



2018 LISTENING TOUR: REGION 4

BUILDING ON REGIONAL INPUT

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative hosted a statewide listening tour in 2018, holding more than 30 meetings throughout the state's eight watershed regions. This document outlines input provided by Region 4 stakeholders, which informed early LWI efforts and guides the program today.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS

MODELING

- Supporting accurate modeling will require additional staff, technicians and resources, along with the years it will take to build and run a gauge system.
- Incorporating updated software will better capture all aspects of water behavior, including tributary versus main channels, salinity changes and tidal influences.

DATA GAPS

- No accurate method or tool exists to understand water behavior before it reaches the coast. The region needs open-water measuring systems.
- Stakeholders have had to make assumptions based on outdated or minimal data-gathering techniques. The region needs better models and data sharing approaches to improve data use in the future.
- A central coordinating entity needs to maintain a data schedule that is up-to-date and consistent.

QUALITY OF DATA

- Providing too much data causes confusion and results in data becoming outdated when not used in a timely manner.
- Standardizing data sharing throughout the collection, publication and use phases ensures data remains timely and specific enough for modeling inputs.
- Using existing portal frameworks, such as the North Pacific portal, increases the functionality and acceptance of advanced data analytics or modeling efforts.
- Creating a mechanism that shows when data is too burdensome and studies are exhausted is important.



WHAT WE HEARD FROM PLANNING, PROJECTS AND POLICY PROFESSIONALS

PLANNING

- Focusing on planning that connects jurisdictions within a region is necessary to encourage watershed-to-watershed interoperability and shared goals.
- Setting broad performance measures at the state level that take regional performance measures into account will help make regional planning more specific and applicable.
- Planning at the state level should reinforce regional plans, with local jurisdictions driving planning based on local knowledge and expertise.
- Incorporating a public information or educational component into planning will lay the groundwork for local involvement and a more educated public that understands the importance of watershed-based planning.

PROJECTS

- The top priority for selecting projects should be based on who floods the most and who is in greatest need of risk reduction or mitigation measures.
- The amount of future maintenance needed for a project should be a significant factor in funding allocations.
- The projects should consider potential burdens on local jurisdictions based on the project's landscape (e.g., \$5,500 for clearing a channel or \$700,000 to widen a ditch). Minimizing project costs is critical.
- The funding should apply to future projects and prevention, not past projects that include wish-list items.
- The purpose of the project should drive project-selection decisions. Officials must decide between infrastructure needs, population impact or saving recreational land, among other factors.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- The state should adopt legislation that provides a framework for how local jurisdictions create ordinances and supporting measures.
- State and local officials must build funding incentives into policies to reward proactive or compliant jurisdictions and limit those that do not comply with or meet standards.
- The state must organize jurisdictions into watershed regions, as self-organization efforts at the local or regional level do not have the same long-term binding impact as a state-mandated organization.
- The state should provide policies to guide and aid regions that do not have the capacity to meet standards or seamlessly interoperate with other jurisdictions on a watershed basis.
- The private sector (e.g., engineering and consulting firms) must be active participants in watershed-based approaches. The state can help reinforce this through regional and local policy guidance.