the city requires a lengthy assessment process before new water infrastructure can be built. At this rate, the city's supply will run out in June, precisely when the first winter rains show up. If those rains are late or light, things could go from bad to worse in a hurry. (If you're thinking "haven't I heard this before?" Yes, in Sao Paulo, Islamabad, and other major cities around the world. These really are [trying times](#).)

[There's a Storm Coming](#)

Things are heating up along the Gulf of Mexico, and we're not just talking about the [FloraBama's](#) Annual Mullet Toss. The world's tenth largest water body has been abnormally hot of late; for the first time on record, temperatures in the Gulf [didn't dip below 73 degrees](#) all winter. This unprecedented warmth spurred record winter highs from Brownsville to Boca Raton. New Orleans and Baton Rouge both had their hottest Februaries on record and in Miami, over 75% of the days this winter eclipsed the 80-degree mark.

"So what?" you say, "More time to work on my tan!" Not so fast, [George Hamilton](#). Studies show a correlation between steaming Gulf waters and an uptick in [severe](#) spring weather across the Southern and Central United States. This means more frequent and intense thunderstorms and tornadoes. While warm, wet air is only one ingredient of spring ["supercells"](#), the abundance of moisture from the Gulf could

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:

[Mississippi River Commission High-Water Inspection Trip](#)

Hickman, Memphis, Greenville, Baton Rouge

April 3-7, 2017

[New Water Music](#)

New Orleans, LA

April 8, 2017

Water jobs:

[Project Specialist \(Enviro. Initiatives \(Temp\)\)](#)

World Economic Forum

Geneva, Switzerland

[Assoc. VP for Water and Sustainability](#)

Fresno State University

Fresno, CA

[Advocacy Director](#)

Neponset River Watershed Association

Canton, MA

[Program Director \(Climate Resilience\)](#)

Sonoran Institute

Phoenix, AZ

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fuel particularly nasty weather from March to late May. Thankfully, for coastal Louisiana, higher winter temperatures haven't been shown to increase activity in hurricane season (though they also haven't been linked to a *decrease* in hurricanes either).

Is That a Threat?

The election of Donald Trump left many environmentalists understandably concerned about America's commitment to global efforts to curb climate change. Prior his campaign, Trump called global warming a [hoax](#) "created by and for the Chinese" in order to weaken American industry. Fears about Trump's unwillingness to address climate change were largely [confirmed](#) earlier this month when the President's budget proposal eviscerated spending on climate change because the administration considers it a [waste](#) of money. His words and actions are in line with what [many](#) Republicans have been saying for years, that the science linking man-made carbon emissions and higher temperatures is by no means settled and actions to address climate change hurt the economy. [Hence](#), this week's [executive order](#). Some GOP members, however, are bucking the denial trend and taking political cover in a nearly unassailable harbor: the military.

It's one thing to cast [aspersions](#) on the findings of "[eggheads](#)" in their "[science laboratories](#)" who [overwhelmingly](#) conclude that anthropogenic carbon emissions are increasing global temperatures. It's a horse of a [different](#) color to deny the findings of [numerous](#) studies by the Department of Defense that state not only that climate change is real, but that it poses a legitimate threat to national security. As far back as [2003](#), security analysts have stressed that a warming planet could have far-reaching implications for the military, both at home and abroad. Officials warned that extreme weather could ignite or exacerbate conflicts over water resources. Rising sea levels will force military installations in coastal areas to adapt or [move](#), and any geographic realignments will require attendant shifts in strategy. Secretary of State John [Kerry](#) went so far as to call it one of the single greatest threats to national security. All this focus on global-warming-as-threat has provided an avenue for [some](#) Republicans, [including](#) current Secretary of Defense James Mattis, to call for meaningful action to combat climate change. Environmentalists hope the common enemy of carbon emissions will convince more conservatives to cross the aisle. Maybe it has even started. Seventeen Republican House Members have introduced a bill ([H.Res. 195](#)) calling attention to the importance of keeping climate change adaptation on the table, partly in the name of national security. This ride is not over yet. All this can't help but bring to mind the [latest viral elephant news](#). It's gotta be a metaphor for something, but what, exactly, that turns out to be is the scary part.

[Bring Out Your Dead \(Christmas Trees\)!](#)

Spring has [sprung](#)! It is a time of rebirth, new beginnings, and verdant possibility. In that spirit, the City of New Orleans, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Louisiana Army National Guard are breathing new life into leftovers from the (other) [most wonderful time of the year](#). The annual Christmas Tree Recycling Program drops bundles of old Douglas firs, scotch pines, blue spruces, and other species into Louisiana's wetlands where they slow water movement and increase sediment retention. As the trees decay, they provide nutrients for the plants that take root in the sediment that builds around the bundles. The [drop](#) took place last week as helicopters placed thousands of trees in Bayou Sauvage. And the old becomes new, the seasons [go round and round](#), and somewhere, [Mufasa is smiling](#).