

Fishers & Farmers

PARTNERSHIP

STEERING COMMITTEE CHARTER

The Fishers & Farmers Partnership (Partnership) for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is a self-directed group of individuals representing organizations and agencies working to achieve the partnership's mission "... to support locally-led projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations." The Partnership has no authority beyond those of its individual members' organizations. Participation on the Partnership's Steering Committee is voluntary.

The Steering Committee is the decision-making body for the Partnership and has oversight responsibility for all activities. The activities of the Steering Committee directly support the Partnership Strategic Plan, which identifies the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes for the Partnership. This adaptive plan was developed to foster collaborative conservation projects between farming landowners and natural resource managers to use innovative strategies for best land use and water-ways practices in the basin that benefits farmers, fish, and aquatic habitat. A united effort of diverse professionals and volunteers are committed to the Partnership that is guided under the direction of the National Fish Habitat Board and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff.

STEERING COMMITTEE BY-LAWS

Membership and Organization

1. The Partnership Steering Committee membership shall be predominantly composed of non-federal organizations and not exceed 26 members. The make-up will include no more than one person from each entity in the following qualified categories:
 - a. State fish and wildlife and agricultural agencies up to a total of 7 seats
 - b. Non-governmental conservation organizations up to a total of 7 seats
 - c. Non-governmental agricultural organizations up to a total of 7 seats
 - d. Federal agencies, and tribal organizations up to a total of 5 seats

2. The Steering Committee seats will have a term limit of three years, upon which time a new

organization may request the seat. If no new partners/organizations request the seat, the sitting at-large organization may keep the seat if they so choose.

3. Partnership Steering Committee members should represent the highest appropriate level of their organization. Representation should work at an administrative level, so that Steering Committee members have some authority to commit financial resources, staff resources, or other types of organizational support.
4. Individuals with voting seats on the Steering Committee may name an alternate or replacement at any time. Current Steering Committee members may remain on the Steering Committee until replaced. A Steering Committee member's failure to meet expected roles and responsibilities may result in the member being replaced.
5. New partners wishing to participate on the Steering Committee may petition the Steering Committee at any time to do so, provided there is a vacant seat on the Steering Committee. Petitions will be acted upon by the Steering Committee at their next scheduled meeting.
6. The Partnership Steering Committee's officer positions will be filled from steering committee members and will consist of two Co-chairs; two Vice-chairs and one Secretary-Treasurer. The positions of Co-chair shall have a two-year term limit and shall be automatically filled by the current Vice-chairs upon completion of the term limit. Steering Committee members shall nominate and elect all officers to serve a two-year term. In the event that the Vice-chairs are unable or unwilling to take the position of Co-chair, the Steering Committee shall elect a new Co-chair. The initial Co-chairs shall be elected by the Steering Committee in a similar manner. The Secretary-Treasurer position shall have a two year term limit and be nominated from the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee Management

1. There shall be two in-person Steering Committee meetings and monthly or more frequent virtual meetings each year. Chairs may call additional Steering Committee meetings at their discretion.
2. Steering Committee business conducted digitally will carry the same authority as business conducted in person.
3. Each Steering Committee meeting will have an agenda developed jointly by the Chairs and partnership Coordinators.
4. The Steering Committee normally makes decisions by consensus, defined as "when no party objects to the proposed action or decision." However, in situations where consensus cannot be reached on questions of unusual urgency, importance, or contentiousness, voting on such

questions may be conducted upon the agreement of Chairs.

5. In the interest of expedited decision-making, Chairs can approve proposed actions by the Coordinators or Work Groups if they believe consensus by the Steering Committee is highly likely. If the Chairs question the likelihood of consensus, the proposed action needs approval of the Steering Committee membership via an email "consensus check".
6. For Steering Committee actions that require a decision or vote, a quorum consisting of at least one-half of the seated Committee members will be required. All designated voting Steering Committee members have the right to vote on motions with one vote per member, and Steering Committee members may designate alternates or replacements to vote in their absence. A simple majority of voting members shall carry a motion.
7. The Steering Committee business and responsibilities include, but not limited to:
 - A. Attend the two in-person steering committee meetings and a minimum of six virtual meetings at their own organization's expense. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend a business meeting, he or she should designate an individual from his or her agency/organization to represent him or her in their absence
 - B. Adopt and use an organizational structure for administration of Partnership
 - C. Guide the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of conservation strategies at regional and local scales
 - D. Promote cooperation and coordination among partners, stakeholders and local project partnerships that lead to restoration and/or enhanced protection of fish habitats
 - E. Prioritize projects for funding
 - F. Provide direction and input to the project partnerships and working groups
 - G. Participate on one or more of following work teams:
 - i. Projects & Planning
 - ii. Communication
 - iii. Science
 - H. Create additional work groups and ad-hoc task groups as needed supporting the initiatives of the Partnership with financial and/or staff resources
 - I. Participate in advocacy efforts/information campaigns to garner additional resources to meet Partnership objectives (within respective agency/organization guidelines)
 - J. Report to National Fish Habitat Board, project partners and stakeholders on the status and accomplishments of the Partnership Strategic Plan

Leadership Team

The Leadership Team, composed of Partnership Chairs and Coordinators, will coordinate activities and assist with implementation of the strategic plan and provide direction to the Steering Committee.

Partnership Coordinators

The Partnership Coordinators shall carry out the essential functions of the Partnership at the staff level. There may be up to three Partnership Coordinators. The Partnership Coordinators may be an employee of one of the partner organizations or may be an independent contractor. The Partnership Coordinators work at the pleasure of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee Chairs will seek services of the Partnership Coordinators who will develop annual work plans and agreements to be reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee.

Duties of the Partnership Coordinators include:

1. Development of an annual plan of work for Steering Committee review and approval.
2. Facilitating communication among members, including disseminating information and guidance; and coordinating overall implementation of actions and projects.
3. Providing primary staff support to the Steering Committee, advisory groups, and program activities and attending to administrative matters including preparing news releases and other correspondence.
4. Coordinating partnership activities between participating project partners and the National Fish Habitat Board to ensure partnership activities are aligned with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.
5. Coordinating all Partnership-associated meetings and providing administrative support, including preparing and distributing Partnership meeting summaries.
6. Coordination with Work Teams.
7. Pursuing funding and grant initiatives.
8. Reminding Partnership member representatives of pending action items, deadlines and generally keeping the members focused on Partnership objectives.
9. Monitoring progress in achieving Partnership goals and objectives and preparing the annual report on accomplishments to the Steering Committee.

Work Teams

1. The Steering Committee may organize standing or ad-hoc work groups at any time and shall select Work Team Leads. Work team members may be appointed by individual Steering Committee

members, or may be volunteers.

- 2. Work groups will be responsible for defining, refining, or accomplishing tasks that assist with meeting Partnership goals and objectives. The Lead of each Work Team, or their designee, will participate on the Leadership Team and attend Steering Committee meetings and participate in other scheduled meetings.

Dues and Budget

- 1. There will be no dues assessed to Partnership Steering Committee members.
- 2. There is no Steering Committee budget per se; resources available to conduct Partnership activities will collectively come from the participating partners and grants.
- 3. The National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region, and Beyond the Pond will act as fiscal agents for the Steering Committee. The Coordinators will keep track of the Fishers & Farmers Partnership funds.

Procedure to Change By-Laws

Any member of the Steering Committee may propose changes to the By-Laws. Proposed changes will be circulated to the Steering Committee for a period of 60 days for review and comment, after which a Steering Committee vote will be taken to accept or reject the changes. To change the by-laws, a 2/3-majority vote of all seated Steering Committee membership is required.



Figure 1. Fishers and Farmers Partnership organizational chart