



# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy  
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## Who Watches the Watchmen?

The age-old question, “Who watches the Watchmen?” comes to mind when the country’s environmental watchdog is failing to do the watching. In a [recent interview](#), [former EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator Stacey Geis](#) told Federal News Network that of all the facilities with permits to pollute the environment, 25% are out of compliance with either their permit conditions or other federal environmental regulations. According to Geis, despite the alarming uptick in non-compliance, environmental enforcement is down from approximately 6,000 cases a year during the Bush administration to about 1,800 cases in 2024. Both the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) have experienced personnel cuts during the current administration’s downsizing effort, which saw nearly 4,000 employees from each agency separated in 2025 alone. The [Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality \(LDEQ\) also saw cuts of approximately 26% to its budget](#), and the quoted [Environmental Integrity Project report](#) revealed that over half of the U.S. states had “cut budgets and nearly two-thirds reduced departmental staffing.” And—to add insult to injury—it would seem that despite the best intentions of the remaining staff, the remaining watchmen are asleep at their posts or just overwhelmed by the firehose.

In a year that saw major environmental disasters in Louisiana, such as [toxic discharges from the Atlantic Alumina \(Atalco\) facility into the Mississippi River](#) and the [explosion at Smitty’s Supply that discharged a toxic mix of petrochemicals into the Tangipahoa River](#), a lax enforcement regime has emboldened polluters and created a culture of complacency around environmental protection. The federal government has [pulled a vanishing act](#) with respect to most environmental issues, only reappearing when the damage is substantial and highly visible. With federal enforcement down, states are left to fill the gap, but as Geis aptly pointed out, “you need to have a state that actually is putting resources [toward] and prioritizing environmental enforcement in their state.” In the meantime, tens of millions of Americans can’t drink the tap water in their local communities, our rivers and streams are once again dumping grounds for chemicals and heavy metals—among other nasty things—and [losing their biodiversity](#), and the states have been left holding the bag while the federal government takes a step back.

All these things leave us asking, “What do we do when the watchmen stop looking out for us?” When we depend on our environmental watchdog to secure our environment for us and future generations, we need it to fulfill that role, and when it isn’t doing that, we need to remind it who’s boss. Or [get a new dog](#)?

## [Oops, we did it again! Thirsty Data Centers and Their Many Splendored Water Use](#)

It wouldn’t be a normal week at the Institute without talk of AI data center water use! This time, however, it is refreshing to promote a blawg post by a former student research assistant, Alyse Coakley, who wrote about the water impacts of data centers in the context of Mississippi River states. She highlights the need to consider indirect, offsite water impacts from things like energy and chip manufacturing, which aren’t often discussed, but they are every bit as

important as the direct impacts of AI data centers on our watersheds, even when they're [so hard to calculate](#). You can read more [in the blawg post](#)!

## Don't Hang the DJ, Send in Your Water Songs for 2025 Instead!

Embracing the festive season, we continue the time-honored tradition of compiling a playlist of water-themed songs that have either been released or achieved popularity over the last year. If you've come across a water banger, or any water-themed song, for that matter, send it our way! Chris is just dying to play DJ again, and who are we to deprive him? Send your submissions his way at [cdalbom@tulane.edu](mailto:cdalbom@tulane.edu), and you'll make Chris a happy man! Besides going to [giving.tulane.edu/waterlaw](http://giving.tulane.edu/waterlaw) (and don't forget to fill in the "selected designations" line!), it's the best gift you could give the guy!

### Coming Up:

[Environmental Law & Policy Summit](#)  
Tulane University Law School; New Orleans, LA; March 5–  
7, 2026

[Coastal Law CLE](#)  
May 7 & 8, 2026; New Orleans, LA

### Water jobs:

[Staff Attorney](#), Surfrider Foundation; San Clemente, CA  
(remote/hybrid)

[Deputy Director of Water Resources](#); City of San José, CA

[Senior Watershed Scientist](#), America's Watershed Initiative; Mississippi  
River Basin (Remote)



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.

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