Following two and a half years of development, the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan was released in November 2013 to directly address groundwater and storm water as critical factors in shaping a safer, more livable, and economically vibrant Southeast Louisiana.

This strategy, which can be found at www.livingwithwater.com, seeks to work in tandem and create multiple lines of defense with the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System and Louisiana’s Coastal Master Plan.

Administered by GNO, Inc., the $2.5 million plan was funded by the Louisiana Office of Community Development-Disaster Recovery Unit. New Orleans firm, Waggonner & Ball Architects, led a team of local and international water management experts to develop the Urban Water Plan. A regional advisory council made up of industry, government, economic development and nonprofit leaders guided the two-year process.

The study area for the plan was St. Bernard Parish and the east banks of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

At its core, the Urban Water Plan focuses on a clear and direct issues which affect the Greater New Orleans region. These include:

- Flooding is caused by frequent storms common to this region, when the catch basins, pipes, and pumps of our current drainage systems are overwhelmed. Flooding causes not only property and economic damage but is potentially harmful to residents.

- Subsidence, the sinking of the ground, damages buildings, streets and other infrastructure, and makes the challenge of pumping storm water out more difficult. Subsidence, a result of dry soils that are impacted by drainage practices, results in the sinking of the ground, damaging buildings, streets, and other infrastructure,

The Urban Water Plan sets forth strategies to address flooding caused by excess runoff and subsidence.

**PLAN UPDATES**

Since the Urban Water Plan's design and release in November 2013, the region has progressed in the adoption and implementation of policies, projects, and principles, as well as gained community, government, and financial support.

**Government Commitments**

- The City of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish have committed funds to the design phase of Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan demonstration projects:

  - Jefferson Parish is advancing design work for the Joseph S. Yenni Building parking lot which will incorporate water retention and green infrastructure elements. This project will be a crucial first step in advancing the Elmwood Fields and Water Lanes demonstration project.

  - The City of New Orleans is working with diverse community partners to develop the Mirabeau Water Garden in Gentilly, 25 acres of land which will be designed to divert water from the London Avenue Canal and capture stormwater runoff, allowing for more infiltration, reducing subsidence, and becoming a neighborhood amenity.

**Community Progress**

- Launched in September 2014, The Greater New Orleans Urban Water Collaborative is a collaborative of more than 100 individuals, organizations, and communities working to address critical water issues throughout New Orleans and the greater New Orleans region.

- Ripple Effect was recently established to promote “water literacy” through design-based, in-school instruction as a means to create opportunities for our youngest citizens to gain the knowledge and skills they need to strengthen their communities.

**Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans** has committed $500,000 a year for green infrastructure pilot projects including demonstration, education and outreach projects.

- The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority has created six rain gardens in various residences of New Orleans –
Hollygrove, Filmore, Gentilly Woods, Lower Ninth Ward, and Algiers

- The new New Orleans Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance includes Article 23 that requires that new development and redevelopment retain, detain, and filter the first one and one quarter inch (1.25”) of stormwater runoff during each rain event.

**Awards**
The Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan has received national and global recognition, including:

- The American Planning Association: 2015 National Planning Excellence Award for Environmental Planning for the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan
- The NADO 2014 Innovation Award for the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan App
- The NADO 2013 Innovation Award for the Greater New Orleans Comprehensive, Integrated and Sustainable Water Management Strategy

**BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**

The impact of the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan goes far beyond an innovative new vision, providing unique opportunities for local firms to develop tailored expertise around green infrastructure and water management.

These forthcoming opportunities spurred by the Urban Water Plan already build on Louisiana firms’ past experiences exporting specified skill sets around disaster management: as The Data Center has calculated, Louisiana-based firms received over $200 million in contracts for rebuilding in New York and New Jersey following Hurricane Sandy.

As more communities around the country and the world prepare for the adverse impacts of sea level rise and intensified storms, Louisiana-based practices in resilience and mitigation are growing in prominence—as are the firms pioneering implementation efforts.

The growing reputation of the Greater New Orleans region’s approach to water is drawing attention from Norfolk, Virginia to Iraq.

As a result of this prioritized focus on water in our region—from urban to coastal—the Data Center predicts the Water Management sector will yield 12,000 job openings between 2015 and 2019 (not including the jobs to be created by the influx of RESTORE Act funds relating to the BP Oil Spill). And these jobs are not only diverse—from engineers to welders—but high paying: The Data Center estimates the average wage in Water Management to be $69,466 per year.

Beyond the wealth generation opportunities for individual households, these jobs represent a macro-shift for Southeast Louisiana’s workforce, constituting a new pool of specialized, exportable labor whose expertise can bring external contracts and revenue back to local firms and municipalities.

**The Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan was made possible by:**

- The plan can be found in its entirety at livingwithwater.com
- iPad users can learn more about the plan and its benefits for the region at gnoinc.org/waterapp