

Professional Ethics Survey

Conducted at MESAF meeting

October 23, 2018

LCI Nov. 6, 2018

At our Fall Maine Society of American Foresters meeting, we included a survey instrument in the meeting packet and asked people to fill it in and leave it as they departed. We received 53 responses. Curiously only 22 checked the box 'SAF member', so this is a bit baffling. Possibly some members did not check the box. So this makes results a bit difficult to interpret. Strong conclusions are not possible. Still, since little information of this kind is available, this may be of some interest.

Total attendance was 127, of whom 80 were SAF members. Thus, our response rate among SAF'ers was only 28%, lower than the overall response rate. This meeting was well attended by industry and other nonmembers as important discussions were being held on the industry outlook.

The survey's purpose was to assess very generally the state of attendee awareness on ethical issues, sources of information, and suggestions for things SAF might do in this area.

Summary of Categorical and Y/N Questions

Eleven respondents were retired to semi-retired. Of 49 responding to the question, 36 said their work required them to be licensed, and a similar proportion dealt regularly with timber marketing, inventory, sales, or logging supervision. Of 40 who were specific about their occupation, 36 checked industry or consulting. So the respondents were people who would regularly encounter different types of business and professional ethics questions.

This was an older group: average years since highest degree was 30, with a range between 3 and 52.

65 % of those responding to question inquiring about any recent ethics problem had encountered one.

14 of 39 did seek advice on that problem.

Half of those responding had read something on professional ethics recently.

Only 3 out of 36 could recall a recent J of F article on the subject.

13 of 33 recalled ethics on a recent SAF meeting program.

14 of 49 responding owned a copy of the SAF Ethics guide; 32 did not, and 3 did not know what it is.

Open ended Response Summary

(All responses noted below)

34 responded to the question whether undergraduate education adequately prepared them. 25 said that it did. Yet, reading individual written comments, a somewhat different picture emerged. A total of 48 wrote in open ended responses. Of these,

20 said, None or don't remember

13 said minimal or lacking

12 said basics, OK, adequate, or equivalent

4 Said fine, good or equivalent

(perhaps there's an argument for making this q multiple choice, easier to interpret)

These responses need to be read while recalling average age since highest degree. This writer, graduated from undergraduate training in 1967, and completed graduate work in 1973. I can't recall anything being said about professionalism or ethics during that time; I only focused on it when in public service in Maine almost a decade later.

Points in Code -- would like Guidance?

31 respondents gave written responses.

14 said no or unsure; 2 said not applicable.

6 hadn't read or not recently

2 said, been a while since read, would like to review

Two followed other codes, ACF and Appraisers.

1 – too lengthy to get into, amid a list of unrelated topics;

1 -- not clear where social perspective fits

1 -- As CF I adhere to standards which include ethics

Things SAF could be Doing?

27 wrote written responses:

10 conduct programs/discussions at meetings

No suggestions or maybe 8

Focus more attention, or equivalent 8

Articles occasionally in Source 1

List of Open ended Responses

Instruction in undergraduate education?

I took 2 courses, Consulting Forestry and Wood Procurement, which contained instruction of professional ethics

It was satisfactory, but less satisfactory presently

I don't remember any specific

Pretty basic, but addressed

Good, not much, but simple school ethics were covered

Do not remember what was taught to us. I do not think that it was significant amount

None

None that I remember

Very little

Lacking. It was very generalized and could be far more specific and intentional.

Low

We had 1 course that covered ethics

Good, but perhaps not extensive enough

None

Ethics were touched on but not taught specifically

Fine

Good

None

Ethics was not taught

Don't remember

Non-existent

None

Minimal

Not emphasized enough

Basic intro only

Don't remember!

Don't remember -- but I aim to strive to be the most honest consultant and any other things I do on a daily basis

Modest

Inadequate

Minimal, however involvement with student chapter of SAF covered it

Ethics was covered and I do not recall how much in depth. I do think the emphasis on ethics importance was not as strongly prescribed as it should be.

None

Poor

Minimal

Ethics presented on a 10 year old's level

We had some, but could have been more. Needed examples of foresters who had ethics issues.

None - early 1970s

Adequate (considering time frame of education)

Cannot reliably remember

Outdated and very small program at the time, not SAF accredited program

Not a lot of emphasis but was discussed

None given

OK

I don't remember specifics but it was covered at various times

Can't have been that great because I can't remember

n/a - don't remember

1 day - lacking

Limited

Do not remember, BUT I do know it was a part of the profession.

none that I recall

Specific points in the Code on which you'd like guidance?

Have not read it (this marked as an SAF 'er)

Yes. Where's accountability of unethical and nonprofessional conduct, behavior, actions, etc.? Non-responsiveness by SAF Nat'l Office! Other issues need to be addressed -- too lengthy to get into here. Where's recourse and remedies to past issues?!

As a CF, there are standards of professional practice that I have to adhere to, which includes ethics

No

Unsure

Not familiar with principles (SAF member)

No

Not sure

No, but as an appraiser I have others to follow

I use both SAF and ACF code

No

No

?

None

No

I've read it - have no questions - long time ago though

I don't recall any specifics of the code and can think of no difficulty apply the principles

Never read code

No

I don't think so

Need to read or re-read

No

It's not clear where, if anywhere, the code applies to ethical professional behavior from a social perspective.

No

No

n/a

It's been a while since I've read it - Yikes

n/a

Don't recall

Would like to review again

I would have to re-read it.

not recently

Things SAF Could be Doing?

Yes. Need more reciprocity of our licenses and other credentials interstate. Otherwise, end it; we have a right to earn a living without over-regulation!

Occasional ethics column in Forestry Source is an option

No

Discuss the topic of ethics in a future meeting

More discussion at local meetings

Subject at fall conference

Maybe

No

Focus more attention on this subject

Ethics are a little discussed topic especially in procurement of wood

Absolutely -- needed especially NOW that "honor system," veracity and "my handshake is my bond" are all "falling out the window."

Maybe a 1 hour ethics course at a SAF meeting to hit the high points

Should consulting foresters be buying their clients wood when part of their job is to negotiate stumpage prices and select the timber to be cut.

Encourage members to review guide

Situational examples of training session

Website link to ethics, concerns, Q&A posts

Keep the issue on the front burner (latter words supplied from illegible)

Continuing education through SAF annual meetings would be much appreciated.

Regular offerings on ethical issues would be appreciated.

Not at this time

n/a

n/a

Address issues at meetings

Maybe

None come to mind

Have an ethics discussion or roundtable at meeting as a regular event. NOT a lecturer.

Give SAF members a chance to give examples of ethical questions they have encountered.

Notes for later surveys –

more multi-choice?

Add section on student/ grad student

Member of other groups with Ethics Codes?

Add CF?

Other additions/improvements

Professional Ethics Survey

SAF Member? Y/N

(responses from all welcomed)

Fall 2018

1. State where you are currently employed _____
_____ retired
_____ semi-retired
2. Does your state have a requirement for registration
or licensing of professional foresters? Y/N
 - a. If so, does your work require you to be licensed? Y/ N
3. Employer type:
 - Higher Ed
 - Research
 - Consulting Forester
 - Industry Forester
 - Agency/government Forester
 - NGO
 - Other
4. Number of years since highest degree _____
5. Does your work involve supervision of timber sales, of harvesting, or the work of contractors? If so, please specify.
6. How would you describe instruction you received in your Bachelor's level education on the subject of professional ethics?

7. Do you feel this undergraduate instruction adequately prepared you for the needs of your current employment?
Y/N _____
8. Have you encountered questions of professional ethics in recent years? Y/N

9. What were those questions? (We are concerned with the issue or question, not the identities of any person or organization involved)
10. Did you ask for advice or further information on the situation? Y/N _____
11. Have you read recent articles or books on subject of professional ethics? Y/N

12. Can you recall the last article you saw in *Journal of Forestry* on professional ethics? If so, please specify.
13. Has any professional ethics topic been on the program at any state or regional SAF meeting that you have attended? If so, please specify.
14. Do you have a copy of the 2004 SAF Ethics Guide? Y/N _____
15. When you read the SAF Ethics Code, are there specific principles and/or pledges that you find difficult to apply, or would like further guidance on? If so, please specify
16. Are there things that SAF could be doing that would help you to identify and address questions that you have seen of this kind?

Thanks much for responding