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CODE OF ETHICS FOR VERMONT WOODLANDS ACCREDITED CONSULTING FORESTERS

Preamble

The purpose of these canons is to govern the professional conduct of members of the Vermont Woodlands Accredited Consulting Foresters in their relations with the public, their employers, including clients, and each other as provided in The Ethics Procedures adopted by the members. Compliance with these canons helps to assure just and honorable professional and human relationships, mutual confidence and respect, and competent service to society.

These canons have been adopted by the membership of the Association and can only be amended by the membership. Procedures for processing charges of violation of these canons are contained in The Ethics Procedures established by the Advisory Committee. The canons and procedures apply to all membership categories in all forestry related disciplines. All members upon joining the Association agree to abide by this Code as a condition of membership.

** This Code is adapted from that of the Society of American Foresters to conform with the needs of this Association.

Canons

1. A member's knowledge and skills will be utilized for the benefit of society. A member will strive for accurate, current, and increasing knowledge of forestry, will communicate such knowledge when not confidential, and will challenge and correct untrue statements about forestry.
2. A member will advertise only in a dignified and truthful manner, stating the services the member is qualified and prepared to perform. Such advertisements may include references to fees charged.
3. A member will base public comment on forestry matters on accurate knowledge and will not distort or withhold pertinent information to substantiate a point of view. Prior to making public statements on forest policies and practices, a member will indicate on whose behalf the statements are made.
4. A member will perform services consistent with the highest standards of quality and with unqualified loyalty to the employer.
5. A member will perform only those services for which the member is qualified by education or experience.

6. A member who is asked to participate in forestry operations which deviate from accepted professional standards must advise the employer in advance of the consequences of such deviation.
7. A member will not voluntarily disclose information concerning the affairs of the member's employer without the employer's express permission.
8. A member may not have an economic interest in timber purchasing or procurement entity. That is, a member must represent the interest of the landowner and may not be the purchaser of the logs or representative of the purchaser. The advisory committee will evaluate on a case by case basis.
9. A member must avoid conflicts of interest or even the appearance of such conflicts. If, despite such precautions, a conflict of interest is discovered, it must be promptly and fully disclosed to the member's employer and the member must be prepared to act immediately to resolve the conflict.
10. A member will not accept compensation or expenses from more than one employer for the same service, unless the parties involved are informed and consent.
11. A member will, engage, or advise the member's employer to engage, other experts and specialists in forestry or related field whenever the employer's interest would be best served by such action, and members will work cooperatively with other professionals.
12. A member will not by false statement or dishonest action injure the reputation or professional associations of another member.
13. A member will give credit for the methods, ideas, or assistance obtained from others.
14. A member in competition for supplying forestry services will encourage the prospective employer to base selection on comparison of qualifications and negotiations of fee or salary.
15. Information submitted by a member about a candidate for a prospective position, award, or elected office will be accurate, factual, and objective.
16. A member having evidence of violation of these canons by another member will present the information and charges to the Advisory Committee in accordance with The Ethics Procedures.

THE ETHICS PROCEDURE**

Definition

"Unethical conduct" is a conduct which violates the Association's Code of Ethics.

Charges

Information and charges of unethical conduct presented to the Advisory Committee shall refer to the specific canon or canons of the code of Ethics alleged to have been violated. Such information and charges shall be signed by five or more voting members and submitted to the Advisory Committee in writing. Firsthand knowledge, although preferable, is not a requirement for presenting charges of unethical conduct.

Committee on Ethics

The Advisory Committee shall refer information and charges of unethical conduct to an ad hoc committee on Ethics for preliminary review. However, the Advisory Committee may direct the ad hoc committee on Ethics to defer investigation of complaint against a member in the event the Advisory Committee has knowledge that the subject matter of the complaint is involved in a court or other judicial proceeding and the Advisory Committee has been informed that final judgment has not yet been entered in the case or that any appeals connected with the litigation have not been concluded. The Advisory Committee shall direct the ad hoc committee on Ethics to resume investigation when all litigation has been concluded. Each individual member signing a charge of unethical conduct may be required to cooperate with the committee by submitting such evidence as the member may have, or by directing the committee to other sources of information. At the time of referral to the ad hoc committee on Ethics, the accused member shall be given a copy of the information and signed charges, advised that the ad hoc committee on Ethics is making a preliminary review, and shall also be advised of his right to respond to the committee concerning the charges. After considering the information and charges and any response of the accused member, the ad hoc committee on Ethics shall submit to the Advisory Committee its recommendation for subsequent handling of the charges.

Rejection by Advisory Committee

If the Advisory Committee, after considering the information and charges and the recommendation of the ad hoc committee on Ethics, determines that there is insufficient evidence of the charges, it shall reject the charges and shall so inform the accused member and those members who signed the charges.

Advisory Committee Action

After considering the Ethics Committees report, the Advisory Committee shall, by secret ballot, decide whether the charges shall be sustained or dismissed.

Charges Dismissed

If two-thirds of the Advisory Committee do not vote to sustain the charges, the charges shall be dismissed. If the charges are dismissed, the accused member and any member signing the charges shall be so informed, but there shall be no public announcement unless specifically requested by the accused member.

Charges Sustained

If the charges are sustained by vote of at least two-thirds of the Advisory Committees the Advisory Committee shall determine, by majority vote using secret ballots, whether the accused member shall be reprimanded, censured, expelled, or otherwise disciplined, and shall direct the chair person to administer any such discipline. The chair person shall promptly inform the accused member and any member signing the charges.

Finality

Action by the Advisory Committee on charges of unethical conduct shall not be terminated, either by voluntary resignation of an accused member or by the failure to pay dues, until the Advisory Committee has disposed of the charges.

** Adapted from The SAF Ethics Guide