


Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Internal Management Policies and Procedures (IMPP)		
	TITLE	IMPP
	SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND REGULATION	1.36
		EFFECTIVE DATE 12/19/2025
	APPLICABILITY All Staff	RESCINDS/AMENDS N/A
REFERENCES: <i>CONNICK V. MYERS</i> , 461 U.S. 138 (1983); <i>GARCETTI V. CEBALLOS</i> , 547 U.S. 410 (2006); FLORIDA STATUTE 119; IMPP 6.31; IMPP 6.34. AUTHORITY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR		
IMPP OWNER: OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS		

POLICY

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) utilizes multiple internet-based social media platforms to disseminate information and receive feedback from stakeholders. This social media presence must be well managed in order to provide the most accurate and timely information available. This document aims to provide policy guidance for social media usage for employees' professional use of social media on behalf of the FWC, as well as personal accounts. Social media activity reflects on the FWC and can impact the work environment, and, subject to applicable law, will not be exempt from this policy whether it occurred on an FWC account or a personal account.

For the purposes of this document, social media platforms include but are not limited to social media/business networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, Nextdoor, TikTok, Reddit, Indeed, SnapChat, etc.

This policy does not apply to the use of covert social media accounts by the Division of Law Enforcement and the Office of Inspector General.

1.36.1 PURPOSE

The FWC expects the expansion of internet-based social media platforms to continue, with new and far-reaching audiences taking part. This expansion provides opportunities for the FWC and its staff to communicate with stakeholders, each other, and the world. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for FWC employees to take full advantage of technologies while, at the same time, protecting the FWC and its employees by mitigating risks inherent in using such technologies. This policy is to ensure compliance with all state and federal laws pertaining to the distribution of information by a state agency within those platforms. Also, FWC employees shall reflect a neutral image of themselves and the FWC by maintaining standards for social media. Every person employed by the FWC is responsible for knowing and following the guidelines for social media use outlined here. Failure to comply with policies and procedures in this Internal Management Policies and Procedures (IMPP) may result in disciplinary action.

1.36.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all FWC employees regardless of their employment designation. It also applies to all activities conducted on internet-based social media platforms, whether personal or professional, and includes, but is not limited to, account creation, information release, media (pictures, videos, etc.) release, comments, and opinions. Included are blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

1.36.3 DEFINITIONS

Confidential Information: Information that has a specific statutory exemption or protection from the public record law. Confidential information may only be released to individuals or entities specifically listed in the relevant Florida Statutes or federal laws, or by court order.

Employees: Someone employed by the FWC full-time or part-time, whether as an FTE, OPS, CS, SMS, SES, or Regular Service and Occasional Service Volunteers. Additionally, for the purposes of this IMPP, the definition of employee includes any non-OPS temporary staff hired by the FWC who have access to FWC Information Technology (IT) resources, including contracted staff and contracted vendor staff.

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by individuals with administrator rights.

Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

1.36.4 APPLICATION

1. Social Media Use

- a. This policy applies to the professional use of social media on behalf of the FWC as well as personal use of social media by an employee of the agency.
- b. All employees are responsible for ensuring compliance with all FWC policies and procedures regarding social media use.
- c. All employees are responsible for ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations regarding social media use.
- d. IMPP 6.34.4 Employee Demeanor applies to use of social media.
- e. Employees are not to publish, post, or release any information that is confidential, exempt, by the FWC.
- f. All employees are responsible for compliance with terms and use agreements by the individual social media platforms.

2. FWC Official Accounts

- a. Only individuals authorized by the FWC may publish content to an agency or social media account.
- b. A coordinator should be assigned to any social media account representing the agency directly. The coordinator will be responsible for the posting and monitoring of the account.
- c. All assigned FWC social media account coordinators shall read and abide by "Guidelines for FWC's Social Media Coordinators," including all policies referenced.
- d. Any agency social media account that has not been approved via the approval process detailed in the "Guidelines for FWC's Social Media Coordinators" is subject to immediate termination.
- e. The number of social media accounts shall be set by the Office of Communications.
- f. All weekly social media schedules must be submitted to the FWC's Social Media Manager or designee for review and approval. All individual post content, on the submitted social schedule, is subject to review and approval by the Communications Director or FWC Social Media Manager before publishing.
- g. Employees shall monitor and evaluate, on a regular basis, the account activity (conversations, replies, etc.) of the agency account they have been assigned.
- h. When not using agency-created media, only stock photos from authorized providers/suppliers or media for which the agency has written authorization shall be used. Employees must not use media that is copyrighted or trademarked without the written permission of the owner. Credit for media content not owned by the FWC should be given across all FWC platforms.
- i. When published on agency-authorized platforms, media captured by FWC employees that is not FWC property should be credited as such: Photo by FWC Employee Name, FWC.
- j. Employees shall not use personally owned devices to manage official social media or social network activities.
- k. Employees shall not utilize FWC official accounts to post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any public record exempt from release pursuant to Florida State Statute(s), including photographs or videos, related to Commission activities, or work-related assignments, unless approved by the Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, or their Division/Office Director.

3. Employee Personal Accounts

- 1.** Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens while utilizing social media, so long as it is in accordance with IMPP 6.31 and IMPP 6.34.
- 2.** Employees are advised that their speech on social media and related activity may reflect upon their employment with the agency.
 - a.** The United States Supreme Court in their 2006 decision in the case of *Garcetti v. Ceballos* has held that speech made by public employees pursuant to their official duties is not protected by the First Amendment from employer discipline.
 - b.** Members shall not use social media to create, comment, disclose, post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information which ridicules, mocks, derides, disparages, or otherwise expresses bias against any race, sex, religion, or protected or any other class of individuals.
- 3.** Employees shall not post or otherwise disseminate any information which they have access to as a result of their employment. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a.** Any information that divulges the time, location, or nature of planned or ongoing enforcement or investigative operations.
 - b.** Any unpublished details about regional or site-specific projects or initiatives.
 - c.** Forwarding, quoting, or summarizing content from employee emails, internal reports, or official briefings that are not meant for public release.
 - d.** Information shared with the agency by partners or stakeholders under a confidentiality agreement or expectation.
- 4.** Employees shall not use social media to depict Commission uniforms, badges, patches, vehicles, or any other Commission graphic mark or emblem in any manner which reflects a lack of good moral character or may negatively affect the public's perception of the Commission.
- 5.** Grievances and/or negative comments on the internal operations of the Commission, or specific conduct of a Commission employee, are not protected by the First Amendment from employer discipline.
 - a.** The United States Supreme Court in their 1983 decision in the case of *Connick v. Myers* has held that speech made by public employees which affects the good order of the agency is not protected by the First Amendment from employer discipline.
- 6.** Unless authorized by the Office of Communications, employees shall not create social media accounts using their FWC email account.
- 7.** Employees should be aware that content and information they make available through social media may come to the attention of other FWC employees including FWC leadership. Employees should use their best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the FWC, its employees, or stakeholders.
- 8.** Subject to applicable law, online activity that violates the FWC's IMPPs or other policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to termination.

4. Use of FWC Resources

- a.** Unless authorized by a direct supervisor or necessary for work duties, social media sites and applications should not be accessed while utilizing agency resources.
- b.** Social media use may not interfere with employees' work duties.
- c.** Employees shall not utilize agency equipment to participate in any personal social media networking activities. Media captured during FWC work hours are considered FWC property and should not be posted to personal accounts. It is strongly recommended that employees do not post photos and videos taken of work activities to individual personal accounts without the express permission of their Division/Office supervisor.

5. Recommended Precautions:

- a.** When using social media, employees shall be aware that their speech becomes part of the public domain. Social media is utilized by private citizens, public officials, government, businesses, media, defense attorneys, criminals, etc. Content and/or information posted using social media has been used to discipline employees and impeach courtroom testimony.
- b.** As a matter of personal safety, and in applicable circumstances, to foster protection provided under Florida Statutes Chapter 119, it is recommended that employees not intentionally use a photo of themselves in uniform or wearing other agency insignia as a profile photograph.
- c.** Employees should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation or criminal prosecution for:
 - i.** Publishing or posting false information which harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization.
 - ii.** Publishing or posting private facts and/or personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, which is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person.
 - iii.** Using another person's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission.
 - iv.** Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- d.** Employees should be aware that privacy settings and social media security features are constantly changing and should never assume that personal information which is disclosed, posted, transmitted, or otherwise disseminated using social media is protected and private.

- e. It is recommended that an employee's personal account settings ensure the greatest amount of privacy when the employee has chosen to affiliate with the agency on personal social media.
- f. For safety and security reasons, employees should exercise caution when disclosing their employment with the agency on personal social media.

6. Public Access to Records/Sunshine Law

- a. All social media users should be aware of Florida's Public Records and Government in the Sunshine laws.
- b. Employees should be aware that information from private personal accounts (i.e., posting, photos, video) could be subject to Florida's Public Records law.
 - i. Any information related to an employee's work may be subject to Florida's Public Records law, even if located on their personal account.
 - ii. Work related activities posted on an employee's personal account will be held to the State of Florida record retention schedules. Retention schedules vary based on the content of the document.
 - iii. Records retention requirements must be followed for all approved FWC social media accounts. Reference the current [Social Media Comment Policy](#) for the FWC's reserved rights to report, hide, or remove submissions. FWC Social Media Coordinators must ensure that public records created or received by the FWC, including records posted on or received by social media or social networking sites, are retained in accordance with the State of Florida's record retention schedules and are made available to the public in response to public record requests. Records and information posted on social media or social networking sites will have different retention schedules based on content. If no existing retention schedule covers the records, a new records retention schedule may need to be created. For assistance, contact the FWC's Records Management Liaison Officer in the Office of General Counsel. Each Division, Office, or employee posting to social media or social networking sites shall be responsible for the retention of the records or information posted.
 - iv. If utilizing personal technology resources, such as smartphones and cameras, to create content for social media pages, the person creating the media should be aware that their technology resources may then become subject to Florida's Public Records law. Use agency-provided resources when available i.e. cameras, smartphone, GoPro, etc.

7. Deriving personal benefit from social media content.

- a. Employees shall not use content acquired while accessing areas or opportunities provided to them due to their employment with the FWC for profit.

FORMS	
FORM NUMBER	FORM TITLE
N/A	N/A

Approved: Roger A. Young
Roger A. Young, Executive Director or Designee

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