

Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative Steering Committee Bylaws

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Note: These bylaws are considered a living document, past iterations are available upon request. Changes may be suggested to the Coordinating Committee and made using the formal decision-making process outlined in Section III. E.

Program

In accordance with PUBLIC LAW 114–322 subtitle E. Delaware River Basin Conservation (Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, DRBCA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established a Delaware River Basin Restoration Program (DRBRP) to develop a comprehensive and collaborative approach to restore and protect the land and water resources of the Delaware River Basin. The DRBRP will build on existing restoration and protection efforts and assist with the coordination of funding mechanisms at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. The DRBRP will also establish and administer through a cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) a non-regulatory competitive grant and technical assistance program.

Collaborative

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service serves as the Coordinating Committee for the DRBRP (Section IV. C.) and therefore coordinates and facilitates the Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative (the Collaborative) to support healthy fish and wildlife, water quality and volume, and public access and recreation. The intent of the Collaborative is to:

1. Strengthen coordination across agencies, organizations and partnerships currently performing conservation activities in the watershed,
2. Amplify the collective impact of conservation practitioners in the watershed, and
3. Shape the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF) grant program and the Delaware Watershed Conservation Blueprint to ensure collaborative priorities are reflected in the investments of conservation action across the Delaware River watershed.

The Collaborative shall reflect the diverse ecological, geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics of the communities and stakeholders in the watershed. It is the long-term goal of the Collaborative to sustain a healthy, connected and resilient watershed that provides essential ecosystem services and societal values to current and future generations.

Mission

Our mission is to inspire, coordinate and actively support watershed wide collaboration among partners and stakeholders, while pursuing strategic actions throughout the Delaware River watershed that achieve agreed upon conservation, restoration and public outdoor recreation outcomes.

Vision

Our vision is a Delaware River watershed where a vast, diverse, and interconnected network of healthy lands and waters support and improve our life while sustaining water resources, abundant habitat for fish and wildlife, and safe access that allows for enjoyment of outdoor recreation in a way that benefits current and future generations.

DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

I. Roles & Tasks

A. Description: The Steering Committee is responsible for accomplishing the mission of the Collaborative by encouraging and supporting innovative ideas, fostering an environment for information exchange and learning, and advising on policy and financial investments that impact the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF) grant program and the Delaware Watershed Conservation Blueprint (see Section VI).

B. Role: The Steering Committee's role is to provide advice, feedback, guidance, resources, and support to advance the shared vision of the Collaborative and inform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service DRBRP operations, specifically the DWCF grant program and the Delaware River Watershed Conservation Blueprint (see Section VI).

C. Tasks: The following task list is not exhaustive, but exemplifies the types of actions that are the purview of the Steering Committee:

- Assisting with crafting, refining and periodically refreshing a collective vision.
- Advising on grant program policies and investment priorities.
- Linking initiatives and defining metrics around desired landscape scale outcomes.
- Establishing through annual work plans, the Collaborative's priorities and the roles of the Steering Committee and other stakeholders.
- Fostering and supporting communication across diverse groups with competing interests and values.
- Providing advice (and making formal and informal decisions) about changes to the collaborative, see Section III.
- Providing capacity to Standing and Ad hoc Workgroups to focus on specific issues and priorities.

D. Expectations

- Collaborate with partners to work toward the goal of a cleaner, healthier Delaware River watershed.

- Act as representatives of the program within the broader watershed community; promoting the mission and vision of the program.
- Attend and actively engage in Steering Committee meetings and appropriate Standing and Ad hoc Workgroups.
- Review and recommend long-term plans, annual goals, and priorities for the Collaborative.
- Identify and appoint individuals to actively serve as members of the Standing and Ad hoc Workgroups, as well as the DWCF Technical and Advisory Review Team.
- Provide guidance to ensure that priorities of the Collaborative are reflected in the administration of annual DWCF grants, and that the evolution and trajectory of the grant program reflects shared views of the Collaborative.
- Make decisions that affect the Collaborative and its governance, such as membership and Steering Committee structure, see Section III.

II. Membership

A. Membership: The Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative (Collaborative) Steering Committee will consist of representatives from relevant agencies and organizations (from among those named in the legislation or added by the Steering Committee) in the four-state Delaware River watershed region. No membership fees or dues will be imposed. No compensation will be provided for representatives participating on the Steering Committee. The composition of the Steering Committee shall represent the diversity of sectors in the watershed. Membership will rest with the agency or organization elected to the Steering committee, not the individual representative representing the organization.

B. Number of Members: The Steering Committee should generally not exceed 20 members, unless new membership positions are approved by the Steering Committee. Members have equal standing and privileges regardless of sector. The Steering Committee shall strive for geographic proportional representation and diverse group representation with no more than 1/3 national groups making up the membership. The breakdown by sector is as follows:

1. State Agency Members – Four members to represent the collective interest of the four watershed states. These are permanent members of the Steering Committee.
 - State of Delaware (permanent member)
 - State of New Jersey (permanent member)
 - Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (permanent member)
 - State of New York (permanent member)
2. Federal Agency Members – Two members to represent the collective interest of the Federal agencies listed below. One member will serve on a rotational basis, the other is a permanent member.
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (permanent member)
 - National Park Service
 - U.S. Geological Survey
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - Other federal agencies
3. Tribal Representation – Potentially three members will represent the three federally recognized Tribal Nations descended from the Indigenous Lenape people of the Delaware River watershed (Delaware Nation and Delaware Tribe in Oklahoma, and the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican Nation in Wisconsin).. Each Tribe will be provided a seat on the Steering Committee.
 4. General Members – Eleven members shall be from local, national and regional organizations, with two organizations being permanent members. These members must represent the geographic diversity of the region (urban, suburban, rural, and by State) and may include:
 - Delaware River Basin Commission (permanent member)
 - Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (permanent member)
 - Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed
 - Local county, municipal, or Tribal government
 - Public or private academic institutions
 - Regional and/or national environmental/conservation organization or partnership
 - Resource based and/or other relevant industry or nongovernmental organization such as 1) organizations leading diversity, inclusion, environmental justice initiatives in the watershed and 2) other public agencies and organizations with authority for planning and implementing conservation and restoration strategies in the watershed.

C. Terms of Service for Rotating Members: Rotating member organizations shall commit to a three-year term of service concluding at the end of the calendar in the third year of service (e.g. if starting in May 2023, tenure concludes December 2025), with no more than a third of members’ terms expiring in a given year. Once new members are approved by the Steering Committee, terms of service will be memorialized in a tracking spreadsheet updated and maintained by the Coordinating Committee (see Section III C). Members will initially be assigned a random term limit (either one, two or three years assigned via a random number generator), and all term limits shall be three years after the initial random term.

Membership rotation may occur if:

1. A current member’s term of service ends– A member’s term may be renewable depending on 1) the discretion of the Steering Committee via vote; 2) the results of the Collaborative’s evaluation (see Section IV, B); and 3) the willingness of the member organization to serve. If membership is not renewed, the Steering Committee may submit nominations (cover letter and resume) for new members to the Coordinating Committee two weeks in advance of a Steering Committee meeting. These nominations will be provided to Steering Committee members, to be voted upon using the formal decision-making process (Section III. E.) at the

next Steering Committee meeting. Nominations should seek to diversify representation on the Steering Committee both organizationally, geographically, and demographically.

2. A current representative leaves a member organization – The representative will no longer be eligible to serve and will be asked to retire should they leave an organization that is a member of the Collaborative. The retiring representative may designate a replacement representative to represent the organization for the remainder of the term if they choose. If the organization does not assign a replacement representative, the Steering Committee may submit nominations for a new member to join the Coordinating Committee two weeks in advance of a Steering Committee meeting. The nomination (nomination documentation shall consist of a headshot and bio) will be circulated to Steering Committee members, to be voted upon using the formal decision-making process (Section III. E.) at the next Steering Committee meeting. Nominations should seek to diversify representation on the Steering Committee both organizationally, geographically, and demographically.

III. Meetings, Conduct, and Decision Making

A. Meetings: The Steering Committee shall meet at least once per year. Attendance at meetings may be by any means (e.g., physical presence, telephone, video) as determined by the Coordinating Committee.

B. Agendas: Meeting agendas shall be sent to all Steering Committee members in advance of meetings.

C. Meeting Minutes: Detailed meeting minutes will be taken during each Steering Committee meeting. Draft minutes will be distributed to Steering Committee members after each meeting and reviewed and accepted at the following Steering Committee meeting via an informal decision-making process (Section III. D). The Coordinating Committee will keep records of all meeting minutes.

D. Informal Decision Making: The Steering Committee primarily functions as an advisory body. Meetings of the Steering Committee, Standing and Ad hoc Workgroups shall be conducted on the basis of a consensus model, where “consensus” is defined as the absence of sustained opposition. At the discretion of the Coordinating Committee, meetings may be conducted using parliamentary procedure, as described in the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order. When formal decision making is required, follow guidance in Section III. E. Any Steering Committee member may request to upgrade an informal decision to a formal decision. No formal decision making shall be conducted in the absence of a quorum.

E. Formal Decision Making: The Steering Committee primarily functions as an advisory body. However, the Steering Committee will sometimes be responsible for formal decision making on key matters that affect the Collaborative and its governance, or other decisions identified as consequential by the Coordinating Committee or Steering Committee members. In such instances, each member on the Steering Committee shall have one vote. Decisions will be reached as follows:

1. The Steering Committee will attempt to reach consensus, defined as a lack of objection, on all votes regarding the Collaborative. In the absence of consensus, Committee decisions can be reached with a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Committee in attendance.

2. Committee members will be notified by electronic communication in advance of a meeting when votes on key matters are expected to occur.
3. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend a meeting where a vote on a key matter is anticipated, they may provide a virtual vote via email prior to the meeting or designate an alternate from their organization to act on their behalf as described above. Alternates from outside the designating member organization are not permitted.
4. A quorum is required for action by the Steering Committee. A quorum is defined as 2/3 participation of the full Steering Committee, including alternates (proxy) and virtual.
5. Any voting Steering Committee member may bring a matter of concern to the attention of the Steering Committee by communicating with the Coordinating Committee, either directly or through a member of the Steering Committee. The Coordinating Committee shall then disseminate the issue through the agenda or an attachment to it.

IV. Administration

A. Administration: The Steering Committee may develop, approve and issue administrative and operating guidelines. Operating guidelines will be circulated to all partners and published on the Collaborative's website or other suitable public communications platform (currently, GoogleDrive).

B. Evaluation/Review Process: The Steering Committee shall engage a third-party evaluator every other year to review the Steering Committee's composition, direction, and performance. The third party will provide an evaluation report and recommended actions to the Steering Committee. The evaluation should:

1. Identify any functional issues,
2. Ensure the composition of the Steering Committee represents an inclusive partnership,
3. Review and refresh this document as needed, and
4. Identify, inform and guide any necessary changes.

C. Coordinating Committee: As mandated by the DRBCA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall coordinate the Collaborative. Primary roles in support of the Steering Committee and Workgroups include:

1. Administrative assistance,
2. Technical guidance,
3. Organizational support to advance the mission,
4. Administration of the search and recruitment of members for the Steering Committee

V. DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE STANDING AND AD HOC WORKGROUPS

A. Standing Workgroups: The Steering Committee will rely on established conservation networks within the watershed to create and execute the goals and strategies of the Collaborative's. The Steering Committee may appoint, as necessary, Standing workgroups to assist in developing or implementing goals and strategies.

Current Standing Workgroups include:

1. State Directors Workgroup – Since 2020, leadership from the State Fish and Wildlife agencies from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware have gathered regularly to foster collaboration across states. This workgroup has served as a platform for strategic planning, prioritization, and the effective implementation of conservation efforts within the Delaware River Watershed.
2. Federal Partners Workgroup – Since 2022, staff from numerous federal agencies including USDA (NRCS, USFS), EPA, USGS, NOAA, and NPS have met regularly to coordinate federal initiatives across the Delaware River watershed and to ensure that the views of the federal agencies are being reflected in the larger DRWCC.

B. Ad hoc Workgroups: The Steering Committee will rely on established conservation networks within the watershed to create and execute the goals and strategies of the Collaborative's. The Steering Committee may appoint, as necessary, Ad hoc Workgroups to assist in developing or implementing goals and strategies. Ad hoc Workgroups may be established and dissolved as needed.

VI. DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT

A. Watershed-wide Strategy: According to Sec. 3503(b)(1) and (2) of the DRBCA, the DRBRP shall adopt a Basin wide strategy that supports the implementation of a shared set of science-based restoration and protection activities that targets cost-effective projects with measurable results. The Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative Steering Committee, workgroups, and other management entities identified will:

1. Act as a consulting body, providing feedback throughout initial development and future iterations, ensuring the vision of the Collaborative is reflected and existing watershed plans are incorporated,
2. Provide technical support to ensure the most up-to-date science and data layers are included,
3. Utilize the Basin wide strategy and promote its use with partners to direct and guide conservation and related efforts across the watershed, ultimately implementing a shared set of science-based restoration and protection activities.