



## PROCEDURES FOR DRBC OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT SESSIONS

Unlike the public hearing on matters such as dockets, rules, or resolutions that are under consideration by the Commission for a specific action, Open Public Comment Sessions provide an opportunity for interested persons to speak about **other topics that are relevant to the management of the basin's waters and the scope of DRBC's authority.**

**Comments made during Open Public Comment Sessions are not included in any decision-making record.** There is no requirement for the Commission to provide for open public comment. The Commission affords this opportunity in order to be better informed about the concerns of basin water users.

Open Public Comment Sessions generally will be:

- held, as time allows, upon the conclusion of Commission business at DRBC business meetings;
- limited to one hour per quarter; and
- noticed in advance on the DRBC web site.

The public will be informed in advance if additional open public comment time is planned for any reason. In addition, the Business Meeting Chair may choose to extend or suspend Open Public Comment Sessions the day of the meeting or during a meeting, as required.

The Commissioners and staff appreciate the public's participation and thank individuals in advance for cooperating with the procedures set forth below. These procedures are intended to help sustain the flow of Commission Open Public Comment Sessions as well as to provide as many people as possible the opportunity to be heard on relevant topics as time allows. The Commission may modify these rules as necessary to ensure that business meeting objectives are met and to ensure public safety and security.

1. **Speaker Registration.** Individuals who wish to provide an open public comment are asked to "register" in either of the following ways:
  - (Preferred) Online at a web site set up in advance for each open public comment session. The web site address for registration will be included in the public notice for the meeting. Online registration must occur prior to the scheduled business meeting date (no later than 5 PM on the day before the scheduled business meeting date). This method is preferred and encouraged since it allows the Commission to plan and implement business meeting schedules and procedures.

- By completing and submitting a comment card at the business meeting clearly indicating the speaker's name, affiliation, and the matter(s) on which he/she wishes to comment.  
Registration will remain open throughout the business meeting, but please note that the open public comment session is as time allows, is limited to one hour, and those that pre-register (in most instances) will have priority.
2. **"As Time Allows."** On business meeting days, the Commission's first priority will always be to complete scheduled formal business. The opportunity for open public comment is always subject to the discretion of the Business Meeting Chair.
  3. **Speaker Sequence.** Commenters who have registered in advance will generally be called first. Commenters are asked to begin by clearly stating their name and affiliation, as applicable. The Business Meeting Chair may invite elected government officials to speak before others in order to afford everyone an opportunity to hear them and to expedite their return to their official duties. People in the audience who have not yet registered may be offered the opportunity to comment as time allows, at the discretion of the Business Meeting Chair.
  4. **Time Limits for Speakers.** The maximum time typically afforded for all open public comments will be **one hour, time permitting**. However, if there are special circumstances or unique issues that require information exchange beyond one hour, the Commission will consider holding special meetings or allowing more time for public input on a case-by-case basis. **Each speaker should plan for a maximum three minute time limit**. When a commenter's time has expired, the commenter must stop speaking and return to his/her seat. Commenters may not cede any portion of their time to another commenter. Time limits may be adjusted at the session as required.
  5. **Questions and Dialogue.** As a general rule, the Commissioners and staff will not respond to open public comments. At the request of a speaker, the Business Meeting Chair may ask a staff member to clarify an ambiguity or confirm facts. The Business Meeting Chair may comment after a speaker finishes to clarify certain issues for the benefit of the audience.
  6. **No Comment by Audio/Video.** Open public comments will not be accepted via phone, video, or audio recording. Individuals or their representatives who wish to speak must do so in person.
  7. **Recordkeeping.** Open public comments are not included in any decision-making record.
  8. **Speaker Conduct, Audience Conduct, Safety, and Security.** Business meeting attendees should understand and respect the fact that the safety and security of all participants is a primary objective of the DRBC. All attendees must adhere to the following basic rules of conduct, safety and security:
    - a. Attendees should always find, locate, and note the emergency exits in the venue and follow all instructions to vacate should there be an emergency that requires evacuation.
    - b. The audience should remain quiet while others are speaking. Interrupting anyone's open public comment with loud objections, demonstrations, or other disruptions is prohibited.

- c. The Business Meeting Chair and/or trained security officers may remove attendees for conduct, behavior, or language that is disruptive or threatening.
  - d. Audience members may be subject to search and metal scanning by trained security officers. Weapons or items that can be used as weapons are not permitted in the meeting room.
  - e. Speakers should state their name and affiliation and direct all comments to the Commissioners. Speakers should refrain from directly engaging and debating with one another. It is likely and should be expected that individuals will offer differing opinions or points of view; however, all speakers who provide comments in a respectful manner should be respected by the audience.
  - f. Speakers should speak to topics relevant to the scope and authority of the DRBC.
  - g. The Business Meeting Chair may immediately close the Open Public Comment Session if, in the opinion of the Chair, the safety and security of attendees cannot be achieved.
9. **Signs, Placards, Banners & Other Display Media.** Except as provided below, no signs, placards, banners, props, or other visual displays will be permitted in the public hearing/meeting room or in the registration area. Signs, banners, and other media are permitted in other public areas outside the meeting and registration area; however, if the facility or venue where the public hearing/meeting is being conducted has additional restrictions on the use or location of such media, the public will be informed and must comply with the facility's requirements.

Exception: The use of visual exhibits (such as maps, plans, tables, or charts) to support an individual's public testimony may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. Anyone wishing to display such items during their spoken comment must submit copies for review and must obtain the Commission's prior approval, which can be requested at the time of pre-registration (preferred) or on-site registration. Visual exhibits for support of an individual's public testimony must be no greater in size than 30" x 42", must be handheld, and may not be attached to or projected on walls or mounted on poles, staffs, or other forms of support.

10. **Written Comments.** While open public comments are not included in any decision-making record, individuals who wish to provide written materials will be directed to designated staff or collection area(s) and are asked not to approach the Commissioners.
11. **Video and Audio Recording.** Handheld or stand-based video and audio equipment is generally permitted as long as its use does not interfere with other people's ability to see and hear, and does not otherwise disrupt the proceedings. Those wishing to record open public comments should recognize that: (1) the Business Meeting Chair can end the activity if it is disrupting the meeting; and (2) there will be restrictions on where equipment can be located. Generally, such equipment may not be placed in the area directly in front of the Commissioners, DRBC staff participants, DRBC recording equipment, court reporter, or the podium from which comments are offered.

12. **News Media.** Members of the news media must check in at the registration desk. If news media wish to use video and audio equipment, they should mention this at check-in so they can be directed to a designated area if one has been established. All news media wishing to interview Commissioners or staff must make the request through on-site DRBC Communications Office representatives. All interviews conducted during the business meeting must take place outside of the meeting room.
13. **Meeting Room Access.** All rules and access restrictions established by the host venue will be adhered to, including occupancy limits, emergency and handicapped access, and parking regulations (such as fire lanes and no parking zones). Every person in the room must have a seat or stand in an area designated by DRBC staff. While attendees may come and go as they please (as long as the movement does not disrupt the meeting proceedings), standing in aisles or sharing seats is not allowed.
14. **Green Meetings.** Participants are encouraged to support “Green Meeting” initiatives, such as submitting written materials electronically rather than on paper. Agendas and other related materials will be available to the public electronically and should be brought to the meeting on electronic devices rather than in a paper format, if possible. DRBC will provide very limited paper copies of materials at meetings.

*Last Updated 5/3/2017*