

Frequently Asked Questions about the ATFS No Harassment Policy

Updated September 6, 2017

This policy was updated and approved by the AFF Certification Committee on September 6, 2017.

Why does ATFS need a No Harassment Policy?

Harassment policies are standard practice for volunteer and partnership organizations like ATFS. Such a policy demonstrates AFF's commitment to a safe and professional environment for staff, volunteers, partners and landowners participating in ATFS. This policy assists State Leaders seeking support and guidance regarding situations where a volunteer's behavior may be perceived as inappropriate and potentially creating issues regarding the safety of other volunteers, partners, staff or landowners engaged in ATFS. A standard policy, applied equally among all program participants and with appropriate due process procedures, will help staff, State leaders, volunteers, partners, and landowners involved in ATFS more effectively deal with these situations.

What catalyzed the development of this policy?

It is not uncommon for organizations to implement new policies as they grow and adapt to an ever-changing social and business environment. In addition, AFF has, recently, received formal complaint of harassment. As part of ATFS's broad efforts to prevent any harassment of volunteers, partners, landowners and staff involved in ATFS, AFF, at the direction of the [AFF Certification Committee](#), updated its policies for all ATFS volunteers to be aware of, regarding our zero tolerance of sexual and other forms of harassment.

Why was the policy revised?

AFF released the No Harassment Policy in January of 2017. Following this introduction, AFF staff and [AFF's Certification Committee](#), the body responsible for setting ATFS technical policy, welcomed feedback on the policy. A special task group of state leaders was also formed to help process feedback. Drawing on this input, AFF revised the policy in August of 2017.

AFF and ATFS remains committed to zero tolerance of harassment and ensuring a safe and professional environment for our volunteers, landowners, partners and staff involved in ATFS. AFF believes and have heard from many volunteers, landowners, State Leaders and partners in our network that such a policy reflects our shared values, as a community, and is essential to our shared success.

Is there a fair process in place to investigate harassment claims and avoid frivolous claims?

As noted above, AFF and ATFS have a process in place, [the ATFS Inspector Compliance Policy](#), for receiving formal harassment claims and addressing them. This process ensures that, in the event that a claim is alleged, the validity and details of that claim are fully investigated, including interviews with the individuals involved and other evidence, as appropriate. This ensures fair and due process, as well as defense against frivolous or negatively motivated claims. All investigations, discussions, and meetings will be held in confidence and shared only on a "need to know" basis to protect the interests of parties associated with the allegations. The complainant will be notified of what action will be taken, if any. Revocation of participation in ATFS will result from investigations finding evidence of harassment in any form.

What type of conduct is covered by this policy?

This policy is intended to address any inappropriate conduct by ATFS volunteers when acting in their capacity as an ATFS volunteer or participating in an ATFS activity. Conduct that is abusive, unlawful or

unsafe is strictly prohibited. Each complaint will be handled on a case by case basis and reviewed for reasonableness. AFF expects anyone participating in the ATFS Inspection program to treat others with dignity and respect. Additionally, AFF acknowledges and welcomes diversity of opinion, character and custom. **This policy is intended to only cover the ATFS program. It is not intended to cover any non-ATFS related conduct.** AFF reserves the right to take any action it deems necessary to protect the safety and well-being of anyone involved with the ATFS program.

Are political opinions covered by this policy?

This policy applies to conduct. The manner in which a volunteer, when acting in their capacity as a volunteer or when participating in ATFS programs, expresses his or her opinion can be the subject of a complaint and subsequent review for prohibited conduct. Generally, harassment is undertaken with the intent to disturb or bother persistently and continually or repeatedly. Each complaint will be reviewed on a case by case basis for reasonableness.

Is training available? Do I need to take No Harassment Policy training?

Several State Leaders, ATFS Inspectors and Facilitators, have requested training on harassment to better understand what constitutes harassment and how to support the policy. In response, AFF has contracted with a human resources firm to develop No Harassment training materials that will be available online to all ATFS volunteers, including State Committee members, and incorporated into the ATFS Inspecting Foresters training that is compulsory for all ATFS Inspecting Foresters. These materials are anticipated to be available in October of 2017 and training of facilitators will be offered on this new material at that time. For inspectors with current training credentials (having been trained or completed an inspection within the last two years), re-training is not required until the release of revised ATFS Standards in 2020. While ATFS Inspecting Foresters will undergo the No Harassment training as part of the required ATFS Inspecting Forester training, the No Harassment training is not required for State Leaders and others (non-Inspecting Foresters) involved in the ATFS program. However, the No Harassment training is available as an important reference and resource for the entire ATFS community.

My company has a similar policy. Can AFF recognize and enforce that policy?

AFF recognizes that many of its partners including state agencies, conservation organizations and forest product companies, which implement ATFS in partnership, have their own anti-harassment policies which apply to their programs, operations and employees. These policies may differ from AFF's ATFS No Harassment Policy. As such, AFF takes sole responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of the ATFS No Harassment Policy. Similarly, AFF does not monitor and enforce the policies of other organizations. However, AFF will always enforce all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations.