

Summary: FWS Employee Used Her Position to Influence an American Samoa Contract Award for Her Husband

Report Date: July 31, 2017

OIG initiated an investigation after we received allegations of a conflict of interest involving a biologist and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) employee. The FWS employee was alleged to have assisted her husband, a biologist, in obtaining contract work for the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) on projects funded by FWS grants. In addition, we investigated allegations that the husband failed to return a DMWR laptop and related media when his involvement with DMWR concluded.

Our investigation substantiated that the FWS employee used her FWS position to influence a contract award by DMWR to her husband. After she reviewed a proposal written by her husband for rat-related research, the FWS employee suggested to DMWR they consider additional rat-related research on American Samoa. Almost immediately after the FWS employee made her suggestion to DMWR, her husband submitted an unsolicited proposal for rat-related research on American Samoa. In response to her suggestion and following her husband's proposal, DMWR submitted a grant proposal, which the FWS employee approved despite her knowledge that her husband could benefit from the award. We also determined that the FWS employee had helped her husband prepare the research proposal before he submitted it to DMWR.

Because DMWR was uncomfortable with the apparent conflict of interest, it never awarded the rat research contract to the husband and the project never received Federal funding.

We confirmed the FWS employee and her husband had in their possession a laptop that was the property of the American Samoa Government. The laptop had been loaned to him by DMWR for a work related project. When DMWR asked him to return it, the husband falsely reported to DMWR that the laptop was broken and that he had thrown it away. We subsequently recovered the laptop from the FWS employee who, at the time we recovered it, falsely asserted it was her and her husband's personal computer.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Hawaii declined prosecution in this matter. This is a summary of a report that was issued to FWS for any action deemed appropriate.

