

Louisiana awarded \$92 million in disaster resilience funds: \$52 million to help relocate Isle de Jean Charles community

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Louisiana [has been awarded](#) more than \$92 million through a National Disaster Resilience Competition, part of which will help the community of Native Americans living in Isle de Jean Charles to relocate to safer ground.

Announced Thursday by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the award includes \$52 million toward moving the Isle de Jean Charles community from lower Terrebonne Parish.

The [remaining \\$40 million](#) will go toward the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments program. The [LA SAFE program](#) is designed to be a companion to the state's master plan for coastal restoration and protection. Because the master plan is expected to take decades, the LA SAFE program is meant to help communities deal with a shrinking landscape and their increasing vulnerability to flooding.

“We think of it as the community development side of the master plan,” said Pat Forbes, executive director of the Louisiana Office of Community Development-Disaster Recovery Unit.

Developed in the past year, the LA SAFE program will get its first chance to take action through this funding, Forbes said.

One of the program's strategies is to recognize that people need help to move away from the most vulnerable parts of the coast while keeping their communities intact.

In addition, the program recognizes the need to strengthen protections around industries, fishing and other activities along the coast.

A third main goal is to emphasize development in lower-risk areas.

Although it's been a Louisiana trend for decades that people move out of areas as flooding becomes more of a problem, that haphazard migration can break up long-standing communities and the support and culture they share.

Louisiana was one of 67 cities, states and territories eligible for a portion of the \$1 billion in funding.

New Orleans also was awarded \$141 million through the program.

The idea is rather than using federal money just to patch up damage from a disaster, some of the funds should be directed to building communities that can better survive, said Sam Carter, associate director of the Rockefeller Foundation, which assisted the grant-seekers with workshops to help them refine their proposals.

This kind of work for these communities, such as elevating homes, is something that has been included in the state's coastal master plan for years.

“This announcement exemplifies our continued commitment to coordinating expertise across the state, leveraging all available funding sources and using the best available information to improve the overall resiliency of Louisiana,” said Johnny Bradberry, the governor's executive assistant for coastal activities.

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