

Valley Branch Watershed District Citizen Advisory Committee General Workplan



The Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD) Citizen Advisory Committee is made up of volunteer citizens who help the VBWD Board of Managers accomplish its vision and missions.

VBWD Vision:

Always be careful stewards of the water resources within our watershed boundaries.

VBWD Mission:

To manage and protect our water resources: lakes, ponds, creeks, streams, wetlands, drainages, and groundwater by:

- A. Promoting open communication with our constituents, both our citizen base and pertinent governmental units.
- B. Improving and protecting the quality of water for all water bodies within the VBWD.
- C. Managing the quantity of water and minimizing the negative impact on the VBWD from floods, high flows, and droughts by providing public works projects and other prudent measures.
- D. Understanding the effects of community growth and other activities on groundwater, initially focusing on the groundwater-surface water interface.
- E. Continuing to enforce the Wetland Conservation Act requirements as the responsible local unit of government.
- F. Educating our constituents and the local units of government within the VBWD on water quality and quantity issues, management, and means of improvement.

The VBWD Citizen Advisory Committee serves as a liaison between the communities and the VBWD. The Citizen Advisory Committee will:

- Communicate to cities and townships within the VBWD about VBWD projects, programs, and activities
- Represent and communicate the plans and activities of the cities and townships within the district to the VBWD Managers
- Provide input on projects and planning efforts to the VBWD Managers
- Educate VBWD citizens and communities about actions to protect and improve water resources and habitat within the VBWD
- Organize and facilitate efforts to protect and improve water resources and habitat within the VBWD
- Collect water level and water quality data



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Workgroups

The VBWD Managers believe the committee should represent broad interests and backgrounds and be appealing to its members. In order to accomplish this, the Managers have suggested that five topic-specific work groups be formed. Each work group will be made up of Citizen Advisory Committee members that have an interest in a specific topic or issue.

Below is a list of the work groups suggested by the Managers. Initially, the focus will be on one or two of the areas. The VBWD Managers will provide a framework, education, and direction as needed.

1. Eyes & Ears in the Watershed – The VBWD Managers and staff cannot be everywhere all the time. The Citizen Advisory Committee can serve as the eyes and ears of the watershed. If activities or issues of concern regarding the resources of the Valley Branch Watershed District arise, the Citizen Advisory Committee members can bring them to the attention of District staff and the Board of Managers. The committee can also communicate activities, such as public hearings, project activities, programs, etc., to the cities and townships of VBWD.
2. Best Management Practices (BMP) Enthusiasts – The VBWD Managers have implemented a cost-share program to encourage homeowners, developers, businesses, and other organizations to implement projects to better manage stormwater runoff, improve habitat, and reduce erosion. The Citizen Advisory Committee members will help the Managers educate residents about the program and improvement practices. The Citizen Advisory Committee will serve on the BMP subcommittee, which reviews funding applications to the program. They will also publicize, coordinate, and facilitate an annual BMP project tour and/or award event.
3. Habitat Managers – This group will recommend to the Managers how to develop and implement habitat improvement projects (removing buckthorn, establishing native vegetative buffers around/along water bodies, managing invasive aquatic plants, etc.) The group will then coordinate and implement the projects.
4. Data Collectors – This group will collect lake water level data and water quality data, find volunteers to collect data at other water bodies, develop a program to review the results, and recognize the efforts of volunteers.
5. Educators – Much of the work the VBWD Managers hope to accomplish cannot be done through engineered projects or solutions. Therefore, education is a major focus of the Valley Branch Watershed District. The Citizen Advisory Committee will play a significant role in accomplishing the District's education goals through both active and passive education. Active education is hands-on, face-to-face interaction with the general public, city and township staff, and elected officials. It is accomplished through meetings, presentations, events, and other opportunities to interact with people. Passive education is accomplished through the use of brochures, signs, newspaper articles, newsletters, public bulletin board postings, and other methods of communication that do not involve actual participation. This work group will identify education needs for both the Citizen Advisory Committee and the general public. They will work with the VBWD Managers, staff, and the Citizen Advisory Committee Chair to develop education programs to address the identified needs.

Examples of active and passive education opportunities include:

- Constructing and promoting small-scale stormwater management demonstration sites
- Conducting education and management control of invasive species (aquatic or otherwise)
- Cleaning lake and stream shorelines

- Holding neighborhood meetings
- Organizing, promoting, and staffing county/community fairs/events
- Maintaining yards for water quality
- Educating landowners on vegetative buffers and inspecting buffer areas
- Developing and installing educational signs
- Stenciling storm sewer catch basins
- Organizing and coordinating tours of VBWD projects
- Supporting the VBWD educator

Education typically requires working with other groups and organizations to reach a greater number of people. Through partnerships, the VBWD Managers can accomplish their goals more efficiently and effectively. Examples of potential partnership opportunities include:

- 4-H clubs and Boy/Girl Scouts – Partner with 4-H clubs and Boy/Girl Scouts on clean-up events, storm drain marking, or other projects
- National Night Out – Partner with neighborhoods and cities on National Night Out to include water resource and water quality education in the events
- Conservation, environmental, social service, and business organizations – Partner with various organizations that can help enhance District projects and education efforts
- Joint city & township/watershed district education/information materials – Work with cities and townships to develop joint education materials about water quality. Work with City planning and zoning/permit departments.
- Schools – Partner with schools to build water resource education into the curriculum

Incentives

The VBWD Managers will offer incentives to attract and retain Citizen Advisory Committee members. The Managers are considering the following:

- Partially funding the installation of a small BMP project on the member's property
- Covering tuition fees for workshops, conferences, seminars, or tours
- Providing passes to county or state parks
- Giving free books or magazine subscriptions