

OCEAN BOUND PLASTIC

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

OBP COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY



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Reference Documents

This policy shall be used together with the following complementary documents:

- OBP Certification Program Standards;
- OBP Program Definitions & Annexes;
- OBP Logos Uses and Claims Guidelines;
- OBP Certification Bodies Approval Process;
- OBP Audit Protocol;
- Other applicable OBP Certification Program procedures, guidelines and templates;
- ISO/IEC 17065, Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services;

The applicable version of the OBP Program documents shall be used.

All OBP documents are available on the “document center” section of the OBP Program website (www.obpcert.org)

Revisions and Updates

This policy will be revised if and as required, to incorporate improvements or clarifications that will not change substantially the content of the policy. Further significant revision schedule will be communicated on the OBP Program website. Please send any comment you have regarding the policy to [contact\(at\)obpcert.org](mailto:contact(at)obpcert.org)

Revision history

Date	Version	Changes
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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of Zero Plastic Oceans is to protect oceans from the continuous leakage of Plastic waste from land-based activity by developing incentives and models that promote the collection of Ocean Bound Plastic¹ (OBP).

The **OBP Certification Program** was designed to encourage the removal of OBP from the environment by adding value in effectively collecting and treating it before it reaches oceans. The scheme is composed of two subprograms; the **OBP Recycling Subprogram**, and the **OBP Neutrality Subprogram**.

When OBP is commercially recyclable², its collection and Recycling can be encouraged by certifying its origin and traceability, giving it a higher market value with the OBP Recycling Subprogram. This chain of custody is certified using the OBP Collection Organization Standard, the OBP Recycling Organization Standard and the OBP Brand Standard depending on which step on the chain an organization is.

When OBP is not commercially recyclable³, its collection and final treatment can be encouraged by certifying the process with the OBP Neutrality Subprogram. In this model, Plastic producers or users can contribute to a better environment by removing a determined volume of plastic waste from nature through the acquisition of OBP Credits. This model is certified using the OBP Neutralization Services Provider Standard and the OBP Plastic Producers & Users Standard.

Organizations may certify themselves for one or both subprograms as they are complementary solutions. Working with both subprograms makes sense in terms of economic efficiency, given all OBP is collected and marketed at once. It also makes sense from the environmental perspective, since it is only by addressing both, Commercially and Non-Commercially Recyclable OBP, that we will be able to make a real impact.

Organizations collecting OBP willing to provide enhanced social benefits to their employees and informal collectors (Independent Collectors), may additionally certify to the Social+ OBP Component.

¹ Ocean Bound Plastic, is, as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, Plastic litter that will be carried away to oceans in particular by the effects of currents, winds, river flows or tides.

² Commercially recyclable OBP as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, means that OBP is technically recyclable and that it can be sold locally to recyclers for a price that renders its collection attractive to waste pickers or collection organizations. Currently, especially in countries where OBP is leaking into the oceans, a significant portion of technically recyclable OBP is unfortunately not commercially recyclable.

³ Not commercially recyclable OBP as defined in OBP-DEF-GUI, means that OBP cannot be sold for an attractive price but also includes products or packaging which are technically not recyclable (because of the resin used, the mix of different materials or because they are too damaged).



2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a transparent, impartial and consistent process for receiving, evaluating, investigating and resolving complaints or appeals related to the Ocean Bound Plastic (OBP) Certification Program.

The policy defines the responsibilities of Zero Plastic Oceans (ZPO), approved Certification Bodies and other relevant parties in the handling of complaints or appeals.

This policy applies only to complaints or appeals that are related to the scope and activities of the OBP Certification Program.

The complaint or appeal process is intended to provide an effective mechanism for identifying and addressing concerns regarding the implementation, certification, use and management of the OBP Certification Program.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints or appeals concerning:

- Organizations certified against an OBP Standard;
- Certification Bodies approved by ZPO to perform certification activities under the OBP Certification Program;
- Non-certified organizations making unauthorized use of OBP logos, trademarks or certification claims;
- Zero Plastic Oceans, in its role as scheme owner, standard setter and program manager of the OBP Certification Program.

The policy applies to complaints or appeals relating to the implementation or credibility of the OBP Certification Program, including concerns regarding compliance with applicable OBP requirements, certification decisions, certification activities, OBP claims, logo use, traceability, or other matters falling within the scope of the Program.

This policy does not apply to matters that are outside the scope of the OBP Certification Program, such as commercial or contractual disputes; product quality complaints or employment or labor disputes that are not related to requirements applicable under the OBP Certification Program or an OBP Claim; other matters that do not concern the activities, requirements or integrity of the OBP Certification Program.

Where a complaint or appeal contains both matters within and outside the scope of this policy, ZPO will consider only the elements that fall within the scope of the OBP Certification Program.



4. PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS OR APPEALS

Complaints or appeals shall be handled according to the following principles.

4.1. IMPARTIALITY

Complaints or appeals shall be evaluated and handled objectively and without undue influence from the complainant, the organization concerned, a Certification Body or any other interested party. Personnel involved in the handling of a complaint or appeal shall not be directly involved in the activity or decision that is the subject of the complaint or appeal where this could create a conflict of interest.

4.2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Information received during the complaint or appeal process shall be treated confidentially and shall only be shared with parties having a legitimate need to access such information.

4.3. TRANSPARENCY

The complainant shall be informed of the status and outcome of the complaint or appeal, subject to confidentiality and applicable legal requirements.

4.4. EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

Complaints or appeals shall be assessed based on available and relevant evidence. ZPO and, where applicable, the Certification Body shall seek sufficient information to establish the facts and determine whether the complaint or appeal is substantiated.

4.5. TIMELY HANDLING

Complaints or appeals shall be handled within the timeframes defined in this policy. Where additional time is required because of the complexity of a complaint or appeal, the involvement of a third party or other justified circumstances, the complainant shall be informed.

4.6. NON-DISCRIMINATION

No complainant shall be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of submitting a complaint or appeal in good faith.

4.7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

ZPO shall take appropriate measures to identify and manage conflicts of interest during the complaint or appeal process. Where the impartiality of ZPO personnel may be compromised, another qualified person or an external expert may be appointed to handle or support the investigation.



5.SUBMISSION OF COMPLAINTS OR APPEALS

Complaints shall be submitted to ZPO using the official **OBP Complaints and Appeals Form** in the OBP Program website (www.obpcert.org).

The filled form shall provide sufficient information to allow ZPO to understand the nature and scope of the complaint or appeal and to determine whether it falls within the scope of this policy.

The complainant should provide, where available:

- Name and contact details of the complainant;
- Name of the organization, Certification Body or other party concerned;
- Description of the complaint or appeal;
- Identification of the relevant OBP Standard, requirement, claim, certification activity or other applicable element of the OBP Certification Program;
- Relevant dates and locations;
- Supporting evidence or documentation;
- Any other information considered relevant to the complaint.

Complaints or appeals may be submitted anonymously. However, anonymous complaints or appeals are not recommended because the absence of contact information may limit ZPO's ability to request clarification, obtain additional evidence and communicate the outcome of the investigation.

ZPO shall accept complaints or appeals submitted in English. Where a complaint or appeal is submitted in another language, ZPO may request that the complainant provide an English translation before the complaint or appeal can be fully assessed.

Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, ZPO shall record the complaint or appeal and initiate the admissibility review described in Section 6.



6. ADMISSIBILITY REVIEW

ZPO shall perform an initial review of each complaint or appeal to determine whether it falls within the scope of this policy and whether sufficient information is available to proceed.

Within 10 business days of receiving the complaint or appeal, ZPO shall inform the complainant of the status of the complaint or appeal.

The complaint or appeal shall be classified as one of the following:

1. Admitted

The complaint or appeal falls within the scope of this policy and sufficient information is available to initiate the complaint or appeal handling process.

2. Rejected

The complaint or appeal does not fall within the scope of this policy, is not related to the OBP Certification Program, or cannot reasonably be considered a complaint or appeal relevant to the activities of ZPO.

3. Additional Information Required

The complaint or appeal appears to fall within the scope of this policy, but additional information is required before a decision on admissibility can be made. ZPO shall specify the information required and provide the complainant with a period of 10 business days to provide the requested information. If the requested information is not provided within this period, ZPO may consider the complaint or appeal as rejected. If the requested information has been received, ZPO shall continue the admissibility review and inform the complainant of the resulting status in the following additional 10 days from the reception of the requested information.



7. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

Once a complaint has been admitted, ZPO shall determine the appropriate handling process based on the party or activity concerned.

The OBP Certification Program recognizes four categories of complaints:

1. Complaints against Certified Organizations;
2. Complaints against Certification Bodies;
3. Complaints concerning unauthorized OBP claims or logo use;
4. Complaints against Zero Plastic Oceans.

7.1. COMPLAINTS AGAINST CERTIFIED ORGANIZATIONS

Complaints concerning an organization certified under an OBP Standard shall be transferred to the Certification Body responsible for the organization's certification. The Certification Body shall investigate the complaint in accordance with the applicable OBP requirements and its own relevant procedures.

ZPO shall remain responsible for overseeing the complaint process and shall ensure that the Certification Body:

- Acknowledges the complaint;
- Reviews the relevant evidence;
- Conducts an appropriate investigation;
- Determines whether the complaint is substantiated;
- Identifies any necessary corrective actions or certification decisions;
- Provides the findings and proposed resolution to ZPO.

Where necessary, the Certification Body may conduct additional document reviews, interviews, audits, site visits or other verification activities.

ZPO shall review the information provided by the Certification Body and determine whether the investigation and proposed resolution are adequately supported and consistent with the requirements of the OBP Certification Program. Where ZPO considers that the investigation is insufficient, ZPO may request additional investigation or evidence from the Certification Body.

The final resolution shall be communicated to the complainant by ZPO.

The outcome of a complaint may result in corrective actions or other measures being required from the Certified Organization. However, a complaint does not automatically result in suspension or withdrawal of certification.



7.2. COMPLAINTS AGAINST CERTIFICATION BODIES

Complaints concerning an approved Certification Body shall be handled directly by ZPO.

Following the admissibility review, ZPO shall investigate the complaint and may request additional information from the complainant, the Certification Body or other relevant parties.

The investigation may include:

Review of audit and certification records;

Review of communications between the Certification Body and the relevant organization;

Interviews with relevant personnel;

Review of the Certification Body's procedures and implementation of OBP requirements;

Additional technical reviews or other verification activities if considered necessary.

The Certification Body concerned shall be given an opportunity to provide relevant information and respond to the complaint. Where appropriate, ZPO may require corrective actions, additional monitoring or other measures from the Certification Body.

ZPO shall document the investigation and communicate the final decision to the complainant.

The outcome of a complaint may result in corrective actions or other measures being required from the Certification Body. However, a complaint does not automatically result in suspension or withdrawal of the authorization of the Certification Body to Audit against the OBP Standards.

7.3. COMPLAINTS REGARDING UNAUTHORIZED CLAIMS OR LOGO MISUSE

Complaints concerning non-certified organizations making unauthorized use of OBP logos, trademarks or certification claims shall be handled directly by ZPO.

The investigation may include:

Review of the claim, logo use or promotional material;

Verification of the certification status of the organization;

Request for information from the organization concerned;

Consultation with a Certification Body or other competent third party where appropriate.

Depending on the nature and severity of the case, ZPO may take one or more of the following actions:

- Request clarification from the organization;
- Request correction or removal of an unauthorized claim;



- Request removal or cessation of unauthorized use of an OBP logo or trademark;
- Publish an appropriate clarification where this is necessary to protect the integrity of the OBP Certification Program;
- Refer the matter to an appropriate Certification Body where certification or verification activities are relevant;
- Consider legal action where appropriate.

7.4. COMPLAINTS AGAINST ZERO PLASTIC OCEANS

Complaints concerning Zero Plastic Oceans shall be handled by ZPO. However, the complaint shall be assessed and investigated by personnel who were not directly involved in the activity, decision or conduct that is the subject of the complaint. If that is not feasible, to ensure impartiality, ZPO may appoint an independent external expert or other qualified third party to support or conduct the investigation.

The investigation shall consider the relevant evidence and applicable OBP Program requirements.

Where the complaint identifies a deficiency in the OBP Certification Program or its management, ZPO shall determine whether corrective or preventive actions are necessary.

The investigation and final decision shall be documented.

The complainant shall be informed of the outcome and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decision.

7.5. TIMEFRAMES

Within a month from notification of admission of a complaint, ZPO will either provide a formal written decision and corrective action, or in cases where the investigation requires more time, ZPO will inform the complainant about the additional time required for the final outcome.

8.CONFIDENTIALITY

ZPO shall treat complaints or appeals and the information obtained during their investigation as confidential, subject to applicable legal and contractual requirements.

Information shall only be shared with persons or organizations that have a legitimate need to access the information for the purpose of assessing, investigating or resolving the complaint or appeal. ZPO shall ensure that such persons or organizations are bound by a confidentiality agreement with ZPO prior to transmitting any information that is identified as confidential.

ZPO shall take reasonable measures to protect the identity of complainants where appropriate.

Information relating to complaints or appeals shall not be disclosed publicly unless such disclosure is necessary and appropriate or is required by applicable law.

9.RECORDS

ZPO shall maintain records relating to complaints or appeals handled under this policy.

Records shall include, as applicable:

- Complaint or appeal and completed Complaints and Appeals Form;
- Date of receipt;
- Correspondence with the complainant;
- Evidence and supporting documentation;
- Admissibility assessment;
- Investigation records;
- Information received from relevant organizations or Certification Bodies;
- Investigation findings;
- Decisions and rationale;
- Corrective actions;
- Follow-up and monitoring activities;
- Final response to the complainant;
- Closure of the complaint or appeal.

Complaint or appeal records shall be maintained for a minimum period of **4 years**.

Records shall be stored in a manner that ensures their confidentiality, integrity and accessibility to authorized personnel only.



10. APPEALS

A complainant who disagrees with the outcome of a complaint handling process may request an appeal through the official OBP Complaint Form.

The appeal shall clearly identify:

- The complaint concerned;
- The decision being challenged;
- The reasons why the complainant considers the decision inappropriate or incomplete;
- Any new information or evidence considered relevant.

Upon receipt of an admissible appeal, ZPO shall assign the re-examination to a different complaint manager or other qualified person who was not responsible for the original investigation or decision.

The person conducting the appeal shall review the original complaint, investigation, evidence and decision and shall consider any new relevant information submitted by the complainant.

Where necessary, additional information may be requested from the complainant, the organization concerned, the Certification Body or another relevant party.

The appeal shall otherwise follow the same principles and general process defined in this policy, including impartiality, confidentiality, evidence-based decision making and the applicable timeframes.

The outcome of the appeal shall be documented and communicated to the complainant. The appeal decision shall constitute the final decision of ZPO under this complaint process, without prejudice to any rights available to the complainant under applicable law.

