

# SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES AND EXAMPLES

Resources provided in this document were created in response to conservation districts' growing social media presence and interest in social media policy guidance. Please feel free to use and modify the examples provided in this document to meet your district's needs.

Background: The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) administered a conservation district web and social media survey in spring 2016. Over 80 percent of respondents used at least one social media platform. Seventy percent didn't have a social media policy, and 88 percent of those said they were interested in guidance. This document is designed to provide that guidance.

*Disclaimer: Content and links provided in this document are informational only and not legal guidance. If you have specific questions regarding content in this document, including public records management, we recommend that you consult an attorney, the Secretary of State, or other professional with expertise in social media management for public entities.*

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## Social Media: Best Management Practices

### ❖ Establish a social media policy

Create either a broad social media policy or a tool-specific policy that addresses the following:

- Process for requesting / authorizing a district-sponsored social media account
- Account administration roles / responsibilities
- Risk management and permissions
- Method for capturing public records

[View an example of the draft SCC social media policy on page 3 of this document.](#)

### ❖ Establish a procedure and mechanism for public records retention

As public entities, social media content is a public record for the purposes of [Chapter 40.14 RCW - Preservation and destruction of public records](#) when the content is 1) published and received by the conservation district, and 2) related to and used for the conduct of the district's business. The district is responsible for capturing electronic copies of its public records made or received using social media, including those records made or received using third-party websites.

- Tools and services exist to help you capture social media records (e.g., the SCC uses digi.me, formally called Social Safe). Visit the Washington Secretary of State Social Media Records webpage for examples of these tools and to view training videos about electronic records management:  
<http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/Managing-Social-Media.aspx>.
- Limit or avoid creating "primary records" on social media sites to reduce the quantity of records with retention value. If you issue a request for proposals (RFP) on your website and then share a link to the announcement on social media, the primary, disclosable record is on your website (which is easier to track). However, if you create and share the RFP announcement on social media first, the primary, disclosable record is on your social media account, which may be harder to search for and capture.

### ❖ Determine "ground rules" for your accounts

Decide what type of content will and will not be allowed on your accounts. Define if and how you'll moderate comments. State these terms somewhere on your account profile. An [example of the SCC Facebook Impressum](#) (ground rules) stated on the "About" page of our Facebook account is available on page 5 of this document.

## ❖ Strive for accuracy

Avoid sharing or posting information that's based on opinion or that easily could be misconstrued as an advertisement or promotion of a third-party. If posts are made that contain errors, modify the information as appropriate and explain the corrected information as necessary.

## ❖ Limit social media accounts to only those that you need and can manage

More isn't always better. Before deciding to administer multiple social media accounts, consider the following questions for each account: 1) How will this social media account help us meet our mission and goals? 2) Does our district have capacity to manage the account, including establishing a procedure to monitor content and capture public records? 3) How will this social media account help us reach important audiences that we currently aren't reaching or improve our communication with existing audiences?

## ❖ Set imagery guidelines

Clarify permissions for others to use social media content that's generated by your district. This can be in the form of a copyright statement listed in your social media account information. An example of the [SCC copyright statement](#) posted on our Facebook account is provided on page 6.

## ❖ Keep district staff and supervisors informed

Before launching a social media account, make sure district staff and the board of supervisors understand the social media tool(s) your district will use. There are risks and benefits associated with managing a social media account, so it's important that leadership understand and approve of the purpose, rules, and procedures established for each account.

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# Example: State Conservation Commission Social Media Policy

*This policy is currently in draft form (as of September 2016) and awaiting final approval. Content was informed by recommendations provided in the document [Guidelines and Best Practices for Social Media Use in Washington State](#) and based off of current working state agency social media policies.*

## Purpose

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) uses agency-sponsored social media tools when appropriate to enhance communication and engagement with customers, partners, stakeholders, and others to support our strategic goals and mission. This policy describes 1) how the SCC uses social media, and 2) gives employees direction and guidelines for proper use of SCC-sponsored social media accounts.

This policy applies to all SCC employees.

## SCC-Sponsored Social Media Accounts

Individual employees may not establish an SCC-sponsored social media account unless there is compelling reason and approval from the Executive Director and Communications Coordinator. Upon approval, designated staff may establish social media accounts for the agency in close collaboration with the SCC Communications Coordinator. Participation and suggestions for content are encouraged for all employees.

SCC-sponsored social media accounts include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Vimeo, and Flickr.

## Social Media Records Management

Representatives of Washington state government communicate via the SCC-sponsored social media accounts. Consequently, any communication on these sites (whether a public employee or the general public) may be subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties in accordance with Chapter 42.56 RCW (Public records act). The agency should establish a method and/or tool to capture records of each social media account.

## Account Rules and Procedures

### *Facebook*

The SCC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonStateConservationCommission>) serves as a platform to share stories about or from conservation districts and to provide updated news and information aimed at encouraging citizen engagement with and growing interest in natural resource conservation and farmland preservation in Washington.

- a) Our agency strives to adhere to the following values in order to facilitate informative, transparent, and responsible management of our Facebook account:
  - **Respect:** Graphic, obscene, explicit, racial, and/or blatantly discriminatory comments or posts will be deleted. In addition, we don't allow comments that are abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone or any association; harassment and bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity will not be tolerated.
  - **Relevance:** Off-topic posts will not be allowed; please keep comments and posts relevant and clean.
  - **Honesty:** Posts and comments that are blatantly untrue, misrepresent facts, or promote personal opinions as "fact" may be subject to removal.
  - **Integrity:** Spam is not allowed and will be removed.

- Nonpartisan: Endorsements or opposition of political candidates are not allowed. Any posts by others about a candidate is not an endorsement or opposition by the SCC. Advertisements, endorsements, or promotions of third party solicitations will not be allowed.
  - Privacy: We acknowledge the limits of privacy inherent in using social media, but we do our best to honor account users' and followers' privacy. Consequently, any personal information including email addresses, telephone numbers, mailing addresses, or any type of identification numbers (excluding agency contact information) will be removed.
- b) The SCC has the right to ban any users who repeatedly violate this policy.
- c) The SCC monitors its own account and monitors all mentions of the SCC on other social media accounts. The SCC reserves the right to remove any comments, posts, and/or mentions of our agency that contain any of the disallowed content listed above.
- d) Comments posted on the SCC Facebook account do not constitute giving official notice to the agency, including public records requests.
- e) All Facebook content should be approved of and posted by the agency Communications Coordinator, or staff must get prior approval from the Communications Coordinator to directly post content.

### *Vimeo*

The SCC Vimeo account (<https://vimeo.com/washingtonscc>) serves as a one-way communication platform to share recorded trainings and webinars with conservation districts and other agency partners in Washington. As such, we do not allow comments on the videos we post to this account. Representatives from conservation districts and other partners should be encouraged to contact staff at the SCC if they have questions or comments about our Vimeo content. user11062193

### *Flickr*

The primary purpose of the SCC Flickr account (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sccgallery/albums>) is to host the shared SCC and conservation district photo gallery. Photos are available to conservation districts, the Washington Association of Conservation Districts, the Washington Association of District Employees, the Washington Conservation Society, and other key partners (upon permission) for non-commercial use. The SCC Communications Coordinator and other designated SCC staff upload all photos. Other Flickr users are not allowed to directly upload to the SCC Flickr account. Since the purpose of the account is sharing photos with and among conservation districts, all comments should be turned off.

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## Example: SCC Facebook Impressum

*The Impressum field (found under the “Page Info: About” tab) is a place to state the terms and conditions you’ve defined for your Facebook account. This may include commenting guidelines, a statement about public records, and copyright information. The following example is the SCC Facebook Impressum.*

Representatives of Washington state government communicate via this site. As such, any communication on this site (whether a public employee or the general public) may be subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties in accordance with Chapter 42.56 RCW (Public records act).

The SCC encourages questions and dialogue on this page, but if a comment, post, or other content falls under any category below, it will be removed:

- Graphic, obscene, explicit, racial, and/or blatantly discriminatory; abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone or any association; harassment and bullying.
- Disrespecting of other members’ positions and philosophies.
- Off-topic posts; please keep comments and posts relevant and clean.
- Advertisements, endorsements, or promotions of third party solicitation.
- Endorsements or opposition of political candidates; Any posts by others about a candidate is not an endorsement or opposition by the SCC.
- Suggestions or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Spam.
- Personal information including email addresses, telephone numbers, mailing addresses, or any type of identification numbers.

Those who violate the above policies will have limited access or removed ability to comment in the future.

The appearance of external links on this page does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the SCC.

Comments posted on agency social media do not constitute giving official notice to the agency, including public records requests.

The SCC retains copyright on all text, graphic images, and other content that was produced by the SCC and found on this page. You may print copies of material for non-commercial use, provided that you include a credit reading: "credit: Washington State Conservation Commission Facebook Page" or "Courtesy of Washington State Conservation Commission." Commercial use of text, SCC logos, photos, and other graphics is prohibited without the express written permission of the SCC.

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## Example: SCC Social Media Copyright Policy

*Clarify social media content permissions by providing a copyright policy or link to a policy somewhere on your social media account page (e.g. in Facebook, you could add a copyright statement under “Page Info > About > General Information”).*

*The following example is the SCC Facebook copyright statement:*

All information and materials generated by the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and provided in the SCC Facebook account are the property of the SCC. The SCC retains copyright on all text, graphic images, and other content that was produced by the SCC and found on the page. You may print copies of information and material for your own non-commercial use, provided that you include a credit line reading: "credit: Washington State Conservation Commission Facebook Page" or "Courtesy of Washington State Conservation Commission." Commercial use of text, SCC logos, photos, and other graphics is prohibited without the express written permission of the SCC.

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