

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
January 13, 2022

A Toast to the Coast

If the start of [Carnival season](#) last Friday didn't have you excited enough, it also marked the release of the [2023 Coastal Master Plan](#)! Well, it's only a draft and has to go through a round of public hearings and a vote from the legislature before becoming the [official plan](#). But the final version will closely resemble what we have before us. This latest iteration builds off previous plans with new equity metrics, updated sea-level and storm modelling, and [this interactive data viewer](#). The same uncertainties, like funding sources and sediment availability, still loom in the background.

In addition, the 2023 plan has a renewed emphasis on nonstructural risk reduction measures in coastal communities. While large scale infrastructure projects and marsh creation are essential components, more individualized mitigation efforts, such as home elevation and flood proofing, are needed to support those with close proximity to the coastal crisis. According to the [Census Bureau's annual household pulse survey](#), Louisiana ranked [number one](#) among states for natural disaster displacement. It's critical to ensure timely implementation of risk reduction projects as hurricane predictions get worse with each passing year.

So, with all that in mind, help yourself to a slice of king cake and start reading the Draft Coastal Master Plan—[public comments are due by March 25th](#).

Still searching for a new year's resolution? How about groundwater management!

Sure, groundwater has at times been considered "too occult" to be understood much less managed, but new Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs [ain't superstitious](#) and is willing to give it a try. Arizona has been one of the hardest hit states in terms of water scarcity. Within a few days of getting sworn in, [Governor Hobbs established a Water Policy Council](#) to review and update Arizona's groundwater management law. As the realities of the severe groundwater shortage come to light, state planners are halting new residential construction until [developers find new water sources](#). You could say it's...[a rest in development](#).

Meanwhile, the [Colorado River Indian Tribes obtained authority to lease river water](#) in Arizona. The tribe ("Colorado River Indian Tribes" is the name of one tribe) has considerable usage rights of the Colorado River but historically lacked the infrastructure to divert its full allowance. Now, with the power to lease, the tribe plans to invest in housing and education on the reservation with revenue from future water customers. It also committed to leaving water in Lake Mead,

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:

Tulane Environmental and Energy Law Summit; March 17-18; New Orleans, LA

[Blue Carbon Law Symposium](#); May 17-18; Athens, GA

[2023 State of the Coast Conference](#); May 31-June 2; New Orleans, LA; [Proposal Submission Deadline](#), January 17

Water jobs:

[Communications Director](#); Healthy Gulf; Multiple Locations

[Assistant Professor of Marine Affairs: Fisheries Management and Policy](#); University of Rhode Island; Kingston, RI

[Restoration Programs Director](#); Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; New Orleans, LA

[Regional Watershed Coordinator](#); Capitol Region Planning Commission; Baton Rouge, LA

[Water Quality Technician](#); Pontchartrain Conservancy; Metairie, LA

[Associate Attorney, Senior Attorney, and Paralegal](#); Earthjustice; Multiple Locations

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which comes as refreshing change from the constant warnings that [major lakes and reservoirs are running dry](#).

There might be some relief down south. A [recent study](#) of groundwater resources found that the [U.S. and Mexico share not 11, but 72 groundwater basins](#) in the Borderlands. That's a lot of [deep water!](#) As you've probably heard us say before, water doesn't follow political borders. While the discovery of more groundwater is a good thing, there's no legal framework to manage it or apportion ownership between the countries. It's hard enough to manage these resources between our own states. Maybe the new year will bring new ideas.

Let the river...flood?

Recent storms on the West Coast have wreaked havoc on Californians. Referred to as [atmospheric rivers](#), these weather phenomena bring heavy precipitation and winds when they make landfall. In the past, most dams and levees in California were constructed to store water and prevent overflowing. However, [restraining rivers](#) has prevented potential beneficial uses of excess water. Now, a different approach is being considered—[give rivers more room to flood](#) (safely, that is). This would allow for more [stormwater to percolate and recharge aquifers](#), increasing reserves for the drought seasons to come. But that sort of policy comes with its own unique set of challenges, primarily the acquisition of land from private property owners. If there's any sort of silver lining, it's that [snowpack levels in the Sierra Nevada](#) are twice as high as normal years. Melted snow from these snowpacks account for about 30% of the state's annual drinking water supply. It's not enough to end a drought but will certainly provide short-term relief [after the storm](#) passes. Here's to hoping they make the most of this opportunity before, it like water, [goes down the drain](#).