

New wine in a new bottle: Continuing to serve our growing global community in the Journal of Water Economics

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The launch of the Journal of Water Economics (JWE) marks a new chapter in our field. Having served the growing international community of scholars working on the economics of water resources through Water Resources and Economics (WRE) since 2013, many of us were deeply disappointed by Elsevier's sudden decision to discontinue WRE at the end of 2025 after 52 issues and more than 250 published articles. The decision to continue the journal independently with the same editorial board, the same scholarly focus, and the same commitment to rigorous, policy-relevant research was taken quickly without reservation. JWE is the continuation of WRE and has quickly grown to become more than old wine in a new bottle, as we explain below.

The transition has been managed with care and respect for ethical editorial practices under full disclosure and transparency. We ensured that authors were adequately informed, reviewer contributions clearly acknowledged, and continuity of editorial standards was maintained. Our guiding principle has been simple: to keep the community intact and to keep scientific quality high. JWE is not a rebranding exercise; it is an independent continuation that safeguards the accumulated experience, editorial norms, and scholarly standards developed as part of WRE.

This first issue is both a continuation and a renewal. It is a continuation because the journal's scope remains the economics of water resources: allocation, governance, pricing, regulation, valuation, policy instruments, and the many interfaces between water systems and economic decision-making. It is a renewal because JWE is fully open access, hosted by the University of Waterloo and supported by its Water Institute, and endorsed by the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE). We also aim to secure additional endorsements and recognition across the field, and to embed JWE firmly in the professional networks that sustain water economics. It is also a renewal because all articles are published under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Authors retain copyright, readers face no paywalls, and there are no article processing charges (APCs). Submissions are handled through the University of Waterloo Open Journals platform. The journal is therefore more accessible to researchers, practitioners, and students around the world, aligned with the growing expectation that publicly funded, valuable research should be publicly available.

We are also mindful that trust must be earned and cannot be assumed. We recognize that the transition from WRE to JWE may have inconvenienced some authors, especially early-career researchers, who plan their publication strategies around stable outlets and depend on the longer-term visibility of their work. A key motivation for JWE is to prevent disruption and fragmentation and preserve the intellectual home that WRE provided for more than a decade. We agreed with Elsevier that JWE has a direct link to the archived issues published between 2013 and 2025 and can be accessed on ScienceDirect. The submission and review process continues to emphasize careful editorial screening, constructive peer review, and methodological rigor. We aim to provide timely decisions without compromising standards. The scope remains broad, and we welcome theoretical and empirical contributions across sectors and scales: from agriculture and urban utilities to energy-water systems, from local pricing design to transboundary governance.

This inaugural issue of JWE reflects that breadth. It includes four papers that speak directly to the core concerns of water economists. First, Randriamaro and Cook analyze income redistribution, water scarcity, and water rates in the 225 largest U.S. cities. Using data on rates, demographics, and scarcity, they evaluate the redistributive ability of water tariffs and question whether increasing-block pricing delivers the equity outcomes often claimed. Their findings speak to the persistent policy tension between economic efficiency and distributional justice. Second, Kabaya examines the contributions of aquatic environments to household health expenditures in Japan. Using a two-part health economics model and fine-scale land cover data, the study finds that freshwater coverage around residences is associated with lower health spending. This work highlights the often underappreciated health value of freshwater environments and the economic case for their protection. Third, Celebi and Olmstead study how drought affects residential water demand and price elasticity. Using a new dataset for the western United States, they test whether drought exposure leads to long-term changes in demand. Their results suggest that households may become less price-sensitive after a drought, with implications for demand management under increasingly variable hydrologic conditions. Finally, Giannitsos, Adamowicz, Sandink, and Boxall analyze household decision-making on property-level flood protection investments through a stated preference study. The paper sheds light on the behavioral and policy factors that shape private adaptation to flood risk, a growing concern as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme events.

Together, these papers demonstrate the vitality of research at the intersection of economics and water management. They also illustrate the range of methods and policy questions that define the field: distributional analysis, health economics, demand estimation and management, and behavioral responses to risk. We hope this issue signals both continuity and momentum. Looking ahead, we see at least three priorities for JWE. The first is to continue strengthening the journal's role as a primary outlet for water economics research and maintaining our impact factor. This requires a steady flow of high-quality submissions and a committed community of contributing authors and reviewers. The second is to maintain international breadth. Water challenges are global, and the new journal must reflect that diversity in topics, contexts, editors, and authorship. The third is to keep the journal and its articles accessible for everyone. Open access without APCs is central to that aim. We kindly invite those of you who have published in WRE, reviewed

for it, or simply relied on it as a research venue to continue working with us through JWE. Submit your best work, suggest special issues, and encourage early-career scholars to see JWE as their journal. The field of water economics needs a dedicated, independent, and accessible platform. With your support, JWE will remain that platform.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the editorial board members who supported the decision to continue the journal and who have worked incessantly to manage the transition. Their willingness to serve is a testament to the strength of our community. We are also grateful to the reviewers and authors who stayed with us throughout the transition over the past months and continued to engage with us and the new journal despite the administrative disruption. Your patience and dedication made this first issue possible.

We look forward to building this next chapter together with all of you.