

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
[May 8, 2020](#)

PFAS Contamination Issues – The More We Look, The More We See

Funny how that happens. PFAS, aka “forever chemicals” or “Permanent, Forever, Always Stuff”, were put into the world over the past several decades at industrial and military sites, and they’ve wound up in soils, ground water, drinking water, and our bodies. As their carcinogenic nature has become better understood, everyone has started paying more attention to them. Water utilities and producers of PFAS have begun [talks and settlements](#) to help pay to reduce contamination. But this feels like the top of the polluted iceberg. The [Department of Defense PFAS Task Force](#) updated their [progress](#) in March, and 651 sites may have been contaminated. Of course, that number can and almost certainly will climb – this process is expected to [last for decades](#). That might be why the EPA has recently [extended the comment period](#) for determining whether/how to regulate two of these chemicals under the Safe Drinking Water Act. At the time of writing this, there are only 16 comments that have been submitted. It probably makes sense, only so many of us are chemists who might feel like we have an understanding of the thresholds at which these chemicals should be regulated, but we all now have until June 10th to study up on it and [go online right here to comment](#). Without comments filed, challenging any regulation later is more difficult, and perhaps here, unlike with [The-Rule-That-Must-Not-Be-Named](#), our comments, comprising such a large percentage of the total comments, could carry some serious weight.

More Land and Less Rhine in the Rhineland

The Rhine River has been, off and on, at the center of conflicts for the past 2,000 years or so. For the past 65 years, it has been without conflict, but remained the heart of German industry and connection to the rest of the world. Lately, however, that connection is feeling a bit more tenuous. April is usually one of Germany’s wettest months, but last month was [bone dry](#) in some parts of the country. It’s tempting to say, “[isn’t that weird?](#)” but dismiss it as one single outlier of a month. However, this seems to be part of a larger trend. At points in [2018](#) and [2019](#) the Rhine water levels were too low, and shipping on the river was hampered. This dry spring is following Europe’s warmest winter on record and a five-year trend of decreasing groundwater storage. The river’s headwaters in the Swiss Alps are diminishing along with the glaciers, the warmer air can hold more water and allow more evaporation from plants and soils, and this trend might not be going away as long as the Earth’s climate is warming. Not so slowly and somewhat surely, [the German economy’s main conduit to the rest of the world](#) (Yes, hello, the Dutch. [We see you](#). Yes, the connection goes via [Rotterdam](#).) is being cut off.

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 less stewardship of water.

Coming up:

[Teleconference of Scientific Advisory Board re: draft report on EPA’s Proposed Lead and Copper Rule Revisions](#); May 11

[Sharks! New Insights into an Iconic Ocean Predator](#); May 13

[Public Comment Deadline re EPA’s Proposed Science Transparency Rule](#); May 18

[EPA Drinking Water Webinar: Drinking Water Microbes 101](#); May 19

[Wetlands and Disaster Resilience Webinar: Leveraging Ecosystem Services for Community Preparedness](#); May 19

[Public Comment deadline re EPA’s Proposed 2020 NPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated w/ Industrial Activity](#); May 31

Water jobs:

[Legal Intern](#); Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Richmond, VA

[Executive Director, Washington Water Trust](#); Seattle, WA

[Climate Change Lead](#); California State Water Resources Control Board; Sacramento, CA

[André Hoffmann Fellow: Ocean Innovations](#); The World Economic Forum and Stanford University, San Francisco, CA

[Environmental Specialist: Public Relations and Policy Coordinator](#); Department of Environment; San Francisco, CA

[Associate Attorney \(water, environmental and local government law\)](#); Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan; Sacramento, CA

[Water Law Associate Attorney](#); Young Wooldridge, LLP; Bakersfield, CA

[Attorney: Natural Resources & Water Law](#); Fujitani Consulting; Sacramento, CA

[Adjunct Faculty \(Environmental Science and Policy Program\)](#); Johns Hopkins University; Washington, D.C.

[Staff Attorney/Legal Organizer; Legal Internships; Fall Environmental Communications Internships](#); Center for International Environmental Law; Washington, D.C.

[Various Positions & Locations](#); Earthjustice

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Melting Glaciers Matter in Places that Don't Even Have Glaciers?

Algae blooms are an increasing problem around the world from [Biloxi](#) to [Brazil](#). A recent [study](#) has shown a close connection between one algae bloom hotspot, the Arabian Sea, and melting glaciers thousands of miles away in the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau. Initially one might think, “oh with fewer glaciers, there’s less or different water flowing from the mountains through the Indus River into the Arabian Sea. I guess that makes sense.” But, no! Dear interesting reader who thinks interesting thoughts in these most interesting times, it’s more than that. The research has found that the very air carried by monsoon winds from [The Roof of the World](#) is [through being cool](#). Or, at least, it [ain’t as cool as it used to be](#). That cool air, for who knows how many thousands of years, would flow over the Arabian Sea and cool the surface waters. Those waters would then sink and nutrient-rich waters would rise to take its place. Now, [there’s less cooling, less mixing, and an entirely new food chain taking its place](#). Instead of diatoms and phytoplankton at the base of a food web that include many commercial fish species that feed 150 million people, there’s a rise in a microscopic, bioluminescent predatory greenhouse-like organism called [Noctiluca](#) and the jellyfish that feed on them. All of this because global warming is decreasing snow cover thousands of miles away. It’s almost like this entire planet is one big [house or dwelling](#) and it’s all connected into [one big organized whole that’s compounded of its parts](#). [What would you even call that?](#)