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Web Roundup: Water

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By Lily Shapiro

Before I began graduate school, I worked in water-related public health, and have continued to follow the news around water. This month, some stories (mostly) about water.

Trump signed an order last week to “expedite” the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which jeopardizes the water source for the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, and for many others who drink water from the Missouri River. Opponents of the pipeline are [not surprised](#), and are gearing up for a fight. Although most of [Silicon Valley](#) has come out [against Trump](#) (though perhaps in [somewhat tepid](#) terms), particularly in light of his recent executive order on immigration, Peter Thiel has been tapped to help Trump pick someone to lead the FDA, with the goal of decreasing its regulations around drug approval process. Vox goes into detail about why that’s [a bad idea](#). (And, before we move away from the topic of Trump’s horrifying first week in office, if you haven’t read CultAnth’s interview with prof of anthropology and lawyer Darryl Li on the [travel ban](#), I recommend it).

California has recently gotten some [much-needed](#) rain (and [snow](#)) this month. Researchers and farmers there are experimenting with methods, which include flooding fields during the winter, to use this rain to [recharge the depleted groundwater aquifers](#). Also, check out [this](#) time lapse of the California drought from 2011-present. The storms also toppled an iconic, if controversial, [“drive-through” Sequoia tree](#), one of the last still standing in a public park.

Meanwhile, the state of Tamil Nadu, in South India, is experiencing its [worst monsoon in nearly 150 years](#), a crisis worsened by the demonetization on November 9 (in which the Rupees 500 and 1000 notes were declared invalid), resulting in the deaths of numerous farmers and recent agitations by farmer’s groups. The state government has recently declared the state [officially “drought-hit,”](#) seeking assistance from the central government and offering aid to farmers, and compensation to the families of farmers who have died or committed suicide. Also off the coast of Tamil Nadu, two ships collided, causing an [oil spill](#) which is now washing up on Chennai’s Marina Beach.

A project out of [Melbourne's Monash University](#) recently received USD 27 million in funding for a controlled trial testing innovative water infrastructure delivery in urban slum areas in Indonesia and Fiji. And [The Guardian](#) has an article about the complications of providing water to thousands of elephants in Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, which has been hit by a drought.

Lead levels in water tested in [Flint, Michigan](#), have now fallen below federal limits; however, because lead-tainted pipes have yet to be replaced, it is still not safe for residents to drink. [1700 residents have filed suit](#) against the US Environmental Protection Agency for more than USD 722 million for its failure to protect residents from the toxic water. And, here's an interesting, longish article about the unelected emergency managers who were running Flint at the time of the crisis, and how they contributed to it: [Flint, Michigan's water crisis: what the national media got wrong](#).

The [NY Times](#) has a piece on private equity firms taking over the water management of American municipalities, questioning the fairness in residents seeing their water rates rise while equity firms make returns. And yet, as the article also points out, the US water infrastructure is woefully in [need](#) of updating (something [Trump](#) has said he'll address). Updates and improvements to infrastructure, along with other expenditures are to lead to an average increase of a substantial [\\$49 over the next five years](#) in monthly water bills in American households, according to new research out of Michigan State.

For some completely banal news, Vox has a piece on why [La Croix](#) sparkling water has suddenly become so trendy, which was probably only interesting for me, as a Wisconsinite who remembers my brother in California calling to excitedly tell me his grocery store now stocks it.

Speaking of Wisconsin, [A2 milk](#) (an older, supposedly healthier strain of milk which falls somewhere between health trend and health fad) will soon be available in the US. It is popular in Australia, and interestingly ties into debates and protests in Tamil Nadu about the recent ban (and its subsequent overturning) of a bull-taming sport called [jallikattu](#), and its impact on [indigenous cattle breeds](#).

Also check out this video by Tobias Gremmier "[visualizing motion and music](#)" with the London Symphony Orchestra, kind of like [Fantasia](#) for the 21st century.

[The Internet is Mostly Bots](#) – The Atlantic

[The Moon May Be Covered With Oxygen Beamed From Earth](#) – The Atlantic

[A Lawyer Rewrote Instagram's Privacy Policy in Plain English](#) – Quartz

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