



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

2021



Fontainebleau State Park, Mandeville

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TOOLKIT USE AND PURPOSE



Bogue Falaya, Covington

This toolkit is designed for **use** as a quick reference guide by Louisiana leaders: public officials, public employees, community and religious leaders, environmental advocates, nonprofit volunteers and industry and professional stakeholders, as well as experts in real estate, land use, engineering and construction.

Its **purpose** is to encourage you to participate in the work of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative by providing the context and tools you will need to become a knowledgeable and effective partner. We hope to motivate you by:

- Explaining the reasoning behind LWI—why it was formed, by whom and for what objectives
- Listing the activities that make up the bulk of its work
- Describing the importance of outreach and engagement activities
- Offering specific ways you can participate in the critical function of O&E

Our toolkit is designed in two parts. Part One is the **kit**, which means a container for tools. The kit is shaped out of essential information to help you make effective use of specific **tools** in Part Two.

THUMBNAIL SKETCH

LWI is a state government program created to reduce statewide future flood risk through a watershed-based approach. LWI is characterized by:

- Regional coordination based on the natural movement of water in a watershed
- Science-based planning and decision-making
- Respect for the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains
- Attention to the needs of disadvantaged communities
- Public outreach
- Federal funding
- Five state agency partners
- Bipartisan political support



Cane River, Natchitoches

Part One: The Kit

KNOWLEDGE ESSENTIALS



Bayou Cane, Mandeville

1. Flood Risk

Flood risks are real in every part of our state.

More than anywhere in the country, we are blessed with productive lands and waters.

Louisiana's flooding is not confined to a few vulnerable areas; it is widespread. Actions in one community can affect the performance of an entire river system.

Our economies and lifestyles are intimately connected to our landscape. Yet we live with the constant risk of flooding.

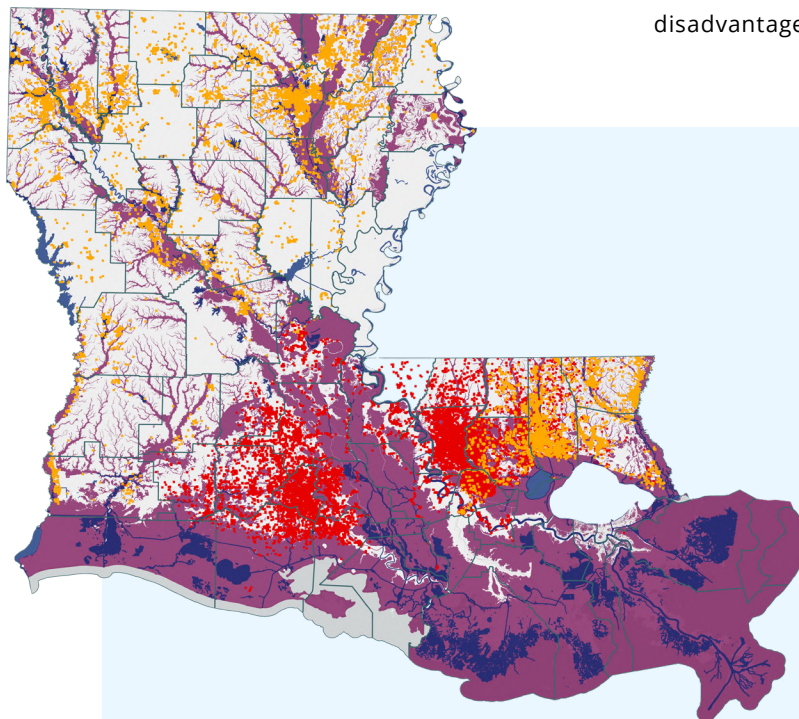
- Louisiana receives more rain than any other state in the continental U.S.—almost 5 feet of rain per year, which is almost twice the national average of 2.7 feet.

- Louisiana is the fourth flattest state (after Florida, Illinois and North Dakota), which makes it difficult to predict how small changes to our landscape can affect neighbors or neighboring communities.

Since Hurricane Katrina's landfall in August 2005, each of Louisiana's 64 parishes has been included in a federal major disaster declaration in response to a named tropical event. During the Great Floods of 2016—two rainfall events that happened six months apart and affected most of the state—unprecedented flooding led the federal government to issue major disaster declarations in 56 parishes. Shocking to homeowners, many flooded homes were located outside designated flood zones and were not covered by flood insurance.

Floods are unlike other disasters or individual losses. With flooding, entire neighborhoods can be rendered uninhabitable; not only are houses ruined, but the community support network and economic base are affected too. In the aftermath of a major flood, residents often face uncertainty about when or if they can return.

Recovery from a flood can be overwhelming. Houses are damaged, sometimes irreparably. Household belongings and family memories can be impossible to replace or recover. Normal life is disrupted, and for some—especially the elderly and the disadvantaged—life will never be the same again.



145,000 IMPACTED STRUCTURES

- AUGUST 2016 FLOODS
- MARCH 2016 FLOODS

More than half of Louisiana is located in a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (displayed in purple). More than 7.1 trillion gallons of rain fell during these storm events.

CHALLENGES IN ESTIMATING FLOOD RISK

No one knows when and where the next big flood will happen, but it is possible to estimate the impacts and likelihood of flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides estimates on the probability of flood risk. The most commonly used probability is the 1% annual chance event, which means there is about a 25% chance of a flood event occurring during the life of a 30-year mortgage.

FEMA also maps Special Flood Hazard Areas, where flooding is most likely to occur. Throughout the country, these flood probabilities and SFHAs are used to set minimum building regulations and flood insurance requirements.

FEMA is responsible for updating its maps every five years, but the agency struggles to keep up. A 2017 investigation by the Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General revealed that 58% of all FEMA flood maps are inaccurate or out of date. This makes it increasingly difficult for communities to be

well-informed about their true flood risk exposure.

FEMA's maps are based on past experience and do not include projections of future conditions, such as sea level rise, changes in rainfall and population growth.

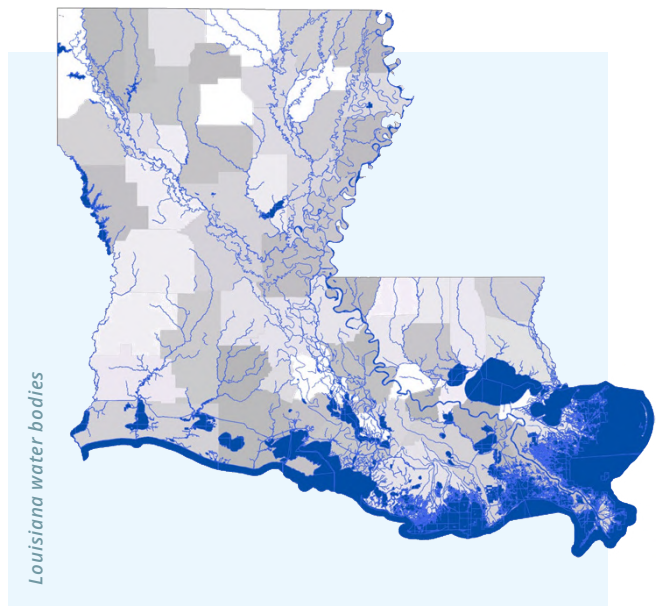
There are other estimates and standards associated with flood risk. Some public and private land use decisions are based on standards of risk that are different from FEMA's SFHAs. For instance, drainage systems, subdivision designs and levee protection systems use standards of flood risk reduction that are different from FEMA's and from each other's. In a broad and confusing context like this, it is important for Louisiana residents and leaders to take nothing for granted and base their decisions on the best available science and data.



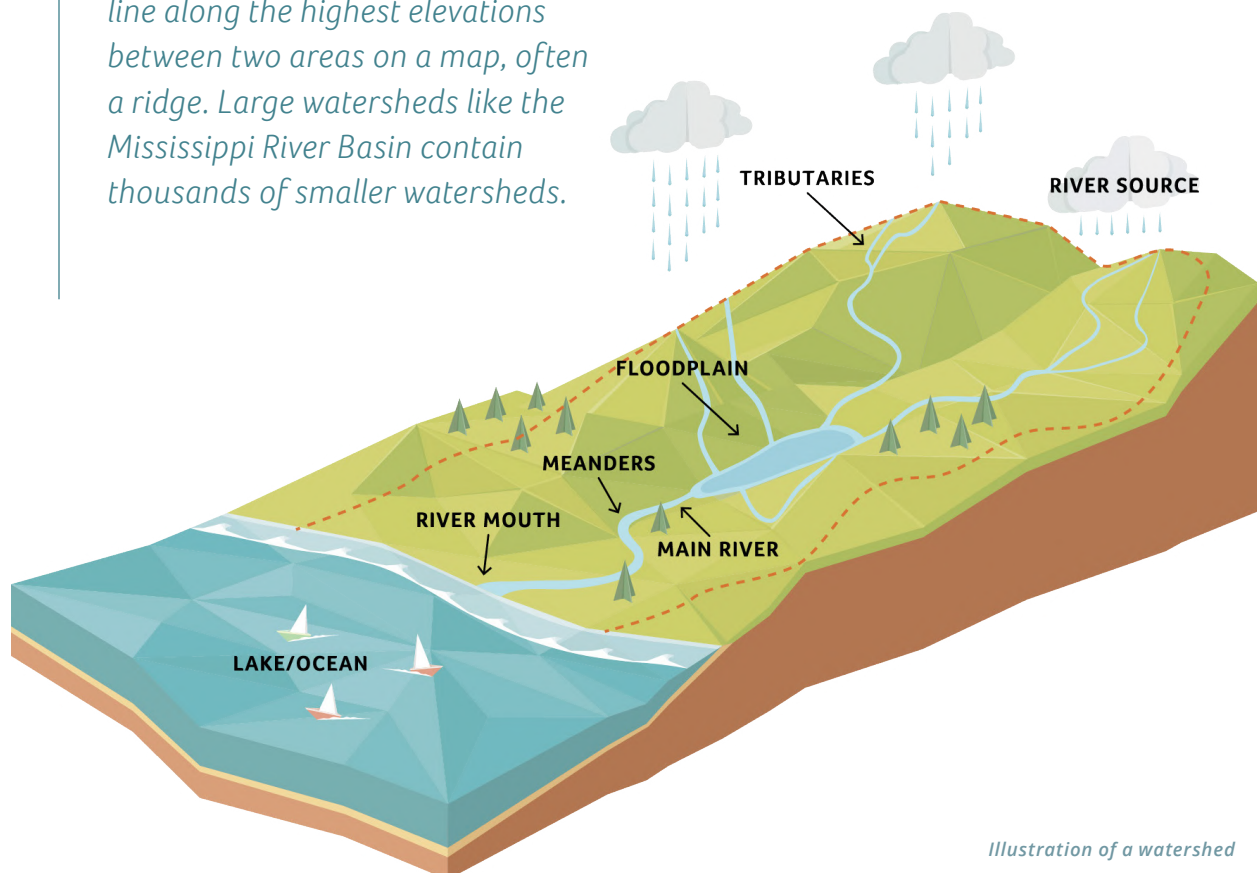
2. Science-based Decision Making

A complicated water environment

In addition to heavy rainfall and flat terrain, another aspect of Louisiana's natural landscape creates additional challenges for flood mitigation: The state is home to an abundance of waterbodies—rivers, streams, lakes and bayous.



A watershed, also referred to as a drainage basin or catchment, is defined as an area of land that drains all streams and rainfall to a common outlet, such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a river or any point along a stream channel. It is a land feature that can be identified by tracing a line along the highest elevations between two areas on a map, often a ridge. Large watersheds like the Mississippi River Basin contain thousands of smaller watersheds.



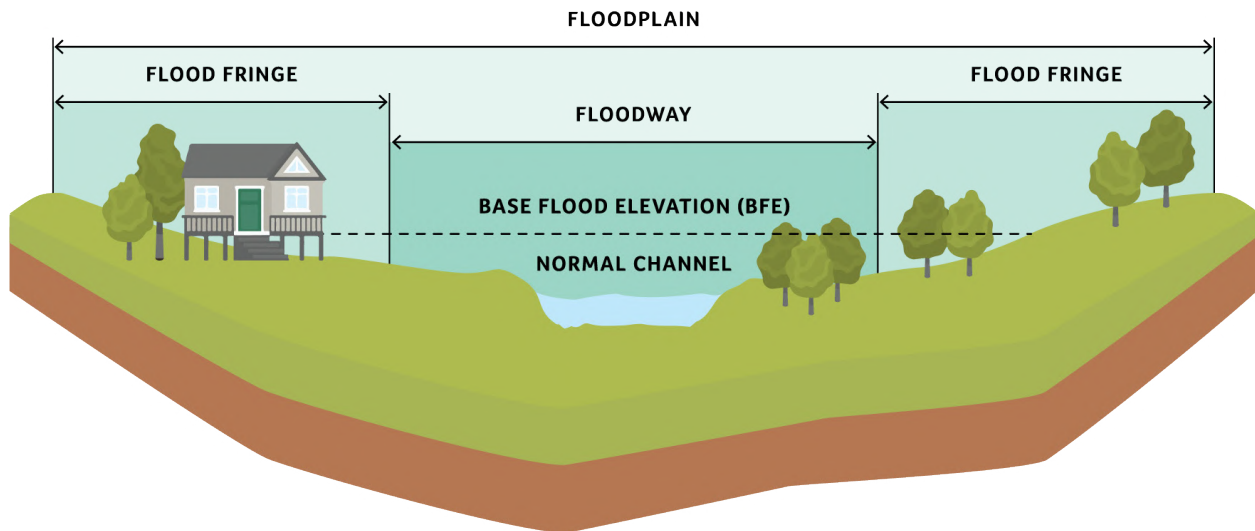


Illustration of a floodplain

A floodplain is defined as any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters from any source.

Water movement between and among these water bodies is highly sensitive to change. This means that filling or removing forested areas, or putting in a small berm, can have a big impact on an area's overall drainage. This complexity has a number of implications.

- It is exceedingly difficult to predict how water will flow and be absorbed throughout Louisiana's vast landscape. In some areas, such as where rivers meet the coast, water can flow in one direction sometimes and in the opposite direction at other times.
- It is also difficult to predict the impact of flood mitigation efforts. Even something as apparently minor as bringing in or moving dirt can have significant impacts over time at local and regional

scales. These changes to natural features can contribute to the state's existing flood challenges, especially if the changes are misunderstood, unintentionally altered or engineered in isolation.

- Well-meaning but uncoordinated actions can have negative effects on neighboring communities that had no role in a project. Sometimes the adverse impacts involve water quality and natural ecosystems, affecting fish, fowl and other wildlife.
- LWI considers two traditional approaches— watershed management and floodplain management—together within broader watershed boundaries.

For more information on H&H modeling, visit watershed.la.gov/modeling-program.

APPLYING HYDROLOGIC AND HYDRAULIC MODELING

Part of LWI's goal is to improve our understanding of these cumulative impacts through watershed modeling. Hydrologic and hydraulic modeling (H&H modeling) uses computer software to simulate the flow of rainfall runoff and predict the rise of stream and river water levels and potential flooding. These models could also be used to evaluate flood mitigation plans, policies and projects.

LWI's statewide **Watershed Monitoring, Mapping and Modeling program** builds H&H models to help us understand flood risks. The LWI modeling program is underway and statewide H&H models are anticipated to be complete by 2023.

The primary objectives of the modeling program are:

- Use the best available science and objective data
- Enable decision-makers to study the feasibility and impact of flood mitigation measures
- Assess flood risks, including adverse impacts and consequences of mitigation efforts
- Guide decisions involving future developments and sustainable community growth
- Evaluate proposed projects, watershed management strategies and policies

For more information on H&H modeling, visit watershed.la.gov/modeling-program.



Bogue Chitto, Franklinton

3. Regional Management

Political boundaries do not align with watersheds

Historically, the state's system of water management has been based on political boundaries, such as parishes, municipalities and other governmental entities like drainage and levee districts. These existing political authorities are either highly fragmented or overlap. There is no water management framework in place that can both adequately understand and resolve mounting flood risk statewide.

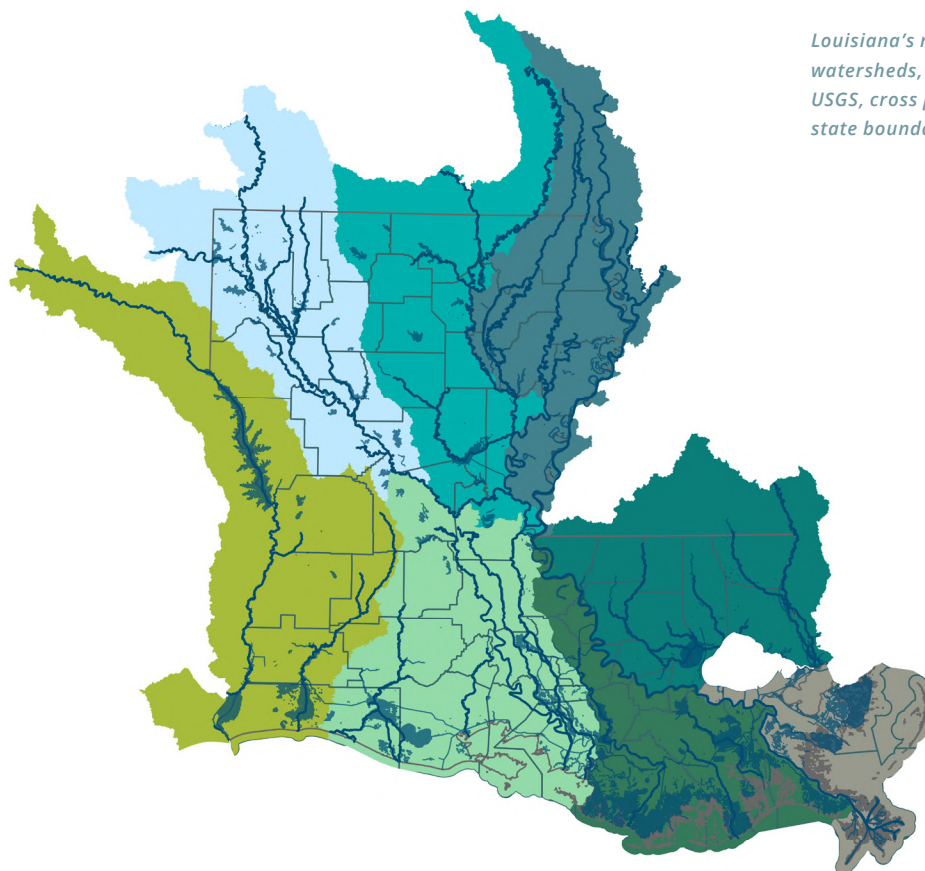
SCR 39 of the 2013 Regular Session requested a comprehensive study and evaluation of organizations with flood control responsibilities. The resulting [report](#) stated that:

- More than 250 governmental entities have legal authority over surface water in Louisiana. Of these, state law created about 75, including the state's 26 levee districts.

- Some entities are within one area of a parish, some align with parish boundaries and others cross a number of parishes.
- These entities present challenges as the state judiciously works to manage and regulate water resources and protect communities from hurricanes and floods.

The existing ways we manage water locally lack mechanisms or processes to assess and resolve the effects of projects and plans on neighboring communities. Without these mechanisms in place, it is difficult to collaborate across jurisdictions to reduce regional flood risk and avoid negative impacts to neighboring parishes.

In reality, water in Louisiana moves within large river systems that require regional management. Recent flood events and increasing rainfall intensity demonstrate that more must be done to address flood risk across political boundaries, acknowledging that actions in one community can affect entire ecosystems.



Louisiana's major watersheds, defined by USGS, cross parish and state boundaries.

A REGIONAL SOLUTION

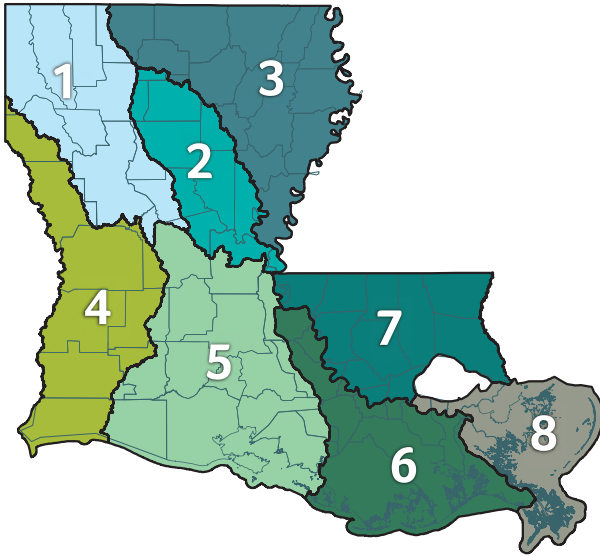


Illustration of LWI watershed regions

In August 2019, as part of its Regional Capacity Building Grant program, LWI started working with regional partners to isolate and develop appropriate regional watershed management responsibilities. The work aimed to create stable, long-term regional watershed coalitions or management entities that are capable of performing watershed-based floodplain management activities to reduce statewide flood risk. To facilitate this work, eight watershed regions have been identified based on how water naturally moves throughout the state. Each region formed a regional steering committee to provide recommendations in support of long-term regional watershed management activities.

Other goals of the regional steering committees include, but are not limited to:

- Planning and prioritizing flood mitigation projects
- Promoting/adopting higher development standards
- Enhancing the capacity of local floodplain management and mitigation efforts
- Developing, maintaining and using a regional watershed project list to advance long-term capital improvement planning

Over the past year, the state and its local and regional partners met to form regional recommendations for long-term watershed management, which focused on three main regional considerations:

- **Accountability:** Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- **Authority:** Decision-makers are empowered to face difficult decisions.
- **Process:** Decision-making is standardized and based on best practices.

For more information on the RCBG program, visit watershed.la.gov/rcbg-program.



Bayou Teche, Franklin

4. CDBG-MIT Grant

Federal funding for mitigation activities in Louisiana

In February 2018, Congress and the president enacted the Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act of 2018, which included a \$1.2 billion Community Development Block Grant-Mitigation allocation for Louisiana flood risk reduction.

In September 2020, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved LWI's plan for expending the \$1.2 billion. The state's Master Action Plan can be viewed in full at watershed.la.gov/action-plan.

For more information on watershed projects, visit watershed.la.gov/round-1-projects.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL WATERSHED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS	\$571 million
STATE WATERSHED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS	\$328 million
WATERSHED MONITORING, MAPPING AND MODELING	\$146 million
NON-FEDERAL COST SHARE ASSISTANCE	\$97 million
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	\$49 million
WATERSHED POLICY, PLANNING AND LOCAL CAPACITY ASSISTANCE	\$24 million

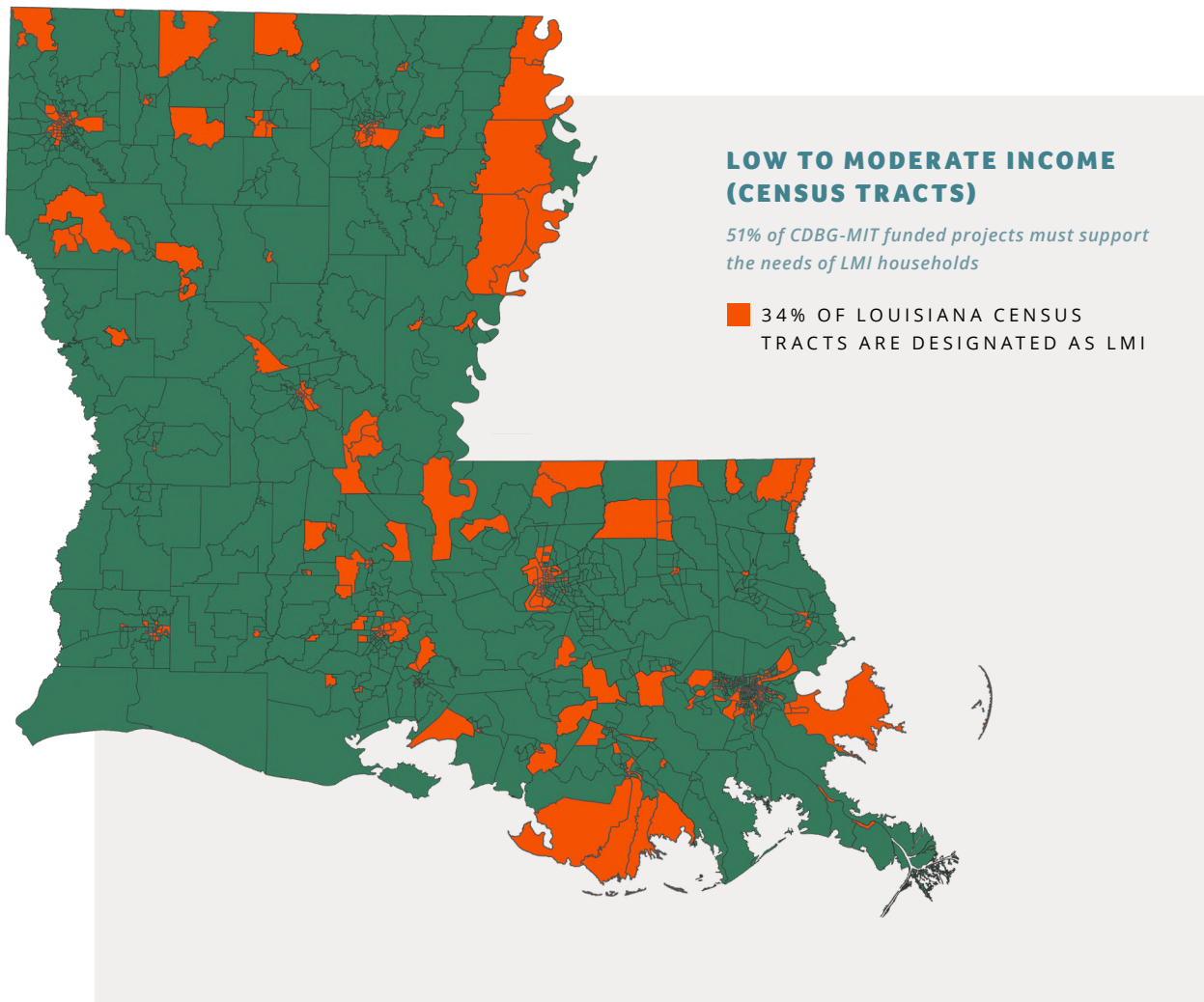
The allocated \$1.2 billion represents an immediate opportunity for the state to change how it responds and prepares for disasters, incentivizing change through project development, planning and modeling activities pursued by LWI.

5. Special Attention Given to Disadvantaged Communities

Low-cost land is usually located in high flood risk areas.

Disadvantaged populations have historically settled on lower-cost lands in Louisiana that were also lower in elevation, swampy or otherwise prone to flooding. This means families with limited resources typically flood more frequently and are more hard-pressed to recover after flooding.

We cannot address this disparity, because it is too long-held, but we can work to lessen its impacts and resolve to avoid it further within disadvantaged communities through the use of these funds. State leadership supports and puts special emphasis on reducing flood risk for disadvantaged communities. This is also a HUD priority: 51% of the projects funded by the CDBG-MIT program must support the needs of low-to-moderate-income households. In Louisiana, 34% of census tracts are designated as LMI.



6. Attention to the Needs of Parishes Most Impacted and Distressed by the 2016 Floods

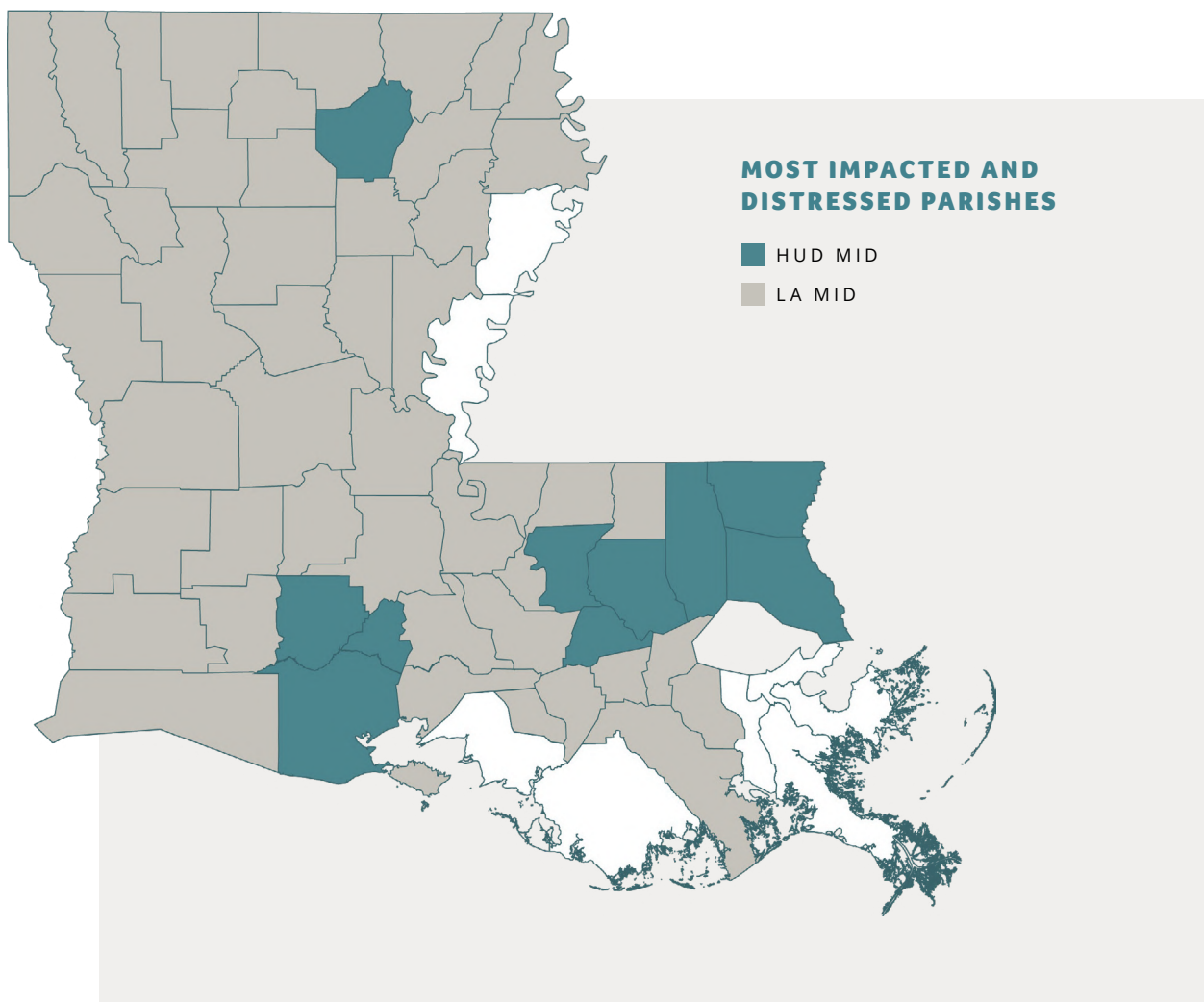
Our focus in spending these funds

Of the \$1.2 billion CDBG-MIT funds made available, 1) Half must benefit the 10 HUD-identified **most impacted and distressed areas which are Acadia, Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Livingston, Ouachita, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Vermilion and Washington parishes**; and (2) More than half (51%) need to benefit LMI populations.

HUD requires that any additional state-identified

MID areas must be determined using quantifiable and verifiable data. The state identified and HUD approved 46 additional MID areas. These areas were selected based on parishes receiving federal disaster declarations as a result of either the March or August 2016 floods.

The following areas are **not** identified as a HUD or state MID: **Concordia, Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Mary, Tensas and Terrebonne parishes**. These areas may receive planning funds, but project funds spent in these areas **must benefit a MID**. These areas are included in statewide modeling, mapping, monitoring and planning efforts.



7. Nature-based Solutions

Working with Nature

Louisiana's vast network of natural ecosystems protects and enhances the state's resilience to floods and other natural hazards. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits of our landscape, it is important to note the significant role our natural resources play in absorbing and detaining floodwaters, enhancing water quality, recharging aquifers and buffering the impact of storms and wind events.

Recent research in civil engineering, biology and hydrology confirms that natural features are not only worth protecting, but can be part of the solution for reducing flood risk. Restoring or preserving floodplains, for instance, can help slow and store rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding. Rain gardens and other forms of green infrastructure can store stormwater in urban settings, providing recreational and economic benefits.

These types of strategies, which use nature to enhance the community, restore water quality and slow storm water, are called nature-based solutions.



Nature-based solutions weave natural features and processes into community landscapes through planning, design and engineering practices. These practices can be used in built environments, such as stormwater parks, or in natural environments, such as land conservation. Nature-based solutions offer hazard mitigation and social, environmental and economic benefits. These benefits decrease vulnerability to climate change, sustain livelihoods, improve food security and provide carbon sequestration. Nature-based solutions make use of natural processes to decrease flood risk and improve water quality.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIALS



Ouachita River, Monroe

What We Do

Outreach and engagement are key activities at LWI. Outreach activities keep residents informed about ongoing opportunities and program decision-making, which could affect the way the state manages water for generations to come. Engagement activities actively solicit and consider input about program direction from residents.

O&E is important for a number of reasons:

- O&E is important for a number of reasons: O&E is a priority of LWI leadership—including the governor, state legislature, agency and department heads, program managers and regional staff.
- O&E makes use of experience with governmental programs, which demonstrate better outcomes as a result of public involvement.

As a part of the O&E effort, LWI staff conducts and manages the following:

- Listening tours
- Opinion polls
- Public participation meetings
- Zoom meetings
- Webinars

- Comment box at watershed.la.gov/contact
- Website at watershed.la.gov with updates, meeting calendar, frequently asked questions and resource library
- Social media presence at:
 - + facebook.com/lawatershedinitiative
 - + twitter.com/lawatershed
 - + linkedin.com/company/louisiana-watershed-initiative
 - + instagram.com/lawatershed



City Park, New Orleans

What You Can Do

To help ensure the success of LWI's long-term resilience objectives, the state encourages public officials and stakeholders to assume these responsibilities:

- 1 Adopt core communication values
- 2 Become familiar with the LWI program
- 3 Become part of the story
- 4 Support local champions
- 5 Lead public discussions to increase understanding of higher standards and mitigation strategies
- 6 Request one-on-one briefings with LWI staff

1. ADOPT CORE COMMUNICATION VALUES

To enable lasting change, it is necessary to build confidence in local and state government decision-making by making the process transparent, equitable, engaging and empowering. When using this toolkit, either via sharing or repurposing its information, all partnering agencies, stakeholders and interested parties should embrace the following communication values:

- Clarity and objectivity—Science, engineering and objective data must inform water-management policy, be used to secure funding for flood risk reduction projects and guide the implementation of innovative and demonstrative projects. The use of decision-support tools and standard decision-making methodologies is critical to driving difficult choices that are understood by all.
- Two-way communication—Ongoing dialogue and stakeholder input in flood risk discussions are critical to the success of LWI. Only through an ongoing dialogue can the state and its regional partners achieve a comprehensive understanding of risk and sustainable solutions in each of Louisiana's watersheds.
- Trust and equity—The state and its partners must build the LWI program upon trust and equity. From project selection and policy development to data sharing and agency coordination, all decisions must be transparent and supported by open communication with all stakeholders empowered as partners.

2. BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE LWI PROGRAM

An effective ambassador for LWI should be informed about the basic objectives and organization of the program. This O&E toolkit contains most of what you need to know, but you can also:

- Email LWI staff at watershed@la.gov
- Visit the LWI website at watershed.la.gov, especially the FAQ page at watershed.la.gov/faq
- Follow LWI on social media:
 - + [facebook.com/lawatershedinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/lawatershedinitiative)
 - + twitter.com/lawatershed
 - + [linkedin.com/company/louisiana-watershed-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/louisiana-watershed-initiative)
 - + [instagram.com/lawatershed](https://www.instagram.com/lawatershed)
- Join the LWI contact list at watershed.la.gov/get-involved. Encourage your friends and colleagues to add their names as well. Neither LWI nor its partners will share your information outside the program.

3. BECOME PART OF THE STORY

As a Louisiana leader, flood awareness and flood risk reduction are part of your responsibility. If you are a public official, a public employee or a community leader, your constituents look to you for the best information about flood risk and flood risk reduction. You need to inform them what LWI is doing on their behalf.

The basic message is not complex; it is easy to master and share. To communicate this work in one sentence, you can say, “The Louisiana Watershed Initiative is proactively defending the state against future flood risk to protect our communities and safeguard our children’s future.” LWI encourages you to pass this on whenever you think it is appropriate.

You can also provide LWI with news or a perspective of your own. Please send items of potential interest to watershed@la.gov. We will get back to you to discuss the details.

If you are asked by journalists to comment on flood risk reduction activities in your area and would like assistance with messaging, feel free to contact LWI

staff. We will be glad to help you.

4. SUPPORT LOCAL CHAMPIONS

You are not alone. Already, there are other people in your community who are capable, well-connected and motivated to do something about flood mitigation. They might be local floodplain managers or other public employees (e.g., public works staff). They might come from philanthropic or environmental organizations or educational institutions. Bankers, realtors and mortgage brokers might already be involved as well. You can find solid contacts among leaders of community and neighborhood organizations, perhaps in areas that have flooded in the recent past.

If you have not already done so, learn who these champions are. Figure out ways to work together and communicate the key program activities underway.



Red River, Campti

5. LEAD PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF HIGHER STANDARDS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Do not wait until after a flood event has occurred; obtain information and take action now to help reduce flood risk ahead of the next disaster.

Leaders often face difficult decisions about flood risk reduction and prevention during and after heavy rainfall and hurricane events.

- However, this is when floods have damaged homes and businesses and when residents and business owners are trying to focus on returning to normal life.
- This is arguably the worst time to discuss risk and ways to improve long-term resilience to disasters. Impacted residents, families and businesses are traumatized and in the process of recovery. They are looking for ways to fix their situation as soon as possible.

By being informed and informing others, leaders can

help get recovery dollars flowing as soon as possible and avoid rebuilding to pre-storm design standards. To break this perpetual cycle of disaster and recovery, **long-term resilience must be proactive**. It must (1) consider community willingness to accept the cost, disruption and instability that comes with a heightened flood risk and (2) adjust its standards to reflect that risk. It is inevitable that decisions regarding flood risk become public issues. This is a good thing; only residents and their representatives can make decisions about the level of flood risk they are willing to assume. Only residents and their representatives can make decisions about land use, building and zoning standards.

As a Louisiana leader, you are in a position to discuss the issue of flood risk with your constituents and stakeholders. You can decide when and how, but this issue will not go away on its own. You can be a key part of the solution.

6. REQUEST ONE-ON-ONE BRIEFINGS WITH LWI STAFF

You can reach us at watershed@la.gov. We would love to hear from you and will be delighted to help.



Lake Martin, Breaux Bridge

BACKGROUND ESSENTIALS



Bayou Contraband, Lake Charles

1. Recent Legislative History

After the Great Floods of 2016, and in tandem with regional and local partners, Louisiana recognized that investments in better data, scientific tools and regional authorities were necessary to deal with the fact that actions taken in one community can impact flood risk throughout an entire region. In response to the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, the state began to analyze how watershed-based approaches could be incorporated into traditional floodplain management practices.

Soon after, Gov. John Bel Edwards identified watershed-based floodplain management as a new approach to increase community and regional resilience to flooding. The approach involved managing, mitigating and adapting to future flood risk through science, engineering and objective decision-making.

In August 2018, Gov. Edwards launched the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. LWI considers two traditional approaches—watershed management and floodplain management—each within broader watershed boundaries.

This initiative represents a comprehensive approach to surface water management that considers both the natural functions of floodplains and land use decisions that affect our built environments.

Also in 2018, Congress allocated \$1.2 billion in CDBG-MIT funds to Louisiana for mitigation activities as specified in Public Law 115-123 and FR-6109-N-02. This CDBG-MIT allocation presents an extraordinary opportunity to implement the flood risk reduction and mitigation efforts advanced by LWI.

In September 2020, HUD approved Louisiana's Action Plan for the expenditure of the CDBG-MIT funds over a period of 12 years, but the state aims to begin closing out grants in year 10.

For more background information, visit LWI's resource library watershed.la.gov/resources-library.



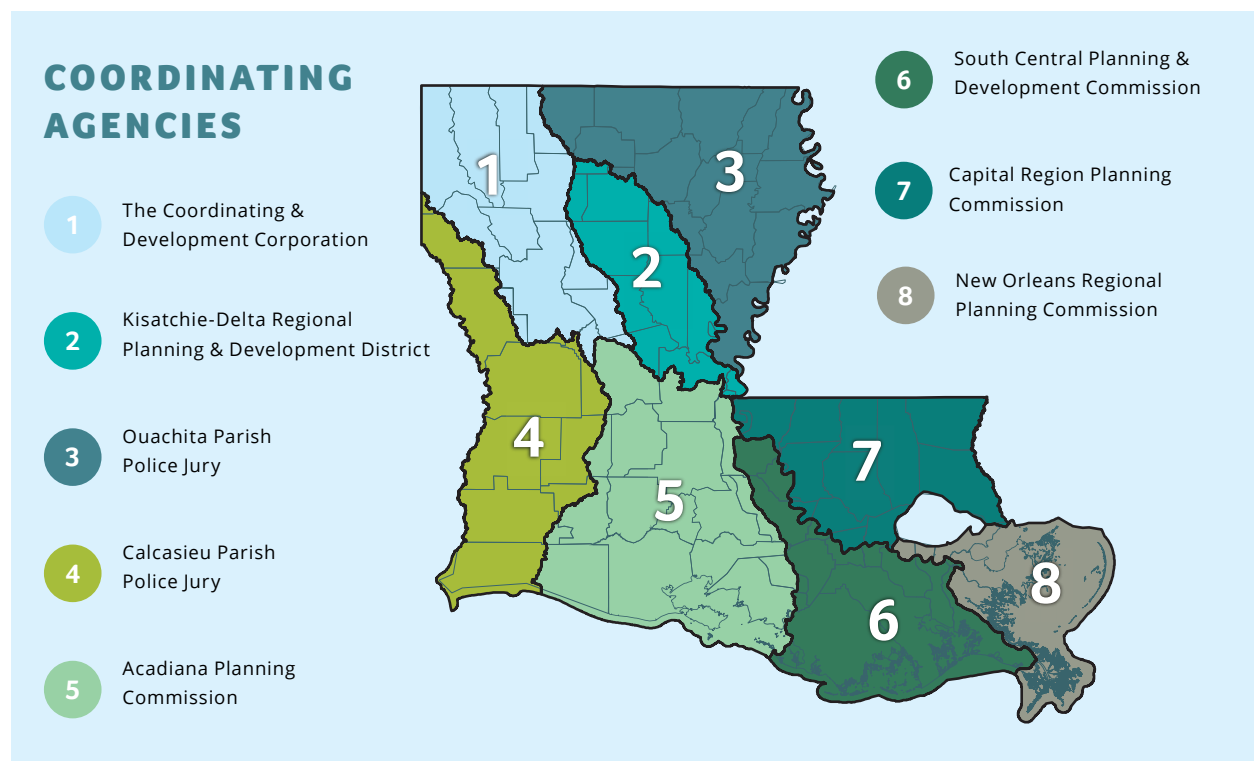
2. Administrative Structures

Executive Order JBE 2018-16 created the Council on Watershed Management to provide oversight of LWI's work.

The council is designed to increase interagency coordination among five state agencies: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, Department of Transportation and Development, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Office of Community Development.



CPRA is the current council chair and GOHSEP is the vice chair. LWI has recognized eight watershed regions to facilitate program objectives. Each region has been awarded \$400,000 over three years to support its work toward comprehensive watershed management. A map of the eight regions is included below.



To learn more, go to watershed.la.gov/watershed-regions.

In the coming year, eight temporary regional steering committees will dissolve and be replaced by eight permanent regional watershed coalitions or management entities to support long-term regional watershed management. The RSCs and the state will propose recommendations to establish

the watershed coalitions' responsibilities and authorities.

Regional fiscal agents and watershed coordinators are responsible for program administration. They are supported by LWI staff who serve as points of contact for each region.

OCD manages day-to-day operations for LWI, including overall program management.

3. The Role of FEMA

FEMA is responsible for managing disaster recovery efforts when needs exceed local and state capacity, mapping the nation's hazardous flood areas and managing the National Flood Insurance Program.

LWI and its partners must have a solid understanding of FEMA's mapping products.

FEMA's floodplain maps:

- Provide a national basis for flood insurance rates and floodplain management regulations
- Inform mapped communities about their flood vulnerability
- Impact development of the built environment

FEMA identifies Special Flood Hazard Areas as land covered by floods during a 1% annual event.

To help reduce the impacts of future flood events in SFHAs, homeowners with a federally backed mortgage must purchase flood insurance and adhere to higher building standards and location restrictions, such as anchoring, using wind resistant building materials, elevating homes, not building in the floodway, etc.

Ask these questions considering flood risk maps:

- Would you accept living in a town that is likely to flood once in a lifetime?
- Would you consider a once-in-30-year flood risk to be too high?
- Would knowing that a flood event could be weathered by putting on some rubber boots cause you to alter your decision-making?
- If you knew flood depths could reach six feet, and this was likely to happen at least once in 30 years, would this make a difference in your decision-making?

While complicated, these distinctions have an enormous impact on the way we consider, fund and mitigate flood risk nationwide.

What is a 1% and 0.2% annual chance event and how does it affect me?

It is important to know how often flooding is likely to occur and how bad it is likely to be. For this reason, FEMA calculates and represents future flood risk as a probability associated with storm severity and likelihood of occurrence.

Consider the 1% storm as less severe, but more likely to happen—about 25% chance during the life of a 30-year mortgage. Recovery professionals and media often refer to the 1% storm as the 100-year storm, but this can be misleading because these types of storms occur more often. Consequently, the use of the term 100-year storm is falling out of favor.

Also, consider the 0.2% storm as more severe and arguably less likely to happen. Recovery professionals and media often refer to the 0.2% storm as the 500-year storm, but this can be misleading because these types of storms occur more often.

Today, flood zone standards are often set to the 1% storm event, which often underrepresents risk and causes communities to be underprepared.

4. The Role of USACE

USACE has coordinated flood risk reduction projects on major river systems throughout the nation, such as the Mississippi River, since 1824. Today, the duties of the Mississippi Valley Division include many Louisiana projects that control water flow and protect the state from flooding.

LWI is coordinating with USACE in the development of the statewide H&H models and implementation of watershed projects to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of efforts.

Part Two: The Tools

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LWI OVERVIEW



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

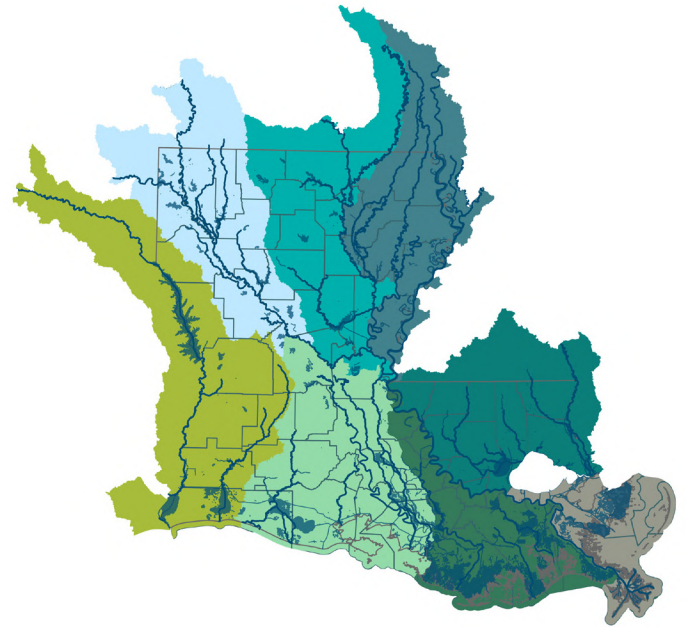
Proactive Flood Defense

THE CHALLENGE

Louisiana's flood risk is changing.

Flash flooding is on the rise, resulting in rivers spilling over their banks and into our communities more frequently. The widespread disaster of the Great Floods of 2016 demonstrated how susceptible our landscape is to severe flooding. In fact, over the past two decades, Louisiana has experienced 28 declared flood and hurricane related disasters. Every parish in the state has been impacted by one or more of these events, costing more than \$16 billion in public assistance.

To proactively defend Louisiana against future flood risk, we must build better tools to help us understand how water flows over the land and through our communities. When it rains, gravity carries storm water to the lowest point in the landscape, which is called a watershed. Since flooding doesn't follow political boundaries, the Louisiana Watershed Initiative uses data and science to make better decisions about floodplain management.

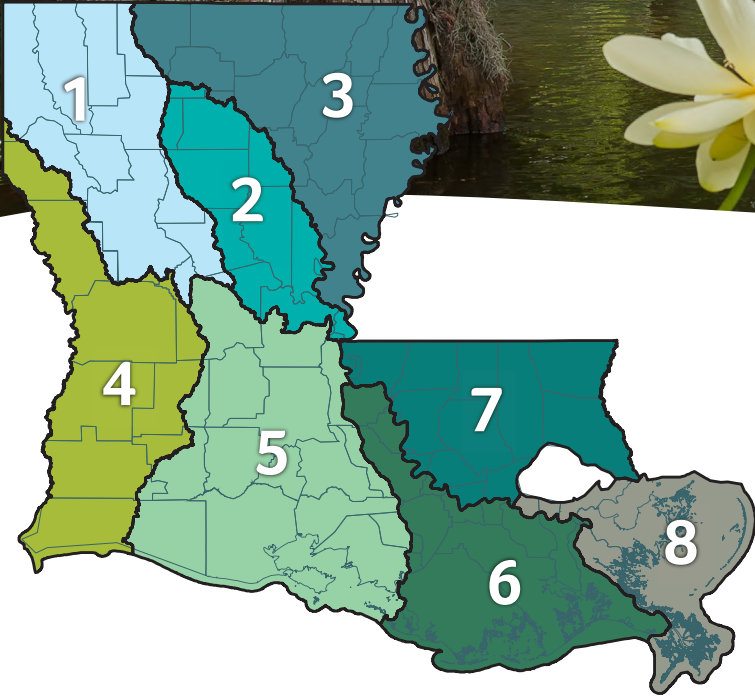


Louisiana's major watersheds, defined by USGS, cross parish and state boundaries.



PROVIDE TOOLS • EMPOWER COMMUNITIES • MANAGE FLOOD RISK

SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE



In August 2019, the Council of Watershed Management agreed to use these eight watershed regions as a starting point to coordinate efforts among parishes and distribute project funds. The boundaries are subject to change based on regional input.

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative is developing computer models to better understand flood risk and help with the selection of projects best suited for investment in each watershed region. The state will make investments in a nonpolitical and transparent way to comprehensively reduce flood vulnerability.

By investing in projects that build statewide flood defense, Louisiana will better protect and safeguard our communities and culture for generations to come, as well as provide an example for other states facing similar flood risk challenges.

THE OPPORTUNITY

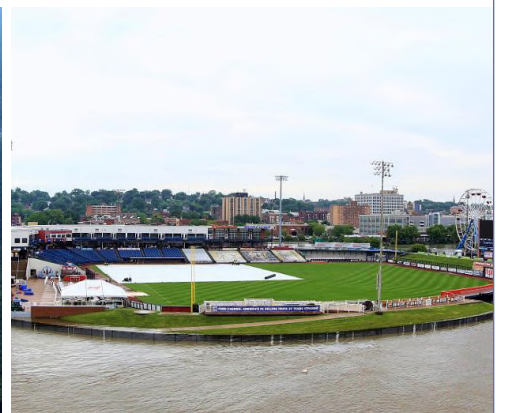
THE INSPIRATION



The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, AL
The site is designed to mimic the natural contours of the landscape and planted with native vegetation to manage storm water.



The Nature Conservancy's Mollicy Farms Floodplain Reconnection Project in Morehouse Parish, Louisiana
Mollicy Farms was restored and reconnected to the natural floodplain along the Ouachita River.



Woodmen Park in Davenport, Iowa
The park's design allows for the Mississippi River to flood its banks leaving the baseball field dry and usable.

Stay up to date on our progress:

WATERSHED PROJECTS GRANT PROGRAM



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

Local and Regional - Round 1

\$100 M
for local and
regional projects



\$60 M + \$40 M
in projects
selected by
the state

in projects
selected by
regions
(\$5 million per
watershed region)

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO?

The goal of the Round 1 program is to fund low-risk, high-impact projects that will significantly reduce regional flood risk and improve the natural functions of floodplains, without adversely impacting surrounding communities. The program is designed to leverage local and regional input in project selection, thus encouraging regional collaboration for the prioritization of projects.

Eligible projects include:

- Floodplain restoration and preservation
- Flood storage and stormwater management
- Flood protection and mitigation for critical facilities and infrastructure
- Non-structural flood mitigation, including elevation and relocation
- Innovative or replicable flood risk reduction activities



A Competitive Funding Opportunity

The highest-scoring projects, consistent with LWI's long-term resilience objectives, will be funded.

The First of Multiple Rounds of Funding

Subsequent rounds will make more than \$470 million in total project funding available.

FUTURE ROUNDS OF FUNDING WILL BE BASED ON

LWI investments in data and watershed models to guide decision-making

Statewide and regional watershed management plans

Efforts to incentivize higher development standards

Best practices in regional watershed management



Bluebonnet storm water detention, Baton Rouge

This program is part of the state's Action Plan to spend \$1.2 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds. For more information, visit the Round 1 webpage at watershed.la.gov or email watershed@la.gov.

Stay up to date on our progress

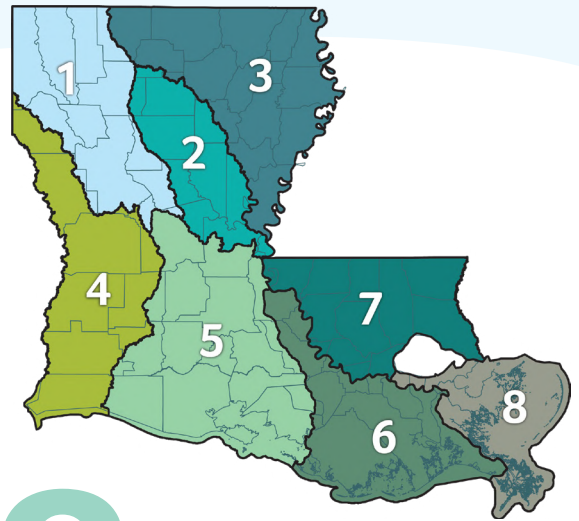
REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT PROGRAM



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO?

This three-year grant program is designed to help the state's eight provisional watershed regions build staff capacity for regional watershed management, as well as provide technical assistance to municipal partners. In each watershed region, the primary goal is to establish a long-term entity—a watershed coalition—responsible for regional watershed management activities that align with LWI's long-term resilience goals.



8

 watershed regions

In August 2019, the Council on Watershed Management recognized eight watershed regions to coordinate regional flood mitigation efforts organized around watershed boundaries.

\$400,000

grants awarded per region

The state awarded \$400,000 grants to each watershed region to support staff capacity and watershed coordination efforts.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Form one-year **regional steering committees**, which will develop work plans and ultimately recommend and implement long-term watershed coalitions.
- Ensure transparent, public **decision-making processes** based on data and science and using watershed models for project planning and development.
- Establish a long-term **watershed coalition** for regional watershed management, which includes developing watershed plans and supporting the implementation of projects, programs and policies.
- Support higher **development standards on a regional scale**, advancing regional flood risk reduction.
- Develop and maintain a **regional inventory of flood risk reduction projects** to evaluate cross-jurisdictional impacts and advance regional capital improvement planning.
- Establish **long-term capacity and funding** to continue watershed coordination beyond the life of the program.



Unprecedented & Transparent Local Engagement

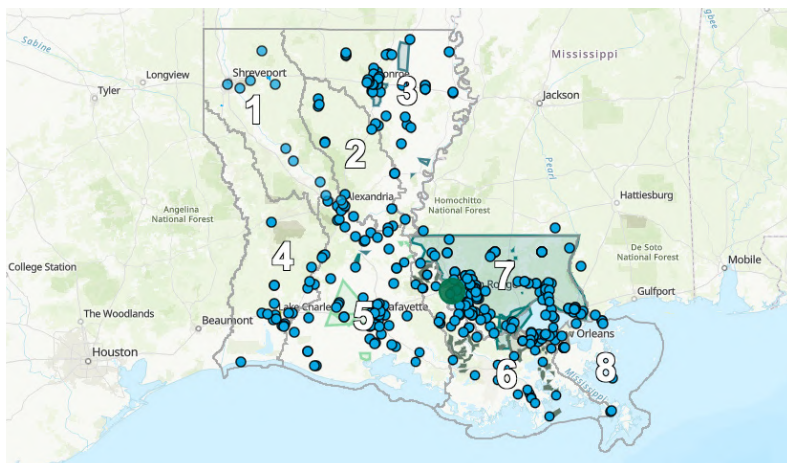
EQUITABLE & DIVERSE REPRESENTATION

RSC membership reflects the demographic diversity and interests of each region. Committee members include a mix of watershed professionals, such as floodplain managers and engineers, as well as community representatives drawn from diverse backgrounds, some of whom have strong ties to local institutions.

75
public
RSC
meetings
held in
year one

116 regional steering committee members throughout the state

ADVANCING REGIONAL FLOOD RISK REDUCTION THROUGH CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING



A capital improvement plan, typically created by a local or regional planning district that delivers a variety of federal, state and local services, helps organizations make good budgeting decisions for large projects and purchases. Each watershed region completed a project inventory so all regional steering committee members could see the universe of project needs and strategize about aligning capital improvements across jurisdictional boundaries. Multi-jurisdictional coordination is a best practice that can advance comprehensive flood risk reduction at a regional watershed scale.

Map (above) of 759 projects submitted for long-term consideration (as of January 2021)

STANDARDS SET BY THE STATE, CUSTOMIZED BY REGIONS

The RCBG program consists of partnerships between the state and regions, in which leadership roles are shared and collaborative, making consensus-building possible.

This program is part of the state's Action Plan to spend \$1.2 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds. For more information, visit the RCBG webpage at watershed.la.gov or email watershed@la.gov.

Stay up to date on our progress

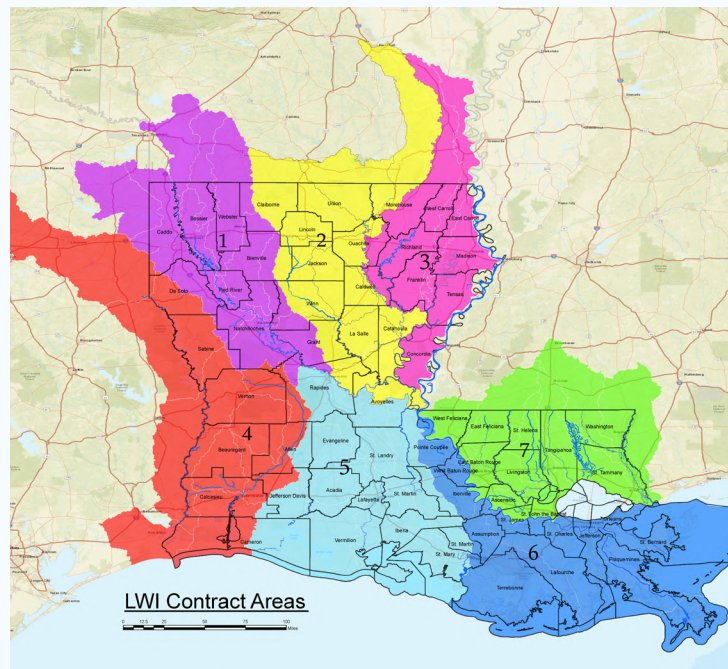
WATERSHED MONITORING, MAPPING AND MODELING PROGRAM



LOUISIANA
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE

This program addresses the need for enhanced data and watershed modeling to support objective, science-based decisions regarding rainfall, river levels and flood mitigation throughout the state. Robust data collection and modeling will help decision-makers select evidence-based flood risk reduction projects and encourage regional collaboration in pursuing long-term resilience.

\$145 million to support statewide effort



Modeling Key Points

MAJOR STATEWIDE EFFORT TO DEVELOP WATERSHED MODELS

The state is working with engineering experts to develop hydrologic and hydraulic models of major watersheds throughout Louisiana, in consultation with local and regional stakeholders. Once complete, the hydrologic and hydraulic models will support greater regional collaboration around shared water management challenges and build an objective, science-based understanding of how projects, policies and other measures will reduce flood risk.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

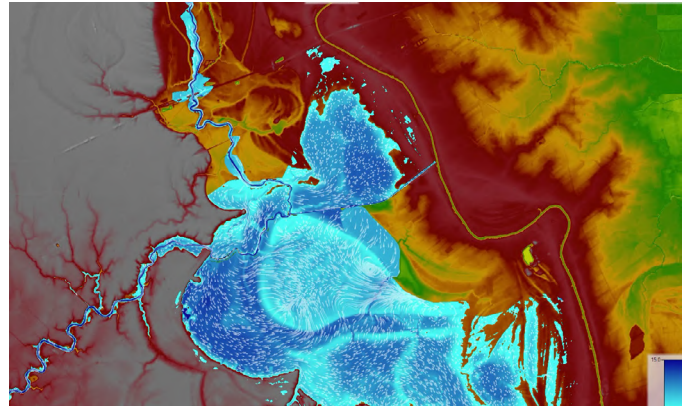
- Generate and use the best available science and objective data to inform decisions
- Assess flood risks, including adverse impacts and consequences of mitigation efforts
- Evaluate proposed projects, watershed management strategies and policies
- Enable decision-makers to study the feasibility and impact of flood mitigation measures using shared hydrologic data
- Guide decisions involving future developments, sustainable community growth and projected costs

TIMELINE

All models are anticipated to be complete by 2023.

STRONG COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Geological Survey
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



H&H models use computer software to simulate the flow of rainfall runoff and predict the rise of water levels and flooding. The models can also evaluate flood mitigation plans, policies and projects.

Monitoring Key Points

ENHANCING THE RIVER & RAIN GAUGE NETWORK

Based on input from local and regional stakeholders, LWI designed an enhanced gauge network in areas where additional gauges are needed. This effort was accomplished in collaboration with researchers from UL Lafayette and Tulane University; technical experts from USGS and NOAA; and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

\$15 million
for river and rain
gauge network
improvements

**up to 100
new gauges**
to be installed
over six years

Mapping Key Points

The data collected from the watershed monitoring and modeling activities can be used to create updated flood risk maps to enhance regional and community hazard mitigation planning efforts.

This program is part of the state's Action Plan to spend \$1.2 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds. For more information, visit the modeling webpage at watershed.la.gov or email watershed@la.gov.

Stay up to date on our progress

STATE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS



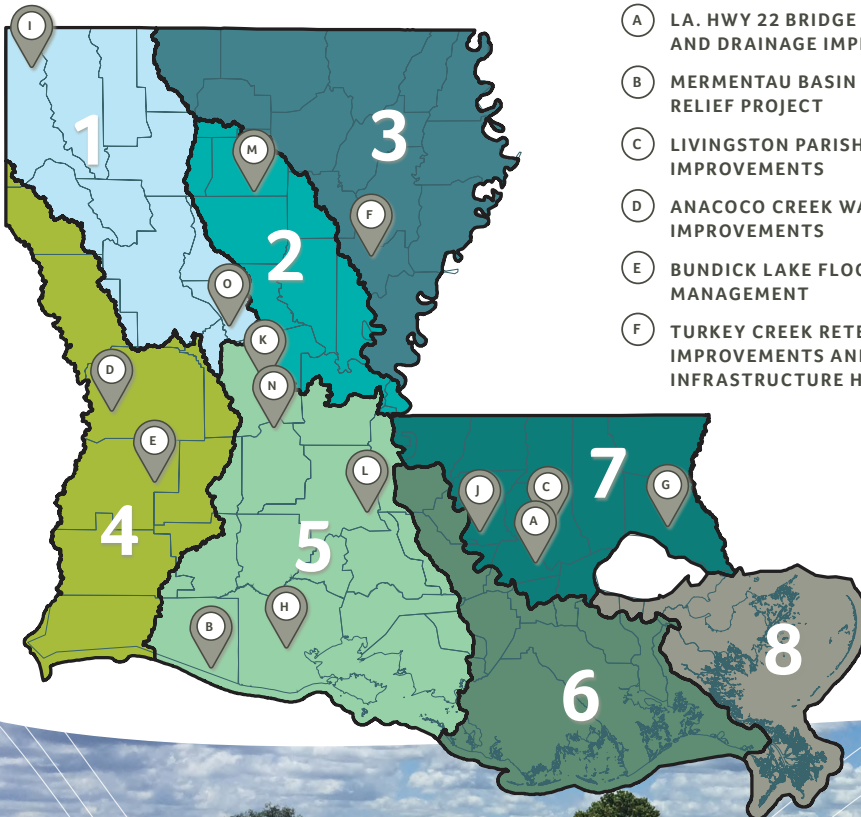
WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO?

In 2020, the Louisiana Watershed Initiative's coordinating state agencies selected 15 projects to receive \$163 million in federal funding. The projects were selected because they align with the missions of these agencies and the long-term resilience objectives of LWI. Specifically, the projects will reduce flood risk in communities throughout the state, store floodwaters in ways that enhance natural habitats and move people in flood-prone areas out of harm's way. As the granting agency of these funds, the Louisiana Office of Community Development vetted the projects to ensure they meet U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirements and align with the state's \$1.2 billion Action Plan for Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds.

\$163 million

in CDBG-MIT funds for 15 projects

State agencies coordinated to determine project awards that further agency missions and LWI resilience objectives. The Office of Community Development is the granting agency of these funds, responsible for determining project eligibility and alignment with the state's Action Plan.



- (A) LA. HWY 22 BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION AND DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS
- (B) MERMENAU BASIN INUNDATION RELIEF PROJECT
- (C) LIVINGSTON PARISH DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS
- (D) ANACOCO CREEK WATERSHED IMPROVEMENTS
- (E) BUNDICK LAKE FLOOD SURCHARGE MANAGEMENT
- (F) TURKEY CREEK RETENTION IMPROVEMENTS AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE HARDENING
- (G) ST. TAMMANY PARISH RESIDENTIAL BUYOUTS, ELEVATIONS OR RECONSTRUCTIONS
- (H) VERMILION PARISH RESIDENTIAL BUYOUTS, ELEVATIONS OR RECONSTRUCTIONS
- (I) BLACK BAYOU STRUCTURE HARDENING AND RUNOFF RETENTION IMPROVEMENTS
- (J) UNIVERSITY LAKES FLOOD RISK REDUCTION PROJECT
- (K) LSU ALEXANDRIA DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS
- (L) THREE MILE LAKE BACKWATER FLOOD REDUCTION
- (M) CANEY LAKE FLOOD SURCHARGE MANAGEMENT
- (N) BAYOU COCODRIE RUNOFF RETENTION AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
- (O) IATT LAKE DRAWDOWN IMPROVEMENTS



PROJECT TYPES

Project types include dam, flood control, drainage, critical infrastructure, nonstructural mitigation and capital improvements. All projects meet the following criteria:

- Reduce flood risk in a project benefit area or support analysis to optimize flood risk reduction for project in design stage
- Feature an eligible activity and advance a national objective
- Do not increase flood risk in surrounding areas
- Address project long-term operation and maintenance needs

PROJECT LOCATIONS AND AWARD AMOUNTS

PARISH	WATERSHED REGION	AWARD AMOUNT
ASCENSION AND LIVINGSTON PARISHES	Region 7	\$42 million
CAMERON AND VERMILION PARISHES	Regions 4 and 5	\$25 million
LIVINGSTON PARISH	Region 7	\$15 million
VERNON PARISH	Region 4	\$14.3 million
BEAUREGARD PARISH	Region 4	\$12.89 million
FRANKLIN PARISH	Region 3	\$10.2 million
ST. TAMMANY PARISH	Region 7	\$10 million
VERMILION PARISH	Region 5	\$10 million
CADDO PARISH	Region 1	\$6.6 million
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH	Region 7	\$5 million
RAPIDES PARISH	Region 5	\$3.7 million
ST. LANDRY PARISH	Region 5	\$2.97 million
JACKSON PARISH	Region 2	\$2.75 million
RAPIDES AND EVANGELINE PARISHES	Region 5	\$2.2 million
GRANT PARISH	Region 1	\$1.1 million

This program is part of the state's Action Plan to spend \$1.2 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds. For more information, visit watershed.la.gov or email watershed@la.gov.

Stay up to date on our progress

HOW TO GET NEWS COVERAGE

MEDIA PITCH GUIDELINES

The most common way to get news coverage is by **pitching your story to journalists**.

HOW TO FIND JOURNALISTS

- **Make** a media list of print reporters, broadcast journalists, radio personalities and social media influencers in your region. Use the list to identify specific journalists who cover your topic.
- **Send** a brief email that appreciates their work, introduces your role and explains the purpose of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.
- **Build** relationships by following journalists on their media outlets and social media channels. Share only their news articles, not their general posts. Don't comment.

HOW TO FIND THE NEWS HOOK

- **Announce** upcoming events or program developments. The media is in the business of reporting on current events.
- **Demonstrate** how your story will affect the audience or community. Make it as easy as possible by lining up interviews with experts and/or residents.
- **Break** new ground. Present data or research that has not been reported yet.
- **Tell** the other side of a story. Provide a counterargument or a new angle to the prevailing narrative on a popular topic, backed by data, results or experience.

HOW TO IDENTIFY DIFFERENT TYPES OF PITCHES

- **News release/media advisory:** When you have something to announce (for example, securing funding or signing a new partnership), email a news release to your entire media list. They may publish the release as is or write their own article. When you want reporters to cover an event or meeting, send them a media advisory with event details. **Always distribute news releases and media advisories in PDF format, not as a Word document.**
- **Guest post/letter to the editor:** When you write an article that is published under your name, you serve as a guest of the publication, not a journalist.
- **Guest appearance:** When you appear as a guest, such as on a podcast or broadcast news show, send your pitch to an editor instead of a reporter. It is an editor's job to greenlight a guest article, not a reporter's.
- **Expert commentary:** When a journalist asks you to provide a comment for a story, you will be representing LWI as an expert.



- **Profile:** When a journalist writes a story about you, it is called a profile piece.
- **Interview:** When you get a feature interview in a publication, such as a trade journal, you will represent the LWI program in more depth than if quoted as an expert in a more general story.

HOW TO WRITE THE PITCH

- **Email subject line:** Must contain the condensed news hook—what makes your story stand out.
- **Spelling:** Spell all names correctly. Triple-check all names.
- **First sentence:** The first sentence of the pitch should get straight to the point.
- **Remaining sentences:** Keep it short and factual, just a few paragraphs.
- **Attachments:** Add a link and/or attach relevant documents.
- **Contact information:** Make it easy for journalists to get in touch by providing your phone number and email address.
- **Tone:** Be professional. Avoid jokes and sarcasm. It's hard for friendliness to come across in an email, so use "please" and "thank you."

HOW TO FOLLOW UP

- This is a crucial step. Once you have sent your story pitch, wait a few days for a reply. If you don't hear back from the journalist, send a brief follow-up, but don't be pushy.
- A follow-up email runs something along the lines of, "I know you're busy, so just touching base to see if you've had a chance to look at the story idea below or if you have any questions on this."
- Most journalists are busy people with a lot of their plate, so they may have missed your first pitch email. Sending a follow-up email will bump your pitch to the top of their inbox.

For guidance or assistance in corresponding with media, email watershed@la.gov.

To download an editable Word version of this news release go to watershed.la.gov/resources-library



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (uppercase and bold)

Sept. 17, 2020 (use correct date)

Contact Marvin McGraw (replace with your name), marvin.mcgraw@la.gov (replace with your email)

STATE TO BEGIN FUNDING FLOOD MITIGATION PRIORITIES WITH \$1.2 BILLION LINE OF CREDIT (uppercase, bold, center justify)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development signed a grant agreement with the state today, establishing a \$1.2 billion line of credit in Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds. This agreement means the state can begin funding vital flood protection efforts throughout the state consistent with the state's Action Plan that HUD approved Feb. 20. (who, what, when, where) (left justify)

"This agreement marks a major milestone in our mission to create a more resilient Louisiana, which is especially relevant given the severe storm impacts from Hurricane Laura," Gov. John Bel Edwards said. "Since the devastating 2016 floods, we have worked diligently to build a statewide framework for reducing flood risk, which we have now with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. We are prepared to begin spending these long-awaited funds on programs and projects that address some of our state's most immediate flood mitigation priorities, as well as provide us the tools we need for a more resilient future." (quote from source)

The state's Action Plan for the \$1.2 billion grant details its approach to spending the funds on projects, data collection, watershed modeling and policy measures that align with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative's long-term resilience objectives. It includes an initial \$100 million funding opportunity for local and regional projects that are implementation-ready and will address immediate flood mitigation needs throughout Louisiana. The state and its watershed regions will select and award funding for these projects this winter. (how, why)

In addition to allocating \$100 million for implementation-ready flood mitigation projects, the state recently initiated comprehensive statewide watershed modeling efforts and is working with local and regional partners to develop flood risk reduction strategies specific to each of the state's watershed regions. (background)

For more information, visit the [LWI](https://www.lwi.la.gov) website or email watershed@la.gov. (for more information)

About the Louisiana Watershed Initiative (standard boilerplate)

Gov. John Bel Edwards established the **Council on Watershed Management** in 2018, which serves as the coordinated, interagency organization at the state level for watershed-based flood risk reduction. The **Louisiana Watershed Initiative** serves as the Council's programmatic arm, under which all related efforts operate.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

P.O. BOX 94095, BATON ROUGE, LA 70804-9095 | (225) 219-9600 | WATERSHED@LA.GOV | WATERSHED.LA.GOV

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (uppercase and bold)

Sept. 12, 2020 (use correct date)

Contact Marvin McGraw (replace with your name), marvin.mcgraw@la.gov (replace with your email)

MEDIA ADVISORY

(uppercase, bold, center justify)

WHO	Gov. John Bel Edwards and the Louisiana Watershed Initiative
WHAT	News conference announcing a grant agreement between the state of Louisiana and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development establishing a \$1.2 billion line of credit in Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds
WHEN	2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17
WHERE	Governor's Press Room, Louisiana State Capitol, Baton Rouge, LA
WHY	Agreement allows the state to begin funding vital flood protection efforts consistent with the state's Mitigation Action Plan, which HUD approved Feb. 20
HOW	State's Action Plan details spending of the funds on projects, data collection, watershed modeling and policy measures that align with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative's long-term resilience objectives

For more information, visit the [LWI](https://www.lwi.la.gov) website or email watershed@la.gov. (for more information)

About the Louisiana Watershed Initiative (standard boilerplate)

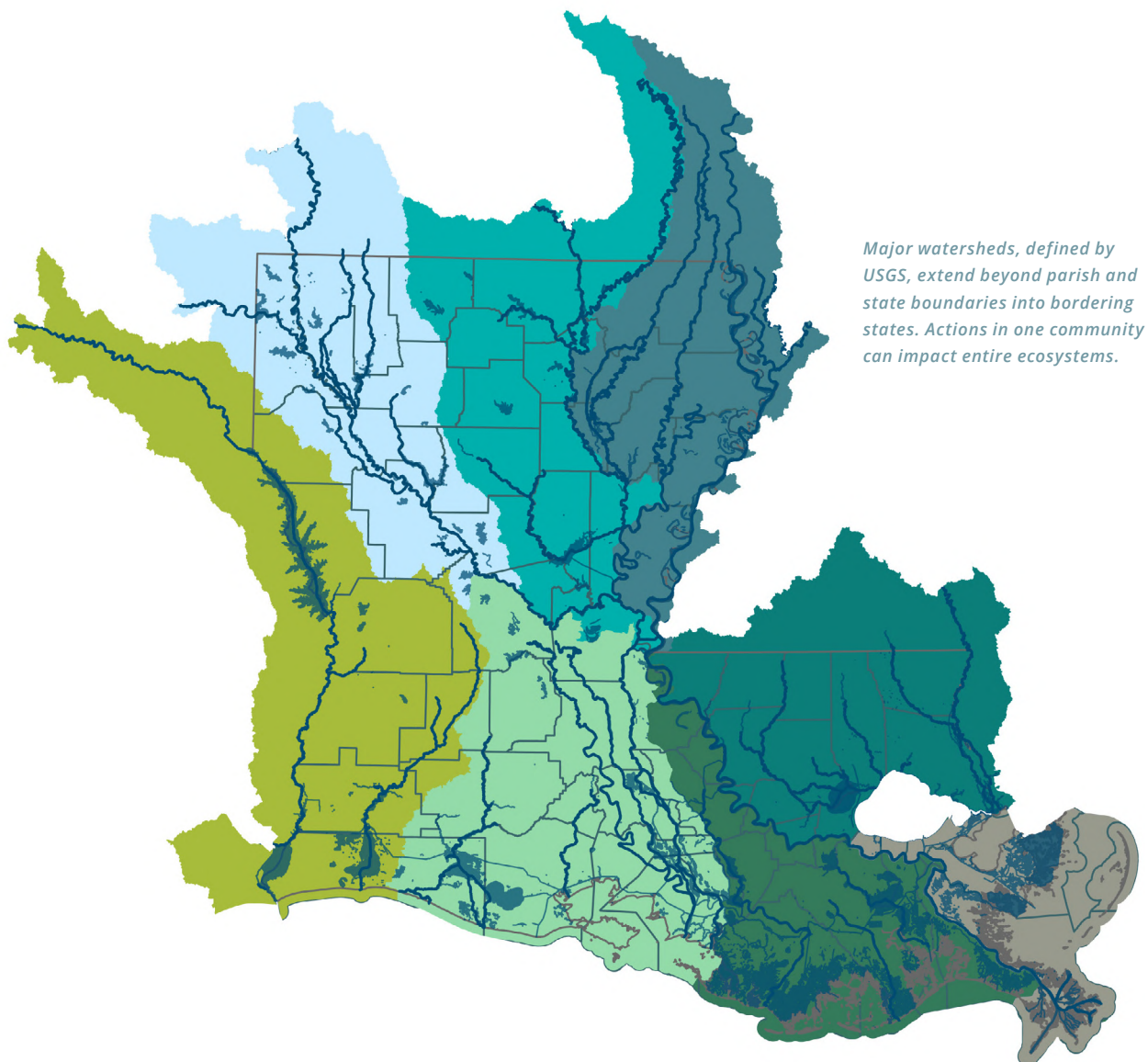
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WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

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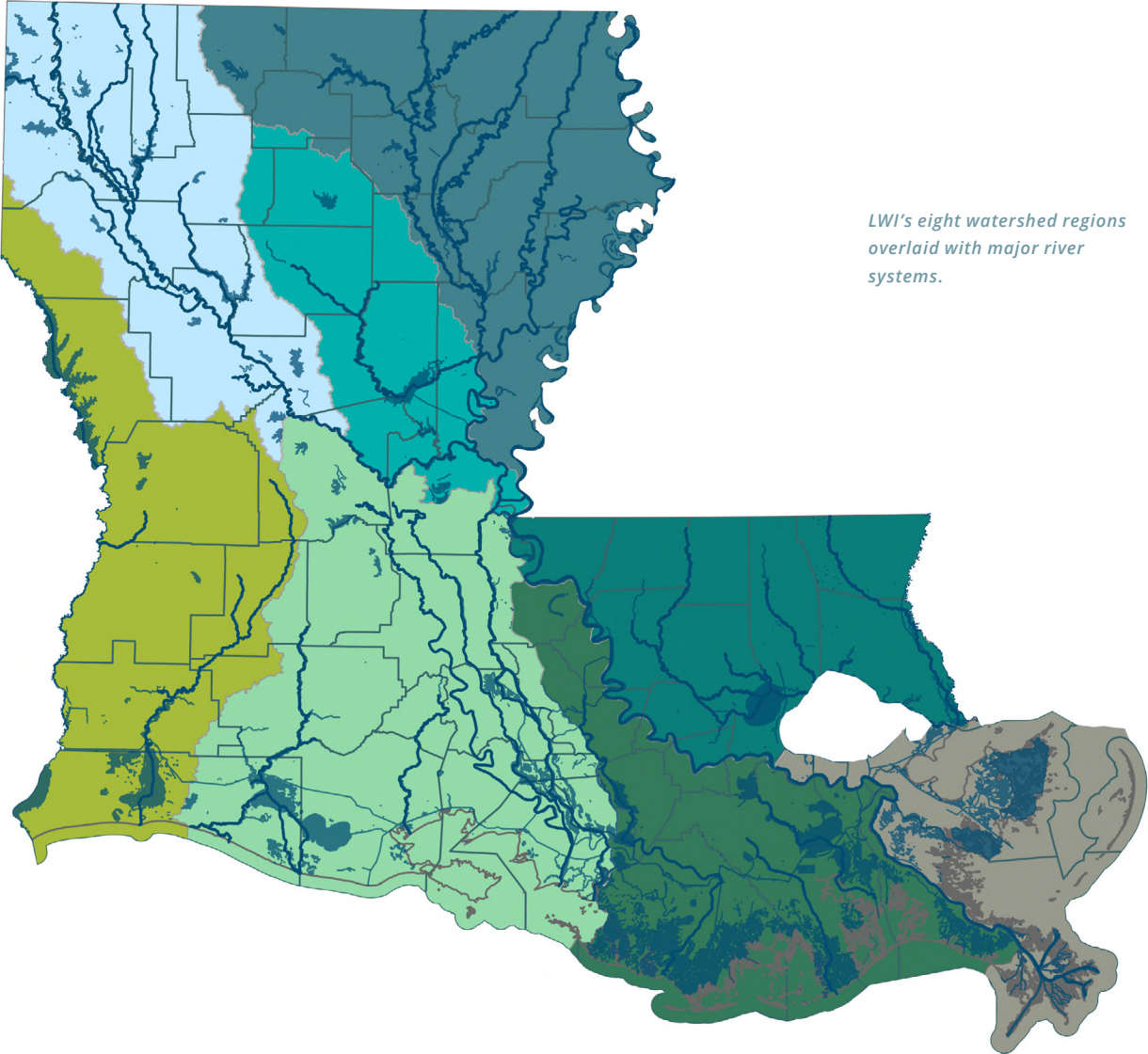
LOUISIANA'S MAJOR WATERSHEDS WITH LWI WATERSHED REGIONS ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR

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LWI WATERSHED REGIONS WITH RIVERS

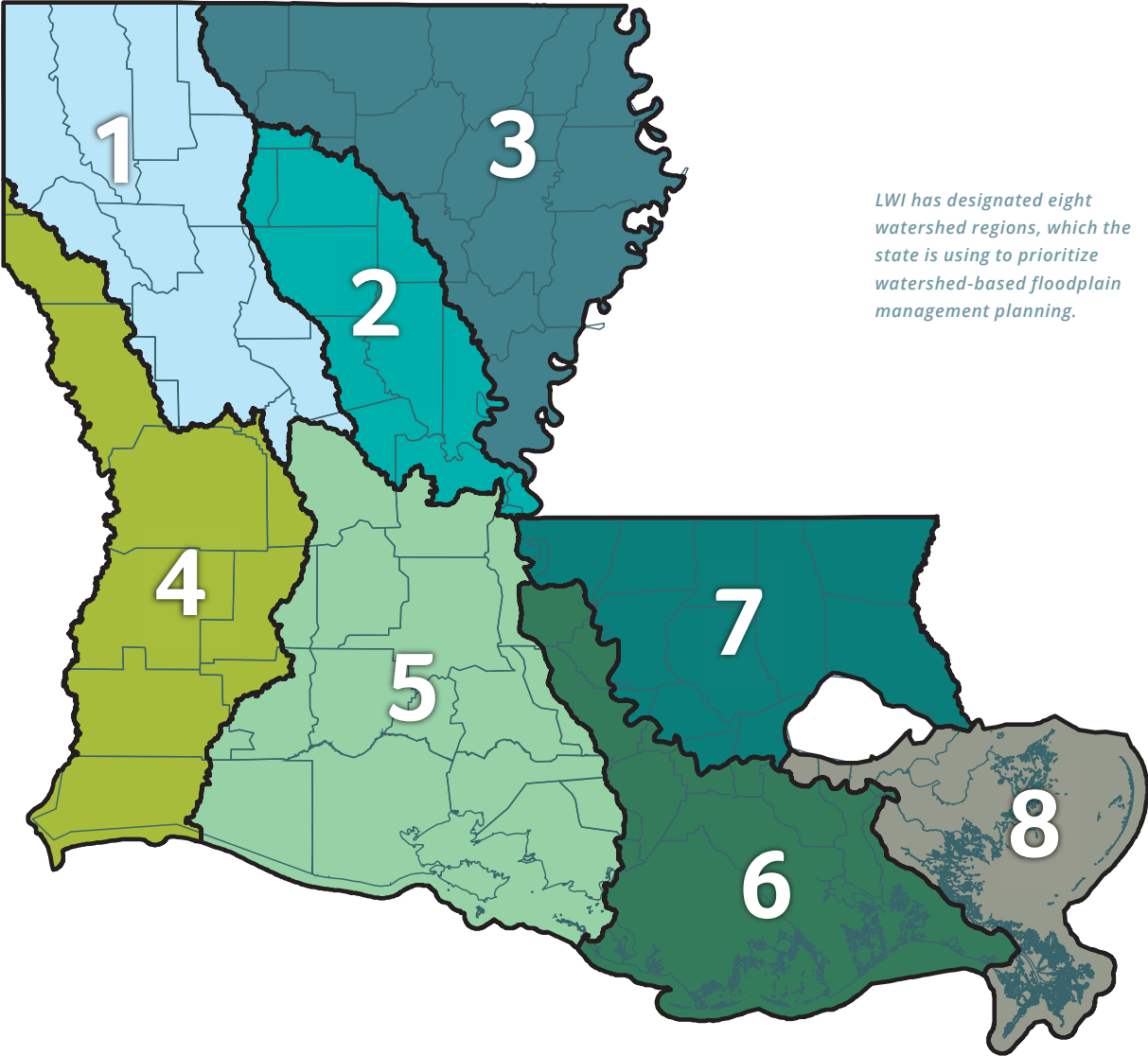
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LWI's eight watershed regions overlaid with major river systems.

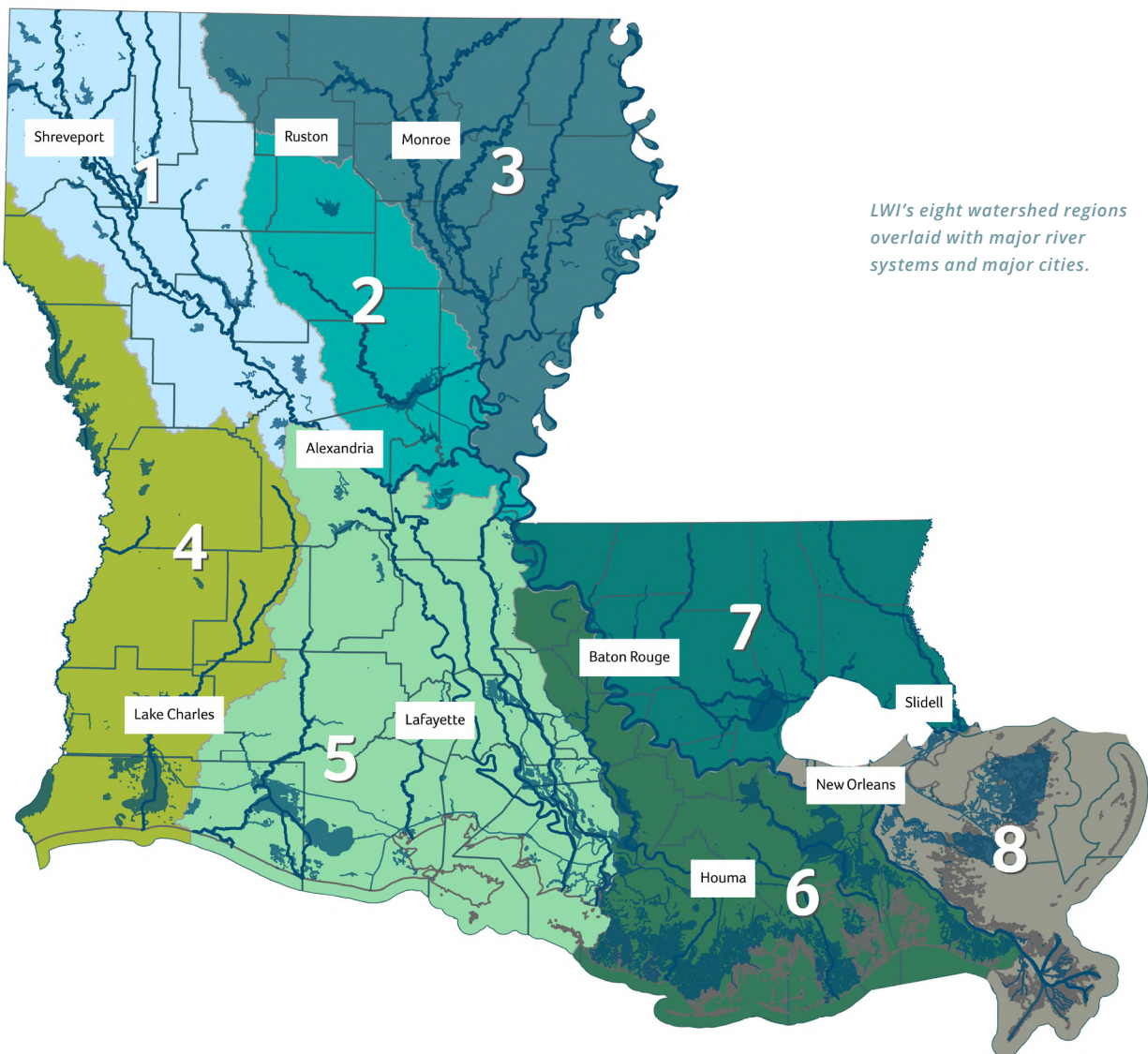
LWI WATERSHED REGIONS ILLUSTRATED BY NUMBER

To download this image, visit watershed.la.gov/resources-library



LWI WATERSHED REGIONS WITH RIVERS AND MAJOR CITIES

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working together for sustainability and resilience