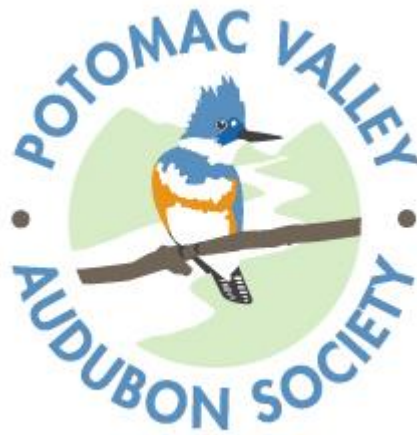


# **Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS)**

## **Employee Handbook**



**March 2023**

Adopted by PVAS Board of Directors March 2, 2023

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# 1. Introduction for New and Current Employees

## Purpose of the Employee Handbook

The Employee Handbook introduces new employees to the Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS), and it serves as a resource for current employees and the Board of Directors. The handbook describes benefits and PVAS policies and practices that govern the workplace. It also sets expectations for employees and management with the aim of fostering healthy management-employee relationships.

## Background Information on PVAS

PVAS was organized in 1982 as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. We serve Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan counties in West Virginia and Washington County, Maryland. PVAS offers a wide variety of educational programs for children, adults, and families. Our goal is to get people of all ages outside to explore and learn about the natural world. We value biodiversity in nature, and we recognize the importance of cultural diversity across our organization. Diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility are essential to our community and to our mission to preserve and enjoy the natural world through education and action.

PVAS manages over 500 acres of land on four nature preserves in West Virginia. These are the

- Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County
- Eidolon Preserve in Morgan County

- Stauffer's Marsh Preserve in Berkeley County
- Yankauer Preserve in Berkeley County

Many of the PVAS programs are implemented at these preserves.

## **PVAS Mission**

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS) is *people dedicated to preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action.*

## **2. Working at PVAS**

Employees at PVAS are engaged in a wide variety of programs and activities that enable PVAS to achieve its mission. These activities support preserving the environment; restoring habitat; educating children, families, and adults about nature and conservation; and helping PVAS and community members enjoy the natural world. Employees work closely with PVAS members and volunteers on important programmatic and fundraising endeavors. Innovation, flexibility, and self-motivation are valued in the work done at PVAS.

### **At-will Employment**

Employees at PVAS are at-will employees. At-will means that an employer can terminate an employee at any time for any reason, except an illegal reason (e.g., whistle blowing), or for no reason, without incurring legal liability. Likewise, an employee is free to leave a job at any time for any or no reason with no adverse legal consequences.

### **Employment Agreement**

PVAS uses an employment agreement in the form of a contract between an employee and PVAS that establishes the terms and conditions of employment, work responsibilities, work rate (hours per week), compensation, performance review, and termination.

### **Equal Opportunity Statement**

PVAS follows Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws that prohibit job discrimination in workplaces. This means that everyone should be treated fairly when they're considered for employment decisions including hiring, compensation, promotion, and termination.

### **Fair Labor Standards Act**

PVAS abides by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its federal regulations on minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards. PVAS also abides by WV labor and employment regulations and requirements. Employees exempt from the FLSA typically must be paid a salary above a certain level and work in an administrative, professional, executive, computer, or outside sales role. Non-exempt employees are usually paid an hourly wage or earn a salary that's less than a minimum amount determined by the U.S. Department of Labor. If employees are non-exempt, it means they are entitled to minimum wage and overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours per week.

## **Orientation**

PVAS conducts an orientation for new employees during the first week of employment, ideally on the first day of employment. Orientation involves reviewing the employment agreement; reviewing the job description, duties, and supervisory roles; filling out required paperwork; reviewing PVAS policies and procedures; reviewing benefits; introduction to PVAS staff; introduction to PVAS programs; and touring the workplace and facilities.

## **Probation Period**

New employees will be on probation during the first three months of employment. During this period, performance and suitability for employment at PVAS will be monitored by PVAS. PVAS may, at its discretion, extend the probation period for a further three months. At the end of the probationary period, PVAS will inform the employee in writing if they have successfully completed the probationary period or not. If the employee is successful, they will be confirmed as a full-time or part-time employee at PVAS.

## **Performance Review and Promotion**

PVAS conducts annual employee performance reviews wherein employees and management work together to plan, monitor, and review the employee's professional objectives, long-term career goals, job trajectory, and contribution to PVAS. The performance review can include evaluative information gained through volunteer feedback, member feedback, program participant feedback, staff feedback, employee input, and the Executive Director's observations. New employees are reviewed following their first six months of employment and annually after that. Performance reviews may form the basis for promotion and/or increases in compensation.

## **Work Hours**

A 40-hour work week with 8 hours of work per day is standard for most full-time employees. Some full-time employees work less than 40 hours per week (but at least 35 hours per week) at a work rate established in their employment agreement (e.g., 35 hours per week). Part-time employees work fewer than 35 hours per week at a work rate established in their employment agreement (e.g., 20 hours per week).

PVAS generally operates between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm on weekdays, but employees are occasionally called on to support weeknight and weekend activities and events. Hours worked to support weeknight and weekend activities and events are offset with weekday time-off arranged with a manager or the Executive Director.

In general, PVAS does not encourage and rarely authorizes overtime work and overtime pay for employees.

PVAS does authorize compensatory (comp) time for exempt employees if the comp time off is taken within the same pay period or within the following pay period. For example, an exempt employee who worked a 10-hour day on a Thursday could apply the 2 extra hours as comp time and work a 6-hour day on the following day or on a day in the following week. Employees are expected to coordinate the accumulation of comp time and the use of comp time with a

manager or the Executive Director. Comp time does not accumulate except as described within a pay period and a subsequent pay period.

Full-time employees who want to work part-time for an indefinite period following maternity/paternity leave or for some other reason are encouraged to develop a transition plan for the Executive Director's review that describes the pathway and timing of a return to full-time work. The Executive Director will work in good faith to negotiate an acceptable transition plan with the employee that describes responsibilities and adjusted benefits (paid time off, health care, and retirement benefits) according to the rate of work defined in the transition plan. See benefits in Section 5 for more detail.

## **Working Remotely**

Depending on their role, employees may work at home or from another remote location when their presence at the Case Nature Center is not needed for meetings, for maintenance activities, or programs. Remote work scenarios and agreements should be arranged and approved individually with supervisors.

## **Dress Code**

The dress code at PVAS is activity specific:

- For routine activities, clean, casual, "outdoorsy" professional wear is required when working in and around the nature center or when in contact with visitors, program participants, and members. Short shorts, visible midriffs, and spaghetti straps are inappropriate. Logos, images, and verbiage on shirts should be mild, inoffensive and non-political. Nature images and mission-appropriate artwork and verbiage are encouraged.
- For school programs, wearing a PVAS staff shirt is encouraged. Otherwise, wearing a nice-looking, non-graphic shirt or dress is acceptable. Jeans are inappropriate except for Fridays (teachers are allowed to wear jeans on Fridays). The dress code for school field trips to nature preserves and other outdoor locations should follow guidance for routine activities as described above.
- For summer camp, shorts or long pants and t-shirts should be neat, clean, and in good repair. Short shorts, visible midriffs, and spaghetti straps are inappropriate.
- For maintenance work at our preserves, closed toed shoes and outdoor work clothes are appropriate and encouraged for your comfort and protection.

## **Travel and Reimbursement**

Upon presentation of appropriate expense reports, PVAS reimburses employees for all reasonable and pre-approved expenses incurred while performing their job. Mileage for travel to schools and to other PVAS activities is reimbursed at the Board-approved mileage reimbursement rate.

### **3. Policies**

PVAS complies with established PVAS policies and federal and state regulations. These policies are found at: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/about/gov/>

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

PVAS abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local government programs and services.

#### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

PVAS follows its established Conflict of Interest Policy. Employees as well as officers and directors are required to sign PVAS's Conflict of Interest Statement. Under this policy, and as attested to in the signed statement, no employee, officer, or director shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of their participation with PVAS. Each employee is required to disclose any personal interest that he/she/they may have in any matter pending before PVAS and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

#### **Drug Free Workplace Policy**

PVAS follows its established Drug Free Workplace Policy. Under this policy, the use of illegal drugs is not tolerated and is always unacceptable in the conduct of PVAS business and in the community at large.

#### **Nondiscrimination Policy**

PVAS follows its established Nondiscrimination Policy. Under this policy, PVAS does not exclude or deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any service recipient, applicant, staff member, or the public based on race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religion.

Further, PVAS acknowledges that it is unlawful to retaliate against any person who, or organization that, files a complaint about such discrimination.

#### **Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy**

PVAS is committed to providing a workplace and offering programs that are free from sexual harassment and bullying. As described in its established Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy, sexual harassment and bullying is unacceptable and not tolerated. When PVAS determines that an allegation of sexual harassment or bullying is credible, it will take prompt and appropriate corrective action. This policy applies to employees, program participants, PVAS members, and volunteers.

#### **Whistleblower Policy**

PVAS subscribes to principles of ethics and conduct for its directors, officers, and employees that require them to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of

their duties and responsibilities. Employees and representatives of PVAS are expected to practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and to comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Under its established Whistleblower Policy, guidance is provided regarding reporting violations, reporting responsibility, retaliation, compliance responsibility, accounting and auditing matters, acting in good faith, confidentiality, and handling of reported violations.

## 4. Procedures

PVAS uses a set of established procedures to manage employees and the workplace in accordance to established policies.

### Nondiscrimination Grievance Procedures

PVAS follows grievance procedures as set forth in its established Nondiscrimination Grievance Procedures. These procedures describe PVAS's responsibilities once an allegation or complaint has been made, employee responsibilities, communication, confidentiality, and resolution.

### Sexual Harassment and Bullying Grievance Procedures

PVAS follows grievance procedures as set forth in its established Sexual Harassment and Bullying Grievance Procedures. These procedures cover employees' rights and responsibilities under this policy, PVAS responsibilities once an allegation or complaint has been made, communication, confidentiality, and grievance resolution.

## 5. Benefits

Full-time employees (including new full-time employees who have successfully completed the probationary period) are eligible to participate in and utilize employee benefits provided by PVAS including paid time off, healthcare, and retirement benefits.

### Time Off

Time off at PVAS includes paid time off, holiday time off, and maternal/parental leave.

**Paid Time Off:** Full-time employees who work 40 hours per week are eligible for paid time off based on their years of employment as described in the schedule presented below. Full-time employees who work less than 40 hours per week receive paid time off at a rate that is proportional to the work rate established in their employment agreement. These days are used for vacation, illness, medical appointments, bereavement, and personal days.

Schedule of Paid Time Off Benefits in Days per Year		
Years of employment	Hours worked per week (from employment agreement)	
	40 ( $40/40 = 1.00$ )	35 ( $35/40 = 0.875$ )
0-1	15 days	13 days



2-4	18 days	16 days
5-10	23 days	20 days
10+	28 days	25 days

Part-time employees are not eligible for paid time off.

Employees are expected to schedule and coordinate planned use of paid time off with the Executive Director.

Paid time off is calculated on a 365-day year that begins on the first day of employment (the employment anniversary date). The maximum amount of paid time off that can be carried over from one year to the next at the anniversary date is five days unless an exception to this is authorized in advance in writing by the Executive Director.

New full-time employees receive and are eligible to use paid time off after successfully completing the probationary period. New full-time employees can take unpaid time off during the probationary period. However, extended absence from work during the probationary period must be authorized in advance in writing by the Executive Director.

**Holiday Time Off:** Full-time employees who work 40 hours per week receive full pay on the 11 federal holidays observed at PVAS. Full-time employees who work less than 40 hours per week receive pay for federal holidays at a rate that is proportional to their work (8 hours) as established in their employment agreement (e.g., the rate for an employee working 35 hours per week would be  $35/40$  or  $0.875$  (7 hours)). Part-time employees paid on an hourly basis are not eligible for holiday pay.

The federal holidays observed at PVAS are:

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (third Monday in January)
- Washington's Birthday (third Monday in February)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Juneteenth National Independence Day (June 19)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Indigenous People's Day (also observed as Columbus Day, second Monday in October)
- Veterans Day (November 11)
- Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November)
- Christmas Day (December 25)

When a holiday falls on Sunday, the Monday following is recognized as the holiday. When a holiday falls on Saturday, the Friday preceding is recognized as the holiday. The Executive Director may authorize additional paid time off surrounding holidays entirely at his/her/their

discretion (e.g., the Friday following Thanksgiving, one-half day on Christmas Eve, and one-half day on New Year's Eve).

**Unpaid, Job-Protected Leave:** Based on the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, PVAS allows eligible full-time employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year under any of these circumstances:

- For the birth and care of the newborn child of an employee
- For placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care
- To care for an immediate family member (i.e., spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition
- To take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition.

Unpaid, job-protected leave under other circumstances (e.g., travel to South America for two months) is not allowed unless authorized in advance in writing by the Executive Director.

**Maternity/Paternity Leave:** PVAS provides full-time employees with eight weeks of paid maternity/paternity leave for the birth and care of a newborn child or an adopted child of an employee. Maternity leave is a period of paid absence from work granted to a new mother before and after the birth or adoption of a child. Paternity leave is a period of paid absence from work granted to expectant fathers, partners of pregnant women, surrogate parents, or a person matched with a child for adoption. This leave ensures a period where a new parent is allowed to stay home and bond with a newborn child.

The maximum amount of job-protected paid and unpaid leave for maternity/paternity purposes is limited to 12 weeks (8 weeks of paid maternity/paternity leave plus 4 weeks of unpaid leave). For example, an eligible employee could take 8 weeks of paid maternity/paternity leave and an additional 4 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave as allowed under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Time taken off work due to pregnancy complications can be counted against the 12 weeks of protected family and medical leave.

## Health Care Benefits

PVAS offers health care benefits to full-time employees. Following successful completion of the probation period, full-time employees are eligible to enroll in PVAS's Highmark healthcare program and receive medical and dental benefits. Under this program, the PVAS and employee contributions to health care insurance are implemented through payroll deduction. Children and spouses/partners are eligible but are fully paid by the employee.

The month of September is an open enrollment period at PVAS during which employees can renew their current health insurance plan, modify their plan, or drop their plan and insurance coverage.

## **Retirement Benefits**

PVAS offers retirement benefits to full time employees in the form of a SIMPLE IRA (Individual Retirement Account) managed by the Vanguard Group, Inc. With a SIMPLE IRA, employers and employees can put a percentage of pay aside for retirement up to the federal contribution limit. The invested money grows, tax-deferred, until it is withdrawn. Employees do not pay taxes on investment growth, but they will pay income taxes when making withdrawals at retirement and could pay penalty fees for early (pre-retirement) withdrawal.

Full-time employees who have successfully completed the probationary period are eligible to enroll in the PVAS retirement benefits program. Under this program, PVAS will make a matching contribution of up to 3% of the employees' compensation for the entire calendar year for those eligible employees who choose to participate through the salary reduction/matching method of IRA funding available at PVAS.

Additional detail on benefits can be obtained from the Executive Director and from the Vanguard Group, the financial provider.

## **Social Security Benefits**

All employees at PVAS participate through salary reduction in the social security program. The three main forms of social security support are social security retirement benefits, disability benefits through the Social Security Disability Insurance program (SSDI), and monthly benefit payments to qualified disabled individuals under the Supplemental Security Income program (SSI).

## **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

All employees at PVAS are covered by workers' compensation insurance. Workers' compensation insurance provides benefits to workers who are injured or become ill as a direct result of their job.