



New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters March 21, 2019, Strategic Planning Meeting Notes

Twenty participants attended all or part of the facilitated New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters meeting conducted from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., March 21, 2019, in the Brown Foundation Center Community Conference room in Metairie, LA. Among participants were representatives of Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF), Friends of Lafitte Greenway, Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF), Woodlands Conservancy, Adaptation Strategies, Audubon Aquarium, City of New Orleans, New Orleans Sewage & Water Board, and Jefferson Parish. Federal partners included representatives from US EPA, USDA/Forest Service, USDA/NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and USGS. (Names and affiliations of attendees are below and a copy of the meeting roster is available.)

Meeting Desired Outcomes

- Develop a sustainable, locally-led New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters (UW) Program Plan
- Review Strategic Transition Plan Core Program Themes and identify local lead commitments for each
- Define local leads' roles and how the structure will be implemented across the UW Partnership
- Identify and discuss how to incorporate new proposals/projects into the New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Program

Meeting Process

Following a welcome and review of the meeting agenda by the facilitator, Pam Avery, and roundtable introductions, Danny Wiegand, New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Ambassador, explained the purpose of the meeting as a tool to determine program commitment and to re-energize NOLA Urban Waters activities. Adele Cardenas Malott, EPA Region 6, briefly described the history and successes of the NOLA Urban Waters Federal Partnership, which was formed in 2010 as the first Urban Waters pilot project. She also described the transition planning meetings that occurred in late 2015 that resulted in the 2016 NOLA/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Strategic Transition Plan. This was followed by facilitated discussions using a synopsis of the Strategic Plan as a guide. (A meeting agenda is attached.)

Facilitated Discussion

Meeting participants unanimously agreed that a thematic, rather than a project-by-project, approach continues to be the best option to leverage local stakeholder resources once the federal partners are no longer taking the lead. **Commonality** and **Connectivity** – what besides water, is the common thread – still works as overriding project criteria, as do the overriding themes: **Community resiliency** and **Environmental Justice/Economic Development**.

Meeting participants also favored keeping the four core project themes and potentially rebranding the overriding Environmental Justice/Economic Development theme as Sustainable Economies, which was later added as a potential fifth core project theme

The core themes are: 1) Environmental Education, 2) Water Quality 3) Small-scale Restoration/Habitat, 4) Public Access (to Water)/Utilization, and 5) Sustainable Economies. The group also noted that reaching out to and encouraging citizen scientists is an opportunity that should be included under project themes.

During the morning session, intense discussion of each Theme occurred, including a review of previously identified opportunities and new projects for each. During the afternoon sessions, potential local co-lead organizations were added to each theme, and interim core theme category lead(s) were identified.

Core Project Themes

1) Environmental Education.

Opportunities/Projects:

- *Outreach to youth through water-related educational programs through schools and summer camps, and possible creation of an Urban Waters Youth Advisory Council.*
- Will Pestoff, LPBF, said his organization is looking into developing a micro-plastics water testing program for area youth. David Lo, Audubon Aquarium, said he could put LPBF in touch with a similar project in Virginia. (Note: Mandy Sartain at MSU's Coastal Research and Extension Center has developed a citizen science microplastics project. Contact: amanda.sartain@msstate.edu)
 - Katie Brasted, Woodlands Conservancy, shared information about the Seeds to Saplings program, which educates youth about trees and the growth process. Students help plant the seeds and then re-locate the saplings.
 - Rochelle Cole to reach out to the NO Botanic Gardens to discuss water-related partnerships for youth.
- *Developing interactive programs and educational displays for all age groups and physical abilities.*
 - Sami Khalil, Jefferson Parish, said he's approached the National Park Service to provide citizen scientists with access to an unused water quality lab.
 - Shelley Stiaes, USFWS, said that the USFWS has been using drones to develop videos of hiking trails and other sites that can be viewed by people who are unable physically or geographically to access these places.
 - Adele Cardenas Malott, EPA, suggested conducting an open house with interactive displays and information on Urban Waters projects.
 - Several people suggested having interactive displays at citywide events, including those planned for April's Earth Day.
- *Water education that leads to water-related and green jobs, and possible creation of an Environmental Education/Employment Committee.*
 - Shelley Stiaes said the USFWS is working with Delta Corp and its Limitless Vistas program to recruit and train water professionals.
 - Outreach to UNO President Dr. John Nicklow was suggested by Andrea Calvin. "There's a great deal of interest in jobs in water quality."
 - The Louisiana Conservation Corps was mentioned as a possible resource.

- *Recruiting and training professionals to replace the water profession's aging employee population. See above*
- *Citizen Science as a Launchpad to environmental education.*
 - Several local efforts were discussed, including those with the USGS and USFWS Citizen Science 2.0 (NPS) and the Citizen Science Association were suggested as potential resources.

2) **Water Quality (One Water Management).** Many of the projects were also identified as environmental education projects described above. Opportunities/Projects:

- *Educating adults and youth about the critical need for water quality. (See above.)*
 - Include water quality exhibits and information at local events, and on partner websites and Facebook pages.
 - ISeeChange app was discussed as a possible resource informing people of effects of climate change on local waterways and water quality.
 - Politicians need as much education about water quality issues as general citizens. Council members, state and U.S. representatives need to be invited to Urban Waters meetings and events.
- *Promote awareness of the impact of chemicals and other materials on stormwater that impacts the bayous and Lake Pontchartrain's water quality.*
 - See LPBF micro-plastics initiative above.
 - Discussion of the Sewerage & Water Board's efforts to keep residents from pouring paint and chemicals down the storm drains.
 - Suggestion to re-initiate the Statewide Stormwater Coalition.
 - Installation of mesh grates to keep Mardi Gras and other parade beads from falling into the storm drains. In Jefferson County, beads initiatives include a "toss back" campaign, in which parade-goers are encouraged to toss their beads back into a truck at the end of the parade, and a "Doughnuts for Beads" project. [Note: Dr. Naohiro Kato at Louisiana State University has developed beads made from algae. They aren't cost effective to produce at the moment, but might be something to keep on the radar moving forward, <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-biodegradable-mardi-gras-beads.html>.
- *Enhancing water quality data collection and monitoring, including groundwater and coastal waterways data.*
 - Danny discussed his application for an EPA Regional Area Research Effort (RARE) grant to support two remote sensors on Lake Pontchartrain that would provide real-time water quality and lake condition monitoring.
 - LPBF is contributing data to the EPA Office of Research Development/NASA remote water quality sensing program (no reports yet).
 - Discussion of expanding the Urban Waters program to include outreach to other parishes that border Lake Pontchartrain.
 - Andrea Calvin, Adaptations Strategies, suggested that water quality needs to be addressed on a watershed scale that includes state programs and initiatives, such as Governor John Bel Edwards's new Louisiana Watershed Initiative.
- *Engaging citizens in the water data monitoring process through the distribution of water testing kits. (See Education section.)*
 - Recruit and encourage citizen scientists interested in water quality issues.
- *Developing and placing in appropriate Urban Waters projects exhibits that illustrate the water cycle. (See Education section.)*

- *As needed, mount a public health, water quality education campaign to alert subsistence fishermen to the risks of eating fish caught in waterways with high levels of mercury and other toxins.*
 - EPA and other organizations have mounted a campaign alerting resident about the risks of eating fish in certain waterways and during certain times of year.
 - <https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/fishing-consumption-and-swimming-advisories>

3) **Restoration and Habitat.** Opportunities/Projects:

- *An emphasis on citizen-driven, small, local restoration and habitat projects that the Urban Waters Partnership can facilitate and maintain.*
 - Urban forest opportunities were discussed, including the Woodlands Conservatory’s Seeds to Saplings program, and local flood lands restoration projects.
 - Kansas City, Mo., Urban Neighborhood Initiative’s Vacant to Vibrant Guide and lot design templates was discussed as a possible New Orleans initiative. Note: the materials were developed under a grant from the EPA. (Pam Avery to send Rochelle a link to the project for distribution to participants.)
 - Lafitte Greenway was mentioned as an example of small scale urban restoration.
 - Discussion of linking Urban Waters efforts to new Green Infrastructure initiatives promoted by NO Mayor LaToya Cantrell.
- *Urban Waters becoming a restoration and habitat projects clearinghouse.*
- *Urban Waters Becoming a local vehicle to connect with systemic, regional restoration and habitat projects.*
- *Urban Waters facilitating grants and other funding for local, citizen-driven projects.*
 - Adele Cardenas Malott, EPA, told the group that small Urban Waters grants are available, but that decision makers need to know in advance what projects NOLA/Lake Pontchartrain UW have in the works and submit information prior to May 31. **(Note: these grants are also available for the other Theme projects.)**

4) **Public Access (to Water)/Utilization.** Opportunities/Projects:

- *Making it easier for residents to access their waterways, including Lake Pontchartrain, to make use of the recreational amenities and environmental resources these urban waterways can afford.*
 - Linking up with the Connect the Crescent was suggested as a means of developing much needed bike lanes to and around the lake. Andrea Calvin, Adaptations Strategies, said there is a “renewed interest” in bike safety after the drunken driving incident that killed several bikers and injured others during the 2019 Mardi Gras.
 - Will Pestoff, LPBF, provided an update on Lake Pontchartrain Beach. The project still faces hurdles, including safety and liability issues. Adele Cardenas Malott, EPA, suggested that LPBF consider a petition to move the project from the NO District to Regional jurisdiction, which might provide access to more resources. (Will Pestoff also gave a brief update on Lincoln Beach process, which is essentially dormant due to multiple financial and jurisdictional hurdles.)
- *Raising awareness of opportunities to utilize water resources, through education and signage.*
 - In process.
- *Augmenting the Lafitte Greenway with other urban access projects.*
 - In process.

- *Developing Bayou Sauvage and other such waterways and wetlands into accessible urban environmental resources.*
 - Delayed due to a lack of City of NO support and funding. Shelley Stiaes, USFWS, plans to approach Mayor Cantrell about city support for the restoration process and pier.
 - Tulane University School of Architecture & Design has approached the USFWS about designing and placing a pavilion at the site to help shade and provide shelter for visitors. The students would provide support for the entire project, including identifying funding sources.

5) Sustainable Economies. This new Theme was suggested by Ella Delio, Programs Director, Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF), and unanimously adopted by the Urban Waters partners present at the meeting.

- *Create small businesses and jobs that foster sustainable economies.*
 - Ella discussed the \$5 million Mayor’s Office/New Orleans Business Alliance initiative to support workforce infrastructure, including sustainable financing mechanisms.
 - GNOF also is working on cross-sectional philanthropic funding initiatives with such foundations as Kresge and JP Morgan.

Theme-Centric Local/Federal Leadership – Updated March 21, 2019

The following chart indicates the updated status of Urban Waters Partners’ leadership of the five core Theme categories. The interim co-lead(s) is indicated under “Theme.”

THEME	LOCAL CO-LEADS	FEDERAL CO-LEADS
Environmental Education Interim Co-champions: Will Prestoff, LPBF Ella Delio – GNOF Scott Finney - SWBNO	Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF) Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) Friends of Lafitte Greenway (FLG) Lower 9 th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development (L9CSED) (?) – Need to check Groundwork NOLA (?) - Need to check Resilient New Orleans (RNO) – (?) - Need to check Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans (GNWC) – Need to check. Contact Keith Twitchell	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) EPA Gulf of Mexico Program (EPA GMP) National Park Service (NPS)

<p>Water Quality (One Water Management)</p> <p>Interim Co-champions: Will Prestoff – LPBF Andrea Calvin - AS</p>	<p>LPBF SWBNO GNOF Adaptation Strategies (AS)</p> <p>RNO – Need to check Groundwork NOLA – Need to check GNWC – Need to check City Park – Need to contact Water Wise – Need to contact</p>	<p>U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) EPA EPA GMP</p> <p>(Add) USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)</p>
<p>Citizen-Driven Small Scale Restoration</p> <p>Interim Co-champions: Groundwork? Water Collaborative?</p>	<p>LPBF SWBNO Friends of Lafitte Greenway (FLG)</p> <p>Jefferson Parish – Need to check RNO – Need to check Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority (CPRA) – Need to check Common Ground Relief – Need to contact Regional Planning Commission (RPC) – Need to contact City of New Orleans – Need to check L9CSED – Need to contact City Park – Need to contact Nature Conservancy – Need to contact RMC – Manchac – Kim Coates Contact NEED MORE INFO</p>	<p>EPA GMP USDA National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) USFWS</p>
<p>Public Access/ Utilization</p> <p>Interim Co-champions: Andrea Calvin – AS Kevin Centanni - FLG</p>	<p>LPBF AS FLG</p> <p>Port of New Orleans (PONO) – Need to contact LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fish (LDWF) – Need to contact L9CSED – Need to check Jefferson Parish – Need to check St. Tammany Parish – Need to contact</p>	<p>Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) FWS NPS</p> <p>(Add) Department of Transportation</p>

Sustainable Economies Interim Co-champion: Ella Delio – GNOF	GNOF AS Propeller – Need to contact NOLA Business Administration Greater New Orleans, Inc. – Need to contact Launch NOLA – Need to contact	EPA GMP Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Development Administration (EDA)

Other Potential Contacts/Resources (Note: excludes Co-champions above)

- University of New Orleans John Nicklow, President: Tom Doyle, USGS to contact
- Delta Corps: Shelley Stiaes, USFWS, to contact
- City Park – Meg Adams: Andrea Calvin, Adaptions Strategies, to contact
- LA Department of Water Quality – James Beckley: David Lu, Audubon Aquarium, to contact
- MS4 Groups – Need contact
- St. Tammany Parish – Need contact
- Derelict Crab Trap program – Need contact
- LA Watershed Initiative – Danica Adams
- Office of Resiliency – David Morris
- Coastal Resilience Program – Anne Coglianese, Manager
- Local Councilmembers
- Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans – Janell Simpson, President

Suggestions

- Develop a Communications Plan
- Develop/update outreach materials:
 - Monthly newsletter
 - Calendar items
 - Updated website/Facebook postings
- Conduct UW Meetings at Different Lake Pontchartrain Locations (North Shore/South Shore)
- Invite Representatives from parishes adjacent to the Lake Pontchartrain (e.g., St. Tammany Parish)
- Identify Interim Project Theme Co-champions (see above)
- Encourage UW local partners to develop a list of “shovel ready” projects, including short one- to two-paragraph write-ups. These projects would be ideal for last-minute funding requests that typically come in at the end of the Federal fiscal year.

Next Steps

- Create a Communications Plan – Adele Cardenas Malott, EPA, to take the lead
- Update the Strategic Transition Plan – Adele and Danny Wiegand, Rochelle Cole to take the lead
- Develop/update outreach materials – Rochelle to take the lead
- Email March 21 meeting notes and other materials to Urban Waters Partners – Rochelle to take the lead
- Urban Waters Partners to meet quarterly. (Next meeting on June 26, 2019.)
- Interim co-leads to reach out to other partners to identify project ideas and to select a permanent co-lead. (Interim co-champions will conduct breakout sessions at June 26 meeting at the Audubon Aquarium.)
- Outreach to potential co-lead partners or resources identified during the March 21 meeting.

NOLA/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Planning Session Participants

The following State/Local and Federal Urban Waters Partner representatives attended the March 21, 2019, planning session, which was facilitated by Pam Avery, AveryMassey LLC.

State/Local Stakeholders

Government/Municipal

City of New Orleans – Brad Klamer, Food Plain Manager

Jefferson Parish – Sami Khalil, Stormwater Manager

Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans – Scott Finney, MS4 Stormwater Manager

Non-Government Organizations

Adaptation Strategies – Andrea Calvin, Chief Scientist

Audubon Aquarium – David Lo, Curator

Friends of Lafitte Greenway – Kevin Centanni, Board Chair

Greater New Orleans Foundation – Ella Delio, Director of Environmental Programs

Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation – William Pestoff, Water Quality Coordinator

Woodlands Conservatory – Katie Brasted, Executive Director

Other: Leon Molinario (Invited by Kevin Centanni – local fisherman)

Federal Agency Stakeholders

Urban Waters – Rochelle Cole

Environmental Protection Agency – Adele Cardenas Malott, Project Lead

EPA Gulf of Mexico Office – Danny Wiegand, Project Lead; Colby McClain, Kat Millard

US Fish & Wildlife Service – Shelley Stiaes

US Department of Agriculture/Forest Service – Dudley Hartel, Urban Forester

US Department of Agriculture/USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service – Alton James, Jr.

US Geological Survey/WARC – Tom Doyle, Deputy Director

US Geological Survey/LMG – Scott Mize, Hydrologist

