

## Principle 4 of the Sports for Nature Framework

### Educate and inspire positive action for nature across and beyond sport

Principle 4 of the [Sports for Nature Framework](#) highlights the power of sports to raise awareness about nature and its critical role in sustaining both life on earth and the future of sport. By engaging vast, diverse audiences, sport can educate, inspire and drive positive action for nature.

#### Relevance to sports organisations

Nature provides the backdrop for countless sports, from grassroots recreation to the world's biggest events, making its health inseparable from the prosperity of the sports industry. Sport depends on nature in three key ways.

- **Playground** – The spaces where people practice, train and compete.
- **Provider** – Essential resources like clean water, air and healthy food.
- **Protector** – Natural systems and native species that safeguard communities and sporting infrastructure.

Principle 4 of the Framework is particularly relevant to sport due to its immense cultural reach and ability to inspire action. Sport's deep emotional connection with athletes and fans allows it to amplify nature and biodiversity issues, whether through large-scale campaigns that reach millions or localised initiatives that create personal impact. Sporting events can also serve as testing grounds for conservation solutions and platforms for education.

Educational opportunities are especially valuable for sports organisations. Sports like cycling, climbing, skiing, canoeing, sailing, football and running, among others, offer powerful ways to highlight

environmental challenges and their impact on people. Given sport's deep connection with young audiences in particular, the potential for education and awareness is vast.

#### Putting Principle 4 into practice

##### 1. Make connections

- Before communicating your role in the Framework and your commitment to nature conservation, you need to understand the relationship between your sport, your organisation and nature. How does your sport depend on nature? What impact does your organisation have on nature?

#### Full text of Principle 4

##### Educate and inspire positive action for nature across and beyond sport

**Goal:** Our organisation will educate and inspire greater awareness and action for nature within our sport and our wider communities and stakeholders.

##### We will

**assess and track** the awareness and understanding of the importance of nature with our stakeholders, including our athletes, teams, staff, volunteers, contractors, sponsors, spectators, advertisers and media partners.

**create** an engaging and wide-ranging education, communications and outreach plan that is relevant to our organisation's relationship to nature.

**implement** the plan to engage our stakeholders on nature.

**engage and support** athletes and sport organisations to be champions for a nature-positive future.

**promote** Sports for Nature and encourage others to join and take positive action for nature across their sports.

- To engage audiences, you must first be clear on this connection yourself. Topics like biodiversity may seem distant from sport, but without a healthy environment, many sports would struggle to thrive. Before crafting your message, ensure you can articulate the strong link between the health of nature and the success of your sport or organisation.

## 2. Understand and define your audiences

- As a sports club or organisation, you interact with multiple stakeholders, each with different perspectives and expectations. Effective communication requires audience segmentation, and sustainability messaging is no different. Fans, commercial partners, colleagues, athletes and local communities all engage with your organisation in unique ways, so your content should be tailored accordingly.
- Consider why each group would care. Fans might be directly affected by environmental changes. Commercial partners may have biodiversity targets. Athletes often train and compete in nature. Understanding what motivates each audience is key to shaping your message and driving engagement.
- World Rugby, for example, created the [Rugby for Nature Toolkit](#) to help clubs and players take action to protect and conserve nature. The toolkit outlines 10 steps clubs and players can follow, including forming a 'Nature Squad', developing a game plan, engaging suppliers and rallying community involvement.

## 3. Craft key messages

- Why does nature and biodiversity matter to your organisation? Why have you joined the Sports for Nature Framework? What are your targets? Answering these questions will help clarify your messaging and make it more compelling.

- Your sport may have a natural connection to biodiversity. Your mascot might be an endangered species. Or perhaps you recognise the operational risks of biodiversity loss. Whatever the link, framing your message in a way that resonates with your audience is crucial.
- Once you've defined your key audiences and know how you want them to engage, develop the right content, campaigns and communication assets to reach them effectively.
- A good example here is World Sailing, which has hosted a series of '[Sustainability Sessions](#)' to equip member associations and other members of the sailing community with the tools and guidance to minimise their impact on nature and support conservation efforts. Sessions focused on nature have covered topics such as megafauna sightings and strikes, biosecurity and ocean health.

### Five tips to avoid greenwashing

The European Union defines [greenwashing](#) as unreliable environmental claims that can mislead consumers and create a "false impression" of environmental benefits or impacts.

While communicating about sustainability efforts and nature conservation is important, there is sometimes a fine line between compelling storytelling and greenwashing.

Here are a few ways to avoid greenwashing:

- Be specific and avoid vague, meaningless terms like "eco-friendly" or "green".
- Focus on measurable targets – what are your objectives and KPIs, and have you achieved them? How did you get there?
- Honesty and authenticity matter more than spin. If you haven't met a target, be transparent about why and explain your next steps.
- Back up your claims with evidence, such as third-party verified reports and audits.
- Communicate consistently. Even when there's little to report, keep stakeholders informed rather than going silent.

#### 4. Choose your channels

- Your communication channels should align with your audience. To reach fans, use your website, app, social media or event activations. For internal or B2B communication, engage colleagues and commercial partners through meetings, workshops, webinars, presentations or reports. For community outreach and youth engagement, educational materials or cooperation with local schools or youth groups might be the best approach.

- A useful step is to collaborate with your communications team, if applicable. Bring them a clear plan outlining your target audiences, key messages and touchpoints, and explore how nature-focused messaging can align with the organisation's broader communication strategy.

#### 5. Get excited!

- Sport unites people and sparks passion. No matter who you're engaging, make it inclusive and inspiring. Give people a sense of belonging, connect them to your sport or club, and provide them with the tools to contribute to a positive impact.



Kunming-Montreal

**GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

Principle 4 strongly aligns with the targets of the [Biodiversity Plan](#), a UN-led global landmark agreement for nature to safeguard and sustainably use biodiversity with global goals and targets to be achieved by 2030 and beyond.

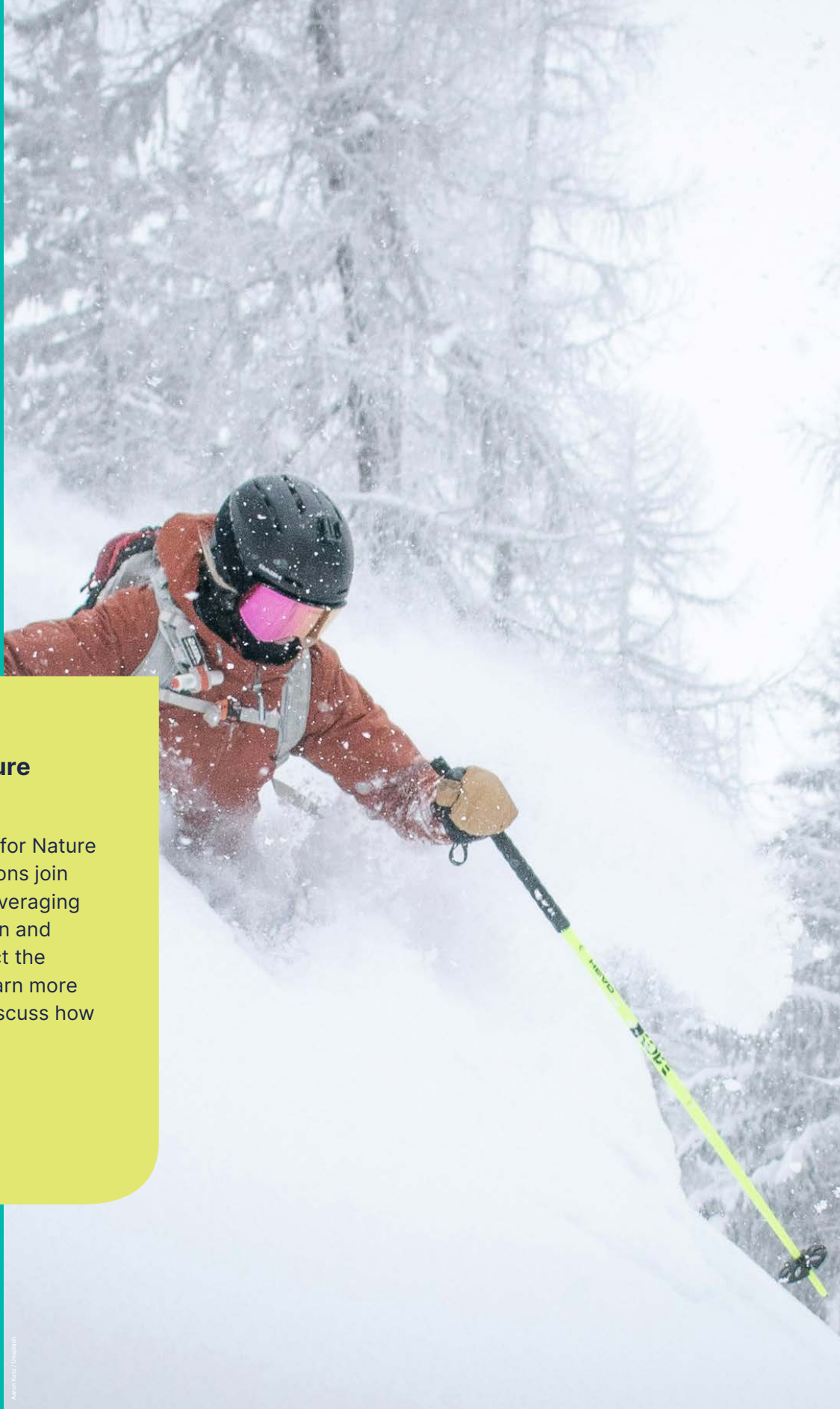
Principle 4 relates to the Biodiversity Plan targets, in particular:

- **Target 16:** Make sure people are encouraged and educated to make sustainable choices.
- **Target 8:** Strengthen capacity building.
- **Target 21:** Ensure information and knowledge are accessible.

## Join the Sports for Nature community

By committing to the Sports for Nature Framework, sport organisations join a community dedicated to leveraging sports towards the protection and restoration of nature. Contact the Sports for Nature team to learn more about the Framework and discuss how you can get involved.

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