

Smithsonian Scientific Diving Control Board Charter

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1. Purpose

This charter outlines the responsibilities, structure, and functions of the Smithsonian Scientific Diving Control Board (SDCB), which is required of the Smithsonian Institution to meet the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Scientific Diving Exemption of [29 CFR 1910 Subpart T](#) (1910.401(a)(2)(iv)).

2. Authority

The Smithsonian Institution grants the SDCB autonomous and absolute authority over all scientific diving activities under the responsibility of the Smithsonian as authorized in Smithsonian Directive 120 (SD120) *Scientific Diving Policy*. While independent, the SDCB reports to the Under Secretary for Science and Research (USSR) and the Director of the Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management (OSHEM) as delegated by the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration.

3. Mission Statement

The mission of the SDCB is to ensure all Smithsonian scientific diving activities meet or exceed standards set forth by the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS); uphold the relevant policies of the Smithsonian Institution; protect the safety of Smithsonian employees, affiliated personnel, and other approved scientific divers

participating in Smithsonian-led diving operations; and support and advance underwater scientific research at the Smithsonian.

4. Duties and Responsibilities

The SDCB is entrusted with the governance of the Smithsonian Institution's scientific diving activities and is accountable for executing its responsibilities with due care and in a manner that encourages a culture of safety, places the Smithsonian's interests above personal interests, and ensures decisions are in keeping with the mission outlined above. All activities and decisions of the SDCB, including all meeting minutes and other written reports, will be provided to the USSR and the Director of OSHM.

Specific duties and responsibilities are outlined in SD120 and/or the Smithsonian's Scientific Diving Safety Manual.

5. Membership

Membership on the SDCB includes ex officio members and nominated members. Ex officio membership is a responsibility of Smithsonian employees who hold the Scientific Diving Safety Officer (SDSO) or Unit Diving Officer (UDO) positions. Nominated members shall be considered by the SDCB based on their qualifications for voting or non-voting membership (see below). The SDCB shall review requests and grant membership based on the availability of seats, representation of active diving units, and ratio of active divers serving on the board. As many units as possible should be represented.

Units with scientific diving activities conducted within the last two fiscal years or planned for the next fiscal year shall have at least one voting member on the SDCB, which may be their UDO. Unit Directors seeking additional representation beyond their UDO, shall submit their request and nomination for a Unit Representative to the SDCB Chair via email.

Leadership

The SDCB shall be led by a Chair and Vice Chair nominated from and elected by a simple majority of the voting membership. The DSO and UDOs are ineligible to be nominated for or serve as Chair or Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve three-year terms, and no single individual shall serve more than two consecutive terms in either role. The Chair and Vice Chair shall be assisted by a Secretary, who is appointed by the Chair.

The Chair shall:

- Be the chief spokesperson for the SDCB.
- Preside over all meetings of the SDCB.
- Create and approve meeting agendas with input from other members of the SDCB, the Director OSHM, and the USSR.
- Assign, delegate, and track completion of tasks of the SDCB.

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- Serve as a direct line of communication to the USSR regarding issues before the SDCB and the minutes from the meetings.

The Vice Chair shall:

- Assist the Chair in the execution of the Chair's duties.
- Act as Chair of the Board in the Chair's absence to the extent needed.

The Secretary shall:

- Assist the Chair and Vice Chair in the administration of the SDCB.
- Manage the SDCB calendar, meeting agendas and minutes, and distribution lists.
- Complete additional tasks as assigned by the Chair.

Voting Membership

The SDCB must have at least seven voting members and no more than thirteen or as determined by the SDCB. Pursuant to Appendix B of 29 CFR 1910 Subpart T, the majority of voting members of the SDCB shall be active scientific divers.

Voting membership on the SDCB is open to all Smithsonian employees who have been certified for scientific diving and are (1) active scientific divers and/or (2) who supervise employees who are active scientific divers.

Voting membership shall convey for individuals holding the following positions:

- Scientific Diving Safety Officer (SDSO)
- Unit Diving Officer (UDO)

A voting member in good standing shall be afforded all the rights, privileges, and obligations of membership, including, but not limited to, the right to vote, the right to seek office, and participation in SDCB activities.

Non-Voting Membership

Non-voting membership in the SDCB is granted to the offices and positions that support the mission and goals of the SDCB. Non-voting members in good standing shall be afforded all the rights, privileges, and obligations of membership, EXCEPT the right to vote and the right to seek office.

Non-voting members may include representatives from:

- Occupational Health Services
- Office of the General Counsel
- Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Research
- OSHM Safety Division
- Facilities and/or operations that support diving operations
- Smithsonian Diving Program (SDP)

6. Meetings

As required by SD 120, the SDCB shall meet quarterly. In the first quarter of each Fiscal Year (October-December), the SDCB meeting shall include the discussion and approval of annually required items, including any leadership votes and the annual reports to USSR/OSHEM and AAUS.

Additional meetings may be requested by any SDCB member through the Chair, who will decide whether to call a special session.

Attendance of the quarterly and annual meeting will be limited to the voting and non-voting members listed above and visitors under the conditions addressed below. All meetings must have a quorum of at least two thirds of the voting membership to conduct SDCB business.

Visitors

A situation may arise where the expertise of an individual outside of the membership of the SDCB may be requested. The request for participation of the individual will be made by the Chair and limited to the portion of the meeting pertinent to such individual's expertise.

Minutes

Minutes and a status of all actions from each meeting will be provided in a timely manner to the full SDCB membership, the Director of the OSHEM and the USSR.

7. Voting

Decisions of the SDCB shall be made by a majority vote of a quorum of the voting membership, be it in person or virtually (e.g., via Zoom meeting). For matters that may not require discussion or deliberation by the SDCB, the Chair may choose to conduct the vote via email.

Whether in a meeting or via email, the vote of each member will be recorded internally, and an overall general tally of the votes will be recorded in the minutes.

The Chair shall strive to build consensus and ensure the maximum number of members participate in the vote. In the case of a tie, the Chair shall cast the deciding vote.

The SDCB recognizes that conflicts of interest will arise due to the makeup of SDCB membership and the positions SDCB members hold within SI. SDCB members shall recuse themselves from votes where a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest is identified.

Any member of the SDCB who has an objection to the outcome of a vote may raise their opposition at the meeting or via written communication to the Chair of the SDCB who will share it with the Director of OSHM and USSR.

8. Reports

At the end of each calendar year, the SDCB will prepare a statistical analysis of the SDP diving operations. This report will be made available to the Director of OSHM, USSR and all Smithsonian Divers.

9. Revisions and Approvals

The charter shall be reviewed by the SDCB every three years. Revisions to this charter may be undertaken by the SDCB at its discretion or at the request of Smithsonian leadership. New versions of this charter shall be approved by Smithsonian leadership noted below.

Version 1.0 approved by:

- Valerie Paul, SDCB Chair (approved 16 April 2025)
- Rich Wright, Director of OSHM (approved 16 April 2025)
- Ron Cortez, USFA (approved 17 April 2025)
- Ellen Stofan, USSR (approved 17 April 2025)