



Executive Director · Nonhuman Rights Project

Position Guide · February 2026

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Executive Director
The Nonhuman Rights Project

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OVERVIEW

Position Executive Director

Reports to Board of Directors

Location Remote



MISSION

The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) works to secure fundamental legal rights for nonhuman animals—rights that are enforceable and effective at protecting animals’ most basic interests, including life, liberty, and bodily integrity.

Under current law, animals are treated as property. Courts routinely decline to hear claims brought on their behalf, leaving even the most serious harms without meaningful legal remedy. Despite growing public concern and advancing scientific understanding of animal cognition, fundamental rights have not yet been extended to nonhuman animals.

The NhRP works to confront that legal injustice and to transform how the law recognizes and protects nonhuman beings.

VISION

We envision a legal system in which nonhuman animals are recognized as rights-bearing individuals, not things.

In that future, animals possess enforceable rights that safeguard their fundamental interests. Courts engage seriously with their claims. Established legal principles are applied consistently and without species membership serving as a categorical barrier to justice.

We understand that durable legal change emerges through sustained engagement. Courts expand rights through disciplined argument, repeated exposure, and increasing legitimacy within the legal culture. Our work is designed to build that legitimacy case by case, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, until recognition of nonhuman animals as legal persons is not extraordinary but expected.

The Nonhuman Rights Project believes that no one should be denied rights because of who they are, including nonhuman animals.

BACKGROUND

Steven M. Wise founded the Nonhuman Rights Project in 1995 after decades as a lawyer and legal scholar led him to a central conviction: it is irrational and unjust to deny legal rights to nonhuman animals solely because they are not human. The principles that ground human rights—liberty, equality, autonomy, dignity, and fairness—are principles of justice, not of species.

Today, the NhRP remains the only civil rights organization in the United States dedicated exclusively to advancing fundamental legal rights for nonhuman animals.

ABOUT THE NONHUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

Litigation is the center of gravity of the Nonhuman Rights Project’s strategy. The NhRP advances a disciplined, multi-pathway litigation approach designed to produce cumulative and compounding legal impact. The organization does not measure success by volume of filings. It selects cases strategically, focusing on those most likely to engage courts, influence legal culture, and generate durable precedent that builds over time.

The NhRP’s work proceeds along three mutually reinforcing pathways:

Right to Liberty

The NhRP seeks recognition of a fundamental right to bodily liberty for cognitively complex species such as elephants, great apes, and cetaceans — challenging unlawful confinement and articulating the strongest form of legal protection available under the law.



Access to Justice

Rights are meaningless without access to courts. This pathway focuses on standing, representation, and procedural mechanisms that allow animals' claims to be heard and enforced.

Freedom from Cruelty

The NhRP leverages existing anti-cruelty laws to establish enforceable rights protecting animals from egregious harm—transforming widely accepted moral norms into meaningful legal safeguards.

These pathways are pursued in parallel. Progress in one strengthens the others, expanding the legal foundation, increasing judicial familiarity, and strengthening the conditions necessary for broader rights recognition.

Litigation does not operate in isolation. The NhRP's communications and campaigns are aligned explicitly to support litigation—reinforcing legal arguments, building credibility within legal communities, and shaping the broader environment in which courts act.

The NhRP assesses success not only by final judgments, but by cumulative indicators of forward movement: judicial opinions that seriously engage animals' legal interests, procedural breakthroughs, favorable reasoning and dissents, and growing normalization of animals as rights-bearing entities within legal discourse.

This is long-term civil rights work. It demands strategic clarity, intellectual rigor, operational discipline, and sustained leadership capable of guiding institutional change over time.

The next leader of the Nonhuman Rights Project will have an unparalleled opportunity to be at the forefront of the movement to build a new world where the fundamental legal rights of nonhuman animals are recognized.

In February 2024, Steven Wise—founder of the NhRP and a pioneering architect of the modern animal rights legal movement—passed away after leading the organization for nearly three decades. He left behind more than a legacy of groundbreaking litigation: he also built a durable institutional foundation. After a two-year transition period, the board and staff are ready to press forward building on that foundation and continuing the work of securing fundamental legal rights for nonhuman animals.

The NhRP is seeking a new leader to guide the organization forward into a new phase of strategic growth and organizational expansion.

The Board of Directors seeks an experienced Executive Director who is passionate

about animal rights and has the necessary experience and skills to help the organization advance to the next chapter of its work. The ideal candidate will be a strategic thinker who is able to envision the future while mastering the necessary details to move the organization to the next phase, successfully balancing long-term planning and short-term needs.



The Executive Director of the NhRP will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the organization's operations, including strategic planning, program development and administration, fundraising, and financial management.

The Executive Director will work directly with the Board of Directors to ensure that the mission of the organization and the vision of its founder are fulfilled. They will lead the development and oversee the implementation of the NhRP's strategic plan, ensuring operational priorities are also in alignment with the organization's mission and vision. They will oversee the core staff and a larger associated network of volunteers and pro-bono partners. This is a full-time remote position that reports directly to the NhRP Board.

The scope of the Executive Director role is as follows:

Mission and Strategy

- Proactively identify and explore new opportunities for the NhRP to maximize its impact and deliver on its mission, including growth and development of existing programs, and creation of new programs, campaigns, and partnerships
- Serve as the primary spokesperson with the NhRP's supporters, the media, and the public
- Serve as a thought leader alongside the Chief Strategy Officer by engaging in the broader dialogue on nonhuman animal rights, while increasing public understanding through high-profile publications, mediate engagement, and talks that elevate the NhRP's mission
- In collaboration with the Managing Director of Programs, oversee the development and implementation of an annual organizational operating plan, including defining specific priorities of annual goals, and determining budget and resource allocation
- Serve as a mentor and leader to staff, facilitate open dialogue and resolve conflict about different professional ideas, and foster alignment

Financial Management and Fundraising

- With the Managing Director of Operations, protect the fiscal integrity of the NhRP, ensuring its long-term financial health to support its mission
- With the Managing Director of Operations and the Director of Development, develop and lead the implementation of a comprehensive fundraising and development strategy that aligns with the organization's mission and goals, and expands and diversifies the portfolio of top donors and prospects
- Ensure the organization raises sufficient funds to meet its annual goals and expand its mission reach and impact, monitoring progress toward fundraising targets and adjusting as needed

Board Relations

- Collaborate and partner closely with the Board to deliver on organizational goals and priorities
- In coordination with the Board President, lead the reporting and activities of the Board of Directors
- Provide relevant and timely updates and information to the Board and work with the Board to manage the NhRP's brand, identity, and positioning

The Board of Directors is seeking candidates with the following qualifications:

- Genuine passion for the NhRP's mission and enthusiasm for animal rights law
- Demonstrated commitment to civil rights and civil liberties consistent with the mission and goals of the NhRP
- At least 15 years of experience in leadership/management roles at a nonprofit/advocacy organizations
- Demonstrated experience successfully conducting a litigation campaign from start to finish; at least 10 years of experience developing and litigating significant cases
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including experience as an effective public speaker and serving as a media spokesperson in an advocacy context

CANDIDATE PROFILE, *continued*

- Positive attitude, exceptional people skills, sense of humor, and comfort in fostering and contributing to a friendly, supportive, inclusive, and team-oriented environment
- Juris Doctor degree from an American-Bar-Association accredited law school
- Admission to the bar in at least one U.S. state
- Willingness to travel



The Nonhuman Rights Project offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

The expected salary range for this position is between \$180,000-\$195,000 and will be commensurate with experience.

The NhRP offers comprehensive health benefits delivered through an Individual Coverage HRA (ICHRA) which provides employer-funded tax-free reimbursements for the individual plan of your choice, flexible paid time off including all federal holidays, paid parental leave, 403b retirement plan with employer match, professional development stipends, and home office equipment subsidies.

How to Apply

For best consideration, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction by Friday, April 17, 2026, to Kittleman & Associates, LLC.

→ **[SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO KITTLEMAN ONLINE](#)**
[\(CLICK THE APPLY BUTTON AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE\)](#)

For more information about Nonhuman Rights Project, please visit <https://www.nonhumanrights.org/>.

The Nonhuman Rights Project is an Equal Opportunity Employer and acts in accordance with applicable laws in all of our hiring and employment practices. The NhRP considers applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, religion, creed, gender identity, national origin, age, ability, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or any other protected factor under federal, state, or local law. This is a U.S.-based position. In compliance with federal law, all persons hired will be required to verify identity and eligibility to work in the United States and to complete the required employment eligibility verification form upon hire.