



Code of Ethics for Members of the Board of Technical Experts and Sea Lamprey Research Board

Preamble: The Board of Technical Experts and the Sea Lamprey Research Board (henceforth referred to collectively as “board”) have important roles in the selection and funding of research essential for achievement of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s strategic vision. Their counsel to the Commission should be fair and impartial and reflect the highest standards of integrity. Because members of these groups are also often integrally involved in the commission’s research programs, the appearance and opportunity for conflicts of interest exist. Members must strive to avoid circumstances that give even an appearance of a conflict of interest or, when avoidance is not feasible, should disclose fully the nature of the conflict and work diligently to minimize it.

Conflict of Interest (COI): A conflict of interest exists when financial interests, or other opportunities for tangible personal or professional benefit, could be construed to exert an improper influence on a member’s professional judgment, while that member is engaged in activities of the board. Improper influence could be used to not only advance one’s own research program but also to promote unfairly a colleague or former graduate student’s program. Thus, care must be exercised to minimize COIs during the peer-review process and the discussion of past, current, or proposed research. A COI also exists when circumstances simply have the appearance of compromising the professional judgment of a member. Conflicts of interest are not accusations and do not imply that a member’s judgment was compromised. It is the policy of the Commission that COIs should be avoided wherever possible and disclosed and minimized in situations where interests cannot be reasonably separated. Whenever a real or perceived COI arises, a member with a possible COI should disclose this information to the chair and board and either excuse themselves from a proposal discussion entirely or allow the chair and/or board to impose restrictions on their participation. Restrictions that the chair and/or board can impose in these situations can include barring board members from commenting, voting, and/or attending proposal discussions. In certain situations, such as when the board has limited expertise in certain topic areas, board members with COIs may remain in the room and be limited to providing comments on the technical aspects of proposals only. In these cases, each individual board member is responsible for appropriately weighing the comments of a board member with a potential COI during proposal discussions and voting.

Code of Ethics: A member of the board should:

1. Adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth;
2. Avoid, or disclose to the board or chair and minimize any circumstances that present, or appear to present, a conflict of interest;
3. Promote mutual understanding, respect, and collegial relationships among research scientists;
4. Avoid injuring or impugning the professional reputation or practice of other scientists and research colleagues;
5. Provide advice only on topics on which they are informed and qualified through professional training or experience and to do so with objectivity, diligence, and honesty;
6. In all communications, clearly distinguish between professional opinion from accepted knowledge or fact;
7. Avoid misrepresenting the actions or policies of the board or Commission.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of all proprietary or otherwise sensitive information in research proposals, peer reviews, and the associated discussions and decisions of the board.

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION

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