

ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR FIELD AND CONSULTING BOTANISTS

6 OCTOBER 2015

WHEREAS professional field¹ and consulting botanists² are a vital component in the field of plant science including floristics; vegetation classification, mapping, description, and management; plant ecology; conservation; impact assessment; mitigation design, implementation, and monitoring; taxonomy; systematics; and rare plant management;

WHEREAS professional field and consulting botanists provide the survey results and/or conduct analyses and make recommendations and decisions that can irrevocably alter native and rare plant habitat; and

WHEREAS professional field and consulting botanists are vital to the continued discovery and cataloging of the California flora and how humans can live compatibly with the natural environment as stewards of our natural resources;

BE IT RESOLVED that the California Native Plant Society, as recommended by the Professional Botanist's Certification Committee, adopts this Code of Ethics and standards for Professional Conduct by field and consulting botanists.

Professional Botanists shall conduct their activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the Standards for Professional Conduct as prescribed below.

A. CODE OF ETHICS

Field and Consulting Botanists have a responsibility for contributing to an understanding of humankind's effects and stewardship of natural botanical resources. Professional botanists will strive to meet this obligation through the following goals:

- Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct based on sound science and full disclosure.
- Recognize current research and scientific monitoring and management of natural vegetation and ecosystems as primary goals.
- Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, the ecological and intrinsic values of native plants and their habitats.
- Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance the practice of professional field and consulting botany.
- Achieve and promote competence in disciplines associated with field and consulting botany by supporting high standards of education, employment, and performance.
- Encourage the use of sound biological information in environmental effects analysis and resource management decisions.

¹ For the purpose of this code of ethics and professional standards, professional field botanists are defined as biologists that provide services related to the expertise of plant identification, vegetation mapping and classification, and rare plant surveys pertaining only to studies in the field.

² Certified consulting botanists are defined as biologists that provide services inclusive of a professional field botanist but also are capable of report preparation providing survey results; analyzing impacts and developing mitigation strategies; and preparing management plans related to the field of botany related to environmental impact review and resource management.

- Support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the field and consulting botanist careers.
- Act with the authority of professional judgment, and avoid actions or omissions that may compromise these broad custodial responsibilities.
- Respect the competence, judgment, and authority of the professional community.

B. STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The following tenets express the intent of the Code of Ethics and traditional norms for professional service. Botanists shall at all times:

1. Recognize and inform prospective clients or employers of their prime responsibility to the public interest and conscientious stewardship of the California flora and its supporting ecosystems.
2. Avoid performing professional services for any client or employer when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or Standards for Professional Conduct or detrimental to the well-being of the flora and its supporting ecosystems.
3. Be mindful of their responsibility to society, and seek to meet the needs of the disadvantaged for advice in flora-related matters.
4. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of professional authority for personal satisfaction.
5. Accept employment to perform professional services only in disciplines and regions of their own competence; refer clients or employers to other natural resource professionals when the expertise of such professionals shall best serve the interests of the public, flora, and the client/employer; and cooperate fully with other professionals in the best interest of the flora.
6. They shall not use such confidence or legal documents (e.g. confidentiality agreements) to their personal advantage or to the advantage of other parties, nor shall they permit personal interests or other client/employer relationships to interfere with their professional judgment. The professional botanist must report any violation of any applicable law or regulation³ to the appropriate authority, regardless of any confidentiality agreement⁴.
7. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients/employers of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to fellow professionals and the botanical resource.
8. Refuse compensation or rewards of any kind intended to influence their professional judgment or advice. They shall not permit a person who recommends or employs them, directly or indirectly, to regulate their professional judgment. They shall not accept compensation for the same professional services from any source other than the client/employer without the prior consent of all the clients or employers involved. Similarly, they shall not offer a reward of any kind or promise of service in order to secure a recommendation, a client, or preferential treatment from public officials.

³ This includes California Fish and Game Codes 1081 et seq., 1600 et seq., 3501 et seq., and other sections of state and federal laws.

⁴ It is prudent for certified botanists to inform clients that require signing of a confidentiality agreement of this Code of Ethics that must be followed.

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

The professional Field and Consulting Botanist shall conduct all field work and analysis according to a minimum standard of ethics, which include the following codes of conduct:

- All field work shall be conducted according to existing laws and regulations and follow established recommended survey protocols adopted by the scientific botanical community including but not limited to current survey guidelines and protocols provided by the California Native Plant Society, California Botanical Society, California Department of Fish and Wildlife⁵, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- No field survey for plants shall be considered complete unless conducted during appropriate seasons to facilitate maximizing complete and correct identification of all taxa present in a given study/project area;
- All lists and reports shall use currently accepted scientific nomenclature to ensure accurate communication between botanists. Currently accepted nomenclature can be found in the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory online, Jepson Interchange, Jepson eFlora, and/or Flora of North America, or other appropriate scientific publications;
- The results of all field surveys and analyses shall be reported truthfully, accurately, and according to professional ethics and standards outlined herein as well as established guidelines and protocols;
- All statements in environmental documents and reports shall be supported by peer-reviewed scientific literature; otherwise, statements or claims should be appropriately qualified as conjectures, estimations, opinions, or assumptions of the botanist;
- Results of field surveys shall be submitted to appropriate resource agencies, such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Natural Diversity Database;
- All vegetation mapping and classification shall be conducted according to currently accepted and adopted mapping and classification methods. In California, the currently accepted and adopted methods and classification is described in the California Native Plant Society's *A Manual of California Vegetation*, Second Edition;
- Local botanical experts or knowledgeable persons shall be consulted concerning the local flora, species of local concern, locally rare, or of scientific or ecological significance;
- The results of field surveys and analyses shall be presented in an unbiased manner, regardless of whether the results or analysis is contrary to the desires of any client or project proponent or opponent.

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