

MIDDLE FORK WILLAMETTE WATERSHED COUNCIL

CHARTER

This charter was developed from meetings and discussions held between March and September 2000, by the membership of the developing Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council.

The Council wishes to acknowledge the efforts of those Oregon-based Watershed Councils whose formations preceded ours, thereby assisting in laying the foundation for this Charter.

◆ PURPOSE

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council serves as a volunteer-based partnership of diverse watershed stakeholders that focuses on promoting sustainability and making the Middle Fork Willamette watershed a better place to live, work, and visit; for now and future generations.

◆ MISSION

To work together as a community to restore and sustain the ecological integrity and economic viability of the watershed, and promote local control of our future by providing effective voluntary solutions to watershed issues.

◆ GOALS

1. Maintain and enhance overall water quality.
2. Gather, verify, and share information on present and historical watershed conditions.
3. Protect and advocate for healthy riparian habitat.
4. Conserve and restore native fish, wildlife, and vegetation throughout the watershed
5. Promote awareness, communication, education, learning, and participation among all people and interests within the watershed.
6. Serve as a technical, financial, and educational resource for individuals and groups who wish to get involved in restoration and enhancement of the watershed.
7. Develop an integrated and comprehensive watershed management program, which includes biennial Work Plans focused on maintaining, enhancing, and monitoring watershed health.
8. Advocate for the social and economic stability of the communities within the Middle Fork Willamette watershed.
9. Promote the mission, purpose, and goals of the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council to regional, state, and national officials.

◆ ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES

General Council

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council may make recommendations to governing bodies and other communities of interest within the watershed regarding the quality, protection, restoration, and enhancement of the watershed. *The council does not serve a regulatory role.* The council serves as a forum for discussion and a clearinghouse for information, and it may, after deliberation, make recommendations on actions affecting the watershed that are proposed by local, state, and federal agencies, as well as by other organizations or interests.

The Council encourages an “open-door” membership policy. Membership is all-inclusive and ever changing, and members work towards achieving the Council’s Mission and Goals as defined in this Charter. Membership is open to all folks who live in, work in, or are affected in any way by the watershed and its resources (local citizens, private landowners, scientists, industries, recreational users, related community, business and government groups, etc.).

Members complete a membership application, support the mission and goals of the Council, and receive monthly mailings that announce upcoming council activities as well as document recent activities. Placement on the Council mailing list confers actual Council membership.

Council meetings are normally held once a month. Meeting locations vary in order to compensate for the large physical nature of the watershed, and permit most everyone to attend a meeting proximate to their homes at least once every few months. Currently, meeting sites rotate between Lowell, Oakridge, and south Springfield. In the future, meetings may be held in Jasper, Dexter, or Westfir. At least one meeting each year will be a field-based tour of a project or site that in some way affects the watershed (restoration activities, etc.).

Steering Committee

A standing Steering Committee guides the Watershed Council. The Steering Committee ensures continuity among council activities and monitors progress towards achieving the council’s mission and goals. The Steering Committee also oversees fiscal operations, provides feedback to the Council coordinator, and makes staffing and operating decisions. The Steering Committee makes reports at general council meetings regarding their topics of discussion, recommendations, and decisions.

The Steering Committee is comprised of no less than 7 and no more than 11 members. All members are volunteers from within the general council membership. Each member must be “affirmed” by the general council during a council meeting. Four of the “seats” are designated appointments: one representative each from the *Willamette National Forest, Army Corps of Engineers, Private Timber Industry, and Environmental interests*. The remaining 3-7 seats are strictly “at-large”. When an “at-large” opening occurs, and more than one person volunteers to fill the opening, the interested volunteers must submit a brief written summary that describes themselves and why they wish to serve on the Steering Committee. The information will be made available for review by the members of the General Council to assist in choosing the prospective Steering Committee member.

Steering Committee members will each serve a term of two years, and rotation of members will be staggered in order to ensure continuity (during the first year, 3 of the “at-large” seats will serve

one-year terms). Each year, the Steering Committee will designate a Chairperson to serve as a spokesman for the Steering Committee in addition to serving as an official Watershed Council representative on all matters requiring endorsements and/or signatures from a Council representative. The General Council will hold affirmation votes regarding Steering Committee membership each year during a designated Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council Annual Meeting.

The Steering Committee will meet as often as necessary to conduct the business of the Council. Minutes will be taken at all Steering Committee meetings and made available for review.

All meetings of both the General Council and Steering Committee are open to anyone interested in attending.

Decision-Making

All decisions being made within both the General Council and Steering Committee will be made by those present who have attended at least one of the previous three General Council or Steering Committee meetings, and using the “*consensus minus-one*” decision-making process. Permitting only those members who have attended at least one of the previous three General Council or Steering Committee meetings to participate in the vote will help ensure that those voting will have more than likely been involved in at least one meeting where the topic being voted upon was discussed.

Members present who meet the one-in-the-previous-three-meeting attendance requirement, but do not wish to vote on a particular issue, are permitted to abstain. Voting member abstention will not affect the ability of the council to reach a decision.

All matters of substance (pursuit of funding, grant applications, project prioritization, Council direction, etc.) will be initially discussed by the Steering Committee, who will then make recommendations to the General Council for discussion and decision by “*consensus minus-one*” of those council members present who meet the attendance requirement. General operating procedures such as fiscal decisions, council meeting agenda compilation, and staffing, will be made solely by the Steering Committee.

Should a decision fail to achieve “*consensus minus-one*” during initial vote, the council will identify the issue(s) of conflict and may form an ad-hoc team to address the issue. All attempts will be made to ensure that this team is comprised of a balance of those who objected to and those who supported the issue which was up for vote. This team will meet and attempt to re-frame the issue or question, and then report back at the next Council meeting where a second vote on the issue will be held. Should the process again fail to reach a decision, the process will be repeated a second time. After a third failure to reach a decision, the Council will decide to either table the issue indefinitely, or seek an alternative voting procedure for the particular issue (but this alternative voting procedure must be affirmed by the established decision making process of “*consensus minus-one*”).

The Council will use a meeting facilitator to help to ensure full participation of members, help members stay on track, help ensure that members abide by accepted common rules of courtesy, and help the council reach decisions.

Technical Team

The Technical Team is a standing committee comprised of people possessing sound scientific backgrounds and/or technical expertise in areas of watershed health and watershed physical processes. The Committee's primary function is to assist the Council in achieving its' goals related to improved watershed conditions as defined in this Charter.

The Technical Team will provide the Council guidance concerning watershed restoration, assessment compilation, and the development of a watershed Action Plan. The Technical Team will vary in size and representation relative to agency, organization, and citizen availability.

Other Committees and Teams

The council encourages the formation of small committees and groups to address specific issues, projects, tasks, and interests. These committees can be short-term in nature, such as a committee formed solely to implement a specific restoration project; or they can become a standing (long-term) committee, such as one focused on providing continual education and outreach services for the Council. All committees must communicate their focus, intent, meeting information and membership to the Steering Committee; as well as share their recommendations and activities at General Council meetings. Calls for volunteers to serve on committees can be made through mailings and at General Council meetings.

◆ PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council works towards creating a positive community atmosphere through welcoming anyone with an interest in watershed issues to attend meetings and become a council member. The Council is continually searching to increase its membership.

The Council strongly supports *voluntary* participation. Although supportive of science-based watershed restoration activities on private lands, the Council recognizes the rights of individuals to make decisions about their own actions and property. The Council will only engage in a project on private land with the expressed written consent of the landowner. Any commitments made by the landowner will be entirely voluntary.

The Council will also attempt to the best of its ability to make all council-generated information available for review by any and all interested parties. Every available effort will be made to grant the public access to information and assist people in gaining answers to their watershed-related questions.

Monthly mailings are sent to all people on the Council mailing list approximately one week prior to the scheduled general council meeting each month. These mailings detail upcoming meeting dates and locations, meeting agendas, issues that are presently in front of the council, other relevant topics of discussion, as well as include minutes from the previous months meeting. The mailings will continue as long as funding and in-kind services allow. Announcements of upcoming Council meetings are also submitted to pertinent local media outlets for publishing. A minimum of ten minutes will be set aside for public comment near the beginning of every general Council meeting.

◆ AMENDMENTS

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council recognizes that this Watershed Council will continue to evolve and change along with the pertinent issues and participating membership. As such, opportunities to amend the charter and general operating procedures of the Council will always be available.

Amendments can be made to the charter of the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council at any time by presenting, in writing, the proposed amendment to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will discuss the proposed amendment(s) and transmit, with recommendation, to the General Council for consideration. All requests for amendments are required to be presented in writing to the Steering Committee at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled Steering Committee meeting.

AMENDMENT #1 (approved June 16, 2004): The Council will indemnify its Steering Committee members to the fullest extent allowed by Oregon Law.

