

Chapters of the Rock River Coalition Fact Sheet

A Rock River Coalition (RRC) Chapter is a group of individuals, organized under the legal umbrella of the RRC, who are working towards improving the environmental, economic, cultural or recreational resources within a specific region within the Basin.

A chapter is an organizational alternative to developing a non-profit corporation. It is designed for people who want to make a long-term commitment towards improving the resources of the basin but don't wish to spend the time and resources on developing a new organization.

It is not designed for groups who already are an incorporated non-profit.

The Rock River Coalition Board hopes that establishing chapters throughout the basin will provide an opportunity for small groups of dedicated individuals to pursue projects without the need to incorporate.

Benefits

The benefits to groups who become a RRC Chapter

- RRC fiscal management of books, grants and donations including invoicing and paying bills.
- Insurance coverage through the RRC.
- Legal 501(c)3 status making contributions tax deductible.
- Time and resources saved on developing by-laws, electing officers or submitting annual IRS reports, which can often deplete the enthusiasm of group members.
- They become part of a well-recognized, award winning organization with grant applications from the Chapter sharing this reputation.
- Ability to promote its efforts through the RRC newsletter and website
- Obtain guidance on its activities through consultation with the RRC board and staff.
- 25% of the value of any RRC membership, where the member identifies themselves as a chapter member goes for the chapters use. The member also receives full RRC membership benefits depending on their level of contribution.
- \$100 annually from the RRC budget is dedicated for use by the chapter (in addition to the 25% of identified membership). Funds can be used for any legitimate purpose of the chapter such as paying for printing, mailing, room rental, speakers, etc.
- The RRC only charges small fees for fiscal management of grants, which represent the true cost to the RRC of managing the grants, versus the percentage most fiscal agents charge. (This cost is worked out in advance of grant submittal and will vary depending on the complexities of fiscal grant management.)
- One time \$500 no interest loan available, which must have a pay-back strategy before being approved.

The benefits to the Rock River Coalition

- Significant local accomplishments in achieving the RRC mission, based on needs and desires of area residents, groups and local governments.
- Increased involvement in the RRC by groups and individuals in the basin.
- Increased membership in the overall organization.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chapter Roles and Responsibilities: Chapters must

- Develop rules governing the conduct of their activities, within the policies of the RRC.
- Maintain contact with the RRC Board liaison as to chapter activities.
- Develop an action plan, and provide annual updates to the RRC board on progress towards achieving the goals, along with any changes to the plan.

- Manage its own activities and conduct due diligence in all matters related to the activity especially addressing all fiscal, safety and liability concerns.
- Provide articles and pictures to the Rock River Reflections newsletter.
- Provide chapter updates to the RRC Facebook page.
- Maintain a page on the RRC website on chapter activities.
- Identify yourself as an RRC chapter in grant proposals and media releases.
- Operate and conduct its business affairs in accordance with the established policies of the RRC, as set forth in the Bylaws, their Charter and other documents that may be adopted by the RRC.
- The Chapter and its officers are not authorized to represent or act on behalf of the Rock River Coalition; only the RRC Board is so authorized.
- Not take any action that would jeopardize the 501(c)3 status of the RRC.

Common Questions

Q1 How are donations to the Chapter handled?

A1 It depends on what the donation is for. The RRC can work with the Chapter for specific situations but in general we expect the following to be the standard policy:

- Donations targeted to the Chapter are 100% available for use by the Chapter, less a standard membership fee. For example an individual makes a \$100 donation to the Chapter; the Chapter receives \$75 plus 25% of the individual membership fee of \$6.25 for a total of \$81.25. The remainder is used by the RRC to support that donor as a member. The donor receives full benefits at the level of the donation.
- Donations specified to a specific project of the Chapter are 100% applied to that project, but no membership benefits are provided to the donor, except for a complimentary subscription for that calendar year to the Rock River Reflections newsletter.

Q2 What happens if the group no longer functions?

A2 The RRC does understand that Chapters might lose momentum, finish their goals, or decide that they have the ability and desire to establish a separate non-profit corporation. The Charter will have a section on dissolution, including how finances will be handled. Please see the Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed Charter for the specific language.

Q3 What if we have a project we want to do, but aren't interested in becoming a Chapter?

A3 The group should contact the RRC president with a description of the event/action they are interested in doing. The group must demonstrate the leadership and ability to complete the project. If the project matches our mission and the current board priorities, the RRC president will query the board to see if there is a board member willing to work with the group. Generally if the project would primarily involve RRC functioning as a fiscal agent, and we have a history with the group, things can move forward. If the group has needs for project management and leadership, it is unlikely that our board can do more than give helpful advice. Generally the Board is already fully committed to its own projects and activities.

Q4 Who are the Chapters of the Rock River Coalition?

A4 The Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed was established as a chapter in 2008. They focus on invasive species eradication, annual canoe trips, stream monitoring and education of themselves, local citizens and elected officials. They have developed their own strategic plan which can be found on the RRC website. Highlights have included receiving several grants for knotweed and field parsnip control, being asked to sit on an advisory panel for a Veridian development in the Village of Oregon and having the Badfish Creek recognized in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan. They are working with the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District on potential changes to discharge to the Badfish Creek.

The RRC is exploring potential chapter development with groups in Waterloo and Johnson Creek

How to Become a Chapter of the Rock River Coalition

- Contact the RRC President, who will help identify a current or past board member to work with the group.
- The group meets and develops its organizational structure and rules, including the election of a chair and a treasurer
- The group develops its action plan, with both short-term i.e. less than one year and long term goals. The plan should include the following components:
 1. identifies its purpose: what it wants to do as a group
 2. identifies the strengths and opportunities that the group currently has
 3. identifies barriers and needs
 4. identifies how to overcome those barriers or how to meet those needs
 - Identifies the specific actions the group plans on accomplishing, including detailed steps for each action
 - Resources needed
 - How to acquire resources not already available i.e. funding, in-kind,
 - Who will be responsible
 - Date anticipated for start and for completion
 5. plan should have both short-term i.e. less than one year and long term goals.
- Working with the RRC Board, the action plan will be finalized.
- The group will agree on their name.
- Working with their representative on the RRC Board, they will write a draft charter, establishing the roles and responsibilities of the group and the RRC. Before becoming a chapter, the interested group develops goals and a plan. If approved, the RRC Board, issues a Charter setting forth the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the Chapter. Steps are also included in the Charter regarding budgets and funding, how changes to the plan can be made and establishing reporting requirements.
- The Charter is a legal document and will be signed at a public event, such as the RRC Annual Meeting.