

Strengthening the FNPS Community:

Core and Affiliate Chapter Models for Sustainable Growth

I. Executive Summary

The Florida Native Plant Society, Inc. (FNPS) is a statewide network built on the energy, expertise, and commitment of its local chapters. As FNPS has grown, so have the administrative responsibilities of maintaining compliance, financial management, and coordination across dozens of volunteer-led groups.

To better support chapters of varying size and capacity, FNPS is proposing an additional organizational model — the Core Chapter — as an optional alternative to the existing Chapter (affiliate) structure under which all chapters currently operate.

Both chapter models share FNPS's mission of conserving and celebrating Florida's native plants and native plant communities. The distinction would lie in how each group operates within the FNPS framework. Under the proposed model, Core Chapters would operate fully under FNPS's umbrella, benefiting from integrated systems, financial and legal protection, and simplified compliance. Chapters (affiliates) would continue under their current structure, aligned with FNPS's mission while managing their own governance and required filings.

This dual-model framework is intended to maintain strong standards of accountability while giving local groups the flexibility to choose the level of administrative responsibility that best fits their capacity.

Whether operating as a Core Chapter or a Chapter (affiliate), every group within the FNPS network shares a singular purpose: to preserve, conserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

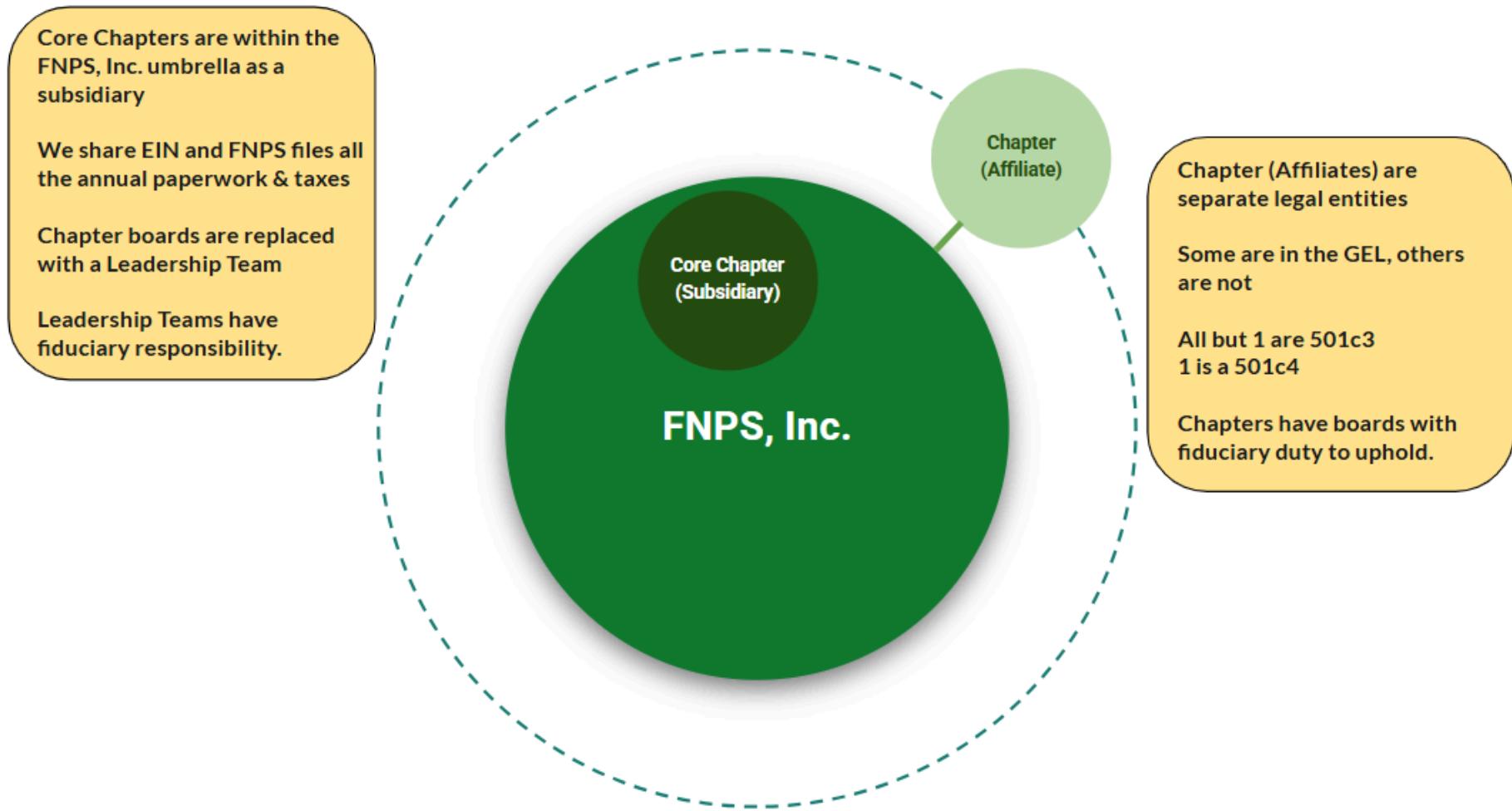
II. Background and Purpose

FNPS's current Chapters (affiliates) connect communities to native plants through education, outreach, advocacy, and volunteer service. Over time, FNPS has recognized that the administrative expectations placed on all chapters—such as annual filings and financial management—create unequal burdens. Some chapters are thriving under these requirements, while others struggle with compliance or leadership continuity.

To address this, FNPS is developing an additional model that aligns with the Society's mission while accommodating different capacities. The proposed Core Chapter model would integrate participating chapters under FNPS's systems and nonprofit status, while the Chapter (affiliate) model would continue for chapters that wish to maintain their current structure and responsibilities within the FNPS framework.

Figure 1. Relationship of FNPS, Inc. to Its Chapters

The diagram illustrates FNPS, Inc. as the parent organization encompassing Core Chapters as subsidiaries within its legal structure and Chapters (affiliates) as separate entities operating under the broader FNPS framework.



III. The Two Models

Under this proposal, FNPS would offer two chapter models [See **Figure 1** for a visual comparison of the Core Chapter's relationship to FNPS, Inc. and the position of Chapters (affiliates) within the overall structure.]:

A. Core Chapter (subsidiary of FNPS)

A Core Chapter would be a subsidiary of FNPS—operating fully under the Society's umbrella with no separate corporate status. Core Chapters would be led by a local leadership team (not a legal board of directors) and would benefit from centralized support and protections, including streamlined compliance and an FNPS-managed business checking subaccount that keeps chapter funds secure and non-commingled.

B. Chapter (affiliate)

A Chapter (affiliate) would continue within the FNPS framework under our agreed upon current governance and filing structures. These chapters would manage their own banking and compliance through their elected board officers and would collaborate with FNPS on programs, communications, and outreach.

IV. Comparative Overview

Under the proposed framework, Core Chapters would offload legal, financial, and operational responsibilities to FNPS, while Chapters (affiliates) would continue managing these functions through their own boards in accordance with FNPS policy. **Figure 2** summarizes the key characteristics of both models, highlighting differences in governance, operations, and support. This distinction would allow chapters to choose the structure that best matches their capacity and administrative needs.

V. Delegation of Responsibilities for Core Chapter Officers

To ensure clarity in the governance relationship between FNPS and any future Core Chapters, it is important to define how local leadership teams would operate within the Society's organizational framework. While Core Chapters would not hold separate legal or fiduciary authority, they would be entrusted with managing FNPS programs, funds, and member engagement at the local level. The following section outlines how these responsibilities would be delegated and the standards of accountability that would guide Core Chapter leadership.

Core Chapters of FNPS would operate as integral divisions of the Society, without separate corporate or fiduciary authority. The FNPS Board of Directors would retain all legal and fiduciary duties on behalf of the organization, while Core Chapter leadership teams would serve as delegated managers of local programs and resources under FNPS's authority.

Figure 2. Comparison of Core and Affiliate Chapter Models

This table outlines the primary distinctions between the proposed Core Chapter and existing Chapter (affiliate) models across areas such as finance, governance, operations, activities, and protection.

| | Characteristic | Core | Affiliate |
|------------|---|------|--------------------------------------|
| Finances | FNPS-managed Chapter checking account ensuring secure banking and segregation of funds. | ✓ | ✗ |
| | Recognized as part of FNPS, Inc. (no independent annual filings required: Sunbiz, FDACS, IRS) | ✓ | ✗ |
| | Financial filings and compliance handled through FNPS umbrella status | ✓ | ✗ |
| | Routine bookkeeping and reconciliations optional and supported by FNPS guidance | ✓ | ✗ |
| Governance | Fully chartered under FNPS Core Chapter bylaws (subsidiary) | ✓ | ✗ |
| | Submits annual reports, budgets, and rosters to FNPS | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Receives FNPS board oversight and guidance as needed | ✓ | ✗ |
| Operations | Access to FNPS operational resources (phone, email, Google Workspace, Canva) | ✓ | ✗ |
| | Promotes events on statewide FNPS calendar and communications channels | ✓ | ✓ |
| Activities | Holds regular meetings, arranges speakers, field trips, and other activities | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Engages members and grows participation with FNPS support | ✓ | ✓ |
| Protection | Covered under FNPS General Liability, Volunteer Accident, and Cyber insurance | ✓ | ✓ (liability/accident) \$ (cyber) |

A. Role of Core Chapter Officers

Core Chapter leadership teams would represent FNPS locally, managing programs, finances, and member engagement in alignment with FNPS's mission, bylaws, and policies. They would not serve as directors of a separate corporation but would be accountable to FNPS leadership for stewardship of FNPS assets, funds, and reputation.

B. Financial Responsibilities

- All Core Chapter funds would be held within an FNPS-managed checking subaccount under the Society's EIN, ensuring transparent and non-commingled banking.
 - Leadership teams would be responsible for day-to-day financial management, following FNPS's accounting, reporting, and expenditure procedures.
 - Leadership teams would maintain accurate records, submit receipts and reconciliations, and ensure funds are used only for FNPS purposes.
 - FNPS would retain oversight authority and may review or audit accounts as needed.

C. Administrative and Ethical Conduct

- Both chapter models must conduct business in accordance with FNPS's Bylaws, Code of Conduct, and other policies.
- All chapter leaders—whether serving on a leadership team or as board officers—are expected to act with integrity, transparency, and in the best interest of FNPS.
- Leadership teams and boards should report any potential misuse of funds or ethical concerns promptly to the FNPS Executive Director or Board of Directors. For more information, refer to the FNPS Whistleblower Policy.

D. Programmatic Responsibilities

- Both chapter models organize regular meetings, field trips, educational programs, and other activities that further FNPS's mission.
- All chapter communications, branding, and public events must align with FNPS's statewide standards and messaging.
- All chapters are encouraged to collaborate with other FNPS chapters to extend reach and impact.

E. Accountability

- Core Chapter leadership teams would be accountable to the FNPS Executive Director and Board for proper management of FNPS resources and mission-aligned activities.
- Both chapters would submit annual reports, budgets, and leadership or officer rosters as requested by FNPS.
- FNPS may adjust delegated authority if necessary to ensure compliance or protect the organization's integrity.

F. Summary

Core Chapter leadership teams would not be fiduciaries in the legal sense, but they would serve as trusted stewards of FNPS resources, reputation, and mission at the local level. Their leadership would extend the reach of FNPS across Florida while operating under one unified and accountable structure.

By clearly defining the delegated responsibilities of Core Chapter leadership teams, FNPS would ensure that local leadership operates with confidence, transparency, and alignment under one unified framework. This shared accountability would strengthen the Society's ability to fulfill its mission statewide while empowering volunteers to focus on what matters most — conserving, restoring, and celebrating Florida's native plants.

VI. Choosing the Right Model

The introduction of this proposed new chapter model gives FNPS flexibility to match structure with capacity. While both models would serve the same mission, the Core Chapter model would offer greater integration, stability, and access to Society resources.

Chapters that wish to focus on programming, reduce administrative workload, and operate under FNPS's enhanced support could elect to become Core Chapters.

Chapters that wish to continue managing their own governance and compliance activities through their board officers within the FNPS framework would remain Chapters (affiliates).

VII. Implementation and Next Steps

1. FNPS will work with chapters to assess interest and determine which model best supports each group's goals and capacity.
2. Existing chapters would remain Chapters (affiliates) unless they choose to adopt the Core Chapter model.

3. Chapters that transition to the Core model would gain simplified administration and access to more administrative and operational support services.
4. Chapters (affiliates) that continue with their current structure would continue to remain valued partners in outreach, advocacy, and education.
5. New or emerging groups would receive guidance to evaluate which model best fits their structure and resources.

VIII. Conclusion

The strength of FNPS lies in its chapters — the people and communities who bring its mission to life. By introducing the proposed Core Chapter model alongside the existing Chapter (affiliate) model, FNPS aims to provide every group with a structure suited to its needs and capacity.

Core Chapters would benefit from full integration, support, and protection under FNPS, while Chapters (affiliates) would continue operating within the FNPS network under our current governance agreement and reporting structure.

Together, both models would strengthen FNPS's statewide network for conservation and advocacy.

IX. Next Steps for Chapters

1. Self-Assessment: Chapter boards review current structure, capacity, and administrative workload.
2. Consultation: FNPS leadership meets with chapter officers to discuss model fit.
3. Designation: Chapters confirm Core Chapter or Chapter (affiliate) status via memorandum of understanding (MOU).
4. Onboarding: FNPS assists Core Chapters with setup of banking, email, and calendars.