

Conference Ombuds Charter

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Partners in the Outdoors Conference

I. INTRODUCTION

To support the Colorado Parks and Wildlife's commitment to ensuring that its annual Partners in the Outdoors Conference is safe and welcoming for all, consistent with the principles outlined in its Values and Participant Commitments, Colorado Parks and Wildlife will provide organizational conference ombuds services in connection with its Conference taking place in Colorado Springs, Colorado, during April 26-29, 2026, ("Conference Ombuds Program"). The goal is to make the conference as inclusive and accessible as possible for attendees, staff, presenters, exhibitors, and anyone participating in the Partners in the Outdoors Conference, regardless of gender, sexual orientation/identity, race/ethnicity, religion, employment status, or field status. In addition, Colorado Parks and Wildlife seeks to improve conduct and climate at future conferences by using aggregate data and feedback from the ombuds.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS

The conference ombuds resource is designed to be an independent, impartial, off-the-record, and confidential channel for conference attendees, staff, presenters, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in the Partners in the Outdoors Conference to discuss any issues they may have. The ombuds selected to provide these services ("Conference ombuds" or "Ombuds") will be available to provide information confidentially and will provide a safe place for people to discuss such issues as safety, actions from overly-friendliness to harassment, micro-aggressions, free speech, integrity, privacy, conflicts of interest (including accessibility, lodging, and food), alcohol consumption and conference cliques. The Ombuds is a resource for informally discussing any of these or other conference-related concerns and for helping inquirers develop options, create paths for self-advocacy, and make informed choices about the best path forward.

This Charter sets forth the operating principles under which the conference ombuds Program will operate and reflects Colorado Parks and Wildlife's commitment to the conference ombuds and to the role of this position.

III. STANDARDS OF OPERATION

The conference ombuds for the Partners in the Outdoors Conference is a member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and shall adhere to IOA's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in performing ombuds services for the conference. See, www.ombudsassociation.org/standards-of-practice-code-of-ethics.

These tenets require organizational ombuds programs to be independent, impartial, informal, and confidential:

1. Independence

The conference ombuds is an independent contractor and not a Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff member. The Ombuds functions outside existing administrative structures pursuant to a Contract between MWI and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

2. Impartiality

As an impartial third-party, the Ombuds is a resource for an equitable and fair process, and the fair administration of the process. The Ombuds does not, however, provide legal or other kinds of advocacy or enforce the Values and Participant Commitments. The conference ombuds does not render services or become involved in any matter that would be a conflict of interest for the conference ombuds to do so.

3. Informality

The conference ombuds provides a means for off-the-record discussions of concern. The Ombuds is empowered to provide only informal assistance and does not conduct investigations, make or override decisions, determine policy, testify or participate in formal or administrative proceedings with respect to confidential communications, provide legal advice, or accept legal notice of claims against Colorado Parks and Wildlife or any other organization, entity, or person. For those wishing to assert claims or engage in on-the-record communications, the conference ombuds can identify appropriate formal channels so individuals can make informed choices about which process is best for them to pursue.

4. Confidentiality

Communications with the conference ombuds are confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. This principle of confidentiality helps the conference ombuds provide a safe place for conference attendees, staff, presenters, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in the Partners in the Outdoors Conference to voice concerns, evaluate issues, and identify options for possible further action. The conference ombuds is a purely voluntary resource. No one is required to use it, but those who do will be deemed to have agreed to respect and abide by the above principles on which

it was created and not to call the Ombuds to testify or produce documents related to confidential communications in any administrative or legal proceeding. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has also agreed not to call upon or attempt to have the conference ombuds disclose confidential communications or to testify or produce documents relating to confidential communications in any administrative or legal proceeding. Consistent with the International Ombudsman Association Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the only exceptions to this confidentiality principle are: (a) when, during the course of communications with the conference ombuds, an inquirer gives the Ombuds permission to make a disclosure, and the Ombuds agrees it is appropriate to do so, or (b) when the conference ombuds determines that there is an imminent threat of serious harm.

The Colorado Open Records Act requires that all state contracts be available to the public.

IV. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The conference ombuds will be available to consult with conference attendees, staff, presenters, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in the Partners in the Outdoors Conference concerning any conference-related issues. The conference ombuds will be available onsite from April 26-29, 2026. Conference attendees, staff, and exhibitors will be advised how to contact the Ombuds, and the times and places where the Ombuds may be found will be posted online.

As an impartial third party, the Ombuds is an advocate for a fair and equitable process. The Ombuds does not, however, provide legal or other kinds of advocacy or enforce the Values and Participant Commitments.

The conference ombuds has been authorized to continue assisting inquirers after the conference for a limited period when continuing consultation has not yet been concluded or when an issue is raised within a reasonable time after the conference.

V. ACCOUNTABILITY

The conference ombuds reports to the Statewide Partnership Coordinator. The Ombuds may also meet with other members of Colorado Parks and Wildlife's executive management team and make them aware of any systemic issues or trends. By doing so, the ombuds may help the organization address identified or potential problems, improve the climate of future conferences, or improve its policies and practices. Even when raising issues to executive management team members, the conference ombuds will protect the confidentiality of those using the ombuds' services.

VI. RECORD-KEEPING

The Ombuds provides only informal assistance. Although informal notes may be temporarily created only as needed, the Ombuds does not retain permanent records containing personally identifiable information. Any post-conference reporting to executive management team members will contain only aggregate data and the ombuds insights and observations into the types of issues raised.

VII. INQUIRY ABOUT THE USE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS IS INAPPROPRIATE; RETALIATION FOR DOING SO IS PROHIBITED

Colorado Parks and Wildlife supports efforts to manage and resolve conflicts informally to preserve collegial and effective working relationships and avoid the time and expense required for formal proceedings or litigation. Because the conference ombuds Program is intended to be a confidential resource, it is not appropriate for anyone at Colorado Parks and Wildlife to inquire about an individual's use of the conference ombuds Program or any communication that may have occurred there. Furthermore, discouraging or preventing eligible visitors from using the conference ombuds Program is inappropriate because it is contrary to the organization's intent to provide a conference ombuds as a resource for early and informal management and resolution of conflicts.

While the organization supports and encourages the use of the Conference Ombuds Program for conflict management, an individual's use of the Ombuds Office must always be entirely voluntary. It is acceptable to remind individuals that the conference ombuds Program is available as an option or a resource. However, no one may be ordered or required to visit the Ombuds, nor may an individual be punished for not visiting the conference ombuds Program.

All attendees, staff, presenters, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in the Partners in the Outdoors Conference shall have the right to consult the conference ombuds without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against any attendee or staff for consulting with the conference ombuds or against the Ombuds for actions within the legitimate scope of her duties as described in the Charter is prohibited.

VIII. PROCEDURE FOR REVISION OR REVOCATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Charter remains in effect unless otherwise revoked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and such revocation shall be provided in writing to MWI's Director of Ombuds Services. Any revision to this Charter shall be jointly agreed to in writing by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Ombuds representatives from MWI and shall be appended to this document.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Signed: **Anna Stern** Digitally signed
by Anna Stern
Date: 2026.03.24
13:44:46 -06'00'

Name: **Anna Stern**

Title: **CPW Purchasing Agent**

Date: **3/24/2026**

Duly Authorized Hereunto

MWI

Signed: 

Name: Charles P. Doran

Title: Executive Director

Date: 03/25/2026

Duly Authorized Hereunto