2018 LISTENING TOUR: REGION 7

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

WHAT WE HEARD FROM TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS

IMAGERY

- There are many imagery resources and GIS processes, such as comparing lidar with flood maps, that can help developers and residents determine how much fill is needed when building.
- Stakeholders must coordinate with federal agencies to receive imagery for portions of watersheds that cross state boundaries, creating an inefficient and inconsistent process for securing key data inputs.
- The discrepancies and inaccuracies between local conditions and national maps highlight the need for consistent and quality imagery across the board.

DATA

- More robust data gathering and expanded use of data will have far-reaching impacts beyond LWI efforts. Insurance companies can use this data to improve NFIP administration, while floodplain managers can use it to guide the administration of CRS framework in their communities.
- The amount of data generated is significant and will substantially increase in the future. Regional officials must engage colleges and universities to house this data and offer access to faculty and supercomputers that can assist in data analysis.
- Metadata is important to managing the life cycle of the data, as it maintains integrity and informs future data collection.
- The issue is not necessarily how much data exists but the lack of scope and direction associated with how it was collected.

MODELING

- The data that goes into models and modeling scenarios can be overwhelming. Users must remember that this data involves actual people and the ultimate goal of modeling efforts is to help the state and local jurisdictions serve their constituents.

- It will be important to fully document and explain the purpose of the models, the assumptions made when developing them and how data was collected to ensure accuracy and quality.
- Models should help decision-makers plan for different risk-based scenarios. Basing policies on models that project overly optimistic results as opposed to worst-case scenarios will inevitably lead to unmanaged expectations and less-than-ideal mitigation efforts.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM PLANNING, PROJECTS AND POLICY PROFESSIONALS

PLANNING

- Existing plans, such as zoning, hazard mitigation, levee, drainage and public information plans, must be incorporated into any future watershed plans.
- Enforcement measures must be tied into watershed plans—simply creating plans is not enough.
- The state must help build a community around watershed plans that involve all relevant stakeholders, including nonprofit, business, industry and academic professionals.
- Consistent regulation and enforcement throughout watersheds will support adherence to baseline plans.
- Statewide plans should primarily provide guidelines that facilitate and recommend funding considerations throughout the state.

PROJECTS

WHAT IS BEING DONE NOW?

- Prioritizing historically impacted and high-susceptibility areas
- Transforming flood-prone property buyouts into drainage lots
- Focusing on projects with the greatest cost benefits
- Pursuing water diversion projects such as the Comite River Diversion

WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED MOVING FORWARD?

- Restructuring and standardizing codes
- Educating those communicating directly with homeowners (e.g., insurance and real estate agents)
- Restoring natural functions of canals
- Including maintenance requirements for completed and ongoing projects to ensure long-term viability

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Data and science should help determine where policy changes are needed.

- Officials should apply policy measures at the local or regional level, where each parish has local permitting authority and follows general guidelines from the state.
- The state should provide incentives to jurisdictions that support immediate coordination and watershed-level policy adoption.