



## **Volunteer Code of Conduct**

### **Introduction**

This code of conduct provides the standard of care expected by and for volunteers working directly under the direction of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) with the goal to maintain a volunteer culture that is safe, ethical, responsible and welcoming to all.

### **Mission and Values**

The mission of the NCTA is to develop, maintain, protect and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.

We are guided by the following core values that represent the organization's commitment to the Trail, our partnerships and each other and are at the heart of our Code of Conduct.

#### **Accountability**

We take ownership and responsibility for our actions, policies and decisions. We engage in wise stewardship of public and private resources.

#### **Collaboration**

We value the spirit of cooperation between staff, volunteers, all partners and landowners and are committed to building and maintaining this culture of collaboration. Service is the backbone of our organization.

#### **Excellence**

We strive for exceptional quality and safety, both in the work we do in building and maintaining the Trail and in the experiences of the users of this world class Trail.

#### **Inclusion**

We are committed to ensuring that everyone is respected, included and valued for their contributions to our mission and culture. We actively welcome people of different backgrounds, perspectives, thoughts and beliefs.

## **Scope of the Code of Conduct**

This Code of Conduct applies to individuals volunteering for the NCTA but also may be adopted by other organizations within the NCNST network.

The code of conduct applies to:

- Physical locations, such as the Trail, office buildings, shelters, trailheads, campsites, etc.
- Activities and events such as hikes, programming, training, and internal and external meetings.
- Activities such as written communication, including online and social Media.
- Other instances or locations where people operating within the code may be representing the organization.

Overall, the code of conduct applies to interactions that occur across our organization's Operations.

The North Country Trail Association's separate Employee Handbook details expectations of the NCTA staff and processes for them to submit grievances.

## **National Park Service Professionalism in the Workplace**

As a partner of the National Park Service (NPS) in this work, volunteers are encouraged to sign up with the Volunteer in Parks program and are subject to the NPS policy for [Professionalism in the Workplace](#).

The NPS respects and values all volunteers as equal partners in accomplishing the mission of the Trail. The commitment to volunteers is to maximize the quantity and quality of training opportunities, make all efforts to provide for a safe and productive work environment, and to maintain standards of conduct for the benefit of everyone. The volunteers' commitment to the NCNST is to demonstrate good faith effort in adhering to NPS policies, standards and procedures, and conduct themselves in manners befitting the NPS Volunteers-In-Parks Program.

## **Anti-Discrimination**

Our organization strives to maintain an environment free from discrimination, harassment, or bullying on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, national origin, or religion, among others. The organization requires all volunteers to ensure their conduct is aligned with this policy and reserves the right to take disciplinary action against any volunteer who is found to be in violation.

In addition, the NPS along with land management partners such as the US Forest Service or our state and local agency partners often have anti-harassment policies and offer avenues for grievance.

[NPS Director's Order 16E: Anti-Harassment Policy.](#)

[USFS Anti-Harassment Policy](#)

## Eligibility

When matching volunteers with opportunities, it's critical that we provide a safe environment for all volunteers and any participants who contribute to our mission.

As such, persons with the following criminal act convictions without limitation (felonies or misdemeanors within the last 10 years) or pending case dispositions are not permitted to volunteer with NCTA:

- Any criminal act including a component involving physical violence, physical force and/or intimidation of force,
- Any criminal act sexual in nature,
- Any criminal act that resulted in physical and/or mental harm to a minor,
- Anyone who is or has been registered in a local, state or national sex offender registry,
- Any criminal act relating to cruelty to animals,
- Non-violent felonies if applicable to the role the volunteer is performing (e.g. A person with a conviction for financial crimes cannot serve in a Chapter Leadership role).

NCTA holds the right to perform background checks of volunteers at all levels and will dismiss volunteers if the above criteria apply. NCTA's Executive Director may grant exceptions as they deem appropriate depending on the situation and volunteer role. Exceptions may also be made for organized prison programs that include formal, on-site supervision.

## Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

We recognize the following rights and responsibilities of volunteers:

<p>Volunteers have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● be treated with respect,</li><li>● have an environment free of harassment, discrimination or hostile conditions,</li><li>● receive a suitable assignment,</li><li>● receive training and necessary support,</li><li>● have qualified supervision,</li><li>● have safe working conditions, and</li><li>● have their time used effectively.</li></ul>	<p>Volunteers have the responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● make safety the highest priority,</li><li>● act in a professional manner,</li><li>● treat others with respect,</li><li>● follow NCTA Trail Management policies and guidelines,</li><li>● participate in and learn from training sessions and meetings,</li><li>● perform high quality work,</li><li>● care for Trail resources,</li><li>● disclose personal information if necessary to the task or NCTA policy, and seek and accept guidance</li></ul>
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## **Standards of Conduct**

In every situation, those within the scope of this Code of Conduct conduct themselves in a manner consistent with volunteer rights and responsibilities and this Code of Conduct. Safety is a high priority focus and refers to both physical safety and emotional safety. To that end, we commit to inclusive and equitable practices in action, word, and deeds.

Those within the scope of this code will not comport themselves in a manner detrimental to others within the NCTA Community including: volunteers, trail users, NCTA employees, the public, federate and state and land management partners, members of Affiliates.

The goal of establishing a code of conduct is to educate, inspire and empower those we interact with, and to further expand civic engagement and the perpetual protection of the NCNST.

Individuals will:

- Welcome all people and actively seek new members, supporters, stewards and constituents.
- Uphold a community built on respect, encouragement and opportunity for all, where issues are addressed in a calm and professional manner.
- Conduct and participate in activities with safety as the highest priority, while minimizing risks and impacts.
- Respect our natural and cultural resources and the ways that other people connect with one another and the NCNST.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.
- Stay informed of the land manager(s) policies and regulations, including guidelines and Recommendations.
- Represent the NCTA in a professional and respectful manner.

A simplified [Volunteer rights and responsibilities handout can be found here.](#)

## **Misconduct**

Misconduct describes actions in violation of the Code's Standard of Conduct. Actions that may be detrimental to the organization, the public and natural resources or are in violation of our organizational values are considered misconduct.

The following is not an exhaustive list, but provides examples of misconduct:

- Unwelcome, discriminatory or exclusionary behavior toward others of any kind based on identities including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental ability, neuro(a)typicality, physical characteristics, socioeconomic background, nationality, age, religion or beliefs. This

includes but is not limited to unsolicited judgments on a person's lifestyle choices and practices, such as appearance, food, health and parenting.

- Physical or sexual assault, including violence or threats of violence toward others.
- Harassment that is sexual, psychological and/or physical. Harassment may be verbal, physical, digital, deliberate, unsolicited or unwelcome. This includes but is not limited to physical contact without consent and/or a refusal to honor a request to stop.
- Failure to prioritize, or willful disregard for, personal and group safety during participation in activities on the NCNST, whether through disregard for stated policies and rules or through negligence.
- Disregard for the rules and regulations of the land manager.
- Failure to interact with or represent our land management partners in a professional and respectful manner.
- Stalking
- Illegal or unethical activity while participating in club activities.
- Misuse, misreporting, or embezzlement of project funds or other assets.

### **Reporting misconduct**

Volunteers are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with others in an open way to help lead to improved communication and stronger working relationships. If this approach is not an option or is unsuccessful, volunteers, Chapter leadership, members and guests of NCTA may submit concerns or complaints to NCTA using our [misconduct reporting form](#).

Any person privy to the communication from the complainant must practice discretion. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Despite every effort to protect the identity of complainants, often given the issues under scrutiny, the identity of the complainants may become obvious to the accused. Retaliation in any form, by any person, is itself a breach of the Code of Conduct.

### **Investigation and resolution**

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the information collected will be shared with a group consisting of one NCTA Staff member, one Board member, one volunteer and a representative of NPS or other land management agency if appropriate, who will review the issue and decide on an appropriate resolution.

### **Limitations and Modifications**

The NCTA and its members, volunteers and leaders acknowledge that the Code of Conduct will not cover every possible circumstance. Modifications to this Code of Conduct will be reviewed on a regular basis.