

# Groundswell Conservancy Policy

**Name:** Personnel Policies

**Approval:** Approved by Executive Committee February 9, 2005  
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Groundswell Conservancy has adopted the following personnel policies as a guide to employees about policies, work rules, and benefits for Groundswell Conservancy's employees. Its contents are general and intended solely as a guide to Groundswell Conservancy practices so that employees may better understand them.

The language used and the information contained herein are not intended to constitute or create the terms of an employment contract between Groundswell Conservancy and any of its employees. These policies retain the employment at-will relationship. That means that both the employees and Groundswell Conservancy have the right to terminate the employment relationship at any time or for any reason or for no reason at all. Employees should not rely on any statement by anyone who tells them that they have a different employment relationship with Groundswell Conservancy.

As part of its ongoing responsibility to periodically review Groundswell Conservancy policies, practices, and benefits, Groundswell Conservancy reserves the right to change, add, or delete from these policies at any time and without prior notice. Employees with questions about Groundswell Conservancy policies should ask their supervisor.

These policies replace all prior personnel policy statements.

## Welcome to Groundswell Conservancy

Groundswell Conservancy is a nonprofit, tax-exempt conservation organization dedicated to the protection of special places in Dane County, Wisconsin, and vicinity. Your dedication, skill and hard work enable us to achieve significant results for the betterment of our community. No matter what your job, you are essential to Groundswell Conservancy's success.

As an employee, you have an opportunity to learn, contribute to our mission success, and grow professionally. Groundswell Conservancy recognizes the importance of each employee's contribution to the organization. These contributions are most effective when

all employees work together as a team. Your loyalty and dedication to the reputation and integrity of Groundswell Conservancy are very important.

As a new employee of Groundswell Conservancy, the Board of Directors and staff welcome you. We hope you will find your employment to be enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION**

All Groundswell Conservancy materials, reports, products, files, and records are the property of Groundswell Conservancy and are confidential. This includes but is not limited to information concerning projects, budgets, clients, personnel and payroll records of present and former employees, and financial records of Groundswell Conservancy. Also included are computer security codes, vendor, and supplier purchase records, pending or potential legal actions, and all other information pertaining to the business affairs or operating practices and procedures of Groundswell Conservancy. Groundswell Conservancy's files and records can neither be copied nor disclosed to any party except as authorized by Groundswell Conservancy's management.

The undersigned individual agrees to follow this confidentiality agreement and will speak to their supervisor if there are questions regarding the disclosure of information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

A conflict of interest exists when an employee of Groundswell Conservancy has a material financial interest in a transaction or project under consideration by the Board of Directors or a committee of Groundswell Conservancy or when that employee proposes to act on any issue, matter, or transaction in which Groundswell Conservancy has an interest, and in which the employee may have an interest separate from that of Groundswell Conservancy. A conflict of interest may also exist in situations in which there is an appearance that an employee is utilizing, for their own benefit, inside information that is proprietary to Groundswell Conservancy, is acting in their own interests rather than the best interests of Groundswell Conservancy, has the ability to exercise undue influence over Groundswell Conservancy's decisions, or is receiving favorable treatment by Groundswell Conservancy because of their status as an employee.

The conflict of interest policy also applies to close relatives of employees, including a spouse, domestic partner, child, sibling, parent, stepparent, parent- or sibling-in-law, grandchild, or grandparent.

All persons shall avoid conflict of interest involving their duties to Groundswell Conservancy and any other interest or organization to which they have a duty, or any other activity in which they are financially or otherwise interested.

It is expected that persons subject to this policy will conduct themselves under strict rules of honesty and fair dealing between themselves and Groundswell Conservancy. Such persons shall not use their position or knowledge gained during their association with Groundswell Conservancy for their private benefit nor to obtain an unfair advantage over any aspect of their dealings with Groundswell Conservancy.

Each employee is obliged:

1. To disclose to the Board or Executive Director the existence of any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.
2. To abstain from discussing with Board members, employees, or committee members any issue, matter, or transaction in which they have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest unless specifically asked by the Board, a board committee, or Groundswell Conservancy Executive Director to give information on the issue, matter, or transaction.
3. To absent themselves from Board, staff, and committee discussions on any issue, matter or transaction involving a conflict of interest, unless requested by the Board, committee, or Executive Director to give information on the issue, matter, or transaction.

Groundswell Conservancy will document in meeting minutes and elsewhere as appropriate the specific actions taken to prevent conflicts of interest, including the three obligations identified above.

The undersigned individual agrees to follow this conflict of interest policy and will speak to their supervisor if there are questions regarding it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY**

Code of Conduct. The Groundswell Conservancy requires directors, officers, and employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of Groundswell Conservancy, we practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Reporting Responsibility. It is the responsibility of all directors, officers, and employees to comply with this code of conduct, and to report violations or suspected violations of it.

No Retaliation. No director, officer, or employee who in good faith reports a violation of the code of conduct shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse employment consequence. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. A director or officer who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from service on the Board of Directors. The Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within Groundswell Conservancy prior to seeking resolution outside the organization.

Reporting Violations. Employees should share their questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, the Executive Director is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if you are not comfortable speaking with the Executive Director, or you are not satisfied with the Executive Director's response, you are encouraged to speak directly with a member of the Board of Directors.

Compliance Officer. The Executive Director is responsible for investigating and resolving all reported complaints and allegations concerning violations of the code of conduct and, at their discretion, shall advise the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director is required to report to this committee at least annually on compliance activity.

Accounting and Auditing Matters. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors shall address all reported concerns or complaints regarding accounting practices, internal controls or auditing. The Executive Director shall immediately notify the Executive Committee of any such complaint and work with the committee until the matter is resolved.

Acting in Good Faith. Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of the code of conduct must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation of the code. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

Confidentiality. Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant or may be submitted anonymously. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations. The Executive Director will notify the complainant and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation within five business days. All reports will be promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read and understood this Whistleblower policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PERSONNEL POLICIES**

I certify that I have received a copy of Groundswell Conservancy’s personnel policies. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and be familiar with the policies and that they are for my information and guidance. I further understand that the policies are not a contract for guarantee of employment, that my employment is considered at-will, that I or Groundswell Conservancy may terminate my employment without notice or cause at any time, and that I may not reasonably rely on any other expectation or oral or written representation about my employment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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### RECRUITMENT

**Equal Employment Opportunity:** The policy and intent of Groundswell Conservancy is to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique or that are protected by law. Employees are selected based on ability or assessed potential to meet the specific job-related requirements as stated in job descriptions, as well as the needs of Groundswell Conservancy.

**Selection of Personnel:** The Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the hiring of the Executive Director), plans and implements the recruitment and selection process, including solicitation of applications, review of resumes and cover letters, selection and interviewing of qualified candidates, and checking references. The Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the hiring of the Executive Director) makes final hiring decisions.

Regular full-time and part-time vacancies may be filled through internal and/or external recruitment, based on the decision of the Board of Directors and/or the Executive Director and/or an ad-hoc hiring committee. Groundswell Conservancy promotes internal advancement and gives current qualified staff applicants for a position equal consideration with outside applicants.

Falsification of information found in a candidate's documents or statements could eliminate the candidate from further consideration. Falsification of information in documents or statements found after a hiring is grounds for immediate dismissal.

Temporary, internship, work-study students, and volunteer positions are established and filled by the Executive Director or staff. None of the positions in this category are considered regular employees. It is not necessary that these positions be widely advertised or that the selection process be as comprehensive as that for regular employees.

**Employment Offer:** At the time of hire, the new employee receives two copies of their letter of hire from the Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the hiring of the Executive Director). This letter identifies the position and employment status being filled; sets the starting date, pay rate, and introductory period; and notes special agreements regarding the terms of employment. The prospective employee signs the letter indicating acceptance or rejection of the job offer and returns one copy to Groundswell Conservancy.

As a condition of employment, prospective employees are required to provide proof of work eligibility in compliance with the Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986.

## **EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

**Exempt Employees:** Exempt employees are not covered by the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). In general, bona fide executive, administrative, or professional employees are exempt from the FLSA.

**Nonexempt Employees:** Nonexempt employees who perform work other than executive, administrative, or professional, as defined by the FLSA, are covered by the overtime provisions of the FLSA and must receive overtime pay for overtime work as stated in the Act.

**Regular Employees:** Regular employees are those whose positions continue without a predetermined end, subject to job requirements, employee conduct, employee performance, and the needs of Groundswell Conservancy. Regular employees who work at least 20 hours per week are eligible for certain benefits described herein.

**Full-time and Part-time:** Full-time employees are those who work at least 40 hours per week. Part-time employees are those who work on a regular basis for fewer than 40 hours per week.

**Temporary Staff, Interns, Work-Study Students, and Volunteers:** Temporary staff, interns, work-study students, and volunteers do not meet the Regular Employee status. They are not eligible for benefits except as may be part of their written agreement with Groundswell Conservancy or as required by law. Interns, volunteers, and work-study students do not receive a salary from Groundswell Conservancy.

**Independent Contractors and Consultants:** Independent contractors and consultants are not employees of Groundswell Conservancy and are paid on a fee-for-service basis to perform specified services. Independent contractors and consultants are not eligible for any benefits listed herein.

## EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

**Orientation:** It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure that new employees are oriented to Groundswell Conservancy and their job responsibilities. The orientation should include the following:

- an introduction to mission and goals of Groundswell Conservancy
- a discussion of organizational structure
- an introduction to coworkers
- an introduction to workspace and office resources
- a review of program information
- a review of policies, administrative procedures, and personnel policies
- a review of eligible benefits and completion of all necessary paperwork to allow enrollment
- a review of the job description and expectations of Groundswell Conservancy
- development of an introductory work plan and calendar for the introductory period

**Introductory Period:** All newly hired regular employees undergo a four-month introductory period. (The introductory period does not apply to employees promoted or transferred within Groundswell Conservancy.) The purpose of the introductory period is to allow the employee to learn the requirements of the position and to demonstrate their ability to perform those requirements satisfactorily.

The Executive Director has the discretion to discipline the employee and/or to end the employment relationship at any time during the course of employment, including the introductory period, without prejudice or fault or cause.

The Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the Executive Director) may conduct an appraisal of the employee's performance at the conclusion of the introductory period. The appraisal compares job expectations to performance and identifies areas for improvement. (Note: The completion of the introductory period should not be construed as creating a permanent employment relationship and neither does it alter the at-will employment relationship.)

**Annual Performance Appraisal:** Annually, each employee meets with their supervisor to review their performance during the previous year. The Board of Directors evaluates the Executive Director annually and may consult with staff regarding the Executive Director's performance.

In addition to the annual performance appraisal, informal reviews are conducted on an on-going basis so that each employee knows what their responsibilities and expected performance standards are, and whether those expectations are being met.

The appraisal process for the Executive Director is as follows:

- Executive director drafts annual goals for the upcoming fiscal year, which are reviewed/modified/approved by the President and signed by the executive director and president (June-July-August).



- Executive director meets with the President (and other officers if desired) at the end of the fiscal year (or more frequently if desired) to review progress towards goals (July-August)
- President prepares letter appraising the performance of the executive director and presents it to the Executive Committee (July-August-September). The President may seek input from staff, external partners, donors, or the board in preparing the letter.
- President shares results of the annual performance appraisal with the Board (September – November)
- The President’s letter is placed in the personnel files of the Executive Director.

**Personnel Records:** Each employee’s personnel file is regarded and treated as confidential to the extent required by Federal and State law. Personnel records are kept in secure files in the office of the Executive Director. The personnel files of an employee may be reviewed by the employee, the Executive Director, or an authorized representative of the Board of Directors. No one else may review the employee’s file without the written permission of the employee to whom the file belongs.

## COMPENSATION

The salary of the Executive Director is determined by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director determines compensation levels for other employees within the pay range established in the relevant job description. As budget constraints allow, employees may receive a cost-of-living compensation increase and/or a merit increase based on the employee’s annual performance review.

Compensation is paid twice monthly on approximately the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the month. Groundswell Conservancy offers direct deposit for payroll.

**Time Sheets:** The schedule of work for non-exempt employees is set by the supervisor and generally follows the regular business hours of Groundswell Conservancy. The schedule for exempt employees is set by the supervisor to meet the needs of Groundswell Conservancy.

To ensure that employees keep accurate records of hours worked and leave taken, employees are required to record their hours worked and leave using Groundswell Conservancy time sheets. All employees should report actual hours worked and sick and annual leave taken on their time sheets. Employees submit time sheets at the end of each month to their supervisor for approval.

## MANDATORY BENEFITS (benefits required by law)

**Unemployment Insurance:** Unemployment insurance compensates employees who lose their job for reasons other than: (1) misconduct, (2) voluntary resignation, or (3) other disqualifying reasons.

**Worker’s Compensation:** All employees are protected under Wisconsin Worker’s Compensation law against loss of income due to injury or death that occurs during work activities in accordance with Wisconsin law. Employees injured on the job must seek

medical attention and immediately notify the Executive Director of the injury.

**Social Security:** Groundswell Conservancy pays matching funds to the Social Security Administration under the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) for each employee.

## **VOLUNTARY BENEFITS**

**Medical and Dental Insurance:** Groundswell Conservancy offers a group health insurance policy and a group dental insurance policy for regular employees working at least 20 hours per week.

Groundswell Conservancy annually reevaluates its participation in the program and its contribution toward the premiums based on budget constraints. Please see individual health and dental policies for specific information about coverage and premiums.

**Retirement:** Groundswell Conservancy offers a Simple IRA retirement plan for any regular full or part-time employee.

## **LEAVE**

**Holiday Leave:** Each regular full-time employee receives twelve paid holidays as follows:

Holidays when the office is fully closed:

1. New Year's Day
2. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday
3. Memorial Day
4. Juneteenth
5. Independence Day
6. Labor Day
7. Thanksgiving
8. Day after Thanksgiving
9. Christmas Day

Holidays when the office is open:

1. Presidents' Day
2. Indigenous Peoples' Day
3. Veterans' Day

Staff may opt to take any or all of these holidays at different times within 30 days (if these holidays are not used during the 30 days, they do not carry over). Employees should talk with their manager about taking alternative religious or cultural holidays.

If any holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Groundswell Conservancy schedules the holiday on either the Friday before or Monday after the holiday. Part-time employees will receive pro-rated holiday leave commensurate with the percentage of time worked (i.e., an employee at 50% time will receive 4 hours of holiday leave) and can arrange the date/s allocated with their supervisors. Holiday leave is recorded in whole day increments.

**Personal Day Leave:** Each regular, full-time employee is eligible to take three personal days each year. Regular part-time employees (working at least 20 hours per week) accrue personal day leave at a proportional rate of full-time employees, based on the number of hours actually worked. Personal days may be taken without advance notice to the employee’s supervisor, but the employee must make every effort to not take a personal day when they have important work to be completed that day. Employees who take unscheduled personal leave should notify their supervisor by phone, text, or email by 9:00 a.m. on the day that he, she, or they are absent. Personal days do not accrue from one year to the next and there are no cash payments for unused personal days upon an employee’s resignation or termination. Employees may not take personal day leave during their introductory period. Personal day leave is accrued during the introductory period and can be used after the end of the introductory period. Employees with a negative annual leave balance must take any unused personal day leave before taking additional annual leave. Personal day leave is recorded in hourly increments.

**Annual Leave:** Groundswell Conservancy provides each regular full-time employee with annual leave as follows:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>Annual Accrual (beginning on the first day of the fiscal year)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	10 days (80 hours)
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Year	15 days (120 hours)
5 <sup>th</sup> Year and beyond	20 days (160 hours)

The Executive Director may start a new, but experienced employee, at a point above the normal starting point in the vacation schedule with Executive Committee Approval. Similarly, the Board may start a new ED at a point above the normal starting point in the vacation schedule.

Regular part-time employees (working at least 20 hours per week) accrue annual leave at a proportional rate of full-time employees, based on the number of hours actually worked.

The supervisor must approve all annual leave of one week or more, and the employee should request such leave at least two weeks in advance. Staff should be conscientious about notifying staff, board, volunteers, or others who might be impacted by their absence well in advance of their leave.

Annual leave is accrued on a monthly basis. Employees are encouraged to use their annual leave during the year in which it is accrued. Annual leave carried over to the next year is limited to a maximum of ten (10) days. Additional unused annual leave hours beyond ten (10) days can be carried over, and the additional hours must be used within six months or be forfeited. Employees are not paid additional unused annual leave upon termination. Payment for unused accrued annual leave at time of employment separation is limited to a maximum of twenty (20) days. No payment for unused accrued annual leave at the time of employment separation is made for employees separated for cause, including Serious

Misconduct or Abandonment.

Annual leave does not accrue while the employee is on Parental Leave or Family Leave.

With the supervisor's permission, an employee may take annual leave before it is accrued (up to the total number of annual days available for the year). If an employee leaves Groundswell Conservancy employment and has a negative annual balance (more used than accrued), the unearned annual pay is subtracted from the employee's last paycheck. All employees record annual leave in hourly increments.

**Sick Leave:** Sick leave is provided to each regular employee for periods of temporary absence due to illnesses or injuries to the employee. Periodic and/or regular medical or dental examinations and treatment do not need to be counted as sick leave. Sick leave may also be used to care for an ill or injured immediate family member or close friend or associate.

Sick leave is accrued at the rate of eight hours per month for regular full-time employees. Regular part-time employees (working at least 20 hours per week) accrue sick leave at a proportional rate of full-time employees, based on the number of hours actually worked. No employee can accumulate more than twenty-four days (192 hours) of sick leave. In case of severe illness or injury, the Executive Director may extend additional sick leave for the duration of the illness or injury at the discretion of the board of directors or Executive Director. Unused sick leave is not paid to employees upon termination.

Employees who take unscheduled sick leave should make every effort to notify their supervisor by 9:00 a.m. on the day that they are absent. Groundswell Conservancy reserves the right to require written documentation from the employee's doctor regarding absences from work.

All employees record sick leave in hourly increments.

**Parental Leave:** Parental Leave is available for a regular employee who has or adopts or assumes guardianship of a new child (or when the employee's spouse or partner has or adopts or assumes guardianship of a new child). Parental leave is six weeks of paid time off. This leave may be pro-rated over a period longer than six weeks; for example, the employee may take eight weeks off at a 75% pay rate/week or ten weeks at a 60% pay rate/week. Parental Leave may be combined with the employee's available paid annual, paid sick, paid personal, and unpaid family leave as well as paid designated holidays that occur during the leave period, for a combined total maximum leave of 12 weeks. The leave may be taken in one block or can be spread out over one year, but in either case the leave must be used in the first twelve months following the birth or adoption or assumption of guardianship of the child. During the period of parental leave, Groundswell will continue to pay Groundswell's portion of the employee's health and dental premiums. Groundswell will continue to contribute to the employee's Simple IRA account based on the employee's use of paid leave. At the end of the parental leave period, the employee is eligible to return to the same position and pay rate which the employee had prior to taking parental leave. For employees working less than 40 hours per week prior at the start of the leave period, parental leave is pro-rated accordingly. Annual leave does not accrue while the employee is on Parental Leave. Sick leave does accrue while the employee is on Parental Leave. Any

employee needing parental leave should discuss and agree upon a leave plan with their direct supervisor.

**Family Leave:** Family Leave is unpaid leave that may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Director, or by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of family leave for the Executive Director. Regular full-time and part-time employees (who work at least 20 hours per week) are eligible to request family leave after having worked for Groundswell Conservancy for at least twelve months. Family leave may not exceed 12 weeks in length, and accrued sick and annual leave may be substituted for unpaid family leave. The employee on family leave may continue to participate in health insurance and retirement programs that may be offered by Groundswell Conservancy but does not accrue additional leave. Since Groundswell Conservancy has a small staff, approval of family leave may be contingent upon the ability of remaining staff and others to maintain the employee's workload. The terms of family leave granted to an employee are documented in a written statement from the supervisor to the employee, signed by the employee, the supervisor, and the Executive Director. Annual Leave and Sick Leave does not accrue while the employee is on Family Leave.

**Compassionate Leave:** Regular employees of Groundswell Conservancy may be granted by the Executive Director up to three working days with pay due to a death of a close friend or family member.

**Jury Duty Leave:** Regular employees working at least 20 hours per week who serve on jury duty will be granted paid leave during the period of time they are on jury duty, up to five workdays.

**Military Leave :** All employees who are members of military reserve units or the National Guard and are ordered to active duty for training will be granted an unpaid military leave of absence in accordance with Federal law. Copies of the orders should be given to the employee's manager and the executive director as soon as possible after receipt. In accordance with the law, time taken for a military leave of absence will continue to count toward accrued time with Groundswell.

Continuation of retirement plans and insurance plans will be governed by applicable State and Federal law, and by current plan provisions. If an employee elects to continue Groundswell's insurance during the leave, insurance premiums, if any, for a twelve (12) week period will be paid by Groundswell and the employee on the same shared basis as prior to the leave. If requested by the employee, accrued vacation, holiday, or personal leave time may be used during military leave to make up the difference between military pay and the employee's regular pay.

**Abandonment:** If an employee takes unauthorized leave for three consecutive days, Groundswell Conservancy may assume that the employee has voluntarily abandoned their position. In such cases, their employment may be terminated.

**Leave Without Pay:** The Executive Director may grant leave without pay to regular employees. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors may grant leave without pay to the Executive Director. An employee on leave without pay does not accrue sick or

annual leave and does not receive pay for holidays. At the discretion of the Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for the case of the Executive Director) an employee on leave without pay may continue to participate in health insurance and retirement programs that may be offered by Groundswell Conservancy. Except in emergency situations, failure by an employee to notify their supervisor in advance of leave constitutes unauthorized leave and is considered leave without pay. The terms of leave without pay granted to an employee are documented in a written statement from the supervisor to the employee, signed by the employee, the supervisor, and the Executive Director.

**Sabbatical Leave:** In an effort to create opportunities to replenish the stores of energy and inspiration for Groundswell's committed staff, Groundswell offers a Sabbatical Leave as a benefit to regular, full-time staff. The program will offer employees in good standing the opportunity to take one 6-week paid sabbatical with benefits after 7 years of continuous full-time employment with Groundswell. In a fiscal year when an employee is taking a sabbatical, they may take a maximum of eight weeks of paid time off in the following manner: a maximum of 6 weeks of sabbatical and a maximum of 2 weeks of vacation, with a minimum of 2 months between sabbatical and vacation. Time taken for sabbatical must be contiguous. The employee cannot extend the sabbatical period with accrued vacation time. Scheduled family or parental leave should also not be taken contiguous with a sabbatical. Sabbatical leave also may not be combined with an additional sabbatical based on an employee's length of employment, (i.e., employees who have been employed longer than 7 years when requesting sabbatical will be granted one sabbatical). Sabbatical leave cannot be carried over into successive years. During a sabbatical year, vacation time is carried over according to Groundswell's annual leave policy. There are no constraints as to how the sabbatical leave should be spent, however Groundswell encourages employees to use the time for travel, study, writing, personal development, artistic endeavors, reflection, or any other pursuits that will enable and encourage their renewal. Employees are not to take any other paid employment during this time, unless approved by the ED. Employees will be eligible for an additional 6-week sabbatical after working for an additional 7 continuous years from the date of their return. Unlike vacation time, no cash payout will be made for an unused sabbatical, and unused sabbatical cannot be used for other types of leave. If an eligible employee leaves the organization, sabbatical time will be forfeited. The employee is expected to return to Groundswell after the completion of their leave; if the employee does not return or leaves within six months after taking sabbatical, the payroll and benefits cost of the full sabbatical shall be reimbursed to Groundswell. Employees are to request sabbatical leave as far in advance as possible, with no less than 4 months in advance of their proposed date of leave. Timing of this leave shall be discussed in advance with the Executive Director and is contingent upon the ability of remaining staff to maintain the employee's workload with minimum impact. Employees whose work cannot easily be maintained by remaining staff should endeavor to request sabbatical leave in advance of the annual budget process for the fiscal year of their sabbatical. No more than two employees may be granted sabbatical leave in any one year. Sabbatical approval and exceptions to this policy are at the discretion of the Executive Director. In the case of the ED, sabbatical leave will be approved by the Board of Directors. The sabbatical program is available to employees who are in good standing. Employees who are not meeting

performance expectations may be denied sabbatical leave, even though they may be eligible based on length of employment. No more than one staff person may be on sabbatical at the same time, unless expressly allowed by the Executive Director.

## **REMOTE WORK**

Employees are expected to secure a home office environment that allows them to perform their essential job responsibilities. The Executive Director must approve Groundswell property to be taken home for remote work purposes prior to an employee taking home the property.

Groundswell offers remote work option dependent upon the position and circumstances. If an employee is granted the option to work remotely by their manager, it is imperative that the equipment provided to work remotely is safeguarded. This includes:

- Complying with Groundswell's electronic communication and internet use guidelines;
- Not duplicating Groundswell-owned software;
- Securing a workspace which is secured from others to protect it from theft, damage, and/or misuse;
- Not allowing others (family or friends) to use the computer and/or equipment;
- Using precautions necessary to protect and hold secure proprietary information;
- Using Groundswell provided anti-virus software; and
- Ensuring Groundswell electronics are properly grounded through an electrical outlet.

For employees who wish to work remotely full time, a separate agreement and discussion with the employee's Manager is required.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND INTERNET USE**

Groundswell Conservancy issues Groundswell-provided hardware and software, and Internet to conduct Groundswell related business. Groundswell-owned property and access must be used in an appropriate, ethical, and professional manner. Groundswell may provide a stipend to employees who request it to cover some of the monthly costs of internet and cybersecurity.

The following is a list of prohibited use and access which may result in termination of rights and/or discipline up to and including termination. Groundswell-issued equipment (hardware and software) and access may not be used for:

- viewing, transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communications of a defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, or pornographic nature;
- disparaging, abusive, profane, or offensive language; creating, viewing, or displaying materials that might adversely or negatively reflect upon Groundswell;
- engaging in any illegal activities, including piracy, cracking, extortion, blackmail, copyright infringement, and unauthorized access of any computers and Groundswell-provided equipment such as laptops;
- copying, retrieving, modifying, or forwarding copyrighted materials, except with permission or as a single copy to reference only;
- using Groundswell hardware and software for personal use (e.g. social media sites, religious or political causes, promote personal beliefs for commercial ventures, non-work solicitations);

- connecting to public Wi-Fi networks;
- downloading software, plug ins, and the like without prior permission; and
- opening suspicious e-mails, pop-ups, or downloads. Please immediately contact the Executive Director with any questions or concerns to reduce the release of viruses or to contain viruses.

Employees are encouraged to keep in mind that internal and external e-mails are considered business records and may be subject to discovery in the event of litigation. Any employee who wishes to use their personal computer for work must first request permission from the Executive Director before storing any work product on their machines. All work product created during working hours and on behalf of Groundswell is considered property of Groundswell, and the policies regarding computer use and who owns the work product apply. All donor information is the property of Groundswell and is to be held in complete confidence.

### **Security & Confidentiality - Using Groundswell Equipment & Internet**

Employees are responsible for the content of all text, audio, or images that they place or send over the internet or email systems. Fraudulent, harassing, or obscene messages are prohibited.

All messages should have an employee's name attached. Employees are not permitted to transmit messages under an assumed name. Users may not attempt to obscure the origin of any message. Information published on the internet must not violate or infringe upon the rights of others. No abusive, profane, or offensive language is to be transmitted through these systems. Email must not be used as a media to circulate jokes or related information.

All messages created, sent, or retrieved over the internet are the property of Groundswell and should be considered public information. Groundswell reserves the right to access, monitor, retrieve, and read all messages and files on the computer system (local and in the cloud) deemed necessary and appropriate. Internet messages are public communication and are not private. The contents of electronic mail properly obtained for legitimate business purposes may be disclosed within Groundswell without the permission of the employee.

The confidentiality of any message should not be assumed. Even when a message is deleted, it is still possible to retrieve and read that message. Aside from Groundswell's right to retrieve and read any electronic mail messages, such messages must be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read any email messages that are not sent to them. Employees must not attempt to gain access to another employee's messages without prior consent. Any exception to this policy must receive prior approval by an employee's supervisor.

### **SEPARATIONS**

The Executive Director has the right to dismiss an employee at any time, for any reason, and nothing herein should be interpreted as altering the at-will relationship or constituting a promise of continued employment.

**Voluntary:** Any employee of Groundswell Conservancy may resign at any time. Groundswell Conservancy requests that the employee submit a letter of resignation to the



Executive Director (or to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the resignation of the Executive Director) at least four weeks prior to the effective date of the resignation. The letter should give the employee's last date of employment and should be signed and dated by the employee.

**Budgetary:** An employee may be discharged for budgetary reasons or changes in program needs or priorities. At Groundswell Conservancy's discretion, the employee may receive a severance payment.

**Serious Misconduct:** Employees may be discharged immediately, without notice or severance pay for serious misconduct. Serious misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- carrying a weapon on Groundswell Conservancy premises
- violent, abusive, or disruptive behavior
- intoxication at work
- sale, possession, or use of illegal drugs while at work
- assault of another employee
- lying and falsification of records, including employment application or resume
- conviction of a crime that is substantially related to the job
- theft or misuse of Groundswell Conservancy property
- conduct that prejudices the reputation or effectiveness of Groundswell Conservancy

**Executive Director Separation:** The Executive Director may be removed for any reason. Dismissal of the Executive Director requires a three-fifths vote of the Board of Directors with a quorum present. Such removal will take place only upon advance notice to the entire Board of Directors of the proposed meeting and action to be taken. The Board of Directors determines the Executive Director's severance package. Severance pay will not be made in cases of dismissal for serious misconduct.

**Employment References:** Former employees of Groundswell Conservancy who request employment references from Groundswell Conservancy must provide written authorization releasing Groundswell Conservancy from liability in connection with providing employment references. Without such authorization, Groundswell Conservancy may only release dates of employment, positions held, and confirmation of salary.

**Exit Interview:** Groundswell Conservancy may conduct exit interviews with departing employees to better understand the circumstances surrounding the separation of an employee, whether voluntary or involuntary. During the exit interview, discussion may cover several topics, including but not limited to: return of keys and equipment, termination of benefits, verification of final pay, reimbursements, and adjustments for accrued leave. The Groundswell Conservancy representative who conducts the interview may prepare a written summary of the interview for inclusion in the personnel files of the employee.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

All employees may file grievances concerning any action affecting their status or conditions of employment, including termination, discrimination, or abusive behavior by a supervisor. Grievances are handled in the following manner:

1. The employee with a grievance first attempts to resolve the matter with the other employee involved.
2. If the employee is still dissatisfied, they should notify the Executive Director in writing, stating the complaints or grievance, including all pertinent facts in the case.
3. The Executive Director investigates the complaint or grievance and responds to a complaint or grievance in writing within thirty days. The Executive Director's decision of the resolution of the grievance is final.
4. When a grievance involves the conduct of the Executive Director, the employee may appeal to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. Such appeal must be in writing, setting forth the specific grievance. The Executive Committee may appoint an ad-hoc committee to review the grievance expeditiously and issue a final decision resolving the grievance. The Board, in its discretion, or its designee, may meet with the individual regarding the grievance and/or conduct an inquiry into the grievance, as it deems appropriate.

## **PERSONAL DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

Groundswell Conservancy strives to create and maintain a work environment in which all people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. These environments, in all aspects of Groundswell's operations, should be characterized by mutual trust and absence of intimidation, oppression, and exploitation. Groundswell Conservancy is committed to providing a work environment free of unlawful harassment and discrimination.

Groundswell Conservancy prohibits sexual harassment and discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, sex or age, or other status protected by law. Further, Groundswell does not tolerate bullying. This policy applies to all persons working in the operation of the organization, i.e., employees, volunteers, contractors, members of the Board of Directors, interns, etc.

Groundswell Conservancy is committed to providing an environment free from sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct or communication constituting sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of an employee by another employee, volunteer, contractor, member of the Board of Directors or any other individual officially connected to the organization is prohibited.

Sexual harassment refers to behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome and personally offensive to its recipients. Sexual harassment is a form of employee misconduct that is demeaning to another person and undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is "sexual harassment" when:

- submission of such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a condition of an individual's employment;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting the employee; or
- the harassment has a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an

employee's work performance, or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile or offensive to the employee.

For example, unwanted physical contact, foul language, sexually oriented propositions, jokes or remarks, obscene gestures or the display of sexually explicit pictures, cartoons or other materials may be considered offensive to another employee, and thus should not occur.

Bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behavior, either direct or indirect, whether verbal, written, physical, or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others at a place of work or service. Bullying may be intention or unintentional.

Employees who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment, bullying, or any kind of discrimination that conflicts with the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility should immediately report the matter to the Executive Director. Where the Executive Director or a member of the Board of Directors is involved, the employee should report the matter to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors or another Board member. All reported matters will be investigated, and remedial action will be taken when warranted. To the extent possible, strict confidentiality will be maintained.

Retaliation against those who file complaints under this policy will not be tolerated. Violators of this policy will be subject to discipline, including discharge.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY**

Groundswell Conservancy is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We want Groundswell to be a place where every individual can be their whole selves. We want everyone to be able to reach their potential and help us achieve common goals. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities, and talent that our employees invest in their work represents a significant part of not only our culture, but our reputation and organization's achievement as well.

We embrace and encourage our employee's differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

Groundswell Conservancy's diversity initiatives are applicable – but not limited – to our practices and policies on recruitment and selection; compensation and benefits; professional development and training; promotions; transfers; programs, projects, and events; layoffs; terminations; and the ongoing development of a work environment and an organizational mission that responds to and represents diverse people and their needs.

We are committed to environmental justice and to removing barriers to equitable access to land and nature. The more we share power and value difference, the closer we get to living in a truly inclusive community. To achieve our goals, we need every employee and partner to understand what we are trying to achieve. We need everyone to work together, learn

together, and be open to change.

## **GENERAL BEHAVIOR**

**Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest:** Consistent with the mission and goals of Groundswell Conservancy, employees are expected to be conscientious, reliable, and honest; to become proficient in their work in a reasonable amount of time; to conduct themselves responsibly and to be respectful and considerate of others; and in all manner of personal conduct to support the aims of Groundswell Conservancy and meet the expectations of the public as a representative of a nonprofit, charitable conservation organization.

Groundswell Conservancy employees are expected to comply with all applicable laws and with the highest ethical standards. Groundswell Conservancy employees should not have outside interests that could conflict with their primary duties to Groundswell Conservancy in the conduct of its business. If an employee consults or provides professional services outside of Groundswell Conservancy, he, she, or they must avoid the use of information or procedures that may involve an actual or apparent conflict of interest between Groundswell Conservancy responsibilities and outside connections. Groundswell Conservancy employees may not use their position to profit personally or to benefit the professional or financial interests of any other organization or individual at the expense of Groundswell Conservancy.

Employees of Groundswell Conservancy may not receive honoraria, fees, or salary from other organizations for work performed for Groundswell Conservancy or by virtue of their position with Groundswell Conservancy without written permission of the Executive Director (or the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors in the case of the Executive Director). Employees may not accept gifts, gratuities, free trips, personal property or any other items of value from an outside person or organization as an incentive to provide services.

**Freelance:** Freelance work is work similar to the employee's duties for Groundswell Conservancy undertaken for any organization or individual outside Groundswell Conservancy. Because of the possible conflict of interest in freelancing, it should be undertaken only with the approval of the Executive Director or, in the case of the Executive Director, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

**Conservation:** In support of its mission, employees of Groundswell Conservancy should practice recycling, waste prevention, and conservation of resources used in the course of completing their duties.

**Smoking:** Smoking is prohibited in the office.

**Drug-free Workplace:** The unlawful possession, distribution, or manufacturing of a controlled substance in Groundswell Conservancy workplace is prohibited.

**Personal Appearance:** Groundswell Conservancy requires that employees dress in attire appropriate to their duties.

## **OTHER POLICIES**

**Flexible Work Time:** Because of the high value Groundswell places on communication, teamwork, and interpersonal relationships, it is expected that employees will accomplish most of their work during regular business hours between 9 am and 5 pm and occasional weekend hours as required by job duties. With the approval of the supervisor, the employee may use earlier or later start and ending times as long as the bulk of their hours overlap with Groundswell's regular business hours.

**Education, Training, and Professional Memberships:** Groundswell Conservancy considers requests for reimbursement of the cost of education, training, or professional memberships for employees when those activities are not already required and paid for by Groundswell Conservancy as part of the employee's job duties. The course or membership must directly relate to the employee's duties with Groundswell Conservancy. When an employee leaves Groundswell Conservancy within one year following enrollment in the course or membership subsidized by Groundswell Conservancy, the reimbursement must be paid back in full.

**Employee Business and Travel Expenses:** The reasonable cost for transportation, lodging, meals, conference registration fees, and other reasonable expenses will be covered by Groundswell Conservancy for its employees when traveling on business. Receipts for all expenses incurred by staff while doing business for Groundswell Conservancy must be submitted to the Executive Director for approval. It is expected that employees will exercise discretion when traveling and choose accommodations, food service, and methods of travel that are economical. Reimbursement for mileage when using a personal vehicle should generally be calculated between the office and the work-related destination rather than the home and the work-related destination (unless it is shorter to travel directly between home and the work-related destination). When employees use their own automobile for travel required by Groundswell Conservancy activities, they will be reimbursed at the mileage allowance as set by the IRS. In the event of a car accident when on company business, Groundswell's liability insurance does not cover damage to the employee's vehicle or self (beyond workman's compensation and Groundswell's voluntary health insurance that the employee may choose to enroll in).

Interns, volunteers, independent contractors and consultants, by definition, are not paid employees; however reimbursements for travel and expenses incurred on behalf of Groundswell Conservancy business may be reimbursed on a case-by-case basis.

**Work Products:** Reports, maps, and other materials produced by employees of Groundswell Conservancy as part of their job duties are the property of Groundswell Conservancy.

**Use of Groundswell Conservancy Resources and Property:** The primary purpose of all property, equipment, and services (including, but not limited to, vehicles such as a tractor or pickup truck, internet service, phone service, e-mail, photocopiers, printers, computers, and other technology) is to facilitate the operation of Groundswell Conservancy. Employees are allowed minor personal use of these services, supplies, and equipment but must limit personal use and must never allow personal use to interfere with the work of Groundswell Conservancy.

**Driving on Conservancy Business:** All Groundswell employees must have a valid driver's license to drive an automobile, tractor, or other vehicle for conservancy business and are expected to follow all local, state, and federal driving requirements. This includes obeying all laws related to the use of mobile devices while driving. Groundswell staff members or volunteers who operate our tractor must have taken an approved heavy equipment/agricultural tractor safety training course or work with tractors professionally with on-the-job experience. Tractor safety instructions can be found in Groundswell's *Power Equipment & Tractor Operator Requirements*.

Groundswell Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Policies may be updated to reflect changing accreditation standards and practices, as well as changing local organizational needs.

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