



*Muskoka*  
WATERSHED  
COUNCIL

A collaboration of the  
Muskoka Heritage  
Foundation  
&  
The District Municipality  
of Muskoka

# Operating Procedures

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Prepared for the  
Muskoka Watershed Council

The Muskoka Watershed Council is not a regulatory or enforcement agency. Instead, it makes recommendations to decision-makers, managers and the general public on ways to protect and restore the resources of the area's watersheds. The Council strives to provide a framework for coordination and cooperation and uses consensus as its decision-making process. The Council represents key interests and stakeholders across the watersheds, ensuring a comprehensive look at watershed issues. Council members also regularly communicate with other groups and individuals, forming an even broader network of watershed stakeholders.

**1. Purpose**

The Muskoka Watershed Council is committed to the enhancement of the health and sustainability of the Muskoka River Watershed, the Black River Watershed and the Severn River.

The Council was formed to share resources, help address watershed management issues, and provide a framework for coordination and cooperation among key interests.

**2. Mission**

The Muskoka Watershed Council wants to preserve and enhance the air, water and terrestrial ecosystems of the area's watersheds for the environmental, health, economic, spiritual and intrinsic values they provide.

**3. Relationship to Decision-Making Bodies, Communities of Interest and the Public**

The Muskoka Watershed Council is an advisory body to established decision-making bodies and communities of interest. As such, the Council makes recommendations concerning the protection, restoration, and enhancement of the quality of the area's watersheds.

**3.1. Partnership Organizations Obligations**

The Muskoka Watershed Council is supported financially through a collaborative effort of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation and The District Municipality of Muskoka. Either organization may dissolve the collaborative at any time, with a minimum of six (6) months notice. Upon suspension of this founding collaborative, the Council is free to seek out and continue functioning under different funding mechanisms.

**3.2. Participant Organization Obligations**

The agencies, organizations, and interests represented on the Council are not obligated to adopt or carry out the recommendation of the Council, but will give due consideration to the recommendations and take actions they consider appropriate. The agencies, organizations, and interests will report back to the Council on any actions taken in response to Council recommendations.

**3.3. Advisory Requests**

The Council welcomes and will respond to requests for advice on actions affecting the watershed that are proposed by local, provincial, and federal agencies, organizations or interests.

**3.4. Representative Obligations**

Council members will keep the public and their respective agencies, organizations, and interests informed about the work of the Council and will bring their concerns to the Council.

**3.5. Relationship to General Public**

The Muskoka Watershed Council provides advice and guidance to the general public on ways to protect and restore the resources of the area's watersheds. The Council also reports to the public on the health of the environment and the impact of various activities occurring throughout the watersheds.

## 4. Council Members

### 4.1. Council Size

The number of Council members may vary between a minimum of twenty (20) and a maximum of thirty (30).

### 4.2. Schedule of Meetings

The Council will meet a minimum of six times per year. The Council may also meet at the call of the Chair, with a minimum of seven (7) days notice.

### 4.3. Council Composition

The Muskoka Watershed Council shall endeavour to include representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

Muskoka Heritage Foundation	Cottager & Ratepayer Associations
Municipal Representatives	First Nations
Business/Industrial	Marina Operators
Home Builders/Development	Golf Course Operators
Education Community	Social Services
Forestry Industry	Federal or Provincial Government
Environmental Community	Community Representatives ( <i>must be approved by Executive Committee</i> )
Tourism Industry	
Rural and Agricultural Representatives	

The Executive Committee will ensure a balanced representation from the varied communities of interest across the watersheds.

When appropriate, one member of the Muskoka Watershed Council may represent the interests of more than one stakeholder group.

### 4.4. Terms of Representation

The term of office for Council members will be 1, 2, 3 or 4 years, depending on the organization. A Council member may be reappointed to serve for consecutive terms.

The representatives shall serve at the pleasure of their respective agencies and organizations.

Terms will commence on the first of January and expire on the thirty-first of December. Upon appointment, new members will receive a letter identifying the length of their term.

### 4.5. Resignation

The Executive Committee will act to replace members who resign or are unable to continue serving on the Council. The Executive Committee will strive to maintain continuity and the balance of interests, as approved by Council, by giving preference to representation from the same agencies and organizations at a similar position. The Executive Committee will request the agency or organization to nominate a replacement representative. If the agency or organization is unable or unwilling to do so, the Executive Committee will seek representation from another agency or organization of the same community of interest.

Upon resignation, outgoing members will be given a letter acknowledging their contributions to the Council.

**4.6. Elected Municipal Representatives**

There will be elected municipal government representation from the municipalities within the watersheds.

Within the District of Muskoka, four of these representatives will be appointed by the District Chair to represent both the District Municipality of Muskoka and their Area Municipality. The remaining two municipal representatives will be appointed by their respective municipal councils.

The term of office will be four years, with possible reappointment for consecutive terms. Terms are to coincide with the municipal term of office.

**4.7. Muskoka Heritage Foundation Representatives**

The Board of Directors for the Muskoka Heritage Foundation will appoint four representatives to sit on the Council on their behalf. The term of office will be four years, with possible reappointment for consecutive terms.

**5. Executive Committee**

**5.1. Composition**

The Muskoka Watershed Council shall have an Executive Committee composed of a maximum of twelve (12) members: four representatives from The District Municipality of Muskoka, four representatives from the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, the Chair of the Council and the chair of key committees.

**5.2. Functions**

The Executive Committee will establish work programs and the strategic direction of Council. It will also oversee all financial matters of the Council.

The Executive Committee may form committees and task groups, comprised of Council members and individuals not on the Council, to perform certain functions or focus on specific issues. The Executive Committee will appoint members of Council to serve as chairs of committees.

The Executive Committee has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council when Council is not in session. The Executive Committee must then report these decisions back to Council.

**5.3. Schedule of Meetings**

The Executive Committee will meet a minimum of six (6) times a year. The Executive Committee may also meet at the call of the Chair with a minimum of seven (7) days notice.

**6. Committees**

Committees operate with a set membership of no specific number. Membership in these committees is open to all Council members and interested members of the public, with the chair being a member of the Council. The meetings shall be conducted under the basic rules for consensus decision-making laid out in Section 9.

The committees undertake the primary, substantive work of the Council. The Committee Chairperson (or designee) will make committee reports and recommendations regarding specific issues at regularly scheduled Council meetings.

Committee chairs, with the help of staff, will ensure that the efforts of their committees are consistent with the mission and goals of the Council.

## 7. Officers

### 7.1. Titles

The officers of this Council shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair and Past-Chair.

### 7.2. Election

The Council shall elect, from its existing members, the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. Each position requires a two (2) year term. An officer shall be eligible for re-election (i.e. Past-Chair can be elected again as Chair or Vice-Chair).

Elections shall occur at the first meeting of the new year (January meeting) as required.

### 7.3. Vacancy

A vacancy of the office of Chair or Vice-Chair shall be filled no later than the first regular meeting of the Council following the vacancy.

### 7.4. Chair

The Chair shall be the chief officer of the Council. The Chair retains the same rights as other Council Representatives to discuss and vote on questions before the Council.

The Chair shall serve as spokesperson, prepare Council agendas, call and manage Council meetings, enforce ground rules, chair the Executive Committee, and perform other tasks as assigned by the Council. The Chair shall have any other powers and duties that may be prescribed by the Council.

### 7.5. Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shall assume Chair duties when the Chair is unable to perform them. The Vice-Chair will assist with Chair duties as requested by the Chair. The Vice-Chair shall have any other powers and duties that may be prescribed by the Council.

## 8. Council Business

### 8.1. Business Arising from Committees

Recommendations may be brought before the Council or Executive Committee by committee chairs on behalf of their committees. Committee chairs may present, within a time frame mutually established with the Council Chair, how recommendations were arrived at.

Following discussion, the Council will, by common agreement, act on the recommendation in one of four ways:

1. Accept it as presented;
2. Modify it in a way that is acceptable to all;
3. Reject it; or
4. Send it back to the committee for further work.

If there is no agreement on which course of action to follow or if Council members need to further discuss the issue, action on the recommendation may be deferred to the next meeting.

### 8.2. Business Arising from the Floor

The agenda will be approved at the start of each meeting, at which time items may be added from the floor. The issue will be handled as follows:

1. The topic is introduced in the form of a motion;
2. The motion requires a second to indicate a broader interest in the topic; and
3. The Council Chair designates a time frame for discussion, which then proceeds as for any other Council business.

## **9. Consensus Decision-Making**

The Muskoka Watershed Council and its committees will strive to make its decisions and recommendations by consensus.

When the Council agrees that it has exhausted all efforts to reach consensus on a particular issue, it is at the discretion of the Chair to determine if a vote is necessary. If a vote is necessary, it will be a simple majority vote that follows the principles of democracy. The Council will strive not to resort to a simple majority vote until it has given serious effort and time addressing the concerns of those not consenting.

## **10. Amendments**

A Council member may propose amendments to the ground rules at any time. Amendments will become effective at the time proposed if all Council members are present and approve. Otherwise, amendments will become effective at the meeting following the proposal upon consensus of those present.

*Collaborative resource management requires a decision-making approach that involves all the interests that have a stake in the outcome. Stakeholders identify problems, share responsibility for developing proposals for dealing with the problem, and mutually agree on a solution strategy. The process encourages a collaborative effort that emphasizes consensus building.*