

Awards Committee (Procedures and Guidelines)

Date: February 2, 2009

Creation of the Awards Committee. The Awards Committee ("Committee") is established at the discretion of the Chair of the Environmental Law Section. Although the Section Bylaws do not specifically reference the Committee, the authority for the Chair to create and select the Committee is derived from Article VI, Section 2 (Special and Other Ad Hoc Committees) of the Section Bylaws. The Committee serves at the pleasure of the Chair and may be terminated by the Chair at any time.

Timing of its Creation. The Chair customarily establishes the Committee by September or October of each year for the express purpose of selecting candidates for the Section and Section Council Awards that are presented at the annual meeting (usually held in January). In order to ensure that there is adequate time for the preparation of the award plaque(s) and certificate(s) prior to the annual meeting, the Committee is expected to present its recommendations to the Section Chair by mid-December. The Committee normally terminates upon the presentation of the awards at the annual meeting. Nothing, however, precludes the Chair from continuing the life of the Committee beyond the annual meeting in order to consider other awards for presentation during the year. The life of a Committee cannot extend beyond the term of the Section Chair that appointed its members.

Membership of the Committee. In the past, the Committee was comprised of members of the Section Council (that is, former Chairs of the Section). However, for more than a decade, the Committee's membership has included Section Council and non-Section Council members. Because the "Section Council" award is one of the awards that the Committee is responsible for recommending, it is expected that at least one of the members of the Committee will be a former Chair of the Section (that is, a Section Council member). By custom, a member of the Section Council serves as chair of the Committee. The Chair determines the number of members to serve on the Committee, which has normally ranged from 2 to 5 members. Members of the Committee must be members in good standing of the Environmental Law Section.

Award Categories. The Committee has generally made recommendations in two award categories: the Section Award and the Section Council Award.

The Section Award is for individuals or organizations with a record of significant achievement, meaningful contribution, and distinguished service to the environment. The Section began presenting this award in 1981. It is expected that the achievements or contributions of an awardee have a New York State nexus or impact; however, these achievements or contributions need not relate directly to Environmental Law Section activities. While the award has not been seen to be time dependent, it has been a general rule that preference is given to "longterm commitment" rather than a single, recent achievement.

In the early years of the Section, section awards were also given to Section members for their involvement in Section activities. However, in 1990, the category of Section Council Award was separately established to recognize Section members for dedicated and continuing contributions to Section activities.

Nothing precludes the Chair of the Section from directing the Committee to consider other award categories either for the annual meeting or for presentation at other times during the Chair's term of office.

Committee Responsibilities:

1. Reviewing the names of potential awardees for the Section Council Award and Section Award.
2. Making awardee recommendations to the Section Chair.
3. Drafting the language for the award plaque(s) for the Section Award and the language for the certificate(s) for the Section Council Award, which language is submitted to the Section Chair. The Section Chair may revise the language at his or her discretion. Note: it is expected that a member of the Awards Committee will proof the award plaque after its preparation to ensure that the inscription is accurate.
4. Contacting the selected awardees to notify them of their awards and provide details to the awardees regarding attendance at the annual meeting. Please note: Non-Section awardees are guests of the Section for the annual meeting luncheon. Unless otherwise directed by the Section Chair, where an organization is receiving an award, only one individual from that organization is given guest (non-paying) status for the annual meeting luncheon. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis.
5. Presenting the Committee's report and the awards at the Section's annual meeting luncheon. Please note: By tradition, awardees are not given any time to speak or present remarks on receipt of their award. Generally, the Committee member presenting the award reads the award inscription and may, in addition, say a few additional words regarding the organization or the individual.

Number of Awards to be Given. Subject to the direction of the Chair, there is no specified number of awards to be awarded. There have been years when no Section Council Awards (2002) or Section Awards (2003, 1993) have been awarded. The general practice is to present no more than one or two Section Awards per year.

For several years a multitude of awards were issued. At various times, members of the Section have expressed concerns regarding the number of awards (both Section Council Awards and Section Awards).

Because of a concern that the number of Section Council awards that had been issued had "diluted" the value of the award, in 1999 several Section Council members proposed discontinuing the Section Council Awards or limiting the number of Section Council Awards to one per year. The proposal was not approved. This same debate resurfaced in 2004 following the presenting of four Section Council Awards at the annual meeting. The Section Cabinet recommended that more restraint be exercised, and this has been reflected in the number of awards granted since then (2005: one award; 2006: three awards; 2007: one award; 2008: two awards; and 2009: one award).

Procedure for Nominating Candidates for the Awards. There is no set procedure for nominating candidates. Past practice is that the members of the Committee consider possible candidates and make recommendations from the "pool" of candidates that the Committee itself develops based on its own knowledge. However, the Chair, other members of the Section Cabinet, members of the Executive Committee or members of the Section are not prohibited from suggesting possible candidates to the Committee.

Although it has not been the practice for past Committees to solicit suggestions, nothing precludes a Committee from doing so.

Repeat Awardees. According to custom, past recipients of the Section Council Award are ineligible for consideration for another (or second) Section Council Award. There has been only one exception to that rule, and that was later acknowledged to have been a mistake (the Committee in existence at the time was not aware that the individual had previously received a Section Council Award). This custom also applies to the Section Award.

Veto Power of the Section Chair. The Section Chair has the authority to veto recommendations of the Committee. The Chair of the Committee is expected to keep the Section Chair advised of the Committee's deliberations, thereby allowing the Section Chair the opportunity to express any reservations/concerns to the Chair of the Committee at an early stage in the Committee's deliberations.

Gift to the Immediate Past Section Chair. At the annual meeting, it is the tradition of the Section to give a gift or other award to the immediate past Section Chair in recognition of, and thanks for, his or her service as chair. The Committee is not involved in this process, and the fact that an immediate past Section Chair has received other awards in the past from the Section does not preclude the Section Chair from receiving this traditional gift or award.

List of Previous Awardees. A list of previous awardees appears on the website of the Environmental Law Section. The list and these procedures and guidelines shall be provided to the members of the Committee by the NYSBA liaison to the Environmental Law Section at such time that any Committee is established.

Submitted by:

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