

Volunteers

Volunteers are the face, heart, and soul of CNPS. For this reason, CNPS encourages a culture of gratitude and celebration of volunteers. The same way job descriptions provide clarity in employee roles and responsibilities, developing a volunteer position description helps ensure successful performance of their role.

In addition, the following provides a list of rights and responsibilities that should be shared with all volunteers.

A. Volunteer Rights

1. **The right to feel safe.** All volunteers have the right to be apprised of any potential risks as well as have precautionary measures and safety procedures in place to ensure physical and emotional well-being.
2. **The right to information about volunteer roles or projects.** All volunteers have the right to know the who, what, when, why, and how of the volunteer positions.
3. **The right to feel valued.** Volunteering—whether for two hours or two years—is a significant commitment. In return, volunteers have the right to feel time and contributions are valued.
4. **The right to negotiate the volunteer role.** Volunteers have the right to talk to the volunteer manager or supervisor to discuss potential ways to shift roles or take on another project or position. And if a good fit can't be found...
5. **The right to leave.** This isn't a decision that should be made hastily but, if after talking to and working with the volunteer manager or supervisor, a volunteer still feels unhappy, unappreciated, or unsatisfied with the volunteer experience, the volunteer has the right to leave.

B. Volunteer Responsibilities

1. **The responsibility to communicate needs.** Talk to the volunteer manager. Let them know the experience is not living up to expectations hoped. Don't hesitate to let them know if additional tools, training, or support would be helpful.

2. **The responsibility to follow through on obligations.** Help improve the reputation of volunteers worldwide by following through on commitments.
3. **The responsibility to promise only what's deliverable.** It's fairly easy to promise too much, unintentionally, when one is excited about making a difference.
4. **The responsibility to honor the organization's investment in its volunteers.** Organizations invest quite a bit in their volunteers via staff time, tools, training, and so on. Once in the role, try negotiating a new volunteer role if unsatisfied, rather than suddenly leaving.
5. **The responsibility to take care of yourself.** Last but most certainly not least, volunteers have the responsibility to make sure they aren't overextending, burning out, or causing physical, mental, or emotional harm by taking on roles that aren't a good fit or for which they aren't properly prepared.
6. **The responsibility to support and communicate with CNPS staff.**

Admin Policies

A. Code of Conduct

CNPS recognizes working supportively and collaboratively is of vital importance to our collective success. Daily challenges may make it hard to remember how important these factors can be. The manner in which we conduct ourselves is a reflection of CNPS as an organization.

Staff and volunteers therefore agree to always conduct ourselves in accordance with the following values:

1. Integrity – We are committed to the highest degree of ethical conduct in the performance of our work. The integrity we exhibit establishes trust and provides the basis for reliance on our judgment.
2. Objectivity – We exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information.
3. Confidentiality – We respect the value and ownership of information.
4. Competence – We apply the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary in the performance of our work.

5. Communication – We communicate honestly, openly, constructively, and respectfully.
6. Accountability – We are responsible for our individual performance.
7. Commitment to Quality – We strive to continuously improve the accuracy, reliability, usefulness, and timeliness of our work and services.
8. Teamwork – We utilize our individual skills and abilities collaboratively to achieve CNPS's goals. We are committed to supporting each other to achieve individual and organizational success.

Additionally, staff and volunteers agree to always conduct themselves in accordance with the following principles:

1. Respect each other at all times.
2. When differences of opinion arise, keep an open mind and always keep those differences about work, never undermining the efforts of an individual with whom there is a disagreement with.
3. Communicate openly; never hold back information that could contribute to success.
4. Communicate honestly, offering only accurate information.
5. Treat each other the way you want to be treated. Recognize that everyone is different and adds value in their own way. We may have a need for different levels of information and different amounts of time to consider information received.
6. Give our best efforts in order to complete our work.
7. Never knowingly act against the goals of CNPS.
8. Recognize that everyone makes mistakes. Thus, we learn from them and continue to expand our perspectives and knowledge.

B. Harassment

CNPS maintains a strict policy prohibiting sexual harassment or any harassment because of factors such as race, color, religion, religious creed (including religious dress and religious grooming), sex (including pregnancy, perceived pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, or related medical conditions), HIV/AIDS status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, transgender status, sex stereotype, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, physical or mental disability, legally protected medical condition or information (including genetic information),

family care or medical leave status, military caregiver status, military status, veteran status, marital status, domestic partner status, status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, enrollment in a public assistance program, or any other basis protected by local, state, or federal laws, ordinances or regulations. CNPS strongly disapproves of and will not tolerate harassment of volunteers or employees by managers, directors, officers, supervisors, coworkers or any person involved in CNPS operations. CNPS will also make reasonable efforts to protect volunteers and employees from harassment by non-employees in the workplace.

1. Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, or unwanted sexual advances, invitation, or comments.
2. Visual conduct such as derogatory posters, photography, cartoons, drawings, or gestures.
3. Physical conduct such as assault (unwanted touching), blocking normal movement, or interfering with work directed at you because of your sex, or any other protected basis.
4. Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests to keep your job or avoid another loss, and offers of job benefits in return for sexual favors.
5. Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment.

Any incidents of harassment should be reported promptly to the Chapter President or the Accounting and HR Manager (Andre Clemente, aclemente@cnps.org, 916-738-7606) who is responsible for consulting with the Board and legal counsel and investigating the matter.

Presidents or the HR Manager who receive complaints or who observe harassing conduct should inform the Executive Director immediately.

CNPS emphasizes that complaints are not required to go first to the President if the President is the person who is harassing you. In that case, employees may report the harassment to the Accounting and HR Manager (Andre Clemente, aclemente@cnps.org, 916-738-7606). Harassment by a Board member should be reported to the Executive Director or to any other Board member. Every complaint of harassment that is reported will be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and in a confidential manner (circumstances permitting). In addition, CNPS will not tolerate retaliation against any employee or volunteer for cooperating in an investigation or for making a complaint to the appropriate authority.

In the case of CNPS employees, if harassment is established, CNPS will discipline the offender. Disciplinary action for a violation of this policy can range from verbal or

written warnings up to and including termination, depending upon the circumstances. With regard to acts of harassment by non-employees, corrective action will be taken after consultation with the appropriate management personnel and legal counsel.

Mandatory sexual harassment training will be provided to employees as required by state or federal law.

In addition to notifying CNPS about harassment or retaliation complaints, affected volunteers or employees may also direct their complaints to the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (“DFEH”), which has the authority to conduct investigations of the facts. The deadline for filing complaints with the DFEH is one year from the date of the alleged unlawful conduct. If the DFEH believes that a complaint is valid and settlement efforts fail, the DFEH may file a lawsuit in court. The courts have the authority to award monetary and non-monetary relief in meritorious cases. Employees can contact the nearest DFEH office by checking the DFEH website.

C. Conflict of Interest

[\(Approved by the Board November 1, 2003\)](#)

To fulfill the public trust placed in CNPS, CNPS needs to maintain transparency and accountability in dealing with conflicts of interest. Both organizations and individuals may be made monetarily responsible for failure to deal responsibly with conflicts of interest. This policy exists to protect both CNPS and individuals working with CNPS. Persons who do have potential conflicts of interest can participate in CNPS if they follow procedures and make appropriate disclosure.

CNPS must also deal with potential conflicts of interest on the level of appearances and impressions. CNPS needs to act with integrity and be recognized by the public as an institution with integrity.

What is a conflict of interest? A conflict of interest is a consideration (typically professional or monetary) that might influence a person’s decisions in his or her work for an organization. A potential conflict of interest for a person working with CNPS will include, but is not limited to, employment by CNPS; service providers working with CNPS; consulting contracts with CNPS; employment with government agencies that deal with CNPS; work with other non-profit organizations working in conservation; employment by businesses contracting with CNPS; interest in publications under consideration by CNPS; and interest in real estate that may be

affected by CNPS decisions. Typically, conflict of interest rules extends to a person's family as well, and to both current and former members of the Board of Directors.

Disclosure and Recusal. CNPS staff and volunteers are asked to disclose any potential monetary and professional conflicts of interest they may have using the [Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form](#). Persons with potential conflicts should also refrain from participating in decisions that may affect their interests. This may mean not participating in votes or discussion, or absenting oneself from the room during discussions.

Members of leadership are required to disclose their potential monetary and professional conflicts of interest prior to the first CNPS Board meeting each year. The Executive Director will ensure these disclosures are distributed to the Board in the regular Board packet for the January Board meeting. Directors are asked to update these disclosures when their situations change materially during the course of the year.

Chapters must retain documentation in accordance with the Records Retention policy available in the online Chapter Handbook.

Transactions Involving Leadership. In many situations, CNPS will contract with volunteers and Board members for services. There may well be no economic alternative to using CNPS volunteers or Board members to obtain the desired services. These transactions should go forward, but when they involve current or former state and Chapter Board members they need to be approved by the Board, preferably at a regular meeting. This applies to decisions which are normally the sole province of Chapter boards or CNPS staff. Any Board member with a potential conflict has the responsibility of bringing the conflict to the attention of the state Board or Chapter and obtaining a proper approval for it. Where a state Board member is involved, there is no minimum value to a contract that might exempt it from this policy.

The procedure for approval of a transaction with past or present Board members shall be as follows. The Executive Director will prepare a report for the Board that provides:

1. A summary of the material facts concerning the transaction and the Board member's interest in the transaction;
2. A good faith statement that CNPS is entering into the transaction for its own benefit; and

3. A good faith determination that CNPS could not have, with reasonable effort under the circumstances, obtained a more advantageous arrangement with a contractor who doesn't have a conflict of interest, and the arrangement is fair, reasonable, and a fair market value.

The report will provide the factual basis for its conclusions.

At a regular Board meeting, the Board will vote to approve or disapprove the transaction. The interested Board member will recuse himself or herself from the discussion and from the vote.

Depending on the value and prominence of the transaction, the Executive Director and Board President may also ask for an opinion letter on the transaction or seek approval of the transaction by the Attorney General's Office or by a court.