

**Montana Watershed Coordination Council**  
**Operating Guidelines**  
**Adopted October 18, 2006**

**I. Mission**

The Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC) 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**

To expand the effectiveness of Montana's communities to manage natural resources.

**III. Objectives of the MWCC**

- Promotes effective communication, coordination and networking between community-based groups and public agencies.
- Provides mutual assistance through education and training.
- Encourages and supports citizens to take a voluntary proactive, collaborative approach addressing natural resource issues and concerns.
- Serves as a statewide coordination network for Montana's communities, watershed groups, natural resource agencies, private organizations, conservation districts and water quality districts.

**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

- **MWCC:** The MWCC is a statewide partnership made up of representatives of organizations and individuals interested in furthering the mission and work of watershed efforts.
- **Membership:** Anyone is welcome to participate in any meeting of the MWCC, its committee or work groups. Members represent communities, watershed groups, state and federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals. Membership is open at all times.
- **Consensus:** 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. (see VI. B. 1.)
- **Qualified Voters:** If consensus cannot be achieved, the following criteria must be met in order to vote: 1) one person can vote one time 2) each group, agency, organization or individual has one vote 3) representative is physically present.
- **Watershed Group:** Any group of multiple stakeholders who are working together to promote and improve natural resource conditions within a specific geographic area.
- **Steering Committee:** Standing committee, chaired by the MWCC Chair(s), which is responsible for organizing MWCC meetings, events, and facilitating coordination among work groups and members of the MWCC.
- **Work Group:** A group formed to fulfill specific functions for the MWCC. Each work group shall have a chair and annual work plan approved by the MWCC on a yearly basis. These groups exist to the extent that they are useful and fulfill the mission and values of the MWCC.
- **Work Plan:** A list of tasks that define the work of a work group, the steering committee, and ultimately the MWCC. The annual work plan is the composite activity of the various MWCC work groups. The work plan is reviewed and adopted biennially, during even-year winter meetings. Progress on work plans is reported at each meeting.

## **VI. MWCC Governance**

The MWCC is governed by its membership and work is carried out by its steering committee and work groups. Membership on work group is voluntary and is driven by interest and participation. Work group chairs serve at the discretion of its members.

### *A. Governance Structure*

#### 1. MWCC

##### i. Meetings

The MWCC shall hold up to four meetings a year, to discuss topics of interest and to carry out any voting and approvals necessary. Time shall be allocated for work group and agency reports.

##### ii. Responsibilities

The MWCC is responsible for final approval of operating guidelines, work plans, for decisions of creation or dissolution of a work group, and for any actions requiring votes of the MWCC. The MWCC is ultimately responsible for addressing and resolving any conflicts affecting the organization.

##### iii. Chairs

The MWCC is led by chair(s) who are voted on by the MWCC membership on a biennial basis, on even-numbered years. The chair(s) is responsible for ensuring the MWCC completed its business and that meetings are held regularly and represent the MWCC's actions and decisions to the general public. MWCC chair(s) are expected to be designated spokesperson(s) for the organization, unless otherwise stated.

##### iv. Communications

- Each member of the MWCC 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 MWCC without appropriate permission. Chair(s) are designated official spokesperson(s) for the MWCC, unless otherwise stated.
- At the request of a work group or the steering committee, MWCC may periodically prepare press releases that fit MWCC objectives, which will be reviewed and approved by the work group or its designee before they are issued.
- From time to time, a work group or steering committee may ask MWCC to prepare fact sheets or issue briefs to help facilitate consistent communication among work group members and other people and/or groups interested in watershed management in Montana.

## 2. Steering Committee

### i. Composition

The steering committee is composed of work group chairs or their designees, key stakeholder organizations, other interested individuals, and the elected chair(s) and incoming-chair(s). Member participation on the steering committee is open and reviewed before the full MWCC annually. The MWCC chair(s) is also the steering committee chair.

### ii. Responsibilities

- Organizing the quarterly MWCC meetings.
- Coordinates the tasks of the work groups.
- Ensures the delivery of timely work plans to the MWCC.
- Works to eliminate redundancy and enhance opportunities for collaboration.
- Gathering, reviewing and presenting work group work plans to the MWCC on an annual basis.
- Ensures that controversial issues are brought before the entire MWCC for discussion and resolution.

## 3. Work Groups

### i. Purpose

Work groups serve at the pleasure of the MWCC. They are the key to translating activities into action and are the active workhorses. Each work group is formed to tackle specific types of work of the MWCC. Each work group has a specific mission and revises tasks annually. These work groups exist only to the extent that active work exists.

### ii. Membership

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

### iii. Responsibilities

Work groups can be formed at any time with the approval of the full MWCC. Work groups must formulate a work plan. Work groups must provide agendas and reports of meetings to the steering committee and MWCC.

### iv. Work Group Chair

Chairs are elected or appointed by the working group members, defined by those present at the meeting. A chair(s) must be put into place during the first meeting of a work group. Work groups review their chair status at least every two years. Notice of the new chair must be made to the steering committee immediately, with a decision on who is representing the work group on the steering committee. The work group chair must be prepared to provide a work update at each MWCC meeting.

## *B. Decision-making*

### 1. Consensus

We strive for consensus as the basis for all decision-making for this 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.

### 2. Resolutions and Motions

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

### 3. Voting

When consensus cannot be achieved, a notice will be issued via the WASHED listserve and MWCC mailing lists informing the membership of the vote which will be conducted at the following MWCC quarterly meeting.

A vote of the membership in attendance at the time of the meeting will be made. Only one vote can be cast per watershed group and per agency. Individuals not representing an agency or watershed group may also vote once.

Those who can not attend the quarterly voting meeting may express their concerns and ideas to the chair(s). The chair(s) will present those concerns to the membership prior to the vote.

### 4. MWCC Chair Elections

The chair(s) take office at the first meeting held in even-numbered years. Incoming chair(s) is/are elected at the first meeting in odd-numbered years.

#### 5. Work Group Formation

A work group can be formed at any time for a specific, stated purpose. The work group must elect a chair at its first meeting and come up with a work plan. Both the work plan and the chair must be forwarded to the steering committee immediately. The MWCC must vote on the formation at its next full meeting.

#### 6. Work Group Dissolution

Work groups serve until one of two circumstances occurs: 1) they feel their work is completed and ask to be dissolved; or 2) the work group is not acting in accordance with the mission and purpose of the MWCC. In the first case, the work group chair writes a note to the chair of the MWCC. The MWCC considers the dissolution at its next meeting. In the second case, the chair of the MWCC works with the steering committee and work group in question to develop a proposal for realigning the work group with the purpose, mission, and core values of the MWCC, including steps for conflict resolution. If that cannot be achieved, the chair of the MWCC writes a notice letter to the work group chair, stating that there will be a motion to dissolve the working group. That motion will be made at the next MWCC meeting and a vote taken, if consensus can not be reached. The work group will follow the direction of the MWCC.

### **VII. Modification**

The operating guidelines can be amended at any time. The guidelines are formally reviewed every two years during odd-numbered years. A sub-committee is established to implement the review process. Anyone can motion to modify the guidelines.