

Summary: FWS Employee Guilty of Theft of Funds from Recreation Fee Program

Report Date: February 22, 2017

OIG initiated this investigation after receiving information that a refuge employee, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Region 3, allegedly stole funds collected from the FWS Recreation Fee Program, which included the sale of Federal duck stamps and America the Beautiful passes to national parks and recreation lands. A new FWS supervisor who had been reconciling program funds for 2015 discovered a shortage in the funds that the refuge employee had been managing.

We found evidence that between 1997 and February 2016, the refuge employee stole approximately \$12,400 in cash from the sale of duck stamps. We were unable to quantify the amount of money that she stole from the America the Beautiful passes due to an absence of documentation and oversight in Region 3.

The refuge employee admitted that since 1998 she had stolen approximately \$150 in cash every 2 weeks from the sale of the stamps and passes, and had used the money to pay for medication and gas. We found that the absence of any oversight by FWS managers not only made the theft possible, but also allowed it to continue for nearly 20 years. We determined, however, that oversight over the program had improved since the new FWS supervisor took over the program and identified the shortage in funds.

The refuge employee resigned from FWS in July of 2016, and pled guilty to theft by swindle in District Court. She was sentenced to 3 years of probation and 450 hours of community service, and she was fined \$128.

This is a summary of a report of investigation that was issued to FWS.

