

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

Contents

COUNCIL CHARTER..... 1
 Council Purpose 1
 Council Structure and Powers..... 1
 Council Goals..... 1
COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP 2
 Chapter Representation..... 2
 Council Member Duties and Expectations..... 2
COUNCIL OFFICERS 3
 Council Chair 3
 Council Vice Chair 4
 Council Secretary 4
OFFICER ELECTIONS 4
 Nominations..... 4
 Nominating and Elections Schedule 5
 Election Voting 5
 Council Vacancies..... 5
COUNCIL OPERATIONS..... 6
 Communication and Access 6
 Council Subcommittees 6
 Meetings 7
 Motions and Voting 7
 Orientation and Training..... 8
 Changes to Council Guidelines..... 8

NOTES:

This Council of Chapters Guidance document will replace the current Council section of the FNPS Handbook. Each capitalized heading will be a subheading under the Council of Chapters tab. The Council website will include the above table of contents (without page numbers) with each heading and subheading linked to the relevant section of the Handbook.

Links in green [square brackets] are not functional yet as the linked document is not gathered/located in a centralized location.

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

COUNCIL CHARTER

Council Purpose

“The purpose of the Council (of Chapters) is to facilitate communication among the chapters and with the Board. It serves as a conduit of information that supports and strengthens the FNPS Chapters in their pursuit of the FNPS mission, and identifies and elevates local and regional issues and shares solutions throughout the Society.”¹

Council Structure and Powers

The Council of Chapters (Council) was created in April 2014 by a vote of the general membership of the Florida Native Plant Society that reorganized the Society and adopted new Bylaws. Prior to the 2014 reorganization, one Chapter Representative from each Chapter statewide sat as a Director on the FNPS Board. Since reducing the size of the Board was a significant goal of reorganization, the Council of Chapters was created to represent the Chapters on the FNPS Board.

The Council of Chapters is like a Board Committee in its basic relationship to the FNPS Board. The Council works with and for the whole Society organization, under the same Bylaws, and aligned with policies and initiatives established for the whole organization. However, its focus may be different from the Board’s, reflecting the interests of the Chapters.

The powers of the Council of Chapters are specified by the FNPS Board. Every action taken by the Council must adhere to and support the bylaws and mission of the Florida Native Plant Society.

- The Council shall have the powers that are reasonably necessary to achieve its goals, not otherwise restricted by the [FNPS bylaws](#).
- Powers outside the scope of the goals specified by the FNPS Board of Directors must be approved by the FNPS Board of Directors
- To develop and implement project initiatives, approval of the FNPS Board of Directors is required after the Council provides an estimated budget of project cost (including staff, contractor, and volunteer time), work plan, and a timeline for completion of any proposed project or initiative.

Council Goals

The goals of the Council of Chapters are:

- Support the FNPS mission: the preservation, conservation and restoration of the native plants and plant communities of Florida.
- Ensure that all Chapters are represented and have a voice.
- Provide Chapter input, including ideas and concerns, to the Society and FNPS Board.

¹ Council Purpose, approved by the FNPS Board, February 8,2020

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

- Disseminate news from the Society and FNPS Board so that Chapter members can stay apprised of key Society actions and Committee initiatives.
- Facilitate the sharing of news, ideas, knowledge, and successful strategies between and among Chapters.
- Assist Chapter Representatives to help their Chapters stay in compliance with bylaws, administrative issues, adherence to deadlines, etc.
- Produce or collect and maintain informative resources and practical tools (e.g., templates or guidelines on recruiting members, conducting plant sales, finding meeting speakers, engaging with local elected officials, submitting taxes, etc.) to help Chapters.
- Recognize Chapter success and work with FNPS staff to ensure that Chapters receive recognition for achievements and mission-related programs.
- Enable communications, collaborations and partnerships between regional groups of Chapters.
- Promote and advance initiatives to assist chapters in their mission to foster the growth and success of their Chapters and the Society.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Chapter Representation

The Council of Chapters consists of a representative from each Chapter. These Chapter Representatives collectively comprise Council membership.

Each FNPS Chapter may select a Chapter Representative (Representative) in any manner consistent with their Bylaws and procedures.

A majority of Chapter Representatives may vote to censure a Representative up to and including a request for resignation for abuse toward others, disruption of the group process, or egregious behavior bringing discredit to the Council or FNPS.

Council Member Duties and Expectations

The Chapter Representative is the “information highway” between Chapter members and FNPS – and between FNPS and Chapter members.

Chapter Representatives are expected to:

- Place a high priority on attending all meetings of the Council of Chapters to represent and vote for their Chapter’s interest.
 - Ensure their chapter is represented in a minimum of 4 online or in-person meetings per year.
 - Recruit a proxy if unable to attend a meeting.
- Prepare to contribute to the discussion of any issues and business addressed at meetings by reviewing the agenda and any background materials posted on the Forum and by gathering information from their Chapter (including achievements, successful

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

strategies, challenges, outreach, conservation activities, landscaping projects, LMR participation, advocacy, grants and fundraising, collaboration and partnerships, and notable events) in advance of the meeting.

- Report to their Chapter to keep their local chapter members abreast of FNPS and Council meeting discussions, initiatives, programming, events, successful strategies shared by other Chapters, availability of new materials, new policies, reminders about administrative deadlines, and other relevant information.
- Familiarize themselves with the FNPS and Council resources available to assist Chapters and Representatives.
- Submit reports and respond to polls requested by the Council Officers. Report requests and polls may include questions about Chapter progress, successes and challenges, procedures, compliance, needs or other information needed for the creation of meeting agendas and formulation or successful completion of Council initiatives.
- Participate in one or more subcommittees, if feasible, to help further Council work and initiatives.
- Agree to resign their position if they become unable to carry out the responsibilities of Chapter Representative.
- Train their successor.

COUNCIL OFFICERS

The Council Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary collectively comprise the Council Officers.

Officers must be current or past Chapter Representatives.

Council Chair

The Council Chair:

- Represents the Council on the FNPS Board of Directors and FNPS Board Executive Committee to provide an essential link between the Council and FNPS.
- Prepares, with input from the Council and Council Officers, and submits Council reports [Report Guidelines] to the FNPS Board of Directors and FNPS Executive Committee.
- Reports Society and FNPS Board news to Council members.
- Sets the Council meeting agenda and ensures it is posted or sent to the Chapter Representatives.
- Leads Council meetings to create and maintain a pleasant and productive meeting environment.
- Develops strategies and assigns Council or other resources to further the Council goals.
- Monitors and ensures achievement of Council agendas and compliance with Board bylaws.
- Trains his/her successor.

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

Council Vice Chair

- Assists the Council Chair.
- Acts on behalf of the Council Chair in his/her absence.
- Heads the Orientation and Training subcommittee and schedules and organizes Chapter Representative orientation and training.
- Trains his/her successor.

Council Secretary

- Assists the Council Chair as requested, including:
 - Suggesting agenda items based on previous meeting unfinished business;
 - Emailing meeting instructions and agendas prior to all full Council meetings;
 - Starting online meetings.; and
 - Disseminating polls and report requests.
- Records minutes (including all motions and votes) of all full Council meetings and publishes a timely record on the Council website, with email, Forum, and Facebook notifications.
- Keeps track of full Council meeting attendance and updates attendance spreadsheet on Google Drive.
- Makes or requests updates and revisions to the Council website.
- Updates instructions and provides assistance to facilitate the use of all adopted communication.
- Monitors, records, and publishes poll and reporting results.
- Posts and updates Council entries to the FNPS Calendar.
- Keeps a record of subcommittee heads and their members.
- Heads the Administration subcommittee and ensures an annual review of the Council Guidelines is conducted and recommendations for revision are referred to the Council for approval.
- Trains his/her successor.

OFFICER ELECTIONS

Election of Council Officers will be held annually in March.

- The Chair will be elected in odd years
- The Vice Chair and Secretary will be elected in even years.

Nominations

The Council Chair will appoint at least three Chapter Representatives or other FNPS members in good standing to a nominating committee, whose duty shall be to propose a slate of candidates.

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

The nominating committee will propose at least one, but preferably more than one candidate for each office. No member of the nominating committee may be nominated for an office. No person may be nominated without that person's consent.

Nominating and Elections Schedule

The following schedule will be adhered to for Officer nominations and elections:

- November – Appoint nominating committee.
- January – Nominating committee solicits candidates at full Council meeting and sends email to Chapter Representatives and Chapter Presidents to solicit additional candidates and invite self-nomination.
- February 8 – Nominations close.
- February 15 – Deadline for submittal to Sabal Minor (for March 1 issue) for publication of all nominees and a brief summary of the Council election process [[Sample election Notice](#)].
- March 1 – Publish nominees and election process on the Council website. Email nominee and election process information to all Council members [[Sample Email Election Announcement](#)].
- March 15 – Open voting.
- March 30 – Close voting.
- April 8 – Announce voting results by email to the FNPS Board, Chapter Presidents, and Chapter Representatives.
- Mid-April to Mid-May – Officer-elect orientation and training.
- Mid-May (concurrent with Annual Meeting) – New officers take office.

Election Voting

Voting for Council officers will be conducted online using the FNPS Forum.

A separate vote will be taken for each Office (Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary). The online ballot will list all candidates for a particular office (unopposed candidates will be listed as the only choice) with voters only permitted to vote for one candidate.

The highest number of votes from the Chapter Representatives who cast votes will determine the election winner; a tie for highest vote requires a runoff vote. An unopposed candidate will be elected regardless of the number of votes cast.

Council Vacancies

Vacancies in Council Officers will be filled by appointment by the remaining Officer(s) or through an interim online election for the vacant office, conducted in compliance with regular voting guidelines.

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

COUNCIL OPERATIONS

Communication and Access

The Council will use multiple means of online communication and to disseminate information, each with a slightly different purpose. Links and instructions to obtain logins for closed or restricted sites will be posted on the Council of Chapters Website.

- [Council of Chapters Website](#) - open to view by everyone inside and outside of the Society – contains Council calendar, contacts, meeting minutes, and resources.
- [FNPS Forum](#) Council of Chapters section - open to view by everyone inside and outside of the Society – used for announcements, election voting, and public discussions.
- [FNPS Council of Chapters Facebook](#) page - a "closed group" for Chapter Representatives - used communicate informally with each other.
- [Council of Chapters Google Drive](#) – accessible only by invitation - used for collaborative document development and archiving.
- [FNPS Website](#) – private section accessible only with a Chapter login – provides email lists and resources.

Email, virtual meeting service providers, polling software, and other communications tools will be used for communications, meetings and gathering information and opinions.

Council Subcommittees

The Council, with agreement of the Officers, will create subcommittees to advance the work and initiatives of the Council without prolonging or diluting full Council meeting focus on overall strategies and communication.

Council Subcommittees will include:

- Standing subcommittees for ongoing Council business (including Administration and Orientation and Training). All standing subcommittees will be headed by a Council Officer.
- Regional groups will be encouraged to communicate, cooperate, and coordinate activities and share materials for their mutual benefit among Chapters in proximity. Regional activities may take many different forms based on the needs and goals of the participating Chapters. Regional groups will operate as Council subcommittees.
- Ad-hoc subcommittees to conduct research and craft recommendations on Council issues or develop and implement Council initiatives. Ad-hoc subcommittees will typically go out of existence upon completion of a project.

All subcommittees will have a head or primary point of contact and identify this person to the Council Secretary. Heads of all standing and ad-hoc subcommittees will be responsible for scheduling meetings, reporting progress, and forwarding recommendations for Council voting or action.

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

Subcommittees may adopt their own procedural rules and meeting format(s) subject to state laws, FNPS Bylaws, and Council guidelines.

Best Practice: Subcommittees (including regional groups) whose purpose or initiatives overlap with the purview of other FNPS committees should coordinate with the Chair of those committees.

Subcommittees will prepare reports [[link to Board Report Template](#)] and recommendations to the Council.

Best Practice: Submit a final report and recommendation and, at a minimum, an annual progress report.

Subcommittee recommendations will be presented and voted on at a full Council meeting and either approved or disapproved. If disapproved, a recommendation shall be returned to the subcommittee for further study and brought up again at a future Council meeting.

Meetings

The full Council will meet regularly to ensure timely communication and e. Subcommittees will meet as needed.

A tentative schedule for all regular meetings of the full Council (live or online) will be scheduled one year in advance on the Council calendar. One meeting will be scheduled in January to solicit officer nominations. Four meetings will be scheduled approximately 1 month prior to FNPS Board meetings to discuss and prepare Council requests and reports for the Board. Up to seven additional full Council meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the Council Chair.

Best practice: Confirm, cancel or reschedule full Council meetings at least one month in advance.

Subcommittee meetings (live and online) will be scheduled in advance to give members sufficient notice. Advance notice will depend on the type of meeting (in person or online) and the need for prompt action.

Best Practice: Only in unusually urgent cases will less than one week be sufficient notice.

Meeting invitations including directions and agendas for regular meetings of the full Council will be emailed prior to the meeting.

Best Practice: Distribute directions, agendas and backup documents at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting.

All meetings will be posted on the Council calendar by the Council Secretary.

Motions and Voting

Voting, except for elections, may be conducted by voice or online using polling software.

FNPS Council of Chapters

FNPS HANDBOOK - COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS GUIDANCE

Any Council member may make a motion (e.g., to approve work product or initiate action). A vote will be called after the motion is seconded and discussed. A simple majority of the Council members casting votes will determine motion approval or rejection.

Orientation and Training

Within a month of joining the Council, Chapter Representatives will receive orientation to facilitate their use of all adopted communications and obtaining necessary logins to access online Council sites and resources.

Annually, a training session will be conducted that includes, at a minimum, and highlights recent changes to:

- Council of Chapters Website
- Communications access – FNPS Website, FNPS Forum, Council of Chapters Facebook, Council of Chapters Google Drive
- FNPS Handbook – Council of Chapters Guidance
- FNPS Bylaws and Policies
- Chapter Representative expectations
- Chapter Responsibilities
 - Ensure Chapter Bylaws are not in conflict with FNPS bylaws
 - Ensure FNPS Executive Director is in receipt of Chapter bylaw changes
 - Ensure each Chapter is reporting volunteer hours
- Council of Chapters resources and educational materials (toolbox)
- Support (resources) provided to Chapters by FNPS
- Chapter Representative Reports

Orientation and training materials will be posted on the Council Website [\[Link to Website page\]](#) and kept current by the Orientation and Training Subcommittee.

Changes to Council Guidelines

The Council has the right to vote to establish, remove, or revise any guideline as long as it is not in conflict with FNPS Bylaws.

The Council Administration Subcommittee will review the Council Guidelines annually and make recommendations for affirmation or revision to the Council at the January full Council meeting.

Any Council member (Chapter Representative) may make suggestions to the Administration Subcommittee for improvements to the guidelines. The subcommittee will review and prepare and present a recommendation to the full Council for a vote.

Changes to the Council of Chapter Guidelines, after approval of the Council, will be forwarded to the FNPS Board for review and updating of the FNPS Handbook.