

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources
Law & Policy
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Big Science Part 1: Doubling Down on Sea Level Rise

The trouble with science is that it is always a work in progress. Just when one lesson starts to sink in, along comes another that may well tell you that things are worse than previously thought (feels like it's never better, doesn't it?). Case in point, coastal Louisiana land loss rates.

Anyone paying attention knows that the bottom has been falling out of Louisiana for a long time, with 2 million plus acres of what was once land now being water. There are [a number of reasons for that](#), some natural but many not. So getting a solid handle on what to expect is harder than one might like, especially where sea level is concerned. That's a factor of both how quickly seas are rising and coastal lands are sinking. The news on that front has been bad for a long time, but it just got worse, according to a [paper \(authored by some of our Tulane colleagues\) published in the Journal Ocean Science](#). The gist seems to be that traditional means of measuring water levels and subsidence miss important aspects of shallow soil compaction that can result in under-measuring relative sea level by up to factor of one- half. [The science you need is not always the science you want.](#)

Big Science 2: Hot +Cold = Cool

As just noted, science marches on, fueled by pioneering researchers looking into important questions with [new tools](#) and perspectives. Water science knows no bounds however and there is still room for the [citizen scientist](#) using whatever is at hand to verify what is already pretty well known. In particular, proving that mixing really hot water and really cold air with a day off school or work [equals cool stuff](#) (but, please, dear reader, [be careful](#)).

Back to the Drawing Board, Darling?

Murray-Darling that is, like in the Murray-Darling River in Australia. Most TUWW readers know that there big ecosystem restoration efforts planned or underway for the Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades, and other places including our very own coastal Louisiana. We are hardly alone in needing to revisit how water system and ecosystems are managed. We are also not alone in having our chosen plans challenged by changing conditions and evolving science. Welcome to the South Australia and the \$13 billion Murray-Darling River Basin Plan. That Plan, inked in 2012 was supposed to usher in a new era of balanced water management in severely water stressed region. Now, just 7 years in, the [South Australia Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission is recommend a vast overhaul of the plan](#). The reasons? Wholesale noncompliance and a critical discounting of

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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climate change. It seems that plans work best when they are grounded in reality and are actually implemented as called for. Hmm, could there be a lesson in there? Oh, and by the way, for anyone wondering where global warming has gone during our recent polar vortex, it is living large in Australia, as reported in [last week's TUWW](#).

The Water/Fame/Law Nexus

Water can make or break a person or a relationship whether that is on a continental scale (as we just saw) or a personal one. And it can happen fast as Kelleth Cuthbert reminds us. If you don't recall Ms. Cuthbert, perhaps you will recall her by her nom de guerre "[Fiji Water Girl](#)", she rose to international fame for photobombing the Golden Globe Awards while dispensing Fiji brand water to parched celebrities. [But before she could parlay her fame into fortune she alleges that the folks at Fiji water jump the gun and started using her image in their promotions.](#) As nature's laws require, sabers are being rattled and law suits are being threatened. Also, if you need to find us at [the Hyatt](#), we'll be checked in under the name "Kelleth Cuthbert."