

Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District Public Social Media Policy

Introduction

The Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District (LPGCD) uses Social Media platforms to inform the public about our programs, water conservation efforts, and other relevant updates. Our official Social Media handle is @LostPinesGCD. This policy was not adopted in response to Texas State Senate Bill 1893 governing prohibited applications.

For official information about LPGCD, please visit our website at www.lostpineswater.org or contact our office at (512) 360-5088.

For media inquiries, please contact: cmarks@lostpineswater.org.

Why Social Media?

Citizens, businesses, news outlets, and those deeply involved in civic, political, and educational service are increasingly interacting with Social Media. Blogs and microblogs, video, online communities, and other social networking outlets are now a primary information and communications source for a growing segment of the population.

Benefits of Social Media

There are several tangible benefits of using Social Media. Through appropriate use of Social Media, organizations have:

- Increased traffic to websites.
- Communication with the public in a faster and affordable manner.
- Promoted information that would not have reached the public through traditional channels.
- Turned negative complaints into positive experiences with timely customer service.
- Increased outreach and brand recognition to stakeholders.

Align with the Mission

Social Media applications are communication tools. A strategic, structured approach to Social Media should be aligned with the LPGCD mission as well as the Ethos of the Education and Outreach Unit (EOU). The approach should also be consistent with other communication efforts, such as web, print materials, media outreach, and press releases. Keeping the mission in mind helps us stay focused in our Social Media efforts.

Develop Goals and Measure Success

The LPGCD EOU should have targeted goals or objectives that align with the LPGCD mission and the EOU's Ethos. Once objectives are identified, the EOU should establish performance measures or key results to gauge results of the EOU's Social Media strategy. With continued evaluation and assessment, we can indicate if goals are being met.

Many social media sites have simple measurements such as:

- YouTube page views
- Number of Facebook followers
- Number of Instagram post impressions

Key results need to be specifically and directly tied to the EOU's Social Media goals. Here are some examples of specific performance measures or key results that can more accurately determine success.

- Decreased volume in other contact channels such as phone calls or email inquiries.
- Increased traffic to the LPGCD website.
- Increased participation in events and programs.
- Increased numbers of people applying for a particular service

The key to establishing useful performance measures is that they tie to an outcome that is outside the Social Media efforts.

Definitions

Social Media

A software system or service provided via the Internet used to communicate and share information between people, especially affinity groups of people such as customers or constituents, where customers, constituents, or the public are the primary creators of the information content. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Accessibility

Usability of a product, service, environment, or facility by people with the widest range of capabilities.

Personally Identifiable Information

Personally identifiable information is defined in Texas Business and Commerce Code (TBCC) Chapter 521 as “Information that alone or in conjunction with other information identifies an individual.” This includes an individual’s: (a) name, social security number, date of birth, or government-issued identification number. (b) mother’s maiden name. (c) unique biometric data including the individual’s fingerprint, voice print, or retina or iris image. (d) unique electronic identification number, address, or routing code; and (e) telecommunication access device as defined by Section 32.51, Penal Code.

Sensitive Personal Information

There are two categories of sensitive personal information defined in Texas Business and Commerce Code (TBCC) Chapter 521: (a) an individual’s first name or first initial and last name in combination with any one or more of the following items: (1) social security number (2) driver’s license number or government-issued identification number; or (3) account number or credit or debit card number in combination with any required security code, access code, or password that would permit access to an individual’s financial account; or (b) information that identifies an individual and relates to (1) the physical or mental health or condition of the individual (2) the provision of health care to the individual; or (3) payment for the provision of health care to the individual.

Purpose

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to provide guidelines to LPGCD employees regarding the use of Social Media for official business. Although there is currently no Texas Administrative Rule that directly addresses the use of Social Media, there are existing rules associated with electronic information resources (EIR) that may affect the use of Social Media by government agencies. While government bodies are required to comply with established state rules and laws this document contains additional guidance and best practices to maximize the benefits of Social Media while minimizing the risk to the LPGCD. Due to the evolving nature of social media, the content in this document may require periodic updates.

Scope

The guidelines apply to the use of Social Media for conducting official LPGCD business. The scope of the guidelines does not govern an employee's personal use of Social Media. Policies regarding an employee's personal use of Social Media are monitored by our human resource policy.

Accessibility

The LPGCD has a legal responsibility to ensure that all electronic and information resources are accessible and usable by people with the widest range of capabilities possible. 1 TAC 206 and 1 TAC 213 describe requirements regarding accessibility of state websites and all agency EIR. It is the LPGCD's responsibility to ensure social media content is fully accessible.

Privacy

Only public information may be published on social media websites. Public commenters and posters must exclude Personally Identifiable Information, Sensitive Personal Information, and any other personal information protected by law from social media communications. For information regarding the difference between Personally Identifiable Information and Sensitive Personal Information, refer to the Definitions section.

There may be instances when Personally Identifiable Information is needed to serve the public. If appropriate, the LPGCD should provide an alternate means of communication for the public to continue the conversation in a protected environment. If Sensitive Personal Information or other confidential information is posted, the LPGCD must remove it as soon as possible upon discovery. Other federal laws, rules and regulations may apply.

Open Records Request & Records Retention

Open Records requests under the Texas Public Information Act for social media content must follow the LPGCD's Open Records (or "Public Information") Requests Policy. Content posted by the LPGCD or the public on the LPGCD's social media or website is a state record (Government Code, Section 441.180(11)), and is subject to State Records Retention requirements in Government Code Chapter 441, Subchapter L, 441.180-205.

To manage compliance, the LPGCD may consider common exceptions to State Records Retention Requirements in developing Social Media content strategy. Two common exceptions are:

- Duplicate content, which is content that is duplicated from another source (Government Code, Section 441.180(11)).
- Transitory information is a record of "temporary usefulness that are not an integral part of a records series of an agency, that are not regularly filed within an agency's recordkeeping system, and that are required only for a limited period of time for the completion of an action by an official or employee of the agency or in the preparation of an on-going records series," (13 TAC 6.10 and 13 TAC 6.91(8)).

The LPGCD may be prohibited from deleting Social Media records, regardless of its established records retention policy, if the record is the subject of legal claims or actions (Government Code, Section 441.187). In addition, state and federal courts require the preservation of relevant records if a judicial or administrative action is reasonably foreseeable, even if such action is not yet initiated.

Third-Party Website Policies and Terms of Service

Before creating an account with a Social Media Tool, the EOU should review and accept the provider's terms of service. The decision to accept a provider's terms of service is the responsibility of LPGCD and the state of Texas does not accept the terms on behalf of the LPGCD. Terms should be reviewed to determine whether the risks stemming from the provider's terms are acceptable.

Intellectual Property Rights and Ownership

Social media content may sometimes include photographs, audio, or video. The LPGCD must ensure that it has the right to post all social media content and is not infringing on the intellectual property rights of others. 1 TAC 206.54(1) provides rules regarding the "copying and use of

information by website owners linking to state agency sites.” Adherence to this rule will ensure that the LPGCD is compliant with requirements related to intellectual property rights and ownership. Intellectual property rights of content provided by the public will be governed by federal copyright law, the terms of service of the Social Media provider, and the copyright policies in this Social Media policy.

Employee Use

This section addresses the LPGCD employees’ use of Social Media in connection with their position or as a part of their official job duties. When using Social Media in any fashion connected to their position or job duties, and when presenting oneself in a Social Media setting as a LPGCD representative, employees must comply with applicable LPGCD policies governing employee behavior and acceptable use of electronic and information resources. All information posted on the LPGCD’s Social Media by an employee under the above-described conditions should adhere to the LPGCD’s professional conduct and employee ethics policies.

Social Media Content

LPGCD’s Social Media accounts provide the following types of content:

- Announcements about upcoming events, workshops, and programs.
- Updates on water conservation efforts and groundwater management.
- Tips and resources on water conservation practices.
- Live coverage of LPGCD activities.
- Alerts related to water service issues or emergencies within our district.

Social Media channels are monitored by the LPGCD’s EOU during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Standards of Conduct

Disclaimer: Posted comments and images by the public do not necessarily represent the views of LPGCD.

We encourage comments. Our community members’ thoughts, ideas and concerns play a critical role in helping LPGCD better explain our actions, improve our management and be even more responsive to the needs of the public. We want to publish comments, but comments must be respectful and follow the conventions of polite discourse. As a government agency, LPGCD abides by strict standards of conduct to serve the public fairly and impartially. All comments on

our Social Media pages are reviewed, and while we do not edit them, LPGCD reserves the right to hide or remove any content that includes:

- Copyrighted material (posted without permission).
- Defamation to a person or people (libel or slander).
- Name calling and/or personal attacks.
- Discrimination or hate speech.
- Fraud or misleading information.
- Incitement to violence or illegal activity.
- Obscenity, pornography, or profanity.
- Threatening or abusive language.

We may also remove comments or posts that:

- Advertise commercial businesses or products.
- Are considered spam or irrelevant.
- Are posted by automated accounts ("bots").
- Are posted by an account with nudity in profile pictures.
- Includes private information such as phone numbers or email addresses.

Additionally, LPGCD may use platform filters to automatically remove comments that violate these guidelines. Each Social Media platform we use (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) is governed by its own community standards. We encourage users to review these policies for further information:

- [Facebook Community Standards](#)
- [Instagram Community Guidelines](#)
- [YouTube Community Guidelines](#)

Following and Engagement Policy

LPGCD values its community and appreciates those who engage with us. We follow and interact with:

- Government entities and agencies.
- Non-profit organizations related to water and environmental conservation.
- Public utilities and related organizations.
- Local and national media outlets.
- Water and environmental conservation-minded profiles.
- Individuals who follow @LostPinesGCD.

LPGCD does not endorse businesses or products by following them and refrains from following for-profit entities.

Policy Updates

This Social Media Policy may be updated periodically. For more information about LPGCD's Social Media presence or this Policy, please contact us at (512) 360-5088 or email us at cmarks@lostpineswater.org.

Final Thoughts

This Social Media Policy is more than a guideline. It is a commitment to providing clear, respectful, and engaging communication about groundwater conservation. This Social Media Policy reflects our commitment to the people of and the groundwater under the Bastrop and Lee Counties.

The Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District is confident that our efforts will create a positive and informative environment across all platforms while advancing our mission to protect our precious groundwater resources.