

The Wildlife Society Code of Ethics

(As amended and approved March 2024)

Section 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS – All members of the Society must pledge upon application, renewal, or recertification to uphold and conduct their professional and membership-related activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics as prescribed by the Society in TWS' Code of Ethics and set forth in Sections 2 and 3 below. A person accepting membership in the Society incurs the obligation to conduct their professional and membership-related activities in a responsible and ethical manner.

Section 2. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS – Members of the Society have a responsibility for contributing to an understanding of human society's proper relationship with natural resources and, in particular, for determining the role of wildlife in satisfying human needs and addressing the management of wildlife-related impacts. All members of the Society shall adhere to the following principles and practices in the conduct of their professional and membership-related activities. All members shall:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct and proactively promote and address ethical behavior.
2. Recognize research and scientific management of wildlife species and their environments as primary goals.
3. Encourage and sustain the use of sound biological, physical, and social science information in management decisions.
4. Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, values of wildlife and their habitats.
5. Strive to increase the knowledge and skills needed to advance the practice of wildlife management.
6. Promote competence in the field of wildlife management by supporting high standards of education, employment, and performance.
7. Support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the practice of wildlife management.
8. Refrain from speaking for or representing the Society or any of its Chapters, Sections, or Working Groups in any way, or implying such representation, without appointment or approval by the Council of the Society, its Executive Committee, or the Executive Boards of Chapters, Sections, or Working Groups.

Section 3. STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT – Members of the Society who are employed or otherwise engage in professional activity shall adhere to all provisions of the Code of Ethics, including the following Standards for Professional Conduct. These standards express the intent, practices, and procedures of the Code of Ethics as they particularly apply to wildlife professionals. Wildlife professionals shall at all times:

1. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the wildlife profession. They shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.

2. Refrain from plagiarism in verbal or written communications and shall give credit to the works and ideas of others.
3. Refrain from fabrication, falsification, or suppression of results, and shall not deliberately misrepresent research findings, or otherwise commit scientific fraud.
4. Exercise high standards in the care and use of live vertebrate animals used for research, in accordance with accepted professional guidelines for the respective classes of animals under study.
5. Protect the rights and welfare of human subjects used in research and obtain the informed consent of those individuals, in accordance with approved professional guidelines for human subjects.
6. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and seek to meet the needs of all people when seeking advice in wildlife-related matters. They shall studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of professional authority for personal satisfaction.
7. Recognize and inform clients or employers of the wildlife professional's prime responsibility to the public interest, conservation of the wildlife resource, and the environment. They shall exercise professional judgment and avoid actions or omissions that may compromise these broad responsibilities. They shall cooperate fully with other professionals in the best interest of the wildlife resource.
8. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client or employer, regardless of the degree of remuneration.
9. Accept employment to perform professional services only in areas of their own competence, and consistent with the Code of Ethics. They shall seek to refer clients or employers to other natural resource professionals when the expertise of such professionals shall best serve the interests of the public, wildlife, and the client or employer.
10. Maintain a confidential relationship between professionals and clients or employers except when specifically authorized by the client or employer or required by due process of law or the Code of Ethics to disclose pertinent information. They shall not use such confidences to their personal advantage or to the advantage of other parties, nor shall they permit personal interests or other client or employer relationships to interfere with their professional judgment.
11. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner-beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients or employers of one's qualifications-or in a manner detrimental to fellow professionals and the wildlife resource. They shall clearly distinguish among facts, hypotheses, and opinions. They shall provide professional advice and guidance only when qualified to do so by training and experience.
12. Refuse compensation or rewards of any kind intended to influence their professional judgment or advice or to secure preferential treatment. They shall not permit a person who recommends or employs them, directly or indirectly, to regulate or impair their professional judgment. They shall not accept compensation for the same professional services from any source other than the client or employer without prior consent of all the clients or employers involved.
13. Avoid performing professional services for any client or employer when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well-being of wildlife resources and their environments. If a wildlife professional believes that their employment activities conflict with the Code of Ethics, that person shall advise the client or employer of such conflict.
14. Advise against an action by a client or employer which violates any statute or regulation.

Section 4. ENFORCEMENT – Violations of this Code by a current member of The Wildlife Society (TWS) may result in, but are not limited to, censure¹, censure and suspension of membership for a specified time period, termination of current and future membership in the Society, and/or revocation of any certification credential conferred by TWS. All reported violations will be addressed by the procedures outlined in Clause A and Clause B.

CLAUSE A – Ethics Board – Upon receipt of a complaint, the President will promptly form an Ethics Board of no less than 5 and no more than 7 members of the Society in good standing and appoint one of the members to serve as the Ethics Board Chair. If allegations of a complaint are made against a Certified Wildlife Biologist® (CWB) or an Associate Wildlife Biologist®, at least the Chair of the Ethics Board will be a CWB in good standing. Appointees to an Ethics Board should not be drawn from the same TWS Voting District as the person who files a complaint (i.e., Complainant) or the member against whom the complaint is directed (i.e., Respondent). No current member of Council may be appointed to or serve on the Ethics Board.

CLAUSE B – Procedure for Addressing Code of Ethics Violations

1. The following procedures will be applied to alleged violations of The Wildlife Society's Code of Ethics by current TWS members. All parties to a complaint (Complainant and Respondent) shall be advised of their duty to cooperate in good faith in the review and hearing process as required, and to treat the process and those involved with dignity and respect. All deliberations related to an alleged violation shall be treated as confidential in nature.
2. Information from a previous complaint against a TWS member will not be considered unless the current complaint involves a repeat of previous behavior.
3. An allegation of a violation of the Code of Ethics made against a TWS member shall be filed with TWS by transmitting in writing or via electronic conveyance a signed and dated complaint and any supporting documentation to the TWS President, copying the CEO. All complaints must be signed and dated by the person filing the same (i.e., Complainant). TWS will not consider an anonymous or unsigned complaint.
4. The President will promptly form an Ethics Board and notify each member of the Ethics Board of the identity of the parties in order to provide an opportunity for each Board member to disclose to the President, copying the CEO, any real or potential conflict of interest or if the Board member is otherwise unable to participate in the complaint and hearing process.
5. After the final composition of the Ethics Board is established, the President will immediately transmit a copy of the signed complaint and any supporting documentation to all members

¹ Censure is defined as an official condemnation or reprimand that formally disapproves of a person's actions: e.g., if the Ethics Board finds a violation of the Code of Ethics, they can recommend that TWS sends a letter to the person against whom the finding has been made that specifies the provisions of the Code of Ethics that have been violated, asks them to refrain from any further violations, and indicates that further action may be taken if there is a pattern of repeated behavior.

of the Ethics Board.

6. Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date the complaint and any supporting documents were sent to the Ethics Board, the Board will render one of two possible initial findings: 1) The complaint warrants further review and consideration by the Ethics Board, or 2) The complaint does not warrant further review and consideration by the Ethics Board.
7. If the initial finding by a majority of the members of the Ethics Board is that the complaint is without merit or there is insufficient evidence to support the alleged ethics breach, then the Board will notify the Complainant, as well as the TWS President and CEO of such finding in writing or via electronic conveyance and the matter will be deemed closed and the Ethics Board dissolved.
8. If the initial Ethics Board finding is that there is sufficient evidence and documentation to warrant further review and consideration by the Board, then the Chair of the Ethics Board shall transmit in writing or via electronic conveyance to the Respondent a full copy of the signed complaint and any supporting documentation submitted, as well as a copy of TWS' Code of Ethics. The Chair will also notify the Complainant, TWS' President, and CEO in writing of such initial finding.
9. The Respondent shall have thirty (30) calendar days from the date of transmission of the complaint to submit a written response to the complaint and any supporting documents. The response shall be sent to the Ethics Board Chair, who will promptly transmit such response to each Ethics Board member and the Complainant. A reasonable request from the Respondent for an extension may be allowed (e.g., medical reasons) by submitting such request and the grounds therefore to the Chair of the Ethics Board. If a request for an extension is made, and without providing any details, the Chair of the Ethics Board will notify TWS' President that a request for extension has been made by the Respondent. An extension shall be at the discretion of the Chair of the Ethics Board. If an extension is granted, and without providing any details, the Chair of the Ethics Board will notify TWS' President that an extension has been granted and the revised deadline date for receipt of the written response to the complaint and any supporting documents. If the Respondent wishes to appear before the Ethics Board to present their defense to the allegations, such election must be set forth clearly in their written response to the complaint. A failure to request a hearing in writing before the Ethics Board shall result in the Ethics Board considering the matter solely on the complaint, response, and documentation submitted.
10. If a hearing is requested, the Chair of the Ethics Board, and without providing any details, will notify TWS' President and shall confer with the CEO to schedule a video or telephone conference hearing on a date and at a time agreeable to the Respondent and the Ethics Board. TWS staff shall be charged with making the necessary video or telephone conference arrangements. A requested hearing shall be scheduled within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt by the Chair of the Ethics Board of the Respondent's answer to the complaint and request for a hearing.
11. At any point in the process outlined in the following steps, the Chair may contact the Complainant or the Respondent for more information as requested by the Ethics Board or either party to the complaint.

12. The Ethics Board shall have thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the hearing, if one is requested, or its receipt of the written response to the complaint, to review the complaint and response, confer and render its finding as to whether there was a violation of TWS' Code of Ethics as alleged in the complaint and what, if any, sanction or disciplinary actions, are appropriate.
13. The Chair of the Ethics Board shall promptly notify the Respondent in writing, copying the TWS President and CEO, of the finding of the Ethics Board and the nature of any recommended disciplinary action. The Chair of the Ethics Board shall also notify the Complainant of the finding of the Ethics Board but not the details of any recommended disciplinary action.
14. The Respondent shall have thirty (30) calendar days from the date of written notice of the Ethic's Board's determination that a violation of the Code of Ethics has occurred, and the resulting disciplinary action recommended by the Ethics Board, to appeal the decision. An appeal shall be in writing and submitted to the Chair of the Ethics Board who will immediately transmit a copy of the appeal and any supporting documentation to all members of the Ethics Board and notify the Complainant, the TWS President, and the CEO that an appeal has been submitted to the Board. The appeal must be based on the Respondent's stated grounds and facts to support the appeal set forth in writing and any further supporting information. If a notice of appeal is not submitted within the required time frame, the work of the Ethics Board is complete, and the Board is dissolved.
15. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Ethics Board will review all materials and within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the appeal, render their final decision by majority vote. The Chair of the Ethics Board shall promptly notify the TWS President and CEO of the final decision of the Ethics Board and any recommended disciplinary action.
16. The Chair of the Ethics Board will forward all documentation related to an appeal to the TWS President and CEO. After the President and CEO have received all documents related to an appeal, the work of the Ethics Board is complete, and the Board is dissolved.
17. Any disciplinary action recommended by the Ethics Board, based on their original findings or their findings after considering an appeal, will be reviewed by TWS Council in Executive Session at its next scheduled meeting and render by majority vote a decision on any disciplinary action to be taken, from which there shall be no appeal. In rendering a decision, the content of any documentation provided to the TWS President, or description thereof, may be shared with Council at the discretion of the President during the Executive Session.
18. The TWS President, copying the CEO, will notify the Respondent in writing of any disciplinary action that will be taken. The TWS President, copying the CEO, will also notify the Complainant in writing if any disciplinary action will be taken against the Respondent, but the details of any final disciplinary action shall not be disclosed. If disciplinary action results in suspension or termination of membership, the TWS President will also notify any Section, Chapter, or Working Group in which the Respondent holds an Executive position that the Respondent is not currently a TWS member in good standing. Council will determine the need to notify others on a case-by-case basis if a non-officer is subject to disciplinary action that includes suspension or termination of membership due to a Code of Ethics violation.

19. The written decisions of the Ethics Board and Council, if applicable, along with all supporting documents shall be included in the TWS file on this matter and securely stored by TWS staff with other confidential TWS documents.