

TUWaterWays

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

[July 2, 2021](#)

A [Revival](#) of Bipartisanship for Infrastructure Bills?

Not quite, but we [really hope](#) so in the Senate. This week, the House has [passed](#) the \$715 billion infrastructure bill with [promises](#) of enhancement of water systems across the nation. The bill includes a number of provisions key to President Biden's [American Jobs Plan](#), introduced earlier this year. It allocates \$51 billion to address wastewater systems and enhance green infrastructure waterways protection throughout the U.S. The bill also allocates \$117 billion for drinking water systems improvement, including \$45 billion to replace all lead pipes in the country. [Salvation](#) from lead-poisoned water? That sounds like music to [our](#) ears and to the ears of people all [across the United States](#). In addition to those water provisions, the bill aims to tackle climate change issues by cutting carbon emissions from the transportation sector, specifically through boosting of zero emission vehicles and money for better public transportation systems. These all seem like investments that there's [no need to argue](#) over, but still the bill met widespread Republican opposition with only two Republicans supporting and voting for it. Those two come from districts in New Jersey and Pennsylvania that have been significantly affected by water pollution issues like PFAS and lead contamination. The bill will now be headed to the Senate, where a more bipartisan agreement could be made after Biden's work with bipartisan Senate leadership on another infrastructure bill. So, unfortunately, while we wait for the Senate to come to an agreement, lead contamination will [linger](#) for a bit longer before being [all over](#).

[Here Comes the Flood](#)

While parts of the West are in a historic [drought](#) and [heat wave](#), areas of the Midwest are seeing record amounts of [rain](#) and [flooding](#). In the past week, Detroit experienced a "[500-year flood](#)," meaning a flood event that is only projected to happen once in 500 years. The city, on average, gets about three inches of rain in the entire month of June, and parts of it got about seven inches in just one day. The Midwest is typically thought of as more low-risk for climate change effects compared to areas that have seen an increase in frequency and intensity of hurricanes, wildfires, and sea level rise, but these massive rain and flooding events show that [the region](#) is not immune, and will have to take mitigating actions as well. Better water management and infrastructure is a major part of that, and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department is already [jumping on it](#), constructing \$1.5 billion worth of retention basins, and a project to store 95 billion gallons of water. In addition, the Great Lakes Water Authority will be investing \$175 million in water system

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.

Coming up:

[WHOI: Understanding Human Origins, from the Bottom of the Sea](#); July 2

[Wetland Education Teacher Workshop](#); LDWF Grand Isle Research Lab; July 11-16

[National Marine Educators Conference](#); July 13-17

[EPA Small Drinking Water Systems: Drinking Water Microbes 201](#); July 27

Water jobs:

[Economic Development Manager](#) or [Program Director](#); Louisiana Bucket Brigade; River Parishes, LA and New Orleans, LA

[Assistant or Associate Scientist in Hydrogeology](#); The Jones Center at Ichauway; Newton, GA

[Senior Attorney, Fossil Fuels Program](#); Earthjustice; New Orleans or Texas

[Water Policy Manager](#); Conservancy of Southwest Florida; Naples, FL

[Law Clerk](#); San Francisco Baykeeper; San Francisco, CA

[Senior Policy Advisor, Natural Climate Solutions](#); The Nature Conservancy; Arlington, VA

[Water Policy Advisor](#); Tuvli; Washington, DC

[Senior Manager, Environmental Policy \(EMEA\)](#); Amazon; Brussels, Belgium

[Program Officer – Plastics Initiative](#); The Ocean Foundation; Washington, DC

[Strategic Program Director – Water, Climate Change, and Resilience](#); International Water Management Institute; Colombo, Sri Lanka or other regional office

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improvements over the next five years. Cities plagued by these floods are hopeful that the aforementioned infrastructure bill's water system improvement investments will include them.

Is Climate Change Related to Catastrophic Collapses?

After the tragic partial collapse of a condo building in South Florida, many questions will remain unanswered until a full evaluation of what happened can be done. One of those questions is whether [climate change and sea level rise](#) are to blame for the disaster. While a final conclusion is still a way off, scientists do believe that sea level rise and subsidence cause conditions making such an event more possible, but that is certainly not the only factor at play here. It is not likely that we will see an uptick in building collapses in the near future – this particular building had structural problems that were previously identified. Sea level rise and subsidence causing saltwater intrusion can be particularly damaging to porous limestone land, which is what the foundation of the partially collapsed building stands on. This is not only a problem that Florida faces, and the disaster has sparked an increase in awareness for the need to better study and manage subsidence and flooding in [other states](#) as well. This could also lead to a funding problem, as more states are competing for funds to conduct those studies and implement mitigation measures.

[Great Gadget in the Sky](#)

Fun new study alert! NASA is utilizing airborne and field measurements to conduct a new study, [Delta-X](#), on water flow and its relationship to deltas and wetlands in Louisiana. It specifically analyzes the Atchafalaya Basin, which is attached to the Mississippi River and growing, and the Terrebonne Basin, which is sinking and dying. The study uses high-altitude airplanes to collect water height, slope, and sediment information, as well as information on the density of plants to observe how wetlands grow or disappear. Those measurements are compiled and analyzed by scientists to determine how land is lost or gained in deltas. Hopefully, the findings will give southern Louisiana and other parts of the world more information on viable solutions to wetland and delta loss.