

CIVIL RIGHTS REQUEST AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT



WASHINGTON STATE DEPT OF
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**

POLICY Document # PO06-101	Approved: 2/21/2025	Revised: N/A	Next Review Date: 2/21/2027	Page 1 of 5
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SCOPE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a process for the public to submit civil rights requests, concerns, or complaints regarding perceived non-compliance with policies of the Department of Natural Resources (Department), Washington Administrative Code (WAC), Revised Code of Washington (RCW), and/or other state or federal laws. It also establishes procedures to respond to, investigate, and track civil rights requests, concerns, and complaints.

It implements federal requirements consistent with *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, *Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972*, *Age Discrimination Act of 1975*, and *U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulation 6 C.F.R. Part 19*, and Washington State Civil Services laws and rules: *Chapter 49.60 Discrimination—Human Rights Commission* (also known as *Washington Law Against Discrimination*).

PO06-100 Public Meetings and Community Involvement addresses the accommodations process for public meetings and community involvement.

POLICY:

The Department will comply with federal civil rights laws and is committed to providing its programs and services without discrimination in accordance with state and federal laws.

It is against the law for the Department to retaliate against anyone who takes action to oppose discrimination, files a complaint, or participates in the investigation of a complaint in accordance with the above laws and regulations.

The Department makes every effort to treat all people fairly regardless of their gender identity, race, color, ethnicity, nationality, national origin, language spoken, age, sexual orientation or identity, education, socioeconomic status, or mental or physical ability, per *PO26-002 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging*. To further integrate Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR), and Environmental Justice (EJ) principles and requirements into DNR's daily work and expand opportunities for transparency, the following policy decisions apply.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Office of Equity, Environmental Justice, and Civil Rights (OEEJCR), the Office of Legal Affairs and Business Practices (OLABP), and the Office of Workplace Culture and Development (WCD) will work in coordination with Appointing Authorities and work units to implement this Policy. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the Policy is followed.

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The Director of the Office of Equity, Environmental Justice, and Civil Rights (OEEJCR) is responsible for the oversight of civil rights requests, concerns, and complaints. The OEEJCR Director has the authority to make the final determination on civil rights requests, concerns, and complaints.

Notice of Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination

1. The Department will develop and maintain a civil rights webpage for the Department's public website.
2. The Department will ensure that civil rights compliance information and instructions for filing a civil rights request, concern, or complaint are publicly available on the Department's civil rights webpage.
 - a. Instructions will be available in the state's seven most used languages. Translations may be requested for additional languages, per *PO26-004 Community Language Access*.
3. The Department will provide assistance with submitting requests or filing a concern or complaint, as needed.
 - a. The Department's website will provide instructions and contact information for assistance.
4. The Department's civil rights webpage on the public website will provide instructions for requesting reasonable accommodations and language access services, per *PO26-004 Community Language Access*.

Submitting, Intake, and Tracking of Civil Rights Requests, Concerns, and Complaints

1. Civil rights requests, concerns, and complaints should be submitted as soon as possible to allow the Department to respond promptly.
2. Requests, concerns, and complaints may be submitted by the individual or their designee.
3. Upon receipt of a request, concern, or complaint, Department staff will follow *GL06-004-001 Processing Civil Rights Requests and Complaints*.
 - a. All requests, concerns, and complaints will be assigned a tracking number and logged upon receipt.
4. The Department will maintain a tracking intake system to ensure requests, concerns, and complaints are addressed and a response is provided.
5. The Department will notify the requester in writing within 5 business days that the request, concern, or complaint was received.

Civil Rights Requests Handling

1. The Department will coordinate civil rights requests with the appropriate Division, Region, Office, or Program.
2. The Department will provide accommodations in accordance with state and federal laws.
3. The Department will facilitate an interactive dialogue with the requester to understand the request and the accommodation needs.

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4. The Department will provide a written response to the requester within 14 business days of receiving the request.
 - a. If the request is denied, the reason for the denial will be provided.
 - b. If the Department requires additional information to process the request, the Department will provide an initial response with a request for the required information within 14 business days.
 - c. If the request cannot be approved or denied in 14 business days due to the complexity of the request, the requester will be provided with information on when a request is expected to be addressed fully.
 - i. The Department will provide a status update to the requester every 30 business days until the request can be approved or denied.
 - d. An equally effective alternative accommodation may be offered when a request cannot be approved.

Civil Rights Concerns and Complaints Handling, Investigating, and Making Recommendations

1. Staff will address and resolve concerns and complaints in a timely manner.
 - a. Concerns and complaints will be addressed within 90 business days of the Department receiving the concern or complaint unless there are extenuating circumstances.
2. The Department may decide not to investigate concerns or complaints or may terminate an investigation if:
 - a. The matter or a substantially similar matter is under, or comes under, litigation;
 - a. The matter, or one substantially similar, from the same individual has been previously addressed by the Department;
 - b. The matter referenced in the concern or complaint is moot or is no longer in the Department's policy, practice, or purview;
 - c. It has previously been determined that no violation of Department policy, WAC, RCW, state or federal law has occurred;
 - d. The Department has no jurisdiction to address the matter.
 - e. The concern or complaint requires alternative resolution, such as legislative intervention, Executive Order, or other rule-making.
3. At the conclusion of an investigation, the Department may determine that:
 - a. There is insufficient evidence to make a determination;
 - b. The concern or complaint is substantiated as having merit; or
 - c. The concern or complaint has no merit or cannot be substantiated.
4. When the Department determines a concern or complaint is substantiated, staff investigating the matter will issue a written recommendation, including action that can be initiated to resolve the substantiated concern or complaint, to the appropriate Appointing Authority and the Chief Operating Officer, or their designee.

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DEFINITIONS:

Civil Rights Complaint: A formal complaint which is filed when an individual believes that they have been discriminated against, or their civil rights have been violated.

Civil Rights Request: A request for assistance or action to protect civil rights. Examples of civil rights requests include, but are not limited to, requesting accommodations for a disability to participate in services, programs, or activities; and, requesting assistance with filing a civil rights complaint; requesting language access services such as interpretation services.

Work Unit: The team an employee is assigned to at the Department, such as a Division, Region, Program, or Office, which falls under an Appointing Authority.

REFERENCES & CITATIONS:

Age Discrimination Act of 1975
DNR's Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Plan
GL06-101-001 Processing Civil Rights Requests and Complaints
PO06-007 Records Management
PO06-100 Public Meetings and Community Involvement
PO06-650 Responding to and Managing Public Disclosure Requests
PO26-002 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
PO26-004 Community Language Access
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulation 6 C.F.R. Part 19

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND:

This Policy was developed to ensure that the Department is in alignment with federal and Washington State civil rights requirements.

REVISION HISTORY:

Date	Comments/ Summary of changes
2/21/2025	New.