

TUWaterWays

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

[November 20, 2019](#)

[The Tide is High](#)

With nicknames like “City of Water” and “The Floating City,” Venice is clearly no stranger to water, but on November 12 the city experienced an [exceptionally high tide](#), which peaked at 187 centimeters (73.6 inches for [our non-metric system brains](#)) and was accompanied by strong winds. Based on government statistics, the flooding is the worst to strike the city [since 1966](#), when the city was hit by tides up to 194 cm (76.4 inches) high. Tides of 140cm (55 inches) or more are known as “[acqua alta](#)” in Italian, and they typically occur during winter time. As a result of the tide, at least one person died; the city experienced reduced public transportation (a Venetian taxi driver explained that use of the canals is prohibited for safety reasons if the tide exceeds 1.10 centimeters); and the crypt of St. Mark’s Basilica was inundated by corrosive saltwater for just the sixth time in 1,200 years. Additionally, with the Tide Forecasting and Reporting Center of Civil Protection reporting that 45% of the city was flooded on Tuesday, countless other cultural legacies, as well as residences and businesses, have been damaged. In a [tweet](#), Venice’s mayor Luigi Brugnaro, also blamed climate change for the unusually high tides. And, in a karmic twist of fate, the Veneto regional council, which is located on Venice’s Grand Canal, [was flooded for the first time](#) in its history on the night of the high tide a mere two minutes after rejecting measures to combat climate change. [Cue the Radiohead](#).

Among others, Mayor Brugnaro [believes that the damage could have been avoided](#). That is, following the aforementioned 1966 flooding, the Italian government asked engineers to draw up plans to build a barrier at sea to defend the city from flooding. In 2003, construction began on [Mose](#), which is an acronym for “Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico” (try saying that five times fast in your [best Italian accent](#), we expect we’d do about as well as [Brad](#)) or “Experimental Electromechanical Module,” and it refers to the biblical figure Moses who parted the Red Sea to enable the Israelites to flee to safety from Egypt. Mose is designed to have more than 70 massive, yellow underwater gates positioned across the three inlets that separate the Adriatic Sea and the Venetian lagoon. The gates are supposed to rise during high tides to seal off the lagoon.

Though Mose was supposed to be ready for business in 2011, the project is still not complete due to delays, cost overruns, and political corruption. Project engineers say that they will complete Mose by the end of 2021 (albeit with a much higher price tag of 5.5 billion euros (\$6.1 billion) against an original estimate of 1.6 billion euros). Engineering experts are now worried that even once Mose is complete, [it will not be the savior it was designed to be](#). Meaning, a

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:

[Council on Watershed Management Meeting](#)
November 21; Baton Rouge, LA

[ProPublica "Investigating Justice" Series](#)
November 21; New Orleans, LA

Urban Swamp Habitat Planting Events
November [22](#) & [23](#); Akers, LA
December [11](#) & [12](#); Violet, LA

[Water Fall Fest: A Climate Solutions Festival](#)
November 23; New Orleans, LA

[Public Comment Deadline: LA Watershed Initiative’s proposed Action Plan](#); November 29

[Association of Levee Boards of LA Annual Meeting](#)
December 3-4; New Orleans, LA

[Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission Meeting](#)
December 5, 2019; Baton Rouge, LA

[Latoya Ruby Frazier: Flint is Family Exhibit](#)
Now – December 14, 2019; New Orleans, LA

[State of the Coast Early Bird Registration Rate](#)
Now – December 31, 2019

[Tina Freeman: Lamentations Exhibit](#)
Now – March 15, 2020; New Orleans, LA

Water jobs:

[Attorney](#)
State Water Resources Control Bd; Sacramento, CA

[Postdoctoral Fellowship in Climate Change Law](#); The Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University; New York, New York

[Project Associate](#) or [Project Manager](#)
Washington Water Trust; Seattle & Ellensburg, WA (respectively)

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prototype was first tested in the 1980s, and the project was based on drastically outdated projections about how quickly the seas might rise. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [report](#) states that sea levels will rise between 60 cm and 110 cm, or 2 to 3 ½ feet, if gas emissions continue to increase. The consortium that leads the Mose project says the barrier is designed to handle sea level increases up to 60 cm. Thus, Mose has not quite lived up to the biblical proportions of its namesake, but experts say that Mose can at least serve as a stopgap measure, which can buy Venice a few decades while it comes up with other plans.

[Take It to the Limit](#)

According to a recent New York Times [report](#), The Environmental Protection Agency is expanding upon [a previous plan](#) to begin limiting the type of scientific research that the government can use to form public health regulations. Specifically, [a draft expansion proposal](#) from the EPA [calls for scientists to disclose their raw data](#), including confidential medical records, in order for the EPA to consider a study's conclusions. However, health-related scientists are subject to patient privacy restrictions and may not publish such raw data. Why do we care, and why should you care, dear reader? Well, if the EPA proposal moves forward, this is likely to complicate the enactment of clean air and water regulations, which largely rely on studies with such confidential information as personal health disclosures. Moreover, unlike the old version of the plan, the new version would apply retroactively, thus preventing the further use of studies already cited by the EPA that do not comply.

The proposal has been touted by the EPA as a commitment to “science transparency,” and it forms part of the Trump administration's broader goal to limit environmental regulations. As examples of the administration's success in limiting environmental regulations, a September EPA [internal watchdog report](#) stated that the EPA has changed which waters are protected under the Clean Water Act (Ha! There isn't a [WOTUS](#) story this week, but we still managed to mention it); rolled back an Obama-era plan that would have reduced carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants; and proposed a rule that would allow fewer restrictions on hazardous air pollutants. The EPA plans to issue a final rule in 2020. Expect [plenty of pushback](#).

[Dog Days Are Over](#)

With Thanksgiving approaching, the [dog days of summer](#) are long over. However, researchers at the University of Maryland are still thinking about something that happened this summer: what should have been fun [games of waterside fetch](#) between dogs and their owners sadly [turned deadly](#). In response, experts began warning dog owners that the culprit was blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, that can be found in fresh or salt water and contain toxins that can be fatal to dogs within minutes, hours, or days of exposure. In positive news, the Maryland researchers think that there may be a way to prevent the algae, and to keep [man's best friend](#) safe, by placing spent grain (the leftovers after brewers extract sugars needed to make beer) into small ponds. The hypothesis is still being tested, and the researchers warn that adding too much spent barley could actually exacerbate the problem. However, one of the researchers [explained](#) the rationale: “When barley degrades, it releases [] compounds that inhibit some species of algae.” Plus, spent grain is the number one waste product of breweries, and many brewers are willing to give it away for free, so this could prove to be a [win-win](#) situation. One man's trash is ~~another man's treasure~~ another man's best friend's savior.

[Don't Go Chasing Waterfalls; Do Go Check Out Water Fall Fest on November 23](#)

The Greater New Orleans Foundation with its partners the Alliance for Affordable Energy, Urban Conservancy, Water Collaborative, Waterwise Gulf South, and Thrive NOLA are holding the second Water Fall Fest: A Climate Solutions Festival. Water Fall Fest will be a free family-friendly festival to celebrate the work of organizations building the “living with water” movement and helping fight climate change, which continues to adversely affect our region. It will also connect residents to innovative and practical ways to be part of this movement. Residents will enjoy local music, food, and interactive activities that explore how individuals and communities can adapt to the effects of and mitigate climate change as well as reduce flooding and subsidence. The event is on **Saturday, November 23rd** at the Rosa Keller Library in the Broadmoor Neighborhood in New Orleans. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

[Be Our Guest for the ProPublica “Investigating Justice” Event on November 21](#)

As discussed in a [previous edition of TUWW](#), A new series by ProPublica, The Times-Picayune, and The Advocate is [detailing](#) the state of industrial pollution in Louisiana decades after the passage of pollution control laws and efforts to reduce pollution from the scores of plants along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans – known as “Cancer Alley” or “The Petrochemical Corridor” (depending on where your paycheck comes from). There’s a new boom in industrial expansion in the Gulf Coast fueled by cheap oil and gas coming from the fracking boom. And in Louisiana, where belief that encouraging (and providing tax incentives for) industrial expansion will make the state rich is a political bedrock for both parties, there’s nothing to slow it down. Also, pay no attention to the fact that this industry has been encouraged since the 1950s, and, [last time anyone checked](#), Louisiana is still [decidedly not rich](#).

The reporting so far has focused on air pollution around poor communities like [St. Gabriel](#) and [St. James Parish](#), but veteran reporter Mark Schleifstein [notes](#) that these have a hand in not only air pollution, but water pollution and hazardous waste, as well – and the trend is going the wrong way. Expect more of this reporting in coming months. If you’re interested in learning more, [those handsome devils](#) over at the [Tulane Center for Environmental Law](#), are hosting [an event](#) with the investigative team behind this work at Tulane Law School this **Thursday, November 21st at 5pm**. The event is free and open to the public, so feel free to invite anyone who you think might be interested. For more information and to register, [click here](#).