

Friends of Olympic National Park Communication Policy

1. Background

The Friends of Olympic National Park (FONP) is a Washington nonprofit corporation that publishes a Newsletter, website and Facebook page (or future blog or Twitter list) for its membership. To maintain the integrity of its nonprofit status, FONP must act in conformance with all applicable laws and in a manner that reinforces the trust that its membership and the public places in FONP. FONP's Board of Directors, and Editor(s) all play important and separate roles in ensuring both compliance with applicable rules and in formulating, implementing or evaluating FONP communications.

2. Policy Purpose

FONP recognizes that it must exercise diligence and discipline in order to maintain its reputation as a trusted and neutral source of information. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that FONP:

- adheres to the highest professional and ethical standards, and complies with its mission statement;
- has the ability to maintain its independence and creative freedom with regard to creating and disseminating content;
- is not influenced by undue influence from internal or external sources (see definition of undue influence in #4); and
- remains positive and supportive of the Park's management objectives and policies.

3. Communication Standards

Content should be consistent with FONP's mission statement:

"The mission of Friends of Olympic National Park is to support Olympic National Park in preserving the Park's natural, cultural and recreational resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The Friends of Olympic National Park promote understanding of the Park's ecological, education, economic and recreational importance and work with Olympic National Park on special projects".

Content should be of a high professional quality and, in its totality, represent a well-balanced diversity of views.

Content should be credible, accurate, fair, valuable, stimulating and relevant to FONP's membership.

Content decisions should be made in compliance with all legal requirements and applicable industry ethical guidelines.

At all times, FONP should strive for transparency regarding its communication decisions.

FONP will not comment on issues or publicize activities outside of the geographic boundaries of Olympic National Park without Editorial Board approval.

4. Undue Influence

For purposes of this policy, "undue influence" shall mean intentionally coercive behavior undertaken by any source - including but not limited to governmental agencies, private corporations, funders, members, news or content sources, influential individuals, or special interest groups - that seeks to influence fair and balanced communication content.

5. Advocacy

For purposes of this policy, "advocacy" shall be defined as FONP members taking public positions, explicit action, such as giving money, lobbying a public official or private person, participating in any political party or campaign, or attending public meetings in a manner that could be perceived as an official position of the FONP. This is not consistent with the FONP mission.

Direct quotation of Park press releases, plans, policies, laws, publications, reports, presentations or similar factual information is not "advocacy" for purposes of this policy. Every effort will be made by the Editorial Board to avoid out-of-context, selective, incomplete, and/or otherwise misleading quotations.

Asking questions is not "advocacy" for purposes of this policy. Every effort will be made to accept the answers given by ONP staff to questions asked by the board. Debating ONP policy during FONP board meetings will be avoided if at all possible. Clarification and follow-up questions are reasonable.

Newspaper articles or advocacy positions taken by external individuals or organizations that bear on Park positions or actions may be deemed newsworthy. Reporting these positions as news, without endorsement, is not viewed as "advocacy" by this policy.

FONP's current Advocacy Policy, adopted by its Board of Directors, is hereby incorporated by reference in this Communication Policy.

6. Questions for Park management.

If any member of FONP or of the public requests FONP facilitate communications by relaying a question to Park management, the question will be placed on the agenda for the next FONP Board meeting. Any board member who has concerns with the question (e.g. believes it is not constructive, inappropriate to FONP's mission, or may be perceived as "advocacy", or any other reason), may move that the question be stricken from the agenda. If so moved and seconded, the Board will vote on the question.

Questions remaining on the agenda are not considered "advocacy" for the purpose of this policy.

7. Role of FONP Editors

Any willing current or past members of the Board of Directors and FONP's Membership Chair may serve as FONP's Editorial Board.

Members of the Editorial Board will review FONP's draft newsletters to our members, and are appointed as Administrators or as Moderators of FONP's Facebook page, and may approve, hide or delete postings.

If any member of FONP, the public, or of the Editorial board disagrees with an editorial decision, the issue will be decided by a majority of the Editorial Board.

If any member in good standing of FONP disagrees with a decision of the Editorial Board, the issue will be decided by the Board of Directors.

8. Role of FONP Board of Directors

- a) In any specific issue of concern to the Editor(s), or which the Editor(s) perceive may potentially be of concern to the Board, FONP Editor(s) shall notify the Board and seek its guidance on how this Policy should be applied.
- b) As our deadlines are typically short, the Board will seek to reach this decision in a timely manner, typically within 3 days.
- c) The Board may seek advice from the Park Superintendent, Public Affairs Office, or other relevant Park specialist(s).
- d) The FONP Board will exercise appropriate oversight to ensure that FONP Editor(s) comply in all material regards with this policy.

Friends of Olympic National Park Advocacy Policy

Friends of Olympic National Park (FONP), as part of its mission to promote understanding of and support Olympic National Park's efforts to preserve the park's natural, cultural and recreational resources, periodically becomes involved in public advocacy issues. Many Friends groups take on advocacy as a part of their mission. In doing so, a Friends group never publicly confronts or berates the park, but rather engages the superintendent privately on issues or concerns that the Friends feel a need to address. The purpose of the FONP must remain positive and be consistent with the park's mission and management objectives.

In order to guide our organization when public advocacy issues are present, the following guidelines and procedures will be utilized to assist the board in deciding if FONP will become involved, and the degree of involvement.

GUIDING QUESTION

Does the issue in question directly relate to the mission of FONP?

Does the issue impact the park as a whole or strategic resources on the North Olympic Peninsula that provide park and community benefit?

Does FONP have the necessary resources and special expertise and knowledge to participate?

Have we obtained guidance from Park leadership (Superintendent's office or specialists) on the issue?

Can collaboration, park and community support be achieved? Determine how our involvement is based on the level of support?

Would involvement with the issue advance or diminish FONP's overall and long-range interests, credibility and public image?

How important is the issue in light of FONP's other priorities?

If the request is for an endorsement by way of signing letters or petitions, ask the following questions at a minimum:

Why are you seeking the endorsement of FONP? How will our endorsement add to your effort?

What will be the effect of the proposed action, campaign or initiative on preserving the park's natural, cultural and recreational resources?

What resources, if any, are you asking the FONP to provide your effort, i.e. volunteer time, funding)?

Please provide information about your organization: how long has it existed? Is it a 501C3 organization? Who are your members? What other organizations have endorsed this effort?

Make sure involvement in this issue cannot jeopardize FONP's 501c3 nonprofit status or (future) Letter of Agreement with the NPS.

PROCEDURES

Only the board of directors, by a majority vote, can decide on an official policy stand by FONP.

Suggestions for taking a policy stand can come from anyone. These suggestions should be sent in writing to the president of the board of directors.

The president will refer the issue to the board for discussion. The criteria to be used by the board are those contained in the guiding questions.

Along with the policy stand, FONP will develop a realistic plan for how to communicate its position to appropriate people and what we will do, and not do, to implement this position.

Letters to officials, letters to editors and open letters to the public on this stand will be signed by the president of FONP.

Public policy positions will be posted on our website.

When adopted, the Board should specify whether a public policy position has a limited time period, such as one year, or will stand indefinitely until the Board revisits the issue.

If FONP perceives that the public policy stand will use significant time or financial resources, or if this is an election season, FONP will consult with an attorney to be sure we are in compliance with regulations.