



TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
March 17, 2023

[Rust Never Sleeps](#)

The drumbeat of news about bomb cyclones, [super big hurricanes](#), [atmospheric rivers](#) and such is enough to make a person wonder if we really have things under control, flood-wise speaking. Fortunately, New Orleans doesn't have to worry about that, at least for a long while thanks to the world class engineering and upgrades to the city's flood defenses that came following the disastrous flooding from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Oh sure, it's still not to [the level of protection promised back in the '60s](#). And there were some glitches along the way with the [corrosion-prone materials being used in the temporary pumps installed after the storm , but those were ultimately replaced with corrosive resistant stainless steel pumps](#) and then by state-of-the-art permanent pumps that were expected to last for several decades. Except they haven't, or at least the one on the London Avenue Canal hasn't. It's already showing signs of serious corrosion. Other pumps are now being looked at to see if the problems are systemic or confined to the London Avenue pump station. Whatever the reason, this is a troubling but useful reminder that the things we plan for are not always the things we get. [All too often there's more to the picture than meets the eye. All too often they give you this but you pay that](#). Those were big reasons that New Orleans flooded in 2005, and apparently it still is lesson number one. We hope everybody learns that sooner than later. [Here's looking at you California](#). Good luck.

[Who Lives in a Big Mat Out in the Sea?](#)

Brownblob Algalplants! That's who (or what), and it just might spoil some spring break and summer vacation plans in Florida, the Caribbean, and Mexico. A [massive mat of sargassum is drifting westward in the Atlantic](#) following a winter of unusually high growth. [Sargassum is macroalgae](#) that is common in the mid-Atlantic between Africa and North America (there is a reason it's called the [Sargasso Sea](#)). Normally, sargassum is not only natural but an important part of the ecology of the Atlantic. But over the past decade or so, things haven't been so normal, and the large mats have gotten ever larger (turns out algae likes [warmer waters](#) with [higher nutrient levels](#)). The mats have made landfall in Florida and elsewhere where they can be a major smelly mess. Or as better described in the scientific journal USA Today, it can become a "Huge seaweed blob ... 'like a Stephen King movie.'" Yuck. Aside from being gross, Brownblob Algalplants poses few risks to people unlike its [red-tide](#) cousin, but tell that to people who count on pristine beaches for their livings and peace of mind.

[Maybe Forever isn't Forever](#)

Diamonds 1, PFAS 0? Could it be that only [diamonds are forever](#)? Over the past few years, there have been lots of stories—[including in TUWW](#)—about how perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have become persistent and problematic parts of our lives and environment, especially in our water resources. Deemed "forever chemicals," they were developed to help fight fires, make water bead up on your raincoat, and keep food from sticking to your pans. They did all those things, but those benefits were decidedly short term while the chemicals

themselves stick around for a very long time and cause major pollution and public health risks. This is particularly true when they get into drinking water supplies—which they often do. Until very recently there were no laws dealing with PFAS, but that changed last year. EPA and a [number of states](#) have begun regulating the use of PFAS, and this week [EPA made a major move by announcing rules that will require that drinking water be essentially PFAS free](#). Exactly how that will happen and who will bear the cost is still not clear, but it won't be easy, and according to EPA it will cost [about \\$772 million each year](#). Not everybody is thrilled with the rule, especially water utilities and the chemical industry, which question the cost and the exposure limits, although [some in the industry are already pivoting away from PFAS](#). The rule will be open for public comment for the next 60 days before becoming final.

Feeling Lucky?

The day has finally arrived! No, we're not talking about Saint Patrick's Day. Today and tomorrow marks the fully in-person return of the [Annual Tulane Environmental Law & Policy Summit!](#) We hope to see you at 5:30 this evening for a [keynote speech by Ryan RedCorn](#): artist, comedian, and writer for the FX series *Reservation Dogs*, or at any of the more than a dozen panels happening over the next two days! Forgot to register? Not to worry—come on by anyway! In addition to [good times](#), CLE credit is available. [St. Patrick](#) might try, but he can't top everyone's favorite student-run environmental law conference.

Coming Up:

[28th Annual Tulane Environment Law & Policy Summit](#); March 17-18; New Orleans, LA

[Blue Carbon Law Symposium](#); May 17-18; Athens, GA

[2023 State of the Coast Conference](#); May 31-June 2; New Orleans, LA

Water jobs:

[Coastal Organizer](#); Healthy Gulf; Multiple Locations

[Assistant General Counsel – Water](#); Sandia Resort & Casino; Albuquerque, NM

[Associate Attorney, Senior Attorney, and Paralegal](#); Earthjustice; Multiple Locations

[Legal Fellow](#); Bayou City Waterkeeper; Houston, TX

[Policy and Partnerships Manager](#); Bayou City Waterkeeper; Houston, TX

[Legal Director](#); Orange Country Coastkeeper; Costa Mesa, CA

[Program Director](#); Restore America's Estuaries; Long Island Sound

[Governor's Fellows Program](#); Baton Rouge, LA



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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