

# REGION 4: YEAR 1 ACTIVITY SUMMARY

## REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT PROGRAM

March 1, 2021

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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The Regional Capacity Building Grant (RCBG) program is one of many efforts supporting the [Louisiana Watershed Initiative's \(LWI\) long-term resilience objectives](#). The LWI targets RCBG resources to support regional watershed management in furtherance of reducing flood risk and enhancing the natural functions of the floodplains statewide. **Over the past year, the program has enabled local, regional and state stakeholders to codesign an effective statewide system of regional watershed management and governance**, including the collection of feedback from a series of exercises, presentations and guidebooks. Additional background information and resources related to the RCBG program is available [online](#), including:

- 1) [Senate Resolution 172 Response](#): The SR 172 response provides strategic areas of focus for LWI and recommendations for regional watershed management statewide.
- 2) [Phase 1 Report](#): The report outlines efforts completed in Phase 1 and a path forward for the development of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and regional watershed management.
- 3) [Provisional Watershed Regions](#): The Council on Watershed Management approved eight provisional watershed regions in August 2019, establishing a framework for regional coordination of LWI activities.
- 4) [RCBG Governance Exercises Briefing Book](#): The briefing book introduces the goals of the regional governance exercises and references previous regional watershed management research and efforts.
- 5) [Regional Watershed Management Guidebook](#): The guidebook explores existing entities in each watershed region that perform watershed management functions, including their authorities and jurisdictions.
- 6) [Regional Watershed Management Webinar - Oct. 14, 2020](#): LWI hosted a regional watershed management webinar to explore nationwide approaches to regional flooding and water management challenges and opportunities.
- 7) [Watershed Regions Webpage](#): Includes information on the LWI calendar, RSC members, fiscal agents, and watershed coordinators; as well as all RSC GIS shape files, project inventories, meeting materials, recordings and exercises.

Presentations and exercises conducted as part of the RCBG program had two main objectives:



- 1) To build a common understanding of what a regional watershed management entity should accomplish and identify the key responsibilities at the local, regional and state levels to help achieve the shared goal of reduced risk through watershed-based floodplain management; and
- 2) Identify gaps and opportunities in watershed management in each region and recommend strategies for establishing a regional watershed coalition and policies designed to improve water management at the local, regional and state levels.

Exercises, presentations and discussions were broken down into three key questions to resolve and build consensus around, including: (1) What is the work that needs to be done or to improve or reduce flood risk regionally? (2) Who could do this work effectively? (3) How could this realistically be accomplished statewide?

GOVERNANCE EXERCISE NO. 1	GOVERNANCE EXERCISE NO. 2	GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES
<b>What is the work?</b>	<b>Who does it?</b>	<b>How?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct root cause analysis</li> <li>• Identify the need for regional roles, responsibilities and authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider opportunities</li> <li>• Build consensus around solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend coalition structure</li> <li>• Provide action items for implementation</li> </ul>

**The feedback and outcomes of exercises captured in the following sections aim to inform the development of a provisional recommendation for each of the 8 watershed regions, that—together— collectively contribute to statewide framework for regional watershed management.** Once provisional recommendations are approved by each RSC, each region will conduct additional outreach and engagement with local stakeholders, including parish leadership and the public to gather any additional feedback. RSCs will reconvene in early Summer 2021 to consider feedback from outreach and engagement efforts and refine and finalize recommendations, as needed.

PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT	REFINED RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>An iterative planning process requiring vetting and revisiting recommendations</b>		
<b>November – January</b> Make recommendations based on best available data, practices, expertise and information	<b>January – April</b> Engage parish leadership, stakeholders and the public to gather feedback RESOURCE: O&E TOOLKIT	<b>May – June</b> Consider feedback from outreach and engagement and refine recommendations



It is important to recognize that RSC recommendations may influence the design of state and local policies and funding programs to produce better outcomes in each watershed region and that implementation could include state and local legislative efforts to better align the functions of watershed management with watershed boundaries.

## SEC. 1: REGIONAL FLOOD RISK PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSIONS CONCERNS, FEEDBACK AND PRIORITIES

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Beginning in 2018 with a [Statewide Listening Tour](#), the LWI has worked closely with Region 4 to understand, capture and assess the region's unique flood risk concerns, feedback and priorities. In the summer of 2020, as part of a Region 4 flood risk assessment, stakeholders discussed unique flood risks on a regional scale, with a focus on **(1) major watersheds in the region, (2) existing data available, (3) types of flooding and their sources, (4) various risk factors and (5) opportunities to work with nature**. The interactive [flood assessment presentation](#), mapping exercise and feedback are available online as part of the [Watershed Regions webpage](#), and align with the summary provided below.

Several data sets were utilized to elevate regional challenges, including rainfall datasets from the March 2016 storms, maps of FEMA's Special Flood Hazard areas, maps of FEMA repetitive and severe repetitive loss data, FEMA data on properties damaged as a result of the 2016 floods, data and maps on wetlands within Region 4, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Social Vulnerability Data to highlight how flooding challenges often coincide with vulnerable populations. A key theme of this discussion was the importance of considering all of these data **together** when crafting solutions to reduce flood risk in Region 4.

Based on this information and local experience and expertise, RSC members and stakeholders discussed and refined the following regional flooding concerns, feedback and priorities.

### PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

The following flood risk priorities derived from conversations during the 2018 [Statewide Listening Tour](#). LWI used these key points to frame the **flood risk analysis discussion** on June 15, 2020. Regional stakeholders provided feedback on the mapping exercise until June 29, 2020.

- **Enable watershed-to-watershed interoperability.** Disconnected watershed management can inhibit natural flood risk mitigation and exacerbate flooding. Planning, data collection, dynamic modeling, flood risk evaluation and monitoring efforts need to reflect interdependencies to work toward common goals.
- **Allow locals to guide planning.** Those who have lived with and experienced complex hydrologic dynamics manifested as flood risk challenges have a deep understanding of this problem. Planning to address future floodplain management must begin with the lived experiences of locals. Their contextual knowledge and expertise can be integrated into a regional perspective, supplemented by strong watershed-level data and modeling, a common vocabulary and state guidance.



- **Identify who is in the greatest need of risk reduction based on flood risk analysis.** Outdated flood hazard maps that do not adequately reflect current and future flood risk make it difficult to identify the areas and populations most at risk. Unmapped repetitive loss properties also exacerbate this issue.
- **Prioritize project purpose in selection.** Project development must focus on tangible outcomes. Different communities and parts of the region face distinct flood risk challenges driven by the complex interaction of coastal, fluvial and/or pluvial flooding with localized impacts and various needs based on societal conditions. Any project should articulate clear goals, with an understanding of potential interdependencies and unintended consequences.

## OVERARCHING THEMES

- RSC members focused on two main watersheds in Region 4, the Sabine watershed and the Calcasieu watershed, each with different hydrologic dynamics and floodplain management issues. Northern and southern parishes must approach water management differently, given their varied flood risk challenges, while also considering interdependencies. Officials should consider this when pursuing coordinated floodplain management regulations and stronger building standards (such as freeboard) whether these are initiated by the region or by the state.
- RSC members said existing flood hazard data and FEMA maps are often outdated, contain discrepancies and inaccurately communicate risk, which complicates floodplain management.

## FLOODING-RELATED CONCERNS AND FEEDBACK

- The Sabine watershed drains from Texas and Louisiana and contains Toledo Bend, the largest man-made reservoir in the southern United States. Smaller tributaries, meanwhile, primarily feed into the Calcasieu watershed, making it harder to predict how the water will move.
- RSC members expressed a need to pay attention to coastal effects farther north, beyond areas typically studied. They also noted that coastal parishes face the distinct challenge of needing to release water, as opposed to slowing the speed of water, as is the case in parishes farther north. High tides also are a chronic issue, both from a flooding perspective and regarding the release of riverine flood waters.
- RSC members said the Calcasieu River exceeded its capacity due to relentless rainfall during the March 2016 flood. They also noted that the Sabine River is getting deeper and narrower.
- Calcasieu Parish stakeholders said pluvial flooding is the hardest to deal with and is a widespread issue. Development both causes and exacerbates pluvial flooding impacts. Meanwhile, flooding events are becoming noticeably worse. Cameron Parish stakeholders gave the example of a recent two-hour rain event that produced 4 inches of rain.

## DATA, COORDINATION AND GOVERNANCE-RELATED FEEDBACK

- RSC members said existing flood hazard data and FEMA maps are often outdated and contain discrepancies. About 40% of Region 4 is in a FEMA special flood hazard area, but these maps were updated decades ago and do not consider future flood risk. Also, these maps tend to follow political boundaries rather than watershed boundaries.



- RSC members noted flood hazard data also provides an inaccurate representation of risk. For example, most severe repetitive loss properties are in flood Zone X, which is outside special flood hazard areas. The lack of mapped repetitive loss properties that have flood insurance also underrepresents risk. Having accurate repetitive loss data is important because parishes such as Sabine use this data in decision-making.
- RSC members suggested that state-produced flood data and modeling will help address some of these issues. They noted that these resources must be publicly available and accessible with adequate outreach and education to ensure they are actively used. Calcasieu Parish stakeholders said developers are using outdated FEMA maps when developing homes and homeowners are usually unaware of this. Outreach and education efforts are needed to inform people of risks before they buy property.
- One topic of concern that did not garner much discussion but should be further explored is the CDC vulnerability data. Most Region 4 parishes have communities that face unique challenges not only because they are flood prone, but also because of social vulnerabilities that impede their abilities to prepare for flood-related threats. Specifically, the Lake Charles community has large concentrations of households that are highly vulnerable to flood impacts. The CDC data suggests a significant portion of the roughly 70,000 residents of Lake Charles faces increased risk due to contributing social factors such as low income, disability, minority status, language and inadequate housing and transportation.

## OTHER CONCERNS

- RSC members noted that endangered species are an important concern near the Calcasieu and Sabine rivers. Any effort that impacts water can affect these species, making some mitigation projects difficult to implement. Communication regarding project delays for these reasons needs to be clear and transparent.

## SPATIAL FEEDBACK IN FLOOD RISK MAPPING TOOLS

In addition to verbal feedback, the mapping exercise provided the following spatial feedback:

- Flooding issues in the Moss Bluff area
  - Flooding during heavy events blocks subdivisions and floods the homes near Indian Bayou on Sutherland Road north of Coffey Road, Coffey Road west of Sutherland Road and North Paul White Road north of Dunn Ferry Road.
  - Heavy rains cause Clifford Road to flood near Dunn Ferry Road, flowing to the drainage ditch.
  - Watts Road floods during heavy rain.
  - During high-water events, Dunn Ferry Road at West Fork Calcasieu River floods.
  - Flooding during heavy rain causes Bankens Road at Little River to flood.
- Flooding issues in the Sulphur area
  - Vine Street floods at Ward Lane.
  - Hazel Street floods from Ward Lane to Maplewood Drive.
  - Rio Hondo, Quelqueshue and Madison streets flood at every intersection with Attakapas Street.
  - Church, Elizabeth, Cypress and Huntington streets flood around Frasch Elementary School.
- Flooding issues in the Westlake Area
  - La. Hwy. 378
- Flooding issues in the Lake Charles area



- Ryan Street floods around McNeese State University north of Park Street.
- Flooding issues in the Bundick Lake area
  - The lower end of Bundick Lake on both the south and north shores floods during high rainfall events. Roads most affected are in the Dogwood Trail East area, Dogwood Trail West area and along Harris Drive, Lake Loop, Surfside Road, Vincent Lane and Iles Lane
- Flooding issues in the Starks area
  - La. Hwy. 12 west of Starks floods to the Sabine River.

## SEC. 2: GOVERNANCE EX. NO.1 - “WHAT IS THE WORK?”

### ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

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The Region 4 RSC held the **first governance exercise** on Oct. 26, 2020 and discussed the root causes of flood risk concerns, as well as potential gaps in roles, responsibilities, and authorities through the establishment or enablement of a regional watershed coalition or regional watershed management entity.

### ROOT CAUSES

- **A lack of watershed-based governance** has led to uncoordinated planning and project design throughout drainage basins, leading to disconnected watersheds. This issue is exacerbated by outdated approaches to understanding flood hazard, in addition to decision-making structures based on political boundaries.
- **A lack of robust public education and outreach efforts** backed by consistent, accessible and transparent information has resulted in a general lack of public awareness about true flood risk and how the problem varies geographically.
- **Inadequate data collection and availability** limits understanding of communities with the greatest need for flood risk mitigation. Planning decisions have not addressed the risks, needs and challenges faced by the most vulnerable communities in the region. Limited access to resources prevents real and pervasive concerns from being included in policy implementation.
- **Inconsistent floodplain management and development regulations** have enabled growth in flood-prone areas, which exacerbates pluvial flooding. Development is destroying natural or built systems that previously mitigated flood risks and, as a result, is exacerbating flooding in surrounding communities. Consistent minimum development standards should exist not only statewide but within the region, particularly for new projects, which impact downstream communities the most.
- **Inadequate funding limits infrastructure** maintenance and improvements. Outdated drainage, pumping and roadway infrastructure with short effective lifespans and a lack of ongoing maintenance may increase flood risk and exposure in many areas, especially pluvial flood risk. If communities cannot secure the funding sources necessary to maintain, improve and build new infrastructure, changing landscape and climate dynamics combined with aging assets will continue to drive flood risk throughout the region.



## FLOOD RISK CONCERN 1:

*We do not have a formal process for coordinating across political boundaries*

### Root Causes:

- Lack of predictable financing
- Existing complicated federal processes; fear of overcomplicating this further

### Discussion:

- This needs to be *apolitical*; too much focus on SE LA in coastal areas; regions should be given equal/fair attention; often politics supersedes community input (diversity of thought perspectives) and relevant responsibilities
- Challenge: This requires a financial incentive to support and sustain in the long-term. There is a need for this funding to be both timely and consistent across the state. Need a baseline standard at the state to receive funding; not subject to local or regional politics and political shifts; an enduring type of framework
- Federal programs are complicated to start; coordinating across jurisdictional boundaries adds increased complexity. There are procedural issues to consider with regional coordination; despite a desire to use regionalism – it remains complicated.
- NRCS – could be expanded to assist with financing floodplain management activities and preservation (limits any use on lands; can CDBG-MIT allow farming on land reserved for conservation easements or servitudes (nonstructural uses are permitted?))
- Detention/retention plan - lower lying areas need to drain quickly; areas higher need to retain and slow waters. Terry Frelot is coordinating on this activity.

## FLOOD RISK CONCERN 2:

*There are too many organizations responsible for water management.*

### Root Causes:

- Lack of watershed-based governance leads to uncoordinated planning and project design throughout drainage basins
- Inconsistent floodplain management has enabled construction of unprotected buildings in high-risk areas
- Lack of regional or state consistency and guidance on higher standards hinders flood risk reduction efforts

### Discussion:

- This extends to floodplain management responsibilities (lack of awareness i.e. building code enforcement mandates; elevated need for local responsibility)
- Being mindful of urban/rural standards and working relationships; property ownership will be key to success.



### FLOOD RISK CONCERN 3:

*We need updated data and flood risk maps that accurately portray and communicate flood risk to a broad audience.*

#### **Root Causes:**

- Inadequate data collection and availability limits understanding in communities with the greatest need for flood risk mitigation
- Lack of funding to develop data in a consistent way
- Lack of public education

#### **Discussion:**

- Regional repository for models for filtering of information/responsibilities
- Inconsistent data availability and standardization; lack of funding to develop data in a consistent way
- Lack of funding to develop (and maintain) models to support decision-making, re: detention/retention areas
- Data underlying FEMA flood maps is outdated and undermines floodplain management activities; RL and SRL properties in X zones
- Parishes need a ‘true flood risk’ tool/map to communicate risk; those located in Zone X have a false sense of security and thus, do not choose to purchase flood insurance
- “If you can’t afford flood insurance, you can’t afford to flood”
- Updating data will more clearly communicate risk, but will also result in high insurance premiums in some cases
- Important to advise citizens of this process; avoid surprises in insurance payments
- All insurance rates appear to be increasing; but there are also areas in the flood zone that shouldn’t be
- Need to get it right at the end of the day – understand areas most at risk, areas least at risk and manage properties accordingly
- When the maps are right, we’ll be in a better position to manage community growth/development

### FLOOD RISK CONCERN 4:

*We have allowed development that has impaired the natural functions of floodplains.*

#### **Root Causes:**

- Lack of knowledge about the cumulative effects of development; need to understand functional benefits of the floodplain
- Inconsistent floodplain management has enabled construction of unprotected buildings in high-risk areas

#### **Discussion:**

- Rapidly growing areas could benefit from lessons learned about increased flood risk from existing urban and suburban areas
- Inclusion of conservation easements/servitudes presents a unique opportunity for balancing need for future development and preservation at a regional scale
- New growth (subdivisions) in areas of natural storage; decisions today may need to be reversed or corrected in future efforts





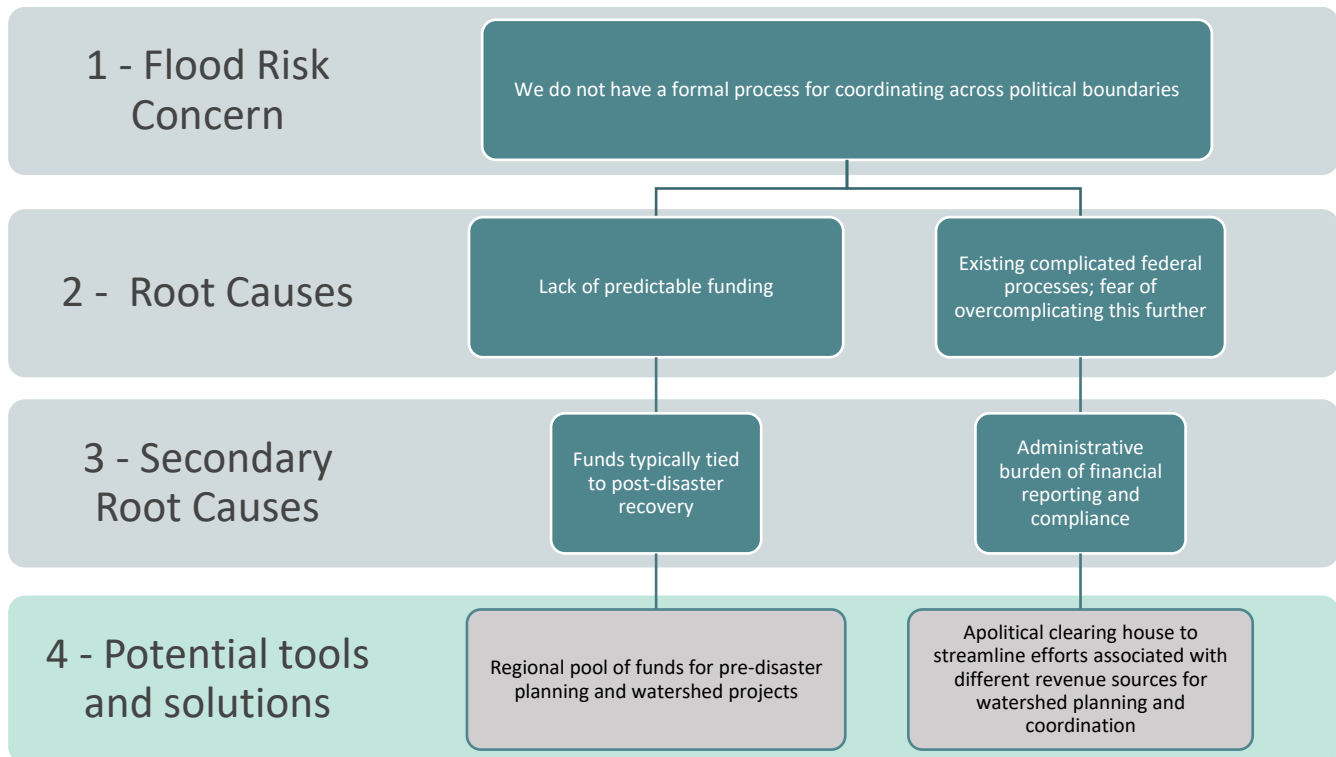
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Joey Breaux—include in next RSC meeting) and LDAF to weigh in, re: mapping natural storage areas and considering tradeoffs of development and impairing natural functions

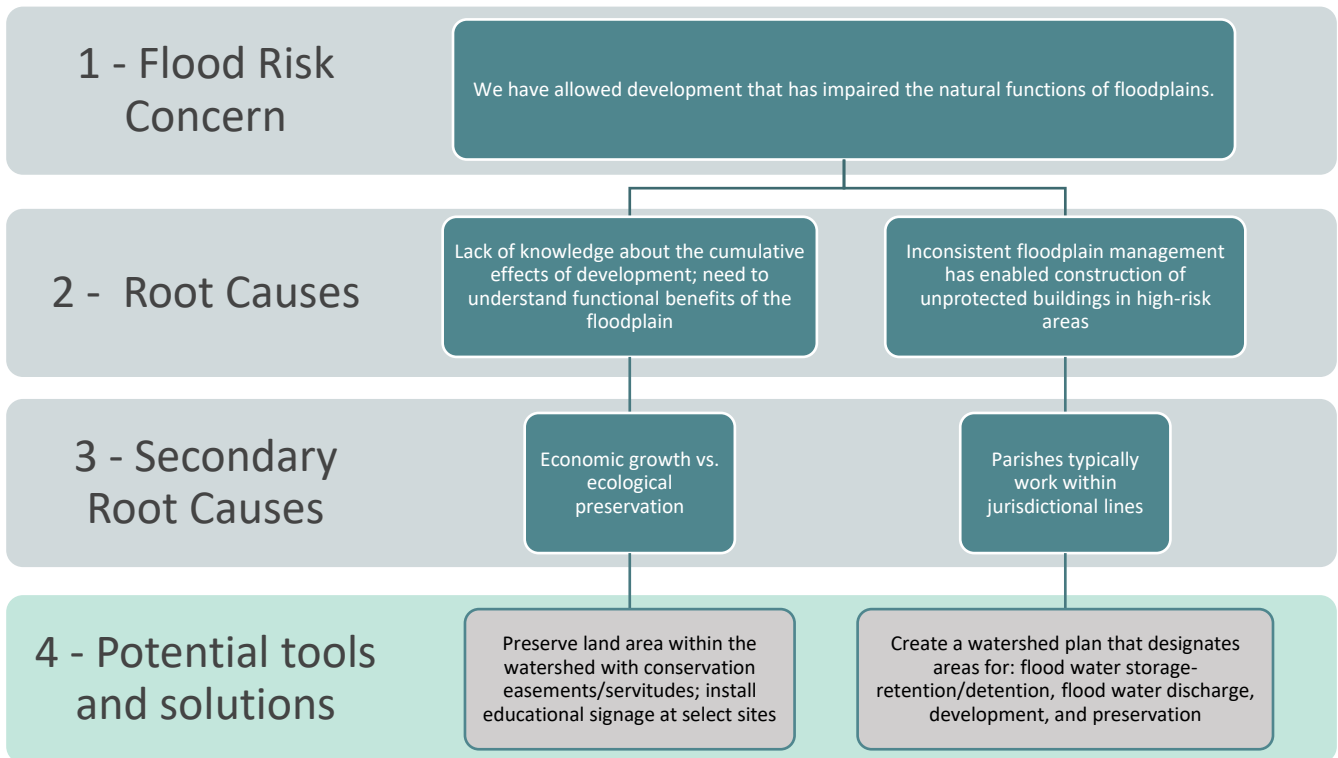
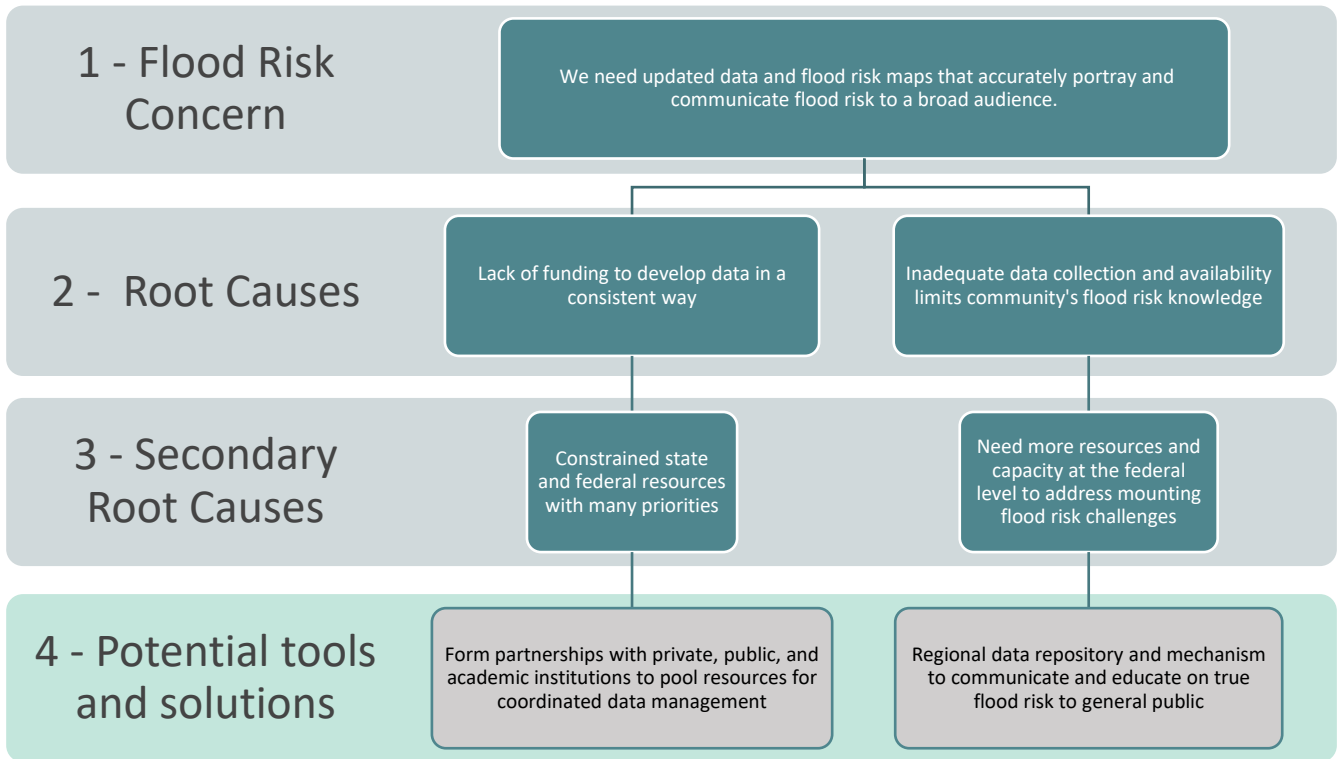
## GAPS IN ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND AUTHORITIES

- Lack of regulation of development in flood zones
- Need for up-to-date data and maps to understand dynamic environmental conditions
- Need for regional watershed plan that addresses storage, discharge, development and preservation
- Work to communicate flood risk in a digestible way that assists the general public
- There is no watershed-focused, apolitical entity to manage regional flood risk

## RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAMS: ROOT CAUSES OF FLOOD RISK

This section draws connections between the key flood risk concerns and the underlying root causes driving the issue, which ultimately leads to potential solutions. The potential solutions are the future ‘work’ that the watershed coalition could adopt.







## SEC. 3: GOVERNANCE EXERCISE NO. 2 - “WHO DOES IT?”

### GAP ANALYSIS, COALITION OPTIONS AND TRADE OFFS

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The Region 4 RSC held the **second governance exercise** on Nov. 16, 2020 where attendees connected the root causes of flood risk to potential solutions needed to mitigate those flood concerns. The RSC then analyzed existing entities in the region that work in the realm of water management to determine who is best suited for long-term regional watershed management responsibilities.

### COALITION RESPONSIBILITIES

The following information provides a summary of potential coalition responsibilities and the required authorizations that would be necessary to enable effective long-term watershed-based floodplain management.

#### ***Planning and development regulation***

- Create a watershed plan that designates areas for retention, discharge, development, and preservation
- Serve as an apolitical clearinghouse to streamline efforts associated with different revenue sources for watershed planning and coordination; align floodplain managers
- State creates min. higher standards; regional entity tailors standards and develops consistent floodplain enforcement

#### ***Project implementation & land acquisition***

- Develop a regional pool of funds for mitigation planning and watershed projects
- Preserve land within the watershed with conservation easements/servitudes

#### ***Data and modeling***

- Coordinate data management with local stakeholders and create regional data repository
- Store watershed models locally with entity in charge of day-to-day operation

#### ***Outreach and engagement***

- Provide public outreach and education (re: Nature-Based Solutions, NFIP, CRS, and flood risk solutions identified from watershed models)

### REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS

- Authority to cooperate or contract with other governmental agencies
- Authority to generate revenue (e.g., issue/sell bonds, borrow money or accept grants, collect fees, levy tax/special assessments)
- Authority to acquire, hold and use property
- Authority to finance, fund, plan, establish, acquire, construct or reconstruct, enlarge or extend, equip, operate, and maintain systems and infrastructure



## GAP ANALYSIS

The steering committee then reviewed and discussed information in the LWI [Regional Watershed Management Guidebook](#), which explores existing entities in each watershed region that perform watershed management functions, including their authorities and jurisdictions. The below table represents a high-level gap analysis of existing authorities and jurisdictions for current watershed management organizations in Region 4.

### REGION 4 GAP ANALYSIS

#### Existing versus potential authorities for regional watershed coalitions

Entity type	Develop and adopt watershed plans	Regulate development	Develop and enforce higher standards	Fund, construct, operate and maintain flood risk reduction projects	Authority to operate throughout entire watershed region
Parish/municipal governing authorities	●	●	●	●	●
Planning and development districts	●			●	●
Levee districts		●		●	●
Water districts	●	●		●	●
Navigation districts	●			●	●

While Region 4 has a number of entities with some authority related to water management, these entities are limited in both authority and jurisdiction, creating gaps in the ability to manage flood risk at the watershed level. While most of the authority lies with local governments, they are limited by their jurisdictional boundaries. Similarly, levee, navigation, conservation and planning and development districts, though they cover more geography, are limited in their ability to enforce higher standards and regulate development at the watershed scale.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The RSC identified that a new entity may need to be created to carry out the desired watershed management authorities. A Technical Advisory Board consisting of members from existing entities would oversee the entity's activities. Also, an MOU would need to be established between the three planning and development districts whose jurisdiction lie within Region 4. The RSC identified an opportunity to collaborate with McNeese State University for the watershed model storage responsibility. They also discussed collaborating with LDAH and the soil and water conservation districts to leverage best practices in conservation for regional floodplain management. They decided that IMCAL is best suited to manage the day-to-day operation of the watershed coalition.



## SEC. 4: GOVERNANCE EXERCISE “HOW” RULES, OUTCOMES AND STRUCTURE

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On Dec. 14, 2020, the RSC held their **third governance exercise** to discuss how their potential regional watershed management responsibilities would fit in to a larger statewide framework. Key considerations are captured below.

### PREFERRED METHOD FOR CHARTERING THE COALITION

The RSC unanimously agreed (via a vote) that the coalition should be enabled by a combination of legislation via a state commission as well as locally in accordance with the state charter. All watershed coalitions 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 coalition bylaws/regional charters.

### COALITION MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

The RSC unanimously agreed (via a vote) that the coalition should be composed of a mix of public and private representatives and include a technical advisory committee. The technical advisory committee members should not be a part of the watershed coalition but should act as subject matter experts and make recommendations to the coalitions. The coalition should have oversight by a state agency which provides technical support, coordination among regions, and state-level management.

### PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING REGIONAL WATERSHED BOUNDARIES

The RSC unanimously agreed (via a vote) that the regional watershed boundaries should be recognized or approved by a state agency, board or program.

### FUNDING ABILITIES

The RSC unanimously agreed (via a vote) that the coalition should have the ability to obtain external funding and maintain stable local funding. The coalition should help local jurisdictions get access to grant funds and figure out how to administer them. The coalition could serve as a conduit for grant funds, but revenue streams should not be limited to only grant funds.

## SEC. 5: PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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On January 27, 2021, the RSC convened to review and refine their coalition framework and officially adopt their provisional recommendation for long-term regional watershed management. The RSC approved the recommendation with a unanimous vote and submitted their provisional recommendation to the state on January 31, 2021. The following is the official **Region 4 provisional recommendation template**, which is also available on the [watershed regions page](#).



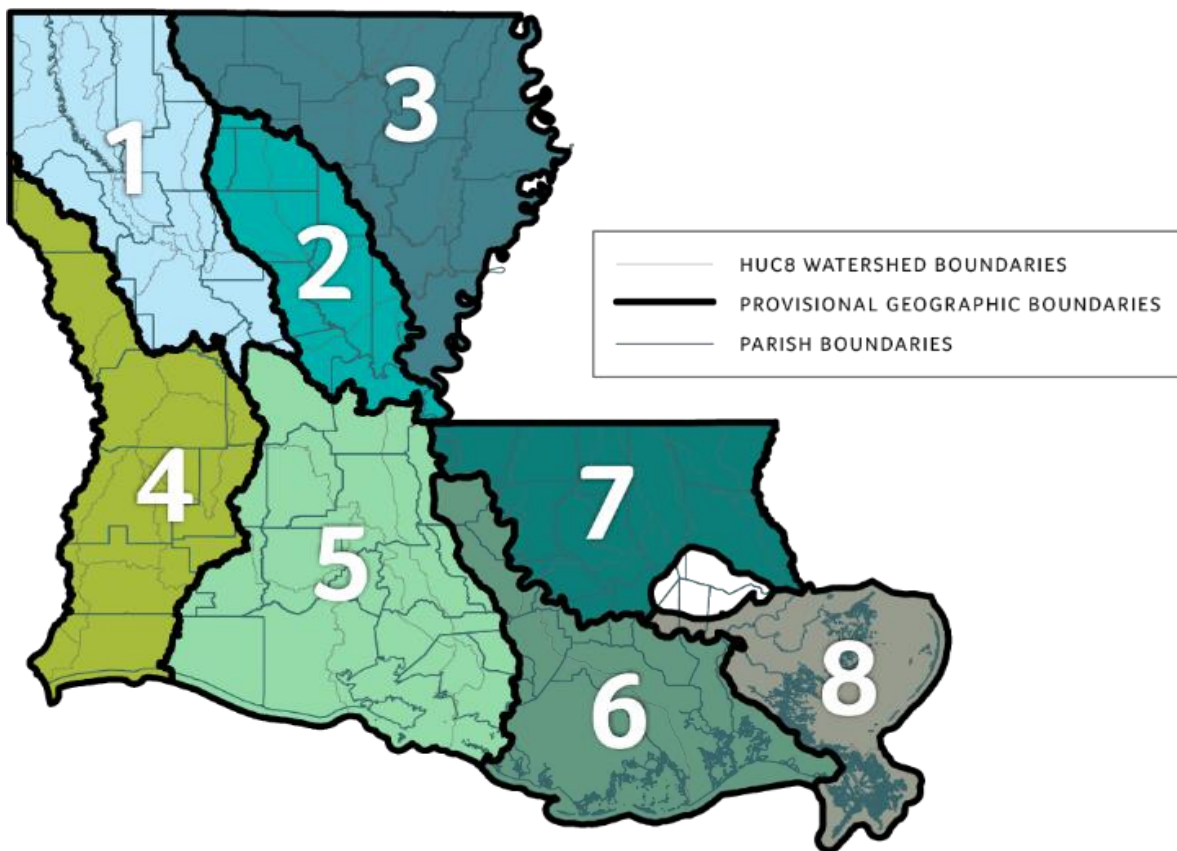
# REGION FOUR

## GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Region 4 Steering Committee hereby offers the provisional recommendation that a long-term Watershed Coalition be formed within the current boundaries of Region 4 as shown in Figure 1 below. The following details constitute a provisional recommendation, subject to final review of the Region 4 Steering Committee and the Council on Watershed Management.

**Figure 1. LWI Provisional Watershed**





### Recommendation Date & Vote

Provisional Recommendation Date: January 27, 2021

RSC Participants Vote to Approve LWI Region 4 - Provision Recommendation Document (with edits from floor):

Mr. Jacob Marceaux - Beauregard Parish (Did not vote)

Mr. Alberto Galan - Calcasieu Parish, Yes

Kara Bonsall - Cameron Parish, Yes

Gardner Rose - Coushatta Tribe, Yes

Mr. Thomas Fontcuberta - DeSoto Parish, Yes

Mr. Alex Guillory - Jeff Davis Parish, Yes

Mr. Matt Johns - Rapides Parish, Yes

Mr. Carl Thompson - Vernon Parish, Yes

RSC Vote Total: Yes 7-0

No objections

## REGIONAL SUMMARY

The Regional Watershed Coalition or Coalition should conduct regional watershed management and assist local entities with watershed planning, policy, project prioritization, and data/modeling in the following ways:

### Planning and Development Regulation

- Facilitate a watershed plan that may accomplish the following: more accurately identify flood risk in the region; identify potential areas for retention, discharge, and preservation; provide guidance and recommendations regarding development best practices; identify and prioritize potential regional watershed projects
- Serve as an apolitical clearinghouse to streamline efforts associated with different revenue sources for watershed planning and coordination; align floodplain managers
- State creates min. higher standards; regional entity tailors standards and develops consistent floodplain enforcement

### Project Implementation

- Develop a regional pool of funds for regional mitigation planning and regional watershed projects
- Preserve land within the watershed with conservation easements/servitudes

### Data and Modeling

- Coordinate data management with local stakeholders and create regional data repository
- Store watershed models locally with entity in charge of day-to-day operation



## **Outreach and Engagement**

- Provide public outreach and education (re: Nature-Based Solutions, NFIP, CRS, and flood risk solutions identified from watershed models)

## **Recommended Authorities for the Coalition**

- Authority to cooperate or contract with other governmental agencies
- Authority to generate revenue (e.g., issue/sell bonds, borrow money or accept grants, collect fees, levy tax/special assessments)
- Authority to acquire, hold and use property
- Authority to finance, fund, plan, establish, acquire, construct or reconstruct, enlarge or extend, equip, operate, and maintain systems and infrastructure

## **ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTING THIS RECOMMENDATION**

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

- IMCAL (Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development Commission) shall facilitate all meetings of the Coalition and shall perform administrative functions related to the work of the Coalition.
- The coalition should be enabled by a combination of legislation via a state commission as well as locally in accordance with the state charter.
- All watershed coalitions 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 coalition bylaws/regional charters.
- The coalition should be composed of a mix of public and private representatives and include a technical advisory committee. The technical advisory committee members should not be a part of the watershed coalition but should act as subject matter experts and make recommendations to the coalitions.
- The coalition should have oversight by a state agency which provides technical support, coordination among regions, and state-level management.
- The regional watershed boundaries should be recognized or approved by a state agency, board or program.
- The coalition should have the ability to obtain external funding and maintain stable local funding. The coalition should help local jurisdictions get access to grant funds and figure out how to administer them. The coalition could serve as a conduit for grant funds, but revenue streams should not be limited to only grant funds.
- The state should lead the effort in drafting the legal elements that reflect these recommendations while the regions collect feedback on provisional recommendations and the regions should be kept aware of continued progress.