

Council on Watershed Management Meeting

Thursday, May 30, 2019, 1:00 PM

- I. **Called to Order by Pat Forbes at 1:02 PM**
Welcome and opening comments

- II. **Council Member Roll Call:**
Pat Forbes (OCD)
James Waskom (GOHSEP)
Matthew Weigel (LDWF)
Pat Landry (DOTD)
Stuart Brown (CPRA)

- III. **Pledge of Allegiance**
Led by Pat Landry, DOTD

- IV. **Public Comment**
Public comments will be taken at the end of the meeting.

- V. **Consent Agenda Items**
Approval of May 30, 2019 Meeting Minutes
Motioned: Pat Landry, DOTD
Seconded: James Waskom, GOHSEP
No opposition

- VI. **Opening Remarks**
 - A. **Federal Register Notice – Pat Forbes, OCD**

Before we get started, I would like to provide some updates regarding the Federal Register Notice. First, we continue to anticipate its publication and make preparations in advance of its release. As discussed in our March meeting, we also understand that the CDBG-DR mitigation funds will likely align with FEMA HMGP and we are working to describe the State's risks in a way that is consistent with how GOHSEP defines risks to FEMA. It remains uncertain at this time whether HUD will require 80% or 100% of funding to benefit the 10 most impacted and distressed parishes or if they will allow us to benefit the other 46 parishes. HUD is working to define flexibility within the MID requirement and we have worked within the LWI to provide similar justifications for projects that will benefit a MID parish when not located within a MID. We also understand that there will be a heavy emphasis on citizen participation and a continuous feedback loop, both pre-and post-action plan development. There is also going to be an emphasis on transparency in the project and program selection process. We are doing everything we can to prepare for the release of the Federal Register Notice and look forward to getting to work on this Program in support of this Initiative.

B. Statewide Modeling RFQs – Chris Knotts, DOTD

As anticipated, statewide watershed modeling RFQs were posted on May 15th for 7 watershed regions throughout the state. This is a major step forward for the Louisiana Watershed Initiative in support of improved long-term project evaluation/prioritization, coordinated decision-making, and planning efforts statewide. The deadline to respond for Region Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 7 is June 17th. The proposal due dates for the remaining regions will be posted once consultants are selected for these regions. For full details and to access the advertisements, visit DOTD's Advertisements & Addendums webpage, which can be accessed by a link that has been posted to the Watershed Initiative's web, Facebook, and Twitter page. While advertisements are posted, state employees are in a blackout period and may not address questions regarding the RFQs. Should you have questions, you must direct them through the appropriate channels, as advised in the RFQs. As such, we will not be answering questions today, but are excited to get this work underway.

VII. Old Business

Mr. Forbes: None.

VIII. New Business

Mr. Forbes: Krista Jankowski with CPRA and Alex Carter with OCD will now walk us through new business items, and we will discuss and open to public comment before voting on these items. If you approach and wish to provide public comment, please fill out the public comment cards provided.

A. Amite River Basin Model Pilot Program – Krista Jankowski, CPRA

The use of comprehensive hydrologic and hydraulic watershed modeling for development review and project prioritization is a new concept within the state, therefore, we recommend it be implemented in a pilot format prior to expanding its application state-wide. Specifically at this time, the Policy TAG and Working Group recommend we attain local and regional feedback on the establishment of a Pilot Program to utilize the Amite River Watershed Model for the review of proposed developments and for permitting purposes. The Policy TAG anticipates that such a pilot program will require significant technical assistance to the participating jurisdiction(s) through the period of the pilot program. The recommended approach requires substantial local and regional input in order to facilitate state and regional collaboration.

Mr. Forbes: Are there any public comments related to this item? Hearing none, do I have a motion to authorize members of the Watershed Initiative to begin working within communities of the Amite River Basin to attain local and regional feedback on the establishment of a pilot program to utilize the Amite River Watershed Model for development review?

Motioned: James Waskom, GOHSEP

Seconded: Matthew Weigel, LDWF

No opposition

B. State Agency Pilot Program for Project Prioritization – Krista Jankowski, CPRA

In order to align state agency procedures with the goals of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, it is necessary to establish best practices and guidance for the use of comprehensive hydrologic and hydraulic watershed modeling in project prioritization and funding procedures of such agencies. To this end, the Policy TAG and Working Group recommends that the state implement the use of watershed modeling for project prioritization and funding purposes on a single-agency pilot basis in the near-term before expanding the use of watershed models to other state agencies.

Mr. Forbes: Are there any public comments related to this item? Hearing none, do I have a motion to establish a State Agency Pilot Program to utilize watershed models for project prioritization?

Motioned: Stuart Brown, CPRA

Seconded: Pat Landry, DOTD

No opposition.

IX. Updates

Mr. Forbes: Alex, please walk us through these items and we will discuss as needed, and open to public comment at the end.

A. Program Development – Alex Carter, OCD

At the last meeting we emphasized the importance of modeling and data collection, but this Initiative is so much more than modeling and data. For this reason, before we receive the Federal Notice and the State updates its Action Plan, we thought it wise at this point to step back and provide an overview of the Initiative as it stands today, including the feedback we have received in response to the Parish Leadership Meetings. This includes the evolving narrative around this work that has emerged from ongoing engagement activities. **(Ms. Carter began overview with PowerPoint presentation.)**

B. Recent and Upcoming Engagement Activities – Ben Wicker, OCD / Alex Carter, OCD

Legislative Briefings – Thursday, May 23, and Monday, May 27
Interstate Summit – Wednesday, June 12

X. Next Steps

A. Regional Capacity Building Grant Program – Alex Carter, OCD

We continue to await approval of an Action Plan amendment needed to distribute funds to regions to support both local capacity and cooperation with the Initiative. This has moved the estimated program implementation timeline to Summer 2019.

B. Statewide River and Rain Gauge Monitoring Network – Alex Carter, OCD

Recently the Data and Modeling TAG reached consensus on establishing a statewide river and rain gauge monitoring network that would address the existing informational gaps in many of the state watersheds. Next steps associated with that effort are described in the slide shown, including outreach efforts with locals and stakeholders to refine and provide feedback on the design of the essential backbone of statewide modeling.

C. CDBG-MIT Funding Action Plan Public Comment Process – Alex Carter, OCD

Before we close, it is likely that the Federal Register Notice will be posted before the next scheduled Council Meeting, so we would like to take this opportunity to review what the process looks like between the Federal Register Notice posting requirements for how we can spend the \$1.2 billion and the actual spending of these funds. In short, required next steps are time consuming.

- a. Updated Action Plan, in development, in response to FRN
- b. LWI Council Meeting to review/approve Summary & Budget
- c. Proposed Action Plan published, including a minimum 30-day period for citizen review and comment – pre-submittal to HUD
- d. HUD review and approval of the Action Plan takes up to 45 days; more to address comments, revisions, or plan denial
- e. Before disbursing funds to any organization that is carrying out CDBG activities, a written agreement must be executed

This process could take anywhere from three months to a year; it is difficult to anticipate given we are not sure what or how the Mitigation funds will be restricted and if this process will be significantly different from what the State has addressed in the past. With this in mind, we are doing everything we can to prepare for next steps, while also taking advantage of this time to plan and address long-term programmatic challenges.

Mr. Forbes: Before we move on to closing remarks, this is an opportunity for public comment on agenda items. We ask that it be limited to two minutes per citizen. Is there any public comment at this time? Hearing none we will move on to closing remarks.

XI. Closing Remarks

Mr. Forbes: Before I motion to adjourn, I would like to make the council aware that if the FRN comes out before our next scheduled meeting, there is the possibility of the need for a special meeting.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Forbes: Do I have a motion to adjourn?

Motioned: Pat Landry, DOTD

Seconded: Matthew Weigel, LDWF

Mr. Forbes: Adjournment at 1:49 PM.