ELECTION 2017 FACT SHEET

Economic Opportunities in Water Management

Understanding the Opportunity

Water is fundamental to Southeast Louisiana's culture and economy: from our iconic seafood and architecture to our ports and industries. Water has also shaped our history through floods, storms and rebuilding. How we manage water resources can determine whether we thrive or suffer.

Water management is driven by public and private entities within three distinct but related categories- coastal restoration (e.g. rebuilding wetlands and chenieres), coastal protection (e.g. constructing levees), and urban water management (e.g. mitigating stormwater impacts). As Southeast Louisiana implements a new wave of innovative water management projects in both the urban and coastal contexts, there is a unique opportunity to maximize the economic impact of environmental restoration. Through active engagement with business and civic groups as well as nonprofit advocates, local elected leaders can contribute to the momentum.

A rainwater detention system being installed. Courtesy Construction Eco Services LLC

Integrated Water Resource Management is "a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize … economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems"[1]. Because of our abundance of water and prevalence of related threats, including urban flooding, subsidence and wetlands loss, Greater New Orleans can be a global

[1] Hassing, J., et al., Integrated Water Resources Management in Action, in The United Nations World Water Assessment Programme, UNEP, Editor. 2009, UNESCO: Paris, France.

WATER COLLABORATIVE of Greater New Orleans

4902 Canal St., Ste. 300
New Orleans, LA 70118

(504) 233-4347
nolawater.org

leader in this integrated approach.[2] By doing so, we can create economic opportunity for our citizens.

Leveraging Federal Dollars

The 2012 federal RESTORE Act dedicates 80% of all administrative and civil penalties for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to a Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, while the 2006 Gulf of Mexico Energy and Security Act(GOMESA) provides Louisiana and its coastal parishes with nearly one third oil and gas lease revenue from federal waters off our coast. GOMESA takes full effect in 2017 and revenues are dedicated to coastal restoration.

In addition, the City of New Orleans was awarded $141 million from HUD in 2015, most of which will fund green infrastructure in the Gentilly Resilience District. The city has also committed millions in FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants and local dollars to green infrastructure for stormwater management. These local projects are slated for completion by 2020 or sooner. As these projects move from design to construction and maintenance, skilled workers stand to benefit.

With hundreds of millions of dollars flowing into Louisiana's water management sector over the next several years, there is a large, sustained, and increasingly competitive demand for skilled workers.

Preparing a Workforce

According to GNO, Inc. the water management sector already employs 30,350 people in the Greater New Orleans region and is projected to grow 23% over the next ten years.[3] The number of high-skill jobs in water management is projected to grow by 28% over the next ten years. When accounting for attrition, that translates to 13,620 job openings in the next 10 years, including 3,250 high skill, high wage positions.[4]

Delgado Community College partnered with Sewerage and Water Board to establish a career pathways program for certified water and wastewater technicians. Recently, Delgado added preparation for the National Green Infrastructure Certification exam to its workforce offerings. Those who complete the program should be well positioned for the inherently place-based construction and maintenance jobs resulting from aforementioned green infrastructure projects. Equally important are programs like BuildNOLA Green within the city's Office of Supplier Diversity, which links existing firms to new opportunities in this growing sector, and nonprofits like Propeller, which foster entrepreneurship in the water sector. All these players benefit from transparency in public sector hiring and contracting.

The city currently requires contractors to assume maintenance responsibilities for green infrastructure installations for an initial period of 2-3 years, meaning most of the resulting jobs will be in the private sector. Whether a public agency, and which public agency, will assume responsibility for maintenance after that time is a decision to be made by the next administration and council.

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[2] Adaptation Strategies. 2017. *The Louisiana Water Economy: Our Shared Destiny* https://issuu.com/adaptationstrategies

[3] Greater New Orleans, Inc. 2016. *State of the Sector: Water Management* http://gnoinc.org/wp-content/uploads/GNO_Inc_Water_State-of-the-Sector_FINAL.pdf

[4] Greater New Orleans, Inc. 2017. Sectoral Shift: An Unprecedented Opportunity in Water Management http://gnoinc.org/wp-content/uploads/Kresge-Report-Draft-2017-04-25_Final_Kresge-1.pdf

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