

DNR BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

TRAINING MANUAL

For New Members





WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Welcome Letter

Thank you for your decision to serve Washington State and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)!

Welcome to your new role as a member of one of our agency's boards or commissions. You join dozens of resident volunteers whose time, lived experience, and talents help made DNR and our state a great place to live.

This Board and Commissions Member Handbook is an excellent starting point to understand the general policies and goals guiding boards and commissions, as well as what is expected of you in your role as a board or commission member. Please read this document carefully.

This handbook applies to all DNR board and commission members. In addition, you may receive further information from your board or commission liaison, including adopted ordinances, policies, and by-laws specific to your board or commission.

You have challenging and meaningful work ahead and will help shape policy in our growing and vibrant state for years to come. Thank you for accepting your nomination and appointment to serve. We look forward to your board or commission's feedback, advice, and recommendations.

Sincerely,

*Stefan Petrovic
Boards and Commissions Manager
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Cell: 360 867-8261
Stefan.petrovic@dnr.wa.gov*

I've been appointed to a DNR board! What happens next?





WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Boards and Commissions - Background

The Commissioner of Public Lands is responsible for appointing Washingtonians to several dozen boards, commissions, councils, and working groups. These entities are a vital part of state government - they perform a variety of different functions and are created by state laws, executive orders, internal agency initiatives, as well as federal laws and regulations. Each board is unique in its mission, charge, and role. Some boards shape policy for DNR's various divisions (i.e. the Board of Natural Resources) while others serve in a primarily advisory capacity (i.e. the Wildland Fire Advisory Council) to the Commissioner. In other instances, boards may provide reports and recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor's Office.

These bodies consist of between 5-20 members and may be comprised of a combination of elected officials, agency employees, tribal government representatives, policy experts, and members of the public. Appointees typically serve out defined terms - the length of which are established by statutory or charter authority. Most boards and commissions are created by the state legislature or internal DNR initiative and serve as advisory bodies to the agency. They provide information, analysis, and recommendations to inform DNR's and the Commissioner's decisions on matters pertaining to the board or commission's specialized knowledge. Most agency boards do not have the authority to make final decisions, though their recommendations are heavily weighted and are considered essential in DNR's determination.

DNR is committed to engaging meaningfully and transparently with communities from every corner of the state. This work is conducted and facilitated through DNR's [Office of Equity and Environmental Justice](#). That office works to find highly qualified individuals for appointment and supports the agency's boards and commissions. View online: [DNR Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan for Boards and Commissions](#)

Public policy discussions and decision-making spaces should center and reflect the lives and expertise of Washingtonians - we hope that you will bring your voice, guide our work, and help move your community and our state forward.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please reach out to your board liaison and/or DNR's Boards and Commissions Manager, [Stefan Petrovic](#).



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Membership Roles:

Boards and commissions may be comprised of a combination of elected officials, agency employees, tribal government representatives, policy experts, and members of the public. Appointees typically serve out defined terms - the length of which are established by statutory or charter authority.

What are the roles, responsibilities & duties associated with Board Membership?



Officers:

Boards and commissions have bylaws or established rules and procedures to guide operations and leadership roles. According to Robert's Rules of Order, bylaws define the primary characteristics of an organization, prescribe how it should function, and include rules that are so important that they may not be changed without prior notice to members and formal vote an agreement by a majority of members. As part of this guidance, officers will be elected (or selected by the Commissioner of Public Lands) to preside over the regular and special meetings of your board or commission. Some boards may have designated members who are professionals in specific fields, while others may choose to vote members into executive roles based on their interest. Although the structure of board and commission roles may vary, examples of those roles are listed below.

BOARD CHAIR

Provides leadership to board and organization, ensures meeting procedures are done in a timely and orderly manner, adheres to by-laws and policies, and evaluates board decision making

VICE CHAIR

Shares the same responsibilities as the board Chair, and acts as sitting Chair in the Chair's absence

SECRETARY

Responsible for records and correspondence of the board, including but not limited to board meetings, member contacts, schedules, and agenda keeping

EX OFFICIO MEMBER

"By the right office" – This member holds the role as a result of their status or another position they hold [i.e. the Director of Equity and Environmental Justice]. This member may take on a variety of different roles.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Additional Staff Functions:

Some boards have employees dedicated to performing daily administrative, research, and management tasks. These staff are typically trained subject matter experts in the business processes and policies which in place to professionally guide and facilitate the duties and responsibilities of the board. Staff may prepare and post agendas, write minutes of regular business meetings, create legislative files, provide administrative support for the meetings and other activities of the boards, supply information on procedures and protocol, process requests for financial reimbursement or compensation, and maintain records.

However, there are several boards that work within our state agency or have access to advice from the agency, with no exclusively dedicated staff. In such cases, DNR usually provides support services. Board members must keep in mind that staff have other job responsibilities outside of their board duties.

The primary function of the board staff is to carry out the rules, policies, and programs developed by the board. In addition, staff members notify board members of pertinent issues and legislative activity. They may also arrange meetings, prepare meeting materials, compile background information and conduct research.

Board staff members also serve as liaisons to other boards and agencies, DNR's Executive team, the Legislature, and the public. Staff members are immensely valuable resources to boards. A good staff member can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of a board. Board members should not hesitate to ask staff for reasonable help or accommodations in carrying out their responsibilities.

Board Transactions and General Policies

Terms of Office and Term Limits: Each appointment to a DNR board, commission, or working group is subject to a term of office and term limit for serving on a specified body (unless you serve "at the pleasure" of the Commissioner). Each body has varying terms of office (generally between two to four years) and term limits based on the needs of the specific body and the agency. A newly appointed board member may find information on their respective term limits in the adopted charter and bylaws for their particular board. Reach out to your board chair or board liaison to obtain further information regarding your charter and bylaws. This information should be provided freely and readily.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Time Commitment: Some boards require more time than others. Most DNR boards meet on a quarterly basis (for two to four hours per day), although some may convene on a monthly basis. In addition, board members may be invited to participate in sub-committee meetings, for which additional time commitments may vary. Board member time commitments include preparation for the meeting, meeting attendance, ethics training as determined by law, and possible attendance at additional public meetings.

Conducting Meetings and Quorum: DNR boards and commissions may follow different general rules, standards, and guidelines for conducting meetings. However, as a general matter, meetings should be conducted in a fair and equitable manner. Most meetings will follow Robert's Rules. Meetings are typically called to order by the Chairperson, or Vice Chairperson (or equivalent position) in the absence of the Chairperson. If neither is in attendance, the board shall confer with the Board liaison to determine next steps. Typically, the board liaison or Chairperson will take roll to determine the presence of quorum. Quorum is the number of members who must be present to conduct official business. If a quorum is not present, any transaction or meeting agenda discussed is null and void. The quorum protects against unrepresentative actions by a small number of individuals. The bylaws should specify the number of individuals who constitute a quorum and whether a majority of this quorum may take action. Thereafter, the Chairperson is expected to announce the agenda items for discussion or action.

At meetings where a quorum is not present, the only actions that may be legally taken are to fix a time for adjournment, adjourn, recess, or take measures to obtain a quorum (such as contacting absent members).

Efforts will be made to provide phone or video conferencing for meetings to comply with the Washington Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30).

Proxy Voting and/or Representation: DNR does not permit board member participation or voting by [proxy](#) (permitting another individual to represent you or vote on your behalf in your absence). A board member may vote in person or virtually, but not by proxy. DNR strongly encourages members to attend and actively participate in board meetings. Repeated absences and a general disrespect for board-related time commitments may warrant removal from the board.

Concurrent Service: DNR does not prohibit service concurrent service on multiple DNR boards, commissions, or workgroups. You are free to apply to serve on as many



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

boards as you so desire. Be cognizant of overloading yourself with multiple board-related time commitments.

Existing board opportunities and vacancies are listed [here](#).



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

This manual applies to board members on boards, commissions, or workgroups listed below. Groups with informal or stakeholder structures (i.e. the Surface Mine Advisory Committee) are not subject to the guidance set forth in this manual. However, these entities are encouraged to utilize this resource.

Who uses this manual & how do I contact the right board?

- ❖ Forest Health Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Jennifer.watkins@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee
 - Contact: sfloac@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Washington Community Forestry Council
 - Contact: urban_forestry@dnr.wa.gov or Jennifer.watkins@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Advisory Committee on Real Estate Strategy
 - Contact: Kari.Fagerness@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Blanchard Forest Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Christopher.Hankey@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Committee on Geographic Names
 - Contact: bogn@dnr.wa.gov or caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Natural Heritage Advisory Committee
 - Contact: nhac@dnr.wa.gov or Jayana.marshall@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Survey Advisory Board
 - Contact: plso@dnr.wa.gov or Pat.beehler@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Sustainable Harvest Technical Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Kate.McBurney@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Teanaway@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Carbon and Forest Management Work Group
 - Contact: duane.emmons@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Bryan.Perrenod@dnr.wa.gov or Loren.torgerson@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Wildland Fire Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Bryan.Perrenod@dnr.wa.gov or Allen.lebovitz@dnr.wa.gov
- ❖ Environmental Justice Advisory Committee
 - Contact: Carlos.lugo@dnr.wa.gov



Contact information may be subject to change. If you cannot reach a listed contact, please reach out to boardsandcommissions@dnr.wa.gov for assistance.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Boards Best Practices

- ❖ Be courteous during meetings and treat board members, the public, and DNR staff with respect and regard. Disagreements are inevitable, rather than focusing on personal differences, appointees should strive to remain civil, and focus on resolution of the issues at hand.
- ❖ Arrive on time and let your staff liaison and chair know if you will be absent. Unexpected absences may cause a meeting to be cancelled due to lack of quorum. If quorum is not met, the board will be unable to conduct regular business. As courtesy to your fellow board members and the public, provide advanced notice of absences. Regular attendance is essential so that decisions will represent the opinions of the board as whole. In addition, regular attendance enables board members to keep abreast of board concerns and helps ensure that issues are examined from a variety of perspectives.
- ❖ Come prepared. Review minutes, agendas, and other information ahead of time for timely and informed deliberation.
- ❖ Represent yourself, your community, and the board appropriately. As a member, people may ask you to speak on behalf of the agency or your particular board. Do not speak for your board or commission unless appropriately authorized to do so. When in doubt, make clear you are speaking in a personal capacity.
- ❖ Observe good democratic practices. Assist the chair in running an efficient meeting, by being concise in making your points and not interrupting others.
- ❖ Be familiar with the operating statute, bylaws, and other critical documents of your particular board. These documents provide information on the mission and scope of your group as well as how it should operate. If you are unfamiliar with these documents, ask your board liaison or reach out to DNR's Board and Commissions Manager. If you do not hear back from either your liaison or the B&C Manager, reach out to boardsandcommissions@dnr.wa.gov.
- ❖ Understand the role of your board(s) and/or commission and constraints on DNR.
- ❖ Remember: You are just one member. The authority of the board and/or commission is derived from the entire group, not just one member; the

How should I approach serving on a board?

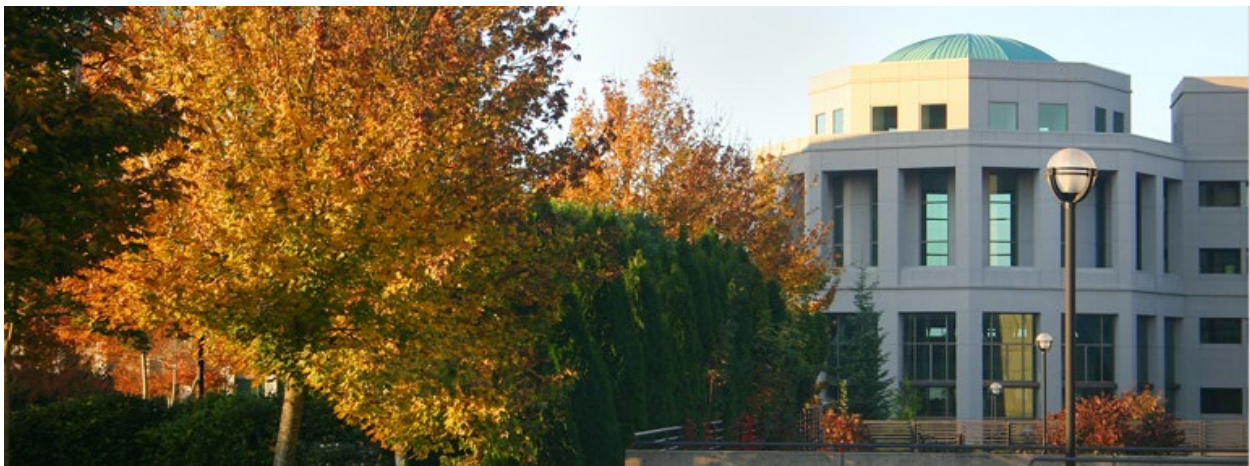




WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

decisions made must be of a consensus or majority nature. There may be times when your individual view is not in line with the board. In these cases, remember to work constructively with your fellow board members. You have an immense opportunity to influence public policy through your recommendations and participation - make sure you are being respectful and understanding of others with differing views.

- ❖ **Resignations:** If you are unable to complete your term, it is important to inform your DNR board liaison and the Boards and Commissions Manager. A letter of resignation should be sent to the Boards and Commissions Manager indicating the date your resignation is effective and whether you are able to serve until a replacement is named.



Legal Compliance and Public Engagement

Legal and Public Engagement Guidelines:

In developing rules, board members should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- The board must have the statutory authority to adopt the rules, and may adopt only those rules supported by statute and/or approval by the Commissioner of Public Lands.
- The board may not adopt a rule which conflicts with state law or the state Constitution.
- Rules must reflect a consensus or majority of members of the board.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

If the board holds a public meeting where members of the public are invited to attend, it must comply with DNR's policy on Public Meetings and Community Involvement. This includes:

- Ensuring that notices regarding the public meeting are broadly disseminated to the local community, including overburdened communities.
- Providing a translated agenda when demographic data indicates that 5% or more of the local community speaks a common language other than English and meeting attendees are not known English-speakers.
- Hosting in-person meetings in an ADA-accessible facility
- Reserving a 20-minute period for public comment

[Open Public Meetings Act](#)

The Open Public Meetings Act applies to several DNR boards and commissions. To determine whether the Act applies to your board, consult with your board liaison. Regardless of whether the Act applies, all boards should comply with open meeting requirements to the extent they can do so.

Notification of Meetings: The Open Public Meetings Act requires that all meetings of the governing body of a public agency, as well as some other meetings affecting the public, be open to the public. In addition, the public must be notified of such meetings in a timely manner.

Public Disclosure: The minutes of regular meetings must be recorded and made available for public inspection.

Accessibility Requirements: To afford members of the public who have disabilities an equal opportunity to participate, meetings subject to the Open Public Meetings Act are to be held in facilities with appropriate accommodations. Public notices about such meetings must include a statement that sign language interpreters, materials in Braille, and other materials will be provided with advanced notice. Refer to RCW 42.30.010 and 42.30.900 for more information.

Public Records

The Washington Public Records Act (PRA) requires agencies to make public records available to members of the public with limited, narrow exemptions.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF

NATURAL RESOURCES

What is a public record? The PRA defines a “public record” to include any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form of characteristic.

Public records and you!

Most public boards and commissions receive and create public records while conducting regular business. You also produce public records when you function in your official capacity as a board member. For instance, if you communicate with another individual in your official capacity or exchange information about matters under your board’s purview, you may create a public record even if you use your personal email. Many people misunderstand the law and assume communications on personal email accounts or via text messages are not subject to public records laws; this is untrue.

All board or commission related communications are subject to public disclosure. Every single email that you receive and send back, in your official capacity (i.e. having to do with board duties, responsibilities, or meetings), may be subject to public disclosure. If you are conducting any board business, you should assume it may be subject to public disclosure.

Public Records Tips:

- 1) Keep all your board-related correspondence in a labeled folder in your Gmail or on your desktop.
- 2) Generally, avoid “Reply all” in your correspondence.

Responding to Media Inquiries

If you are contacted by a member of the media in your official capacity as a DNR board or commissions member, you should first communicate with your board Chair and board liaison. These folks are here to help you and help the media get answers to their questions. Please do not communicate with reporters before checking with your board Chair and board liaison. If you are contacted by reporters, let them know that you may not be the best person to represent the board on a particular issue and they should check with DNR’s Communications team for further information.

If you are the Chair of a DNR board and are contacted by a member of the media, you may respond to inquiries only following consultation with DNR’s



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF

NATURAL RESOURCES

Communications team. Ask your board liaison about how to get in contact with Communications or reach out to dnrnews@dnr.wa.gov.

Recruiting Guidance

DNR's Boards and Commissions Manager is primarily responsible for board, commission, and workgroup recruitment. DNR Executive Management and program staff also assist in this effort. If the agency is recruiting for other seats on your board (or other boards entirely), you are free to provide recommendations and/or potential candidates.

However, if you are directly reaching out to potential candidates you may not promise or guarantee appointment. The vast majority of final appointment decisions are made by the Commissioner of Public Lands. As a board member, you may not process seat appointments or take steps to unilaterally "appoint" new members.

If you would like to recommend a potential candidate, you should:

- Confer with your board liaison to see if the potential candidate matches statutory requirements set forth (For example, if the board is recruiting a "public member," almost anyone may qualify for this position and apply. If the board is recruiting for a narrower, statutorily prescribed position (i.e. a "small forest landowner") the candidate pool is smaller and may require more comprehensive search on the part of the agency and/or Board leadership).
- Direct the potential candidate to apply at the [DNR Boards and Commissions site](#).

Ethics and the Appearance of Fairness

As a board member, you are expected to uphold a high ethical standard. DNR does not require new board members to take ethics training upon appointment. However, board members are expected to read and sign an Ethics Attestation Form. You may not be seated or granted voting rights until DNR is in receipt of this attestation form. Your Board liaison should provide you with this form upon notification of appointment.

It is extremely important that board members avoid conflicts of interest or even the appearance of such conflicts. Using a public position for private gain is improper and illegal. Similarly, actions benefiting close relatives are prohibited. There are penalties for violations of state ethics statutes.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The following are examples of conflicts of interest:

- Directing state contracts to a business in which you have a financial interest
- Using confidential information for private investments
- Obtaining personal favors from employees
- Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for certain regulatory rulings
- Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for making certain purchases
- Accepting favors for disclosure of confidential information
- Engaging in outside employment which assists non-governmental entities in their quests for state business

Most conflict-of-interest issues can be resolved easily and without resort to more drastic measures such as removal from position or resignation. The resolution of conflicts depends on *disclosure* and *removing yourself from the conflict*.

Board members may avoid conflict of interest issues by being aware of and adhering to statutory restrictions, using good judgment, and being fair and equitable in decision making. For more information, visit the [Washington State Executive Ethics Board](#).

Commitment to Equity and Environmental Justice

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to building an equitable, inclusive, and thriving Washington. As DNR intentionally builds out and promotes equitable and inclusive practices internally and externally, the agency has committed itself to four overarching strategies to embed equity and environmental justice into boards and commissions operations:

Strategy 1: Eliminate barriers to equitable and meaningful public engagement with and on DNR boards and commissions.

- DNR has modernized its application and appointment process through the implementation of an [online candidate form](#) for members of the public who wish to be considered for appointment.

Strategy 2: Ensure that DNR boards and commissions reflect the populations we serve.

- DNR is committed to collecting, tracking, and report annually on demographic survey data concerning the composition of existing DNR boards and



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

commissions, total number of applicants and related demographics of all candidates applying for positions.

Strategy 3: Embed environmental justice and equity practices into boards governance documents and operations.

- DNR has increased recruitment of “public member” seats to create space for additional input from members of the public historically excluded from state government.

Strategy 4: Expand candidate pathways for service on DNR boards and commission.

- DNR has sought to cultivate and nurture authentic relationships with community groups, social service and faith-based organizations, local and ethnic media outlets, disability rights groups, advocacy coalitions, tribes and individuals representing overburdened communities.

You may find DNR’s Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan for boards [here](#).

Equity, Environmental Justice, and You

In making recommendations in your capacity as a board member, consider ways in which you can advance equity and environmental justice. Communicating your ideas effectively and respectfully is crucial here.

If you are running a meeting, or communicating with members of the public, be concise, clear, and utilize [plain language](#). Plain language makes it easier for the public to read, understand, and effectively use government communications. Avoid jargon and unnecessarily confusing messaging. Many aspects of the DNR’s programs and operations have a direct impact on the public, and it is vital that we communicate clearly and reliably.

Remember to know who your audience is - don’t guess or assume. Helpful plain language guidelines can be found [here](#).

Tips for Plain Language Communication:

1. Write or speak for your reader, not yourself. Use pronouns when you can.
2. State your major point(s) first before going into details.
3. Stick to your topic. Limit each paragraph to one idea and keep it short.
4. Write or speak in an active voice.
5. Use short and clear sentences.



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF **NATURAL RESOURCES**

6. Use everyday words. If you must use technical terms, explain them on first reference.
7. Omit unneeded words.
8. Use headings, list, and tables to make reading easier.
9. Proofread your writing.

Accommodations

Reasonable Accommodation of Persons with Disabilities

In addition to the Open Public Meetings Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets criteria for accessibility and accommodation. Under the ADA, persons with disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity for effective participation in the activities of boards and commissions, whether as appointed members or as members of the public.

Accessible Locations and Communications: Meetings and other in-person, board-sponsored activities should be held in wheelchair-accessible locations. Qualified sign language interpreters, materials in accessible formats such as Braille, large print and tape, and other forms of auxiliary aids for effective communications should be provided upon request.

General Accommodations Support: If you need an accommodation or support, please send email to wcdsupport@dnr.wa.gov. A ticket will be started to allow our Workplace Culture and Development (WCD) team to address your request.

Compensation

Subject to available funding agencies may provide a stipend to individuals who are low income or have lived experience to support their participation in working groups when the agency determines such participation is desirable to implement principles of equity. DNR is in the process of creating a policy to compensate members of Class One workgroups, boards, commissions, councils, and committees, as defined by RCW 43.03.220. This policy shall provide limited compensation to community members with lower financial means to volunteer their time and expertise.