

Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members, and Process for Making Recommendations to Ecology

Revised draft for AC member approval at May 13 meeting

Purpose and goals of the committee

To advise Ecology in drafting general permit requirements for domestic wastewater treatment plants discharging directly to Puget Sound that will lead towards reducing nutrient loads. Ecology has convened the committee to:

- Short-Term (2020) Goal: Deliver permit requirement recommendations that ensure progress towards nutrient reduction during the first permit term
- Mid-Term (2021-2025) Goal: Consider how progress toward reducing other (i.e., “watershed”) sources of nutrients will be tracked and considered in reissuance for the second general permit term (2026-2031)
- Long-Term (2026-on) Goal: Set dischargers and Ecology on a path towards success in eventual achievement of nutrient reduction targets and to meet numeric water quality criteria

Roles and responsibilities of AC members and designated alternates

AC members include eight representatives of treatment plants of various sizes, types, and geographic locations; two environmental groups; two tribes; two state agencies; and one federal agency. Ecology’s facilitator and Nutrient Forum coordinator are also considered AC members, though they have different roles in making recommendations as discussed below. Representatives of other interest groups will be invited to participate in AC meetings as needed/appropriate to provide additional perspectives.

Honesty, mutual respect, civility, and common courtesy should underscore all discussions. Ecology needs to understand all of the differing opinions and goals of the AC members. AC members are expected to listen, ask questions, learn from each other, and create a problem-solving atmosphere.

All members are expected to come prepared to fully and constructively participate in AC discussions. Following meetings, each member will review the meeting summary and share any concerns or suggested edits with all AC members.

Each member represents a broader set of constituents in an interest group. AC members and alternates are expected to gather information from their constituents and represent their collective interests in the course of AC discussions. To accomplish this, the facilitator recommends convening “caucus discussions” between AC meetings to educate constituencies about issues discussed and progress being made by the committee, explain the context in and process by which the decisions are being made, and to gauge their approval of emerging areas of agreement. It is up to each AC member to decide how best to seek constituent input: any combination of in person meetings, phone calls, webinars, or email exchanges is appropriate. AC members are expected to seek assistance from the facilitator as needed.

All members are expected to inform the committee chair and facilitator of any concerns or suggestions about meeting agendas and management of discussions, and support changes in our approach that allow the group to proceed in accomplishing its goals and purpose.

Each member may designate a single alternate to participate in the event of their absence. Alternates should attend as many meetings as possible so that they, too, can fully and constructively participate.

Roles and responsibilities of the chair

The chair will lead the meeting discussions and serve as spokesperson for the entire group. The chair will report on AC recommendations to the Forum and sign a letter from AC members submitting final recommendations to Ecology.

In advance of each meeting, the chair will work with Ecology's permit writer and facilitator to ensure that the planned discussion topics are appropriately sequenced and the proposed agenda allows adequate time for robust discussion of all topics the committee needs to address. The chair will work with the facilitator to finalize edits to draft AC meeting summaries and draft and final recommendations that reflect the input of AC members and themes from the public input opportunities at AC meetings. The chair will also inform Ecology's facilitator of any concerns about committee meeting agendas or management and documentation of discussions, and suggest changes in our approach that will support the group to in accomplishing its goals and purpose.

Roles and responsibilities of Ecology staff

Three Ecology staff will participate in each AC meeting:

- Ecology's permit writer is responsible for organizing and presenting the content of technical discussions and making sure AC members understand Ecology's underlying legal and policy requirements and limitations for developing a PSNGP.
- Ecology's facilitator is responsible for ensuring that: the discussions are appropriately sequenced and managed; the proposed agenda allows adequate time for deep, robust discussion of each topic the committee need to address; all AC members contribute constructively to the discussions; and a creative problem-solving environment is maintained. The facilitator will also support interest group discussions as requested, and will keep stormwater managers informed about the AC's process and decisions.
- Ecology's Nutrient Forum coordinator is responsible for planning meeting logistics, taking notes during committee discussions, posting materials on the PSNGP webpage, communicating with the public via the Nutrients General Permit listserv, and providing high-level updates via the Nutrient Forum listserv.

All three Ecology staff will work together to provide a draft summary of each meeting to AC members within a week of the meeting. Ecology staff will use meeting notes and summaries to develop draft documents to communicate emerging agreements and disagreements and articulate AC member concerns with documentation. The facilitator and chair will work together to resolve AC member input on AC documents to reach committee approval between and at meetings as described below.

Process for making and delivering recommendations to Ecology

The sequence of developing AC recommendations for a given topic should look like this: AC members have robust discussions sharing their own perspectives at the first discussion and take note of others' perspectives. AC members share information from the first discussion with their constituents, gather their feedback, and bring that information to the next discussion. Emerging agreements are documented in meeting summaries, which highlight consensus agreements, areas of emerging agreement, and disagreements and concerns. A third (or fourth) discussion may be needed for difficult/challenging topics. This approach allows for gathering additional information and ideas between the first discussion and a final group decision on each topic.

Definition of agreement: AC members will work toward consensus in developing AC recommendations. However, because reaching consensus on all recommendations may be challenging, the AC may, by consensus agreement, submit some recommendations to Ecology as a "majority agreement" with others' concerns noted. The AC may alternatively decline to submit a recommendation. Because this is a complicated process, the final recommendation package is expected to include an appropriately worded articulation of the level of agreement from each various interest group around each recommendation.

Definition of decision: AC members agree to forward a recommendation to Ecology along with the documentation about concerns related to the decision.

All AC members must agree that the final recommendation package delivered to Ecology represents their perspective. Even if members disagree with a final recommendation, they should see their concern clearly and accurately articulated in the record. Ecology will consider the entire package of recommendations and dissenting opinions when developing the permit language.