



Citizen Advisory Committee Formation

The three most important things for successful Citizen Advisory Committees are:

1. Have a definite committee role
2. Have a definite committee role
3. Have a definite committee role

Committees need to know what role they play and what value they are adding to the watershed management process. They need to know their relationship to the board and how they relate to the wider public. In short, what is their piece of the puzzle?

The fact that statute requires Citizen Advisory Committees is not a good reason for committee formation. Good reasons for Watershed Districts and JPA WMOs to form a Citizen Advisory Committee are to fulfill some or all of these roles:

- Identification of water resource issues;
- Assisting board in considering issues;
- Assisting in establishing program goals;
- Serving as a “sounding board” for board;
- Communicating between the watershed organization and community;
- Carrying out watershed information and education activities;
- Collecting information and data;
- Generating new ideas and approaches;

The best time to form a Citizen Advisory Committee is three months before you need them.

Citizen Advisory Committees, like other working groups, take time to “gel”. Members need to become familiar with the Watershed District and JPA WMO, their role in the organization, and with each other. It usually takes a month or more to form a Citizen Advisory Committee and multiple meetings for the members to learn the necessary background information to make informed decisions.

University of MN Extension Website Resource and Publication:
“Committees That Work: Common Traps - Creative Solutions”
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Recommended steps to Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) formation:

√	What	Who	Time	Deadline
Deciding on CAC fundamentals		<i>Board</i>	<i>1 – 2 months</i>	
	Decide on CAC role (develop a role and relationship document)			
	Decide on CAC size (8 – 12 is a good working size)			
	Decide on CAC composition (who should be represented?)			
	Decide on selection method (open invitation, or by invitation?)			
	Decide on budget for CAC (will support staff be provided? food?)			
	Decide who will facilitate the group for the short and long term			
	Decide when to start forming CAC			
CAC creation process		<i>Board</i>	<i>1 - 2 months</i>	
	Extend invitations to join			
	Select members and publicize			
	Hold first CAC meeting jointly with Board			
CAC orientation and gelling		<i>Various</i>	<i>2 months</i>	
	Orientation to the Watershed District/WMO and planning process	<i>Board or Staff</i>		
	Orientation to CAC role and function	<i>Board or Staff</i>		
	Decide on meeting schedule and location	<i>CAC & Board</i>		
	Decide on CAC by-laws	<i>CAC & Board</i>		
	Elect CAC leadership (often takes longer, up to 4 months)	<i>CAC & Board</i>		
CAC gets down to work		<i>CAC & Board</i>		
	It takes 3 - 4 months to have a fully functional CAC!			