

Native Plant Society of Oregon Grievance Policy adopted: Feb. 1, 2025

1. Purpose

The Native Plant Society of Oregon (NPSO) is committed to providing a respectful and fair working environment for all employees, board members, and volunteers. This grievance policy outlines the process for employees, board members, and volunteers to raise and resolve concerns or grievances in a constructive and timely manner.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contracted workers on behalf of NPSO, and volunteers of NPSO, including board members, committee members, and other volunteers involved in supporting organizational activities (e.g., field trip leaders). While a useful framework, this policy is not intended to encompass grievances raised by other classifications of person(s) not named within 2. *Scope* including the public, and NPSO members without active volunteer roles, including grievances incurred between members without active volunteer roles.

This policy is not intended to address complaints against NPSO as an organization writ large.

This policy is upheld by the NPSO Board of Directors, inclusive of chapter presidents. While chapters are encouraged to apply the policy or similar provisions, it is not a requirement to enact or maintain a chapter.

This policy does not pertain to criminal activity. Accusations or discovery of criminal activity through the process described herein may be reported to and investigated in collaboration with law enforcement and/or social services. The requisite requirements of the law will supersede the policy described herein.

3. Definitions

A “***grievance***” is any concern, complaint, or issue related to the work environment, organizational policies or practices, interpersonal conflicts, discrimination, harassment, or any other matter that affects the employee, contractor, or volunteer's ability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

The “***Grievance Officer***” is most often a duty of the NPSO Vice President unless otherwise designated by the NPSO Board of Directors. In cases where the NPSO Vice President is the grieving party or the subject of a complaint, then the NPSO President shall become the Grievance Officer for the purposes of resolving the grievance. Should both the NPSO Vice President and President be involved in a grievance and/or the subject of a complaint, the NPSO

Board of Directors shall designate a Grievance Officer for the purposes of resolving the grievance.

Employee(s), contractor(s), or volunteer(s) filing the grievance shall be referred to hereafter as **“grieving party”**. “Grieving party” is used for understanding within the document and not intended to convey a completed investigation or conferred judgement.

“Retaliation” refers to any adverse action taken against the grieving party or related individual(s) in the grievance process as a result of the grieving party filing a grievance. This can include actions such as, *inter alia*: demotion or dismissal from leadership roles, verbal or physical harassment or threats, exclusion from NPSO activities, unwarranted scrutiny of performance, or any other form of punishment or discrimination.

4. Informal Resolution

The objective of the Grievance Policy is a fair and amicable resolution to concerns which arise in the course of business. If appropriate, parties are encouraged to resolve conflicts bilaterally. If unsuccessful, grieving parties are encouraged to address grievances informally whenever possible by discussing concerns directly with the individual(s) involved, their chapter president, and/or with their committee chair. If the complaint is against their chapter president and/or committee chair, the grieving party may engage the NPSO Grievance Officer. The aim of informal resolution is to resolve issues promptly and amicably. Informal resolution of grievances does not need to be monitored or reported unless one or both parties wishes to do so.

If informal resolution is considered unsuccessful, one or both parties, as well as the Grievance Officer, may escalate to the formal grievance procedure by completing a Grievance Form (found on the NPSO website at <https://www.npsoregon.org/wp/npsso-administration>) and submitting it to the Grievance Officer. The Grievance Officer may also file a Grievance Form if potential paths to resolutions may exceed the scope of authority or comfortability of the Grievance Officer. The Grievance Officer must inform the involved parties at least 24 hours in advance if submitting a Grievance Form.

5. Formal Grievance Procedure

a. Filing a Grievance: If the parties are unable to resolve the grievance informally, the grieving party may submit a Grievance Form via email (found on the NPSO website at <https://www.npsoregon.org/wp/npsso-administration>) to the Grievance Officer. Grievances against the Grievance Officer should be submitted to the NPSO President to avoid conflict of interest. Email addresses for all NPSO officers can be found at <https://www.npsoregon.org/wp/officers>. Grieving parties must identify named person(s) within the Grievance Form (i.e., a grievance cannot be filed against the NPSO Board of Directors as a unit). Should the grievance be against a

majority of the sitting members of the NPSO Board of Directors, the Grievance Officer shall contact each Chapter President to recommend a non-elected board member within their chapter to participate in review of the grievance. The grievance should include, at minimum, a description of the issue, timeline, relevant facts, desired outcome, and any supporting documentation. At this time, NPSO does not have the tools to ensure anonymity. Grieving parties wishing to remain anonymous to the Grievance Officer may contact any trusted member of NPSO to request they submit a complaint in lieu.

b. Investigation: Upon receipt of a formal grievance, the Grievance Officer will acknowledge receipt to the grieving party, and initiate an investigation within 72 hours. The investigation may involve contacting the person(s) identified in the complaint, gathering additional information, interviewing relevant parties, and conducting a fair and impartial review of the matter. Volunteers or staff identified in the grievance, including a member(s) of the NPSO Board of Directors if applicable, will be recused from participating as investigators.

c. Fair and Impartial Review: The investigating parties will conduct a fair and impartial review of the matter in line with NPSO's values and mission. The criteria, recommendations, and procedure for this review are further detailed in a separate document titled *Fair and Impartial Review* and available as Annex 1.

d. Resolution: Efforts will be made to resolve the grievance in a fair, equitable, and timely manner, taking into account the interests of all parties involved. Following the investigation, the Grievance Officer will:

- 1) Decide whether the grievance is substantiated or not and document their reasoning for the decision;
- 2) Document their communications surrounding the investigation (who was contacted, what information was provided, etc.);
- 3) Document their findings of the investigation and propose a resolution to the grievance;
- 4) Provide their proposed resolution to the grieving party (if self-identified) or representative in-lieu (if anonymous) and to the subject(s) of the complaint. If all parties do not agree to the resolution, or should the resolution propose specific action by the Board, the Grievance Officer will elevate the grievance to the NPSO Board of Directors for review and resolution. The Grievance Officer will inform all parties prior to taking such action;
- 5) If elevated to the NPSO Board of Directors, provide all information pertaining to the grievance, investigation thus far, and proposed resolution to the NPSO Board of Directors; and
- 6) Retain documentation within the designated location in NPSO's Google Drive/Workspace for a minimum of three years with appropriate confidentiality to ensure the privacy of all involved parties.

If the grievance is found to be unsubstantiated by the Grievance Officer (or NPSO Board of Directors), the grieving party, as well as the subject(s) of the complaint, will be informed of the results of the investigation and the reasoning of the decision in writing within 72 hours of the decision. The grievance is to be dismissed and considered resolved.

If the grievance is found by the Grievance Officer to be malicious in intent, they may exert their discretion in determining that the grievance is unsubstantiated and allow for appeal by the grieving party (see f. Appeal Process, below) or pursue and/or recommend a counter-grievance by the original subject(s) of the complaint. Any decision or grievance involving malicious intent is to be documented with the investigatory information and brought to the attention of the NPSO Board of Directors for further consideration, action, and/or resolution.

e. Board Review: Should the resolution propose specific action by the NPSO Board of Directors (or the Grievance Officer defers review and resolution to the Board), the Board must review and decide the course of action and whether to implement actions as proposed by the Grievance Officer. At the discretion of the NPSO State President (or NPSO Vice President if the grievance is against the NSPO President), an emergency board meeting may be called to take place within 96 hours. If it is determined an ad hoc meeting is not necessary, the NPSO Board of Directors will review the grievance at the next scheduled Board meeting. The NPSO Board of Directors will review the findings of the Grievance Officer and any supporting documentation and make a final decision on how to proceed with resolving the grievance within 72 hours of review via Board vote. If the grievance involves one or more members of the NPSO Board of Directors, those members will be recused from said review and vote.

f. Appeal Process: If the grieving party or the original subject(s) of the complaint is dissatisfied with the resolution of the grievance, they may appeal the decision to the NPSO Board of Directors by contacting the NPSO President and Grievance Officer via email. The appeal will be acknowledged by the Grievance Officer (or NPSO President if filed against the Grievance Officer) within 72 hours via email. The NPSO Secretary shall provide previous documentation to the NPSO Board of Directors (from NPSO's Google Drive/Workspace). Any new information provided by all parties related to the investigation will be forwarded to the NPSO Board of Directors via email.

If a majority of reachable NPSO Board of Directors members agree that an emergency exists necessitating action faster than the normal 14 day notice requirement for NPSO Board of Director meetings, the NPSO Board of Directors may call an emergency ad hoc, emergency board meeting to take place within 96 hours under ORS 65.064. The grievance shall thereafter proceed through the process described in *e. Board Review*.

6. Confidentiality

While all efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved in the grievance, individuals should not assume anonymity due to the current scope and resources of the NPSO. As of this policy, NPSO does not have an anonymous submission portal. All information related to grievances, including the identity of the individuals involved, will be treated confidentially to the extent possible from non-involved parties and in NPSO's records (i.e., NPSO's Google Drive/Workspace and physical file management), consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation and implement appropriate remedies.

7. Non-Retaliation

NPSO prohibits retaliation against any person(s) who raises a grievance or participates in the grievance process in good faith. Retaliation against individuals who file grievances or cooperate in investigations is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer role(s) and/or member status (per the NPSO Bylaws (specifically, Article III. Section 4. Termination of Membership).

8. Policy Review

Amendments or updates to the policy may be made as needed to ensure effectiveness and compliance with applicable laws and regulations with approval from the NPSO Board of Directors.

9. Contact Information

For assistance with filing a grievance or questions about the grievance process, individuals may contact the NPSO President or Grievance Officer. The email addresses can be found at <https://www.npsoregon.org/wp/officers/>. The Grievance Form can be found on the NPSO website at <https://www.npsoregon.org/wp/nps-administration>.

10. Acknowledgment

All employees and volunteers will be notified of the grievance policy at the start of their employment or volunteer role. By volunteering with the Native Plant Society of Oregon, employees and volunteers acknowledge receipt of this grievance policy and agree to adhere to its provisions.

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

Annex 1. Fair and Impartial Review

1. Good Faith

With acknowledgement of human fallibility, the Grievance Officer (or other designated party) tasked with investigating any grievance will strive in good faith to conduct a fair, impartial, and fully informed review of the complaint in line with NPSO's values for conflict-resolution.

2. Evaluation Process

The Grievance Officer (or other designated party) shall first collect evidence as presented by the grieving party and those subject(s) of the complaint as well as that solicited from interviews of these parties and individuals related to the complaint. If desired, interviewees may invite a third party to participate in the interview as an observer. The third party is recommended, but not required, to be an affiliate of NPSO.

This evidence shall be compiled and documented into a presentable format or report that summarizes their findings of the investigation. The Grievance Officer shall also propose resolution measures/actions or may defer to the NPSO Board of Directors for review of the grievance and any resolution measures/actions. As described in the NPSO Grievance Policy, grievances elevated by the Grievance Officer to the NPSO Board of Directors (or appealed to the Board) shall be discussed at a Board Meeting and resolved with a majority vote regarding the accuracy of the grievance and including any proposed resolution measures/action. Resolution could entail dismissal of the grievance on the basis of lacking substantiating evidence.

3. Conflict-Resolution Values

a. Thoroughness: The Grievance Officer (or other designated party(ies)) tasked with investigating any grievance shall solicit, to the extent possible, all available information regarding the alleged grievance including an interview of the grieving party, those subject(s) of the complaint, and other individuals identified as pertinent in the investigation.

b. Respect: All involved parties will be treated with respect as expressed by neutral and evidence-based discussion of events described and materials presented. Bullying, hazing, harassment, and/or inflammatory remarks/statements by any party as determined by the Grievance Officer (or other designated party(ies)) tasked with the investigation will not be tolerated. Disrespectful parties may have action taken against them at the recommendation of the Grievance Officer to the Board of Directors (such as removal/dismissal from employment, volunteer duties, Board duties, and/or NPSO membership per the NPSO Bylaws (specifically, Article III. Section 4. Termination of Membership)).

c. Fairness: The Grievance Officer (or other designated party) tasked with investigating any grievance will approach all identified parties and evidence presented with impartiality, with accused individuals will recuse themselves from participating in the investigation. The Grievance Officer (or other designated party) tasked with investigating the grievance, if unable to treat the alleged grievance with impartiality, is(are) invited to self-recuse and ask the NPSO President or NPSO Board of Directors to investigate the grievance. The grieving party and those subject(s) of the complaint are within their rights to request an individual be recused from the investigation. Requests for recusal of individuals not identified in the alleged grievance are evaluated by the Grievance Officer (or other designated party(ies), and/or the NPSO Board of Directors (if elevated, appealed to, or requested), who will make the determination for the recusal. Any individual identified to have a conflict of interest may be interviewed by the NPSO Board, but may not participate in the review process or vote.

d. Transparency: The Grievance Officer (or other designated party) tasked with investigating any grievance will be required to document all evidence presented, the decision factors, the decision made, and the resolution steps recommended. The parties involved in the complaint may voluntarily report steps taken for resolution to be filed with the complaint records.

e. Confidentiality

While all efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved in the grievance, individuals should not assume anonymity due to the current scope and resources of the NPSO. As of this policy, NPSO does not have an anonymous submission portal. All information related to grievances, including the identity of the individuals involved, will be treated confidentially to the extent possible from non-involved parties and in NPSO's records (i.e., NPSO's Google Drive/Workspace and physical file management), consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation and implement appropriate remedies.