

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
August 5, 2022

Didn't It Rain, Children

Very few places can handle 10 inches of rain in a 48-hour period, and the unfolding tragedy in Eastern Kentucky is just the latest reminder of that. The trouble with rain is it can do its worst so quickly and can be hard to plan for. Hard, but not impossible. The simple fact is that rain can be extremely localized and there is evidence that rain patterns are changing with heavy rain events becoming both more intense and frequent—which is exactly what has happened in [Kentucky \(and parts of Virginia and West Virginia\), where up to 10.5 inches of rain fell in 48 hours](#). And in [Illinois, where up to 12 inches fell in 12 hours](#). Neither of those come close to the [40 plus inches that fell in Harris County, TX in a matter of days back in 2017](#) or the [30 inches that fell around Baton Rouge, LA in 2016](#). Hurricane storm surge, river floods, and rising seas get lots of ink and attention but when it comes to putting lives and property at risk, nothing beats rain. Most places are equipped to handle a modest rain, something meteorologists might call a 1-in-10 year event, but the rains that just hit KY and IL are more in the 1-in-1000 year event window (though try and find and actual data set to back that up). The point here is that across this country [rain needs to be taken a lot more seriously](#). That won't be easy or cheap but, in the face of extreme natural disasters, some help is available courtesy of [FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities and other federal grant programs](#). Welcome as that may be, it won't be enough and certainly won't get the flood victims in KY back on track. Especially for those people without flood insurance, which may be quite a few. If you want to help with that human relief piece of the puzzle there are a number of ways [you can help](#). And one way you can help yourself is by buying flood insurance. Really, floods can happen anywhere (and we are looking at you, Louisiana, where only about 25 percent of households are protected).

Maybe Forever is Not Forever

[Diamonds may still be forever](#) but maybe, just maybe, some of those [PFAS "forever chemical pollutants"](#) aren't, which would be very good news given how prevalent and risky they can be. Word from a team led by Rice University suggests that PFOA (perflourooctanoic acid) a common PFAS found in our waters can be neutralized in 6 to 9 hours. [The trick is a combination of boron nitride and titanium dioxide and "Sunlight."](#) Exactly how much of that concoction is needed and how it can be used to deal with PFOA-contaminated groundwater is a story for another day. In the meanwhile, [good job science](#).

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:

[ABA SEER 30th Fall Conference](#); Sept 21- 24

[Water Collaborative Seeds of Innovation: Resilient Design Competition](#); Info [webinar](#) – Aug. 9, Registration ends Aug. 25

[Louisiana Climate Initiatives Task Force Fall Meeting and Workshop](#); October 22

[Restore America's Estuaries, 2022 Coastal and Estuarine Summit; December 4-8 2022. New Orleans](#)

Water jobs:

[Water Quality Technician](#); Pontchartrain Conservancy; Metairie, LA

[Clinical Instructor Tulane Environmental Law Clinic](#); New Orleans, LA

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

[Climate Risk Legal Fellow](#); Environmental Defense Fund; Boulder, CO

[Summer Associate 2023](#), Sher Edling LLP, San Francisco

[California Resources Control Water Board](#); Sacramento, CA

[Maryland Staff Attorney](#); Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Annapolis, MD

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Can You Still Get Your Tan by Standing in the English Rain?

So it's raining everywhere right? Well no. It is not raining in [North Texas](#), or in [much of Massachusetts](#). Indeed, at this very moment, [half of the United States is suffering from drought](#) (often compounded by high heat) and water shortages are at [crisis levels in Mexico](#). Not even in damp, dreary [England, where people are being urged to conserve water](#). The common thread connecting all of these dry and wet places is the lack of plans, programs, and infrastructure to handle an increasingly extreme water world. Simply put, more and more people and places are at greater and greater water risk, and the pace of recognition and response is woefully out of step. Need a metric for that? Consider Louisiana where, thanks to hurricanes in 2021, [seven—count them seven—insurance companies that offered homeowners policy in the state have failed and are being liquidated](#). Yeah, a lot of that is thanks to wind, and we get that, but try having a hurricane without water. Can't do it, can you? Families and communities that can't get or afford insurance are families and communities that are going to have trouble prospering. Could be time to have a grown-up conversation about all of this.