# CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

## POLICY ON CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS (FORESTS, MOUNTAINS, AND DRYLANDS)

### 1. PREAMBLE

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems as vital conditions for ecological stability, environmental sustainability, biodiversity preservation, and climate resilience.

The University is committed to fostering an institutional environment across all its campuses and landholdings in which land use, infrastructural development, research, and community engagement align with rigorous environmental stewardship and sustainable land management principles.

This Policy establishes the University's institutional commitment to preventing land degradation, protecting native forests, restoring degraded terrains—including hillside and mountain slopes—and promoting sustainable land practices within drylands and agrarian vegetation zones associated with the University.

The Policy is intended to operate consistently with the Constitution and environmental laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, national forestry and biodiversity policies, Anambra State environmental protection legislation, the University's enabling statutory framework, and applicable international commitments, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 15: Life on Land).

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- protect intact natural habitats, forests, and sensitive landscapes owned by or associated with the University;
- provide a binding regulatory framework for the ecological restoration of degraded soils, eroded topographies, and deforested areas;
- promote the sustainable management and conservation of dryland and sub-humid vegetation zones within University properties;
- safeguard mountain, hillside, and sloping terrains from erosion, illegal quarrying, and unapproved construction;
- ensure environmental impact assessments precede major land clearing, structural development, or physical site alterations;
- mitigate biodiversity loss by preserving indigenous flora, fauna, and key ecological corridors;
- foster academic research, innovation, and community outreach in sustainable land management, afforestation, and ecosystem restoration; and
- establish institutional mechanisms for monitoring compliance, evaluating land use practices, and responding to ecological violations.

### 3. SCOPE

This Policy applies across all campuses, research stations, agricultural estates, and land holdings of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, and covers:

- all academic, administrative, and technical staff;

- enrolled students across all faculties, institutes, and departments;
- contractors, developers, concessionaires, and service providers operating on University land;
- agricultural tenants, farm operators, and research station managers; and
- visitors, community partners, and third-party users of University land assets.

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as authorising illegal land clearing, unauthorized logging, poaching, bush burning, unsustainable soil extraction, habitat destruction, or violation of environmental standards established by law or University regulations.

## 4. PRINCIPLES OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION

### 4.1 Protection and Sustainable Management of Forests

The University shall protect existing forested tracts, greenbelts, and woodlots under its control. The harvesting, clearing, or trimming of trees on University land shall be subject to prior environmental authorization. Tree removal for construction must be offset by compulsory replanting of indigenous tree species at a minimum ratio prescribed by the University Land and Estates Committee.

### 4.2 Conservation of Mountain and Sloping Terrains

Recognising the vulnerability of hillside and elevated topographies to severe gully erosion and land sliding, the University strictly regulates physical development on steep slopes. Construction, excavation, or clearing on elevated or mountainous terrains must incorporate approved civil engineering and bio-engineering soil stabilization measures.

### 4.3 Sustainable Use and Protection of Drylands and Vegetation

The University shall enforce sustainable land management in seasonal drylands, savannas, and agrarian zones under its administration. Bush burning is strictly prohibited on all University properties. Soil conservation practices, including cover cropping, organic soil conditioning, and controlled irrigation, shall be mandated for all agricultural activities.

## 5. ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

### 5.1 Reforestation and Habitat Rehabilitation

The University shall establish annual afforestation and reforestation programs targeting degraded, eroded, or vacant parcels of land. Restoration efforts shall prioritize native tree species, soil-enriching vegetation, and ecosystem-supportive flora.

### 5.2 Soil Erosion Control and Gully Management

Given the specific ecological vulnerability of the region to severe gully erosion, the University shall institute structural and biological controls—including drainage management, contour planting, and deep-root vegetation anchoring—to protect vulnerable land resources.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS

No capital development project, physical infrastructure, road construction, or large-scale agricultural clearing shall commence on University land without undergoing an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approved by the designated University authority.

All development projects must include explicit plans for topsoil preservation, drainage management, tree replacement, and post-construction landscape restoration.

## 7. PROTECTION FROM ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION AND VIOLATIONS

No individual or corporate entity operating on University grounds shall engage in activities that cause intentional or negligent destruction of protected habitats. Prohibited actions include:

- unauthorized felling of mature or protected trees;
- unregulated sand mining, quarrying, or soil excavation;
- indiscriminate dumping of solid, hazardous, or construction waste in natural drainage basins or forest zones; and
- wildlife poaching, trapping, or destruction of critical animal habitats.

**8. RESEARCH, CURRICULUM INTEGRATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The University shall actively encourage multi-disciplinary research, innovation, and educational activities focused on ecosystem conservation, land restoration, and climate adaptation. Academic units are encouraged to utilize University forest reserves, dryland plots, and erosion management sites as living laboratories for field training and community outreach.

**9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY**

Members of the University community, including staff, students, and campus residents, shall:

a. refrain from acts causing vegetation destruction, bush burning, or environmental pollution;

b. report observed ecological threats, unauthorized logging, or soil erosion hazards to designated campus authorities;

c. participate in University-sponsored tree planting, environmental cleanup, and restoration campaigns; and

d. adhere to environmental guidelines established for laboratories, residential quarters, and recreational grounds.

**10. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT**

The University Management shall:

a. allocate appropriate resources for campus environmental management and ecosystem restoration;

b. ensure all infrastructural developments conform strictly to sustainable environmental standards;

c. collaborate with state, national, and international environmental agencies on conservation initiatives;

d. enforce disciplinary or legal measures against violators of this Policy; and

e. oversee periodic environmental audits of all University campuses and land holdings.

**11. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT**

The University shall designate or establish a **Campus Ecosystem and Environmental Sustainability Committee** to:

a. monitor compliance with and enforcement of this Policy across all campuses;

b. evaluate Environmental Impact Assessments for proposed University projects;

c. oversee campus reforestation, slope stabilization, and conservation initiatives;

d. receive and investigate reports of ecological violations on University land; and

e. submit annual Terrestrial Conservation and Land Stewardship Reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

**12. PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY**

This Policy shall be published on the official University website and communicated to all operational units, contractors, and campus stakeholders. The University shall maintain an official policy control record detailing approval, implementation, and scheduled review dates.

**13. REVIEW AND REVISION**

This Policy shall be formally reviewed every three years or earlier if necessitated by statutory amendments, environmental conditions, or institutional requirements. All revisions shall be formally documented, approved by the appropriate authority, and published accordingly.



**Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr**

Vice Chancellor **Date:** 24/10/2026