

*Muskoka*  
WATERSHED COUNCIL



# Operating Procedures

October 2003

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An initiative of the District  
Municipality of Muskoka  
and the Muskoka  
Community

Prepared for the  
Muskoka Watershed Council

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Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) is an initiative of The District Municipality of Muskoka (DMM) and the Muskoka community. In general, DMM provides part-time staff resources and the Council is comprised of members of the community-at-large, together with elected appointees from each area municipality.

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

## **1. Purpose**

Muskoka Watershed Council is committed to the enhancement of the health and sustainability of the Muskoka River Watershed, the Black River and Severn River Watersheds, and the Georgian Bay shoreline and islands that lie within the District of Muskoka.

MWC was formed to share resources, help address watershed management issues, provide a framework for coordination and cooperation among key interests, and report on the health of the watersheds on a regular basis.

## **2. Mission and Goal**

### **2.1. Mission**

To Champion Watershed Health.

### **2.2. Goal**

To sustain and enhance the water and terrestrial ecosystems of the area's watersheds for the environmental, health, economic, spiritual and intrinsic values they provide.

### **2.3 Our Objectives**

#### Evaluate the Watersheds

Develop and implement science-based programs to research, assess, monitor and evaluate the health of Muskoka's watersheds.

#### *Strategies*

- Undertake and/or endorse research to better evaluate, understand, benchmark and monitor watershed health;
- Develop collaborative research relationships with governments, agencies, business, industry, NGOs and associations with shared interests in watershed health, including water quality and quantity, habitat protection, air quality, climate change and land use planning; and
- Identify watershed health degradation, impairment and poor program delivery, along with watershed health improvement, quality and good program delivery.

#### Speak for the Watersheds

Provide advice on sound air, land and water use planning and management practices and policies that sustain and improve the health of Muskoka's watersheds.

### *Strategies*

- Develop timely and informed policy positions on watershed health;
- Advise on environmentally sustainable urban, rural and waterfront development design standards and best practices that enhance the traditional small town, rural, waterfront and wilderness character of the watersheds;
- Advise on sustainable use of natural resources including soils, forests, aggregates, bedrock, water and air;
- Advise on behaviour change that supports healthy watersheds;
- Advise on plans and programs to rehabilitate degraded areas;
- Provide comments to municipal governments on matters related to watershed health policy and related programs and initiatives; and
- Host public lectures, workshops and conferences.

### Communicate and Educate

Develop and implement public information and education programs that promote understanding of the impact of human actions on the watersheds and encourage lifestyle choices that are compatible with healthy and functioning watersheds.

### *Strategies*

- Develop and publish the Watershed Report Card every 4 years;
- Enhance and promote access to the MWC resource library on watershed health and management;
- Publish science-based position papers and best practice information;
- Use state-of-the-art methods and techniques to communicate and educate, including publications, electronic media and face-to-face contact; and
- Regularly meet with the Councils of the watersheds' municipal governments.

### Promote and Demonstrate

Promote and facilitate demonstration activities and best practices that support an environmentally sustainable economy and a healthy community structure.

### *Strategies*

- Promote environmentally responsible behaviour by individuals, government, business and industry by demonstrating lifestyle and best management practices that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of watershed communities;
- Seek out external funding sources to support watershed partner collaboration in demonstrating best practices;
- Participate in and strongly support various national and international environmentally sustaining behavior awareness initiatives such as Earth Day and Earth Hour; and
- Develop and promote our own Muskoka-based, local environmentally sustaining behavior awareness initiatives.

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

Muskoka Watershed Council is a working collaborative of the District of Muskoka and the Muskoka community (the "Community"). Program and operating direction is provided by an Executive Committee made up of equal representation from both bodies. Staff support, office space and other operational resources are provided to the Muskoka Watershed Council by the District of Muskoka with additional funds and support as needed provided by the Community.

Within that framework, Muskoka Watershed Council is an advisory body to established decision-making bodies and communities of interest. As such, the Council provides scientifically researched educational material on matters concerning the protection, restoration, and enhancement of the quality of the area's watersheds.

### **3.1. Participant Organization Obligations**

The agencies, organizations, and interests represented on MWC are not obligated to adopt or carry out the recommendations of MWC, but are encouraged to give due consideration to the recommendations, which are based on scientifically-sound educational material, and then take actions they consider appropriate. The agencies, organizations, and interests are encouraged the report back to MWC on any actions taken in response to MWC recommendations through their representatives on MWC.

### **3.2. Advisory Requests**

MWC welcomes and will respond to requests for advice on actions affecting the watershed that are proposed by local, regional, provincial, and federal agencies, organizations or interests. MWC does not provide advice on site-specific proposals. MWC will approve positions on matters of interest and consistent with its objectives. Any comment made on behalf of MWC must be consistent with the approved position.

### **3.3. Representative Obligations**

MWC members will be involved in the work of MWC through the provision of advice on projects, active participation on committees, or volunteer time at activities and events. In addition, they will keep the public and their respective agencies, organizations, and interests informed about the work of MWC as well as bring concerns or issues back to the Council.

### **3.4. Relationship to General Public**

Muskoka Watershed Council provides advice and guidance to the general public on ways to protect and restore the resources of the area's watersheds. MWC informs and educates the public through the Watershed Report Card, conferences, lectures and scientifically researched papers on the health of the environment and the impact of various activities occurring throughout the watersheds.

## **4. Contributions of the Supporting Organizations**

The Community and DMM will support MWC as identified below:

The Community will provide to MWC:

- Financial administration and reporting (primarily though those individuals approved as signing authorities);
- Support for MWC initiatives to ensure that the organization may achieve its Mission and Goal, primarily through the above noted objectives and strategies;
- Program and operating funds , where possible, through fundraising activities and grant applications.

DMM will provide to MWC:

- Staff resources shared between MWC and DMM. Staff Resources will include:
  - Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development (DMM) (liaison to District Council)
  - Director of Environmental and Watershed Programs (staff resource to MWC)
  - Watershed Planning Technician (recording secretary)
- Meeting space on request.
- Office space, including light, heat, hydro, and phone, etc.; office space will be allocated as need arises.
- Office supplies including desks, computers and other required technical equipment, paper and other usual office equipment and supplies.

- Technical and administrative support of DMM as appropriate (Human Resources, Engineering and Public Works, legal, administration).
- Benefit of the DMM Water Strategy program, especially the Lake System Health program, and the relationship with Lake Associations.

Any change to this arrangement will be reviewed for approval by MWC's Executive Committee.

## **5. MWC Members**

### **5.1. Council Size**

The number of MWC members may vary between a minimum of twenty (20) and a maximum of forty (40).

### **5.2. Schedule of Meetings**

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

### **5.3. MWC Executive Committee**

MWC is comprised of membership from the Community, the District and the Area Municipalities.

MWC's Executive Committee will be comprised of four Community members appointed from MWC's Community representatives, including the MWC Chair, Vice-Chair, and a Past-Chair.

The Chair of MWC will Chair the Executive Committee.

DMM will appoint four District Council members to sit on the Executive Committee of MWC to represent and communicate the interests of DMM. The term of office will be four years, with possible reappointment for consecutive terms. The term of office will coincide with the District Council term of office.

The Chair of all MWC standing committees will be appointed to sit, as non-voting members, on the Executive Committee of MWC to represent and communicate the interests of their committee.

The function of the Executive Committee will be to:

- Approve MWC's annual work program and all strategic planning documents
- Approve MWC's position papers
- Approve MWC's annual project budget
- Approve any significant changes to MWC's annual work program
- Approve any significant changes to MWC's annual project budget

The Executive Committee will generally meet four (4) times a year. The Executive Committee may also meet at the call of the Chair with a minimum of seven (7) days notice.

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

### **5.4. Council Composition**

MWC should be comprised of a wide range of watershed stakeholders. As such, MWC will endeavour to include representatives from the broader Muskoka community as identified

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

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

Area Municipalities not represented by an appointed District Council member will be asked to appoint a representative to MWC.

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

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

#### **5.5. Procedure for Other Appointments to Council**

A member of MWC, after discussion with the Chair, may approach an individual who could be a representative of any community group not represented on MWC at any time, or an individual who could provide professional expertise appropriate to MWC, and extend an invitation to attend a MWC meeting.

An individual may approach a member of MWC and express an interest in joining or contributing to MWC. The MWC member may invite the individual to attend the next MWC meeting and inform the Chair of their presence.

In either case, if the potential member expresses an interest in joining MWC, the individual will be invited to attend meetings of the standing committees with the understanding that most of the work of MWC is done at the committee level, and will be encouraged to select their preferred committee.

The Chair, Vice-Chair or Past-Chair will review the Operating Procedures, Purpose and Mission, and history of MWC with the potential member.

Once the individual has established a commitment to MWC and a committee, the Executive Committee will be introduced to the new member and asked to approve their membership formally.

New members and retiring members will be confirmed at the MWC meeting in January of each year.

#### **5.6. Classification of Membership**

There are several classes of membership to address the diversity of members on MWC:

- Appointed member – Appointed by a municipality within, or partially within, the area of interest as described in section 1, above. The prime role of these members is to act as a liaison with their municipality or organization.

- Government or industry representative – Appointed, or otherwise representing, the interests of a government Ministry or agency, or local business or industry. The prime role of these members is to provide advice and technical assistance as appropriate.
- Lake Association or other community group - Appointed, or otherwise representing, the interests of a lake association or other community group. The prime role of these members is to act as a liaison with their lake association to encourage collaboration and development of joint programs and activities.
- Public member – A member of the public that has an interest in the programs and activities of MWC and is prepared to work for the goals and objectives of MWC.
- Alumni – A member that has been an active participant in MWC activities and has retired from active involvement but may be interested in helping from time to time or receiving newsletters and other information.

All members of MWC are encouraged to actively participate on committees and be involved in the other work of MWC.

## **6. Terms of Representation**

The term of office for MWC members will be 2 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.

## **7. Resignation**

The Executive Committee will act to replace members who resign or are unable to continue serving on MWC. The Executive Committee will strive to maintain continuity and the balance of interests, as approved by MWC, 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 MWC.

## **8. Committees**

The Executive Committee has a set membership as described in section 5.3. All other committees operate with a set membership of no specific number. Membership in these committees is open to all MWC members and interested members of the public, with the Chair being a member of MWC. The meetings shall be conducted under the basic rules for consensus decision-making as laid out in Section 11.

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

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



## 9. Officers

### 9.1. Titles

The officers of MWC shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Past-Chair. Those individuals holding these positions will also be approved as "Signing Authorities" for MWC.

### 9.2. Election

MWC 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 (e.g., the January meeting) as required.

### 9.3. Vacancy

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

### 9.4. Chair

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

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

### 9.5. 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 MWC.

### 9.6. Signing Authorities

A minimum of three (3) Designated Signing Authorities are required for financial administration and oversight, though only two (2) signatures will be required to endorse financial transactions. The Signing Authorities will be responsible for general financial oversight, financial planning and budgeting, and financial reporting. Signing Authorities are also able to clarify financial implications of proposals.

External fee-for-service assistance may be sought to assist the Signing Authorities with banking, book keeping and record keeping.

## 10. Council Business

### 10.1. Business Arising from Committees

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

Following discussion, MWC 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 MWC Executive members need to further discuss the issue, action on the recommendation may be deferred to the next meeting.

#### **10.2. 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;
2. The Chair asks for consensus to add the item to the agenda to indicate a broader interest in the topic; and
3. The Chair designates a time frame for discussion, which then proceeds as for any other MWC business.

#### **11. Consensus Decision-Making**

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

When MWC 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 the matter will proceed at that time by vote or if the matter will be deferred. If a vote is taken, it will be a simple majority vote, of those present at the meeting, and will follow the principles of democracy. MWC 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.

#### **12. Amendments**

A MWC member may propose amendments to the Operating Procedures at any time. Amendments will become effective at the meeting following the proposal upon consensus of those present.