

CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE OREGON CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

This Code of Ethics¹ provides principles of conduct to guide the members of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society in maintaining ethical relations with the natural and cultural communities they serve and to which they belong. As fisheries professionals, we are obligated to provide clear, accurate, and timely information; to encourage open discourse, both professional and public; and to participate in the debate that results in informed choices by the public. We are also obligated to select for ourselves and to recommend to others courses of action we believe will protect the biological diversity and integrity of aquatic ecosystems.

We recognize that the complexity of the physical and biological worlds, compounded by the complexity of social values and conflicting perspectives, often means that all of the alternatives contain costs as well as benefits. Often, none of the alternatives can satisfy everyone, and choosing among them will be difficult and painful to some or all of the interested parties. We recognize that resources are finite, that we share them with all forms of life, and that no one species or group can “have it all.” We also recognize that human culture and quality of life depend on intact ecosystems. Reaching an appropriate level of global sustainability, although it may be achieved with local excess, requires us to take responsibility for educating, studying, and managing for that level of sustainability.

People expect management decisions to be based on sound reasoning and scientific information, guided by reasoned judgment, in keeping with principles of conservation and rational use of aquatic resources. Accurate scientific information is critical to sound management. Both the relevant science and the limits of scientific knowledge and understanding must be clearly communicated to decision makers and the public. Another primary role of fisheries professionals is to define management options and the likely outcomes of implementing them. Predicting outcomes of alternatives often contains considerable uncertainty; people need to be made aware of this uncertainty when they evaluate alternatives.

Because our knowledge of changes in ecosystems is often coupled with a high degree of uncertainty, reasonable and competent professionals may disagree about the ecological and social consequences of natural resource decisions. We must therefore recognize that the foremost obligation of the fisheries professional is to ensure open, honest discussion of the benefits, costs, risks, and tradeoffs of alternative management actions in balancing scientific principles with the interests of society.

Achieving the goals of responsible stewardship and credible science requires that ethical standards be followed by all of us. To that end, each member agrees to follow the principles outlined below:

I will work toward maintaining the structure, function, and integrity of aquatic, riparian, and upland ecosystems—the physical surroundings and the complex, interconnected web of life on which fish and other aquatic organisms depend.

I will take care in my research to minimize adverse effects to the environment and not kill or injure organisms except when essential for collecting data.

¹The code supplements American Fisheries Society Code of Practices and Ethics, 1994.

I will insist that any use of the aquatic resource promotes ecological integrity and continuity of ecosystems now and into the future. Because human beings are a part of the interconnected web of life, I will consider human needs and influences as integral to the study and management of these ecosystems.

I will cooperate with professionals in other disciplines to foster interdisciplinary understanding and to guide research and management toward clarifying the complex interactions that affect fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as the ecosystems on which they depend.

I will speak and write honestly and openly about the results of my work, neither hiding or exaggerating their implications. I will explicitly acknowledge my own biases, assumptions, and values that are the foundation of my understanding and interpretation of scientific theories and knowledge. I will be open to the ideas of others and evaluate those ideas with clear recognition of the influence of my own values.

In writing and speaking, I will acknowledge the work and ideas of others, whether gleaned from publications, presentations, or conversations.

I recognize that my deeply held, professional convictions may conflict with the interests and convictions of others. I am obligated to be clear and honest in distinguishing between reports of results from rigorous study and my professional opinions based on observations or intuition. My professional opinions clearly so identified have value, but must not be put forward as fact. In addition, the temporal, spatial, and contextual limits of my facts and their confidence limits must be clearly acknowledged.

I will distinguish between recommendations based on science and those based on policy, both to avoid confusing the public and to better separate political decisions from aquatic science.

I recognize that my professional convictions may sometimes conflict with the policies of my employers. When such conflict arises, I will provide decision makers with full supporting evidence and sufficient time for study and action before I publicly disclose my views. But my commitments to the profession and to ecosystems, including their human components, may compel me on occasion to speak against policies or actions of my employers.

I will learn from the wisdom of the past, but I will freely and consistently question all information, inferences, and assumptions that could affect aquatic ecosystems.

I will continue to learn throughout my professional life to read, listen, assimilate, integrate, and apply new information as it becomes available. I will follow advances in related disciplines (other branches of biology, hydrology, geology, sociology, economics, ethics, and politics) that affect fish and aquatic ecosystems so that the value of my expertise does not become irrelevant or overwhelmed by unforeseen influences.

I recognize that diversity among my professional colleagues brings differences in perspective, experience, expertise, style, and values to the profession and that these differences are a source of strength and new ideas. I welcome as colleagues people of both sexes, all ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, life styles, religions, and physical conditions.

I will uphold the highest standards of excellence, integrity, and public service of my profession, and I will do my share to return to the profession the full measure of all that I have received. I will speak and write to people outside of the fisheries profession to help increase their awareness of and interest in aquatic ecosystems.

I will serve as a mentor to young people in the profession so that they may learn, care and contribute. I will teach them, encourage understanding of their own and society's values, and by my own example, help them to develop high ethical standards for research and resource management.

APPROVED BY THE OREGON CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP FEBRUARY 1995

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