

Acadiana Watershed District (LWI Region 5) Meeting Minutes



10am-12pm, Thursday, September 26th, 2024
 Rosa Parks Transportation Center
 101 Jefferson St.
 Lafayette, LA 70501



AGENDA, NOTES AND DECISIONS

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME	The meeting was called to order at 10:12am by Chairman Landry. Opening Statement: " Welcome to this public meeting of the Acadiana Watershed District (also known as LWI Region 5). I am Jacob Landry, Chair of the Acadiana Watershed District. Agendas are available at the room's entrance and were made available through the AWD email distribution list and online at planacadiana.org. The purpose of this public meeting is to consider items established by the agenda. For our records to reflect your attendance, please sign-in at the table or drop a message in the chat box listing your name and affiliation. The purpose of this public meeting is to consider items established by the agenda. Public input is welcome on these items. However, to ensure an orderly meeting, members of the public shall speak at the time designated. Each organization may be permitted one representative to speak for 3 minutes on its behalf and individual public members are permitted 3 minutes. For those wishing to speak in-person, complete a speaker card and present it to the APC staff. For members of the public participating online, please submit your comments and questions in the chat box. Comments/questions will be read aloud during the public comment period. Thank you."
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Vice Chair, Rachel Godeaux (Lafayette), led the Pledge of Allegiance and all stood and recited the pledge.
ROLL CALL	Roll call was taken by Kelia Bingham, Watershed Coordinator, to establish a quorum. A quorum was present with 11 Board members.

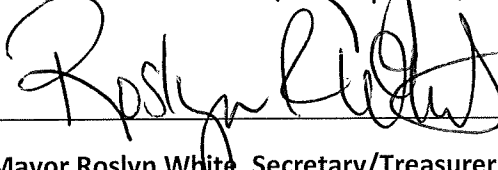
	Teche, Vermilion, Mermentau watersheds. Lafayette, Vermilion, and Iberia parishes will benefit from this project as well as the above Vermilion River project. These projects will act as one once they are implemented. It will connect the Teche (east side of the watershed) to the Vermilion (west side of the watershed) in a positive way to benefit the three parishes and possibly beyond. Earl Garber did state we need to consider not just the Vermilion, but the Mermentau as well as other parishes like Acadia and Jeff Davis. Also, we need to identify projects and funds as LWI funding is ending December 2025. Kelia Bingham did state that APC is estimated to have two more years of funding after December 2025 as a no cost extension for the LWI capacity building grant.
OVERVIEW OF THE 2021 DRAFT PROJECT PRIORTIZATION	Kelia Bingham referred to the slide deck and agenda packet and gave an overview of the 2021 DRAFT project prioritization. The former LWI Region 5 steering committee came up with this draft project prioritization (questionnaire & criteria) as a series of tasks required by LWI. This would need to be revisited and finalized for the regional watershed plan. This can be addressed by, and recommendations taken by the Technical Advisory Committee. Earl Garber (Acadia) commented on the draft project criteria that the criteria has been tested and has been successful. Rachel Godeaux did emphasize the criteria was created prior to the models being developed for the steering committee to evaluate projects in Round 1. Mayor White did ask if economic impact be considered as part of the scoring matrix to consider the cultural, tourism and agricultural impact to give a higher score for rural areas. Kelia Bingham did say this was possible because this is in draft form and can be considered.
STATE GAUGE NETWORK LONG TERM FUNDING UPDATE	Kelia Bingham stated that on September 4th, she and Sara Gary, APC, along with Rep. Kimberly Coates, Chuck Berger & Josh Riggins with LDEQ, USGS, Donald Sagraera with Teche-Vermilion Freshwater District, and our Calcasieu Board member, Terry Frelot, and his team met with Rep. Jacob Landry to discuss long-term funding for the entire state gauge network. Rep. Landry and Rep. Coates will begin reaching out to the rest of the House Committee on Natural Resources to find an avenue for an appropriations request next year during session. He stated that perhaps a state agency could overtake the gauges, and a more affordable source could be identified other than USGS as it is very costly. Dave Dixon (DTV) did make a comment and stress the importance of these state gauges. Jacob Landry agreed and said this gauge system is a huge effort to help project all our watersheds. LDEQ is finalizing a map of the gauges overlayed with the legislative districts. Kelia Bingham did send an email to all regional watershed coordinators to contact their legislators on the importance of this sustainable funding.
LWI PROJECTS DASHBOARD	Kelia Bingham informed the Board of the new LWI Projects Dashboard that give statuses of all LWI projects. This can be viewed here: https://watershed.la.gov/projects-dashboard.
NEXT BOARD MEETING	Our next Board meeting will be November 7th from 10am to 12pm. We will have Donald Sagraera, Executive Director of the Teche-Vermilion Freshwater District, present on the functions of the TVFWD. The District brings additional fresh surface water to the heart of Acadiana via the Atchafalaya River to the Bayou Teche, Vermilion River and connecting streams through a pumping station and a series of control structures and channels designed to divert, regulate and carry the flow. The TVFWD is also part of an inter-governmental surface water quality sampling team with LCG and BVD.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES	• Alexandria to the Gulf Bill Update – as of July 22nd the US Bill HR8812, was passed in the House and received by the Senate on July 23rd • Atchafalaya Master Plan Development Team Steering Committee – Chris Tauzin (St. Martin) is serving as our representative on that team • Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan application via HMGP funds – received update in July – GOHSEP reviewed documents and held a joint meeting • State ethics training certificates for Board members are due before the end of the year • Regional Flood Coordination Strategy/Plan – TVFWD, DTV and Congressman Higgin’s office involved – this could be a discussion topic for our TAC.
PUBLIC COMMENT	Jeremiah Supple, Board member of the Dredge the Vermilion (Lafayette focus), stated he was affected by the 2016 flood as one of 5,000 houses flooded. There was \$300 to \$400 million in damage. He highly recommends that someone from the DTV be on one of the AWD committees who are qualified professionals. He also stated that the Vermilion River is rising. He would like to see that during an upcoming hurricane that the level of the river be taken in consideration by the TVFWD and it be part of their mandate to lower the river and for the AWD to amend the TVFWD legislation for the Governor to approve, or someone with the state to approve, to lower the river down to 4 or 5 feet in preparation of a storm. This will not cost anything. We understand the coastal issues and are happy to help, but when DTV tries to mitigate anticipated rainfall, we get opposition from individuals on the coast due to concern of storm surge. For every 1 ft above 16 feet on the river is equal to \$100 million. Pushback is received from camp owners of Bayou Courtableau. DTV wants the economics to be considered on what they want to accomplish by lowering the water levels. Jacob Landry said he understood the concerns and that the AWD can assist in figuring out what needs to happen. Jeremiah Supple did acknowledge that there needs to be coordination between TVFWD, the USACE and the state. Harold Schoeffler with DTV stated that a hydrologist, Dr. Ben Grisson, studied the Calcasieu and announced results of a study of increasing channel capacity by removing a reef at the Port of Iberia in 1985. This could raise storm surge from Bayou Lafourche to the Calcasieu 8 to 10 feet. This would greatly affect the Port of Iberia. Storm surges could be reduced if the reef was restored. There is future opportunity for the board to consider these methods. Scooter Trosclair (virtual) with LDWF stated that a simple, storm surge protection system that includes enhance outlets, preventing high tides and salinities, but takes advantage of low tides to flow out as well, maintains needed water levels through water management. Part of the enhancements would include FORCE drainage. Major project improving a region! Look at these issues and consolidate into one project of multiple parishes. A levee alignment that takes consideration of existing outlet structures but identifies locations for adding additional outlets and pump stations. Construct as funding comes available but the project layout is identified in the plan to take advantage for putting the project together for completion overtime. Planning and agreement within the group is needed to seek overall benefits for the region. Pam Granger (McBade Engineers) said it’s very important to seek funding as it is running out. Consider that the Amite River Basin Board received the \$100 Million funds from LWI/OCD as they became political. Since there is only one dedicated funding source until December 2025 and the AWD board is only meeting every other month, that

	deadline will come quick. When it's November, you need to consider that the legislative session starts in March 2025 and a plan is needed for a dedicated funding source before then. Kelia Bingham did state that AWD is anticipating a no-cost extension for LWI funds until December 2027 and that APC will be looking at sustainable funding sources. Jacob Landry said he agreed that this is important, and we also do need a mission statement as this will help for future funding.
ADJOURNMENT	Terry Frelot made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Tyler Tullier seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting ended at 12:06pm. VOTE: 11-0-7: Yea – 11; Nay – 0; Absent – 7;
MEETING DETAILS	
CONTACT	Kelia Bingham, LWI Region 5 Watershed Coordinator kbingham@planacadiana.org or (337) 446-0807
ADA/TITLE VI NOTICE	The Acadiana Planning Commission (APC) convenes public meetings in accessible locations. Meeting materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English upon request. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the ADA/Title VI Coordinator via email at amoran@planacadiana.org: or by phone at 337-806-9364. If you wish to attend an APC function and require special accommodations, please provide at least 72 hours advanced notice.
ATTENDANCE RECORD	
ATTENDEES	<u>Delegates Present:</u> Acadia – Earl Garber Allen – Tyler Tullier Calcasieu – Terry Frelot Cameron – Kara Bonsall Evangeline – Dirk Deville Iberia – Ben Langlinais Lafayette – Rachel Godeaux St. Martin – Chris Tausin Vermilion – Keith Roy House Committee on Natural Resources & Environment – Rep. Jacob Landry Senate Committee on Natural Resources – Mayor Roslyn White of Abbeville <u>Others Present</u>

ABSENTEES	Kelia Bingham - APC Sean Reed - APC Jessica Cornay – Lafayette Consolidated Government Dr. Garland Pennision – HDR Engineering Scooter Trosclair – LDWF Kathleen Lunn – Arcadis (LWI) Claire Taylor – The Advocate Karen Hail – Bayou Vermilion District Augusto Villalon – Freese and Nichols Jody Roger-White – CPRA Pamela Granger McBade – McBade Engineers & Consultants Gordon Schoeffler – DTV Chip Vosburg – Upper Delta SWCD Harold Schoeffler – DTV Jeremiah Supple – DTV Greg Ellison – Congressman Higgin’s Office Jessica Cornay – Lafayette Consolidated Government Lauren Ortego <u>Delegates Absent:</u> Avoyelles – Jacob Coco Jefferson Davis – Kori Myers Iberville – John Clark Pointe Coupee – Nathan Cobb Rapides – Matt Johns St. Landry -Van Reed St. Mary – President Sam Jones
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Minutes approved on 2/27/2025 by the Acadiana Watershed District Board.



Mayor Roslyn White, Secretary/Treasurer
Acadiana Watershed District

