

# **Society for Range Management**

## **Ethics Review Committee Process / Ethics Violations Procedures**

### **PURPOSE:**

As a condition of continued membership in the Society for Range Management (SRM or Society) each individual or entity joining the Society agrees to abide by the SRM Code of Ethics and Standards for Professional Conduct. SRM seeks to maintain the highest level of professional integrity among its members to enhance its reputation as a professional society advocating objective, science-based rangeland management. A violation of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct by any member of SRM reflects unfavorably on the Society and the profession it represents. Such violations are, therefore, a serious matter which must be addressed to ensure equitable treatment of both the individual and the membership at large. A guiding principle is that all deliberations will retain the maximum level of confidentiality in order not to inadvertently tarnish the reputation of any member of SRM.

### **ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

An Ethics Review Committee will be appointed within 30 days after a formal complaint is received in writing. After receiving the complaint, the board will be appointed by the President. The committee will consist of a Chair and 3 members as a minimum. The suggested structure of the committee should consist of at least 2 past officers or Board of Directors members and 2 individuals that closely represent the disciplinary nature of the complaint.

Candidates for service on the Ethics Review Committee will be selected based on significant and continuous service and leadership in SRM as elected officers and other leadership positions, and other individual members that have demonstrated personal integrity and adherence to professional standards.

### **PROCEDURE FOR MAKING AND ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS OF VIOLATIONS OF THE SRM CODE OF ETHICS OR STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Any member or non-member of the Society may file a complaint against a member of SRM who they reasonably and in good faith believe has committed a violation of the Code of Ethics or Standards of Professional Conduct.

The complainant shall be required to file a written complaint with the Society's Executive Vice President (EVP). Upon confirming that the complaint is complete, the EVP shall forward the complaint and any supporting documents to the Chair of the SRM Ethics Review Committee (ERC). The ERC Chair will not divulge the name(s) or the complainant or any substantiating witnesses. This written complaint should contain the following:

1. The name of the SRM member against whom the complaint is made (henceforth, the respondent).
2. Complete description of the nature of the complaint, including dates, locations, circumstances, and other pertinent information. This should be sufficiently documented to enable the Ethics

Review Committee to determine whether there is adequate basis to proceed with an investigation.

3. If there are witnesses or other individuals with first-hand knowledge that will substantiate the allegations of the complaint, these should be included in the complaint, preferably as co-complainants, but at least the names and contact information should be provided in the complaint.
4. A description of how the respondent has violated a specific provision of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct (The specific provision should be clearly identified).

Upon receiving the complaint, the Chair will make it available to the ERC. If any member of the ERC has a pre-existing personal or professional relationship with either party or is previously aware of the alleged violation, he or she shall be recused from participation in the matter. The ERC will then examine the complaint and any supporting documentation to determine whether the submission and supporting evidence warrants further action. Further action by the ERC will only be taken if the complaint alleges conduct that is directly related to the standards prescribed in the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct. Allegations of illegal activities or personal issues unrelated to or falling outside the scope of the SRM Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct will not be considered by the ERC and instead left to the employer or legal authorities where applicable. The ERC may request further information from the complainant or co-complainants if necessary and helpful to the full and fair consideration and review of the complaint. If after such initial review a majority of the ERC determines that the complaint is without merit, falls outside the scope of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct, or is not sufficiently verifiable, it will so inform the complainant, close the matter, and destroy all records of such complaint. If the ERC determines that the complaint merits further review and consideration, it will promptly:

1. Contact the respondent(s) (person(s) named in the complaint) and inform the respondent(s) of the nature of the charges, but not the identity of the complainant. If the respondent admits the violation, the ERC will then proceed to decide what action will be taken with regard to censure, suspension or loss of membership, loss of certification, or such other sanction as the ERC may consider appropriate. If the respondent denies the complaint, the ERC will then proceed with the investigation to evaluate fairly the complaint and response. This investigation may vary depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, and the type and amount of supporting information and documentation available.
2. When the respondent denies responsibility for the actions described in the complaint, the ERC should then forward to the respondent all the materials provided by the complainant. The respondent shall be asked to provide a written response and supporting evidence that refutes the claim of the complainant. Such response shall be submitted to the ERC Chair, with a copy to the Society Executive Vice President, within thirty (30) days of the date of respondent's receipt of the complaint and supporting materials. Such material can include notarized statements by others having first-hand knowledge of the alleged act violating the Ethics or Standards. Copies of this information should also be supplied to the complainant. The respondent may at this time also request the opportunity to a hearing before the ERC either in person, by telephone or video conference whereby all participants may be heard simultaneously. Such hearing shall be scheduled by the Society's Executive Vice President on a date and time that is mutually agreeable by all parties and members of the ERC. The Society will endeavor to schedule the

hearing within thirty (30) days of the respondent's request for such hearing. Neither party is entitled to representation by counsel at such hearing.

3. If a hearing is requested and conducted, following the conclusion of the hearing, the ERC will then consider the documentation, statements, testimony, and submissions supplied by both the complainant and the respondent and formulate a written finding. The ERC may ask for more information from either party if needed to complete its finding.
4. If the ERC finds that there has been no violation of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct, the complaint will be dismissed and the file closed, with both parties being notified of the finding in writing.
5. If the ERC finds that a violation of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct has occurred, it shall prepare its written findings and a recommendation of the nature and extent of sanctions, if any, for review and consideration by the Society's Board of Directors. The findings and recommendation(s) of the ERC must be approved by a majority of the participating members of the ERC. The ERC's written findings and recommendation(s) shall be submitted to the Society's Executive Vice President for distribution to and consideration by the Board of Directors.
6. Upon submission of the ERC's finding and recommendation(s) to the Board of Directors, the Board shall meet either in person or by telephone or video conference to confer and render a final decision as to the sanction(s) to be imposed, if any. Any sanction(s) to be imposed shall be approved by not less than a majority vote of the Society's Board of Directors. The decision of the Board shall be issued within thirty (30) days of its receipt of the ERC's finding and recommendation(s). A copy of the ERC's written findings and recommendations and the Board's final and binding written decision on the matter shall be issued to both the complainant and the respondent.