

## **French Broad River Partnership Membership Policy**

### **I. Mission, Vision, & Guiding Principles:**

**Mission:** To maintain and improve stream health within the French Broad River Watershed for environmental and economic benefits.

**Vision:** That broad-based interests work collaboratively to ensure the French Broad River Watershed serves as a source of drinking water and recreation while supporting biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, forestry, and economic growth.

**Guiding Principles:** We recognize sustainable economic development and the pursuit of improved water quality are mutually beneficial goals. We work collaboratively, engaging the skills and resources of diverse stakeholders to achieve a greater positive impact. We operate with integrity and transparency to define challenges to watershed health and resolve them through innovation and stakeholder commitment, resulting in a lasting impact on the river. We engage communities because knowledge empowers all to consider the health of the river in daily and long-term decisions.

### **II. Partnership Strategy:**

A broad-based partnership is needed to achieve and support significant water quality improvements and protections in the French Broad River watershed. Participants may include, but are not limited to: nonprofit organizations; businesses; academic institutions; informal community or issue-based organizations; local, state, and federal government agencies; and individuals. The French Broad River Partnership is committed to the principles of equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination.

As a partnership, we will identify a focused set of meaningful policies, consistent with our mission, vision and principles that can be supported by a broad set of organizations. The Partnership may serve as a platform for networking around projects, however, many of our organizations will likely work on issues outside of and not formally endorsed by the Partnership.

The strategies we employ may include public support, engaging regulatory agencies, leveraging the Partnership to access funding, project-based improvements, working with public land managers and private landowners, public education, and policy initiatives.

### **III. Structure:**

Partnership “Members” are those whose values align with the mission, vision and principles of the Partnership and actively contribute to the work of the Partnership. Member organizations will designate a point person to be the primary contact with the partnership. Members are included on email communications and may participate in all partnership meetings and vote on Partnership matters. Members are encouraged to commit a higher level of staff or leader time to advance the work of the partnership. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, assisting in planning meeting agendas, taking responsibility for specific pieces of the partnership’s work load, and determining strategy for partnership campaigns. Members not able to continue active participation are encouraged to stay involved as Supporters.

Members may request representation on the “Steering Committee.” Members may designate representatives to serve on working groups. The Partnership encourages Members to be consistently engaged with the working group that best aligns with their interests. Working groups will convene initially around issues of water quality, recreation and business, and education and outreach. Additional working groups may be established by the Steering Committee as needs arise. The Steering Committee and working groups may establish subcommittees around issues as they deem necessary and appropriate. Working groups will develop a work plan and project proposals that will be submitted to the Steering Committee for review and approval.

Partnership “Supporters” are those whose values align with the mission, vision and principles of the Partnership, though they may not actively contribute to the Partnership’s work. Supporters are included on email communications and are welcome to attend/participate in partnership meetings. They do not have a vote on partnership matters. Supporters that decide to be more active in contributing to the Partnership’s work may request to be a Member, subject to approval by the Steering Committee.

Membership issues should be directed to the Steering Committee with a brief summary to be included in the next available meeting agenda.

#### **IV. Decision-making**

There may be a number of policy areas where disagreements among Members are possible, and even likely. The partnership will make decisions through consensus of those Members or their appointees present (physically or by phone/email). If there are **slight reservations** by Members on a proposal, but general agreement by the group that it is the best option, it would be considered consensus. If there are **strong feelings** in the group against a proposal, and there is not general agreement of the group, it would not be considered consensus. Decisions will only be made with a quorum of more than half of Members serving on the Steering Committee or working group present. Where consensus cannot be reached, Members may proceed with work using their own resources outside of the Partnership.

#### **V. Communication within the Partnership**

As the Partnership evolves over time, our communication tools will change appropriately. At the outset, the Partnership will have:

- An email listserv that reaches all members and supporters of the Partnership that can be used to circulate information about the Partnership, its policy agenda, work plans, and updates about specific issue campaigns.
- A Google Drive file for sharing information between key leaders and volunteers in the Partnership, including internal documents being drafted, work plans, a shared calendar, etc.

Internal communications may not be made public without approval of the Steering Committee.

## **VI. Communication about the Partnership**

We want to strike a balance between having visible, unified partnership and giving each of our organizations' latitude to speak and act independently on watershed health issues. Therefore, we will communicate as a partnership when the issue relates to the work of the Partnership, its goals, and activities.

There will be a communications team, consisting of appointees from the Steering Committee. That team will draft, review, and approve by consensus all Partnership communications to the general public, including partnership website, social media, press outreach, etc. Members must opt in to be mentioned in external communications.

We expect and encourage organizations to also communicate independently about watershed health issues. To the extent possible, when communicating about watershed health issues not directly related to the Partnership, Members will seek to align their messaging to reinforce and amplify the Partnership's principles, policies and strategy. But different organizations may choose to prioritize some pieces of the message (health, jobs, economic benefit, etc.) or focus on different audiences (elected officials, recreation, business, etc.) depending on their own mission and goals.

## **VII. Data Management**

The Steering Committee will maintain the overall Partnership communication list that will consist of anyone who signs up to join or receive information about the Partnership. Each Member may keep the names and contact information for anyone who signs up through them, and the names and contact information of people who sign up at joint or Partnership events will be shared with all Members. Land of Sky Regional Council will maintain the Google Drive file for sharing information between key leaders and volunteers in the partnership, including internal documents being drafted, work plans, a shared calendar, etc. We recognize that documents held on the Google Drive may contain sensitive information, and members agree to keep that information confidential unless otherwise publicly available or unless approved for distribution by the Steering Committee.

## **VIII. Accountability**

We will review and update the Membership Policy and committee work plans as needed or on an annual basis to ensure commitments are honored and resolve any conflicts that arise.

### **IX. Conflict of Interest**

Members will disclose any and all potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, and will recuse themselves from discussions and decisions that may implicate conflicts of interest. The Steering Committee may initiate a closed session to discuss potential conflicts in a confidential setting.

### **X. Funding & Expenses**

Members will communicate about fundraising activities that are specific to the Partnership and agree to work cooperatively to achieve the best result for the Partnership as a whole. Income for the Partnership will be held by Land of Sky Regional Council and used to support Partnership activities. Partnership expenses will be shared consistent with approved work plans or with express approval by the Steering Committee.

The following organization acknowledges this Membership Policy and agrees to the terms contained herein as a Member/Supporter (circle one) of the French Broad River Partnership:

Organization:

Authorized Representative:

Title:

Signature:

Date:

Do you consent to be listed in external communications? yes/no (circle one)