

## Conservation Issue Committee Standards

(DRAFT – Revised 12/9/19)

The Chapter, acting through the Executive Committee, has been delegated (among other things) four important powers from the Sierra Club Board of Directors:

- the authority to communicate opinions on national and other policies and positions to the appropriate bodies within the Club,
- the authority to take positions on behalf of the Club on public issues within its territory when consistent with Sierra Club policy,
- to publicize or otherwise take action to support those positions,
- and to take actions within its territory in support of positions and policies made by other entities of the club.

As a form of shorthand, the first and second powers are referred to as "positions" and the third and fourth as "actions."

The role of the conservation issue committees is to make recommendations to the Chapter Executive Committee on positions, and, with the help of Chapter conservation staff, to coordinate actions.

In both cases, the purpose of this delegation is twofold. The first reason is to allow more time to deal with complicated subjects than can be dealt with at the higher level. The second reason is to allow those who are interested only in the more specific issue to more easily participate in only the discussions and actions that interest them.

The Chapter relies on conservation issue committees to fully investigate and debate the issues before recommending a position to the next higher level. The conservation issue committees ensure that every reasonable action is taken to ensure that this investigation and debate occurs. Conservation issue committees should always welcome further involvement by Club members and take positive steps to encourage Sierra Club members to contribute to and participate in debates and investigations on positions.

Conservation issue committees have a responsibility to the Executive Committee, and to ensure that every reasonable action is taken to ensure that this investigation and debate occurs. Applicable groups, activities committees, and other entities within the Chapter, as applicable, must also be consulted. Reciprocal consultation by local groups and entities regarding the subject matter is also essential.

Should there be a difference of recommended position between one or more conservation issue committees and/or groups with jurisdiction on a new proposed position, the Chapter Executive Committee will agendaize the matter and adjudicate a final decision. Conservation issue committees must take positive steps to encourage

Sierra Club members to contribute to and participate in debates and investigations on positions.

Conservation issue committees are required to comply with the following standards.

- Conservation issue committees must have a charge approved by the Chapter Executive Committee, specific enough to distinguish it from the charges of other committees. In practice, there will always be some overlap between committees, but the charge should attempt to draw a line between the subject areas, so that someone can decide to attend or not attend a committee meeting depending on their interests.
- Conservation issue committees must have regular, public, and noticed meetings, published, at minimum, through the "sfbay-agendas" electronic mail list at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Agendas and meeting notices should also be sent to regular attendees and others who have indicated an interest,. Whenever possible meetings should be held in Club offices or public meeting rooms rather than in private homes, and in places accessible by transit. A telephonic or online participation must be available with the associated call-in number or website link posted on agendas and other materials. Committees must hold, at minimum, quarterly meetings (four meetings per calendar year), of which at least two meetings must be conducted in person.

Although it is always appropriate to cancel a meeting rather than hold one where there is no business to conduct, in general meetings should be held regularly, and at a fixed location or series of locations. If there is insufficient business for quarterly meetings, this is a good indication that the business that might be transacted there may instead be transacted through a different committee. An inactive committee, or one with an insufficient number of members to give issues thorough and public debate, should disband and allow its subject area to be discussed fully at the Chapter Executive Committee. (The Chapter Executive Committee has the option of creating a task force or appointing an issue coordinator to cover the relevant issue, which would not have the same responsibility for public involvement.)

Committees should have a defined leadership and membership. The leadership can be a single chair, a chair and vice-chair(s), or co-chairs. When selecting the most effective leadership structure and leaders, consideration should be given to the leader's ability to manage committee agendas and work products and generally be available to coordinate meetings, or delegate certain administrative duties to other leaders. To maintain the health of conservation issue committees, whenever possible responsibilities for the various committee tasks should be widely dispersed among the committees' respective memberships. Though attendance of committee meetings is open to all members and invited guests, leaders and voting members of committees are nominated by the committees subject to approval by the Chapter Executive Committee. A best practice is to, as part of the minutes, keep attendance records of both voting members and other attendees.

Committee leaders are responsible for facilitating open discussion on controversial issues. While it can be assumed that leaders have opinions on areas within their committees, they must be fair and allow all participants to participate in debates on positions, and actively support the inclusion of more members in discussions and actions.

Committees shall follow all provisions of National Standing Rule 2.2.6: Affirmative Standards of Conduct

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/leadership-training-committee-and-outings-management-/Sierra-Club-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf>