



Ethics Complaint Process

Complaints regarding a member's adherence to the Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS) Code of Conduct can be submitted to any of the Board of Directors in person, or through written notification via letter, text or email, or through board notification on STPS' website (board@seaturtlespacecoast.org). Complaints shall be forwarded to the Ethics Committee within 2 business days for review and resolution.

The Ethics Committee shall be composed of the following five members (appointed by the **Board of Directors** by the end of January of each year):

- 2 non-Permit Holder Board of Directors
- 1 Permit Holder Board of Director
- 2 STPS members
- #1 *alternate*
- #2 *alternate*

If the complaint involves member(s) of the Ethics Committee, if there may be a potential conflict of interest, or if any primary Ethics Committee member(s) are unavailable at the start of the investigation, #1 alternate will fill the void, and if needed, #2 alternate will fill the 2nd void, to always maintain a committee of five members.

For a complaint involving one or more Board Members, the Board member(s) may be suspended from the Board effective immediately during the review process. The Board of Directors shall decide if a temporary suspension is warranted, based on the severity of the complaint.

The Ethics Committee and the member(s) involved shall always maintain strict confidentiality regarding the complaint during the investigation.

The Ethics Committee will begin an investigation no later than five business days from receipt of the complaint. The Ethics Committee may dismiss any charge if there is insufficient evidence to pursue an investigation, or for which there is no apparent unethical behavior or violation of the STPS Code of Conduct. The complaint must be resolved within two weeks of the commencement of the investigation. If additional time is needed, a request shall be submitted to the Executive Committee to justify the additional time requirements, and a notification of extension shall be communicated to all parties involved.

The Ethics Committee may determine that there is no proof beyond a reasonable doubt of a violation, but that there are concerns. In that circumstance, the Committee may recommend the Board of Directors issue an appropriate communication to all parties involved.



Decisions by the Ethics Committee shall require a majority vote of all its members. The Ethics Committee shall submit their findings to the Board of Directors and their recommended action(s). If the complaint is of a criminal nature, the Ethics Committee shall notify the Chairperson immediately, so as to alert the appropriate authorities.

The Board of Directors shall review the findings of the Committee within five business days, and decide as to actions that may be taken including, but not limited to:

- No action is warranted
- Written reprimand
- Suspension of membership in all STPS programs for a defined period
- Expulsion from STPS membership

After determining the appropriate actions, the Chairperson shall communicate in writing the course of action to all parties involved.

A request for appeal may be made in writing to the STPS Chairperson within thirty (30) days of the date of the communication.

In the event of an appeal, the Board of Directors shall review the appeal at the next regularly scheduled board meeting, and decide on further action(s). The Board of Directors decision will be considered final, and the Chairperson shall communicate in writing the course of action to all parties involved.

Procedure:

1. Upon receipt of a complaint, details about the complaint will be entered into in the "Ethics Investigation Log".
2. The complaint will be forwarded to the Ethics Committee within 2 business days.
3. Ethics Committee will begin investigation no later than five business days of the receipt of complaint.
4. Ethics Committee shall resolve the complaint within two weeks of the commencement of the investigation and submit their findings and recommended actions to the Board of Directors.
5. Board of Directors shall review the findings of the Ethics Committee within five business days and decide as to actions that may be taken.
6. A request of appeal can be submitted in writing to the STPS Chairperson within 30 days of the date of the communication.
7. All parties shall complete the appropriate section(s) of the "Ethics Investigation Log".