TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy
July 12, 2017

Farming: Plant a Seed, Harvest a Crop. What's so Hard About That?

If only! Farming's a very complicated thing, man, lotta ins, lotta outs. One constant, though, is water. It's the quality and availability of that water that is the variable. A new study shows 800 million people across the world are dependent on crops grown using raw or diluted sewage. Despite the extra nutrients in the wastewater, it also carries countless pathogens like *e. coli*.

Other farms are looking to improve the water quality that comes off their land, rather than the water that goes into it. That's why the city of Madison, WI and local farmers are teaming up to keep phosphorus pollution out of the watershed in the first place; it's a pollutant the city's water treatment plant would have to remove otherwise. Wider adoption of these efforts sure would help the Gulf of Mexico where their cumulative effects could reduce the dead zone from the size of New Jersey to less than Connecticut.

While 'Sconsin's been working on a local phosphorus trading system, Microsoft and rice farmers have figured out a carbon (methane) swap by tweaking the rice-field water management. After 10 years of work figuring out a carbon swap system, developers are ready to scale it up. But whether or not it'd work on Louisiana's rice fields that also supply us with those delicious mudbugs is still unclear.

How Much Does Water Cost? Probably Not What It's Worth!

Water and water resources are a big deal, and not just around these parts. The Great Barrier Reef, for instance, has been valued in a new report at $42 billion (US). That's Dr. Evil-level cash, so it might be helpful to the Queensland economy to do something about keeping it around. Everyone from the Gold Coast to the Cape York Peninsula ought to be cracking open some XXXX and figure this thing out!

Far, far across the Pacific from the Great Barrier Reef, some are trying to figure the best way to utilize another valuable water resource – the Columbia River. As the Columbia River Treaty is being eyed for renegotiation, a new study from Earth Economics finds that the overall economic value of the system could go from $198 billion (US) annually (how you like them apples, Great Barrier Reef?) to $219 billion (US) annually. However, for that to happen US and Canadian negotiators will have to focus not just on cutting up the pie, but on making the

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:

July 12, 2017
Louisiana CPRA Governor's Advisory Commission Meeting
Thibodaux, LA

July 19, 2017
CPRA Board Meeting
Chalmette, LA

Water jobs:

Research Fellow in Urban Flood Resilience
University of Leeds
Leeds, United Kingdom

Director (Water Strategy)
Microsoft
Redmond, WA

Executive Director and Riverkeeper
Ogeechee Riverkeeper
Savannah, GA

Planning Division Manager
Puget Sound Partnership
Tacoma, Washington

Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy
6325 Freret Street, 1st Floor
New Orleans, LA 70118
504-865-5982
tulanewater.org
TWITTER: @TulaneWaterLaw

pie bigger through managing the river to mimic a more natural flow. Might not be a bad idea, given that the Atlantic salmon aquaculture boom is lousy with problems these days.

Researchers are able to come up with these big numbers and comprehensive studies because we know a lot about the Great Barrier Reef and the Columbia River Basin. Something we really don't know much about, though, is the deep ocean floor. We know a bit about what's down there – a variety of valuable minerals and even diamonds. But it's what we don't know about what's down there – from blobfish to kaiju – that leads many to pump the brakes on the next ~~gold~~ manganese rush. Like Danny Ainge's first round picks, these assets aren't going anywhere, so it might be time to come up with a reasoned, sustainable policy on this stuff.

Sure, rivers, and reefs, and rocks and stuff can be worth a lot, but what about the water itself, man? So glad you asked! The water that most of us in the US depend on directly – the water that we pay to have piped into our homes and businesses – is costing more than ever, and that cost is projected to keep rising. Even in places where the supply isn't in immediate jeopardy, infrastructure needs are so pressing that utilities and municipalities have no choice but to bring in more money. Some cities are even selling their public water systems to private corporations – a desperate move to get the local government out from under debt but one that doesn't change the cost of repairs. That cost and the cost of making a profit for the new company are left for the water users who, short of leaving town, have no choice but to pay up. This water, man, in the infamous words of Rob Blagojevich, it's "a [freaking] valuable thing. You don't just give it away for nothing"