

MRW Partnership Leadership Council

To provide necessary structure and streamline decision making, the Mississippi River Watershed Partnership (MRWP or Partnership) will implement a Leadership Council, Federal Agency Network, and system of committees that will work alongside the convening partners (America's Watershed Initiative and The Nature Conservancy) to advance collective goals and actions.

The Leadership Council will support the convening partners in making decisions about how to move the partnership forward while upholding its mission

The Federal Agency Network provides coordination and insight from federal agencies, helping ensure MRWP strategies align with federal priorities, programs, and funding pathways while maintaining clear boundaries around decision-making authority.

The Technical Committees bring together subject-matter experts across the watershed to assess needs, guide data and science priorities, and provide coordinated recommendations that inform partnership strategies and investments.

The Strategy Committees coordinate the partnership's outward-facing work—shaping messaging, policy engagement, education efforts, and convenings to strengthen collaboration and accelerate impact across the watershed.

Leadership Council

Number of members: 25

Membership:

- For initial selection, prospective council members will be appointed by the convening partners. Members should represent the wide variety of constituents (regionally, across issue areas, and across organization type) in the watershed with seats reserved for individuals as follows: 2 seats for each focus area, 1 seat for each key strategy committee, 1 seat for each basin group, 2 seats for indigenous representatives.
 - This process is open to all relevant groups including: federal, state, and local government, industry, academia, non-profits, commodity groups, etc.
- After initial selection, new members will be decided on by the current leadership council.
 - Prospective members will be selected through an open nomination process with the option of self nomination.
 - A Nominating Committee may be formed to manage the selection process.
 - The Leadership Council will take a vote during a council meeting.
- Leadership Council members will have a term of 2 years, with a 3 term limit, for a maximum of 6 years on the Council.
 - Continued service beyond an initial term requires re-nomination and approval through the Nominating Committee.
- Leadership Council members can participate in up to 2 other partnership committees, with Leadership Council liaisons on each committee.
- Members will have their name publicly listed on the Partnership web page for transparency.

Responsibilities:

- Define and uphold the vision, mission, and shared goals of the Partnership.
- Ensure alignment of MRWP activities with broader needs across the watershed.
- Provide guidance on long-term strategies and emerging issues in the watershed.
- Review and approve or recommend partnership-wide strategies and roadmaps.
- Provide input on technical committee concerns/questions.
- Coordinate technical committee plans to prevent overlap or unintended conflicts with the work of other committees.
- Monitor and evaluate the Partnership's progress and impact, and share findings with the broader Partnership.

Expectations:

- Attend all council meetings (including annual partnership meeting in-person) and participate actively during meetings.
- Contribute input based on your experience and role(s) outside of the Partnership.
- Review pre-meeting materials in advance and come prepared with questions or concerns.
- Uphold the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and equity in decision-making.

Meetings:

- The leadership council will start by meeting once every other month for 1 hour.
 - If this cadence is not appropriate for the work that needs to be done, the council can vote on a new cadence.
 - The council will meet no less than 4 times per year.
- Meetings will be primarily virtual, one in-person meeting will occur during the MRWP annual meeting.

Operations

- Convening partners will coordinate and host meetings.
- Convening partners will draft meeting agendas and circulate materials at least one week in advance.
- Convening Partners will record notes and share summaries of meetings with MRWP committees as appropriate.
- Convening Partners will collect and distribute committee reports to the council.

Voting:

- Leadership Council members cast votes as individuals serving the Partnership, not as representatives of their employer or home organization.
- Votes of the Leadership Council establish positions and decisions of MRWP as a partnership, and do not imply endorsement by all MRWP partners unless explicitly communicated as such.
- When a decision is adopted, the Council may also decide how it is communicated.
- Quorum: A quorum will consist of 50% + 1 of seated members. Votes may only occur when quorum is met.
- The Council will seek consensus, defined as broad agreement with no strong objections.
- Any decision requiring a formal vote will be open for comment from the broader Partnership for at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting where the vote will occur, unless time sensitivity requires emergency action.
- In urgent situations where deferral would cause harm or prevent timely action, the chair may call for an emergency vote with shorter notice. Emergency votes must later be confirmed at the next scheduled meeting.
- Members must abstain if they have a conflict of interest.
- Members may consult with their home organization before voting, but should be prepared to vote at meetings.
 - Repeated abstentions due to institutional approval requirements may signal a need to reassess that member's role or level of decision-making authority on the Council.

Outside Input:

- MRWP values transparent decision-making and welcomes input from all interested parties.
- Anyone may provide written comments to the Leadership Council at any time.

- Comments related to specific agenda items or votes must be submitted at least 48 hours before a scheduled meeting to be included in the pre-read packet.
- All comments will be acknowledged by staff, and a summary or full content may be shared with the Council at the discretion of the convening partners.
- Commenters should recognize that while all input is welcomed, the Leadership Council is not obligated to respond or take action, and votes reflect Council members' independent judgment.
- Individuals with private, financial, or organizational interests in an issue are expected to disclose relevant conflicts when submitting comments.