

# **Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative By-laws**

*Adopted: 4/14/2021*

## **Program**

In accordance with PUBLIC LAW 114–322 subtitle E. Delaware River Basin Conservation, 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 and help coordinate existing restoration and protection and funding mechanisms at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. The DRBRP will also establish and administer a non-regulatory and competitive grant and technical assistance program.

## **Collaborative**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is coordinating and facilitating a Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative (the Collaborative) to support healthy and functioning natural communities and working landscapes, fish and wildlife, water quality, and access for outdoor recreation. The intent of the Collaborative is to 1) strengthen coordination across agencies, organizations and partnerships currently performing conservation activities in the Basin and 2) amplify the collective impact of conservation practitioners in the Basin and 3) shape Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grant program policies to ensure collaborative priorities are reflected in investments and ensure shared implementation of conservation action across the Delaware River Watershed. The Collaborative shall be representative of the ecological, geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic diversity of communities and stakeholders in the Watershed. It is the long-term goal of the Collaborative to sustain healthy, connected and resilient ecosystems with essential ecosystem services and societal values for current and future generations.

# Mission

Our mission is to inspire, coordinate and actively support watershed wide collaborative and strategic actions by partners and stakeholders throughout the Delaware River watershed, to achieve agreed upon conservation, restoration and public outdoor recreation access outcomes.

# Vision

Our vision is of a Delaware River watershed where a vast, diverse, and interconnected network of healthy lands and waters support and improve our life sustaining water resources, habitat for abundant fish and wildlife, and safe access to enjoy outdoor recreation, for the benefit of all people, now and for generations to come.

# Steering Committee

## Description

The Steering Committee is responsible for accomplishing the mission of the Collaborative by setting policy, managing financial interests, and directing the activities of Work Groups, Technical Committees or Advisory Committees established or incorporated by the Steering Committee on behalf of the Collaborative.

## Role

The Steering Committee's role is to provide leadership, guidance, resources and support to partners in order to advance the shared interests of the Collaborative. The Steering Committee will employ the following leadership styles to manage collaborative actions:

- Collaborative leadership, in which members share leadership functions at different points in time; collaborative leaders share and disperse power throughout the network and build capacity by broadening participation.
- Distributive leadership, in which Collaborative processes provide local opportunities for members to act proactively for the benefit of the collaborative; and
- Architectural leadership, in which the structure of the Collaborative is intentionally designed to allow Collaborative processes to occur.

The Steering Committee's structure and processes are based on shared rules and norms, and typically depend on participatory processes to make collective decisions based on communication, relationships (personal and organizational), and mutual interests.

## Tasks

The following task list is not exhaustive, but exemplify the types of actions that are the purview of the Steering Committee:

- Help to craft, refine and periodically refresh a collective vision
- Link initiatives with landscape scale outcomes
- Define metrics around desired outcomes
- Craft Annual work plans to define Collaborative priorities and roles for the Steering Committee, identified agencies and stakeholder partners.
- Advise on grant program policies, priorities and funding levels for specific priorities
- Foster and support communication across diverse groups with competing interests and values
- Provide advice (and sometimes make decisions) about changes to the collaborative as it develops
- Appoint Work Groups and Advisory Committees to define landscape scale analytical priorities including but not limited to:
  - Developing geospatial transboundary datasets and models.
  - Engaging with key researchers and scientists to support identified Conservation Priorities.
  - Supporting research to fill information gaps which inhibit conservation in the landscape

## Membership

The Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative (Collaborative) Steering Committee will comprise representatives of relevant agencies and organizations (from among those named in the legislation or added by group consensus) in the four-state Delaware River watershed region. No membership fees or dues will be imposed. Composition of the Steering Committee shall represent the geographic, programmatic and philosophical diversity of communities in the watershed.

## 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:

### **State Agency Members**

Four total, one from each State

1. State of Delaware
2. State of New York
3. State of New Jersey
4. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

### **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 member will be permanent.

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Permanent Coordinating 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

### **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). These Tribes coordinate their involvement in Lenape heritage matters in the Northeast. Each Tribe will be provided a seat on the steering committee.

## **General Members**

Local, National and Regional Organizations- 11 total – must be representative of the geographic diversity of the region (urban, rural, and by State):

- Delaware River Basin Commission
- Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
- Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed
- County and Municipal government
- Academic institutions
- Regional and national environmental organizations
- Resource based and other relevant industry

## **Additional Members**

Shall be approved by the Steering Committee, and may include representatives of:

- Other federal, tribal and local government agencies;
- Organizations leading diversity, inclusion, environmental justice initiatives in the watershed.
- Important national and regional conservation organizations and partnerships;
- Public agencies and organizations with authority for planning and implementing conservation and restoration strategies in the Basin
- Relevant industries, nongovernmental organizations, and public and private academic institutions

## **Evaluation/ Review Process**

The Steering Committee shall engage a third-party evaluator to biannually review Steering Committee composition and constitution, direction, implementation and accomplishments. An effective evaluation/ review process would 1) identify any functional issues 2) ensure the composition of the Steering Committee is representative of the partnership and is inclusive, 3) review and refresh these By-laws as needed and 4) identify, inform and guide any necessary changes. The third party will provide an evaluation report and recommended actions to the Steering Committee.

## **Terms of Service**

Member organizations shall commit to a three-year term of service, with no more than a third of members' terms expiring in a given year. Steering Committee 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. Terms are renewable depending on: 1) the discretion of the Steering Committee; 2) the results of the annual evaluation of Collaborative operations; and, 3) willingness of the member organization to serve. Members 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 member may designate a replacement member to represent the organization for the remainder of the term if they choose.

## **Primary responsibility**

The Steering Committee's major responsibility is to provide leadership and decision making in the development and implementation of annual goals, priorities and strategies of the Collaborative.

## **Committees and Workgroups**

The Steering Committee will seek to maximize reliance on existing networks of other conservation partnerships, agencies, water resource or natural resource organizations performing similar relevant work in the Watershed to develop and implement the Collaborative's committee and workgroup goals and strategies. The Steering Committee may appoint as necessary additional standing and ad hoc committees and/or workgroups to assist in developing or implementing goals and strategies.

## **Administration**

The Steering Committee may develop, approve and issue administrative and operating guidelines. All guidelines will be are circulated to all partners and published on the Collaborative's website or other suitable public communications platform.

## **Steering Committee Member Expectations and Roles**

1. Provide leadership, guidance, influence and support for the policies, operations, and focal areas of the Collaborative to ensure responsiveness and accountability to priorities within the comprehensive work of the Collaborative.
2. Participate actively in the Steering Committee meetings and Workgroups, Technical Committees and Advisory Committees as appropriate.
3. Review and recommend long-term plans, strategies, annual goals and priorities for the Collaborative. Oversee progress toward established plans, goals and outcomes.

4. Appoint a Collaborative Coordinator and provide guidance and direction to the person serving in this capacity.
5. Identify, appoint and consult with individuals to serve actively as members of the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund's (DWCF) Technical Review Team.
6. Identify, appoint and consult with individuals to actively serve as members of Work Groups, Technical Committees, and Advisory Committees established by the Steering Committee, as appropriate.
7. Oversee membership and structure of the Steering Committee, Work Groups, Technical Committees, and Advisory Committees, as appropriate. Initiate and approve, in consultation with then Steering Committee, changes to this and other governance policies.
8. Provide oversight and direction on the use of funds needed for the Collaborative's operations, and the performance of such operations (e.g. projects not administered through the (DWCF, contracts for services deemed necessary by the Steering Committee, etc.)
9. Provides oversight and 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 partnership over time.
10. Approve Steering Committee budget and expenditures not specifically noted in the budget over \$xxxxx.
11. Vote on all governance and approval matters before the Steering Committee.
12. Organize and conduct an annual meeting of the Collaborative members.
13. Produce an annual report for the Collaborative

## **Coordination Committee**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall support and staff a Coordination Committee. The committee will consist of a Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator and or a Communications Coordinator. The purposes of the Coordination Committee is to:

1. Provide administrative and technical support to the Steering Committee and members of the DRWCC
2. Assist in recording and implementation of the ideals, initiatives and priorities set forth by the Steering Committee;

3. Provide input, guidance and assistance to the Steering Committee on the need for and composition of additional Collaborative operations and structural elements such as Work Groups, Technical Committees and Advisory Committees;
4. Administer the process to address requests for new Steering Committee memberships; and
5. Administer a search and recruitment process for Steering Committee member openings.

## **Decision Making and other Rules of Order**

1. The Steering Committee will be responsible for making decisions on key matters that affect the Collaborative and its governance.
2. Each member on the Steering Committee shall have one vote.
3. Decisions will be reached by vote following Robert's Rules of Order.
4. 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.
5. Committee members will be notified by electronic communication in advance of a meeting when votes on key matters are expected to occur.
6. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend a meeting or cast a vote, an alternate from the organization may be designated to act on their behalf as described above. Alternates from outside the designating member organization are not permitted.
7. A quorum is required for action by the Steering Committee. A quorum is defined as 2/3 of Steering Committee members, including alternates.
8. If a Steering Committee member cannot designate an alternate (proxy) and is unable to participate in a meeting where a vote on a key matter is anticipated, the member then forfeits their vote for that matter.
9. Any voting Steering Committee member may bring a matter of the Collaborative's concern to the attention of the Steering Committee by communicating with the Chair, either directly or through a member of the Steering Committee. The Chair shall make an appropriate announcement of the matter either in writing attached to the agenda or by placing the matter on the agenda

## **Meetings**

The Steering Committee shall meet at least once per year. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chair or authorized committee or sub-committee.

Attendance at meetings may be by any means (e.g., physical presence, telephone, video) as determined by the convener of the meeting.

## **Agendas**

Meeting agendas shall be sent to all members in advance of meetings.

## **Meeting Minutes**

Detailed meeting minutes will be taken during each Steering Committee meeting. Minutes will be distributed to Steering Committee members after each meeting and reviewed and accepted at the following Steering Committee meeting. U.S. Fish and Wildlife will keep records of all meeting minutes.

## **Business Year**

The business year of the Steering Committee shall be \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Conduct of Meetings**

**No business shall be conducted in the absence of a quorum. With the exceptions of business as noted, all meetings of the Steering Committee, Technical, standing and ad hoc committees 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 Chair, meetings may be conducted using parliamentary procedure, as described in the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order. All actions and decisions pertaining to any expenditure of DWCF funds or any other financial matter shall be made using Robert’s Rules of Order.**

## **Watershed-wide Strategy**

The Steering Committee will adopt and maintain a watershed-wide conservation and restoration strategy in accordance with Sec. 3503(b)(1) and (2) of the Act, and in consultation with applicable members and management entities that direct conservation and related strategies in the watershed, to support implementation of a shared set of science-based restoration and protection activities, drawing on existing plans for the watershed or portions of the basin.