



2018 LISTENING TOUR: REGION 2

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 2 stakeholders, which informed early LWI efforts and guides the program today.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS

DATA

- Researchers and officials should focus on narrowing the scope of data collection and avoiding “paralysis by analysis” to determine what actual data is needed to make decisions.
- A central repository of data would allow the consulting community to contribute to and use data with a clearly defined scope and purpose, while providing local jurisdictions a reliable resource other than the National Weather Service.
- Some local agencies have physical forms of data, such as hard copy reports or pamphlets, but these are rarely used and need to be converted to digital formats.
- The key to supporting effective response and recovery, as well as resilience, in a rural area is being able to provide information to the public in a timely manner.
- Residents can provide useful data, such as point-location information, during an event.

MODELING

- Projects should be based on updated policies.
- Knowing where repetitive issues occur will inform future economic and planning decisions.
- Having the capacity not only to gather data but also create meaningful and complex models is a priority for the region.

CAPACITY

- Funding is a critical need because it enhances capacity (e.g., new maps, modeling, modernization, etc.).
- Having the funding to support the people who collect and manage data builds technical capacity in the region.
- The state should establish a statewide baseline or standard of capacity in every community, while helping smaller, rural areas build that capacity.



- Antiquated use of technology is a major concern. Lidar and better gauges would provide better data to make more informed decisions.
- Lack of technical expertise is also a major concern. The state should embed resources in local offices in need of assistance or advisory support on complex technical topics.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM PLANNING, PROJECTS AND POLICY PROFESSIONALS

PLANNING

- Planning efforts should occur in anticipation of funding as opposed to waiting on funding.
- There is a need to educate all stakeholders on what being in a hydrologically connected area means, which will drive targeted planning efforts.
- Local plans, such as economic development and natural resource plans, should guide watershed plans.
- Understanding the state and region’s overarching strategic vision will determine whether watershed planning is strategic or operational in nature, which will influence local planning.
- The region can plan more effectively by using smart data and finding the root causes of issues, while avoiding planning in a vacuum.
- The state should provide a “menu” of options to guide planning and give local jurisdictions flexibility.

PROJECTS

WHAT IS BEING DONE NOW?

- Final phases of multi-phase projects
- Property acquisition
- Channel improvements (currently the focus of study at Northwestern State)
- Design, planning and implementation of flap gates and upgraded pipes

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE MOVING FORWARD?

- Conduct maintenance of older projects
- Create an inventory of all current drainage systems and needs
- Tie everything into master plans
- Address root causes of sedimentation and retention or drainage issues
- Engage the nonprofit community
- Ensure data does not become burdensome



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

AUTHORITY

- Avoid reinventing the wheel. A regional approach can benefit from using state and local resources and planning that incorporates prior efforts.
- Having a bottom-up versus top-down approach will help parishes collaborate and set policy together.
- A regional approach should limit adverse downstream effects of mitigation efforts.
- The state should mandate policies in line with federal and state insurance laws.
- The region must include accountability measures in its policies to limit watershed-to-watershed effects.

ALTERNATIVES TO CURRENT POLICIES

- Having set standards and incentives, like the CRS program, would provide a more equitable approach in accessing funding based on the extent to which local communities or regions adopt policies.
- LWI should provide multiple levels of assistance opportunities for local and regional entities to fit the needs of the communities they serve.
- A carrot-and-stick approach would provide access to funding via incentives for adhering to state policies.
- Decisions should be made based on data and cost-benefit analyses, not politics.