



TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
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We're From the Government and We're Here to Help

Better water management is like the weather: Everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it*. But what if they did? Well, California's Department of Water Resources (DWR) is trying to do just that in the parched but productive San Joaquin Basin, which has been stressed by decades of over-pumping, drought, and flooding (yes, all three) that have created ever increasing risks to communities, agriculture, and the environment in the Basin. To get a better handle on those risks and what might be done about them, the DWR has released what it is calling the [San Joaquin Basin Flood-MAR Studies](#). At the heart of these studies are the desires to better understand how climate change is impacting water management challenges and to manage flood waters more beneficially. That latter desire is what the "MAR" (managed aquifer recharge) is all about. Never mind that natural aquifer recharge is what the basin had before all the wetlands were drained.

Anyways, science, climate change adaptation, and engineering may not be as "[en vogue](#)" as they were a while back. Where water is concerned, however, they are hard to ignore, so a tip of the hat to the DWR for even trying. The studies are not so much an action plan but a way to show the interested public what might be done if there is sufficient public support. None of that is a given, and you can be sure that for every winner from the proposed actions, there will be a loser, most probably a loud one. Nonetheless, you [gotta start somewhere](#).

*Yes, we know people are working every day to improve our understanding of weather and water management, but as far as most people are concerned, the witticism rings true, perhaps because most people have no idea what might be done.

We're Scientists and Economists and We're Here to Help

California is not the only place trying to come to grips with a world that is often a lot drier and harder to supply with water than its plans were counting on. [Tehran](#)—yup, that's you. [South Florida](#)—don't look away. [Grand Canyon National Park](#), you know we are talking about you. And Iowa—wait, Iowa? Yes, indeed, the Hawkeye State has its own water challenges, many of which are tied to the state's agricultural sector—which, if you know anything about Iowa, you know is a very big deal. The future of Iowa agriculture is very much dependent on the availability of water that may come from a variety of sources (surface and subsurface), places, and that will definitely be needed for multiple purposes.

Lawmakers, judges, governmental bodies, and many others have tried to figure out the best ways to manage vital, but limited, water resources, and the results have been mixed at best. This is tough stuff. When the going gets tough, the tough turn to [natural resource economists](#) and [scientists](#), which is what the Hawkeyes are fixin' to do. How will this be different? Good question. In this case, [a study supported by the National Science Foundation and led by an economist at the University of Arkansas](#) would not begin with a survey of existing laws, programs, or hydrologic data, but rather a survey of farmers in the Lower Mississippi River Basin and how they assess risk and make decisions. Given

that water management is very—some might say, most—often a factor of stakeholder hopes and fears, this could be a very interesting angle. We don't want to prejudge the outcome of the study, but since one possible outcome might be a framework for putting a price on water, it should really be worth following.

Given that water in its natural form is generally not susceptible to private ownership or pricing as a matter of law and custom, it will be interesting to see how economists work around that. Regardless, we hope it doesn't come a [Cropper](#) and leads to better things since, heaven knows, something needs to. [Time is tight](#), and nobody wants to find themselves [sittin' on the dock of a bay](#), wondering where their water went.

Still Looking for Them--Water Songs 2025

One of the high points of any year is the release of our Institute's list of water songs that came out or that surfaced during the year. Actually, best or even good has nothing to do with it. If you came across a song or two that came out this year with water as a theme, or as a catchy hook, now is the time to share it with us and the world. Just send your submissions to cdalbom@tulane.edu, and our team of music curators will handle the rest. What else do you have to do?

Coming Up:

[Environmental Law & Policy Summit](#)
Tulane University Law School; New Orleans, LA; March 5–
7, 2026

[Coastal Law in Louisiana CLE](#)
New Orleans, LA; May 7 & 8, 2025

Water jobs:

[Staff Attorney](#), Surfrider Foundation; San Clemente, CA
(remote/hybrid)

[Deputy Director of Water Resources](#); City of San José, CA



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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