



(Approved by membership vote 12/14/2019)

FOREST STEWARDS GUILD - MEMBERSHIP AND POLICY GUIDELINES

Purpose of this Document:

This document guides the Organization in its interaction with the Membership, with the Membership and Policy Council (MPC), the Board of Directors (Board) and any other ad hoc or regular committees or working groups. These guidelines will be periodically reviewed by an *ad hoc* committee of Board and MPC members and updated as needed. Updated guidelines are submitted to the Membership for ratification.

I. Organization

The Forest Stewards Guild (the “Guild”)

II. Structure

An active membership is central to the organization. Professional and Retired Professional Members are eligible to vote in MPC representative elections, on Policy Statements, and on Guideline revisions.

- A. The Board of Directors provides overall fiduciary and policy governance, and determines matters relating to the “policies, actions, and property of the Guild” (Bylaws, Article I). The Board refers matters relating to membership and policy statements to the MPC for consideration and takes timely action on MPC recommendations on such matters, including those that require a vote by the Membership for adoption (see Section XI below).
- B. The MPC serves the Membership as elected representatives. The MPC develops and revises Policy Statements and other policy documents, works to support membership related projects and outreach, and assists with other Guild initiatives where needed. The MPC informs the Board with regular communications about its activities.

III. Statement of Mission and Principles

- A. The Forest Stewards Guild promotes ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry, “excellent forestry,” as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. The Guild provides training, policy analysis, and research to foster excellence in stewardship, to support practicing foresters and allied professionals, and to engage a broader community in the challenges of forest conservation and management.
- B. The Guild’s professional members base their practice on the following principles:
 - 1. Human society benefits from responsible forest management that places the highest priority on the maintenance and enhancement of the entire forest ecosystem.
 - 2. The natural forest provides a model for sustainable resource management; therefore, responsible forest management emulates nature’s dynamic processes and minimizes impacts when harvesting trees and other products.
 - 3. The forest has value in its own right, independent of human intentions and needs.
 - 4. Human knowledge of forest ecosystems is limited. Responsible management that sustains the forest requires a humble approach and continuous learning.

5. The practice of forestry must be grounded in field observation and experience as well as in the biological sciences. This practical knowledge should be developed and shared with both traditional and non-traditional educational institutions and programs.
6. Our first duty is to forests and their future. When confronted with circumstances that threaten the integrity of the forest and conflict with the Mission and Principles of the Forest Stewards Guild, members must respond through education, advocacy, or where necessary, disassociation. Guild membership signifies a commitment to the highest forest stewardship ethic.

IV. General Membership

A. Application

1. Prospective Professional and Retired Professional members must complete an application form and submit it to the national office for processing (with exceptions as noted in IV.B.4.d) below.
2. Applications will be accepted at any time during the year and reviewed regularly by Guild staff. Membership renewals are due annually on July 1.

B. Types of Membership

1. Professional Members

Professional Members are foresters and allied resource management professionals, working independently or with organizations, whose activities and accomplishments exemplify the Guild's statement of Mission and Principles.

2. Retired Professional Members

Retired Professional Members are members who have retired from professional practice and continue to support the Mission and Principles of the Guild.

All subsequent references to Professional members in this document shall be assumed to mean both Professional and Retired Professional members

3. Student Members

- a. Students of forestry and allied resource disciplines who support the Guild's mission and principles and wish to become actively involved in the Guild's activities.
- b. Students may participate in working groups and the Program Committee but are not eligible to vote or to serve on the MPC or other committees.

4. Affiliate Members

- a. Affiliate Members are individuals, organizations, businesses or agency offices who support the Guild's mission, but are not forestry professionals and are not actively involved in Guild affairs.
- b. Organizational, business or agency affiliates must designate a single individual to serve as the contact person with the Guild and hold the official membership.
- c. Affiliates and their representatives may participate in working groups but are not eligible to vote or to serve on the MPC or other committees.
- d. One-year gift Affiliate Memberships may be awarded at the discretion of Guild staff.

C. Membership Requirements

1. All members must support the Guild Statement of Mission and Principles.

2. Professional Membership in the Forest Stewards Guild is open to all forest professionals whose work is directly related to the stewardship and protection of forests, whether that work occurs through on-the-ground management, policy, advocacy or research.
3. Professional Members must either possess a college-level degree in forestry or a working knowledge of forestry practice based on several years' experience.
The qualifications of an applicant seeking Professional Membership based on field experience will be subject to the discretion of the Guild staff. The staff may request that applicants with less than five years' experience provide additional demonstration of their qualifications such as resumes, references and sample management plans. Guild staff may consult with the Board, MPC, or other Professional Members for specific advice on membership applications.
4. The Forest Stewards Guild is committed to a culturally diverse membership. Guild membership is non-discriminatory regarding race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran.
5. Payment of Annual Dues. Full and timely payment of dues is required at the time of membership application. In the rare case an application is denied, the dues will be refunded. Other renewal policies are determined by Guild staff.

D. General Privileges

1. All members have the following privileges:
 - a. Access to the shared knowledge and experience of other members and peer organizations.
 - b. Access to research resources.
 - c. The ability to sign onto and help with Guild-sponsored policy initiatives.
 - d. Invitation to regional or national Guild meetings and other Guild Gatherings.
 - e. Free subscription to Guild's email newsletters.
 - f. Online access to the Professional and Retired Professional member directory and access to a directory of full membership via Guild staff.
 - g. Free copy of the Guild's print magazine and other publications.
 - h. Other privileges as established by the MPC and staff.

E. General Duties and Responsibilities of Membership

1. Members shall uphold and promote the Guild Mission and Principles.
2. Members should actively participate in membership development through recruitment, referrals and other assistance.
3. Members volunteer assistance in Guild obligations and activities.
4. Members vote, if eligible.
5. Members endeavor to attend Guild meetings.
6. A Guild member's individual actions affect the reputation of the organization as a whole and members shall always strive to uphold the positive reputation of the Guild .
7. Guild members shall conduct themselves in their professional affairs in a civil and dignified manner and shall refrain from the use of personal attacks and inflammatory language in any public communications.

F. Specific Privileges of Professional members

1. Professional members may nominate and vote for election of the Membership and Policy Council (MPC).
2. Professional members are eligible for membership on the MPC and other organizational and special committees.
3. Professional members are eligible to receive a discount on regional or national Meeting registration fees and assistance with travel and lodging expenses, when available.

4. Professional Members may propose amendments to the Mission and Principles to the MPC at any time. The MPC must review such proposals and decide as to the appropriate response within six months of receipt. The Board of Directors will review the decisions of the MPC. The Board and MPC will jointly decide whether an amendment is minor and can be approved without a Membership vote, or if it requires a full vote of the Membership.
5. Professional Members participate in the formulation and approval of policy and position statements.
6. Professional Members can initiate a termination or censure action on another Professional Member. (Section IV.H below)

G. Voting Rights and Processes

1. For all voting purposes, Professional Members are entitled to one vote each.
2. Student and Affiliate members are not eligible to vote.
3. Votes may be submitted by any methods deemed appropriate by Guild staff.
4. Voting deadlines will be established by Guild staff.
5. A minimum of one month must be provided for voting members to review and consider issues requiring a vote.
6. Amendments to the Guild's Membership and Policy Guidelines must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of Professional members who take part in the vote. No minimum level of participation is required for a vote to be valid.

H. Termination of Professional Membership

1. Professional Membership may be terminated for any of the following reasons:
 - a. A member's annual dues have not been paid in full.
 - b. A member's actions are clearly not in accord with the Guild's Mission and Principles.
 - c. A member's actions are clearly and consistently contrary to the General Duties and Responsibilities of Membership (Section IV.E above).
2. Membership is automatically terminated for non-payment of dues when at least 90 days have elapsed since the expiration of membership and the member's dues have not been received AND the member has received a written notice stating that termination is pending for non-payment of dues. Any Guild Professional Member for whom dues are a financial hardship may request a waiver of membership dues for up to two years.
3. Termination of professional membership for reasons other than non-payment of dues can only be made by the MPC in response to valid petitions for termination as described in III.H.4.
4. A petition for termination of a Professional Member can only be proposed by one or more Professional Members in good standing. Petitions for termination must be submitted to the Chair of the Membership and Policy Council in writing and include sufficient detail of the reasons for termination and references to information sources or persons familiar with the circumstances to allow the MPC to reasonably assess the situation. Members facing a petition for termination shall have the right to respond directly to the petition in writing or in a closed session with the MPC prior to the MPC taking action.
5. Within 60 days of having received a petition for termination, the MPC shall investigate and make a decision in response to the petition. At a minimum, the investigation shall include interviews with the petitioning member(s) and the member facing termination. The MPC may elect to interview any other directly affected or knowledgeable persons and the details of any such interview conducted in response to a petition may be considered confidential if the interviewee so elects. Following the investigation, the MPC will either approve the petition to terminate membership, deny the petition with no further action, or deny the petition while sending a formal letter of censure to the member subject to the petition.

6. Professional Members having received a formal letter of censure within the last 36 months may have their membership subsequently terminated by the MPC for continued actions not in accord with the Mission and Principles or the General Duties and Responsibilities of Membership. The MPC will exhibit reasonable diligence in evaluating such circumstances, however it may act subject to the approval process described in IV.H.(7.) without the need for another petition for termination or formal investigation.
7. MPC action in response to petitions for termination requires a 2/3 majority of MPC member votes during a properly announced meeting with a quorum of members present. Failure to achieve a 2/3 majority for any action in response to a petition for termination will result in denial of the petition. The chair or another representative of the MPC will notify both the petitioner and the member facing termination of the MPC's action on the petition within 3 days.

V. Meetings of the General Membership

A. Schedule

1. Meetings of the General Membership can be held on an as needed basis and may include but are not limited to the following topics:
 - a. Review of Guild activities.
 - b. Reports from national staff and regional coordinators.
 - c. Meetings of working groups and committees, concerns from the floor, installation of new MPC members.

VI. Board of Directors

A. General Powers

1. The property, affairs and activities of the Organization shall be managed by the Board of Directors. See the formal Organization Bylaws document for more information on the structure of the Board.
2. The Board shall be constituted to represent Membership and other interests as determined necessary or useful to the continued viability and vibrancy of the Organization.

VII. Membership and Policy Council (MPC)

A. Composition

1. The MPC is to be comprised of nine members.
2. Only Professional Members in good standing are eligible for the MPC.
3. MPC composition should reflect the diversity of Guild membership, including geographic, gender, experience, and professional affiliation.

B. Election

1. The MPC will coordinate with Guild staff to schedule an annual Membership vote for election of MPC members.
2. The MPC will solicit nominations from the Professional Membership no later than three months prior to the date of the Membership vote.
3. Professional members may submit nominations to the MPC at any time.
4. Nominations must be received no later than two months prior to the Membership vote.
5. The MPC will review nominations, establish eligibility, recruit candidates, prepare a slate of candidates and distribute ballots to the Professional Membership one month prior to the voting deadline. Staff will support the MPC in these efforts.

6. Completed ballots must be received by the deadline set by the MPC and Guild staff, typically 30 days after the start of Membership voting. The manner by which ballots are submitted will be determined by Guild staff and the MPC.
7. Election will be based upon the most votes received for each candidate as submitted by Professional Members.
8. Candidates will be notified of the results by either Guild staff or the chair of the MPC within 10 days of the end of voting.

C. Term of Office

1. Term begins at the next scheduled MPC call or meeting immediately following the election.
2. MPC members will be elected for terms of 3 years, with staggered terms, such that 3 seats are up for election each year.
3. MPC members may be elected to a maximum of 2 consecutive terms.
4. MPC members who have served the maximum number of consecutive terms may seek reelection after a period of 2 years.
5. Vacancies:
 - a. Any vacancy occurring between Membership votes may be temporarily filled by the MPC at any meeting (in person or by conference call) held after the vacancy occurs. An MPC member so appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve until the next Membership vote, at which time they'd be eligible for election if they choose to run.
 - b. Vacancies will be officially filled during the next scheduled Membership vote, based on votes conducted according to section VII B. above.

D. General Duties, Powers and Responsibilities of the MPC

1. The Council will:
 - a. Fulfill the purposes and objectives set forth in the mission statement.
 - b. Issue Guild policy and position statements in accordance with Section XI below.
 - c. Schedule and supervise votes of the Professional Membership on:
 - MPC membership
 - Guild policy statements
 - Modification of the Mission and Principles
 - d. Address topics related to membership size, composition, outreach, engagement and any issues that arise around membership services.
Select the members of the Membership and Nominating Committees.

E. Terminations

1. The status of any member who is absent from 3 consecutive in-person meetings will be automatically reviewed by the MPC.
2. If the MPC finds insufficient cause for absence, the MPC may, by simple majority vote of a quorum, deem the member to have vacated their seat and any office, elected or appointed, that they may have held. Seats thus vacated may be filled according to VII.C.6 above.

F. Compensation

1. MPC members will not be compensated by the Guild for fulfilling membership obligations, including services on committees.
2. Reimbursement may be provided for reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out MPC obligations. Reasonable expenses include lodging, transportation, and work-related meals.

VIII. Meetings of the MPC

A. Regular Meetings

1. Regular meetings of the MPC will be held by conference call or in person. The schedule of frequency shall be reviewed and determined by vote of the MPC.
2. Other meetings may be called as deemed necessary. Responsibility for coordination and notification lies with the Chairperson of the MPC and Guild staff.

B. Agendas

1. Agendas will be set by the MPC with assistance from Guild staff.
2. Agendas will be distributed to meeting participants sufficiently beforehand to enable MPC members to cast proxy votes if necessary.

C. Participation and Voting

1. Votes will be conducted on a one person, one vote basis.
2. Proxy voting
 - a. Proxy votes may be cast in response to specific issues identified in the meeting agenda.
 - b. Only one proxy vote is allowed per MPC member in attendance at an MPC meeting.
3. Guild staff is expected to be represented at all meetings of the MPC.
4. Guild staff is responsible for compilation and distribution of minutes.

D. Quorum

1. A quorum is 2/3 of the MPC membership in attendance or represented by proxy.

E. Duties of Officers

1. Chair
 - a. Presides over all MPC meetings.
 - b. Serves as coordinator and liaison between the MPC and the Board.
 - c. Develops agendas with Guild staff.
2. Vice-Chair
 - a. Carries out duties as delegated by the Chair and the MPC.
 - b. Assumes the duties of the Chair in his/her absence.

IX. Committees

A. Committees will be composed of Professional Members and be responsible for handling issues assigned by the Board or Guild staff or by the chair of the MPC.

1. Composition

- a. All Professional Members in good standing are eligible for membership on committees.
- b. Each committee shall have a 9-person maximum.
- c. Members of committees will be appointed by the MPC.

2. Formation

- a. Committees are created, renewed or dissolved at the discretion of the MPC.
- b. Any member in good standing may at any time ask the MPC to establish a committee.

3. Obligations

- a. Each committee will elect a chairperson, who will be responsible for reporting regularly to the MPC and Guild staff, and to the Membership as appropriate.

- B. Committees
 - 1. Membership Committee
 - a. In addition to responsibilities specified elsewhere in this document, the Membership Committee may be asked to review and approve applications of prospective Professional Members and complete other duties as assigned.
 - 2. Ad hoc Committees
 - a. Ad hoc committees may be created by the MPC to deal with organizational issues as deemed necessary by the Board.

X. Working Groups

- A. Definition
 - 1. Working groups will focus on general areas of interest such as policy, education or silviculture.
- B. Composition, Formation and General Obligations
 - 1. Composition
 - a. All Professional Members in good standing are eligible for membership on working groups.
 - b. Working groups are not limited in size.
 - 2. Formation
 - a. Working groups are created, renewed or dissolved at the discretion of the MPC, in coordination with staff.
 - b. Any member in good standing may at any time ask the MPC to establish a working group.
 - 3. Obligations
 - a. Each working group will elect a chairperson, who will be responsible for reporting regularly to the MPC and Guild staff, and to the Membership as appropriate.

XI. Policy Development

- A. Categories
 - 1. Broad Policy Statements
 - a. Guild Policy Statements generally address broad issues with unrestricted time horizons and/or wide geographic relevance. Policy Statements require a formal vote of the Professional Membership. Policy Statements shall be consistent with and relevant to the Guild Mission and Principles, but may include opinions, positions, factual clarifications, and other points pertinent to the objective.
 - b. Policy Statements will take the form of a formal document, written in a style that is appropriate to the subject matter and audience.
 - c. State- or local-level Policy Statements may be developed by local chapters or coordinators, must refer to and be consistent with existing national level Policy Statements, and shall follow the approval process for Policy Statements outlined in section B, below.
 - 2. Detailed Position Statements
 - a. Position Statements are intended to respond to pressing issues, often within a narrow time window. The process of approving Positions Statements should reflect the urgent nature of this need and avoid cumbersome review. Position statements generally address focused issues with restricted time frames and/or limited geographic relevance, are tiered to policy statements, and require review by the staff and Executive Committee of the Board. Because of the need for timely consideration, staff and the Board Executive Committee will have 3 days to complete this review from the date of delivery of the

Position Statement. The lack of a response within that time frame will be considered an affirmative review. Final approval is by vote of the MPC.

- b. Position Statements may take any of a number of forms, including a formal document or a simple letter from the Executive Director or MPC Chair.
- c. State- or local-level Position Statements may be developed by local chapters or coordinators, must be consistent with existing national level Policy or Position Statements, and require approval by Guild national headquarters staff and/or the Guild's MPC.

B. Procedure

1. Any Professional Member may recommend the development of a Policy or Position statement to the MPC, either directly or through Guild Board members or staff.
2. The MPC (or a subcommittee thereof) may develop the first draft of a Policy or Position Statement, or, if it so desires, delegate the first draft to Guild staff, the policy working group, or, in the case of a Position statement, to local members on issues relevant or restricted to their locale.
3. If a Policy Statement is particularly contentious or complex, the MPC may organize a series of workshops or meetings with professionals within or outside the Guild to solicit broad perspectives, as part of the process of drafting the Policy Statement.
4. The MPC Chair will notify the Board when Policy Statements are slated for development or revision. Following the start of MPC work on a Policy Statement, the MPC Chair or designated liaison to the Board, will provide information about the policy work at the next scheduled Board meeting. This will ensure Board members have an opportunity to provide input on a given statement early in the development/review process.
5. In cases where the policy working group or staff develops the first draft, it may be reviewed and revised as necessary by the MPC in conjunction with staff. In cases where the MPC or staff develops the first draft of a Policy Statement, it may be sent to the policy working group for review and comment.
6. Policy Statements must receive initial approval by majority vote of the MPC. An MPC-approved Policy Statement will then be submitted to the Board for approval before scheduling a Membership vote. The Board must vote its approval of the Policy Statement, or if the Board disapproves, it will provide the MPC with a single document representing the Board's position, and with a description of its concerns and recommendations. The MPC will consider the Board's responses and revise the Policy Statement, as appropriate. After any changes, the revised Policy Statement will be resubmitted to the Board. Approval by the Board is required.
7. Final approval by the Professional Membership is through a simple majority of the votes cast.
8. The MPC may authorize changes to a Policy Statement after approval by voting for purposes of clarification and editorial clean-up. Substantive changes to an approved Policy Statement must be subjected to a new approval by the Board and a new vote of the Professional Membership.
9. Position Statements may be appealed by petition of one-third of the Professional Membership. In such cases the MPC and staff must conduct a vote of the Professional Members within one month after receipt of the petition. Affirmation or rejection of the Position Statement in question is based on a simple majority of submitted votes.