



2018 LISTENING TOUR: REGION 1

BUILDING ON REGIONAL INPUT

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative hosted a Statewide Listening Tour in 2018 with more than 30 meetings held throughout the state's eight watershed regions. This document outlines input provided by Region 1 stakeholders, which informed early LWI efforts and guides the program today.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS

URBANIZATION

- Rapid development in the region has outpaced mitigation efforts and studies.
- Evacuation routes need to be designed using a BFE +1 or higher standard, as recent flooding has inundated regional evacuation routes.
- Ongoing sewer projects are becoming costly because the water table in the region is rising. Infiltration and influx studies need to be completed in a timely manner to assess this impact.

DATA

- Master drainage plans in the region are addressing gaps in local digital datasets.
- Some rivers and streams in the area have never been studied. Data collected from studying these rivers and streams could help inform modeling efforts.
- High-water marks have been the most reliable data collected in the region, serving as the default mechanism for determining minimum elevations in the area.

MODELING

- Models should be living models and studies should be ongoing, not static.
- FEMA and state agencies should adopt local models into federal and state databases.
- Old FEMA maps that were used in the past to assess floods may have been incomplete or outdated, impeding recovery efforts.



WHAT WE HEARD FROM PLANNING, PROJECTS AND POLICY PROFESSIONALS

PLANNING

- The state should assign a methodology to align all planning districts into regional coalitions.
- State and local officials should require all planning efforts to identify downstream flooding impacts.
- The state should require periodic updates of its watershed plan, including potential funding sources, to better inform watershed management efforts throughout the state.

PROJECTS

- Benefit-cost analyses largely dictate which projects are chosen over others.
- Projects with the greatest impact and long-term benefit are generally prioritized, but the region should establish criteria to reinforce these priorities.
- Project-selection criteria must be standardized throughout the state.
- Projects that restore watersheds to their original flow capacity and natural functions will mitigate the need to raise levees in the future.
- Regional detention strategies should feature the capacity and resources to control watershed behavior at the regional level.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

WHAT ARE CURRENT CHALLENGES?

- Limited regional coordination on flood risk reduction efforts leads to a lack of consistent policies applied throughout the region.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prohibits alterations to the levee system, even though raising or adjusting levee infrastructure could fix key issues.
- Little to no coordination or mechanisms exist to prevent the downstream impacts of sedimentation from out of state that passes through the region.
- Policies such as BFE +1 may become outdated as rapid development continues; any policy measures should be long-range in nature, taking into consideration expected community development and urbanization.
- Regional stakeholders have concerns regarding state agencies placing equal focus on all communities throughout Louisiana.

WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVES TO CURRENT POLICIES?

- Implement a drainage impact fee or drainage utility tied to a regional retention system.



- Create an equitable grant distribution system through a regional entity with adequate representation.
- Establish pools of funding for projects of different sizes so all projects are included in funding considerations, regardless of size and scope.
- Connect policy strategies to achieve greater impact (e.g., freshwater retention and flood control measures).
- Prioritize funding incentives for jurisdictions most aligned with state-level policy standards.