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Code of Ethics for the Profession of Forestry

Society of American Foresters

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Code of Ethics

for the

Profession of Forestry

Adopted by the Society of American Foresters, November 12, 1948



THE PURPOSE of these canons is to formulate guiding principles of professional conduct for foresters in their relations with each other, with their employers, and with the public. The observance of these canons secures decent and honorable professional and human relationships, establishes enduring mutual confidence and respect, and enables the profession to give its maximum service.

Professional Life

1. The professional forester will utilize his knowledge and skill for the benefit of society. He will cooperate in extending the effectiveness of the forestry profession by interchanging information and experience with other foresters, and by contributing to the work of forestry societies, associations, schools, and publications.

2. He will advertise only in a dignified manner, setting forth in truthful and factual statements the services he is prepared to render for his prospective clients and for the public.

Relations with the Public

3. He will strive for correct and increasing knowledge of forestry and the dissemination of this knowledge, and will discourage and condemn the spreading of untrue, unfair, and exaggerated statements concerning forestry.

4. He will not issue statements, criticism, or arguments on matters connected with public forestry policies, without indicating, at the same time, on whose behalf he is acting.

5. When serving as an expert witness on forestry matters, in a public or private fact finding proceeding, he will base his testimony on adequate knowledge of the subject matter, and render his opinion on his own honest convictions.

6. He will refrain from expressing publicly an opinion on a technical subject unless he is informed as to the facts relating thereto, and will not distort or withhold data of a substantial or other nature for the purpose of substantiating a point of view.

Relations with Clients, Principals, and Employers

7. He will be loyal to his client or to the organization in which he is employed and will faithfully perform his work and assignments.

8. He will present clearly the consequences to be expected from deviations proposed if his professional forestry judgment is overruled by non-technical authority in cases where he is responsible for the technical adequacy of forestry or related work.

9. He will not voluntarily disclose information concerning the business affairs of his employers, principals or clients, which they desire to keep confidential, unless express permission is first obtained.

10. He will not, without the full knowledge and consent of his client or employer, have an interest in any business which may influence his judgment in regard to the work for which he is engaged.

11. He will not, for the same service, accept compensation of any kind, other than from his client, principal, or employer, without full disclosure, knowledge, and consent of all parties concerned.

12. He will engage, or advise his client or employer to engage, other experts and specialists in forestry and related fields whenever the client's or employer's interests would be best served by such actions, and will cooperate freely with them in their work.

Relations with Professional Foresters

13. He will at all times strive to protect the forestry profession collectively and individually from misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

14. He will aid in safeguarding the profession against the admission to its ranks of persons unqualified because of lack of good moral character or of adequate training.

15. In writing or in speech he will be scrupulous to give full credit to others, in so far as his knowledge goes, for procedures and methods devised or discovered and ideas advanced or aid given.

16. He will not intentionally and without just cause, directly or indirectly, injure the reputation or business of another forester.

17. If he has substantial and convincing evidence of unprofessional conduct of a forester, he will present the information to the proper authority for action.

18. He will not compete with another forester on the basis of charges for work by underbidding through reduction of his quoted fee after being informed of the fee quoted by a competitor.

19. He will not use the advantages of a salaried position to compete unfairly with another forester.

20. He will not attempt to supplant another forester in a particular employment, after becoming aware that the latter has been definitely engaged.

21. He will not review the work of another forester, for the latter's employer, without the other's knowledge, unless the latter's connection with the work has been terminated.

22. He will base all letters of reference or oral recommendation on a fair and unbiased evaluation of the party concerned.

23. To the best of his ability he will support, work for, and adhere to the principles of the merit system of employment.

24. He will not participate in soliciting or collecting financial contributions from subordinates or employees for political purposes.

25. He will uphold the principle of appropriate and adequate compensation for those engaged in forestry work, including those in subordinate positions, as being in the public interest and maintaining the standards of the profession.