



**Natural Solutions**  
Costa Rica  
*Reconnecting people with nature*

## Safety and Crisis Management Plan

### INTRODUCTION

**Company Profile:** Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. (Costa Rican tax i.d. # 3-101-510102, "NSCR") is a small, family-run company in Costa Rica that frequently, although not exclusively, operates as a subcontractor for Friends of the Rainforest (Federal I.D. #30-0572051, "FotR") for their sponsored or co-sponsored trips in Costa Rica (e.g., Biodiversity and Peace). NSCR strives to **reconnect people with nature** as modern society becomes more removed from nature with each passing generation. Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. operates primarily in three areas: ecotourism, environmental education, and research. In the tourism sector Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. operates as a receptive tour company in Costa Rica with the majority of the business focused on custom-designed natural history tours for groups originating in the United States of America. For this Crisis Management Plan and other legal purposes Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. should be considered a "virtual" land-based tour operator as the company does not maintain an office, or a physical address with established hours of operation. Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. is effectively run by one person: Jeffrey L. Norris, who in addition to being the primary owner and sole operator of the company's activities is also NSCR's legal representative.

**Purpose of the Management Plan:** In the event of any disruptions or incidents that pose threats of damages to the well-being, life, property, or reputation of Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. (hereafter referred to as Natural Solutions or NSCR), its clients, or third party associates and service providers; this document provides a contingent plan of actions comprising communication responses, mitigation processes and recovery procedures that shall be implemented by the designated personnel of Natural Solutions who are all named hereunder.

The main purpose of this crisis management plan is to safeguard the interests of Natural Solutions' shareholders, vendors, franchisees, affiliates, subsidiaries, customers, clients and employees, by at least minimizing if not eliminating the potential losses arising from unavoidable incidents of threats. Natural Solutions intends to recover and gain control over all critical situations to pave the way for the company's usual day-to-day functions.

This document, first created in June of 2012 (updated November 2022), should be considered a work in progress. Natural Solutions expects the list of potential disruptive events (and plans for their prevention) to grow as they are identified in our day-to-day normal operations. Furthermore, Natural Solutions also expects modifications to the response plans as specific actions develop from generalized ones.

**Players / Roles:** Below is an outline of the usual players and the roles they play in a typical tour organized by Natural Solutions. This is presented here in order to better understand the expectations and actions of each in the event of a disturbance, interruption, or incident that interferes with the usual operation of the company.

- **Natural Solutions / the company representative (guides):** This classification primarily refers to **Jeffrey L. Norris (JLN), company founder, president, and legal representative;** or any one of a handful of experienced, bilingual and freelance naturalist guides and biologists (hereafter referred to as 'guides' or 'representatives') hired for such a purpose.
- **Client(s):** This term refers to the principal person or organization that establishes direct contact with Natural Solutions and the additional people that travel to Costa Rica with them. For this purpose, nearly all of Natural Solutions' trips should be considered "closed" as they are not open to the general public. For example, schools form a large part of Natural Solutions' clientele and a typical school group is composed of the teacher(s) who establishes direct contact with Natural Solutions and the students they allow to travel as part of the school group (with full permission of their parents or legal guardians). Another example of a client would be the Friends of the Rainforest (FoR). As a US NGO supporting the Children's Eternal Rainforest in Costa Rica they send their clients and supporters wanting to travel to Costa Rica through Natural Solutions. The FoR and the people that travel with them would both be considered clients as outlined here.
- **Third party associates / Service providers:** As a "virtual" land-based tour operator in Costa Rica, Natural Solutions provides no direct services other than organizing logistics plus the management and information (i.e. guides) that goes into a group trip to Costa Rica. The companies and businesses that provide *direct* services such as **lodging, transport, meals,** and particular **activities** (i.e. trails in protected areas, adventure activities – rafting, canopy tours) should be considered the third party associates or service providers that Natural Solutions organizes as part of a trip to Costa Rica.
- **Group/Trip leader:** The group leader is usually the initial person of contact between Natural Solutions and the individuals they have signed-up as part of their group. Along with the guide and the driver, group leaders fulfill an important function in the overall success of the trip as they act as the liaison between each traveler, the company representative / guide, and contacts in the U.S.A. In terms of school groups, the lead teacher on the trip (usually the person in charge of planning and communication) is considered the Group/Trip Leader and therefore responsible for the behavior and conduct of the students in their care.
- **Guide(s):** The guides are the biologists and naturalists employed when JLN is either unavailable to accompany each group or hired to provide additional support for the trip. They are contractually hired for *servicios profesionales* (professional services) by Natural Solutions to act as company representatives (i.e. guides) only for the duration of the trip. As the company representative they are responsible for the management of the trip and all decisions and modifications made throughout its duration. However, contracted guides know that such decisions and modifications should **always be made with the**

**consultation and approval of the trip's group leader and driver.** If at all possible and where necessary, decisions and modifications regarding the execution of a trip or the well-being of its participants should also include the company's legal representative, JLN.

- **Driver:** This is the person hired directly by the transport company paid to provide the transportation services throughout the duration of the trip. While not directly hired by Natural Solutions they are very important to the management and success of the trip. Even if they are not official representatives of the company, their conduct and assistance reflect heavily upon the image of Natural Solutions and should be considered as equally important as the guide or any other company representative to the successful execution of a trip.

## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

This remainder of the crisis management plan is composed of four sections: Prediction, Prevention, Plans/Responses, and Post-event Evaluation. Each section begins with a description outlining the general perspectives of Natural Solutions and finishes with a numbered list of more specific events and actions. The numbered entries for each section coincide with the same numbers from other sections.

**PREDICTION:** The items listed below represent those disruptions or events that Natural Solutions considers to pose the greatest threat to the effective operation and integrity of the company; or at this point in time (November 2022), are the most likely to occur.

1. The disability, unavailability, or even death of Natural Solutions' founder, president, and principal employee: Jeffrey L. Norris.
2. Medical situations involving individuals or small numbers of travelers in each trip.
3. Problems with transportation (i.e. traffic accident, mechanical problems).
4. Problems with schedules outlined in the itinerary (lodging, meals, activities).
5. Disruptions due to natural disasters: floods, earthquakes, landslides, storms/hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions.

**PREVENTION:** To date (November 2022), the plans outlined below coincide with the numbered items from the "Prediction" section. These actions are specifically designed to prevent, or reduce the impact to the company, its third-party service providers, and clients that such disruptions or events could cause. In general, all hotels and third-party tour operators or service providers used by Natural Solutions will have the appropriate *Responsibilidad Civil* (Civil Responsibility) insurance policy provided by the *Instituto Nacional de Seguros* (INS, Costa Rica's National Insurance Institute). The *Responsibilidad Civil* policy is not only a requirement in order to provide services for tourists, foreign or domestic, but protects each

operator from incurring extraordinary costs in case of accidents or lawsuits where negligence or human error may be involved. This policy also provides some medical coverage for the tourists themselves.

In consultation with INS, Natural Solutions *does not* directly qualify for *Responsibilidad Civil* coverage for the following reasons: 1) as a “virtual” operator Natural Solutions does not meet the requirements for the *voluntary*, tour operator certificate from the ICT (Institute of Costa Rican Tourism), a document necessary to qualify for the INS policy; 2) Natural Solutions is *not directly responsible* for the actual services or activities provided during trips. In case of a traffic accident the responsibility would fall to the transportation company and their respective *Responsibilidad Civil* policy. The same would apply to hotels and other scheduled activities (National Parks, theme parks, etc.). Natural Solutions only connects clients with other service providers and therefore is not considered directly responsible or liable. In fact, INS indicated they could sell Natural Solutions a policy, but that they would not honor any claims against it for the aforementioned reasons. However, clients traveling with Natural Solutions as part of a group sub-contracted through Friends of the Rainforest receive some coverage under FotR’s travel insurance policy.

1. While no one knows with certainty when life-changing disabilities or even death itself will strike; one can put in place certain implements to slow down their onset, or reduce their impact, especially for those colleagues and family members left to care for the best interests of the company, its clients, and third-party operators and service providers. For this reason, Jeffrey L. Norris has medical and life insurance policies in place to help cover medical costs and treatment either through public or private medical centers in Costa Rica and to provide additional funds in case of death or disability.

2. Before travelling to Costa Rica, all clients are asked to provide any dietary or medical situations that Natural Solutions should know about. This is to help Natural Solutions representatives and third-party operators or service providers bestow upon the company’s clients the best, and most comfortable treatment and conditions for their maintained good health throughout the trip. All clients are suggested to bring plenty of all required medications, have adequate health insurance, provide Natural Solutions with emergency contacts, and to monitor their own limitations and abilities when engaging in scheduled activities. All of Natural Solutions representatives (i.e. guides) that travel with each group have had some level of First Aid training, and in some cases advanced training (i.e., Wilderness First Aid and Rescue).

3. Natural Solutions organizes transportation services only through a couple of highly experienced and reputable transportation companies. These organizations not only retain the necessary licenses and permits (which include periodic safety and mechanical revisions of all vehicles) to provided transportation services for tour groups, but also carry the necessary *Responsibilidad Civil* (Civil Responsibility) insurance policy through INS. Their drivers all have many years of valuable experience driving tour vehicles and possess the necessary certifications (licenses) to operate the vehicles used.

4. All hotels, transportation providers, some activities, some meals, and usually a portion of the guide's salary are all pre-paid before the clients arrive in Costa Rica. This is done to guarantee space for each Natural Solutions group, indicate the high probability that the trip will happen (not be cancelled), and in general shows Natural Solutions' commitment to planning and organization. In an industry plagued by reservations for hypothetical groups that never materialize, or payments made the "day of" to service providers with paper "vouchers", the practices employed by Natural Solutions are not only preferred, but also appreciated. Guides or company representatives travelling with each group carry with them copies of the documentation that such plans and payments have been made in advance of the group's arrival. Additionally, guides or company representatives often call third party service providers a few days before the service is given as a reminder and to prevent any unwanted surprises as the trip unfolds.

5. With disasters like floods, storms/hurricanes, and landslides that have occurred (prior to the group's passing), which have some level of advanced warning, Natural Solutions representatives will modify the path of travel or itinerary to ensure that clients are kept out of harms way. Guides and drivers frequently monitor weather reports to see how any changes in the weather may potentially affect the trip. Additionally, the drivers and guides are often receiving (or making) phone calls to other colleagues in other Costa Rican locations and are therefore privy to timely updates regarding local conditions in various places. While to some degree volcanic eruptions are preceded by warnings, earthquakes are not. In Costa Rica there is an observatory (OVSICORI, Costa Rica's Seismic and Volcanic Observatory) at The National University that monitors all volcanic and seismic activity. If OVSICORI issues warnings for volcanic activity these are readily picked-up by the national media sources and divulged country-wide with recommended actions. Regarding seismic activity, the only thing that Natural Solutions can do for its representatives and clients are remind them of the suggested steps to take in case of an occurrence.

Costa Rica boasts a National Emergency Commission (Comision Nacional de Emergencias), a legal entity created by executive decree that retains the *"authority to enforce actions in order to reduce the risks of loss of life, or any social, economic, or environmental impacts and consequences of emergency situations whether they are caused natural or anthropogenic forces."* Therefore, in any situation declared an emergency by Costa Rica's CNE, NSCR and its representatives will follow the suggestions and actions as declared by them.

Natural Solutions strives to provide every client with positive, memorable experiences from their visit to Costa Rica. With its varied tropical ecosystems and diverse flora and fauna, the company's founder (JLNorris) hopes that clients will experience all the magic and excitement in their short trip that he has experienced since moving to Costa Rica in 1994. Unfortunately, individual preferences and experiences vary despite the custom-designed nature of Natural Solutions' trips. To minimize the dissatisfaction that could arise with any one client, Natural Solutions provides all travelers with fairly detailed trip itineraries well in advance of the travel dates. The itineraries also contain links to many of the locations and accommodations visited on the trip. Additionally, as part of the procedures and

policies page clients are reminded (see attached example in Appendix I) that: 1) they are traveling as part of a group in which group's needs often supersede the needs of individuals; and that 2) given the vagaries of tourism and international group travel there are bound to be changes, modifications, and setbacks (although minor) which preclude a literal, strict adherence to the itinerary. However, as also stated, Natural Solutions will carry out such changes or modifications in order to improve the overall flow, quality, and comfort of a tour, including individual preferences and requests as long as they do not interfere with the group's travel objectives.

Additionally, Natural Solutions only takes clients on reference from previous clients as opposed to posting open advertisements. Because of this Natural Solutions assumes that future clients are well-informed regarding the type of experience they can expect. All clients are given the opportunity to rate and qualify the quality of their experience through post-trip surveys and evaluations. Therefore, the company does not expect unhappy clients to resort to negative comments or campaigns against Natural Solutions or any of the third-party service providers used that may appear in a variety of media.

**PLANS/RESPONSES:** Natural Solutions expects the items below to evolve from general to more detailed, specific responses over time as the company and its representatives gain more experience and face more situations while leading ecotours in Costa Rica. In general, the company's plans and responses should be honest, timely, and direct. Within the capabilities, limitations, and responsibilities of Natural Solutions' representatives and third-party service providers, these actions are designed to the highest ethical standards and to be fair to all parties.

1. *If* Jeffrey L. Norris, company founder, president, legal representative, and principal employee should at any time be unable to carry out the basic functions of Natural Solutions, the first persons of contact should be Maggie Eisenberger and Chelsea Raiche at Friends of the Rainforest (FoTR), or Maria Nela Chacon (JLN's wife). Many of our trips are run for FoTR and associated clients. Regarding FoR trips, Maggie (Science and Travel Director) will be aware of the itinerary, travel plans, and potentially third-party service providers. Chelsea (Executive Director) will know what funds have been dispersed to NSCR. Maria Nela Chacon will have emergency access to additional files, accounts, and contact information for local service providers and clients.
  - a. Maggie Eisenberger ([maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org](mailto:maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org)), Sophie Arp ([sophie@friendsoftherainforest.org](mailto:sophie@friendsoftherainforest.org)). 1324 Clarkson Clayton Center, #312, St. Louis, MO 63011, tel.314-941-1257
  - b. Maria Nela Chacon.  
Phone: **011-506-8327-0497** from the US or **8327-0497** from Costa Rica.  
E-mail: [nelachacon@hotmail.com](mailto:nelachacon@hotmail.com)  
Fluent in Spanish with basic English.
  - c. During the times we are at one of the stations of the Children's Eternal Rainforest phone and internet service may be un-reliable. If the group needs to be reached while at one of the two stations, family members of clients may reach out to the central offices of CER. Ask for *Giselle Rodriguez* and mention the group with Natural

Solutions. Telephone: (+506) 4001-4866 o 2645-5200, WhatsApp (+506) 8386-9565,  
Email: info@acmcr.org

2. Most medical incidents experienced on trips are minor in nature (e.g. headaches, indigestion, diarrhea, fatigue, nausea/motion sickness, insect bites, sunburn, cuts/bruises, fever) which are often triggered by exposure to abrupt changes in climate, diet, physical activity, and outside elements. Such incidents are often treated with bed rest, adequate hydration, monitoring diet, and the application of basic over-the-counter first aid medication or supplies. Most of these situations are handled by the travelers themselves with items they, or other travelers, have with them. Natural Solutions representatives (e.g. guides) will have some of these items with them in a basic first aid kit that travels with each group, however all medical treatments, no matter how minor, are made at the discretion of the traveler or with the permission of the group leader in case of minors.

In cases of more severe medical incidents (e.g. sprains/dislocations/broken bones, snake bites, food poisoning, allergic reaction, heart attack/stroke, seizures, shock, among others) the Natural Solutions representative will seek the most rapid and best medical attention available wherever the group or individual is located.

- If in the field (i.e. hiking) the NSCR representative or guide will first try and maintain the individual/group calm and relaxed and remove the individual/group from the threat (e.g. venomous snake, stinging insects); or help keep the injured person (e.g. sprain/broken bone) immobilized and comfortably protected from the elements.

The NSCR representative will then call the third-party operator/service provider (e.g. hotel, or adventure activity) where they are staying or participating to advise them of the situation. This is an important step as each site/location will often have additional equipment that can be utilized (e.g. immobilization boards), more trained people to assist, and can begin making contact with medical emergency providers. If there is no phone service or other means of communication available, then the guide can send 2-3 people back to seek help. NSCR representatives have received basic first aid courses, and in some cases wilderness first aid and rescue training. Most, if not all staff of the Children's Eternal Rainforest, one of our frequent destinations have wilderness first aid and rescue training.

- If on the road (e.g. traffic accident), or near the road, as above the guide/driver/group leader should assess the situation and work to keep everyone calm and relaxed. The guide and/or driver should directly call emergency services (e.g. traffic police, paramedics) and advise them of the situation. If possible, and advised by the emergency officials, it could be quicker to get the person/group to trained medical professionals by using the tour's transportation to meet the paramedics en route.

- With Costa Rica's public health system there are usually medical clinics or centers in each county or district. Clients will be taken here first in order to be stabilized before being transferred to a larger regional hospital, unless medical emergency personnel

determine that the individual should be rushed to the nearest hospital or are already stable enough to make the trip.

- The trip leader and a representative of Natural Solutions (either the trip's guide, or JLN) will travel with the patient to the medical facility / hospital or meet them there.

The Natural Solutions representative would then facilitate communication between the trip leader and the patient's emergency contact back home. If need be, an additional driver/vehicle and guide could be sent to meet up with the rest of the group so they could continue the trip as planned.

3. With the quality of service Natural Solution customarily receives from its usual transportation companies; mechanical problems with vehicles are an extremely rare occurrence and relatively minor at that (i.e. punctured tires). However, in case of greater mechanical issues that cannot be fixed locally and quickly, then alternate vehicles are quickly and easily provided by the transportation company. The transportation companies utilized not only have multiple units at their disposal but are well-connected and highly respected in the transportation community, thus giving them greater access to additional units with other companies.

In the case of a substantial traffic accident that renders the vehicle inoperable or unsafe, then another vehicle will be acquired (as outlined above) so as not to greatly delay the execution of the trip. If there are concerns about the health of any passengers or injuries sustained in the accident, then emergency medical providers will be called to the scene along with the traffic police (see plans/response to medical events - #2).

4. Given the detailed efforts to prevent problems planned and pre-paid services from third party service providers, there should be no problems or disruptions of this kind. However, if there is an event then the guide or company representative will try to work out the discrepancy with the management of the service provider. The guide or company representative will do their best to convince the service provider to go ahead with the service as the issue would likely be one of paperwork or miscommunication that could be easily resolved with a little time investigating the issue. If the error lies with Natural Solutions, then the company will assume the charges required to go ahead with the service or find an alternative. If the error lies with the service provider, then they should be financially responsible for providing the service or finding an alternative. This latter situation would be something that JLN would need to recover from the service providers as the clients should not be financially responsible for such changes to their itinerary. Natural Solutions representatives will then review whether or not to use the same service provider in the future.

5. For those disruptions or events (i.e. natural disasters) that provide some advanced warning, Natural Solutions, to the extent possible, will modify the path of travel or the itinerary to ensure that clients are kept out of harms way. Unfortunately, if such changes require or incur additional charges Natural Solutions would only have a limited amount of capital to cover such costs. Although these changes lie outside the limits of the itinerary for which Natural Solutions



is financially responsible, the company will use its position to broker the lowest possible cost for its clients.

In case of an event or natural disaster whereby the group is caught off-guard or surprised, the guide will first try to maintain the group calm and relaxed, and work with the driver to get the group to a safety zone as quickly as possible. The company representative will then contact emergency services to notify them of the group's situation and location. If any medical emergencies arise then they will be dealt with according to what is stated in #2 of this Crisis Management Plan. The guide or company representative will make sure that the suggested steps or plans outlined by Costa Rica's National Emergency Commission are followed to prevent further damage or risk to company representatives and clients. Once all risks have been minimized and all clients are safely installed at a secure location, then the Natural Solutions representative would facilitate communication between the trip leader and the client's emergency contact back home. *The goal is to directly inform family and friends of the situation as international news reports are often too general to too sensational to properly inform worried friends and family members.*

**POST-EVENT EVALUATION:** It is the position of Natural Solutions to constantly review and update this document, especially after a particular event or disruption to services.

## APPENDIX I

### \* Payments and Policies: *EXAMPLE*

- The cost for this package is \$xxxx/person. Lodging is usually in double or triple occupancy rooms, although depending upon the availability at certain field stations we may need to put three or more people per room in their bunk-style rooms. Single occupancy rooms can be arranged for an additional \$xxx/person at some locations. Included in the cost: (see specific itinerary)
- *Airfare is not included* in the tour package as this will be arranged separately by the individual traveler/groups. With points/miles, airline preferences, and access to internet, we prefer to allow our travelers to choose how, when, and for what cost they should travel to Costa Rica.
- We kindly ask for a \$.... /person deposit to reserve your space on our trip calendar (*\$.... non-refundable*). The deposit should be made by .....
- The full payment or balance is required no later than ....
- The payments for either the deposit, trip balance, or the full-trip are to be made directly to Friends Rainforest (FoR). Please contact Sophie Arp ([sophie@friendsoftherainforest.org](mailto:sophie@friendsoftherainforest.org)) or Maggie Eisenberger ([maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org](mailto:maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org)) to arrange the payment.
- Cancellations and requests for refunds must be made in writing (e-mail) to both FoR ([maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org](mailto:maggie.eisenberger@friendsoftherainforest.org)) and Natural Solutions Costa Rica ([operations@naturalsolutionsCR.org](mailto:operations@naturalsolutionsCR.org)). In case of cancellations we will do our best to refund the full, refundable amount. However, please keep in mind that the deposits are used to hold reservations at hotels or service requests, many of which require full payment 4-6 weeks in advance. Therefore, we make no guarantees about refunds within 6 weeks of the first travel date.
- When registering for this trip please send FoR the following personal information: contact information (at least a phone number and valid e-mail address); emergency contact information; any dietary and/or medical conditions that we need to be aware of, and any particular procedures or treatments to be followed; passport number; and your name as it appears in your passport. This information should be forwarded on to Natural Solutions to help us provide you the utmost in protection, safety, and comfort during your visit.  
**FoR maintains a registration package sent to each group leader.**
- With any trip there will likely be minor, specific modifications of the itinerary as the tour progresses (e.g. timing and order of daily activities, dining locations, departure/arrival times, etc). These modifications are designed to improve the flow and comfort of the tour based on the group's changing needs. Such decisions will be made by your trip's driver and guide as long as they meet with your trip leader's approval. Within the limitations of the company's abilities and responsibilities, Natural Solutions' representatives will honor personal preferences and requests as long as they do not interfere with the travel objectives of the group.
- We strive to provide each customer with a high-quality tour at a reasonable cost. Furthermore, all efforts are made to accommodate the safety and comfort of travelers at all time while in Costa Rica. Therefore, the trip leader as well as any representative of Natural Solutions Costa Rica S.A. can not accept responsibility, nor be held accountable or liable for any temporal or material loss, personal injury, or even death, that result from accident, third party actions, inclement weather, natural disasters, poor trail or road conditions, or any greater force or other circumstances beyond their direct control. The travel package rate only covers the items included in the itinerary and for the time stated. Any additional expenses are the responsibility of the traveler. It is the responsibility of each traveler to monitor his or her physical abilities and limits to determine whether or not their participation in particular activities is appropriate. Although the majority of the walking on this tour will be of easy to moderate in difficulty, we may be walking for extended distances or lengths of time and trail conditions may not always be favorable. All travelers should have their own medical or health insurance.

*PAYMENT OF THE DEPOSIT OR FULL COST FOR THIS TOUR INDICATES YOUR AGREEMENT TO THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS.*