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1. Purpose. To provide guidance to all National Weather Service (NWS) personnel for participating in and responding to OIG audits, inspections, and investigations; to ensure each process is carried out in accordance with NOAA policy, in a manner which supports the needs of the auditors; to ensure responses are complete, reliable, consistent, timely, and that follow-up action is appropriately managed to completion.

2. Definitions

2.1 Audit – Within the Department of Commerce (DOC), an audit is a comprehensive evaluation of an operating unit, a program, an activity, or a function within the Department. An audit may have financial or performance objectives. Audits provide an objective basis for evaluating financial operations, program operations, resource utilization, and the conformance of policies, plans, systems, and procedures to applicable laws and regulations. They are conducted in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the U.S. Comptroller General. Audit reports containing findings and recommendations are public documents and are available upon request.

2.2 OIG Inspection - A brief review of an area or aspect of an organization’s management and administrative practices. An inspection does not attempt to evaluate the totality of the operating unit or activity as does an audit. Inspections are special reviews the OIG undertakes to provide agency managers with timely information about operational issues.

A primary goal of an inspection is to eliminate waste in the federal government, by encouraging effective and efficient operations. By asking questions, identifying problems, and suggesting solutions, the OIG hopes to help managers to move quickly to address problems identified during an inspection. Inspections may also highlight effective programs or operations, particularly if they may be useful or adaptable for agency managers or program operations elsewhere.

- 2.3 Referrals - Referrals are allegations received by the OIG of fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement in DOC programs and operations. These allegations are received online, by mail, over the telephone, or in person, and may be reported anonymously. Allegations may also come from outside of the DOC. The OIG makes the determination whether such allegations warrant investigation by the OIG and whether they should be referred to a line office. The OIG forwards referrals to NWS Management and Organization Division (CFO3) via NOAA, for resolution and any action NWS deems necessary. All referrals should be regarded as sensitive information and, as such, access should be limited to only those individuals entrusted with responding to the inquiry, and those with a need-to-know basis. The official selected to conduct an inquiry should be from outside of the office being investigated.

Note: When OIG requests are received directly at an NWS office, the recipient will immediately contact the NWS OIG Specialists in the CFO3 of the NWS Office of the Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer (CFO/CAO).

3. Responsibilities and Procedures

3.1 The NOAA OIG Coordinator:

- a. Oversees the conduct of OIG audits and inspections within NOAA.
- b. Oversees follow-up tracking and reporting within NOAA.

3.2 The NWS OIG Specialist in CFO3 oversees the OIG audits, inspections, and investigations affecting NWS and is responsible for overseeing the NWS management of all NWS OIG activities. They serve as the central contact with upper management within the NWS and with NOAA. They directly oversee the implementation of the NWS program for managing OIG audits and inspections at headquarters and in the regions. The NWS OIG Specialist also serves as central contact between headquarters and the regions for all OIG matters; coordinates all responses to OIG audits and inspections; and manages the systems of audit and inspection follow-up for the NWS. Responsibilities include:

- a. Keeping the NOAA OIG Coordinator and NWS higher management apprised of all NWS OIG-related actions.

- b. Overseeing the audit/inspection process at headquarters and in the regions by coordinating with the Regional/Office Point(s) of Contact (POCs) (see para. 3.3).
- c. Serving as the central communication point for all NWS OIG matters. Reviews the annual audit and inspection plans.
- d. Providing updates to the OIG on progress of completion for all Action Plan items.
- e. Receiving initial notification of the audit/inspection/referral from NOAA Audits and Internal Controls, and Information Management.
- f. Ensuring appropriate attendance at the Entrance and Exit Conference and:
 - (1) Ensures the audit/inspection purpose, scope, and related details are clearly identified and documented.
 - (2) Designates the appropriate POC for the audit/inspection.
- g. Determining appropriate individual(s) to conduct inquiries when referrals are received.
- h. Maintaining contact with the POC during the course of the audit/inspection/referral.

3.3 Regional and Office Directors appoint a NWS Point(s) of Contact (POC) for their respective offices (see Appendix) to monitor the conduct of the audit/inspection/referral in their area by:

- a. Appointing the appropriate person to be responsible for the action, to manage the OIG review process for the NWS.
- b. Notifying the NWS OIG Specialists of the person(s) appointed responsible for the action.
- c. Keeping the NWS OIG Specialist informed on the status of the actions.
- d. Providing guidance to person(s) responsible for the action.
- e. Participating in the Entrance and Exit Conferences, as appropriate.

3.4 The NWS Person(s) responsible for the action:

- a. Serves as technical lead for the audit/inspection/referral.

- b. Participates in the audit/inspection process. During the course of this process, ensures all contacts with OIG representatives are documented as a memorandum for the record. The POC is kept current on the course of the audit/inspection.
 - c. Participates in the Exit Conference. Discusses with the OIG the results of the audit/inspection and the proposed recommendations. In particular, the Action Officer, along with the POC, is responsible for evaluating the auditor's conclusions and recommendations.
 - d. For referrals, investigates the allegations, and prepares a report in MS Word on the findings and recommendations. The written report is submitted via the regional office director to CFO3, sealed and marked EYES ONLY. An electronic copy should be sent to the NWS OIG Specialist.
- 3.5 Response to OIG Draft and Final Audit/Inspection Reports, and Referrals. NWS OIG Specialist, working with the POCs and the person(s) responsible for the action, will:
- a. Upon receipt of the OIG Draft Audit/ Inspection Reports:
 - (1) Oversees and coordinates review and response process with offices/regions and NWS management.
 - (2). Coordinates with the POC to ensure:
 - (a) Recommendations are thoroughly reviewed.
 - (b) Where agreement with the OIG exists (concurrence), a statement of implementation, either proposed or in process, is included.
 - (c) Where disagreement with the OIG exists (nonconcurrence), substantiating rationale is provided.
 - (d) Where the draft report addresses funds that could be put to a better use, the issue is addressed.
 - (e) Proposed responses represent NWS/NOAA positions. Coordinate NWS preliminary conference call before creating an action plan.
 - (f) Responses to the OIG draft recommendations follow prescribed format (see Appendix B).
 - (g) Written response is submitted in a timely manner:

- (i) Provides deadline dates to the POC.
 - (ii) Prepares memorandum and package for signature by the Assistant Administrator for Weather Services.
 - (iii) Submits response to NOAA Audit, Internal Control, and Information Management Office
- b. Upon receipt of the Final Audit/Inspection Report:
 - (1) Ensures a NOAA-coordinated response to the report is developed.
 - (a) Coordinates/participates in conference call scheduled by Audits and Internal Control Staff, requesting input/participation of POC and Action Officer, as appropriate.
 - (b) Ensures Action Plan responds adequately to the OIG Final Report (see Appendix C)
 - (i) Specifies concurrence or nonconcurrence with each recommendation and, if applicable, addresses funds to be put to better use.
 - (ii) Ensures specific plan for each action and provides a target completion date.
 - (iii) Describes action taken and date of completion if recommendation was carried out.
 - (iv) Provides specific rationale for nonconcurrence with recommendations.
 - (2) Submits response & Action Plan to NOAA Audit, Internal Control, and Information Management Office
 - (3) Prepares memorandum and package for signature by the NWS CFO/CAO.
- c. Follow up to ensure the OIG accepts the Action Plan.
- d. Manages closure of Action Plan items:

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- (1) Develop and maintain a tracking system for Action Plan items.
- (2) Directs POCs on format and frequency for submission of status reports.
- (3) Coordinates with POCs to track closure/progress toward closure for all Action Plan items.
- (4) Maintains, in CFO3, official files of documentation to substantiate closure of all of the action items.
- (5) Reports progress to NOAA OIG Coordinator for annual report to Congress following guidance provided.

**APPENDIX A
REFERENCES**

1. Department of Commerce, Department Administrative Order (DAO) 213-2, Inspector General Inspections and evaluations
<http://204.193.232.34/cgi-bin/doiit.cgi?204:112:361427e6c76c01c00dd2716d686a5e8dc812759c6c8b2dd5dea7e875fdbbeabc:264>
2. Department of Commerce, Department Administrative Order (DAO) 213-3, Inspector General Auditing
<http://204.193.232.34/cgi-bin/doiit.cgi?204:112:2db49b0178b4d78d54bbb827e5a31d78e59c383015c9b18fb85b4dc59731ad45:265>
3. Department of Commerce, Department Administrative Order (DAO) 213-5, Audit Resolution Follow Up
<http://204.193.232.34/cgi-bin/doiit.cgi?204:112:2db49b0178b4d78d54bbb827e5a31d78e59c383015c9b18fb85b4dc59731ad45:159>
4. NWS Points of Contact - OIG/GAO/FOIA
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/cfo/management_organization/doc/poclist_oig_gao_foia.pdf

APPENDIX B

*****SAMPLE FORMAT FOR DRAFT OIG REPORT*****

Instructions: The following format should be used to prepare agency comments to a draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) report. Repeat the audit report title and audit report number in subsequent pages. Please use Times New Roman and font size 12 for the text below.

**NOAA Comments on the Draft OIG Report Entitled
“Northwest Fisheries Science Center Needs Improved Research Management
Processes to Better Implement Its Salmon Research Plan”
(STD-14440-1-0001/August 2002)**

General Comments

Provide general comments in this section such as an overall assessment or opinion of the draft report. Do not address recommendations, which will be covered in another section.

Recommended Changes for Factual/Technical Information

Provide changes to factual or technical information in this section. Cite page number and other specific references (see examples below). Do not include editorial comments, which will be covered in another section.

Page 5, first paragraph, first sentence:

The National Marine Fisheries Service is a component of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This distinction should be made throughout the draft report.

Page 8, third paragraph, line 2:

Note that the fishing season was increased to eight (not ten) months. It has since been expanded by an additional two weeks.

Page 31, fourth bullet:

Add NMFS to the following sentence: “NMFS and FWS provided extensive input and guidance on the role of hatcheries in recovery;”

Editorial Comments

Provide editorial comments (such as grammatical changes) in this section. Cite page number and other specific references (see example below).

If these comments can be provided earlier than the deadline specified in the tasking memo, NOAA’s Audit, Internal Control, and Information Management Office will give them to the OIG separately from the official NOAA comments.

Page 30, first paragraph, lines 4-5:

Replace one word in the following sentence: “Forum meetings are open to ~~some~~ all entities.”

NOAA Response to OIG Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Provide the exact recommendation from the draft OIG report.

Example:

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries take the necessary actions to ensure that NMFS headquarters revise the Science Quality Assurance Program, Fisheries Science Center Accreditation Standards, to clearly require science centers to develop documented peer review processes.

NOAA Response: In responding to each recommendation, please state whether or not NOAA concurs. A brief statement regarding action to be taken may also be provided. If a recommendation is rejected (not concurred), please provide a rationale for your disagreement.

Example:

We concur. Implementation of this recommendation is already underway. NMFS headquarters had required all of the science centers, as part of the Science Quality Assurance Program, Fisheries Science Center Accreditation Standards, to prepare a stand-alone document that will clearly articulate a policy for peer review of stock assessments, scientific advice, and science programs.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR FINAL OIG REPORT

Instructions: Each recommendation identified in a final Office of Inspector General (OIG) report should have an audit action plan. Place each recommendation and associated audit action plan on a separate page. Repeat the audit report title and audit report number in subsequent pages. Please use Times New Roman and font size 12 for the text below.

NOAA AUDIT ACTION PLAN

Audit Report Title: Chanhassen Weather Forecast Office Generally Provides Effective Forecasts, But Office Management and Regional Oversight Need Improvement (Provide the entire title of the audit report)

Audit Report Number: Final Inspection Report No. IPE-14423/March 2002 (Provide audit report number and report issuance date)

Audited Entity: National Weather Service (NWS), Chanhassen Weather Forecast Office (WFO) (Provide the name of the line office and specific unit within that line office)

OIG Recommendation #1: We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for NWS instruct the Central Region Director to work with Chanhassen forecasters and the Central Region staff to determine how best to improve the office's verification statistics by lengthening the flash-flood warning lead time. (Provide the first recommendation from the audit report)

Action Planned or Taken: Based on the audit report, state what action your office plans to take or has taken for the first recommendation.

Example: In order to improve lead-time for typical flash-flood events, each member of the forecast staff and service hydrologist will utilize the Weather Event Stimulator (WES) to increase proficiency in flash-flood situations. Additionally, Central Regional Headquarters has collected a listing of best practices used by offices that have been very successful in the issuance of flash-flood warnings. The meteorologist-in-charge (MIC) and staff will incorporate the best practices into the Chanhassen WFO operation.

Target Implementation Date: Specify month, day, and year for action planned or action taken (completed). Add narrative showing proof of action taken. No narrative is necessary for planned target date.

Example: 4/5/02 (completed)

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All Chanhassen forecasters have completed the simulation training on the WES. The MIC incorporated the best flash-flood warning practices used by other Central Regional WFOs into the Chanhassen flash-flood program.

OIG Concurrence

Date

NOAA AUDIT ACTION PLAN

Audit Report Title: Provide the entire title of the audit report.

Audit Report Number: Provide audit report number and report issuance date.

Audited Entity: Provide the name of the line office and specific unit within that line office.

OIG Recommendation #2: Provide the second recommendation from the audit report.

Action Planned or Taken: Based on the audit report, state what action your office plans to take or has taken for the second recommendation.

Target Implementation Date: Specify month, day, and year for action planned or action taken (completed). Add narrative showing proof of action taken. No narrative is necessary for planned target date.

OIG Concurrence

Date