

Title of Policy:	<b>Code of Conduct Policy</b>
Policy Type:	Governance
Approval date:	February 29, 2024
Approved by:	Nova Scotia Nature Trust Board of Directors
Next Review:	January 2027
Review History:	New Policy

## 1.0 PURPOSE

To provide the Nova Scotia Nature Trust (the Nature Trust) Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers with policy, standards of service, and principles for behaviour that support and uphold the accepted professional standards as follows:

- Support strong principles that allow Board members, staff, and volunteers to achieve the desired results for the Nature Trust vision, mission, and strategic priorities.
- Promote integrity and excellence of the Nature Trust in all daily work with Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, and stakeholders including donors, landowners, funders, partners, volunteers and governments at all levels, Indigenous partners and organizations, and community members.
- Maintain a professional, productive, and effective work environment.
- Ensure a positive, welcoming organizational culture that values relationship, people, trust, collaboration, innovation, and learning.
- Uphold the guiding principles of the Canadian Land Trust (CLT) Standards and Practices (integrity, perpetual care, excellence, and good governance) by consistent example in delivery of services, in guidance for the Nature Trust and the continual development of best practices.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

**“Board Members, Staff and Volunteers”** includes all volunteer members of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust’s Board of Directors, all full time, part time, casual, and contracted employees of the Nature Trust, and all volunteers.

**“Designated Authority”** is the person to whom violations of this Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures are reported and who is responsible to review, act upon, report on, and document any violations or reports of violations, as well as resulting decisions and actions. The Designated Authority for violations associated with staff members or volunteers is the Executive Director. The designated authority for violations associated with Board, board committee Volunteers, or the Executive Director is the Board Chair (or Vice-Chair if Board Chair is not appropriate in a particular situation).

## 3.0 POLICY

To preserve the Nature Trust’s credibility, respect and trust as a conservation charity operating in the public interest, to ensure the organization is effective, open, and accountable, and a positive, rewarding organization with which to be affiliated, all Nature Trust Board members, Staff, and Volunteers are expected to meet the following Code of Conduct:

- Act in good faith, honestly, and with professional integrity.
- Conduct themselves truthfully and professionally.

- Ensure that public confidence and professional respect in the Nature Trust are upheld and can bear close public scrutiny of accountability.
- Engage in open and transparent business dealings.
- Exercise due diligence in considering issues and questions for professional judgement in an unbiased manner independent of personal interests.
- Exercise appropriate judgement in terms of personal behaviour and decorum, in a manner which will never damage or undermine the reputation of the Nature Trust or its volunteers, staff, supporters and partners.
- Support open, two-way communications that reflect active listening, fairness, courtesy, and respect.
- Take personal responsibility for their actions and give their best to the organization, while trusting that others are doing the same.
- Respect and understand the opinions and beliefs of others, even where such opinions and beliefs may be different from their own perspective.
- Maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality and privacy in accordance with applicable laws and Nature Trust policies and procedures.
- Avoid any real or perceived Conflict of Interest in accordance with applicable laws and Nature Trust policies and procedures.
- Foster a positive outlook and do their best to contribute to building morale.
- Ensure proper care and stewardship of financial assets and resources.
- Use their voice as an ambassador of the Nature Trust, promoting the organization, our mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- Speak on behalf of the organization and the organization's views only as specifically authorized.
- Ensure a positive, welcoming organizational culture that values relationships, people, trust, collaboration, innovation, and learning.
- Treat everyone (Nature Trust, community, stakeholders) in a courteous and professional manner, with fairness, equity, dignity, and respect.
- Promote and support an environment that has strong diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, accessibility, and belonging values that align with the mission of the organization.

In the event of non-compliance with the above Code of Conduct, consequences and/or remediation may follow (as described in section 6.0).

### **3.1 ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

The Nature Trust's primary goals are to secure ecologically sensitive properties and ensure their conservation and stewardship in perpetuity. The Nature Trust is not an environmental advocacy organization and only performs advocacy tasks when they align with these specific goals. In addition, to help attain organizational goals, the Nature Trust has become an important partnership builder and collaborator, working closely with all levels of government, Indigenous groups and other conservation and community organizations and initiatives. To achieve its mission, the Nature Trust works with a wide diversity of people and organizations, from many walks of life, and political and other interests and values. Our advocacy actions are carefully and strategically executed to maintain these important relationships, partnerships, credibility, and trust with the full spectrum of stakeholders. Communication or position statements about topical or sensitive public policy issues and any advocacy actions will be guided by the Executive Director and/or the Board when deemed appropriate.

Board Members, Staff and Volunteers need to be cognizant of these sensitivities when considering the impact of taking advocacy positions and interfacing with the public or in the public space, including posting and interacting on social media. Careful consideration should be given to how their social media usage reflects on the Nature Trust.

### **3.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Nature Trust recognizes the importance of independence and integrity with respect to all the Nature Trust's operations to preserve the Nature Trust's credibility as a conservation charity operating in the public interest. All Board Members, Staff, and Volunteers must read and agree to the *Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures* and disclose any potential or actual Conflicts of Interest by completing a *Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement and Disclosure Form* upon joining the Nature Trust. No person will use his or her position with the Nature Trust to obtain, either directly or indirectly, any financial or other inappropriate benefit.

**NOTE:** See full *Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures* for specific *Conflict of Interest* requirements.

### **3.3 ADDITIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS**

In addition to meeting general Code of Conduct requirements, Board Members are expected to exhibit behaviour and conduct that is consistent with the Board of Directors role description and with any other Board protocol for respectful and professional behaviour and communication.

Standards of excellence for Board Members include accountability, democratic voice, due diligence, best practices, risk management, organizational direction, openness, transparency, and fiduciary responsibility (particularly around assets, property, legal, and regulatory matters). Board Members will conduct themselves through a governance model that sets objectives and makes decisions that guide staff and volunteers toward achieving the overall goals of the organization. Board Members are expected to speak with one voice, supporting, championing, and implementing majority decisions of the Board.

### **4.0 COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, JUSTICE, ACCESSIBILITY, AND BELONGING**

The Nature Trust embraces the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, accessibility, and belonging and believes these yield adaptability and longevity inside our organization and in the community. All people are to be treated with respect and are to display inclusive and accepting behaviours toward each other and those outside the organization they interact with on behalf of the organization. All activities within the organization are to be performed in a fair and transparent manner to ensure an unjustified advantage is not created for any individuals or groups of individuals.

### **5.0 REPORTING AND WHISTLEBLOWER SUPPORT**

The Nature Trust is committed to lawful and ethical behaviour in all our activities and require Board, Staff, and Volunteers to act in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures and to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. Board, Staff, and Volunteers must act in good faith and report violations of policy, practice, or activity that are inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, or that are in any way malicious or harmful. No Board, Staff, or Volunteer shall suffer harassment, retaliation or consequence when bringing forward such matters.

**NOTE:** See full *Whistleblower Policy* for additional information.

### **6.0 ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

At any time, if Board, Staff or Volunteers observes behaviour inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, they should raise the issue directly with the offending individual and attempt to resolve the issue in compliance with this policy.

If direct resolution is not appropriate, adequate, or effective, a report on the behaviour of concern should be escalated to the individual's direct supervisor/superior and if still not resolved, to the Designated Authority.

The Designated Authority will consider and determine an appropriate decision and directed resolution or action on the matter. As appropriate, the matter may be elevated to the attention and direction of the Board Chair, Executive Committee and/or full Board. All violations and resulting decisions and actions must be documented in writing. Serious violations should be reported to the Board of Directors.

## **7.0 POLICY VIOLATION**

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action as directed by the Executive Director, Board Chair, or full Board of Directors, including but not limited to direction for change or improvement in behaviour, revocation of Board or volunteer appointment, or termination of employment, subject to the applicable charity laws and approved Nature Trust bylaws, policies, procedures, principles, standards, and related guidelines on addressing violations.

## **8.0 IMPLEMENTATION**

All Nature Trust Board, Staff, and Volunteers must sign a statement affirming understanding of and requirement for compliance with the Code of Conduct, upon onboarding with the Nature Trust.

Guidelines and procedures for administration and interpretation of this policy and for investigating and resolving issues may be determined as needed by the Nature Trust Board of Directors or delegated to Executive Committee for administrative process.

## **9.0 POLICY APPLICATION**

This Code of Conduct applies to all Nature Trust Board Members, Staff, and Volunteers.

All Board, Staff, and Volunteers will be provided with a copy of this Code of Conduct as part of their onboarding process and will attest to having read and to understanding and agreeing to abide by this Policy.

**Nova Scotia Nature Trust**

**CODE OF CONDUCT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

I have read and understand the Nature Trust's Code of Conduct and I agree to abide by all terms and conditions of this Code.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Role with the Nature Trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** *This acknowledgement may be modified and combined with other policy acknowledgements in an employment contract, board agreement, volunteer or other similar document.*