

Policy C-7002: Scientific Integrity

Approved by the full Commission on March 21, 2025

Purpose: This policy describes expectations of Commissioners and agency staff when conducting, managing, applying, and communicating scientific findings and activities. The policy describes behaviors that ensure scientific process and findings that inform decisions are credible, transparent, and unbiased. Though this policy does not intend to describe decision making, the Commission recognizes its obligation and shared commitment to the tribes in resource management.

The following is adapted from the National Science Foundation statement on Scientific Integrity (<https://new.nsf.gov/policies/scientific-integrity#what-is-scientific-integrity-877>).

Definitions:

Ethical behavior (conduct) refers to activities that reflect norms, such as honesty, lawfulness, equity, and professionalism, for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Inclusivity refers to the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of participants of all backgrounds.

Objectivity refers to the quality of being unbiased, honest, and impartial.

Professional practices refer to conducting oneself with qualities that are characterized by skill, competence, ethics, and courtesy.

Scientific activities refer to activities that involve the application of well-accepted scientific methods and theories in a systematic manner, and includes, but is not limited to, data collection, inventorying, monitoring, statistical analysis, surveying, observations, experimentation, interpretation, study, research, integration, economic analysis, forecasting, predictive analytics, modeling, simulation, technology development, scientific assessment, informing decision-making.¹

Transparency refers to ensuring all relevant data and information² used to inform a decision made or action taken is visible, accessible, and consumable by affected or interested parties, to the extent allowable by law.

Commissioners and agency staff commit to adopting and acting in accordance with the principles of Scientific Integrity:

Scientific integrity is the adherence to professional practices, ethical behavior and the principles of honesty and objectivity when conducting, managing, using the results of and communicating about science and scientific activities. Inclusivity, transparency and protection from inappropriate influence are hallmarks of scientific integrity. (<https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2024/nsf24007/nsf24007.pdf>)

Scientific integrity is a model of behavior, and a series of practices grounded in ethical principles and professional standards. It focuses on how science is conducted and communicated, ensuring that the process and findings are credible, transparent, and unbiased.

As a model of behavior, scientific integrity means that individual scientists, institutions, and policymakers uphold these principles in how they gather, analyze, and present information, while fostering an environment where trust in science is built through ethical conduct.

¹ Includes adaptive management to test if results are meeting expectations.

² We interpret that phrase “relevant data and information” to include “what we do not know” or our uncertainty.