

WRIA 29A Watershed Planning Unit Ground Rules

Introduction

The WRIA 29A watershed management plan was adopted in 2005. Upon completion of the plan additional stream flow data was collected by the Department of Ecology (Ecology). As a result of this new information the initiating governments believe it is in their interest to develop a detailed implementation plan pursuant to RCW 90.82.043 and assist Ecology in crafting a streamflow rule. To this end, the initiating governments have reestablished the planning unit. The following ground rules will provide the foundation for facilitating the work.

Meetings

Meetings shall occur at least monthly to accomplish the requirements of the Watershed Planning Act. These meetings shall be used to discuss and determine how the Planning Unit will conduct and organize itself in order to best fulfill its obligations and best utilize its resources. During Planning Unit meetings Planning Unit members should sit at tables and non-members should sit off to the side to avoid confusion in decision-making. Non-members may participate in discussions but not in decision making.

Decision Making

Consensus agreement is best for the group as a whole.

1. We commit to making decisions based on consensus. If an issue or decision cannot be resolved through consensus, a vote shall be used in order to move the decision-making forward. Voting shall be used only as a last resort.
2. Consensus decision-making shall be applied as illustrated in the Definition of Consensus table, Attachment 1. Planning Unit members shall have the option to utilize any of the seven options within the continuum. Decisions will be recorded as part of the Planning Unit and Committee meeting minutes.
3. We agree that a time limit of 30 minutes should be placed on each decision. If consensus is not reached by that time, the decision should be tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting. Discussion of that decision shall be limited to 30 minutes. At that time consensus shall be agreed upon or a vote shall be taken.
4. We agree to brainstorm and conduct small group discussions in order to generate ideas and encourage participation by group members. Ideas from brainstorming and small discussion should be assessed by the Planning Unit and considered in the decision-making process.
5. For a quorum, 60 percent of the membership and four initiating governments shall be present (participation may be by phone). In the event the planning unit cannot reach consensus, it will make decisions by voting. To pass a motion, a vote must be unanimous by all initiating governments and 60 percent of the members present.

6. In the event that poor attendance by Planning Unit members affects the Planning Unit's ability to reach quorum for two (2) consecutive Planning Unit meetings, the following procedures will be followed by the lead agency:
 - The appropriate representative will be contacted and informed that improved attendance is necessary.
 - If the representative misses a third consecutive meeting without contacting the lead agency they will be informed that new representation is being sought.
 - The lead agency will inform the interest group that new representation is needed.
 - The interest group will recommend a new representative to the initiating governments.
 - The initiating governments will approve new Planning Unit members.

Ground Rules

1. We will focus our discussions on the issues associated with developing a plan for the management and use of the watershed. We will avoid debating issues beyond the scope of that effort.
2. We represent a broad range of interests, each having an interest in how our water resources are used and protected. We recognize the legitimacy of each other's interests and concerns in our efforts to forge an effective and viable management plan. We will listen carefully. We will respect each other's right to disagree.
3. All participants will be treated with respect and dignity. We will not tolerate personal attacks directed at individuals and agencies.
4. We commit not to characterize each other's motivations, values, or positions in any discussions that we may have with the press. We will not attribute specific statements or positions to a participant without their prior approval and we will seek such approval during the course of our meetings whenever possible. We commit to work out our differences at the table rather than in the press.
5. We commit to search for opportunities and creative solutions. We will focus on problem solving, rather than stating our positions.
6. We agree that this planning effort is a priority in terms of committing our time and resources. We agree that consistency in participation is critical and we commit to make every effort to attend meetings of the Planning Unit. However, in recognition that events may arise that prevent attendance, each participant may name an alternate to attend meetings on his or her behalf. The participants shall be responsible for ensuring their alternate is informed.
7. The use and protection of our water resources is an important public issue. Our meetings will be open to the public and we will make time available at each meeting for the members of the public to share their concerns, interests and suggestions.
8. We will keep minutes of our meetings. The minutes shall summarize the discussions and document the decisions of the Planning Unit.

Definition of Consensus

DEFINITION OF CONSENSUS FOR WRIA 29A						
Consensus is defined in terms of agreement along a continuum. Planning Unit members may register the degree of their agreement with the language in any of the first six columns:						
Endorse	Endorse with a minor point of contention	Agree with reservation	Abstain	Stand aside	Formal disagreement but will go with the majority	Block
"I like it"	"Basically I like it"	"I can live with it"	"I have no opinion"	"I don't like it but I don't want to hold up the group"	"I want my disagreement to be noted in writing but I'll support the decision"	"I veto this proposal"
The last (shaded) column on the right side of the continuum is <i>not</i> considered acceptable for consensus in this process. However, anything to the left could be considered "agreement by consensus."						