



## **Group Charter**

**Adopted April 16, 2015**

### **CONTEXT**

#### **1. Background**

The NC Watershed Stewardship Network (NCWSN) is a community of watershed stakeholders across North Carolina connected by our shared work to increase communication and collaboration for healthy and clean water. The need for the network is explained in *An Assessment of Capacity and Resource Needs of NC Watershed Programs*, and *An Assessment of Capacity and Resource Needs of North Carolina Watershed Volunteers*, published by the UNC Institute for the Environment (UNC-IE) in partnership with NC Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI), Watershed Education for Communities and Officials (WECO), Division of Water Resources of NCDENR, and Triangle J Council Of Governments in 2013. After these needs assessment results were rolled out to stakeholders in a May 2013 workshop, interested representatives of state and local governments, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and private industries established the NCWSN in October 2013. The group created this working charter to guide its work and interactions, and to inform future participants and stakeholders of how the NCWSN functions and how people can participate.

#### **2. ROLES**

**Program Coordinators:** Coordinators serve on the steering committee and commit to spending a portion of their time on NCWSN activities, thus typically are paid by their respective organizations or grants they have acquired to dedicate time to the NCWSN. They ultimately are accountable to the organizations paying their salaries. Their activities must work towards meeting the goals and objectives of the NCWSN as stated in the mission, strategic plan, and charter. The NCWSN steering committee will have an annual opportunity to provide feedback on coordinators' work via an online survey. Members are also welcome to provide feedback to coordinators at any time.

Roles include:

- Coordinate activities of subcommittees to ensure their outcomes are working towards meeting the goals and objectives of NCWSN.
- Lead fundraising efforts, including grant development and administration.
- Oversee planning and facilitation of steering committee meetings.

- Create and revise documents such as the strategic plan, charter, and outreach materials with assistance of steering committee.
- Act as the main contacts and recruiters for new partners and members, answer NCWSN member questions, and link resources to NCWSN members.
- Oversee online tools development, including website, social media, database, mapping, etc.
- Coordinate the development and delivery of NCWSN educational, outreach, marketing, and networking offerings.

At the time of this Charter version, UNC-IE and WRI are dedicating funding for staff to serve as co-coordinators. The two coordinators work together to carry out the roles listed.

**Steering committee:** A group of people who, in close collaboration with the program coordinators, provide guidance and support to the NCWSN. This group guides the direction and development of the NCWSN through strategic planning and goal development and helps implement the strategic plan by seeking resources and funding on behalf of the group, serving on subcommittees, and participating in NCWSN activities. Roles may include participating in special NCWSN projects; recruiting members to the NCWSN; generating support from a steering committee member's own organization, network partners, or others; developing online resources; creating and delivering training; and other tasks as determined by the group aimed at meeting NCWSN goals.

*Representation on the steering committee:* The NCWSN is intended as a diverse network for building partnerships among multiple sectors, organizations, and communities. As such, the steering committee should include a broad array of members whose organizations represent diversity in geography, race, income, organization size and type. A current list of steering committee members is found in Appendix A.

**Subcommittees:** Temporary groups formed to accomplish specific tasks to meet the NCWSN mission. Members may come from the steering committee and/or from the general NCWSN membership. At least one steering committee member must be on a subcommittee. Current (at the time of NCWSN foundation) subcommittees include: Online tools, Outreach, Education/Training, Fundraising, and Strategic Planning. Subcommittees bring their interim/draft products, efforts, and activities to the steering committee for feedback and final approval.

**NCWSN members:** People, organizations, or businesses with an interest in watershed stewardship who participate in the network via online activities or in activities hosted by the NCWSN. They may be asked to submit a form to the NCWSN with their contact information and interests. A more formal membership structure may be enacted with guidance from the steering committee as the NCWSN develops.

**Contractors:** Businesses or individuals paid to accomplish specific time-limited tasks for the NCWSN. Contractors may be steering committee members, NCWSN members, or others, depending on the task at hand and requirements of a steering committee member's organization if they are contributing funds to accomplish a particular task.

**Audience:** Individuals, groups and organizations who may benefit from the network's efforts, services, and activities. This includes paid and non-paid professionals, volunteers,

citizens, communities, businesses and nonprofits who impact or are impacted by water resources, and may be interested in watershed efforts.

## Purpose

### 3. MISSION

The mission of the NCWSN is to ***Empower more effective watershed stewardship because water is critical to economic, environmental, and community health.***

### 4. APPROACH

The NC Watershed Stewardship Network seeks to identify, include, link and serve watershed stakeholders in North Carolina.

We do this through the commitment and actions of the coordinators, steering committee, and subcommittees. The strategic plan identifies three main areas of action:

1. Building a network: Networking infrastructure and events, hub for sharing resources and connecting, recruiting members and helping members approach and work with others.
2. Building skills and inspiring engagement: Training and other educational offerings to increase ability and confidence of members, activities and campaigns to spark connections between potential watershed stewards and natural resources.
3. Building financial support for the NCWSN and local stewardship efforts: Acquiring funding to support NCWSN development and assisting local stewardship efforts with their funding efforts.

NCWSN goals and milestones through 2020 are included in the NCWSN Strategic plan.

## Meetings and communications

### 5. MEETING SCHEDULE AND DURATION

The NCWSN steering committee commits to convene together three times per year through December 2016 to ensure the 2014-2016 goals are met. Two of the meetings will be held in person and one of the meetings will be held via webinar or videoconference. The location will alternate between the Triangle and Triad region, or other locations as decided by the steering committee. In 2016 the steering committee may revisit the schedule and determine if changes are needed to meet the mission of the NCWSN.

Conference calls and webinars are options for discussions and keeping actively engaged in between steering committee meetings.

The NCWSN Coordinators meet on a monthly basis, either in person or by phone.

Subcommittees meet on an as-needed basis to accomplish tasks within the timelines established for the action plan and/or agreed upon as action items during steering committee meetings.

#### Steering Committee Meeting Attendance

Each coordinator and steering committee member is expected to attend and fully participate in each meeting. Members shall read appropriate materials and arrive prepared to work. Materials presented for discussion will be distributed at least one week in advance of the meeting, as practical. Any member that anticipates not being able to attend should notify one of the Coordinators in advance by e-mail or telephone.

Steering committee members commit to attending at least 2 out of the 3 meetings per year, with at least 1 of the meetings attended in person (members may participate in the remaining 1-2 meetings via conference call or webinar). A conference call, webinar or video-conference option will be made available at all steering committee meetings. Steering committee members are encouraged to send an alternate from their organization as a substitute if they cannot attend a meeting.

In the event that a member is not able to attend a meeting of the NCWSN, and the member is not in agreement with any actions taken by the NCWSN during his/her absence, that member should explain his/her concerns regarding the actions taken with one of the coordinators within one month after the meeting summary is distributed. Coordinators will work with the member to address his/her concern on a case by case basis.

#### Meeting Summaries

The program coordinators shall alternate providing a note taker from their respective organization at each meeting.

The program coordinators shall compile and send meeting summaries to the steering committee listserv within two weeks of a meeting.

Subcommittee chairs shall compile and send meeting summaries to the steering committee listserv within a month of a meeting.

All meeting summaries shall be made accessible to all steering committee members by saving them in a shared folder (currently in Dropbox).

#### Agendas

The program coordinators shall develop meeting agendas and associated materials with the assistance of the steering committee.

## **6. COMMUNICATION PLAN**

#### Communication among subcommittees, steering committee, coordination team, WSN members

Subcommittees should inform the steering committee of upcoming meetings, and keep steering committee and program coordinators informed of activities and progress by making meeting summaries available and providing updates to the steering committee listserv.

Products created by the subcommittees are not considered official NCWSN products until reviewed and approved by the steering committee.

#### Website updates

A website will be created and housed by the UNC Institute for the Environment (or by their contractors) with guidance from the steering committee. Regular updates will be provided by the program coordinators. Steering committee members may provide content to the program coordinators (such as stewardship highlights, news items, photos). Content will be evaluated and approved if it meets the mission and the spirit of the network.  
<http://ncwatershednetwork.org/>

#### Social media management

The program coordinators will manage the NCWSN Twitter and Facebook accounts, and any other social media accounts created on behalf of the NCWSN. Steering committee members may provide news items to the coordinators for posting. Content will be evaluated and approved if it meets the mission and spirit of the network.

#### Listserv management

Two listservs were created and are managed by WRII.

[wsn-steer@lists.ncsu.edu](mailto:wsn-steer@lists.ncsu.edu) is for steering committee members and alternates to discuss steering committee business.

[nc-watershed-network@lists.ncsu.edu](mailto:nc-watershed-network@lists.ncsu.edu) is for NCWSN members and any interested member of the public. The initial purpose of this listserv is to keep NCWSN members apprised of NCWSN progress, products, and opportunities to participate in the network or in related watershed activities throughout the state.

WRII steering committee members can subscribe or unsubscribe people from these lists by request.

Steering committee members may send emails at any time to the steering committee listserv with questions and information relevant to the operation of the steering committee and/or the NCWSN. The steering committee listserv does not require moderator approval for sending an email.

Steering committee members and NCWSN members may send emails at any time to the NC-Watershed-Network listserv with information and opportunities related to watershed efforts in the state, including but not limited to job/volunteer opportunities, funding/grant opportunities, information and resource sharing, requests for information, and other posts that meet the mission and spirit of the NCWSN. The listserv shall be moderated by the program coordinators, who must approve emails before they are posted to the list. The program coordinators will contact the original poster of a denied post with rationale for denying the post.

The program coordinators will send a message to the NC-Watershed-Network listserv within one month of each steering committee meeting with a copy of the meeting summary and a message about current efforts of the network.

#### Social media, listserv, and online content

The intent of the NCWSN is to build a broad diverse network of people who work to improve water resources, and to build local capacity for doing so. To help build mutual

understanding and partnerships, the NCWSN will not advocate for specific policies or regulations. Thus, appropriate content will include case studies of watershed improvement efforts, educational information, notices of volunteer activities and outreach events, notices of available services and needs for services, and similar notices. The steering committee recognizes advocacy and lobbying are important aspects of policy making, but the NCWSN is not intended as a forum for those activities. Steering committee members are free to post whatever content they wish on their respective websites and social media feeds, but we request that political, lobbying, or otherwise potentially adversarial messages do not include references to NCWSN within the content.

#### Document sharing (i.e. Dropbox)

Steering committee members shall have access to network and committee documents through a shared folder on Dropbox.com. To ensure file integrity, committee members should save new versions of documents they are editing by adding their initials before saving, and should not delete shared files and folders in Dropbox. Access to the folder will be removed when a person is no longer an official member of the committee. **Members should coordinate sharing/unsharing with the program coordinators to avoid unintentional deletion of critical documents.**

## PROCESS

### **7. DECISION PROCESS**

The NCWSN steering committee and subcommittees will operate by consensus of all members represented at the meeting. In making decisions, each member will indicate his/her concurrence on a specific proposal using a five-point scale. Full consensus is considered to be achieved when all members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2 or 3 on the following five point scale. If a 5 is noted, at least one alternative will be discussed and considered by the group before making a final decision. If all efforts have been made to arrive at full consensus, but it appears that the steering committee will not be able to achieve it, the group may choose to proceed with less than consensus in order to achieve progress. All recommendations, major reservations, and the full lack of support to implement recommendations or decisions will be documented in meeting summaries and reports.

Five point scale:

Level 1: Endorsement (I like it)

Level 2: Endorsement with a minor point of contention (basically I like it)

Level 3: Agreement with reservations (I can live with it)

Level 4: Stand Aside (I don't like it but I don't want to hold up the group)

Level 5: Block (I cannot/will not support the recommendation, decision, or proposal)

Appendix B provides more details on consensus decision-making.

### **8. DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

In order to have the most efficient and effective process possible, Members will follow these basic guidelines:

- Be fully present in the conversation.
- Be respectful.

- Be responsible.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Ensure participation is balanced and everyone has a chance to be heard.
- Stay on topic.

Additional guidelines are found in Appendix C.

## ADMINISTRATION

### 9. STEERING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS, WITHDRAWAL AND REPLACEMENT

#### Steering Committee Terms

Steering committee members commit to serving 2 years on the committee, and may serve as many terms as desired. Members who find they are not able to participate in steering committee meetings may be asked to designate a new person to represent his/her organization, and/or serve the NCWSN in another capacity, such as by participating in a subcommittee. Such requests and decisions will be made on a case by case basis by the coordinators with input, as appropriate, from the rest of the steering committee.

#### Steering Committee Composition

The steering committee shall include representation from the following sectors:

- University/Academic
- Non-profit/Non-governmental organization
- Business/Corporation (Private or publicly held)
- Local Government
- Regional Government/Council of Government (COG)
- State Government
- Volunteer-based watershed group (formal incorporation is not required)

The NCWSN shall aim for a minimum of 2 and maximum of 6 representatives from each category, with a cap of 30 members. Each geographic region of the state should be represented by at least three different sectors (for example- a non-profit, a local government, and a University/Academic from the coast).

#### Appointments

The steering committee and program coordinators identify potential steering committee members. Program coordinators oversee the recruitment of members and coordinate their participation, including reminding them of their terms.

#### Voluntary Withdrawal and Replacement Appointments

If steering committee members are unable to complete a term, they should help the program coordinators identify a replacement from their organization or sector.

### 10. AMENDMENTS TO THIS CHARTER

Changes to the charter can be made at any meeting of the WSN steering committee by consensus. The requested change shall be announced on the meeting's agenda ahead of time.

**APPENDIX A – NCWSN Program Coordinators and Steering Committee  
(1/30/2015)**

**Program Coordinators:**

Michele Drostin, University of North Carolina Institute for the Environment

Christy Perrin, Water Resources Research Institute of the UNC System

**Steering Committee**

First	Last	Organization	Sector	Region
		Open seat (2)	Business	
Kevin	Boyer	City of Raleigh	Local Govt	Piedmont-Triangle
Caitlin	Burke	Conservation Trust for North Carolina	Nonprofit	All NC
Shari	Bryant	Wildlife Resources Commission	State Agency	Western Piedmont
Paul	Clark	NCDWR Use Restoration Program	State Agency	All NC
Bill	Crowell	APNEP	State Agency	Coast
Nancy	Daly	Ecosystem Enhancement Program	State Agency	Coast
Greg	Godard	Upper Coastal Plain COG	COG	Coastal Plain
Joey	Hester	NCD&CS Division of Soil & Water Conservation	State Agency	All NC
Betty	Huskins	NC Regional Councils	COG	All NC
George	Matthis	River Guardian Foundation	Nonprofit	Piedmont
Holly	Miller	Town of Wake Forest	Local Govt	Piedmont-Triangle
Gloria	Putnam	NC Sea Grant	University	Coast
Eric	Romaniszyn	Haywood Waterways Association	Local Watershed	Mountain
Rebecca	Sadosky	NC DWR	State Agency	All NC
Mike	Schlegel	Triangle J Council of Governments	COG	Piedmont-Triangle
Cy	Stober	Piedmont Triad Regional Council	COG	Piedmont-Triad
Stuart	Taylor	Elkin Presbyterian Church	Faith-based	Piedmont-Triad
Jason	Wager	Centralina COG	COG	Piedmont- Char Meck
Nicole	Wilkinson	Water Resources Research Institute	University	All NC
Melanie	Williams	NC DWR	State Agency	All NC
Mitch	Woodward	NC Cooperative Extension	University	All NC
<b>Alternates</b>				
Joy	Fields	Piedmont Triad Regional Council	COG	Piedmont- Triad
Wendi	Hartup	NC Cooperative Extension	University	Piedmont- Triad
Ron	Townley	Upper Coastal Plain COG	COG	Coastal plain



## APPENDIX B – CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING PROCESS

### What is Consensus Decision Making?

Consensus is the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work. It is a way for more than two people to reach agreement. Consensus prevents domination by the majority, allows building of trust, and the sharing of information, especially under conditions of conflict. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, but rather there is general agreement and support that the best decisions or recommendations that can be made at the time, have been made, with the people involved.

Consensus principles include:

- Consensus requires sharing information, which leads to mutual education, which provides the basis for crafting workable and acceptable alternatives.
- Consensus promotes collaborative thinking of a diverse group and leads to creative solutions.
- Because parties participate openly in the deliberation, they understand the reasoning behind the recommendations and are willing to support them.
- The focus for each stakeholder should be on making good decisions for the future of the WSN, and to represent the interest of his or her constituency, not simply to reach agreement.

In making decisions, each member will indicate his/her concurrence on a specific proposal using a five-point scale. The scale allows members to clearly communicate their intentions, assess the degree of agreement that exists for a particular proposal, and register their dissatisfaction without holding up the rest of the group. The five-point scale is as follows:

<b>1</b>	<b>Endorsement</b>	Member fully supports it
<b>2</b>	<b>Endorsement with minor point of clarification</b>	Basically, member supports it.
<b>3</b>	<b>Agreement with minor reservations</b>	Member can live with it.
<b>4</b>	<b>Stand aside with major reservations</b>	Formal disagreement, but will not block or hold up the proposal/provision from moving forward.
<b>5</b>	<b>Block</b>	Member will not support the proposed plan.

If all efforts have been made to arrive at full consensus, but it appears that the group will not be able to achieve it, the group may choose to proceed with less than consensus in order to achieve progress. In the event of lack of consensus, the group will;

- Allow time for the dissenting parties to express their concerns, rationale, and alternative points of view,
- Note the range of views presented on the decision or proposal at hand and record those views in the meeting summaries, and,

- Make clear in any verbal or written communications that the decision to proceed with less than consensus was made in order to proceed, but that consensus was not achieved.

Facilitators measure the group's consensus on a given proposal by open polling of the members present. The levels of consensus are:

<b>Consensus</b>	All members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2 or 3
<b>Consensus with Major Reservations</b>	All members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2 or 3, except at least one Committee member rates it as a 4
<b>No Consensus</b>	Any member present rates the proposal as a 5



## APPENDIX C – Discussion Guidelines

In order to have the most efficient and effective process possible, Members will be fully present in the conversation, be respectful and be responsible. Additional discussion guidelines that can help are outlined below:

- Be concise and stick to the topics on the meeting agenda.
- Speak to the whole group when talking; avoid side conversations.
- Honor the agenda.
- Ensure participation is balanced and everyone has a chance to be heard.
- Help start and end the meeting on time.
- Put cell phones on “vibrate” and leave the room when a call is received.
- Recognize that everyone’s interests are important.
- Agree that it is okay to disagree, and disagree without being disagreeable.
- Put personal differences aside in the interest of a successful WSN
- Focus on the problem, not the person.
- Encourage free thinking. Offer mutually beneficial solutions.
- Encourage candid, frank discussions. Be honest and tactful. Avoid surprises.
- Openly express any disagreement or concern with all other WSN Members.
- Actively strive to understand others points of view.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Share information discussed in the meeting with the organizations and constituents represented and bring back to the group the input from constituencies as appropriate.
- Communicate the requirements of this charter with the organizations they represent to minimize the possibility of actions contrary to the charter.
- Commit to issues in which they have an interest.
- Support and actively engage in the group’s decision-making process.