

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for your Conservation Enforcement Program

A Step-by-step Guide for Developing Effective SOPs for Conservation Enforcement Programs¹

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Introduction to SOPs:

What are SOPs and why are they useful?

Written Standard Operating Procedures, or SOPs, define the ways regular activities are to be performed. They are important for the smooth and efficient operation of your program, agency, or department. Clear SOPs help to ensure that critical processes and responsibilities related to conservation law enforcement activities are routinely followed, that proper action is taken, and that Conservation Officers act in a safe and professional manner.

The purpose of the written Standard Operating Procedure manual is to clearly document and explain the mission, organization, policies and procedures to all staff, supervisors, and administrators. *Policies* are broadly stated principles and values intended to guide members in the performance of their duties. *Procedures* are methods of performing activities to achieve an objective. Procedures may be general or specific in nature. It is important that each

¹ This document is one of a series of practical guides designed to assist marine conservation programs and practitioners in planning, building, and implementing effective conservation compliance and enforcement action. These elements, along with other available materials, are intended to help local communities, stakeholders, government agencies and other conservation practitioners work together to maintain natural resources, biodiversity, and food security across Micronesian and other Pacific islands. For more information, please visit the Pacific Island Managed and Protected Area Community website at <http://www.pimpac.org>.

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Conservation Officer shall be familiar with the Standard Operating Procedures Manual of their department or agency and adhere to its directives.

SOPs do not and cannot address every situation that a staff member may encounter in the performance of his/her law enforcement duties. If a member encounters a situation that is not covered by policy, procedure or training, the member shall be expected to exercise sound judgment and act in accordance with the Department's Mission Statement and Core Values. There may be times when it is necessary for a member to take action that may not fully comply with a stated policy or procedure. In such situations, the member shall be required to justify the deviation from stated policy or procedure.

About this Guide

This guide is intended to assist government conservation and resource management agencies identify a process for developing good SOPs within its conservation law enforcement program. As such, it does not provide particular suggestions or recommendations about specific SOPs. However, the guide does present a series of steps for a program to work through as it considers new procedures or revisions to existing SOPs.

Suggested Steps for Developing Effective SOPs:

STEP 1.

Describe various scenarios that require a single or series of responses from a Conservation Officer. In a small group, select an individual scenario to discuss what you would do as a best-practice for the particular situation or event. After going through all selected scenarios, present your deliberations and findings for recommended SOPs back to the larger group. For each scenario, recommended SOPs are discussed and critiqued, with additional suggestions added.

STEP 2.

It may be likely that a scenario includes more than one particular SOP (e.g., an SOP for responding to a reported violation, and another to address handling of evidence). In these cases, group all SOPs into categories as appropriate.

Suggested SOP Categories:

1. Organization Structure/Chain of Command
2. Officer Integrity, Conduct, and Appearance
3. Safety

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4. Addressing Violations
5. Equipment Operation and Maintenance
6. Orientation and Training
7. Other

STEP 3.

After your list of SOPs has been generated, ask if there are policies or procedures missing that would address issues particular to your program. Add these topics along with specific recommended standard procedures to the existing list of SOPs.

STEP 4.

Inquire if any of the procedures or operations listed have associated legal requirements. If so, seek appropriate advice from legal counsel or the Attorney General on if/how requirements can be fulfilled at your program's enforcement (authorization) level. For example, an SOP addressing the detainment and treatment of suspected violators, or the liquidation of confiscated equipment, or gear.

STEP 5.

Refer to existing SOPs from similar operations that you know of. Use these as a starting point for your SOP, or to compare against once your draft SOP is complete.

STEP 6.

Add particulars related to your program's specific context to your draft SOPs (for example, how your particular program addresses maintenance issues for the equipment it operates, or how violations are dealt with by traditional authorities).

STEP 7.

Taking all the information that you have collected and advice that you have received, finalize your draft SOP in simple language that your staff will understand. Include: Definitions / Glossary / Index so that terms will be clarified and used with consistency.

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The table below is an example of a header that can be used with each page containing a SOP description:

Conservation Law Department	
Standard Operating Procedures	SOP Number: 1.4
Chapter: Departmental Organization	Effective Date: 02/18/04 Prv. Rev. Date: 05/10/09 Revised Date: 01/24/11
Subject: Training	Accreditation Standards:

STEP 8.

Share your draft SOP with your Supervisors, Executive, Council, Board, Officers, etc. and with staff for their review and additional input.

STEP 9.

Finalize your SOP through formal adoption and approval (what ever process that might follow). These SOP should receive a version number and date, and are not be modified unless with formal approval, and which at that time will receive a new version number and date.

STEP 10.

Publish the SOPs in a manual so that all staff and relevant government offices have readily available copies. Include mission statement of unit/division/department.

STEP 11.

Inform and train existing and new staff in the SOPs.

STEP 12.

Receive regular feedback on how to make the SOPs themselves or the SOP training more effective.

STEP 13.

Incorporate any changes into the next edition of the SOP manual with a unique version number and date.