

Shoreline Citizens Advisory Committee

The Shoreline Management Act requires that local governments actively encourage participation by the public and federal, state and local agencies in updating SMPs(RCW 90.58.130).

Local governments may want to form a citizen advisory committee (CAC) to provide a forum to discuss shoreline management issues, set goals, review technical work and propose regulations and to promote communication with the general public concerning shoreline management issues.

Following are some tips and suggestions for selecting a committee, establishing procedures, starting the process, building a working consensus and involving the public.

Selecting a Committee

- Committee members should represent a cross section of interest groups and public values. However, all committee members should have experience in working toward consensus. “Radicals” or “extremists” who cannot work in a group setting should be passed over for individuals with similar values who can develop constructive solutions to satisfy opposing interests.
- Search for members who are committed to participating on the committee, not just those who are available.
- The committee should be limited to no more than about a dozen members unless there is an overriding circumstance. Larger groups can be unwieldy and prevent efficient work.
- The committee chair should remain neutral and not represent a particular group or interest. When there is a conflict it should be the chair’s primary task to direct the process and arrive at consensus.

Establishing Committee Rules and Procedures

- It is very important to clearly describe the committee’s authority, responsibilities and work procedures. Generally, the committee will be advisory to the planning commission, governmental council or other decision making body. Clarify what the committee’s tasks will be. (i.e. Will the committee actually help prepare the provisions or will they review and approve or reject staff’s language? Will they be given alternate provisions to choose between?) The committee’s authority and responsibilities should be prepared in writing and should be indicated in the initial letter of invitation to prospective members.
- Set a standard meeting time and place for committee meetings. That way all members can more easily adjust their schedules. Begin and end the meetings on time.
- Discuss a long-term schedule, with the understanding that the process may take much longer. Since turnover can be expected, discuss how replacements will be selected.
- Determine a decision making process. Is consensus required? What constitutes a consensus?
- Keep at least informal minutes of the meetings.
- Determine what will happen to the committee after the SMP is adopted. Unless there are specific tasks for the committee after adoption, it is recommended that the committee be

disbanded. On the other hand, there have been instances where CACs have evolved into active, ongoing committees. These assist in substantial development permit review, shoreline program implementation and public access improvement programs.

- Determine whether or not other citizens may take part in committee meetings. Although allowing all citizens to observe meetings is important, opening the discussion to the general public can be very distracting and prevent progress. It is recommended that outside participation during the meeting be limited, by allowing input in writing or by invitation or appointment only, or by setting a specific time in the meeting for public comment.

Starting the Process

- The first meeting of the CAC should be used to introduce committee and staff members, outline the purpose, process and responsibilities of the committee and review issues needing attention.
- Smaller jurisdictions may want to initiate the local planning process with a tour of the shoreline.
- Consider inviting “guest experts” such as port officials, Department of Fish and Wildlife staff, Ecology staff dealing with special issues, maritime economists, etc. address the committee to provide background information.

Decision Making

Each difficult issue must be tackled in a way that looks for a solution satisfactory to all interests. Ideally a committee should act as a team that considers all objectives. The negotiating technique described by Roger Fisher and William Ury in *Getting to Yes*, provides a good model for solving potentially difficult conflicts:

1. **Separate people from the problem.** Emotions often get in the way of solving conflicts. Fisher and Ury suggest several methods for dealing with emotions, including acknowledging both sides’ perceptions and prejudices, not responding to emotional outbursts and using effective communication methods. The key is to build personal working relationships so all participants can work together to solve a problem, rather than create a conflict in which each side tries to win.
2. **Focus on interests rather than positions.** (Describe what each party wants, not what they demand.) A position is a statement or demand. An interest is a desire, a motivation or a concern. “I don’t want any public access in the industrial waterfront” is a position. “I want to make sure that the safe, efficient operation of industrial activities is not diminished by public access improvements” is an interest. Focusing on interests rather than positions allows both sides to explore areas of compatible interests and to attack the problem rather than each others objectives.
3. **Explore options for mutual gain.** Searching for creative solutions is preferable to simply trying to compromise. Staff members can assist in this effort by proposing a range of solutions that optimize all interests. For example, in the case of a conflict between industrial operators and public access advocates, there are several ways to promote both objectives, including: 1) develop plans for public access features that do not

impede industrial activities, 2) include an SMP provision that describes how to decide when public access is inappropriate or 3) describe explicitly where public access is not required, allowing off-site public access mitigation according to a specified plan.

4. **Use objective criteria to make a decision.** Resolving the issue ultimately means arriving at a decision that may not please everyone. Before taking a potentially divisive vote, the committee should evaluate all options with respect to objective criteria. In this case, the criteria should be the Goals and Objectives set out in the Plan.

Nurturing a Committee

Committee members provide an invaluable and difficult service, and recognition of their work is important. Each committee member deserves his or her viewpoint to be considered by the other members and the staff. The greatest reward is knowing that they are making an important contribution. Keeping the committee on track in meeting objectives, verifying role(s) and reviewing performance occasionally will enhance this feeling.

Public Outreach Program

Public participation during the entire planning process is essential. The Citizen Advisory Committee is a great way to ensure key stakeholders are getting involved. Some typical approaches to reaching out to the broader population include:

- Publicizing the master program update through a **web site** where progress reports and draft products are posted throughout the development process.
- Holding an **open house** at various stages of the SMP development process. Open houses can be structured events with presentations and small group exercises that promote the exchange of viewpoints and forces participants to recognize the wide range of issues and trade-offs involved with shoreline management; or they can be informal “drop-in” meetings at which individuals are invited to attend any time during an advertised 2 to 4 hour period. Staff and/or Advisory Committee members should be available to explain the upcoming process and discuss the project informally. Display presentation graphics explaining key concepts, jurisdictional boundaries, etc. Use an evaluation form to gather structured feedback from participants.
- Maintain a **list of interested parties** that participated in the process so that they can be kept informed through the local process and by Ecology during the state review process.