

Centering Coushatta Knowledge



Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana

Project Team: Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and
South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center

Funding Amount: \$80,089



Project Summary

This project built capacity for understanding climate vulnerabilities and identifying opportunities to build resilience with the Coushatta Tribe. The project team identified community assets, evaluated exposures, and analyzed risk and vulnerability in partnership with Coushatta tribal staff, leadership, and a Coushatta Advisory Committee. These efforts increased the strength of the community vulnerability assessment and provided a framework for identifying community climate resilience objectives and criteria for evaluating and prioritizing programs and projects, forming the basis for a draft climate resilience plan that is informed and supported by tribal objectives and priorities.

Project Goals



Engage the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana's staff and community members in learning about its climate hazards, vulnerabilities, risks, and needs for climate resilience.



Propose, evaluate, and prioritize programs and projects to support climate adaptation and resilience.



Being able to say we have funding for stipends for committee members is a big deal... for young people it is an even bigger deal. Engagement was a challenge initially to get people involved - both food and stipends really helped, if we didn't have that, we may have had much less participation

*- Bethany Crochet
Environmental Division Manager,
Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana*

Project Timeline

Months 1-9

Update Vulnerability Assessment with new information on climate hazards and community vulnerability and risk

Months 7-12

Draft resilience objectives and prioritize implementation projects

Region-Wide Partnerships and Collaboration

The project developed climate projections for a six-parish area: Allen, Jefferson Davis, Evangeline, Calcasieu, Acadia and St. Landry. Tribal lands are within two Louisiana Watershed Initiative districts.

Community Challenges



Rainfall-Induced Flooding

Extreme rainfall events and flooding impedes transportation, contaminates drinking water, and damages wastewater facilities, homes and businesses.



Extreme Heat

Increases risk to outdoor workers, the elderly, and youth, and reduces opportunities for traditional practices such as foraging and powwow activities.



Ecosystem Impacts

Extreme weather and heat impacts the integrity of ecosystems important to the Tribe. Risks include loss of native species, loss of culturally important species used in medicine and basket weaving, and reduced opportunities for religious practices in intact habitats.

Project Approach

This project brought together a climate adaptation planner, Coughatta staff, and the Coughatta Advisory Committee to develop a relevant and local vulnerability assessment and to identify and prioritize climate resilience project opportunities.

- ★ Map and document community assets and evaluate community risks and vulnerabilities
- ★ Establish and work with a Coughatta Advisory Committee to develop and implement opportunities specific to participation of traditional knowledge holders and additional engagement with tribal members
- ★ Collaboratively develop programs and projects in a draft climate resilience plan



Impact

By centering inclusive engagement and traditional knowledge, this project resulted in a culturally rooted and relevant vulnerability assessment and draft Climate Resilience Plan designed to address the needs of the Coughatta Tribe. Broad participation fostered trust and intergenerational learning that extends beyond this one effort. Communication and capacity-building created a foundation for sustainable, community-led decision-making now and into the future.



Next Steps

- Implement priority initiatives identified in the draft climate resilience plan