

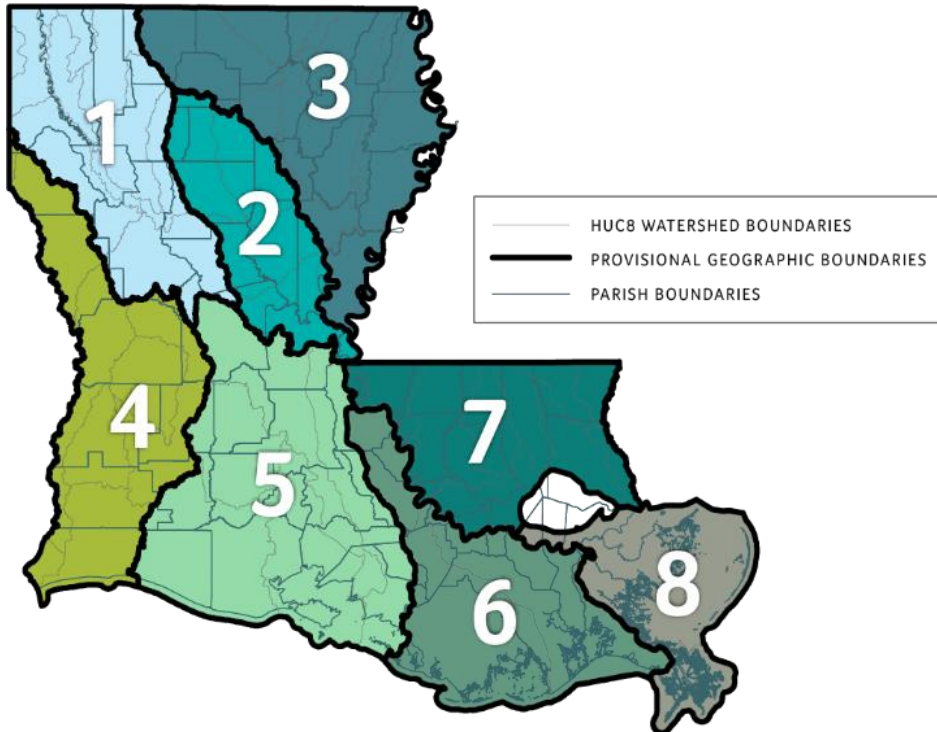
# REGION 8

## PROVISIONAL GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Region 8 Steering Committee hereby offers the provisional recommendation that a long-term Watershed Coalition be formed within the current boundaries of Region 8 as shown in Figure 1 below. The following details constitute a provisional recommendation, subject to final review of the Region 8 Steering Committee and the Council on Watershed Management.

Figure 1. LWI Provisional Watershed





#### Recommendation Date & Vote

*Approved by Region 8 Steering Committee on Thursday, January 21, 2021. The vote was as follows:*

*Aye: 8 (Tyler Antrup, Stephanie Bruning, Jessica Dandridge, Matt Falati, Danielle Honor, Albertine Kimble, Maggie Talley, Meagan Williams)*

*Nay: 0*

*Abstain: 0*

*Absent: 3 (Derek Boese, Ken Dugas, Blaise Pezold)*

## 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

- The coalition should develop regionwide and sub-area watershed plans that define needs, specify goals, and recommend solutions. The plans developed by the coalition should:
  - ✓ Be created using processes that can be replicated by other entities at various scales.
  - ✓ Include recommendations that are transferable to other agencies and jurisdictions.
  - ✓ Include regional goals and standards for watershed management.
  - ✓ Identify and evaluate innovative practices and projects.
  - ✓ Identify methods to reduce ongoing operations and maintenance costs.
  - ✓ Recognize the threat of climate change, and address its causes and potential impacts.
  - ✓ Emphasize the use of natural processes to address flood risk and other watershed-related hazards.
  - ✓ Identify opportunities for multi-jurisdictional cooperation, particularly in locations where flooding crosses jurisdictional boundaries or where upstream or downstream impacts are likely.
  - ✓ Recognize the importance of land use regulation and development standards to overall community resilience and recommend ways to ensure future development does not increase risk in the watershed.
  - ✓ Evaluate the impacts of current and proposed watershed-related systems to traditionally disadvantaged or underserved populations.
  - ✓ Identify practices, policies, and projects that ensure traditionally disadvantaged or underserved populations are not disproportionately, negatively impacted by watershed-related hazards or by the actions taken to mitigate those hazards.



- ✓ Address the unique challenges presented by the region's watersheds, which include highly engineered, discreet systems as well as locations such as the coast where natural systems provide substantial protection.
- The coalition should provide guidance and technical assistance to local stakeholders regarding best practices in watershed management.
- The coalition should serve as a forum for sharing resources and best practices among stakeholders.

### **Project Implementation**

- The coalition should support local entities in project planning and development and provide resources to assist implementation. In this role the coalition should engage all public, private, or non-profit implementing agencies. The coalition should not directly implement, operate, or maintain projects.
- The coalition should facilitate cross-jurisdictional coordination by identifying related projects and/or projects that will have multi-jurisdictional benefits.
- The coalition should review proposed projects for upstream and downstream impacts.
- The coalition should identify methods for prioritizing projects with multi-jurisdictional impacts.
- The coalition should serve as a conduit for project implementation funding. In this capacity it should:
  - ✓ Have the legal authority to receive and manage outside funding, including funds from existing or new federal, state, or private sources,
  - ✓ Allocate funding to local entities for project development, implementation, operations and maintenance, pursuant to and limited by state/ federal guidelines and regulations.
  - ✓ Program projects based on available funding, benefits, needs, and other regionally agreed upon criteria.
  - ✓ Incentivize local adherence to regional standards and goals by requiring compliance as a condition of funding.
  - ✓ Identify funding sources for new projects as well as ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

### **Data and Modeling**

- The coalition should be tasked with housing and operating the LWI watershed model for Region 8.
- The coalition should use the model and other data to evaluate projects, policies, and programs for upstream and downstream impacts.
- The coalition should enhance local capacity to run and use models and other related data through training programs and resource sharing.
- The coalition should serve as hub or clearinghouse for other entities to submit and use collected data and modeling.
- The coalition should use data responsibly to explain threats and potential project benefits to the public and other stakeholders.

### **Outreach and Engagement**

- The coalition should conduct outreach and education activities to inform both the general public and public officials about the importance of watershed management and its associated strategies.
- The coalition should work with property developers, real estate professionals, and related sectors to enhance awareness about the impact of land use to community resilience, and to develop mutually beneficial strategies that mitigate future impacts.



- The coalition should ensure that local and regional activities are coordinated with state and federal partners. This should include improved communication between entities so that local stakeholders are aware of opportunities and requirements at the state and federal levels.
- The coalition should engage state and federal elected officials to inform them about regional needs and to encourage policy change as appropriate.
- The coalition should maintain open lines of communication with other regions to discuss programs or projects that impact multiple regions, and to share best practices and resources.

### **Recommended Authorities for the Coalition**

Full implementation of the activities described above will require local, state, and/or federal regulators to grant the coalition the authority to:

- Cooperate or contract with governmental, private, or non-profit entities.
- Conduct watershed-related planning activities in conjunction with and on behalf of local governments.
- Receive, manage, and allocate funds from governmental, private, or non-profit sources, including the authority to set policy on how funds will be distributed.
- Hire staff, pay administrative, overhead, and other direct and indirect costs using funds collected from various sources.
- Fund and manage other governmental, private, or non-profit entities to complete coalition tasks, including contracting or subgrants.
- House and manage watershed-related data, including hydrologic models.
- Conduct outreach and education activities.
- Engage governmental, private, or non-profit entities on behalf of coalition members.
- Engage state and federal elected officials on behalf of coalition members.

## **ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTING THIS RECOMMENDATION**

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

### **Authority**

- The coalition should be enabled by legislation under state charter.
- All of the 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. Enabling legislation should explicitly allow for coalitions to be led by partnerships between public, private, and/or non-profit entities. The legislation should also allow for regional discretion in coalition structure, membership, and leadership.
- In addition to state enabling legislation, coalitions must be granted the same authorities by all relevant local, state, and federal governments and agencies.
- The regional watershed boundaries should be recognized or approved by a state agency, board or program.



## Structure & Membership

- The various functions of the coalition should be performed by public, private and non-profit entities acting in a partnership. A single entity will be required to perform fiscal and administrative tasks, while other functions may be performed by separate entities based on their expertise and resources. The entities that are able to participate in the partnership will greatly depend on the level of authorization and funding granted to the coalition. Potential partners may include existing government agencies, non-profits, universities, industry groups, or private entities. Multiple precedents for such arrangements exist locally and nationwide, and these should be used as guides.
- The coalition should be composed of a mix of public, private, and non-profit representatives to ensure a wide range of experience and expertise.

## Long-Term Stability

- The coalition must have a stable, consistent funding source that adequately covers the staffing and administrative costs of running the coalition in addition to project and program funding. The coalition will not achieve long-term success without dependable funding.
- The coalition should have oversight by a state agency which provides consistency and state-level management that would serve as the pass-through entity for federal funds as defined in 2 CFR 200.74 and consistent with said regulation or successor legislation thereto.
- The coalition should have the ability to obtain external funding and maintain stable local funding.
- If the appropriate authorities and funding cannot be obtained to establish a coalition as described above there should be alternate plans for maintaining a long-term entity that will accomplish as many of these activities as possible. Over the remaining course of the existing Regional Capacity Building Grant the RPC will work with the RSC and LWI to develop alternative strategies based on the authorities and funding that are likely to exist when the current grant ends.

## State Agency Role

- 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.
- Region 8 offers the following recommendations to OCD and other state agencies that are leading the effort to secure the appropriate authorities, funding, and policies that would allow the coalitions to function successfully:
  - Strategy:
    - ✓ As soon as possible, develop a coordinated strategy for achieving the regions' recommendations, and seek feedback from the regions on the strategy.
    - ✓ The strategy to acquire authorizations and funding must acknowledge existing fiscal and political realities. There are limited available resources at all levels of government, and it is difficult to create new sources of revenue. There may also be challenges to seeking authorizations that are perceived to conflict with or override existing entities.



Finally, the cooperation and approval of local governments will be equally as important as state and federal authorizations.

- ✓ Anticipate and plan for the possibility that the state and regions may not be able to acquire the authorities and funding required to fully implement the coalitions as envisioned by the steering committees. Create alternative/contingency plans that will allow LWT's work to continue without the ideal level of authorizations and/or funding.
- ✓ As soon as possible, seek legislative champions, partner agencies, and other allies that will be essential to securing the required authorizations and funding.
- ✓ Conduct outreach to elected officials and the public to inform them about the ongoing efforts to establish coalitions, solicit feedback, and seek their support.

- Structure:

- ✓ The authorizations and funding should allow a variety of entities to participate in and/or lead the coalitions, including those from the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
- ✓ Any new coalition structures that are created must be accompanied by sufficient funding. The funding must include the staffing and administrative costs of running a coalition as well as project/program funding.
- ✓ The distribution of funding across regions must be equitable and include all parishes.
- ✓ Future Regional Capacity Building Grant rounds should be flexible enough to allow regions to prioritize their own activities based on regional needs. It should also allow for multiple types of fund recipients based on the regions' recommendations, including partnerships between public, private, and non-profit entities.

- Coordination:

- ✓ State agencies should be coordinated to ensure that work is not duplicated or conflicting, and to most effectively use existing resources.
- ✓ Encourage and facilitate communication between regions to share best practices and resources, and to evaluate projects or programs that may impact multiple regions.