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Gov. Edwards Updates Restore LA Task Force on Recovery Progress and \$1.2 Billion in Federal Flood Protection Funding

More than 9,600 Homeowners Offered Grants Totaling More Than \$256 Million

The recent allocation of \$1.2 billion in CDBG-DR funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to Louisiana for mitigation against future flood damage is a critical component of the state's efforts to protect communities from water-related disasters, Gov. John Bel Edwards said at today's Restore Louisiana Task Force meeting.

The funding is part of \$28 billion awarded by Congress in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 and allocated through HUD to support long-term disaster recovery in nine disaster-impacted states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These funds will become available for use by the state once HUD releases the Federal Register Notice and approves the state's Action Plan.

"Louisiana's allocation of \$1.2 billion in mitigation funding provides the opportunity for us to not only make our people safer from future flood events, but also to lead the nation in taking a science-based approach to watershed-based floodplain management across the state," Edwards said. "Working with local, state and federal agencies, as well as with our universities and the private sector, we'll harness the skills and knowledge necessary to do this right."

Edwards also updated the Task Force on his recent letter to HUD asking for a final interpretation of the language related to the federal Duplication of Benefits penalty concerning

Small Business Administration Loans that is included in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, an issue that negatively affects thousands of Louisiana homeowners impacted by the disastrous floods of 2016.

“We continue to press HUD for clarity regarding the recent legislation from Congress with the hope that the interpretation allows the Restore Louisiana Homeowner Program to not count approved SBA loan amounts that were either never or partially accepted by homeowners in the federal duplication of benefit calculation,” Edwards said. “As I have stated repeatedly, this is the single most frustrating stumbling block that is preventing thousands of people from rebuilding. We will continue working with our Congressional delegation to fix this issue, as we strongly believe a loan is different than a grant and that homeowners shouldn’t be penalized.”

In addition, the Office of Community Development presented three resolutions subsequently passed by the Task Force. The resolutions concern the following programs and plans:

- **Watershed Planning and Mitigation Assistance:** Creates a broad proposal for investment in resilience projects; and recommends the Louisiana Watershed Coordinated Agencies report directly to the Governor on mitigation activities, programmatic planning and guidance developed through the proposal, in keeping with the policies and purpose of the Louisiana Watershed-Based Floodplain Management Program. The LWCA will develop the Louisiana Watershed-Based Floodplain Management Program in collaboration with other stakeholders. LWCA comprises the following agencies and offices: Office of Community Development, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Department of Transportation and Development, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
- **Rental Housing Programs:** Reallocates \$7 million from the Neighborhood Landlord Program to the Piggyback Program, dedicated specifically for projects in a rural area; and recommends OCD create an Action Plan Amendment about the program for submission to HUD. The Piggyback Program “piggybacks” Community Development Block Grant dollars with Low Income Housing Tax Credits to create new housing units for low-to-moderate income tenants.
- **Public Service Program:** Creates the Public Service Program to assist First Responder operations in the most-impacted and distressed parishes, which experienced a reduction in revenue from ad valorem taxes because of the Great Floods of 2016; allocates \$8 million from OCD administrative funds to the newly created program; and recommends OCD create an Action Plan Amendment about the program for submission to HUD.

Additionally, Baton Rouge Area Chamber President and CEO Adam Knapp presented a resolution, subsequently passed by the Task Force, related to the mission of the Louisiana Watershed Coordinated Agencies:

- **Prioritize Investment To Advance Watershed-Based Floodplain Science in Louisiana:** Encourages the LWCA to further Louisiana’s competitiveness in watershed-based floodplain management by prioritizing the use of state and federal resources at Louisiana’s independent, nonprofit, scientific research institutes and similar Louisiana public and private university water-management research centers, in collaboration with Louisiana’s private sector.

OCD also provided the Task Force with updates on the Restore Homeowner Program, the Restore Rental Housing Programs and the Restore Small Business Program.

- **Restore Homeowner Program:** 49,353 surveys submitted; 29,811 applications submitted; and 9,611 homeowners offered grants totaling \$256.5 million.
- **Restore Rental Housing Programs:**
 - Neighborhood Landlord Rental Program—60 contingent commitment letters issued for 310 units totaling \$33,293,213 in loan commitments.
 - Piggyback Program—28 applications approved for 2,939 units totaling \$109,522,101 in loan commitments.
 - Multifamily Program—14 applications approved for 582 units totaling \$13,786,787 in loan/grant commitments.
- **Restore Small Business Program:** 612 applications submitted; 143 loans closed totaling \$16,534,041.

About the Restore Louisiana Task Force

The Restore Louisiana Task Force comprises 21 individuals from throughout the state who were appointed by Gov. John Bel Edwards to oversee the rebuilding process after historic flooding in March and August 2016 impacted 51 disaster-declared parishes. The Task Force’s mission is divided into six categories: community planning; economic; health and social services; housing; infrastructure; and natural and cultural resources. All Task Force documents are available at [Restore Louisiana Task Force Resources](#).