

## **TSA / TFTSG Statement of Inclusion**

As the TSA and IUCN TFTSG prepared to take our conference into a virtual platform, we were delighted to discover that this format allowed for greater inclusion of our international colleagues. The Annual Symposium on the Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles typically draws approximately 250-300 turtle specialists from at least 20 countries. The Conference Committee strives to have a relatively high percentage of students, to encourage our next generation of conservation leaders. As both organizations work across international platforms, we strive to be inclusive. It has, and will always remain a goal of the conference to provide a safe and welcoming environment for people of all social and cultural backgrounds.

When reviewing abstracts for the virtual conference, we focused our efforts on selecting those that had suitable content. We carefully reviewed the proposed content of all presentations prior to them being presented, and felt that we had upheld the TSA/TFTSG Policy on Annual Symposium Code of Conduct. In retrospect, we acknowledge that we should have looked beyond the content. For this, we apologize.

We have therefore listened to the comments received in recent days, and have revised the presenter lineup so that everyone feels welcome and safe in interacting with all the presenters. In addition, the TSA/TFTSG will be adopting practices developed by the diversity and inclusion teams within PARC, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, AZA, and other organizations, and will move forward with developing a diversity and inclusion committee to further develop a code of ethics and conduct, and ensure that members observe and uphold the highest standards of professional behavior.

We look forward to seeing you virtually,

TSA/TFTSG

We include below the Policy on Annual Symposium Code of Conduct.

The TSA/TFTSG Annual Symposium is a forum to present, consider, and debate scientifically relevant research and viewpoints professionally and respectfully. All participants will at all times be held to the highest standard of professional ethics and conduct. TSA and TFTSG are committed to providing a professional meeting environment that (1) fosters open dialogue and the exchange of scientific information and ideas, (2) promotes equal opportunities for and treatment of all participants, and (3) is free of discrimination or any forms of harassment or objectification based on gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or religious belief, or military/veteran status. This policy applies to all attendees, including speakers, exhibitors, staff, contractors,

volunteers, and guests at the symposium itself, and at associated activities in hospitality suites and venue facilities. All presenters are requested to review and assess their own presentations for appropriateness of content so as not to transgress against this Code of Conduct. If anyone has any concerns about perceived Code of Conduct related issues at the Symposium, please direct them to either TSA Chief Operating Officer Andrew Walde or TFTSG Chair Craig Stanford, who will discuss them with their teams.