

Montana Watershed Coordination Council

Operating Guidelines

Adopted January 12, 2012

I. Mission

The Montana Watershed Coordination Council (**Council**) is an inclusive partnership to enhance, conserve, and protect natural resources and sustain the high quality of life in Montana for present and future generations using a collaborative watershed approach.

II. Vision

Build and unite leaders in Montana's watershed communities to effectively manage natural resources.

III. Objectives of the MWCC

MWCC will work with Montana's watershed communities to:

- Promote effective communication; coordination and networking between community-based groups and public agencies by providing a forum to foster better understanding of issues that bring diverse perspectives together.
- Provide mutual assistance through education and training.
- Encourage and support citizens to take a voluntary proactive, collaborative approach addressing natural resource issues and policies without identifying a position preference.
- Raise awareness of issues affecting Montana's watershed communities
- Promote and highlight the successes of watershed groups, natural resource agencies, private organizations, conservation districts, natural resource educators and water quality districts.
- Empower local watershed groups to speak up and be engaged in issues that affect them.
- Support statewide watershed issues and funding when endorsed by the Steering Committee.

IV. MWCC Core Values

- Accept independence and interdependence

Members have their unique purpose yet remain linked to the whole.

- Nurture trust and safety

Members can respectfully speak and be heard without fear of unexpected consequences.

- Respect autonomy
Members make their own choices while being sensitive to their impacts on others.
- Cultivate skillful practice
Members support ongoing training to improve their effort.
- Demand transparency
Practice: Members understand that what is shared will not be misunderstood.
- Encourage Consensus
Members strive for consensus decision making.
- Remain inclusive
Members do not limit purposeful participation.
- Honor Humor
Members recognize that if we are not having fun, we probably won't show up.

V. Definitions

- **Committee:** A group formed to help implement the mission of MWCC. Each committee will have a chair and a work plan approved by the Council at the Annual general meeting. Committees may form workgroups that address specific tasks in their work plans. These committees and their work groups exist to the extent that they are useful and fulfill the mission and values of MWCC.
- **Consensus:** An agreement where participants approve or are supportive of the proposed decisions. At a minimum, participants can live with the decision in spite of possible reservations.
- **Coordinator:** A contracted position that serves the interest of the Council by providing essential support services, communication and coordination to MWCC.
- **Fiscal Sponsor:** A legal entity that serves the Council by maintaining fiscal affairs and appropriate records at the direction of the Treasurer and the Steering Committee.
- **Member:** An individual who participates in MWCC meetings, committees and/or work groups. Members represent communities, watershed groups, local, state and federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals. Membership is free and open at all times.
 - **Supporting member:** An individual who has made an annual cash donation to support the mission and vision of sustaining the Council.
- **MWCC (Council):** A statewide partnership comprised of individuals, members, partners and representatives from organizations dedicated to furthering the mission and work of watershed efforts.

- **Partner:** A natural resource agency or organization that supports the Council either through time or endorsement.
 - **Supporting Partner:** An agency or organization that has made an annual cash contribution to support the mission and vision of sustaining the Council.
- **Qualified Voter:** If consensus cannot be achieved, the following voting criteria must be met:
 - One person can vote one time on each issue under consideration
 - Each individual or partner has one vote.
- **Sponsor:** MWCC accepts donations and grants from individuals, businesses, partners and corporations that support the mission and programs of the Council. Donations are accepted to support general operations, programs, and projects. Donations will not be used to enable the donor to change the mission or influence the direction of the Council.
- **Steering Committee:** A standing committee, chaired by the MWCC Chair, comprised of eleven voting members and several non-voting participants.
- **Watershed Group:** Any organization of multiple stakeholders who are working together to promote and improve natural resource conditions within a specific drainage basin.
- **Work Group:** A group formed to fulfill a specific task or set of tasks within the annual work plan of a committee. Each work group will have a work group leader approved by the parent committee on a yearly basis. A work group can be formed and dissolved at the committee level.
- **Work Plan:** A list of tasks that define the activities of a work group, committee, and ultimately MWCC. The annual work plan is the composite activity of the various Council committees and work groups and shall identify responsible parties, timelines and associated budgets. The work plan is reviewed and adopted at the annual general meeting.

VI. MWCC Governance

MWCC is governed by the full Council and work is carried out by its committees. Participation on committees and work groups is voluntary and is driven by interest and need. Committee chairs serve at the discretion of the members of that committee.

Structure

MWCC (Council)

(1) Organizational chart

(2) Meetings

MWCC shall hold an annual general meeting in January each year to discuss topics of interest and to carry out any voting and approvals necessary. Time shall be allocated for committee and partner reports.

(3) Responsibilities

- Final approval of Operating Guidelines and Organizational Chart
- Final approval of work plans
- Election of officers
- Creation or dissolution of a committee
- Any actions requiring votes of the Council.
- The Council is ultimately responsible for addressing and resolving any conflicts affecting the organization.

(4) Officers

Chair: The Chair ensures that the Council completes its business and that meetings are held regularly, and represents the Council's actions and decisions to the general public.

Vice Chair: Acting Chair when necessary; provides input, comments, and advice to the Steering Committee, and is a key member of the management team leading the Council;

Treasurer: Leads in preparing the annual budget, reviewing financial activities and reports on fiscal management issues to the Steering Committee.

(5) Terms

Officers are elected on an annual basis and take office at the annual general meeting each year.

(6) Media Communications

- The Chair is the official designated spokesperson for the Council, unless otherwise stated. Each member of the Council may speak to the media, congressional delegation, government agencies or any other entity about his/her own views, but no member may speak on behalf of other participants or the Council.
- A committee may periodically draft press releases that fit the Council objectives, which will be reviewed and approved by the Chair or its designee before they are issued.

Steering Committee

(1) Purpose

The Steering Committee comprises the core working leadership for MWCC. The Steering Committee meets monthly to stay current on issues affecting MWCC, both internal and external. The Steering Committee makes decisions through consensus and reports to the Council.

(2) Composition

The MWCC Chair is the Steering Committee chair. The steering committee is comprised of voting and non-voting positions;

Voting (11)

Elected Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer

Committee Chairs

Members at Large (Elected at annual general meeting or appointed by the Steering Committee)

Non Voting (support and advisory)

Coordinator

Ex Officio

Fiscal Sponsor

Work Group Leaders

(3) Responsibilities

- Develop the agenda for annual general meeting and Council meetings
- Ensure the delivery of timely work plans and budgets
- Work to eliminate redundancy and enhance opportunities for collaboration
- Gather, review and present committee work plans to the Council on an annual basis.
- Ensure that controversial issues are resolved or are brought before the Council for discussion and resolution.
- May draft position papers or issue briefs to help facilitate consistent communication among Council members and partners interested in watershed issues in Montana.

Committees

(1) Purpose

Committees serve at the pleasure of the Council. They are the key to translating activities into action and are the active workhorses. Each committee is formed to tackle specific types of work to achieve the

mission and vision of the Council. Each committee has a specific goal and develops annual work plans. These committees exist only to the extent that active work exists. A committee can be formed at any time for a specific, stated purpose. The Council must vote on the new committee formation at its next full meeting.

(2) Committee Chair

The committee must elect a chair at its first meeting. Committee chairs are elected or appointed by the committee members, defined by those present at the meeting. A Committee reviews its chair status annually. Notice of a new chair must be made to the Steering Committee immediately. The Committee chair must be prepared to provide a work update at each Council meeting.

(3) Membership

Membership on a committee is open to anyone interested in the work. All members of a committee are expected to be active and strive to achieve the goals outlined in the committee's work plan which also follow the mission and values of the Council.

(4) Responsibilities

- Develop a work plan that must be forwarded to the Steering Committee immediately upon formation and annually thereafter.
- Committees must provide meeting agendas and summaries of each meeting to the Steering Committee and the Council in a timely manner.

(5) Work Groups

A group is formed to fulfill a specific task within the annual work plan of a committee. Each work group will have a work group leader approved by the work group on a yearly basis. A work group can be formed and dissolved at the committee level.

(6) Committee Dissolution

Committees serve until one of two circumstances occurs: 1) they believe their work is completed and ask to be dissolved; or 2) they are not acting in accordance with the mission and purpose of the Council.

Coordinator

A contracted position that serves the interest of the Council by acting as a central point of communication and coordination by providing essential support services to MWCC.

(1) Purpose

Support the Council by providing communication and organizational coordination including: committee meeting support, reporting and postings; MWCC website maintenance and updates, and acting as a “central clearing house” for Council business. The duties are a function of the funding source contracts and may vary depending on funding level and organizational needs and priorities.

Fiscal Sponsor

A legal entity that serves the Council by maintaining fiscal affairs and appropriate records at the direction of the Treasurer and the Steering Committee.

(1) Purpose

Maintain the fiscal records of the Council according to generally accepted accounting principles; provide periodic financial statements to the Council as requested; act as the applicant for grants when requested. MWCC will partner with the fiscal sponsor to secure, administer and meet the deliverables and contracting guidelines of all state, local and foundational funding sources. The fiscal sponsor and MWCC will use state and federal procurement guidelines for contracting purposes.

Decision-Making Process

Consensus

MWCC strives for consensus as the basis for all decision-making for the organization. Any issue failing to be resolved through consensus will be resolved according to the voting procedures at a subsequent, announced meeting. A consensus decision is defined as an agreement where participants approve or are supportive of the proposed decisions. At a minimum, participants can live with the decision in spite of possible reservations. The important awareness and understanding for those participating in a consensus decision, is that the decision will be non-harming to affected parties.

In the process of seeking consensus each participant:

- Has the right to disagree with any proposal.
- When a participant disagrees, she/he agrees to explain the nature of the disagreement, and agrees to offer an alternative that seeks to accommodate her/his interest and the interests of others, if possible.
- Is committed to supporting implementation of agreements that are reached.
- Will maintain his/her values and interests.

Resolutions and Motions

Resolutions and motions may be forwarded to the Council by any individual or organization. Action on any resolution or motion is decided by consensus. If that cannot be achieved, voting may be used.

Voting

When consensus cannot be achieved a notice will be sent to the Council informing the membership of the vote which will be conducted at the following Council meeting.

A vote of the membership in physical attendance or attending by conference call at the time of the meeting will be made. Only one vote can be cast per member or partner. Those who cannot attend the voting meeting may express their concerns and ideas to a committee chair. The chair will present those concerns to the membership prior to the vote.

VII. Modification

The operating guidelines can be amended at any time and must be adopted by the Council. The guidelines are formally reviewed annually.