

POLICY AND APPLICATION PROCESS RELATING TO NON-VIOLENT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Participating in non-violent civil disobedience is an action that the Sierra Club does not take lightly, as it can pose risks to our members and staff as well as to our reputation. For this reason, the Sierra Club has established a rigorous review process for any proposed actions. When properly managed and planned, these inherent risks can be minimized. Civil disobedience can turn public opinion and decision-makers in favor of our cause or weaken our cause depending on how it is conducted.

Non-Violent Civil Disobedience - Guidelines and Process for Approval

Civil disobedience actions may be promoted, planned, organized or officially participated in by the Sierra Club, its volunteer leaders, staff or members, **only** by application to, and approval by, the Board of Directors. (**Sierra Club Standing Rule 2.2.1**)

The Board has authorized the consideration only of **non-violent** civil disobedience in the name of Sierra Club. Activities that, for example, contemplate property damage or risk of physical harm to any individuals by our actions do not meet this standard and will not be considered or approved by the Board.

Applications will be accepted only from Chapters, the Sierra Student Coalition, National Campaign Committees or the staff Executive Team. All group requests should go through their chapters. All staff requests should go through their department head to the Executive Team. (**NOTE - this full application should only be submitted after you've been invited to do so following submitting the initial questionnaire. Please do not fill out the application form unless you have been explicitly asked to do so by civil.disobedience@sierraclub.org**).

The formal application should be submitted to civil.disobedience@sierraclub.org. The full application will be first evaluated by a committee consisting of the President, Vice President, and Executive Director (or their respective designees), in consultation with national staff and volunteers, as appropriate.

If the committee determines that an application warrants further consideration, then it will be referred to a staff task force for further evaluation and processing to assess in detail its compliance with planning and risk reduction and training requirements. Once that detailed analysis is completed, a staff report will be sent to the Board of Directors. The report shall include a detailed analysis of any identified concerns or areas of heightened risk to consider.

The Board of Directors will then make a decision either denying or approving the proposed civil disobedience action and any qualifications or restrictions the Board decides to impose along with approval.

Applications must be submitted **45 days in advance** of the proposed event. Only in very special circumstances will applications be considered which are submitted past this deadline.

Key Responsibilities and Expectations

1. At the time of the application, the sponsor must identify two or three designated team leaders, who will be responsible for the planning and implementation of the event.
2. Having all Sierra Club participants fully trained in the practice of non-violent civil disobedience is essential.
3. It is also required that all Sierra Club participants receive de-escalation training, so that they know how to try to de-escalate a bad situation and also how to keep themselves safe.
4. Participants should be informed that this is a personal decision to participate that probably will involve some personal expense for fines, bail, or legal representation, as well as a time commitment (which may be difficult to predict).
5. Sierra Club has no obligation to pay for or reimburse participants for any expenses, injuries or loss of personal property.
6. Due to the inherently uncertain nature of these activities, no promises or commitments can be made to participants about what may or may not happen at the event, in terms of law enforcement actions, disruptions, specific charges that may be brought, etc.
7. Although not eliminating risk (and not required by the Board), it is often advisable to pre-negotiate with relevant law enforcement the terms of the activity and what charges are likely to be brought and how participants will be processed if they are arrested. Please indicate in the application the plans, if any, in this regard.
8. In order to better assess and manage the Club's risks when working with a coalition or other partners on a planned action, the Club sponsor/applicant must report on what other groups are formally participating (if any), along with an assessment as to whether the other partners are equally committed to keeping the event non-violent and not involving property destruction.
9. As compared to civil disobedience actions focused on government entities or property, those which focus on corporate or private subjects can pose additional or heightened risks to Sierra Club and participants, and those risks must be evaluated.
10. The participation in Club-approved civil disobedience is not limited to Sierra Club members.
11. The participation by minors (those under 18) in Sierra Club civil disobedience actions is not permitted.

Implementation of an Approved Action

1. One of the Club's team leads for the action should be the designated liaison with national Sierra Club and should stay in contact with the designated National/HQ contact in advance of the action (especially if plans change substantially) and should provide an informal debriefing to National following the event.
2. The Club's team leads should also involve other Club stakeholders (including Program Safety, Communications, and Compliance) in the event planning and implementation.
3. The final list of participants should be sent to civil.disobedience@sierraclub.org no later than 7 days in advance of the event.
4. All participants must sign a Sierra Club approved form which provides emergency contact information, special medical needs/conditions, and a waiver of any claims against the Club or its agents. The team leader(s) must collect and retain signed copies of the forms.
5. Any difficulties (medical problems, altercations, etc.) must be reported to the National/HQ contact (attention: civil.disobedience@sierraclub.org) and Program Safety (attention:

todd.duncan@sierraclub.org) immediately.

6. The Club team leads will be responsible for ensuring - in coordination with the event organizers and coalition partners - that the planning for the event includes:
 - a) A detailed timeline.
 - b) Designated local legal support and observers and trained event marshals.
 - c) A safety plan, including safety/medical contacts.
 - d) Non-violence and de-escalation training for all participants in advance of the event.
 - e) Pre-negotiation with law enforcement, if any, of the details of the event.

Evaluation

At the conclusion of the civil disobedience action, the applicant will be required to complete an evaluation within 30 days of the action. This will enable the Sierra Club to review what went right and what went wrong or was unexpected and how effective the action was. This will help the Club review and design future actions to reduce risk and improve effectiveness.