

REGION 6 OUTREACH

Louisiana Watershed Initiative

OVERVIEW

Regional Steering Committee Process:

1. Water doesn't obey political boundaries. There is no water management framework currently in place with adequate resources to fully understand and solve mounting water risks statewide. The existing political authorities are highly fragmented or overlapping.
2. Presented with this challenge, our region's steering committee members have been working hard throughout the past year to build a framework for communities in our region to work together on addressing and reducing flood risk.
3. This work was public and involved input from community members of all interests and backgrounds.
4. The result of all this work is our provisional recommendation to set up a watershed coalition to provide coordination and expertise which provide the opportunity to link local entities together.
5. We want to hear what you think about this recommendation.

Importance of Regionalism:

1. Uncoordinated project planning across jurisdictions could reduce the impact of our flood control projects; we could accidentally work at odds with each other.
2. When we share technical expertise or data resources, we can achieve an "economy of scale" where we can all benefit.
3. When the region speaks with one voice, it will be easier to justify our project requests, such as to the USACE, CPRA and legitimize our input or communications with the state and federal partners.

GOVERNANCE COALITION

Watershed Region 6 Provisional Recommendations:

The Regional Watershed Coalition or Coalition should conduct regional watershed management and assist local entities with watershed planning, policy, project prioritization, and data/modeling in the following ways:

1) Planning and Development Regulation

- Develop and adopt regional watershed plans
- Align local ordinances/standards to manage development to reduce flood risk (e.g., stormwater regulations)
- Support local jurisdictions with technical assistance and provide capacity (e.g., assist with CRS program)
- Assist with FIRM map amendments, help with the administrative burden (i.e., noticing requirements)
- Advocate on behalf of localities at federal level (FEMA), coordinate with federal entities

2) Project Implementation

- Serve as clearinghouse who can find supplemental funding for watershed projects
- Implement a regional project O&M plan
- Reviews major projects for upstream and downstream impacts

3) Data and Modeling

- The coalition should be tasked with housing and operating the LWI watershed model for Region 6
- Create or update FIRMS based on models

4) Outreach and Engagement

- The coalition should provide public outreach and education to residents and local leaders

5) Recommended Authorities for the Coalition

- Authority to cooperate or contract with other governmental agencies
- Authority to finance, fund, plan, establish, acquire, construct or reconstruct, enlarge or extend, equip, operate, and maintain systems and infrastructure
- Authority to generate revenue (e.g.: issue/sell bonds, borrow money or accept grants, collect fees, levy tax/special assessments)
- Authority to adopt minimum development codes and allow localities to adopt stricter standards
- Authority to enforce minimum development codes if given permission by governmental agencies and allow localities to adopt stricter standards

ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTING THIS RECOMMENDATION

In order to successfully implement the recommendation above, the RSC recommends the following implementation steps:

- 1) South Central Planning and Development Commission shall facilitate all meetings of the Coalition and shall perform administrative functions related to the work of the Coalition.
- 2) The coalition should be enabled by legislation under state charter.
- 3) All of the watershed coalitions in the state should be authorized by a single charter that includes a list of minimum standards and authorities identified by all regions, wherein each region is able to choose which additional higher standards or authorities to implement and at what degree within individual coalition bylaws/regional charters.
- 4) The coalition should be primarily composed of public entity representatives. These may include, but not limited to:
 - Local Governments
 - National Estuary Programs
 - Levee Districts
 - Drainage Districts
 - Higher Education Institutes
 - Research Institutes
 - Water Districts
 - Coastal Institutes
- 5) The coalition can establish technical or advisory committees that may appoint public members to assist in the committee's goals to report to the coalition.
- 6) The coalition should have oversight by the established state agency for the Watershed Initiative that provides consistency and state-level management.
- 7) An established working relationship between the Regional Coalition and the State Agency is vital to the success of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.
- 8) The regional watershed boundaries should be recognized by a legislatively authorized state agency, board or commission that has the authority to amend the boundaries at the request of the coalitions through a public process.
- 9) The coalition should have the ability to explore and maintain all options for funding.
- 10) The state should lead the effort in drafting the legal elements that reflect these recommendations while the regions collect feedback on provisional recommendations and the regions should be kept aware of continued progress.