



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Policy/Procedure ADM 8 – DNCR Social Media Policy

Section General Administration

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APPROVED BY:

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Date

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent expectations for appropriate social media use of both Department of Natural and Cultural Resources ("DNCR") managed accounts and personal accounts of DNCR employees.

This policy is not intended to restrict employees' rights and privileges under applicable federal or state laws to engage in protected speech. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that social media communication related to DNCR's work is respectful, appropriate, and avoids the appearance of a conflict of interest that would impede the agency's mission or the employee's ability to carry out their duties.

2.0 Scope

This policy sets minimum requirements for **all DNCR employees and DNCR-managed accounts**. Divisions are permitted to maintain division-specific social media policies that are not in conflict with the DNCR Social Media Policy only after they have been approved by the DNCR Communications Director, DNCR General Counsel, and DNCR Policy Director or their designees.

3.0 Definitions

Employee: An individual who works for the Department in full-time or part-time status on a probationary, permanent, time-limited, or temporary basis, including interns and contractors.

Social Media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in publicly available social networking. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. **Micromedia/Online Forums:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, Mastodon, Bluesky, Nextdoor, X
- b. **Video and Photo Sharing:** YouTube, Instagram Reels, Facebook Live, Vimeo, Flickr
- c. **Instant Messaging/Discussion Platforms:** Reddit, Discord, and online gaming platforms
- d. **Survey/Scheduling:** Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, Doodle
- e. **Blogs/Microblogs:** Medium, Substack, Government-hosted blogs
- f. **Geospatial Tagging:** Google Maps, OpenStreetMap contributions, location-based social check-ins
- g. **Podcasts:** Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, YouTube Podcasts
- h. **Wikis:** Wikipedia, internal government knowledge bases
- i. **Electronic Newsletters:** GovDelivery, Mailchimp, Constant Contact, Substack

4.0 Policy

4.1 DNCR-Managed Social Media Accounts

All DNCR employees who intend to contribute to any DNCR-managed account *must* first receive training from the DNCR Communications Office before accessing, managing, or posting material from a DNCR-managed social media account (DNCR-managed account).

DNCR recognizes the value of using social media to communicate with the public, media, employees, and others. It is the responsibility of all DNCR employees who contribute to any DNCR-managed accounts to adhere to this policy. Establishing new social media accounts to represent official DNCR-related activity must be approved by the DNCR Communications Director or their designee. All posts and comments on agency accounts, and direct messages sent to or from agency accounts, whether from agency employees or the public, are subject to North Carolina Public Records Law and cannot be deleted absent approval from the DNCR Communications Director and the DNCR General Counsel or their designees.

4.1.1 Requesting New Social Media Accounts

Approval: Employees or divisions considering creating a new social media account representing DNCR should ensure the account aligns with the mission of DNCR. Such accounts must be approved by the Communications Director or their designee before their creation is finalized.

Naming Conventions: All DNCR-managed account names must clearly reflect their respective division, site, or attraction while maintaining a clear connection to DNCR. Whenever possible, account names should remain consistent across platforms to reduce confusion and improve searchability. While including "NC" is recommended when appropriate, it is not required if the division or site name is distinctive. All DNCR-managed account names must be approved by the Communications Director or his or her designee.

Each DNCR-managed account's bio or about section must **explicitly state that** it is an **official account of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**. Additionally, each DNCR-managed account should be registered with the State Archives Office.

4.1.2 Content Protocols

Voice and Tone: Posts shall use plain language at a maximum of an eighth grade reading level and be professional, concise, simple, and clear.

Accuracy: Content should be proof-read for accuracy and copy edits before posting.

Images: Images should be related to the post and help in adding context.

- a. Ensure proper credit is given to the creator or account and that there are photo releases in instances when children are in photos.
- b. Staff should strive to use DNCR-owned images where possible. Otherwise, staff should ensure that they secure appropriate licenses for any images pulled from webpages or are images within the public domain.
- c. Check all images closely, including objects in the background, for graphic or insensitive content before posting.
- d. Avoid images of a controversial nature including images that are defamatory, pornographic, libelous, or politically partisan.
- e. Do not post images if it could be perceived they were taken violating traffic or safety laws (e.g., taken from the driver's seat, individuals not wearing safety gear in situations that warrant).

GIFs: GIFs may be used if they are appropriate and relate to the account's mission.

Replies: Replies from DNCR-managed accounts to commenters should be polite and informative. Account managers should avoid engaging with antagonistic commenters.

Editing Posts: If a post needs to be altered, an indication that the post has been updated should be made. Any mistakes should be corrected immediately.

Hiding or Removing Comments: Users have First Amendment rights, and users' comments or speech cannot be removed for expressing disagreeing viewpoints with the agency. Employees shouldn't block users on DNCR-managed accounts. Comments may be removed or hidden only if they are obscene/profane, threatening, discriminatory, or harassing. Examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, or libelous.

No Product Endorsement: DNCR-managed accounts may not endorse products or private companies. When acknowledging sponsorship of DNCR sites or programming, accounts may acknowledge or thank companies for support but may not promote them in a way that could be construed as advertising or imply endorsement. Additionally, company names associated with DNCR facilities with Department-approved naming rights may be referenced.

Multilingual and ADA-Compliant Content: Posts should aim to include image descriptions, video captions, and translations, when possible, especially for locations with high visitor traffic.

State Employee Access Only: Official DNCR-managed accounts, including divisional and site-specific accounts, may only be managed by DNCR employees. Volunteers, friends groups, or external support organizations are not permitted to create, manage, or post content on official DNCR-managed accounts.

Account Security & Oversight: All DNCR-managed accounts must be registered and maintained by DNCR staff, with oversight from the DNCR Communications Office. Login credentials should never be shared with non-employees, and all account management must follow the DNCR Acceptable Use Policy

Affiliated Group Guidelines: While friends groups, nonprofit partners, or volunteer organizations may maintain their own independent social media pages, they must not present themselves as official DNCR entities.

Privacy: Posts should not reveal confidential or highly sensitive information, including personally identifiable information (PII) of individuals.

Content as state property: Any content posted using a DNCR-managed account is considered state property and is subject to the Public Records Act. Employees do not retain ownership of content produced in their official capacity and may not use it for personal influence, commercial purposes, or financial gain during or after their employment with the Department.

Monitoring: Time should be devoted each day by employees managing accounts to monitoring their respective DNCR-managed account for comments, replies, tagging from other accounts, trolls, and trending topics.

Reviews: Reviews of DNCR-managed accounts should be performed on a quarterly basis by employees managing those accounts. This includes monitoring followers for fake accounts and bots and running an analysis for engagement and clicks.

Following other accounts: Accounts followed by DNCR-managed accounts should be relevant to the mission of the agency and shall be bipartisan. DNCR-managed accounts should not follow political campaign accounts. They may follow and interact with the official accounts of elected and appointed government officials.

4.1.3 Disciplinary Action

Unsanctioned accounts: Any accounts purporting to represent the Department in any capacity that have not been approved as required in 4.1.1 are unauthorized. The DNCR Communications Director or their designee has the right to ask the account holder to delete any unauthorized account. Failure to delete an unauthorized account within five business days may result in disciplinary action.

Improper use of DNCR-managed accounts:

Posts from DNCR-managed accounts are perceived to represent official stances of the Department. Employees should refrain from posting personal opinions using DNCR-managed accounts. If a post clearly deviates from DNCR's mission, takes a position counter to the Department's official stance on an issue, or is obscene or otherwise inappropriate, the post should be removed, and the responsible employee may face disciplinary action at the discretion of the Communications Director and General Counsel. Such action could include removing the employee's access to DNCR-managed social media accounts and other actions up to and including dismissal. All DNCR employees are subject to the Office of State Human Resources Disciplinary Action Policy including but not limited to disciplinary action imposed on the basis of unacceptable personal conduct.

4.2 Personal Accounts

4.2.1 Social Media Use on DNCR Devices and Networks

- All contributors to DNCR-managed accounts must keep personal and department-related social media use separate. DNCR recognizes that employees maintain social media accounts in their lives outside of their professional activities for DNCR and DNCR encourages the responsible use of social media accounts.
- DNCR computers and mobile devices are to be used mainly for business purposes; however, reasonable personal use is permitted (please refer to DNCR's Acceptable Use Policy).
- Social media use shall not interfere with an employee's responsibilities at DNCR.
- Employees are prohibited from using State-issued e-mail addresses for any personal social media account.
- An employee's social media identity must be distinct from the State and agency usage identity.
- Employees shall ensure that their social media activity does not interfere with their duties and/or the work of DNCR or create the perception of a conflict of interest.
- Use of personal social media accounts for professional purposes could make the accounts subject to N.C. Public Records Law.

4.2.2 Content Guidance

Disclaimers: If an employee publishes (self-posting, commenting on another post, or like/share of post) content that involves their work, subject matter area, or information obtained as part of their employment, or otherwise relates to the work of DNCR, a statement should be posted in a prominent and visible place to clarify the views represented do not represent the position or opinions of DNCR.

Interviews: Participation in podcasts, videos, features, articles or other forums where content may be posted to social media, including interviews with print or broadcast media, in which an employee will be discussing their work as a DNCR employee requires prior approval by the employee's division director or their designee, and the DNCR Communications Director or their designee.

Privacy: Employees must refrain from disclosing confidential or highly sensitive Department information, including safety and security information and personally identifiable information (PII) of individuals.

Commenting on DNCR posts: Employees who are not the DNCR Communications Director or his or her designee should refrain from commenting/responding to negative comments by members of the public on DNCR accounts.

4.2.3 Disciplinary Action

Willful violation of the DNCR Social Media Policy is considered unacceptable personal conduct. Employees may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. All DNCR employees are subject to the Office of State Human Resources Disciplinary Action Policy, including but not limited to disciplinary action imposed on the basis of unacceptable personal conduct.

5.0 Referenced and Related Policies

Acceptable Use Policy for DNCR Networks and Devices

Office of State Human Resources Manual, Disciplinary Action Policy

6.0 History

This policy replaces *Best Practices for Social Media Usage March (2012)*.