

## Forest Stewards Guild - Membership and Policy Guidelines Revision Process

October 24, 2019

### Background

The Guild's Membership and Policy Guidelines (referred to as the "Guidelines") describe the rights and obligations of membership, membership activities, and our process for development of policy and position statements. The original guidelines were created when the Forest Trust/Forest Stewards Guild merged in the early 2000s. The last substantive update for the Guidelines was in 2007. Minor revision in 2015 reflected the Guild's name change. Many sections still required minor revisions to eliminate ambiguous or conflicting guidance, minor errors, and use of consistent terms.

It is the goal of this work to ensure that the Guidelines are revised to be sufficiently clear and unambiguous to serve their purpose, while also being as flexible as possible, in order to avoid becoming quickly outdated.

### Revision Process

The formal revision process has taken more than a year and was led by an *ad hoc* committee composed of three members of the Board of Directors, three members of the MPC, and an additional member at large. Guild staff have also been supportive with their review for consistency with current practice. The committee met 4 times by phone and once in person during a regional meeting in NH in June 2019. Following the committee's final recommendations, both the Board and MPC contributed additional input and edits. The final document has been formally approved by both the Board and MPC.

This document is intended to guide the reader through the major changes, including background and rationale, as needed.

### Summary of Edits by sections I, II, III...XI

Note that an additional section has been added to this document, section II (formerly Mission and Principles) is now "Structure", adding one roman numeral to all following sections, thus section III in the original document is now section IV and so on. References in this document are made to the section headers as they appear in the newly revised document.

- I. Organization:** no edits made
- II. Structure:** This section has been added to provide basic overview of the role of Membership, Board, and MPC as it relates to the functions of the organization.
- III. Mission and Principles:** Formatting and typo correction changes only.
- IV. General Membership**
  - A. Edits to membership application review process, reflecting current practice of having staff review applications. In the past the membership committee (different from the MPC) reviewed applications, but this practice was changed 2015 to review by staff.
  - B. Types of membership have been edited to reflect current terminology and structure. The founding members category has been removed, and a retired professional member category added.
  - C. Changes to process of membership application review and structural changes to renewal process, similar to those made in section "A". Change to requirement of 5 years of field

experience being “desired” but not required for new applicants. This was seen as a barrier to young professional applicants and the term “desired” seemed vague.

- D. No changes made
  - E. No changes made
  - F. Amended to allow the MPC to consider “censure” of a member, as a less severe alternative to termination.
  - G. No changes made
  - H. Process by which a membership can be terminated has been updated to place MPC as the only body to conduct investigations as described in section H (2).
- V. Meetings of the General Membership:** Updated to reflect that regular “annual meetings” of the membership no longer occur. Removing this language does not preclude having membership meetings during future national or regional meetings, or via conference call or webinar formats. Annual Meetings were seen by the Founders as a key element of the Guild—a chance to learn from professional across the country and sustain the community that brought us together originally. Unfortunately, national meetings are expensive for members and generally cost the organization money. Recent efforts have been focused on smaller, more informal, regional gatherings.
- VI. Board:** Language added to reference legal Bylaws of the organization as the primary document describing the role and structure of the Board.
- VII. MPC**
- A. Removal of requirement that 2/3 of MPC members be actively engaged in “forest management”. Again, this criterion seemed vague and unnecessarily exclusionary.
  - B. Multiple minor edits to clarify the election process for MPC, mostly involving adjustments to language reflecting that elections are not tied to an annual meeting of the membership but rather the election process as described.
  - C. Multiple edits to clarify the terms of office for MPC, and process for filling vacancies should they occur outside normal election period.
- VIII. Meetings of MPC:** Various minor edits to clarify the structure and timing of MPC meetings, removing requirement that they are tied to an annual membership meeting. Current practice is for MPC meetings to be conducted via conference call on a monthly basis, revisions to the document reflect this new practice.
- IX. Committees:** Minor edits to clarify that the creation of Committees is to be overseen by the MPC.
- X. Working Groups:** Minor edits regarding Working Group coordination with staff.
- XI. Policy Development**
- A. Sections edited to improve the clarity description of how and why statements can be crafted.
  - B. Detailed descriptions added to clarify the process by which a statement is created by the MPC and approved by the Board. These edits reflect the current process by which Policy statements are moved through the development process before being formally voted on by the general membership. Other edits were made to improve consistency between sections involving both Position and Policy statements.
- The impetus for these changes arose from concerns that the roles of the MPC and the Board in the process of developing Policy Statements needed clear articulation—both to ensure that the Board’s fiduciary role was recognized and that the MPC’s authority for moving the process to a vote was clear.