

REGION 7

GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION

The Region 7 Steering Committee (RSC) hereby offers the recommendation that a long-term Watershed Coalition be formed within the current boundaries of Region 7 as shown in Figure 1 below. In the Regional Capacity Grant Building Program Policies and Procedures¹, Watershed Coalition is defined as, “A watershed coalition is a formalized entity based on regional watershed boundaries. Coalitions could be composed of

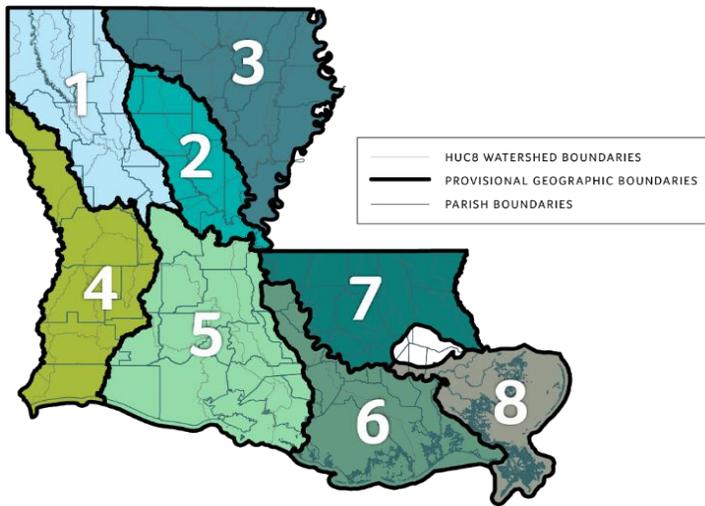


Figure 1. LWI Provisional Watershed

representatives from existing political subdivisions and other stakeholder organizations such as PDDs [Planning and Development Districts]”, MPOs [Metropolitan Planning Organizations], and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others.” That document goes on to state... “as part of this Program and the LWI design process, coalitions will assume different governance structures for developing watershed management plans; aiding in the implementation of projects, programs and policies emanating from those plans; and

improving the lives of residents and the success of businesses affected by those plans. Watershed coalitions are an expected outcome of the Initiative. These entities do not currently exist in the state of Louisiana.”

Within the following text Region 7 Watershed Committee will be used instead of Watershed Coalition. The following details constitute a recommendation, subject to final review of the Region 7 Steering Committee and the Council on Watershed Management.

¹ <https://watershed.la.gov/assets/docs/RCBG-Policies-and-Procedures-6-9-20.pdf>



Document History

Version 1: Region 7 Provisional Governance Recommendation was adopted on January 28, 2021. The vote tally was 12 for the recommendation and 2 against.

Version 2: This document was presented to the Regional Steering Committee during the June 29, 2021 Steering Committee and was adopted. The vote tally was unanimous for the adoption of the recommendation.

The following votes were recorded as in favor of the motion (Yay):

- 1. Ascension Parish (Yay)*
- 2. East Baton Rouge Parish (Yay)*
- 3. Iberville Parish (Yay)*
- 4. Livingston Parish (Yay)*
- 5. St. Charles Parish (Yay)*
- 6. St. Helena Parish (Yay)*
- 7. St. John the Baptist Parish (Yay)*
- 8. St. Tammany Parish (Yay)*
- 9. Tangipahoa Parish (Yay)*
- 10. Washington Parish (Yay)*
- 11. West Feliciana Parish (Yay)*
- 12. Regional Representative, Amite River Basin Commission (Yay)*
- 13. Regional Representative, Home Builders Association of Greater Baton Rouge (Yay)*
- 14. Regional Representative, Pontchartrain Conservancy (Yay)*
- 15. Regional Representative, Individual who serves on the following committees and boards... St. John Coastal Advisory Committee, LA Recycling Coalition, Keep St. John Beautiful, etc. (Yay)*

The following votes were recorded in opposition of the motion (Nay):

None

Absent from the vote (non-attending) are the following Regional Steering Committee member affiliations:

- 16. East Feliciana Parish*



REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Region 7 Watershed Committee should conduct regional watershed management activities and assist local entities through coordination, collaboration, technical assistance, and capacity building related to watershed management as detailed below. These activities are in support of the regional values, vision, and goals as stated in the Region 7 Guiding Principles Framework².

Planning and Development Guidance

- State should adopt minimum development standards based on local environmental risk factors based on regional input.
 - Examples **may** include: 1 foot of freeboard.
- Region will provide technical assistance and offer best practices to local entities on land use planning and development guidance as it relates to floodplain management and flood risk reduction.
 - Examples **may** include: Support for development of model ordinances; Support for best practices

Support for Projects

- Provide technical assistance on projects as deemed appropriate by the future bylaws of the Region 7 Watershed Committee
 - Examples **may** include: Support for project conceptualization; Support for project co-design processes; Support for data access and interpretation; Support for identifying funding streams

Data and Modeling

- Repository of technical data and information, including H&H models at the State level that is informed by, and made accessible to, the region.
 - Examples **may** include: State-wide data portal website.
- Technical assistance for interpretation and utilization of information and data
 - Examples **may** include: Support for interpretation and use of H&H model information and other data; Translation of models into action for projects, policy, and programs; Provide information and have a technical expert run models and provide outputs; Partnership opportunities for a regional gauge network.

²

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54cbd54fe4b047a0380cae54/t/5f8846c923173127aa9b64fd/1602766539187/Guiding+Principles+Framework+Updated+10132020.pdf>



Outreach and Engagement

- Conduct intentional watershed-related outreach and education to support long-term capacity building from the region to public entities and citizens.
 - Examples **may** include: Education for legislators; Clearly communicate updates to policy and regulations to elected officials and the general public; Flood risk communication to general public; Localized outreach and engagement efforts on resilience, flooding, climate change, relationship/impacts to other sectors; Training for citizens, practitioners, and elected officials.

Recommended Authorities for the Region 7 Watershed Committee

- Authority to provide support for projects, data and information, planning, outreach and engagement, and programs as determined by the Region and/or State
- Authority to cooperate or contract with other governmental agencies.
- Authority to manage and facilitate regional planning processes.
- Authority to receive, manage, and distribute funds from governmental, private, or non-profit sources, including the authority to set policies for consistency on how funds will be distributed.

ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTING THIS RECOMMENDATION

In order to successfully implement the recommendation above, the RSC recommends the following implementation steps:

Who staffs future efforts?

Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC) shall facilitate all meetings of the Region 7 Watershed Committee and shall perform administrative functions related to the work of the Region 7 Watershed Committee.

How will the future Region 7 Watershed Committee be chartered?

Legislatively via a state commission, board, or agency.

How consistent are charters among regions?

All of the watershed bodies in the state should be authorized by a single charter that includes a list of standards and authorities identified by all regions, wherein each region is able to choose which standard or authority to implement and at what degree within individual Region 7 Watershed Committee bylaws/regional charters.

Who should be represented?

The Region 7 Watershed Committee should be composed of a mix of technical experts, elected officials (or their appointees), and citizens/organizations outside of government entities who represent citizens. It is



recommended that the membership structure is established separately in each region's bylaws in coordination with the State's recommendations.

What is the State's role?

The Region 7 Watershed Committee should have oversight by a State agency which provides consistency and state-level management.

How are regional boundaries defined?

The regional watershed boundaries should be recognized or approved by a State agency, board, or program.

What options are available to the Region 7 Watershed Committee for funding?

The Region 7 Watershed Committee should have the ability to obtain external funding and maintain stable local funding.

What is the Region, and State's, role in drafting legal elements that reflect these recommendations?

The state should lead the effort in drafting the legal elements that reflect these recommendations while the regions collect feedback on recommendations and the regions should be kept aware of continued progress.



REGION 7

The mission of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative is to reduce flood risk, improve floodplain management throughout the state and maximize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains. The values, vision, and goals that are provided below support this mission and reflect input from residents of Region 7 that was collected during a virtual workshop on August 19, 2020. A recording of that meeting can be found at <https://crpcla.org/previous-events>. This document may change over time as we learn more about the current state of practice in the region and as our needs shift.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FRAMEWORK

The values, vision, and goals below are centered around the following two concepts:

1. Region 7 understands that our current, and future flood risk challenges, are intrinsically tied to every other part of our lives. This includes education, housing, transportation, and more.
2. Our challenges can be turned into opportunities to develop solutions that reduces flood risk and leads to equitable outcomes.

VALUES

- Advocating for equitable solutions and outcomes – We believe that we can develop solutions that address disparities and that our outcomes will lead to more equitable futures for individuals and communities.
- Access – we value ensuring that everyone has access to resources, information, and opportunities to be a part of conversations about our communities.
- Culture – We celebrate our many cultures and believe that paying homage to and acknowledging our culture within the work will lead to better outcomes.
- Community – Sharing life together is a part of who we are, we are one big family, and showing up for each other is a part of how we take care of one another and express our shared belonging.
- Creativity and innovation – We believe that Louisianan creativity and innovation is going to make us more successful.
- Diversity –Louisiana’s challenges impact everyone and to solve them, we’re going to need everyone to be at the table. This is why we celebrate and value a diversity of opinions and world experiences.
- Economy and environment – Our economy and environment are tied to one another and we should strive to create economic opportunities that support the environment that we are a part of.



- History – The best solutions and outcomes are created by letting history guide us as we look to the future.
- Living with water – Water is what connects us. It is in our genes and bone marrow. It has shaped our lives, our culture, and economies. Water is our life and it is the root of everything that we love about our Region and about Louisiana.
- Sustainable growth – The best kind of growth is strategically planned, planned with (not for) community, is done in harmony with environmental conditions, and is responsive to the needs of the region.
- Shared destiny – Our destiny across the region is tied together and that we must work together toward a shared vision and goals.
- Quality of life – We value our quality of life and all people have the right to a healthy environment, clean air, clean water, and natural areas that protect and preserve our natural areas for future generations.

VISION

As long as Region 7 of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative exists with an advisory body, we will pursue the following vision and goals.

Vision statement: Region 7 envisions a future with less flood risk, healthier natural environments, and resilience practices that are responsive to the needs of our communities and to our evolving environment.

This vision is one where:

- Communities and sectors converge to collaborate around managing water, like the tributaries to our rivers do.
- We are responsive to our communities, changing environments, and subsequent impacts.
- We live with water instead of trying to control it.
- Solutions are developed for access to safe, low risk housing that is also affordable.
- Our environment and economy go together and do not exist at the expense of one another.
- Our projects, programs, policies, and planning efforts support a future with less flood risk, cleaner water, and opportunities to create more equitable outcomes.
- Floodplain management, land use, and development decisions across the region incentivize sustainable growth, minimize competition, and are consistent.
- Water quality in our surface water bodies is improved, creating healthier environments for all. We understand that flood risk (hydrology) and water quality go together. One does not gain at the expense of the other.



- We return to our roots and traditions as they relate to living with water and our natural environments.
- We transform today's challenges into opportunities for future generations.

GOALS

Please note that the following goals are not listed in order of priority.

OVERALL GOALS

- Equitable flood risk reduction (climate and environmental equity)
- Address urban/rural split and resource disparity
- Upstream/downstream coordination
- Identify funding sources (short and long-term)
- Regional planning efforts and the development of a comprehensive strategy that is beyond political terms
- Understand, anticipate, and incorporate the impacts of migration and population shifts due to acute (flood events) and chronic (land loss and rising seas) disasters within our strategies

POLICY AND PLANNING GOALS

- Incentivize improved development standards and the enforcement of them
- Consistent regulation and development standards
- Development standards are enforced consistently
- Build in resilience practices, planning and regulatory capacity at all levels of our local, parish, and regional offices
- Update and develop preservation ordinances for the purpose of keeping floodplains and adjacent undeveloped land for flood storage capacity
- Strategic placement of development across the region based on best available data and planning practices
- Development of decision-making and support tools that support local government decision-making
- Integrate flood risk information, data, and planning efforts with updates to codes, regulations, and ordinances
- Provide examples and tools to update codes, regulations, and ordinances
- Improve quality of decision-making
- Key areas that provide significant flood storage, ecosystem, and other benefits are identified, and preserved



PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS GOALS

Outreach and education

- Opportunities for citizen, parish, and elected official (Municipal, Parish, State) education, building awareness and creating champions
- Courses and training opportunities on water management for Parish and municipal staff
- Opportunities for input planning, public and private investment at all levels
- Development of outreach materials that convey concise, understandable, and actionable information and messages
- Develop an intentional process for accountability associated with activities conducted by the Regional Steering Committee
- Connecting locals to information on projects, jobs, and businesses within the water management sector

Projects

Design and fund projects that are responsive to our needs. Examples may include:

- Equitable buyout and elevation projects/programs. Find opportunities to provide matching funds.
- Retrofit already developed areas utilizing innovation and learning from best practices
- Projects that reduce negative impacts downstream, like reservoirs
- Projects that improve the natural function of the floodplain
- Projects have multiple uses and co-benefits (ex: open space reserves that also serve as public recreation space)

DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Use data (such as rain and river gauge network data and relative sea level rise and subsidence data) and develop models to give us visual representations of flood risk
- Use data and models for the purpose of project evaluation, scenario planning, and plan updates
- Collect and house data for model, project use, and more informed decision-making
- Collect and consider traditional ecological and community data and information for planning efforts and decision-making