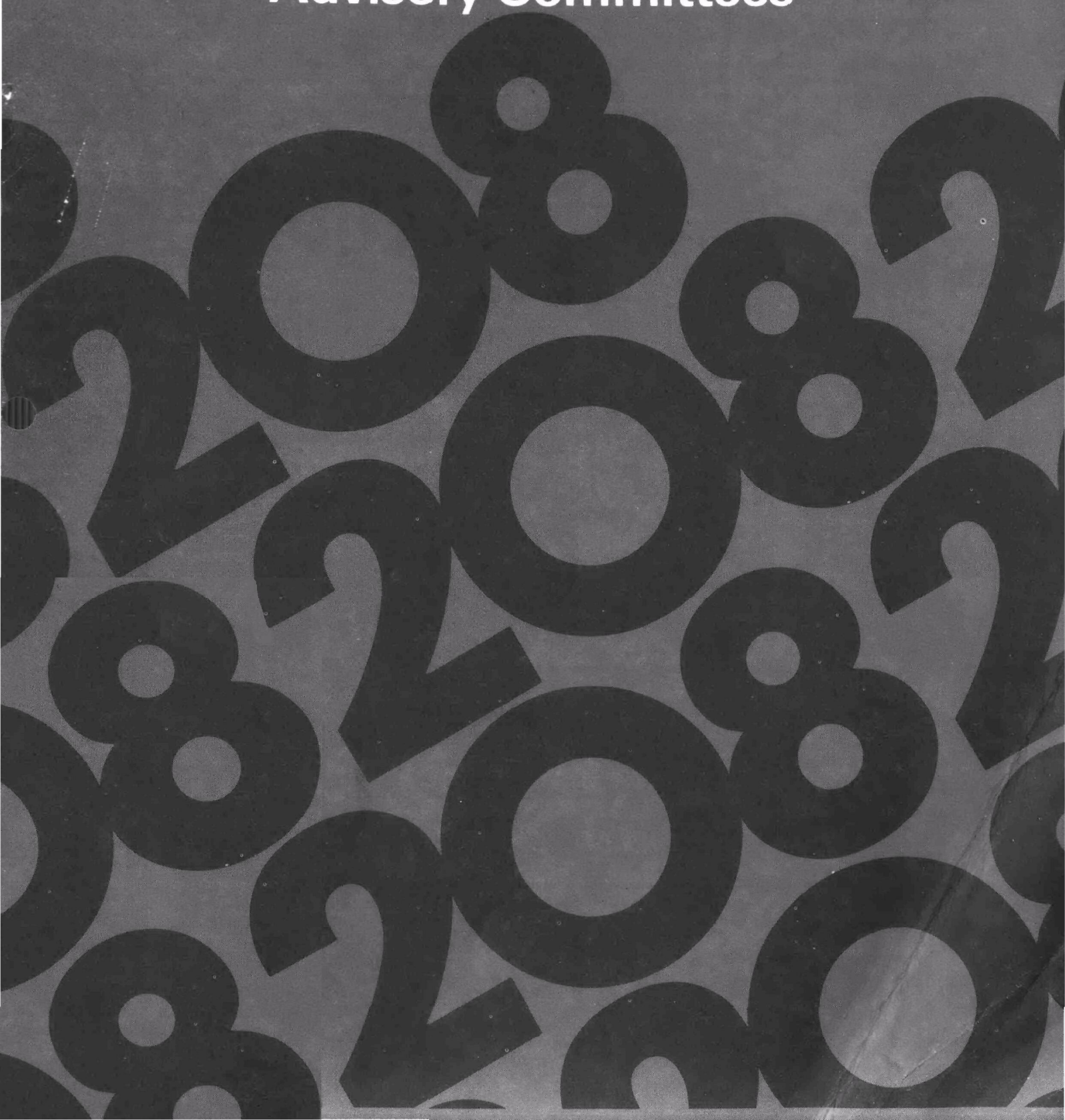**⚡EPA**

Guide 2

Working Effectively with Advisory Committees

Working Effectively With Advisory Committees in Water Quality Planning

What they do

What kinds there are

How they interact

How to . . .

Organize them
Operate them
Support them
Respond to them
Build their trust
Evaluate them
Get their support
Budget for them

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Under the requirements for public participation in 208 planning, most areawide agencies and States have by now organized at least a policy advisory committee, and in many cases, other committees as well. They have chosen members, drawn up rules, and set patterns of operation.

How are all these committees working? What has gone wrong? What can be done to help? How can an imperfectly operating committee be made effective?

Some of the answers are in this guide* which has been designed to help agencies and States work with committees to support them and to make them productive and effective in plan development, as well as rewarding to the participants.

For those agencies which are just setting up a new committee, advice on organizing it is found in Appendix B. The advice also applies to changing or reorganizing committees.

The advice is general, since it is impossible to be too specific, because physical circumstances, political realities, government constraints, public mood, and many other factors vary so much. However, the guide sets forth issues, discusses them and suggests how you might deal with them.

Discussed are the various types of committees; their purposes, broad roles, functions, powers and duties; their life spans and interrelations. Also discussed are committee organization; rules, meetings and other activities; staff support; building committee trust in the agency; response to recommendations; evaluation; relation to plan implementation; special problems of State committees, and budgeting as well as likely effects of the choices that are made.

Throughout, examples of typical problems and incidents are highlighted, with suggested approaches to solutions. These are listed in the Contents for easy reference.

This guide, it is hoped, offers an opportunity to learn from other peoples' problems and mistakes since it is based on actual experiences, including those of 208 advisory committees.

---

* While most of the guidance applies to both States and areawide agencies, Chapter 6 deals specifically with special problems of State advisory committees.

1 ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN WATER QUALITY PLANNING

The fact that advisory committees are required is reason enough to have them. But they can perform many useful functions throughout the planning period. Perhaps most importantly, advisory committees can make it more likely that the final plan will be carried out.

Types of Committees

Three general types of committees are used in 208 planning: policy advisory, technical advisory, and citizen advisory. There are many variations and combinations.

Policy Advisory Committee

Every agency (and every State) is *required* to have a policy advisory committee *"to advise ... the agency ... during the development and implementation of the plan on broad policy matters, including the fiscal, economic, and social impacts of the plan. (40 CFR 130.16(c), emphasis added)*"*

Sometimes the policy advisory committee is the governing board of the agency, expanded to meet EPA requirements. It may be an existing committee expanded to fulfill the requirements, or it may be a new committee appointed just for this purpose.

The policy advisory committee is the link between the program and the governing body. It keeps track of the progress, discusses the work plan, and reviews results of data collection and management analysis.

Membership of such committees at the areawide level generally includes city and county officials and representatives of the State and EPA. Other members may be utilities and public works people, professional planners, city administrators, sanitary engineers, environmental group representatives, soil and water conservation people, labor union officials, health department people, representatives of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Army; members of Indian tribal councils, and other citizens. At the State level the policy advisory committee must be made up of at

* For relevant statute, regulations, and guidelines, see Appendix A.

least 50 percent locally elected officials unless a different arrangement is agreed upon by the local jurisdictions and EPA's responsible Regional Administrator.

Technical Advisory Committee

The technical advisory committee is not mentioned specifically in the regulations or guidelines. It may be a subcommittee of the policy advisory committee, or it may be a separate entity.

Usually, members have technical backgrounds representing government planning and technical units such as city government, sewer districts, water and sewer authorities, and State and Federal agencies. Other members include planning commissioners, river basin commissioners, sanitary engineers, biologists, ecologists, air pollution officials, and county health officials. Citizens and private groups usually are not represented.

The normal role of technical advisory committees is to review and make recommendations on technical data and analysis. Sometimes they help translate for citizen advisory committees what is going on in the planning.

Technical advisory committees are often broken down into functional subcommittees. These might include subcommittees on such things as implementation, legal and financial aspects; land use planning, transportation, and population and economy; nonpoint source and surface water quality and resources; solid waste; agriculture and forestry, marine resources or economic-industrial development.

Citizen Advisory Committee

Formation of a citizen committee is strongly recommended in the Draft Guidelines:
" ... In addition to Policy Advisory Committees, citizens advisory committees should be established. It is unlikely that adequate citizen input will be obtained solely through the Policy Advisory

1

Committee. Citizens can provide valuable inputs throughout the planning process. Their participation should be actively encouraged." (P. 4-10)

However, the roles and functions of these committees are not spelled out. The EPA Public Participation Handbook* recommends that such a committee *". . . critique and aid planners in determining the best, fairest and most practical means of dealing with water quality problems and . . . informing and motivating the groups they represent to participate . . " (P. 24)*

Citizen advisory committees provide a broader-based review of the plans and programs than would otherwise be possible.,

'Typical members include representatives of business and industry in general, those from particular industries such as shipbuilders, realtors, seafood processors, and construction workers; educators, doctors and other professionals; representatives of local and national environmental groups; recreational interests such as hunters, fishers, hikers; students, labor union officials, civic groups, professional societies, lake and stream protection organizations, agricultural interests, and representatives of geographical areas or governmental entities.

Citizen advisory committee meetings give more citizen groups an opportunity to participate on a regular basis. Such citizen advisory committees also allow citizen groups to zero in on issues that concern them, whereas policy advisory committees must deal with all matters.

What Do Advisory Committees Do?

Advisory committees exist to give advice. Since there are many different ways that this can be done, it is best to first set some ground rules. Committee purposes, broad roles, and specific functions ˙ ˙wer˙, ˙nd duties must be clearly speled out and agreed upon in advance by the committee(s) and the agency (including the governing board). This is especially important for citizen advisory committees. Individual members also need to have a good understanding of what the committee is to do *before they agree to serve*, to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding.

An advisory committee can be a *sounding board* for the agency. It can act as a *guidance group*, monitoring the planning on behalf of the governing body,, making recommendations to it. An advisory committee can act as a channel of communication for those wanting information, and wanting to make input to the plan. And, an advisory committee can become an effective citizen lobbying group for the completed plan, helping to ensure implementation.

Other roles for a committee:

● Help ensure that community goals (both local and statewide) are addressed in the plan.

● Provide additional technical or professional skills to the planners.

● Provide for representation of many different interests throughout the planning process.

● Broaden the agency's view of issues. Give the agency a chance to try out new ideas, float trial balloons.

Advisory committees may undertake specific functions such as those listed below:

● Help set planning priorities.

● Review technical data and analysis.

● Design, or help design, a public participation program.

● Interpret the planning to others (agencies, organizations, officials, citizens) and advise the governing body and agency staff of reactions, comments.

● Review and make recommendations on interim products of the planning.

● Help resolve conflicts among various interests.

● Review and make recommendations on the budget.

● Help select consultants, review contracts.

● Review all written material, especially that destined for the public.

● Help agency staff reach local opinion leaders.

● Help plan, host, and participate in public meetings and meetings with organizations or agencies, especially those which the committee members represent.

● Advise on environmental and social assessment.

● Help educate the public about 208 planning and programs.

● Review plans for and results of public opinion surveys.

● Take part in action programs to advance the plan—for example, a stream cleanup program.

● Review and make recommendations on alternative plans.

● Advise on the politics of plan acceptance and/or implementation.

● Act as a watchdog for the public on agency planning and/or implementation.

Most important is to define the limits of
each committee's authority before the
committee begins its work. Will the
committee have the power to make
decisions? If so, which? Under what
conditions? Is the group expected to work
on all agency responsibilities, or just one
or two? Where does each committee fit
into the agency's organization chart? Is it
an integral part of the agency decision-
making process, or parallel to it?
Committee members need to know
answers to these questions, and they are
entitled to a clear definition at the
beginning of their work. Serious
misunderstandings can result from lack cf
clarity on these questions.

Permanence of Committees

Committees may be temporary or
permanent. In addition, ad hoc task
forces or committees may be set up to
deal with particular problems or areas of
interest. While the requirement for
planning and implementation suggests
permanence, a permanent committee has
some pitfalls. It may become so
institutionalized that it is more an arm of
the agency than a separate advisory body
and loses credibility with its outside
constituencies.

Also, some committee members may be
more interested in planning and others in
implementation. It might be reasonable to
reorganize the committee (s) as
implementation nears.

On the other hand, a non-permanent
committee may be interpreted as less
important to some members—the agency
should be alert to counter this feeling if it
arises. Setting up ad hoc committees or
task forces, to take care of special jobs
could counter much of this feeling.

There is likely to be a need for some
type of long-term or future committee
structure, and the agency might benefit
from consideration of this as early in the
process as possible.

Committee members should
understand the duration of their
responsibility clearly, too—are they
committed to meeting monthly for a year,
quarterly for three years, or weekly for six
months.

Interaction Among Committees

Relationships among committees vary
greatly (See Appendix B for sample
organization charts).

In some cases, the technical and citizen
committee each advise the policy
committee, which advises the governing
board. In this arrangement what the board
hears from the technical and citizen
committees is filtered through the policy
committee, so the board may never learn
specifically what the other two committees
think is important. Also, the citizens have
no opportunity to take technical problems
into account, nor do the technical experts
have to consider the citizens' concerns.

Where all three committees advise the
governing board (the policy committee
usually has the dominant role because it
is required), the governing board gets
recommendations and weighs all
considerations—technical versus citizen,
versus special interest, etc. This may be a
considerable burden, but at least they are
aware of what is on the minds of all their
committees.

In some situations citizens are
members of subcommittees of the policy
committee and there are no separate
citizen committees. Ad hoc committees or
task forces may report to any of the
committees or directly to the governing
board.

Some of the problems of liaison can be
lessened by having members of the
technical and citizen committees serve as
members of the policy advisory committee
(and vice versa). They may attend policy
advisory committee meetings and be
allowed to speak or may have voting
powers. The problem of representation
remains—will these dual members report
back adequately and represent the views
of both bodies to each other. It also may
be hard to find people who can attend all
those meetings.

Occasional meetings of two or all three
of the committees will help improve
communications in general, as well as the
discussions on specific issues.

In one large metropolitan area, the
citizen and technical advisory committees
were combined, because committee
members felt strongly that they should not
be separate. In this case committee
members are pleased with the results.

Another problem, however, is that citizens might become so "professional", that they begin to function as technical experts. One danger with this arrangement is that technical people on a citizen committee could intimidate those who are not technically trained.

In another 208 area, the policy advisory committee can overturn a decision by the citizen advisory committee only by a vote of two-thirds of the whole committee (not just those in attendance). Although final decisions still have to be made by the policy advisory committee, the citizen committee can exert a powerful influence on what the policy group does.

Too often, committee structures and relationships grow out of past agency practices and local feelings about advisory committees. Each approach has its pluses and minuses. Agencies first need to decide what will work best in their own areas, for their own problems. Then the roles of the various advisory committees should be determined, and together responsibility for these roles should be assigned as they relate to the tasks of the agency.

Each committee member should understand and accept how his/her committee relates to the others and to the governing board and agency. It is vital therefore, that some machinery be set up for informational cross-flow and inter-relation between committees and their members.

Problem: "How do we manage the interface between the policy advisory committee, the technical advisory committee, and the citizen advisory committee?"

Suggestion: First, be sure the roles and tasks of each are defined. Draw a realistic organization chart of the relationship. Do the technical and citizen committees report to the policy committee, or do all three report to the governing board/agency separately? Does everyone understand the place of each committee in the structure? Occasional meetings of all groups together could help provide some common ground, as could having representation from each committee on all others, or periodic reporting from one to another.

How Do Advisory Committees Relate To Other Parts Of the Citizen Participation Program?

Advisory groups are only one part of a public participation program. Other elements include public meetings, public education efforts, and surveys, all of which can affect and be affected by advisory committees.

Public Meetings

Advisory committees have a particularly close relationship with public meetings. The policy advisory and the citizen advisory committee, either separately or together, or both in consultation, should assist in scheduling meetings at appropriate times. From their perspective as representatives of various organizations and interests, committee members should help plan the meetings.

Members of policy and citizen advisory committees should attend all public meetings and help in chairing them, moderating workshops, and making presentations. Members of technical advisory committees should also attend public meetings. Where necessary, they can help explain technical matters to the public (although technical presentations should be minimized).

Committee members by their presence can help ensure that comments made by the public will be considered in the decision-making process. Members of the policy and citizen advisory committees also have an obligation to encourage members of the groups they represent to attend the meetings.

Comments made at public meetings should be submitted promptly to the policy advisory and citizen advisory committees (and, if appropriate, to the technical advisory committee) for recommendations to the governing board.

Problem: "Committee members object that when there's a public meeting we're anxious to 'throw them to the wolves'—the public."

Suggestion: A committee should be a big help at the time of public meetings—helping chair, meeting people, answering questions, etc. But members need to be well-prepared in advance for what is likely to happen (including sparse turn-out), and should have helpful staff back-up). Committee members should not be left in an exposed position to defend the study and the plans.

Public Education

The policy advisory and especially the citizen advisory committees have an important role in public education. They can make speeches or presentations about the planning and what is going to be happening. They can be available for newspaper, radio, and television interviews and "talk" shows.

If surveys are used to try to determine public feeling about some of the issues, advisory committees can help review the survey plans and format as well as the results. They also can make recommendations as to what weight should be attached to survey results.

2 COMMITTEE OPERATIONS

It's a complicated process to put together an advisory committee that will be able to work productively together and with the agency or State for two years or more.

Keeping an advisory committee running effectively is just as complicated. Most, if not all, committees are already in existence. What can you do to make such groups work more smoothly, to meet problems that have arisen? If problems exist, it's not too late to improve committee operations.

Organization

There are a number of ways an existing committee's organization can be changed if it becomes necessary.

Membership

Agencies should review their committee's membership periodically, particularly as issues become more fully known. New interests can develop and you may want to add members from those interests.

Additions of members should present no serious problems unless rules prevent it. (If so, it might be wise to amend the rules.) More people may be needed just to maintain a reasonable size.

Some people believe that negative or overtly hostile people should be included on committees. It is important to consider this. While it may be painful to try to enlist opponents, their opposition might be softened, and you would at least eliminate the frequent complaints of not being included.

Problem: "We aren't anxious to include a vocal opponent on the committee."

Suggestion: You need to know what is on the opponent's mind. He or she may be expressing a view held by many, and may be able to make a lot more trouble for you by staying outside the process. Be sure to give the opponent credit for helping, too.

Problem: "What if they say, 'Our role is *adversary*, not *participatory*. We don't want to preclude our option to sue.'?"

Suggestion: Try first to persuade the group to send someone to join the committee. If that doesn't work, try to persuade them to send an observer, at least, so that they are informed. If they are adamant, there is nothing more that you can do. Publize the fact that they were invited, so that all will know.

Balance is most important for the committee—but is more easy to recognize than to define. While all possible interests cannot be represented on the advisory committee, the major one must be, and in a balanced way. Are the committee's major values and concerns represented on the committee? If you are open to criticism on this score, or think you might be from developers, environmentalists, industry, or some other interest—it is time to reconsider the total membership of the committee.

Problem: "How can a committee really be representative of all interests in the community?"

Suggestion: It can't be, completely, but it can be close enough to meet the intent of the law and the regulations—and minimize criticism. Make a list. Include all characteristics of present committee members that might be of representational interest (occupation, age, sex, race, geographical area, avocation, organizational memberships, etc.). Then look to see if something is missing. Think about the nature of your area. Is wheat farming important? Livestock raising? Shellfish harvesting? Stream fishing? Strip mining? What kinds of recreation might be affected by the plan? Are there women on the committee? Young people? Old people? Minorities? Discuss with present members of the committee any gaps that seem to need filling, and then go about filling them.

Be prepared for formal or de facto dropouts, and realize that not all will continue to participate throughout. If people quit attending meetings, or taking part otherwise, see if they are willing to terminate their formal membership and make room for more active people.

The committee or the agency may wish to drop members on its own initiative. This can only be done with great caution; it is risky to drop a member for reasons other than non-participation.

Structure

A committee should be big enough to represent major points of view, but small enough to be effective as a forum for discussion and work. If the whole group is more than 15-20, an executive or steering committee is probably needed for day-to-day contact with the agency, setting agendas, overseeing arrangements, etc.

One agency said that if it was doing it again, it would subdivide the committees into smaller subgroups, having found smaller groups much more effective. Another, finding that a couple of its subcommittees were not working well, combined them with other effective subcommittees.

All subcommittees or task forces need not be fully active through the whole planning process. Some will be active early, some late, but all should be active near the end of the planning.

Leadership

Is the committee leadership satisfactory and effective? It can be delicate or difficult to change leadership, but not impossible.

If the rules provide for periodic election or rotation, problems are minimized. If not, and a change is deemed desirable, perhaps a frank talk with the chairperson will help. Assigning more responsibility to vice chairpersons also may be helpful.

Rules

The degree of formality of a committee's operations is up to the agency, the committee, or (preferably) a combination of both. If the agency made the rules, it should at least give its advisory committee(s) a chance to propose revisions.

To assure effective committee operations, there should be written rules or bylaws defining committee responsibilities and functions. The rules should include the responsibilities of the governing body and the agency in relation to the committee, too. For example, what kinds of written material will be submitted to the committee for review? How much notice will be given for meetings?

Other items to be considered for specific rules or policies include:

● *Attendance*
Is a certain number of absences grounds for dropping a member?

● *Participation of observers*
Are nonmembers permitted to speak at meetings? Take part in other ways?

● *Voting*
Are all members entitled to vote? Do staff members vote? Are all decisions made by a simple majority? Are there quorum provisions?

● *Subcommittees*
How do they relate to the full committee? Are their responsibilities defined? Do they decide what work to do, or is it assigned to them? How do they report?

● *Reporting*
How does the committee report to the governing body/agency, and vice versa? How often?

● *Public availability of material*
Should committee minutes, tapes, and other material be available to the public? How and where?

● *Constituencies*
Are there specific requirements for members to report to and from their constituencies? How are such requirements implemented?

● *Parliamentary procedures*
To what extent are they followed?

● *Expenses*
Are members' expenses reimbursed? (In large areas, and particularly with State committees, members may have to spend a night—or even two—away from home to attend a meeting.)

Although some rules are clearly needed, don't burden yourself with unnecessarily complicated ones, and try not to let the committee spend a lot of time and energy on them.

On the other hand, you may need more rules than you currently have. If so, attempt to deal with all appropriate revisions at one time. Most important, all parties should understand what is expected of them, so that there is no chance for misunderstanding.

Committee Meetings

The 208 Guide No. 1 on public meetings has many general suggestions which apply to advisory committee meetings as well. Briefly, the relevant points are:

● Meetings should be planned within the time available. Usually only one large subject, perhaps several aspects of it, can be handled in one meeting.

● The topic must be appropriate for the planning phase currently underway.

● The topic must be important, and must be seen as important by committee members.

● The meeting format should be simple and chosen in consideration of the time available, to maximize participant discussion.

● If presentations are to be made, speakers should be knowledgeable, responsive, and personable.

● The moderator should have the same characteristics and be neutral toward the content of the topics discussed.

● Necessary arrangements should be made for recording or taking minutes of meetings.

● Committee members should be greeted when they arrive. If they are not already acquainted, or if the public is expected, name tags, and/or name plates at the meeting table should be considered.

● Many different formats can be considered for meetings; workshop, conference, hearing, information, forum.

When?

Meeting times depend on the convenience of the participants. In general, if attendance is part of the members' jobs, they will want it to be during business hours; if not, evenings or weekends are preferable. Committees that have both types of people should probably hold meetings at various times.

In any case, the conveniences of the agency staff—while not negligible—should not be an overriding consideration.

The length of meetings should be specified and agreed upon, usually no longer than two and a half to three hours.

Some committees (perhaps only technical advisory committees) never meet. Material is sent to members, and they comment or respond in writing, by telephone, or by tape recording.

Where?

The place should be convenient for the majority of members.

Factors to be considered are:

● Suitable room—easy to see and hear

● Available parking

● Available public transportation

● Travel time minimized

● Safe surroundings

● Comfort

● Convenience of nonmembers who may wish to attend.

The arrangement of the space is also important. Seating the committee around a table—round or a hollow square—is probably best if the group is not too large. A large committee may have to be seated classroom style. This, however, does not encourage informal discussion. For the same reason, the chairperson and speaker(s) should be on a raised platform only if the group is so large that it is difficult to see and hear. A large committee should be broken up into smaller discussion groups whenever possible.

How Often?

Regular meetings are easy for people to remember and schedule. Many committees meet monthly, often alternating presentations and discussions. Sometimes the full committee meets one month, and subcommittees the next.

Based on agency-committee agreements as to committee responsibilities, it is desirable to develop a schedule of meetings appropriate to those responsibilities and the planning schedule well in advance. Then the governing body and agency will be able to consider comments and recommendations of the committee in timely fashion—there will be no danger that comments will be too late in the process to affect the planning.

However, there is nothing worse than a meeting that is not really needed. So if meetings are scheduled far in advance, some flexibility should be provided.

When long periods (longer than two months, for example) occur between meetings, written progress reports to all members are advisable. A regular newsletter is especially useful for large committees.

Problem: "Committee members have the feeling that if they miss a meeting they never find out what happened."

Suggestion: A responsible staff person should call absent persons and tell them what happened. In addition, minutes or summaries in writing should be sent out promptly. It may be necessary to do some reviewing at the beginning of the next meeting (but not too much). The staff has the responsibility for keeping the members up to date.

Problem: "Members quit coming unless their parochial interests are addressed, or there is an exciting general controversy."

Suggestion: Perhaps everyone's particular interest can be addressed at least once in a while. Or, it could be done at informal meetings or in small groups. The chairperson or a high-ranking staff member could talk to the committee member, pointing out the importance of the committee's work and the need for that member's presence. If the member consistently stays away, perhaps his or her resignation should be asked for. More variety in types of meetings, so that they are not boring, is another way to attack this problem.

Agenda

Meetings should be carefully structured to get the results that are needed. Specific issues and questions should be posed. Each agenda item should be an action item, even if the only action will be to comment (comments which will be reflected in appropriate reports).

Written information should be received by members at least seven days before the meeting. Written reports and other material for the committee should be as nontechnical as possible, with major points summarized.

Problem: "We can't seem to get the written material out long enough in advance."

Suggestion: It's easy to say you just have to, but this may be hard to accomplish. Everyone will have occasional problems like this, but if it happens all the time, there is something wrong.

While committees must be kept fully informed, they can be overburdened with paper and may react by reading none. Some general criteria for written material:

● The information should be written for about an 8th or 10th grade reading level.

● Summary information should not be longer than five pages, double-spaced.

● The more detailed and technical information upon which the summary is based should be readily available at convenient places for people to review.

Many types of agendas can be used.

● Staff presentation, discussions, decisions

● Presentation only (for education)

● Presentations, smaller discussion groups, reporting to full committee, decisions

● Individual interest group, agency or subcommittee presentations, discussion, decisions

● Discussion, decisions following public meeting

● Special films, slides, etc. (*All* presentations and most other agendas should contain a generous amount of well-done graphics).

● Field trips

● Informal and quasi-social contacts

Variety in meeting types and styles helps maintain interest. If things seem to be dragging with your present program, try something different.

The responsibility for preparing meetings rests primarily with the agency staff, but is often shared with the committee chairperson, the interest group making a presentation, or a program subcommittee. Or the whole group may agree on the agenda for the next meeting. While the agency must ensure that it gets the help it needs from the committee when it needs it, the interests of the committee members in selection of topics for the agenda must be given every consideration.

Problem: "*Committee members complain* that most of the meeting is usually taken up with complicated and/or dull presentations from the staff. But those are the things we need to bring to them."

Suggestions: The staff should determine just how much of this is really essential. Then figure out ways to make the material less technical. Get the reports out in advance so that people can look at them, and then just ask questions and discuss them at the meeting—no presentation will be necessary. Develop a variety of ways to present the material (including graphics).

Problem: "Committee members say, 'The meetings all have the same routine format in a stuffy meeting room—why can't they be different once and a while?'"

Suggestion: Why not visit a sewage treatment plan to make the planning effort more meaningful? Similar effects can be achieved with industries or problem areas—overflowing creeks, feedlots, sewage or industrial outfalls into public water, etc.

Voting

For an advisory committee to make recommendations, the members must take a position (or consciously decide not to do so). The usual way is to take a vote.

Most votes are decided by a simple majority but this method does present some pitfalls. While balanced representation on the committee is always a goal, it is seldom fully achieved. Some members may resist voting with others because of long-standing hostility. Close votes on important issues, even in accordance with agreed-upon rules, may result in committee member resentment. The agency may be misled into following a recommendation which presumably has "committee support" because it was approved by a bare majority. Neither of these results bodes well for plan implementation.

Committee member *consensus* on important issues is the most desirable form of committee opinion. To achieve it, several alternatives to a simple majority vote may be tried.

● *More than a simple majority* (three-fifths or two-thirds) could be required for a vote to carry. This would eliminate the need of achieving "perfect" representation in the committee.

● *Differing vote margins* could be required for different types of issues. Such things as committee operational rules might be decided by a simple majority,

---

while votes on the substance of the plan would require something more. These could be further divided, for example, two-thirds required for recommendations on interim planning products, with a three-fourths majority required to recommend the final plan.

● *Taking no vote* might be appropriate where the issue would so polarize the members that future deliberations would be jeopardized. Or, at times, the issue may be such that the majority "lean" to one position, but many members may prefer not to "go on record" as supporting or opposing it. If necessary, the chairperson might achieve a positive result without a vote by saying:
"It seems to be the sense of the committee that (statement). If there are no strong objections, I'd like to let the minutes reflect that sense."

Using any of these suggestions requires a strong, sensitive chairperson and agency staff. They must be sensitive to the wording of recommendations in order to achieve the greatest possible consensus. They must be able to break any issue down into points of agreement (which can be voted upon readily) and disagreement (which probably cannot). Informal negotiations may be required.

But, when implementation is the goal of planning and broad community support is needed to assure that implementation, these methods to achieve consensus may be needed.

Dynamics of Committee Meetings

Much of the material in the 208 Guide No. 1 (Public Meetings) is relevant here. For example, discussions are worthwhile if:

● the atmosphere is natural, calm, and informal;

● all participants respect what others have to say; and

● the full diversity of ideas is expressed—as opposed to personal conflicts.

In addition, it is necessary to keep to the agenda and to be sure that everyone has a chance to speak.

In public meetings there is little time to try to deal with personality conflicts. The moderator can only try to keep to the issues at hand, asking people to refrain from harangues. With a continuing

committee there is time to try to resolve these problems.
Some suggestions:

● Talking with the disruptive individuals, asking them why, and seeing if there might be a solution (this should always be done outside the meeting.)

● Attempting to get the antagonists together privately to work out their differences.

● Setting aside a meeting or two to discuss "personal agendas" in the hope that this will lead to greater understanding.

Another possible problem is hostility between the committee and the agency staff (or even governing board). If the purposes, roles and functions of the committee have been agreed upon at the beginning, such occurrences, though uncomfortable, should cause no lasting problems. If there is confusion about the committee's role, the first order of business is to discuss this, as dispassionately as possible, with the whole committee (perhaps with a preliminary discussion between the staff and the chairperson or executive committee.)

The committee may come up with recommendations that the agency does not like. If all attempts to persuade the members fail, there should be no attempt to prevent them from filing their own report on the plan. Make every effort to keep the disagreement on a substantive basis, so that citizens and decisionmakers will understand the real issues.

Other Committee Activities

Committee meetings need not—and should not—be the only committee activity. For example, a good change would be for the committees (and the staff) to get together informally over brunch or supper. This can pay dividends in helping to understand each other's problems, and can increase members' ability to work together.

Field Trips

Field trips, mentioned earlier, are valuable, for nothing takes the place of actually seeing the local sewage treatment plant, a feedlot, a strip mine, or a wild river. Such trips need to be carefully planned so that they are learning experiences, and are still enjoyable for the participants. Members should have advance appropriate written material and maps for the trip. There should be well-informed guides and an opportunity for discussion on what has been seen and how it fits into the planning.

In addition, field trips give members a chance to talk informally and to get to know each other better and understand opposite sides of issues before the committee.

Meetings with Other Groups

The advisory committee may have its own meetings with other organizations, often with the organizations represented by members of the committee. This can enhance the member's reputation in his or her own group, and help spread the

responsibility for informing each constituency.

Informal Contact

Agencies with successful committee programs usually spend a lot of time on informal contacts with members and small groups of the committee. "One-on-one meetings are best with elected officials—you can get their individual attention," said one agency person. "You can raise issues with them without their audience being there."

Staff personal interaction can be especially helpful with technical material. People without technical training are often hesitant to ask questions in a meeting, and discussing technical matters individually or in small groups will pay dividends.

One agency official arrived early for a meeting and had a chance to have dinner with the committee. "He got to hear all their frustrations", said an observer. "He learned some things he never would have learned at formal meetings."

In these activities, guard against fostering an in-group and out-group feeling in the committee—this will only lead to trouble. Individual attention should be distributed among all members.

Problem: The committee goes out of control and makes ridiculous statements and proposals."

Suggestion: If frank discussion with the chairperson and the committee does not help significantly, consider bringing in some strong new members and perhaps vice chairpersons who can help chair meetings. Sit down with committee members and point out the problems with what they are proposing, frankly and firmly, but not with ridicule.

Problem: "Committee members don't stick to the subject."

Suggestion: The chairperson should probably take a stronger hand in guiding the discussion. Periodic summaries of the discussion and where it needs to go to accomplish what needs to be done can help

Problem: "A few members do all the talking."

Suggestion: Staff and chairperson should discuss how to cope with this problem. It may be useful to have a short discussion with the whole committee to point out that some talk a lot, others very little, and that all comments are welcome, and urged. From time to time it may be necessary to place time limits on everyone's comments, or actually to interrupt.

Problem: "There is hostility between the members and the staff."

Suggestion: If the problem is over a substantive part of the planning—for example, if the committee does not like any of the alternative sites for a sewage treatment plant—the committee may just have to make its own report and state its reasons. Attempting to paper over a difference of that magnitude would only lead to more trouble. Recognize that

there will not always be agreement, and acknowledge it to the committee. Discuss with the committee (perhaps first with the chairperson and any other officers) how you can work together even under these circumstances, and try to come to an agreement on how to operate.

Problem: "How can we cope with confrontation and disruptions?"

Suggestion: If things get ugly at a meeting, it may be best to adjourn and try to meet separately with the various factions before the next meeting. In an extreme case the committee might have to be disbanded. Disruptions (not very likely with a regular committee) call for a firm hand, and probably an immediate recess or perhaps adjournment for the day.

3 SUPPORTING THE COMMITTEE

Making advisory committees effective takes strong leadership from the agency—and substantial support.

Along with philosophical and administrative support (logistical, analytical, issue formulation, and information preparation), a clear commitment of agency resources is needed. This means staff time, printing, contact work, presentations, mailing lists—it translates into a substantial amount of time and money. Committee members themselves do not have the time (or necessarily the commitment, or inclination) to provide their own support. And they can hardly be expected to use their own money to pay for it.

Staff Involvement

Staff members' position with respect to a committee is delicate: they must lead when necessary, but not take over. They should be supportive to people, no matter what their level of technical training is and they must try to be resourceful, patient, and neutral—not advocating one alternative over another.

Who?

Many agencies have a public involvement coordinator for the agency public participation program. An important part of this job is dealing with the committee(s). The coordinator should have the full help and cooperation of other staff members. If the coordinator is the only one who attends meetings, the agency's credibility with the committee could suffer.

In some agencies a committee has its own staff person. This provides continuity and trust can be built, as the staff person acts as liaison between the committee and the agency. A disadvantage is that this staff member may not understand equally all elements of the plan. Finally, the staff person should not be expected to attend meetings alone; various technical people should attend the committee meetings as appropriate.

In another agency, a planning staff member is assigned to each committee responsibility or subcommittee. This provides consistency and a point of contact, but may be too heavy an additional time burden for the planners.

Probably everyone on the staff, including the director, should spend some time working with the committee. Participation by agency leadership in committee meetings adds to their credibility and is likely to lead to more committee influence on decisions. Staff attendance at meetings can be on a rotating basis. One agency with a successful committee program assigned *each* staff member to at least one subcommittee and expected each to make periodic reports to the full committee. The whole staff must understand the information flow process and be involved in it if both sides are to benefit.

It is clear that however staff support is arranged, time will be taken away from other aspects of the program. This must be recognized, for it is one aspect of the commitment of resources.

Consultants can be used to plan and manage programs, advise, and evaluate, but they cannot completely take the place of staff involvement.

In some agencies a consultant, group, or organization has been hired to accomplish citizen participation. This can make the committee more autonomous. There are, however, some disadvantages in having the citizen participation activity separate from the agency. Liaison may not be so close and frequent meetings with the agency staff are necessary to keep in touch with what is going on.

Some agencies have successfully used student interns to do detail work. Students can be inexpensive and often enthusiastic labor, and sometimes they have worked themselves into permanent full-time jobs. But interns have to be backed up by experienced staff members.

Help is also available from EPA Regional Offices and headquarters in the form of manuals, conferences, and seminars. (See Bibliography, Appendix C, for some publications which might be of assistance.)

> **Problem:** "We can't spare the planning staff time to go to all those committee meetings, or the program will fall behind schedule."
>
> **Suggestion:** It may be the most important thing they could do. The advisory committee has to understand what's going on in order to become supporters of the plan, and their help will be crucial to the implementation of the plan. These costs in staff time should have been built into the budget in the first place. If they weren't, adjustments are necessary.

What?

From the beginning, there is much administrative and detail work for the staff. The agency staff should work with

chairpersons in planning meetings and setting agendas. They take care of the logistics of meeting places, field trips, etc. They see that minutes and/or tape recordings are taken, transcribed, distributed to committee members, and filed where they are available to the public, along with other relevant papers.

Staff people help frame the way issues come before the committee. There are many ways to do this. One agency takes up part of an issue at each meeting. Another advocates first a brief overview of all the issues, then takes one subject at a time—land use, agriculture, forestry, etc. For this agency, this method has led to an active role for the committee.

The agency also needs to help educate the constituencies of committee members. Staff people may help organize meetings, make presentations, talk to leaders. For some groups, this may mean visits and other contacts.

The staff, in cooperation with committee members, must be alert to keep bringing new people up to date.

Inevitably, much written material will pass from the agency to the committee. (see Chapter Two for suggestions). It is a challenge to keep the committee informed without overwhelming it. As the chairperson of the New Castle (Delaware) County Citizen Advisory Committee wrote:

"Along the way we learned that our committee members have to have a quality we had not envisioned in the beginning: The ability to keep from drowning in the data furnished so abundantly by staff and consultants alike."
"Therefore, I would recommend that trustworthy executive summaries become a standard part of every report made by either consultants or staff.   *"**

It is best if the material is in terms the committee can understand and deal with—problems that they are familiar with.

Problem: "Committee members complain, 'We can't understand enough of what's going on to make a contribution.'"

Suggestion: The staff has been talking in its own jargon. Have a round-table session with the committee to discuss the problem. Give your written material and oral presentations to a neutral observer or consultant without technical training to identify problems in understanding. Hire or identify a staff person with good communications skills to work on the problem.

However, better too much information than not enough. Some agencies are reportedly guilty of not even providing enough copies of documents to their committees. Maps and other supporting material must be provided, too.

It is vital to keep the advisory committee informed, even about those things they may not need to know. It may turn out that some minor or obscure matter sparks an important contribution by a committee member. Appropriate acknowledgement and feedback for *all* contributions (discussed more fully in Chapter 4) are also vital.

How?

This whole section discusses "how" but several items should be emphasized here:

● Committees are made more autonomous by letting them control their own budgets. There may be some legal constraints, but arrangements can be made to let the committee make basic decisions about their budgets.

● Staff people regularly assigned to citizen committees, ought to feel that their boss is the committee or its chairperson, not the project manager. (The public is their real boss.)

Staff people can be members of advisory committees, but should be *ex officio* without a vote, since their major input to the planning comes in a different way. They should go to committee meetings and serve the committee in other ways as resource people.

● Some committees need a lot of shoring up to keep going. This is where the need for informal, individual, and small-group contacts is the greatest.

● Citizen "experts" can have real, substantive input into policy. Don't underestimate the contribution that can be made by such members. Technical training or a degree in engineering is not necessarily a prerequisite for a good committee member. "Self-educated experts" can be especially valuable in advising on public participation, citizen values, and the political feasibility of implementing various plan alternatives.

Problem: "Committee members feel the staff talks down to them"

Suggestion: It may take a lot of self-discipline for a technically trained staff person not to become impatient with non-technical citizens, but it is essential. If attitudes cannot be changed, perhaps such a staff person will have to be kept away from contact with the committee. With time and good will on both sides, though, good working relationships can be established.

Problem: "Committee members feel the staff pays more attention to the 'important' people on the committee than to the others."

Suggestion: This is often a temptation. The nationally known mayor of a large city is used to commanding more attention than a part-time mayor of a village (not to mention a "plain" citizen), but it is very important that all on the committee be treated equally, given the same information, and be made to feel equally important.

*"Citizen Participation in the 208 Program"Environmental Comment. January 1976. p. 7.

Building Committee Trust in the Agency

Citizen advisory committees, especially, tend to be skeptical about whether anyone pays any attention to their opinions. Show that you take the committee seriously. It may be helpful to have citizen committee members sit on policy committees and vice versa.

The more helpful a staff is to a committee, the more accessible, and the more open and informal, the greater the trust that is likely to develop. Informal and individual contacts will help. Never try to deceive the committee or hide problems that may be occurring in some phase of the planning. Nothing can destroy trust more quickly.

What is needed is to work toward a relationship where everyone thinks in terms of "we", rather than "we the committee", versus "they" the agency (or vice versa).

Most important in building trust is showing that what the committee said and did, *did* make a difference, that it was taken into account. (Chapter 4 deals more fully with this).

Problem: "Why is the committee so suspicious of the agency?"

Suggestion: They have probably had some bad experiences in the past, not necessarily with this agency, but with some government agency. Their feelings may be colored by their feelings about the Federal Government, too. Perhaps you can change their attitude for the future. Don't just tell them, but show them that you take their interests and contributions seriously. Recognize that they are giving you what you could not get in any other way.

Unless committee recommendations are adequately dealt with, there is absolutely no point in having a committee (except, of course, to go through the motions of the law and regulations).

---

4 MAKING THE COMMITTEES COUNT

Responding to Committee Recommendations

In the beginning, the agency should have thought through what, how, and when, committee advice would be used. This should include a plan for dealing with advice that is unacceptable to the agency as well as that which is acceptable. If this was not done at the beginning of the agency-committee relationship, some agreed-upon plan to use comments and advice should be made now.

To maintain credibility, responses to committee comments, at all times, must be specific and prompt. Obvious good faith effort by an agency, and a good record over a long period, are needed to convince committees that they are not just showpieces.

Problem: Committee members can feel that they don't know whether, or how, their input is being used. There are several ways to overcome this.

Suggestion: *First,* communications are clearly lacking. The committee should be kept informed, promptly, of what use is being made of its recommendations and comments. *Second,* the agency should be making all possible efforts to incorporate the committee's input. The better you explain what you are up to, the more likely it is that they will have worthwhile input to be considered. They probably do not expect that everything they say will be used, but they can be resentful if it is ignored. Bend over backward to use anything you can and where you can incorporate some point, even if revised extensively, be sure to point this out. Above all, explain why you didn't if you didn't. Not doing so is the surest way to lose the committee's interest, your credibility, and the committee's trust in you.

Using Committee Recommendations

Insofar as possible, the committee's comments and recommendations should

12

be part of the plan. Even if they are in a somewhat (or even radically) different form, they should be cast so that the committee can trace its influence. The record should be clear. Committee members have to see how their input affects the whole process. This means that there should be feedback from the agency throughout the planning process.

Ideally, there should be a constant two-way flow of information and feedback. New Castle County described its process as: *"Interaction between the staff and the advisory committees is an ongoing process. Each task assignment in the work program results in some type of work product by the staff member or consultant. At the completion of a report or analysis, copies of the report are given simultaneously to the Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees, and appropriate subcommittee (s). The subcommittees follow the progress of the tasks . . . by reviewing preliminary draft reports and outlines, and by commenting on procedures, methodologies, and preliminary findings. It is important to note that—where possible—draft reports are distributed at preliminary stages so that the initial thinking of the agency on the subject is shared with the advisory committee. Written comments are encouraged and are subsequently filed with the work product. Comments raised in discussion during subcommittee meetings are recorded in the minutes of the meeting and on tapes of the meetings. Members of the staff are assigned as resource persons to each subcommittee in order to explain technical aspects of the reports, answer questions raised by subcommittee members, and to consider their comments, criticism, and suggestions. The result of this process is a two-way flow of information and ideas, with the staff presenting their viewpoints to citizen representatives and the citizens, in turn, contributing their suggestions to the program. ("Public Participation in the New Castle County Areawide Waste Treatment Management Program.")* This work required much attention to detail and a lot of follow-up to be effective.

Success or failure can depend on many little things that just require watchfulness and sensitivity. Listen to what the committee is saying, and be aware of what isn't being said. You may have to deal with extraneous points—but don't just dismiss them, try to learn why committee members thought they were important.

The agency isn't perfect and it's counterproductive to give the impression that it is—if you have gone down a blind alley or made a mistake, admit it and show that you've learned from the experience.

Recommendations That Can't Be Used

If some of the committee's advice is not usable, it is most important that all its suggestions be treated respectfully. It should be demonstrated that there was careful consideration given to the suggestion and there should be detailed explanation of why the suggestions are not used.

Problem: "How can we deal with recommendations that are impossible or impractical without alienating the committee?"

Suggestion: See suggestion for last problem. Above all, treat the committee's comments with respect and courtesy. They are making a big commitment in time and energy, and should be treated accordingly.

Evaluating Committee Effectiveness

Periodic evaluation (perhaps at the end of each planning phase) is needed to determine whether the committee arrangement is working well. Then, if there are some problems, changes can be made to increase effectiveness. Evaluation should be done periodically by the committee itself, by the agency staff, and, if necessary, by outside consultants. One way for a committee to conduct this kind of self examination with or without agency staff is on a one-day or weekend retreat.

What are some criteria for measuring effectiveness? Suitable questions for the committee to ask itself include:

● Is the information provided to us understandable?

● Do we get all the information we need?

● Are meetings interesting and worth-while?

● Are we expected to make decisions on real issues?

● Is our representation balanced?

● Does the agency respond to our input?

● Do we feel a vital part of the process, and are our recommendations a given major consideration?

● Do we feel that we can affect the final decisions?

In its evaluation the agency might ask:

● Has the committee's input been useful? Why or why not?

● How has it influenced planning?

● Is it an effective working body? Are there conflicts within it, or with the agency?

● Do members come to meetings regularly?

● Have new issues emerged during the planning as a result of committee input?

If there are problems with an advisory committee—poor attendance, or members grumbling about each other or about the agency, neutral outside consultants may be needed to help evaluate and resolve some of the problems.

Plan Implementation and Committees

Integration of committee recommendations into the planning can and should have a beneficial relationship to implementation of the plan. If you have made concerted efforts to work with your committees to make them active participants, members should be effective partisans of your plan. They can help explain it to the community, while they work with you on the next steps.

> **Problem:** "Committee members say, 'They've already made all the important decisions—we're just here to ratify them.'"
>
> **Suggestion:** It takes a long time to build up credibility. Good faith efforts over the period of the study and planning can eventually change this feeling. Early on, show that you are paying attention to advice and recommendations. If you can't adopt suggestions, give reasonable explanations why, not just the "we technicians know best" type. And treat committee members with respect.
>
> **Problem:** "How can we get a consensus within the committee that our proposals are the best solution to the problems before us?"
>
> **Suggestion:** You may not be able to get a consensus, but if you can't persuade the committee, you are likely to have a hard time persuading the taxpayers and decisionmakers. Be sure that the division of power is defined. What the committee can do will be circumscribed, but they can certainly make trouble. If you are confident that you are right, chances are good that you can persuade the larger community. After all, you are the experts. If you can't, you will just have to take your lumps and examine how you could have done things differently to change the outcome—for future battles.
>
> **Problem:** "How can we get them to be partisans of the plan?"
>
> **Suggestion:** This can never be guaranteed, but if the agency has shown strong leadership, if the committee has been kept informed all along, has had a chance to make comments and recommendations and has seen some of them adopted, and if reasons for not adopting others have been given (in a reasonable and non-patronizing way), chances are much improved. If committee members are given real responsibilities, as at the time of public meetings, that will help, too.

According to a study of 208 agencies made in 1975, an agency's budget for public participation averaged from 1 to 20 percent. While no information is available on the specific costs associated with advisory committees alone, one agency (most of whose public participation is its advisory committee activities), conservatively estimates its public participation budget is at 15-16 percent.

Inadequate public participation budgets have caused many problems but agencies have often discovered this when it was too late to allocate any more money.

What are probable advisory committee budget items? Some are identified here along with a suggested formula for calculating the costs. These budget items are included as *direct* and *indirect* expenses. Direct expenses are those which must be paid for, out of the "agency pocket", when incurred. Indirect expenses are part of the general agency or program budget (that is, not normally allocated to advisory committees or other citizen participation efforts). Because of the time which agency staff must spend in preparing for, conducting, and following up on advisory committee meetings and other activities, indirect expenses, (expenses which include personnel costs) will exceed direct expenses. Budgeting for them will help assure effective advisory committee operations.

A budget should be prepared for each committee and subcommittee, the two-year budget probably should be broken down into six-, four-, or three-month periods because committee expenses will not be incurred at the same rate over that period. Some months will require more meetings and more budget than others. Developing such as "cash-flow" budget can help ensure having enough money or time later in the planning process when committee activity is likely to be most intense.

5 ADVISORY COMMITTEE BUDGETING

Direct Expenses

1. **Printing**
   a. background information for meetings: No. of meetings x No. of pages/meeting x No. of copies (all meetings) x unit cost $ _____

   b. meeting notices: No. of meetings x No. of copies/meeting x unit cost   _____

   c. committee reports: No. of meetings x No. of pages/meeting x No. of copies (all meetings) x unit cost   _____ $_____

2. **Graphic Design and Production**
   a. design: contract or piece rate for No. of charts (all meetings) $ _____

   b. production: No. of charts x No. of copies (all meetings) x unit cost   _____ $_____

3. **Postage**
   a. background information: weight of each piece to be mailed x 1st class piece rate x No. of pieces/meeting x No. of meetings $ _____
   b. meeting notices: weight of each piece to be mailed x 1st class piece rate x No. of pieces/meeting x No. of meetings   _____
   c. committee reports: weight of each piece to be mailed x 1st class piece rate x No. of pieces/meeting x No. of meetings   _____ $ _____

4. **Consumables**
   a. envelopes (see No. 3 above) $ _____
   b. pencils, paper, felt pens, chalk (all meetings)   _____
   c. refreshments (all meetings)   _____ $ _____

5. **Advertising:**
   newspaper to publicize meetings to general public (if required or desired)—for each paper, rate x No. of times $ _____ $ _____

6. **Travel**
   a. reimbursement for participant travel to meetings: No. of meetings x No. of miles (round-trip) each member x No. of members x mileage rate $ _____
   b. reimbursement for staff travel to meetings: No. of meetings x No. of miles (round-trip) each staff person x No. of staff persons x mileage rate   _____
   c. field trips: bus (or other vehicle) rental x No. of times   _____ $ _____

TOTAL, DIRECT EXPENSES $ _____

Indirect Expenses

1. **Agency Personnel**
   a. meeting preparation: for each person, No. of hours x hourly rate $ _____

   b. meeting conduct: for each person, No. of hours x hourly rate   _____
   c. informal member contact: for each person, No. of hours x hourly rate   _____
   d. meeting follow-up: for each person, No. of hours x hourly rate   _____ $ _____
2. **Agency overhead to above:**
   percent of all other unallocated costs necessary to support No. 1 above $ _____

TOTAL, INDIRECT EXPENSES $ _____
TOTAL, ADVISORY COMMITTEE $ _____

6 SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROBLEMS OF STATE WATER QUALITY AGENCIES

Generally, this guide to Advisory Committees applies to States as well as to areawide agencies. But there are some differences between State and areawide advisory committees, which can result in some different problems for States.

Requirements

The State must do planning in non-designated areas, and must coordinate the water quality planning of *all* agencies within the State—including local, State, interstate, and Federal agencies. This additional duty is reflected in what is expected of statewide advisory committees.*

To accomplish this, the State's 208 policy advisory committee must have a majority of elected officials of local units of government, unless the EPA Regional Administrator permits otherwise. In addition, representatives of Federal and other appropriate agencies should be included on the policy advisory committee. And it is strongly urged that at least one advisory group be set up for each planning area.

While there is no requirement for citizen advisory committees at the State level, many States have established them as a help with the whole citizen participation program. Some States have also set up technical advisory committees.

* See Appendix A for relevant portions of the law, regulations, and guidelines. Appendix B provides advice on organizing and reorganizing committees, which applies generally to States as well as to areawide agencies.

Who Is on the State Committees?

In many States, the Governor's cabinet or staff, supplemented with key legislators, may form the nucleus of the policy advisory committee. Often, States have an existing board or committee, which may advise on many aspects of State Government. This may be used for the citizen advisory committee. (The use of existing committees is advised for States as well as areawide agencies.)

Balance is perhaps even more important for State committees than for areawide ones. Representatives from significant statewide interest groups and organizations should be included—labor, business, agriculture, environmental, taxpayer, conservation, engineering, civic, consumer. The EPA *Public Participation Handbook* suggests inclusion of:

"local elected officials, appointed officials who make water quality related decisions, those groups or individuals who express a special interest, groups whose support or opposition could affect a plan's approval, and citizens who would bear the brunt of implementation impacts. " (P.21)

In one State with no areawide agencies, a selection committee chose the members of the citizen advisory committee. Organizations were asked to submit names and these were winnowed and balanced to provide regional and other representation. In addition, a special task force advises this committee on legal,

technical and financial ramifications, but these people are not members of the committee.

Since an advisory group is recommended for each planning area, the statewide committee could consist of representatives of the various local areas. In another State which is doing all the State's 208 planning, there is a policy advisory committee for each basin. The chairperson and vice chairperson of each constitute the statewide policy advisory committee. The local groups receive recommendations from their areas and pass them on to the State governing body.

Such a committee, however, may be less than ideal because each of its members is specifically pursuing the local interests of his or her basin, rather than focusing on a statewide perspective.

State committees must address the goals of the whole State. Taking such a broad view is difficult. There are not many groups (or individuals) who have such a State perspective.

What Do State Committees Do?

According to the *Handbook*, the purpose of State advisory committees is to help planners and State government officials determine "the best, fairest and most practical means of dealing with water quality problems."

What they do depends to some extent on the size and nature of the State, and how much of it is non-designated. If there are many designated areawide agencies, the role of the State agency and its committees may be mostly a coordinating one.

Because of local interest, it is likely to be easier to obtain citizen participation on the local level, so that the State agency (and committee) will be very interested in helping see that areawide citizen participation efforts are effective.

State advisory committees or special task forces can help resolve conflicts between communities or help with particular water quality problems that may cross the boundaries of areawide agencies, such as feedlot runoff, forestry activities, or urban stormwater.

As with areawide committees, an important task for advisory group members is getting members of the groups they represent to participate in the planning process. They should be doing public education not only with their own organizations, but generally in their own areas.

It can be helpful for the State committee to hold its meetings in various parts of the State, to observe local conditions first hand and to hear about problems and solutions from local people. A committee member from the area (if there is one) may act in a host role with the help of the agency staff. Where areawide agencies have been designated, the State committee can meet with the committee(s) of the local agencies.

A State advisory committee has a special responsibility to help with any public meetings held by the State agency. (See the 208 Guide No. 1 (Public Meetings) for advice on statewide meetings). This will likely require working closely with a local organization and local representatives of statewide interest groups to prepare for the meeting and help stimulate attendance.

How Do State Committees Operate?

How State committees operate depends somewhat on the size and nature of the State. If the State is large, and water quality problems differ vastly from one part to another, the committee may work mostly through subcommittees based on area or subjects rather than holding meetings of the full committee.

In any case, State committee meetings have to be carefully scheduled, since members are likely to have to travel some distance. It may be appropriate to reimburse members' expenses since some members may have to stay over night. And meetings should be arranged so that the same people are not always inconvenienced.

How Does
The Staff Help?

The lead agency responsible for the State water quality management plan is also responsible for staffing the statewide committees and acknowledging, coordinating and responding to their advice.

The agency may appoint another government agency as its deputy in dealing with the committee or may hire a consultant, but the responsibility remains that of the State agency.

In one State, a statewide citizen organization contracted to staff the citizen advisory committee. It made the citizen committee autonomous, and the participants have found it very satisfactory. The committee is reportedly well organized, and is able to exercise power and affect major decisions including consultant selection. (The policy advisory committee in the same State is staffed by an organization of municipalities rather than by the State agency.)

Informal staff contacts may be more important for State committees because of having meetings of the full committee. Meetings are more difficult to arrange.

A State agency should consider annually inviting one or two representatives of each of the areawide agencies to meet with the State committee, on State issues and how they affect local goals and activities. Nuts and bolts conferences can be useful, too— how to conduct meetings, how to get publicity, etc. At least one State has been doing this.

APPENDIX A.
REQUIREMENTS
OF THE LAW,
REGULATIONS,
AND GUIDELINES

For Areawide Agencies

Sec. 101(e) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, PL 92-500, provides:
"Public participation in the development, revision, and enforcement of any regulation, standard, effluent limitation, plan, or program established by the Administrator or any State under this Act shall be provided for, encouraged, and assisted by the Administrator and the States . . ."
Clearly, this is a broad requirement, and it is being interpreted broadly by EPA at headquarters and in the regions.

There are many specific regulations relating to public participation. The general ones are contained in 40 CFR 105, and those relating to 208 planning are mostly in 40 CFR 130. There are few specific requirements for advisory committees, but provisions concerning assistance to the public and consultation are particularly relevant. The Rules and Regulations (40 CFR 130) require *policy* advisory committees.

40 CFR 130.16(c) specifies that *" . . . a policy advisory committee (s) shall be established to advise the responsible planning or implementing agency during the development and implementation of the plan on broad policy matters, including the fiscal, economic, and social impacts of the plan . . . "*

Sec. 130.16(d) adds
"The policy advisory committee for designated areawide planning areas shall include representatives of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Army, and the Interior, and such other Federal and local agencies as may be appropriate in the opinion of EPA, the State(s), and the designated areawide planning agency."

The Draft Guidelines for Water Quality Management Program Development (WQM) add that, as a result of an agreement between the agencies, " . . . the designated area planning committee must create a policy advisory committee, with representatives of the Departments of Agriculture, Interior and Army invited to participate . "

" . . . A special effort should be made to include representatives of agencies responsible for other environmental programs being conducted in the planning area . . . "

" . . . In addition to Policy Advisory Committee, citizen advisory committees should be established. It is unlikely that adequate citizen input will be obtained solely through the Policy Advisory Committee. Citizens can provide valuable inputs throughout the planning process. Their participation should be actively encouraged." (P. 4-9, 4-10)

The use of existing policy advisory committees is actively encouraged in Sec. 130-16(c) of the Rules and Regulations. The Draft Guidelines also emphasize that " . . . It is important . . . that representatives of the planning agencies responsible for various programs be included in any advisory group which might be created to ensure periodic consultation between the agencies." (P. 12-3)

For States

In addition to general requirements above, there are some provisions specifically addressed to States.

40 CFR 130.16(c) provides that "The State shall provide a mechanism for meaningful and significant results from local, State, interstate and Federal units of government. As an element of this mechanism, a policy advisory committee(s) shall be established to advise the responsible planning or implementing agency during the development and implementation of the plan on broad policy matters, including the fiscal, economic, and social impacts of the plan. Use of existing policy advisory committees is encouraged: however as a minimum, this policy advisory committee shall include a ma rity membership of representatives o .inf elec ed officials of local units of government."

The Regional Administrator may make exceptions to this arrangement provided there is no substantial disagreement from the affected local jurisdictions.

The Draft Guidelines expand upon this requirement:
" . . . The States should exercise discretion and imagination in setting up advisory committee structures and procedures that best contribute to developing implementable water quality plans.
" . . . While the regulations only require one advisory group, it is strongly recommended that at least one advisory group be established for each planning area. Representatives from Federal land managing agencies should be included on such committees where Federal lands constitute a significant part of the planning area. The advisory committee should meet with the agency responsible for the State WQM Plan in order to discuss and make recommendations on each of the following overall steps of planning: review of the EPA/State Agreement, establishment of objectives and analysis of problems, analysis of abatement measures and controls, consideration of alternatives, and plan selection.
" . . Each advisory group should make any recommendations it feels appropriate to the planning agency responsible for the State WQM Plan in its area. The planning agency director should inform the advisory group of his actions with the advisory group recommendations." (P. 2-8)

The Draft Guidelines also provide:
" . . It is important . . . that representatives of the planning agencies responsible for various programs be included in any advisory group which might be created to ensure periodic consultation between the agencies. The Part 130 regulations require the establishment of at least one policy advisory committee. Representatives of programs with a major relationship to the State WQM Plan should be members of any advisory committees which are used." (P. 12-3)

APPENDIX B. ORGANIZING OR REORGANIZING A COMMITTEE

Although most areawide water quality management agencies and States have organized policy advisory and other committees, additional committees might be desired. The following guidance covers points on organizing or reorganizing committees.

Types of Members

Committees may be made up of representatives of organized groups who are likely to be interested in the plan; people who are connected with or have certain interests, although they may not officially represent those interests; individuals who want to participate, or a combination of two or all of these. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

Organizational Representation

Organizational representatives are expected to report on what is going on in the committee, and with the plan to the groups they represent. They are also expected to report to the committee the concerns and interests of their groups. Ideally, they should have authority to speak for their agencies or groups officially in any committee action.

The chief advantage of this member is this ability to speak for a broader constituency. The organization commitment should help make all its members partisans of the finished plan. Committee members also act as advocates of their constituencies. And, a major function of each committee member is to help get his or her group involved in the process.

There are several disadvantages. Organizational representatives may not communicate (either to or from) with their

organizations as much or as well as would be desirable. (The agency can monitor the feedback process, and if necessary, help members with the reporting.) Committee members may not be able to speak definitively for their organizations.

Membership may or may not be truly representative of community views. It is difficult to assure representation of all interests. Some organizations may feel participation will compromise their independence from the finished plan, or they want to be free to take legal action later. Another disadvantage is that in volunteer organizations the necessary mechanics—timely board or membership meetings for information exchange on committee matters, and specific mechanisms for reporting—often are missing

Interest Representation

This is similar, but less formal. Committee members are chosen for their known interests—professional, employment, organizational membership, or public statements—but are not expected to formally represent any particular group. (Citizens can represent their vocational or avocational interests). Examples are developers, industrialists, fishermen, and environmentalists.

In this case, discussion and decisions may be less inhibited since organizations are not put on the spot. But there is no assurance that others besides the individuals on the committee will become informed or involved. There is also the difficulty of identifying the one who can be most effective. Support for implementation of the plan depends on how accurately the members reflect the "public" interest.

Open Membership

Here, anyone who comes to meetings and abides by the committee rules (such as regular attendance) becomes a member.

Such a system avoids the accusation of elitism, and demonstrates the openness of the process. But there is no assurance of balance. Size is unpredictable—the committee might be big and unwieldy, or too small to be useful. Few agencies operate on an open membership basis, most common is a combination.

Combination

Most agencies have a combination of member types. Although some agencies invite volunteers and then augment them with people from groups that did not come forward.

Problem: "A known troublemaker has volunteered. Do we have to accept him?"

Suggestion: Rejecting him may lead to more trouble than accepting him. Strong agency and chairperson leadership and cooperation from other committee members should be able to minimize the problem.

Having a committee with some "official" representatives along with others who are only vaguely representative can create some other problems. A representative of a several hundred-member organization may feel that his voice ought to be worth more than that of an individual.

Another consideration is that people often wear more than one hat. One person could, for example, represent the Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, taxpaying homeowners—and women—but all those interests might not *feel* represented by that one person.

Geographical distribution is also important. And consider other elements of balance - race, sex, age, income level. If all parts of society are not represented, problems could emerge later. It's especially important for a citizen advisory committee not to leave out some segment of the community.

In case of doubt, first identify the groups that you know about. Then ask them to suggest others. When you start getting duplicate suggestions you can assume that you have probably covered all the bases.

Selecting the Individual Members

Individual members should be productive and work well together, as well as (preferably) be representative.

The regulations encourage the use of existing groups. However, they may be too busy to devote proper attention to 208 planning, or, they may have some conflicts because of other issues. On the other hand, the use of an existing group can help with coordination with other programs—coastal zone planning or water supply planning. Most existing committees have to be augmented to meet the requirements of the regulations.

There are several methods of selecting members.

Organizational Selection

Groups are asked to pick their own representatives. The process should produce the person the organization feels is most qualified but a drawback is that it may also take a long time for the group to make an "official" choice.

Agency Selection

If you pick the people yourself, you will be sure to get the ones you want but it might seem self-serving, particularly if some "obvious" people are left out.

Third Party Selection

The agency can ask a respected neutral group or individual to choose committee members.

Group Nomination

This is similar to organization selection, except that groups nominate prospective members; then the agency chooses from the nominees. This gives both the participating groups and the agency some choice. It can be time-consuming but, if time allows, this method may be best.

Snowball

First, one individual or organization who agrees to serve is selected. That person selects the second, together they select the next, and so on. This requires careful selection of the right individual in the beginning, and specific agency instructions regarding the representation desired. This method insulates the agency from any charge of manipulation.

Persuading People to Serve

Sometimes it is hard to persuade some of the most needed people, such as key community leaders, to join the committee. If prospective members are invited by letter, there should always be follow-up telephone calls to answer their questions and stir up enthusiasm.

When people are reluctant, urge them to come to one meeting to see how interesting, important, and efficient the activity will be. Favorable publicity about the committee, stressing the vital tasks it will be performing, may help.

In some areas, being a member of such an advisory committee is considered an honor, and is sought. If committees do credible work, and it is appropriately acknowledged by the agencies, this will be true everywhere!

Committee Leadership

Committee leadership to a great extent determines the success of a committee. "Leadership is vital", said one agency official. "We first identified people who could run meetings and force out decisions."

There are several different ways of choosing the leadership.

Selection by Governing Body/Agency

This method means that the chairperson is selected and then helps select other people on the committee.

It's probably best not to have the chairperson strongly identified with one competing interest, although this can work in some cases.

Member Election

This is democratic, and shows that the agency is not controlling the selection. However, it cannot be done until the whole committee is in place. And it may not result in choice of the most effective leader. Members may be strangers and voting may be done on the basis of name familiarity, popularity, or some other irrelevant characteristic.

Temporary Selection

The governing body/agency may select a chairperson for a specific period of time, then have member election. This assures eventual choice by the members, but it may be painful to change, and may cause friction.

Rotating

This assumes that there are several potential leaders, and avoids some conflict in the selection or election but it can disrupt continuity.

Agency Chairing

Chairing by an agency person can be done in the beginning for a short time, or in emergencies, but should be limited.

Committee Size and Structure

Size

One study shows committee membership varies from 2 to 250! The average, however, is between 25 and 75.

Five to ten people is generally considered best for good discussion and interaction in a group. However, keep in mind that it is seldom that all members will attend. Some consultants report that it takes a group of 30-40 to end up with the desired 5 to 10.

Structure

A committee may be organized by first deciding on needed subcommittees, appointing them, and adding them up into the full committee. Or, one can first organize the whole committee and then divide it into subcommittees. An executive or steering committee may also be needed.

One agency gave members a choice of subcommittee they wished to serve on with the leadership and staff making the final decisions.

Subcommittee Functions

Subcommittees can be determined even after the committee has been constituted. Some ways to structure subcommittees are by:
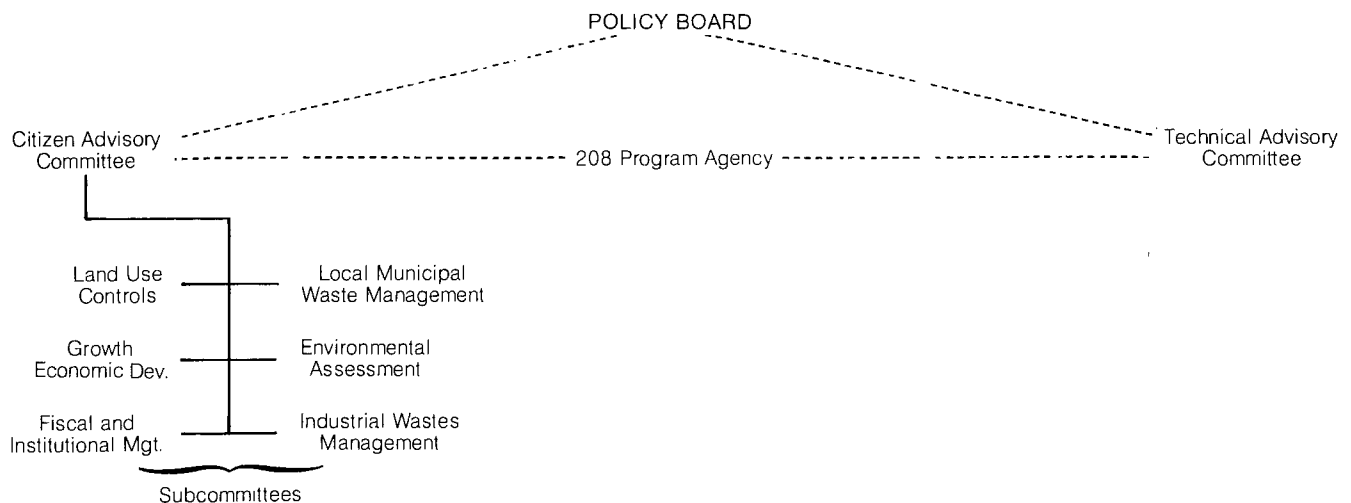
● Plan component (nonpoint source management, point source, stormwater, land disposal)

● Impact: economic, social, environmental

● Process: technical, policy, participation

● Geography: sub-basin, political b undary

It is advisable to have an interest balance on each subcommittee. This minimizes the policy battles that may have to be brought out in the full committee.

Special Considerations

"Some advisory committees are so elaborate that they fail," said one agency person. "The main thing is to have it run by one good, politically astute person." There is a danger in organizing too many committees at once, with all the staff help they need to be successful.

For your information organization charts of some 208 agencies and their committee and subcommittee structures follow.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Technical Advisory
Committee

Citizens Advisory
Committee

Project Staff

MC-COS/DD Support
Staff

(Contract Areas)

| Engineering | Management | Water Quality | Public Participation | Environmental Assessment |

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Technical Advisory
Committee

Study Advisory
Committee

| Municipal Dischargers | Industrial Dischargers | Public-Environmental-Conservation Groups |

Subcommittees

County Public
Participation Programs

Special
Interest
Groups

POLICY GROUP

Steering Committee

Institutional Advisory
Committee

Operations Committee

Solid Waste ←→ Implementation-Management, Legal & Finance

Land Use Planning ←→ Public Participation

Surface Water Quality & Resources ←→ Transportation

Nonpoint Source ←→ Population & Economy

Environmental Quality ←

Technical Committees

AREAWIDE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Technical Advisory Committee

Government Agencies Advisory Representatives

Environmental Protection

Agriculture & Forestry

Marine Resources

Economic & Industrial Development

Citizen Subcommittees

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY COMMITTEE

208 Interstate Coordinating Committee

Staff

Environmental Task Force

Environmental Agency Advisory Committee

(Public Meetings)

Point Source Committee

Non point Source Committee

Management/Institutional/ Fiscal Committee

APPENDIX C.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bishop, A. Bruce. *Public Participation in Water Resources Planning.* U.S. Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources, Alexandria, Virginia, 1970

Theory of public participation and models for achieving it. Includes material on citizen advisory groups

Copp, H.D. *More Responsive Water Planning Is Possible.* Washington State University, R. L. Albrook Hydraulic Laboratory, Pullman, 1973

Based on studies of water planning and management in Washington, this paper suggests a number of procedures, including the use of advisory groups

Corwin, Beverly, and Susan Hall. *"White Paper". 208 Citizen Involvement.* Clean Water Project League of Women Voters of Seattle under contract to Region X, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Seattle, Washington, 1976. (Unpublished draft.)

A supplement to the *Public Participation Handbook for Water Quality Management,* designed to specify the philosophy and goals of Region X regarding public participation. Includes material on advisory committees, and questions for self-evaluation of program.

Cuyahoga County Regional Planning Commission, *Study Design for a Regional Water and Sewer Plan.* Cleveland, Ohio, August 1971

A brief description of a local plan which includes citizen participation particularly through advisory committees.

Davis, G. D. "The Commission Form of Policy Determination: Is the Public Involved?" *Proceedings of the Symposium on Social and Economic Aspects of Water Resources Development,* Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, June 21-23, 1971.

A short history of the Adirondack Study Commission and associated bodies, including a discussion of the advantages to administrators, as well as problems that may arise, of a commission which makes recommendations.

Emerson, Patricia H. *Overview of Citizen Participation.* Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Washington for Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Washington State Department of Ecology. Seattle, Washington, 1975

Among the specific aspects of citizen participation studied here were three advisory committees. Their problems and successes are noted.

Environmental Comment. Urban Land Institute, 1200 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C 20036. January 1976.

This issue of this monthly publication is devoted to 208 planning. Several of the articles are of interest in relation to advisory committees, especially "Citizen Participation in the 208 Program" by Marvin S. Gilman, the chairperson of the New Castle County (Delaware) advisory committee

Ertel, M.O. *The Participatory Role of Citizen Advisory Groups in New England Water Resource Planning: A Preliminary Study.* Water Resources Research Center, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1972

Surveys and evaluates several citizen advisory groups in New England, with suggestions for the future.

Felton, P.M. "Case Study: Stimulating Community Involvement: Bringing to Public Decision Makers the Point of View of Private Citizens." *Proceedings of the Symposium on Social and Economic Aspects of Water Resources Development,* Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, June 21-23, 1971

Discussion of the Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin, with suggestions for improvement in community involvement in water resources planning, including establishment of representative citizen advisory groups.

Gates, Clare. *Profile of 208 Agencies.* U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Washington, D.C., 1976 (Unpublished.)

This paper provides a useful survey of 25 208 agencies' advisory committees—types of committees, who serves on them, and what are their purposes. Many organization charts are included, as well as names and addresses of contact persons

Gleckner, Christine. *The Costs of Public Participation in the New Castle County Areawide Waste Treatment Management Program.* New Castle County Areawide Waste Treatment Management Program, One Peddler's Row, Peddler's Village, Newark, Delaware 19711 1975

Detailed accounting for public participation costs of the agency. Since almost all of the participation to date has been through advisory committees, this paper offers some reasonable benchmarks.

Gleckner, Christine, and James Owen. *Public Participation in the New Castle County Areawide Waste Treatment Management Program.* New Castle County Areawide Waste Treatment Management Program, 1975. See above for address

A brief overview of the goals and objectives, organization and operation of this program, which relies primarily on advisory committees.

Hanchey, James R. *Public Involvement in the Corps of Engineers Planning Process.* U.S. Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, 1975.

A manual on public participation for Corps personnel. Includes helpful section on advisory groups.

McGinnis, E.S. *Power Plant Siting—Social/Political Considerations.* Northern States Power Co., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1971.

Experience of a private power company in establishing an advisory group to help choose a site for a generating plant

McKenzie, Linda, ed. *The Grass Roots and Water Resources Management.* Washington State Water Research Center, Pullman, 1972.

Proceedings of a symposium on all aspects of public participation, including the use of advisory groups

North Central Texas Council of Governments. *Our Natural Resources: Let's Talk Clean Water: Annual Public Participation Program for Water Quality Management Planning 1976-77.* North Central Texas Council of Governments, P.O. Drawer COG, Arlington, Texas 76011. 1976

Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. *Revised Public Participation Work Element.* 1975.

A detailed discussion of the public participation program of this large metropolitan agency, including much information on its advisory committee organization and also including budget figures.

Ragan, James F., Jr. *Public Participation in Water Resources Planning: An Evaluation of the Programs of 15 Corps of Engineers Districts.* U.S. Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, 1975.

A general and detailed study of Corps public participation program, including evaluations and recommendations. Part of the material deals with advisory committees.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Citizen Involvement in OCPC 208 Planning: A Progress Report.* Washington, D.C. 1976

A complete documentation of the Old Colony Planning Council's citizen involvement program, including advisory committee activities, quantified as much as is feasible

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Draft Guidelines for State and Areawide Water Quality Management Program Development.* Washington, D.C., 1976

Contains specific requirements for advisory committees along with many other things.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *National Profile of Section 208 Areawide Management Planning Agencies.* Washington, D.C., 1975.

Useful listing and statistics of 208 agencies which includes some information on their public participation programs including advisory committees.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Public Participation Handbook for Water Quality Management.* Washington, D.C., 1976.

This handbook contains advice on all aspects of citizen participation specifically related to EPA requirements. Information and examples of advisory committees are included.

Widditsch, Ann. *Public Workshops on the Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters Study: An Evaluation.* U.S. Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources, Alexandria, Virginia, 1972.

This case study has information and recommendations relevant to advisory group management.