

## **I. Introduction and Guiding Principles**

Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH) is the state museum of natural history in Idaho, remotely governed by the Idaho State Board of Education, parented by Idaho State University (ISU), and overseen directly by the ISU Vice President for Research. It is a nonprofit institution with a commitment of service to the public. Included in public services is the goal of being responsive to and representative of society. It is organized as a public trust, holding its collections and information to benefit the citizens of Idaho and visitors. IMNH employees and volunteers are committed to the interests of these beneficiaries.

IMNH makes its unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving, and interpreting specimens and artifacts to advance knowledge about the natural and cultural history of Idaho and the intermountain west. To accomplish this, IMNH collections and/or the objects and specimens it borrows are the basis for research, exhibits, and programs that invite public participation.

As the steward of the collections it holds, it is incumbent upon IMNH to preserve those collections for posterity. It is also incumbent on IMNH to be a resource in all its activities for the citizens of Idaho and visitors to the State and to foster an informed appreciation and understanding of all nature, of the human experience, and of the rich and diverse world we have inherited.

As a nonprofit institution, IMNH complies with applicable local, state, and federal laws and international conventions, as well as with the specific legal standards governing trust responsibilities. However, these legal standards are a minimum. IMNH must act not only legally but also ethically. With this Code of Ethics, the IMNH takes an affirmative step to ensure its integrity to warrant public confidence.

For IMNH, its public trust responsibilities are paramount. In creating this Code of Ethics, IMNH employees and volunteers examine their performance of these responsibilities in the areas of professional conduct, governance, collections, and public programs. IMNH thereby affirms its chartered purpose, ensures the prudent application of its resources, enhances its effectiveness, and maintains public confidence. Policies are articulated and prudent oversight is practiced. This endeavor strengthens IMNH work and the contribution of IMNH to society, present and future.

This Code of Ethics strives to deal with the issues of human good. IMNH employees and volunteers act corporately and not as individuals. In all activities, they act with the highest levels of honesty and integrity, holding high the standards of ethical principles and objectivity. By using the ethical standards within this Code, IMNH moves to develop an understanding of the roles and collective mission of all who work within IMNH or who are affiliated with it, including staff, volunteers, and governing authority. Hereafter, “personnel” refers to these individuals.

Personnel may refer to overarching documents relating to ethics in ISU's stated Policies and Procedures, such as the Conflict of Interest and Intellectual Property Policies. These describe specific ethical policies relating to practices for all ISU personnel.

## **II. Professional and Personal Conduct**

IMNH, in fulfilling its mission, is subject to high public visibility. To the public, IMNH personnel are never completely separate from IMNH. Professional standards and practices inform and guide IMNH operations. Any related activities by an individual reflect upon the integrity of IMNH; therefore, all personnel must deal with the following specific ethical issues:

**Personnel practices and equal opportunity.** Working relationships among all personnel are based on equity and mutual respect, where shared roles and separate responsibilities are recognized. IMNH adheres to and supports ISU general personnel policies as described in ISU's Policies and Procedures (Governance/Legal and Human Resources).

**Conflict of interest.** IMNH personnel often have the opportunity to pursue professional activities and interests outside their job responsibilities. Such activities may be paid or volunteered and may be in the same community or some distance from the community. These actions, even in an unofficial capacity, reflect on IMNH. Therefore, it is of primary importance that there is no conflict – actual, potential, or perceived – between these outside activities and the individual's job responsibilities.

**Gifts, favors, discounts, and dispensations.** IMNH personnel and others in a close relationship to them must not accept gifts, favors, loans, or other dispensations or items of value that are available to them in connection with their duties for IMNH. Personnel are permitted to retain gifts of trifling value when acceptance would not appear to impair their judgement or otherwise influence decisions.

**Financial Arrangements.** IMNH personnel who are authorized to spend IMNH funds must do so with honesty and respect for public funds within the guidelines of IMNH and ISU. Travel reimbursement, hours of work, and accomplishments are honestly reported.

**Professional conduct.** Loyalty to the IMNH mission and to the public it serves is the essence of museum work, whether volunteer or paid. In all activities, IMNH personnel act with integrity and in accordance with the most stringent ethical principles as well as the highest standards of objectivity. Museums enjoy high public visibility and their personnel a generous measure of public esteem. To the public, museum employees are never wholly separable from their institution. They can never consider themselves or their activities totally independent of the museum despite disclaimers they may offer. Any museum-related action by an individual may reflect on the museum or be attributed to it. Personnel are concerned not only with the true personal motivations and interests as they see them but also the way in which the outside observer might construe such actions.

**Outside employment and consulting.** IMNH employment activities are undertaken within the fundamental premise that the employee's primary responsibility is to IMNH;

that the activity will not interfere with their ability to discharge this responsibility; and that it will not compromise the professional integrity of the employee or the reputation of IMNH. Employees disclose to the Director the facts concerning any planned outside employment or consulting arrangements that are in any way related to the functions that person performs for IMNH. Disclosure is not required for employment or consulting that is entirely unrelated to the work the individual carries out for IMNH.

**Extracurricular and/or Volunteer Activities.** Personnel are encouraged to volunteer with community groups and public service organizations. Employees conduct themselves so that their activities on behalf of community or public service organizations do not reflect adversely on the reputation or integrity of IMNH. The name of and the employee's connection with IMNH should be used sparingly and respectfully in connection with outside activities. Disclosure is not required for an employee's activities on behalf of voluntary community groups or other public service organizations, except for those organizations such as other museums or organizations with like missions where the employee could appear to be acting in an official capacity.

**Teaching, lecturing, writing, and other creative activities.** Personnel recognize that when an outside activity is directly related to their regular duties for IMNH they are obliged to reach an agreement with IMNH concerning all aspects of that activity. Any contemplated uses of IMNH research facilities, staff assistance, and property such as copying machines, images, or objects and specimens from the collections must be described and approvals obtained. The proprietary interest of IMNH, ISU, and personnel in copyrights, royalties and similar properties is stated in the IMNH Collections Management Policy Manual (Rights of Reproduction) and ISU's Intellectual Property Policy.

**Confidentiality.** Information about the administrative and non-scholarly activities of IMNH that personnel may acquire in the course of their duties that is not generally known or available to the public must be treated as proprietary IMNH information. Such information cannot be used for personal advantage or other purposes detrimental to IMNH. This principle does not preclude public disclosure of information that is properly in the public domain, or information that should be released in fulfilling the Museum's accountability to the public.

**Personal Use of Collections.** Personnel may not use in their home or for any personal purpose any object that is part of IMNH collections or that is under IMNH guardianship.

**Personal collecting.** Personal collecting in fields closely related to the scope of IMNH collections is sensitive and requires great care to avoid real or apparent conflicts of interest. Possible pitfalls are accusations of theft if an object or specimen is found to be missing from the collections, of competing with IMNH if an object is purchased that fits IMNH mission, or of graft if the staff member does personal business with an individual who may sell or donate objects or specimens to IMNH.

**Therefore, personnel may not:**

- ◆ compete with IMNH in any personal collecting activity;

- ◆ use their IMNH affiliation to promote their personal collecting activities;
- ◆ participate in any dealing (buying and selling for profit as distinguished from occasional sale or exchange from a personal collection) in objects similar or related to the objects or specimens collected by IMNH;
- ◆ traffic in objects originating on public lands;
- ◆ enlist the aid of friends or relatives to act on their behalf in conducting any of these restricted activities.

**Personnel may:**

- ◆ keep their private collection separated physically from IMNH collections;
- ◆ assure that IMNH has the first option to accession into the collections any objects collected by personnel that are intended to be retained permanently;
- ◆ conduct all personal collecting outside of their normal and regular working hours;
- ◆ assure that IMNH has the first option to buy any objects within the IMNH mission statement that the employee plans to buy or to sell.

**Political Activities.** In the arena of political activities personnel fall under the restrictions of state, local, and federal statutes. Under the Hatch Act (5USC 7321-7326),

**State and Local employees may:**

- ◆ run for office in non-partisan elections;
- ◆ campaign for and hold office in political clubs and organizations;
- ◆ actively campaign for candidates for public office in partisan and non-partisan elections.

**State and Local employees may not:**

- ◆ be a candidate for public office in a partisan election;
- ◆ use official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination;
- ◆ directly or indirectly coerce contributions from subordinates in support of a political party or candidate.

**Volunteers including Members of Support Groups.** While IMNH is greatly appreciative to volunteers for the gift of their time, efforts, and expertise, access to IMNH inner activities is a privilege, and the lack of monetary compensation for effort expended on behalf of IMNH in no way frees the volunteer from adherence to the standards that apply to paid employees. Volunteers are expected to work toward the betterment of IMNH and not for personal gain other than the natural gratification and enrichment inherent in participation. Conflict of interest restrictions placed upon employees must be explained to volunteers and, where relevant, observed by them. Volunteers and affiliated organizations understand clearly the policies and programs adopted by IMNH and do not interfere with the administrative application of these policies and programs.

**Live Animals.** Live animals may be permitted in IMNH for use in public programs or as service animals. Animals used in public programs must be cared for in accordance with animal welfare regulations and in ways that do not endanger personnel, collections, or audience.

**Children and Dependents.** Brief visits by children and dependents to IMNH areas other than public areas may be authorized by the Director, but in general children and dependents of personnel are only permitted in public areas.

### **III. Governance**

IMNH is a public trust responsible for service to society. The ISU Vice President for Research, representing the State Board of Education, ensures that the IMNH Director functions in an atmosphere that allows the Director to use IMNH resources to support its mission, respond to the needs of its audiences, and respect the diversity of Idaho's natural and cultural heritage. The administrators and managers of IMNH should create a work environment that encourages and fosters the productivity of personnel. They also should take safety measures to ensure and protect personnel. The Museum and its administration should never require personnel to act in a way that could reasonably be judged to be unsafe, unethical or insecure. IMNH administration is responsible for obtaining and maintaining accreditation by appropriate professional organizations.

### **IV. Collections**

The distinctive character of ethics for the IMNH derives from the public trust responsibilities of ownership, care, and use of objects representing the natural and cultural heritage of Idaho and the Intermountain West. Stewardship of IMNH collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful acquisition, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal. The policies and guidelines of the IMNH Collections Management Policy are included in the IMNH Code of Ethics.

**Collections support IMNH's mission and public trust responsibilities.** The approved mission of IMNH is to acquire, preserve, study, interpret, and display objects for research and education relating to the natural and cultural history of Idaho and the Intermountain West. IMNH seeks to enhance an understanding of Idaho's natural and cultural heritage for the citizens of Idaho and visitors. IMNH's public trust responsibilities are those of a nonprofit educational institution whose purpose is to collect and preserve objects and to disseminate information about those objects and specimens.

**Collections are protected, secured, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved.** The physical care of the collections and their accessibility is in keeping with accepted museum standards, the IMNH Collections Management Policy, and/or state or federal guidelines, statutes, regulations, and any other legally binding agreements. IMNH has an ethical obligation to either correct any deficiency or dispose of the collection in accordance with the IMNH Collections Management Policy.

**Registration and cataloguing.** Each object is an integral part of a cultural or scientific composite. An object's context includes a body of information about the object that establishes its proper place and importance and without which the value of the object is diminished. The maintenance of this information in orderly and retrievable form is

critical to the collection and is a central obligation of those charged with collection management.

**Collection management.** An ethical duty of IMNH is to transfer to its successors, when possible in enhanced form, the material record of Idaho's natural and cultural heritage. IMNH must be in control of its collections and know the location and the condition of the objects that it holds. Procedures are established and followed for the periodic evaluation of the condition of the collections and for their general and special maintenance.

**Ownership of scholarly material.** The object, its documentation, and all additional documentation accrued or developed by IMNH subsequent to its acquisition are IMNH property. The analysis of an object or specimen for scholarly purposes, including interpretive notes, outlines and illustrative material, is IMNH proprietary property if personnel produced the material during their IMNH working hours. Such material is not the proprietary property of IMNH if IMNH funds were not used to produce it.

**Access to the collections.** Although the public must have reasonable access to the collections on a nondiscriminatory basis, IMNH assumes as a primary responsibility the safeguarding of its materials and therefore regulates access to them. Some parts of the collections may be set aside for active scholarly pursuits but normally only for the duration of an active research effort. Decisions relating to access are guided by two primary objectives: the continued physical integrity and safety of the object, specimen, or collection, and high scholarly or educational purposes. Requests for access to the collections shall be weighed in an unbiased manner. If a conflict of interest exists regarding personnel granting access and a researcher requesting access, the request will be turned over to the IMNH Director or ultimately to the ISU Vice President for Research for a decision.

**Acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to IMNH mission and public trust responsibilities.** The IMNH Collections Management Policy is IMNH's public statement concerning the acquisition and disposition of collection objects. These policies allow it to conduct its activities within the complexities of existing state and federal legislation and with the reasonable certainty that its approach is consistent with the spirit and intent of these laws.

**Acquisition.** IMNH personnel anticipate the possible consequences of their own actions as they pertain to the acquisition of plants, animals, or cultural materials. They are aware of the potential damage that such acquisitions might have on the population of a species, a community of organisms, the environment in general, or a culturally or historically significant site. They conduct their collecting activities within recognized standards that avoid insofar as possible the adverse effects of such activities. These principles apply to the acquisition of objects for all IMNH activities including education, research, or exhibit purposes.

**Disposal.** Deaccessioned objects may be offered for sale to another non-profit organization or at public auction; however, archaeological objects and vertebrate fossils

may never be sold. All sales of objects from the collection must be at advertised public auctions or to the public in a manner that will best protect the interests, objectives, and legal status of IMNH. Exempt are collection objects or specimens that must be discarded, and which IMNH cannot transfer to another institution or sell, will be given to an educational program, or destroyed. Deaccessioned objects will not be given, exchanged, or sold privately to staff of IMNH, Idaho State University, members of museum support groups, members of the governing authorities, or to their representatives. No private sales will be made to individuals.

**Loans.** Incoming loans receive the same standard of care that IMNH's own objects or specimens receive. Loaned objects must have been acquired in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.

**Disposal of collections is solely for the advancement of IMNH's collections mission.**

All monies obtained from the sale of deaccessioned objects will be used for IMNH acquisition of new objects through purchase, preparation, or collecting expeditions. Monies are maintained in a separate IMNH local account.

**The unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects are the basis of all decisions concerning said objects.** IMNH does not collect human remains or associated funerary objects. IMNH will hold and preserve human remains and associated funerary objects as they await proper disposition in accordance with directions from the appropriate native peoples and/or in accordance with state and federal law. IMNH does not conduct research, analyze, or display human remains or funerary objects.

**Collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.** Appraisals, authentication, and commercial use of collections are IMNH activities where the public trust may be abused. IMNH personnel must remain focused on the public trust responsibilities in these circumstances.

**Commercial use of collections.** In arranging for the manufacture and sale of replicas, reproductions, or other commercial items adapted from an object accessioned in IMNH collections, all aspects of the commercial venture are carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of IMNH or the intrinsic value of the original object. Great care is taken to identify permanently such objects for what they are and to ensure the accuracy and high quality of their manufacture.

**Appraisals.** Appraising is an area that is subject to conflict of interest; therefore, IMNH does not do appraisals. If a person decides to donate an object or specimen to IMNH, it is the donor's responsibility to obtain an appraisal that meets Internal Revenue Service tax deduction requirements. When advising potential donors concerning appraisals, IMNH provides at least two qualified sources and preferably three or more sources. There may be no appearance of personal favoritism in providing the names of appraisers. Should IMNH require the services of an appraiser, IMNH ensures that only qualified and ethical appraisers are used. Any appraiser selected must have no past, present, or future interest in the transaction and may not be a previous or potential owner or vendor of the object.

**Authentication.** Personnel may assist a visitor with the identification of an object. However, the identification must avoid making any judgement relevant to monetary value. Personnel will be particularly sensitive to the difference between identifying and appraising. Any authentication represents an honest and objective judgment, and includes an indication of how the determination was made.

## **V. Public Programs**

IMNH actively nurtures an understanding of and delight in Idaho's natural and cultural heritage through exhibitions and educational activities. These programs further IMNH's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests, and needs of society. As the official state museum of natural history, IMNH interprets and displays natural and cultural objects for Idaho residents, visitors, and the world's community of students and scholars.

**Programs are founded on scholarship and marked by intellectual integrity.** All programs must be scholarly, current, and accurate. Intellectual honesty and objectivity in the presentation of objects is the duty of all personnel. The stated origin of the artifact or specimen and attribution of work reflects the thorough and honest investigations of IMNH and yields promptly to change with the advent of new facts or analysis. The research and preparation of a program will often lead personnel to develop a point of view or interpretive sense of the material. Personnel clearly understand the point where sound professional judgement ends and personal bias begins. They must be confident that the resultant presentation is the product of objective judgement. If need be, personnel must be willing to present objective but opposing concepts in public programs.

**Programs are balanced and respect pluralistic values, traditions, and concerns.** IMNH addresses a variety of issues and they are appropriate if approached objectively and without prejudice. Programs provide with candor and tact an honest and meaningful view of the subject. IMNH programs strive to understand the concerns and unique cultural contributions of its region.

**Programs encourage inter-institutional cooperation.** IMNH welcomes cooperative action with similar organizations. IMNH also supports and encourages Idaho's other natural history museums through mentoring and training in sound museological practices.

**Programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources.** IMNH public programs should be accessible, both physically and intellectually. They should also be relevant to the audience and engaging, visually and/or verbally. IMNH strives to remain accessible and encourages participation of the widest audience consistent with its mission and resources.

## **VI. Development, Marketing, and Earned Income**

The IMNH programs consistently promote the public good instead of individual financial gain. Revenue-producing activities and outside support are not in conflict with IMNH's mission. IMNH ensures that its standards and its public trust responsibilities are not compromised by these relationships. Further, IMNH must maintain ethical standards in the following areas:



**Media Relationships.** IMNH provides honest and accurate information to all media outlets. The goal of media relations is to increase the free flow of information and to aid the public in decision-making. No relationships with the media may compromise the integrity of IMNH. All information accurately reflects who we are and what we do.

**Public Relations.** Open communication fosters informed decision-making; by acting responsibly IMNH builds public trust. IMNH works to build community support in its mission through all of its endeavors.

**Sponsorships.** Personnel involved in fundraising or soliciting sponsorships, gifts-in-kind, and all other like activities do so with honesty. Personnel involved in these activities pay particular attention to conflicts of interest. Personnel ensure proper handling of all such endeavors and maintain the confidentiality of records in regards to these activities.

**Museum Store.** The Museum Store activities and any other commercial activities of IMNH, and any publicity in relation to these, enhances the integrity of the Museum. Sales items must be relevant to the mission of the Museum and must not compromise the quality of the collections.

## **VII. Communication and Distribution of the IMNH Code of Ethics**

The IMNH Code of Ethics will be communicated to all governors, employees, and volunteers of IMNH. This Code of Ethics should be explained to all new governors, employees, and volunteers of IMNH at the time of orientation. All governors, employees, and volunteers of IMNH shall have access to a copy of this Code of Ethics; it will be available on the IMNH website. All IMNH personnel will be required to sign an acknowledgment of receipt and understanding.

## **VIII. Review and Revision of the IMNH Code of Ethics**

All Museum policies and procedures in this document will be reviewed administratively at least once every ten (10) years, coinciding with reaccreditation, to ensure that they conform to prevailing standards of Museum management and that they reflect any changes at the Museum or at ISU since the last review. All revisions of policies and procedures must be approved by IMNH Director and the Vice President for Research of Idaho State University, and must be approved by the Idaho State Board of Education before they can be implemented.

## **Idaho Museum of Natural History Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding**

I have received and read a copy of the IMNH Code of Ethics. I understand this Code of Ethics and agree to follow its guidelines and principles. I understand that failure to adhere to the Code of Ethics will result in possible dismissal as a governor, staff member, or volunteer.

I understand and agree to follow all applicable existing and future policies of the Museum.

I understand that my agreement to comply with the Code of Ethics and other Museum policies does not constitute a contract of employment.

---

**Printed Name**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**