

Georgia Water Coalition  
Ground Rules for Leadership Team and Partner Meetings

The Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) Leadership Team recognizes that a diverse mix of personalities comprise its roster. The interplay of these different personalities—outgoing, forthright, passionate, thoughtful, considered and/or quiet—is essential to our success. We need a broad and robust discussion in order to identify issues impacting Georgia’s waterways and reach consensus on the solutions that GWC will pursue to address said issues.

While we recognize the essential role the free-flowing exchange of ideas plays in GWC’s success, we will not entertain bullying or intimidating behavior at our meetings. Each GWC member has a right to participate in GWC meetings that are free of discrimination, bullying, and violent or intimidating behavior. Each member must treat the others with patience and respect. Disagreements and debates are expected, but all conflicts should be handled with this ideal of professionalism in mind and practice. This standard of behavior must be extended to all GWC Leadership Team and Membership meetings. GWC meetings must be forums at which all voices are welcomed and meaningfully considered if we want to truly achieve our mission.

Each GWC Leadership Team meeting is led by a host, while each Membership meeting is led by a facilitator. These ground rules are provided to the host/facilitator so that they may better lead discussions in the interest of facilitating robust, congenial and—above-all—productive meetings.

- **Introductions.** Each meeting will begin with introductions.
- **Ground Rules.** During introductions, the meeting host/facilitator will walk participants through the following ground rules.
  - **All participants will engage in active listening.** Show respect for speakers and let them know their comments are heard and understood.
  - **Do not interrupt.** Wait until a speaker is finished before seeking to add your comments to the conversation.
  - **Do not digress.** Stay on topic and keep your replies responsive to the subject being addressed.
  - **Be respectful.** If you have questions or disagree with a comment, focus on the subject being addressed, not the speaker themselves.
- **Leading the Meeting.** The Host/Facilitator should take an active role in guiding the meeting, employing basic facilitation skills (e.g., SLAPS)
  - **Stay Neutral.** Host/Facilitator should focus on the meeting process, not offer opinions on content.

- **Ask open-ended questions** to encourage thorough discussion, gather information, and draw out key points of discussion (e.g., who, what, why, how?).
  - **Solicit input.** The Host/Facilitator should seek input from all meeting participants, particularly those who have not spoken.
  - **Paraphrase** discussions to clarify what was said.
  - **Summarize** discussions to identify key takeaways and conclusions.
- **Intervention.** The Host/Facilitator should be ready to intervene when the meeting is sidetracked or interrupted. Before intervening, the Host/Facilitator should determine if the problem is serious enough to warrant interrupting the meeting discussion (e.g., Is the problem serious? Will it go away by itself? Is it jeopardizing productivity? Will my interruption be more disruptive than the problem?).
    - **Identify Sidetracks.** Neutrally observe when the group gets off track and suggest that the group stay on-topic and return to the tangential topic at a later time.
    - **Disruptive Behavior.** If any participant's words or behavior are disruptive (e.g., constant interruptions, preventing others from speaking or preventing participants from covering the intended agenda items/meeting topics), the Host/Facilitator should stop the conversation, neutrally observe that the discussion has moved away from the intended topic, and direct the group either back to the topic or move on to the next item on the agenda.