

Standards of Conduct

Adopted by the Sierra Club Board of Directors September 11, 2021

SR. 2.2.6: Standards of Conduct

Sierra Club seeks to be an equitable and just place to work and volunteer. In addition to our overall mission of advancing bold environmental policy, all of our actions should explicitly seek to promote equity and justice both internally and externally. All Sierra Club activity should be rooted in equity and justice, to build a Sierra Club that is inclusive, diverse in culture and lived experience, and respectful of our members and the communities in which we work. Volunteers and members have the responsibility to abide by these standards and to hold others accountable for their conduct.

(a) Affirmative Standards of Conduct

(i) Serving as a volunteer or in an appointed or elected position of leadership is a privilege that can be lost by not acting in the best interest of Sierra Club or by violating the following affirmative standards of conduct.

(ii) Sierra Club volunteers are responsible and will be held accountable to meet the following affirmative standards of conduct, and to hold other leaders and volunteers accountable to them as well, in all Sierra Club interactions with others, including in person, in writing, using digital tools, or on the phone.

(A) Communicate and work together toward shared interest with common courtesy, solidarity, mutuality, and respect; work across difference and disagreement.

(B) Create a welcoming and inclusive environment for new members, visitors, guests, staff, and volunteers. Avoid cliquishness, behavior that fosters an “insider” vs. “outsider” culture, and language (including humor) or behavior that is harmful, toxic, or offensive. Seek to welcome and engage people who reflect the diversity of the community.

(C) Always represent Sierra Club and its mission in a positive and proficient manner, keep disagreements within the Sierra Club, and limit the impacts any internal disagreements may have on external partners and allies.

(D) Accurately present Sierra Club’s policies and positions when communicating on behalf of Sierra Club; don’t use a Sierra Club leadership role or title to advance personal views that are not consistent with Sierra Club’s positions and policies.

(E) Respect Sierra Club members’ confidentiality; use member lists and information about members for Sierra Club purposes only.

(F) Use Sierra Club resources wisely and in keeping with the fiduciary responsibility of all volunteers.

(G) Foster an open democratic decision-making process; respect decisions once they are made. Wherever possible, seek opportunities to create amicable clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution.

(H) When speaking of other Sierra Club volunteers praise publicly, criticize privately and tactfully.

(I) Encourage robust dialogue and debate and seek to resolve differences with other Sierra Club volunteers, avoiding factionalism and/or behavior that exacerbates or prolongs conflict.

(J) Respect the policies and procedures that have been established by and for members and volunteers engaged in specific Sierra Club activities; when in doubt, ask.

(K) Show and hold respect for colleagues at all levels; demonstrate humility, empathy, and patience; and hold oneself and others accountable for collaborating with internal and external parties in a just and inclusive manner.

(L) Foster a work and volunteer atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including prohibited discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

(b) Misconduct

The following actions constitute misconduct:

Behavioral misconduct:

(i) Any behavior that constitutes inappropriate behavior pursuant to the Sierra Club's Equal Opportunity Policy.

(ii) Physical or sexual assault or violent threats toward others.

(iii) Use of slurs, epithets, threats, intimidation, negative stereotyping or other derogatory language regarding – but not limited to – gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnic or national origin, class/economic status, education, color, ancestry, medical condition, religion, age, veteran and military status, sexual orientation, or physical or mental ability, and all protected statuses as defined by the laws of the State of California, where Sierra Club is incorporated, and applicable federal law.

(iv) Action or behavior that denigrates, threatens, bullies, shows hostility or aversion towards, or seeks to exclude an individual or group from participation based on the above characteristics.

(v) Harassment, unwelcome conduct, threats or any action directed toward Sierra Club employees or volunteers that violate Sierra Club policies or are covered by law.

Other misconduct:

(vi) Embezzling, misdirecting, or misusing Sierra Club funds, membership lists, confidential information, or other assets for activities not authorized by the entity responsible for following Sierra Club policy and guidelines.

(vii) Fraud, libel, defamation, illegal, specious claims or unethical activity of any kind in the conduct of Sierra Club business.

(viii) Illegal or unethical conduct outside Sierra Club if that misconduct could significantly damage Sierra Club, its staff, its members, its reputation, or its assets.

(c) Resolving Disputes and Violations (other than Personal Disruptive Behavior)

(i) **Policy Disputes.** When there is a dispute regarding interpretation, application, or disregard for Sierra Club Bylaws, Standing Rules, policies, guidelines, or other governing procedures, leaders should seek clarification from the relevant entity, for referral or appeal if necessary to the appropriate Board Advisory Committee or the Executive Committee. No leader should act in violation of a policy interpretation that has been provided by the appropriate entity. If the leader believes the interpretation is incorrect, they should appeal or seek clarification from the appropriate Board Advisory Committee or the Executive Committee, but shall not act in violation of the interpretation the volunteer has received.

(ii) Decision-Making Disputes

(A) All Sierra Club volunteers involved in a contentious decision-making process are nevertheless expected to behave according to these Standards of Conduct. This includes decisions regarding priorities for action, strategies and tactics, and the allocation of resources where differences of opinion can be heated.

(B) All decision-making disputes among volunteers (that do not involve “Disruptive Personal Behavior” as described below) should be resolved at the most local level possible, whenever possible. Disputants may make use of such dispute-resolution assistance or services as Sierra Club may make available.

(C) Authority is delegated to the Board Volunteer Leadership & Activism Advisory Committee to develop and adopt, as needed, guidelines for resolving disputes over these Standards of Conduct (that do not involve “Disruptive Personal Behavior” as described below). In the event of a threat of litigation relating to any of these matters, the involved entity should notify the Office of Chapter Support and the Office of General Counsel.

(D) Board Discretion. The procedures listed in this document shall not deprive the Board, at any point in the process, from taking such actions as it may deem necessary or advisable for the best interests of the Sierra Club.

(iii) **Disputes Regarding Financial, Legal, or Other Public Violations.** Any allegations or concerns that regard violations of the affirmative standards of conduct or actions constituting misconduct as defined in subsections (b)(vi)-(viii), and that do not involve “Disruptive Personal Behavior” (as defined below) or allegations of illegal activity (which shall be reported pursuant to (c)(iv)), shall be handled according to this provision. For these matters, volunteers have an obligation to resolve violations quickly and decisively. These disputes should be resolved at the most local level, subject in each case to Sierra Club's legal obligations to respond to and potentially report such misconduct. Each volunteer has the responsibility to uphold the affirmative standards of conduct. The entity chair, lead, co-lead of the relevant Sierra Club

entity has an additional obligation to deal quickly and decisively with suspected violations. Misconduct under these subsections may also warrant the removal, suspension or barring of the member from leadership positions or participation in certain activities, consistent with local Bylaws and subject to Standing Rule 5.10.2.

(iv) **Illegal Activity.** Alleged illegal activity shall be reported immediately to the Office of General Counsel. The Office of General Counsel is authorized to take any actions needed to report and address illegal activity.

(d) Resolving Behavioral Misconduct Concerns

(i) **Dealing with Disruptive Personal Behavior.** Any allegations or concerns that a volunteer or employee has engaged in conduct or behavior that (a) constitutes misconduct under subsections b(i)-(v); (b) has the purpose or effect of creating a humiliating, insulting, threatening, offensive, abusive, or intimidating environment; and/or (c) otherwise interferes with or regularly or significantly interrupts or disrupts a stakeholder's ability to do their work on behalf of the organization ("Disruptive Personal Behavior") must be immediately reported to the Sierra Club's People, Culture, and Equity Department (the "People Department"). Until the People Department has been established, all references to the People Department shall be deemed to refer to the Human Resources Department. Because of the Sierra Club's legal obligations and values, volunteers should not attempt to handle Disruptive Personal Behavior at a local level or otherwise attempt to investigate or resolve the matter at a local level. Instead, the Resolutions Team, as described more fully in 5.10.2, shall oversee investigations and determine resolutions. The Sierra Club will ensure that trained professionals will investigate and respond to each situation appropriately and in accordance with the organization's policies for handling all such concerns.

(ii) **Mandatory Reporters.** The obligation to report Disruptive Personal Behavior immediately to the People Department is a mandatory obligation for Chapter Leadership and other Volunteer Leaders of the relevant Sierra Club entity. Volunteer Leaders have an affirmative duty to report conduct or incidents they see, hear, or become aware of indirectly. This reporting obligation applies at all times, even if the Volunteer Leader already intervened, believes they can or have dealt with the situation, believes the situation was isolated or a misunderstanding, or otherwise doubts the severity of the issue.

(iii) Authority of the Resolutions Team

The Panel has permanently delegated to the Resolutions Team the authority to oversee investigations and determine resolutions pursuant to (d)(i), subject to the guidelines herein and in Standing Rule 5.10.2.

(A) **Interim Interventions.** In matters involving allegations of Disruptive Personal Behavior, where the conduct or consequences in question are of a serious-enough nature and/or the alleged victim(s) specifically request(s) it, the Resolutions Team will determine whether and to what degree temporary interim modifications or interventions may be merited. The Resolutions Team will be guided by the principle of ensuring that the opportunities of any alleged victim(s) are not negatively affected or otherwise interrupted during the pendency of an investigation. If

appropriate, the Resolutions Team may temporarily and immediately: (1) suspend an elected leader from one or more of their positions or from their participation in specific Sierra Club activities; (2) restrict any member from their participation in specific Sierra Club activities; and/or (3) assign other temporary modifications or interim interventions. Interim interventions will apply only while the investigation is pending. The authority of the Resolutions Team is restricted by the fact that the Panel may only limit Director participation to the extent allowed by law and the organization's Articles and Bylaws.

(B) Assignment of Corrective Actions.

1. Termination of Membership. If, after an investigation, the Resolutions Team determines that termination of membership is the appropriate corrective action, the Panel will review that determination and approve it or remand it back to the Resolutions Team for further process in accordance with the process for Termination of Membership (Standing Rule 5.10.2) prior to that corrective action being communicated to the volunteer in question.

2. Revocation of Privileges. Where the Resolutions Team assigns permanent revocation of privileges (whether revocation of leadership role or revocation of access to a particular group or type of function), the Member receiving that corrective action has a right to appeal that corrective action in accordance with the process for Revocation of Privileges (Standing Rule 5.10.2).

3. Other Corrective Actions. Where the Resolutions Team determines the appropriate corrective action is something less than Termination of Membership or permanent Revocation of Privileges, their decision following the investigation will be final and binding.

(iii) Investigations of Directors, Executive Director, or Resolutions Team members

The Executive Committee will oversee investigations regarding concerns or allegations that a Director, the Executive Director, or a member of the Resolutions Team or the Panel have engaged in Misconduct, or other behavior subject to mandatory reporting under subsection (d)(i) above.

The Executive Committee will carry out such investigations in accordance with the policies and procedures the organization follows for complaints regarding other individuals. The Executive Committee will seek the written advice on investigation process design from the Head of the People Department and the General Counsel, unless such individual(s) are implicated. The Executive Committee will seek the assistance and advice of external investigators if appropriate and will require external investigators to abide by the same guidelines utilized in other investigations; and may request additional information, support, or recommendations from the Head of the People Department and the General Counsel as appropriate.

(C) The Executive Committee will share with the full Board (excluding any Director who is the subject of any recommended corrective action or resolution or are the subject of any alleged misconduct) the written advice from the external investigator on corrective actions and

resolutions, along with the Executive Committee's recommendation. The Board (excluding any Director(s) who is the subject of any recommended corrective action or resolution or are the subject of any alleged misconduct) will make a final determination on appropriate corrective actions and resolutions, provided that this rule applies to Directors only to the extent allowed by law and the Club's Articles and Bylaws, including Bylaw 5.10.

(D) Individuals raising concerns can, in addition to other reporting options, raise concerns under this subsection directly to the Executive Committee of the Board.

(e) **Immediate removal and suspension of appointed leaders and volunteers.** Sierra Club entity leadership or the Panel may remove and/or suspend officers, representatives and committee members of their respective entities from appointed leadership positions in matters not governed by subsection (d)(i) above.

(f) **Removal of membership privileges.** Only the Executive Director, Sierra Club Board President and the Volunteer Leadership and Activism Advisory Committee Chair (i.e., the Panel) together can finalize the termination of a membership. See Standing Rule 5.10.2 Termination of Membership, Suspension of Member Privileges and Other Corrective Actions and Interventions.

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