Introduction
Adaptation has long been a coping strategy for individuals and communities facing environmental change and extreme weather events. Modern climate change has increased both the speed of environmental change and the magnitude of extreme weather events. In addition, high rates of coastal erosion in Louisiana, due to rising sea levels, subsidence, and natural resource extraction practices, is further increasing the vulnerability of Louisiana’s coastal communities. In response, individuals and communities are taking steps to adapt to their increasing risk. Fortunately, our understanding of climate change impacts and current challenges provides an opportunity to implement preemptive and proactive adaptation strategies.

Adaptation: a change or the process of change by which we become better suited to our environment—usually done in response to actual or expected changes—in order to moderate harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities

Even with an understanding of the risks facing residents of the Louisiana coast, however, there are still challenges to developing effective adaptation strategies for individuals and communities:

- **Uncertainty**: Future events that affect vulnerability cannot be predicted
- **Unique geographies**: Across the Louisiana coast, environmental risks vary greatly depending on geographic location
- **Socioeconomic variability**: Risk factors are tied to socioeconomic and cultural characteristics that vary within communities and among communities.
- **Capacity**: Adaptation requires skills and money that individuals or communities may not have sufficient access to.

Survey Results
To explore these challenges, CPEX surveyed residents across the Louisiana coast to evaluate perceptions of risk, preferred adaptation strategies, and barriers to adaptation for individuals and coastal communities to better understand current needs and challenges.

In the next 10 years, risk from this hazard will:

We found that respondents think their environmental risk will get worse in the next 10 years.

Full survey results and analysis available at [www.cpex.org](http://www.cpex.org)
What adaptation strategies do you think would be most beneficial to your community for reducing risk?

Responses from across the coast show a wide range of preferences for adaptation strategies, indicating that an “all-of-the-above” policy approach may be necessary. Respondents that chose “Other” predominantly stated structural measures would be most beneficial. One respondent noted that making elevation more affordable would be most beneficial to their community.

If you were compensated the full market value of your property, would you consider voluntarily relocating to reduce your environmental risk?

Relocating as an adaptive strategy can be a difficult topic. It currently occurs on an ad hoc basis and can fracture communities and sever social and economic ties. But due to high levels of risk in some places, relocation needs to be part of any comprehensive adaptation strategy. Among respondents, relocation as an adaptation strategy was viewed favorably, especially if sufficient financial support was provided.

Residents are generally open to a wide range of adaptation strategies, provided they are able to afford them.

The survey results shed light on the complex and shifting situation of environmental risk in coastal Louisiana, where residents face a spectrum of risks and have varying ability to adapt. Programs with a narrow scope, that only focus on elevation or relocation for example, are likely to be non-starters with many individuals who view those strategies as excessive or unnecessary for their situations. Further, we found respondents were open to a wide range of adaptation strategies; however, only a few were viewed as available to them due to cost limitations.

**Recommendations**

The goal of an adaptation policy or program should be to enable proactive, environmentally motivated adaptation before it becomes reactive, environmentally forced adaptation. We recommend the following for any policy for adaptation in coastal Louisiana:

1. **Financial assistance** is absolutely necessary. Adaptation is more cost-effective than disaster recovery, yet most people are unable to afford the adaptation measure best suited to their situation.
2. **An “all-of-the-above” approach.** To the maximum extent practicable, all adaptation options should be on the table for individuals and communities looking to adapt, provided the strategy of choice can be shown to be effective.
3. **Promote cost-effective adaptation.** Basing the availability of specific adaptive strategies on estimated levels of risk can be cost-ineffective. For example, the cost of elevation, especially for slab-on-grade homes, can exceed the cost of relocation or new construction.
4. **Continue to develop emerging state-level adaptation programs,** such as the CPRA Flood Risk and Resiliency program and the OCD LA SAFE program, and ensure they have sufficient capacity and funding to respond to growing demand.
5. **Create a program for education and outreach** to ensure residents are aware of the various adaptation strategies available to address different levels of risk.

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