

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
July 19, 2018

Yo, Stormwater in the House

The [U.S. House of Representatives](#) that is, where stormwater is in this season. While others are just talking about the weather, members of the House are talking and voting about it, well about stormwater and flooding anyway. Case in point, House Bills 3906 and 5846. The first bill ([HR 3906](#)) would direct EPA to create the Stormwater Infrastructure Funding Task Force to survey the federal, state, local and private options funding stormwater projects and report back in 18 months so Congress. If that does not induce stormwater to be better behaved, it just might face the possibility of another study resolution or maybe even another [Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy white paper](#). [Take that](#), stormwater! The second bill ([HR 5846](#)), the Promoting Flood Risk Mitigation Act, would direct the Comptroller General of the U.S. study the efficiency of buyout and nonstructural flood protection programs with an aim toward reducing repetitive flooding losses. That report would be due back to Congress in one year. All of this assumes the Senate and the President go along (until then, [these are just bills](#)) with this but at the least there seems to be [agreement in the House](#) that the Comptroller apparently works faster than the EPA Administrator.

Buffering, Buffering, Buffering

The sea—and [its creatures](#)-- has wreaked havoc on communications for a long time but [now comes word](#) that sea level rise could mess with web surfing and instagramming and hence with the survival of human society. This threat is spelled out in a [new paper](#) published via the [Applied Network Research Workshop 2018](#). Apparently our virtual lives still depend on wires, cables, and power stations that were not designed to be underwater, much less salt water. Who knew? So as seas rise all of that stuff could go on the fritz. How much and where? The paper suggests that within 15 years about 4,000 miles of cables and such all the U.S. coast could be in trouble. To be sure there are fixes to problems like this, sort of like there are a leaky roof, but both require [actually fixing things](#) before the water comes.

But How Will Jamaicans See Clearly?

Jamaica knows rain. Home to one world renowned expert on [rainfall](#), the risks of [falling in the rain](#), and even [rainbows](#), can anyone be surprised that Jamaicans might be keen about rain-harvesting as a means of stemming water shortages following hurricanes, power outages, or just when the [pressure drops](#)? We doubt it, but it is still worth checking in. When public water supplies go down, it is more than momentary inconvenience, especially if you are on a remote island. Pollutants can creep in, delivery systems be off-line for

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:

[World Water Week](#)

August 26-31, 2018

Stockholm, Sweden

Water jobs:

[Proposal Writer](#)

Global Water Partnership
Stockholm, Sweden

[Utility Services Manager](#)

Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

[Attorney – Water](#)

City of Houston
Toledo, OH (Just kidding. It's Houston, TX)

[State Water Projects Bureau Chief](#)

Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Helena, MT

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months, and the costs of stocking and distributing bottled water can be crushers. So, if things go according to plan for researchers at Syracuse University, [Jamaica will soon be encouraging residents and businesses to collect and store rainwater](#) for use in those hard times. These are not [your grandpa's cisterns](#) or even those rain barrels you find at Home Depot. These systems can hold hundreds to hundreds of thousands of gallons of water and deliver water through a filtration system to make it safe to drink and share. Truth be told, rain harvesting is anything but a new idea, but in a world with fragile infrastructure and growing risks it still can be a good one.

The Poseidon Adventure

Harvesting rain may be a fine idea, but what if you live in place where it does not rain much? Or in a place with complex laws about who gets to use water, a place like Huntington Beach, California? What do you do then to shore up your water supply? If you work for [Poseidon Water](#), you just might propose to build a desalination plant and sell the newly freshened water to thirsty communities and consumers. Which is exactly what they did. And several years and millions of dollars into that proposal, Poseidon hopes to get a new round of permits and customer commitments to move into construction of the estimated \$600 million project. But as decision time approaches for a vote by the Orange County Water District, [questions persist about just how good a deal this going be \(customers will pay more at least in the near term\)](#), the environmental impacts and [whether there are better alternatives](#). The [tension is unbearable](#).