

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
July 9, 2015

It's a Gusher! Details, Fallout, and Hot Takes Spew Forth in the Wake of the BP Settlement Announcement

A week ago, [the outline of BP's settlement](#) the Federal government and the five Gulf Coast States was announced. So how much is known now? Well, it's [pretty good](#), or it's [terrible](#). The Environmental Law Institute makes [good graphics](#). BP is going to get some [tax breaks](#). Local governments are [reaching their own settlements with BP](#). Watch out [monorails](#) popping up all along the Gulf Coast.

Weed Farms: Thirstier Than a Fanta-less Pothead

Wine is best when the grapes have to put in work. Too much water or too rich soil makes for a lower quality yield. That was the takeaway from that [movie](#) where Professor Snape went to California and met a be-wigged Captain Kirk and his dad, the President from Independence Day, right? Anyway, it appears that might not be true for California's other great psychotropic cash crop, marijuana. Because in states where it is now legal(ish) to grow weed, those farms are sucking up water and burning electricity like crazy.

In Washington, they're [testing sewer water](#) for THC content. Not as some sort of indictment of the legalization of weed. Apparently the THC was always there whether the weed was legal or not. No, they're using sewer water to test the overall use of weed against the reported legal weed sales. One does wonder, though, if wastewater facilities are set up to handle THC extraction or if fish in increasingly weed-friendly states are going to be getting a contact high.

In Colorado, indoor pot farms are using [so much energy](#) the state is scrambling to meet Clean Power Plan requirements. In Denver, almost half of the growth in energy consumption can be traced to marijuana cultivation, and the state is [working with growers](#) to increase their energy efficiency. Those indoor grow operations [can require](#) a lot of water, too – hydroponic operations can use the equivalent of 100 inches of water per year.

And in drought-stricken California? Weed is using up more water than [Tom Selleck's avocados](#)! The latest targets in the California water blame game are the rapidly-growing small farms of California's [Emerald Triangle](#) – it's one kind of agriculture that [Fresno just can't get](#) behind. These farms do pose a [serious threat](#) to endangered salmon where they divert and [pollute streams](#) that already have a reduced flow. Law enforcement officials have begun to [break up](#) these farms, not

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.

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for the weed, but for violating environmental laws and regulations. As marijuana becomes more legitimate and legalized, expect growers to become more regulated, form an industry group, and work Sacramento like they were another soybean growers association. [High Times](#) – the next [Corn Grower Update!](#)

See [this article](#) by Gina Warren for the full spectrum of the weed industry's environmental impacts.

By the Way, California Isn't the Only Place Suffering from Drought

California's drought gets the most press in this country, but it's hardly alone these days. Brazil's drought and [Sao Paulo's](#) shortage continues. [Bangkok](#) is down to a month of water supply. [Puerto Rico](#) is under water rationing. Heat is killing people in [Mumbai](#), and Indian [aquifers](#) are being quickly depleted. [North Korea's](#) rice paddies are drying up. Other places are suffering from explicitly man-made water shortages; water in [Yemen](#) is becoming harder and harder to get, and [ISIS is cutting off water](#) to Iraqi marshes much the same way Saddam Hussein did in the 1990s.