

# Ethics Policy and Procedures for the Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Board

## Statement of Commitment

The Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Board (KCNWCB) recognizes the need for establishing ethics policy and procedures for its Board members to complement the State of Washington's Boards and Commissions Membership Handbook and the Kitsap County Advisory Group Handbook. We recognize that we are custodians in trust of the assets of the KCNWCB, and we pledge to do our utmost to support the KCNWCB to the best of our ability. As part of our duties, we represent the organization both formally and informally to other associations, societies, government officials, and business representatives. We recognize that it is important that we represent the organization in such a way as to inspire trust, goodwill and mutual respect with our colleagues and stakeholders. In our duties, we will strive to preserve and enhance the good reputation of the organization and will avoid behavior which might erode public trust.

## Board Code of Conduct

Board members are expected to abide by the following code of conduct.

- Comply with the Ethics in Public Service Act (RCW 42.52).
- Comply with the Kitsap County Advisory Group Handbook.
- Approach all Board issues with an open mind, prepared to make an unbiased and impartial decision in the furtherance of the goals and objectives of the Board.
- It is the mutual responsibility of all Board members to suggest ways to improve the policies and or operations of the KCNWCB.
- Do not knowingly take advantage of or benefit from information that is obtained in the course of official duties and responsibilities as a Board member.
- Respect the individual rights of others and keep Board members' sensitive information confidential. Do not share personal files or business discussed at closed executive sessions unless they are part of the public record.
- Recognize that the manner in which we participate on the Board will bear public scrutiny.
- Do not use the KCNWCB or service on the Board for personal gain or advantage or for the gain or advantage of friends or supporters.
- Do not accept gifts, favors, or benefits offered by people or organizations that KCNWCB has or could have a business relationship with. Reject such offers on the basis that it is against the organization's policy to accept gifts from business associates. At most, accept minor promotional handouts of a nominal value.
- Avoid creating conflicts of interest that would interfere with the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the Board.
- Declare any conflict of interest, be it real, potential, or apparent, which is not immediately obvious with regard to any matter being discussed while in attendance at a meeting. The remaining board members present at the meeting will cast a vote to decide if a conflict of interest exists. If the Board decides that there is a conflict of interest, accept their request to voluntarily refrain from participating in that discussion and recuse yourself from any Board action on the matter. If there is not agreement among a majority of the Board about the presence of a specific conflict of interest, the KCNWCB will seek legal counsel on the matter.

## Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest are situations where there is an actual, potential, or apparent benefit that a person stands to gain through the fulfillment of their duties on the Board, whether monetarily or otherwise. The appearance of a conflict of interest can be just as harmful to public trust and government functioning as an actual conflict of interest. While conflicts of interest should be avoided, they can naturally arise when the Board discusses or takes action on a topic in which a Board member has an existing financial or personal interest.

The Board recognizes that conflicts of interest include but are not limited to the following situations:

- The intentional sale, purchase, cultivation or distribution of plant species that are listed, proposed for listing, or proposed for control on the noxious weed list;
- Any involvement with the appropriation of KCNWCB resources to friends, family, or people and businesses with whom the Board member has a direct or indirect financial interest;
- Accepting gifts, favors, meals or other benefits from any business associate or organization that the KCNWCB does business with, be it a monetary relationship or otherwise;
- Any circumstances where a Board member puts their personal interests above the needs of the KCNWCB.

## How to Submit an Ethics Complaint

- Any person who lives, works, travels through, or recreates in Kitsap County can submit an ethics complaint regarding the conduct of a Board member.
- Complaints should be emailed to the current Chair of the Board. If the current Chair of the Board is the subject of the complaint, it should instead be emailed to the current Vice Chair.
- Alternatively, complaints can be submitted to the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners.

## How an Ethics Complaint will be Handled

- Within 7 days, the Chair or Vice Chair will respond to the complainant to acknowledge receipt.
- Any ethics complaint submitted to the Board will be forwarded to all other members of the Board, including the subject of the complaint. We will also notify the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners of the complaint and make it available to them.
- The Chair or Vice Chair will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint of how the Board will proceed with the complaint.
- The Chair or Vice Chair will investigate facts related to the complaint. The subject of the complaint will not be involved with leading this fact-finding investigation.
- At the next regularly scheduled public meeting or a special meeting, the Board will present facts, discuss the complaint, and determine any Board actions needed to resolve the complaint.
- Within 1 day following the meeting, the Chair or Vice Chair will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint of any Board actions taken and how the complaint will be resolved. The Kitsap County Board of Commissioners will also be informed.
- Any Board member who violates the code of conduct twice will be asked to resign.