

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
March 22, 2017

Rivers Are People, Too

In New Zealand, a Māori tribe has won their incredibly long ([apparently 140 years!](#)) battle to have the river that runs through their land recognized as an actual living ancestor of the tribe. This means that the Whanganui River now has the same legal rights as a human being and can seek recourse for injuries. Originally, the tribe sought to acquire ownership rights over the river in order to protect it from non-native New Zealanders who may have viewed the river just a little differently - or at least not as an older member of their family. But New Zealand thought this might go a little too far in terms of changing how they view water rights. So, [they found a compromise](#). While this is a unique way to [meet in the middle](#), this is not the first time that New Zealand has supported legal personhood for natural things. In 2014, the country [conferred legal rights to a park](#) on Māori tribal land.

This stands in stark contrast to how countries like our own [United States](#) are handling debates over shared resources with tribal governments, but shines a light on how our friends abroad are treating their natural world. Affording rights to nature isn't a new idea, and it's growing in popular support. In 2008, Ecuador enshrined [rights of nature in its constitution](#). Yesterday, an Indian court followed New Zealand's lead, [giving rights](#) to two of its most beloved and sacred rivers, hoping to prevent pollution and ensure their long-term survival. If this is all part of a [global movement to take better care of our planet, we're on board](#).

Rising High Water Blues

We here in Louisiana are familiar with flooding, and getting more familiar with time. However, we aren't the only ones who have had a rough go of it in the past several months. Most recently, massive flooding and mudslides have left northern Peru in shambles, [with at least 72 dead and tens of thousands of people homeless](#). NOAA scientists are estimating that this is 10 times more rainfall than the region has previously experienced. We do know that it is the largest flooding incident since 1998, when 400 people were killed, and that this is one of the only known floods to affect Lima, the capital of Peru. People are having a hard time down south, folks, and not to beat a [dead horse](#), but this just might be related to a little thing called climate change. While [American perception of climate change](#) is varied, particularly as to how we think it will affect us individually, [science shows that our](#)

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 stewardship of water.

Coming up:

[CRCL Coastal Restoration Road Show](#)
Abbeville, Lafitte, Cameron & Lacombe, LA
February & March, 2017

[Mississippi River Commission High-Water Inspection Trip](#)

Hickman, Memphis, Greenville, Baton Rouge
April 3-7, 2017

[New Water Music](#)
New Orleans, LA
April 8, 2017

Water jobs:

[Project Specialist \(Enviro. Initiatives \(Temp\)\)](#)

World Economic Forum
Geneva, Switzerland

[Assistant Analyst \(Climate Finance\)](#)

Climate Policy Initiative
San Francisco, CA

Tulane Institute
on Water Resources Law & Policy

6325 Freret Street, 1st Floor
New Orleans, LA 70118
504-865-5982

tulanewater.org

TWITTER: [@TulaneWaterLaw](https://twitter.com/TulaneWaterLaw)

[coastal communities will continue to be affected](#) in the same ways we're seeing around the world on a pretty regular basis. At any rate, [people are having a hard time](#) right now, and it's not going to get better as the rainy season is still in full swing. You can reach out to [aid organizations](#) if you'd like to send help. We're thinking fondly of you, [Peru](#).

Not Color-Safe Bleach

Like most coral ecosystems, the Great Barrier Reef had a terrible 2016. A [new study](#) has reminded us that the thing we knew ([because NOAA told us so](#)) but wish wasn't true, is happening. The world's most infamous and expansive coral reef system is in big trouble, suffering from a once rare phenomenon called coral bleaching. Long story short, [coral bleaching](#) happens when the ocean temperatures get so high that the algae supporting the ecosystem leave, taking the color and immune systems of the coral with them. This has happened a few times over the past several decades, once in 1998 and once in 2002. (PS – Remember how the last time Peru had catastrophic flooding was in 1998? [Coincidence?](#)) But this time, the prognosis is much, much worse. In 1998 and 2002, researchers found that only 10% of the Great Barrier Reef was experiencing severe bleaching. Now, only 10% of the reef is *not* severely bleached. And, [reach for your tissues](#), the study also ruled out the possibility that the reef will adapt to warming ocean temperatures and informed us that the bleaching event will be continuing into 2017. Book your flights now, because it's not looking good for one of our most beloved natural wonders. Can't make it? Check out [this](#) instead.

ITS [WORLD WATER DAY!](#)

If it wasn't clear before, you should know that we here at Chateau D'Eau are truly fond of water. We like to drink it, swim in it ([except maybe here](#)), protect it, research it, and even just [look at it](#) from time to time. And, [we recently found out](#) that just being out in nature (preferably with water) can make us [thinner](#), [happier](#), and have [healthier babies](#). But, we also know that people from here in St. Joseph, La. to the Sudan suffer from lack of access to clean water, or just don't have enough water, period. That's why the United Nation's World Water Day is [focusing on wastewater](#) and water conservation, inspiring some to rethink their relationship with wastewater and others to [ask themselves if they are a water waster](#). So today, support water – go walk your dog on the bayou, take a shower that's a little shorter, let the rain water your plants, and [throw caution to the wind](#) and enjoy an extra glass (of water) at dinner. [Salud!](#)