

Task 10: Public Outreach and Engagement



Source: City of Austin Lower Shoal Creek Risk Reduction Public Meeting

The objective of this task is to address public participation, public meetings, and administrative and technical support activities that are required to complete and submit a draft Regional Flood Plan by August 1, 2022, and the final adopted Regional Flood Plan by January 10, 2023. These activities are ongoing from the start to the completion of the planning process.

Regional Flood Planning Group Meetings (2020–2022)

At the start of the regional flood planning process, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) established 15 flood planning regions based on river basin boundaries and convened Regional Flood Planning Groups (RFPG) for each region. The RFPG's responsibilities include directing the work of technical consultants, soliciting and considering public input, identifying and assessing flood risks, and identifying, evaluating, and recommending Flood Management Evaluations (FME), Flood Management Strategies (FMS), and Flood Mitigation Projects (FMP). To ensure a diversity of perspectives is represented throughout the planning process, the TWDB appointed RFPG members representing 11 interest groups:

- Agriculture
- Counties
- Electric Generation Utilities
- Environmental Interests
- Industry
- Municipalities
- Public
- River Authorities
- Small Businesses
- Water Districts
- Water Utilities

The Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG convened its first meeting in November 2020, at which time it elected a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, and two additional RFPG to serve on an Executive Committee. At its December 16, 2021 meeting, the RFPG voted to establish a Technical Committee to review, on behalf of the full RFPG, potential FMEs, FMPs, and FMSs for possible inclusion as recommendations in the Regional Flood Plan. Five members of the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG were selected to serve on the Technical Committee. The

committee's first meeting was convened in person on January 27, 2022, when the committee elected officers and considered the process and timeline for reviewing FMEs, FMPs, and FMSs. The committee also took action throughout several meetings to approve FMEs, FMPs, and FMSs for subsequent consideration and approval by the full RFPG. A complete chronology of RFPG meetings is provided in *Table 10.1*.

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), the sponsoring agency for the Lower Colorado-Lavaca regional flood planning process, has been responsible for posting all meetings of the RFPG and its committees on the Texas Secretary of State website and on the [Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region website](#). LCRA also distributes agendas and meeting materials via email to all voting and non-voting RFPG members, as well as any person or entity who has requested notice of RFPG meetings and activities. The opportunity to subscribe to receive such notifications is clearly provided on the website.

All meetings of the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG have been convened either virtually via the Zoom webinar platform or in a hybrid (virtual and in-person) format. All meetings are conducted, as required, following the Texas Open Meetings Act (Chapters 551 and 552, Government Code), Public Information Act, and COVID-related disaster proclamations issued by Governor Abbott. All RFPG meetings must provide at least one opportunity for public comment. Starting in February 2021, the RFPG added a second agenda item for public comment at each meeting, so the public has been allowed to comment at the beginning or end of each meeting or both.

Table 10.1 RFPG and Technical Committee Meeting Calendar

Year	Date	Meeting	Highlights
2020	November 2	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	RFPG convening hosted by the TWDB
	December 7	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Planning Group Sponsor (LCRA) hosted
2021	February 8	Executive Committee Virtual Meeting	
	February 11 ^A	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Pre-planning public comment
	March 25	Executive Committee Virtual Meeting	
	March 29 ^A	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Pre-planning public comment Technical Consultant selected/hired
	April 19 ^A	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Pre-planning public comment
	May 17	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	First meeting for Technical Consultant
	June 21	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	The technical consultant presented and discussed goals and strategies for public outreach and engagement. Review and discussion of requirements for Tasks 1 and 3.
	July 19	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Technical consultant presentation and discussion of requirements and processes for Tasks 2, 4, and 5, including an overview of types of FMEs, FMSs, and FMPs. Initiated RFPG goal-setting process. Review requirements and process for Task 8 and discuss the preliminary list of potential policy issues of interest.
	August 16	Planning Group Virtual Meeting	Present and review a preliminary draft of Chapter 1, preliminary draft goal statements, and proposed process for identification, evaluation, and selection of FMEs, FMSs, and FMPs.

Year	Date	Meeting	Highlights
	October 18 ^B	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	Public comment taken on draft goals and draft process for identifying and evaluating potential studies and potentially feasible strategies and projects.
	November 15	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	RFPG approves draft goals and processes for identifying and evaluating potential studies and potentially feasible strategies and projects.
	December 16	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	RFPG approves the submittal of the Technical Memorandum No. 1 to the TWDB on or before January 7, 2022. RFPG establishes a subcommittee to assist with developing recommendations regarding FMEs, FMSs, and FMPs.
2022	January 27	Technical Committee In-Person Meeting	Discuss committee meeting process; nomination and election of committee officers; discussion on requirements/guidelines for Tasks 4B and 5 with regard to FMEs, FMPs, and FMSs; review standardized templates for FMEs, FMPs, and FMSs review.
	January 31	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	Nomination and election of RFPG officers and members of Executive Committee; discussion of project status, Technical Memorandum No. 2, Tasks 2A/B, 4B, and 9.
	February 17	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	Review planning progress by Tasks (2A/B, 4A/B/C, 10); Accept public input on initial flood hazard map(s); RFPG approved submittal of Technical Memorandum No. 2 to the TWDB.
	March 9	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	Technical consultant presentation and discussion on Task 4B, Identification and Evaluation of Potential Flood Management Evaluations and Potentially Feasible Flood Management Strategies and Flood Mitigation Projects.
	April 7	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	The TWDB approved additional tasks 11, 12, and 13. Update from Technical Committee. Project status from Technical Consultant on Tasks 3A/B, 4A/B, 5, 7, and 9.
	April 13	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	Presentation, discussion, evaluation, and input on template information and formatting for FMSs, FMEs, and FMPs.
	April 28	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	Presentation of revised templates for all FMSs, FMEs, and FMPs. Technical Committee recommended three FMSs and 21 FMEs.
	May 2	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	Task 8 was discussed. Technical Committee recommended 24 FMXs; RFPG moved to approve 21 FMEs and 3 FMSs. RFPG called for public comment on an initial flood hazard map that may not have been identified previously. No public comment.

Year	Date	Meeting	Highlights
	May 10	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	Presentation on FMEs, FMSs, and FMPs. Additional comments and suggestions were made to improve FMSs, FMEs, and FMPs templates. No action to recommend.
	May 25	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	
	June 9	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	June 16	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	
	June 30	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	July 7	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	July 11	Technical Committee Hybrid Meeting	
	July 18	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	August 1	DRAFT Regional Flood Plan Posted for Public Comment	
	August 4 ^C	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	September 1 ^C	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	September 15	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	October 6	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	November 7	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	
	December 1	Planning Group Hybrid Meeting	

A Pre-Planning Public Input (Feb, March, April) – Public input regarding suggestions and recommendations as to issues, provisions, projects, and strategies that should be considered during the flood planning cycle and/or input on the development of the Regional Flood Plan (as required per Texas Water Code §16.062(d) and 31 Texas Administrative Code §361.12(a)(4))

B October 18, 2021, the meeting initiated a hybrid meeting format with the RFPG Chair and Sponsor organization meeting in a published physical location at LCRA offices in Austin while continuing to offer the Zoom webinar option for members, non-members, and public participants.

C Meeting will only be held if necessary.

Public Outreach Strategies and Tools

Branding the Region

A visual language, style, and color palette was created to provide a consistent look and feel in all public and interest groups' communications and outreach activities. This established a "brand" for the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Flood Planning Region, which helped draw public attention to the planning process. *Figure 10.1* below presents the logo developed for the region's website and communications.

Figure 10.1 Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region Branding



Commitment to Plain Speak

The Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG and the Technical Consultant have committed to using "plain speak" whenever possible and to avoid language and technical jargon that is not readily accessible to the general public. An acronym-decoder and a glossary of flood planning and hydrologic terms are included on the RFPG's website. There is also a consistent and concerted effort to use more "familiar" terms rather than terms prescribed in the TWDB rules and guidelines. For example:

- Flood Mitigation Evaluation (FME) = Study
- Flood Mitigation Project (FMP) = Project
- Flood Management Strategy (FMS) = Strategy

Website: Robust and User-Friendly

The LCRA established the required website on behalf of the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG in January 2021 under the domain name LowerColoradoLavacaFlood.org using the Square Space hosting platform. The technical consultant came on board in May 2021 and immediately undertook branding enhancements and buildout of the website to provide more information about the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Regional Flood Planning Area and the regional flood planning process, as well as information and educational materials about flood planning related topics. The website was also enhanced to allow easy access for the public and entities to provide input and to access draft deliverables (e.g., flood mitigation and floodplain management goals) for review and comment. The enhanced website went live in June 2021. Currently, there are several locations on the website where active links can be found for public engagement on the website:

- Subscribe to Notifications (top of the Home page, on the Contact Us page, and in the Footer)
- Documents for the Public View page
- Stakeholder Survey page for public and community interest groups
- Submit Comments on the Contact Us page for written comments before or after meetings

As of June 21, 2022, 75 subscribers have registered on the website to receive notifications and information pertaining to the regional planning activities. The table below provides additional website analytics.

Table 10.2 Website Analytics

Date	Total Visits	Unique Visitors	Page Views
January 1, 2021 through June 21, 2022	6,100	4,100	12,000

Direct Email Blasts

The technical consultant introduced Mail Chimp to communicate directly with the public and community interest groups. An email contact list has been developed for a targeted audience with 496 contacts and includes the following tags:

- Municipalities
- Counties
- County Judges
- Floodplain administrators
- Directors of development
- Other Districts
- Subscribers through website
- Chambers of Commerce
- Libraries
- NGOs
- RFPG members
- Halff team

Twenty-six email blasts were sent to audiences between June 2021 and June 2022, with a click-to-open average rate of 29 percent. For perspective, a click-to-open average rate between 20-30 percent is generally considered a good response.

News Media

With the help of the Texas Press Association and the Texas Association of Broadcasters, the technical consultant has built a media list including 110 newspapers and 70 radio stations within the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region. To reach all interest groups through local news media, the technical consultant sends Media Alerts in advance of each RFPG meeting. In July 2021, the technical consultant provided a 30-second public service announcement (Live DJ read) to all regional radio stations.

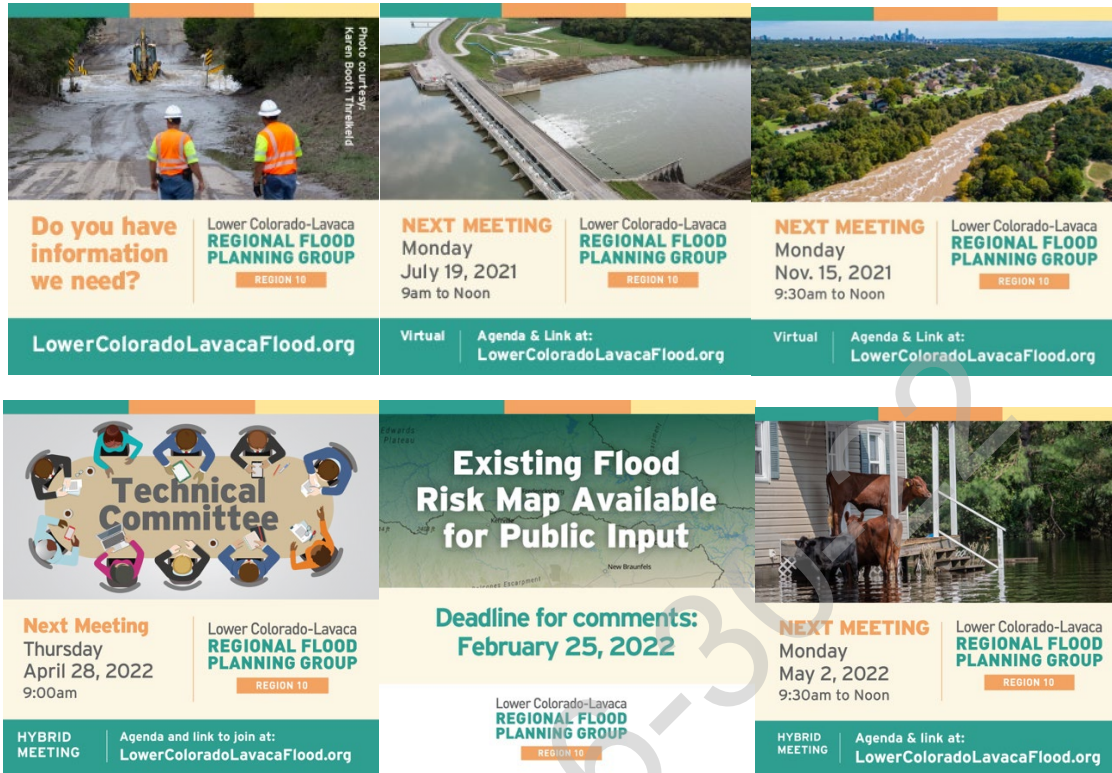
Social Media and Other Media

Facebook has been the primary social media platform used for public outreach within the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region, with all meetings posted and promoted and key elements of flood planning in the news media or on the TWDB website. The Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region Facebook page can be accessed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/LowerColoradoLavacaFlood>.

DRAFT 6-30-22

Figure 10.2 Sample Facebook Post Graphics



Members of the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG and the public indicated early in the process that a digital flyer that could be easily printed would be a useful tool. In response, the technical consultant developed flyers in both English and Spanish, which are available on the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region website and shown in Figure 10.3

Figure 10.3 Sample Digital Flyers (English/Spanish)



Public Hearing and Outreach for the DRAFT Regional Flood

Note – this section of Chapter 10 will be completed at the conclusion of the required public comment period for the draft Regional Flood Plan and before its adoption by the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG on or before January 10, 2023.

Rule §361.21 Draft Plan Notice Requirements

For meetings at which the RFPG will take public input related to the RFPG's draft Regional Flood Plan per TWC 16.062(f–g), the following additional public notice provisions must be met:

- The draft Regional Flood Plan must be made available for public inspection online for 30 days prior to the first meeting, if more than one meeting is held, and 30 days following the first meeting
- At a minimum, notice must be provided at least 30 days prior to the first meeting
- Notice must be provided to all adjacent RFPGs
- Notice of the meeting must include a summary of the Regional Flood Plan
- Notice must include information on how the public may submit comment
- A hard copy of the draft Regional Flood Plan must be made available for public inspection in at least three publicly accessible locations within the flood planning region for at least 30 days prior to the first meeting and 30 days following the first meeting
- Written comments must be accepted for consideration for at least 30 days prior to the first meeting and at least 30 days following the first meeting for consideration and response prior to adoption of the final plan under §361.50 of this title and oral comments must be accepted during the meeting.

Public Engagement and Outreach Plan

According to the requirements above, the Lower Colorado-Lavaca RFPG will post the Draft Regional Flood Plan on August 1, 2022, online at: <https://www.lowercoloradolavacaflood.org/>

Hard copies of the Regional Flood Plan will be placed no later than August 8, 2022, at four locations:

- Upper Basin (public location tbd)
- Mid-Basin: LCRA offices in Austin, Tx (exact address tbd)
- Lower Basin: (public location tbd)
- Lavaca River basin: (public location tbd)

The official Public Meeting for the RFPG to meet in the hybrid format (online and in-person), as a quorum, to present the summary of the Draft Regional Flood and to take public comment is planned for:

September 15, 2022

Time TBD

LCRA Redbud Center
3601 Lake Austin Blvd
Austin, TX 78703

In addition to the official public meeting, the project sponsor (LCRA) and the technical consultant plan to host three in-person "Open Houses" to present the summary of the Regional Flood Plan, answer questions, and take public comments. Exhibits and handouts will be available to the public, including details and directions for posting public comments after the public hearing and open houses. Locations for open house events are planned for the

Lavaca River Basin, Lower Colorado Basin, and Upper Colorado Basin, with exact locations, dates, and times to be determined.

Promotional Tactics to Reach the Public for Awareness and Comment Opportunities

At a minimum, the following activities will be utilized to engage the public and make them aware of the Draft Regional Plan, the public hearing and meetings, and the public comment opportunity:

Table 10.3 Promotional Tactics

Tactic	Activity
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General media release(s) regarding Draft Regional Flood Plan and public comment period Media alerts to local news outlets where meetings will be held PSA Radio script for local stations to promote public hearings or meetings
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of Mail Chimp blasts to the interest groups' list Direct emails to key interest groups, including local electeds and floodplain administrators
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posts on the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region's site Preparation of digital posts and content for RFPG members to post
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Regional Flood Plan will be posted on the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region's site (https://www.lowercoloradolavacaflood.org/) A public comment link on the website for the Regional Flood Plan
RFPG Members, Project Sponsor, Technical Consultant Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content for personal communications will be provided for ease of targeting and sharing

Accept Public Comments

From August 1 through October 15, 2022, public comments will be accepted by:

- Oral comments at the official RFPG meeting on September 15, 2022
- Written or verbal comments in person at open house meetings
- Written comments sent to email: LowerColoradoLavacaFlood@lcra.org
- Written comments received on the Lower Colorado-Lavaca Region's website portal