

TOWARD A REGIONAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

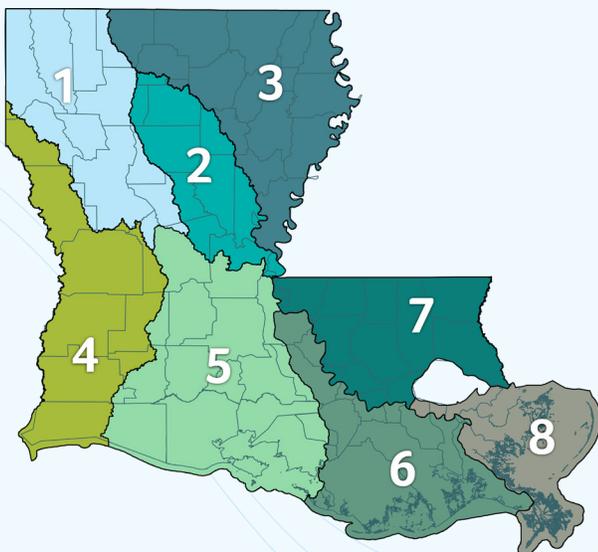
Regional Steering Committee Recommendations

A NEW APPROACH TO MANAGING FLOOD RISK

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative's eight regional steering committees have submitted recommendations to guide long-term regional watershed management, marking a significant milestone in LWI's efforts to create a statewide framework for comprehensive flood risk reduction.

Supported by the LWI Regional Capacity Grant Program, the RSCs held regular meetings throughout 2020 and 2021 to discuss and prioritize flood risk concerns, assess research on existing conditions and identify best practices and solutions to reduce flood risk through improved regional watershed management. The RSCs proposed roles and responsibilities for long-term regional watershed coalitions, which will be organized around watershed boundaries. They also established goals and next steps in instituting regional watershed management activities in coordination with state and local efforts.

RSCs reflect the demographics of each region and include a mix of watershed professionals, such as floodplain managers and engineers, as well as community representatives from diverse backgrounds or with strong ties to local institutions. Each committee's primary objective is to provide recommendations on the establishment of a long-term regional entity—or watershed coalition—responsible for regional watershed management activities aligned with LWI's long-term resilience goals. RSCs held about 120 meetings statewide throughout 2020 and 2021.



Recommendation Highlights

COALITION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The regional steering committees' recommendations for watershed region roles and responsibilities include:

- Engaging in regional planning, including land use planning, watershed project prioritization and river systems operations, as well as developing hazard mitigation policies and projects targeting traditionally disadvantaged or underserved populations
- Warehousing, funding and operating regional watershed models and serving as a clearinghouse for sharing watershed-related data
- Conducting outreach and education to local leaders and residents promoting best practices in community development and watershed management
- Creating new opportunities for engagement, providing access to resources and improving coordination among local jurisdictions

Several steering committees made additional recommendations specific to their regions, including:

- Supporting local jurisdictions with National Flood Insurance Program compliance and participation in the Community Rating System
- Providing technical assistance to local communities for watershed project and policy development
- Establishing a role in project funding, such as providing matching funds to local entities or generating a pool of local funds for implementation of regional water management projects
- Reviewing major projects for upstream and downstream impacts
- Incentivizing the development of certain types of projects and/or facilitating capital improvement planning throughout the watershed

COALITION AUTHORITY

The RSCs recommend the following authorities, roles or responsibilities to empower their regional watershed entities to:

- Enter into contracts with other governmental agencies and private and nonprofit entities
- Generate revenue or, at minimum, obtain and maintain funding from external and local sources
- Issue bonds, levy taxes or special assessments, borrow money, accept grant funds or collect permitting, stormwater or user fees
- Conduct or oversee regional watershed planning processes
- Fund infrastructure projects and acquire property for conservation
- Review and issue permits and adopt and enforce development codes
- House and manage watershed-related data, such as hydrologic and hydraulic models

For more details on region-specific recommendations, see the [regional recommendation summary here](#).

COALITION COMPOSITION

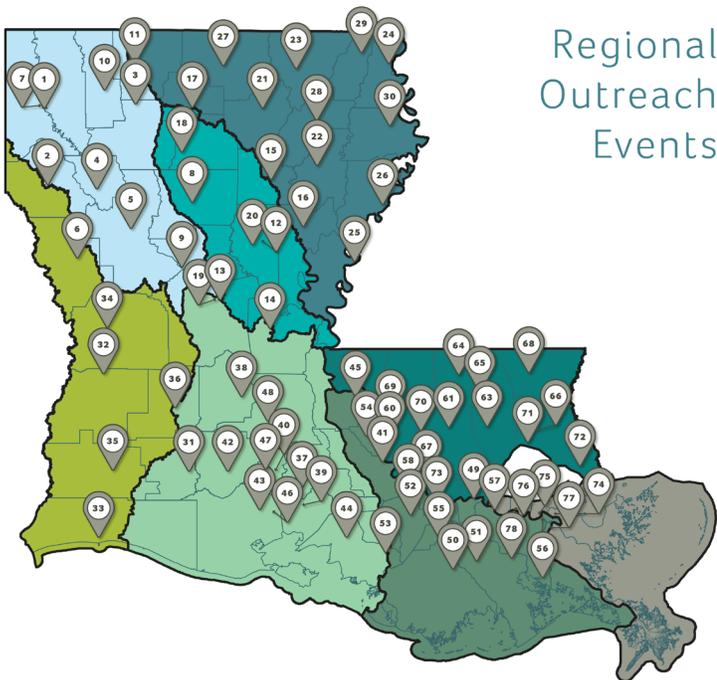
Recommendations for each watershed region's membership reflect the diversity, unique considerations and varied regional characteristics found throughout the state. Four RSCs recommended ensuring membership is composed of public representatives (elected officials or their appointees) and private representatives (residents, businesses and organizations outside of government).



WORKING WITH EXISTING AGENCIES

RSCs recommended the following agencies serve as coalition staff to facilitate meetings and perform administrative functions:

- 1 Coordinating and Development Corporation and Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments
- 2 Kisatchie-Delta Regional Planning & Development District and Rapides Area Planning Commission
- 3 Ouachita Parish Police Jury, with North Delta Regional Planning & Development District providing technical assistance
- 4 Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development Commission
- 5 Acadiana Planning Commission, with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's Louisiana Watershed Flood Center assisting with data management, modeling and water science; and with the Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District supporting gauge network and water quality efforts
- 6 South Central Planning and Development Commission
- 7 Capital Region Planning Commission
- 8 Public-private partnership consisting of public, private and nonprofit entities



RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

The RSCs recommended the following actions to build and support long-term regional coalitions, thus:

- Enabling the coalitions by legislation through a state agency, board or commission
- Forming each coalition under a single charter, while providing for the coalitions flexibility in choosing their authorities
- Providing appropriate state agency oversight to promote consistency between regions and state-level management

Most regions recommended the boundaries of each watershed be approved by a state agency, board or program through a public process.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In spring 2021, regional watershed coordinators assisted by RSC members held a series of outreach meetings with stakeholders throughout their regions to introduce LWI and explain the proposals for long-term regional watershed management. They met with parish and municipal leaders, including police juries and city councils, nonprofits and business associations, local floodplain managers, tribal leaders and community organizations.



163
meetings



78
communities



more than
1,400
participants

The outreach efforts provided Louisianians with the opportunity to learn more about the goals of LWI and allowed regional staff to receive valuable feedback on their recommendations on long-term regional watershed management.