Code of Conduct

Terrestrial Ecosystem Science - Science Focus Area (TES SFA)

Project Culture

The TES SFA project aims to sustain a working environment that fosters creativity, discussion and teamwork using transparent communication. We are committed to conducting the highest quality ecosystem science and believe that this goal requires that we sustain a safe and welcoming environment for team members to contribute their efforts. Our commitment extends from values enshrined by the broader institution of Oak Ridge National Laboratory: Impact, Integrity, Teamwork, Safety and Service. Crucially, these values extend beyond the foundational aspects of ethical data stewardship, towards building excellent science by directly encouraging inclusive behaviors and outlining unacceptable misconduct and consequences.

Background

Our goal for this code of conduct is to establish a standard of expected behaviors, unacceptable behaviors, and fair consequences for unacceptable behaviors. The initial draft of the Code of conduct was put together by a self-selected group of project members and feedback from the entire SFA was solicited during an in-person discussion. There were opportunities to submit feedback both in-person and online. Additional feedback is welcome as we implement this code of conduct for the first time, and as the project progresses.

The TES SFA considers this Code of Conduct valid until rescinded or revised. At minimum, it will be reviewed at the end of the current funding cycle (end of FY2028). Project participants may at any time bring changes or amendments to the Code of Conduct to the entire SFA for discussion. Changes to the Code of Conduct must be approved by a majority of TES SFA participants.

Expected Behaviors

When communicating with colleagues
1. Treat colleagues respectfully: know and befriend your colleagues
2. Be transparent
3. Acknowledge and reward successes, large and small
4. Be deeply critical of ideas, but not people
5. Work cooperatively to address issues, scientific and interpersonal
6. Speak clearly and with sufficient volume if there are difficulties with hearing or participating in the conversation, especially in online and hybrid meetings

(https://www.york.ac.uk/about/equality/policy-guidance/guidance/hearing-loss-guidance)

7. Reinforce and reiterate ideas brought forth, particularly those from early career participants, and **always acknowledge the source**
8. Take the time to learn the correct pronunciation of your colleagues' names. Asking how to pronounce a name you are unfamiliar with is always a good idea and is preferable to stating "I am probably pronouncing it wrong." There are also some neat tools available if you want to share how to pronounce your name (https://namedrop.io/) or if you want to learn how to pronounce names unfamiliar to you (https://pronouncenames.com/; https://www.howtopronounce.com/)

When performing research, alone or in a group
9. Maintain a questioning attitude. Everyone has stop work authority and can stop work or suggest a time-out
10. Maintain vigilance for emotional and physical safety in the lab and field, both for yourself and your colleagues
11. Open invitations for new investigations or research directions - get the widest available input and ensure those who want to participate feel welcomed and can engage if they choose

If conflict arises
12. If conversations become negative, intervene if you are a bystander or enlist others who can help. If you are a participant, consider continuing the conversation at a later date. Bystanders or participants can ask for a time out. Seek advice from colleagues or PIs to help you better continue that conversation later. If helpful, invite project PIs or other staff who may help facilitate that conversation and prevent negative spiraling.
13. If receiving feedback on your own behavior, take time to listen and reflect. Consider how you might have impacted your colleagues in unintended ways and now have the opportunity to learn from your misstep. Consider receiving feedback as a sign of respect: people generally do not provide feedback without an expectation of a resolution.

When preparing analyses, presentations, and manuscripts for publication
14. Be honest and realistic about the conclusions that can be drawn from research
15. Coauthors should include anyone that has made a meaningful contribution to the research. We suggest following the Ecological Society of America's guidelines for authorship inclusion which defines meaningful contributions as: conceiving the ideas or experimental design, active participation in execution of the study, analysis and interpretation of the data; and/or writing the manuscript
16. Contact team members who have generated data used in the manuscript and involve them during development of your plans for data usage and manuscript preparation. TES-SFA policy is that lead authors must include data creators as coauthors and participants in manuscript preparation. Data creators are most aware of data shortcomings and how best to interpret the data (https://mnspruce.ornl.gov/sites/default/files/application/pdf/2021-07/ORNL_TESSFA_Policy_2090515.pdf)

17. Follow best practices for manuscript preparation and submission: respond to all feedback and questions from coauthors, utilize track changes as appropriate so that updates are traceable, allow coauthors opportunities to weigh in on manuscript revisions, and submit papers for publication only with approval from all coauthors

At all times during the research process
18. Everyone has **Stop Work Authority** that they can exercise to halt work if they are concerned with emotional or physical safety issues, in the lab, field, in meetings, and in discussions. All project personnel have the authority to stop work when conditions are not safe. In the TES SFA, the principle of safety explicitly applies to both emotional and physical and concepts of safety (e.g. harassment, bullying). Ignoring someone trying to exercise Stop Work Authority (especially by managers) should be reported as misconduct. If a worker utilizes their stop work authority for any reason, the incident must be reported to TES SFA project leadership (PI or co-PI) by the next business day. Reporting may consist of an email, phone call, or meeting for discussion
19. In the case that the offender consists of both PI and co-PI, and/or if PI and co-PI are nonresponsive, ORNL Environmental Division leadership staff should be engaged (Division Director, Section Heads, Group Leaders)
20. Report any type of misconduct that you observe (see Reporting below)
21. Conduct environmentally responsible research through being good stewards of research sites and mindfully considering and actively mitigating negative environmental impacts of research activities (See Murray et al., 2023)

Unacceptable Behaviors

1. Bullying (emphasizing power imbalance by use of demeaning, dismissive, or aggressive language and/or actions)
2. Intimidation (a type of bullying; words, actions, or implied threats that cause reasonable fear for personal safety, research opportunities, or personal standing, often with the goal of making someone behave a certain way)
3. Discrimination (treating a project member less favorably because of, for example, their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability status, or status as a protected veteran)
4. Harassment (unwelcome conduct that is based discrimination criteria above, can include offensive jokes, name calling, assaults and threats)
5. Sexual Misconduct (unwanted advances of a sexual nature or creation of a unpleasant and offensive work environment)
6. Retaliation (increased scrutiny, adding complications to workload, transferring tasks, inappropriate reprimands, threats) against anyone reporting unacceptable behavior or attempting to adhere to the code of conduct
7. Belittling colleague's research (unlike constructive criticism, which identifies research shortcomings and offer solutions, belittling is feedback **intentionally** made to hurt the self-esteem of the recipient or their perceived standing within the organization)

8. Breaking Federal/state/local laws at workplaces (including MOFLUX, SPRUCE field site, SPRUCE office space in Grand Rapids MN, Morton Arboretum, and ORNL)
9. Breaking ORNL policies or agreed upon policies of organizations managing off-site locations

Consequences for Unacceptable Behavior

If a project participant violates the TES SFA code of conduct, there will be repercussions that scale with the seriousness of their infraction. Differentiating between low, mid, and high level infractions will be at the discretion of TES SFA project leadership (PI and co-PI will together make the determination). In the case where the PI and/or co-PI are the offending party(ies), ORNL Environmental Division leadership staff (Division Director) will become the responsible entity.

1. First offense/low level infraction: A discussion with TES SFA leadership
2. Second offense/mid level infraction: A record of incident sent to worker's manager and TES SFA leadership can decide to have project privileges altered or removed based on the behavioral problem (could include removing various privileges including funding lines, supervising of mentees/technicians/students, presenting project results at conferences, participation in field campaigns, etc.)
3. Third offense/high level infractions: Removal from the TES SFA project

- General examples of Low level infractions: Bullying, Belittling
- General examples of Medium level infractions: Intimidation, Discrimination, Harassment
- General examples of High level infractions: Breaking Federal/state/local Laws, Sexual Misconduct

Of primary importance is ensuring the safety and security of project participants, and that requires holding people accountable for their behaviors, helping them understand how their behaviors impact others, and providing support to the staff negatively impacted by the behaviors. But we also need to practice kindness and forgiveness, by helping offending staff correct undesirable behaviors and provide apologies as appropriate. We need to recognize that humans will make mistakes, and that interactions within a large and diverse team may unintentionally result in misunderstandings. We need to take care of each other, and accommodate both healing and forgiveness, in order to move forward together and continue our science journey.

Project PIs and co-PI (and ESD management, if involved) will thoughtfully, carefully, and transparently address any issues brought forth. Judging the seriousness of an infraction and deciding the consequences thereof is an inherently "gray" area for many of the undesirable behaviors. Project PIs and co-PI (and ESD management, if involved) ask for trust from the team, in order for them to evaluate the issue, consult with involved staff, and decide the resolution. Sexual Misconduct and Breaking Federal/state/local

Laws, however, are severe infractions and as such, will be treated differently. These must be reported to project PIs and co-PI and to ORNL management. Project staff should understand that these kinds of complaints, when ORNL staff are involved, will be handled in an official manner in accordance with ORNL policies, and as such, a high degree of confidentiality will be required throughout the investigation and resolution. If the staff is not employed at ORNL, ORNL cannot mandate actions by the collaborative institution. In this situation, ORNL management and the PI/co-PI will engage in a discussion with the offending party and their manager to determine how to proceed.

For a Code of Conduct to be impactful, staff must be willing to share their concerns, either in a current and direct fashion at the time of the event, or later through discussions and/or complaints, or anonymously if desired. We do not improve unless the need for improvement is conveyed.

Reporting

There are several key staff who you could report to, depending on your comfort level and the nature of the issue you are reporting:

ORNL TES SFA project

Melanie Mayes (TES SFA PI from 2025 onward; mayesma@ornl.gov; 865-574-7336)
Daniel Ricciuto (TES SFA co-PI; ricciutodm@ornl.gov; 865-574-7067)
Eric Pierce (Environmental Sciences Division; pierceem@ornl.gov; 865-574-9968)
ORNL researchers can also report to their Group Leaders and/or Section Heads
ORNL Human Resource options:
- Employee Handbook contains general guidance on ORNL policies and expectations
- Reporting through ORNL Employee Concerns Program (ECP) can be done several ways
- Visiting the ECP Office, 4500N, Rm. 125B
- Calling the ECP Coordinator at 1-865-241-8255, or 1-888-280-0616 (anonymous)
- Emailing your concern to employeeconcerns@ornl.gov
- Employee concern reporting website (anonymous)

SPRUCE Field Site

Kyle Pearson (ORNL staff onsite in Grand Rapids; pearsonkl@ornl.gov; 218-999-9469)
Mark Guilliams(ORNL staff onsite in Grand Rapids; guilliamsmp@ornl.gov; 218-999-7058)
Keith Oleheiser (ORNL staff onsite in Grand Rapids; oleheiserkc@ornl.gov)
Stephen D. Sebestyen (USDA Forest Service; stephen.sebestyen@usda.gov)

MOFLUX Field Site

Jeff Wood (MU staff; woodjd@missouri.edu; 573-882-3295)

Lianhong Gu (ORNL staff; lianhong-gu@ornl.gov; 865-241-5925)

Morton Arboretum

Luke McCormack (Research Scientist at Morton Arboretum; lmccormack@mortonarb.org; 630-725-2072)

DOE Reporting

To report concerns about policies and practices, contact DOE Employee Concerns Program at 1-844-799-8855 or EmployeeConcernsProgram@hq.doe.gov. To report an allegation of fraud, waste or abuse contact DOE Inspector General at 1-800-541-1625

References & Resources for Continued Learning

1. AdvanceGEO guidelines and resources on developing a code of conduct: https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/codes_conduct.html
2. American Geophysical Union's scientific integrity and professional ethics: https://www.agu.org/-/media/files/learn-about-agu/agu_scientific_integrity_and_professional_ethics_policy_document.pdf
3. American Geophysical Union's meeting code of conduct: https://www.agu.org/plan-for-a-meeting/agumeetings/meetings-resources/meetings-code-of-conduct
4. American Astronomical Society Code of Ethics: https://aas.org/policies/ethics
5. Toolik LTER Code of Conduct and Title IV: https://www.uaf.edu/toolik/handbook/title-ix.php
6. Ecological Society of America Code of Ethics: https://www.esa.org/about/code-of-ethics/
7. What are microaggressions? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450&ab_channel=FusionComedy
8. ORNL Everyday Ethics guide: https://sbms.ornl.gov/sbms/SBMSearch/SubjArea/ethics/EthicsGuide.pdf
9. Murray, D. S., Cole, I., Nunez, N., Parker, E. M., Mikulis, A., Herreid, A. M., et al. (2023). The environmental responsibility framework: A toolbox for recognizing and promoting ecologically-conscious research. Earth's Future, 11, e2022EF002964
10. Al Shebli, B. K., Rahwan, T., & Woon, W. L. (2018). The preeminence of ethnic diversity in scientific collaboration. Nature Communications, 9(1), 5163. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-07634-8
11. Yang, Y., Tian, T. Y., Woodruff, T. K., Jones, B. F., & Uzzi, B. (2022). Gender-diverse teams produce more novel and higher-impact scientific ideas. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 119(36), e2200841119. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2200841119

12. IARPC reading list: https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vQRiOkxxM19SDxYMZoOU0gMyE17K_1PJMa4R9tW7ru2EEUQMAt4pvcMQk7k7Bp97BZD_2Mldkv9AOYp/pub
13. https://www.vox.com/2017/9/11/16270316/college-mobility-culture
14. Workplace right to be protected from discrimination: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ofccp/regs/compliance/factsheets/FACT_Workplace_Aug2016_ENGESQA508c.pdf
15. US Equal Opportunity Commission pages on workplace harassment and retaliation: https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment, https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation