

# Fostering Regional Watershed Collaboration and Planning in Louisiana

## BACKGROUND

The Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center (SU EFC) partnered with the Louisiana Capital Region Planning Commission (LA-CRPC) in an effort to foster regional watershed collaboration and planning. The timing of this partnership was favorable as LA-CRPC had just started rolling out the work of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative in Region 7. This work focused on altering the long-held mindsets of residents and urged that the current and future flood risk challenges can be turned into opportunities to develop solutions that reduce flood risk and lead to equitable outcomes. Each component, flood risk and equity, is being supported through on-going partner work that is in pursuit of addressing the goals of Louisiana Watershed Initiative's (LWI) Region 7.

Flooding and environmental changes routinely impact the lives of residents in Louisiana. LA-CRPC reported that 56 out of 64 parishes had federal disaster declarations as a result of flooding in 2016. LWI's Region 7 faces multiple flood risks: riverine flooding, storm surge flooding, high tide flooding, backwater flooding, stormwater and drainage flooding. These risks are increasing over time and the impacts from flooding are experienced disproportionately. The Louisiana Watershed Initiative, funded at \$1.2 billion, aims to "reduce flood risk, improve floodplain management throughout the state and maximize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains." Region 7 envisions a future with less flood risk, healthier natural environments, and resilience practices that are responsive to the needs of the communities and to the evolving environment. However, the current governing and planning networks are fragmented, calling for a revised and improved watershed collaboration effort.

*Slide from EFCN Presentation to LRPC Advisory Board*

**Environmental Finance Center Network**  
Working together to solve funding challenges for environmental programs & promote a sustainable environment

**Sectors**

- Watershed Planning
- Stormwater
- Drinking Water
- Brownfields
- Contaminated Soil/Groundwater
- Materials Management

**Services**

- Training & Capacity Building
- Outreach, Education & Community Engagement
- Financial Planning/Assessment
- Asset Management/Capital Planning
- Infrastructure Design/Operation/Maintenance
- Sustainability & Resilience Planning/Assessment
- Regulatory Compliance Support

**Partners:** CRPC, LWI, EFCN, EFCWest, most, EFCN

**Logos:** Louisiana Watershed Initiative, Working Together for Sustainability and Resilience, EFCN, EFCWest, most, EFCN

## HIGHLIGHTS

### ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER

Syracuse Environmental Finance Center

### PARTNERS

Louisiana Capital Regional Planning Commission

### LOCATION

Baton Rouge, LA and 13 surrounding parishes

### SCALE/SIZE

Municipal / Populations > 100,000

### KEYWORDS

Regional watershed planning, inland flooding, hurricanes, extreme weather events

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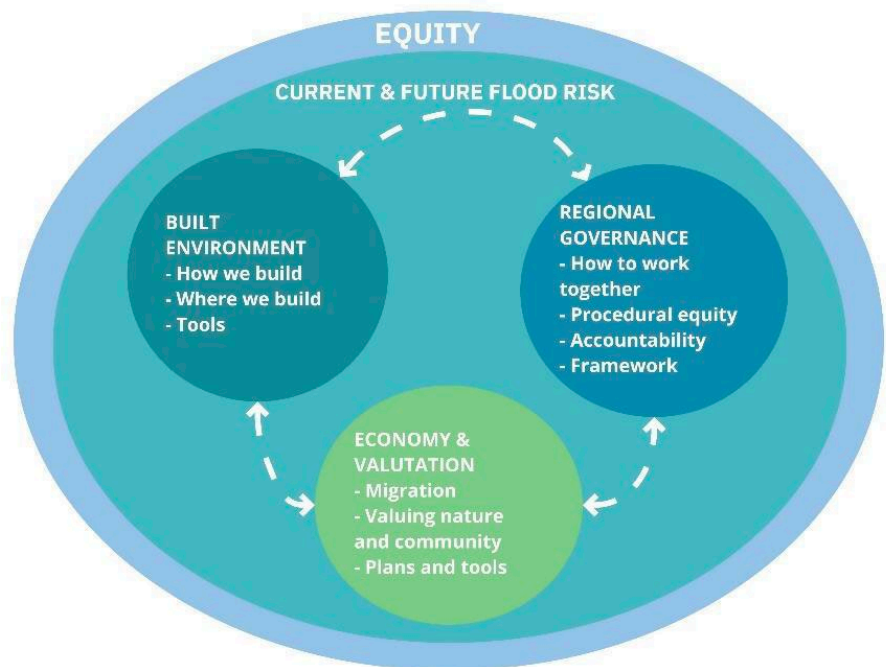
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## APPROACH

A project kickoff meeting was held to review the project needs and expectations, and workplan. This partner work (between SU-EFC and LA-CRPC) is supported through capacity-building and technical assistance, which was originally planned to result in hosting two workshops with the goals of bringing together individuals to discuss regional watershed planning and funding and to support capacity-building efforts across the region. This work was informed by a multi-disciplinary advisory group that also advises partner work with the US-EPA. SU-EFC drafted the Fostering Regional Watershed Collaboration Workshop survey to gauge interest on selected workshop topics and to gain an understanding of the intended audience's familiarity and feelings towards regional watershed collaboration. Survey findings were integral in shaping the agenda for the workshop titled "Shrimp Boots to Pirougues: Fostering Watershed Collaboration." Post-workshop activities included one-on-one technical assistance provided to a local parish as well as participation in several advisory board meetings.

## KEY FINDINGS

The greatest challenge that was met in the course of this project was the inability to reach our intended audience either at the fault of overlapping events or post-disaster recovery demands, as well as continued COVID-19 restrictions. There are a



LA-CRPC Guiding Principles Framework

multitude of parties working on watershed and equity issues in the region, LA-CRPC alone has partnerships with 75 individuals affiliated with over 45 entities. It's possible that the gap in funding, as identified during the technical assistance work with St. John the Baptist Parish, also presented a challenge. Without long-term planning and resiliency funding, local municipalities may not have the capacity to engage in training opportunities such as the one we presented. Finally, the governing and planning networks are fragmented and this may trickle down

to the local level where NGOs and state entities are conducting their watershed collaboration work while attempting to create a unified network. However, LA-CRPC has made great strides to coalesce their working partners around this new approach to watershed collaboration and planning. Key findings include the importance of peer-to-peer capacity building to level the playing field and maximize knowledge sharing and that successful recovery hinges on the watershed community's ability to collaborate on drinking water supply and stormwater and management.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[The Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Tool Guide](#)

[Navigating the Federal Funding Landscape: A Guide for Communities](#)