Ethical Conduct for Research

A Code of Scientific Ethics

Within the Forest Service, as in many other research organizations, there has been a general awareness of scientific ethics but no formal policy or guidelines that encouraged ethical practices. There were no formal guidelines to help identify unethical practices that threatened fairness, accuracy, and integrity in the conduct of science, nor was there any special process for handling allegations of research misconduct within the organization. To fill this void, the Forest Service completed the development of a code of ethical conduct for scientific research and development. The code was adopted by the Forest Service research organization at the end of 1999. The agency is expected to issue a formal policy regarding its use later in 2000.

The Code of Scientific Ethics for Forest Service Research and Development applies specifically to the conduct of scientific investigation and reporting. The code is intended to provide consistent guidance to all individuals who participate in agency-sponsored research and development. The Forest Service code was developed by a team of scientists and professionals from within the Forest Service research organization over a three-year period and relies heavily on the code adopted by the USDA Agricultural Research Service (Agricultural Research Service 1999).

The Need for a Code

The authors believe that in general, Forest Service research scientists understand science ethics and behave in accordance with the generally accepted principles of ethical conduct in science (National Academy of Sciences 1995; Sigma Xi 1999). Scientific misconduct is rare within the agency, but it does occur.

Science ethics has not been a major emphasis area in science education programs. By the completion of postsec-

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32 July 2000
I dedicate myself to the pursuit, promotion, and advancement of scientific truth. I will conduct, manage, judge, and report scientific research honestly, thoroughly, and without conflict of interest. I will prevent abuse of all resources entrusted to me and endeavor to treat human and animal subjects humanely, following established guidelines where they are available. I will not willfully hinder the research of others nor engage in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or other professional misconduct. I will welcome constructive criticism of my personal scientific research and offer the same to my colleagues in a manner that fosters mutual respect amid objective scientific debate. I will recognize past and present contributors to my research and will neither accept nor assume unauthorized and unwarranted credit for another's accomplishments. I will claim authorship for a research product only if I am willing to be held responsible for both the interpretation of the data and the conclusions as presented. I will claim authorship for a research product only if I have made a major intellectual contribution (as part of conception, design, data collection, data analysis, or interpretation) and made significant contributions to its preparation (write, review, or edit). I will not publish or use original ideas, research data, or unpublished findings of others without written approval. I will refrain from duplicative publication of the same research findings as original. I will show appropriate diligence toward preserving and maintaining resources such as data records that are entrusted to me. Proposed federal policy on research misconduct to protect the integrity of the research record. Federal Register, October 13.


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