



A Washington State Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 2524, Olympia, WA 98507  
(360) 352-7299 [www.blackhills-audubon.org](http://www.blackhills-audubon.org)

*Black Hills Audubon Society is a volunteer, non-profit organization of more than 1,300 members in Thurston, Mason, and Lewis Counties whose goals are to promote environmental education and protect our ecosystems for future generations.*

## BHAS GRIEVANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (Approved 10-1-15)

### **Four key points for a fair procedure are:**

1. The aggrieved person(s), hereafter referred to as person(s), should deal with issues promptly and consistently, and the organization should carry out any necessary investigations.
2. The person should have an opportunity to state their case.
3. The person should have an opportunity to appeal against the decision.
4. The person should have the right to be accompanied by a companion/advocate at any formal meeting if they wish.

### **1. Introduction**

This procedure applies to BHAS Board Members and Volunteers, collectively referred to as persons.

The aim of this Grievance and Conflict Resolution Procedure is to settle grievances or complaints fairly, and it is intended to operate simply and quickly. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue at the earliest possible stage, and at each stage efforts will be made in order to avoid proceeding to the next stage and to settle the issue amicably.

If a person has a problem with any other volunteer or board member or two persons have a problem with each other, every effort should be made to reach an agreement between the conflicting parties in an informal meeting between them and a committee chair or board president. A companion/advocate may also be included if desired. However, if they are unable to sort out the conflict informally, the persons involved should be provided with the opportunity to use a formal grievance procedure, involving the person's committee chair or the Board president.

### **2. The Procedure - Raise the grievance in writing**

The person(s) should raise a grievance with their committee chair or in the case of a board member with the president of the board without unreasonable delay, normally within one month of the incident (or final incident) which gives rise to the complaint.

If the grievance is against the committee chair, the matter should be raised with the president of the board. In the case of the president, the matter should be raised with the vice president. Whoever deals with the grievance, will normally be excluded from hearing any appeal.

However, if this exclusion is not possible, the person dealing with the grievance should make it clear that they will treat all grievances fairly and objectively even if the grievance is about something they have said or done.

The aggrieved person must detail in writing the specific circumstance or circumstances which constitute the grievance, with dates, times, witnesses, etc. as applicable. Persons should stick to the facts and avoid insulting or abusive language.

### **3. Invitation to a Grievance Meeting**

The person dealing with the grievance will invite the person to attend a meeting, without unavoidable delay to discuss the matter, ideally within five working days of receiving the written grievance.

The aggrieved person is entitled to be accompanied by a companion/advocate at the meeting. This companion can speak at the meeting on behalf of the person, but they cannot answer questions put directly to the person.

Reasonable adjustments should be considered for disabled persons, such as allowing a sign language interpreter to attend the meeting.

### **4. Grievance Meeting**

Where possible, a note-taker, who must be uninvolved in the case will take down a record of the proceedings.

The person dealing with the grievance will introduce the meeting, read out the grounds of the person's grievance, ask the person if they are correct and require the person to provide clarification regarding details of the grievance if unclear.

The aggrieved person will be given the opportunity to put forward her/his case and say how they would like to see it resolved. The person may call witnesses and refer to any documents previously provided.

The person dealing with the grievance may question the person and any of the person's witnesses. The person/companion will be given the opportunity to sum up but may not introduce any new material.

The meeting may be adjourned by the person dealing with the grievance if it is considered necessary to undertake further investigation. Any necessary investigations will be carried out to establish the facts of the case. The meeting will be reconvened as soon as possible.

Having considered the grievance, the person dealing with the grievance will give her/his decision regarding the case in writing to the person which will normally be within five working days. If appropriate, the decision will set out what action they intend to take to resolve the grievance or if the grievance is not upheld, will explain the reasons. This will also include notifying the person of her/his right of appeal and the procedure to be followed.

### **5. Appeal**

If still unresolved, the person may refer the matter, in writing, to an appeal panel of the Board of Directors.

The person wishing to appeal against a grievance decision, must do so in writing within five working days of receiving written notification of the grievance decision, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.

Arrangements for the appeal meeting will be made by the president or vice president who will ensure that a note-taker is present if possible. The appeal meeting should be held without unavoidable delay. Where possible, at least two members of the board will constitute an Appeal Panel. The board members hearing the appeal should, if at all possible, have had no direct involvement in the case.

The person is entitled to be accompanied by a companion/advocate at the appeal.

The decision of the Appeal Panel hearing the appeal shall be final.