

## **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY NO.: 35**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: JUNE 8, 2021**

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA**

**AUTHORIZATION: THOMAS F. HARRIS, SECRETARY**

#### **I. POLICY**

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is fully committed to supporting the responsible use of social media as a means of informing the public of DNR's objectives, activities and accomplishments. Although DNR recognizes the role that social media plays in society today, employees should realize that the content of social media postings may have an adverse impact on DNR and its employees. For this reason, employees are encouraged to use this medium responsibly.

#### **II. PURPOSE**

This policy serves to identify expectations and provide guidance of a cautionary nature regarding department authorized and personal social media postings by DNR employees. The intent of this policy is not to address one particular form of social media but rather, social media in general terms since technology will outpace our ability to identify and address emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

#### **III. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all DNR employees and appointees, regardless of status.

#### **IV. STANDARDS FOR DEPARTMENT SANCTIONED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

DNR designates "authorized users" who are responsible for the creation, development, monitoring and overall management of the Department's social media sites and social media content. Authorized users must comply with the following expectations:

- Ensure that all postings and communications on DNR owned and controlled social media sites are in compliance with state, federal and local laws and regulations.

- Ensure that information, materials and communications posted on DNR social media sites are directly related to the mission, services and business objectives of the Department.
- Ensure that privileged and confidential information remains protected and is not posted on DNR social media sites.
- Ensure that accounts, profiles, pages or sites representing DNR are not created nor terminated without approval of the Press Secretary.
- Adhere to the standards of conduct, decorum and professionalism expected and required of all employees as representatives of the Department.
- Abide by all copyright, patent, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials on social media sites.
- Abide by political activity policies and related prohibitions as defined by law.

**NOTE:** Authorized users must be mindful that DNR websites and social media postings are subject to disclosure by subpoena and generally are publicly accessible under Title 44 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes (Louisiana's Public Records Act). As such, social media sites must be developed, managed and maintained in accordance with express law.

## **V. STANDARDS FOR PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Although free to express themselves as private citizens on personal social media sites, as public servants DNR employees are reminded that their social media postings may have a connection back to and affect their employment relationship with DNR. Furthermore, such postings may be personal in nature and not necessarily a matter of public concern. For this reason, employees should exercise caution in posting on personal social media sites since the content of their postings may not be protected as free speech by the First Amendment.

Employees are also reminded that postings on social media sites are widely available to the public and may be archived indefinitely, maintained by others, re-posted elsewhere and/or shared with others without notice or permission. Because of this, employees should give thought to and be cautious in their postings.

Employees must understand that they are personally accountable and responsible for their postings and content in using social media, and should

carefully read, fully understand and comply with the terms of use of any social media site. In addition, employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false or derogatory information that causes harm or damages the reputation of another.

Employees are required to comply with the following expectations in their personal use of social media:

- Employee postings shall be consistent with and not violative of state, federal or local laws regulating online activity.
- Employees are prohibited from posting or disseminating any information learned as a result of their employment that is privileged, confidential, sensitive or otherwise not authorized by DNR for disclosure. To avoid violations, the best practice is to refrain from posting information related to DNR; otherwise, employees should seek guidance from management prior to posting.
- Employees are prohibited, unless expressly authorized by DNR Administrative Policy No. 7 (External Communication), from posting and disseminating any information which expressly or impliedly asserts such to be the official view, opinion, policy, statement or position of DNR.
- Employees are prohibited from posting personally critical, degrading, derogatory, disparaging, discriminating or harassing comments, views, opinions or other such communications to or regarding their co-workers and supervisors.
- Employee postings shall be consistent with and not violative of existing DNR policies such as those prohibiting discrimination, sexual harassment, substance abuse, workplace violence, etc.
- Employees are prohibited from engaging in personal social media activities during work hours or via the use of DNR computers/services. Use of personal cell phones or other electronic devices to access personal social media sites should be limited to break periods.
- Employees are prohibited from using a DNR e-mail address when registering for or participating in social media.
- Employee postings shall abide by political activity policies and related prohibitions as defined by law.

**VI. REPORTING**

Any employee having knowledge of a posting or media site in violation of the provisions of this policy is encouraged to notify his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Director.

**VII. VIOLATIONS**

Disciplinary action, including the possibility of termination, will be imposed for violations of this policy, but only after a complete and thorough review of all available information and due consideration afforded the privacy and free speech rights of our employees.

**VIII. QUESTIONS**

Questions regarding this policy should be addressed to the Human Resources Division.

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**THOMAS F. HARRIS, SECRETARY**

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**INITIAL ISSUE DATE: 02/14**

**REVISION DATE: 05/15; 06/21**