

TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
January 19, 2016

Toilets for Everyone!

This past December, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed that yes, water is a human right, but more than that, [the right to sanitation is separate and distinct](#) from that right. Everyone has a right to a socially acceptable toilet. Specifically, the newly recognized definition states that everyone is entitled “to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use...[and]...to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.” Importantly, this new resolution highlights the disparity between the treatment of men and women when there are inadequate sanitation services. Women are often exposed to social stigma and risk bodily harm when there are not suitable facilities for privacy and protection. This new distinction, with all of its important ramifications, ties the rights to water and sanitation to one of the most basic of human rights, the right to an adequate standard of living. The General Assembly is hopeful that this clarification will enable UN Member States to develop adequate plans for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now all humans may go forth and worship the [porcelain throne](#).

The Neglected Child of the Water World

People have been increasingly skeptical of the growing use of recycled water and for the most part think that brackish groundwater is completely useless. Recycled wastewater has been a boon to drought stricken California where treatment plants are [supplementing](#) the dwindling groundwater supplies. But in Denver, the purple pipe, the granddaddy of all recycled water pipes, has been [cut off from the zoo](#). There have been reports that the recycled water used, like most recycled water, for irrigation is poisoning the trees of Denver’s Parks. (Remember, Remember, the [Evergreen Hill Massacre](#)) This is not the first case of dying trees, in 2007 Wyoming experienced a large [spruce tree die off](#) attributed to the high salinity of recycled water. The Denver zoo, not wanting to take chances with its elephants has stopped using the water for consumption in the elephant, rhino, and [tapir](#) enclosures. At least they aren’t feeding them [marula fruit](#). Though there have been no adverse health effects evident in the animals, the zoo has asked the Department of Agriculture to review its

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:

[Tulane Environmental Law Summit](#)

New Orleans, LA
February 19-20, 2016

[Center for Natural Resource Economics & Policy](#)

New Orleans, LA
March 20-22, 2016

[State of the Coast 2016](#)

New Orleans, LA
June 1-3, 2016

[Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration](#)

New Orleans, LA
December 10-15, 2016

Water jobs:

[Clean Water Advocate](#)

Environment America

[Professor of the Practice/Managing Attorney](#)

Virginia Coastal Policy Center,
William & Mary Law School
Williamsburg, VA

[Staff Attorney](#)

Tennessee Clean Water Network
Knoxville, TN

[Public Outreach Coordinator/Education Specialist](#)

CWPPRA/The Wetland and Aquatic Research
Center
Lafayette, LA

[Assistant Water Program Leader](#)

Forest Service
Washington, D.C.

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use of the purple pipe water.

Unlike recycled water, which has been used begrudgingly, [scientists predict](#) that brackish groundwater will shine in 2016. The first national [brackish groundwater assessment](#) in years is due out this year. In October, San Antonio is set to open the first phase of what will be the world's largest inland desalination plant. The study, though quite comprehensive, will not be able to determine what will happen if these deep brackish aquifers are utilized, but [Texas](#) recently passed a bill that will enable it to map brackish aquifers and determine safe yield. Oil companies have begun to use the water in place of fresh water, and many communities are hoping to do the same with the development of desalination plants. Perhaps brackish groundwater won't be neglected anymore, and those facing water shortages will have a chance to fill their watering holes once more.

On the Struggle Bus with California Legislation

Twenty-seven years ago, California began two legal sagas over water in the San Joaquin Valley, one of which has made its way to Capitol Hill for approval as the Justice Department and the Westlands Water District have [reached a settlement agreement](#). The agreement would release the Federal Government from its obligation to provide irrigation drainage to the Westlands and in return, the Westlands would be relieved of its \$375 million debt and would retire 100,000 acres from agriculture production. The deadline for congress to complete the legislation is January 15, 2017. That's a long time right? Well perhaps not, just last month Congress allowed a proposed compact from 2010 that took stakeholders on the [Klamath River](#) years to agree upon to [expire](#). In the second lawsuit, filed by environmentalists unhappy with the degradation of the San Joaquin River, a settlement was reached in 2006 but failed to obtain Congressional approval in the same year and wasn't approved until 2009. California lawmakers have pointed out that even if everyone agrees on a plan, Congress will still move as [slow as molasses](#). Perhaps they should take a page out of Cher's book and [rearrange some things](#).

Required Water Reading

Perhaps you wish to learn more about water and science, but you fear that technical articles will at best be boring, and at worst, fly right over your head with figures and numbers and science-y words that are distinctly not [Bill Nye](#). Well, have no fear! The steamy water fiction of your dreams is now available. Follow Freja Folsom, the intrepid reporter, as she investigates the poisoning of an Iowa town's water supply, while falling for the director of Des Moines Water Works. This novel has everything: poison, threatened legal action, lust, love, and education for Midwesterners about farming and its effects on water quality. Please note, Freja Folsom is a [strong, smart](#), dynamic character who [will not be labeled](#) with the typical damsel-in-distress motif so many fictional female reporters are subjected to. You can [pre-order](#) *Water* (Yes, it is for real and yes, we are excited about it). If romance and intrigue aren't your cup of tea, and you're more of a dystopian sci-fi reader, there's [The Water Knife](#). It's on our list, too.

Do You Wish to Propose Something?

Restore America's Estuaries, in partnership with the Coastal Society, is hosting its [8th National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration](#). The Summit will bring together the coastal restoration and management communities to discuss issues, solutions, and lessons learned in their respective fields. As of right now, the Summit is being developed through the hard work of 200 partnering and supporting organizations, with the theme of Our Coasts, Our Future, Our Choice. The Program Committee is inviting anyone who may wish to present along this theme to [submit](#) proposals by May 2, 2016.