

Developing and Approving the PSG Code of Conduct

The Pacific Seabird Group developed a voluntary Code of Conduct (version 5.2, Dec 2019) for all members that was approved by 95% of the 231 members who voted. Most non-profit organizations have a Code of Conduct (also called Code of Ethics or Code of Professional Conduct), and it is one of the policies that was recommended to PSG by an independent audit in 2012. In order to make this happen, an Ad Hoc Code of Conduct Committee was formed in 2015 at the PSG Annual Meeting in San Jose, California. Over a period of 18 months, the Committee created a draft Code of Conduct with input from the Executive Council, member's suggestions, and advice from other organizations. The Committee reviewed similar Codes from respected societies, organizations and government agencies in United States, Canada, and Europe. A range of factors was considered including applicability across 16+ countries where members reside, diversity of member affiliations (e.g., students, academia, non-profit, government, consulting, retired), feasibility and practicality to implement and uphold. The Code elements and investigation approach were informed by examining other codes including [American Ornithological Society](#) and [Society of Conservation Biology](#).

Steps for approving the PSG Code of Conduct were as follows:

- 1) Legal review of draft Code of Conduct.
- 2) Distribute for member input (see below for summary).
- 3) Committee revises document based on member input.
- 4) Committee submits revised draft to Executive Council for review and approval to send to members for a vote.
- 5) EXCO Secretary submits revised Code to members for a vote via online ballot.
- 6) Vote results taken to EXCO for discussion and approval.
- 7) Once approved, Code is posted online and sent to members.

Thank you to the ad hoc committee members that established the PSG Code of Conduct: Joanna Smith (Chair 2016-2019), Jen Zamon (Chair 2015-2016), Anne Harfenist, Annette Henry, Ken Morgan, Kim Nelson, and Jennifer Provencher

PSG Draft Code of Conduct Member Survey – Summary

- Survey link sent to 369 members on 4 Jul 2018
- Survey closed 31 Aug 2018
- 14 Statements, one open question and a general comment box
- 186 members (50.4% of membership) completed survey
- 285 comments submitted
- On average, 94% of responses were “Yes” that agreed with wording (range: 87-97 %)
- On average, 6% of responses were “No”, with comments (range: 3-13%)
- 5-22 comments per statement (average = 11)
- 108 comments on the open question for how to handle members not adhering to the voluntary Code
- [40 general comments](#), mostly “thank you” to PSG for developing the Code

Summary of responses to Code of Conduct statements (Aug 2018)

Statement	% - YES	% - NO	# comments
1	97	3	5
2	96	4	6
3	97	3	6
4	97	3	7
5	96	4	6
6	91	9	16
7	89	11	18
8	91	9	15
9	87	13	21
10	91	9	13
11	96	4	7
12	96	4	6
13	94	6	11
Average	94	6	
Open Question			108
General Comments			40

Developing and Approving the Terms of Reference

In 2020, an interim Code of Conduct Committee was formed to develop a Terms of Reference by which the full Committee would operate once established. However, because of complications from the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were delayed until 2021. The interim Code of Conduct Committee worked with the 2021 Pacific Seabird Group Chairs to develop the Terms of Reference. Like the Code of Conduct, this effort involved reviewing similar documents from other organizations, such as the [Ecological Society of America](#) and the [American Ornithological Society](#). Throughout the process, the PSG Chairs consulted with the PSG Executive Council and committees, including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to ensure there was broad support for the final version that the Executive Council would vote on.

Thank you to the interim committee members (Michelle Kissling, Julia Parrish, Scott Pearson) and the 2021 PSG Chairs (Rachel Sprague, Rob Suryan, Roberta Swift) for their efforts to establish fair guidelines in the Terms of Reference for applying the Code of Conduct.