



VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

The Center For Wilderness Cryptid Studies (CWCS) is committed to conducting ethical, evidence-base research while ensuring the safety, respect, and professionalism of all participants. This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for all volunteers representing CWCS in the field, online, and in public.

All volunteers are required to read, understand, and comply with this Code as a condition of participation.

1. Professionalism and Representation

- Volunteers must conduct themselves in a respectful, responsible, and professional manner at all times.
- Volunteers represent CWCS during activities and agree not to engage in behavior that could harm the organization's reputation or credibility.
- Harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

2. Safety and Compliance

- Volunteers must follow all safety instructions, protocols, and decisions made by expedition leaders and CWCS staff.
- Unsafe, reckless, or unauthorized actions (including wandering off alone or ignoring team procedures) are prohibited.
- Volunteers must immediately report injuries, hazards, or unsafe conditions to leadership.
- Alcohol, illegal substances, or impairment of any kind during CWCS activities is strictly prohibited.

3. Scientific Integrity and Ethics

- CWCS operates under an evidence-based, scientific approach. Volunteers agree to:
 - Accurately record observations and data without exaggeration or fabrication
 - Avoid jumping to conclusions or presenting speculation as fact
 - Respect differing interpretations of evidence
- Hoaxes, staged evidence, or intentional misinformation are grounds for immediate removal.

4. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Volunteers may be exposed to sensitive research data, locations, or findings.
- Volunteers agree **not to publicly share**, post, livestream, or disclose CWCS findings, locations, or internal discussions without explicit authorization.
- This includes social media posts, interviews, podcasts, videos, and online forums.

5. Media and Public Communication

- Only authorized individuals may speak on behalf of CWCS to the media or public.
- Volunteers must clearly state they are **not official spokespeople** if discussing general involvement in a personal capacity.
- Any photos, videos, or recordings taken during CWCS activities are subject to CWCS media policies.

6. Respect for Land, Wildlife, and Communities

- Volunteers must follow all applicable laws, regulations, and land-use rules.
- No harassment, pursuit, or harm of wildlife is permitted.
- Volunteers must practice Leave No Trace principles and respect private property and local communities.
- CWCS does not support aggressive behavior toward alleged cryptid subjects or environments.

7. Teamwork and Conduct in the Field

- Volunteers are expected to cooperate, communicate clearly, and support team cohesion.
- Disagreements should be handled respectfully and brought to leadership if needed.
- Bullying, exclusion, or undermining team leadership is not acceptable.

8. Equipment and Property

- Volunteers are responsible for their own equipment unless otherwise stated.
- CWCS equipment must be used responsibly and returned in good condition.
- Damage or loss of equipment should be reported immediately.

9. Compliance and Consequences

- Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct may result in:
 - Verbal or written warnings
 - Removal from a specific activity or expedition
 - Suspension or termination of volunteer status
- CWCS reserves the right to remove any volunteer whose behavior poses a safety risk or violates organizational standards.

10. Acknowledgment

By volunteering with the Center For Wilderness Cryptid Studies, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Volunteer Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

11. Disciplinary Process

The Center For Wilderness Cryptid Studies is committed to maintaining a safe, ethical, and professional environment. When concerns or violations of this Code of Conduct arise, CWCS will follow a fair and consistent disciplinary process.

A. Reporting Concerns

- Volunteers are encouraged to report violations, safety concerns, or unethical behavior to a CWCS expedition leader, staff member, or designated contact as soon as possible.
- Reports may be made verbally or in writing.
- CWCS will make reasonable efforts to handle reports discreetly and respectfully.

B. Review and Assessment

- CWCS leadership will review the reported issue and may gather additional information, including statements from involved parties or witnesses.
- The severity, frequency, and impact of the behavior will be considered.
- CWCS reserves the right to take immediate action if safety or organizational integrity is at risk.

C. Corrective Actions

Depending on the nature of the violation, corrective actions may include one or more of the following:

1. Verbal warning and clarification of the expectations
 2. Written warning placed on record
 3. Required retraining or supervision
 4. Removal from a specific activity or expedition
 5. Temporary suspension of volunteer privileges
 6. Termination of volunteer status
- Serious violations - such as safety endangerment, harassment, fabrication of evidence, substance use during activities, or intentional misconduct - may result in **immediate removal without prior warning**.

D. No Guarantee of Progressive Discipline

CWCS is not required to follow a progressive discipline sequence. The organization may determine the appropriate action based on circumstances and reserves the right to bypass steps when warranted.

E. Appeal Process

- A volunteer who is removed or suspended may submit a written appeal within a reasonable timeframe, as determined by CWCS.

F. Non-Retaliation

CWCS prohibits retaliation against any volunteer who raises a concern or reports misconduct in good faith.

1. Purpose and Scope

This media policy provides guidelines for how volunteers may represent the Center For Wilderness Cryptid Studies (CWCS) in all forms of media, including digital, print, audio, and video content. It applies to all volunteers involved in public, outreach, reporting, content creation, interviews, social media, and any other communications that reference the CWCS or its research activities.

2. Authorized Spokespersons

Only designated individuals may speak on behalf of the CWCS to external media outlets (press, podcasts, television, radio, documentaries, and online news sites). Volunteers must refer media requests to the designated Media Contact or Organizational Leader unless expressly authorized in writing.

Authorized spokespersons may:

- Speak about official findings, research practices, safety protocols, and educational objectives.
- Represent the organization's mission and core values accurately.

Volunteers may NOT:

- Claim to represent the organization without express authorization.
- Publicly contradict official positions or release unpublished research conclusions.

3. Content and Claims

Volunteers should communicate responsibly and ethically:

Accuracy:

- Ensure any information shared publicly is accurate, supported by verified observations, and consistent with the organizations documentation.

Speculation vs Evidence:

- Clearly differentiate speculation from documented evidence. Avoid presenting unverified claims as fact.

Scientific Tone:

- Use objective, respectful language. Refrain from sensationalism or exaggeration that could mislead audiences.

Respect for Skepticism:

- Acknowledge the scientific community's perspective and the nature of cryptid research as a fringe area of study. Clear communication about uncertainty helps maintain credibility.

4. Field Media and Documentation

When creating photos, audio, or video content in the field:

Consent and Safety:

- Ensure the safety and privacy of volunteers and research participants.
- Respect all local laws and land use regulations during recording.

Attribution and Release:

- Any person identifiable in media must sign a media release form before public use.

Sensitive Data:

- Do not disclose site coordinates, sensitive habitat locations, or proprietary research methods without organizational approval.

5. Social Media Guidelines

When posting on personal or organizational social media:

Personal Accounts:

- Volunteers may share personal content about their involvement, but should include a disclaimer such as:

“Views expressed here are my own and do not represent the Center For Wilderness Cryptid Studies unless explicitly stated”.

Official Accounts:

- Content must be approved through the media and communications team.
- Maintain professionalism - avoid posts that could be construed as offensive, discriminatory, or harmful to the organization’s reputation.

6. Interviews, Podcasts, and Public Forums

Before participating in interviews:

- Consult with the Media Contact to understand organizational talking points.
- Share interview questions in advance when possible.
- Follow the established message, emphasizing research goals, field work, and scientific inquiry.

7. Crisis Communication

In the event of controversy, dispute, or public misunderstanding:

- Refer all external inquiries to the Media Contact or Director.
- Do not engage in online arguments or public rebuttals without approval from leadership.

8. Compliance and Review

Volunteers are expected to comply with the policy at all times. Repeated violations may result in suspension of media privileges or volunteer status.

This policy will be reviewed annually and may be updated as needed.

9. Definitions

- **Media:** Any form of content published publicly - including print, audio video, and social platforms
- **Volunteer:** Anyone contributing time or representing the Organization without financial compensation.
- **Designated Spokesperson:** A volunteer or staff member explicitly authorized to speak for the Organization.