

# American Aquifers



## Statement of Policy

December 2021

[AmericanAquifers.org](http://AmericanAquifers.org)

*"Every Drop Counts"*



## ABOUT US

Our goal at American Aquifers is to protect our aquifers and to educate, support, and advocate for sustainable groundwater use through community outreach, data collection, scientific research, and financial assistance for those struggling with groundwater issues. We strive to be a resource for all those that depend on groundwater, including our communities, our families, and our habitats.

American Aquifers is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. At American Aquifers, we believe *"EVERY DROP COUNTS"*. Although surface water is seen and felt, groundwater plays an equally important role in water resources. While the two vary greatly in volume, we are all intrinsically linked - when one is overdrawn, it drastically impacts the other - resulting in significant loss of water supply, damage to the environment, and other negative consequences. These implications reverberate throughout our habitats, throughout our communities, and impact our families. The better we understand groundwater resources, the more we can protect it, the better we can use it, and the greater it will benefit our environment and our families for generations to come.

The idea for American Aquifers started in 2018, and born in 2021, when it became apparent that resources, for those which rely on groundwater as a means of survival, are difficult to access quickly when groundwater begins to disappear. At American Aquifers our vision is to help families, communities, and aquatic habitats struggling with groundwater scarcity, dry wells, and lack of water, plus provide a resource for all groundwater-related needs. Groundwater is a historically undervalued resource. With increasing temperatures and wide-spread droughts persisting for many years, the need to improve our understanding of groundwater, its use, and its connection to our communities and our environment is needed. We aim to tackle these issues with education, science, and financial support for all those whose quality of life depends on groundwater now and in the future.

Mission Statement: To protect our aquifers and promote sustainable use through research, community outreach, and by educating, assisting, and advocating for those whose quality of life depends on groundwater.

We strive to meet this vision by supporting the Statement of Policy.





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## OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

American Aquifers is committed to a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment where all board members, staff, and volunteers feel respected and valued regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation or identity, disability, education, or any other bias.

We are committed to being nondiscriminatory and providing equal opportunities for employment, volunteering, and advancement in all areas of our work.

We respect the value that diverse life experiences bring, and we strive to listen to all views and give them value.

We're committed to modeling diversity, inclusion, and equity and maintaining fair and equal treatment for all.

At American Aquifers, we commit to:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity in connection with our vision and mission for the benefit of those we serve
- Recognize and address inequities in our policies, programs, and services
- Update and document progress on our diversity, equity, and inclusion practices
- Investigate underlying assumptions that interfere with our diversity policy
- Advocate for systemic inequities that impact our work at the board level and address it according to this policy and in accordance with our mission
- Challenge commonly accepted notions about what constitutes strong leadership within our organization
- Be transparent about diversity in all our interactions
- Dedicate our time and resources to expanding greater diversity within all positions
- Lead with respect and tolerance and encourage all employees and volunteers to express this in their work within our organization

American Aquifers agrees to abide by the following action items to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in our work:

1. We will create new learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies as we strive for cultural competency throughout our organization.
2. We will strive to conduct or identify research related to equity so that we can make progress in the area of diversity, inclusion, and equity and we will share our findings publicly on our website.
3. We will take action to improve diversity, inclusion, and equity in our board and leadership positions.
4. We will identify resources for our underrepresented constituents by networking with other organizations that are also committed to efforts for diversity, inclusion, and equity.
5. We will develop internal resources that demonstrate our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity and present them to our community.
6. We will develop a system to create awareness and address biases during our recruiting, hiring, and evaluating processes.
7. We will train our personnel to be responsible for orienting, onboarding, and training our staff and volunteers on equitable practices.



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### A1. General

American Aquifers is organized exclusively for charitable, education, and scientific purposes, pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

A1.1 The Policy Statements, written herein, have been adopted by the Board of Directors of American Aquifers to supplement the Bylaws and to serve as administrative guidelines for all positions within American Aquifers, including the Directors, officers, staff, and committee members.

A1.2 These policies shall remain in effect until altered in total or in part by the Board of Directors action at a regularly scheduled meeting or by an amendment to the Constitution and Bylaws in accordance with procedures described in the Bylaws.

A1.3 Should there appear to be any conflict with the Bylaws of American Aquifers, the Bylaws shall supersede the Statement of Policy.

### A2. Organizational Vision

A2.1 It is the Vision of American Aquifers to be the recognized authority on, and an advocate for, preserving, restoring, enhancing, and protecting groundwater resources in the United States.

### A3. Organizational Mission Statement

A3.1 The Mission of American Aquifers is as follows – *“To protect our aquifers and promote sustainable use through research, community outreach, and by educating, assisting, and advocating for those whose quality of life depends on groundwater.”*

A3.2 Through this forum, objectives, strategies, and goals will be developed and presented that will enhance the vision of American Aquifers and promote the wellbeing of the public and the environment while promoting groundwater security.

### A.4 Non-Discrimination Policy

A4.1 American Aquifers does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

A4.2 American Aquifers is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate and will take affirmative action measures to ensure against discrimination in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and



other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the bases of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

## A5. Discrimination

A5.1 A fundamental purpose of American Aquifers is to promote an environment that encourages the professional growth and education of all involved with American Aquifers. In accordance with this purpose, no person involved with American Aquifers may discriminate against or harass (sexually or otherwise) another person, spouse, guest, and/or participant at any American Aquifer function in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. As such conduct may be illegal and will not be condoned.

A5.1.1 Discrimination includes conduct that denies any individual equal opportunity on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, height, weight, marital status, age, gender or other as defined in the law.

A5.1.2 Harassment involves any physical, verbal, or non-verbal activity that causes a party to feel threatened, embarrassed, or otherwise singled out as a result of being subject to said activity.

A5.1.2 Sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct that victimizes an individual on the basis of sex.

A5.2 Anyone who feels that they have been the victim of discrimination or harassment by staff members should promptly bring it to the attention of a Board Member or the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of discrimination and/or harassment with a Board Member - designated by the Board (in case where the charge is made against the Executive Director, the President shall determine how best to conduct the investigation). During the investigation the accused person shall be given notice of the charges and an opportunity to be heard. The confidentiality of all persons involved shall be maintained to the extent practicable. Upon completion of the investigation, the Executive Director shall report his findings to the Board of Directors who shall then determine the appropriate follow-up measures.

## A6. Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

A6.1 American Aquifers may make use of and take place at commercial establishments that are in the business of providing such meeting necessities as facilities, rooms, equipment, and meals.

A6.2 These establishments have the necessary liability insurance coverage, indemnifying the establishment only against potential losses and claims arising from providing said services.



A6.3 American Aquifers does not recognize alcoholic beverages as a routinely reasonable or reimbursable expense and will not reimburse members for their purchase except provided in section 5.4 below.

A6.4 In the case of conferences, seminars, or other special events, the Board may, on a case-by-case basis, authorize the purchase and serving of alcoholic beverages by the host venues and the rules that will govern such serving/consumption. Such approval must be granted prior to the event.

A6.5 Members shall not bring, share, or otherwise provide alcoholic beverages for their own, or others, consumption while actively participating in any authorized activity, except as may be allowed and/or provided by the duty contracted facility at which said activity is being held.

## A7. Code of Conduct

A7.1 The Code of Conduct is presented in Appendix A

## A8. Antitrust Statement

A8.1 American Aquifers, its staff, officers, directors, or representatives shall not play any role or affect any decision of its member or their employers, or in any way restrict competition among companies. An antitrust policy in Appendix B applies to all activities and events, including actions conducted through the website.

## A9. Association Administration

A9.1 The Board of Directors may elect to conduct its administrative affairs through volunteers or a paid Executive Director. The Board may further authorize the Executive Director to hire additional paid staff and determine the titles by which those positions are designated. Additionally, the Board may authorize the Executive Director to set the compensation package for those positions, provided she/he acts within the approved budget.

## SECTION B: BOARD OF DIRECTORS OPERATIONS AND FUNCTIONS

### B1. Fiduciary Responsibilities

B1.1 Board of Director's member privileges, prerogatives, and authorities are stipulated in the Bylaws.

B1.2 Except as authorized by the Bylaws, the full Board must meet in open and formal sessions when making corporate decisions on behalf of American Aquifers. A schedule of regular Board meetings shall be developed and posted for availability to officers and the staff of American Aquifers.

### B2. Board of Directors Liability

B2.1 Each Board Member is obligated to review and understand American Aquifers' insurance policies and abide by limitations of the policy.



## B3. Meetings of the Board of Directors

B3.1 Scheduled meetings of the Board of Directors shall take place as required by Bylaws. At the discretion of the President, meetings may be held in person or by conference call.

B3.2 The President or a majority of the Board may call a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors as deemed necessary.

B3.3 The President may declare an emergency and call a meeting of the Board on a 24 hours' notice, provided all members of the Board receive notice. Any member of the Board may raise an objection to the declaration of an emergency, in which case, the rules for calling a special meeting shall govern.

B3.4 The President shall ensure that all members of the Board shall be notified of the time and place of all Board of Directors meetings.

## B4. Votes of the Board of Directors

B4.1 A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum. Any Board Member, with the approval of the President, may attend a Board Meeting by conference call and shall be deemed to be present for purposes of a quorum.

B4.2 Official actions of the Board shall require a majority vote of those present at scheduled meetings, except as required by the Bylaws.

## B5. Duties of Board Members

B5.1 Overview: Detailed descriptions of duties and responsibilities of the Board Members are defined in the Bylaws.

B5.2 President: The President shall provide direct supervision over the activities of the Board of Directors and general supervision over the affairs of American Aquifers during the term of office, which is up to 5 years.

B5.3 Treasurer: Shall conduct duties as defined in the Bylaws during a term of up to 5 years.

B5.4 Secretary: Shall conduct duties as defined in the Bylaws during a term of up to 5 years.

## B6. Reimbursement for authorized expenses

B6.1 American Aquifers is tax exempt and our vendor and service providers must be apprised of this so that tax may be excluded from all billings.

B6.2 Reimbursements for Board Member expenses are listed in section B6.6 and submitted to the Treasurer for final approval.



- B6.3 Request for travel expenses for non-board members shall require prior approval of the President.
- B6.4 All requests for disbursement of American Aquifer funds shall be made on a form as provided by the Board of Directors and/or the Treasurer. The reimbursement form shall be completed by the requesting party, which shall have attached documentation of the expense. Credit card charges will not be accepted without adequate supporting documentation. Credit card charge slips must be accompanied by the itemized receipts for which the charge was made.
- B6.5 Reimbursements must be consistent with approved budgets and policies. Credit card charge receipts will not be accepted without supporting documents and/or itemized receipts.
- B6.6 Reasonable expenses include the following:
- A. Travel: Whenever possible all arrangements for travel shall be made at least 30 days in advance in order to book the most cost-effective rate possible. Reimbursements shall be limited to economy, second-class, coach or other such reasonable rate designation. If travel is by personal auto, mileage reimbursement may be made on the basis of miles driven multiplied by the current effective mileage rate as established by the Internal Revenue Service for computing personal income tax.
  - B. Accommodations: Whenever possible room reservations shall be made in advance in order to obtain lodging at the most cost-effective rate. The number of nights authorized shall be limited to those directly related and required for conducting business and or attending meeting(s) on behalf of American Aquifers.
  - C. Meals: Reimbursement of the cost of meals shall be contingent upon the submittal of receipt(s) documenting the actual cost of the meal(s). American Aquifers does not consider alcohol an essential or reasonable expense. Only those actual food costs documented by receipt will be eligible. For guidance purposes, it is suggested that meal expenses of up to \$25 per meal, included gratuities be considered reasonable. This is not to be construed as a per diem allowance. Meals provided as part of a scheduled event such as banquets, awards, ceremonies, etc. may exceed the above noted maximum.
  - D. Registrations(s): Fees for American Aquifer Representatives' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and others, may be reimbursed (with adequate supported documentation) when pre-approved by the Board of Directors. Registration fees for Board Members must be pre-approved by the Treasurer.
- B6.7 The Schedule of Reimbursement for travel/meetings shall be subject to annual review of the Board of Directors' authorization.
- B6.8 Eligibility for reimbursement for the expenses associated with attendance at various functions require approval by the Board of Directors.



## APPENDIX A: CODE OF CONDUCT

As members of the American Aquifers engaged in water resource activities and related environmental field:

- We shall act to provide the best possible service while preserving the public health, ensuring public safety, and being responsible stewards of our precious water resources.
- We shall perform our duties in accordance with local, state and federal laws and follow generally accepted and professional procedures, making sure that such procedures are based upon reasonable substantiated information.
- We shall discourage exaggerated, unfair, or untrue statements concerning American Aquifers and groundwater resources issues and promote an understanding of professional standards for groundwater, groundwater pollution control, and other groundwater resources systems operations and materials.
- We shall abide by all applicable ethics policies while at work, in our communities and in our volunteer service to American Aquifers
- We shall perform the duties entrusted to us to the best our ability. We shall hold the public interest superior to personal interests and shall endeavor to ensure, through actions and leadership, that service to supporting those which depend on groundwater resources is maintained under all conditions.

We understand our essential environmental stewardship obligations to our community, state and nation. We accept these obligations and we shall always strive to do our best to follow them.