

# WESSA VOLUNTEERS'



# CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to inform volunteers about WESSA and of the standards of conduct required. Volunteers are expected to act respectfully, honestly, conscientiously and in good faith at all times when carrying out their volunteer activities and in their relationships and interactions with other people.

## JOIN WESSA TO EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND ACT FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE PLANET

Climate change, habitat loss, pollution, species are under threat – everyone needs to get involved in caring for the Earth! For 100 years, WESSA (the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) has played a significant role in creating awareness and providing platforms for people to act and get involved in helping to solve environmental issues. WESSA encourages and supports citizen action for environmental stewardship. We focus on education and training – particularly among young people – as well as advocacy and action projects to promote biodiversity, habitat integrity, pollution reduction, climate action and sustainable use of natural resources. Our commitment lies in acknowledging the interconnectedness of people and the environment in order to promote sustainable development.

### Our VISION:

*To lead citizen action in the region, supporting climate action, fighting biodiversity loss, and promoting a no pollution tolerance culture.*

### Our MISSION:

*To educate, advocate, and act for environmental and social justice, climate action, biodiversity protection, and reducing pollution in southern Africa.*

### Our SLOGAN:

*People Caring for the Earth*

**We AIM:** to contribute to conserving the Earth's vitality and diversity by:

- ☞ promoting sound environmental values and sustainable lifestyles
- ☞ integrating conservation and development
- ☞ encouraging and generating individual and community action
- ☞ enabling and growing a vibrant and active broad-based membership
- ☞ securing the protection and wise use of natural resources
- ☞ acting as an environmental watchdog
- ☞ influencing policy and decision-making
- ☞ fostering collaborative partnerships

## WESSA's VALUES

WESSA staff and volunteers are expected to uphold these Values:

**Integrity:** We shall endeavour to uphold our integrity, both as individuals and as an organisation, at all times, as we recognise that this principle is the value upon which all others are founded.

**Mutual Respect:** We shall, at all times, treat each other with mutual respect. Mutual respect at all levels fosters a sense of pride and belonging that is essential to a positive culture and enjoyment of both the workplace and WESSA's activities. We therefore promote tolerance, sharing, humility and a desire to seek consensus.

**Excellence:** We shall conduct ourselves and do business in a manner displaying the highest level of professional competence and behaviour, thereby bringing credit to WESSA. We shall always strive to be consistent, conscientious and focussed in our quest for personal excellence as we recognise that individuals striving for personal excellence will enhance any team and, thereby, the organisation as a whole.

**Ethos:** We shall promote an organisational culture that embraces diversity and empowerment for the benefit this brings. Our ever-changing environment requires us to be adaptable in order to remain effective and to seize opportunities. We shall therefore always encourage proactive problem-solving, initiative, and the search for better ways to succeed in our activities and mission.

**Accountability:** We recognise that each of us is a part of a team, and that no individuals can achieve more by themselves than everyone working together. In so doing, we shall always make the extra effort for our fellow team members whilst ensuring that all of us take full responsibility for our roles and remain accountable for our actions. We shall be empowering and continually re-evaluating ourselves in our actions.

## VOLUNTEERING WITH WESSA

**Volunteer definition:** Volunteer activity is unpaid participation undertaken in an approved, not-for-profit community organisation in a verified voluntary position.

**Volunteer Structure:** WESSA volunteers are organised and supported through local Branches, Sub-branches and Friends Groups, which are led by volunteer committees. Branches are grouped into geographic Regions, served by committees of Branch representatives. Regional representatives contribute to the governance and coordination of WESSA volunteer structures at the Membership Governance Committee and on the WESSA Board of Directors.

### Volunteer Commitments

- **Responsibilities:** Be punctual and reliable; Give notice if your availability changes or you are leaving the organisation; Deal with complaints in the appropriate manner; Undertake any training required; Respect confidentiality and privacy; Be accountable; Adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures; Ask for support when needed; Support other team members.
- **Attitude:** Respect and cooperation at all times in working and communicating with other volunteers, communities and organisations.
- **Dress code:** Volunteers may dress casually in order to work comfortably but must, at the same time, be neat and professional. As a volunteer, you may receive a WESSA T-shirt, which should be worn when participating in volunteer activities.
- **Complaints procedure:** WESSA has a grievance and complaints procedure. Any complaint should be first addressed to the activity leader or Branch committee member; from there it can be escalated through the WESSA membership structures if necessary. Volunteers may also use the Whistleblowing Hotline: [wessa.org.za/whistleblower-hotline](http://wessa.org.za/whistleblower-hotline).
- **Policies and procedures:** WESSA has many policies dealing with organisational operations, governance and behavioural issues; as well as policies and position statements on environmental issues, such our Policy on Mining and our position on rhino horn trade. These policies and position statements can be accessed at [www.wessa.org.za](http://www.wessa.org.za) or requested from the WESSA Membership Office (Email: [membership@wessalife.org.za](mailto:membership@wessalife.org.za))

### Possible reasons for withdrawing permission to volunteer at WESSA:

- Putting at risk one's own safety or the safety of fellow participants.
- Jeopardizing the organisation's reputation or relationship with the communities in which we work.
- Engaging in activities and/or promoting positions on issues that are contrary to WESSA's Mission, Values, Policies and position statements.
- Inappropriate behaviour, aggression or disorderly conduct.

## VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT & DECLARATION

I confirm that my participation and related activities are entirely voluntary, and I accept all risks involved therein. Accordingly, WESSA and/or any of their respective employees or partners shall not be liable for any loss, damage, injury or illness of whatsoever nature and howsoever caused, suffered by myself as a result, directly or indirectly, of participating in the activities, and WESSA and/or any of their respective employees shall not be liable for any loss, damage, injury or illness whether direct, indirect or consequential, arising therefrom.

I hereby indemnify WESSA and their respective employees from any loss, damage, injury or illness and/or any costs that may arise due to or incidental to my participation in the activities. I understand that any costs in respect of any accident or illness, damage or loss, including but not limited to medical attention, are my sole liability.

I do hereby warrant and acknowledge that my general health is good and that there is nothing which renders me unfit to participate in any related activities. I will undertake to inform WESSA should I suffer from any serious medical condition or if I am currently using medication while participating in any WESSA activity.

I agree to abide by the WESSA Volunteers' Code of Conduct.